

Exodus Plagues 7-9

Hail, Locust and Darkness

Good morning saints.

SLIDE: Welcome >

We're continuing on in the Book of Exodus today.

SLIDE: SUMMARY TO DATE OF PLAGUES

Well, we're up to Plague #7 – Hail. So far, we're seen six previous plagues... (Blood, Frogs, No-See-Ums, Dog Flies, Livestock disease and Boils).

The first three (Nile water turning into blood, the frogs and the no-see-ums) affected **both** Israelites and Egyptians.

Beginning with plague #4 (dog-flies), **only the Egyptians** are affected, not the Israelites.

- God showed Pharaoh that He has the power to make a distinction, to have **PRECISION BOTH IN TIME** (when to have a plague stop) and **PRECISION IN SPACE** (limit the

effects only to one location). Something polytheistic gods could not do!

After Plague #6 – Boils – Pharaoh’s has had enough and his knees begin to buckle.

- He is about to give in, but God steps in and gives Pharaoh’s heart a pep-talk so that he can continue.

Why does God do that when Pharaoh is about to let the people go? Because ***Pharaoh is to be given every the chance to freely agree in conscience with Yehovah as Creator.***

SLIDE: THE AGENDA

- ➔ Make a reference to Exodus, the Exodus You Almost Passed Over.¹

The plagues weren’t just there to have devastating physical effects upon Egypt so that they might let the Israelites go; they were also there to teach them something; that there was a one God, a Creator, Master of all these various different forces in nature. It all came down to one God. The plagues, in short, were for to teach Egypt that Yehovah is the Creator and, vicariously, through Egypt, the World.¹

¹ Rabbi David Fohrman, AlephBeta Press, 2016

Remember – It is of paramount importance in this story that Pharaoh – the leader of the greatest polytheistic nation in this part of the world – should come to an understanding of Who God is, so that he might make a moral choice to obey or disobey Him, and thus be held accountable for his actions.

- But...there is only **ONE PROBLEM** – **PHARAOH MIGHT SUBMIT – BUT FOR THE WRONG REASONS!**

*What if he lets the Hebrews go – NOT because he theologically gives up when he realizes that God is the Creator – but because it's **TOO HARD** for Egypt to continue to fight the battle?*

- What if he gives in for *tactical* reasons but NOT actually for *moral or theological* reasons?
- Teenager cleaning their room – not because they realize it's the right thing to do but because they're tired of hearing their mother nag them about it.

That's the case here. Pharaoh is on the brink of giving in for the wrong reason...

God doesn't want Pharaoh to surrender out of a lack of strength! He wants Pharaoh to submit because he understands that there is One God Who rules all that exists. **THIS CREATOR**

GOD DOESN'T WANT TO BEAT THOSE WHO OPPOSE HIM INTO SUBMISSION.

THAT MIGHT BE THE WAY THAT THE EGYPTIAN GODS WORK... BUT IT IS NOT THE WAY OF THE CREATOR.

- The Creator wants His creatures to know the TRUTH of His existence and to shape their lives around this truth.”²
- So, God strengthens his heart by giving him that *courage* to continue a bit longer.
- And on to the fateful Plague #7, Hail.

7TH PLAGUE – HAIL

Hebrew name: 'barad'³ – Hail

Long reading...

Exodus 9:13–35

13 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, 14 or this time I will send the **full force** of my plagues **on your heart** and against your officials and your people, **so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth.** 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. 16 **But I have raised you up for this very purpose,** that I might show

you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. 17 You still set yourself against my people and will not let them go.

18 Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been seen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. 19 Now therefore send, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. **Every man and beast that is found in the field and is not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die.**” 20 The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses; 21 but he who paid no regard to the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field.

22 Now the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt, on man and on beast and on every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.” 23 Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt. 24 So there **was hail, and fire flaming within the hail, very heavy**, the likes of which had never been throughout the entire land of Egypt since it had become a nation. 25 The hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, there was no hail.

27 Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, **"I have sinned this time;** the Lord is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones. 28 Make supplication to the Lord, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer." 29 Moses said to him, "As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer, 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 (Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. 32 But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they ripen late.) 33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to the Lord; and the thunder and the hail ceased, and rain no longer poured on the earth. 34 **But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased,** he sinned again and **hardened ('kabad')** his heart, he and his servants. 35 Pharaoh's heart was **hardened ('chazaq')**, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.

I'm continuing on into Chapter 10, as it is part of the overall thought here...

Chapter 10 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for **I have hardened his heart ('kabad')** and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these signs of mine among them 2 that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the Lord."

GOD COULD HAVE KILLED YOU: Moses, on God’s instructions, goes into Pharaoh’s presence and lets him know that Yehovah has been *restraining* Himself up to now. Moses says... He could have killed you – Pharaoh – any time He wanted to but has restrained Himself because – *if you continue to refuse to let His people go* – **He is going make you into the textbook example of the foolishness of not recognizing that He is the Creator.**

- THIS next plague will be done... (quote) “in order to teach you (Pharaoh)... that there is none like me in all the earth”. In other words, Pharaoh will plainly see that Yehovah is utterly unique in the land. He is not just another of the polytheistic gods. He is the CREATOR.

WARNING PHARAOH: God is warning Pharaoh here. “Pharaoh, I am doing this for you so that you should come to a recognition that I am the Creator and the Only God.

- **Plan A** is that you recognize the eternal truth of Monotheism by recognizing Who I Am. But...
- **There is a Plan B.** If you refuse to recognize the truth of my being the Creator, then the eternal truth of monotheism will come through your destruction.
- ***WE CAN EITHER DO THIS WITH OR WITHOUT YOU.***⁴

- *I can play this easy or I can play it hard – it's your choice Pharaoh.*

NOTE: I refer to **Plan A** and **Plan B** here. It's not that God doesn't know what is going to happen – it's just my way to identifying several possible scenarios as how things could have gone *depending upon Pharaoh's choices* – God knows beforehand what Pharaoh would do; He offers Pharaoh Plan A but Pharaoh is the one who makes the choice of Plan B.

The point here is that God's original motivation in bringing about the plagues was **NOT TO TERRORIZE** the Egyptians, but to teach them a lesson. Pharaoh was at the center of that attempt, and through the plagues, God demonstrates to him that He was not just one god of many, but the Creator of the Universe.

WARNING THE PEOPLE: We also see something in this plague that we haven't seen in any plagues – a **warning** as to how the everyday Egyptians could **escape the harsh effects** of the plague. “If you want to escape the plague,” Moses says, “take everybody inside.” And some did, some did not.

This warning reveals something significant about God. If you give your opponent a warning of where you're going to

attack **before a battle begins**, you only do so **IF** you are an **OVERWHELMING FORCE** and your opponent can't stop you.

- “If I am so assured of victory that a warning doesn't even matter and I feel a sense of compassion for my foe; that's when I warn. A God that has compassion for His foe? That doesn't really sound like a pagan god. A Creator God might has passion for a rebellious child; not a pagan god.”⁵

OK – if you remember, in the first five plagues, **Pharaoh** is the one hardening his own heart. God only began to act on Pharaoh's heart in Plague #6 and it was to merely strengthen his heart – to give his the *courage* to continue – in order that he might get to this very point in world history.

But if Pharaoh continues to refuse to let the Israelites go to worship Yehovah, plague #7 will be in a **DIFFERENT CLASS...**

SLIDE: UPON YOUR HEART

For this time, God says: I am going to send the **full force of my plagues into your heart.**”

- The coming plague will not be only upon the land and the *physical* aspect of the people but upon both the Pharaoh's "heart" and the "hearts" of the people.

The Hebrew word here is *leb*⁶ and its essence is that of **the INNER self**... a man's soul where our conscience and our emotions and our wills and our sense of self resides. In other words, what was about to come would not just effect Pharaoh's anger and stubbornness.....it would finally penetrate that thick head and skin of his... attack his inner being... it would "hurt" far deeper than anything prior.⁷

- You begin to get this sense that we're reaching a kind of climax. Pharaoh does not realize it, but this plague is the **DECISIVE MOMENT IN HIS SPIRITUAL LIFE!**

BUT... WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT HAIL? When you think about it, a plague of hail seems like any old plague. Sure, we will have another example Yehovah's ability to have precision in time – "*tomorrow that this will happen,*"

- But, Egypt has seen and survived hail storms in its history. Sure, that people and animals left outside will die and crops ruined, but that's not terribly different than what they have gone thru in the past.
- What will be different about THIS hail?

SLIDE: FIRE AND ICE

The hail stones, which are ice on the outside, contained a *flame of fire* that burned within the ice. Hail hits the ground and fire bursts out!

➤ **There is fire FROZEN into the Hail**, which seems to be a physical impossibility.

- ***FIRE AND ICE TOGETHER IN THE SAME HAIL STONE!***
- ***FIRE KINDLING AND REKINDLING ITSELF WITHOUT THE NEED FOR FOOD TO FUEL ON (LIKE BURNING BUSH)***

As Rabbi David Fohrman comments: *“If you go back to the pagan mindset. So, what two gods would be at greater odds with each other than the fire god on the one hand and the ice god on the other. I mean, they’re never going to cooperate. Only one Being could put together that and that, right, and that is in fact the Creator; the Creator of both fire and ice together can make peace between them. All of these indications of God as Creator, comes together in Hail.”*⁸

SLIDE: I HAVE SINNED

And finally, a breakthrough. “I have sinned this time.” Pharaoh says, “**I have sinned this time**; the Lord is the

righteous one, **and I and my people are the wicked ones.**" Vs.
27

Pharaoh has never spoken that way before. **That's moral language.** You don't sin against a pagan god; you only sin against your Creator before whom you've rebelled.

- Yehovah is the Creator God, the righteous one
- I and my people, we are the wicked ones.

PHARAOH HAD GOTTEN IT!

- This is THE WHOLE POINT of the plagues to date – to get the Pharaoh to this very point!
- This is the **TIPPING POINT!**

Pharaoh has a FLASH OF REALIZATION regarding the truth.

- Plan A has succeeded! He has recognized the truth of God as Creator, **IT SHOULD BE OVER.**

So why are there three more plagues?

Because it's NOT over. Pharaoh changes his mind. **God doesn't change his mind; Pharaoh changes his mind again.**

SLIDE: After the Hail Stops

Click> Exodus 9:34 – Pharaoh made his heart Hard – **he deliberately ignores the facts he has before him**

Click> Exodus 9:35 – Pharaoh made his heart Strong, “Pep-Talk” to continue his opposition to Yehovah’s will!

Click> Exodus 10:1 – God made Pharaoh’s heart Hard – Pharaoh is now holding a **DEAD MAN’S HAND**.

God had used this 7th plague to **SOW A SEED** in Pharaoh’s heart –

But – as Jesus said in the **PARABLE OF THE SOWER** (Matthew 13:5–6) – this seed was sown “...on the rocky place, where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.” (note: substituted “it” for “they”)

The seed was planted, but when the plague is over – *when the sun came up* – Pharaoh’s repentance withered away.

Note: This is the very first time that the Torah “...has accused Pharaoh of sinning and again only because Pharaoh himself has said that he’s sinned. How did he sin? By making himself stubborn. This is a sin. You see, up to now, the Pharaoh had

never *consciously* realize that God was Creator; he had subconsciously resisted it.

- *Subconscious* resistance *can't necessarily be described as a sin.*
- Conscious, willful, rebellious resistance – **that's a sin!** ⁹

This was the **FINAL STRAW** in God's patience with this man – the final chance for the Pharaoh. The Scripture says that God will not strive with man forever (Genesis 6:3).

WHY WOULD PHARAOH DO THIS? When Pharaoh hardens his heart and defies God after he knows the truth, “he reveals himself to be a man so full of himself, so absorbed in his ego, in his own self-importance, that he was incapable of changing his behavior -- even when faced with certain knowledge of his own limitation in the face of an all-powerful God.”¹⁰

- NOTE -> COMMUNION CLASS – BELIEVE BUT DON'T WANT IT?
- This 7th Plague is Pharaoh's **7TH REFUSAL**, and it is obviously related to the use of the number 7 as **THE NUMBER OF COMPLETION.**

God now LOCKS (sealed shut) Pharaoh's heart in his stubbornness.

OK – One of God’s original purposes with the plagues was to bring Pharaoh to the point where he could see the truth about Yehovah being the Creator and then submit to Him; then he would bet the Israelites go.²

Well, God has got him to the point that he knows the truth but refuses to submit and admit the truth to the world. His problem is his narcissistic ego.

OK – WHY ARE THREE MORE PLAGUES BEFORE Israel leaves Egypt? What’s the point? Why not just whisk them out now by one of numerous ways a Sovereign God can act? He did this with Phillip in the Book of Acts.³

SLIDE: NEW AGENDA

The next 3 plagues happen because God now announces His New Agenda – **Plan B: I am now going to play with Egypt as if it’s my toy to demonstrate Who I Am. This is MY NEW AGENDA.**

*I will hardened Pharaoh’s heart’ in order to establish my signs and wonders in his midst, and so **YOU** should be able to tell your children and your grandchildren how I played with Egypt, and my signs that I put in their midst,*

² Exodus 7:5,

³ Acts 8:39-40 “... they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the Egyptian eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus...”

and **YOU** shall know that I am God. Gone is the idea that Egypt shall know this. It's that you should know. You should be able to tell your kids how I played with them.

All of previous language that was “that Pharaoh will know that I am God”; that isn't here now. It is no longer about Pharaoh knowing that Yehovah is God – he *knows* the truth now but turns his back on the evidence.

- From now on until the finale, the plagues will be **SO THAT ISRAEL AND THE WORLD WILL KNOW THAT I AM GOD.**
- God wants to demonstrate His power to His own people, to the Hebrews, so they will pass on that truth for generations.
- And it's also about what **WE** today can see through Pharaoh's destruction about the power of God and the dangers of ego.

So, after each of the next two plagues until the finale; God will give Pharaoh's heart pep-talks, but – this is important – in doing so, **GOD IS NOT COMPROMISING PHARAOH'S FREE WILL.**

- James 1:13 assures us that God does not inject evil into anyone's hearts⁴. God is saying to Pharaoh: "So you want to sin? Well, go ahead... but I'll make sure that when you do, your evil intentions will suit my higher purpose and plan."¹¹

OK – Pharaoh is now just a pawn. There is nothing educational about this for Egypt anymore – it's about the Hebrews – 'You should know that I am God.'

On to the 8th Plague...

⁴ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

SLIDE: LOCUST

8TH PLAGUE – LOCUST

Exodus 10:3 Moses and Aaron went 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 territory. 5 They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has escaped—what is left to you from the hail—and they will eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field. 6 Then your houses shall be filled and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, something which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day that they [f]came upon the earth until this day.'" And he turned and went out from Pharaoh. 7 Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?"

So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the Lord (YHVH) your God! Who are the ones that are going?" 9 Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the Lord." 10 Then he said to them, "Thus may the Lord be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind. 11 Not so!

Go now, the men among you, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desire." So 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, that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, even all that the hail has left." 13 So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. 14 The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; they were very numerous. There had never been so many locusts, nor would there be so many again. 15 For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt. 16 Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you. 17 Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the Lord your God, that He would only remove this death from me." 18 He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the Lord. 19 So the Lord shifted the wind to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt. 20 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

SLIDE: EGYPT IS RUINED

Moses and Aaron warn Pharaoh of the next plague that is coming, a devastating plague of locusts that will devour all the grain left after the hail as well as the fruit of the trees. If you refuse, Yehovah will bring locusts into your territory. “they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, even all that the hail has left”

- If there’s anything green left in the land of Egypt, they’re going to eat it.
- ...what is left to you from the hail--and they shall eat every tree which sprouts . . .
- Then your houses shall be filled, and the houses of all your servants . . . something which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have ever seen.

Moses and Aaron then abruptly turn and leave the palace without waiting for Pharaoh’s reaction.

- They’re giving the Pharaoh time to let the message sink in – *Pharaoh: next comes total agricultural destruction!*

And for the first time we hear something we have not heard before.

- PHARAOH'S OWN ADVISORS tell him he is making a mistake: Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the Lord their G-d. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?"
- These words indicate to the servants that Pharaoh plainly wasn't about to give in – which reflects his continuing spiral into self-delusion.
- Why this continuing opposition when it is plain that he can't win?

THE MARCH OF FOLLY (taken from the comments of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks on *Parsha Bo*).¹²

SLIDE: MARCH OF FOLLY

In 1984, historian Barbara Tuchman published a famous book called *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*.¹³ It details four major instances of government folly in human history: the Trojans' decision to move the Greek horse into their city, the failure of the Renaissance popes to address the factors that would lead to the Protestant Reformation in the early sixteenth century, England's policies relating to American

colonies under King George III, and the United States' mishandling of the conflict in Vietnam.

Ms. Tuchman asked the great question: *How is it that throughout history intelligent people have made foolish decisions that were damaging both to their own position and to that of the people they led?*

By this she did NOT mean, decisions that in *retrospect* proved to be the wrong ones. With the wisdom of hindsight we can see where we went wrong, because of factors we did not know about at the time.

What she was talking about were decisions that people **COULD SEE AT THE TIME WERE THE WRONG ONES**. There were warnings and they were ignored. Examples:

- (1) One of the Trojan priests guessed that that the wooden horse was a plot and warned his people, in the famous words, *“I fear the Greeks even when they come bearing gifts.”* His warning was ignored, and Troy fell.
- (2) Another of her examples is the PAPACY in the 16th century which had become corrupt, financially and in other ways. There were many calls for reform but they were ignored. The Vatican regarded itself, like some financial institutions today, *as too big to fail*. The result was the reformation and more than a century of religious war throughout Europe.

These were policies voluntarily taken that were contrary to self-interest; they were not the only policies available.

- We saw a perfect example of this early in Exodus where the Pharaoh ordered that the **STRAW FOR MAKING BRICKS NOT BE SUPPLIED** to the Israelites – they would have to gather it themselves. The evident result was that there were less workers available to making brick and thus less brick produced to build Pharaoh’s buildings – obviously a result that is opposite of his best interest. **Why did he do it?**
- **EGO.** He was not going to submit to anyone. (sin in the Garden)

Pharaoh’s advisors bluntly warn him against continuing his opposition. They urge him to call Moses back: "Can't you see Egypt is ruined?" So he does.

The tide appears to be turning again. Pharaoh is getting more open to letting Israel go. Moses and Aaron are brought back and Pharaoh says, “OK – you can go worship YHVH your God...

SLIDE: WHO IS GOING?

"But tell me who will be going."

- This question implies the MORE IMPORTANT QUESTION, **WHO WOULD STAY?**

Moses answers: "We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the Lord." V. 9

The matter is now crystal clear to Pharaoh. His paranoia that Israel would leave permanently has been confirmed. Why would every last Hebrew, and every last one of their livestock, need to go for a 3 day pilgrimage? No, Pharaoh thinks, they plan on leaving forever.

Pharaoh says, **NO WAY JOSE!** I will allow ONLY the MALES among you to go.....but the women and children and livestock must be left behind. That was his final answer. He called security and had Moses and Aaron thrown out of the palace.

God will not allow Pharaoh to save face by letting only the men to go out and worship, so He tells Moses to "stretch out his hand".....that is, Moses was to order.....the locusts to come.

The 8th plague is set into motion, as an east wind begins to blow, and on the flow of that wind, in come the locusts. A horde of locusts as has never been seen before, and they devour everything in their path. Here again, we see that God

uses, as in all the previous plagues, nature itself to strike the Egyptians.

- It would have been bad enough if locusts had come out of the Nile like the frogs did. Or the flies or no-see-ums. But a wind that blew for a day and a night in order to bring them, proves that God reigns waaaay over there in Arabia too?
- It's bad enough that He controls all the insects in Egypt. But this God controls all insects everywhere on the face of the earth.
- **ISRAEL** – Plague shows **Israel** (REMEMBER – THAT'S THE PURPOSE OF PLAGUES NOW) that YEHOVAH is not another run-of-the-mill local polytheistic deity nor is He just the strongest kid on the polytheistic block. **You're dealing with the Creator God of the whole earth!** So the locust come and come and come.

Pharaoh calls Moses, says he has sinned again and asks Moses to get God to call off the locust. Moses does and Pharaoh changes his mind again. God hardens (chazak) his heart – gives Pharaoh the courage to continue to resist.

On to the 9th plague – **THE MOST SCARY OF ALL UP UNTIL NOW.**

9TH PLAGUE – DARKNESS

SLIDE: DARKNESS

Exodus 10:21 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness () over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt."
22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. 23 They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings. 24 Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you."
25 But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice them to the Lord our God. 26 Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the Lord our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the Lord."
27 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go. 28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!" 29 Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"

This ninth plague comes without warning. God is keeping to his established pattern – every third plague is unannounced.

But – what is THIS type of plague doing here? It seems out of the normal order: so far there have been eight plagues, and they have become **STEADILY, RELENTLESSLY, MORE SERIOUS.**

- The 7th and 8th plagues – hail and locusts – destroyed the Egyptian grain and caused the deaths of some Egyptians and animals (those left in the fields). Now there was no food.
- The 10th plague is the death of the firstborn. This would break Pharaoh’s resolve.¹⁴

So we would *expect* that the 9th plague to be more serious than the 8th plague – something that threatened additional death. **Instead at first blush, we read what seems like an anticlimax.** Darkness is a nuisance, but no more.

- But... the phrase “*darkness that can be felt*” does suggests *something* more.
- Here is a Darkness that is not just nighttime. It is far more than merely the absence of light; it is so complete that it *denies you the ability to see your surroundings, that makes you just sit there – lamps don’t help, fires don’t help.* And it is *so* thick that it is **literally felt.**
- This darkness lasted three days throughout Egypt, but which did NOT happen in Goshen.⁵

⁵ Vs. 23.

Summary of excellent commentary regarding plague of darkness; Tom Bradford's *Torahclass Exodus Lesson 9 chapters 10-11*⁵

Visible darkness is bad enough, but there's more to this darkness that reading the text in English doesn't really convey. You know that I don't pretend to read Hebrew, so I rely on rabbinical scholars.

- God is repeating here in Egypt is a reflection of what ***HE HAD DONE AT CREATION.***

In the beginning, when the universe was in chaos, when darkness covered the deep, God said "Let there be light"; and He saw that the light was "good" – actually the Hebrew word means "beautiful"⁶ – and He separated the light from the darkness.⁶

- **God brought ORDER to the Universe by SEPARATING the light from the darkness.**

AND GOD AGAIN MAKES A SEPARATION HERE IN EGYPT – Egypt was in total darkness, but the Israelites had light. He made a distinction, and He separated the light away from the darkness.

⁶ Genesis 1:4

GOD MAKES CHOICES on Who and What to separate – I talked a little about this principle last time. His people are *chosen, set apart, separated away from the world.*

- This is an important principle – the **SEPARATION OF THE LIGHT AWAY FROM THE DARKNESS** is the **ESSENCE OF ORDER**. This separation is the call to be holy, to be separate *toward* God – if we will don't appreciate THIS principle, we will miss the reason behind a lot of God's actions.¹⁷

So, the Egyptians experiences two kinds of darkness: physical and spiritual.

CHAMSIN

The Physical darkness involved THE LACK OF VISUAL light. It was a darkness so deep that you couldn't even move around. It says – 'They **did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place** for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.'

Just being without sunlight, or even moonlight, would not have created such a darkness as is being described here. The Egyptians, as all other cultures, knew how to deal with nighttime; they had oil lamps, and fire pits, and torches... all manner of way of going about their business after dark.

The idea that no one could “*move from his spot*”, that is, they couldn’t even see to move around, does not reflect a typical nighttime experience. No, this was not three 24-hour periods of nighttime.

– **Example – Howe Caverns**¹⁸, elevator, turned light out...

**WHAT KIND OF CIRCUMSTANCE COULD CAUSE SUCH
DENSE VISUAL DARKNESS THROUGHOUT THE LAND?**

There are natural conditions that happen from time to time that bring a type of darkness in which the darkness actually seems to absorb the light. Fog on high spot of NYS Thruway – the fog was so dense, that my high beams wouldn’t penetrate any more than 5 or 6 feet in front of the car... and the darkness described here in Egypt is a complete blackout.

In Egypt, there came occasionally a brutal type of dust storm called a *Chamsin*. Every few years, a combination of conditions collided that caused the air itself to become charged with **static electricity**, which literally lifts and suspends super fine particles of dust in the air; alongside the coarser particles of sand that the fierce winds normally carry. If anyone here has spent any time in super dry climates, you know that static electricity is a normal everyday phenomenon that one must deal with; clothing sticks to other clothing, you get shocked just grabbing the handle of a car door, pull a wool

sweater over your head in a darkened room, and you'll get a light show from the static discharge that occurs.

These Chamsin dust storms turn day into night. And, especially in ancient times, when doors didn't seal, and windows were just open holes in the wall, dust came indoors quite easily. Indoors, you can escape the winds and the sandblast effect of the storm; but you can't escape the thick dust clouds caused by the electrically charged air. Indoors became dark as well. Even oil lamps didn't help. Mobility ended.

I suspect this is what occurred as far as the visual element of light is concerned. Otherwise, *it would be out of character* with the eight previous plagues that all involved natural elements of nature.

Now – this didn't necessarily mean that the Israelites had three 24-hour day of sunlight – they had three days of God's enlightenment; regarding being able to see with their eyes, they no doubt went thru the normal day-night routine – the difference was that the lamps in their houses worked whereas those in the Egyptian houses were OF NO USE.

Ok...

- The Egyptians FELT the darkness, the Israelites FELT the light.

- How do you “*FEEL*” darkness or light?

This is the 2nd kind of darkness – **A SPIRITUAL DARKNESS.**

I mentioned God’s actions in Genesis chapter 1: darkness on the face of the deep, God said “let there be light” and He separated the light away from the darkness. There’s a relationship between the words used for “light” and “darkness” here in the 9th plague with those used in Genesis 1.

SLIDE: Genesis 1 texts

Here’s Genesis 1 – and I know the type is small – I don’t expect you to be able to read it –> I only put it here to show that there are the two passages referring to light.

Click> In verse 3 – on the 1st day, “And God said, ‘Let there be light...’”

Click> Then, on the 4th day, verse 14, “God made two great lights...to give light on the earth.”

This raises a **QUESTION** that sceptics make – and it’s a good one: if the sun, moon and stars were not created until the 4th day, how can we have “LIGHT” ON THE 1ST DAY? Even the term “day” implies daylight. What’s going on?

SLIDE: OWR¹⁹

Well – there are TWO DIFFERENT HEBREW WORDS used in Genesis 1 for light and also two different ones for darkness.

1. The *light* created to give light to the earth in verse 14 refers to the sun, moon and stars, and this is **VISUAL LIGHT**. The Hebrew word here means to “shine”²⁰.
2. In vs. 3, the Hebrew word for light is “**OWR**”, and in a nutshell, it means “**ENLIGHTENMENT**”.²¹

Actually, speaking about Jesus, the Gospel of Matthew quotes Isaiah⁷ to express this difference in meaning between light that enables “spiritual enlightenment” verses light that is the natural visible light. Isaiah wrote:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a **great light**; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” Matthew 4:16

This is spiritual light, and it is “good” – as opposed to the darkness of evil. The “truth”, as opposed to a “lie”.

- When you switch on a lamp, you get *visual* light, the type of light talked about in Gen 1:14.

⁷ Isaiah 9:2

- When you hear from God, you get *spiritual* light.... Enlightenment, the type of light talked about in Gen 1:3.
- The reason I mention this is that the word used for the “light” that would remain over Israel in Goshen is that **SAME EXACT WORD** as that used in Genesis 1:3!
- During the three days when Egypt was in darkness, Israel was being instructed by God on how to prepare the Lamb for the upcoming Passover meal. They were experiencing **“enlightenment”**. Not to break a bone of the lamb, blood on the doorpost for protection and so on.

SLIDE: DARKNESS

And just in a similar fashion, there is another type of darkness other than visible darkness – it is spiritual darkness. And in describing the 9th plague of darkness, the Exodus text uses the same exact Hebrew word that is used in Genesis to describe the chaos that existed before God’s creation of OWR. That word is “choshek”²².

- Darkness here is a very negative darkness. A kind that blots out good. A kind that leads men into wrong. Evil.
- 'Choshek' is the opposite of 'Owr'
- 'Choshek' is a Spiritual darkness, blindness, misery, falsehood, ignorance
- 'Choshek' carries evil spiritual overtones

So, besides a total blackout of visible light, the Egyptians were also experiencing as a creepy, scary SPIRITUAL darkness.

And this darkness can be “felt” or sensed. **The “feeling” of the “choshek”, the spiritual darkness**, evil that covered them like a blanket. The type that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end when you can't see anything evil or dangerous, but you can sense it.

- My personal example of darkness felt in other room when doing New Age presentations. Don't go looking for fights, but if one presents itself in the course of your Christian walk...

This was a time of real horror for Egypt. But, in the same land, the Israelites were at peace.

Q: WHAT IS THIS PLAGUE OF DARKNESS SUPPOSED TO TEACH ISRAEL AND US ABOUT HIM? That He is the Creator. By the fact that the SAME type of light and darkness that existed at the beginning of creation – that came about thru at His command – also existed in this 9th plague. *ONLY THE CREATOR COULD PRODUCE THAT!*****

So, Pharaoh sends out an urgent call for Moses and again he tries to bargain with God.

After the previous plague – Hail – the Pharaoh had agreed to let the Israelite MEN go to worship Yahweh but the women and children had to be left behind. Of course, Moses refused and the 9th plague of darkness came. Now Pharaoh says that if Moses will get God to call off the darkness, ALL ISRAEL can go, man and woman, girl and boy, young and old...

➤ however, their livestock must be left behind.⁸

Moses says no – the livestock must also come, and – thanks for reminding me, Pharaoh – you must give us some cattle to supplement ours!

Why does Moses insists to Pharaoh that **everything must go?** Why? Because, he says that Yahweh has called Israel to

⁸ Vs. 24

serve Him and sacrifice to Him.....but they don't know exactly what this is to involve.⁹

- Maybe God will want ALL their livestock, maybe he won't want any.
- Maybe he'll want Sheep, maybe cattle. They haven't been told.
- So, the only thing they can do is to take ALL their people and ALL their possessions into the desert, set them before God, and see what it is He might demand of them.

Here is another permanent God-principle that just bursts out of nowhere. **We are to submit all that we have and all that we are.....ourselves, our families, every possession.....before God, because we cannot possibly know at any given moment what it is He will demand of us.**

- Yet, what is our (MY) typical response? Ok God, you can have everything but this.....or this.....or this. You can have me; just don't take my job, my health, my wife, and my kids, my video game.

Those things that the Israelites would have left behind at Pharaoh's orders would have remained in servitude, so Moses HAD to refuse.

⁹ Vs. 26

- **Everything we leave behind, but still possess; everything that we do not take with us to present to God when we approach the Cross, stays in Egypt.....stays in bondage and servitude, and is therefore not available to serve God.**

God has made it clear that EVERYTHING we are and possess is to be put before Him, when we turn our life over to Him.

Pharaoh was now backed into a corner (being used as a pawn to show Israel God's power). Pharaoh knew that if there Israelites didn't have something of value to come back to, they would just keep on going. It was a choice between further destruction by Yehovah or loss of the major economic labor force of his kingdom as well as his own reputation as a god. He chose the latter:

Pharaoh said to Moses, "Get out of my sight! Make sure you do not appear before me again! The day you see my face you will die." "Just as you say," Moses replied. "I will never appear before you again." Vs. 28-29

Conclusion

At Moses' first encounter with Pharaoh, Pharaoh asks ""**Who is Yehovah** that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know Yehovah, nor will I let Israel go."

Well, now he knows Yehovah as the Creator but he still refuses to let Israel go. **PHARAOH HAS, BY HIS OWN WORDS, SEALED HIS AND HIS PEOPLE'S FATE.** There will be no more opportunities to avoid judgment.

- God does not strive with us forever. God's patience with us ends, and we don't know ahead of time exactly when that day or hour is. **But, when it does end, when God decides to turn us over to our innate wickedness, all hope of redemption vanishes, forever.** Our destination is a darkness that can be felt.

SCARY, SCARY THOUGHT.....AND TERRIBLY, TERRIBLY TRUE.

- Next time – the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn.

SLIDE: The Passover

Jesus said:

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,** I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. Rev 3:20

We have a Great God, and this is a Great Promise!

Endnotes

- ¹ Aleph Beta, *Parsha Bo; Did God Really Need Ten Plagues?* <https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/bo-did-god-really-need-ten-plagues/autoplay>
- ² Aleph Beta, Rabbi David Fohrman, *Parsha Va'era Guide*. <https://www.alephbeta.org/guides/get?key=public/guides/parsha/1/Exodus/2/Vaera>
- ³ Strong's Hebrew # 1259. **Barad**, Phonetic Spelling: (*baw-rawd*), hail
- ⁴ Aleph Beta, Rabbi David Fohrman, *Through Pharaoh's Eyes* <https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/through-pharaohs-eyes/autoplay>
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Strong's Hebrew # 3820. '**leb**', Phonetic Spelling: (*labe*), inner man, mind, will, heart
- ⁷ Tom Bradford, Torahclass, *Exodus Lesson 8 chapters 8-9*, <http://www.torahclass.com/old-testament-studies/35-old-testament-studies-exodus/128-lesson-9-chapter10-11>
- ⁸ Aleph Beta, Rabbi David Fohrman, *Through Pharaoh's Eyes*
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Aleph Beta, Rabbi David Fohrman, *Parsha Bo Guide* (premium members)
- ¹¹ Comment by Joni Eareckson Tada, *Beyond Suffering Bible*, p. 79
- ¹² Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sachs, *Bo (5771) – The March of Folly*, <http://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-5771-bo-the-march-of-folly/>
- ¹³ Barbara W. Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*; Knopf
- ¹⁴ Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sachs, *The Difference Between Signs and Wonders* <http://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-5770-bo-the-difference-between-signs-and-wonders/>
- ¹⁵ Tom Bradford's Torah Class *Exodus Lesson 9 chapters 10-11*
- ¹⁶ Strong's Hebrew # 2896 '**towb**'; Phonetic Spelling: (*tobe*) Short Definition: beautiful
- ¹⁷ Gary Edward Schnittjer, *The Torah Story*, p. 62
- ¹⁸ The Howe Caverns is a cave in Howes Cave, Schoharie County, New York. Cavern is 156 feet below ground and accessed by elevator.. It is the second most visited natural attraction in New York State, after Niagara Falls. <http://howecaverns.com/>
- ¹⁹ As it appears in the Interlinear Bible text
- ²⁰ Strong's Hebrew # 215. '**or**', Phonetic Spelling: (*ore*), to be or become light, shine
- ²¹ Strong's Hebrew # 216. '**or**', Phonetic Spelling: (*ore*), a light
- ²² Strong's Hebrew # 2822. '**choshek**', Phonetic Spelling: (*kho-shek*), darkness, obscurity