

Exodus 12:1-14ⁱⁱ

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

ii About Exodus 12:1-14

Today's reading interrupts the narrative flow of the exodus story to give the community detailed instructions for celebrating the Passover. This meal is to be an annual memorial recalling the pivotal experience of the community's rescue by Yahweh from their slavery in Egypt.

Celebrating the Passover ritual makes the exodus experience present to each generation, who in turn must attune their lives to the covenantal responsibilities that emerged from their relationship with Yahweh. Situated at the start of their year, the Passover ensures that each year will be consecrated by the memory of the community's founding experience of liberation.

The reading also connects several important themes: the household, the sacrificial lamb, rescue through blood and the dual character of Yahweh whose presence in our world always means first the judgment of evil and then the rescue of those who cry out for help.