

Psalm 105:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

Analysis

The tenth and final plague (death of firstborn, Exodus 11:1-12:30) is the climactic judgment. 'Smote' (nakah) again emphasizes divine striking. 'All the firstborn' shows comprehensive judgment—no Egyptian household was exempt. 'Chief of all their strength' (reshit, רִאשִׁית, 'firstfruits') emphasizes these were the heirs, the future of Egypt. This plague directly challenged Pharaoh, considered the son of Ra, and all Egyptian hopes for dynastic continuation. The Passover lamb's blood protected Israel's firstborn, establishing the substitutionary principle: the righteous live because an innocent substitute dies. This foreshadows Christ, the ultimate Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Historical Context

This plague occurred on the night of Passover (circa 1446 BC), establishing Israel's foundational redemptive event. Every Egyptian family lost their firstborn son, from Pharaoh's heir to the prisoner's child (Exodus 12:29). The night of weeping contrasted with Israel's protected households, demonstrating God's distinction between His people and the world. This became the central event of Israel's calendar and worship, remembered annually in Passover.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the death of Egypt's firstborn foreshadow Christ's sacrificial death?
2. What does the Passover's substitutionary principle teach about atonement?
3. How should the distinction between protected and judged households affect our view of salvation?

Interlinear Text

לְכָל	כִּי	אֲשֶׁר	יְהִי	בָּאָרֶץ	מִן	כָּל	בְּכָל	וּרְאֵת	וְכָל
He smote	H3605	also all the firstborn		in their land		the chief		H3605	
H5221			H1060		H776		H7225		
אֶלְעָזֶר									
of all their strength									
	H202								

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 49:3 (Parallel theme): Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: