

## Blood on the Door

“Maat, what are you doing?” Jubal asked.

“I’m putting blood over my door like you are.”

“Did you sacrifice a lamb at the synagogue?”

“No, of course not. I’m not one of you. It’s the blood of a bull.”

“No, no, no, Maat, that won’t work.”

“Why not?”

“It has to be an unblemished lamb, sacrificed to Jehovah, not some pagan idol.”

“What difference does that make? Blood is blood.”

“Oh, Maat, after all this time, you have no idea.”

“Of what?”

“You saw how Moses countered all the magic of Pharaoh’s priests, how the Nile turned to blood, the frogs, the locusts. God said he’ll kill all the firstborn tonight in the houses that don’t have the blood of a lamb on the top and sides of the front door. There’s no other way, Maat. You must believe.”

“Look, we have our own gods, Jubal. I’m just doing this to be sure.”

Weary of yet another fruitless conversation with his pagan neighbor, Jubal turned away, shoulders slumped. “It’s not going to work, Maat.”

“What was that?” Maat asked.

“Nothing. I was talking to myself.”

*<sup>4</sup> So Moses said, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt, <sup>5</sup> and every firstborn male in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the servant girl who is behind the millstones, as well as every firstborn of the livestock. (Exodus 11:4-5 HCSB)*

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“What are you going to do, Abasi?” Jubal’s daughter asked Maat’s first-born son, Abasi.

“Father’s adamant, Mara,” he replied. “He thinks all we need is to put blood on our door as your father is doing.”

“But it won’t work. We have brought a lamb to the priest as a sacrifice to Jehovah. That’s the only way it will work to save my older brother, Levi.”

“Father says that blood is blood.”

“Do you believe that?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Oh, Abasi, when will you come to believe in Jehovah?”

“I do, Mara.”

“Do you? Do you believe enough to trust in Jehovah and try to convince your father to believe, too?”

“You know how he is. I won’t be able to convince him.”

“Doesn’t your mother believe in Jehovah?”

“Yes, but when she stupidly tells Father about her faith, he beats her. She should know better. My sister, Baniti, believes as Mother does, but keeps her peace to avoid a beating.”

“I fear for you, Abasi, I really do.”

“Don’t worry so, Mara. We have blood on our door, just as you do. I’ll be fine.”

Tears began to spring from Mara's eyes. "I'll pray for you, Abasi, pray that you'll be spared and that you'll believe in Jehovah."

When Abasi left her, Mara sunk to her knees and poured out her heart in prayers... and hot tears of sorrow.

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Darkness fell and all the believing Jews huddled in their huts, relying on the blood on their doorways to protect their firstborn sons. In addition, some of the Egyptians who had secretly become believers in Jehovah followed their Jewish neighbors in putting blood on their doorways as well.

When the sun set, an abnormally stygian darkness descended, leaving everyone with a sense of foreboding. Jewish fathers prayed for their families and Egyptian fathers stood in their doorways looking nervously at the dark-troubled sky with no moon in it, nor any visible stars. Everyone waited with bated breath, wondering what would happen.

Around midnight, many Egyptians had deemed the threat a hoax perpetrated by that rabble-rousing malcontent, Moses, and fallen into a deep sleep. Many of the Jewish faithful had also fallen asleep, confident in the application of blood on their doorways to protect them.

Those who didn't sleep remembered hearing the whisper of a wind—an ill wind, some would later say—followed by the wails of those who had checked on their firstborn sons and found them cold and dead. Soon, the sound of those wails increased as more and more families discovered the loss of their firstborn sons as well.

*<sup>6</sup> Then there will be a great cry of anguish through all the land of Egypt such as never was before, or ever will be again. <sup>7</sup> But against all the Israelites, whether man or beast, not even a dog will snarl, so that you may know that Yahweh makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. (Exodus 11:6-7)*

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Jubal came awake, roused by an eerie chorus of wails. Levi! Did he survive? He jumped up, ran to the curtain where his children slept and swept it to one side. To his utter shock, three faces stared, wide-eyed, back at him... Mara's, Levi's and Abasi's!

Behind him, he heard a banging on the door. "Jubal! Jubal! It's Maat!"

Jubal went to the door and opened it.

"Abasi's gone!" Matt, with tears on his face, wailed.

"I know," Jubal replied. "He's here."

"What? He's *here*?"

"I'm all right, Father," Abasi said from behind Jubal.

"Oh, son, I thought I'd lost you!" Maat said, rushing past Jubal to embrace Abasi.

When the two of them had cried out some of their emotion, Maat stepped back. "Why are you here, son?"

Abasi saw Mara standing to one side and held out his hand, she took it and he pulled her close. "I spoke with Mara yesterday and she made me see the error in your, no, in *our* thinking. I lay on my bed, wide-awake, and decided to come here and pass the night with her. I sneaked in through her window."

Amsu pushed past her husband to embrace her son. "Oh, Abasi, praise the Lord God Jehovah that he led you here!"

Baniti joined her mother in a group family hug. "Do you now believe in Jehovah?" she asked.

“I do, now. I’ve ignored Mara for too long. From this day forward, I will honor only the Lord God Jehovah, for only he is the true God.”

Three faces turned toward Maat. “What do you believe, husband? Will you beat me now for my faith in Jehovah?”

Maat stood there shaking his head, fresh tears springing from his eyes.

“Come, Maat,” Jubal said, putting his arm around his neighbor’s shoulders, “we have much to discuss. Rachel, please make us all breakfast. We will get no further sleep this night.”

“Let me go back to our house to get more food,” Amsu said, “and then we can make a meal together.”

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“Now that we are brothers in Jehovah,” Maat said to Jubal, “it’s sad that you are must leave.”

“It is, indeed, but we must go, now. Pharaoh is very angry with us and Moses says we have no time to waste. I will remember you and your family in my prayers.”

“And I will pray for your family in mine.”

“Do you have the gold jewelry we gave you, Rachel?” Amsu asked.

“Yes, thank you, but it wasn’t really necessary. Your neighbors have given us so much already.”

“Please, take it. We are all members of Jehovah’s family, now. It isn’t much, but it’s the least we can do. Please look after Abasi.”

“We will. Jubal has spoken to the priest and he says he will marry him and Mara as soon as he is circumcised and has been baptized into our congregation.”

Amsu fell against Rachel and wept. “Oh, Rachel, it’s almost as if we lost Abasi that night. We’ll never see him again.”

“True, but he and Mara will unite our families further with many children, I can feel it.”

“That will give me some comfort and we don’t want to break his heart by denying his union with Mara.”

“Jubal and I will pray that Jehovah blesses you with many more sons as a reward for your faith and sacrifice.”

“Do you think he will?”

Rachel smiled at her friend. “I’m sure of it.”

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Maat put his right arm across Amsu’s shoulders and his left across Baniti’s, comforting his crying wife and daughter as their friends joined the throng leaving their homes. He could not have imagined such a thing, thousands upon thousands, laden down with gifts from their Egyptian neighbors and leading their flocks.

For four hundred years, the Jews had been slaves in the land, a land they once ruled, second only to the Pharaoh himself. Now, their God, *his* God, Jehovah, humbled Pharaoh and secured their release. Thankfully—through his son Abasi’s love for his Jewish neighbor’s daughter, Mara—the Lord God Jehovah saved him and his family, uniting him with his own chosen people. Though he would dearly miss his firstborn son, he would thank Jehovah every day for the legacy his son and their daughter would leave.

*Lord God, Jehovah, I humbly thank you for sparing Abasi, even though I stupidly ignored Jubal’s warning. Thank you, too, for being a real God to worship, instead of the dead idols of Egypt. Strengthen my resolve to teach my people the true way and keep me thankful for any blessings you choose to bestow upon my family and me. I praise your name!*

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<sup>33</sup> Now the Egyptians pressured the people in order to send them quickly out of the country, for they said, “We’re all going to die!” <sup>34</sup> So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls wrapped up in their clothes on their shoulders. <sup>35</sup> The Israelites acted on Moses’ word and asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. <sup>36</sup> And the Lord gave the people such favor in the Egyptians’ sight that they gave them what they requested. In this way they plundered the Egyptians. <sup>37</sup> The Israelites traveled from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 soldiers on foot, besides their families. <sup>38</sup> An ethnically diverse crowd also went up with them, along with a huge number of livestock, both flocks and herds. <sup>39</sup> The people baked the dough they had brought out of Egypt into unleavened loaves, since it had no yeast; for when they had been driven out of Egypt they could not delay and had not prepared any provisions for themselves. (Exodus 12:33-39)