

In chapters 7-10 we will see how that the LORD intentionally hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to provide the opportunity to demonstrate His superiority over Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt and thereby strengthen the faith of the children of Israel in their God. These chapters describe 9 of the 10 plagues that the LORD used to display His power until Pharaoh surrendered and let the children of Israel leave Egypt.

Exodus 7

1 And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. 2 Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

Obviously Moses was not a literal god but the LORD is describing the relationship between Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh. Moses would speak with the power and authority given to him by the LORD and then Aaron would be his spokesman, delivering what Moses said to Pharaoh. This is similar to how the LORD would speak to a prophet and then the prophet would deliver the message to the people. The message here is that Pharaoh is to send the children of Israel out of Egypt.

3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

This verse is an overview of vs. 4-5. The LORD will harden Pharaoh's heart so that He can "multiply my signs and wonders." The LORD could easily have turned Pharaoh's heart to favor the children of Israel as He did to the Pharaoh in Joseph's day (Gen. 41:38-45). Instead, the LORD's purpose here seems to be to create the circumstances that would make it necessary to demonstrate His power so that the children of Israel, the Egyptians and the whole world would understand that it was He Who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. To accomplish this, the LORD raises a stubborn man to be Pharaoh at this time and influenced the circumstances to amplify his stubbornness (Ex. 9:16 "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth").

4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. 6 And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.

"But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt" – The LORD states the purpose for hardening Pharaoh's heart: in order that He might lay His hand upon Egypt. The LORD will harden Pharaoh's so that he will not listen to Moses and Aaron so provide the opportunity for the LORD to prove that He is more powerful than Pharaoh and all the gods of Egypt.

"and bring forth mine armies [a large assembly], and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments" – The LORD will not bring the people out of Egypt a few at a time but in mass, as a large army. The LORD will harden Pharaoh's heart so that a series of events will happen: (1) Pharaoh will not listen; (2) the LORD will lay His hand upon Egypt; (3) the LORD will bring the children of Israel out of Egypt; (4) the Egyptians will know that it is the LORD Who has done this.

"And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD..." – The Egyptians will recognize that the LORD is more powerful than Pharaoh and all of the gods of Egypt when they see the plagues that He sends on Egypt and the liberation of the children of Israel despite Pharaoh's refusals to allow it.

"And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they" – Moses and Aaron deliver the message to Pharaoh (v. 2).

Exodus 7:7-16: As instructed by the LORD (v. 9), Aaron throws his staff down in front of Pharaoh and it turned into a snake. Pharaoh's magicians were able to do the same with their staffs, but Aaron's staff swallowed up the other staffs. Pharaoh's heart was hardened when he saw that his magicians could do the same miracle as Moses and Aaron and refused to let the people go. The LORD then instructs Moses and Aaron to go the next morning and wait by the Nile River for Pharaoh to come. When he arrives, they declare the message from the LORD.

17 Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

Moses and Aaron announce a sign that will demonstrate the power of the LORD: they will strike the waters of the Nile River and it will be turned to blood. The fact that everything in the river dies and begins to stink as well as the fact that the Hebrew word used here for "blood" refers to actual blood, indicates that this is not merely a changing of the color of the water. The Nile River was considered sacred to the Egyptians as well as being their main source of water for irrigating their crops, so this plague was a formidable act against Egypt. The remainder of the chapter (vs. 18-25) describe how that all water in Egypt, including all bodies of water and even water in containers in their homes, were turned into blood. The magicians are able to duplicate this plague as well, but they seem to be unable to reverse it. However, this plague does not change Pharaoh's mind and he goes home and ignores it. Meanwhile the Egyptians attempt to dig wells in hopes of finding water. Fortunately for them, this plague only lasts a week (v. 25).

Exodus 8

6 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

The LORD gives Pharaoh another chance to free the children of Israel, warning him that the next plague will be an infestation of frogs in the land (vs. 1-5). Pharaoh refuses and the LORD sends the plague of frogs into the land. Verses 7-15 say that the frogs were everywhere (in their homes, in their bedrooms and kitchens) and apparently also in the home of Pharaoh. The magicians are able to emulate this plague also but this time Pharaoh agrees to let the people go if Moses will pray for the LORD to remove the frogs. Moses does so but once the frogs were gone Pharaoh changed his mind and again would not let the people go.

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

The Hebrew word for "lice" refers to a gnat, which commentators say was a tiny insect with a painful sting. Verses 17-19 tell us that these insects covered man and beast and when the magicians were unable to duplicate this plague they told Pharaoh that "this is the finger of God." Even though they recognized the supernatural nature of the plague, Pharaoh still stubbornly refused to listen.

21 Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of *flies* upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of *flies*, and also the ground whereon they *are*.

The LORD sends Moses to intercept Pharaoh early in the morning at the riverside (the Nile) and repeat the LORD's command to let the people go (v. 20). The penalty for refusing would be a plague of "swarms" (the words "of flies" are supplied by the translators) that would infiltrate everywhere in Egypt. It is believed that these swarms are of blood-sucking flies that would lay their eggs on people or animals where their larvae could feed. In vs. 22-23 the LORD points out the distinction that He will make between the Egyptians and the children of Israel in Goshen, sparing His people from this plague. Pharaoh refuses to comply and when the LORD sends the promised plague (v. 24), Pharaoh becomes willing to make a deal. He will allow the people to sacrifice "in the land" (v. 25) but Moses says that this idea is unacceptable because they would have to sacrifice animals that were sacred to the Egyptians, which would be offensive to the Egyptians (vs. 26-27). The children of Israel would need to go three days journey into the wilderness in order to properly worship their God, to which Pharaoh agrees as long as they don't go very far from Egypt and that Moses will ask the LORD to remove the flies (v. 28). Moses agrees but warns Pharaoh not to be deceitful and change his mind again (v. 29). However, as soon as the flies were gone, Pharaoh hardens his heart once again and refuses to let the people go (vs. 30-32).

Exodus 9

3 Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which *is* in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: *there shall be a very grievous murrain*.

The LORD sends Moses to speak to Pharaoh once again and tell him that the LORD demands that he let the children of Israel go (vs. 1-2). If Pharaoh refuses to obey then the LORD will send a plague upon the livestock of the Egyptians. The Hebrew word for "murrain" refers to a pestilence. The LORD says that it will be "grievous" [*heavy; massive*], indicating there will be widespread death among the Egyptian livestock due to disease. However, this pestilence will be limited only to the Egyptians because the LORD will spare the livestock of the Israelites. In vs. 6-7, the LORD sends the plague and all the Egyptian livestock dies. However, when the Pharaoh sends his men to confirm, he discovers that none of the Israelite livestock had died. The news causes Pharaoh to become stubborn again and he refuses to let the people go.

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

The LORD instructs Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of ashes (apparently from the brick kilns of the Israelites) and throw them into the air while Pharaoh is watching (v. 8). The ash will become a fine dust that will spread throughout Egypt and cause boils and "blains" (blisters and sores) to break out on men and beasts. Pharaoh's magicians can do nothing about it because they become covered in the boils, blisters and sores along with the rest of the Egyptians (vs. 10-11). The LORD continues to harden the heart of Pharaoh (v. 12).

22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

The LORD sends Moses to Pharaoh in the morning to once again demand that he let the people go (v. 13). The LORD states that the plagues that He is sending demonstrate His greatness and that He raised up Pharaoh at this time in order have His name declared in all the world (vs. 14-16). The next plague will be a severe hailstorm that will kill any men or beasts that are left outside. Some Egyptians feared the LORD and brought their servants and livestock into their barns to protect them from the hail (vs. 17-21). The subsequent hail and lightning storm destroyed any people and animals left in the fields as well as the crops. Again, the children of Israel were spared and the hailstorm did not come to Goshen (vs. 23-26). The destruction is so severe that Pharaoh calls for Moses and begs him to ask the LORD to stop the hailstorm but he again changes his mind once the plague has ended (vs. 27-35).

Exodus 10:12

12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, *even* all that the hail hath left.

The LORD repeats His statement that He has hardened Pharaoh's heart so that He can demonstrate His power and so that Israel can teach their descendants about the greatness of their God (v. 1-2). Moses and Aaron obey the LORD's command to warn Pharaoh that the next plague, one of locusts, will be sent if he continues to refuse to let the people go (vs. 3-6). Pharaoh seems willing to let the people go as long as only the adult men go and leave the women, children and livestock behind, apparently so that they must return to Egypt (vs. 7-11). However, that arrangement was not acceptable and the LORD sends the locusts, which devour any vegetation that the hail did not destroy (vs. 12-15). Again, Pharaoh begs for Moses to ask the LORD for relief and once the plague is gone, he stubbornly refuses to let the people go (vs. 16-20).

21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness *which* may be felt.

This next plague comes without giving Pharaoh a chance to repent and the LORD sends a darkness so thick that for three days no one in Egypt was able to leave their homes (vs. 21-23). Apparently this darkness snuffed out even artificial sources of light such as torches and candles because v. 23 mentions that the Israelites "had light in their dwellings." Pharaoh calls for Moses and tells him that the people can go as long as they leave their livestock behind. He obviously wants to insure that the Israelites will be back but the LORD will not accept partial compliance (vs. 24-26). The Israelites will need their livestock to supply the sacrifices necessary for them to worship the LORD.

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

The LORD is not quite through demonstrating His power and again hardens Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh is likely thinking that either Moses accepts his terms or there will be no deal because he wants to think he's the one in control. Nonetheless, it is actually the LORD Who is in control. Pharaoh sends Moses and Aaron out and forbids them from ever seeing him again under penalty of death. Moses agrees that Pharaoh will never see him again, perhaps because he knows the LORD is almost done displaying His power (vs. 28-29).