

Cindy Cottone

The Bible Corner



The final plague

Moses could feel the anticipation in the room from the people that had been gathered before him and waited for his announcement. "Surely they think that I have come here to tell them they are free of Pharaoh at last," he thought.

The elders of Israel came forward and motioned for silence. One of the elders remarked, "Moses, we have watched the power of our God crush the false gods of Pharaoh with nine plagues. Can we go now and worship our God in peace?"

Moses hesitated. Every eye in the room was fixed on him, prepared for his answer. "I have just come from speaking with Pharaoh, and his answer is still no."

"This is an outrage!" someone said angrily.

"How can this be?" someone else reacted. "We've had enough, Moses!"

One of the elders came forward now and said, "Moses, the reaction should not surprise you. Ever since you came, Pharaoh has only increased the burdens on our people."

"It is not only for Pharaoh that all of these plagues have been sent," Moses replied. "Our faith has been tested, too. There is to be one last terrible plague in

Egypt. But after it happens, we are going to leave this cruel king forever."

"Tell us about the last plague," one of the Hebrews said, and the people came to order.

"At midnight," Moses began, "God will pass through the land and strike down all of the firstborn, from the heir to the throne of Egypt, to the son of Pharaoh's servants. Even the firstborn of all of the livestock will be killed."

"But how will we be spared this judgment?" the elders asked. "How are we to be saved?"

"By having faith and believing in the one true God," Moses continued. "Yahweh has given instructions to me that everyone must follow carefully to show Him that we are obedient and trust Him to save us."

"Each family is to select a lamb and kill it for a meal. Take some of the blood from the animal and use it to mark your doors, above the top frame and along the two side panels. This blood will serve as a sign to God that His people dwell within and the angel of death will pass over this house."

"And finally," Moses instructed, "prepare the roasted lamb and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. There will be no time to wait for the dough to rise for the bread. You are to eat this meal with your traveling clothes on so that you are ready to leave at a moment's notice."

All of the people believed Moses, and when he had finished speaking, they lowered their heads and prayed. Then everyone hastened to do exactly as Moses had instructed. No one was to venture outside until Moses gave the signal.

Meanwhile, back at the palace, Pharaoh called one of his servants to him and said, "I would like a guard posted by the door of my son's room while he sleeps. The Hebrews claim that an angel of death will visit here tonight." He laughed wildly, saying, "that Moses will try any trick to force me to release my slaves."

After Pharaoh checked on his son, he retired for the evening. Just after midnight, he awakened to a muffled cry. He rose from his chambers to investigate.

"What is the meaning of this clamor?" he demanded from a servant who was crying in the hall.

"Just as the Hebrew predicted," he sobbed. "If only you would have listened, my son would not be dead."

"It's not true," Pharaoh said and brushed past him, racing to his son's room.

The guard still stood at attention. "Any trouble tonight?" Pharaoh asked.

"No, it's been quiet all evening."

"Well, just the same, I think I'll check on my son," Pharaoh replied.

Pharaoh smiled briefly as he regarded his son still sleeping. "Yes, my son," he said, patting him lightly, "You shall rule all of Egypt someday."

The boy's skin felt cold and all of the color had drained from his face. Pharaoh grabbed his son and shook him. "Wake up! Wake up, my son!" he cried. "Who will rule in my place? You must be alive. Wake up!"

The cry of anguish that rose over Egypt was so loud that the Hebrews heard it inside the walls of their own houses, where the angel of death had not entered that night. There was not an Egyptian family that had been spared. They mourned their loss with bitter waiting for many days.

For the last time, Moses came and stood before Pharaoh. "Take your people," Pharaoh pleaded, "and go far away. Leave us. Be gone quickly."

All of the Hebrews, with their children and livestock, left Egypt that day in a vast exodus. It had been exactly 430 years since the family of Jacob had come to live in Egypt with Joseph. The people carried the bones of Joseph with them, as he had requested before he had died. For Joseph knew that the promise God had made long ago would one day be fulfilled. The feast of Passover is celebrated annually to commemorate God's deliverance of His people from the land of Egypt into the Promised Land.

For discussion:

1. God sent 10 plagues on the land of Egypt. What was He testing in His own people?
2. Why is this event called Passover?
3. Jesus is known as the Lamb of God and the new Passover. Why?
4. When did Jesus celebrate Passover with His 12 apostles? What do Christians call this commemoration?

For further reading:

1. The story of the very first Passover is found in Exodus, Chapters 11 and 12.
2. Jesus is described as a Lamb in John 1:29.

Foundation

Continued from Page 7

The Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation now offers programs from emergency grants to education and advocacy to both rural and urban people and agencies in 13 upstate counties. "We're not so much Catholic or Episcopal as we are housing. We come

together on housing issues," Smith said.

The foundation's operating philosophy might be summed up as "money makes money." It seldom undertakes a project's funding alone, but rather specializes in pulling together funding packages. Most often, the money comes from a variety of sources, none of which would finance an entire project, but which together accomplish aims beyond their individual means.

Since 1968, for instance, the foundation has expended \$493,000 in reduced-interest or interest-free loans for down payments and/or closing costs for families and housing projects. Combined with additional money those funds have generated, the foundation has helped to create housing worth more than \$12 million.

While its administrative costs are funded by the Episcopal and Roman Catholic dioceses and by the New York State Division of Hous-

ing and Community Renewal, all of the foundation's seed money comes from contributions.

Despite its admirable record, the Bishop Sheen Foundation also suffers from a lack of identity. Even though it is affiliated with both the Episcopal and Roman Catholic dioceses of Rochester, few pastors realize what it offers. "Even our own don't know us," Smith said.

"But it's time-consuming to educate churches, **Continued on Page 13**

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