

The sincerity and truth of Exodus 11-13

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Part 1

This important section of Scripture describes the institution of the Passover meal and the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread, the tenth plague, and the much-anticipated deliverance from Egypt. But one of the first things we notice is the considerable repetition of subjects, to the point that it is difficult to follow or identify a train of thought. However, what at first may seem disorganised, disjointed and repetitious is in fact finely crafted literature. The beauty of these literary structures is a further indication of the divine inspiration of Scripture, and the structures themselves help us interpret the text.

Immediately following the account of the first nine plagues of Egypt in Exodus 7-10 are three verses that appear to be out of place. The last verse of chapter 10 seems to conclude Moses' interview with Pharaoh, for chapter 11 begins: "And the LORD said unto Moses ...". By verse 4, however, Moses is again speaking with Pharaoh: "And Moses said ..."—we know this because verse 8, at the end of Moses' words, states: "And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger." Verses 1-3 therefore 'interrupt' the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh.

These three verses form a special passage because they repeat the message that Moses received from God when he was in Midian:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (11:1-3).

"And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out My hand, and smite Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (3:19-22).

Three things that God tells Moses in chapter 3 are repeated in chapter 11, as shown in Table 1. First, Pharaoh lets the people go after the final plague (11:1); secondly, Israel spoil the Egyptians, taking their silver and gold (v. 2); and thirdly, "the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians" (v. 3). However, it

is not until 12:31-36 that any of these things actually happens, as also shown in Table 1. In other words, the promise of 3:19-22 is repeated in 11:1-3 and fulfilled in 12:31-36. So the section from 11:1 to 12:36 is ‘framed’ by the promise made to Moses in chapter 3. This framework sets the boundaries of a chiasmic structure.¹

Table 1: Pharaoh gives in and the spoiling of the Egyptians	
Exodus 11	Exodus 12
v.1 “And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards <i>he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.</i> ”	vv. 31-33 “And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and <i>get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.</i> ”
v.2 “Speak now in the ears of the people, and <i>let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.</i> ”	vv. 34,35 “And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; <i>and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment</i> ”
v.3 “And <i>the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.</i> ”	v. 36 “And <i>the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.</i> ”

The death of the firstborn

Immediately after 11:1-3 the interview between Moses with Pharaoh, which deals with the warning of the death of the firstborn, continues. The account of the fulfilment of these events comes in chapter 12 (see Table 2), immediately before the verses 31-36 we have considered above.

Table 2: the death of the firstborn			
Exodus 11		Exodus 12	
v.4	“And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About <i>midnight</i> will I go out into the midst of Egypt”	v. 29a	“And it came to pass, that at <i>midnight</i> ”
v.5a	“And <i>all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die</i> ”	v. 29b	“the LORD <i>smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt</i> ”
v.5b	“ <i>from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.</i> ”	v. 29c	“ <i>from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.</i> ”
v.6	“And there shall be <i>a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt</i> , such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.”	v. 30a	“And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was <i>a great cry in Egypt</i> ”
v.7	“But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.”	v. 30b	“for there was not a house where there was not one dead.”

The last part of these passages highlight the extreme contrast between Israel and Egypt. Not even a dog barked at an Israelite, but every single Egyptian household mourned the loss of a firstborn child.

The work is done

After the prediction of the death of the firstborn, chapter 11 ends with two verses that do not appear to follow chronologically. The phrase “And Moses and Aaron did

all these wonders before Pharaoh” (v. 10) refers back to the nine plagues of chapters 7-10; so verses 9 and 10 are summarising everything that Moses and Aaron have done so far. Notice that these two verses come immediately *after* the section dealing with the warning of the death of the firstborn, and parallel the verse that comes immediately *before* the section that actually records the death of the firstborn: “And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they” (12:28) (see Table 3). At first sight the order of the verses may seem awkward, but they make good sense if this whole section of Exodus is understood to have a chiasmic structure, as we shall explore.

Table 3: the work is done			
Exodus 11		Exodus 12	
vv. 9,10	“And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.”	v.28	“And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.”

The Passover lamb

The next section, 12:1-27, deals with the information given to Moses and Aaron and the people concerning Passover. This information occurs in two blocks, verses 1-14 and verses 21-27, which are separated by information concerning the feast of unleavened bread. In other words, God first gives instructions regarding the Passover lamb; then He gives instructions regarding the feast; then Moses relays to the elders of the people instruction regarding the Passover lamb. Thus the two sections on the Passover lamb are in parallel within the chiasmic structure (see Table 4).

Table 4: the Passover lamb

Exodus 12:1-14		Exodus 12:21-27	
vv. 1-6	“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron . . . Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall <i>take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers . . .</i> and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall <i>kill</i> it in the evening.”	v.21	“Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and <i>take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.</i> ”
vv. 7-11	“And <i>they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post</i> of the houses . . .”	v.22	“And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and <i>strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood</i> that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.”
vv12, 13	“For <i>I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt</i> , both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and <i>when I see the blood, I will pass over you</i> , and the plague shall not be upon you to <i>destroy</i> you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”	v.23	“For <i>the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door</i> , and will not suffer the <i>destroyer</i> to come in unto your houses to smite you.”
v.14	“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; <i>ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.</i> ”	v. 24	“And <i>ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.</i> ”

Whilst these two sections are not 'balanced' in terms of number of verses, we can see from Table 4 that they follow the same pattern and can each be split into four subsections. The first is about choosing the lamb and killing it; the second is about what Israel to do or not do during Passover; the third is about what God did during Passover; and the final section is about how Israel were to keep the Passover as a memorial and an ordinance always, and were to teach it to their children.

The overall chiastic structure

Piecing together the information we have considered so far, the following diagram shows the structure of Exodus 11:1 to 12:36: The whole section is revealed to be a chiasm, with a passage on the feast of unleavened bread at its centre.

A 11:1-3: Pharaoh gives in and the spoiling of the Egyptians.

B 11:4-8: the death of the firstborn

C 11:9,10: the work is done

D 12:1-14: the Passover lamb

E 12:15-20: the feast of unleavened bread

D' 12:21-27: the Passover lamb

C' 12:28: the work is done

B' 12:29,30: the death of the firstborn

A' 12:31-36: Pharaoh gives in and the spoiling of the Egyptians

Chiasms within chiasms

Remarkably, the passage concerning the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread (12:15-20) is not only at the centre of the chiasm, but is also a chiasm itself:

A v.15: “Seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread”

B v.15b: “even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.”

C v.16: “And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.”

D v.17a: “And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread”

E v.17b: “for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt”

D' v.17c: “therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.”

C' v.18: “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.”

B' v.19: “Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.”

A' v.20: “Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.”

The chiasm can be understood as follows:

- A and A' each stipulate the simple commandment that unleavened bread must be eaten.
- B and B' both refer to the removal of leaven from the Israelites' houses and the cutting off of a soul from the congregation if he refused to do so.
- C and C' both make mention of the beginning and end of the feast.
- D and D' both contain the commandment to “observe”.

- Finally E, the centre, tells us that Israel was delivered from Egypt on “this selfsame day”.

Being the centre of the entire passage from 11:1-12:36, this sentence is evidently important. But why is it important? Which day is it referring to, considering that Israel had to eat unleavened bread for seven days?

Dating the feast of unleavened bread

The week of unleavened bread started when at sunset on 13th/14th Abib (later called Nisan) and continued until sunset on 20th/21st Abib (12:18)—the Jewish day beginning at sunset. The lamb was killed in the evening at the very beginning of the 14th, and the Passover meal was eaten during that same night of the 14th: “And they shall eat the flesh in that night ...” (v. 8). God killed the firstborn at midnight on the 14th whilst Israel ate the Passover meal: “And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt” (v. 29). No one was allowed out of his house until the morning: “none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning” (v. 22). Not until dawn on the 14th did the Israelites leave their houses to spoil the Egyptians: “And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians” (vv. 35,36). This must have taken place during daylight on the 14th, so that Israel could leave on the 15th: “And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians” (Num. 33:3).

So Israel began their exodus from Egypt at the beginning of the 15th of Abib at night. The following diagram sets out the order of events:

Lamb killed; Passover meal prepared

14th Nisan		15th Nisan		16th Nisan	17th Nisan	18th Nisan	19th Nisan	20th Nisan	21st Nisan
Night	Day	Night	Day						
Death of firstborn	Egyptians spoiled	Exodus begins							
Passover, 1st day of feast		2nd day		3rd day	4th day	5th day	6th day	7th day	

Sincerity and truth

What we have shown so far is that 15th Abib was the night on which Israel left Egypt, and that the importance of this night is emphasised by its position at the centre of the structure of Exodus 11 and 12. But what did the feast of unleavened bread teach Israel, and why was it so important?

The Apostle Paul takes up the language of these events: “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:6,7). The Passover lamb therefore prefigures Christ; leaven represents malice and wickedness; and unleavened bread represents sincerity and truth. Fornication, greed, extortion, idolatry, covetousness and other evils (vv. 9-11) are things that we need to get rid of so that we might be ‘sincere’ and ‘true to God’s ways in our lives.

This is exactly what Israel were to do. Paul’s inspired words echo the words of Joshua who, at the end of his life, gathered together the tribes of Israel to rehearse to them all that God had done for them from the days of Abraham until that present time, including their exodus from Egypt. God had done so much for Israel; time after time He had delivered them from their enemies. Now Joshua tells the people exactly what their response should be: “Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD” (Josh. 24:14).

Israel was to put away the things of Egypt and serve the true God in sincerity and truth. The things of Egypt corresponded to the leaven which had to be put away during the feast of unleavened bread, and that unleavened bread represented serving God in sincerity and truth. This is why the feast is at the heart of the chiasm in the Exodus narrative. The Passover sacrifice is not enough; we have also to forsake the things of Egypt throughout our journey to the Kingdom.

WE HAVE SEEN in part 1 that the centre of the chiasm of Exodus 11:1-12:36 is “the selfsame day” (12:17). This expression is also found bracketing another chiasm in 12:41-51—the centre of one chiasm becomes the boundaries of the next. The structure is as follows:

A v.41: “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even **the selfsame day** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.”

B v.42: “It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of **all the children of Israel** in their generations.”

C v.43a: “And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the **ordinance of the passover**”

D vv.43b-45 “There shall no **stranger** eat thereof: but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast **circumcised** him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.”

E v.46a: “In one **house** shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the **house**”

F v. 46b: “neither shall ye break a bone thereof.”

E' v. 47: “All the **congregation** of Israel shall keep it.”

D' v. 48: “And when a **stranger** shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be **circumcised**, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.”

C' v. 49: “One **law** shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.”

B' v. 50: “Thus did **all the children of Israel**; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.”

A' v. 51: “And it came to pass **the selfsame day**, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.”

The chiasm is to be understood as follows:

- The elements A and A' both contain the expression “the selfsame day”, referring to the deliverance from Egypt.
- B and B' emphasise that “all the children of Israel” were to perform this service.
- C and C' refer to this new Passover instruction, describing it as an “ordinance” or a “law”.

- D and D' make up the content of this law, both referring to strangers being "circumcised" before keeping the Passover.
- E and E' are interpretive; "house" is parallel to "congregation". Israel as a whole is contrasted with Israel as individual households. Everyone must take part and everyone must eat it, remaining in their houses until the morning.

The centre of the chiasm is striking. Element F reads "neither shall ye break a bone thereof". Again we have a sentence that seems out of place. Surely this passage concerns how only those in the covenant relationship with God can keep the Passover. Through the covenant of circumcision, a stranger or foreigner could become like "one that is born in the land" and keep the Passover as an Israelite. How does the phrase regarding not breaking a bone of the lamb fit it? Why is it at the centre of this chiasm?

They two shall be one flesh

John's record of the Lord's crucifixion informs us that this phrase was fulfilled in Christ's death:

"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (19:32-36).

Clearly the centre of the chiasm in Exodus 12:41-51 is looking forward to Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb, whose bones were not broken. But what might this signify?

When God made the woman and gave her to the man, Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:23,24). Here, at the beginning of His Word, God establishes a principle concerning Christ and the ecclesia: they are spiritually one being. The complete body of Christ consists of Jesus as the head and the ecclesia as the body, joined together.

Paul, through the Spirit, expands on this theme in his Letter to the Ephesians using the same language:

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*. For this cause shall a man leave his father and

mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (5:28-32).

As part of the Bride of Christ, “we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” It is because of this principle that a husband and wife, literally two people, are spiritually “one flesh”, reflecting in their lives the relationship between Jesus and those baptised into his name. The same honour, love and sacrifice that exist between Christ and the ecclesia should exist between husband and wife. Christ’s body and bones were not broken (Jno. 19:36), just as the Passover lamb was not broken (Ex. 12:46). The centre of the chiasm of Exodus 12:41-51 is not merely a prophecy concerning Christ, but also a powerful teaching about the relationship between him and the ecclesia to come. The ecclesia should not be ‘broken’ or divided or separated from Christ; it is complete and one in him.

We can now see how powerful the centre of the chiasm is, and how relevant it is to its context of deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

The chiasm of Exodus 13:1-16

This theme of the redemption of the firstborn and the keeping of the feast of unleavened bread continues into Exodus 13: “And the LORD spake 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” (vv. 1,2). This is followed by fourteen verses of instruction given to the people by Moses. This dialogue is in two main sections: first Moses refers to the observance of the week of unleavened bread (vv. 3-10); he then deals with the law of the firstborn (vv. 11-16). By returning in verse 11 to the subject introduced in verses 1,2, the Word is drawing our attention once more to the importance of unleavened bread by ‘sandwiching’ it between two sections that refer to the sanctification of the firstborn. The basic framework of this passage is therefore as follows:

A vv. 1,2: God speaks; the sanctification of the firstborn

B vv. 3-10: Moses speaks; the feast of unleavened bread

A’ vv. 11-16: Moses speaks; the sanctification of the firstborn

However, a more detailed analysis of the structure of this passage indicates that the third section, verses 11-16, is itself another chiasm:

A vv. 1,2: “And the LORD spake 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.”

B v. 3a: “And Moses said unto the people, **Remember this day**, in which **ye came out from Egypt**, out of the house of bondage; for by **strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place**”

C v. 3b: “**there shall no leavened bread be eaten.**”

D v. 4 “This day came ye out in the month **Abib.**”

E v. 5a: “And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into **the land** of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites”

F v. 5b: “which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee”

E’ v. 5c: “**a land flowing with milk and honey**”

D’ v. 5d: “that thou shalt keep this service **in this month.**”

C’ vv. 6,7: “Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and **there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee**, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.”

B’ vv. 8-10: “And thou shalt shew thy son in that **day**, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I **came forth out of Egypt**. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a **memorial** between thine eyes, that the LORD’S law may be in thy mouth: for with **a strong hand** hath the LORD brought thee **out of Egypt**. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.”

A’ consists of vv. 11-16, which is further broken down as follows:

a v. 11: “And it shall be when **the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites**, as He sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee”

b v. 12a: “That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD **all that openeth the matrix**”

c vv. 12b,13a: “and **every firstling that cometh of a beast** which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’S. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck”

d 13b: “and **all the firstborn of man** among thy children shalt thou redeem.”

e vv. 14,15a: “And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, 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 it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt”

d’ v. 15b: “**both the firstborn of man**”

c’ v. 15c: “and **the firstborn of beast**”

b’ v. 15d: “therefore I sacrifice to the LORD **all that openeth the matrix**, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.

a’ v. 6: “And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand **the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.**”

Thus verses 1,2 correspond to a larger section, verses 11-16, which itself is structured chiasmically. It centres on the need to teach the nation’s children what happened in Egypt; the way God that delivered them was through the final plague, the destruction of Egypt’s firstborn and the salvation of their own firstborn.

As we move inwards in the overall chiasmatic structure we again encounter the subject of unleavened bread. Sections B and B’ both refer to the feast of unleavened bread on 15th Abib—“remember this *day*” and “shew thy son in that *day*”. These two sections also emphasise the idea of remembrance—the word “memorial” in B’ comes from the root word in B, ‘remember’. Both B and B’ also refer to the ‘strong hand’ of God that brought them out of Egypt.

The remaining features of the overall chiasm are as follows:

- C and C’ both refer to eating unleavened bread and/or the ban on eating or possessing leavened bread.

- D and D' both mention the month Abib.
- E and E' both refer to the land to which God was bringing Israel. In a nice contrast, the land had belonged to other nations (E), but once this land was won by Israel, they would be able to enjoy the bounty of its produce (E').
- Finally the central phrase (F), “sware unto thy fathers to give thee”, focuses the whole passage on God’s promises concerning the land. Abraham was given the promises because of his righteous faith. Israel must likewise faithfully carry out both the observance of unleavened bread and the law of the firstborn because God had delivered them out of Egypt, and was leading them into a wonderful land that He had promised them and their fathers.

Conclusions

The structure of Exodus 11-13 contains three distinct features:

1. The first, from the beginning of chapter 11 to part way through chapter 12, is a chiasm with a single phrase at its centre—“for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt”. It emphasises the significance of observing the feast of unleavened bread because God delivered Israel out of Egypt.
2. The third, taking up most of chapter 13, is another chiasm, which again emphasises Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and the importance of the feast of unleavened bread. Both these sections are focusing our minds on Israel’s deliverance and the lesson that the feast of unleavened bread teaches: since Israel had been delivered by God, they should leave Egypt behind permanently in their own lives.
3. Between these two structures is another chiasm with boundaries that reaffirm that God brought Israel out on the day of the feast of unleavened bread. But at the centre of this structure our minds are taken forward to Christ. Here God draws our attention to His ultimate method of deliverance from sin—through the Lord Jesus Christ His Son. Here within the Exodus narrative God has hidden the principles regarding the ecclesia of Christ. It is only within the household of God that we are saved. Separated from Christ we cannot be saved. By discerning the structure of the text we are able to see more clearly, highlighted for us, these amazing truths.

¹ For an explanation of this feature, see Stephen Palmer, “Chiasmus in all the Scriptures?”, vol. 85, no. 1,010, Nov. 2015, p. 436.