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I Will Bring One More Plague on Pharaoh

11: 1-10

I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh DIG: How is this plague different from the others? Why do you think Pharaoh disregards Moses' warning? How did this particular plague hit at the heart of the Egyptian religious beliefs?

REFLECT: How do you feel when someone rejects your warning? Why do think people disregard God's warnings today? Have you rejected any warnings lately? How can the memory of these plagues help you heed His warnings for doing His will?

Much of the historical material in the TaNaKh is not organized in a strict chronological order, but is arranged topically. This section is one such example, and it deals exclusively with the threat of the tenth **plague**. It seems clear that **Moses** had remained in the presence of **Pharaoh** from **10:24** on and was not until **11:8** that he left Pharaoh's court.

The contest between **Pharaoh** and **God** was almost over. Many opportunities had been given to **Amenhotep II** to repent. Warning after warning, **plague** after **plague** had been sent. But he continued to harden his **heart**. But a King mightier than **Pharaoh** would visit the land that night. **God Himself** would lay **His** righteous hand upon all **the firstborn of Egypt**. And with all their wisdom and learning, **Pharaoh**, the magicians and his people were helpless to do anything. There was no withstanding the Angel of Death!¹⁸⁵



During the three days of darkness, **God** had instructed **Moses** regarding the tenth **plague** and the Passover. **Now ADONAI had said to Moses His servant: I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely (11:1).** One more judgment was to be given, the heaviest of them all, and then not only would **Pharaoh** let the **people** go, he would kick them out **(12:31-32)!** At that time it would become clear that fighting against **God** is useless and foolish. **Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is God's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:21).**

For the first time **Moses** was able to see the end of **the plagues**. Previously **God** had probably not revealed the exact number of judgments. **He** merely indicated that several would be coming prior to **Isra'el's** departure **(3:19, 9:14)**. This **plague** was not an afterthought, but according to this verse, it would be the means by which the deliverance of **Isra'el** would finally be accomplished.¹⁸⁶

These two verses form a parenthesis as a brief notice of what had been revealed to **Moses** previously. **Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold (11:2). The Israelites would come out of Egypt with great possessions, as was promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:14)** and as was committed to **Moses** before the burning bush **(3:21-22)**. These riches were not for **the people themselves** but for **God**, to fashion the Tabernacle and the implements of worship for **Him (35:20 to 39:31)**. **ADONAI made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and**

by the people (11:3). From a natural standpoint, there was every reason why **the Egyptians** should *hate* **the Israelites** more than ever. Not only were they **detestable to the Egyptians** because they were **shepherds (Genesis 46:34b)**, but it was the **God of the Hebrews** who had so severely plagued **them** in **their** land. As a result, it was only **God's** all-mighty power, moving upon the hearts of **the Egyptians** that caused **them** to then regard **the Israelites** with favor.¹⁸⁷ The only one not **favorably disposed** was **Pharaoh himself** because **his heart** remained hard.¹⁸⁸

*There is a striking introversion between the first and the last **plague**. In the first, the waters of the Nile turned to blood – the symbol of death; while here in the last **plague**, there was the actual death of the **firstborn**.*¹⁸⁹

After the three days of darkness were over, **Pharaoh** had summoned **Moses** and Aaron to offer his **fourth compromise**. **Moses** had turned it down, and **Pharaoh** told **him** to get out of **his** sight (10:28). But before leaving, **Moses** warned **the king** about the imminent death of the firstborn: **This is what ADONAI says: About midnight, I will go throughout Egypt (11:4)**. The three days of darkness had to be over to be able to discern day from night. And nighttime was an especially fearful time for **the Egyptians**. In the *Hymn to Atum*, the author describes the dread of night because the sun god Atum had departed to the underworld and was no longer protecting **the Egyptians**. For **the Hebrews**, on the other hand, **He who watches over Isra'el will neither slumber nor sleep (Psalm 121:4)**.

Every firstborn son in Egypt will die. This was clearly retribution for **Pharaoh's** attempt to kill the male **children of Isra'el** in 1:15-22. **God** would respond in kind by putting to death **the firstborn children of Egypt**.¹⁹⁰ **From the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill and all the firstborn of the cattle as well, because the Egyptians worshiped them as deities (11:5)**. The last **plague** is distinctive because **God Himself** would strike the fatal blow, rather than through **Moses** and **Aaron** as all the previous **plagues** had been. **The firstborn** of animals would also die. **The Egyptians** attributed divine character to animals, so they would also be destroyed to show that **God** would claim the first fruits of **the Egyptian** gods.¹⁹¹

The firstborn of Pharaoh, thought to be a god **himself**, and heir to the throne of **Egypt** also died. **His** death ended the conflict with the gods of **Egypt** because it left no doubt who was more powerful. **The Egyptian** religious system was based on the belief that Amon-Ra, **Pharaoh** and **his** son were all gods without equal. But now, with the death of **the firstborn**

of **Pharaoh**, it was obvious to everyone that the **God of the Hebrews** was **the One** who truly had the power over life and death. **Pharaoh** and **his** army soon found that out as they passed through the Red Sea (**14:5-31**).

Moses continued to warn **the king**, “**There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt - worse than there has ever been or ever will be again**” (**11:6**). One can only imagine what the multitude of households must have been like with the discovery of the death of **the firstborn**. Even if some did not have children, the death of **the firstborn** of their animals would bring anguish in the light of the great value of their domestic animals. In addition, a great cry would be a cry for help under distress and duress. **Egypt** would call upon **her** gods for help, but they would remain silent.¹⁹²

But when the time for the deliverance of **the Israelites** came, no one would resist **their** departure. This was expressed by a proverbial saying: **Not a dog will bark at any man or animal**. That expression signified angry growling. But when it was time for **the Israelites** to leave, **the Egyptians** would not be angry that **they** were leaving; in fact, **they** would be relieved. **Then you will know that ADONAI makes a distinction between Egypt and Isra’el (11:7)**. The **distinction** was not the death angel that passed over both the lands of Egypt and Goshen. It did not lie in the fact that one race was Jewish and the other was Gentile. The difference was in the blood of the lamb on the doorpost. Each home, either Jew or Gentile, protected by the blood would not be touched by the death angel.¹⁹³

Then, as if shaking **the dust off his feet** (**Matthew 10:14**), **Moses left** the presence of **Pharaoh** with these prophetic words: **All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me** and saying: **Go, you and all the people who follow you! After that I will leave. The Egyptians would beg the Jews to leave the land. Then Moses, hot with righteous anger, left Pharaoh (11:8)**. The sun was setting on the thirteenth of Nisan. **Twilight and the fourteenth day of the month (12:6)** were approaching and **Moses** needed to get back to Goshen to slaughter **his** lamb for the first Passover.

Here is a summary statement of what had gone on before and what would soon come to pass. **ADONAI had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you - so that My wonders will be multiplied in Egypt” (11:9)**. **Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, and therefore fulfilled their mission as far as the plagues were concerned, because they had no part in the last plague. But ADONAI hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country (11:10)**. The condition of **Pharaoh’s heart** had not changed from **the first plague** until now. Even with the declaration of impending doom, **Pharaoh** refused to yield or repent. You would

think he would have understood by this time, after nine **plagues** had destroyed **Egypt**, that **the God of the Hebrews** was more powerful than **he**. But he **refused to repent**.

Quite frankly, this should not surprise us. Even in the ultimate climax of **the plagues** in the book of **Revelation**, which, as we have seen, is far more harsh and painful than **the plagues** of **Egypt**, people respond with hardness. When **the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast** we are told that **men gnawed their tongues in agony, and cursed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done (Revelation 16:10-11)**.

Apart from **God's** grace, we are all like **Pharaoh**. Paul asked the question this way: **Who makes you different than anyone else (First Corinthians 4:7a)?** The answer of course is simple. It is **God**. It is not because our hearts are more tender, more responsive to **the Holy Spirit**, than the hearts of unbelievers; it is not that our wills are more adaptable and less stubborn. Nor is it because we are more intelligent and more able to see our need for a **Savior**. No, **God's** grace is the difference. **For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this grace is not from yourselves, it is THE gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)**. Apart from God's grace we are **hardened** and unrepentant. **What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."** It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, **"I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth."** Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden (Romans 9:14-18).