

until the Israelites were assembled at Mount Sinai.

In preparation for Israel's deliverance God's relationship with the entire nation was vividly brought into the experience of every Israelite. The whole community of Israel was instructed through Moses and Aaron to prepare for the Exodus. For each household a lamb was to be slaughtered, putting the blood on the door frames and roasting the meat for a meal before departing from Egypt. The blood applied to the door frames provided divine assurance that God's judgment upon the Egyptians in the death of the firstborn would not be meted out to the Israelites. Simple was the promise that "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod 12:13).

What did this offering mean to the Israelites as they followed the simple instructions to bring this sacrifice? It was not an ordinary sacrifice brought to an altar in a worship ritual. When the Israelites were given these instructions for observing this first passover the response of the people was that they "bowed down and worshipped" (Exod 12:27).

Unlike the prescriptions for the sin offering and other kinds of sacrifices delineated in the Sinaitic revelation, the entire lamb was to be eaten that night before they left Egypt. Unlike the blood that was later applied at the sanctuary in purifying the altar as they approached God in worship, the blood of this passover sacrifice was applied to the doorframes of their houses. It was in the houses where the blood was applied that they were assured divine protection as they awaited the slaying of the firstborn in every Egyptian home as well as among the animals. In this sense the blood of the passover sacrifice was given as a substitute representing a life laid down (cf. Lev 17:11). Although there were no instructions in the Exodus context concerning expiation for sin the Israelites must have been keenly aware of the fact that the blood of the sacrifice applied to the door-frames of their houses provided life for them during the night of divine judgment.

Vitally important for the Israelites were two elements in this passover sacrifice: the blood of the lamb shed for them provided life and the roast lamb provided physical sustenance for them to march out of Egypt to freedom as a nation.

The focus upon the firstborn in the execution of judgment upon the Egyptians who enslaved them must have made the Israelites keenly aware of God's claim announced previously through Moses and Aaron that "Israel is my firstborn son" (cf. Exod 4:22-23, 29-31). As they observed the passover sacrifice and realized that their firstborn sons were not subject to divine judgment the Israelites were instructed to consecrate every firstborn son to God (Exod 13:1-16). This offering for each firstborn would be a continual reminder that the firstborn in Israel had been spared in the historic deliverance of Israel when judgment was executed upon the Egyptians who had enslaved them.

With the parting words of the pharaoh. "Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take you flocks and herds, as you have said, and go" (Exod 12:31-32), the Israelites departed in haste as the Egyptians urged them to leave. En route the Israelites became realistically aware of their relationship with God. Uniquely God's presence was manifested in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night providing divine guidance and