

A Living Relationship

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[0 : 0 0] As we continue in our progress through this section of Exodus, looking at the chapters 11 to 20, we come into this 13th chapter.

We saw how in chapter 12 the Lord visited Egypt with the plague upon the firstborn and brought the Israelites out from under the power of the Egyptians.

Technically they're probably not out of Egypt itself yet. We can't actually say they're out of Egypt, but they're out of their state of bondage. Probably just on the borders now of the land of Egypt itself.

But out from under the control of Pharaoh and they have been redeemed and brought to this state of freedom thus far. So the previous chapter we had the Passover.

We had the people coming out as it were while it was still night and their median troughs bound up with them in their clothes so the bread was still unleavened. And that which had been in the first instance something of a symptom of the emergency and the sort of speed with which they were rushed out of Egypt.

[1 : 0 4] As now to become under God a remembrance. A reminder of the night in which they were delivered. So the Lord speak unto Moses saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn.

Whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast, it is mine. Now it might surprise us that the Lord includes the animals, the beasts of the field as well.

But if we look at chapter 12 at verse 29. We read it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. And the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat in the stronghold.

And the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon. And all the firstborn of cattle. Now where the authorised version uses cattle. It doesn't just mean cows.

It doesn't just mean that which is bovine. It means all livestock. It's a generic term for livestock. Whether goats or sheep or cattle or oxen or horses or whatever it might be.

[2 : 0 3] Livestock in general. Now the Israelites of course being slaves in Egypt. They probably didn't have vast flocks and herds to call their own. We would probably have to say that in the case of the beasts of the field.

It's unlikely that the Israelites had all their flocks and herds gathered with them in the house. Covered by the blood. And probably in that instance.

Whilst the human beings were protected by the mark of the blood on the door lintels and posts. The beasts in the field. The Lord simply made a distinction between those which were the Egyptians.

And those which were the Israelites. Now that's me speculating on that. You can't quote say oh yes the word of God teaches that. The word of God however definitely says that all the firstborn of cattle of the Egyptians died.

And for that reason in the same context. He claims all the firstborn of the Israelites livestock as his own. Every time a beast were to bring forth a calf or a lamb or a kid or whatever.

[3 : 12] That firstborn was to be offered up to the Lord. And if it was an unclean beast. Then it was to be redeemed or bought back either by a lamb or to be itself destroyed.

But not sacrificed. Because that which was unclean could not be sacrificed. So the claim upon the firstborn is to sanctify the firstborn.

After all God who is first and best should have the first and best of all that he gives us. Now this also perhaps explains a little bit.

It's always a curious kind of phrase we've got there in the book of Hebrews chapter 12 at verse 23. When it talks about the general assembly and church of the firstborn.

Which are written in heaven. And I always assume that well it says the firstborn because it means those who inherit. Because we inherit the kingdom the Lord has laid up for us.

[4 : 08] And that's because we are made as it were ordinarily firstborn. So that's why we inherit because it's the church of the firstborn. But remember that this is part of the letter to the Hebrews.

It is to a Jewish Christian audience. For whom there would also be this additional connotation of the firstborn. The firstborn throughout the children of Israel.

For those upon whom there was a legal imperative to redeem. You had to redeem with a sacrifice or the lamb or whatever.

The firstborn of your children. Now it specifies the firstborn males to be the Lord. But I think we would probably have to take it. Given the situation in Egypt. That whether the firstborn was male or female.

They would have to be presented to the Lord. And yes they would have to be redeemed. With a lamb, with a sacrifice. That which is the firstborn. Is by definition that which has to be redeemed.

[5 : 10] So I would suggest to you this is a sort of an additional angle. On Hebrews 12 to 23. That that which is a church of the firstborn. Is the church of the redeemed.

The firstborn always have to be redeemed. And it is a legal imperative. To redeem the firstborn. With a lamb.

No doubt if we look ahead. To verse 13. Every firstling of an ass. Now it only specifies donkeys there. But I think we have to take it. That every kind of unclean beast.

Is covered by it. If we look ahead to Numbers chapter 18. And verse 15. Where it says. Everything that openeth the matrix. In all flesh. Which they bring unto the Lord.

Whether it be of men or beasts. Shall be thine. Nevertheless the firstborn of man. Shall thou surely redeem. And the firstling of unclean beasts. Shall thou redeem.

[6 : 05] So anything that couldn't be offered. As a sacrifice. Was to be redeemed. Under no circumstances. Were human sacrifices to be made. The children of Israel.

Were not to sacrifice their firstborn. Unlike what the heathens did to Moloch. Making their children pass through the fire. And so on. They were always to be redeemed.

The firstborn must always be redeemed. Hence General Assembly. And Church of the Firstborn. In Hebrews chapter 12. Verse 23. We are the redeemed. We are redeemed.

Not only because we are those who are made in the image of God. And redeemed for that reason. But if you also notice. What kind of beasts had to be redeemed.

Those which were not fit for sacrifice. Because they were unclean. It is the unclean which must be redeemed.

[7 : 00] And the firstborn of man are by definition also unclean. Born and conceived in sin. And therefore we needs must have a redeemer.

We needs must be redeemed. We needs must be bought back. From the death that ought to be ours. Now that is true in a spiritual sense. But it is also showing a context here.

For the remembrance of their deliverance. From Egypt. If we see then. Going on to verse 3. Moses said unto the people. Remember this day. In which he came out from Egypt.

Out of the house of bondage. For by strength of hand. The Lord brought you out from this place. Now this is a phrase that we curse. Verse 3. Again at verse 14.

Again at verse 16. And also if you see. There at verse 9. Lord's law may be in thy mouth. For with a strong hand. The Lord brought thee out of Egypt.

[7 : 57] In other words. God exerted. His power. To deliver you. That's what Moses is taught. To remind the people here. It didn't happen by nature.

It didn't happen by accident. It didn't just sort of a. You know. A lot of various contingent events. That just happened to fall out. The way we did. So. You moseyed on out of Egypt. There was no way.

That Pharaoh was going to let. His slave population go. There was no way. That he. As a God. As he saw himself. Was going to bow to the God. Of the Hebrews.

There was absolutely. No way. That the Egyptians. Were going to let. The Israelites go. Left to themselves. God. Had to intervene.

And it is this. Divine. Deliberate. Intervention. Which is referred to here. With a strong hand. With strength of hand.

[8 : 52] The Lord. Brought you out. He delivered you. It's not nature. It is miracles. Of divine. And deliberate. And direct. Intervention here.

That the Lord is doing. Again. And again. And again. You've got the plague of blood. You know. Terns and Nile. And all the water is blood. Then you've got the frogs. You've got the flies.

You've got the lice. You've got the locusts. And so on. The plague upon the capital. The plague upon the hail and fire. Each of them. Terrifying in themselves. And economically disastrous.

And by the time you get to the plague of darkness. And the plague upon the first born. Egypt is just finished. Egypt is destroyed. And it is virtually out of this. Dark wilderness.

That the Israelites are brought out. To go into another wilderness. Of a different kind. That Egypt is destroyed. Behind it. That doesn't happen by magic.

[9 : 49] And it doesn't happen by nature. It happens because God. Exerted his power. To make sure. That his children. Were set free.

Now that is required. Likewise. With every soul. That is actually redeemed. Every soul. That is ever converted. It did not happen by nature.

It didn't happen. Just because. You happen to bump into another Christian. Who gave you a book. And you read it. The ooh. That's interesting. It didn't happen. Just by accident. If you were sitting in a church one day.

And somebody said something. That really. Penetrated your mind. You didn't just happen. To bump into somebody. Who witnessed to you. Or you read something. Or whatever. All of these things.

Will be stitches in the tapestry. Of what the Lord will have been bringing together. And when the Lord converts a soul. From death to life.

[10 : 44] It is because of miraculous. Divine. And deliberate intervention. When he saves you. If you are a saved soul. When he saves you.

He has to exert the power of heaven and earth. To do it. To pry his open. As it were. The jaws of hell. And reach down. And pluck you out. His own son.

Has to go to the cross. To shed his own divine blood. To die there. God the son. Dying on the cross. So that you might be saved.

This is strength of hand. This is the power of God. Being exerted. It is not nature. It is not accidental. It is not just.

You know. Contingencies. Or whatever. This is God. And therefore. You are entitled to pray for this. You are entitled to ask for this. Ask for the divine intervention.

[11 : 41] Ask for the Lord to intervene. In your life. And to save you. If you are not already saved. You can pray for it. And if you have been redeemed. You can pray that he will keep you. And continue to uphold you.

Because it is the Lord. Whose hand. Not only redeems. But keeps us. In his relationship. Verse 3. Verse 14. Verse 16.

Again implied there at verse 9. The Lord's strength of hand. It's needed. If this deliverance. Is going to work. So we read down.

Through the verses. How he brings them through. Into the land of the Canaanites. Hickites. Hickites. Hickites. Hickites. A land flowing with milk and honey. And he talks about. Teaching them to observe.

The feast of unleavened bread. After the Passover. Itself. The lamb has been slain. And they've all eaten of it. They're to carry on. Eating unleavened bread. For a week afterwards. There shall no unleavened bread.

[12 : 37] Be seen with thee. Nor shall there be leavened. Seen with thee. In all thy quarters. Now obviously. This would be an unusual. Dietary habit. But the rest of the year.

You're perfectly able. To eat ordinary bread. The rest of the year. You don't have to hunt. For the leaven in your house. And make sure. That there's none found it. Confine yourself. To unleavened bread.

For a week. So your children. Are bound to ask. Why are we doing it. Differently this way. You know. Why do we do this. Well they're right there. If they want to say. Well why do you have turkey. At Christmas. Well nobody can probably tell.

It's just a sort of tradition. But the Lord is saying. That when it comes to unleavened bread. And you've got to be able to tell them. Why it happens. Thou shalt show thy son.

Verse 8. And that they're saying. This is done. Because of that which the Lord did unto me. When I came forth out of Egypt. It shall be for a sign unto thee. Upon my hand.

[13 : 31] And for a memorial between my hands. That the Lord's law may be in my mouth. With a strong hand. The Lord brought thee out of Egypt. And so on. And again this idea of teaching your children.

What is needful. Is there at verse 14. It shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come. This is about offering the sacrifice. To redeem the firstborn. What is this.

That thou shalt say unto him. By strength of hand. The Lord brought us out from Egypt. From the house of bondage. And so on. So these two things. The remembrance. With the feast of unleavened bread.

And the redeeming of the firstborn. And they're all bound up. With this deliverance from Egypt. It's all focused really. On the remembrance. And sort of reenactment almost.

Of the same event. Because this event. Of the deliverance. Of the exodus. It is what brings Israel. Into being as a nation.

[14 : 27] It is that which establishes. Their national. As opposed to mere familial. They were just a sort of extended family. Before that really grew and grew. Now they are a nation.

This relationship of the nation. With the Lord. It is birthed. If you like. In the exodus. So they look back to it. They remember the unleavened bread.

They remember the redeeming. Of the firstborn. But. That's not going to happen. From generation to generation. By itself. They have to be taught.

And if we. If we say we. You know. These are like to experience. At that time. If we do not tell them. Moses might have said. You know. Then they will not know. They are not going to know.

By nature. They have to be taught. They have to be. Instructed. And it will be. No use. Just to say. Well we don't actually have to tell. We will just make sure. We don't eat leavened bread.

[15 : 22] We will just keep the unleavened bread. We will keep the sacrifices going. But we won't tell them. Why? Then probably for a generation or two. The practice would continue.

But it would become simply. A hollowed out observance. That people did. But nobody really knew. Why they did it. And eventually. It just.

It would just fall into a base. Let me give you an example. I mean. When I was growing up. My parents would still. Not be chuffed. If I went off to play football. With my friends.

Or whatever. On the Lord's sake. And they might say. Well you probably shouldn't. Really be doing that. My son. And they say. Well why not? I beat the church in the morning. Why not? And they couldn't give me a reason.

Just like my professor. One of my professors. Who was at university. Said that when he was a young boy. This is in mainland. Parish church. Aberdeenshire. Sort of thing. He was. Always never allowed.

[16 : 16] To go out and play. On the Lord's day. And he said. You know. It was just a tradition. That's what he said. Of course. It wasn't just a tradition. But nobody explained to him.

Why it was the case. That you should keep that day holy. Nobody explained to me. How it was that. Beyond going to church in the morning. You know. Why the day should be holy.

And so. What you had was. A mere society observance. It was sort of a dumb thing. You didn't really do it. But nobody really knew why. And so. The whole thing became a hollowed out shell.

With simply a human observance. That eventually. People thought. Well why should we bother. You know. It's just a society. So you know. We can just do what we like. Because nobody brought.

The Lord. Into it. To teach. This is how we honour. The Lord. Because the Lord. Teaches us these things. That's what. Why not. Comes into the equation.

[17 : 15] Why shouldn't we actually go and play like we do in other days. Why shouldn't we do the things we do on other days. Nobody was really ready to explain. What about. What it was about the Lord.

So people. Lost confidence. In the claims of the Lord. On their own lives. And if we lose confidence in the claims of the Lord.

In our own lives. On his day. And the other days of the week. And we do this practice. And we do that practice. Because of what God says. In his word. And if we lose confidence in that.

In the church. Then the rest of the world. Is not going to pay any heed to it. If we don't believe it. They're not going to believe it. And if we only believe it. In terms of. A human tradition.

We had it passed on to us. So we pass it on to others. Then. A mere human observance. Becomes. A dead weight. Because if the Lord.

[18 : 07] Is breathed in it. And through it. If it's about the Lord. And love for the Lord. It becomes a living thing. It becomes a thing. That is alive.

With his presence. And that which we delight in him. To do. It's why we would. We would seek to bring more and more. Of our lives. Under the teaching of his work.

If it's about the Lord. Then it's alive. If it's about the Lord. Then it is about the love. Of the Lord. If. We forget about the Lord. In it. And it says.

Well this is something we do. Then it becomes a mere observance. It becomes what society does. It becomes what man does. And so if the life. And the love of the Lord. Isn't in it.

Then if the life isn't there. There's only deadness. Now a dead weight. Is a very heavy burden to bear. Once many years ago. I was visiting a gentleman in the hospital.

[19 : 00] In my then congregation. He had begun to get. You know. Ill. And lose the weight. Of his. The use of his legs. Of it. He could still sort of walk a bit. But. But without.

He had to be really supported. What I didn't realize. At the time was. That he now needed. To be supported. By two people. As he walked. In fact. He could barely.

Walk at all. But he used to be able to. See. So when he said. I want to go up. Up to the corner. I said. Well come on. I'll help you up. And you put your arm. On my shoulder. And what I didn't realize.

Was. That he had become dependent. On being supported. By at least two people. So when I tried to take. You know. His arm on my shoulder. What I was supporting.

Was in fact. The weight of a man. Who had become. Inactive. Through being in hospital. Who had simply. Gained the weight. That you do. When you're not active. And was unable.

[19 : 53] To give any support. Himself. By the use of his legs. It became effectively. Like a dead weight. Like bearing the weight. Of a cross. And I just couldn't do it.

Because it was so heavy. You wouldn't believe. The weight. Of a human body. When it cannot. Assist you. With the use of its own legs. Or limbs.

Or whatever. So. It was just. I had to help him. Back down into his chair again. Because if it's not alive. Itself. Then the body. Is effectively. Like it is dead.

The weight. Is as though. It is dead. And so it is. Friends. This is an important point. This is what it becomes. When that. Which is meant to be about.

The living Lord. And his light. And his beauty. And his love for us. And the reason that he gives us. The laws. The commandments that he does. When that becomes.

[20 : 48] Mere. Hollowed out. Human institution. Then that's a dead weight. The life of the Lord. Isn't breathing through it. So it's just.

Human deadness. And that very quickly. Becomes just. Burdensome. And nobody wants to get it. Because nobody knows the reason why. We're doing it. Nobody knows the reason why.

We should keep these particular commandments. Or institutions. Or whatever anymore. And it just seems dead. It just seems restrictive. Because the Lord. Is in being breathed through it. Because.

We have ceased. To honour. And to recognise. And to become. As it were. Infused by. The claims. Of the Lord. Upon our lives.

And the claims of the Lord. Upon our lives. Bring those lives. Alive. They energise. Those lives. If we submit ourselves. To the Lord.

[21 : 44] It's like an injection. Of his life. And his power. And his joy. But if we don't. Then we're just. Bailing our own weight. And it's a dead weight.

Without the Lord. This is why then. It is so vital. That the Israelites. Not only observe. The unleavened bread. But teach their children. About. Why they do it.

About their deliverance. From Egypt. About the reason. They're alive. As a nation. Because the Lord. Brought us out. With his strength. Of his arm. It's why we redeem.

The firstborn. Because. Son. Or daughter. You wouldn't be here. If the Lord. Hadn't redeemed. Our firstborn. With the blood. Of the Passover. If he hadn't. Passed over us.

When he killed. The Egyptians. You'd be dead. Most of us. Would be dead. You wouldn't be here. And I'm so glad. Son. Dollar. Whatever it is. That you're here. And so. That's why.

[22 : 39] We remember. That's why. We keep. On redeeming. Our firstborn. To remember. That it's the Lord. Who delivered us. It's because of the Lord. That we are alive.

It is because of the Lord. We have our children. At all. It's because of the Lord. We exist. As a nation. And if the Lord. Is breathed through. And taught.

And his love. And the enthusiasm. Of the Lord. Is taught. Through these ordinances. Then it becomes. A living thing. That becomes. The heartbeat. And the pulse.

Of the nation. And that's what we've got here. Or that's what we've been encouraged. To do here. Although the observance. Of the Passover. And the feast of unleavened bread.

Is at this point. Simply that. Which is prospective. It is looking ahead. To when they come into the promised land. Verse 5.

[23 : 33] It shall be. When the Lord. Shall bring thee. Into the land. Of the Canaanites. And the Hittites. And the Ammonites. In other words. You're not necessarily. Called upon. To do it. While you're in the wilderness. Notice that.

There's not really. As far as I'm aware. Hoping to correction. Are not aware. Of any reference. To the Israelites. Keeping the Passover. While they're in the wilderness. But once they come.

Into the promised land. Joshua chapter 5. We read at verse 10. The children of Israel. Encamped in Gilgal. And kept the Passover. On the 14th day of the month.

At even. In the plains of Jericho. Now. That 14th day of the month. That is like. Four days. After the. Nationwide. Circumcision.

Of the people. Once they have crossed. The river. Now. That in itself. Is an act of faith. Because that would render. The entire nation. Very vulnerable. And helpless. If they were attacked.

[24 : 29] And it would take. An awful lot. More than four days. For the hearing process. To enable them. To be strong again. But this is an act of faith. Trust in the Lord. And so. They keep the Passover.

When they cross the Jordan. And enter into the promised land. And we read. They did eat of the old corn of the land. On the morrow. After the Passover. Unleavened cakes.

And parched corn. In the self same day. And the manna ceased. On the morrow. After they had eaten of the old corn of the land. Once they were in the promised land. They kept the Passover.

And the manna ceased. Now we haven't come to the manna yet. In Exodus. But we will come to that. But it's the. It's the recognition. That this is what the Lord says. This is what you've got to keep.

When the time comes. But for now. You're not in a position to do it. But I'm telling you now. So that when it happens. You'll remember that I taught you this. Now Jesus did the same thing of course.

[25 : 23] He said to his disciples. Look I'm telling you this now. You won't understand it yet. But you'll come to understand it. It's like maybe if a child is going off away.

On a trip or whatever. Or maybe they're going. You know. Boarding school. Or something like that. I don't know. But for a long period of time. And mother very carefully. Packs all the things that she knows. They're going to need.

You know. Extra socks. And you know. Extra lunches. Or whatever it may be. And they think. Oh I'm not going to need that. I'm not going to need that. I'm fine. My mum will be fine. I'll just take my. I'll take my football.

And I'll take one pair of shoes. Or whatever it is. And I'll be fine. She knows all the things he's going to need. He doesn't know. But once he gets there. As the time goes on. He unpacks it.

Oh actually this is quite useful. I'm glad she packed this up. This is a helpful thing. Do you? Because it's packed. Just now. Because she knows. It's going to be needed. And the Lord tells his disciples.

[26 : 17] The things he does. Knowing they don't yet understand. But that when the Holy Spirit is given to them. After Pentecost. He will then remind them.

Of all the things Jesus has taught. So Moses is giving this instruction. To the Israelites just now. Knowing that. It won't actually. Be something they do.

Until they come in. To the promised land. But here's a thought. Here's a little thought in passing. Moses remember. Dias on the east side of the ground. He never crosses the river with them.

He never comes into the western side. Of the promised land. So in other words. Moses never actually eats. The Passover. With the children of Israel.

Ever again. That's quite a solemn thought. He's giving them the instructions about it. But 40 years down the line. They still haven't done it. And he doesn't partake of it with them. But.

[27 : 12] He gives them what they need. For looking ahead. But. Our responsibility. His responsibility. Is to tell them. And to keep it. Before them. So that it's.

The Lord. Breathing through. These institutions. And so we see. At verse 9. And at verse 14. Also. So these. And 16. I beg your pardon. That these things. Will be.

As. As a sign. Upon thy hand. And from a memorial. Between thy eyes. That the Lord's law. May be in thy mouth. Now. Again. Talking about. How these things.

Go from being. A spiritual remembrance. To becoming. A mere. Man made thing. What's being. Referred to here. Is the unleavened bread.

And. The sacrifice. To redeem. The firstborn. These things. Are so important. Moses is saying. Or the Lord is saying. Through Moses. It will be like. Everything you do.

[28 : 05] With your hands and feet. Like every time. You stretch out your hand. As though it were a reminder. On your hand. Everything you do. Everything you see. Through your eyes. You are to be seeing it.

As though. Through the eyes. Of those. Redeemed. Those who the Lord. Has intervened. To save. A sign upon your hand. Frontlets between your eyes.

That the Lord's law. May be in thy mouth. So keep this ordinance. Again. Likewise. Verse 16. It shall be for a token upon my hand. For frontlets between my eyes.

Now. Sometimes people would say. Oh well. You know. That's. That's a reason. That they might. And occasionally Christians do this. They'll tattoo. A scriptural reference. Onto their hands.

Onto their hands. Onto their arms. To say. This person. I want to keep the Lord's word. Always before me. That's great. But if you're actually keeping the Lord's word. You would see. That.

[29 : 02] It says. Not to tattoo your flesh. And not to actually. Print any marks upon you. So although. Yes. It's a good intention. If you're actually obeying the Lord. You won't be doing it.

Merely with these physical things. Now in Jesus' day. The living. Breathing reality. Of that relationship. With the Lord. Had become.

To wither and die. Which is why you've got. In Matthew 23. At verse 5. He talks about the Pharisees. And those who have become hypocrites. He says.

All their works they do. For to be seen of men. They make broad their phylacteries. And enlarge the borders. Of their garments. Now what's a phylactery?

The word phylactery. Comes from a Greek word. Meaning safeguard. Or amulet. The root of the word. Means to guard. Or guardian. Or watcher.

[29 : 53] Or protector. And what did it come to mean. Was that. Rather than living out. The practice. Of having the Lord. Always to be in their minds.

And before their eyes. And in everything their hands did. Instead. They reduced it. To a human. Literalism. And so. The phylactery.

Was a small leather case. That would contain within it. Little bits of parchment. On which. Were. Traditionally. Inscribed. Four passages. Of the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Scriptures. Exodus 13. Verses 2 to 10. Which is part of our passage. Exodus 13. Verses 11 to 17. Likewise. Part of our passage.

Deuteronomy chapter 6. Verses 4 to 9. Which is known as the Shema. Because in Hebrew. It begins with the word Shema.

[30 : 47] Meaning to hear. Which is. Hear O Israel. The Lord our God. Is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God. With all thy heart and soul. And mind and strength. And again. Further on.

Then the same chapter. In Deuteronomy 6. Another passage as well. So these four. Were traditionally inscribed. In little bits of parchment. Were rolled up tight. And put in these little letter cases.

That were then tied. Onto the hand. And then put. On a little set of thing. Round the head. So that it was sort of. Between the eyes. On the forehead. And this then.

Was their way. Of saying. Look. The word of God. Is always be on my forehead. It's always on my hand. Look. But once you've reduced it. To a mere physical literalism. You no longer feel the obligation.

To put it into practice. It's not meant to be a dead. Literal. Human institution. It's meant to be a living reality.

[31 : 44] That guides whatever your hands and feet do. That affects how you view the world. That's what it means. As frankliners between your eyes. And as a sign and a token upon your hand.

It's to be a living thing. And that's what it means at verse 9. And again at verse 16. And that's what there's the danger. Of losing. You see. No amount of mere.

Outward observance. Will make the practice. Even of true religion. To be exciting. Or a living thing to us. It will just be. A human thing we do.

And it's a bit dead. And it's a bit boring. And my goodness. When will it ever be finished? But if it is about the Lord. Lord. Then it becomes exciting. In the same way.

As spending time with the one you love. Is exciting. Your heart's going faster. You're breathing in. As it were. Their presence. You can smell. Their perfume. Or scent.

[32 : 43] Or whatever it may be. You want to be. You want to be where they are. And it's like that with the Lord. When the Lord is in your heart. You delight. In the things of the Lord.

And mere binding it upon your hand. Or around your head. Is not the same thing. At all. So. Likewise. When the Lord. Is going to bring his people.

Out of Egypt. And into the promised land. He doesn't just do it. By a fast short cut. He knows. That it is more important. To establish. That relationship.

First. Says verse 17. Came to pass. When Pharaoh let the people go. God led them. Not through the way of the land. Of the Philistines. Although that was near. For God said.

Let's hear of it. Should the people repent. When they see war. And they return. Into Egypt. Where he led them about. By the way of the Red Sea. And so on. Now the Philistines. Were a warlike people.

[33 : 40] They were strong. They were militarized. They were ready to fight anyone. And the Israelites. Remember. Had been. Servile. They had been slaves.

For centuries now. They were not in a position. To take on anyone. Yet. Now of course. The time would come. When they would have to fight. Their battles. When they would have to fight.

Many big and strong armies. But before they could do that. They needed to have. Their relationship. With the Lord. Established. On a firm footing.

Before the people. Are ready to enter. Into battle. With their enemies. They have to. Make sure. They have to make sure. That matters. Must be settled.

Between themselves. And the Lord. That laws. Have to be given. Ordinances. Have to be instituted. Covenants. Have to be sealed. And all the relationship.

[34 : 34] Has to be ratified. And for that. They needed solitude. They needed. They needed the peace. If you like. They needed isolation. Of the wilderness.

When Jesus. Wanted to recharge. His batteries. After he'd been healing. People. And teaching. And was exhausted. He went away. Into a mountain. To pray. And he drew strength.

Again. From his father. In that isolation. Now Jesus. Of course. Thought his own disciples. That when they were to pray. They were to go into their closet. And shut the door. Get all the distractions.

And the noise. Away from you. And focus upon the Lord. Now this isn't just. An individual. During their quiet time. Or their prayer time. This is a whole nation. Who have drifted.

So far. From the Lord. That they effectively. Who don't really know him anymore. They can't go into battle. Just now. They can't face the Philistines. Just now. They need.

[35 : 29] No wilderness. They need the peace. They need the isolation. They need. To establish. That relationship. With the Lord. They need his laws.

They need his ordinances. They need his covenant. To be sealed. They need to get. That relationship. Onto its firm footing. Now you may remember. I think it's in Galatians.

Where Paul says. About his own. Conversion. When he says. That after he was first. Converted. He didn't consult. With anyone else. But rather. He went into Arabia.

First of all. We don't have any record. Of his time. In Arabia. But rather. He says. Now they went down. To Jerusalem. To them which were apostles. Before me. But I went into Arabia. And returned again.

To Damascus. That's probably about the space. After three years. I went up to Jerusalem. To see Peter. Now we don't have any record. Anyone else. Of those three years. In the desert. Or in Arabia.

[36 : 26] But he says. That's what he did. Why did he need to do that? Because he had been at enmity. With the Lord. For so long. And now. He needed to establish. That relationship.

On a right basis. And for that. He needs to focus. On the Lord. And on the Lord. Alone. Just like. You know. A married couple. Go off on honeymoon.

What's the purpose of the honeymoon? It was originally intended. To be a month. A moon. A full course. Of the moon. In which time. They would. They would drink. Sweetened mead.

And honey drinks. And so on. Hence the name. But the point is. They were intended. To have time. Just with each other. To get the relationship. Established.

To get to know each other. Just to spend time. One with another. Every relationship. Needs it. And your relationship. With the Lord. Certainly needs it. And Israel's relationship.

[37 : 20] With the Lord. Definitely needed it. You face the Philistines. Now. You'll be wiped out. You settle with the Lord. First of all. Be it in the wilderness. And you'll be strengthened.

Says they went up. Harnessed. That can be interpreted. In some. As. They went up. By fives. In groups of five. Five squadrons. Or five divisions. In their armies.

Perhaps. Or it could mean. That they were loaded down. With all their baggage. And all that they had. But the point is. That when they went. Into the wilderness. Those whom God brings.

In. To the wilderness. He will not. Leave there. But he will. Lead them through it. He will guide them about. To the springs of water.

He will provide for them. When there is no other provision. That's what God did. In the wilderness. That is what he did. With Israel. And that is what he will do. With you. And with me.

[38 : 16] If the Lord. Brings you. Into the wilderness. Then I guarantee you. In the fullness of time. He will bring you out again. And in the meantime.

Whilst you are in it. He will be in it. With you. And he will provide. Everything that you need. Because we read. The Lord went before them. By day.

In a pillar of cloud. To lead them out of way. And by night. In a pillar of fire. To give them light. Now it's likely. It's the same pillar. It's probably got this. This glow within.

This kind of. Orangey gold light. Coming out from it. Which by day. You probably don't see so clearly. All you see is the cloud. By night. When everything else is dark. And you can see the light.

A bit more clearly. You know. Sometimes you see the moon. A little sort of shell of it. Up there. By daylight. But once night time comes. It's really going brightly. It's really sort of a bright. Bright light.

[39 : 10] But you don't see the bright light. Until it's dark. And so the same pillar. Just looks like cloud. By day. But by night. The light in it. The internal light.

Shining out of it. To guide them. And to read them. Also. You remember how it says. In Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10. That those who were.

Were. Following. This cloud. Through the mountains. They were. Baptized. Into it. Now. A cloud. Of course. Is composed of what? Composed of moisture.

It's composed of. Of. Of. You know. That. That. That. That. That. That. That. That. Which. Is. Essentially. Water. The.

and they all get the same spiritual meat and so on. Now what does it mean they were baptised? Some commentators have suggested that the cloud was not only a pillar in one place but that it spread out over at its base the Israelite camp and that this would have the double effect not only of giving them a certain amount of as it were dew and moisture in a desert situation and this is probably what's meant by they were baptised by it the sort of moisture that settled upon them but it would also shade them to an extent.

[40 : 35] We think, well, what did they do? What did they live under? Well, they had tents! People who lived in a slave court where do they suddenly get all these tents from? You know, if they're going to have tents in the wilderness they have to make the tents.

If they're going to make the tents they've got to have material. All of this is going to take time. In the meantime, how do you shelter if you're out in the desert in the wilderness? That's the suggestion that the Lord sheltered them with this vapour of cloud that spread over the camp of the Israelites.

They were shaded from the worst excesses of the heat of the desert and they were likewise in a sense baptized in the moisture of the cloud that also guided them by fire, by light.

Whichever way we do it. Christ is there with us. Christ is the one that leads and guides us. His is the spiritual presence. The rock that went before them we read in 1 Corinthians 10 was Christ.

The Lord does not abandon his people. When he brings them into the wilderness he will bring them out again. And in the meantime he will bring them through it.

[41 : 42] But the thing that we must remember most of all out of this passage not just about unleavened bread not just about redeeming the firstborn is that if it is the Lord then it is alive with his love and his power.

If it is a mere tradition of men it will be deadly and heavy. Therefore what we must seek is not to sweep away everything the Lord has given us and all his commandments because they're so dreary but rather to see the spiritual and loving and life changing reality of what God has given in his word and how he intends it to be a living blessing relationship.

Remember what Jesus said think not that I have come to destroy the law and the prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill but until heaven and earth pass away one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

Now somebody who knew what the Pharisees were on about would say oh my goodness that is going to be so tedious so heavy not a jot not a tittle it's going to be absolutely crushing.

No it's not because it is all fulfilled in Christ. If your relationship is in Christ then all of these things are brought alive. All these things live and breathe and pulsate with the love of the Lord and you can tell your children and you can pass it on to generation after generation about how the Lord desires to live in the midst of his people and how he desires that his teachings and his commands should breathe with a life and the love of the Lord.

[43 : 30] If we make it about the Lord then he is the way through the wilderness he is the truth of his commands he is the life that he desires to give us. If we make it about us it's dead and it's deadly and it's a dead weight and it's just a burden that we want to sweep away.

The Lord is the life we of ourselves are just dead in regulations. There's the choice before us life and death blessing and cursing as Moses said later on at the end of Deuteronomy.

This is what he has said before them. Therefore choose life. Let us pray.