

EXODUS 9: *RESPITES, DO-OVERS AND YOUR LOT IN LIFE*

If you have been with us in this study, you will have quickly noticed a pattern that has developed since we have gotten to the plagues. Moses gives a warning. Pharaoh hardens his heart and doesn't heed that warning which results in God sending the aforementioned plague. Occasionally Pharaoh will ask for relief and will even attempt to negotiate with God. He even appears sincere from time to time in a vain attempt at feigning repentance. Most of us just picture the scene and shake our heads. We wonder how anyone seeing these things could harden his heart and thumb his nose at such demonstrations of power.

Once again, the Bible says that all things are common among men and that there is nothing new under the Sun.

The Fifth Plague: Livestock Diseased

1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to

Pharaoh and tell him, ‘Thus says the Lord 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 be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence. 4 And the Lord will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel.” ’” 5 Then the Lord appointed a set time, saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.” 6 So the Lord did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died. 7 Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.

Once again God hit Pharaoh where it hurts. He sent a plague of some sort of pestilence on the cattle specifically and livestock in general. This was a direct assault on at least three gods of the Egyptian pantheon.

Hathor: mother-goddess – form of a cow

Apis: bull of the god Ptah – a symbol of fertility

Mnevis: sacred bull of Heliopolis

God continued to assault Egypt with smart bombs. God showed even more power by being able to direct his attacks at only the Egyptian herds. Any nation can be susceptible to pestilence, but when it is directed towards certain herds, possibly discriminating between herds in adjacent pastures, the supernatural cannot be denied. This is a very important point, especially for the skeptic.

On top of that we see that God stated exactly when the plague would begin.

If you think this through you will see that this was another devastating blow to the already failing Egyptian economy. Cattle were held to be sacred so their deaths wouldn't have an effect on meat prices. But some of the other livestock were harvested as food. Meat prices skyrocketed as the supply was eliminated. The other animals were

beasts of burden. They were used for everything from transportation to plowing the fields. All this would have ground to a halt.

The Egyptians considered cattle sacred. They would not have been eaten. In fact, they were considered so sacred that in one ancient document an opposing nation placed cattle on their front battle lines and the Egyptian army refused to enter into battle for fear of killing the cows. However, the mass extinction would have made the point in the spiritual realm. Their gods and goddesses could not compete with the God of the Hebrews.

The downward spiral of the nation continued. I'm sure the polls showed that a majority of the citizens did not approve of the way Pharaoh was handling the crisis.

But alas, the drama continues.

The Sixth Plague: Boils

8 So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for

yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.” 10 Then they took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered them toward heaven. And they caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast. 11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians. 12 But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

The next plague was the sixth. Moses was instructed to take ashes (soot from the lime kilns) and throw them into the air. The result was that everyone got what is translated as boils. The word literally means a painful burning inflammation of the skin. The magicians, who are also tied into the medical industry in Egypt, are mentioned specifically. This was not a direct assault on the god of medicine known as Imhotep because he doesn't enter the Egyptian pantheon of gods until

much later.

The Egyptians put great emphasis on cleanliness – especially the priests, magicians and doctors. They were rendered as powerless and seen as powerless also. Unlike the plague of lice, which we saw last week, which rendered the priests unclean and unable to perform their duties, this plague rendered them incapable of even moving. They were bed-bound – unable to even show up for work. Now the religious realm as well as the medical realm is unstaffed.

God does not have a problem with medicine. But we can glean from this that He definitely has a hand in over-riding its effects. He says when it will work and when it won't. In the end our medical fate is still in the hands of the Great Physician.

In Exodus 4:21 and 7:3, God announced that He would harden Pharaoh's heart. This was the fulfillment of that statement. It has been stated at least six times prior to this that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Here, for the first time we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. This is actually the end result of what happens when we continue to

resist God. God hardens those that harden themselves. The plagues could have resulted in the softening of Pharaoh's heart had he decided to repent.

- There are two Hebrew verbs used for "harden." When Pharaoh hardens his heart, to the Egyptian it meant that his heart became heavy. This is what we see resulting from the first 5 plagues.
- The second verb used for "harden" is what God does to Pharaoh's heart in the second five plagues. This verb actually means that God, in a sense, strengthened Pharaoh's heart in his rebellion. God has actually strengthened Pharaoh's resolve to resist.

However, God knew the end from the beginning, as we will see later in the chapter.

As verse 12 says, everything went just as God had spoken to Moses.

The Seventh Plague: Hail

13 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise early in

the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me, 14 for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. 15 Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. 16 But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. 17 As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go. 18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now. 19 Therefore send now and gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die." "'

20 He who feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses. 21 But he who did not regard the word of the Lord left his

servants and his livestock in the field.
22 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt." 23 And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt. 24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail.

The seventh plague was one of fire mixed with hail. It was an assault on:

Nut: sky goddess

Isis: goddess of life

Seth: protector of crops

Once again they were seen by all to be powerless to stop YHWH.

God gave Pharaoh a sort of extended warning here. He showed Pharaoh some grace by telling him, had He wanted, God could have already destroyed all of Egypt. As bad as it was, it could have been worse.

The greater purpose of all this is given to us in verse 14, so that the Egyptians would know that there is none like God in all the earth.

This is a truth we all need to carry with us with pride! **The same God that is destroying Egypt and all its pagan gods is the same God that loves and protects us!** We tend to overlook that at times but it is the truth. The God of the Hebrews is our God also! He is just as big and powerful now as He was during the time of the Exodus.

We are to proclaim that same truth - that there is none like Him in all the earth! That is part of our mission today.

16 But indeed for this purpose I have raised

you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.

You have often heard me say that we all have a plan and a purpose in God's economy. Here in verse 16 we see that even the unbeliever has a plan and a purpose. Pharaoh always had the option of repenting. God has given him plenty of chances and as we shall see he will be given even more. However, because God knows the end from the beginning He knew from the dawn of time that Pharaoh wouldn't repent. That made him the right man for the job. Pharaoh was chosen for that time and place. He was raised up for this purpose.

17 As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go. 18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now.

None of us have arms long enough to box with God. That includes Pharaoh. The more Pharaoh rebelled, the more God was glorified. The more he resisted the more power God manifested.

Proverbs 28:14

**14 Happy is the man who is always reverent,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into
calamity.**

God is a God of second chances. He is a God of grace. We can see that again in verse 19.

19 Therefore send now and gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die.” ”

20 He who feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses. 21 But he who did not regard the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field.

God gave the Egyptians a way out in this case. He not only warned of the coming plague but He told them how to avoid it. Those that heeded the warning saved their livestock while those that

didn't saw great losses.

The same goes for the other warnings in the Bible. Whether it is a general warning of sin or a specific warning, God gives us an escape route.

The Egyptians that avoided the loss of their livestock all believed God and followed that belief with obedience. The same "formula" works today. Belief that isn't accompanied by obedience can hardly be called belief. Obedience is the evidence of belief. Those that believe God and obey his voice avoid the judgment. That is a principle.

Goshen, the land in which the Hebrews dwelt was spared once again from the plague.

Finally, Pharaoh has had his fill and asks for prayer.

27 And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time. The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked. 28 Entreat the Lord, that there may be no more mighty thundering and hail, for it is enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no

longer.”

29 So Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth is the Lord's. 30 But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the Lord God.”

31 Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the head and the flax was in bud. 32 But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they are late crops.

33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the Lord; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth. 34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. 35 So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

Pharaoh said all the right words. He confessed that he and his people had sinned. Most of us would have said, “Amen!” However, talk is cheap.

This was a false confession born out of a worldly repentance. Once again, Pharaoh just wanted some relief from the judgment. He was sorry he was being hammered. He wasn't sorry that he had offended God. There is a huge difference there.

True repentance recognizes that we have offended God. The truly repentant person is sorrowed by that. It is about God, not us the sinner. True repentance is more of an outward thing while false repentance is narcissistic (self-centered). A person that is not truly repentant is more worried about himself than God. True love is others-centered. False repentance is worried about being caught and the price that is to be paid for it.

I wonder if sometimes when we seem to get a break from the troubles we are having; if that break is not because we have repented or conquered the sin that is besetting us or if it just God backing off after our false confession.

God knew that Pharaoh wasn't sincere in his confessions but He stopped the plague anyhow before coming back with another one. How many times have we sent up some sort of glib prayer of

repentance and seen a break in the storm only to have it come back a short time later? We all have. If that is happening maybe we need to do some soul-searching regarding our hearts.

Jesus loved us enough that He took the ultimate pay cut to come down here and die a criminal's death for no other reason than He loved us and wanted to secure a path in which we could live with Him eternally. He was more worried about us than Himself.

When we are more worried about offending God than we are about our own desires and wellbeing then and only then will we have known true repentance.

Pharaoh is not only suffering because his pride has been hurt. But his boat has also been rocked! We don't like that do we? We are in a constant state of trying to keep every thing, as it should be. And when it isn't we become frustrated. We get angry. We get angry with those around us. We may even get angry with God. And I believe we need to understand that we have not been saved in order that we would have a stress-free life, but

that we can be an image to those around us - that we may be a beacon to those around us who are also in the midst of trouble. They need to know, to see the proper response to the issues of life. If they don't see it in us, then where will they see it? We have been saved not just so we have a ticket to Heaven, but that they may see a little piece of Heaven here on earth. So that they can see God's will being done on earth, as it is in Heaven! That is a vocation – a calling – a lifestyle.

Surrendering our will to God doesn't mean that everything will be groovy all the time. Instead it means that even though things sometimes get worse before they get better, God is still in control. When we get that, as a revelation, when it is more than head knowledge, we will finally find peace that surpasses all understanding. And God wants to give you that today.

(prayer team)