

סח ליהוהפ - The LORD'S Passover

An Exegesis of Exodus 12:1-14

Paul Brug

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The LORD's Passover is often considered one of the high points of the Old Testament, and for good reason. The LORD instituted the Passover at the high point of his deliverance of his people from Egypt. In the events of the Passover night, the LORD not only delivered his people from slavery to the Egyptians, but also from death itself, with the blood of the lamb intervening between the Israelites and death. This is a type and shadow of the ultimate deliverance the LORD gives his people from slavery to sin and the devil and from death itself through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Just as we look to the cross and empty grave as the crowning point of God's love and power on our behalf, in the Old Testament, the Passover and Red Sea were seen as the pinnacle of God's deliverance.

The Passover account is also an important text in discussion of the Lord's Supper. It was at the celebration of the Passover that the Lord Jesus instituted the Supper, and the Passover is seen as the Old Testament precursor to the Lord's Supper. The text also has historical significance in the Reformation debate about the Lord's Supper between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli.

The New Testament looks back on the Passover as a type of Christ in these and other passages:

1 Corinthians 5:7 Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

1 Peter 1:18-19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

John 1:29 Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

In Exodus 12:1-14, we have the account of the LORD's institution of the Passover. May God strengthen our understanding of and appreciation for God's saving grace through our study of the LORD's Passover.

Verses 1-2

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַל־אַהֲרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר:
2 הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְכֶם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשׁוֹן הוּא לְכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be the head of months for you; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you."

Syntax and vocabulary:

בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם Obviously, if we've been reading the whole account, we already know that Moses and Aaron were in Egypt. The fact that this is stated here shows that 1) these are the instructions for the people to celebrate the Passover on the night of *the* Passover, and possibly that 2) this section was written so that it could be read independently, as in a lectionary or annual Passover celebration.

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה Exodus 13:4 & Deuteronomy 16:1 state that this month is Abib (the Babylonian name was Nisan, as in Nehemiah 2:1), roughly corresponding to April, but based on lunar cycles.

(no verb)	"Is" is understood. I translated it as "shall be" in both cases, since the context indicates a jussive force ("a lasting statute," verse 14, etc.)
ראשון	first, former, chief — Used in parallel construction to ראש.

Discussion: Do ראש and ראשון simply indicate chronology ("first") or do they have the additional significance of prominence ("most important")?

Comments:

The Passover is not a human tradition, but is instituted by the LORD himself. In these verses the Passover is placed in its historical context. Its significance is emphasized by its prominence in the new calendar. In the Passover the LORD will reveal his saving grace to the people of Israel and deliver them from their enemies. Not surprisingly, God uses his covenant name, יהוה, in this section.

Verse 3

3 דָּבְרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה
וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ שֹׂה לְבֵית-אָבִתּוֹ שֹׂה לְבַיִת:

Speak to the whole assembly of Israel: "On the tenth day of this month let each man take for himself a lamb¹ for his family—a lamb per family."

Syntax and vocabulary:

דָּבְרוּ	Piel Imperative – speak
עֵדֹת	Construct – congregation, assembly
עֶשֶׂר	Tenth day
וַיִּקְחוּ	Qal 3 rd pl m of לקח. The form could be simple imperfect, but context indicates that it is a jussive. The plural verb (and following pronoun, לָהֶם) refers to the people of Israel.
אִישׁ	Has a distributive force ("each man"). Literally, the Hebrew reads, "Let them take for themselves each man a lamb."
שֹׂה	Typically, this word is translated "lamb," but it is really more general. The closest English translation would be something like "head of stock" or "one of the flock." It can refer to a sheep or a goat (as v.5 indicates). The word itself has no reference to age or gender, though God limits the selection to a year-old male in v. 5. ²
לְבֵית-אָבִתּוֹ	Literally, "for house of fathers." The expression refers to families or clans. Here "family" would fit the context of "each man" and "a lamb per house."

Comments:

God's deliverance of Israel was collective, but in the Passover, as in the Lord's Supper, deliverance is personal and individual. Each family was delivered from death by the blood of the lamb. If Maundy Thursday was the 14th, the Passover night, Palm Sunday would have been the 10th, the day the lamb was chosen and set apart.

¹ "Lamb" is the traditional translation, but there is really no English equivalent. See vocabulary notes.

² Cole 105.

Verse 4

4 וְאִם־יִמְעַט הַבַּיִת מִהֵיֶת מִשָּׂה וְלָקַח הוּא וְשָׂכְנוֹ הַקָּרֵב
אֶל־בַּיְתוֹ בְּמִקְסַת נִפְשׁוֹת אִישׁ לְפִי אֲכָלוֹ תִּכְסֹּו עַל־הַשָּׂה:

If his house is too small to have a [whole] lamb, he and his neighbor closest to his house should take [a lamb] according to [Hebrew: ב] the number of people [souls]. Figure out the [amount of] lamb each mouth will eat.

KJV: Let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

Syntax and vocabulary:

This verse is difficult to translate into good English without paraphrasing to some degree. I included the King James translation, which was the best attempt I could find of a literal translation.

יִמְעַט	Qal impf of מעט, "to be small," used in a conditional clause with אם.
מִהֵיֶת	Qal inf construct of הִיהָ, to be, with a מִן of comparison. Literally: "If it is small from being from a lamb."
וְלָקַח	VCPf of לקח with jussive force. Forms the apodosis of the conditional. (The verbs in this section sometimes are in imperative or jussive forms, some are in simple imperfect (or Vav-consecutive perfect) forms, but are translated as jussives — when God says, "you shall," it is a command. The forms also often switch in person.)
וְשָׂכְנוֹ	neighbor, inhabitant (from שָׁכַן, dwell; מִשְׁכָּן = dwelling place, tabernacle)
בְּמִקְסַת	Number, computation (from כִּסַּס, compute, used later in the verse). ב could be taken with קָרֵב (near in number of souls) but seems more natural with the verb, though in this case כ (according to) would seem more appropriate as a preposition.
לְפִי	Construct of פִּה, mouth.
אֲכָלוֹ	noun (אֲכָל) w/ 3m suf – (the act of) eating; food; amount eaten.
תִּכְסֹּו	Qal Impf 2mp (inv force) of כִּסַּס, compute. The verb is a hapax legomenon; the noun form used earlier in the verse is used one other place, Leviticus 27:23. Another derived noun, מְקָסָה, is used once, meaning <i>calculated amount</i> , that is, <i>tax</i> . Literally, the clause reads, "each one for the mouth of his eating you shall compute upon the lamb."

Comments: The reason for joining families to share a lamb is obvious from verse 10: there are to be no leftovers.

Verse 5

5 שֶׁה תָּמִים זָכָר בְּוֶן־שָׁנָה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם מִן־הַכֹּבָשִׁים וּמִן־הָעִזִּים תִּקְחוּ:

It should be a perfect, male, year-old lamb. Take [the lamb] for yourselves from the sheep or goats.

Syntax and vocabulary:

תָּמִים	Complete, without flaw, perfect, spotless; whole, sound, healthful; blameless, innocent.
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Verse 46 and Numbers 9:12 adds the further qualification that none of its bones be broken, referred to by John (19:36) in connection with Christ's crucifixion.

An animal that was תמים was required for all burnt offerings, as in Leviticus 22:18-21: "If any of you...presents a gift for a burnt offering to the LORD,...¹⁹ you must present a **male without defect** from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf.²⁰ **Do not bring anything with a defect**, because it will not be accepted on your behalf.²¹ When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be **without defect or blemish** to be acceptable."

See also 1 Peter 1:18-19.

זָכָר	male
בֶּן־שָׁנָה	"Son of a year," year old
הַכֹּבֵשִׁים	Pl of כֹּבֵשׂ, <i>lamb</i> or <i>sheep</i> , that is, as opposed to a goat.
הָעִזִּים	BDB lists עִזָּ as meaning "she-goat." Since the lamb must be male, this is either a more general word referring to female or male goats or to "take from the she-goats" is referring to the mother of the lamb.

Discussion: What significance do each of the qualifications listed for the lamb have in regard to the celebration of the Passover? In reference to Christ?

Comments:

The qualifications for the lamb are similar to those listed for other types of sacrifices.

Keil and Delitsch: "As the lamb was intended as a sacrifice (v. 27), the characteristics were significant. Freedom from blemish and injury not only befitted the sacredness of the purpose to which they were devoted, but was a symbol of the moral integrity of the person represented by the sacrifice. It was to be a male, as taking the place of the male first-born of Israel; and a year old, because it was not till then that it reached the full, fresh, vigour of its life" (11).

The characteristics listed in verse five suggest the **perfection** of the sacrifice, its **value** and its **substitutionary nature**.

Verse 6

6 וְהָיָה לְכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת עַד אֶרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וְשָׁחֲטוּ
אֹתוֹ כָּל קְהַל עֵדֹת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים:

Let it [the lamb] be something to be kept until the 14th day of this month. Then they—the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel—should slaughter it at twilight.

Syntax and vocabulary:

לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת	ל with היה: "Let it serve as, let it be" מִשְׁמֶרֶת, from שָׁמַר, <i>keep, watch, guard, preservation</i> , can mean a guard, station, post, or watch, a keeping or preserving, a charge or injunction, or also a ceremonial office or function. The common thread of all these meanings is that all of them refer to <i>something to be kept</i> , whether a watch, post, charge, or duties of an office. For lack of a better English word, I retained <i>something to be kept</i> in my translation. The idea is that the lamb was to be singled out and watched over with special respect until the time of the sacrifice.
עַד	Until.
אַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר יוֹם	14 th day.

וְשַׁחֲטוּ	VCPf 3mp (jussive force) – Slaughter (for the purpose of sacrifice).
קָהַל	Construct form – Assembly, gathering.
עֵדָת	Congregation, assembly (also used inverse 3). The doubling of קָהַל עֵדָת serves to emphasize the כָּל : everybody in Israel was to do this.
בֵּין הָעֶרְבָּיִם	Literally, "between the evenings." Typically, this is translated as "twilight." For the "two evenings," some explain that the Jews thought of the late day in terms of two evenings, the first being the late afternoon, the second being the time when it got dark. Others suggest it was the time between sunset and dark. ³

Comments:

The word מִשְׁמֶרֶת reminded me of a story I had heard, I don't know where, that in some traditions, the lamb was treated during this time as if it were a family pet. It was central in the life of the family, the children played with it, and so forth. In this way, the value of the animal was emphasized, for the sacrifice was not only an animal from the flock with material value, but it also had emotional value attached.

Verse 27 confirms that the Passover is a sacrifice.

Verse 7

וְלָקְחוּ מִן־הַדָּם וְנָתְנוּ עַל־שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וְעַל־הַמַּשְׁקוּף
עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר־יֹאכְלוּ אֹתוֹ בָּהֶם:

Let them take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and lintel of the houses where you eat it [the lamb].

Syntax and vocabulary:

וְלָקְחוּ	VCPf 3Pl (jussive force). The subject refers back to the congregation of Israel in verse 6.
מִן־הַדָּם	"Take from the blood," that is, take some of it. Leviticus 17:31 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Hebrews 9:22 The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Again, also see 1 Peter 1:18-19 .
וְנָתְנוּ	VCPf 3Pl (jussive force). "Give it," that is, place it or put it. Verse 22 adds more detail: "Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning."
שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת	The two doorposts.
הַמַּשְׁקוּף	The lintel, the top part of the doorframe. So the blood was put on every part of the doorframe.
אֲשֶׁר...בָּהֶם	"In which." The pronoun clarifies the use of the relative אֲשֶׁר. Each house in which the Passover meal was eaten was to have the blood on the door.
יֹאכְלוּ	Qal Impf 3s of אָכַל, eat.

³ See, for example, Cole 106, Keil & Delitsch 12.

Comments:

The shedding of blood emphasizes the sacrificial nature of the Passover. The difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians was not that the Israelites were superior in any way (cf Deuteronomy 7:7, 9:4) to the Egyptians. The difference was that the blood of the lamb covered them.

Verse 8

8 וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־הַבֶּשֶׂר בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה צְלִי־אֵשׁ וּמִצּוֹת עַל־מֶרְרִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ:

Let them eat the meat on that night, fire-roasted, and they should eat it [with] unleavened loaves on bitter herbs.

Syntax and vocabulary:

אֶת־הַבֶּשֶׂר	Flesh, with direct object marker.
צְלִי־אֵשׁ	צְלִי, <i>roasted</i> is an adjective from צָלָה, <i>roast</i> . "Roasted of fire" = fire-roasted.
וּמִצּוֹת	Plural of מִצָּה, (<i>a piece of</i>) <i>unleavened bread</i> . You either have to supply <i>with</i> , or take it as a second direct object. Deuteronomy 16:3 Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt.
עַל־מֶרְרִים	The noun refers to bitter herbs in general, not a specific plant. The על indicates that the meal is to be served "on a bed of bitter herbs," as a meat dish may be served on top of a salad or pasta.
יֹאכְלֶהוּ	Impf 3 pl with 3m suffix, referring to the lamb.

Discussion: What is the symbolism of the bitter herbs?

Comments:

Yeast is often used as a symbol of impurity. Only a small amount is required to affect the entire loaf. In instructing the Corinthians to excommunicate the man practicing incest, he says, "Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

So the one who truly removes our "yeast" is Christ.

Jesus also says, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6).

Verse 9

9 אַל־תֹּאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ נָא וּבִשְׁלַל מִבֶּשֶׂל בְּמַיִם כִּי אִם־צְלִי־אֵשׁ
רֹאשׁוֹ עַל־כַּרְעָיו וְעַל־קַרְבּוֹ:

Do not eat it raw or cooked boiled in water, but only fire-roasted, its head on its legs and inner parts.

Syntax and vocabulary:

אַל־תֹּאכְ	Qal 2 nd Impf prohibition.
מִמֶּנּוּ	מֶנְּ with 3 sg suffix, referring to the lamb.

נָא	Raw. A hapax legomenon.
בָּשֵׁל	Adjective meaning "boiled."
מִבְּשֵׁל	Pual participle from בָּשֵׁל, <i>boil</i> Clarifies the adjective.
כִּי אִם	But, but rather, but only. Either limits the preceding clause (<i>unless, except</i>) or contradicts it, as in this verse.
כַּרְעָיו	Legs.
קַרְבּוֹ	Inner part, middle, entrails.

Discussion: Why was the lamb only to be fire-roasted, not boiled or raw?

Comments:

Keil and Delitsch suggest that the reason for prohibiting boiling was that boiling would have destroyed the wholeness of the animal. Most likely it would have to be torn apart to boil it in a pot, and the process of boiling would dissolve the meat to some degree. The importance of the animal remaining whole may be seen as part of the commandment to keep the lamb תָּמִים. Keil and Delitsch also assert that the lamb was to be eaten whole because it was a communion meal: "Through the unity and integrity of the lamb given them to eat, the participants were to be joined into an undivided unity and fellowship with the Lord, who had provided them with the meal." "The sacrificial lamb to be eaten was to be thoroughly and perfectly whole, and at the time of eating was to appear as a perfect whole, and therefore as one.... There was no other reason for this, than that all who took part in this one whole animal, i.e. all who ate of it, should look upon themselves as one whole, one community, like those who eat the New Testament Passover, the body of Christ (1 Cor 5:7), of whom the apostle says (1 Cor 10:17), 'There is one bread, and so we, being many, are one body: for we are all partakers of one body.'"

Verse 10

10 וְלֹא־תִירֶוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר וְהַנֶּתֶר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹפוּ:

Do not keep any left over from it until morning. What is left over from it until morning burn in the fire.

Syntax and vocabulary:

לֹא־תִירֶוּ	Hifil 2pl impf prohibition of יָתַר, <i>remain over, be left</i> , hifil <i>leave leftovers</i> . Exodus 23:18 The fit of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning.
הַנֶּתֶר	Nifal participle from יָתַר, <i>what is left over</i> . It is at the beginning of the clause, an emphatic position.
תִּשְׂרֹפוּ	Qal impf 2pl (jussive force) of שָׂרַף, <i>burn</i> .

Discussion: Is there any significance in the difference in the prohibition in this verse (לֹא + impf) and the one in verse 9 (לֹא + impf)?

Comments: The burning of the animal was most likely commanded in connection with keeping the animal whole. The whole animal was to be eaten.

Verse 11

11 וְכָכָה תֹאכְלוּ אֹתוֹ מִתְּנִיכֶם הַגְּרִים נֹעְלֵיכֶם פְּרִגְלֵיכֶם וּמִקְלָכֶם

בְּיָדְכֶם וְאַכְלֶתֶם אֹתוֹ בְּחֶפְזוֹן פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה:

Eat it like this: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. Eat it in a hurry. It is the LORD'S Passover.

Syntax and vocabulary:

כֹּה	Thus, this way; equivalent to כֹּה.
מִתְנַיִם	<i>Loins</i> , with 2 pl suffix. The area where the girdle is put on ("gird your loins"); also where the sword, etc. were strapped on.
חָגְרִים	Qal passive participle of חָגַר, <i>gird on</i> .
נְעָלֵיכֶם	<i>Sandals</i> , with 2 pl suffix.
כֹּה	Thus, this way; equivalent to כֹּה.
בְּרַגְלֵיכֶם	Feet.
וּמִקְלָכֶם	Staff.
וְאַכְלֶתֶם	VCPf 2 pl (jussive force)
בְּחֶפְזוֹן	Hurried flight. The word is used three times; it is used in the same context in Deuteronomy 16:3. This word summarizes and explains the first part of the verse. The obvious implication is that it's going to be time to leave soon.
פֶּסַח	<i>Passover</i> . See verse 13 for discussion of the vocable meaning of the verb form and significance of the term.
לַיהוָה	The ל could indicate advantage (Passover for the LORD), dative idea (Passover [sacrifice] offered to the LORD, or possession (the LORD'S Passover).

Discussion: What is the antecedent of הוּא in "It is the LORD'S Passover?"

- Options:
- The lamb
 - The entire celebration
 - Impersonal (as in, "It is Christmas," or "It is raining.")

Comments:

The lamb has been the antecedent of the object or subject going back to verse 5. It would seem best to keep it as the antecedent unless there is compelling reason to do otherwise. The word פֶּסַח is often used of the entire celebration, sometimes including the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread, and it could possibly be used that way here. But פֶּסַח is also used of the victim itself.⁴ In verse 27, the phrase is "It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD" (וְזִבַח־פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה); however, here the antecedent is הַעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת, *this service*.

The historical significance of this question is that during the debates on the Lord's Supper, Ulrich Zwingli used this passage as proof that it can mean represents. The problem was, as he says, "There still remained the most difficult undertaking of furnishing illustrations not connected with a parable."⁵ The passage was suggested to Zwingli, he says, by a messenger in a dream. Zwingli's interpretation of the verse would then be, "The lamb represents the LORD'S act of passing over your houses." Luther opposed this argument by arguing that the phrase is impersonal. It is important to note, however, that even if we agree that "the lamb" is the antecedent of הוּא, this does not by any means provide Zwingli's

⁴ Brown-Driver-Briggs 820.

⁵ Quoted in Pieper 333.

illustration. It is unclear how the lamb could possibly represent the Lord's act of passing over. If פסח is used in the same sense as in verse 27, *Passover-sacrifice*, it is no trouble understanding the phrase, "the lamb is a Passover-sacrifice to the LORD." But even if with Zwingli we take as the Lord's act of passing over the Israelites, it does not provide an argument that *is* equals *represents*, but an argument for the sacramental value of the Passover. F. Pieper explains:

The expression "The paschal lamb is the (sparing) passing over of the Lord" is then analogical to John 11:25: "Christ is the Resurrection and the Life." Christ does not signify the Resurrection and the Life, He actually is the Resurrection and the Life. In Christ, or wherever Christ is, there is resurrection and life for men so that whoever believes in Christ lives and does not die. Thus in Exodus 12:11 we would have the declaration: The paschal lamb is the sparing, or passover, of the Lord. The sense then would be: In the paschal lamb there was present for the Children of Israel sparing, exemption from God's righteous judgment, so that when God saw the blood of the paschal lamb on the huts of the Israelites, He passed by with His vindictive judgment.⁶

Thus, several interpretations of the verse are possible, but none of them take us where Zwingli wanted to go with it. A key question to ask may be, "How does this phrase fit in with the first part of the verse?"

Verse 12

12 וְעָבַרְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה וְהִכִּיתִי כָל-בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם וְעַד-בְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים אֲנִי יְהוָה:

I will go through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt from man to beast. On all the gods of Egypt I will perform judgments. I am the LORD!

Syntax and vocabulary:

וְעָבַרְתִּי	Qal 1 sg VC Perfect – pass over, through, by; cross (This is not the same word which the name "Passover" refers to).
וְהִכִּיתִי	Hifil 1 sg VC Perfect from נָכָה, <i>to strike</i> or <i>hit</i> (used in hifil), often in the sense of <i>strike down</i> or <i>kill</i> . Exodus 11:5 confirms that the Lord will strike with death when it states that every firstborn will die.
בְּכוֹר	Firstborn.
וְעַד-בְּהֵמָה	Animals were also included in the plague on the firstborn.
אֶעֱשֶׂה	Qal 1 sg Impf.
שְׁפָטִים	Judgments. The plural perhaps indicates that each death was an act of judgment against the gods of that house, showing that there is only one God who saves from death.
אֲנִי יְהוָה	In the Passover, the LORD is showing that he is the only true God. Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols." Isaiah 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. Isaiah 43:11 I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.

Comments:

In the Passover, we see God acting in judgment and in mercy. He is the only true God; He is the God of Law and Gospel; He is the God who punishes sin and forgives sin; He is the God of absolute constancy and absolute independence. This is what God's name, the LORD (Yahweh or Jehovah - "He Is") brings to mind. On the Passover night, we see this God in action.

⁶ Pieper 334 footnote.

Verse 13

13 וְהָיָה הַדָּם לְכֶם לְאֵת עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם שָׁם וְרָאִיתִי אֶת־הַדָּם
וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם וְלֹא־יְהִיָּה בְכֶם נֶגֶף לְמִשְׁחִית בְּהַכְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

The blood will serve as a sign for you on the houses where you are: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there will be no destroying blow among you when I strike down in the land of Egypt.

Syntax and vocabulary:

וְהָיָה...לְאֵת	וְהָיָה + ל = "to be, serve as." אֵת is a sign or pledge. God says "a sign to <i>you</i> ," that is, God doesn't need a visible mark to know which houses are his or not, but the blood on the door is a pledge from God to the people living in that house that no death or destruction will touch that house.
הַדָּם	See the comments on verse 7 for the atoning value of the lifeblood, pointing to the atoning blood of Christ, shed on the cross.
וְרָאִיתִי	Qal 1 sg VC Perfect. The vav probably has a temporal force ("When I see..."). It could possibly show that the clause modifies <i>sign</i> (a sign <i>that</i> I will see the blood and pass over...).
וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם	Qal 1 sg VC Perfect from פָּסַח, to <i>pass over</i> , always used with עַל. I have always understood the <i>passing over</i> in the sense that God would see the blood and <i>skip</i> that house or <i>pass it by</i> . The word seems to have a different connotation, however. The verb is only used in this section in the same context except for one other place. In Isaiah 31:5, it is used as an infinitive absolute: "Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will ' <i>pass over</i> ' it and will rescue it." Here it is clearly parallel with the idea of shielding. Perhaps a better understanding would be that the Lord would pass over the house in the sense of a protecting covering. Thus the blood covering the doorframe on the house was God's sign that he himself would be covering the entire house, protecting those within from death. ⁷
נֶגֶף	Blow; plague. The word is used for some of the ten plagues. The root of the word means to strike or smite (but not the same word used above, נָכָה).
לְמִשְׁחִית	Destruction, from the verb שָׁחַת, to <i>go to ruin</i> . It is impersonal, rather than personal, as it is sometimes translated "destroyer." ⁸
בְּהַכְתִּי	Hifil infinitive construct with 1s suffix from נָכָה, to <i>strike</i> (see verse 12). The בּ is temporal, "when I strike" (literally, "in my striking").

Discussion: Is it proper to speak of the Passover as a sacrament? What about other Old Testament sacrifices for sin?

Comments:

The three marks of a sacrament are that it is 1) Instituted by Christ, 2) has an earthly element, and 3) gives the forgiveness of sins. The first requirement is met in the case of the Passover, which the LORD commanded. The second is clearly met in the blood of the lamb. But does God promise the forgiveness of sins in the Passover? As far as I know, the Bible never explicitly connects the Passover with the forgiveness of sins. Yet, the promise of forgiveness may certainly be seen as implicit in the Passover, first because the Passover is described as a *sacrifice* (verse 27). Furthermore, the Passover sacrifice delivers from death. How else does the Lord make us his own and deliver us from death except by forgiving our sins through the blood of the Lamb?

⁷ Cf. Edersheim II, Chapter 7, 79.

⁸ Keil and Delitsch 19.

F. Pieper: Ex 12:21ff shows that the Children of Israel were exempted from the punitive judgment of God not because they were Jews, but because of the blood of the paschal lamb.... Both through the Word about the coming Messiah and through circumcision and the Passover, the Sacraments of the Old Testament, the remission of sins was given and, by the believers, appropriated.⁹

Keil and Delitsch: In the meal the sacrificium became a sacramentum, the flesh of the sacrifice a means of grace, by which the Lord adopted his spared and redeemed people into the fellowship of his house, and gave them food for the refreshing of their souls.¹⁰

Verse 14

14 וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן וְחֻמָּתָם אֲתוֹ חַג לַיהוָה לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻמָּת עוֹלָם תִּקְהָהוּ:

This day will serve as a memorial for you. Observe it as a holy day to the Lord for [all] your generations. Observe it as a lasting statute.

Syntax and vocabulary:

לְזִכְרוֹן	A memorial day or object. When Christ instituted the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal, he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The word used here in the New Testament, however, is different than the Greek word used in the Septuagint translation of this passage.
וְחֻמָּתָם	Qal VC Perfect 2 pl of חָגַג, to celebrate, observe, or keep [a festival].
חַג	Festival, holy day. Used as a predicate accusative.
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם	"For your generations," that is, each generation should continue celebrating the Passover.
חֻמָּת	Something prescribed, a statute.
עוֹלָם	Unbounded time, from this time forward. Since the Passover is a shadow and the reality is found in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17, 1 Corinthians 5:7), the Passover is no longer a statute for the New Testament Church.
תִּקְהָהוּ	Qal 2s Imperfect of חָגַג, to celebrate, observe, or keep [a festival].

Discussion: In what ways does the Passover point forward to the sacrifice of Christ?

Comments:

The Passover	Christ
"Let each man take for himself a lamb..."	"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" – John 1:29
"...without defect (תָּמִים)..."	"...a lamb without blemish or defect" – 1 Peter 1:18 "the blood of Christ, who...offered himself unblemished to God" – Hebrews 9:14 "Not one of his bones will be broken." – John 19:35
"slaughter it" ... "the Passover sacrifice" (v. 27)	"Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." – Ephesians 5:2
"Take some of the blood... When I see the blood ..."	"You were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ." – 1 Peter 2:18 "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin." – 1

⁹ Pieper III, 214.

¹⁰ Page 20.

"You were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers...with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect."

¹¹ Adapted from Wendland 73-74.

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