*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 29 – July 4

*Exodus Chapters Nine and Ten*

**Monday, June 29 Exodus 9:1-7**

*“The livestock of the Egyptians died”*

Moses returns to Pharaoh and proclaims the now familiar phrase: “This is what the Lord says.” The hand of God is about to bring a terrible plague on Egyptian livestock. The “hand” of God to deliver the Israelites is a common term in Exodus and is normally associated with some mighty act of judgement. This is the first plague in which this term is used, and it concerns the first plague that directly causes death. As such, it serves as a harbinger of worse things to come, culminating in the tenth plague and the failed crossing of the Red Sea by the Egyptian army.

As with the previous plague, a distinction is made between Egypt and Israel. God’s people are protected so that their livestock escape the plague. In light of this, naturalistic explanations for the plague (e.g., a new potent animal disease) are not helpful as the protection of the Israelites’ animals would still be left unexplained. Pharaoh, in an act that betrays a diminishing self-confidence, has his people check to see whether Moses’ promise that the Hebrew animals would be spared had actually occurred. Even so, Pharaoh’s heart remains unyielding.

*Presented with clear evidence of your power, Lord, many still refuse to believe. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 30 Exodus 9:8-12**

*“Festering boils broke out on men and animals”*

This is the first real demonstration to the Egyptians that their lives are in danger as their physical bodies are directly impacted by God’s judgment. Heretofore it has been blood, pesky frogs and insects, and the death of livestock. Now humans bear the brunt of God’s judgment. This plague represents a concrete step toward the ultimate, irrevocable outcome, the death of the firstborn and of the Egyptian army in the sea.

For several plagues now, the Egyptian magicians have been unable to reproduce God’s acts, but now they are unable to even stand before Moses. This inability is contrasted with Moses and Aaron standing before Pharaoh and scattering the soot into the air. The magicians have lost their power and their magic can’t save them from the boils, but Moses and Aaron are far from done. Another turning point marked by this plague is the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart being attributed to God. This, of course, is not unexpected, for verse 12 ends with the refrain, “just as the Lord had said to Moses” (see 4:21). Once again, Pharaoh refuses to listen to God.

*People can only stand against you for so long, Lord, before they falter. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 1 Exodus 9:13-26**

*“The Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt”*

This plague unleashes the heavens themselves against Egypt. The elements are obeying their Creator, even to the point where God can specify the target of his destruction. This show of frightening power should have finally convinced Pharaoh to release the Israelite slaves. God’s purpose throughout the plagues is to make Pharaoh bow to him, that is, to make him “know” the true God. There are those in Egypt who “fear the Lord” and heed Moses’ advice to seek shelter, but no mention is made of whether Pharaoh responds to Moses’ warning.

What is unique to this plague is that now Moses lets Pharaoh in on a secret, saying in effect: “By now I could have wiped you off the face of the earth. The reason I haven’t is because I am using you to spread the word throughout the world that I am God. Understand this well, Pharaoh. You are serving my purpose.” There is more at work here than simply liberating a band of oppressed slaves from Egypt. Pharaoh is, unfortunately for him, involved in something far bigger than he understands or is able to overcome.

*There is no one like you in all the earth, Lord, and we worship you alone. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 29 – July 4

*Exodus Chapters Nine and Ten*

**Thursday, July 2 Exodus 9:27-35**

*“Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron”*

This appears to be a truly heartfelt capitulation by Pharaoh. Could it be true repentance? He confesses that he has sinned and that “I and my people are in the wrong.” Pharaoh seems to begin to understand the core problem which is his refusal to honor God and heed his commands. Having “sent” for Moses and Aaron, is he finally ready to “send” the Israelites away so they can worship the God who is bringing these mighty plagues against him?

However authentic this repentance seems to be at first blush, it is certainly short-lived (and perhaps therefore not authentic). No sooner does the plague cease than Pharaoh “sins again” (Verse 34) by hardening his heart to the lesson he really should have learned long ago. He cannot compete with Israel’s God. Moses, in a strong show of force that under normal circumstances would have sealed his own fate, calls Pharaoh a liar. He anticipates what has now become Pharaoh’s predictable cycle of behavior: Say one thing and do another. Once again neither Moses nor God are taken by surprise by Pharaoh’s tactic.

*True repentance, Lord, is evidenced by true change in behavior. Amen.*

**Friday, July 3 Exodus 10:1-20**

*“I will bring locusts into your country”*

The locust plague brings to light a purpose of the plagues, one that has been hinted at previously but has not yet been given clear expression: not merely so that the Egyptians may know God, but so that future generations of Israelites may know him as well. God’s actions in Egypt with the Exodus generation are not meant to be kept secret. They must be told and remembered in future generations. Nor is it simply that the whole earth may know of God now. Rather, even those not yet born will remember what God has done here.

The locust plague brings Pharaoh to his knees. He quickly calls for Moses and Aaron and confesses, once again, that he has sinned. Although the intensity level of the plagues is rising, Pharaoh is up to the same old tricks. He asks for another chance, and Moses prays for the plague to be removed, and it is. Once the land is relieved of the locusts, Pharaoh goes back on his promise and once again refuses to let the people go. All he has accomplished through his stubbornness is to set up his people and himself for further trouble.

*We remember your acts throughout history, Lord, that make your glory known. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 4 Exodus 10:21-29**

*“Total darkness covered all Egypt”*

A plague of darkness is almost certainly to be understood as a statement against an Egyptian solar deity, possibly Re, a common sun god throughout Egypt’s history. For the God of Israelite slaves to have his way with such a powerful Egyptian god would send a clear message. This would speak to Pharaoh even more directly, since Egyptian kings were sometimes referred to as the son of Re. Darkness was also the first thing God brought under control by introducing light in Genesis 1:3. A reintroduction of darkness for three long days shows that God, who is the giver of light (and, life), is able to withhold light (and, life), bringing about darkness (and, death).

Moses and Pharaoh part company for what Pharaoh declares is to be the last time (but see 12:31). Pharaoh, ironically, cuts off the only means of salvation he has by banishing Moses from his presence forever. Throughout the plagues, it is Moses’ prayers alone that have been able to bring relief to Egypt. Pharaoh’s pronouncement of Moses’ death comes back to haunt him, for when he and Moses meet again at the Red Sea, it is Egypt’s army and not Moses who dies.

*You have brought light and life to me, Lord, and I worship you for your goodness. Amen.*