

The Nile turned to blood, frogs covering the land, gnats covering everyone, and then biting flies; the livestock in the field died, and proud Pharaoh has stood defiant. His heart is rock hard. He relents for a moment and then his pride kicks in and he goes back on his word. What will it take? (Isaiah 46:10)

Commented [Paul Wall1]: Isaiah 26:10 (ESV)
10 If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD.

Ravi Zacharias was at ASU recently. A student asked him to comment on **the hiddenness of God**. It is a theological argument that questions why a God that loves mankind would stay so unseen and seemingly unrevealed to so many.

Part of Ravi's answer included that God is working through dreams and visions to cause tens of thousands to come to Christ in Muslim countries where the Gospel is banned. He told the story of one man who for seven years had the same dream night after night. Jesus appeared to him in his dream and invited the man to trust in Him and be made right with God. After seven years of the same dream every night he finally accepted God's invitation and became a Christian.

Is there any limit to which God will not go to reveal Himself to man? (John 12:46) I would flip the argument on its head and say the Bible is hands down the most translated and distributed book in the history of the world. Is this not proof that it comes from the God who loves mankind and wants them to know Him?

Commented [Paul Wall2]: John 12:46 (ESV)
46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

Look at the extent to which God was going in Egypt so that the Israelites, the Egyptians, and Pharaoh might know that He is the LORD! Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart only gave God more opportunities to display the folly of the gods of Egypt. (Numbers 33:4)

Commented [Paul Wall3]: Numbers 33:4 (ESV)
4 while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them. On their gods also the LORD executed judgments.

Half the plagues are over. Pharaoh hardened his own heart each time, yet God had promised that He would harden Pharaoh's heart to show His mighty power. It is my conviction that Pharaoh had passed the point of no return. God could see that Pharaoh was determined not to allow his heart to be changed. (Jeremiah 26:4-6) Pharaoh will not yield to God. He may be forced to give in to His demands, but he will never yield his heart to know Him as LORD. Now God will begin to harden Pharaoh's heart to show the gods of Egypt are worthless.

Commented [Paul Wall4]: Jeremiah 26:4-6 (ESV)
4 You shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you,
5 and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened,
6 then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.' "

Plague number six was boils on everyone in Egypt. In obedience to God's command ¹⁰ *"...they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast.* The plagues are now very personal. Chaos seems to have invaded Egypt to an extent that they had never been witnessed before. The gods of healing **Im-Hotep** and **Sekhemet** were proven to be powerless. God alone is the Great Physician. Every Egyptian individual and animal was afflicted. It reminds us of Job's affliction. Unfortunately, they did not respond like Job did. (Job 2:7-10)

Commented [Paul Wall5]: Job 2:7-10 (ESV)
7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.
8 And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.
9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die."
10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

It was another action full of irony, for this is the same action the priests would make with sacrificial ashes to pronounce a blessing on the people. God was

turning the action into a curse. And if the ash was from the brick kilns of the overworked Hebrews, it was even more meaningful. The Egyptians were reaping the suffering they had sown. (Job 4:8)

Commented [Paul Wall6]: Job 4:8 (ESV)
8 As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

Pharaoh kept asking his magicians to imitate the plagues with their tricks. They failed before, and now they can't even stand before Moses to try to perform their tricks. ¹² *But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.*

The Lord stepped in and hardened Pharaoh's heart. That tells me Pharaoh would have given in. He would have let them go out of desperation, but his heart would not have changed. God was not done. Does God have a right to harden the heart of the unrepentant? Of course He does! (Job 23:13) He is not willing that any perish, but He knows that Pharaoh will never turn to God. God is revealing Himself to Pharaoh and to Egypt. If hardening Pharaoh's unrepentant heart brings a greater revelation, so be it! (See verse 16)

Commented [Paul Wall7]: Job 23:13 (NIV)
13 "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases.

God said, ¹⁴ *For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.* God is warning, "Now I'm really going to let you have it with plagues on your heart!" Translators should just leave it "heart" instead of "you yourself" (ESV) Egyptians believed the heart of Pharaoh was the foundation of their society and the source of human progress.

Commented [Paul Wall8]: Preaching the Word, Exodus Chapter 24

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart speaks to the hiddenness of God question. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart revealed God's power and authority to the world. This is happening so that the world may know there is none like God in all the earth. (1Samuel 4:8) Bow your knee Pharaoh! Worship God all you ends of the earth! He'll have no other gods before Him! (Exodus 20:2-3)

Commented [Paul Wall9]: 1 Samuel 4:8 (NIV)
8 Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the desert.

But is that fair? Here is what is fair: ¹⁵ *For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth.* Fair would be for God to say, "This evil man won't stop abusing my children, so he and all his children are dead!" That's fair! How dare Pharaoh exalt himself above God! How dare he refuse a command of God again and again! (Joshua 23:16)

Commented [Paul Wall10]: Exodus 20:2-3 (ESV)
2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

God goes on to say, ¹⁶ *But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.* God is having mercy and patience upon Pharaoh in not obliterating him so that God's might and power, mercy and love, may be proclaimed in all the earth, so that God is not hidden, so that men might know Him.

Commented [Paul Wall11]: Joshua 23:16 (ESV)
16 if you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you."

We read this story today and if we are honest we see the same tendencies in us that we see in Pharaoh and his advisors: Is it really history? Did it really happen just like that? Maybe it was some natural phenomenon? Give me a break! God revealed Himself in the plagues of Egypt. Let us not harden our hearts or God may end up hardening them further to reveal His glory through our stubborn refusal to

believe! He is God Almighty. Get used to it because that fact will never change! (Malachi 3:6)

Commented [Paul Wall12]: Malachi 3:6 (ESV)
6 "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

Plague number seven was hail like they had never seen. God is now giving the Egyptians a chance to show their fear of God and to begin to pull out of their culture. This was a plague on the sky goddess Nut who was the mother of the sun god Ra. She was supposed to protect Egypt from destruction that came from the heavens. ¹⁹ *Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them.* " " "

That must have really angered Pharaoh. God is really asking people to make a decision between God and the Egyptian gods including Pharaoh. Pharaoh can't order his servants and animals in or it would show his inability to do anything about the plagues. He was caught in his own trap and had to plead with his gods as a last resort. (Deuteronomy 4:7)

Commented [Paul Wall13]: Deuteronomy 4:7 (ESV)
7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

Skeptics ask where the animals came from if they all died in plague 5. Plague 5 says all the animals **in the field** died. The ones that were in shelters would have lived and may now be in the fields, not to mention the ones they may have purchased from the Hebrews.

The hail wiped out everything but didn't fall in Goshen. Pharaoh called for Moses. How did Moses get to the palace? Did he walk in divine protection?

²⁷ *Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, "This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. ²⁸ Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer."* One of Egypt's worship songs declared their Sun god Right and that he fought against Wrong. Pharaoh was confessing he was on the wrong side! This is what we call a false conversion. Just because a person says the words does not mean that their heart has been changed. You can say the right words until the cows come home (pun intended). In this case they aren't coming home. The hail killed them! Pharaoh's heart is unchanged.

Moses said he would stop it so that Pharaoh *"might know that the earth is the LORD's"*. Even in the stopping of the plagues at God's timing showed God is sovereign over all things. (Romans 2:4) The ending of the plagues was just as instructive as the plagues. God allows chaos and creates peace, not Pharaoh!

Commented [Paul Wall14]: Romans 2:4 (ESV)
4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Then Moses declared that even though he is stopping the plagues, he knows Pharaoh and his servants don't yet fear the LORD. Why? The next verse tells us. Two kinds of wheat had not yet sprouted. Pharaoh could still see a way out. There was hope the nation wouldn't starve. He is still stupid enough, hard hearted enough, to think he can go on resisting God because there is another crop yet to come up.

Now you may think, I wouldn't have been so dumb, but just think how many times and ways the LORD had to get your attention before you finally surrendered your heart. Maybe you weren't as bad as me. I had to get hit over the head with a 2x4 again and again and again. Even then I had to see it illustrated in others' lives over and over so that I really began to sense the fear of the Lord. Still, pride and the flesh tempt me to think I might be able to slide in this area or that and the Holy Spirit has to remind me of how stupid it is to even consider those thoughts for a moment. (John 16:8) Thank God that He is not hidden but constantly pursues us to save us from this fallen world! (Galatians 1:4)

Commented [Paul Wall15]: John 16:8 (ESV)
8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. God let up the pressure, and Pharaoh hardened his heart. It's as if God gave him one more chance to reconsider. God didn't do it this time. He did it again to himself. He is beyond hope.

Commented [Paul Wall16]: Galatians 1:4 (ESV)
4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

He had crossed that line. Now listen to what God declared. *¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them,* From here on out every plague will end with God hardening Pharaoh's heart. God will finish showing all the signs necessary to prove to Egypt and the world that He is the LORD.

God went on to tell Moses that the other purpose is that Moses may tell his descendents of the greatness of God. (Deuteronomy 4:9) That is what we are doing right now. We are seeing there is none like God. God wanted Moses to know with total conviction that He is Almighty God.

Commented [Paul Wall17]: Deuteronomy 4:9 (ESV)
9 "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—

Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh again to announce the eighth plague. But they have a question from the LORD for him. *"How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?"* That is the question that confronts every unbeliever and every backsliding Christian. Sin is exalting our self above our Creator. It is declaring that we have a right to call the shots. Like so many people, Pharaoh just can't admit that he isn't god. He's hoping against hope that he can somehow pull off this confrontation with God.

The eighth plague is a locust swarm that will devour everything not destroyed by the hail. Some of the largest locust swarms have been estimated to be as large as 10 billion insects. A swarm can be as big as 1000 square kilometers and rise a kilometer into the sky. Each one eats their weight in plant material every day. Pharaoh had a night to think it over, but his officials didn't want to take the chance.

⁷ Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "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 understand that Egypt is ruined?" This was a desperate plea as they could have suffered for suggesting Pharaoh was not able to stop Moses or any god. They had seen enough. They cost was too great. They didn't surrender their hearts, but their heads told them they were doomed if they resisted further.

Pharaoh had an idea that the Hebrews would not be returning. The request was no longer for three days, but to let them go. So Pharaoh asked who was going. (Joshua 6:25) Moses answered, "All of us!" Pharaoh demanded that only the men leave to go worship. Time for the locusts to descend! They covered the ground and ate every green thing. The locust headed god, **Senehem** was shown to be a vain thing to worship.

Commented [Paul Wall18]: Joshua 6:25 (ESV)
25 But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Once again Pharaoh pleaded for mercy and promised to let the people go. Once again he went back on his word. The LORD hardened his heart. It was time for plague number 9.

The most revered of all Egyptian gods was the sun god, **Amon-Ra**. Pharaoh was said to be his son, even his incarnation. Songs of praise were lifted to him for bringing light to each day. ²¹ *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt."* For three days no one could see a thing. What does it mean that the darkness could be felt? Sounds like a line out of a horror movie. Apparently no light of any kind shone for everyone was forced to stay where they were for the duration. (Genesis 1:3-4) That is supernatural! For the Egyptians, this was the most unsettling plague yet!

Commented [Paul Wall19]: Genesis 1:3-4 (ESV)
3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

²⁴ *Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind."* He made one last attempt to make sure his slaves would return by asking that their flocks and herds stay behind. Moses didn't budge. Pharaoh is in no place to bargain. ²⁷ *But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.*

Pharaoh made a last ditch effort to end the cycle of plagues and demands. ²⁸ *Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die."* ²⁹ *Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again."*

Earlier, Moses may have feared that warning, but now he knows it is merely Pharaoh sealing his own fate. If he would not see Moses, he could not ask for mercy from God. (Proverbs 27:22)

Commented [Paul Wall20]: Proverbs 27:22 (ESV)
22 Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him.

We can't avoid God's demands on our life. We can avoid his messengers. We can refuse to read the Bible. We can avoid time in prayer, but His demands are still there. He must have first place. His children must worship and serve Him. They must come out of the world. They must make a journey through the wilderness of life to the Promised Land. (1Peter 2:9)

Commented [Paul Wall21]: 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)
9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

If you really think God is hidden, I'd challenge you to ask in sincerity that if He is real, that He reveal Himself to you, only do not harden your heart when He answers that prayer.

Questions:

1 Is God hidden?

2 Who hardened Pharaoh's heart in the first five plagues?

3 Why was ash used in plague 6?

4 Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Is that fair?

5 What was changing in plague 7?

6 What is a false conversion?

7 Why did God stop the hail?

8 How are we tempted to harden our heart?

9 What god did darkness address? Implications?

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