

## That the World May Know – God Heard Their Cry: Session 3 – Finger of God: The Plagues

### The Authority Behind the “Sticks”

Anyone who opposed Pharaoh did so at great peril. Many ancient carvings depict Pharaoh holding a flail, crook, or other “stick” and exercising brutal power by beating his enemies or bashing in the skulls of helpless prisoners. The Hebrews experienced the crushing blows of this brute force as they were worked ruthlessly and forced to throw their newborn boys into the Nile River.

- 1 In what ways was Pharaoh’s flail and crook, often used in ancient Egyptian carvings to identify him as “Lord” and “god” a good representation of his authority and style of rule?  
Exodus 1:22  
Exodus 5:6 – 21
- 2 What action forced Moses to flee from Egypt?  
Exodus 2:11 – 15
- 3 What was Moses doing when he met God by the burning bush? How much of an attitude of authority and power did Moses seem to have?  
Exodus 3:1 - 6  
Exodus 4:1
- 4 If Moses thought the burning bush was amazing, he must have been utterly shocked by what happened next. What job was God calling Moses to do? What authority was God giving to Moses?  
Exodus 3:11 – 18  
Exodus 4:1 – 5
- 5 In contrast to Pharaoh’s style of leading, how was Moses to confront Pharaoh and lead Israel out of Egypt?  
Exodus 3:16 – 20  
Exodus 4:10 – 17

### God’s Judgment Egypt’s Gods

Why did God use plagues to deliver the Hebrews from Egypt? Why did God use the ten plagues he chose? What was the reason behind these catastrophes? In light of what scholars have learned about Egyptian gods, it is likely that the Hebrews and Egyptians would have identified a connection between specific plagues and specific gods.

- 1 God is intent on defeating sin and the chaos it causes in the world and in the lives of people. One way in which God restored harmony to the lives of the Hebrews was to act against the gods of Egypt. What makes the gods of this world a source of evil and chaos? What is the real power behind them?  
Deuteronomy 32:16 – 17  
Matthew 12:24 – 26  
1 Corinthians 10:19 – 20
- 2 Since there were hundreds of Egyptians gods related to the functioning of the universe, any natural disaster would likely have confronted one or more of those Gods. How frightening would the plagues have been to the Egyptians as everything that provided life was destroyed?  
  
How troubling would it have been for the Egyptians as one after another of Egypt’s gods appeared to be powerless before the God of the Hebrews?
- 3 When the gods of Egypt failed before God’s power, as demonstrated in the plagues, what was God revealing about himself?  
Exodus 20:3 – 6  
Deuteronomy 11:16 – 17  
Psalm 40:4  
Jeremiah 46:25

### That the Whole World Will Know

In the Bible, *knowing* is not primarily a rational activity, although it involves the intellect. To *know* is to experience a relationship involving deep, emotional connections that are characterized by interaction, loyalty, and commitment. This is why the Hebrew word for “know,” *yada*, is used to describe the intimate relations of marriage. Consider what knowing God had to do with the plagues, God’s powerful demonstration of judgment on Egypt’s gods.

1. What is God’s great desire for people, and how important is it to him?  
Isaiah 45:1 – 7
2. The ten plagues expressed God’s judgment on the gods of Egypt, but for what other purpose did God display his great power?  
Exodus 7:14 – 17  
Exodus 8:9 – 10  
Exodus 8: 20 – 22  
Exodus 9:13 – 16

Why was it important for Pharaoh to know that the God of the Hebrews was indeed God of the universe?

3. Moses’ opening statement to Pharaoh was a direct challenge from the God of the Hebrews. What was Pharaoh immediate response to it?  
Exodus 5:1 – 2

God did not immediately end the confrontation. What was God doing for Pharaoh through the plagues?

Why did it take ten plagues to free Israel?

When the plagues were over, what do you believe Pharaoh knew about God and why God should be obeyed?

## The Plagues: Echoes of God's Creation Story

It is significant that God gave the story of his creation to Moses to share with the Hebrews early in their exodus journey. They knew their own story – their plight in Egypt, God hearing their cry, the plagues, and their miraculous exit from Egypt – and were beginning to see their role in God's unfolding story. They would have noticed words, phrases, events, and numbers from the creation story that were repeated in their own story.

Genesis Creation	The Plagues
The waters teemed with life Genesis 1:20	What chaos "teemed" from the waters of the Nile? Exodus 8:3
The land produced living creatures Genesis 1:24	What chaos did the land produce? Exodus 8:16 – 18
Flying creatures are made Genesis 1:20 – 22	What chaos came from the air? Exodus 8:21
God gave livestock to humans Genesis 1:25 – 26	What was taken away from the Egyptians? Exodus 9:2 – 6
On the third day, God put vegetation on the earth Genesis 1:11 – 12	What plagues caused Egypt to look as the earth did before the third day of creation? Exodus 9:13 – 10:20
God distinguished light from darkness and created light givers Genesis 1:3 – 19	What chaos reigned in Egypt, but not Goshen, for three days? Exodus 10:21 – 23
God created human beings Genesis 1:26 – 27	In what way did God take back his creation? What chaos did it bring? Exodus 11:1 – 8 Exodus 12:29 – 30

## Did Israel Hear God's Message

It is one thing for Moses to deliver God's message to Pharaoh and for Pharaoh to close his ears to it. Perhaps Moses expected that. He knew that Pharaoh believed himself to be a god who kept harmony and natural order in the universe, so why would he listen? But what about the Hebrews? Had they grown so complacent in Goshen that they too would have difficulty hearing and acting upon God's message?

1. When the Hebrew elders first learned that God had heard their cry and was concerned about them, how did they respond?  
Exodus 4:29 – 31
2. What happened to the Hebrews' willingness to hear God's message when Pharaoh's treatment of them became even harsher than it had been?  
Exodus 5:17 – 19  
Exodus 6:6 – 9
3. How did the Hebrews leave Egypt?  
Exodus 14:8  
Numbers 33:3  
  
Had they heard God's message? How can you know?
4. After being led safely through the Red Sea and delivered from Pharaoh and his army, what did the Israelites sing about?  
Exodus 15:1 – 18
5. Just a few days after the plagues ended and the Hebrews left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, what happened to challenge their trust in God?  
Exodus 15:22 – 27

What did God want to teach them about the importance of listening to his voice?

## References

Genesis 1	Genesis 15
Genesis 46	Genesis 48
Exodus 1	Exodus 2
Exodus 3	Exodus 4
Exodus 5	Exodus 6
Exodus 7	Exodus 8
Exodus 9	Exodus 10
Exodus 11	Exodus 12
Exodus 14	Exodus 15
Exodus 20	Exodus 34
Leviticus 26	Numbers 33
Deuteronomy 8	Deuteronomy 11
Deuteronomy 32	1 Kings 8
1 Kings 21	2 Kings 7
Psalms 23	Psalms 24
Psalms 40	Psalms 78
Psalms 80	Psalms 95
Psalms 105	Psalms 146
Isaiah 6	Isaiah 37
Isaiah 38	Isaiah 40
Isaiah 45	Isaiah 55
Jeremiah 4	Jeremiah 46
Ezekiel 11	Amos 3
Micah 3	Zechariah 1
Malachi 1	Matthew 12
Luke 11	Acts 7
1 Corinthians 10	2 Corinthians 5
Ephesians 6	

## Ten Plagues and the Egyptian Gods

The Plague	The Egyptian Gods
#1 – Water to Blood Exodus 7:14 – 24	Hapi – Nile River Khnum – Water and Fertility Osiris – Resurrection and Life
#2 – Frogs Exodus 7:25 – 8:14	Hecket – Frog-headed goddess of childbirth
#3 – Gnats and Lice Exodus 8:16 – 18	Geb – Earth and dust and harvest
#4 – Flies Exodus 8:20 – 24	Nephthys – Protector of the household
#5 – Livestock Exodus 9:1 – 7	Apis – Procreation and fertility Hathor – Goddess of fertility and sexuality
#6 – Boils Exodus 9:8 - 11	Thoth – Moon and medicine and good health
#7 – Hail Exodus 9:13 – 33	Seth – Chaos (the enemy of order) Isis – Magic and medicine Min – Crop fertility
#8 – Grasshoppers Exodus 10:3 – 19	Seth – Conflict Isis – Magic and medicine Min – Crop fertility
#9 – Darkness Exodus 10:21 – 23	Amun Re – Chief god and god of the sun Horus – War
#10 – Deaths of Firstborn Exodus 11:4 – 8 Exodus 12:21 - 30	Nekhet – Goddess protector of Pharaoh Osiris – Resurrection and life