**Moses and the 10 Plagues**

**(Exodus 7-12)**

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# **Introduction**

1. Prayer
2. Required reading for this is Exodus chapters 7-12
3. I wanted to talk about the 10 Plagues and have researched this somewhat in terms of looking at the constituent parts of the Plagues which were imposed upon the Egyptian’s by an almighty God
4. We are in the book of Exodus where Moses now attempts to lead the Israelites out of captivity after being given the task by God himself.
5. I have grouped this message sequentially and will aim to show that there was both a purpose and meaning to both the order of the plagues and the underlying message God wanted to show the Egyptians in the face of their Pharaoh rejecting Moses demands.
6. I will start by looking at the concept of why Pharaoh would not consent to Moses request to release the Israelites through an initial confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh.

# **Initial showdown**

1. In chapter seven there was an initial showdown between Moses and Pharaoh in the presence of his magicians. It is worth pointing out here that earlier in Exodus 4:2-4 God had shown Moses that his stick could be turned into a snake and then reversed. This was obviously a precursor to the events later in events.
2. Question here is what was Moses dealing with? there may have been Black magic in practice here by Pharaoh’s magicians and we are not told explicitly and the spells themselves are translated in Hebrew “l-w-t” which means to enwrap or to envelope.
3. The reference here to the transformed rod in chapter 7:10 is to large reptiles the word in Hebrew is “Tanninim” and could refer to a variety of animals;
   1. There are various translations for what the reptile was, but in **Ezekiel 29:3** The same word is used for Crocodiles and some see this referring to the Pharaoh himself who was similar in nature to the crocodile in that they were mighty and controlled their surroundings completely. It was God who was to show that the Pharaoh’s might was just an illusion and they were controlled by Gods decree.
   2. Interesting point here is there was an Egyptian god called Sobek who was also known as the Crocodile god
   3. Or another theory is with reference to a big sea serpent in the book of Genesis

# **Introduction to the Plagues**

1. Ten plagues = “*Eser Makkot*”, Why 10?

Spiritual base i.e., Minyan – Friday night service in a synagogue Maariv - Judaism, the minimum number of males (10) required to constitute a representative “community of Israel” for liturgical purposes.

1. The plagues themselves are repeated in Psalms;
   1. 78: 43-51
   2. 105: 27-36
2. The question could be asked were they demonstrations of Gods might or punishments? But we can see these were calamities in nature but brought about by Gods hand due to the;
   1. Timing
   2. rapid succession of each of them
   3. announcement of them
   4. the subsequent removal of them
3. There are a number of ways of grouping the Plagues;
   1. First 5 plagues brought about by Pharaohs stubbornness and wrongdoing
   2. Last 5 brought on by Gods causality – ‘the relationship between cause and effect’
4. Set into 3 triads i.e., 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9 with 10 being the Final unique plague upon the Egyptians
5. For each triad, the initial plague 1, 4 and 7 Pharaoh was warned in the morning
6. Within the 3 triads there was increasing severity but within the triad it decreased in severity some commentators see;
   1. Group 1 low severity
      1. Plague 1 High severity – No water
      2. Plague 2 Medium – plague of frogs
      3. Plague 3 low – plague of lice
   2. Group 2 medium severity
      1. Plague 4 High severity
      2. Plague 5 medium severity
      3. Plague 6 Low severity
   3. Group 3 high severity etc…….
7. I have split the message into two distinct aspects;
   1. The first is the Plague itself and the physical manifestation of the plague including side effects and illness as well as the impact it had on the Egyptians
   2. The second aspect is how God uses the plague to denigrate the god or deity the Egyptians worshipped showing them to be false and powerless

# **Plague 1 - Water into blood (*DAM*) Ex. 7:14–24**

**Plague**

1. The river Nile was deified in Egyptian culture and had many gods in charge of it or connected with it
2. It is possible that there were floods which would flush out all the red earth in the area and make the area somewhat unappealing to the eye, but the word is ‘dam’ which means blood; hence we can take this to be actual blood.
3. There is a clear link to where all Israelite boys were thrown into the river in Exodus 1:15 and links in with the last plague of death of the first born.
4. This was quite a severe plague as the water would have been undrinkable without water the body dies.

**Gods of Egypt**

There were three Gods who related to the Nile namely;

1. Khnum(M) Guardian of the river source, who was said to control the Nile flood and give life to gods and humans
2. Hapi(M) spirit of the Nile, god of the annual flooding of the Nile in ancient Egyptian religion. The flood deposited fertile soil on the river's banks, allowing the Egyptians to grow crops
3. Osiris(M) Nile was his bloodstream, Egypt relied on for agricultural fertility.

# **Plague 2 – Frogs (*TSEFARDEA*) 7:25–8:15**

**Plague**

1. Hebrew class.
2. From last plague, all river wildlife would have been driven from the shores due to the lack of water and the aroma of dead fish and animals would already be permeating the air.
3. So many frogs that they were piled up like grain.
4. In 7:29. The word ‘Upon’ is used which can also mean into you which means that the frogs would croak from the insides of the Egyptians.

**Godess of Egypt**

1. Heqet(F) – Frog goddess said to protect women in childbirth and frogs could not be killed and were considered holy as with other animals I will discuss

# **Plague 3 – Lice (*KINNIM*) Ex. 8:16–19**

**Plague**

1. Also known as vermin and could refer to
   1. Possible mosquitoes carrying malaria
   2. The Hebrew word used is ‘arob’ which can mean a mixture of dangerous animals
2. Magicians could not duplicate this plague
3. No warnings given this time and God sent forth plague.

**Gods of Egypt – 3 of them**

1. Geb(M) the earth god of Egypt and heals scorpion stings
2. Serket (F) scorpion goddess, god of healing
3. Horus (M) - linked with the sky, the sun, kingship, protection, and healing

# **Plague 4 - Flies or wild animals Ex. 8:20–32**

**Plague**

1. Israelites and Egyptians were divided, Israelites were not affected and God in effect partitioned his people. In 8:19 the word division means either
   1. a redemption
   2. a rescue
   3. or ransom
2. Place mentioned is Goshen and refers to Wadi Tumeilat (East Nile to Great Bitter lake)
3. Point here is the Israelites would only worship God outside the area where the Egyptians worshipped animal deities and there is also reference to Genesis 43:32 where the Egyptians would not eat with the Israelites as they ate sheep – **‘for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians**.’
4. The flies themselves could relates to;
   1. scarab beetle
   2. Or the dog-fly is in the Septuagint (Greek version of the OT), nasty disease carrying fly.

**Gods of Egypt**

1. Uatchit / Wadjet(F) – fly goddess of Egypt
2. Amon Ra(M) was the deification of the scarab beetle itself.

# **Plague 5 - Diseased livestock (*DEVER*) Ex. 9:1–7**

**Plague**

1. Death introduced as livestock killed, some livestock were viewed as sacred animals
2. The impact here would be the dead animals would spread Anthrax which is dangerous to life.

**Gods of Egypt**

1. Mnervis(M) A live bull god worshipped
2. Amon(M) was a god of the air, and the name probably means the “Hidden One.

# **Plague 6 – Boils (*Shehin*) Ex. 9:8–12**

**Plague**

1. The Plagues now intensify and again there is no warning.
2. In Leviticus, the term for skin disorder is known by the Hebrew word ‘Tzaret’
3. But other versions translate the boils as the Hebrew word ‘Shechin’ which means heat, hence the Egyptians felt inflammation and perhaps a burning sensation and obvious constant discomfort
4. Why is soot mentioned? In Genesis 19:28 – Sodom and Gomorrah, referenced to a smoke of destruction, it looks ominous and be a warning of destruction and death.

**Gods of Egypt**

1. Sekhemet(F) – Egyptian goddess of epidemics, goddess of the sun, fire plagues, healing, and war
2. Serapis(M) – god of healing and fertility?
3. Imhotep(M) He became the god of medicine and healing

# **Plague 7 - Thunderstorm of hail and fire (*BARAD*) Ex. 9:13–35**

**Plague**

1. Third triad of plagues begin with a noticeably clear timing of this as it relates to early Feb (9: 31-32)
2. Human death is also warned of in verse 19 for the first time
3. There is a long warning given over 6 verses (9: 14 – 19)
4. All the other plagues were earth based, now heaven based
5. This would have destroyed Egyptians homes

**Gods of Egypt**

1. Set(M) was a god of the desert including desert storms
2. Shu(M) – Egyptian god of atmosphere, Embodiment of wind or air
3. Nut(F) – Egyptian sky goddess, the ancient Egyptians believed that Nut swallowed the sun-god, Ra, every night and gave birth to him every morning.

# **Plague 8 – Locusts (*ARBEH*) Ex. 10:1–20**

**Plague**

1. Elsewhere in the bible Locusts are the means of destruction in Joel 1 & 2 - Many locusts and in parts of the world they can eat 100,000 tons of vegetation and they breed in great quantities
2. At this stage, any surviving remnant of crops i.e., Barley, wheat and emner which would have survived previous plague of the hail;
   1. This would have impacted Egypt’s prosperity as they made Flax for linen fibre which would be woven into cloth for clothing
   2. Barley was used for bread and beer and used in Egyptian trade.
3. God moved the East wind to move the locusts showing God is clearly in control of the environment.

**Gods of Egypt**

1. Serapia who was the Egyptian daily protector from Locusts
2. Neper (M), the god of grain

# **Plague 9 - Darkness for three days (*HOSHEKH*) Ex. 10:21–29**

**Plague**

1. What is interesting is no warning given this time
2. Wind is called a ‘Kadim’ from Africa which covers the land in sand and dust
3. Blotted out the sun – the impact here was the sun god was the supreme god for the Egyptians who would battle daily with a demon of darkness and again to show their god could not act and was impotent.

**Gods of Egypt**

1. Re(M) - One of several deities associated with the sun
2. Aten (M) One of several deities associated with the sun
3. Horus(M) the right and left eyes of Horus were associated, respectively, with the sun and the moon.
4. Khonsu (M) who was the Egyptian moon god, and we can assume there was no moon to light the sky up.

# **Plague 10 – Death of firstborn (Exodus 12)**

**Plague**

1. This one has no further negotiations with Moses and Pharaoh, this was Pharaoh’s Plague of judgement
2. 3 declarations;
   1. Completion of Moses and Aarons role as instruments of Gods chastening
   2. God will now intervene in proceedings
   3. Transition of the Passover
3. God tells the Israelites to act and start preparations that they will need to leave in haste and the Israelites would end up borrowing from their Egyptian neighbours
4. There is something which alludes to Moses punishment where he says in Exodus 11:8 – where he says “They will bow to me” and later on in Numbers 20 is where he trips spiritually at the waters of Meribah
5. First born of cattle were deified by the Egyptians also as well a lamb which was used for the blood and would be slayed. Reference to our Lord Jesus as the blemish free sacrificial lamb.
6. Some films and books discuss the angel of death as passing over the Israelites, but I believe it was God himself as in;
   1. **Exodus 11:4 –** **And Moses said, thus saith the LORD, about midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:**
   2. The word used is destroyer in;

**12:23 - For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.**

* 1. Hebrew word is ‘ham·maš·ḥîṯ’ and is used in 1 Chronicles 21:15 for the angel of death as well as the word for raiders in Samuel as well as the God destroying a mountain in Jeremiah 51:25

**Gods of Egypt**

1. Isis(F) As goddess of life and magic, Isis protected women and children, and healed the sick
2. Hathor(F) - The goddess Hathor was usually depicted as a cow, Hathor embodied motherhood and fertility

# **Summary Point 1 – Gods power**

1. Point was to show that this was a judgement on the gods of Egypt to show them true power exists in 1 God alone
2. Purpose is primarily to show Moses and the Israelites Gods power and to tell his name in the earth / witnessing (Exodus 9:16)
3. Show the ineffectiveness / impotence
   1. Kings and rulers
   2. false gods worshipped by the Egyptians as later in

**Exodus 20:3 - Thou shalt have no other gods before me.**

1. The ‘marvel’ was used to convince people of Moses divine mission.
2. Also, another element here is that the Egyptians WERE given a warning and I see this as God’s grace that he does not take life easily but ultimately God hardens Pharaoh’s heart and ultimately God is in control, who knows the future and he had completed his period of grace to Pharaoh and now was judgement upon him.
3. The purpose of the Passover was to be a symbolic precursor to our Lord Jesus saving us from death whereby Gods judgement will passover us by the shedding of his blood as well as him being the unblemished and perfect sacrifice. I will talk about this as a separate future message.

# **Summary Point 2 – Pharaoh**

1. Pharaoh was arrogant and the story shows him to be morally degenerate.
2. He was unresponsive to reason and I see pride in his actions and his stubbornness, a man who was accustomed to getting his own way and giving orders rather than receiving them ‘let my people go’.
3. **Exodus 7:3 -** And I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

Another translation puts it as “stiffening his heart” and the Hebrew word is ‘hiqshah’ which means ‘to harden’. Stiffening of the heart appears 20 times;

* 1. 10 times man’s character
  2. 10 times Gods intervention

Interestingly the heart is meant to signify his psychological features;

* 1. Intellectual
  2. Moral
  3. Spiritual life

1. The question arises, why did God harden his heart, In Chumash – “*God has endowed everyman with superior wisdom and intelligence to enable him to rise above fate, but Pharaoh failed to make the attempt*’
2. Shemot Rabbah ( the Midrash is a Hebrew commentary on Exodus) talks about Pharaoh not receiving the words of God and his heart becoming hard and impervious and we can see that God merely hastened events in time as no number of plagues would I believe have softened his heart and he would have relented to God.
3. This is enforced by the sequence of Pharaoh’s’ actions throughout these events;
   1. Early plagues when Pharaoh would have been boldened in his control of the Israelites and at this stage and Pharaoh maybe saw this as a natural occurrence of nature.
   2. With the frogs the first to feel effects of the plague “into thy house”
   3. Pharaoh early on realised magicians could not stop the plague.
   4. Pharaoh acknowledges God throughout the ordeal
   5. He alternates between requesting prayer from Moses to God and not doing as he alternated only letting the men leave and the women and children are now held hostage.
   6. He does admit it is his fault in verse 9:27 and states “I have sinned”
   7. Then goes on later in Exodus to pursue the Israelites with the intention of killing them all

# **Summary Point 3 – Moses and Aharon**

1. My view of the story of the Plagues is I see Moses and Aharon being secondary in this confrontation is between Pharaoh and an almighty God and see them as instruments or messengers for Gods will.
2. First triad of plagues it is Aaron who is the agent of God, in the last it is Moses, so God used them both.
3. Obedience of the pair ‘did as the Lord commanded’ and there is no hint of hesitation or questioning by either of them in these 5 chapters.
4. In 10:2 Moses seen as the embodiment of the Israelites for whom the message is intended that both the Egyptians and the Israelites must know God passed down from generation to generation (as with the religious event of Passover)
5. If you think about in the book of Joshua the story of Rahab, she knew of the Israelites reputation and the legends of God and his Israelites across region.

**Joshua 2:10 - 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.**

I always think in the line of the James Bond films where the villain says to James Bond “your reputation precedes you Mr Bond” as a way of conveying his history and they inform him of his legendary status.

# **Summary Point 4 – Final Verse**

1. COVID-19, I do not believe God is punishing man, I believe this is because of man interfering with nature and the study of virus and plagues.
2. People have died and people will suffer, if you look at the effects of plagues cause distress as with COVID-19 and its wider ranging impacts as it has on the Egyptians with their livestock as well as their commercial activities.
3. Alternatively, this may be a warning to man and enable him to look at his life and his surroundings and put his mind on God.
4. Last summer I spent time running through many parts of London I had not seen before and some of nature in a place called the Leg of Mutton which is local nature reserve.
5. What I do know all things work for the benefit of God and are in his plan

**Isaiah 55:9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.**

1. As a final petition, I ask God blesses and comforts you and your family in these challenging times

**Amen**

# **Bibles**

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| **Ref.** | **Publisher** | **Title** |
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| A2 | JPS | Jewish Study Bible |
| A3 | KJV | King James Version |

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