

Exodus Chapter 9

Verses 1-7: Once again Egypt's religion was rebuked and ridiculed, because it included the worship of various animals (such as the bull-gods Apis and Mnevis; the cow-god Hathor; and the ram-god Khnum), as well as animal-headed deities. Again, God made a "distinction" between the Egyptians and the Israelites: "the cattle of the children of Israel died not one". All of these various animals would have affected transportation, agriculture and worship.

Exodus 9:1 "Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me."

The same day the plague of the flies was removed.

"Go in unto Pharaoh": Boldly, without any fear of him or his court.

"And tell him, thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews": Speak in the name of Jehovah, the God whom the Hebrews worship, and who owns them for his people, and has a special love for them, and takes a special care of them, and is not ashamed to be called their God, as poor and as oppressed as they be.

"Let my people go, that they may serve me": This demand had been often made, and, though so reasonable, was refused.

Exodus 9:2 "For if thou refuse to let [them] go, and wilt hold them still,"

Continue to refuse, as he had done.

"And wilt hold them still": In the land, and under his dominion and oppression.

Exodus 9:3 "Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which [is] in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: [there shall be] a very grievous murrain."

"In the field": Apparently stabled livestock did not succumb to the pestilence. Although incredibly severe, some animals were still alive afterwards for Egypt to continue without total loss to an economy which depended upon domesticated animals. A few months later, when the seventh plague struck, there were still some cattle, which, if left in the field, would have died (9:19).

"Horses ... camels": Horses, which were common in the period, had been brought into military service by the Hyksos. Camels were a domesticated animal by this time in the 15th century B.C.

"Very grievous murrain" (plague). In listing the different kinds of livestock, the severe nature of the plague was emphatically underscored as one which would for the first time target personal property. Egyptian literature and paintings substantiate how valuable livestock was to them.

Whatever the exact nature of this pestilence, anthrax, murrain, or other livestock disease, it was clearly contagious and fatal. Religious implications were obvious: Egypt prized the bull as a sacred animal with special attention and worship being given to the Apis bull, the sacred animal of the god Ptah. Heliopolis venerated the bull, Mnevis. Further, the goddess Hathor, represented by a cow, or a cow-woman image, was worshiped in several cities.

“Cattle” were often worshiped in Egypt as representatives of various deities.

This was the fifth plague and the thing that amazes me the most in all of this is the patience of the Lord. In the last four plagues, we have seen the problems coming to the people themselves, and to Pharaoh's house. These pests and the water turning to blood had not really destroyed the wealth of Egypt, but had rather been an aggravation. This murrain was an epidemic disease among the animals that would kill a great portion of them. Notice here again, each plague got a little worse; and again, here we see the plague affects one of their false gods, the cow.

This would deeply hurt the economy of this land as well. It would hurt their transportation in the horses, asses, and camels. We can see this was a grievous plague. Just as God gives us chance after chance, He gave Pharaoh plenty of chances to repent and do what was right. There is a day of reckoning and God will not always wait.

Exodus 9:4 "And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all [that is] the children's of Israel."

“There shall nothing die”: The additional declaration on the safety of Israel’s livestock graphically underscored the miraculous nature of what God was about to do as He declared for the second time the distinction being made between Israel and Egypt. It underscored Israel’s protection and to whom she really belonged.

We see here again, that God was making a difference between the Egyptians and the children of Israel. Nothing would be hurt in Goshen where the Hebrews lived.

Exodus 9:5 "And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land."

“Appointed a set time”: The prophetic and miraculous nature of this plague is highlighted by stating “morrow” and, by noting “on the next day,” it happened as predicted (verse 6).

Pharaoh a few verses back, set the first time on the morrow. Moses set the next time, on the morrow. Here God sets the time tomorrow. God is just in all His dealings with man. He gives time to repent. Man must respond by repenting; when he doesn't, trouble comes.

Exodus 9:6 "And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one."

“Cattle ... died not one”: The distinction being made received added emphasis with this double declaration that Israelites suffered absolutely no loss in livestock.

Agriculture was and remains Egypt's premier economic resource, with wealth measured in cattle and other livestock that the Egyptians possessed for work and for war. When God struck their animals with murrain (plague), He was beginning to single out the Egyptians and destroy their economy. Earlier plagues caused irritation and pain but not the widespread loss of personal property.

As in the case of the flies (8:22), all of Israel's livestock was spared.

As I said before, these plagues were getting worse and worse. God had specifically spared His own children in the midst of this plague. Just as Noah was saved in the flood, these cattle of the Hebrews had been saved in the midst of the plague.

Exodus 9:7 "And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go."

"Pharaoh sent": This time the king had to check on the veracity of the protection afforded Israel. Whatever his own rationalizations or theories about it might have been, they only confirmed him in his resistance and disobedience, despite finding out that there was "not one ... dead."

This is all too similar to what is going on in our world today. The sins are getting worse and worse. The people's hearts are getting harder and harder. Few are heeding the warnings of God. There is a day of wrath coming, which is punishment for not repenting. Just as Pharaoh was headed to a terrible punishment; so are the people who are living away from God who are not heeding any of the signs that are all around us.

Pharaoh couldn't believe that the Israelite cattle were spared, so he sent to be sure. When he found it was true, he still didn't listen and would not let the people go. Look all around us today at the problems (plagues): Aids, bad water, ozone layer leaving causing skin cancer, etc. I could go on and on. We had better not be like Pharaoh. There is very little time left. Repent before the wrath of God falls.

Verses 8-12: The sixth plague came with no warning, and even "the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils." The boils are referred to again (in Deut. 28:35). They were very painful and seriously affected the knees, legs and soles of the feet, which may explain why they could not stand before Moses. (In 8:18), the "magicians" could not "bring forth lice"; now they cannot even stand in Moses' presence.

Exodus 9:8 "And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh."

Furnaces in Egypt were either for the melting of metal, the preparing of lime, or the baking of bricks. It was probably from a furnace of this last kind that the ashes were now taken. Much of Goshen had been converted into a brick-field (Exodus 1:14; 5:7-13); and though most of the bricks made would be simply dried in the sun, a portion would be subjected to artificial heat in

brick-kilns. When ashes from one of these kilns were made the germs of a disease that was a sore infliction, their own wrongdoing became to the Egyptians a whip wherewith God scourged them.

“And let Moses sprinkle it towards the heaven, in the sight of Pharaoh”: This was to be done before Pharaoh, that he might be an eyewitness of the miracle, he himself seeing with his own eyes that nothing else were cast up into the air but a few light ashes; and this was to be done towards heaven, to show that the plague or judgment came down from heaven.

From the God of heaven, whose wrath was now revealed from thence; and Moses he was to do this; he alone, as Philo thinks, or rather both he and Aaron, since they were both spoken to, and both filled their hands with ashes; it is most likely that both cast them up into the air, though Moses, being the principal person, is only mentioned.

Exodus 9:9 "And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth [with] blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt."

“Boil breaking forth ... upon man ... upon beast”: For the first time, human health was targeted.

The “boils” came with no warning on “man and beast (verse 10). This is similar to the affliction suffered by Job (Job 2).

These ashes were made with fire. These "ashes" and "dust" probably, just show that God can take things common to our everyday lives and turn them into plagues. This "sprinkling toward heaven" just shows that this plague was not one created by man but sent from God in heaven as punishment. These boils seemed to be of a terrible nature. The description here was of sores that were runny and incurable, accompanied with great pain. This was so widespread that all of Egypt was affected by it, except the Hebrews. This could be similar to radiation sores.

Exodus 9:10 "And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth [with] blains upon man, and upon beast."

“Ashes of the furnace”: Aaron and Moses took two handfuls of soot, not just from any furnace, but from a lime-kiln or brick-making furnace. That which participated so largely in their oppressive labor became the source of a painful health hazard for the oppressors!

This sixth plague could be a warning of the impending danger of death in the final tenth plague. Here in the verse above, we see this terrible plague brought just as God said it would be.

Exodus 9:11 "And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians."

“Magicians could not stand”: A side comment indicates that these men (who in Egyptian eyes were men of power) had been so sorely afflicted that they could not stand, either physically or vocationally, before God’s spokesmen. Although they are not mentioned after the third plague, they apparently had continued to serve before Pharaoh and were undoubtedly there when plagues

4 and 5 were announced. Their powerlessness had not been sufficient as yet for Pharaoh to dispense with their service, an outward symbol perhaps, of Pharaoh's unwillingness to grant the God of Israel total sovereignty.

Here we see sudden judgment fell on these false prophets (magicians). These boils were hurting so badly that they could not stay in the presence of Pharaoh, Moses or Aaron. These wonders, as we said before, were in the presence of Pharaoh so that he could not deny they came from God.

Exodus 9:12 "And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses."

After this sixth plague, "the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh." Previously, either "Pharaoh had hardened his own heart" means, only the Pharaoh was given over to his own will; just as the Lord had spoken to Moses (4:21; 7:3). God is never one to coerce someone to do evil.

"The Lord hardened": For the first time, apart from the words to Moses before the plagues began (Exodus 4:21; 7:3), the statement is made that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. In the other instances, the record observes that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Each instance records "as the Lord commanded," so what happened did so from two closely related perspectives:

- (1) God was carrying out His purpose through Pharaoh, and
- (2) Pharaoh was personally responsible for his actions as the command of (verse 13) implies.

(See note on 4:21).

One other place in the Bible, where we see similar happenings and the people not repenting, is in the Book of Revelation when the wrath of God falls. This is the first time there was a direct statement that God Himself, had hardened Pharaoh's heart. It seemed God was very angry with Pharaoh and these followers of false gods, the Egyptians (world). This, like all the other plagues, attacked false worship in Egypt. The Egyptians had practiced human sacrifices in the high places and had grabbed foreigners for their sacrifices.

Hebrews had sometimes, been their victims. They would take the ashes of these people and throw them in the wind. Whether this plague was in repayment for this or not, I am not sure. The furnace could be symbolic of the slavery of the Hebrews. At any rate, this was a terrible plague. The Pharaoh seemed to not be afflicted by the boils. He was a cruel king who did not have sympathy for his people, and he did not let the Hebrews go. So far Pharaoh had gotten off with no personal pain to his body, but he had better prepare for the worst.

Verses 13-35: The exceptionally "heavy hail" would destroy agriculture as well as harm people and livestock. That these plagues were sent "to" Pharaoh's "very heart" means they were intended to have a deep impact.

Exodus 9:13 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me."

"Who it seems used to rise early in the morning, and so was a fit time to meet with him, and converse with him; it might be one of the mornings in which he used to go to the water early, though not mentioned, unless that was every morning.

"And say unto him, thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, let my people go, that they may serve me; thus, had he line upon line, and precept upon precept, so that he was the more inexcusable (see Exodus 9:1).

We see here, that the message of God never changes. God never changes either.

Verses 14-19: After sounding again the customary demand to release God's people for worship (verse 13), and after delivering a warning of how His plagues would really have an impact (verse 14), God provided more information and issued certain preliminary instruction:

(1) A 3-fold purpose pertained to the plagues, namely, the Egyptians would recognize that Yahweh was incomparable, that His power would be demonstrated through them, and that His name, character, attributes and power would be known everywhere. Egypt could not keep from other nations her humiliation by the plagues of Israel's Lord.

(2) A declaration that whatever total authority Pharaoh had, it had been because of God's sovereign and providential control of world affairs, which included putting Pharaoh on his throne. This was a telling reminder that He was what He declared Himself to be, the one and only true and immanent Lord.

(3) A reminder of the worst scenario for Egypt if Yahweh had chosen, in lieu of the preceding plagues, to strike the people first, they would have perished. In others words, God had been gracious and longsuffering in the progression of the plagues.

(4) A declaration that the weather about to be unleashed by the incomparable God was unlike anything previously recorded in Egypt's entire history, or "since its founding" or "since it became a nation."

(5) An instruction as to how the Egyptians could avoid severe storm damage and loss of property.

Grace again was afforded them!

Exodus 9:14 "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that [there is] none like me in all the earth."

"My plagues": God's use of the possessive pronoun specified what should have become abundantly clear to Pharaoh by then, namely, that these were God's own workings.

Here we see that God was not going to play around with Pharaoh any longer. This was not for a later time. God would bring these plagues right now in rapid succession. We have no way of knowing the intervals between the other plagues, but we do know that these last plagues were to happen in a short period of time. These plagues would break Pharaoh down. He would not be able to stand against the power of Almighty God. Pharaoh would have to humble himself and admit that God was far superior to all of Egypt's gods. Not only would Pharaoh admit that Egypt's gods were nothing to compare to Jehovah God, but Pharaoh would insist on the Israelites leaving Egypt.

Exodus 9:15 "For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth."

Hail was the seventh plague. It was the first one in the last cycle. This is best translated "For by now I could have stretched out My hand and struck you." But He had not, for verse 16 says, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up" and two reasons are then given in verse 16.

Here we see that God could have totally destroyed Pharaoh and his people at any moment He wanted to. God had been more than patient but He was going to show Pharaoh, and all of these Egyptians and all the people around Egypt, that God with a mighty hand would bring His people out of Egypt. God would show all of that part of the world, that He was the true God and that all the world was subject to Him.

Exodus 9:16 "And in very deed for this [cause] have I raised thee up, for to show [in] thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

The two reasons mentioned in verse 16 are:

"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up" and two, "that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." Paul quoted the verse almost verbatim as an outstanding illustration of God's sovereignty (Rom. 9:17). The resulting declaration of God's name "throughout all the earth" is incorporated into the Song of Moses (in 15:14-16), and is graphically illustrated (in Joshua 2:9-11).

Even with his hardened heart, Pharaoh served the Lord's greater "purpose." Everyone accomplishes God's will in the end. Those who conform to His will accomplish it willingly; those who do not conform accomplish it inadvertently, as an unwitting tool in His hands.

See (Romans 9:17), where Paul indicates God's sovereignty over Pharaoh.

God here told Pharaoh (through Moses and Aaron), that He was the one who made him Pharaoh. God was going to use this very evil world leader to show His supreme power. The world surrounding Egypt would know this in a few days, but the whole world would know of God's power shown to Pharaoh because of it being written in the Bible. So truly, the whole world does know of God's greatness.

Exodus Chapter 9 Questions

1. This plague that would come upon the animals, was what?
2. Name the specific animals listed.
3. What was this murrain?
4. What would be some side effects of this plague?
5. What difference would be shown between Egypt and these Hebrews?
6. Where did the Hebrews live?
7. What 3 appointed the morrow as a time element?
8. What was the ultimate end of the cattle?
9. Where did Pharaoh check to see, if their cattle were killed?
10. What are some plagues in our day?
11. What was Moses to do with the ashes?
12. Who was to be present, when they did this?
13. What plague would this bring?
14. What false teaching did this plague attack?
15. Who had the boils?
16. Who could not stand before Moses, because of their boils?
17. Where is another book in the Bible that speaks of horrors such as these, where the people repented not?
18. These plagues attacked what?
19. The furnace could be symbolic of what?
20. Why did God keep giving Moses the same message to give Pharaoh?
21. Whose heart would all of the plagues fall on?
22. Why?
23. What would these last plagues do to Pharaoh?

24. Would Pharaoh let them go?
25. How would God bring His people out?
26. Why did God make Pharaoh ruler of Egypt?
27. God was going to use this evil ruler to do what?