

Exodus 12:29-36

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-12/exodus-1229-36/>

Verses 29-36 relate the coming of the tenth plague and its immediate aftermath. The time for judgment (on Egypt) and deliverance (for Israel) had come. The LORD Himself went through the land of Egypt at midnight and killed all of the firstborn, even Pharaoh's. Pharaoh woke up, saw what had happened, and called Moses and Aaron and told them to leave Egypt with all their families and flocks. He also asked Moses for a final blessing.

The LORD fulfilled His word (11:4) when *about at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt*. "Midnight" is literally "in the middle of the night," indicating that this plague happened in the darkest part of the night. It can also be a symbolic of the time of judgment (see [Judges 16:3](#) and [Job 34:20](#)).

Previous plagues involved some aspect of nature (flies, boils, etc.). There was nothing natural about this plague – it was supernatural from beginning to end. The LORD did not use any other agency but His own hand. At this time, the LORD Himself "struck all the firstborn." Social standing did not matter, because every firstborn *from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon* was killed. From the highest echelons of power in Egypt to the lowliest of its victims, all suffered loss. Even *all the firstborn of cattle* (the word for "cattle" is also a generic term for livestock) were slain.

With the tenth plague, the LORD has enacted His judgment upon Pharaoh for the killing of Hebrew sons (see 1:22). This judgment upon evil has also resulted in the deliverance of God's people.

Verses 30 – 32 describe the aftermath of the plague. Filled with grief and shock, *Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians*. The excruciating horror must have been overwhelming because *there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead*. The phrase "no home" should not be taken absolutely, because only those houses affected by the loss of a firstborn son were affected. In response, Pharaoh *called for Moses and Aaron at night*. Since Moses had told Pharaoh he would not see his face again, it is likely that this communication occurred through messengers. He told them to *rise*

up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the Lord, as you have said. Finally, after all the attempts to bargain with Moses to maintain some control over the Hebrews, Pharaoh tells them to leave unconditionally, even to *take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said.* Amazingly, Pharaoh had a final request of Moses and Aaron – *go, and bless me also.* This so-called “god” had finally been humbled to the point of wanting Moses’ God to bless him. Whether he felt real remorse for his actions or this was another attempt at manipulation is not known, but he was humbled enough to let the Israelites go without any restrictions.

The preparation for leaving Egypt is described in verses 33 – 36. Pharaoh told them to leave, and even *the Egyptians urged the people* to leave. The Hebrew word for “urged” is the same one used for Pharaoh’s “hardened” heart. It is ironic that Pharaoh’s “hardened” heart forced him to refuse the Israelites’ request to leave. Here, the people are equally “hardened” *to send them out of the land in haste.* They had suffered so much from the plagues (especially this last one) that they reasoned *we will all be dead* if the Israelites do not leave immediately. In their minds, so much had died, and they might be next.

The urgency was so great that *the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.* Normally, bread was made with leaven to give it a texture and volume. But this night was different – they had to vacate their homes before the whole bread-making process was completed. Furthermore, *the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing.* This was predicted in 3:22 and 11:2. It was made possible because *the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request.* The result is *they plundered the Egyptians.*

Biblical Text:

²⁹ Now it came about at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. ³⁰ Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. ³¹ Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, “Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the Lord, as you have said. ³² Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also.” ³³ The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out

of the land in haste, for they said, “We will all be dead.”³⁴ So the people took their dough before it was leavened, *with* their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.

³⁵ Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing;³⁶ and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.