

Exodus Chapters Thirteen & Fourteen
Consecration of the firstborn & the crossing of the Red Sea

Read 13:1-16

v. 1 – 2 – *Consecrate* means to sanctify, sacrifice or set apart (i.e., *make holy*) a thing or person from all secular purposes and devote that thing to God. The people and animals consecrated to God were to be committed to religious service.

Jesus, Mary's firstborn, was presented to the Lord in accordance with this law. Read Luke 2:7; 22-23

v.3 – God wants His children to remember His loving acts of kindness and provision – not for His ego, but for our own good. Have you ever noticed the tassels that Orthodox Jewish men wear? Read Numbers 15:39-41

v.11-16 – Observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to begin when they reached the Promised Land. By then a reminder of God's deliverance would be needed. These observances would continually remind them of their duty to love and serve the Lord. We are to do the same through baptism and observance of the Lord's Supper.

v.13 – On that night in which the Lord had the Israelites escape Egypt, He spared the oldest son of every house marked with blood. Because God spared them, He had a rightful claim to them. God commanded them to redeem (or buy back) their donkeys (beasts of burden) and sons. "Break its neck": animals were consecrated by their death; humans were consecrated by their life. A lamb was offered as a substitute to redeem the firstborn from God.

v. 14-16 "When your son asks you..." The strangeness of the practice would invite questions from children "why," and prompt parents to explain God's goodness to their children. The reminders on their foreheads and hands were small strips of cloth upon which scripture had been written, bound to their forehead inside small boxes called "phylacteries."

We are quick to forget what God has done and what He has shown us. God commands us to take action to remember. Can you think of some ways you can remember the faithfulness God has shown you?

Read 13:17-22

V.17-18 - It would have been easy for the Israelites to think that the shorter route was best. But the dangers of the way were too great, and they were not mature enough in their faith to meet them. By sending them the long way, God provided them with time to grow.

Read 14:1-12

Notice the fear of the Israelites when faced with their first trial. God was right, in 13:17, to perceive the fragility of their faith. This was the first of their grumblings, and not the last. God would have to teach them to trust and obey Him. How?

Read 14:13-18

v. 13 – Moses didn't know what God had in mind, but he knew God would save His people. Consider the faith of Moses now, compared to when he was first called by God from the burning bush. What has happened to cause this change?

v.15-18 – Moses had told the people to "stand." God corrects him, telling him to tell the people to "move forward." Sometimes faith is more than praying for deliverance; we need to trust God enough to "step out in faith."

Read 14:19-31

v.26 - By instructing Moses to lift his arms and staff, God was allowing Moses to be the agent of this miracle, and to be seen by the people as such. Why? Compare this to Matthew 10:1, 8.

Whether God is performing obvious miracles like parting the Red Sea, or feeding the hungry, God delights in using his children to take part in His miraculous works. Are there miraculous works of God yet to be done in our own families and communities because we have neglected to step forward and "stretch out our hand"?

v.31 – The people were convinced by the influence of Jehovah that his power was unlimited, and that He could do whatever He pleased, both in the way of judgment and in the way of mercy. Read Psalm 71:17-20

This, then, was the first trial of the Israelites, and by His deliverance, He began to teach them to trust Him.