

Cindy Cottone

# The Bible Corner



## The darkness

Darkness — it permeated everything in Egypt. Three days ago, it had rolled into the country like a fog. The thick black cloud had slipped into all of the houses like a thief. It wound itself around all of the people and filled their hearts with such dread that no one dared to even move.

A sliver of light was not to be found even in Pharaoh's palace. But Hassaballa was not bothered by the darkness. It comforted him in a strange way by hiding the emptiness he always felt. When had he become so unhappy and without hope? Perhaps it had begun with the very first plague. But as he thought back over his life, he realized that emptiness had carved a home for itself deep inside of him from the moment he had come to live at the palace.

Hassaballa was Pharaoh's chief adviser, and his position included a share in possessions and special privileges that the common citizens of Egypt only dreamed about. He had focused his entire life on attaining this position, even from the time he had served as a foot soldier in the military. The goal had been before him always like a valuable prize to be sought after.

When Hassaballa had finally been ap-

pointed chief adviser, he expected a huge rush of joy or at least the sense of relief that a runner feels as he crosses the finish line. But, for all of his vain strivings, he felt none of these things — only emptiness.

Egypt had been utterly ruined by the plagues sent by the God of the Hebrews. No one in all of Egypt, except Hassaballa, knew what had occurred at the palace. Pharaoh had summoned him to set up the appropriate sacrifices for the gods. Then the king had prostrated himself and prayed to the sun god, Ra. "Let there be light!" Pharaoh commanded. The darkness remained.

As Pharaoh's chief adviser, Hassaballa could no longer remain silent. "Your majesty," he began, "I must disagree with your decision regarding these Hebrew slaves."

"And what is it that you find so objectionable?" Pharaoh replied, his nose wrinkled in contempt.

"It is clearly against the will of their God to force them to remain in Egypt," Hassaballa stammered. "What is to be gained by keeping them here?"

Pharaoh bristled. "Are you questioning my authority? Or perhaps you think the Hebrew God is more powerful than the king of Egypt."

"We have seen our country devastated by one plague after another," Hassaballa

continued. "The country I love and serve lies in ruins. I fear for our very lives now."

"You are a fine one to talk," Pharaoh snipped, "you who live in luxury, with your own servants to wait on you."

"Yes, your majesty, I have been given much," he agreed. "But as your chief adviser, I must inform you that many of your own officials have threatened to join with Moses and Aaron."

"Well what are you waiting for?" Pharaoh demanded. "Take care of these traitors like the rest."

The court magicians, Jannes and Jambres, had not been able to do anything about the lice that had infested Egypt. They had been inflicted with boils like the rest of the people and animals in Egypt. Pharaoh was so angry that he had banished them both. There were others who had been executed for treason. Many of Pharaoh's government officials were siding with the Hebrew cause.

"Hassaballa, I command you," Pharaoh shrieked. "Why do you just stand there and stare?"

"Am I to be executed, too?" Hassaballa asked.

"I think you have all gone mad!" Pharaoh said angrily. "Leave me, I wish to be left alone!"

Meanwhile, in neighboring Goshen, the Hebrews had light as usual. Finally, Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, "You will see now that I can be a reasonable man. I am granting you permission to go into the desert and worship your God. Take all of your people and go. However, your flocks and herds must remain here in Egypt."

"No," Moses replied. "We cannot leave our animals here. We must offer sacrifices and burnt offerings to our God in worship, and we need our animals to choose from."

"Then you may not go!" Pharaoh shouted. "It is you who are unreasonable, and it is your own fault that your people do not leave Egypt. Get out. I never want to see your face again."

"Very well," Moses said calmly, "then you never shall."

"If I do," Pharaoh said as he stood up, "on that day, you shall surely die!"

Moses left the palace and went immediately to speak to the elders of Israel. God had told him that one last terrible plague would occur in Egypt. It would be worse than anything that had ever happened. This plague would force Pharaoh to drive the Hebrews out of his kingdom.

As soon as Moses had gone, Pharaoh called for his chief adviser, Hassaballa. He was no where to be found. Early that morning, Hassaballa had made a decision. He had left Pharaoh's palace forever.

**For discussion:**

- 1) Why did Hassaballa feel so empty when he reached his goal?
- 2) What would have been a better goal for Hassaballa's life?
- 3) What decision did Hassaballa make?

**For further reading:**

- 1) The story of plagues 8 and 9 is found in Exodus, Chapter 10.
- 2) Paul talks about running in a race in Philippians, Chapter 3:14 and in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

### Religious education congress scheduled for Southern Tier catechists

"And their eyes were opened," a quote from St. Luke's gospel (24:13-32), is the theme of the Southern Tier Regional Religious Education Congress scheduled for Saturday, November 8, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Mary Our Mother School in Horseheads.

During the congress, all catechists will be

invited to spend the day reflecting on the presence of Jesus in their lives and learning ways of helping their students recognize his presence.

The keynote speaker for the event is Dr. Marie Murphy, religion editor for William H. Sadlier, Inc., and nationally known speaker in the areas of Shared Christian

Praxis, sacramentality and American religious experience.

The day is open to all catechetical ministers. Registration forms are available through schools and religious education offices. Those interested in attending may also call the Southern Tier Office of Religious Education at (607)732-3862. The fee for the day is \$7, including lunch.

### YWCA schedules 'recycle sale'

The International Chapter of the YWCA of Rochester and Monroe County has scheduled a "recycle sale" for Thursday, November 13, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the YWCA, 175 N. Clinton Ave., Rochester.

Items for sale include household goods, clothing, baked foods and lots more.

All proceeds will benefit the Chapter Council Goal Fund.

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