

# West Palm Beach, Florida

# "The City of Parks"

## The Story of Passover

(Continued from Page 18)

it became a serpent. The Lord commanded him to take it by the tail. He did so, and it became a rod in his hand again. The Lord told him to put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it from his bosom, and it was leprous; but when he put it back in his bosom, it became as always. "This," said the Lord, "will be your proof to the people that I have commanded you, and they will harken your voice."

Then, Moses said, "I am slow of speech and stutter."

The Lord said to Moses, "Take your brother Aaron to speak for you."

Moses took his wife and his two sons and went to Egypt, where he gathered the elders of Israel and went before pharaoh. He told him, that the God of Israel had commanded him to let the people of Israel go into the wilderness, to have a feast and sacrifice to the Lord.

Pharaoh said, "I do not know this God of Israel. I will not harken to his voice and will not let his people go." And, he tightened his grip on the Israelites and made them work even harder.

God sent through Moses ten plagues upon Egypt. Each one was more severe than the one preceding it, but Pharaoh would not

harken to the voice of God, through Moses, and he would not free the Israelites. When the plague befell the pharaoh himself, he promised to let the Israelites go. When Moses removed the plague, however, he would not let them go. Thus, it was throughout all of the nine plagues.

Before the tenth plague was administered, God sent Moses before the pharaoh once more and told him to let the Israelites go, or God would smite the Egyptians with a most fearful plague. He would kill all the first born sons, even the first born males of the cattle, and even the Crown Prince, who is supposed to inherit the throne of the pharaoh. But, the pharaoh would not harken unto His voice, and he would not let the people go.

Moses gathered all the elders of Israel and told them, that every family should kill a lamb, and with the lamb's blood, they should paint the posts of the doors of the Hebrew homes. This would be a sign to the Lord, that these were Hebrew homes, so that He would not smite their first born males, as He would do to the first born males of the Egyptians. No Israelite was to leave his home that night.

So, it was, that at midnight, God smote all the first born males in Egypt. There was a great cry throughout the land, to let the Hebrews go, for the Egyptians feared that they would all surely die.

The pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and he told them to take their people and go, because there was not an Egyptian house free of death. Therefore, they took their

wives, their children, their flocks, their gold, their silver, and their other riches that they had borrowed from the Egyptians, and they left Egypt. The people took with them their dough, which had not been leavened; they bound it up in their clothes and put it on their shoulders. The sun baked unleavened cakes of the dough. This occurred, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry to finish their bread.

Somewhat later, the pharaoh became sorry that he had let all the slaves, who had built his cities and worked his fields, go. He took his best men and sixty chosen chariots of Egypt, along with captains for all of the chariots, and he pursued the Israelites, to wage war and bring them back to Egypt.

When the Israelites saw the pharaoh, they became frightened and accused Moses of bringing them there to die. Moses told them, that God was with them, and they would witness a miracle that day that had not been seen before. Moses lifted his staff and struck it upon the sea; and the sea was divided, so that the Israelites could pass over it onto dry land. Then, the Egyptians followed them into the sea, and Moses raised his staff and struck it upon the sea once more. And, again, the waters were joined. All of the Egyptians and their horses were drowned that day.

The Israelites had come into Egypt with but seventy souls. They departed with 600,000. They were in Egypt for 430 years. When they left, they took with them Joseph's bones, as he had asked them to do.

God then proclaimed an ordinance, through Moses, to the Israelites, that Passover would begin on the fourteenth day of Nisan, in the evening. For seven days, only unleavened bread would be eaten. Leavened bread, or anything resembling it, should not be found in the Jewish home. Instead of the Passover sacrifice, as it was in the days of old, the Jews celebrate with the Seder, during the first night in Israel, and during the first two consecutive nights, in all other lands.

The Seder is a ritual, observed in almost every Jewish home. The entire family gathers at a festival table, and the head of the household recites the history of Jacob and his coming to Egypt, the trying times of our predecessors, and all of the miracles that God performed until the time that they were freed. At the Seder, unleavened bread and bitter herbs are eaten, and four glasses of wine are had by all. The youngest son asks his father the well-known four questions. The Seder is the most beautiful of Jewish customs.

On the first two days, and on the last two days, no work of any manner may be done. The four remaining days are half holidays. During the eight days, Jews go to synagogues and recite special prayers. (Only in Israel is Passover celebrated for seven days.)

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