

**Exodus 12:29-51 (KJV)**

<sup>29</sup> And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, 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. <sup>30</sup> And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead. <sup>31</sup> And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, *and* get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. <sup>32</sup> Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. <sup>33</sup> 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*. <sup>34</sup> And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. <sup>35</sup> 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: <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot *that were* men, beside children.

<sup>38</sup> And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, *even* very much cattle. <sup>39</sup> And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual. <sup>40</sup> Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, *was* four hundred and thirty years. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> **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.** <sup>43</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This *is* the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: <sup>44</sup> But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. <sup>45</sup> A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. <sup>46</sup> In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. <sup>47</sup> All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. <sup>48</sup> 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. <sup>49</sup> One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. <sup>50</sup> Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. <sup>51</sup> 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.

**Birth of a Nation (2)**

**(1) Day of Severance/Separation/Rejoicing/Freedom (v29-37)**

**(2) Day for Remembrance (38-51)**

**INTRODUCTION**

Many of our forefathers came to Singapore to seek a better life. Back in their home country, they could hardly make ends meet. Life was hard and miserable. It was so difficult that it gave them the courage to brave the seas to come to Singapore and Malaya looking for opportunities of a better life. It was a newfound freedom and opportunities for a new life.

Would they have known that they would be the pioneers in the birth of the nation of Singapore! We, today, look back with hindsight.

Meanwhile in China, the generation of the 1860s, would begin a revolution that culminates in the overthrow the Qing dynasty in 1911 ending more than 2000 years of dynastic rule giving birth to the first Republic in Asia intended to model after the United States' Judeo-Christian system of Western democracy incorporating the three principles of the People – nationalism, democracy and the people's livelihood. These three principles, were formulated with the intention of "saving" China. Sun declared that the three principles of the people can also be called the nation's "saving principles".<sup>1</sup>

Sun's idea of nationalism is derived from the two words "nation" and "state". The first of these "nation" is in turn derived from the word *natio* which has the meaning of "natal" of "birth". He saw the example of the English, Scots and Welsh with different cultural, social and historical differences becoming unified under a new political entity called the "United Kingdom". Sun's concept of "nation-state" appears to be influenced by this conception of ethnic groupings and political entity that is the state, in his account of the Chinese nation-state. Sun believes that China was weak and facing the invasion and colonising of foreign powers when its nationalistic fervour was waning. He proposed to reduce the 56 ethnic groups to five main groups – the Hans, Manchus, Mongolians, Huis and Tibetans. And the five groups would be further reduced to one group, although in terms of majority, the Chinese can be considered to be Han Chinese.<sup>2</sup>

China eventually went the way of Communism (CCP – China Communist Party) where it is viewed that the 1911 Revolution is regarded not a rival but complementary event to the 1949 revolution and the true legitimate successor to Sun Yat-Sen's unfulfilled revolution cause instead of the Kuo Ming Tang (KMT). Sun was thus addressed the father of modern China. Reform and opening up in 1978 was a starting point for China to change its economic and social system gradually. When Deng Xiaoping initiated the reforms that transformed economic and social structure of China, he refrained from identifying the ideological orientation of the process.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, there is a cost that comes for freedom. There is a high price to be paid. Sun Yat-Sen had more than 30 failed attempts before he succeeded to overthrow the Qing Dynasty.

For the Israelites in Egypt, it will be 430 years and 10 plagues that God will send to set them free from their slavery, to becoming a nation. For the nation of Israel, they are descendants from one man Jacob and his twelve sons that formed the 12 tribes that will make up the nation. More importantly, they are a nation that was created to be a witness to the living and true God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

- (1) Day of Severance/Separation/Rejoicing/Freedom (v29-37)**
- (2) Day for Remembrance (38-51)**

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<sup>1</sup> Lee Lai To. Lee Hock Guan, Sun Yat-Sen – Nanyang and the 1911 Revolution, Institute of South-East Asian Studies, 2011, 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 33-35.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 251.

**(1) Day of Severance/Separation/Rejoicing/Freedom (v29-37)**

<sup>29</sup> *And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, 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.*

The longsuffering and patience of God awaiting the Egyptian Pharaoh to repent and let His people go has reached its end point. God's judgment fell heavily upon Egypt with the death of every firstborn of men and cattle starting with Pharaoh's son. We saw God as very merciful. He will not afflict easily. He sent 9 plagues before he sent the ultimate judgment that will break the pride of the Egyptians. In fact, it was told to Moses what He will do to Egypt culminating in the death of the firstborn of Pharaoh. God gave every opportunity for repentance that Pharaoh may turned from his ways and acknowledge Israel's God as the living and true God, Creator of heaven and earth.

God's instruction to Moses to administer the Passover feast was wholly followed. God also informed Moses that the death plague will come at about midnight. It is the day of severance, of separation, of departure. The death plague came as God had said. Indeed, man need to take God's Word seriously.

<sup>30</sup> *And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.*

The counsel of God was spurned. His admonition overlooked. His advice rejected. There is indeed a fearful awaiting of judgment. Judas Iscariot who betrayed our Lord took his own life.

**Proverbs 1:24-33 (KJV)** <sup>24</sup> *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;* <sup>25</sup> *But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:* <sup>26</sup> *I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;* <sup>27</sup> *When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.* <sup>28</sup> *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:* <sup>29</sup> *For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:* <sup>30</sup> *They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.* <sup>31</sup> *Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* <sup>32</sup> *For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* <sup>33</sup> *But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.*

For the people of God who went their own way, the Lord will send chastisement that they may come back to Him. After Peter denied the Lord three times and He has predicted, Peter wept and repented bitterly, coming back to the Lord.

**Hosea 5:15** *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.*

**Luke 15:14-24 (KJV)** <sup>14</sup> *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.* <sup>15</sup> *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* <sup>16</sup> *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* <sup>17</sup> *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!<sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned*

against heaven, and before thee, <sup>19</sup> And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. <sup>20</sup> And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: <sup>23</sup> And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

<sup>31</sup> And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. <sup>32</sup> Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.

The power of God when fully unleashed is irresistible or insurmountable. All men must bow in humble submission. Pharaoh was a reluctant but was forcibly confronted so that he was duly humbled into submission and surrender, though not willingly. He will go after the Israelites after they left Egypt with his army of chariots only to finally perish in the Red Sea. It is a foolish thing to fight against God.

<sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. <sup>35</sup> 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: <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.

Whether it was out of fear or out of obligation for their years of free service in building Pharaoh's cities, the Egyptians gave their jewels of silver and gold and raiment to the Israelites. Our text tells us it was God who gave the Israelites favour in the Egyptian's sight because these are the materials needed later to construct the tabernacle for the worship of God. It was an act that will bring honour and glory to His Name.

The silver and gold items taken were some of the most valuable of the Egyptians' possessions. Moreover, these events are set in the spring, when it was customary for Egyptian kings, particularly those of the New Kingdom, to send out messengers (and accompanying armies) in order to collect tribute payments from the smaller political entities (e.g., city-states) outside Egypt. In a sense, then, springtime was the time the Egyptians officially plundered their subject peoples. Once again, the biblical text turns the tables on an Egyptian custom. This time, the Egyptians are the ones exploited and forced to pay.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary - Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the Old Testament – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.



## (2) Day to be Remembered (38-51)

<sup>38</sup> And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. <sup>39</sup> And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual. <sup>40</sup> Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. <sup>41</sup> 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.

How precise is God's Word! This promise was made to Abraham in **Genesis 15:13-14** *And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them **four hundred years**; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and **afterward shall they come out with great substance.***

<sup>42</sup> **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.** <sup>43</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: <sup>44</sup> But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. <sup>45</sup> A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. <sup>46</sup> In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. <sup>47</sup> All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. <sup>48</sup> 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. <sup>49</sup> One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. <sup>50</sup> Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. <sup>51</sup> 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 Passover was instituted as a remembrance feast that the Israelites will observe for posterity because it reminds them how they were slaves in Egypt and God delivered them.

How the Passover is to be observed is stipulated here. John Calvin said well here, “It is a night to be much observed. He shows that the Israelites have good cause for sacrificing to God with a solemn ceremony year by year for ever, and for celebrating the memory of that night; and that the Passover was instituted in token of their gratitude. But this admonition was very useful, in order that the Israelites should retain the legitimate use of this solemn feast-day, and that it might not grow into a mere cold ceremony, as is often the case; but that rather they might profitably, and to the advancement of their piety, exercise themselves in this emblem of their redemption. At the same time, he teaches that this so inestimable a benefit was not to be celebrated in one, or two, or three generations, but that as long as the people should remain it was worthy of eternal remembrance, and that it might never be forgotten, the Passover was to be sacredly observed.”

**Psalm 78:1-7 (KJV)** <sup>1</sup> Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. <sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: <sup>3</sup> Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. <sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. <sup>5</sup> **For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:** <sup>6</sup> **That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:** <sup>7</sup> **That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:**

Indeed, God’s people must not forget what their God has done for them sending His only begotten Son for the redemption of their souls. The Passover feast is the equivalent of the Lord’s Supper to the New Testament church. We commemorate the Lord’s Supper to remember Christ’s death for our sins. A time of reflection and soul-searching that our souls may be drawn closer to our God.

**Psalm 103:1-18 (KJV)** <sup>1</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. <sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: <sup>3</sup> Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; <sup>4</sup> Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; <sup>5</sup> Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s. <sup>6</sup> The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. <sup>7</sup> He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. <sup>8</sup> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. <sup>9</sup> He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. <sup>10</sup> He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. <sup>12</sup> As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. <sup>14</sup> For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. <sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. <sup>16</sup> For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. <sup>17</sup> But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; <sup>18</sup> To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

## CONCLUSION

It is worthy and worthwhile to rehearse history of God’s grace in our lives in the collective history of the church to remind us of God’s goodness and not forget His benefits.