



Exodus - Chapter Eleven

I. Exodus 1:1-18:27 - The Exodus of Israel from Egypt (continues)

I.d. Exodus 7:8-15:21 - The Plagues and the Exodus (continues)

Summary of Chapter Eleven

God promised that Pharaoh would send the people away after just one more plague and that they would go with great wealth given to them by the people of Egypt. Moses then warned Pharaoh of the terrible outcome of the final plague and the impact it would have on his nation but Pharaoh's heart remained hard.

I.d.xi Exodus 11:1-15:21 - Tenth plague: Final sign

The section that describes the tenth and final plague includes extended accounts that relate to: the warning (11:1-10); the instructions for Israel's Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:1-28); the plague (12:29-32); the exodus (12:33-42); the statute for the Passover (12:43-51); the command to consecrate the firstborn and celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread (13:1-16); how Israel went out of Egypt (13:17-22); the events of the Red Sea (14:1-31); and the songs of Moses (15:1-18) and Miriam (15:19-21).

I.d.xi.1 Exodus 11:1-10 - Warning of the Final Plague

The Lord both prepares Israel for going out of Egypt (vv.1-3) and once again warns Pharaoh of the plague that is to come (vv.4-8). The section ends with a final statement that Moses and Aaron had done all that the Lord asked them and that Pharaoh would not listen because the Lord had hardened his heart (vv.9-10).

¹ The Lord said to Moses, 'I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you away.'

Exodus 11:1

I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Although the Lord told Moses at the outset that Pharaoh would not listen because of his hardened heart, refer to 3:19-20 and 4:21, the Lord only now reveals when the plagues would end. The plague narratives show Moses continually maturing in his role as Israel's leader, as one who is called to act in light of the Lord's promises even though he does not know exactly how and when the Lord will bring Israel out of Egyptian slavery.

He will drive you away. Long before this, God told Moses that he would plague Egypt with the death of the firstborn (4:21-23). After this final plague, Pharaoh would not merely allow Israel to leave; he would compel them to go.

² Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbour and every woman is to ask her neighbour for objects of silver and gold.' ³ The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, Moses himself was a man of great importance in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's officials, and in the sight of the people.

Exodus 11:2-3

The Lord instructs Israel to ask the Egyptians for silver and gold, a fulfilment of what he told Moses at the burning bush (3:21-22). In addition, the fact that Moses was considered to be a man of great importance by both Pharaoh's officials and the people in Egypt is a fulfilment of the Lord's promise at the Burning Bush: <<*will be with you*>> (3:12). Although Pharaoh's heart was not yet persuaded, all of Egypt knew the Lord God was greater than all the gods of Egypt and that Moses was a servant of this great God.

The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. God has the ability to make people see God where their natural inclination may have been against a person, such as Joseph when he was put into prison: <<*But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favour in the sight of the chief jailer*>> (Genesis 39:21). Pharaoh was still not quite convinced, but the people of Egypt were willing to see the people of Israel immediately leave. They were more than willing to give them gifts of silver and gold to persuade them to leave. This was how the slaves of Israel received their past wages from their time of slavery, and why they did not leave Egypt empty-handed.

⁴ Moses said, 'Thus says the Lord: About midnight I will go out through Egypt.'

Exodus 11:4

About midnight I will go out through Egypt. This was a time of night that people typically thought that death may come upon them: <<*In a moment they die; at midnight the people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away by no human hand*>> (Job 34:20), yet in a time of trouble Paul and Silas saw it as an opportunity to offer praise to God: <<*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them*>> (Acts 16:25).

The descriptions of the third, sixth, and ninth plagues each begin with the Lord simply instructing Moses to perform the sign. The descriptions of the other plagues always include the words to Pharaoh thus says the Lord and the instruction to ‘let my people go’. The warning here indicates the finality of the tenth plague when Moses says Thus says the Lord, and then describes the forthcoming effects of the plague without any further request to let Israel go.

⁵ Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

Exodus 11:5

When the Lord spoke to Moses as he was preparing to go back to Egypt, he referred to Israel as ‘my firstborn son’ (4:22) and indicated that Pharaoh’s refusal would result in the death of *his firstborn* (4:23). Since Pharaoh leads as his people’s representative, the plagues have extended not simply to him but also to his people, a fact which becomes even more poignant in the final plague when every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.

⁶ Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt, such as has never been nor will ever be again. ⁷ But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites – not at people, not at animals – so that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

Exodus 11:6-7

But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites. Despite the great calamity to come, God would grant the Egyptians the ability to see the situation as it really was: the fault of their own Pharaoh, not the fault of Moses or the children of Israel.

The Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel from the very beginning by referring to Israel as ‘my people’ and identifying himself with them as ‘the God

of the Hebrews'. This distinction is further revealed to Pharaoh through the plagues and is grounded not in anything inherent in either nation but in the Lord's sovereign governance over all nations and particularly in his steadfast love for and covenant promises to Abraham. This can be seen in: <<***For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and who repays in their own person those who reject him. He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject him. Therefore, observe diligently the commandment – the statutes and the ordinances – that I am commanding you today***>> (Deuteronomy 7:6-11).

⁸ Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me, and bow low to me, saying, "Leave us, you and all the people who follow you." After that I will leave.' And in hot anger he left Pharaoh.

Exodus 11:8

Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me, and bow low to me, saying, "Leave us, you and all the people who follow you." Moses' final words to Pharaoh told him that he and the rest of the Egyptians would command the people of Israel to go out from their land.

After that I will leave. Moses would not take the people out in defiance of Pharaoh or in compliance with his command to go, but he would go because of his faith in God: <<***By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible***>> (Hebrews 11:27).

The narrative does not tell the reader explicitly why Moses left Pharaoh in hot anger. As the one who has interacted with Pharaoh throughout and even pleaded with the Lord on his behalf, it may be that Moses found Pharaoh's persistent pride infuriating because of the devastating effect it would have on the people of Egypt, as confirmed by the comment made on 9:34.

⁹ The Lord said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you, in order that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.' ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; but the Lord

hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

Exodus 11:9-10

Pharaoh will not listen to you. If nine plagues had come from the hand of God, one might expect that the warning about a tenth plague would be believed; but Pharaoh's heart remained hard, and God strengthened Pharaoh in his hardness of heart.

In order that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. The nine plagues can now be seen as a whole. They touched every phase of nature: mineral, animal, vegetable, human. They affected persons and property, and included all, from the highest to the lowest.

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Here for the fourth time it is revealed that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, i.e. Exodus 9:12, 10:20, 10:27, and here. Yet God never hardened Pharaoh's heart until he had first hardened it against the Lord and his people. This is a warning that Paul also gives: <<***But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgement will be revealed***>> (Romans 2:5).