

Week 4: Ten Strikes - Exodus Ch 7:14-11:10

Pre-Work

- This is a good week to review and preview! Please watch the excellent video below summarizing Exodus Chapters 1-18.

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/exodus-1-18/>

- Please read Exodus 7:14 to 11:10 in the translation of your choice. What stands out to you in these chapters? What questions arise in your mind when you read them?

Class Notes

Ten strikes - Just as Yahweh used a “tannin” to show His power over the “tannin”, He will use plagues associated with various Egyptian gods to show His power over those gods.

The gods associated with these plagues are not named because they are the Moses’ team’s literary goal is not to draw excessive attention to them.

Possible suspects among many:

Plague	Egyptian god	Description
Nile to blood	Hapi	Water-bearer god
Frogs	Heket	goddess- head of a frog/fertility
Gnats/Lice from the dust	Geb	god of dust of the Earth
Flies	Khepri	God of creation w/head of fly
Livestock destroyed	Kathor	goddess of love/head of cow
Boils and Sores	Isis	goddess of medicine
Hail	Nut	Sky goddess
Locusts	Osiris	god of harvests
Darkness	Ra	Sun god
Death of Firstborn	Pharaoh	Dynastic god

7 ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning just as he is going out to the water, and position yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent. ¹⁶ And you shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened up to now.”’ ¹⁷ This is what the LORD says: “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I am going to strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned into blood. ¹⁸ Then the fish that are in the Nile will die, the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will no longer be able to drink water from the Nile.”” ¹⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and extend your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, so that they may become blood; and there will be blood through all the land of Egypt, both in *containers of wood* and in *containers of stone*.””

²⁰ So Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that *was* in the Nile in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants; and all the water that *was* in the Nile was turned into blood. ²¹ Then the fish that *were* in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt. ²² But the soothsayer priests of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had said. ²³ Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. ²⁴ So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, because they could not drink from the water of the Nile. ²⁵ Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

- All the above ground water of Egypt, not just the Nile, rendered undrinkable
- The significance of the Nile to Egyptian power
- Local reversal of Creation Day 5 (fish)
- Corrupt worshippers are also able to make water undrinkable
- 7 days - clue from the Moses writing team that this has to do with creation

8 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. ² But if you refuse to let *them* go, behold, I am going to strike your entire territory with frogs. ³ The Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your house, and into your bedroom and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants, and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading bowls. ⁴ So the frogs will come up on you, your people, and on all your

servants.””⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Extend your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams, and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’”⁶ So Aaron extended his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.⁷ However, the soothsayer priests did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

- Frogs blur the difference between the waters and the dry land (see day 2)

⁸ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Plead with the LORD to remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, so that they may sacrifice to the LORD.”⁹ And Moses said to Pharaoh, “The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I plead for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, *that* they be left only in the Nile?”

¹⁰ Then he said, “Tomorrow.” So he said, “*May it be* according to your word, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God.”¹¹ The frogs will depart from you and your houses, and from your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile.”¹² Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh.¹³ The LORD did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courtyards, and the fields.¹⁴ So they piled them in heaps, and the land stank.¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

- Pharaoh asks for Moses’ intercession.
- The pagan priests were able to bring out frogs but unable to stop them
- Yahweh responded to Moses’ intercession requested by Pharaoh even without a promise to let the people go
- The stink is set on comparison to Pharaoh hardening his heart

¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Extend your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may turn into gnats through all the land of Egypt.’”¹⁷ They did so; and Aaron extended his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on *every* person and animal. All the dust of the earth turned into gnats through all the land of Egypt.¹⁸ The soothsayer priests tried with their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on *every* person and animal.¹⁹ Then the soothsayer priests said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

- Gnats/lice from the dust of the earth instead of humans from the dust of the earth
- “All the dust on all the earth” - the role of hyperbole in narrative
- The pagan priests recognize Yahweh’s victory - not Pharaoh

²⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he comes out to the water; and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. ²¹ For if you are not going to let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants and on your people, and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they *live*. ²² But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land. ²³ I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur.”’” ²⁴ Then the LORD did so. And thick swarms of flies entered the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants, and the land was laid waste because of the swarms of flies in all the land of Egypt.

- “As he comes out of the water” - undoing of day 3 of creation where dry land for living appears
- “Houses and lands” - ruins the living cycle of the Egyptians
- Goshen (garden land) is spared

²⁵ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” ²⁶ But Moses said, “It is not permissible *for us* to do so, because we will sacrifice to the LORD our God that which is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice that which is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?” ²⁷ We must go a three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God, just as He commands us.” ²⁸ Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, so that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Plead for me.” ²⁹ Then Moses said, “Behold, I am going to leave you, and I will plead with the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow; only do not let Pharaoh deal deceitfully again in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.”

³⁰ So Moses left Pharaoh and pleaded with the LORD. ³¹ The LORD did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained. ³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go

- Pharaoh: you can do your sacrifice thingy in Egypt
- What will seem right in the “eyes” of the Egyptians would be to kill the Israelites
- We need the 3 days
- Pharaoh: ok, go
- Moses intercedes, warns Pharaoh not to renege, the flies go away, pharaoh reneges

9 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and speak to him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews says: “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. ² For if you refuse to let *them* go and continue to hold them, ³ behold, the hand of the LORD will come *with a very severe plague on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks.* ⁴ But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.’” ⁵ And the LORD set a definite 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 not one of the livestock of the sons of Israel died. ⁷ And Pharaoh sent *men, and they learned that, behold, not even one of the livestock of Israel was dead.* But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

- Undoing part of Day 6 (animals)
- Pharaoh sent men to spy and verify that Israelite animals were just fine
- Instead of disobedient worship being “seen” by the Egyptians who would throw stones, Pharaoh saw the protection of Yahweh and his heart grew hard as stone

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and Moses shall toss it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹ Then it will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and will turn into boils breaking out with sores on *every* person and animal through all the land of Egypt.” ¹⁰ So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses tossed it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on *every* person and animal. ¹¹ The soothsayer priests could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the soothsayer priests as well as on all the Egyptians. ¹² But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

- Just as the kilns were used for the bricks that represented oppression, their dust became the means of retribution on the skin of the oppressors.
- The progressive weakness of the pagan priests
 - Imitation of the plagues
 - Recognition of Yahweh’s hand
 - Silent standing
 - Now they cannot even stand
- This is the first time in the event narrative that we hear “Yahweh hardened Pharaoh’s heart”

¹³ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews says: “Let My people go,

so that they may serve Me. ¹⁴ For this time I am going to send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For had I now put out My hand and struck you and your people with plague, you would then have been eliminated from the earth. ¹⁶ But indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name throughout the earth. ¹⁷ Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.

¹⁸ Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been *seen* in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. ¹⁹ So now, send *word*, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. Every person and animal that is found in the field and is not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die.””” ²⁰ *Everyone* among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring his servants and his livestock into the houses; ²¹ but *everyone* who did not pay regard to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

²² Now the LORD said to Moses, “Reach out with your hand toward the sky, so that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt, on *every* person and animal, and on every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.” ²³ So Moses reached out with his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran *down* to the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. ²⁴ So there was hail, and fire flashing intermittently in the midst of the hail, *which was* very heavy, such as had not occurred in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵ The hail struck everything that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, from people to animals; the hail also struck every plant of the field, and shattered every tree of the field. ²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel *were*, was there no hail.

²⁷ Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones. ²⁸ Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” ²⁹ Moses said to him, “As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will no longer be hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD’S. ³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God.” ³¹ (Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. ³² But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they *ripen* late.) ³³ So Moses left the city from *his meeting* with Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to the LORD; and the thunder and the hail stopped, and rain no longer poured on the earth. ³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had stopped, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. ³⁵ So Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

- Thunder, hail, fire: distinct from the fiery rock that fell on Sodom, but similar language used
- “All my plagues” (v14)- this plague can be used as a summary of the previous plagues
- I have allowed you to remain to show you my power and proclaim my name (v16) - Sometimes the wicked remain so they can know who Yahweh is
- This time Pharaoh *and his servants* hardened their hearts

10 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, so that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, ² and that you may tell in the presence of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, so that you may know that I am the LORD.”

- Yahweh takes credit for the hardening we just read Pharaoh and his servants did to themselves. Human sin and God “handing them over” to what they are already doing is almost identical in the Bible.

³ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to 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, so that they may serve Me. ⁴ For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. ⁵ And they will cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has survived—what is left to you from the hail—and they will eat every tree of yours which grows in the field. ⁶ Then your houses will be filled *with them*, together with the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, *something* which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day that they came upon the earth until this day.’” And he turned and left Pharaoh. ⁷ Then Pharaoh’s servants said to him, “How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is destroyed?” ⁸ So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, “Go, serve the LORD your God! Who specifically are the ones who are going?” ⁹ Moses said, “We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD.” ¹⁰ Then he said to them, “So may the LORD be with you, when I let you and your little ones go! Watch out, for evil is on your mind! ¹¹ Not so! Go now, *but only the men among you*, and serve the LORD, since that is what you desire.” So they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.

¹² Then the LORD said to Moses, “Reach out with your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, everything that the hail has left.” ¹³ So Moses reached out with his staff over the

land of Egypt, and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. ¹⁴ The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; *they were* very numerous. There had never been so *many* locusts, nor would there be so *many* again. ¹⁵ For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Therefore nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field throughout the land of Egypt. ¹⁶ Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. ¹⁷ So now, please forgive my sin only this once, and plead with the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me.” ¹⁸ Then he left Pharaoh and pleaded with the LORD. ¹⁹ So the LORD shifted *the wind* to a very strong west wind, which picked up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt. ²⁰ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

- The servants now turn on Pharaoh and tell him to let the Israelites go
- Pharaoh says the men can go, but will keep the wives and kids (hostages)
- What are the locusts images of? Pharaoh’s army.
- West wind/ east wind Ch 14
- Drove them into the Red Sea

²¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Reach out with your hand toward the sky, so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.” ²² So Moses reached out with his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. ²³ They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings. ²⁴ Then Pharaoh called for Moses, and said, “Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be left behind. Even your little ones may go with you.” ²⁵ But Moses said, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, so that we may sacrifice *them* to the LORD our God. ²⁶ Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the LORD our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the LORD.” ²⁷ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go. ²⁸ Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Be careful, do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face, you shall die!” ²⁹ Moses said, “You have spoken correctly; I shall never see your face again!”

- Darkness an undoing of Day 1 of Creation (let there be light)
- If Pharaoh will not see off the Israelites on their “three day” journey, Pharaoh will not see anything for three days.

- Then Pharaoh warns Moses to never “see” his face again - all sorts of allusion to darkness and light/ seeing and blindness.

11 Now the LORD said to Moses, “One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will assuredly drive you out from here completely. ² Speak now so that the people hear, that each man is to ask of his neighbor, and each woman of her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.”³ And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses *himself* was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, *both* in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.

⁴ Then Moses said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, ⁵ and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶ So there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been *before* and such as shall never be again. ⁷ But not *even* a dog will threaten any of the sons of Israel, *nor anything* from person to animal, so that you may learn how the LORD DISTINGUISHES between Egypt and Israel.’ ⁸ And all these servants of yours will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, ‘Go out, you and all the people who follow you,’ and after that I will go out.” And he left Pharaoh in the heat of anger.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt.” ¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

- The “plunder” of the Egyptians shows that the common people of Egypt had been convinced to favor the Israelites
- The final plague is the death of the firstborn
 - Meaning of “firstborn” in the ancient world
 - Reversal of the firstborn law/ last shall be first
 - Pharaoh will not be the first one to truly tell Moses that Israel can go/ his servants will. Reversal of his rule

“In all the prior plagues, the Children of Israel were automatically shielded from the effects of the plague. For example, when the Egyptian livestock were struck, animals belonging to Israelites were automatically unaffected (Exodus 9:4). The same with darkness — the plague attacked only the Egyptians, not the Israelites (Exodus 10:23). Until now, the Israelites have had diplomatic immunity from the plagues, as if they are driving around with United Nations license plates and couldn’t be ticketed. But suddenly, when the tenth plague rolls around, the Children of Israel are no longer granted this automatic immunity. We are led to believe that Israelite firstborn will perish along with Egyptian firstborn unless the Israelites do something. They need to bring a special offering known as Korban Pesach, the “Pesach offering,” and place blood from this offering on the doorposts of their homes. But why would that be necessary?”

~David Fohrman, The Exodus you Almost Passed Over

Reflections