

Session 6

Old Testament Survey with Apologetics

Exodus 1-18

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EXODUS

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AUTHOR

Exodus has been termed “the central book of the Old Testament.” Indeed its pages contain some of Scripture’s greatest treasures, including the Ten Commandments, the primary accounts of the ten plagues, Israel’s exodus from Egypt into freedom, God’s establishment of a covenant with his people at Mount Sinai, and the construction of the tabernacle along with its sacred furnishings. Not surprisingly, much controversy has developed around this book as well. Critics have questioned its authorship, challenged the accuracy of its historical accounts, and suggested that its theological and moral teachings contradict statements found elsewhere in the Bible.

Traditional Judaism and Christianity have maintained for thousands of years that God is the author of the book of Exodus and that Moses was the human agent he used to pen its words. The acceptance of Moses as the human author of the first five books of the Bible is based first of all on biblical statements indicating that Moses wrote sacred Scripture. These statements are found within the Torah, or first five books of Scripture (Ex 24:4; 34:28; Nm 33:2; Dt 31:9,22), as well as in other parts of the Bible (Jos 8:31-32; Mk 12:19; Lk 20:28; Jn 1:45). Jesus himself affirmed that Moses wrote Scripture (Jn 5:46). Within the Bible, the usual way of referring to the first five books of the Bible is to call them the law of Moses (Jos 8:31-32; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18;

[30:16](#); [Ezr 3:2](#); [7:6](#); [Neh 8:1](#); [Dn 9:11,13](#); [Mal 4:4](#); [Lk 2:22](#); [24:44](#); [Jn 7:23](#); [Ac 13:39](#); [15:5](#); [28:23](#); [1Co 9:9](#)).

THE RELIABILITY OF EXODUS

Some nineteenth-century skeptics rejected Mosaic authorship because they believed that Semitic writing systems had not been devised at the time he was alive. However, archaeological evidence has dispelled that objection; Semitic inscriptions written at least a hundred years earlier than Moses have been discovered in the Sinai desert. Narrative accounts in the Torah dealing with the events of Moses's lifetime contain details that suggest an eyewitness account and a thorough acquaintance with Egypt. Furthermore, references in the Torah to the land of Canaan are consistently those of one who lived outside the region, as did the Egyptian-born Moses. Linguistic evidence for an early date of composition is also found in the archaic uses of certain terms, particularly the third-person singular feminine pronoun. The way that the narrative hangs together as a whole provides evidence favoring single authorship for the first five books of the Bible.

While accepting Moses as the author of the Torah, conservative scholars have regularly acknowledged that editors living after the time of Moses helped to shape the first five books of the Bible. Evidence for this is found in the use of place names that did not exist during Moses's day (e.g., [Dn](#); see [Gn 14:14](#); [Dt 34:1](#)), reference to Israelite kingship ([Gn 36:31](#)), updated place names ([Gn 14:2,3,7,8,17](#); [23:2](#); [35:6,19,27](#); [48:7](#)), and the account of Moses's death ([Dt 34:1-12](#)). It is also possible that editors were responsible for the inclusion and final arrangement of narrative passages beyond the account of Moses's death. To admit that God may have used editors in the process of producing the finished book of Exodus and the rest of the Torah in no way reduces the central role Moses played in producing these books: Moses is legitimately their human author. These books are properly referred to as the law of Moses.

At a more basic level, some skeptics have suggested that there never was an actual person named Moses who led Israel from Egyptian slavery to freedom. For them the story of Moses presented in Exodus—Deuteronomy is a work of fiction created for religious and political reasons. According to these critics, the absence of any mention of Moses in the records of ancient Egypt or contemporary non-Israelite Semitic cultures, as well as the extraordinary claims about him in Scripture, are enough to convince them that Moses was the invention of an ancient Israelite storyteller.

Of course, throughout the centuries Christians have had no problem accepting Moses's reality. As with many other controversial issues, the starting point for

addressing this issue is considering the explicit claims of the Bible. Clearly the narratives in Exodus—Deuteronomy present Moses as a historical reality. Numerous passages in the rest of the Old Testament (e.g., [Jos 1:1-7](#); [14:7-11](#); [Jdg 4:11](#); [1Sm 12:6](#); [1Kg 8:9](#); [2Kg 18:4-6](#); [1Ch 6:3](#); [2Ch 5:10](#); [Neh 1:7-8](#); [Ps 77:20](#); [106:23](#); [Is 63:11-12](#); [Jr 15:1](#); [Mic 6:4](#)) as well as in the New Testament ([Mt 19:7-8](#); [Mk 12:26](#); [Lk 5:14](#); [Jn 3:14](#); [Ac 3:22](#); [Rm 5:14](#); [1Co 10:2](#); [2Co 3:7-15](#); [2Tm 3:8](#); [Heb 3:2](#); [11:23-24](#)) make it clear that the biblical writers believed that Moses really lived. Jesus also implied that Moses was an actual person ([Jn 5:46-47](#)).

THE FOUNDATION STONE

In many ways the book of Exodus is the foundation stone upon which the rest of the Bible stands. Its laws established the outlines of Israel's social life and provided the authoritative basis for the religious practices that informed Israelite culture for more than a thousand years. The events in this book prepare the reader for Israel's conquest of Canaan and occupation of the land. Its regulations regarding the proper treatment of others serve as the core around which the teachings of Proverbs, the lyrics of many psalms, and the proclamations of the prophets were built.

From a New Testament perspective, this book is used in three main ways. First, it prefigures the life and ministry of Christ, especially in his role as our sacrificial lamb ([Heb 9:12](#); [1Pt 1:19](#); [Rv 5:8-9](#)). Second, it provides examples that illustrate the Christian life. Finally, it presents the moral and ethical framework to guide Christians in their decision making.

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ISRAEL OPPRESSED IN EGYPT

¹These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; each came with his family:

²Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

³Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin;

⁴Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher.

⁵ The total number of Jacob's descendants ^A was seventy; ^B Joseph was already in Egypt.

⁶ Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation eventually died. ⁷ But the Israelites were fruitful, increased rapidly, multiplied, and became extremely numerous so that the land was filled with them.

⁸ A new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ He said to his people, “Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and powerful than we are. ¹⁰ Come, let’s deal shrewdly with them; otherwise they will multiply further, and when war breaks out, they will join our enemies, fight against us, and leave the country.” ¹¹ So the Egyptians assigned taskmasters over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor. They built Pithom and Rameses as supply cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they oppressed them, the more they multiplied and spread so that the Egyptians came to dread ^c the Israelites. ¹³ They worked the Israelites ruthlessly ¹⁴ and made their lives bitter with difficult labor in brick and mortar and in all kinds of fieldwork. They ruthlessly imposed all this work on them.

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives — the first whose name was Shiphrah and the second whose name was Puah — ¹⁶ “When you help the Hebrew women give birth, observe them as they deliver. If the child is a son, kill him, but if it’s a daughter, she may live.” ¹⁷ The midwives, however, feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. ¹⁸ So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this and let the boys live? ”

¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them.”

²⁰ So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very numerous. ²¹ Since the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²² Pharaoh then commanded all his people: “You must throw every son born to the Hebrews into the Nile, but let every daughter live.”

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

1:5 The number “seventy” mentioned here and in [Gn 46:27](#) seems to contradict Stephen’s figure of seventy-five in [Ac 7:14](#). The number seventy-five can also be found at [Ex 1:5](#) within the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) and the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, these two numbers can be reconciled. The higher figure includes five additional sons born to Ephraim and Manasseh sometime after Jacob and his other clan members arrived in Egypt. These additional individuals are named in [Nm 26:28-37](#) and [1Ch 7:14-23](#) as well as in the Greek version of [Gn 46:27](#).

1:8 The biblical writer’s use of the term “king” to refer to the supreme leader of Egypt has been used as evidence that Moses could not have written the book of Exodus since anyone familiar with Egyptian culture would have used the Egyptian term *pharaoh*. But *pharaoh* is used 185 times elsewhere in the

Torah. Moses was writing this document to a Hebrew, not Egyptian, audience. In the language of the original readers the term king (Hb *melek*) referred to the highest governmental official within a social system. Perhaps, for the sake of clarity for his readers as well as for literary variety, Moses chose to use the usual Hebrew term.

1:11 The mention of a city named Ramesses cannot be used to prove that the events of this narrative took place during the days of Ramesses II (ca 1290 BC). However, the Bible's chronological references (see [1Kg 6:1](#)) suggest that the events of [Ex 1](#) occurred at least 150 years prior to Ramesses II's reign. The city's name means literally "Born of [the god] Re." Re was one of the most popular gods in the history of Egypt, worshiped since at least the Fourth Dynasty (ca 2772 BC). It is entirely possible that a city honoring this popular god was built hundreds of years before Ramesses II.

1:19 Were the Hebrew midwives lying? The Hebrew midwives misled Pharaoh in order to save innocent human lives. The Bible teaches that lying is wrong ([20:16](#); [Lv 19:11](#); [Eph 4:29](#); [Col 3:9](#); [Rv 22:15](#)) and that people should tell the truth ([Zch 8:16](#)). What the midwives did is not meant as an example of behavior of which God approves. Nevertheless, their act was intended to avert a far greater wrong—the murder of innocent children. Because of Pharaoh's wicked intentions in this matter, he did not deserve to hear the truth from these women. Others in the OT were recorded as deliberately misleading people in order to protect innocent human life, including Samuel ([1Sm 16:2](#)) and Jeremiah ([Jr 38:24-27](#)). In a world marred by sin it is not always possible to choose between pure good and pure evil, and one is sometimes compelled to choose the least sinful alternative. Christians are to speak the truth in love ([2Co 4:2](#); [Eph 4:15](#)). Jesus set the example for Christians by telling the truth even when it produced personal pain and suffering ([Mt 26:63-66](#); [Jn 8:40-59](#)).

^A **1:5** Lit of people issuing from Jacob's loins

^B **1:5** LXX, DSS read 75 ; [Gn 46:27](#); [Ac 7:14](#)

^C **1:12** Or Egyptians loathed

MOSES'S BIRTH AND ADOPTION

² Now a man from the family of Levi married a Levite woman. ² The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son; when she saw that he was beautiful, ^D she hid him for three months. ³ But when she could no longer hide him, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with asphalt and pitch. She placed the child in it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴ Then his sister stood at a distance in order to see what would happen to him.

⁵ Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe at the Nile while her servant girls walked along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds, sent her slave girl, took it, ⁶ opened it, and saw him, the child — and there he was, a little boy, crying. She felt sorry for him and said, "This is one of the Hebrew boys."

⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Should I go and call a Hebrew woman who is nursing to nurse the boy for you? "

⁸ "Go," Pharaoh's daughter told her. So the girl went and called the boy's mother. ⁹ Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the boy and nursed him. ¹⁰ When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, ^A "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

MOSES IN MIDIAN

¹¹ Years later, ^B after Moses had grown up, he went out to his own people ^C and observed their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his people. ¹² Looking all around and seeing no one, he struck the Egyptian dead and hid him in the sand. ¹³ The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you attacking your neighbor? " ^D

¹⁴ "Who made you a commander and judge over us? " the man replied. "Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? "

Then Moses became afraid and thought, "What I did is certainly known."

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard about this, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well.

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Then some shepherds arrived and drove them away, but Moses came to their rescue and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they returned to their father Reuel, ^E he asked, "Why have you come back so quickly today? "

¹⁹ They answered, “An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock.”

²⁰ “So where is he? ” he asked his daughters. “Why then did you leave the man behind? Invite him to eat dinner.”

²¹ Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. ²² She gave birth to a son whom he named Gershom, ^E for he said, “I have been a resident alien in a foreign land.”

²³ After a long time, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned because of their difficult labor; and they cried out; and their cry for help because of the difficult labor ascended to God. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning; and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; ²⁵ and God saw the Israelites; and God knew.

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

2:10 Is it reasonable to suppose that Pharaoh, who had ordered the death of all male Hebrew children, would permit Moses to live ([1:16](#))? Yes. Ancient parallels exist in which governments raised and educated select young males of hostile cultures. Daniel and several other young Israelites were raised and educated in Babylon so they could serve as government officials ([Dn 1](#)). Similarly, Moses’s life was apparently spared by Pharaoh in order to prepare him as an administrator over Egypt’s Hebrew slaves (see [2:11](#); [Ac 7:22](#)).

2:10 Why would an Egyptian princess have given Moses a Hebrew name? Because the name she chose was both an Egyptian and a Hebrew word. In Egyptian the root word means “born” and was commonly used as an element in personal names (e.g., Pharaohs Ahmose, Thutmose). In Hebrew it means “to draw out [of water].” This bilingual wordplay fit Moses in both ways, especially since she “drew him out” of the Nile.

2:14 This verse has been taken by some as contrary to [Heb 11:27](#), which states that Moses was not afraid of the king’s anger. Note, however, that this verse only states that Moses was afraid, not that he feared Pharaoh’s wrath. What then might Moses have feared? Perhaps it was the loss of support from his fellow Israelites, since they were willing to betray him. Or perhaps he feared that he had lost his opportunity to be the deliverer of his people.

^D **2:2** Or *healthy*

^A **2:10** The name *Moses* sounds like “drawing out” in Hb and “born” in Egyptian.

^B [2:11](#) Lit *And it was in those days*

^C [2:11](#) Lit *his brothers*

^D [2:13](#) Or *fellow Hebrew*

^E [2:18](#) Jethro's clan or last name was Reuel; [Ex 3:1](#).

^E [2:22](#) In Hb the name *Gershom* sounds like the phrase “a stranger there.”

MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

³Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, ^G the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, ^A the mountain of God. ² Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire within a bush. As Moses looked, he saw that the bush was on fire but was not consumed. ³ So Moses thought, “I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn’t the bush burning up? ”

ARTICLE

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EXODUS 3

CAN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE SHOW THAT THERE IS A GOD?

by R. Douglas Geivett

The Bible reports many direct experiences of God. As we read in the Old Testament, for example, Moses came across a burning bush in the desert, and God commanded him to return to Egypt to free his people ([Ex 3–4](#)). The Angel of the Lord promised Gideon divine deliverance from Israel’s enemy the Midianites ([Jdg 6:11–8:32](#)). In Abraham’s old age, and despite his having no children, the Lord promised Abraham that he and his aged wife, Sarah, would have a son through whom Abraham would become the father of a great nation ([Gn 12](#) and [28](#)). In 1 and 2 Kings God appears to kings and prophets with numerous warnings and promises.

In the New Testament we read of the experiences surrounding the birth announcements of Jesus and John the Baptist ([Lk 1:5–38](#)); the transfiguration ([Mt 17:1–8](#); [Mk 9:2–8](#); [Lk 9:28–36](#)); Paul’s conversion while on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians ([Ac 9:1–19](#)); and Peter’s decision, motivated by a vision, to take the gospel to

the household of Cornelius ([Ac 10](#)). There are many other reports of this kind in the Bible—but the record does not end there. Every generation of believers has testified to the immediate presence of God in various ways.

Admittedly, in most cases, these religious experiences occurred in people who already believed in God. The experiences often were intended to impart reliable information or divine guidance and were frequently accompanied by miraculous confirming events. On the other hand, these experiences confirmed the participants in their belief in God, led them to testify to the existence and supremacy of the Lord, and emboldened them to act on the information and guidance they received.

This raises an important question: does religious experience provide grounds for believing that God exists? It is reasonable to think so, and here's why.

A basic principle of rationality is that how things appear in our experience is good grounds for believing that that is how things are, unless there is a good reason to think that how things appear to us is actually mistaken. If I seem to see an orange tree in my garden, then, in general, I have good grounds for believing there is an orange tree there. But suppose that, during the past 10 years, I've never seen an orange tree there, I did not arrange for an orange tree to be planted there, my wife now looks and says she does not see an orange tree there, and I've recently been prescribed medication known for its hallucinogenic side-effects. These considerations now make it very unlikely that I am seeing what I seem to be seeing. And thus I have no good grounds for believing an orange tree is in the garden.

While alleged religious experiences do not involve the five senses, they do correspond to perceptual experiences of things like orange trees. An entity (an object or a person) is present to the consciousness of some person. So if I seem to be directly aware of God's presence, and if there are no overriding reasons why things are not as they seem, then I have good grounds for believing that God is present and hence for believing that God exists (since God would not be present if God did not exist).

But now we must ask, would my experience be evidence for others if I reported my experience to them? Is testimony about an experience of God good grounds for believing that God exists?

A basic principle is that the testimony of an experience should be trusted unless there is at least as good a reason to think that it is mistaken. If I report to others that I saw a particular orange tree, then, in general, recipients of my testimony have good grounds for believing that I saw it and hence that that particular orange tree exists. But if I have a reputation for clowning around or telling lies, or if I have no idea what an orange tree

looks like, or if recipients of my testimony have strong independent reasons for denying that there is an orange tree in the garden, then it would not be so reasonable for them to accept my testimony.

Similarly, if I report a personal experience of God, then this will be grounds for others to believe that God exists if what I report is plausible, if it is likely that my faculties are adequate for such an experience, and if I have a reputation for honesty.

In general it seems rational that, for those who have had the experience, belief in God may be grounded in an experience of God. Also, testimony about the experience may even provide grounds for belief in God for those who do not have such experiences themselves. In combination with other evidences for God's existence, direct religious experience and testimony about such an experience may provide strong motivation for believing in God. It should at least provide motivation for exploring other evidence for God's existence.

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⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses! "

"Here I am," he answered.

⁵ "Do not come closer," he said. "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ Then he continued, "I am the God of your father, ^B the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey — the territory of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ⁹ So because the Israelites' cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, ¹⁰ therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

¹¹ But Moses asked God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt? "

¹² He answered, "I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship ^A God at this mountain."

¹³ Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?”

¹⁴ God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. ^B This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.

¹⁶ “Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said: I have paid close attention to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ And I have promised you that I will bring you up from the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites — a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁸ They will listen to what you say. Then you, along with the elders of Israel, must go to the king of Egypt and say to him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us go on a three-day trip into the wilderness so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

¹⁹ “However, I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go, even under force from a strong hand. ²⁰ But when I stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my miracles that I will perform in it, after that, he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give these people such favor with the Egyptians that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. ²² Each woman will ask her neighbor and any woman staying in her house for silver and gold jewelry, and clothing, and you will put them on your sons and daughters. So you will plunder the Egyptians.”

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

3:2 Who appeared to Moses at the burning bush—the angel of the Lord, or the Lord himself ([v. 4](#))? Both terms are used in this passage. Elsewhere in the OT the two terms could be used in close proximity in ways that draw no clear distinction between them ([Gn 16:7-13](#); [Jdg 6:11-14](#)). Since the Hebrew *mal'ach* means “messenger,” one does not have to think of the “angel” here as falling into some unscriptural stereotype. Perhaps both expressions are simply different ways of referring to the one God. The intimate relationship between the Lord and the angel of the Lord hints at the relationship demonstrated in the NT between God the Father and God the Son (see [Jn 10:30](#)).

3:6 If God cannot be seen, why was Moses afraid to look upon him? The Bible states that God is invisible ([1Tm 1:17](#); [6:16](#)) and that no one has ever seen him ([Jn 1:18](#); [1Jn 4:12,20](#)). But biblical narrative also makes it clear that God personally visited human beings at various times and did so in awesome and mysterious ways. The divine disclosure might take the form of a phenomenon

of nature—a storm ([Jb 38:1](#)), a fire ([Dt 4:12](#)), a fiery cloud ([Ex 13:21](#)), or a burning bush ([3:2-4](#)), or the revelation could be human in appearance ([Gn 18:1-33](#)). But the Bible suggests that these self-expressions of God were mediated and partial, not the direct appearance of God in his fullness. The Israelites saw the fire of God, but they did not see him. They heard God's voice, but they never saw his mouth speaking ([Dt 4:12](#)). Moses saw God's form ([Nm 12:8](#)), but never saw his face ([Ex 33:20-23](#)). When Moses became aware that the bush was burning because God's presence was within it, he showed reverent submission by practicing the timeless Asiatic custom of avoiding eye contact with a superior. To have gazed directly upon God would have been to show contemptuous pride and risk destruction.

3:8 Which people groups did Israel actually conquer? The Bible's lists of nations that inhabited the land of Canaan differ from one another. Among the seven lists of nations provided in the Torah, only three agree completely ([vv. 8,17](#); [Dt 20:17](#)). The first list ([Gn 15:19-21](#)) is the longest, containing the names of ten people groups. One contains seven names ([Dt 7:1](#)), while the others contain only six ([Ex 3:8,17](#); [Dt 20:17](#)). There are at least two explanations for these differences. First, some of the groups may have been exterminated from the land before the time of Moses. The Kadmonites, Kenizzites, and Rephaim are mentioned only in the list given to Abraham, who lived hundreds of years earlier. According to [Dt 2:20-22](#), the Ammonites destroyed the Rephaim. Perhaps the Kadmonites and Kenizzites were also eliminated before the time of the exodus. Second, the remaining lists may not have been intended as an exhaustive cataloging of all the cultural groups present in the land; they merely listed the major people groups with which Israel would have to deal.

^G **3:1** Moses's father-in-law's first name was *Jethro* ; [Ex 2:18](#).

^A **3:1** = Desolation; another name for Mount Sinai; [Dt 4:10,15](#); [18:16](#); [Mal 4:4](#)

^B **3:6** Sam, some LXX mss read *fathers* ; [Ac 7:32](#)

^A **3:12** Or serve

^B **3:14** Or *I AM BECAUSE I AM*, or *I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE*

MIRACULOUS SIGNS FOR MOSES

4Moses answered, "What if they won't believe me and will not obey me but say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?" "

² The LORD asked him, “What is that in your hand? ”

“A staff,” he replied.

³ “Throw it on the ground,” he said. So Moses threw it on the ground, it became a snake, and he ran from it. ⁴ The LORD told Moses, “Stretch out your hand and grab it by the tail.” So he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand. ⁵ “This will take place,” he continued, “so that they will believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

⁶ In addition the LORD said to him, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” So he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, his hand was diseased, resembling snow. ⁷ “Put your hand back inside your cloak,” he said. So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, it had again become like the rest of his skin. ⁸ “If they will not believe you and will not respond to the evidence of the first sign, they may believe the evidence of the second sign. ⁹ And if they don’t believe even these two signs or listen to what you say, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the Nile will become blood on the ground.”

¹⁰ But Moses replied to the LORD, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent — either in the past or recently or since you have been speaking to your servant — because my mouth and my tongue are sluggish.” ^A

¹¹ The LORD said to him, “Who placed a mouth on humans? Who makes a person mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now go! I will help you speak ^B and I will teach you what to say.”

¹³ Moses said, “Please, Lord, send someone else.” ^C

¹⁴ Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses, and he said, “Isn’t Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, he is on his way now to meet you. He will rejoice when he sees you. ¹⁵ You will speak with him and tell him what to say. I will help both you and him to speak ^D and will teach you both what to do. ¹⁶ He will speak to the people for you. He will serve as a mouth for you, and you will serve as God to him. ¹⁷ And take this staff in your hand that you will perform the signs with.”

MOSES’S RETURN TO EGYPT

¹⁸ Then Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, “Please let me return to my relatives in Egypt and see if they are still living.”

Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”

¹⁹ Now in Midian the LORD told Moses, “Return to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.” ²⁰ So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took God’s staff in his hand.

²¹ The LORD instructed Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, make sure you do before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put within your power. But I will harden his heart ^E so that he won’t let the people go. ²² And you will say to Pharaoh: This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son. ²³ I told you: Let my son go so that he may worship me, but you refused to let him go. Look, I am about to kill your firstborn son! ”

²⁴ On the trip, at an overnight campsite, it happened that the LORD confronted him and intended to put him to death. ²⁵ So Zipporah took a flint, cut off her son’s foreskin, threw it at Moses’s feet, and said, “You are a bridegroom of blood to me! ” ²⁶ So he let him alone. At that time she said, “You are a bridegroom of blood,” referring to the circumcision.

REUNION OF MOSES AND AARON

²⁷ Now the LORD had said to Aaron, “Go and meet Moses in the wilderness.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸ Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and about all the signs he had commanded him to do. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. ³⁰ Aaron repeated everything the LORD had said to Moses and performed the signs before the people. ³¹ The people believed, and when they heard that the LORD had paid attention to them and that he had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped.

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

4:3-8 Could a stick actually become a serpent, or a hand suddenly become leprous and then instantly healthy again? Yes, if God transforms them. According to vv. 5 and 8, God made these things happen to convince doubters that he had really appeared to Moses. An “impossible” act—that is, one occurring outside of the natural order—would be more convincing than an ordinary action. As Creator of the universe, God is not limited to actions in accordance with the laws of nature; the occurrence of these miracles would convince all but the most determined doubters that God had come to his prophet.

4:21 The Bible teaches that human beings are free to make choices ([Gn 2:19](#); [4:7](#); [Ezk 18:2-32](#)). God is good ([Ps 25:8](#); [34:8](#); [100:5](#)) and always acts consistently with his nature. Yet people can choose to rebel against God’s goodness, and consistent rebellion can lead to their hearts being “harden[ed].” As the saying goes, “The same sun that melts butter also hardens clay.” Egyptian pharaohs believed they were divine, and Pharaoh would never have been inclined to submit to the Israelites’ God. Each time God placed a demand on him, he became more determined to resist. Thus it was both God’s demands and Pharaoh’s own

pride-motivated stubbornness ([Ex 8:15,32](#); [9:34](#)) that led to his hardened heart. God would use Pharaoh's stubbornness for a good end, to demonstrate his power and extend his reputation ([9:16](#)).

4:24 Why did the Lord try to kill Moses? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine how Moses's life was spared; the situation was reversed only when Moses's wife circumcised his son. Since the days of Abraham God had required his people to circumcise their sons as a sign of their relationship with him ([Gn 17:10-14](#)). As a leader of God's people, Moses was expected to set the proper example before the Israelites. When he failed to have his son circumcised before returning to Egypt, he incurred the Lord's displeasure. Failure to meet God's requirement had imperiled both his life and ministry.

^C **4:6** A reference to whiteness or flakiness of the skin

^A **4:10** Lit *heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue*

^B **4:12** Lit *will be with your mouth*

^C **4:13** Lit *send by the hand of whom you will send*

^D **4:15** Lit *will be with your mouth and with his mouth*

^E **4:21** Or *will make him stubborn*

MOSES CONFRONTS PHARAOH

5 Later, Moses and Aaron went in and said to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival for me in the wilderness."

² But Pharaoh responded, "Who is the LORD that I should obey him by letting Israel go? I don't know ^A the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."

³ They answered, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go on a three-day trip into the wilderness so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, or else he may strike us with plague or sword."

⁴ The king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why are you causing the people to neglect their work? Get to your labor!" ⁵ Pharaoh also said, "Look, the people of the land are so numerous, and you would stop them from their labor."

FURTHER OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL

⁶ That day Pharaoh commanded the overseers of the people as well as their foremen: ⁷ "Don't continue to supply the people with straw for making bricks, as before. They must go

and gather straw for themselves. ⁸ But require the same quota of bricks from them as they were making before; do not reduce it. For they are slackers — that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ ⁹ Impose heavier work on the men. Then they will be occupied with it and not pay attention to deceptive words.”

¹⁰ So the overseers and foremen of the people went out and said to them, “This is what Pharaoh says: ‘I am not giving you straw. ¹¹ Go get straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but there will be no reduction at all in your workload.’ ” ¹² So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ The overseers insisted, “Finish your assigned work each day, just as you did when straw was provided.” ¹⁴ Then the Israelite foremen, whom Pharaoh’s slave drivers had set over the people, were beaten and asked, “Why haven’t you finished making your prescribed number of bricks yesterday or today, as you did before? ”

¹⁵ So the Israelite foremen went in and cried for help to Pharaoh: “Why are you treating your servants this way? ¹⁶ No straw has been given to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks! ’ Look, your servants are being beaten, but it is your own people who are at fault.”

¹⁷ But he said, “You are slackers. Slackers! That is why you are saying, ‘Let us go sacrifice to the LORD.’ ¹⁸ Now get to work. No straw will be given to you, but you must produce the same quantity of bricks.”

¹⁹ The Israelite foremen saw that they were in trouble when they were told, “You cannot reduce your daily quota of bricks.” ²⁰ When they left Pharaoh, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who stood waiting to meet them.

²¹ “May the LORD take note of you and judge,” they said to them, “because you have made us reek to Pharaoh and his officials — putting a sword in their hand to kill us! ”

²² So Moses went back to the LORD and asked, “Lord, why have you caused trouble for this people? And why did you ever send me? ²³ Ever since I went in to Pharaoh to speak in your name he has caused trouble for this people, and you haven’t rescued your people at all.”

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

[5:1](#) When Moses and Aaron asked Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt to “hold a festival” in the wilderness, they were not lying. The proper worship of the Lord had been denied the Israelites in Egypt, yet it was more fundamental to their calling as the people of God than freedom from slavery. Pharaoh had the opportunity to accommodate Israel’s desire, but his denial of the request made it clear that the only way Israel could worship the Lord as he required was to leave Egypt for good ([6:11](#)).

5:7 Archaeology reveals that bricks made with straw were a common building material in Egypt during the OT era. Such evidence from archaeology gives the biblical narrative greater credibility.

^A **5:2** Or *recognize*

6 But the LORD replied to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: because of a strong hand he will let them go, and because of a strong hand he will drive them from his land.”

GOD PROMISES FREEDOM

² Then God spoke to Moses, telling him, “I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but I was not known to them by my name ‘the LORD.’ ^B ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land they lived in as aliens. ⁵ Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are forcing to work as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

⁶ “Therefore tell the Israelites: I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians and rescue you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you to the land that I swore ^A to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.” ⁹ Moses told this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their broken spirit and hard labor.

¹⁰ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, ¹¹ “Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go from his land.”

¹² But Moses said in the LORD’s presence: “If the Israelites will not listen to me, then how will Pharaoh listen to me, since I am such a poor speaker? ” ^B ¹³ Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them commands concerning both the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

GENEALOGY OF MOSES AND AARON

¹⁴ These are the heads of their fathers’ families:

The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel:

Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi.

These are the clans of Reuben.

¹⁵The sons of Simeon:

Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin,
Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.

These are the clans of Simeon.

¹⁶These are the names of the sons of Levi

according to their family records;

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Levi lived 137 years.

¹⁷The sons of Gershon:

Libni and Shimei, by their clans.

¹⁸The sons of Kohath:

Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

Kohath lived 133 years.

¹⁹The sons of Merari:

Mahli and Mushi.

These are the clans of the Levites

according to their family records.

²⁰Amram married his father's sister Jochebed,

and she bore him Aaron and Moses.

Amram lived 137 years.

²¹The sons of Izhar:

Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.

²²The sons of Uzziel:

Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

²³Aaron married Elisheba,

daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon.

She bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

²⁴The sons of Korah:

Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph.

These are the clans of the Korahites.

²⁵Aaron's son Eleazar married

one of the daughters of Putiel,

and she bore him Phinehas.

These are the heads of the Levite families by their clans.

²⁶ It was this Aaron and Moses whom the LORD told, "Bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt according to their military divisions." ²⁷ Moses and Aaron were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt in order to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

MOSES AND AARON BEFORE PHARAOH

²⁸ On the day the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ he said to him, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I am telling you."

³⁰ But Moses replied in the LORD's presence, "Since I am such a poor speaker, how will Pharaoh listen to me? "

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

^B **6:3** *LORD* (in small capitals) stands for the personal name of God, which in Hb is *Yahweh*. There is a long tradition of substituting "LORD" for "Yahweh" out of reverence.

^A **6:8** Lit *raised my hand*

^B **6:12** Lit *I have uncircumcised lips*, also in [v. 30](#)

7The LORD answered Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet. ² You must say whatever I command you; then Aaron your brother must declare it to Pharaoh so that he will let the Israelites go from his land. ³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you, but I will put my hand into Egypt and bring the military divisions of my people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. ⁵ The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the Israelites from among them."

⁶ So Moses and Aaron did this; they did just as the LORD commanded them. ⁷ Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

ARTICLE

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EXODUS 7

ARE MIRACLES BELIEVABLE?

by Ronald H. Nash

Miracles are essential to the historic Christian faith. If Jesus Christ was not God incarnate, and if Jesus did not rise bodily from the grave, then the Christian faith as we know it from history and the Scriptures would not—could not—be true (see [Rm 10:9-10](#)). It is then, easy to see why enemies of the Christian faith direct many of their attacks against these two miracles of Christ’s incarnation and resurrection in particular and against the possibility of miracles in general.

What one believes about the possibility of miracles comes from that person’s worldview. On the question of miracles, the critical worldview distinction is between naturalism and supernaturalism. For a naturalist, the universe is analogous to a closed box. Everything that happens inside the box is caused by, or is explicable in terms of, other things that exist within the box. *Nothing* (including God) exists outside the box; therefore, nothing outside the box we call the universe or nature can have any causal effect within the box. To quote the famous naturalist Carl Sagan, the cosmos is all that is or ever has been or ever will be. The major reason, then, why naturalists do not believe in miracles is because their worldview prevents them from believing.

If a naturalist suddenly begins to consider the possibility that miracles are really possible, he has begun to move away from naturalism and toward a different worldview. Any person with a naturalistic worldview could not consistently believe in miracles. No arguments on behalf of the miraculous can possibly succeed with such a person. The proper way to address the unbelief of such a person is to begin by challenging his naturalism.

The worldview of Christian theism affirms the existence of a personal God who transcends nature, who exists “outside the box.” Christian supernaturalism denies the

eternity of nature. God created the world freely and *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). The universe is contingent in the sense that it would not have begun to exist without God's creative act and it could not continue to exist without God's sustaining activity. The very laws of the cosmos that naturalists believe make miracles impossible were created by this God. Indeed one of naturalism's major problems is explaining how mindless forces could give rise to minds, knowledge, and sound reasoning.

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⁸ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹ "When Pharaoh tells you, 'Perform a miracle,' tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh. It will become a serpent.' " ¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD had commanded. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent. ¹¹ But then Pharaoh called the wise men and sorcerers — the magicians of Egypt, and they also did the same thing by their occult practices. ¹² Each one threw down his staff, and it became a serpent. But Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs. ¹³ However, Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

THE FIRST PLAGUE: WATER TURNED TO BLOOD

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hard: He refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning. When you see him walking out to the water, stand ready to meet him by the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a snake. ¹⁶ Tell him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let my people go, so that they may worship ^A me in the wilderness, but so far you have not listened. ¹⁷ This is what the LORD says: Here is how you will know that I am the LORD. Watch. I am about to strike the water in the Nile with the staff in my hand, and it will turn to blood. ¹⁸ The fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from it."

¹⁹ So the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron: Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt — over their rivers, canals, ponds, and all their water reservoirs — and they will become blood. There will be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in wooden and stone containers."

²⁰ Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded; in the sight of Pharaoh and his officials, he raised the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile was turned to blood. ²¹ The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad the Egyptians could not drink water from it. There was blood throughout the land of Egypt.

²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same thing by their occult practices. So Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. ²³ Pharaoh turned around, went into his palace, and didn't take even this to heart. ²⁴ All the Egyptians dug

around the Nile for water to drink because they could not drink the water from the river. ²⁵
Seven days passed after the LORD struck the Nile.

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

7:9-10 Did the Egyptians really turn their rods into serpents (see [v. 12](#))? Another translation of the Hebrew word rendered “by their occult practices” ([v. 11](#)) is “by their flames.” The Egyptian sorcerers, like modern magicians, seem to have used a bright distraction to conceal their substitution of serpents for the sticks. (The NT in [2Tm 3:8](#) gives their names as Jannes and Jambres.) The activities of these sorcerers foreshadow those of a “lawless one” who will come at the end of the age and perform pseudo-miracles ([2Th 2:9](#)).

7:20 Did the Nile River actually turn to blood? The OT uses the Hebrew word translated “blood” in two different senses—in the literal sense to refer to the life-giving fluid in the circulatory system of human beings and animals ([Gn 4:11](#)), and in the figurative sense to refer to the color of blood (see [Jl 2:31](#)). Either interpretation is possible here: the Nile could have become literal blood, or it could have turned the color of blood due to the presence of some toxin within it. In either case, the Bible is describing a true miracle. God produced the results he said he would, and he did it when he said he would.

7:20-21 Were the ten plagues natural occurrences, not miracles? According to the Bible they were true miracles—signs and wonders performed by God ([6:6](#); [7:3-4](#); [8:19](#)).

Theologically, a miracle can be defined as God’s working at just the right time, in just the right place, in just the right degree to produce a redemptive outcome. Miracles are acts of God, but God can make them happen in various ways. As Creator of the universe he can work miracles *through* nature or *outside* the natural order when it suits his purposes.

The biblical description of the events associated with the ten plagues allows for the possibility that God used natural processes to bring judgments on Egypt’s gods ([Ex 12:12](#)) and set his people free from Egyptian captivity. Some have suggested that bacteria turned the waters red, and the poisoned waters killed the fish and forced the frogs to seek cool, moist places away from the Nile. When the frogs died their corpses were a breeding ground for two types of small insects. These, in turn, spread communicable diseases among both animals and humans, resulting in death to the livestock and boils upon the people. A well-timed locust plague followed by a spring hailstorm devastated Egypt’s crops. Shortly thereafter a desert sandstorm or dust cloud darkened most of Egypt. Finally a devastating plague, perhaps one caused by the insects, killed both humans and beasts among the non-Israelites. God was at work in the entire sequence of events, making them occur in the appropriate location, at the designated time, and at the prescribed intensity level.

If God chose to work outside the natural order, it is reasonable to assume that the waters of the Nile were transformed for a time into actual blood. No causal chain would be needed to link the events of the first plague with those that followed up through the sixth, and possibly the tenth, as described above. God could bring small insects into existence directly from the dust of the earth ([8:16-17](#)) without resorting to natural causes. He made these ten events take place in response to Pharaoh's stubbornness.

[7:22](#) The Bible suggests it was human cunning, not miraculous powers, by which the Egyptian magicians turned the water from the Nile into blood. The same Hebrew expression, "by their flames," occurs here as the explanation for what they performed (see note on [7:9-10](#)).

^A [7:16](#) Or serve ; [Ex 4:23](#)

THE SECOND PLAGUE: FROGS

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him: This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. ² But if you refuse to let them go, then I will plague all your territory with frogs. ³ The Nile will swarm with frogs; they will come up and go into your palace, into your bedroom and on your bed, into the houses of your officials and your people, and into your ovens and kneading bowls. ⁴ The frogs will come up on you, your people, and all your officials."

⁵ The LORD then said to Moses, "Tell Aaron: Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, canals, and ponds, and cause the frogs to come up onto the land of Egypt." ⁶ When Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. ⁷ But the magicians did the same thing by their occult practices and brought frogs up onto the land of Egypt.

⁸ Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Appeal to the LORD to remove the frogs from me and my people. Then I will let the people go and they can sacrifice to the LORD."

⁹ Moses said to Pharaoh, "You may have the honor of choosing. When should I appeal on behalf of you, your officials, and your people, that the frogs be taken away from you and your houses, and remain only in the Nile? "

¹⁰ "Tomorrow," he answered.

Moses replied, "As you have said, so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God, ¹¹ the frogs will go away from you, your houses, your officials, and your people. The frogs will remain only in the Nile." ¹² After Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, Moses

cried out to the LORD for help concerning the frogs that he had brought against Pharaoh. ¹³ The LORD did as Moses had said: the frogs in the houses, courtyards, and fields died. ¹⁴ They piled them in countless heaps, and there was a terrible odor in the land. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

THE THIRD PLAGUE: GNATS

¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron: Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land, and it will become gnats ^A throughout the land of Egypt.” ¹⁷ And they did this. Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and when he struck the dust of the land, gnats were on people and animals. All the dust of the land became gnats throughout the land of Egypt. ¹⁸ The magicians tried to produce gnats using their occult practices, but they could not. The gnats remained on people and animals.

¹⁹ “This is the finger of God,” the magicians said to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

THE FOURTH PLAGUE: SWARMS OF FLIES

²⁰ The LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh when you see him going out to the water. Tell him: This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship ^B me. ²¹ But if you will not let my people go, then I will send swarms of flies ^C against you, your officials, your people, and your houses. The Egyptians’ houses will swarm with flies, and so will the land where they live. ^D ²² But on that day I will give special treatment to the land of Goshen, where my people are living; no flies will be there. This way you will know that I, the LORD, am in the land. ²³ I will make a distinction ^E between my people and your people. This sign will take place tomorrow.”

²⁴ And the LORD did this. Thick swarms of flies went into Pharaoh’s palace and his officials’ houses. Throughout Egypt the land was ruined because of the swarms of flies. ²⁵ Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go sacrifice to your God within the country.”

²⁶ But Moses said, “It would not be right ^F to do that, because what we will sacrifice to the LORD our God is detestable to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what the Egyptians detest in front of them, won’t they stone us? ²⁷ We must go a distance of three days into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he instructs us.”

²⁸ Pharaoh responded, “I will let you go and sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but don’t go very far. Make an appeal for me.”

²⁹ “As soon as I leave you,” Moses said, “I will appeal to the LORD, and tomorrow the swarms of flies will depart from Pharaoh, his officials, and his people. But Pharaoh must not act deceptively again by refusing to let the people go and sacrifice to the LORD.” ³⁰ Then Moses left Pharaoh’s presence and appealed to the LORD. ³¹ The LORD did as Moses had said: He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, his officials, and his people; not one was left. ³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also and did not let the people go.

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

[8:26-27](#) The Bible never says that Moses tried to deceive Pharaoh in requesting permission to leave Egypt in order to conduct a sacrifice. Apparently, on three occasions (vv. 26-27; [10:9,25-26](#)) the Lord told Moses to make relatively minor requests of Pharaoh—all of which would be turned down—to show the extent of his hardness of heart (see note on [5:1](#)).

^A [8:16](#) Perhaps sand fleas or mosquitoes

^B [8:20](#) Or serve

^C [8:21](#) Or *insects*

^D [8:21](#) Lit *are*

^E [8:23](#) LXX, Syr, Vg; MT reads *will place redemption*

^E [8:26](#) Or *allowable*

THE FIFTH PLAGUE: DEATH OF LIVESTOCK

⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to 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. ² But if you refuse to let them go and keep holding them, ³ then the LORD’s hand will bring a severe plague against your livestock in the field — the horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks. ⁴ But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that the Israelites own will die.” ⁵ And the LORD set a time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.” ⁶ The LORD did this the next day. All the Egyptian livestock died, but none among the Israelite livestock died. ⁷ Pharaoh sent messengers who saw that not a single one of the Israelite livestock was dead. But Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he did not let the people go.

THE SIXTH PLAGUE: BOILS

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of furnace soot, and Moses is to throw it toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹ It will become fine dust over the entire land

of Egypt. It will become festering boils on people and animals throughout the land of Egypt.”¹⁰ So they took furnace soot and stood before Pharaoh. Moses threw it toward heaven, and it became festering boils on people and animals.¹¹ The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians.¹² But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had told Moses.

THE SEVENTH PLAGUE: HAIL

¹³ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh. Tell him: This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.”¹⁴ For this time I am about to send all my plagues against you, ^A your officials, and your people. Then you will know there is no one like me on the whole earth.¹⁵ By now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague, and you would have been obliterated from the earth.¹⁶ However, I have let you live for this purpose: to show you my power and to make my name known on the whole earth.¹⁷ You are still acting arrogantly against ^B my people by not letting them go.¹⁸ Tomorrow at this time I will rain down the worst hail that has ever occurred in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.¹⁹ Therefore give orders to bring your livestock and all that you have in the field into shelters. Every person and animal that is in the field and not brought inside will die when the hail falls on them.”²⁰ Those among Pharaoh’s officials who feared the word of the LORD made their servants and livestock flee to shelters,²¹ but those who didn’t take to heart the LORD’s word left their servants and livestock in the field.

²² Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven and let there be hail throughout the land of Egypt — on people and animals and every plant of the field in the land of Egypt.”²³ So Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail. Lightning struck the land, and the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt.²⁴ The hail, with lightning flashing through it, was so severe that nothing like it had occurred in the land of Egypt since it had become a nation.²⁵ Throughout the land of Egypt, the hail struck down everything in the field, both people and animals. The hail beat down every plant of the field and shattered every tree in the field.²⁶ The only place it didn’t hail was in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.

²⁷ Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron. “I have sinned this time,” he said to them. “The LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the guilty ones.”²⁸ Make an appeal to the LORD. There has been enough of God’s thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don’t need to stay any longer.”

²⁹ Moses said to him, “When I have left the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know the earth ^A belongs to the LORD. ³⁰ But as for you and your officials, I know that you still do not fear the LORD God.”

³¹ The flax and the barley were destroyed because the barley was ripe ^B and the flax was budding, ³² but the wheat and the spelt were not destroyed since they are later crops. ^C

³³ Moses left Pharaoh and the city, and spread out his hands to the LORD. Then the thunder and hail ceased, and rain no longer poured down on the land. ³⁴ When Pharaoh saw that the rain, hail, and thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his officials. ³⁵ So Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he did not let the Israelites go, as the LORD had said through Moses.

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

9:6 If all the Egyptians’ livestock were killed in the plague, where did the livestock come from that later died in the hailstorm ([vv. 19-25](#))? The Bible doesn’t explain this; however, two possibilities exist. The first assumption is that the word “all” should be taken literally. In that case the livestock later killed in the hailstorm were imported from farther up the Nile river, perhaps from Cush, or in the interval between the plagues the Egyptians had acquired some of the Israelites’ flocks. Alternatively, the word “all” in [v. 6](#) might be used here in a restrictive sense to mean “all that were in a particular area,” “all who were afflicted,” or perhaps simply “the great majority.”

^A **9:14** Lit *plagues to your heart*

^B **9:17** Or *still obstructing*

^A **9:29** Or *land*

^B **9:31** Lit *was ears of grain*

^C **9:32** Lit *are late*

THE EIGHTH PLAGUE: LOCUSTS

10 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may do these miraculous signs of mine among them, ^D ² and so that you may tell ^E your son and grandson how severely I dealt with the Egyptians and performed miraculous signs among them, and you will know that I am the LORD.”

³ So Moses and Aaron went into Pharaoh and told him, “This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may worship me. ⁴ But if you refuse to let my people go, then tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. ⁵ They will cover the surface of the land so that no one will be able to see the land. They will eat the remainder left to you that escaped the hail; they will eat every tree you have growing in the fields. ⁶ They will fill your houses, all your officials’ houses, and the houses of all the Egyptians — something your fathers and grandfathers never saw since the time they occupied the land until today.” Then he turned and left Pharaoh’s presence.

⁷ Pharaoh’s officials asked him, “How long must this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Don’t you realize yet that Egypt is devastated? ”

⁸ So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. “Go, worship the LORD your God,” Pharaoh said. “But exactly who will be going? ”

⁹ Moses replied, “We will go with our young and with our old; we will go with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds because we must hold the LORD’s festival.”

¹⁰ He said to them, “The Lord would have to be with you if I would ever let you and your families go! Look out — you’re heading for trouble. ¹¹ No, go — just able-bodied men — worship the LORD, since that’s what you want.” And they were driven from Pharaoh’s presence.

¹² The LORD then said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt, and the locusts will come up over it and eat every plant in the land, everything that the hail left.” ¹³ So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD sent an east wind over the land all that day and through the night. By morning the east wind had brought in the locusts. ¹⁴ The locusts went up over the entire land of Egypt and settled on the whole territory of Egypt. Never before had there been such a large number of locusts, and there never will be again. ¹⁵ They covered the surface of the whole land so that the land was black, and they consumed all the plants on the ground and all the fruit on the trees that the hail had left. Nothing green was left on the trees or the plants in the field throughout the land of Egypt.

¹⁶ Pharaoh urgently sent for Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. ¹⁷ Please forgive my sin once more and make an appeal to the LORD your God, so that he will just take this death away from me.” ¹⁸ Moses left Pharaoh’s presence and appealed to the LORD. ¹⁹ Then the LORD changed the wind to a strong west [A](#)

wind, and it carried off the locusts and blew them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in all the territory of Egypt. ²⁰ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the Israelites go.

THE NINTH PLAGUE: DARKNESS

²¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt." ²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt for three days. ²³ One person could not see another, and for three days they did not move from where they were. Yet all the Israelites had light where they lived.

²⁴ Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, "Go, worship the LORD. Even your families may go with you; only your flocks and herds must stay behind."

²⁵ Moses responded, "You must also let us have ^B sacrifices and burnt offerings to prepare for the LORD our God. ²⁶ Even our livestock must go with us; not a hoof will be left behind because we will take some of them to worship the LORD our God. We will not know what we will use to worship the LORD until we get there."

²⁷ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them go. ²⁸ Pharaoh said to him, "Leave me! Make sure you never see my face again, for on the day you see my face, you will die."

²⁹ "As you have said," Moses replied, "I will never see your face again."

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

^D [10:1](#) Lit *mine in his midst*

^E [10:2](#) Lit *tell in the ears of*

^A [10:19](#) Lit *sea*

^B [10:25](#) Lit *also give in our hand*

THE TENTH PLAGUE: DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN

11 The LORD said ^C to Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, ^D he will drive you out of here. ² Now announce to the people that both men and women should ask their neighbors for silver and gold items." ³ The LORD gave ^E the people favor with the Egyptians. In addition, Moses

himself was very highly regarded ^E in the land of Egypt by ^G Pharaoh's officials and the people.

⁴ So Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: About midnight I will go throughout Egypt, ⁵ and every firstborn male in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the servant girl who is at the grindstones, as well as every firstborn of the livestock. ⁶ Then there will be a great cry of anguish through all the land of Egypt such as never was before or ever will be again. ⁷ But against all the Israelites, whether people or animals, not even a dog will snarl, ^H so that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. ⁸ All these officials of yours will come down to me and bow before me, saying: Get out, you and all the people who follow you. ^I After that, I will get out." And he went out from Pharaoh's presence fiercely angry.

⁹ The LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his land.

COMMENTARY & REFERENCES:

^C [11:1](#) Or *had said*

^D [11:1](#) Or *go, it will be finished* —

^E [11:3](#) Or *had given*

^E [11:3](#) Lit *was very great*

^G [11:3](#) Or *in the eyes of*

^H [11:7](#) Lit *point its tongue*

^I [11:8](#) Lit *people at your feet*