

LESSON 11

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Exodus 7:14-10:2 & 12:29-36

According to Exodus 12:12 the plagues of Egypt were against all the gods of the Egyptians. God was bringing judgment of the gods and the spirit/demons represented by them. Remember that all the gods of the Egyptians and all idols are demons, not gods.

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD." – **Exodus 12:12**

"You shall have no other gods before Me. - Exodus 20:3

--for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-- Exodus 34:14

"To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. - Deuteronomy 4:35

"Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. - Deuteronomy 4:39

See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand. - Deuteronomy 32:39

1st PLAGUE – BLOOD IN NILE

Hapi - A fertility god, god of the Nile silt and associated with the inundation which caused the river to overflow its banks and deposit the rich earth which the farmers relied on for their crops. Hapi was a very ancient god whose name may have originally been derived from the river and who was a personification of the river at flood. He is depicted as a man with large breasts and belly signifying fertility and success.
(1st PLAGUE: WATER INTO BLOOD.)

2nd PLAGUE – FROGS

Heh and Hauhet - God and goddess of infinity and eternity. Heh was depicted as a frog and Hauhet as a serpent. Their names mean "endlessness" and they were among the original gods of the Ogdoad.

Heqet (Heket) - Goddess of fertility and childbirth, depicted as a frog or a woman with the head of a frog. **(2nd PLAGUE – FROGS)**

3rd PLAGUE – GNATS OR LICE

Geb - God of the earth and growing things. Geb is the son of Shu and Tefnut, husband of Nut, the sky.

Set (Seth) - God of war, chaos, storms, and pestilence. His name is translated as "Instigator of Confusion" and "Destroyer". He is depicted as a red beast with cloven hooves and a forked tale and is the prototype for the later iconography of the Christian Devil. Set was originally a hero-god who drove away the serpent Apep (Apophis) from the barge of the sun god and killed it nightly. He was a desert god who brought the evil winds of the dry lands to the lush Nile Valley and was associated with foreign lands and people. His consorts were Anat and Astarte, both goddesses associated with war and both from foreign countries, as well as Taweret, the benign protective goddess of childbirth and fertility. Set is often characterized as "evil", and did manifest many evil qualities, but was not regarded by the ancient Egyptians as an embodiment of evil or darkness.

4th PLAGUE – FLIES OR BEETLES

Khepri - An aspect of Ra the sun god in his morning form, represented by the scarab beetle. Scarabs were sacred beetle-like insects that were used as amulets throughout Egypt and were often found as jewelry (necklaces, bracelets, collars, wristbands) in tombs. The dung beetle would roll dung into a ball for purposes of eating and laying eggs. It represented the eternal life cycle. (4th PLAGUE – GNATS/FLIES/BEETLES)

Sekhmet - One of the most significant goddesses of ancient Egypt. Sekhmet was a leonine deity usually depicted as a woman with the head of a lion. Her name means "Powerful" and is usually interpreted as "The Female Powerful One". She was a goddess of destruction and healing, of desert winds and cool breezes. She was the daughter of Ra who appears in one of the most important stories concerning the Eye of Ra/Distant Goddess motif. When Ra became tired of the sins of humanity, he sent Sekhmet to destroy them. She ravaged the land until the other gods implored Ra to stop her before humans were destroyed completely. Ra had a vat of beer dyed red to attract Sekhmet's blood lust and left it at Dendera where she drank it and fell into a deep sleep; when she woke she was the benevolent Hathor. Sekhmet continued to exist in her leonine form, however, and was the patron deity of the military for her powers of destruction and vengeance. She was known as "Smiter of the Nubians" in this regard but she also brought natural disaster. Plagues were known as "Messengers of Sekhmet" or "Slaughterers of Sekhmet". In the same way that she could bring the desert winds, she could deflect them, and the same with pestilence; just as she had brought the plague, she could cure it and was known as "Mistress of Life" in this capacity (and so was frequently invoked in healing spells and incantations by ancient doctors). (4th PLAGUE – GNATS/FLIES/BEETLES)

5th PLAGUE – CATTLE SICKNESS

Hathor - One of the best known, most popular, and most important deities of ancient Egypt. She was the daughter of Ra and, in some stories, wife of Horus the Elder. A very ancient goddess, she was sent by Ra to destroy humanity for their sins. The other gods implored Ra to stop her destruction before no humans were left to benefit from the lesson. Ra then had a vat of beer dyed red, to resemble blood, and placed at Dendera which Hathor, in her blood lust, drank. She fell asleep and woke as the benevolent goddess who was a friend to all. She was the patron goddess of joy, inspiration, celebration, love, women, women's health, childbirth, and drunkenness. One of her names is "The Lady of Drunkenness". She was thought to live in sycamore trees and so was also known as "The Lady of the Sycamore." In the afterlife she helped guide the souls of the dead toward paradise and was one of the deities aboard the sun barge of Ra who defended it from Apep. She is further associated with gratitude and a thankful heart. The Greeks associated her with Aphrodite. She is depicted as a cow or a woman with a cow's head and evolved from the earlier goddess Bat. **Her characteristics were later largely absorbed by Isis.**

(5th PLAGUE – SICK CATTLE)

Apis - The Divine Bull worshipped at Memphis as an incarnation of the god Ptah. One of the earliest gods of ancient Egypt depicted on the Narmer Palette (c. 3150 BCE). The Apis Cult was one of the most important and long-lived in the history of Egyptian culture.

6th PLAGUE – BOILS

Heka - One of the oldest and most important gods in ancient Egypt. He was the patron god of magic and medicine but was also the primordial source of power in the universe. He existed before the gods and was present in the act of creation although, in later myths, he is seen as the son of Menhet and Khnum and part of the triad of Latopolis. He is depicted as a man carrying a staff and knife, and **physicians were known as Priests of Heka**. Magic was an integral part of medical practice in ancient Egypt, and so Heka became an important deity for doctors. He was said to have killed two serpents and entwined them on a staff as a symbol of his power; this image (borrowed from the Sumerians, actually) was passed on to the Greeks who associated it with their god Hermes and called it the caduceus. In the modern day, the caduceus is frequently confused with the Rod of Asclepius in iconography related to the medical profession.

(6th PLAGUE – BOILS)

7th PLAGUE – HAIL

Nut - The primordial sky goddess who personified the canopy of the heavens, wife of Geb (earth), mother of Osiris, Isis, Set, Nephthys, and Horus the Elder. After the primordial mound rose from the waters of chaos at creation, Atum (Ra) sent his children Shu and Tefnut out to create the world. When they returned, he was so happy he shed tears of joy which became human beings. These creatures had nowhere to live and so Shu and Tefnut mated to give birth to Geb (earth) and Nut (sky). Their relationship was so intimate that it disturbed Atum who pushed Nut high above Geb and fixed her there. He also decreed that she could not give birth on any day of the year. Thoth, the god of wisdom, gambled with Iah, god of the moon, and won five days worth of moonlight which he transformed into days. Nut was able to then give birth to her five children on five consecutive days in July which were not part of Atum's original. In some versions of the story it is Khonsu who loses the gamble with Thoth. **(7th PLAGUE – HAIL)**

8th PLAGUE – LOCUSTS

Renenet (Renenet or Ernutet) - A very important goddess depicted as a cobra or a rearing cobra with the head of a woman. Her name means "Snake Who Nourishes" and she was goddess of nursing and rearing children. In time, she became closely associated with Meskhenet, goddess of childbirth and destiny, and even superseded her to determine the length of a person's life and significant events which would befall them. Along with Meskhenet, she was also associated with Neith and sometimes portrayed as the mother of Osiris, with Isis as the wife of Osiris and mother of Horus, as Atum's wife or consort. In the afterlife she appeared as the "Lady of Justification" linking her with the goddess Ma'at. She was thought to protect the clothing worn by the king in the afterlife and so was also known as "Lady of the Robes". In this capacity, she appeared as a fire-breathing cobra who drove away the enemies of the king. **She was also a grain goddess known as "Lady of the Fertile Fields" and "Lady of the Granaries"** who protected the harvest and was the mother of Nepri, god of grain. As a fertility goddess, she was further linked to the Nile River and the inundation and so with Hapi, the god of the fertile mud of the Nile. (8th PLAGUE – LOCUSTS)

9th PLAGUE – DARKNESS

Ra (Atum or Re) - The great sun god of Heliopolis whose cult spread across Egypt to become the most popular by the Fifth Dynasty (2498-2345 BCE). The pyramids of Giza are associated with Ra as the supreme lord and creator god who ruled over the land of the living and the dead. He drives his sun barge across the heavens by day, showing another aspect of himself with each advance of the sun across the sky, and then dives into the underworld at evening where the barge is threatened by the primordial serpent Apep (Apophis) and must be defended by the other gods and souls of the justified dead. Ra was among the most important and popular gods of Egypt. Even when the god Amun rose in prominence, Ra's position was undiminished and he merged with Amun to become Amun-Ra, the supreme god. (9th PLAGUE – DARKNESS)

10th PLAGUE – DEATH OF FIRSTBORN

Osiris - Lord and judge of the dead, one of the First Five gods born of Nut at the dawn of creation, and one of the most popular and enduring gods of Egypt. His name means "Powerful" or "Mighty". Osiris was originally a fertility god who grew in popularity and influence through the Osiris Myth in which he is killed by his brother, Set, brought back to life by his wife Isis, fathers sky god Horus, and descends to the underworld as Judge of the Dead. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead he is mentioned frequently as the just judge in the Hall of Truth who weighs the hearts of the souls of the dead against the white feather of ma'at. He is an early example of the Dying and Reviving God figure in mythology who lent himself to the later version of this figure, Jesus Christ. Egyptian kings identified themselves with Osiris in death and he is usually depicted as a mummy (symbolizing death) and with green or black skin (symbolizing the fertility of the Nile region and life). He was so popular that people in ancient Egypt paid to have their bodies buried at Abydos near his cult center and those who could not afford that would pay for memorials to be erected to them or their loved ones at Abydos believing that proximity to Osiris on earth guaranteed easier access to paradise after death.