

## Exodus 8-11, Plagues 2-9 and Warning of 10

### Overview

These chapters complete the central nine plagues, which fall into a regular structure (Table 1). In each cycle, the descriptions of the first two plagues are of comparable length, while the third, unannounced plague is much shorter (Figure 1).

| Agency                     |                        |                                   | Warning and Setting                         |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| First Cycle<br>Aaron's Rod | Second Cycle<br>No Rod | Third Cycle<br>Moses' Rod or Hand |                                             |
| 7:14-25 Nile to Blood      | 8:20-32 Swarm          | 9:13-35 Hail                      | Stand before Pharaoh at Nile in the morning |
| 8:1-15 Frogs               | 9:1-7 Cattle           | 10:1-20 Locusts                   | Go to Pharaoh (in palace?)                  |
| 8:16-19 Lice               | 9:8-12 Boils           | 10:21-29 Darkness                 | No warning                                  |

In addition to this structure, all ten plagues come in pairs (chart).<sup>1</sup>

Table 1: Structure of the Nine Plagues

The frogs come from the Nile, the same hydrological features seen in the first plague, and both plagues result in a stench:

Exo 7:17 behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in **the river**, and they shall be turned to blood. 18 And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall **stink**; ... 19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their **streams**, upon their **rivers**, and upon their **ponds**, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood;

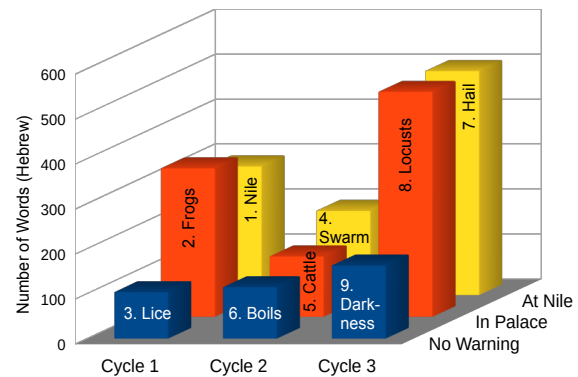


Figure 1: Length of Plague Descriptions

Exo 8:3 And **the river shall bring forth frogs** abundantly, ... 5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the **streams**, over the **rivers**, and over the **ponds**, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. ... 13 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. 14 And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land **stank**.

The lice and swarm both consist of insects.

The cattle disease and boils both describe physical ailments, afflicting first cattle, then both people and animals.

The hail and locusts both destroy the crops:

(Hail) Exo 9:31 And the **flax and the barley was smitten**: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled. 32 But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.

Exo 10:14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, ... 15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and **they did eat every herb of the**

<sup>1</sup> Cassuto, p. 92. In revision, this should be discussed with other structuring principles, before the first plague.

**land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field,** through all the land of Egypt.

The Lord smote the firstborn of Egypt at midnight (12:29), the darkest part of the night, recalling the darkness of the ninth plague.

The overall effect is a series of double punches, each pair coming from a different direction.

## 8:1-15, Second Plague: Frogs

Eventually, the waters of the Nile ran clear and became drinkable, only to yield another plague.

Like the first plague, the second is remembered in both Psalm 78 and Psalm 105, and also echoed in the bowl judgments of Rev 16 (chart). Each of these emphasizes different feature of the plague.

Psalm 78 is a warning to Israel not to depart from the Lord, as their ancestors often did. So it focuses on the destructive aspect of the frogs (think of their invasion of the kneading bowls, or the stench when they began to decay):

Ps 78:45 He sent ... frogs, which destroyed them.

The message is, “If you persist in disobeying the Lord, he can destroy you also.”

Psalm 105 is one of three Psalms that close the fourth book of the Psalter, introducing the phrase “Praise ye the Lord” (Hallelujah), which then dominates the fifth book. Its focus is praise to the Lord, and so it emphasizes how the plague of frogs shows the Lord’s domination over human rulers:

Psa. 105:30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, **in the chambers of their kings.**

In Revelation 16, the echo of the frogs is in the sixth bowl:

Rev 16:13 And I saw three **unclean spirits like frogs** come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Here, the abundance of frogs in Exodus anticipates the influence of the frog-spirits in the Revelation over “the whole world.”

Table 2 compares the features in the first two plagues. There are three differences.

1. The plague of frogs does not have the introductory divine analysis where the Lord explains to Moses and Aaron what is going on. That feature will not return until the eighth plague, the locusts.
2. Conversely, the bloody Nile does not have a section where Pharaoh tries to negotiate with

| Feature           | 7:14-25, Nile | 8:1-15, Frogs |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Divine Analysis   | 14            |               |
| Demand to Pharaoh | 15-16         | 1             |
| That you may know | 17a           | 10            |
| Warning           | 17b-18        | 2-4           |
| Exemption         | 19?           | 3? 11?        |
| Command to M&A    | 19            | 5             |
| Imposition        | 20-21         | 6             |
| Magicians         | 22a           | 7             |
| Negotiation       |               | 8-11          |
| Relief            | 24-25         | 12-14         |
| Hardening         | 22b-23        | 15            |

Table 2: Features in the First Two Plagues

Moses and Aaron, while the plague of frogs does. This is an extremely important feature of this plague, and will require careful attention.

3. In both plagues the Lord explains that his purpose is enabling Pharaoh to know him, but this statement moves from the demand (in the first plague) to the negotiation (in the second one). In the first plague, the lesson is delivered by the suffering of the plague itself. In the second, it is based on the release from the plague that comes at Pharaoh's request.

## 1, Demand

**8:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh,**—We are now in the second row of Table 1, where Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh rather than waiting for him by the river. Their direct visit emphasizes the urgency of the warning that they bring.

**and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.**—This demand appears in six of the nine plagues. It is lacking only in the third plague of each cycle, because the demand is part of their warning to Pharaoh, and in the third, sixth, and ninth plagues, there is no warning. It reminds us of a central theme of the book: the Lord is jealous of the service of his

people.

Recall the distribution of the verb “serve” (עבד *abad* H5647) and the noun “service, bondage” (עבדה *abodah* H5656)

(Figure 2, chart), which

shows a clear transition from serving Pharaoh (red

dots) to serving the Lord (blue dots).<sup>2</sup>

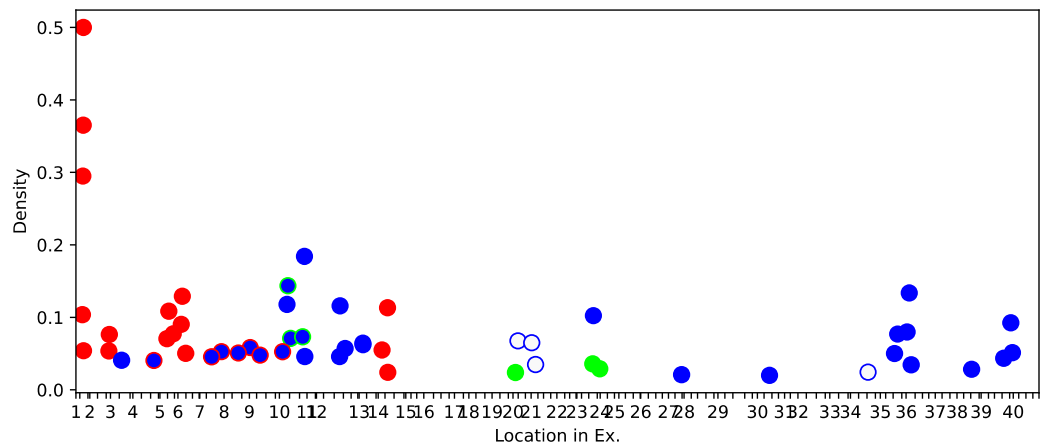


Figure 2: "To serve" *abad* and "service, bondage" *abodah* in Exodus. Recipient of service: Egyptians (red), the Lord (blue), other gods (green), daily labor (white). Red border: "let my people go, that they may serve me." Green border: "go, and serve the Lord your God."

## 2-4, Warning

**2 And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs:**—This plague aligns with an Egyptian deity, but mocks the worshippers rather than directly attacking the god. The frog-headed goddess Heqet was popular because she was believed to assist women in childbirth.<sup>3</sup> Now the plague gives the Egyptians more frogs than they could possibly want.

<sup>2</sup> Note for revision: this review of Figure 2 should move to the exposition of the first plague.

<sup>3</sup> The four male gods of the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, primary actors in a creation myth, were also sometimes represented as frogs, but Heqet was more widely worshipped.

There is a general principle here, which is illustrated in God's dealings with lustful Israel in Numbers 11 (chart). They complained about the diet, and craved flesh:

Num 11:4 And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a **lusting**: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: 6 But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.

The Lord gave them their desire abundantly, but accompanied it with judgment:

Num 11:31 And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. ... 33 And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

The Psalmist recalls the event,

Psa. 78:29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for **he gave them their own desire**; 30 They were not estranged from **their lust**. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, 31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.

Psa 106:15 And **he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul**.

How is the Egyptian's devotion to the goddess Heqet like the Israelites' desire for flesh to eat? Idolatry is loving something more than God. The foundation of God's covenant is the Shema:

Deu 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And **thou shalt love the LORD thy God** with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy ~~might~~ abundance.

That triple priority is summarized in negative form in 1 John:<sup>4</sup>

1Jn 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, **the love of the Father** is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The soul in Deut 6:5 is the life force. John describes it as "the lust of the flesh."

The mixed multitude in the desert loved their fleshly appetites more than the Lord. They failed to love him with all of their soul, their life force. So the Lord overwhelmed them with the flesh that they loved more than they loved him. Similarly, the Egyptians worshipped Heqet, the frog goddess, and the Lord gave them so many frogs that they could not avoid them. If we cling to our idols, he may sicken us with them also.

**3 And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly**,—The verb translated "bring forth abundantly," שָׂרַץ *sharats* H8317, appears only one other time in Exodus, in the account of the fertility of the children of Israel (chart):

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4 A detailed discussion of these two verses and examples of their application throughout Scripture is available at <https://cyber-chapel.org/DoctrinalStudies/ThreeChoices/ThreeChoices.pdf>.

Ex. 1:7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and **increased abundantly**, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

From the Egyptian perspective, the Israelite problem began because Heqet was too good to the children of Jacob. Now she is an annoyance to her own people! Of course, the real point is that she, with all the other demons that lie behind the gods of Egypt, is ultimately subject to the Lord. He has taken control of the Egyptian pantheon, and is using it for his glory.

**which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: 4 And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.**—As with the first plague, the Lord announces it in detail before it happens, to demonstrate his control of it.

Notice the emphasis on the facets of Egyptian society that pertain to Pharaoh. The same focus appears when the plague is removed in 8:11,

Exo 8:11 And the frogs shall depart from **thee**, and from **thy** houses, and from **thy** servants, and from **thy** people; ...

The first plague was also focused on the Egyptians, again using personal pronouns:

Exo 7:19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon **their** streams, upon **their** rivers, and upon **their** ponds, and upon all **their** pools of water, that they may become blood; ...

In both plagues, the pronouns, referring to Pharaoh and his people, suggest that the suffering is limited to the Egyptians, sparing Israel.

## 5, Command

**5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.**—Following the protocol outlined in 7:1-2, Moses directs Aaron, who invokes the plague. This is the second time that Aaron has targeted the “streams, rivers, ponds” (7:19). The resulting parallelism of the first and second plagues establishes the principle of pairs of plagues that will continue through the series.

## 6, Imposition

**6 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.**—As with the change in the Nile’s waters, while an explosion of the frog population is not unknown after the inundation, the timing here is under Aaron’s control.

## 7, Magicians

**7 And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.**—Again, the magicians demonstrate their power, though it intensifies Egypt’s woes.

## 8-11, Negotiation and Knowledge

Negotiation was not part of the first plague, but is central in the overall purpose of the plagues, which is to educate Pharaoh and the Egyptians about the Lord (chart).

The plagues grow out of Pharaoh's response when Moses and Aaron first ask him to release the children of Israel:

Exo 5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

Pharaoh denies knowing the Lord. This is an unacceptable situation. Isaiah tells us the end state that God desires for his creation:

Isa 11:9 ... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

His covenant people have been living in Egypt for 400 years, and yet the ruler of that country is able to say, "Who is the Lord? ... I know not the Lord." So the Lord determines to remedy the situation, and the plagues are the mechanism he chooses, as he says at the start of chapter 7,

Exo 7:5 And the Egyptians shall **know that I am the LORD**, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

He repeats this objective in the plague on the Nile:

Exod 7:17 ...thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

Pharaoh had declared total ignorance of the Lord, and the Lord sent the first plague to address this issue. Pharaoh proved a slow learner, seemingly unaffected by the disaster:

Exo 7:23 Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart.

So the Lord repeats the lesson with the plague of frogs, which is paired with the bloody Nile.

The whole book of Exodus is about teaching Israel who Jehovah is. Similarly, the plagues are a curriculum for teaching Pharaoh who God is. They contain numerous statements of two types (Table 3, chart): statements from Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh of the form "that thou mayest know X" (see note), and declarations by Pharaoh and his staff wrestling with their understanding of God and their responsibility to him. Both series show a progression. The propositions that God is teaching Pharaoh increase in content and detail, while the statements from the Egyptians show increasing recognition of who God is and his power over them.

We won't go over Table 3 in detail right now, but work through it as we study the individual plagues. God gives the points to be learned either just before the plague is imposed (the lesson to be learned from the plague itself), or just before it is relieved (the lesson to be learned from the relief), while Pharaoh's statements are all part of the negotiation sections. He requests negotiations precisely because his understanding is growing. Only three plagues (the cattle, the boils, and the darkness) lack these explicit statements of either educational purpose or Pharaoh's progress, and we may be able to fill those out as we study them in detail.

The three shaded cells in Table 3 are in focus in the plague of frogs. The Lord sends the first plague to teach him "that I am the LORD." When he does not respond to that plague, the Lord sends the frogs. Finally Pharaoh begins to get the message, and calls for Moses and Aaron.

**8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron,**—Each negotiation section begins with Pharaoh summoning Moses and Aaron, with the verb "to call" (קרא *qara* H7121).

|    | Plague    | Lesson (from the Plague)                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Pharaoh's Response                                                                                                                                                                                                | Lesson (from the Relief)                                                                             |
|----|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Nile      | 7:17 ... <b>thou shalt know</b> that I am the LORD                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                      |
| 2  | Frogs     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 8:8 <b>Intreat the LORD</b> , that he may take away the frogs from me                                                                                                                                             | 8:10 [the frogs will go] that <b>thou mayest know</b> that there is none like unto the LORD our God. |
| 3  | Lice      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | (8:19 magicians: this is the finger of God)                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                      |
| 4  | Flies     | 8:22 [exemption for Goshen] to the end <b>thou mayest know</b> that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth/land [of Goshen]                                                                                                 | 8:28 <b>intreat</b> for me.                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                      |
| 7  | Hail      | 9:14 ... that <b>thou mayest know</b> that there is none like me in all the earth. ... 16 ... for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. | 9:27 I have sinned this time: <b>the LORD is righteous</b> , and I and my people are wicked. 28 <b>Intreat the LORD</b> (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail                      | 9:29 the thunder shall cease ...that <b>thou mayest know</b> how that the earth is the LORD'S        |
| 8  | Locusts   | 10:2 [re Israel:] And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; <b>that ye may know</b> how that I am the LORD.    | (10:7 servants: Egypt is destroyed)<br>10:16 <b>I have sinned against the LORD your God</b> , and against you. 17 Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and <b>intreat the LORD your God</b> |                                                                                                      |
| 9  | Darkness  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                      |
| 10 | Firstborn | 11:7 <b>that ye may know</b> how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.                                                                                                                       | 12:32 <b>bless me</b> also.                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                      |

Table 3: Transcript of the Plague Academy

and said, **Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.**—Pharaoh's request shows great progress from his denial in 5:2 that he knew the Lord. Finding frogs in his breakfast muffins and between the sheets of his bed has persuaded him that there is something to this "LORD" about whom Moses and Aaron keep talking. God said, "Thou shalt know that I am the LORD," and now Pharaoh asks Moses, "Intreat the LORD."

**9 And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me:**—Moses immediately rewards Pharaoh's insight, inviting him to reassert his royal control, though under Moses' permission.

**when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only?**—Letting Pharaoh set the time emphasizes that the Lord's power is seen in his ability to predict its appearance. Unlike Pharaoh's gods, the Lord can reliably predict the future. It's not just the suffering caused by the plague that matters, but that it comes and goes at the command of the Lord's representatives.

**10 And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word:**—The time is set.

**that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.**—God makes the relief an occasion for expanding Pharaoh’s knowledge. After two plagues, he finally understands that “the LORD” is not just a Hebrew myth, but someone with whom he must deal. In the first plague, the objective was simply that Pharaoh would acknowledge YHWH as a deity:

Exod 7:17 ... thou shalt know that I am the LORD

Now the stakes are higher:

Exod 8:10 ... that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.

Not only is the Lord a god, but he is incomparable, as the next plague will demonstrate, when the Egyptian magicians find themselves unable to duplicate the plague, and are forced to confess that the Lord’s power is greater than their own.

**11 And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only.**—The wording recalls the scope of the initial warning before the imposition of the plague

Exod 8:3 [the frogs] shall go up and come into **thine** house, and into **thy** bedchamber, and upon **thy** bed, and into the house of **thy servants**, and upon **thy people**, and into **thine** ovens, and into **thy** kneadingtroughs: 4 And the frogs shall come up both on **thee**, and upon **thy people**, and upon all **thy servants**.

As we noted there, the infestation appears to be restricted to the Egyptians, sparing Israel.

## 12-14, Relief

**12 And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh:**—In each negotiation section, Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron, so the corresponding relief sections begin with Moses and Aaron “going out” (אצא *yatsa* H3318) from Pharaoh (flies, 8:29-30; hail, 9:33; locusts, 10:18).

**and Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.**—Pharaoh requested that Moses would “intreat” the Lord (עָתָר *C, atar* H6279) (chart). This verb describes a respectful request to a superior party. Moses does “intreat” the Lord, in the case of the flies (8:26, 29) and the locusts (10:18). But here he “cried” (צָעַק *tsaaq* H6817), describing a cry for help or deliverance in a time of danger (chart). In 2:23, a closely related verb describes the cry of the children of Israel that led to God’s coming out of the shadows:

Exo 2:23 And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they **cried**<sup>5</sup>, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

Why is Moses so agitated? He may recognize that he has gone a bit off-script. God told him to warn Pharaoh about the plague, and he confidently predicted its onset. But the Lord didn’t give him instructions for ending a plague. The bloody Nile apparently cleared on its own after a week. In the excitement of the moment, he Moses to Pharaoh’s request for intercession with the Lord by dramatically inviting Pharaoh to pick the time, and promising a result on that timetable.

5 The verb here is צָעַק (*zaaq* H2199), which appears only here in the Pentateuch, and is likely an orthographic variation of צָעַק. In fact (Propp 1999 p. 296) 4Q11, from Qumran, reads צָעַק, as do the Samaritan pentateuch, two medieval mss, and the paraphrase of 2:23-24 in Deut 26:7.

Now, having withdrawn from Pharaoh, he wonders whether perhaps his showmanship has gone beyond his commission.

We've seen Moses go off-script before, in chapter 5, when he and Aaron went to see Pharaoh without taking the elders as God had told them, and when they modified the message he had told them to deliver. That deviation led to a very unpleasant series of events that ended with the people calling on God to curse Moses. Perhaps, recalling that episode, he is now worried.

His very concern is a sign of growth. At first, he refused God's commission to the point of making God angry with him (4:14). Now he is yielded to the Lord, doing his best to serve him, and sensitive to the danger of falling again into a personal weakness of over-enthusiasm.

The Lord does not abandon his servant in this crisis:

**13 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses;**—We often read that Aaron and Moses, and later the children of Israel, “did as the Lord commanded.” For example,<sup>6</sup>

Exo 7:6 And Moses and Aaron did **as the LORD commanded them**, so did they.

Exo 7:20 And Moses and Aaron did so, **as the LORD commanded**; ...

Now the Lord does what they request. He delights to hear the words of his servants, and intervene on their behalf. This principle is important enough that the Scriptures call it out:

1Sa 2:30 ... **them that honour me I will honour**, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Psa 91:14 Because **he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him**: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15 **He shall call upon me, and I will answer him**: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

People without any habits of holiness sometimes criticize God, recalling an instance when they faced a major crisis and he did not answer them. But on what grounds did they expect his favor? The one prayer he guarantees to answer from an impious person is a prayer of repentance, requesting salvation. In the affairs of daily life, the principle stands, “them that honour me, I will honour.” In the sequel, Moses will often rely on the fact that the Lord is as eager to hear and respond to his cries as he is to obey the Lord.

**and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. 14 And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land stank.**—The Lord honors Moses' prayer, and kills off the frogs. But like the fish in the bloody Nile, their stench remains.

## 15a, Hardening and Prediction

**15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them;**—For the first time, Pharaoh (rather than his heart) is the subject of the verb. Recall the pattern we discussed in connection with 7:22 (Table 4, chart). Progressing from top left down to bottom right, with some alternation between the first two options,

- In plagues 1, 3, 5, 7 (and 7:13 in Hebrew): Pharaoh's **heart** is hard, the natural condition of a fallen person.
- In 2, 4, 7: **Pharaoh** hardens his heart.

<sup>6</sup> See also, in Exodus alone, 12:50; 16:34; 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31; 40:19, 21, 25, 27, 29, 32

- In 6, 8, 9: The **Lord** hardens Pharaoh's heart.

Up to this point, his heart is like that of any child of Adam. Now Pharaoh cooperates with that fallen nature. In 8:8, he has recognized that the Lord is active, but he suppresses that knowledge, showing the behavior that Paul summarizes in Romans 1,

Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

|                                 |                                 |                                                                    |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Nile<br>7:22b <b>Heart</b>   | 4. Swarm<br>8:32 <b>Pharaoh</b> | 7. Hail<br>9:34 <b>Pharaoh &amp; Servants</b><br>9:35 <b>Heart</b> |
| 2. Frogs<br>8:15 <b>Pharaoh</b> | 5. Cattle<br>9:7 <b>Heart</b>   | 8. Locusts<br>10:20 <b>Lord</b>                                    |
| 3. Lice<br>8:19 <b>Heart</b>    | 6. Boils<br>9:12 <b>Lord</b>    | 9. Darkness<br>10:27 <b>Lord</b>                                   |

Table 4: Who hardens Pharaoh's heart?

The plagues correlate suppression of knowledge and Pharaoh as the agent of hardening. The first three times his heart is the agent (1 Nile, 3 Lice, 5 Cattle), there is no negotiation, and no indication that he recognizes the Lord. Each time that he is the agent (2 Frogs, 4 Flies, 7 Hail), he has shown some recognition of the Lord's power. When the Lord finally hardens Pharaoh's heart, he is simply confirming Pharaoh in a position he has deliberately chosen.

This correlation between Pharaoh's requests for prayer, and his own role in hardening his heart, paints a sober picture. Our fallen hearts are naturally hard. But how do we respond when we see the light of the gospel? If we reject it, we are hardening our own hearts, and our condemnation is greater. Recall the Savior's words,

Mat 11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Pharaoh, like Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, had seen the Lord's mighty works. He knew in his heart that the Lord was real, and yet deliberately rejected his authority.<sup>7</sup> Pharaoh's comments show that he knows the Lord exists and is powerful, yet even with that knowledge he insists on rejecting the Lord's demands.

**as the LORD had said.**—As with the miracle of the dragon and the plague on the Nile, we are reminded that in 7:3-4, the Lord had predicted exactly this response.

## Another Example

Pharaoh's example is tragic, but not inevitable. Compare his spiritual trajectory with that of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, 900 years later (chart). Both men had spiritual heart problems:

Dan 5:20 But when **his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride**, ...

He engages both men with a series of challenges from his servants. Moses and Aaron challenge Pharaoh with the plagues. Daniel and his Hebrew companions challenge Nebuchadnezzar in a series of confrontations. In both cases, the monarch makes a series of confessions, as the confrontations progress. But Nebuchadnezzar is a much more successful student.

<sup>7</sup> Compare also Luke 12:47-48.

Nebuchadnezzar's first lesson, in Daniel 2, is a dream of a great statue in which his kingdom, the head, is replaced by several others, all of which are eventually destroyed by a stone representing the Messiah. Daniel's success in revealing this dream leads the king to confess,

Dan 2:47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that **your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings**, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.

He accepts Daniel's god as a legitimate god, but does not subject himself to the Lord, for he next constructs a physical copy of the statue, one that claims that his rule will continue forever, and commands his people to bow down to it. When Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refuse to bow down, Nebuchadnezzar casts them into a fiery furnace, where they are delivered by "one like the Son of God." In response to this frustration of his royal purpose, Nebuchadnezzar blesses their God, and forbids anyone to persecute his worshippers:

Dan 3:28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ... 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which **speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

But he continues in his pride, until God afflicts him with insanity. After that judgment, Nebuchadnezzar confesses,

Dan 4:34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and **I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever**, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: ... 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar **praise and extol and honour the King of heaven**, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Both men were pagan kings, with hearts naturally hard as fallen men, and both inclined to pride. God engages both. One resists to his destruction, while the other eventually submits.

## 16-19, Third Plague: Lice

Now we move away from the river. The next two plagues involve swarming insects (chart). The word translated "lice" appears only here in the Bible, and its meaning is not clear. Lice, gnats, and mosquitoes have all been suggested. What is clear is that they are many, and an annoyance.

The third plague in each cycle comes without warning. Pharaoh has rejected the simple warning by the Nile, and the more formal warning when Moses and Aaron come to him. Now a plague falls with no warning. If we do not heed the Lord's gentle voice, he will act without telling us.

These third plagues (lice, boils, darkness) are also much shorter than the ones with warnings (Figure 1). Like exclamation points, they highlight God's autonomy and sovereignty.

This plague is echoed in Psalm 105, but not Psalm 78 or the Revelation. Psalm 78, which rebukes Israel's periodic rebellion, omits all three of the final plagues, perhaps because they are so short, while Ps 105 remembers the third and ninth plagues in praising God for his mighty works. In particular, it groups the lice with the flies, emphasizing that the command of God was sufficient to summon them:

Psa. 105:31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts.

In this verse, the means of bringing this plague is simply, “He spake,” אָמַר (*amar* H559), the same verb used in Genesis 1 for God’s creative commands. We will see that this plague emphasizes the plagues as demonstrations of God’s creative power.

This short plague introduces no new features from the overall set, and includes only the command, the imposition, the magicians, and the hardening. However, the magicians are unable to duplicate this plague, and their evaluation provides an additional testimony against Pharaoh.

## 16, Command

**16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land,**—This plague shows the impotence of the god Geb, the god of the earth. The “dust of the land” is supposed to yield produce for the nourishment of people, and Geb is sometimes depicted with vegetation sprouting from his body.

**that it may and let it become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.**—But God has taken control of the soil, and now it yields only lice (or gnats or mosquitoes, some very small and annoying vermin).

The grammar<sup>8</sup> (chart) gives the verb “that it may become” the imperative sense of the initial commands, “Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust,” and may be translated, “and let it become lice.” With 8:17, this recalls Gen 1:3, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

## 17, Imposition

**17 And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became there was lice in man, and in beast;**—This is the second of five instances of the expression from Genesis 1, “and there was X,” reflecting the creative theme.

**all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.**—There is no indication that Israel was exempted from this plague, as they probably were from the first two. But living in slave quarters, they may have been well acquainted with lice and other vermin that proper people would find unacceptable, so this affliction would be nothing new to them.

By contrast, the lice would have serious implications for the priests, of whom it is recorded,

Their priests shave the whole body every other day, so that no lice or anything else foul may infest them as they attend upon the gods.<sup>9</sup>

This plague thus disqualifies them from serving their gods, perhaps explaining the next verse:

## 18-19a, Magicians

**18 And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.**—For the first time, the magicians are unable to duplicate the miracle, in direct fulfillment of 8:10,

Exod 8:10 that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God

<sup>8</sup> Waw-relative. I missed the implications of this construction in discussing 7:21. See revised notes on 6b-7a.

<sup>9</sup> Herodotus (ca. 450 BC), History, Book 2, ch. 37. His word for lice is φθειρ, while the LXX here uses σκνίψ.

The frogs persuaded Pharaoh of the first lesson,

Exod 7:17 ... thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

Now he has to recognize the Lord's incomparability, shown by the magicians' failure.

In the second plague, Pharaoh shows a glimmer of understanding, recognizing the Lord as the source of the disaster. He makes no such comment in the third plague, but the magicians remind him of what ought to be obvious.

**19 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God:**—Moses uses the expression “finger of God” two other times in the Pentateuch, and these may suggest its meaning here (see note). In both cases, it describes how the law of God was written:

Ex. 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the **finger of God**.

Deu 9:10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone **written with the finger of God**; ...

Much later, God's fingers are again mentioned in writing a divine message:<sup>10</sup>

Dan. 5:5 In the same hour came forth **fingers** of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Jhn 8:6 But Jesus stooped down, and **with his finger wrote** on the ground, as though he heard them not.

Perhaps the magicians are urging Pharaoh to recognize in the plague, a message from God. We might paraphrase, “This is a message from God.” Their confession anticipates the stronger comment from Pharaoh's broader circle of advisors in the plague of locusts,

Ex 10:7 And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?

## 19b, Hardening and Prediction

**and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.**—In this case, he has not confessed a knowledge of the Lord, so the diagnosis returns to the intrinsic hardness of his heart. As before

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10 This consistent association of the divine finger with revelation suggests a deeper meaning of one more instance:

Psa 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the **work of thy fingers**, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Perhaps David calls the heavens “the work of thy fingers” because of the message they convey to him, of his own insignificance. He builds on this theme of their revelatory content in Psalm 19:

Psa 19:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The heavens **declare** the glory of God; and the firmament **sheweth** his handywork. 2 Day unto day **uttereth speech**, and night unto night **sheweth knowledge**.

Compare Paul's statement of the role of creation:

Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him **from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made**, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

## 20-32, Fourth Plague: The Swarm

In “swarms of flies,” “flies” is in italics, and “swarm” (עֶרֶב *arob* H6157) is singular. It appears only here and in Psalms 78 and 105. Some Jewish commentators suggest it refers to a swarm of wild beasts, but their ability to enter into houses, as well as the pairing with lice, suggests that these pests are some kind of biting insect, perhaps stable flies. LXX translates “dogflies.”

In the second cycle, again the first plague appears in both Psalm 78 (rebuking Israel for what they have forgotten) and Psalm 105 (praising God for his deliverance). But the feature that he emphasizes differs in the two cases, reflecting the different themes of the two Psalms (chart).

Psalm 78, warning of judgment, emphasizes that the swarm, like the frogs, are destructive:

Psa 78:45 He sent ~~divers sorts of flies~~ a swarm among them, which **devoured** them; and frogs, which **destroyed** them.

Psalm 105, praising God for his power, emphasizes their pervasiveness:

Psa 105:31 He spake, and there came ~~divers sorts of flies~~ a swarm, and lice **in all their coasts**.

Table 5 shows the features in this plague.

1. While there are hints of Israelite exemption in the plagues of the bloody Nile and the Frogs, this is the first time that the exemption is explicit.
2. Unlike the first and third cycles, in this cycle, God imposes the plague without a command from Moses or Aaron.
3. Having failed to match the plague of lice, the magicians vanish. They appear only once more, in the plague of boils.

Other explicit exemptions for Israel follow in plagues 5 (cattle), 7 (hail), and 9 (darkness). This first one is marked with a peak in the density of the expression “my people” (Figure 3), just as references to the

| Feature           | 7:14-25, Nile | 8:1-15, Frogs | 8:16-19, Lice | 8:20-32, Swarm |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Divine Analysis   | 14            |               |               |                |
| Demand to Pharaoh | 15-16         | 1             |               | 20             |
| That you may know | 17a           | 10            |               | 22             |
| Warning           | 17b-18        | 2-4           |               | 21             |
| Exemption         | 19?           | 3? 11?        |               | 22             |
| Command to M&A    | 19            | 5             | 16            |                |
| Imposition        | 20-21         | 6             | 17            | 24             |
| Magicians         | 22a           | 7             | 18-19a        |                |
| Negotiation       |               | 8-11          |               | 25-29          |
| Relief            | 24-25         | 12-14         |               | 30-31          |
| Hardening         | 22b-23        | 15            | 19b           | 32             |

Table 5: Features in the Plague of the Swarm

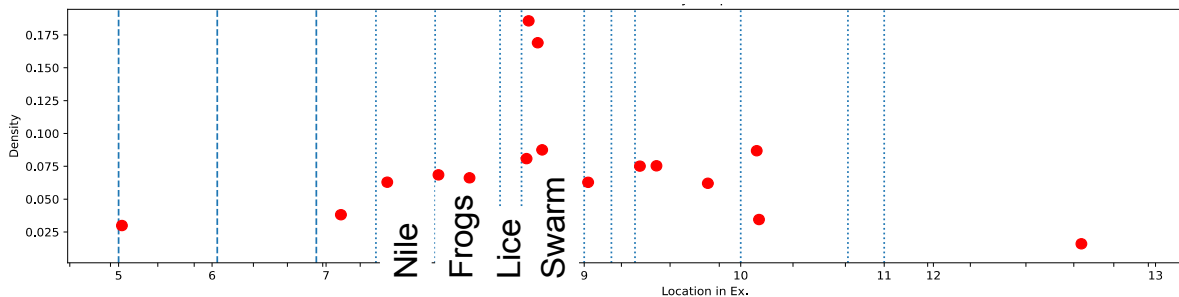


Figure 3: “My people” in the history of the plagues. The peak in ch. 8 is the plague of the swarm. (NB: Hebrew 8:1 = English 8:5.) (One more instance is in 22:24.)

Egyptians in 7:19; 8:3, 4, 11 marked implicit exemption. God displays his deity, not just in mighty works, but in caring for his people.

## 20, Demand

**20 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let **my people** go, that they may serve me.**—At the beginning of each cycle, God sends Moses and Aaron out in the morning to stand where Pharaoh will meet them. Again, the message is to let Israel go, so that they may serve the Lord.

## 21, Warning

**21 Else, if thou wilt not let **my people** go, behold, I will send the swarms<sup>11</sup> of flies upon **thee**, and upon **thy** servants, and upon **thy** people, and into **thy** houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of the swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.**—As in 7:19 and 8:3-4, 11, the pronouns suggest the plague is only on the Egyptians (chart). Compare:

Exo 8:3 And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into **thine** house, and into **thy** bedchamber, and upon **thy** bed, and into the house of **thy** servants, and upon **thy** people, and into **thine** ovens, and into **thy** kneadingtroughs: 4 And the frogs shall come up both on **thee**, and upon **thy** people, and upon all **thy** servants.

This time, however, the restriction is made explicit, emphasizing “my people,” probably because the Lord makes it the point of the lesson that he is teaching Pharaoh.

## 22-23, Exemption (Warning) and Knowledge

The Lord now explicitly exempts his people, using two distinct verbs. Each exemption clause is followed by a reminder of its pedagogical purpose (Table 6).

**22 And I will sever**<sup>12</sup> **in that day the land of Goshen, in which **my people** dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there;**—The verb

“sever,” here and in the plagues on the cattle (9:4) and the firstborn (11:7), designates God’s special treatment of his people. The focus is on the land of Goshen, but the reason for selecting this region is that “my people dwell” there.

This distinction was Joseph’s decision when he brought his family to Egypt (chart).

Gen 46:33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth

| Description of Exemption                                                                                    | Meaning of Exemption                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 22 I will <b>sever</b> (פלה C <i>palah</i> H6395) the <b>land</b> of Goshen                                 | I am the Lord in the midst of the <b>land</b> |
| 23 I will <b>put a division redemption</b> (פדת <i>pedut</i> H6304) between my <b>people</b> and thy people | Tomorrow shall this <b>sign</b> be            |

Table 6: Pedagogical Structure of First Exemption Section

11 אֶת־הַצִּדִּי, “the swarm.” Of the seven references in Exodus, only two (8:18/22, 20/24) are indefinite. “The mixture” is presented as a mysterious but well-defined agent of judgment.

12 The verb is פלה C *palah* H6395, which appears only in Exodus (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7; 33:16) and once in Ps 4:3 (MT v4). It is a by-form of פלא *pala* H6381, which appears in Exodus only as the participle, “wonders or marvels,” 3:20; 34:10. The latter form has taken on the special meaning “to be wonderful.”

even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

He apprehended the danger of conflict between the nomadic lives of shepherds and the settled lives of the agricultural Egyptians. Even more, he probably anticipated the danger of assimilation to Egyptian society, which would compromise his family's covenant commitment to the God of Abraham, and intermarriages, which would lose the distinctiveness of the seed to whom God made the promises. Now that physical separation provides a convenient way for the Lord to spare them the impact of several of the plagues.

The only use of this verb outside of Exodus is by David, probably recalling God's special care for Israel in the plagues.

Psa 4:3 But know that the LORD hath **set apart** him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

Peter gives other examples of God's special care for his people in the midst of judgment, and concludes,

2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to **deliver the godly out of temptations**, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

God's judgments must surely fall on a wicked world, but we should take comfort, as David and Peter did, in our Lord's commitment to protect us. We may suffer tribulation (persecution from unbelievers), but our Savior has borne God's wrath against sin, and we need never fear that.

**to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth/land.**—This exemption motivates a third lesson from the Lord for Pharaoh. Note the progression.

In the plague of the bloody Nile, he is simply introducing himself:

Exod 7:17 ... thou shalt know that I am the LORD

Pharaoh recognizes this lesson when he asks Moses to intreat the Lord to remove the frogs.

When Moses agrees to remove the frogs, he presents the next lesson, emphasizing God's incomparability:

Exo 8:10 ... that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.

The Lord conveyed this lesson by ending the magicians' ability to mimic the plagues.

This third lesson emphasizes God's special relationship to his people. Having just mentioned the land (אֶרֶץ *erets* H776) of Goshen as the home of the Israelites, the Lord, who brings these plagues, claims to be "in the midst of the land," using the same Hebrew word. In other words, he is personally in the midst of Goshen.<sup>13</sup> Each demand reminds Pharaoh that Israel is "my people" ("Let my people go, that they may serve me"), and now he takes his stand in their midst, defending them from the swarm, as he will later hover over them during the plague on the firstborn (see discussion of the verb פָּסַח *pasach* H6452 in 12:23).

**23 And I will put a division redemption between my people and thy people:**—Now the exemption moves from the land where the people live, to the people themselves. The word "division" (פְּדוּת *pedut* H6304) elsewhere in the OT uniformly means "redemption," and we

<sup>13</sup> The conjunction of "midst of the land" with "land of Goshen" suggests that the lesson focuses on Israel's privileged position, under the Lord's care, rather than all of Egypt or the whole earth. God's universal dominion over all the earth will come out in a later lesson, 9:14 "all the earth," 9:29 "the earth is the Lord's."

ought not to evade this usage.<sup>14</sup> The important difference between the children of Israel and the Egyptians is not where they live, but their relation to God, and that relation depends on redemption, paying a price to deliver someone from a controlling power.

The great redemption, of course, is the Exodus itself, and the imperfect here may point beyond the exemption from plague of the swarm to that greater deliverance. So this exemption, and the others that follow it (cattle, locusts, darkness), become a type of the final exodus. This linkage is confirmed by Isaiah's use of the term, which links it to echoes of the judgments on Egypt:

Isa 50:2 Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem [held back from redemption פדות]? or have I no power to deliver? Behold,

*Crossing the Red Sea:*

at my rebuke I dry up the sea,

*Plague 1, Judgment on the Nile:*

I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

*Plague 9, Darkness:*

3 I clothe the heavens with blackness,

*Mourning over the firstborn:*

and I make sackcloth their covering.

The next clause reinforces this idea that the exemption has a more extensive meaning:

**to morrow shall this sign be.**—This is the only time that a plague is called a “sign.” In general, Israel receives “signs,” while the Egyptians receive “wonders,” and this miracle assures Israel of God's care for them, anticipating their full deliverance.

## 24, Imposition

**24 And the LORD did so;**—In this second cycle, Moses and Aaron is to warn Pharaoh, and negotiate with him, but God imposes the plagues directly, without their commanding them.

**and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt:**—As in v. 21, the exemption is not only explicit, but also implied by focusing the plague on Pharaoh and his people.

**the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.**—Recall the verbs in Psalm 78,

Psa. 78:45 He sent ~~divers sorts of flies~~ **a swarm** among them, which **devoured** them; and frogs, which destroyed them.<sup>15</sup>

## 25-29, Negotiation

**25 And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.**—Pharaoh is paying attention. Moses had said that the Lord is “in the midst of the

<sup>14</sup> See note for discussion of this root and comparison with גאל *gaal* H1350.

<sup>15</sup> The Psalm uses שחת *shachat* H7843, the verb used here of the flies, to describe the consequence of the frogs, and describes the flies with אכל *akal* H398.

land” (8:22), referring to Goshen itself. Very well, then, Pharaoh responds, if he is there, they can sacrifice to him without leaving home.

**26 And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?**—Sacrifice was important to the Egyptians, as well as to Israel. The Greek historian Herodotus, about 450 BC, records that the sacrifice of bulls was carefully regulated by the priests, who examined the animal for any defects (even a hair of the wrong color), and attached a certificate of approval to the animal. He writes:

History 2:38 But the penalty is death for sacrificing a bull that the priest has not marked.

History 2:41 All Egyptians sacrifice unblemished bulls and bull-calves; they may not sacrifice cows: these are sacred to Isis.

And different sects forbade the sacrifice of sheep, or goats (History 2:42, 46). Israel’s offerings would not be subject to review by the Egyptian priests, and thus could cause civil unrest.

Pharaoh mentioned Israel’s sacrifices once before, in 8:8, but the verb dominates this plague (Figure 4). This

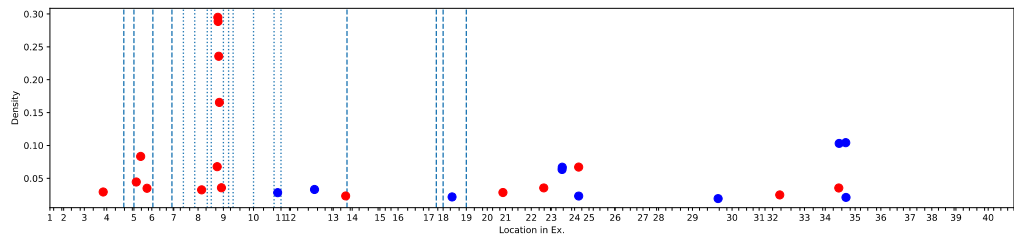


Figure 4: Sacrifice זָבַח *zbx* Verb H2076 (red) and Noun H2077 (blue) in Exodus

emphasis is probably setting the stage for the next plague. Pharaoh clearly recognizes the importance of sacrifice to the Israelites, yet refuses to let them go, and so in plague 5, the Lord destroys the cattle of Egypt, making it impossible for them to sacrifice.

**27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.**—Moses now repeats the request that God gave him at Horeb, and that he already delivered in Exodus 5,

Exo 3:18 ... and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, **three days' journey into the wilderness**, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

Exo 5:3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, **three days' journey into the desert**, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; ...

These references have caused some concern about Moses’ honesty. Most proposals for the location of Mount Sinai are more than three days’ journey from Goshen (see note), and in the event, they went for three days without reaching Sinai:

Exo 15:22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and **they went three days** in the wilderness, and found no water.

Was Moses being dishonest in asking only for three days? He knew they were heading at first to Mount Horeb, more than three days from Egypt, and then on to Canaan.

We need to keep in mind other examples of negotiations in the OT. One approach is to start off asking for more than you expect to get, and then working down. But in the culture of the Old

Testament, sometimes one starts with a modest request and then moves to a more extreme one, perhaps on the theory that if you can get your partner to say “yes” at the start, then they will be reluctant to say “no” later. One example of this is Abraham’s negotiation with the Lord to spare Sodom (Gen. 18:23-32) His objective is protecting Lot and his family, four people, but he thinks that might be too few to justify sparing the city, and so he begins by proposing that perhaps there could be as many as 50 righteous. Then, when the Lord agrees, Abraham raises the stakes, asking the Lord to spare it for 40, then 30, then 20, then 10.

In the same way, if Pharaoh had agreed to three days, Moses would no doubt have asked for more. But in fact each time Pharaoh appears to agree, he immediately withdraws his permission. Ultimately, with the death of the firstborn, both Pharaoh and his people urge the children of Israel to leave, without condition or restriction (chart):

Exo 12:31 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. 32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and **be gone**; and bless me also. 33 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.

**28 And Pharaoh said, I [myself] will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness;**—When Pharaoh finally does give permission, he phrases it in a way that claims continuing control. He adds the explicit personal pronoun to the verb, “to emphasize his majesty and to stress that all depends upon him.”<sup>16</sup>

**only ye shall not go very far away:**—He approves of a short trip, only to reverse in 8:32.

**intreat for me.**—As with the frogs (8:8), Pharaoh acknowledges that the Lord has power over him, and asks Moses to intercede.

With the frogs, Moses turned Pharaoh’s request into a theatrical demonstration, and then, fearful that he had exceeded his commission, cried out to the Lord to remove the plague (8:12). This time, confident in the Lord’s purpose and much less dramatically, he simply intreats the Lord:

**29 And Moses said, Behold, I [myself] go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD—**Pharaoh’s phrasing of the permission, “I myself,” claimed that he was in control, but his need for Moses’ intercession shows that in fact Moses is in control, and Moses returns his grammatical gesture to emphasize this: “You need me to bring relief.”

Each time that Moses intercedes for Pharaoh, he does it in Pharaoh’s absence:

Exo 8:12 And Moses and Aaron **went out** from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.

Exo 9:29 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am **gone out of the city**, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail;

Exo 10:18 And **he went out** from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD. 19 And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

Pagan magicians make a public display of their art, to impress their audience. Compare what Naaman expected Elisha to do (chart):

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<sup>16</sup> Cassuto

2Ki 5:11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

And recall how demonstrative the prophets of Baal were on Mt. Carmel:

1Ki 18:26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and **called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon**, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And **they leaped upon the altar which was made**. . . . 28 And **they cried aloud, and cut themselves** after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

Our Savior warns against such demonstrations.

Mat 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for **they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men**. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, **enter into thy closet**, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Godly prayer is not a dramatic demonstration, but private, earnest intercession with the Lord.

**that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow:**—Note again the implicit restriction of the plague to the Egyptians.

**but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.**—The word “deal deceitfully” (תָּלַל *talal* H2048, see note) refers to deception exercised by a superior to an inferior,<sup>17</sup> and has the sense of playing games or toying with someone. An instructive parallel is Laban’s behavior toward Jacob, as Jacob reports to his wives:

Gen. 31:7 And your father hath **deceived** me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

In both cases, the deception is a repeated phenomenon.

## 30-31, Relief

**30 And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.**—The first time he prayed for the end of a plague, with the frogs, he was uncertain whether God would answer him, and cried out. This time, more mature, he simply brings his request.

**31 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses;**—As in 8:13, the Lord responds to word of the one who has been obedient to his word.

**and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.**—When the Lord removed the frogs, the people still had to deal with the stench of the rotting frogs. This time, the completeness of the deliverance is emphasized.

## 32, Hardening

**32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.**—The negotiation section shows that Pharaoh’s hardness is not just the natural condition of an

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<sup>17</sup> TDOT. The only exception is Job 13:9, which emphasizes the absurdity of people seeking to deceive God.

unsaved heart, but the deliberate rejection of light that God has shown to him, so we are told, not just that his heart is hard, but that he hardened it, as in second plague.

Every plague ends with a report of Pharaoh's hard heart. Up until now, each report reminds us that his behavior was "as the Lord had said," referring to the prediction of 7:4,

Exo 7:4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

This is the first time this notice is omitted. It will appear just two more times, in plague 6 (the boils, 9:12) and 7 (the hail, 9:35). Thus, overall, it appears in both plagues dealing with the Nile (1 and 2), and just one in each of the succeeding pairs. Apparently, Moses feels he has emphasized the Lord's predictive knowledge sufficiently.

## 9:1-7, Fifth Plague: Cattle

Each major plague<sup>18</sup> so far introduces a new feature (Table 7, chart). The plague on the Nile includes a divine analysis that will not appear again until the eighth plague. The frogs introduce negotiation between Pharaoh and God's messengers. The swarm exempts Israel explicitly for the first time, and the magicians are suddenly powerless. But how does the plague on the cattle advance the story? It doubles the explicit exemption for Israel, which reinforces the lesson of the swarm in 8:22, "to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land [of Goshen]." But it also provides further insight on the entire set of plagues, through the word "murrain" in 9:3.<sup>19</sup>

| Feature           | 7:14-25, Nile | 8:1-15, Frogs | 8:20-32, Swarm | 9:1-7, Cattle |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Divine Analysis   | 14            |               |                |               |
| Demand to Pharaoh | 15-16         | 1             | 20             | 1             |
| That you may know | 17a           | 10            | 22             |               |
| Warning           | 17b-18        | 2-4           | 21             | 2-3           |
| Exemption         | 19?           | 3? 11?        | 22             | 4-5, 6b-7     |
| Command to M&A    | 19            | 5             |                |               |
| Imposition        | 20-21         | 6             | 24             | 6a            |
| Magicians         | 22a           | 7             |                |               |
| Negotiation       |               | 8-11          | 25-29          |               |
| Relief            | 24-25         | 12-14         | 30-31          |               |
| Hardening         | 22b-23        | 15            | 32             | 7b            |

Elsewhere in the OT, this Hebrew word (דֶּבֶר *deber* H1698) is translated

"pestilence" (chart). It is one of God's four judgments in Leviticus 26, summarized by Ezekiel,

Ezk 14:21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the **sword**, and the **famine**, and the noisome **beast**, and the **pestilence *deber***, to cut off from it man and beast?

The plague on the cattle is a serious disease, as are boils in the next plague and the death of the firstborn (though these are not called a *deber*). Other plagues also align with these classic judgments: the frogs, lice, and swarm are noisome beasts, and the hail and locusts threaten famine, while God's final judgment on Egypt, at the Red Sea, is described as an act of war:

<sup>18</sup> The first and second plague in each cycle.

<sup>19</sup> Cassuto observes the emphasis on this term by repetition of the root דבר in this section, including the verb (instead of the usual אמר) in 9:1, and the noun "thing" in 9:4, 5, 6.

Ex. 14:14 The LORD shall **fight להם lacham H3898** for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Ex. 14:25 And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD **fighteth lacham** for them against the Egyptians.

Only the first and last of the nine plagues, the Nile and the darkness, fall outside this framework.

*Deber* “pestilence” appears once more in the plagues, in introducing the hail in 9:15. The KJV renders that verse as a prediction, but the verbs there are past tense, not future, and the verse is not describing what will happen, but what could have happened, probably referring to 9:3.

Exod 9:15 For now I ~~will stretch~~ could have stretched out my hand, ~~that I may smite~~ and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence דָּבַר; and thou ~~shalt be~~ wouldst have been cut off from the earth.

In other words, the pestilence on the cattle is a “shot across the bow,” as are the boils. The Lord is showing that he could have destroyed all of the Egyptians as easily as he destroyed their cattle.

This plague and the boils are not mentioned in either Psalm 78 or 105. Psalm 78 does mention pestilence, but on people, not animals, probably referring to the death of the firstborn:

Psa 78:49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the **pestilence**.

## 1, Demand

**9:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.**—The plague starts as does each of the other major plagues, with God’s demand.

## 2-3, Warning

**2 For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, 3 Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field,**—This detail is important in qualifying 9:6, which says that all the cattle died, for 9:19 says that some remain, at risk from the hail.

**upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain (דָּבַר *deber* H1698).**—This plague alone is described as *deber* “pestilence,” and shows what God could do to all of Egypt if he chose.

## 4-5, Exemption (Warning)

**4 And the LORD shall sever<sup>20</sup> between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.**—As with the swarm, God explicitly exempts Israel.

**5 And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land.**—Again, the heart of each miracle is not that bad things happen, but that they occur on cue.

<sup>20</sup> פלה C *palah* H6395, as in 8:22

## 6a, Imposition

**6 And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died:**—As throughout the second cycle, the Lord initiates the plague directly, without a command from Moses or Aaron.

## 9:6b-7, Exemption (Execution)

**but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.**—The exemption is doubled to make sure that we notice it.

**7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead.**—Pharaoh doesn't try to negotiate, but he is at least curious whether the promised exemption occurred. It reinforces the lesson of 8:22, the Lord is in the midst of the land.

## 7b, Hardening

**And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.**—As with the Swarm, there is no reference to the Lord's prediction of his hardness.

## 8-12, Sixth Plague: Boils

As the last plague in its cycle, this account is very short, and includes only the command, imposition, and hardening, along with a final reference to the magicians. The plague is not mentioned in either Psalm 78 or 105, but it leads the bowl judgments in the Revelation (chart):

Rev 16:2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell **a noisome and grievous sore** upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

In the pairs of plagues, it is associated naturally with the pestilence on cattle in the previous plague, and in the four judgments of Ezek 14:21.

## 8-9, Command

**8 And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron,**—Each of the other plagues in this cycle begins with the Lord's instruction to Moses. This is the only one in which he gives the instruction jointly to both of them.

**Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace,**—The word for "furnace" here refers to a kiln, used for making pottery, burning lime, or blowing glass (see note). The relevance of this symbol is not clear. Most commonly, people associate it with the production of bricks by the Israelites, but the use of straw in these bricks, as well the scarcity of baked bricks in ancient Egypt in general, makes a link with the Israelites unlikely.

This is the first plague that threatens people with death, and as an extension of the "pestilence" upon the cattle, referred to in 9:15, it would remind them of their mortality. Of many ceramic items produced by the Egyptians, one of the most common is canopic jars, used to store the internal organs as part of the process of embalming a mummy (Figure 5). Perhaps ashes from the kilns used to make these jars were used to emphasize the threat that the Lord is making against

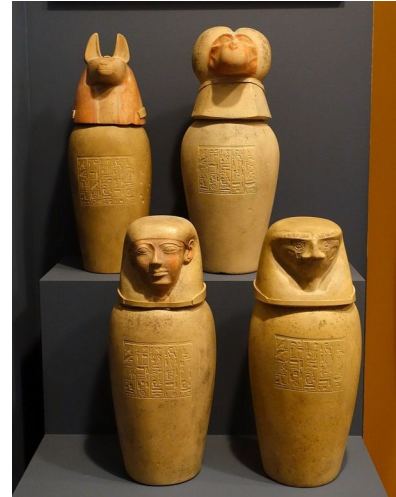
the Egyptians, to be realized finally in the coming death of the firstborn.

**and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 And ~~it shall~~ let it become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and ~~shall~~ let it be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.**—Grammatically, the verb “shall be a boil” has the same jussive force as “let Moses sprinkle,” and could be translated, “let a boil break forth.” Together with v.10, this is another instance of the creative formula of Gen 1:3.

## 10, Imposition

**10 And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh;**—Contrast v. 11. They could stand before Pharaoh; the magicians could not.

**and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and ~~it became~~ there was a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.**—With v.9, “and there was X” completes the Gen 1:3 creation language.



*Figure 5: Canopic jars for storing internal organs after embalming, a common product of the kilns of Egypt*

## 11, Magicians

**11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils;**—Moses could stand before Pharaoh (v. 10), but they could not even stand before Moses. This is the last mention of the magicians, and simply ushers them off the stage.

**for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.**— “All the Egyptians” suggests an implicit exemption for Israel, as in the first and second plagues.

## 12a, Hardening and Prediction

**12 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them;**—Here, for the first time, the Lord is the agent of hardening, as he had predicted in 4:21 and 7:3.  
**as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.**—Again, we are reminded of the prediction in 7:4.

## 13-35, Seventh Plague: Hail

This is the longest plague description we have seen so far.<sup>21</sup> Like Nile and Frogs, the other plagues that come first in their cycles, it appears in all three of the later citations (chart):

Psa 78:48 He gave up their cattle also to the **hail**, and their flocks to **hot thunderbolts**.

Psa 105:32 He gave them **hail** for rain, and **flaming fire** in their land.

Rev 16:21 [seventh bowl] And there fell upon men a great **hail** out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

<sup>21</sup> The only longer one is the locusts, by just two words.

In the four judgments of Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel 14, the hail and locusts bring famine, destroying the crops.

Table 8 shows this plague's features. It is the most complete since the frogs, lacking only the magicians, and emphasizes two features.

1. The lesson taught (vv. 14-17, 29) is longer than previously, and has two parts.
2. The exemption section is doubled. This also happened in the plague on the cattle, but this time, the exemption is open to the Egyptians, if they obey the Lord.

| Feature           | 7:14-25<br>Nile | 8:1-15<br>Frogs | 8:20-32<br>Swarm | 9:1-7,<br>Cattle | 9:13-35<br>Hail |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Divine Analysis   | 14              |                 |                  |                  |                 |
| Demand to Pharaoh | 15-16           | 1               | 20               | 1                | 13              |
| That you may know | 17a             | 10              | 22               |                  | 14-17,<br>29    |
| Warning           | 17b-18          | 2-4             | 21               | 2-3              | 18              |
| Exemption         | 19?             | 3? 11?          | 22               | 4-5,<br>6b-7     | 19-21,<br>26    |
| Command to M&A    | 19              | 5               |                  |                  | 22              |
| Imposition        | 20-21           | 6               | 24               | 6a               | 23-25           |
| Magicians         | 22a             | 7               |                  |                  |                 |
| Negotiation       |                 | 8-11            | 25-29            |                  | 27-32           |
| Relief            | 24-25           | 12-14           | 30-31            |                  | 33              |
| Hardening         | 22b-23          | 15              | 32               | 7b               | 34-35           |

## 13, Demand

**13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.**—Again, at the start of the cycle, Moses goes out to meet Pharaoh. As in each major plague, he delivers the demand to let the people go.

Table 8: Shifting focus in the Major Plagues

## 14-17, Knowledge

In introducing this concluding cycle, the Lord gives the motive for all of his plagues. This is the most extensive statement of God's educational purpose in the entire series.

**14 For I will am at this time send sending all my plagues** מִגִּפֶּה—The verb is not a threat of future judgment, but a participle, describing the whole set of plagues, the six that are past as well as the three to come.

**upon thine heart,**—Note the target. The plagues may impact crops, cattle, and rivers, but the ultimate objective is to touch Pharaoh's heart (note singular pronoun).

**and upon thy servants, and upon thy people;**—The preposition changes.<sup>22</sup> God is sending the plagues *to* Pharaoh's heart, by bringing them *on* his servants and people (not their hearts). He is trying to address Pharaoh's heart by touching those for whom Pharaoh should care.

Compare the Lord's focus on caring for his people in 9:17, where he views Pharaoh's main offense as being against his people:

Exo 9:17 As yet exaltest thou thyself **against my people**, that thou wilt not let them go?

This plague is a contest not just of the power of Pharaoh vs. God, but of the love and care of each for his people. Pharaoh's hardness to the plagues reflects his indifference to the suffering of his people. The Lord persists until his people are delivered.

22 "Upon thine heart" is אֶל־לִבְּךָ, while "upon thy servants and upon thy people" is וְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְעַמְּךָ.

**that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.**—This is the most extreme lesson so far (chart). The first was simply for Pharaoh to recognize that Jehovah is real:

Exod 7:17 ... thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

Then the magicians learned that in their sphere of influence,

Exod 8:10 ... there is none like unto the LORD our God.

Then, by sparing Goshen, he taught Pharaoh,

Exod 8:22 I am the LORD in the midst of the land [of Goshen]

Now there is none like him (the lesson he taught the magicians), in all the earth (not just the land of Goshen). Pharaoh's final lesson, at the end of this plague in 9:29, is that the Lord is not only the greatest God in all the earth, but that the earth itself belongs to him. (The plural pronouns "you" in 10:2 and 11:7 show that these lessons are for the Hebrews and the Egyptians as groups, respectively.)

This global lesson leads to an expanded revelation of God's purposes.

**15 For now I will stretch could have stretched out my hand, that I may smite and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence רָצָה; and thou shalt be wouldst have been cut off from the earth.**—The verbs are past tense, not future, and refer to the close escapes that God has already given Pharaoh in the sicknesses on cattle and people in the previous two plagues.<sup>23</sup>

**16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.**—Paul quotes this amazing statement in Rom 9:17 to support his exposition of the sovereignty of God, that is, "that there is none like me in all the earth." The claim merits careful study (Figure 6, chart).

The main proposition is "I have raised thee up," "caused thee to stand" (עמד *amad* H5975), as subject to God's control as the magicians (9:10, 11). This is a major step forward in God's revelation of himself. (See note on עמד in Exodus.)

- He was barely visible at all in chapter 1, while the children of Israel were under oppression in the land where they were refugees.
- Then, at the end of chapter 2, God steps out of the shadows, and presents himself as aware of the cries of his enslaved people, and engaged to deliver them. But he is still presented as responding to antecedent events. The perspective so far is that wicked people rise up under their own (or possibly Satanic) power, and God steps in to fix things.

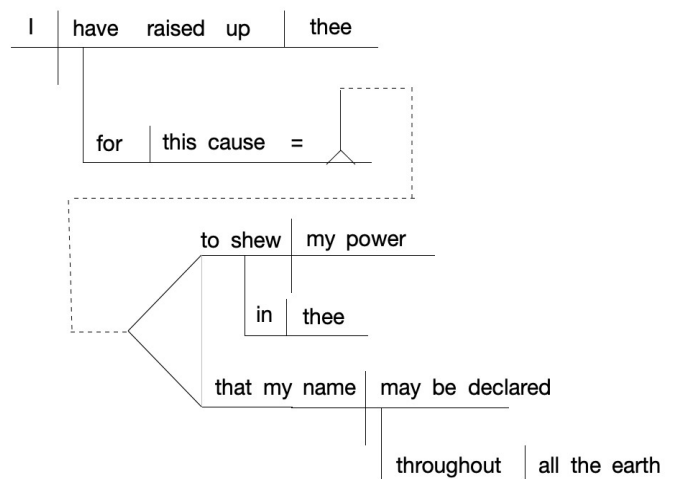
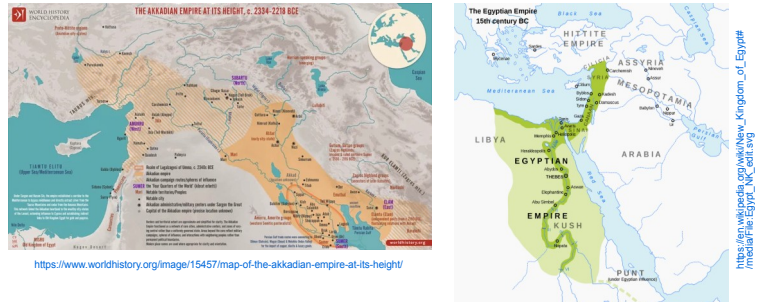


Figure 6: Diagram of 9:16

23 For an excellent defense of this position, see W.A. Ford, *God, Pharaoh and Moses: Explaining the Lord's Actions in the Exodus Plagues Narrative*. Paternoster Biblical Monographs. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006 (reprinted by Wipf & Stock, 2007). Durham PhD dissertation available at <https://etheses.durham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1773>.

## Exodus 8-11

- Now he claims that Pharaoh's very existence is due to his sovereign purposes. History is not about God's response to otherwise autonomous events. It is all driven by him. He is not passive, but active; not the responder, but the initiator.



Two purpose clauses explain why he has raised up Pharaoh.

First, he desires to show his power. At this time (the eighteenth dynasty, 1570-1069 BC), Egypt was arguably the most powerful empire on earth, reaching all the

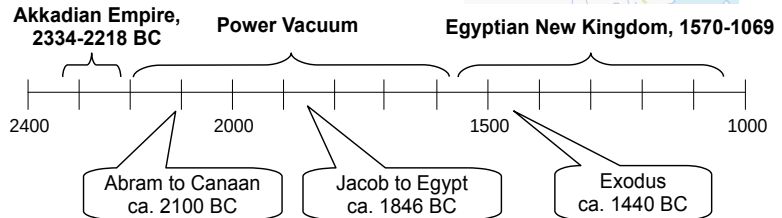


Figure 7: The Lord Picks his Fight

way from Ethiopia in the south to Turkey in the north, and firmly in control of the land that God promised Abraham (Figure 7, chart)). When a strong man wants to show his power, he challenges the person who currently has the reputation for being most powerful. At the time of the Exodus, that person was the emperor of Egypt.

Egypt was not always the big dog. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, Akkadia under Sargon 6<sup>th</sup> was dominant, extending its control toward Canaan. But in between, there was a power vacuum in the area, and this is when God promised Canaan to Abraham (ca. 2100 BC).

It would be an easy time for Abraham to move in, establish a family, and take over the land. But that would not show God's power. Instead he sends Abraham's descendants to Egypt, reduces them to slavery, and raises up Egyptian rulers who establish definitive control over Canaan. Then he declares his intention to deliver Israel from their bondage and give them the land promised to Abraham. He has orchestrated Egypt's history in general, and this Pharaoh in particular, to set up an appropriate stage on which to demonstrate that he, the Lord God of Israel, is more powerful than anyone else on earth.

Second, he wants his name to be declared throughout all the earth. God is in the business of exalting himself. By overthrowing Egypt, he gains a lasting reputation. Recall the words of Rahab in Jericho, a generation later (chart):

Jos 2:9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10 For we have heard how **the LORD** dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: **for the LORD your God, he is God** in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

Or of the Philistines, four hundred years after the Exodus:

1Sa 4:8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of **these mighty Gods**? these are **the Gods that smote the Egyptians** with all the plagues in the wilderness.

They mixed up the details. They were fighting a single God, and the Egyptian plagues didn't happen in the wilderness. But God achieved his purpose, to make himself known through his dealings with Pharaoh. Even so, in our day, when the world seems so confused, we need to remember that God is in control, working all things to maximize his own ultimate glory.

**17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?**—God sees his offense as “against my people,” rather than against the Lord! God promised Abraham,

Gen 12:3 I will bless them that bless thee, and **curse him that curseth thee:**

And after the captivities, when Judah had returned to the land, the Lord's messenger declares,

Zec 2:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; ... he that toucheth you **toucheth the apple of his eye.**

Compare 9:14. This plague is directed “upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people.” God's strategy for getting to Pharaoh's heart is by hitting his people. Like a shepherd with his sheep, a ruler is responsible to care for his people. Pharaoh ignores the effect of the plagues on his people, as long as he is not inconvenienced. The Lord cares deeply for his people, and takes any offense against them personally.

## 18, Warning

**18 Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.**—Hail is very rare in Egypt, because of the desert climate, and when it does occur, it is only along the coastal regions. This incident, exempting coastal Goshen and afflicting the Nile valley, would be unprecedented.

## 19-21, Exemption (Warning, Egyptians)

This plague has two exemption sections. The first is for the Egyptians. Including them as well as Israel reflects God's purpose in 9:16 to reveal himself to all the world.

God promised Abraham that “in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:2). Exodus is focused on how the family of Jacob, Abraham's descendant, became a nation, heirs of the promises that God made him, and it emphasizes how God punishes the Egyptians, who try to hinder them. But to us who are Gentiles, this exemption for the Egyptians reminds us that salvation is available to everyone, Jew or Gentile, who calls on the name of the Lord.

**19 Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.**—For the first time, the Lord gives Pharaoh a way to avoid the consequences of the judgment.

**20 He that feared יִרָא the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: 21 And he that regarded לֹב אֵל not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.**—The negative expression recalls Pharaoh's response to the bloody Nile in the first plague:<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See note. The verbs differ in the two expressions. The one here focuses on paying attention to the moral and revelatory issues involved, while the one in 7:23 focuses simply on the physical circumstances.

Ex. 7:23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he **set שִׁית his heart** to this also.

These contrasting examples emphasize the importance of God's word as medication for spiritual heart disease:

Psa 119:11 Thy **word** have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

## 22, Command

**22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, ~~that there may~~ and let there be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.**—This and v. 24 recall the creation language of Genesis 1, as we see also in the ninth plague. “The land of Egypt” anticipates the exemption of “the land of Goshen,” v. 26.

## 23-25, Imposition

**23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground;**—In this third cycle, Moses invokes the judgments.

**and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. 24 So and there was hail,**—This is the fourth instance of the Genesis 1 creation language.

**and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.**—This devastation would lead to severe food shortages.

## 26, Exemption (Execution, Israel)

**26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.**—But again, God spares his own people.

## 27-32, Negotiation (chart)

**27 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.**—This is Pharaoh's deepest insight so far. Twice (8:8, 28) he has asked Moses to pray for him, to remove the plague (Table 3). Like many people, he wants a god who can make him comfortable, but he has no sense of his own sin. Now, for the first time, he shows a sense of his moral failing. But the prayer he wants Moses to offer is for relief from the plague, not deliverance from his sin.

**28 Intreat the LORD (for it is enough)<sup>25</sup> that there be no more mighty thunderings (קִלְתֵּי אֱלֹהִים “voices of the gods”) and hail;**—Pharaoh is trying to make sense out of the relation of the Lord whom Moses and Aaron serve and the gods in the Egyptian pantheon. The Egyptians

25 The connection of רַב is difficult. The accentuation with *zaqeph gadol* following *zaqeph qaton* on “Lord” would suggest that the break comes before it, “enough of the thunder and hail” (Gesenius §15f.4), but the sense is difficult (Garrett), and the idea that Pharaoh is in fact confessing the sufficiency of the Lord over the gods of thunder is appealing.

worshipped three gods who were associated with thunder: the sky goddess Nut, and the Canaanite deities Baal and Resheph.<sup>26</sup> He no longer has magician-priests at his disposal to manage the Egyptian gods, and his statement, “it is enough” appears to grant that since this Lord of the Israelites can bring the thunder and hail, he can also stop it.

**and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.**—He appears to offer, not just a weekend, but an absolute release.

**29 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city,**—Once more, Moses does not attempt high drama, but withdraws to intercede with the Lord.

**I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail;**—Again, he predicts the outcome.

**that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S.**—This is the only plague that gives two lessons, one before and the other after the imposition of the plague. Correlate this with the Lord’s instructive purpose in 9:14-16.

Exo 9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that **there is none like me in all the earth.**

Not only is the Lord in all the earth, and without peer, but in fact the entire earth belongs to him.

This is the final lesson addressed to Pharaoh alone (“thou”). The last two (10:2; 11:7) are addressed to Israel.

**30 But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.**—Moses knows this because God said so!

Exo 7:3 And I will ... multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 But **Pharaoh shall not hearken** unto you, ...

Moses often refers to “the Lord, the God of Israel” or “the Lord, the God of the fathers,” but this is the only place he ever refers to “the and God” absolutely. He appears to be rebutting Pharaoh’s distinction between the Lord from the gods of thunder in v. 28,<sup>27</sup> reinforcing the theme of this plague that “there is none like [the Lord] in all the earth” (v. 14).

**31 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled. 32 But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up.**—Moses emphasizes the agricultural impact. Having referred to the judgment of pestilence in 9:15, he now draws attention to the judgment of famine.

Notice God’s restraint. He cleaves the wheat and rye to grow up and provide some food, if only Pharaoh will repent. Pharaoh does not repent, and the locusts of the eighth plague finish the destruction. Compare the incremental warning in the pestilence on the cattle, the boils on people, and finally the death of the firstborn. God’s purpose is not to wipe out Egypt, but to increase the pressure incrementally to lead them to repentance. Isaiah later summarizes this principle:

Isa 26:9 ... when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. 10 Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

26 Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, pp. 102, 126, 160. Greenberg notes the separation, and contrasts it with Moses’ words in v. 30.

27 Greenberg

### 33, Relief

**33 And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.**—Again, the Lord hears the prayer of his servant.

### 34-35, Hardening and Prediction

This is the most detailed description of Pharaoh's hardening that we have seen. Earlier statements emphasized only one of the three descriptions: the natural hardness of his heart, his cooperation with his sinful nature by hardening his own heart, or the Lord's confirmation of that decision by hardening his heart. Now the first two are combined, emphasizing the justice of the Lord's judgment, which already appeared with the boils, and returns in the locusts and darkness.

**34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more,**—Now that he has confessed his rebellion as sin in v. 27, the text picks up his own word, “sin,” to emphasize that he is rebelling against what he clearly knows.

**and hardened his heart, he and his servants.**—Not only he, but his servants join him in rejecting the divine evidence. Before, the magicians sought to warn him (8:19). In the next plague, the servants will begin to have doubts (10:7), but for now, they continue to resist.

**35 And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go;**—This rejection is the natural outgrowth of the hardness of his natural heart.

**as the LORD had spoken by Moses.**—The usual comment on Pharaoh's hardening (7:13, 22; 8:15, 19) is “as the Lord had said,” reminding us of 7:3-4. This time, the reference is to Moses' recollection of that promise, in 9:30.

## 10:1-20, Eighth Plague: Locusts

Both Psalms that echo the plagues mention this final major plague (chart):

Psa 78:46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.

Psa. 105:34 **He spake**, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, “He spake” אָמַר (*amar* H559), as with the lice, recalls God's creative words of Genesis 1.

The plagues of Revelation 16 do not mention locusts, but the fifth trumpet does:

Rev 9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, ... and **the sun and the air were darkened** by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And there came out of the smoke **locusts** upon the earth: ... 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. ... 7 And the shapes of the **locusts** were like unto horses prepared unto battle; ...

Together with the hail, this plague implements the judgment of famine from Leviticus 26. Famine brought Jacob's family into Egypt. Now famine is part of what leads them out.

Table 9 (chart) compares this plague's features with the other major plagues. Three stand out.

1. As in the first plague, but not since then, the Lord begins with analysis to Moses and Aaron.

2. Like many other plagues, this one is motivated by revealing the Lord. Up to this point, these revelations have been to Pharaoh. Now, they are to the children of Israel.
3. The negotiation is doubled. At the urging of his servants, Pharaoh tries to block the plague before it happens. Then, after it comes, he asks for relief.

## 1-2, Divine Analysis and Knowledge

**10:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have**

**hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants,**—The first divine analysis section, in 7:14, also mentioned Pharaoh’s hard heart:

Exo 7:14 And the LORD said unto Moses, **Pharaoh's heart is hardened**, he refuseth to let the people go.

There, Pharaoh’s heart was the subject, in its natural, hard state. Now we have completed the trajectory: Pharaoh hardens his own heart, and finally the Lord confirms him in his rebellion.

The Lord gives two<sup>28</sup> purposes for hardening, one toward Pharaoh, and one toward the children of Israel.<sup>29</sup> Compare 9:16 (Table 10, chart), explaining why God brought Pharaoh to power in the first place. The end of 10:2, “that ye may know,” is grammatically distinct from the two main purposes, giving God’s instructional objective for the nation (ye), just as 9:14 gave the objective for Pharaoh (thou) behind 9:16.

| Feature           | 7:14-25 Nile | 8:1-15 Frogs | 8:20-32 Swarm | 9:1-7, Cattle | 9:13-35 Hail | 10:1-20 Locusts |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Divine Analysis   | 14           |              |               |               |              | 1-2             |
| Demand to Pharaoh | 15-16        | 1            | 20            | 1             | 13           | 3               |
| That you may know | 17a          | 10           | 22            |               | 14-17, 29    | 2               |
| Warning           | 17b-18       | 2-4          | 21            | 2-3           | 18           | 4-6             |
| Exemption         | 19?          | 3? 11?       | 22            | 4-5, 6b-7     | 19-21, 26    | 6?              |
| Command to M&A    | 19           | 5            |               |               | 22           | 12              |
| Imposition        | 20-21        | 6            | 24            | 6a            | 23-25        | 13-15           |
| Magicians         | 22a          | 7            |               |               |              |                 |
| Negotiation       |              | 8-11         | 25-29         |               | 27-32        | 7-11, 16-17     |
| Relief            | 24-25        | 12-14        | 30-31         |               | 33           | 18-19           |
| Hardening         | 22b-23       | 15           | 32            | 7b            | 34-35        | 20              |

Table 9: Features in the Plague of Hail

| Feature                     | 9:16                                                                             | 10:1-2                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| God’s action toward Pharaoh | for this cause <b>have I raised thee up,</b>                                     | 1 <b>I have hardened his heart,</b> and the heart of his servants,                                                                                               |
| Purpose: demonstration      | for to <b>shew</b> H7200 in thee <b>my power;</b>                                | that I might <b>shew</b> H7896 these <b>my signs</b> before him:                                                                                                 |
| Purpose: declaration        | and that <b>my name may be declared</b> throughout all the earth.                | 2 And that <b>thou mayest tell</b> in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; |
| Purpose: knowledge          | (9:14 that <b>thou mayest know</b> that there is none like me in all the earth.) | (that <b>ye may know</b> how that I am the LORD.)                                                                                                                |

Table 10: God's purposes in dealing with Pharaoh

<sup>28</sup> Marked by the first two instances of “that” (למַעַן *lemaan* H4616). The third is a different construction.

<sup>29</sup> See note for an interesting NT parallel to God’s sovereign provision for both his enemies and his people.

We will consider these purposes, but first, let's step back and get the big picture. The Lord claims to be completely in control of Pharaoh. In 9:16, he claimed to be the source of his international power and influence, while here he claims sovereignty over Pharaoh's heart. From the point of view of the Israelites during their captivity, their ancestral God might seem impotent and far away, but passages like these assure us that he is working out his purposes in all things that he allows, even those that may seem uncomfortable to us.

**that I might shew these my signs before him:**—As in 9:16, the first purpose of God's sovereign action is to reveal himself to Pharaoh. "Signs" describe the plagues only here and in 8:22-23:

Exo 8:22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. 23 ... to morrow shall this **sign** be.

Both times they convey the message, either to Pharaoh (8:23) or the children of Israel (here), "that I am the LORD."

The second purpose in both cases is to declare God's reputation. In 9:16, the audience was "all the earth." Here, it is the children of Israel, and has two parts:

**2 And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them;**—The Lord wants to provide a captivating memory of how he delivered Israel for later generations. God wants us to tell our children of our experiences with him. Certainly, we are to teach them the Word of God:

Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

But he also wants us to give them our personal testimony of his care and provision for us:<sup>30</sup>

Psa 145:4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

Mark 5:19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

The Lord's deeds are characterized by two words: the verb "wrought" (עָלַל Dt *alal* H5953), and the noun "signs." We have already discussed "signs." The verb "wrought"<sup>31</sup> merits special comment (chart). This verb, and nouns derived from the same root, are used in two very different ways, depending on whether they describe God or man. Consider two examples:

Isa 12:4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his **doings** among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

Psa 141:4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise **wicked works** with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

"Doings" in Isa 12:4 and "wicked works" in Psa 141:4 are both the same noun, derived from the verbal root used in Exod 10:2. Whenever this family of words is applied to the Lord, it always

<sup>30</sup> Cf. also 44:1-2; 51:10-13

<sup>31</sup> See <https://cyber-chapel.org/blog/god-is-arrogant/> for further discussion

describes his glorious, powerful, wonderful deeds. Whenever it is applied to men, it emphasizes irresponsible, sinful behavior. How can the same terms be used in such different ways?

A clue lies in the common use of this word family to describe childish behavior. Young children are focused on themselves, not their responsibilities to others, and thus are, in the most fundamental sense, “irresponsible.” They answer to nobody, but do what they please. This word family captures that sense of independence, being a law unto oneself.

When people behave this way, they are sinning. We are creatures, answerable to God and his law. When we neglect this, and do only what is right in our own eyes (Judg 17:6; 21:25), we sin. But the God of the Bible is answerable to nobody. It is the very essence of his glory to do “according to his will” (Dan 4:35). Acting as this verb describes is rebellion and denial of God for a creature, but the assertion of his independence for God.

So God wants his people to remember, and communicate to their children, “what things I have wrought in Egypt,” how he acted exactly as he pleased, in spite of the opposition of the most powerful monarch on earth, motivated solely by his own purposes of covenant grace toward his chosen people. His absolute, sovereign character ought to comfort them when they face future opposition (as the Jews often have), but also warn them that they are not independent, but must answer to him.

**that ye may know how that I am the LORD.**—This is not parallel to the previous purposes:

- The conjunction “that” represents a different Hebrew construction than the first two.<sup>32</sup>
- The pronoun shifts from “thou,” referring collectively to the nation, to “ye,” the family groups envisioned in the second main purpose.

The lesson being presented recalls what Moses said to Pharaoh at the first plague (chart):

Exod 7:17 ... thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

But at this point, the Lord is no longer giving his lessons to Pharaoh. Those lessons culminated with his claim that “all the earth is the Lord’s” (9:29). Now he points out what the children of Israel are to learn from these plagues.

### 3, Demand

**3 And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh,**—In the second plague of each cycle, God tells Moses to “go in unto Pharaoh” (8:1; 9:1; 10:1).<sup>33</sup> But only here are we told that he does “come in,” the first of a series of verbs describing Moses’ movements throughout this plague (10:3, 6, 8, 11, 16, 18) (Table 11). The initiative shifts between Moses (vv. 3, 6, 18) and Pharaoh (8, 11, 16), reflecting the struggle between the two men for control of the situation. Pharaoh recognizes that he is confronting a mighty power. He is desperate to assert that he is superior, but God’s representative has the last word.

**and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?**—This is the last time God delivers his demand to Pharaoh through Moses and Aaron, and they reinforce it with this final challenge, “How long?”

<sup>32</sup> Waw relative with perfect rather than למען “in order that”

<sup>33</sup> English “go” and “come” in these verses represent the same Hebrew verb (בוא *bō* H935).

“How long?” is common in the Bible,<sup>34</sup> appearing here for the first time (chart). It reminds us of a characteristic of God that he will bring to a focus when he proclaims his full name to Moses,

|                                                                  | Initiative |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|
|                                                                  | Moses      | Pharaoh |
| 10:3 And Moses and Aaron <b>came in</b> unto Pharaoh,            | X          |         |
| 10:6 And he turned himself, and <b>went out</b> from Pharaoh.    | X          |         |
| 10:8 And Moses and Aaron were <b>brought again</b> unto Pharaoh: |            | X       |
| 10:11 And they were <b>driven out</b> from Pharaoh's presence.   |            | X       |
| 10:16 Then Pharaoh <b>called for</b> Moses and Aaron in haste;   |            | X       |
| 10:18 And he <b>went out</b> from Pharaoh,                       | X          |         |

Table 11: The movements of Moses and Aaron in the Plague of Locusts

Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, **longsuffering**, and abundant in goodness and truth,

Micah 7:18, commenting on Exod 34:6-7, describes how the Lord “passes by” our iniquity, in his longsuffering.

Mic 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and **passeth by** the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

But there is a limit to his longsuffering. God waited through five plagues before hardening Pharaoh’s heart, but ultimately he confirmed the unrepentant king in his unbelief.

The prophets bear witness to this same limit to God’s longsuffering. Amos, warning Israel of the coming Assyrian invasion, shows that the period when God “passeth by the transgression” of his people is limited.

Amo 7:8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline עֵנֶךָ, tin, cf. עֵנָה moaning. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: **I will not again pass by them any more**: 9 And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

Amo 8:2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit קֶבֶץ. Then said the LORD unto me, The end קֵץ is come upon my people of Israel; **I will not again pass by them any more**. 3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

We must never presume on God’s longsuffering. Every moment that he withholds his wrath does two things. Positively, it gives us further opportunity to repent. But negatively, it increases the judgment that is to come. Paul warns that to abuse God’s longsuffering is to “treasure up wrath”:

Rom 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. 2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. 3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and

<sup>34</sup> See note.

doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4 Or **despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering**; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart **treasurest up unto thyself** wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 **Who will render to every man according to his deeds:**

Let us keep short accounts with God. He has told us how he wants us to live, and if we put off submitting to his will, we only increase the judgment that will ultimately fall upon us.

**let my people go, that they may serve me.**—After this caution, he repeats the standard demand.

## 4-6, Warning

**4 Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: 5 And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth (שאר) unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field:**—The hail was a warning that God could bring the judgment of famine on the land. The locusts complete the destruction, making a dearth unavoidable. This is the first of three references linking what remained (שאר) after the hail with the locusts (the others being 10:12, 15).

**6 And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day.**—“Houses of all the Egyptians” and the pronouns, as in 7:19; 8:3, 21, suggest that Israel is exempted from this plague.

**And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.**—This is the first time that Moses ends his message by walking out on Pharaoh. His action is abrupt and severe. He is leaving on his initiative, asserting control.

## 7-11, Negotiation

For the first time, Pharaoh tries to negotiate before the plague comes. His servants are persuaded by the previous seven plagues that Moses' threats are real, and seek to stop this one before it comes. After the judgment arrives, we have the more usual post-plague negotiation in v. 16.

**7 And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us?**—This is the second instance of “How long?” in the Bible. Not only is the Lord growing impatient with Pharaoh, but so are his servants! They, like Pharaoh, had hardened their hearts:

Exo 9:34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, **he and his servants.**

But as the bureaucrats responsible for running the country, they have a more immediate sense of the economic crisis imposed by the plague on the cattle and the hail.

**let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?**—Compare the confession of the magicians in 8:19, “This is the finger of God” (= “this is a message from God”).

Pharaoh is losing support from his advisors. But they, as well as Pharaoh, have been hardening their hearts, and ultimately they, like him, will turn away,

Exo 14:5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of **his servants** was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?

**8 And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh:**—(chart) The courtiers rush out to get the Lord's messengers, an aggressive gesture, compared with 9:27, "called for them."

**and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God:**—In each plague, Moses presents God's demand to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." Here, for the first time, Pharaoh tells Moses to go and serve the Lord, a statement he will repeat in 10:11 and (in the plague of darkness) in 10:24. See note.

**but who are they that shall go? 9 And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.**—This is the first time that Moses has spelled out who will go (see note). Previously, he has asked only for "us," or (in God's name) "my people."

**10 And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones:**—This statement is sarcastic. "May the Lord be with you, just to the extent that I will let you go with your children (which I have no intention of doing)."

**look to it; for evil is before you.**—The Hebrew word for evil (רעה *ra-ah* H7451) may be meant as a pun on the high god of the Egyptian pantheon, Ra, the sun god, who was considered the physical father of the king. Thus understood, he is directly setting Ra against the Lord. "Watch out. Don't you know that you are confronting Ra?"

This challenge prepares for the last of the nine plagues, darkness, which shows that even Ra is impotent before the Lord.

**11 Not so: go now ye that are men (גִּבּוֹרִים *geber* H1397), and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire.**—For the second time, he uncharacteristically tells the Israelites to "go."

The word "men" refers to strong, virile males. He may have in mind a historical event with Moses' ancestors, Jacob's funeral party. On that occasion, which was sanctioned by Pharaoh, the flocks and children (and presumably their mothers, to care for them) remained in Egypt.

Gen 50:6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. 7 And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: **only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.**

**And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.**—When they left on their own (v. 6), they were forced back (v. 8), and now are driven out. Pharaoh is desperately asserting his control.

## 12, Command

**12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left (שָׁאֵרָא).**—As in 10:5 and 15, the Lord is completing the agricultural destruction from the previous plague.

## 13-15, Imposition

**13 And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night;**—(chart) The east wind in itself, hot and dry from blowing across the deserts of Arabia and Sinai, is oppressive.

**and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.**—Even worse, it brings a locust swarm. Each of these grasshoppers can eat its own mass every day, and reproducing prolifically, they can strip the earth of all vegetation. A single square km of locusts can eat as much food in a day as 35,000 people,<sup>35</sup> and a single swarm can cover thousands of square km, containing billions of insects.<sup>36</sup> The result is soaring cost of food, and widespread famine.

**14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. 15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened;**—The magnitude of the infestation, as well as Moses' control over it, is unparalleled.

**and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left (שאר): and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.**—Again, the text emphasizes how this completes the threat of famine from the hail.

## 16-17, Negotiation

**16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste;**—(chart) Finally, instead of “bringing” them in, Pharaoh returns to “calling” for them. He takes the initiative, but is greatly humbled.

**and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. 17 Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.**—Pharaoh's words show great progress over previous confessions, but are defective in four ways.

First, he speaks of “your God,” not “my God.” He does not recognize the Lord's authority over him.<sup>37</sup> That would require him to obey the Lord and worship him, and he is very far from doing that. The God of Moses and Aaron is powerful, but Pharaoh will not himself submit to him.

Second, he views his offense as against both God and Moses. Contrast his view with godly examples. When Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph, he replies,

Gen 39:9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and **sin against God?**

35 <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/east-africa-faces-new-locust-threat-idUSRTS33V69/>

36 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locust#:~:text=A%20large%20swarm%20can%20consist%20of%20billions%20of%20locusts%20spread%20o%20ut%20over%20an%20area%20of%20thousands%20of%20square%20kilometres%2C%20with%20a%20population%20of%20up%20to%2080%20million%20per%20square%20kilometre%20\(200%20million%20per%20square%20mile\).](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locust#:~:text=A%20large%20swarm%20can%20consist%20of%20billions%20of%20locusts%20spread%20o%20ut%20over%20an%20area%20of%20thousands%20of%20square%20kilometres%2C%20with%20a%20population%20of%20up%20to%2080%20million%20per%20square%20kilometre%20(200%20million%20per%20square%20mile).) For the 1915 plague in Palestine, see <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/history/articles/jerusalem-locust-plague> and John Whiting's article in the Dec 1915 National Geographic magazine, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_national-geographic\\_the-national-geographic-magazine\\_1915-12\\_28\\_6/page/n35/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/sim_national-geographic_the-national-geographic-magazine_1915-12_28_6/page/n35/mode/2up)

37 This insight is due to Ron Nowlin.

He would offend Potiphar, but his main concern is that he would violate God's standards.

When David repents of his sin with Bathsheba, he certainly has offended Uriah, but confesses,

Psa 51:4 Against thee, **thee only**, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ...

And in the parable of the prodigal son, the son confesses to his father,

Luk 15:21 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.

Sin is wrong, not because it offends a person, but because it breaks God's law, and it is first of all from him that we need forgiveness.

Pharaoh's third error is in asking Moses for forgiveness. Because sin is against God, it is God from whom sinners must seek forgiveness.

Fourth, what he really wants is not forgiveness from anybody, but just an end to the plague. He doesn't ask Moses to intercede for God's forgiveness, but for an end to the locusts.

## 18-19, Relief

**18 And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.**—Again, Moses withdraws to implore the Lord's mercy. In this final movement, he once more takes the initiative.

**19 And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.**—Again, on command, the plague ends.

## 20, Hardening

**20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.**—Again, no mention "as the Lord had said"

## 10:21-29, Ninth Plague: Darkness

This is the final plague, and like the third plague in each of the two previous cycles, it comes with no warning. Only one of the two plague psalms mentions it:

Psa 105:27-28 They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.

The last clause probably refers to Moses and Aaron, who dared in this final plague to answer Pharaoh's challenge in v. 10 and show the Lord's power over Ra, the Egyptian sun god.

This comes first in Ps 105, though the others are in order. Perhaps because it is the culminating judgment on Egypt's gods?

The plagues in the Revelation also emphasize God's power over the sun:

Rev 16:8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was

full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

## 21, Command

**21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, ~~that there may~~ and let there be darkness over the land of Egypt,**—As with the hail, so in this final plague the echo of Genesis 1 is particularly strong (here and the next verse, “and there was X”).

**even darkness which may be felt.**—Perhaps referring to a sandstorm. It was not simply a matter of carrying a lamp to dispel the darkness.

## 22-23a, Imposition

**22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:**—This is the final instance of the expression, “and there was X,” from Genesis 1.

**23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days:**—This would make sense if the darkness was caused by a sandstorm, which would force people to close their eyes and make it impossible to breathe.

## 23b, Exemption

**but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.**—Once again, we have an explicit exemption for Israel (chart). Other explicit exemptions for Goshen are in 4 (swarm), 5 (cattle), and 7 (hail), but the other five plagues all implicitly omit the Israelites, by describing the target as specific to the Egyptians. (The expression “all the land of Egypt” excludes Goshen in the swarm and several time in the hail.)

1 Nile: Exo 7:19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon **their** streams, upon **their** rivers, and upon **their** ponds, and upon all **their** pools of water, that they may become blood; ...

2 Frogs: Exo 8:3 And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into **thine** house, and into **thy** bedchamber, and upon **thy** bed, and into the house of **thy** servants, and upon **thy** people, and into **thine** ovens, and into **thy** kneadingtroughs:

3 Lice: Exo 8:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout **all the land of Egypt**.

4 Swarm Exo 8:22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, th:at **no swarms of flies shall be there;** ... 24 ... and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into **all the land of Egypt:** the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

5 Cattle: Exo 9:4 And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and **there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.**

6 Boils: Exo 9:9 And it shall become small dust in **all the land of Egypt**, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout **all the land of Egypt.**

7 Hail: Exo 9:22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in **all the land of Egypt**, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. ... 26 Only **in the land of Goshen**, where the children of Israel were, was there **no hail**.

8 Locusts: Exo 10:6 And they shall fill **thy** houses, and the houses of all **thy** servants, and the houses of all **the Egyptians**; ...

And of course, they are exempted from the final judgment of the death of the firstborn, by the blood of the passover lamb.

Here, as throughout Scripture, we see the truth that Peter summarizes in his second epistle,

2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

## 24-26, Negotiation

**24 And Pharaoh called unto Moses**,—Up until this point, Pharaoh had always called Moses and Aaron to seek relief (8:8, 25; 9:27; 10:16). This climaxes the shift from the first panel (where Aaron is the agent of each plague) to the third (where Moses is the agent). God called Moses to confront Pharaoh and lead the people out. Moses objected about his inability, so the Lord gave him Aaron as his prophet, but he has been gradually teaching Moses, and now Moses emerges as the prominent figure.<sup>38</sup>

**and said, Go ye, serve the LORD**;—(chart) For the third time (after 10:8, 11), Pharaoh uncharacteristically says, “Go, serve the Lord.” But he still wants to control their worship.

**only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you**.—The Lord has charged Moses to lead the nation into the wilderness, to offer sacrifices to him. This request is a pattern for our service to the Lord, and Pharaoh’s attempts to compromise it warn us of how Satan would derail us in our service to him.

At first, Pharaoh refuses outright, refusing to recognize the God whom Moses serves:

Exo 5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? **I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.**

Pharaoh’s first objection is that he will not support the worship of a god whom he does not know. This is actually a reasonable objection. The Athenians of Paul’s day thought that there was value in making offerings to an unknown god, just in case they had missed one among the multitudes of gods they did recognize (Acts 17:23). But worship “just in case” is based on the idea that if we do something nice for God, he will take care of us. This is completely backwards. Only those to whom he has graciously revealed himself have the privilege of serving him.

Next, he refuses the request to go into the wilderness. The plague of the swarm has showed that God is in the midst of his people in Goshen, so they can just worship there:

Exo 8:25 And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God **in the land**.

Moses refuses because his offerings will not be acceptable to the Egyptians, who had their own standards for sacrificial animals, and he will not compromise the worship of the Lord with

<sup>38</sup> I owe this observation to Anita Parunak.

idolatrous standards. So we must resist the temptation to compromise with the world in our worship. God sent Israel out of Egypt to serve him. He sent them out of Babylon to serve him:

Isa 52:11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

And he makes the same demand to the Corinthians (2 Cor 6:17), warning them of the dangers of idolatry in their day. We must not compromise with the world's corrupt religious practices.

Pharaoh's third requirement is that the children be excluded:

Exo 10:11 Not so: go now **ye that are men**, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

The world says, "Don't force religion on children. Let them make their own choice when they grow up." But throughout scripture, God wants our little ones to be taught to fear and serve him.

Now he proposes his final compromise: don't take any sacrifices with you. Your God is so powerful, he doesn't need anything from you.

This is perhaps the most subtle compromise of all. After all, does the Lord not say,

Psa 50:9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. 10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

It is a mistake to think that God needs our sacrifices, in the way that the Egyptian gods drew nourishment from the offerings of the priests. But the sacrifices of God's people are not to feed God. They are to show our recognition of our need for a substitute, and our willingness to devote ourselves to God's service. The Psalmist continues,

Psa 50:14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: 15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

**25 And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God.**—Moses, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, makes a counterproposal. "So you also will give us animals for our sacrifice?" Of course a sacrifice requires animals. Will Pharaoh provide them from his own (now sadly depleted) flocks?

**26 Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.**—But in fact Israel must also take their own cattle, to be sure to have just what the Lord requires. The Egyptian animals may not meet the Lord's requirements.

## 27-29, Hardening

**27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.**—In spite of the harm that has come on Egypt, Pharaoh stubbornly resists, confirmed by the Lord in his hardness.

**28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.**—He will not obey God, and refuses to see his messenger any more.

**29 And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.**—Moses does have a few more words for Pharaoh before he leaves, which take us into the next chapter.

This is the second time in Moses' life that his life is threatened by a Pharaoh. The parallels are striking (Table 12). As we have observed, the first four chapters are a template for what happens in the main part of the book (Table 13). What happened when Moses was a son in Pharaoh's palace, is now being repeated when he is there as a deliverer of God's son Israel, and in both cases leads him to the mountain of God.

## 11:1-8, Preparation for the Death of the Firstborn

This transitional section contains Moses' final words to Pharaoh (11:4-8), surrounded by the Lord's words to Moses: first, his instructions to spoil the Egyptians (vv. 1-3), and then a conclusion recalling Moses' commission in ch. 7 (vv. 9-10).

It is helpful to compare the next several chapters with our feature analysis of the six major plagues in the previous three cycles (Table 14). All of the features we have come to expect

|                               | First Panel                                                                 | Second Panel                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Moses harms (an) Egyptian(s)  | 2:12 ... he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.                     | 9:25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, <b>both man and beast</b> ; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.<br><b>Famine</b> from hail and locusts |
| Pharaoh threatens to kill him | 2:15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses ...         | 10:28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for <b>in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.</b>                                                                               |
| Moses leaves Egypt            | ...But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian | 12:41 ... all the hosts of the LORD <b>went out from the land of Egypt.</b>                                                                                                                                                           |
| Moses comes to Sinai          | 3:1 Now Moses ... came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.               | 19:1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day <b>came they into the wilderness of Sinai.</b>                                                                            |

Table 12: Moses' Second Exodus

| Theme                       | First Panel, 1:1-4:18                                              | Second Panel, 4:19-40:38                              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Entering Egypt              | 1:1-7, The eleven tribes go to Egypt and multiply                  | 4:19-31, Moses returns to Egypt with his family       |
| Oppression                  | 1:8-22, Pharaoh oppresses Israel                                   | 5:1-6:1, Pharaoh increases the oppression             |
| Leaders raised up           | 2:1-4, Moses born                                                  | 6:2-27, Moses and Aaron commissioned by God           |
| Moses in Pharaoh's Palace   | 2:5-10, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter | 6:28-13:16, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as deliverer    |
| Travel to Horeb             | 2:11-15, Moses flees from Egypt to Midian                          | 13:17-17:7, Israel travels from Egypt to Sinai        |
| Conflict                    | 2:16-17, Moses overcomes the shepherds                             | 17:8-16, Moses overcomes Amalek                       |
| Moses and Jethro            | 2:18-22, Moses' Midianite family                                   | 18:1-27, Moses' Midianite family                      |
| Encounter with God at Horeb | 2:23-4:18, Moses called to "serve God upon this mountain," 3:12    | 19:1-40:38, At Horeb, Israel enters covenant with God |

Table 13: The Organization of Exodus

are here, except for the relief, and the initial demand to Pharaoh (also lacking in the three minor plagues that end the cycles). Some other distinctions merit attention:

- The knowledge component is addressed to all the Egyptians, not just to Pharaoh.
- The command to Moses and Aaron

concerns not the imposition of the plague, but how Israel is to be protected from it.

- The final hardening is delayed until Israel reaches the shore of the Red Sea, and Pharaoh and his servants once more change their minds.

| Feature           | 7:14-25<br>Nile | 8:1-15<br>Frogs | 8:20-32<br>Swarm | 9:1-7,<br>Cattle | 9:13-35<br>Hail | 10:1-20<br>Locusts | 11:4-12:39<br>Firstborn |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Divine Analysis   | 14              |                 |                  |                  |                 | 1-2                | 11:1-2                  |
| Demand to Pharaoh | 15-16           | 1               | 20               | 1                | 13              | 3                  |                         |
| That you may know | 17a             | 10              | 22               |                  | 14-17,<br>29    | 2                  | 11:7b                   |
| Warning           | 17b-18          | 2-4             | 21               | 2-3              | 18              | 4-6                | 11:4-6                  |
| Exemption         | 19?             | 3? 11?          | 22               | 4-5,<br>6b-7     | 19-21,<br>26    | 6?                 | 11:7a                   |
| Command to M&A    | 19              | 5               |                  |                  | 22              | 12                 | 12:1-20                 |
| Imposition        | 20-21           | 6               | 24               | 6a               | 23-25           | 13-15              | 12:29-30                |
| Magicians         | 22a             | 7               |                  |                  |                 |                    |                         |
| Negotiation       |                 | 8-11            | 25-29            |                  | 27-32           | 7-11,<br>16-17     | 11:8<br>12:31-33        |
| Relief            | 24-25           | 12-14           | 30-31            |                  | 33              | 18-19              |                         |
| Hardening         | 22b-23          | 15              | 32               | 7b               | 34-35           | 20                 | (11:10)<br>14:4-8       |

Table 14: Feature Analysis of the Death of the Firstborn

## 1-4, The Lord's Preparation

The Lord has prepared for this final plague in two ways, indicated two verbs: he **said** something to Moses (11:1-2), and he **gave** the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians (11:3) (chart).

**11:1 And the LORD [had] said אמר unto Moses,**—In our feature analysis, this section corresponds to the divine analyses of the first and eighth plagues, where the Lord discusses his plan with Moses. But when does the Lord thus speak to Moses?

10:29 indicates that Moses intends not to see Pharaoh again, but in 11:4-8, he is speaking to him, and then leaves him. So 11:1-3 are probably not spoken to Moses at this time, but are to be taken as pluperfect, “the Lord had said unto Moses ...”<sup>39</sup> 11:1-3 convey two things: the plague on the firstborn, and the gifts from the Egyptians. The Lord had previously told Moses both of these things. So Moses’ words to Pharaoh here are based on his original charge in Midian.

**Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.**—As Moses prepared to leave Midian to return to Egypt, God predicted the death of the firstborn:

<sup>39</sup> Waltke-O'Connor 33.2.3, pp. 552-553

Exo 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

So Moses knows that this judgment is yet to come, and that he is to announce it.

**2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.**—Moses also knew this command. When the Lord called Moses at the bush, he predicted these gifts:

Exo 3:20 And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. 21 And **I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians**: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: 22 But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

Here and in 3:22, the word “borrow” is simply “ask” (שאל *sha-al* H7592, chart). It can refer to a request for a loan,<sup>40</sup> but in itself, the verb does not imply a promise of return.

These gifts from the Egyptians fulfilled God’s promise to Abraham:

Gen 15:13 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; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall **they come out with great substance**.

And they are one of the features recalled in Psalm 105:

Psa 105:36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37 **He brought them forth also with silver and gold**: ...

The next verse reminds us that while humility is a virtue, God can exalt his people to positions of respect when that is necessary to glorify himself.

**3 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians.**—The second preparation that the Lord makes is to grant the people, and Moses, favor with the Egyptians. If 11:1 is pluperfect, we should probably understand this verb also as referring to a past action.

11:3a is a specific recollection of 3:21, “I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians.” Some of them had already begun to recognize the Lord:

Exo 9:20 **He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh** made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:

Not only did they give their wealth to the Israelites, but some of them cast their lot in with Israel:

Exo 12:38 And **a mixed multitude** went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

**Moreover the man Moses [Mr. Moses] was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.**—The phrase “the man PN” regularly marks the person described as particularly noteworthy. We might translate, “Mr. Moses.”<sup>41</sup>

40 2Ki 6:5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed [requested, שאול *shaul* H7592].”

41 See note

## 4-8, Moses' Final Words to Pharaoh

Moses' words match four features in the six major plagues: the warning, the exemption for Israel, the purpose of conveying knowledge of the Lord, and a prediction of the final negotiation.

**4 And Moses said,**—In 10:29, Moses said he would not again see Pharaoh. He has not left Pharaoh, and 11:1-3 must be a recollection of what God told him previously.

### 4b-6, Warning (chart)

**Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst בְּתוֹךְ of Egypt:**—It is interesting to contrast this expression with that used in declaring God's presence with his people,

Exo 8:22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD **in the midst בְּקֶרֶב of the earth land [of Goshen].**

The word used in 8:22 indicates closeness and association, emphasizing God's loving relation with his people. The word here means simply physical location. See note.

**5 And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.**—The judgment is universal, emphasizing the extremes in the highly stratified culture of Egypt. Pharaoh, himself a god, is the highest, while the servant grinding grain is the lowest. Egypt's oppression of Israel reflected a belief that some people were superior to others. The judgment on the firstborn corrects that perception. Before the Lord, all people are on an equal footing, and (apart from his redemptive work) all are under judgment.

**6 And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt,**—Again, "all the land of Egypt" is exclusive of Goshen.

**such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.**—Until now, it is the Israelites who have been crying out in their suffering, whether to God:

Ex. 3:7 (9) And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard **their cry by reason of their taskmasters**; for I know their sorrows; or to Pharaoh and the overseers:<sup>42</sup>

Ex. 5:15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and **cried unto Pharaoh**, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? [cf. 5:8]

Now it is the Egyptian's turn to cry, surpassing anything they have brought upon Israel.

### 7a, Exemption

**7 But<sup>43</sup> against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast:**—Dogs in the middle East are not household pets, but feral, living off trash, considered unclean, and tolerated only because they serve as a burglar alarm, barking at anyone unfamiliar. But Israel will at this time be without any opposition, even from the dogs.

<sup>42</sup> Once before now (8:12), Moses cries out to the Lord, in fear that he has overstepped his commission in promising to remove the plague of frogs

<sup>43</sup> Houtman notes that this observation is disjunctive, breaking the chain of waw-relatives.

## 7b, Knowledge

that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference (פלה *C palah* H6395) between the Egyptians and Israel.—Such a distinction was previously made for Pharaoh’s instruction:

Exo 8:22 And I will **sever** *palah* in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end **thou mayest know** that I am the LORD in the midst of the ~~earth~~ land [i.e., Goshen]

Now all of Egypt will recognize it.

## 8, Prediction of Negotiation

**8 And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out.**—Both Moses and Pharaoh have insisted that they will not see one another again (10:28-29), so Moses is very specific that when the release finally comes, it will be conveyed by Pharaoh’s servants, in the most obsequious manner.

**And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.**—Was it right for Moses to be so angry?

Anger is an important theme in Exodus. Figure 8 (chart) shows references to it throughout the book, with God’s wrath in red and Moses’ in green.<sup>44</sup> The first instance (4:14) is when the Lord is angry with Moses for his reluctance to undertake the mission God had for him, resulting in the appointment of Aaron as his spokesman. 11:8 is the second instance, this time on the part of Moses. God’s wrath breaks out against the Egyptians in 15:7, at the Red Sea, and in 22:23 he threatens it against anyone who would abuse widows and orphans.

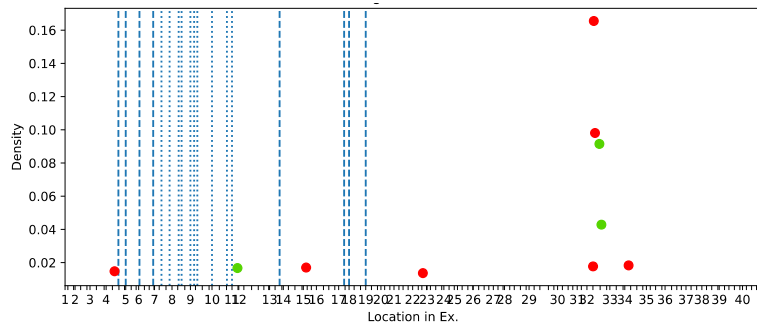


Figure 8: אף and חרה in Exodus, excepting 15:8. Red: subject is the Lord. Green: subject is Moses.

The theme is concentrated in Exodus 32, the episode of the golden calf. The first three (red) dots express the Lord’s wrath against Israel for their sin, and his threat to abandon them and make Moses his heir.

Exo 32:10 Now therefore let me alone, that my **wrath** may **wax hot** against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

Moses intercedes with the Lord,

Exo 32:11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy **wrath wax hot** against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy **fierce wrath**, and repent of this evil against thy people.

And the Lord responds:

<sup>44</sup> See note. This plot shows verses containing חרה or אף, excepting 15:8 (“blast of thy nostrils”).

Exod 32:14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

But then, when Moses sees the calf, he forgets the example the Lord has just given him, and himself becomes angry (green dots), and Aaron has to intercede with him just as he had interceded with the Lord.

This whole experience confuses Moses. When he experiences his own anger against the people, he realizes just how amazing it is that the Lord withheld his anger. He asks the Lord to explain, resulting in the revelation of God's name in 34:6, which is the book's last reference to anger:

Exod 34:6 The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, **longsuffering [slow to anger]**, and abundant in goodness and truth,

Later in the history, Moses' anger leads him to sin in striking the rock, so that he is excluded from entering the promised land (Num 20:10-12). The Psalmist recalls the event:

Psa 106:32 They angered him [the Lord] also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: 33 Because they provoked his [Moses'] spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

Is Moses wrong to be angry with Pharaoh? The instances of anger throughout Exodus establish some basic principles.

- Human rebellion does deserve anger. The Lord is rightly angry with Moses (ch.4), with the Egyptians (ch. 15), and with those who take advantage of the weak (ch. 22).
- But it is his place, not ours, to show that anger,
- and he exercises it with restraint, knowing that he will himself provide the substitute to deal with people's sin.

This does seem to be a character flaw with Moses. At the end of his life, he will deliver this message from the Lord to the people, suggesting that anger is a divine prerogative:

Deu 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Paul quotes this verse in Rom 12:19 in urging God's people to love even their enemies (chart):

Rom 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather **give place unto wrath** [stand back and let God handle the wrath]: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

And to the churches of Asia Minor he urges,

Eph 4:31 Let all **bitterness**, and **wrath**, and **anger**, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; **anger**, **wrath**, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Wrath dominates the works of the flesh against which he warns in Gal 5:19-21.

This is not only a NT teaching. The book of Proverbs is full of warnings about anger:

Pro 22:24 Make no friendship with an **angry man** אִישׁ חָמוּט; and with a **furious man** אִישׁ חָמוּט thou shalt not go: 25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. (cf. 29:22)

Pro 25:28 He that hath **no rule over his own spirit** is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

Pro 21:24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in **proud wrath**.

The first time Pharaoh threatened Moses and Moses left Egypt, he “feared” (2:14), and “fled from the face of Pharaoh” (2:15). This time, he stomps out in anger. Neither response is appropriate for a child of God. But as we have often seen, Moses is a work in progress, like all of us.

## 11:9-10, The Lord’s Summary

**9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken is not hearkening unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.**—This verse is the Lord’s gentle rebuke to Moses’ anger in 11:8. “Moses, don’t be angry. Yes, Pharaoh is being stubborn and rude. But his attitude serves my purpose, which is to glorify myself. If you are serving me, you must trust me to work all things together for good.”

**10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.**—So the rejection that Moses has experienced is actually from the hand of God, and has allowed him to perform all the wonders of chapters 7-10.<sup>45</sup>

11:9-10 are very similar to 7:3-4 (Table 15). Note the parallels, but also the contrasts. In both passages,

- God hardens Pharaoh’s heart
- Pharaoh does not hearken
- God multiplies his wonders in Egypt.

But there are two differences.

- Pharaoh refuses to let Israel leave, so the Lord brings them forth. The Lord wins the contest with Pharaoh.
- In 7:4, God says that he will lay his hand on Egypt, but 11:10 focuses the agency on Moses and Aaron. Here the lesson is: God does his work through his human servants.

| 7:3-4                                                                                                                                                                        | 11:9-10                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, | 9 Pharaoh shall not hearken is not hearkening unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. 10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, |
| and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.                                                              | so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.                                                                                                                                                 |

Table 15: The Inclusio of Exodus 7-11

11:9-10 look backward, not forward, and form an inclusio with 7:3-4, setting off the compact presentation of the initial ten miracles from the eleventh. To see this, consider four details.

<sup>45</sup> The hardening here is a general reference to the process that extends throughout all the plagues. Pharaoh’s hardening specifically after the death of the firstborn doesn’t come until 14:4-8.

<sup>46</sup> Note the chiasmic structure of 11:9-10: not hearken, wonders, wonders, hardened.

- 11:9 is translated in English versions as a future, but the first verb in 11:9 is a participle, and can be translated as a present tense rather than a prediction, referring to the refusal that Moses has just experienced.

| Section    | Structure                     | Agents          | Result                            |
|------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 6:28-11:10 | Inclusio (7:3-4;11:9-10)      | Moses and Aaron | Pharaoh refuses to release Israel |
| 12:1-13:16 | Alternation (History, Legacy) | The Lord        | Pharaoh releases Israel           |

- 11:10 presents the past action of Moses and Aaron in bringing the plagues. *Table 16: Moses' Second Palace Encounters*
- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart promised in 7:3, as past and accomplished.
- 11:10b also reminds us of Pharaoh's past refusals. In the final plague, as Moses has predicted in 11:8, Pharaoh will finally agree to release the nation.

This inclusio thus separates the overall section about Moses and Pharaoh into two parts (Table 16). In the first one, 6:28-11:10, Moses and Aaron are prominent as the agents of the plagues, and Pharaoh repeatedly refuses to let the children of Israel go. At the end of the ninth plague, he banishes them from his presence, perhaps hoping to keep them from proclaiming further judgments. But he has forgotten the second cycle of plagues, the swarm, the cattle, and the boils, in which God acted directly (Table 1), and in 12:1-13:16, the Lord kills the firstborn, leading Pharaoh finally to release the nation. This next section is marked structurally by alternation between statements by the Lord and descriptions of the actual exodus.

## Notes

### That thou mayest/ye may know

Several constructions are used to express this purpose:

למדען in 8:10, 22; 9:29; 11:7

בזאת in 7:17

בעבור in 9:14

ו (continuing earlier למדען) in 10:2; consequence rather than purpose in 6:7; 16:6, 12; 18:20

### Verbs for Supplication: עתה and צעק

|                       | עתה | צעק | זעק | קרא |  | Total |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-------|
| επακουσ <sup>47</sup> | 7   |     |     |     |  | 102   |
| ευχομαι <sup>48</sup> | 9   |     |     |     |  | 84    |
| δεομαι <sup>49</sup>  | 2   |     |     |     |  | 91    |
| *βοαω                 |     | 33  | 34  | 47  |  | 188   |
| κραζω                 |     | 17  | 29  | 28  |  | 104   |
|                       |     |     |     |     |  |       |
| Total                 | 22  | 56  | 74  | 736 |  |       |

## God vs. The God

Is there special meaning in the presence or absence of the article with אלהים, as in “finger of (a) god” 8:19? 31:18 shows that this is not necessarily reducing God’s status.

### Definite usages

(Figure 9):

Accordance ה

(אלהים = <0>

(אלהים@[noun

construct] \*) <0>

(יהוה = אלהים)

אלה either

- with article, or
- followed by genitive (e.g., God of our fathers), or
- in the construct יהוה אלהים.

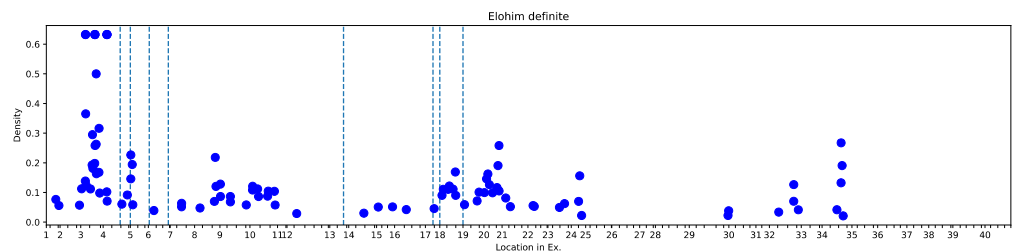


Figure 9: Definite uses of אלהים

47 Mostly from verbs for hearing, such as שמע and ענה

48 Mostly from נדר "to vow"

49 Mostly from חנן "to show mercy"

Only four arthrous uses are subjects:

Ex. 19:19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and **God** answered him by a voice.

Ex. 20:20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for **God** is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

Ex. 20:21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where **God** was.

Ex. 21:13 And if a man lie not in wait, but **God** deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.

**Indefinite:** Figure 10 plots instances of this Accordance query:

@[NOUN absolute] <not> <within 1 word><PRECEDED BY> (יהוה<o>=ה )

There are 35 verses with hits. Of these, in 21, אלהים is subject of its clauses(אלהים=

@[noun absolute]

@[subject]).

Verses where it is not:

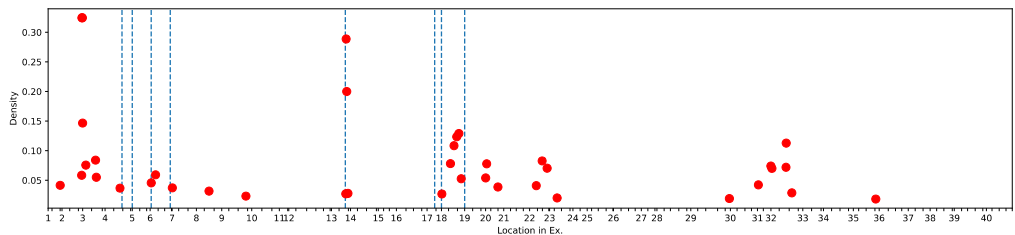


Figure 10: Indefinite instances of אלהים

Ex. 4:16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of **God**.

Ex. 6:7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a **God**: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Ex. 7:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a **god** to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

Ex. 8:19 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of **God**: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

Ex. 9:28 Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more **mighty** thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

Ex. 18:12 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for **God**: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God.

Ex. 18:15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of **God**:

Ex. 18:21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear **God**, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

Ex. 22:20 He that sacrificeth unto any **god**, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

Ex. 22:28 Thou shalt not revile the **gods**, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

Ex. 23:13 And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

Ex. 29:45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their **God**.

Ex. 31:3 And I have filled him with the spirit of **God**, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

Ex. 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of **God**.

Ex. 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Ex. 32:16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

Ex. 32:23 For they said unto me, Make us **gods**, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Ex. 35:31 And he hath filled him with the spirit of **God**, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship;

## 8:15 (ET 19) “Finger of God”

This expression has led to a range of interpretations.

The parallel in Psalm 8 suggests it refers to God’s creative power:

Psa. 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

But this is the plural, not the singular, and is parallel to “hands” later in the Psalm:

Psa 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

Couroyer (RB 1956) notes Egyptian parallels that describe physical objects as the “finger of <divine name>,” and thinks the Egyptians are referring to Aaron’s rod, which has been prominent in the dragon sign and the first three plagues. But this provides no connection with the use of the expression in relation to the writing of the ten commandments, or to Luke 11:20.

The use of the plural for writing in Dan 5:5 suggests that Psalm 8 may be concerned not just with physical creation, but with its revelatory implications. In fact, the Psalm associates God’s fingers with the heavenly bodies, while his hands are involved with the terrestrial sphere, and the heavens are viewed as particularly revelatory:

Gen 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and **let them be for signs**, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

Psa 19:1 The heavens **declare** the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 2 Day unto day uttereth **speech**, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and **their words** to the end of the world.

The singular “finger of God” appears in the NT:

Luke 11:19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. 20 But if I with **the finger of God** cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

The parallel in Matthew refers to the Holy Spirit:

Mat 12:28 But if I cast out devils **by the Spirit of God**, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

The Lord is not just explaining the source of the power, but communicating a message, the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Compare also how the Lord rebukes the accusers of the woman taken in adultery:

Jhn 8:6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and **with his finger wrote on the ground**, as though he heard them not.

## 8:19 (ET 8:23) “I will put redemption ...”

Ever since the LXX rendered this word διαστολή *diastolē* G1293 in in this verse, many commentators have evaded the natural use of the root, which describes redemption (see this same word in Isa 50:2; Psa 111:9; 130:7). But some Jewish commentators insist that the reason that God treats Israel differently is in fact his redemption of them. See Propp (2A, pp. 328-329) for a very well-reasoned modern defense of the old Jewish interpretation, comparing “the paschal blood, which both redeems and separates.”

This is one of two verbs used to describe God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt. פָּדָה (*padah* H6299) is used thus (e.g.) in 2 Samuel,

2Sam. 7:23 And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to **redeem** for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou **redeemedst** to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?

The other is גָּאַל *gaal* H1350:

Ex. 6:6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will **redeem** you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

Ex. 15:13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast **redeemed**: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

Here is Google AI’s summary of the difference:

While both Hebrew roots פדה (padah) and גאל (ga'al) are often translated into English as "to redeem" or "to ransom", they focus on different aspects of rescue: פדה emphasizes the payment of a price, while גאל emphasizes a family relationship. [1, 2, 3]

#### The Root פדה (Padah)

- Focus: The transaction or ransom price.
- Meaning: To buy back, set free, or sever someone from bondage by paying an exact cost.
- Usage: Used when liberating a captive, a slave, or a firstborn son by paying a specific substitution price (like silver coins or an animal). It asks: Is the cost covered? [1, 3, 4, 5, 6]

#### The Root גאל (Ga'al)

- Focus: The relational duty of kinship.
- Meaning: To act as a close family redeemer (go'el) to buy back a relative, restore lost family land, or avenge a family member.
- Usage: Deeply tied to the social laws of ancient Israel where the nearest relative was obligated to protect and rescue family members. It asks: Who is the family member stepping in? [2, 3, 6, 7, 8]

[1] <https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/11142/two-words-for-redeem-whats-the-difference>

[2] <http://helpmewithbiblestudy.org/2JesusChrist/AtonementRuthRedeem.aspx>

[3] <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6299.htm>

[4] [https://www.youtube.com/shorts/zXgS\\_WpmTzA](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/zXgS_WpmTzA)

[5] <https://www.bereanpatriot.com/psa-series-what-do-ransom-and-redemption-mean-in-the-bible-do-they-support-psa/>

[6] [https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV\\_Buc2jwnR/](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV_Buc2jwnR/)

[7] <https://rsc.byu.edu/finding-christ-covenant-path/redemption-gaal>

[8] <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Dictionary/g/g-ay-l.html>

A particularly comprehensive discussion of the whole semantic field is at [https://sahd-online.com/miscellaneous/overview\\_deliverance/](https://sahd-online.com/miscellaneous/overview_deliverance/). (In general, sahd-online.com appears to be an extremely important resource.)

## 8:23 (ET 27) Three Days Journey

Was this request, originating in 3:18 and originally presented to Pharaoh in 5:3, deceptive? It could be, in two ways: the location of the proposed sacrifice, and whether they would return.

Humphreys, *The Miracles of Exodus*, maintains that it is, in both ways. To go out three days, hold a feast, and come back would take at least 7 days, giving them time to cross Sinai and enter Midian (where he thinks Sinai is) before Pharaoh would be alerted.

Har-el, *The Sinai Journeys*, uses the three days to argue that Sinai must be much closer than other candidates, settling on Sin-Bisher at 29.671°N 32.961°E, in north-west Sinai. Thus at least the location of the proposed offering is presented accurately. But 15:22 seems against this.

Exo 15:22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

What about the intent to return?

Stuart interprets the requests against the background of a model of negotiation in which Pharaoh would not understand an implied promise to return. He and Houtman cite examples of escalating negotiations, starting small and then expanding, in Gen. 18:22-33; 1 Kgs. 20:3-6.

Similarly, Cassuto (on 3:18, p.43) understands the three days as “a modest and limited request as the starting-point of their diplomatic negotiations with Pharaoh, the purpose being to uncover his real feelings and thoughts.”

Houtman I.376 has an extensive discussion, leaning to the negotiation understanding.

Sarna p. 19, and Houtman, suggest that “three days” is indefinite, conventionally indicating a significant amount of time.

Alexander cites Larsson, “Pharaoh is tested through a modest request from a tormented people for a few days of rest and celebration. When he refuses, he displays his true face and acknowledges beforehand what is to follow.”

Similarly K&D, “God knew the hard heart of Pharaoh, and therefore directed that no more should be asked at first than he must either grant, or display the hardness of his heart. Had he consented, God would then have made known to him His whole design, and demanded that His people should be allowed to depart altogether.” They note that the provision in 8:27, “as he shall command us,” leaves the sequel open.

## 8:29 Verbs for Deception (Table 17)

תלל C *talal* H2048

כחש D *kachash* H3584

נשא *nasha* H5377

פתה *patah* H6601

רמה *ramah* H7411

כזב *kazab* H3576

סות *sūt* H5496

|               | תלל | כחש | נשא | פתה | רמה | כזב | סות |  | Total |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-------|
| παρολογίζομαι | 3   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 6   | 0   | 0   |  | 14    |
| ψεύδομαι      | 0   | 16  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 6   | 0   |  | 35    |
| ἀπατάω        | 0   | 0   | 6   | 15  | 0   | 0   | 6   |  | 38    |
| πλανάω        | 1   | 0   | 0   | 5   | 0   | 0   | 0   |  | 119   |
|               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |  |       |
| Total         | 9   | 22  | 14  | 27  | 8   | 16  | 18  |  |       |

Table 17: Verbs for Deception in MT and LXX

## 9:8, the Furnace

Why the reference to a furnace (כִּבְשָׁן *kivshan* H3536)? The word, which occurs only 4x in the OT, refers to a kiln for making pottery, burning lime, or blowing glass. Commentators often speculate that these were used in brick production, and thus linked with the slave labor of the Israelites, but the bricks made by the Israelites used straw, and so were sun-dried adobe. More likely, these kilns were used to produce ceramic vessels (such as the canopic jars used in embalming) and articles of faience and glass.

Later texts compare Israel's Egyptian sufferings to a furnace:

Deu 4:20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron **furnace**, even out of **Egypt**, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

1Ki 8:51 For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of **Egypt**, from the midst of the **furnace** of iron:

Jer 11:4 Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of **Egypt**, from the iron **furnace**, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:

But the word in these passages (כֹּר *kur* H3564, 9x in OT) is different, describing a pot for smelting metals. Such pots were typically made of clay, which could easily be broken, but Moses describes one as of iron, known in Egypt from meteors well before Moses' day, and highly valued for its hardness.<sup>50</sup> The metaphor thus emphasizes the difficulty of breaking out of Egypt, not the intensity of the suffering.

It seems best to motivate the reference to kilns, not to the suffering of the Israelites, but to a comparison between the heat of a kiln and the burning of the boils. It is possible that there is an allusion to canopic jars; this is the first plague to threaten human lives directly, and if the Egyptians don't release Israel, they will need to keep the kilns very busy.

## שִׁית לב vs. שִׁים לב

### Google:

Both שִׁים (*sim* / *sum*) and שִׁית (*shit*) mean "to put," "to place," or "to set" in Hebrew, but they differ significantly in usage, time period, and nuance. [1, 2]

### שִׁים (*Sim* / *Sum* H7760)

- Meaning: To put, place, set, or make.
- Usage: This is the standard, everyday verb for "to put" in Biblical Hebrew. In Modern Hebrew, it remains the primary active verb used to place physical objects down or direct attention (e.g., *lesim* לִב/לֵב – to pay attention/set heart).
- Pronunciation / Spelling: Uses שׁ (*sin*, the left-dot variant pronounced like an 's'). [1, 3, 4, 5, 6]

<sup>50</sup> Vang, C. (2014). Israel in the Iron-Smelting Furnace? Towards a New Understanding of the כֹּר הַבְּרִזָּל in Deut 4:20. *HIPIL Novum*, 1(1), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.7146/hn.v1i1.142926>

**שִׁית (Shit H)**

- Meaning: To set, place, put, or bestow.
- Usage: This is a much rarer, formal, or archaic synonym for putting or establishing something. It appears frequently in poetic and prophetic biblical texts (such as Psalms or Isaiah), often used for setting a condition, imposing a penalty, or turning one's mind to something. It is practically unused in standard Modern Hebrew speech, except in high-register literary contexts or fixed idioms.

- Pronunciation / Spelling: Uses שׁ (shin, the right-dot variant pronounced 'sh'). [2, 5, 6, 7]

Table 18 gives a summary comparison.

| Feature         | שִׁים (Sim)                                 | שִׁית (Shit)                                              |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Letter / Dot    | Sin (left dot - s)                          | Shin (right dot - sh)                                     |
| Commonality     | Very common (Biblical & Modern)             | Rare, literary, or archaic (mostly Biblical/Poetic)       |
| Typical Context | Placing physical objects or general setting | Metaphorical setting, poetic expressions, or fixed idioms |

Table 18: Two Verbs for "Put" used with "heart"

- [1] <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7760.htm>
- [2] <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7896.htm>
- [3] [https://www.reddit.com/r/hebrew/comments/1184zr0/do\\_you\\_pronounce\\_%D7%A9\\_differently\\_from\\_%D7%A1\\_a\\_friend\\_of/](https://www.reddit.com/r/hebrew/comments/1184zr0/do_you_pronounce_%D7%A9_differently_from_%D7%A1_a_friend_of/)
- [4] <https://lilmod-aleph-beth.com/verb-to-put-in-hebrew/>
- [5] <https://michaelcarasik.substack.com/p/enmity-gen-315>
- [6] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k02tFn4cKY0>
- [7] <https://www.pealim.com/dict/2806-lashit/>

**שִׁית לֵב**

The focus of this expression appears to be on paying attention to things: the bloody Nile; a baby boy; a highway; walls; riches; an overgrown field; herds.

Ex. 7:23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he **set his heart** to this also.

1Sam. 4:20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she **regard** it.

Jer. 31:21 Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: **set thine heart** toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

Psa. 48:13 **Mark ye well** her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

Psa. 62:10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, **set not your heart** upon them.

Prov. 24:32 Then I saw, and **considered it well**: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

Prov. 27:23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and **look well** to thy herds.

## שים לב

Here the emphasis is on spiritual things (good or bad).

Ex. 9:21 And he that **regarded not** the **word** of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.

Deut. 32:46 And he said unto them, **Set your hearts** unto all the **words** which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

Is. 41:22 Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them **shew the former things**, what they be, that we may **consider** them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

Ezek. 40:4 And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and **set thine heart** upon all that **I shall shew** thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

Ezek. 44:5 And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the **ordinances** of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and **mark well** the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

Hag. 1:5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; **Consider** your ways.

Hag. 1:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; **Consider** your ways.

Hag. 2:18 **Consider** now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, **consider** it.

Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou **considered** my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

Job 2:3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou **considered** my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

## מד in Exodus

Note the peak in Figure 11 in the plague of boils (9:10, 11), in which Moses and Aaron can stand but the magicians cannot, preparing for God's claim that he has made Pharaoh stand (9:11).

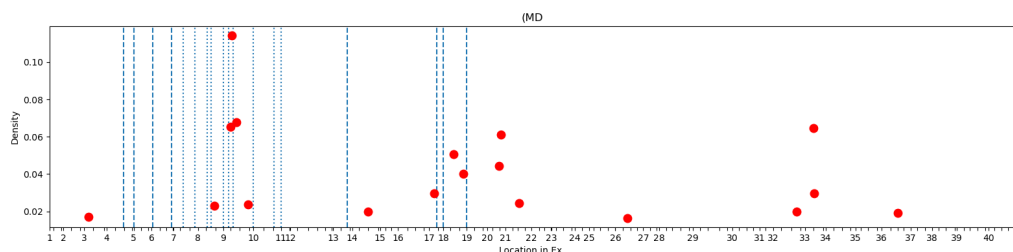


Figure 11: מד in Exodus

## God's Motives and Matt 11:25-26

In the plagues of hail and locusts, God announces his sovereign control over Pharaoh:

Exo 9:16 for this cause **have I raised thee up**, for to shew in thee my power;

Exod 10:1 **I have hardened his heart**, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him:

The primary audience differs in the two cases. In 9:16, the purpose is that Pharaoh “may(est) know that there is none like me in all the earth” (9:14), while in 10:1 is “that ye [Israel] may know how that I am the LORD.”

A saying by our Savior reinforces our need to yield to him in his dealings both with the Pharaohs of this world and with those who are his people.

Mat 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. (= Lk 10:21).

In Matthew, the Lord says this after commenting on those who, like Pharaoh, reject his word:

Mat 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

How often our Lord faced rejection in his ministry, even from his own people. In Nazareth, where he grew up, they tried to stone him. Yet he prays, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.”

Luke also records the rebuke to the cities of Galilee, before he reports this saying (Luke 10:13-16). But in between the two, he inserts another report:

Luk 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

And then follows the saying, introduced, not by “Jesus answered and said,” but by “Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said” (Lk 10:21). He praises the Lord for “reveal[ing] these things unto babes,” the audience of the seventy, just as in Matthew he praised the Lord for “hid[ing] these things from the wise and prudent.”

How is he able to praise God both for acceptance and for rejection? He acknowledges, “For so it seemed good in thy sight.” Throughout his ministry, he recognized the Father’s sovereign rule, and submitted himself to it. When he came into the world, it was to do the Father’s will:

Heb 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

And the night before his sacrifice, he reinforces his commitment:

Luk 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless **not my will, but thine, be done.**

As we remember his sacrifice, let us resolve to follow his example, and submit ourselves to the Father’s sovereign pleasure, whatever it may be.

### 10:3 “How long?” עַד־מָתַי

The expression appears 29x in the OT. This is the first instance. We also find עַד־מָתַי :

Psa. 4:2 O ye sons of men, **how long\*** will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.

Psa. 79:5 **How long\***, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

Psa. 89:46 **How long\***, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

And עַד־אֵינָהּ:

Psa. 13:1 **How long\*** wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? **how long\*** wilt thou hide thy face from me?

Psa. 13:2 **How long\*** shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? **how long\*** shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

Psa. 62:3 **How long\*** will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

עַד־לָמַד (LXX μέχρι τίνος) appears once, in Bildad’s speech to Job.

Job 8:2 How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?

### Addressed by the Lord to people 5x

Ex. 10:3 And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, **How long** wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

Num. 14:27 **How long** shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

1Sam. 16:1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, **How long\*** wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

Jer. 47:5 Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: **how long** wilt thou cut thyself?

Hos. 8:5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: **how long** will it be ere they attain to innocency?

### **Addressed to the Lord 9x +5 עַד־מָה**

Is. 6:11 Then said I, Lord, **how long**\*? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

Zech. 1:12 Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, **how long** wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?

Psa. 6:3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, **how long**\*?

Psa. 74:10 O God, **how long**\* shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

Psa. 80:4 O LORD God of hosts, **how long** wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?

Psa. 82:2 **How long**\* will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

Psa. 90:13 Return, O LORD, **how long**? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

Psa. 94:3 LORD, **how long**\* shall the wicked, **how long**\* shall the wicked triumph?

### **From one person or angel to another 15x +2 עַד־מָה**

Ex. 10:7 And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, **How long** shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?

1Sam. 1:14 And Eli said unto her, **How long**\* wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

2Sam. 2:26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? **how long**\* shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

1Kings 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, **How long**\* halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Jer. 4:14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. **How long**\* shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

Jer. 4:21 **How long**\* shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?

Jer. 12:4 **How long** shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.

Jer. 23:26 **How long**\* shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

Jer. 31:22 **How long\*** wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

Hab. 2:6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! **how long?** and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!

Prov. 1:22 **How long**, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Prov. 6:9 **How long** wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

Dan. 8:13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, **How long** shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

Dan. 12:6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, **How long** shall it be to the end of these wonders?

Neh. 2:6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For **how long\*** shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

## NT Parallels

LXX translates the expression, ἕως τίνος (20x), which does not appear in the NT, and ἕως πότε (26x, marked by asterisk in the list above), which does (Table 19:

|           | עַד־מָתַי | עַד־מָה | עַד־אֵינָה |  | Total |
|-----------|-----------|---------|------------|--|-------|
| ἕως πότε  | 16        | 3       | 5          |  | 26    |
| ἕως τίνος | 8         | 0       | 9          |  | 20    |
|           |           |         |            |  |       |
| Total     | 28        | 5       | 12         |  |       |

Matt. 17:17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, **how long** shall I be with you? **how long** shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

Table 19: "How Long" in the OT

Mark 9:19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, **how long** shall I be with you? **how long** shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

Luke 9:41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, **how long** shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

John 10:24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, **How long** dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

Rev. 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long**, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

## Go, Serve the Lord

Recall the instances of the verb עבַד *abad* H5647 and the cognate noun עֲבֹדָה *abodah* H5657 in Exodus (Figure 12). The last two of the nine plagues account for the peak in ch. 10.

## Requests to Leave Egypt

Table 20 summarizes the requests that Moses makes. 10:9 is the first one that makes clear that the entire people will be going.

Exo 3:18 And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

Exo 5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

Exo 5:3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

Exo 7:16 And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

Exo 8:27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.

Exo 10:9 And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.

## Bearing Sin

Earliest references where נשא is followed by פשע, עון, or חטא\*

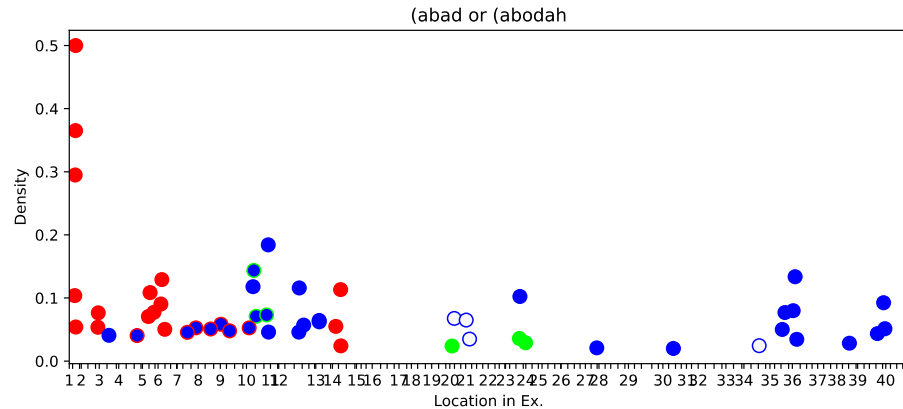


Figure 12: abad and abodah in Exodus: Object of service: **Red** = Egyptians, **Blue** = Lord, **Green** = other gods, **White** = Generic. Red border: demand by Moses. **Green** border: Pharaoh's command

|      | Who?      | Why?      | Where?              | Duration?  |
|------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|------------|
| 3:18 | Us        | Sacrifice | Wilderness          | Three days |
| 5:1  | My people | Feast     | Wilderness          |            |
| 5:3  | Us        | Sacrifice | Desert = Wilderness | Three days |
| 7:16 | My people | Serve     | Wilderness          |            |
| 8:27 | We        | Sacrifice | Wilderness          | Three days |
| 10:9 | Everybody | Feast     |                     |            |

Table 20: Moses' Requests to Pharaoh

**עין:**

- Human subject: Ex. 28:38 And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may **bear the iniquity** of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.
- God subject: Ex. 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

**פשע:**

- Human subject: Gen. 50:17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, **Forgive**, I pray thee now, the **trespass** of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, **forgive** the **trespass** of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.
- Divine: Ex. 23:21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not **pardon** your **transgressions**: for my name is in him.

**\*חטא:**

- Human subject: Gen. 50:17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, **Forgive**, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their **sin**; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.
- God subject, Ex. 32:32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

**11:3 “Mr. Moses”**

Houtman; see v. 1 pp. 6-7. He cites:

Jouon, *Biblica* 6 (1925) 131-314: (but he dismisses Judg 17:5 **האיש מיכה** because “Micah was not an important person”

Que **איש** ait pu prendre, dans certains cas, une nuance méliorative, c'est, en soi, assez naturel. En fait, une nuance analogue à *seigneur* apparaît dans le cas où **האיש** précède le nom d'un personnage important, généralement dans un contexte élogieux: Ex. 11, 3 **האיש משה** « *Le seigneur* Moïse était très considérable dans le pays »; Nomb. 12, 3: « *Le seigneur* Moïse était extrêmement humble, plus qu'aucun homme sur la terre » (opposition implicite entre sa dignité et son humilité); Esth. 9, 4: « *Le seigneur* Mardochée allait toujours grandissant »; Dan. 9, 21 : « *Le seigneur* Gabriel » (ici, en parlant d'un ange, *l'homme* Gabriel serait déplacé). Dans le premier livre des Maccabées, traduit sur un original hébreu, on trouve dans un passage où l'on exalte Judas (1 Macc. 5, 63) **האיש יהודה** **ο ανήρ Ἰούδας** qui répond à un **האיש יהודה** « le seigneur Judas et ses frères furent grandement glorifiés devant tout Israël ».

Dans l'hébreu de la Mishna on trouve אישי employé au sens de monseigneur, monsieur: Yoma 1,3: « אישי כהן גדול » monseigneur le grand prêtre, en s'adressant au grand prêtre.

Semblablement אישה pouvait avoir une nuance meliorative analogue à dame. Dans Pr. 9, 13, la Folie personnifiée est appelée, ironiquement du reste, אישה כסילות. « Dame Folie ».

Dans Judith 11, 1 Holoferne, parlant à Judith avec bienveillance, lui dit חטטך qui se traduirait mieux ici ô dame que ô femme.<sup>51</sup>

## בתוך vs. בקרב

בתוך appears more often than בקרב (about 321x vs. 156x) and thus should be understood as the hypernym (semantically more generic). Figure 13 shows that to some degree, different authors prefer different forms.

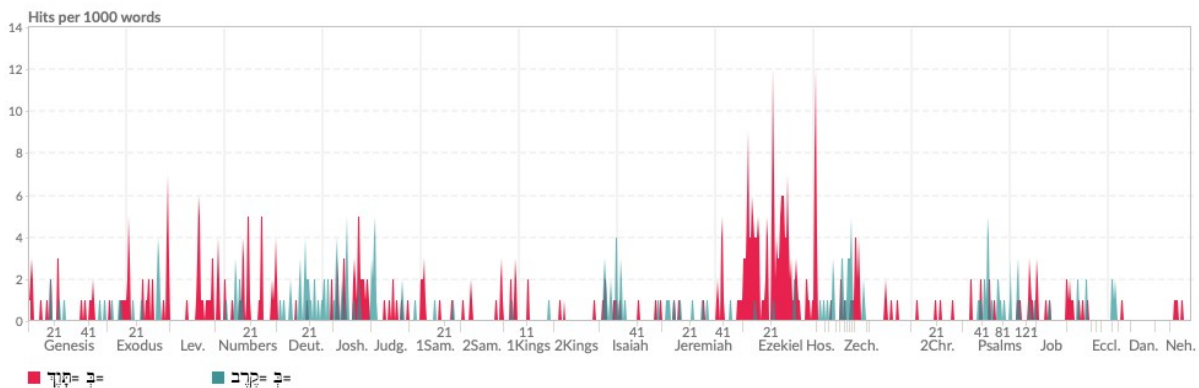


Figure 13: בקרב (green) vs. בתוך (red)

## Response to Google query:

In Biblical Hebrew, both קרב (qerev) and תוך (tawek) mean "midst," "middle," or "in," but they function with different spatial and conceptual

| Word        | Core Meaning                       | Primary Usage                                                                       |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| קרב (qerev) | Internal center, inward part       | Conceptual intimacy, inside a collective group, or literal anatomy (bowels/heart)   |
| תוך (tawek) | Geographic center, bisected middle | Physical placement, being surrounded by obstacles, or the exact middle of an object |

Table 21: qerev vs. tok

nuances. Quick Comparison: (Table 21)

### Key Differences

#### 1. Meaning and Etymology

- קרב comes from a root meaning to draw near or approach. It emphasizes close proximity, intimacy, and the internal essence of something.
- תוך comes from a root that implies cutting in half or bisection. It emphasizes the physical geometry of being right in the center.

51 He suggests using these examples to clarify "woman" in Mt. 15, 28; Luc 13, 12; 22, 57; Jean 2, 4; 19, 26

## 2. Physical vs. Conceptual Inside

- קרב often refers to the hidden, inward parts of a person, like their thoughts, emotions, or literal physical organs (e.g., Genesis 18:12 - "Sarah laughed within herself [b'qirbah]").
- תוך refers to a visible or geometric center. If you split something open, the middle point is the tawek (e.g., Genesis 1:6 - "Let there be an expanse in the midst [b'tok] of the waters").

## 3. Collective Group vs. Physical Surroundings

- When referring to a group of people, בקרב (b'qerev) implies being intermingled among them or part of their community essence (e.g., God dwelling in the midst of Israel).
- When referring to an environment, בתוך (b'tok) implies being physically surrounded by things (e.g., walking through the midst of the sea, or a tree standing in the middle of a garden).

## Moses' Anger in 11:8

The construction here, הָרִי-אֵף, appears only five times in the OT, of which this is the first. The others:

1Sam. 20:34 So Jonathan arose from the table in **fierce anger**, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

Is. 7:4 And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the **fierce anger** of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

2Chr. 25:10 Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in **great anger**.

Lam. 2:3 He hath cut off in his **fierce anger** all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about.

Only the last of these is attributed to the Lord, in his judgment against Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar.

Most often in Exodus, it is God who is angry:

- 4:14, at Moses, for refusing to be his messenger;
- 22:24, at Israel, warning of the consequence of afflicting the widow or orphan;
- 32:10-12, at Israel after the golden calf (though Moses successfully intercedes with him to turn away his wrath)

But Moses is also angry.

- In 16:20, he is angry (קצף) that the people have tried to keep some of the manna overnight.
- He is angry, at the golden calf (32:19, 22), even though he had just pled successfully (32:14) with the Lord to turn from his anger.

- In Lev 10:16, with the sons of Aaron for burning the goat of the sin offering.
- Though the words for anger and wrath do not appear, his second striking of the rock in Num 20:10-12 appears to be due to wrath; cf. also Ps 106:32f, which appears to refer to this incident (not the Meribah of Exod 17:7). And for this he is excluded from the promised land, Num 20:12; Deut 32:51. Note that the sin highlighted in Ps 106 is not the smiting of the rock, but his speech, “Must we fetch you water,” instead of just speaking to it as the Lord said, and sanctifying him, v. 12

## Comparison with קצף (Google)

In the Hebrew Bible, both קצף (*qatsaph*) and חרה (*charah*) belong to the semantic domain of anger, but they express different physical imagery, structural nuances, and distributions across the text. [1, 2]

### *The Core Etymological Differences*

| Attribute        | קצף ( <i>qatsaph</i> )                                             | חרה ( <i>charah</i> )                                                                    |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Root Meaning     | To fracture, snap, or foam                                         | To burn, glow, or ignite                                                                 |
| Physical Imagery | Agitation, snapping into a rage, or foaming at the mouth           | Internal or external thermal heat                                                        |
| Action vs. State | Relates to the <b>outbreak of anger into sudden visible action</b> | Relates to the <b>internal processing or kindling of anger</b>                           |
| Idiomatic Pair   | Rarely paired with body parts; functions mostly on its own.        | Frequently paired with <i>Af</i> (אף - nose/nostril) to mean " <b>the nose burned</b> ". |

## 1. חרה (*charah*) — The Internal Heat

The root meaning of חרה is tied to thermal energy—to glow, grow warm, or bake. Figuratively, it refers to anger or jealousy that "blazes up" or "kindles" like fire. [3, 4, 5]

- **The Mechanism:** In Biblical Hebrew, anger is felt as heat. When a person or God gets angry, their anger "burns" (*wayyihar*).
- **The "Hot Nose" Idiom:** It is famous for its pairing with *af* (nose/nostrils). When the Bible says *wayyihar apó* (וַיִּחַר אָפוֹ), it literally means "his nose burned," capturing the heavy, hot breathing of someone losing their temper. [6, 7]
- **Grammatical Nuance:** It often appears in an impersonal construction: *wayyihar lə...* ("it burned to..."), such as when Cain's offering was rejected and "it burned to Cain greatly, and his face fell" (Genesis 4:5). [8]

## 2. קצף (*qatsaph*) — *The Volatile Outbreak*

The root meaning of קצף is less about temperature and more about agitation or shattering. In later Hebrew dialects, this same root gives us the word for **foam** or **froth**. [9, 10]

- **The Mechanism:** *Qatsaph* captures the moment anger moves from an internal emotion into a visible, external reaction. Think of a boiling liquid overflowing or someone physically trembling and foaming with rage. [9, 11]
- **Righteous Indignation / Institutional Wrath:** It is frequently used for official, severe judicial anger, or divine judgment against covenant breaking. When God reacts with *qetseph* (the noun form), it usually brings an immediate consequence, like a plague or exile. [9, 12]

### *Textual & Scribal Differences*

Lexicographers note that these terms are sometimes chosen based on the biblical author's era or tradition: [13]

- קרה is ubiquitous in the early narrative texts (like Genesis, Exodus, and Judges) and prophetic frames. However, it is largely **absent** from the Priestly codes (portions of Leviticus/Numbers), Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and later exilic poetry. [7, 13, 14]
- קצף is heavily favored by the Priestly authors and late biblical writers (like Ezra or Esther) to describe divine wrath over ritual or covenant violations. [13, 14, 15]

Would you like to examine a **specific passage** where one of these words is used, or look at how they are translated into ancient versions like the **Greek Septuagint**? [16]

[1] <https://www.cambridge.org>

[2] <https://www.cambridge.org>

[3] <https://www.abarim-publications.com>

[4] <https://studybible.info>

[5] <https://thehistoricfaith.com>

[6] <https://hebrewwordlessons.com>

[7] <https://biblehub.com>

[8] <https://en.wiktionary.org>

[9] <https://biblehub.com>

[10] <https://www.reddit.com>

[11] <https://ulpan.com>

[12] <https://biblehub.com>

[13] <https://biblehub.com>

[14] <https://openbible.com>

[15] <https://biblehub.com>

[16] <https://scielo.org.za> (an excellent survey article on “emotions in the Hebrew Bible”)