

Easter

By Vladimir Shelkov

When the King of Egypt the first time heard the requirement to release Israel, he also had heard the warning about the scariest punishment. It was ordered for Moses to tell to Pharaoh, “This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.” Though the Israel nation was held in contempt by Egyptians, the Israel was honored to become the guardian of God’s Commandments. Using particular blessings and privileges, they took outstanding place between the nations as the firstborn son among the brothers.

The punishment about which Egypt was warned in the very beginning, had to occur in the the last turn. The God is slow to anger and has plenty of mercy. He in the most gentle way takes care about the creatures created in His image. If the damage suffered in the loss of livestock, harvest led Egypt to repentance, children would not died, yet the nation continued stubbornly to resist to God’s command, and the last hit was ready to burst upon them.

Moses was early warned do not show up in front of Pharaoh, but the last God’s will had to be revealed to the stubborn monarch, and Moses show up against him telling him awful message: “This is what the Lord says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.’ Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will leave.” (Exodus 11:4-8).

Until enforcement of this judgement the God gave an order to Israel through Moses regarding

the exit from Egypt and their liberation, and especially about the measures of precaution that had to protect from the hereafter punishment. Every single family separately or together with another family had to kill a lamb or a goatling “without a defect” and to sprinkle blood “on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses” with a bundle of hyssop that angel-killer who will be passing the door in the midnight will not enter inside. They had to eat roasted lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. And as the Moses told: “Let you cloak be tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover” (Exodus 12:11).

The Lord said: “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt” (Exodus 12:12-13).

In memory of this great deliverance future generations of Israel had every year to celebrate this festival. “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord – a lasting ordinance” (Exodus 12:14). Celebrating this festival in the following years they were telling history of this great deliverance to their children, as Moses told them: “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:27).

Henceforth all firstborns both from humans and animals had to belong to the Lord. Only at the cost of redemption it could become their ownership. Israel had to do it in recognition of memorial, when all Egyptian firstborns died, but their own firstborns due to sin-offering were saved from the death. “For all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set

apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether human or animal. They are to be mine. I am the Lord” (Numbers 3:13). After establishment of service in the tabernacle the God selected the tribe of Levi instead of all firstborns of sons of Israel. “For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel” (Numbers 8:16).

However the whole nation should recognize God’s favor to carry in redemption price of the firstborn sons (Numbers 18:15-16).

Easter is not just a monument of redemption of the nation from Egypt. Symbolically it had to specify the great deliverance that Jesus will commit exempting own nation from the slavery of sin. Sacrificial lamb symbolizes “God’s lamb” who is the only one hope of salvation. An Apostle says: “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7). It was not enough just to kill the lamb, but the door frames of the house had to be sprinkled with the lamb’s blood. Jesus’ merits have to become procession of every soul. We should believe not only that he has died for the whole world but for everyone of us personally. We should not appropriate merits of the atoning sacrifice to ourselves.

Hyssop was used to sprinkle the blood, it was the symbol of purification and at the same it was used for purification of lepers and those, who was defiled by touching a dead body. The psalmist in this pray expresses the same meaning: “Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow” (Psalms 50:9).

None single bone of the lamb could not be broken during the process of preparation. The whole lamb was prepared (Exodus 12:46. John. 19:36). Not a bone of God’s Lamb could not be broken. In such way is presented the completeness of Jesus’ sacrifice.

They had to eat lamb’s meat. It’s not enough just to believe the Jesus in order to get the forgiveness of sins, we must constantly get from Him spiritual power and food through the faith in him. Jesus says: “Most assuredly, I say to you,

unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you”. And explaining the meaning of it he told “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:53.63). Jesus accepted the law of His Father, embodied His principles in Own life, showed His spirit and beneficial influence on heart. John says: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Followers of Jesus must have own experience of this. They must accept and internalize God’s word that it would become the moving force of their life and behavior. They should become like Him through the power of Jesus and reflect features of the divine character. They must eat flesh and drink the blood of God’s Son; otherwise they do not have life. Jesus’ spirit and work should become His disciples’ spirit and work.

The lamb had to be eaten with bitter herbs commemorating bitter slavery in Egypt. When we want approach Jesus, we have to do it with repentance in the heart, remembering our sins. Eating an unleavened bread had a great meaning. The Passover celebration rules clearly specified that any leaven should not be during the holiday in the house, and it was strictly observed by Jews. As well those who would like to receive life and food from Jesus, they should remove the leaven of sin. Apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Corinth: “Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch.... for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Before getting a freedom an enslaved nation had to express own faith in deliverance. The signs of blood had to be on their houses and they had to separate themselves and their families from Egyptians closing themselves in houses. If Jews ignored any aspect of them given rules, for example, they would not separate their kids from Egyptian kids or after killing the lamb they will not mark the door with blood or if someone left the house at that moment, nobody who breached

God's order would avoid danger. And despite their deep belief that they have done everything, this sincerity would not save them. The first borns would die due to passing angel of death of those families, who didn't fulfill God's requirements accurately.

The nation had to prove the faith through the obedience. The same is with those, who expect to be saved through the merits of Jesus blood; they must understand that they themselves should do something in order to get a salvation. Despite that Jesus saved us from deserved punishment, we must leave the sin and obey Him. A man is saved by faith, not by works, but his faith should be revealed through his works. The God gave his Own Son that He will offer himself as sacrifice of propitiation for sins. He had revealed the light of the truth, the path of life to the world. He gave to a person particular directions. A man was surrounded by opportunities and excellences, and now he should use these means of salvations, he must value and use everything what the God has provided in His plan saving a man. A person should believe and obey all divine requirements.

When Moses repeated Israel God's provision regarding their salvation, "the nation has bowed their heads and worshiped" (Exodus 12:27). Hope of rainbow to get a freedom, terrible news about the approaching punishment on their oppressor, different troubles and bothers caused by their hasty escape – everything was forgotten and only one feeling of deep gratitude to Merciful Deliverer filled their heart. Many Egyptians found out about the real God, and now these addressed Egyptians asked to accept them. They promised to worship Jacob's God and leave Egypt together with His nation.

Israelites obeyed God's requirements. Quickly and secretly they prepared for the exit. All families were in places, Passover's lamb was stabbed and prepared, and unleavened bread, bitter herbs were prepared as well. Every single father and the priest of the family had to sprinkle the blood on the door frames of the house and they had to close the door. They had hurry and eat the Passover lamb in silence. Nation's reverence was in prayer, they kept

vigilance. The heart of every single first born - from the adult male to the little boy - was vibrantly beating and it was ineffable dreading. Fathers and mother were hugging their darling firstborns, thinking about the terrible penalty that will break out the same night. The angel of death had not approached houses of Israelites. The sign of blood – the sign of Savior's protection was on their doors.

About the midnight there was a great cry in the land of Egypt. There was not any single house where the corpse was not found. All the first borns in the country "from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well" were struck down (Exodus 12:29). The pride of every Egyptian family was struck across the vast country. Heartbreaking cries and shouting filled the earth. The King and his people had pale faces and their knees were trembling. They were curdled by nightmare. The Pharaoh now remembered when he once exclaimed: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). Now his bold arrogance turned into nothing. "During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me." Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. "For otherwise," they said, "we will all die!" (Exodus 12:31-33).

Now we do not sacrifice lamb as it was already happened – the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We live due to Jesus' death. Because the Jesus is our Passover, He has been sacrificed. "Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).