

Psalms 78:51

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

Analysis

And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham. Nākâ (נָקַה, "smote") is the verb for striking down in battle or execution—violent, decisive action. Bēkôr (בְּכֹר, "firstborn") held primacy in inheritance and family honor. Rē'shît 'ônîm (ראשית אֹנוֹם, "chief of strength") poetically describes the firstborn as the "beginning of vigor"—the prime of manhood.

"Tabernacles of Ham" ('ohälê-Hām, אֹהֶל-חָם) uses Ham, Noah's son and Egypt's ancestor (Genesis 10:6), to emphasize Egypt's lineage. God struck Egypt in its homes ('ohel, tent/dwelling), the most intimate space. No palace security or religious ritual could prevent the destroying angel's entrance.

This final plague accomplished Exodus: Pharaoh's heart was finally broken by losing his own son. The typology is profound—Egypt's firstborn died so Israel (God's firstborn, Exodus 4:22) could live, foreshadowing Christ (God's ultimate Firstborn) dying so believers might live. Passover blood protected then; Christ's blood protects eternally.

Historical Context

Exodus 12:29-30 describes universal mourning—no house without a death. This plague shattered Egypt completely, leading to Israel's release and the plundering

of Egypt. The Passover became Israel's defining memorial, celebrated annually and fulfilled in Christ, our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 – God is love

John 15:13 – Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the death of Egypt's firstborn to free Israel foreshadow Christ's death to free believers?
2. What does God striking "all the firstborn" without exception teach about His impartiality in judgment?
3. How should remembering Israel's deliverance through substitutionary death shape your worship and gratitude?

Interlinear Text

אָנָּה יְמִינָה	רָאשֵׁית בְּמִצְרָיִם	בְּכָר וּרְכָבָה	כָּל יְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה
And smote H3605	all the firstborn H1060	in Egypt H4714	the chief H7225	of their strength H202
H5221				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 105:23 (References Egypt): Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

Psalms 135:8 (References Egypt): Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.

Psalms 106:22 (Parallel theme): Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea.

Psalms 105:36 (Parallel theme): He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

Psalms 136:10 (References Egypt): To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever:

Exodus 13:15 (References Egypt): And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.

Exodus 12:12 (References Egypt): For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

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: