

Egyptian Plagues: The power of God manifested via the Plagues:

1. Turning the Nile-water into blood:

Thus says the Lord, 'By this you will know that I am the Lord: With the staff that is in my hands I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink and the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.

— *Exodus 7:17–18*



2. Frogs:

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 which shall come up into your house, and into your bedchamber and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and of your people, 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.

— Exodus 8:1–4



3. Gnats:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats throughout all the land of Egypt.'" ¹⁷ And they did so; Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and struck the dust of the earth, and there came gnats on man and beast; all the dust of the earth became gnats throughout all the land of Egypt.

— Exodus 8:16–17



4. Flies:

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.

— *Exodus 8:21*



5. Pestilence on livestock:

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 cattle which are in the field, the horses, the asses, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.

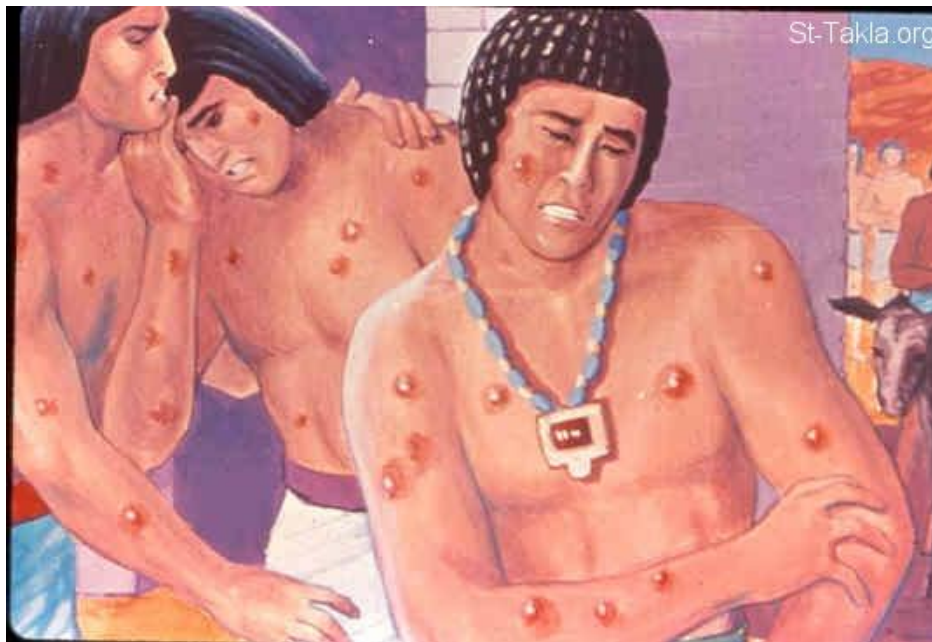
— *Exodus 9:1–3*



6. Boils:

And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of ashes from the kiln, and let Moses throw them toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹ And 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.

— *Exodus 9:8–9*



7. Hail:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand 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 upon your heart, and upon your servants and your people, that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For by now I could have put forth 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 have I let you live, to show you my power, so that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. ¹⁷ You are still exalting yourself against my people, and will not let them go. ¹⁸ Behold, tomorrow about

this time 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 cattle and all that you have in the field into safe shelter; for the hail shall come down upon every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home, and they shall die.'"" ²⁰ Then he who feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his slaves and his cattle flee into the houses; ²¹ but he who did not regard the word of the Lord left his slaves and his cattle in the field. ²² And the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch forth your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man and beast and every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt." ²³ Then Moses stretched forth his rod 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.

— *Exodus 9:13–24*



8. Locusts:

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 which 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.

— *Exodus 10:3–6*



9. Darkness for three days:

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 thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; ²³ they did not see one another, nor did any rise from his place for three days; but all the people of Israel had light where they dwelt.

— *Exodus 10:21–23*



10. Death of the firstborn:

And Moses said, "Thus says the Lord: About midnight I will go forth in the midst of Egypt; ⁵ and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits upon his throne, even to the first-born of the maidservant who is behind the mill; and all the first-born of the cattle. ⁶ And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever shall be again.

— *Exodus 11:4–6*



The hardness of Pharaoh's heart:

1. Until the 6th plague, the Bible is consistent in saying Pharaoh hardened his own heart. In other words, as a free agent he utilized his own sovereign volition as the ruler of the Egyptian Empire to say 'no'. He hardened his own heart through negative volition, negative self-determination.
2. No one up to this time in history had ever been able to say 'no' as many times as Pharaoh would from this time on (plagues 6-10). At this point God hardened Pharaoh's heart which means He gave him the opportunity to carry his negative volition to the maximum.
3. We understand now that we are discussing a part of the soul, invisible yet real, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart or right lobe. This man had developed a maximum amount of scar tissue in the soul. He had been exposed to the truth, he had rejected it time and time again.
4. The hardening of Pharaoh's right lobe in B.C. 1441 became the means of evangelising the world.
5. This is illustrated by the fact that 45 years later, Rahab the prostitute was saved through the hardening of Pharaoh's heart as per Joshua 2:10, 11.
6. The justice of God gave Pharaoh numerous opportunities to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Jehovah Elohim. He rejected them all.
7. Pharaoh saw many demonstrations of divine power, designed to evangelise him personally, but he refused them all.
8. When our Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, Pharaoh's sins were imputed to Christ and judged, along with everyone else's.
9. Furthermore, God was not willing that Pharaoh should perish as per 2 Peter 3:9.

10. Pharaoh had many opportunities for positive volition, as per Exodus 7:22; 8:15, 32; 9:34, 35. In other words, the free will of Pharaoh was negative. Each 'No' added scar tissue to his soul.

11. After five plagues, Pharaoh Amenhotep II had so much scar tissue that he no longer could say 'yes' to the gospel. His faith had been completely damaged by this scar tissue.

12. Therefore, beginning in Exodus 9:12 of the 6th plague, we have it for the first time, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart."

13. To keep Pharaoh alive to say 'no' especially through plagues 6-10, God impressed upon the entire world the greatness of His power both to condemn Pharaoh and to deliver His own people.

14. Therefore, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart or the extension of his negative volition was the mean of evangelising the world of that day.

A few historical points:

1. Like Ishmael and Esau, Pharaoh Amenhotep II was an unbeliever who had the opportunity to be saved many times, but rejected Christ as frequently as he rejected God's demand to release Israel.

2. The integrity of God was not arbitrary in blessing Moses and cursing Pharaoh. The integrity of God gave Pharaoh extra time but Pharaoh used the extra time to reject God's plan.

3. Blessing was imputed to Moses at maturity adjustment to the integrity of God through maximum doctrine resident in the soul, but Pharaoh was an unbeliever who used his great power and lack of integrity to perpetuate tyranny and slavery to the Jews.

4. The plan of God is never hindered by negative volition. In this historical case, God used the wrath of Pharaoh to praise Him.

5. Pharaoh's negative volition and his deceptive hypocrisy did not frustrate the plan or the purposes of God.

6. Pharaoh's resistance only fulfilled the plan of God by leading to world-wide evangelism.

7. We must remember that Amenhotep II was a great man from the standpoint of power and authority, an absolute monarch at the peak of his career.

8. However, God's power [omnipotence] is infinitely greater than the power of any tyrant or dictator, infinitely more powerful than the concentrated evil of any of our modern powers.

9. There is no evil that Satan can inspire, no power, no authority, no tyranny that man can devise, which can compete with the power of God. 1 John 4:4, "You and only you [believers living the spiritual life] are from God, dear children, and you have overcome them [false teachers and others living in the cosmic system] because greater is He who is in you [indwelling of God the Son] than he [Satan] who is in the world [the inventor of the cosmic system]."

The demonstration of divine power:

1. The demonstration of divine power became the means of releasing the Jews from slavery. This was the birth of the first priest/client nation in history. The evangelization of Egypt was another result, plus the evangelization of the entire world.

2. Any Jew, any Egyptian, Ethiopian or Canaanite who wanted salvation had a clear picture of the source of salvation from the manifest power revealed by means of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. If God had not permitted him to live, he could not have said 'no' in those final five confrontations.

3. It was not until the 6th plague, however, that we read the phrase “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” The mechanics, again, of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was the removal of all restraints on his negative volition plus keeping him alive.

4. Pharaoh’s free will moved him, without any restraint from God, on a collision course with historical disaster.

5. Just as God turned the heathen over to their vile lusts, affections, and reprobate minds as per Romans 1:24-28, so God turned Pharaoh over to his negative volition, his arrogance, his jealousy, his pettiness. And this was the means of evangelizing that generation of history around 1441-1440 B.C. and the following generation as well as illustrated by Rahab the Prostitute.

6. The impact of all of this is obvious. Paul is comparing the Jews of his day, the contemporary Jews, with Pharaoh. This was the greatest possible insult one could give to the Jews.

7. As Pharaoh hardened his heart through maximum negative volition at the time of the Exodus, so the legalistic Jews of Paul’s day had hardened their hearts through maximum negative volition toward the gospel and doctrine.

The application to contemporary history

1. To be compared to Pharaoh Amenhotep II was as insulting to the Jews as their negative volition was insulting to God (an anthropathism).

2. The Jews of Paul’s day had violated their magnificent spiritual heritage namely the unique origin of the race of the Jews through positive volition toward Christ, and doctrine resident in the soul on the part of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had not alerted the Jews to their failure, a failure stated in verse 6, “All Israel is not really Israel.”

3. The unique origin of the nation with the contrast between the positive volition of Moses and the negative volition of Pharaoh, plus the fact that Israel was the first client nation to God in history, should have alerted the Jews in Paul's time to the importance of positive volition toward Christ namely believing in Him for salvation.

4. The hereditary people of God had become heretical, heretical in the pattern of Ishmael, Esau and Pharaoh, three Gentiles they detested.

5. Note that the function of God does not rob man of his free will; he is still a creature of self-determination.

6. God used the free will of Pharaoh to advance His own plan and to liberate His people from slavery.

7. Man is not robbed of his self-determination by the omnipotence of God but actually provided with greater historical opportunity to express non-meritorious freewill to enter the plan of God.

God's plan goes on with or without you:

1. Pharaoh in his opposition to God becomes a monument to the power of God.

2. The more he resisted God by saying 'no' from his free will, the greater became the manifestation of divine power.

3. In the garden, God permitted the freewill function of the fall of Adam since that was a requirement of the Angelic Appeal Trial which fall led to the redemptive solution. So, also in the time of Moses, God permitted the freewill of Pharaoh to operate to the maximum in a negative way so that the people of Egypt and the entire world in that generation and the following generation as well might have the opportunity to receive Christ as savior.

4. God permits the worst so that the best can come from it. This means that the plan of God continues whether it is a negative period of history or a positive period of history.

5. The highest expression of man's freedom is the utilization of the grace of God to completely triumph over evil.

6. While sin, human good and evil are permitted, they are constantly being overruled by the sovereign omnipotence and divine integrity of God. Therefore, Jesus Christ controls both history and the devil's world. This is the overruling will of God.

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Based on the scholarly work of R.B. Thieme Jr.

I recommend downloading 'THIEME'S BIBLE DOCTRINE DICTIONARY' from this website: rbthieme.org