

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

God's Judgment against the gods

Or

Bowling for Demons

Exodus 7:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go.

¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent.

¹⁶ And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But so far, you have not obeyed."

¹⁷ Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood.

¹⁸ The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile."

¹⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'

²⁰ Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood.

²¹ And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

²² But **the magicians of Egypt did the same** by their secret arts. So **Pharaoh's heart remained hardened**, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

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

²⁴ And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile.

²⁵ **Seven full days** passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Exodus 8:1 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "**Let my people go**, that they may serve me.

² But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will **plague all your country with frogs**.

³ The Nile shall **swarm** with frogs that shall come up into your **house** and into your **bedroom** and on your **bed** and into the **houses of your servants** and your people,¹ and into **your ovens** and your **kneading bowls**.

⁴ The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants."

⁵ ¹ And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, '**Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers**, over the **canals** and over the **pools**, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!'"

⁶ **So Aaron stretched out his hand** over the waters of Egypt, and ^athe frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

⁷ But **the magicians did the same** by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

⁸ Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "**Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs** from me and from my people, **and I will let the people go to sacrifice** to the LORD."

⁹ Moses said to Pharaoh, "Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile."

¹⁰ And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "Be it as you say, so **that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God.**

¹¹ The frogs shall go away from you and your houses and your servants and your people. They shall be left only in the Nile."

¹² So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh.¹

¹³ And the **LORD did according to the word of Moses.** The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields.

¹⁴ And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank.

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, **he hardened his heart** and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, '**Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth,** so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt.'"

¹⁷ **And they did so.** Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt.

¹⁸ The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast.

¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

²⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up **early in the morning** and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "**Let my people go,** that they may serve me.

²¹ Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand.

²² But on that day **I will set apart the land of Goshen,** where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, **that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.**

²³ Thus I will put **a division¹ between my people and your people.** Tomorrow this sign shall happen."

²⁴ And **the LORD did so.** There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarms of flies.

²⁵ Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land."

²⁶ But Moses said, "It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the LORD our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?

²⁷ We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he tells us."

²⁸ So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go to sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you must not go very far away. Plead for me."

²⁹ Then Moses said, "Behold, I am going out from you and I will plead with the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow. Only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

³⁰ So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD.

³¹ And **the LORD did as Moses asked,** and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained.

³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

Exodus 9:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "**Let my people go, that they may serve me.**

² For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them,

³ behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your **livestock** that are in the field, the **horses**, the **donkeys**, the **camels**, the **herds**, and the **flocks**.

⁴ But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die."

⁵ And the LORD set a time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land."

⁶ And the next day the LORD did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died.

⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

⁸ And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh.

⁹ It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt."

¹⁰ So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast.

¹¹ And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians.

¹² But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

¹³ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me.

¹⁴ For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself,¹ and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.

¹⁵ For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth.

¹⁶ But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

¹⁷ ^aYou are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go.

¹⁸ Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.

¹⁹ Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them."'''

²⁰ Then whoever feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses,

²¹ but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the LORD left his slaves and his livestock in the field.

²² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt."

²³ Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

²⁴ There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

²⁵ The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field.

²⁶ ^aOnly in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.

²⁷ Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, "This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.

²⁸ Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer."

²⁹ Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD. The thunder will cease, and there

will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's.

³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God."

³¹ (The flax and the barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud.

³² But the wheat and the emmer¹ were not struck down, for they are late in coming up.)

³³ So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and stretched out his hands to the LORD, and the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured upon the earth.

³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

³⁵ So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

Exodus 10:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them,

² and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

³ So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me.

⁴ For if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country,

⁵ and they shall cover the face of the land, so that no one can see the land. And they shall eat what is left to you after the hail, and they shall eat every tree of yours that grows in the field,

⁶ and they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and of all the Egyptians, as neither your fathers nor your grandfathers

have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.'" Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

⁷ Then Pharaoh's **servants said to him**, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?"

⁸ So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. And he said to them, "**Go, serve the LORD your God. But which ones are to go?**"

⁹ Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for ^awe must hold a feast to the LORD."

¹⁰ But he said to them, "**The LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go!** Look, you have some evil purpose in mind."¹

¹¹ No! Go, **the men among you, and serve the LORD, for that is what you are asking.**" And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

¹² Then the LORD said to Moses, "**Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come upon the land of Egypt and ^beat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left.**"

¹³ So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an **east wind** upon the land **all that day and all that night**. When it was **morning**, the east wind had brought the **locusts**.

¹⁴ The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again.

¹⁵ They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened, and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

¹⁶ Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, "**I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you.**

¹⁷ Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the LORD your God only to remove this death from me."

¹⁸ So he went out from Pharaoh and pleaded with the LORD.

¹⁹ And the LORD turned the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt.

²⁰ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.

PLAGUE NINE: DARKNESS

²¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be **darkness** over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt."

²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt **three days**.

²³ They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived.

²⁴ Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "**Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind.**"

²⁵ But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

²⁶ Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the LORD our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there."

²⁷ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

²⁸ Then Pharaoh said to him, "**Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.**"

²⁹ Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again."

Exodus 11:1 The LORD said to Moses, "Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely.

² Speak now in the hearing of **the people**, (PLUNDER) that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry."

³ And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

⁴ So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: ^aAbout midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt,

⁵ and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle.

⁶ There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.

⁷ But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

⁸ And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, you and all the people who follow you.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt."

¹⁰ Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

(Exo 7:14-11:10 ESV)

The Ten Plagues of Egypt has become one of the best known stories of the ancient world. This is more than a story, of course. It is history. And through this history, God gave birth to his chosen people Israel. But biblical history is more than brute facts given so you can win a

Bible-Trivia game. Biblical history is *interpreted* history, *theological* history. Understanding God's purpose in this history is key to living a sanctified, God-glorifying life. And so today I want to ask, *why* did God send these 10 plagues upon Egypt?

Last time I showed you how these plagues were a de-creation of Egypt followed by the birth of a new creation, God's son Israel. And I talked about the importance of this for all of biblical history which culminates in the coming of God's only begotten Son Jesus, whom you have come to worship today. But there are other reasons for the plagues, which do not in any way contradict what I said last time. If anything, they *compliment* that perspective by showing forth the power and wonder of the only true God.

One of these reasons is to show God's covenant faithfulness to his chosen people. Yet, God did not really need to send 10 plagues in order to save his people. So that does not really answer the question specifically. Philo the ancient Jewish historian thought "Ten punishments afflicted the country—a perfect number for the chastisement of those who had sinned to perfection" (Philo, *Life of Moses* 96). Other Jews thought it was "so that God might execute vengeance upon it for Israel" (Jub 48:7-8).

And thus, God shows his power to judge sinners and save his people through the plagues. This is in accord with **Genesis 15:13-14**. Both of those perspectives, while true and important, do not get at the very heart of the plagues.

Today I want to get at the heart of the question. To do this, you might remember another question and its answer, “**What is the chief end of man?**” A lot of Christians today will tell you it is to “**be happy,**” or “**to live your best life now.**” This is nothing but the chatter of fools, words without knowledge that darken the minds of those who listen. But the catechism is much wiser saying that the chief end of man is, “**To glorify God and enjoy him forever.**” Our happiness only comes when we learn to worship God and enjoy him. To put it another way, while God does save and punish different parts of humanity here in the exodus, men are not the end for which the exodus occurred.

Repeatedly, we learn in the plagues that God is doing this to demonstrate that he **is the only true God on earth**. These plagues occurred to show forth his glory and power so that the world might see and worship him.

- Plague 1: By this (turning the Nile into blood) you shall know that I am the LORD. (Ex 7:17).
- Plague 2: By this (the sending of frogs), you may know that there is no one like the LORD (8:10).
- Plague 4: By this (beatles), you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the [Egypt]¹ (8:22).
- Plague 7: By this (hail), you may know that there is none like me in all the earth (9:14), so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth (9:16).²
- Plague 8: Because of these many plagues you may tell in the hearing of your children how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians, what signs I did, that you may know I am the LORD (10:2).

In light of these verses, Numbers 33:4 adds something more specific about the Egyptian plagues. It says “**on their gods also the LORD executed judgments.**” One ancient commentary says, “their molten idols were dissolved, their idols of stone were mutilated, their idols of earthenware broken in pieces, their wooden idols turned to ashes, and

¹ Here I am taking *erets* (land) as specifically pertaining to the land of Egypt as opposed to the more general idea of the whole world.

² You could just as easily take *erets* in the former sense here as well. This makes good sense of which god who lives in Egypt is the true God. However, since God is also everywhere, and since he gains a great name for himself among the inhabitants even in Canaan (Ex 15:15; Josh 2:9-11 etc.) it also makes sense in our context to translate this one more generically. Of course, both are true and neither is mutually exclusive.

their cattle gods were slain with death” (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan). Thus, the 10 plagues were more than God’s punishment against Egypt or even his coming to the defense of Israel. It was his very specific way of showing the world that he was greater than the highest gods in the greatest civilization on planet earth. In the 10 Plagues of Egypt, God was going to turn the Egyptian religion upside down. This is what I will be talking about this morning.

Plague 1: Yahweh against Hapi -- Blood in the Nile

After the sign of the dragon-serpent is given to Pharaoh, to foreshadow how the living god of Egypt will be swallowed up the LORD by later in the story, God begins to send plagues upon Egypt. The first plague is the turning of the Nile into blood. Perhaps we should begin by asking why is this the *first* plague? An answer begins to form when we consider that this book began with the baby Jews being thrown into the Nile to drown. The Jews thought of this plague in this way as the Wisdom of Solomon (100BC-150AD) says, “Instead of the fountain of an ever-flowing river, it was stirred up and defiled with blood in rebuke for the decree to slay the infants” (11:6-7). At the end of the Plagues, when God hardens Pharaoh’s

heart one last time, the king then rushes fool-heartedly headfirst into the midst of the Nile, and God makes its water crash down upon him and his army, turning it red again with his blood. Thus, the Nile's banks are the bookends of Pharaoh's career.

But looking at it together with the rest of the plagues is also important, especially when we consider that Pharaoh was himself considered a living god in Egypt. Obviously, the Nile is made up of water. And water is critical to life. Only air is more basic to human need. You cannot go a week without water or you will die. The Egyptian Nile is called the cradle of human civilization because the earliest farmers³ came upon this mighty river which each year will flood, producing vital nutrients to make crops grow and life thrive. The Nile was so important to these people that they eventually worshipped it.⁴ One ancient source asks, “Why did He bring the plague of [blood] upon them first? Because Pharaoh and thee Egyptians *worshiped* the Nile.

³ At least, the earliest farmers that we have record of.

⁴ D. P. Silverman points out that it was technically not the Nile that was worshipped, but the yearly inundation of the Nile that was too important to Egypt's agriculture. Silverman, “Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt,” *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*, p. 34, cf. Enns, 200 n. 16.

God said to Moses: Go and strike their very gods in front of them.”⁵

Of course, being humans who love images over words, they depicted the Nile as a god. His name was **Hapi**, the fertility god of food and nourishment. He was often depicted with a beard and with female breasts and a hanging stomach (i.e. pregnant). Rivers can seem to the superstitious mind to be capricious living entities. One year it gives just the right amount of water. The next yet, it floods too much and destroys everything. As a culture which had forgotten the true knowledge of God (and probably began to entertain demons), the Egyptians began to offer sacrifices to Hapi to appease him so that he would bring just the right amount of water so as to make Egypt fertile and fruitful.

Imagine then if suddenly Hapi became bloody. He wouldn't be very happy. I'm not talking about some natural disaster, like Liberals imagine in all of these plagues, such as too much sediment filling the Nile so that it *looks like* blood. There is evidence from Egypt that they sometimes talked about the Nile as bloody because of these

⁵ Midrash Tanhuma (ed. Buber), Waera 14, in Kugel, 551.

occurrences.⁶ But Liberals and their naturalistic attacks on miracles eventually destroy the purpose of the story itself so that I often wonder why they even care to study it. I can imagine what Pharaoh would say to that kind of a “miracle,” “Moses, this happens all the time. Is that the best you’ve got?”

But what about the sudden, instantaneous change of the Nile into blood “in the sight of Pharaoh” (Ex 7:20) at the lifting of Aaron’s staff over the waters? What might that do to him? You might be surprised. It actually says “he did not take even this to heart” (Ex 8:23). This is not because the miracle was a sham, but rather because his own sorcerers were able to duplicate the miracle “by their secret arts” (8:22). So his heart remained hardened. Friends, the gods of Egypt had powers! That is partly why the LORD does all of the things that he does. He demonstrates that their powers were limited and not even comparable to the omnipotence of Israel’s God.

This brings me to a question of the scope of the miracle. The question is, did all of the water of Egypt turn to blood? Scripture says that it filled the rivers, canals, ponds and pools (gatherings/*mikveh*/or reservoirs) of the

⁶ Enns, 201, n. 18.

water of Egypt; in other words, the Nile and all of its channels. But some think, because of a questionable translation of **Exodus 7:19** that all of the water, “*even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone*” (ESV) turned to blood. In other words, they think that the blood was everywhere in Egypt, even in their drinking cups. The LXX translates the word “vessels” even though that word is not in the Hebrew. Most English translations and Charleton Heston’s movie follow the LXX. Remember when Yul Brenner pours out the water from his vase, and even it turns into blood?

So I want to ask, if all of the water in Egypt turned to blood, how *then did the magicians duplicate the miracle?* (**Ex 7:22**). That does not make any sense. More than that, this plague lasts seven days and if all the water is blood, then everyone would die of dehydration. Besides that, the Scripture says that the *Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink* (**7:25**). Therefore, “vessel” is probably not the best translation.

A better proposal says that when this phrase “wood and stone” is used in other places in the OT (**Deut 4:28; 28:36, 64; 29:16; 2 Kgs 19:18; Isa 37:19; Ezek 20:32; Jer 2:27, 3:9**), it refers to *idols* rather than *drinking cups*. That is,

the blood filled the idols of wood and stone. The point is that gods are being attacked! In other words, this is a figure of speech that the blood so effectively destroyed the Nile-god's ability to be fertile, that he himself turned into blood.⁷ The point is not that there was no pure water in the Egypt. Rather, the point is that **the Nile god is overwhelmed by Yahweh**. To personify it, the Nile god is crying tears of blood and he can do nothing about his sad condition! He is utterly helpless.

Plague 2: Yahweh vs. Heket -- Frogs

I discovered a curious thing about the sacrifices they would make down at the Nile. They would throw their offerings like amulets and other things into the river to the god, because Hapi was thought to come with a retinue of crocodile gods and *frog goddesses* at the time of the annual inundation of the river. Chief among these was a goddess named **Heqet** (Heqat, Hekat), daughter of Ra' who helped women give birth and the dead to be reborn. She was the "Mistress of Joy" that followed Hapi out of the Nile during

⁷ I have not come across this exact interpretation. But something close to it is common. For example, "The verse definitely ends in a climax. Everything in Egypt is polluted by the blood; even Egypt's gods are subdued by YHWH's power" (Lemmelijn, 266).

the fertile season.⁸ She was depicted as a frog, because frogs were thought to spontaneously generate out of the mud of the Nile, especially during the rainy season when thousands of them would appear.⁹

Here the point is, of course, the second plague was a plague of *frogs*. Only, God very specifically says that it isn't just the Nile that will be overrun with them. It is the whole country (**Ex 8:2**). Heqet will not be able to control herself! They will swarm into the **house**, into the **bedroom**, and onto the **bed** (**8:3**). I used to wonder why Exodus would make a big deal of the bed of Pharaoh. I think the answer lies here, in that Heqet was the goddess of fertility, of babies. But the LORD is going to overrun Pharaoh and Egypt with so many frogs that it will seem as if Heqet has gone berserk. There will be so many frogs that they will be in the **ovens** and **kneading bowls**, which again if seen in light of a goddess of children is almost akin to a plague of cannibalism.

It is interesting that on the one hand, the Magicians “**did the same**” by their secret arts, just as they had done with the staff and the bloody water. But what catches us

⁸ Geraldine Pinch, *Handbook to Egyptian Mythology*, 139-40.

⁹ <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/heqet.htm>

by surprise this time is Pharaoh's response even though his own magicians were able to duplicate the miracle through their demonic arts. "Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and my people." Apparently, the magicians could produce the frogs, but they couldn't get rid of them! Getting rid of the plague is every bit a miracle as bringing it in the first place. When God kills them off, they are heaped up in piles and begin to stink, foreshadowing for us the Armies of Pharaoh destroyed and piled up on the shore of the sea (Ex 14:30).¹⁰

Plague 3: Yahweh vs. Seb -- Gnats

In the third, fourth, and sixth plagues, some commentaries think that there is no war at all against the gods of Egypt. Perhaps that is true. Perhaps it is not. There was a god named Geb (Seb) in Egypt. He was the earth-god,¹¹ one of the most ancient of all their gods, and the father of Osiris, Set, and Isis. He was "sometimes called 'the great cackler' [Kenken-Wer] because he laid the great

¹⁰ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 117.

¹¹ Perhaps referred to in other cultures as the Green-Man. American's might call him the Jolly Green Giant. But it is utterly pagan in origin. One source suggests that he is called Repha (Coptic), Kaiwan (Akkadian), Chiun (Hebrew), Cronos (Greek), and Saturn (Latin). He would be associated with Saturn in the heavens. If so, then he is mentioned in Amos 5:26 and Acts 7:43. (<http://www.atlantisquest.com/Hiero.html>).

egg from which the world sprang.”¹² It is curious that in the first two plagues, Moses holds out his staff towards the Nile, and as we have seen, it was the water gods that were being mocked and discombobulated in those plagues. In this third plague, the LORD tells Moses to tell Aaron to stretch out his staff and “strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt” (Ex 8:16). The word is sometimes translated as lice or venomous insects (like mosquitoes or biting flies). The thing of interest is that they all begin as eggs which then hatch. It is not man who is rising from the dust of the ground here by the power of Seb. It is nasty insects. The romantic comedy of Egypt is turned into a horror movie like The Fly. It is therefore conceivable that the LORD is overthrowing the earth god who hatched the great egg by sending a plague of recently hatched insects which sprang forth from the earth and attacked both man and beast.

¹² Patricia Turner and Charles Russell Coulter, “Geb,” *Dictionary of Ancient Deities*, 189. A common unorthodox belief about the origin of the Egyptian gods is that they represent the survivors of Plato’s Atlantis who made their way across the sea and founded Egyptian civilization in ancient times. Egyptology will admit that the culture seems to have sprung up over night with a fully developed language and culture. In my mind, this kind of an explanation makes sense or the primeval and unexplainable origins of Egyptian civilization and why these people would worship these founders as gods (don’t we put our own presidents on mountains?).

It is curious that the magicians have no answer for Moses now. Their secret arts are depleted. Their demon-gods cannot duplicate Yahweh's feat. Their power stops at the Nile. And thus, they tell Pharaoh that this is *the finger of God* (*elohim*; cf. **Ex 8:19**). But Pharaoh would not listen to them.

Plague 4: Yahweh vs. Kephera – Beatles (flies)

The fourth plague is often identified as the plague of flies (ESV). But the word “fly” is not in the text. It is an interpretation from an uncertain word that means *a swarm of something*. The Scripture says that this swarm will fall upon the servants, the people, the houses, and even the *ground that they walk on* (**8:21**). While this *could* be a fly (and so many associate this plague with Beelzebub: Lord of the Flies), the word is sometimes translated as *a beetle* (YLT). Beetles walk on the ground; flies usually crawl around on walls. Perhaps it is a flying beetle (If you are getting grossed out, that's part of the point. Imagine plague after plague of these nasty things! I've lived through a minor plague. In 1976, the year we moved to Broomfield, a plague of earwigs moved through our

neighborhood. They were everywhere including in our cereal. It was totally disgusting).

Now, we have seen in Exodus already how the scarab beetle (or dung beetle) was such an important creature in Egyptian life and death, because it seemed to spontaneously regenerate. It is interesting that Beelzebub can also mean Lord of dung or Lord of the house. The problem with Beelzebub is that he is a Canaanite deity, not Egyptian. But of course the Egyptians did have a god for the scarab. His name was **Khephera**. The name means “becoming,” “formation,” “creation.”¹³

A wiccan book I found online describes this same god and then enjoins the coven to “**Call upon Khephera when you need to remember that the Sun shines even when our half of the world is dark. For our coven, Khephera is the Sun at night. . . call upon this Lord when you need direction, when you want to accomplish something and are not sure how to begin. . . It is Khephera who will help you transform yourself, if that is your desire.**”¹⁴

But modern witches are as out of touch with reality as were the ancient Egyptians. Khephera is not the one to

¹³ Ellen Cannon Reed, *Circle of Isis*, Khephera, p. 93-94. For the identification of this plague with Kephreer see Currid, p. 111.

¹⁴ Ibid.

give direction. He will only lead you to down the path of death. Only the LORD will lead you to resurrection and life, as the resurrection of Jesus by his own power demonstrates. The LORD proved himself to the whole world with Jesus, but he foreshadowed it earlier in Egypt when he showed that Khephera is not in control of resurrection. It is Yahweh who brings the scarab to life. And it is interesting that for the first time, no staff was used by Moses or Aaron. It was merely by the power of the word (**Ex 9:22**) that the beetles rose to life and invaded Egypt like a mighty army. And he proved it this time without even using a staff.

Plague 5: Yahweh vs. Apis -- Livestock

The fifth plague is an attack on the livestock of Egypt, but like the previous plagues, God makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel, so that none of the cattle of Israel is touched. The beasts of Egypt are said to be affected by no less than four (5, 6, 7, 10) of the plagues. **Why?** The answer is apparent when you think, for instance, of the idol that the Israelites made at the foot of Sinai. They made a golden *calf*.

Apis was the sacred bull of Egypt. **Isis**, queen of the gods, who bares cow horns on her head. One is male. The other is female. Together they symbolize the strength and vitality of Egypt, perhaps even embodying Pharaoh himself. After all, man does like to worship himself as much if not more than the he worships the demons. In fact, it was another goddesses, **Hathor** the bovine, whose job it was to protect the Pharaoh.

By attacking these beasts of Egypt, the LORD is bringing the disasters very close to home. Killing Egypt's economy: food, clothing, transportation, and even mocking Egypt's strength. These cows of Egypt are imposters. Only Yahweh is powerful over all things. Pharaoh has no time to even respond to this plague, for it came in a single day from the previous plague, demonstrating that this was not the natural result of the previous natural disasters coming to fruition, but the sovereign hand of an omnipotent God bringing to pass whatever he wishes.

Plague 6: Yahweh vs. Skehmet, Bast & others -- Boils

After the plague on livestock, God immediately sends boils upon Egypt's beasts and people, including even the

magicians in Pharaoh's court, who are not just impotent to reproduce the miracles, but are now themselves being affected by God's plagues. Moses' simply took some soot and threw it in the air, producing nasty painful sores.

Perhaps this plague of soot is at least in part retribution for the painful slavery in the "furnace" of Egypt. But it is also a demonstration against the healing gods, like [Skehmet](#) and [Bast](#), who are not able to help the people anymore than the magicians are. Another idea closely associated with Egypt's worship is her priesthood. [Imhotep](#) of *The Mummy* fame was the chief priest of the third Dynasty of Egypt. Later he was deified as a god of medicine and healing.¹⁵ Jehovah is not only attacking the gods of Egypt, but their priests as well.¹⁶

Plague 7: Yahweh vs. Shu -- Hail

The seventh plague, hail, attacks beast and man, field and tree. Nothing is left safe in Egypt. But in his grace, God sends a warning to the Egyptians to put whatever

¹⁵ Livingstone, "Plagues and the Exodus," 10. In Currid, p. 111, n. 25. Currid also identifies this plague with Amon-Re citing a Dynasty 19 text which says, "He who dissolves evils and dispels ailments; a physician who heals the eye without having remedies, opening the eyes and driving away the squint . . . Amon." But since he is clearly in view in the ninth plague, I will talk about him only in that context.

¹⁶ Another related idea is that plagues 6-8 attack medical, weather, and agricultural shamans of Egypt.

livestock was left under safe shelter (**Ex 9:19**). Then Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and with his staff the LORD sent **thunder** and **hail** and **fire** down to the earth. But the land of Goshen was spared (**vs. 26**).

Shu was the god of the atmosphere. Curiously, one Egyptology source I found writes that “It was **Shu’s duty to separate his children: the sky (the goddess Nut) and the earth (Nut’s husband, Geb). His eternal occupation was holding the sky above the earth. It was said that if he ever was removed from his place, Chaos would come to the Universe.**” **What might it look like if the sky and the earth were reversed?** Perhaps the sky would fall to earth with a thud. Certainly there would be loud crackling in the heavens. And so perhaps this miracle plague was God telling the Egyptians that he is the Lord of the heavens. He alone can make it hail or be clear at his choosing. God is mocking the heavenly deities of Egypt.

And of course, this plague also reminds us of God’s presence on Sinai, when he comes in the storm to the children of Israel. But he protected is people in Egypt from his fury as he protected them at the mountain. But like Sodom, the fire fell from the sky upon Egypt and anyone

who did not take heed was destroyed by the very sky falling down upon them.

Plague 8: Yahweh vs. Senehem -- Locusts

Next came the Locusts. I remember growing up and every summer the grasshoppers would multiply to the point where it became almost plague-esque. You could not ride your bike on the street without running over a grasshopper per second. Squish, squish. Now imagine a plague of locusts swarming into Egypt as has never been seen before or since. All at the command of God. We must continually keep in our minds how terrifying this all would have been.

Senehem was the divine protector against pests. There may even be a word play on the Hebrew word for Locust *snhm* and this particular god of Egypt.¹⁷ But why locusts? Because according to one Egyptian text, “**the gods protected against grasshoppers**” specifically.¹⁸ But they were not able to stop Yahweh from raising an army of locusts that absolutely devastated Egypt, so much so that Pharaoh would have let the people go right there, hand not

¹⁷ See Currid, p. 112, n. 28.

¹⁸ Thus for example, **Isis**, queen of heaven, and **Seth**, god of crops, were supposed to protect Egypt from plagues that would devastate the Egyptian produce.

the hand of the LORD interposed to harden his heart once more.

Plague 9: Yahweh vs. Amon-Re -- Darkness

The most famous god of Egypt was Ra or Amen-Re. He was the supreme sun god of Egypt. As sun god, he was the most powerful of all the gods, since the sun is the source of our life. Each new day would symbolize resurrection, while each night he symbolized death and the underworld.

What happens to Ra when suddenly, by the mere outreach of his arm, the LORD through Moses put Egypt into a darkness that could be felt? Ra was completely powerless against Yahweh, God of Israel. John Currid writes, “When Yahweh so willed, the sun was darkened, and Amon Re was hidden and unable to shine upon his worshipers. During the ninth plague Amon-Re did not rise again and did not give life; his realm was death, judgment, and hopelessness.”¹⁹ This particular god turns up again and again in the Pentateuch (Ex 5:19; 10:10; 32:12, 22; Num 11:1; 20:5; Deut 9:18) in connection with

¹⁹ Currid, p. 112.

the Hebrew word for evil (ra'), as a mockery of the chief god of Egypt.

Plague 10: Yahweh vs. Pharaoh -- Firstborn

Finally, the last plague is direct against Pharaoh himself, for as I told you earlier, he was considered the living god of Egypt. When the LORD attacked his firstborn son while letting his own son go free, the LORD was telling Pharaoh that he alone is the God of Egypt or anywhere else. And this is what the King and all the Egyptians deserved for their cruelty to Israel and disobedience to the LORD's commands. And it was only at this last most terrifying and amazing miracle of all that the LORD let Pharaoh give into his desires so that he finally let the people go.

Conclusion

What then should you take away from this examination of the 10 plagues of Egypt? First, remember again that this is the Bible's own take on things, and so there must be some lessons that God wants us to learn from this perspective. Ex 12:12 says, "I will go through the land of Egypt. . . against *all the gods* of Egypt I will execute

judgments—I am the LORD.” The LORD did that, in the past, ten different times he executed judgment upon the gods. As Philo may have rightly said, “Ten punishments. . . a perfect number.” The whole pantheon of gods who oversaw the greatest culture on earth were lined up like bowling pins and God knocked them down with a perfect strike.

I see three important truths that are derived from this. First, what God did in the past, he will do in the future. The prophets use the plagues as an archetype of things to come, and this serves as a warning. Jeremiah says, “The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, says, ‘Behold, I am going to punish Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh, and Egypt along with her gods and her kings’ (46:25).²⁰ Zephaniah then expands the vision of judgment saying, “The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place” (Zeph 2:11).

How are these predictions fulfilled according to the NT? It is two-fold. First, the “already.” In the coming of Christ, the LORD “disarmed the rulers and authorities”

²⁰ Ezekiel says the same thing. “Thus says the Lord God, ‘I will also destroy the idols and make the images cease from Memphis. And there will no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt; and I will put fear in the land of Egypt’” (Ezek 30:13).

(that is the evil angelic hosts in the “heavenly places” [Eph 3:10]). He disarmed them and “made a public display of them.” That is, as it was with Moses who says, “Tell your children how I made a mockery of the Egyptians” (Ex 10:2), so it is with now with Christ who parades the heavenly hosts around for sport.

And how did he disarm and taunt these gods? By triumphing over them *on the cross*. This is all the teaching of Col 2:15. And by making us alive together in Christ, when we were dead in our transgressions. And by canceling the debt which was hostile to us, by taking it out of the way, and nailing it to the cross (2:13-14). To put it another way, the Father took the plagues that we deserve for our sin and placed them upon his Son, his firstborn whom he struck down for us so that as Zephaniah had said, “every knee shall bow down” (cf. Php 2:10; Isa 45:23).

What happened then is this. The LORD put a god (an angel) over each of the 70 nations (Deut 32:8) of old.²¹ But

²¹ See my Pastor’s Pen #70 article on the Sons of God and the Inheritance of the Nations. The basic idea of this verse is that God gave the nations over to 70 angels, whom he knew would disobey. But he preserved one nation for Christ, the only *uncreated* Angel, the pre-incarnate Jesus, the Word of God, Michael the one who is like God. As the Angel himself says, “They are wholly *given* to me” (Num 8:14-16). But the nation of Israel is not and never was intended to be an end to itself. God gave the promise to Abraham and to his Seed, that he would be the father of *many* nations (Gen 12:3; 17:5-7; Gal 3:8). And the Seed he was referring to was Christ (Gal 3:16)! And in this way Psalm 82 is fulfilled when it says, “Arise, O God, judge the earth: For you will inherit all nations.” Because God (Father and Son) has

those angels began to demand worship, tribute, even human sacrifice for their appeasement. But in Christ, who now inherits those very nations, God shows that the demands of those gods are groundless, because the nations no longer belong to them. They have been disinherited. The nations have been taken away from them and given to Christ who alone inherits the nations as **Psalm 82** and others passages teach! The only sacrifice that counts now is the death of Christ which appeases *the LORD*.

Ephesians teaches that **the gods** (that is the demons) **are rendered powerless by this truth**. **Did Jesus not triumph over them in the desert? Did he not bind the strong man? Did he not cast out the demons? Did he not see Satan fall like lightning from heaven? Was he not victorious over Satan when he entered Peter to tempt him to stray from the path? Did not his resurrection mock the demons who thought they had killed the Lord of Glory? And does not his ascension into heaven mean that there is no longer an accuser that holds any power over your eternal destiny?**²²

judged the angels, God receives the nations. For, “By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (**Rev 5:9-10**).

²² See Hendriksen’s commentary on Colossians 2:15.

Scripture says that the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places see the manifold wisdom of God every time the church proclaims this glorious gospel of Jesus Christ! (**Eph 3:10**). You are not the only beings present in this worship service, beloved. And every time a soul is converted by God, the enemy is mocked, for the dead are raised and Christ is seen yet again as triumphant over all evil. This is why it is so important that the church shines the gospel and nothing less and nothing more in these ever darkening days, and why it is so important that you believe today that Jesus has triumphed over the gods.

But the reason all this talk about demons residing over nations and holding the peoples in their powerful grip seems so strange and foreign to you is because you sit on **this side of the cross**, as the beneficiaries of the proclamation of the gospel which has gone before you, dispelling these rulers and principalities so that human kind is no longer under their dark spell as they were in the past. Oh brothers and sisters, things are so much different today because of Calvary, and we scarcely even notice how much light we yet enjoy and how free we are even in these dimming days from the tyranny and oppression that these beings once brought upon mankind in past ages.

But there is also the not-yet. 1 Cor 15:24-26 says, “Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until he has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.” Thus the second thing to learn today because of the past and the future: You are to repent and believe and tell others what you know. When God sends plagues today and in the future, plagues that remind us of Egypt as Revelation’s trumpets demonstrate, it is to warn you like the Egyptians that he is a judge who will put all his enemies under his feet. Therefore, beloved, you are to repent of your sins and flee to Christ. You must be reconciled to God and to each other!

Again, I read Exodus 10:2 but with a different emphasis, “*Tell in the hearing of your son, and your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians.*” This is not knowledge anyone is born with. Every generation has the duty to transfer this knowledge to the next. Tell your children on the way home how God overthrew the gods of Egypt. Go through them all. Show them how the LORD—and not the gods—is powerful over water, food, fertility, reproduction, creation, strength of men, health,

resurrection, and life. Not the magicians and shamans of Egypt, not the gods of wood and stone, and not the Pharaoh-god himself could withstand the might of the LORD. Then, tell them how God overthrew the principalities on the cross once and for all. Tell them how he has shown himself to be God of all, and how they might be saved by trusting in Christ. “Who among the gods is like you O LORD?” (Ex 15:11), Moses sang.

Finally, **third**, rest in the promises today yourself. What is more practical in a world so full of suffering and evil and constant pointless comings and goings than to rest? That is what God gives you this day to do. Not to go home and sleep. Certainly not to go home and start working. But to go home and rest in the sweetness of the redemption that he has won for you.

Beloved, God makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel, between his sons and those who are not his children. Let me give you one final verse that sums up this day. Ex 11:7 says, “But against any of the sons of Israel a *dog* shall not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.” What a strange thing to say, “not a dog shall bark”. . . until you remember the point today. That

dog was probably Anubis, the famed Egyptian god of the dead and embalming, who is always depicted as a canine, a dog.

None of the gods can touch you if you are one of his children, not even Death, Hades, Abaddon, Apollyon, or Anubis. For the Lord has conquered death and will soon put it under his feet. And the LORD knows those who are his. And he protects his own from the plagues of his wrath that he sent upon Egypt to mock the gods and to exalt himself so that everyone may know and believe that he alone is LORD of Lords and God of gods, and so you may glorify God and enjoy him forever, thus fulfilling the purpose for which you were created.

Excursus: *Ma'at and Canon*

I did not have time this morning to tell you about a very important god of Egypt. I want to do that here now. The 66 books in your Bible are what Protestants call their “canon.” When we talk about the *canon of Scripture*, we are not being metaphorical for the big guns that Pirates carried on their ships, as if we are saying that the Bible is a cannon that blows people to smithereens. The canon (one ‘n’) we are referring to comes from a Greek word (κανών; cf. **2 Cor 10:13-16**) that originally referred to a straight rod that was used to keep your craftsmanship straight (such as a plumb or level does today). It is used metaphorically

in the same sense so that it means a **rule or law by which our lives are governed or kept straight**. The canon of Scripture, therefore, keeps our lives straight. It is the straight rod given to men from God to keep our lives in *order*. “Order” is the idea I want you to keep in your mind now.

The Egyptians had a word that meant the same thing as canon. It was called *ma’at* (muh-aht). Egypt was the crown jewel of culture, order, and law in the ancient world, because *ma’at* was the driving principle of Egyptian civilization.²³ But in the ancient world, great principles (as well as great people) eventually became deified. As Paul says in Romans, **people forget the true God and begin to worship the creation**. In my opinion, this is the root source of polytheism. Perhaps it begins by personifying an idea like liberty, turning it into a statue and putting it on Ellis Island. Few people in America would say that they worship Lady Liberty, as if they thought that the statue was a goddess to be placated and worshipped. But over time, as people forget the truth, our default mode returns to idol worship.

Ma’at, like liberty, was personified as a goddess. She eventually became the feminine counterpart of the great god **Thoth**, who was the “**self-created**” god “**to whom none hath given birth,**” who through the scepter becomes “**the emblem of ‘life’ common to all gods.**”²⁴ Like Thoth, Ma’at is usually depicted as **holding a scepter** in one hand and an

²³ Surely this has been true of every single great civilization throughout history. From the Egyptians to Babylonians to Greece, to Rome, to Britain, Spain, France, and America, when they were greatest was when they were dominated by order and law. Whether you call it canon or ma’at or anything else, the principle is the same. What God is going to do, however, in the plagues of Egypt is demonstrate that men must not worship ma’at or canon as if it were a god(dess) itself possessing power, but him, as the only true source of rule, law, and order.

²⁴ He is also called the “**One,**” “**the LORD of [Hermopolos (Khemennu), the original high ground where upon Ra (the god of light) arose],**” and the “**heart of Ra**” whom I will talk about several times before today is over. See Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, p. 400ff (Thoth) and 416ff (Ma’at).

onyx (the emblem of life) in the other. Thus, truth and order personified as Ma'at is the chief goddess of Egyptian life. She, rather than the LORD and his word, is the canon that ordered that civilization.

Underneath Ma'at and Thoth are the other gods and goddesses of Egypt: Ra, Isis, Horus, Osiris, and even Pharaoh. For example, John Currid writes that, “Every Pharaoh had the obligation to reestablish and reaffirm ma'at upon accession to the throne. The forces of chaos could upset ma'at, so at the advent of a new king, order had to be restored.”²⁵ Each god in its own way was thought to bring order or chaos to specific areas of life: floods, drought, hail, heat, reproduction, blight, disease, seasonal changes. . . virtually everything was thought to be governed by lesser gods and goddesses that served Ma'at and brought order to society.

Given this important foundation of Egyptian culture and religion, how might show forth your greatness if you were the LORD? You would attack these gods, one by one, and prove that they were pitiful objects of worship, devoid of any real power, nothing but sticks in the mud. And through their destruction, you would be attacking the chief of all ideals, ma'at. Egyptian order and truth would be turned into chaos and falsehood. Egyptian civilization disintegrates. Her religion diffuses into nothing. Her power melts away like butter. Her will succumbs at last to to God as he shows himself to be the only true source of order and truth in the universe. Think about these ten plagues as God destroying ma'at and all of her children, one by one, in a victorious campaign waged against the gods of Egypt.

The Reaction of Pharaoh

²⁵ Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the OT*, p. 119.

The plague of frogs really struck a nerve in the Pharaoh. What we are going to see with Pharaoh is the pitiful movement of a man increasingly wanting to get rid of the Israelites and their God, while simultaneously being hardened so that he will not let the people go. Pharaoh's response over the course of the plagues is worth nothing. At first, he does not take the plagues to heart (7:23). Then, he pleads with the LORD to take the frogs away (8:8). During the third through sixth plagues, Pharaoh says nothing, though the Magicians begin to see that this is all being done by the finger of God by the third plague. Pharaoh comes to the point twice where he admits sin against the LORD (9:27, 10:17), and even asks for God and Moses to forgive his sin! (10:17), yet he does not let the people go. This is not true repentance, as his reaction towards the LORD's request makes clear. Repentance produces good works, obedience to God's commandments.

Thus, his reaction towards the LORD's request to let the people go (repeated in plagues 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10) is equally interesting. At first, he makes no such promise. But by only the second plague, he seems to be buckling under the pressure. "I will let the people go to sacrifice" (8:8). Of course, he doesn't, but he keeps returning to this theme with an increasing urgency to get rid of the Israelites, but not altogether so as to ruin his source of free labor. In the 4th plague he said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land" (8:25). In the 8th plague, "Go, serve the LORD, but not the children" (10:8-11). In the 9th plague, "Go, serve the LORD with your children, but leave your livestock here" (10:24). Pharaoh wants to partially comply, but not fully; to get this God off his back, but he will not bow to him as personal LORD of the King of Egypt. Thus, the plagues continue, because the LORD has hardened his heart.

And through it all, God shows himself faithful, and never attacks his chosen people who remain safe for nine plagues simply because God wants them to, and then in the last remain safe as their faith in the promise causes them to wipe the blood on the door posts of their homes as the LORD himself and the death he brings passes over them.

Thus, the Scriptures ring true. “I will go through the land of Egypt. . . against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD” (Ex 12:12). And this Scripture is to continue today, through you who have heard the word in the assembly, “Tell in the hearing of your son, and your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians” (Ex 10:2).

THE PLAGUES AND THE DESTROYED EGYPTIAN GODS		
1. BLOODY WATER	HAPI or NILUS	- sacred river god
2. FROGS	HEKA, HEKT OSIRIS	- goddess of reproduction - frogs held sacred as his emblem
3. LICE (gnats, fleas)	SEB	- the earth god
4. FLIES BEETLES	BEELZEBUB KHEPHERA IRIS	- god of flies - the sacred scarabacus - queen of heaven
5. MURRAIN OF BEASTS	APIS HATHOR	- the sacred bull - the sacred cow
6. BOILS AND BLAINS	NEIT SUTECH or TYPHON	- mother queen of highest heaven - the evil-eye god
7. HAIL	SHU IRIS and OSIRIS	- god of the atmosphere
8. LOCUSTS	SERAPIS	- protector of land from locusts
9. DARKNESS	RA, AMEN-RA	- supreme sun god
10. DEATH OF FIRSTBORN	PHARAOH PIAH	- a god in the flesh - the god of life

Bibliography

- Budge, Ernest Alfred Wallis. *The Gods of the Egyptians, vol. 1*. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1904.
- Currid, John D. *A Study Commentary on Exodus: Exodus 1–18*, vol. 1. EP Study Commentary. Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press, 2000.
- Fretheim, Terrance. *Exodus Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, 1988.
- Kugel, James L. *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it was at the Start of the Common Era*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Lemmelijn, Biblica Anno 80.2, “The Phrase וַבַּעֲצִים וּבִאֲבֹנִים in Exod 7,19,” *Commentarii Periodici Pontificii Instituti Biblici* (1999): 264-68.
- Livingstone, David. “Plagues and the Exodus.” *Bible and Spade* 4:1 (1991): 3-14.
- Pinch, Geraldine. *Handbook to Egyptian Mythology*. Handbooks of World Mythology. Denver, CO: ABC-CLIO, 2002.
- Reed, Ellen Cannon. *Circle of Isis*. Newburyport, MA: New Page Books, 2002.
- Seawright, Caroline. “Heqet, Frog Headed Goddess of Childbirth.” *Tour Egypt*. <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/heqet.htm>.
- Silverman, D. P. “Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt.” *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*, p. 34, cf. Enns, 200 n. 16.
- Turner, Patricia and Coulter, Charles Russell. “Geb.” *Dictionary of Ancient Deities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.