

## **Exodus**

### **The Plagues**

Lesson #4 for July 26, 2025

Scriptures: Exodus 7:8-10:29; Numbers 33:4; Romans 1:24-32; Psalm 104:27-28; Isaiah 28:2,12-17; 44:9-10,12-17.

1. Did God send the plagues on Egypt? Why? What was the result?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] [In this study,] we encounter the God of miracles and the signs and wonders that He performs. Additionally, we will consider nine of the ten plagues that He unleashes as divine judgments upon Egypt. [Consider the plagues] ... **in the setting of the great controversy**—the spiritual battle between forces of good and evil, light and darkness, Christ and Satan, the living God and idols. This spiritual warfare began on earth in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve fell into sin. God promised a victorious outcome to this war so that we would not forever be prey to evil (*Gen. 3:15*). From its inception, the controversy has waged between those who worship the Creator Lord and those who worship creation in its various forms. Worship of the Creator liberates humanity and frees them from the bondage of sin. Worship of creation leads to the moral degradation of humanity, created in the image of God, and ends, ultimately, in their enslavement.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 52.†§

[BSG:] A farmer was trying to get his donkey to move; the beast wouldn't budge. So, the farmer took a thick branch and walloped it. He again spoke to the donkey, who then started moving.

When someone asked the farmer why that worked, he replied, "Well, first you have to get its attention."—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Sabbath Afternoon, July 19.‡

2. Did God have to use the plagues to get Pharaoh's attention?
3. Pharaoh did not give a reason for his not wanting the people to go except for the possibility that if Egypt was attacked by an enemy, the Israelites might join their enemies and escape.

**Exodus 1:10:** "In case of war they might join our enemies in order to fight against us, and might escape from the country. We must find some way to keep them from becoming even more numerous."—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*®\* [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition, Exodus 1:10). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV*\* or *GNB-TEV*\*].‡

[BSG:] In Exodus 7:8–10:29, the confrontation between the living God and Pharaoh intensifies. Pharaoh wants to demonstrate that he is, indeed, a god, as the Egyptians believed him to be. Thus, he endeavors to play the role of a sovereign monarch, who is in control and decides what is right or wrong. **In contrast, God wants to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage, but, at the same time, He wishes to teach the Egyptians who He is and liberate them from slavery to their gods.**

One thing must be made crystal clear: **God is not against the Egyptians**; He loves them as He loves everyone, with His everlasting and unselfish love. At the same time, **the Sovereign Lord stands against the Egyptian gods**. He

intends to demonstrate that these “gods” are a human fabrication, leading people into fear and bondage. Moreover, His primary goal is to break Egypt’s dependence upon these fabricated gods in order that they might serve the living Creator and Redeemer God. **However, if the people continue to associate and identify with these false gods, God’s judgment will fall, not only on their gods but [also] on them. Their persistent idolatry will result in their punishment and, ultimately, their destruction.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 52.††

4. It is important to our understanding of the ten plagues on Egypt that this is a war between the true God (YAHWEH) and Egypt’s false “gods.” One of Egypt’s gods was the snake.

**Exodus 7:8-13:** <sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, <sup>9</sup> “If the king demands that you prove yourselves by performing a miracle, tell Aaron to take his walking stick and throw it down in front of the king, and it will turn into a snake.” <sup>10</sup> So Moses and Aaron went to the king and did as the LORD had commanded. Aaron threw his walking stick down in front of the king and his officers, and it turned into a snake. <sup>11</sup> Then the king called for his wise men and magicians, and by their magic they did the same thing. <sup>12</sup> They threw down their walking sticks, and the sticks turned into snakes. **But Aaron’s stick swallowed theirs.** <sup>13</sup> The king, however, remained stubborn and, just as the LORD had said, the king would not listen to Moses and Aaron.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*†

[BSG:] **The upcoming battles were going to be between the living God and the Egyptian “gods.” What made things worse was that Pharaoh considered himself to be one of those gods. The Lord did not fight against the Egyptians, or even Egypt per se, but against their deities (the Egyptians venerated more than 1,500 gods and goddesses).** The biblical text is explicit: “On all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD” (*Exod. 12:12, ESV*). Later, it is once again emphasized, this time when Israel’s journey from Egypt was recounted: “The LORD had brought judgment on their gods” (*Num. 33:4, NIV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Sunday, July 20.††§

**Exodus 12:12:** “On that night I will go through the land of Egypt, killing every first-born male, both human and animal, and **punishing all the gods of Egypt.** I am the LORD.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*†

**Numbers 33:4:** [The Egyptians were] burying the first-born sons that **the LORD had killed.** By doing this, the LORD showed that **he was more powerful than the gods of Egypt.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*††

[BSG:] **The ten plagues in Egypt were aimed not at the Egyptian people but at their gods. Each plague hit at least one of them.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Tuesday, July 22.†† [How is a “god” attacked?]\*†

## The First Three Plagues

**Exodus 7:14-15:** <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “The king is very stubborn and refuses to let the people go. <sup>15</sup> So go and meet him in the morning when he goes down to the Nile. Take with you the walking stick that was turned into a snake, and wait for him on the riverbank.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.\*

5. Read the rest of **Exodus 7:14-8:19.** These are the plagues of the river turning to blood, the

frogs, and then the gnats/lice. If you had been God, what would you have done to try to speak to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians?

[BSG:] [River to Blood:] The first plague was aimed against Hapi [*sic*], the god of the Nile (*Exod. 7:17–25*). Life in Egypt was totally dependent on water from the Nile. Where there was water, there was life. Water was the source of life, so they invented their god Hapi and worshiped him as the provider of life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, July 22.<sup>†§</sup>

[See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hapi\\_%28Nile\\_god%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hapi_%28Nile_god%29).]<sup>†</sup>

6. Read **Exodus 8:1-15**.

[BSG:] [Frogs:] God then gives Pharaoh another chance. This time the frog goddess, Heqet [*sic*], is directly confronted (*Exod. 8:1–15*). Instead of life, the Nile produces frogs, which the Egyptians fear, detest, and abhor. They want to get rid of them. The precise time when this plague was taken away demonstrated that God's power was also behind this plague.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, July 22.<sup>†§</sup>

[also <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1630621166/egyptian-goddess-heqet-statue-heqet-frog>]<sup>†</sup>

[Imagine sweeping up stinking piles of dead frogs for hours, and then, praying: “Lord Frog, please bless Mommy and Daddy, and help us to be more like you!”]<sup>†</sup>

7. Read **Exodus 8:16-19** about the gnats or lice.

[BSG:] [“Gnats” or “Lice”:] The third plague has the shortest description (*Exod. 8:16–19*). The type of insect here (Heb. *kinnim*) is not clear (gnats, mosquitoes, ticks, lice?). It was directed against the god Geb [*sic*], the Egyptian god of the earth. Out of the dust of the earth (echoes of the biblical Creation story) God brought forth gnats, which spread throughout the land. **Unable to duplicate this miracle (only God can create life), the magicians declared, “This is the finger of God” (*Exod. 8:19*). Pharaoh, however, still refused to budge.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, July 22.<sup>†§</sup>

[See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geb>.]<sup>†</sup>

## Flies, Death of Livestock, Boils on People

8. Read **Exodus 8:20-9:12**. The next three plagues were against the gods of flies; and then, livestock; and then, against the goddess of medicine and magic with boils on people.

[BSG:] [Flies:] The **Egyptian god Uatchit [*sic*]** was the fly god and of swamps and marshes. **The god Khepri [*sic*] (of the rising sun, creation, and rebirth) was depicted with the head of a scarab beetle.** These “gods” were defeated by the Lord. In this account (*Exod. 8:20–24*), while the Egyptians were suffering, the **Hebrews were protected. In fact, no further plagues affected them [the Israelites].**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Wednesday, July 23.<sup>†§</sup> [See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khepri>.]<sup>†</sup>

9. After the plague of flies, Pharaoh began to bargain with God.

[BSG:] Thus, Pharaoh began to bargain. No doubt the pressure was mounting. He was willing for Israel to worship their God and to sacrifice to Him, but only in the land of Egypt (*Exod. 8:25*). His conditions could not be met because some of the animals were considered sacred in Egypt, and sacrificing them would have caused violence against the Hebrews. Also, this was not God's plan

for Israel.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, July 23.<sup>†§</sup>

10. Read Exodus 9:1-12 about the death of the livestock of the Egyptians but not of the Hebrews.

[BSG:] [Livestock:] Meanwhile, the next plague (*Exod. 9:1–7*) falls on the livestock. Hathor [*sic*], the Egyptian goddess of love and protection, was depicted with the head of a cow. A bull god Apis [*sic*] was also very popular and highly regarded in ancient Egypt. Thus, in this fifth plague, additional principal deities were defeated when the Egyptians' livestock died.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, July 23.<sup>†§</sup> [Another “god” attacked!]<sup>†</sup>

[See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hathor> and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apis\\_\(deity\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apis_(deity)).]<sup>†</sup>

[BSG:] [Boils:] In the sixth plague (*Exod. 9:8–12*), the total defeat of **Isis** [*sic*], **the goddess of medicine, magic, and wisdom**, is made manifest. We also see the defeat of such deities as **Sekhmet** [*sic*] (**goddess of war and epidemics**) and **Imhotep** [*sic*] (**god of medicine and healing**). They are unable to protect their own worshipers. Ironically, now even the magicians and sorcerers are so afflicted that they cannot appear in court, which shows that they are helpless against the Creator of heaven and earth.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, July 23.<sup>†§</sup> [See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isis> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sekhmet> & <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imhotep>.]<sup>†</sup>

11. What was Pharaoh's response to all of this? For the first time we see the Bible specifically mention that **God hardened Pharaoh's heart**. See Items #19-23 below.

**Exodus 9:12:** But the LORD made the king stubborn and, just as the LORD had said, the king would not listen to Moses and Aaron.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.<sup>\*†</sup>

## Hail, Locusts, Darkness

12. Read **Exodus 9:13-10:29** describing the next plagues of hail, locusts, and darkness.

[BSG:] [Hail:] **Nut** [*sic*] **was the Egyptian goddess of the sky and heavens and was often depicted as controlling what happened under the sky and on the earth. Osiris** [*sic*] **was the god of crops and fertility**. In the Bible, hail is often associated with God's judgment (*Isa. 28:2, 17; Ezek. 13:11–13*). During this plague, those who hide their property in a safe shelter will be protected (*Exod. 9:20, 21*). Everyone is now tested: will they, or will they not, believe God's Word and act accordingly?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Thursday, July 24.<sup>†§</sup> [See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nut\\_\(goddess\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nut_(goddess)) and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris>.]<sup>†</sup>

13. What do other passages in the Bible say about God's control of skies and the rain? See Isaiah 28:2; Ezekiel 13:11-13; Exodus 9:20-21.

[BSG:] God announces that His purpose in letting Pharaoh live is for the whole earth to know Him (*Exod. 9:16*). The king of Egypt now confesses that he has sinned, but later he changes his mind.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Thursday, July 24.<sup>†§</sup> [Were other nations aware of the plagues?]<sup>†</sup>

**Exodus 9:16:** “But to show you my power I have let you live so that my fame might spread over the whole world.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.<sup>\*</sup>

[BSG:] **The Egyptian god of storm, war, and disorder was called Seth** [*sic*].

**Together with Isis [sic], they were considered agriculture deities. Shu [sic] was a god of the atmosphere. Serapis [sic], personified divine majesty, fertility, healing, and afterlife.** Not one of the Egyptian gods could stop God's judgments (*Exod. 10:4–20*) because idols are nothing (*Isa. 44:9, 10, 12–17*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Thursday, July 24.<sup>†‡§</sup>

[See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set\\_\(deity\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_(deity))

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shu\\_\(Egyptian\\_god\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shu_(Egyptian_god))

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serapis>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serapis#/media/File:Serapis\\_as\\_bull.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serapis#/media/File:Serapis_as_bull.svg).]<sup>†</sup>

14. Read **Exodus 10:4-20**. Compare Isaiah 44:9-10,12-17.

**Isaiah 44:9-17:** <sup>9</sup> All those who make idols are worthless, and the gods they prize so highly are useless. Those who worship these gods are blind and ignorant—and they will be disgraced. <sup>10</sup>**It does no good making a metal image to worship as a god!** <sup>11</sup>Everyone who worships it will be humiliated. The people who make idols are human beings and nothing more. Let them come and stand trial—they will be terrified and will suffer disgrace.

<sup>12</sup> The metalworker takes a piece of metal and works with it over a fire. His strong arm swings a hammer to pound the metal into shape. As he works, he gets hungry, thirsty, and tired.

<sup>13</sup> The carpenter measures the wood. He outlines a figure with chalk, carves it out with his tools, and makes it in the form of a man, a handsome human figure, to be placed in his house. <sup>14</sup> He might cut down cedars to use, or choose oak or cypress wood from the forest. Or he might plant a laurel tree and wait for the rain to make it grow. <sup>15</sup>A person uses part of a tree for fuel and part of it for making an idol. With one part he builds a fire to warm himself and bake bread; with the other part he makes a god and worships it. <sup>16</sup>With some of the wood he makes a fire; he roasts meat, eats it, and is satisfied. He warms himself and says, “How nice and warm! What a beautiful fire!” <sup>17</sup>The rest of the wood he makes into an idol, and then he bows down and worships it. He prays to it and says, “You are my god—save me!”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.<sup>\*†</sup>

15. The Egyptian god of light was the next to be shown to be powerless.

[BSG:] [Darkness:] **Finally, Ra [sic] was the principal Egyptian god, the sun god. Thoth [sic] was a moon god.** Neither was able to give light. Pharaoh again tries to bargain, but in vain. A three-day period of darkness struck Egypt, but there was light where the Israelites lived. The separation could not be more spectacular.

Yet, no matter the battering that his nation took, Pharaoh was determined to fight back and not to relent. Though we don't know his deeper motives, at some point it could have become purely a pride thing. No matter how powerful the evidence, no matter how obvious it was what was happening (even his own servants declared, “ ‘How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?’ ” [*Exod. 10:7, NKJV*]), and no matter that the correct choice was right there before him—after a bit of waffling, Pharaoh still refused to surrender to God's will and let the people go.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Thursday, July 24.<sup>†‡§</sup> [See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ra> and

16. Surely, this is an example of Proverbs 16:18.

**Proverbs 16:18:** Pride leads to destruction, and arrogance to downfall.—*GNB-TEV*.\*

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] Suddenly a darkness settled upon the land, so thick and black that it seemed a “darkness which may be felt.” Not only were the people deprived of light, but [also] the atmosphere was very oppressive, so that breathing was difficult. “They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” **The sun and moon were objects of worship to the Egyptians; in this mysterious darkness the people and their gods alike were smitten by the power that had undertaken the cause of the bondmen.** [See Appendix, note 2.] **Yet fearful as it was, this judgment is an evidence of God’s compassion and His unwillingness to destroy. He would give the people time for reflection and repentance before bringing upon them the last and most terrible of the plagues.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 272.1.<sup>†‡Ω</sup> [What would you do for 3 days?]<sup>‡</sup>  
[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1190&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1190&index=0)<sup>‡</sup>

17. We need to step back and take a look at the overall picture of the plagues.

[BSG:] **There are significant plague characteristics:**

1. The first nine plagues may be divided into three clusters, or groups, of three plagues. The tenth plague is unique and separated from the rest. The people will need a special time and provision to face it.
2. The first nine plagues affected all three habitats created by God in Genesis 1: the heavens (plagues seven to nine), the earth (plagues three to six), and the waters (plagues one and two). **Collectively, these plagues allude to de-creation.**
3. **The first nine plagues intensify**, becoming more and more severe in the process of time, as Pharaoh stubbornly refuses to let God’s people go in order that they might freely worship their Creator Lord. The first three plagues were mild, quick, and did not cause death. The next three plagues (plagues four to six) were more serious and harmful, as they destroyed livestock and afflicted humans with skin sores. The following three plagues (plagues seven to nine) were more devastating, involving the death of people and animals but also the destruction of crops.
4. Generally speaking, each plague fell after a clear warning and plea to surrender to the Lord’s demand. Surprises occurred, but devastation was announced beforehand and could be avoided. An exceptional warning is given before the first two plagues and the tenth, but see also transparent warnings in the introductions to plagues four, five, seven, and eight.
5. Before plagues three, six, and nine, there is little to no confrontation with Pharaoh.
6. **The first three plagues fell on the Egyptians and the Israelites** [Why also on the Israelites?], **but all the remaining plagues came only upon the Egyptians.**

7. Prior to the occurrence of the first plague, God performed a miracle before Pharaoh: Aaron's staff became a snake that ate all the magicians' snakes. Yet, "Pharaoh's heart became hard" (*Exod. 7:13, NIV*).
8. The last plague was the most destructive because each family that was not under the protection of the blood of the lamb was affected by the death of its firstborn son. Before the last plague fell, God, in His mercy, gave the people three days of darkness for reflection, meditation, and repentance, as well as instruction on how to avoid the final devastation.
9. It is after the sixth plague that the record declares that "the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart" (*Exod. 9:12, NIV*; see also *Exod. 10:1, 20, 27*; *Exod. 11:10*; and also *Exod. 14:4, 8, 17*). **During the first five plagues, it was Pharaoh who hardened his heart (*Exod. 7:13, 14, 22*; *Exod. 8:15, 19, 32*; *Exod. 9:7*; *Exod. 9:35*). Before the actual story about the ten plagues, there are two predictions by God stating that He, the Lord, will harden Pharaoh's heart (*Exod. 4:21, Exod. 7:3*). [Did God do it?]**
10. **Magicians could imitate only the first two plagues.** When the third plague occurred, they aptly stated: "This is the finger of God" (*Exod. 8:19*). Later they themselves suffered with boils (*Exod. 9:11*; see also the urging of Pharaoh's "officials," *Exod. 10:7, NIV*).
11. **The plagues also can be gathered into pairs:** plagues one and two are connected with the **river Nile**; plagues three and four are **flying insects** (gnats/mosquitoes and flies); plagues five and six resemble each other, with **pestilence occurring on animals and boils on humans**; plagues seven and eight describe **damage to crops**; plagues nine and ten are related to **darkness—one to physical darkness and the other to the ultimate darkness, namely, death of the firstborn.**
12. It is interesting to note that **the Lord specifically invited Pharaoh seven times to " 'Let my people go' "** (*Exod. 5:1*; *Exod. 7:16*; *Exod. 8:1, 20*; *Exod. 9:1, 13*; *Exod. 10:3*) and once used a negative conditional phrase: " 'If you do not let my people go, I will send . . . ' " (*Exod. 8:21, NIV*). **Pharaoh consented after the second, fourth, seventh, and ninth plagues (*Exod. 8:8, Exod. 8:25–28, Exod. 9:28, Exod. 10:24*), but, in the end, refused to let the people go to worship the Lord (*Exod. 8:15, Exod. 8:32, Exod. 9:35, Exod. 10:27*).** He even asked Moses to pray to end specific plagues and to pray also for him (*Exod. 8:8, 28*; *Exod. 9:28*; *Exod. 10:16, 17*). Only after the tenth plague did he summon Moses and Aaron and commanded them: "And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; **and bless me also**" (*Exod. 12:31, 32*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 53–55.<sup>†§</sup>
18. Again, the plagues on Egypt were to demonstrate that the Egyptian gods were powerless. Take for example, Aaron's rod turning into a snake and then eating the magicians' snakes.  
[BSG:] An example of this judgment on their gods was well demonstrated by the miracle of the rod turning into a serpent (*Exod. 7:9–12*). In Egypt, the



Uraeus [*sic*] goddess Wadjet [*sic*] was personified by a cobra and represented sovereign power over lower Egypt. The symbol of a cobra appeared in Pharaoh's crown, a sign of his power, deity, royalty, and divine authority, because this goddess would spit venom at Pharaoh's enemies. The Egyptians also believed that the sacred serpent would guide the Pharaoh to his afterlife.

[See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wadjet>.]

When Aaron's staff became a snake and ate all the other serpents before the king, the supremacy of the living God over Egyptian magic and sorcery was manifested. Not only was the emblem of Pharaoh's might conquered, but [also] Aaron and Moses clutched it in their hands (*Exod. 7:12, 15*). The initial confrontation demonstrated God's power and lordship over Egypt. Moses, as God's representative, had greater authority and power than did the "god" Pharaoh himself.

**It is also significant that the ancient Egyptians considered a snake god, Nehebkaui [*sic*] ("he who harnesses the spirits"), to be sacred, adored, and worshiped. According to their mythology, this serpent god had great power because he swallowed seven cobras. Thus, God communicated to the Egyptians that He, not the serpent god, has sovereign power and authority. After such a powerful confrontation, they were able to understand this message immediately and distinctly.—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\* for Sunday, July 20.<sup>†§</sup>**

[See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nehebkaui>.]<sup>‡</sup>

## **"Hardening" Pharaoh's Heart**

19. There are a number of passages in Exodus which suggest that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. See for example Exodus 10:1-2; 12:13; 4:21; 11:9-10. The question of **hardening Pharaoh's heart** is a very serious one. What does the Bible actually say?
20. It is clear that some passages suggest God hardened Pharaoh's heart; others suggests very strongly that Pharaoh hardened his own heart!

[BSG:] **Nine times in Exodus the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is ascribed to God (*Exod. 4:21; Exod. 7:3; Exod. 9:12; Exod. 10:1, 20, 27; Exod. 11:10; Exod. 14:4, 8; see also Rom. 9:17, 18*). Another nine times Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart (*Exod. 7:13, 14, 22; Exod. 8:15, 19, 32; Exod. 9:7, 34, 35*)....**

It is significant that in the Exodus story of the ten plagues, in each of the first five plagues, Pharaoh alone was the agent of his heart hardening. Thus, he initiated the hardening of his own heart. From the sixth plague on, however, the biblical text states that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart (*Exod. 9:12*). What all this means is that God *strengthened or deepened Pharaoh's own choice, his willful action, as God had told Moses He would do* (*Exod. 4:21*).

In other words, God sent plagues to help Pharaoh repent and to free him from the darkness and error of his mind. God did not create fresh evil in Pharaoh's heart; instead, **He simply gave Pharaoh over to his own malign impulses.** He left him without God's restraining grace and thus **abandoned him to his own wickedness** (see *Rom. 1:24–32*).—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\* for Monday, July 21.<sup>†§</sup>



21. More on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart:

[BSG:] The hardening of Pharaoh's heart fascinates students of the Bible. We must stress that **God did not predetermine Pharaoh's decisions**. The choices were his. He was not predestined to stubbornly refuse to follow God's instructions and be doomed to perdition. **God gives freedom of choice to every individual and enables people to respond to His message of love and offer of grace**. He does not force people to obey or disobey Him.

The complete textual survey regarding the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (see point 9 in previous section [Item #17, sub-item 9 above]) provides the following result: in the process of hardening, it was first Pharaoh himself who stubbornly refused to humble himself before God (*Exod. 10:3*). It was his decision, his willful disobedience, that led him to go beyond the irreversible point of no return. His character became fixed. The divine call to him to let the Israelites go and worship the living God only added fuel to the proverbial fire in his heart, kindled against the Almighty and His servant Moses.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 55.†§

[BSG:] **Pharaoh had his free will—he could choose for or against God—and he decided against. [Without freedom, one cannot love.]**

**The lessons are obvious. We have been given the ability to choose between right and wrong, good and evil, obedience or disobedience. From Lucifer in heaven, to Adam and Eve in Eden, to Pharaoh in Egypt, and to us today—wherever we abide, we choose either life or death (*Deut. 30:19*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, July 21.†§**

22. Consider an example of how God's love, illustrated by sunshine, affects people differently.

[BSG:] An analogy: imagine **sunshine** that beats on butter and clay. **Butter melts but clay hardens**. The heat of the sun is the same in both cases, but there are two different reactions to the heat, and two different results. **The effect depends on the material**. In the case of Pharaoh, one may say that it depended upon the attitudes of his heart toward God and His people.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, July 21.††

23. What did Ellen White say about Pharaoh's heart being hardened?

[EGW:] Still the heart of Pharaoh grew harder. And now the Lord sent a message to him, declaring, "I will at this time send all My plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth.... And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power." [Exodus 9:16] Not that God had given him an existence for this purpose, but His providence had overruled events to place him upon the throne at the very time appointed for Israel's deliverance. Though this haughty tyrant had by his crimes forfeited the mercy of God, yet his life had been preserved that through his stubbornness the Lord might manifest His wonders in the land of Egypt. The disposing of events is of God's providence. He could have placed upon the throne a more merciful king, who would not have dared to withstand the mighty manifestations of divine power. But in that case the Lord's purposes would not have been accomplished. **His people were permitted to experience the grinding**

**cruelty of the Egyptians, that they might not be deceived concerning the debasing influence of idolatry.** In His dealing with Pharaoh, the Lord manifested His hatred of idolatry and His determination to punish cruelty and oppression....

There was no exercise of supernatural power to harden the heart of the king. God gave to Pharaoh the most striking evidence of divine power, but the monarch stubbornly refused to heed the light. Every display of infinite power rejected by him, rendered him the more determined in his rebellion. The seeds of rebellion that he sowed when he rejected the first miracle, produced their harvest. As he continued to venture on in his own course, going from one degree of stubbornness to another, his heart became more and more hardened, until he was called to look upon the cold, dead faces of the first-born.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 267.4-268.1.<sup>†‡</sup>

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1165&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1165&index=0)<sup>‡</sup> [Could we do that?]<sup>‡</sup>

## Who Sent the Plagues on Egypt? Who Will Send the Seven Last Plagues?

24. ***We have seen that the Bible states clearly that God was the one who sent the ten plagues against the Egyptian gods and those who clung to them. However, what about the seven last plagues? Who causes them?***

**Revelation 16:12-14:** <sup>12</sup> Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River. The river dried up, to provide a way for the kings who come from the east. <sup>13</sup>**Then I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs. They were coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast, and the mouth of the false prophet.** <sup>14</sup>**They are the spirits of demons that perform miracles.** These three spirits go out to all the kings of the world, to bring them together for the battle on the great Day of Almighty God.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.<sup>\*†</sup> [The Devil is doing all he can to destroy God's people!]<sup>‡</sup>

25. ***Isn't it clear that the Devil is the one who brings on the seven last plagues?***

[BSG:] In Exodus 7:3, we read that the Lord will multiply both “signs and wonders” (NIV) before all the people in order that they might understand who He is. Exodus 7:3 is the only text in Exodus in which these two terms, “signs” and “wonders,” are combined. The word “sign” or “signs” occurs 16 times in the book of Exodus (*Exod. 3:12; Exod. 4:8 [twice], 9, 17, 28, 30; Exod. 7:3; Exod. 8:19, NABRE; Exod. 10:1, 2; Exod. 12:13, NIV; Exod. 13:9, 16; Exod. 31:13, 17*). In these instances, it is used to emphasize two things: namely, that **Moses will perform different signs before Pharaoh (*Exod. 10:1, 2*), and that the Passover blood will be a sign of life, causing the destroying angel to pass over the homes under its protection (*Exod. 12:13*).** The term “wonder” is used in reference to what God will do before Pharaoh, despite the hardening of his heart (*Exod. 4:21*). In the context of plagues, this term is structurally crucial because it appears twice at the beginning of nine plagues (*Exod. 7:3, 9*) and, again, twice at the end of the ninth plague (*Exod. 11:9, 10*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 53.<sup>†‡Ω§</sup>

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