

THE PASSOVER, PART 1

EXODUS 11

The last judgment or plague inflicted on Egypt would be the death of the firstborn son in every family not protected by the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of all the residences in Egypt. This judgment has tremendous significance for not only the Jewish people but for Christians as well. Every time we participate in the Lord's Supper, we need to realize the Lord was participating in the Passover. Our remembrance of Him as memorialized in the Last Supper has its roots in this Jewish Feast which, in turn, is the Jewish memorial of the Passover preceding the Exodus. Christians are not remembering the Jewish deliverance out of Egypt, we are remembering the Lord Jesus Christ who was pictured in the Passover as the lamb slain whose blood on the doorposts provided the means through which lives were spared.

The blood of Christ is an important concept in Christian thought and this goes all the way back to the Garden when God killed an animal to provide the clothing for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21. Blood sacrifices were codified in the Mosaic Law as a picture of the work of Christ on the cross. Several times in the New Testament, Paul referenced the importance of the blood Christ shed on the cross.

Ephesians 1:7 ⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Romans 3:23–25 ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith....

It is obvious the concept of sacrificial bloodletting shed in the act of substitutionary death in order to preserve life is a very important doctrine, and that is an important element presented in the story of the Passover.

In this judgment, Moses and Aaron do nothing. Moses told Pharaoh what was coming, but that was the extent of his involvement. God alone would work this work that only God could do righteously and justly and that is to take the lives of the firstborn Egyptians. There was no opportunity for Pharaoh's repentance or change of mind in order to avoid this particular judgment. Only after this judgment was executed would the people be freed.

Exodus 11:1 ¹Now the LORD said to Moses, "One more plague [פָּגַעַת] I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.

Moses had not yet left the presence of Pharaoh; that is recorded in verse 8. Apparently, this word from the Lord came during the time Egypt was enveloped in the judgment of darkness and delivered at that time. Moses therefore knew what the last judgment would be when he was summoned to Pharaoh's court the last time during the judgment of darkness.

God's plan for taking the Israelites out of Egypt was about to be concluded. Four hundred years earlier, he sent Jacob and his family into Egypt where he could form them into a nation capable of going into the Promised Land, settling it, and defending it. Now he was taking them out of Egypt as His people whose

purpose was to be a people through whom God would reveal Himself to the world over and above the created order.

To that point in time, Moses did not know when God would be finished exercising His judgment on the Egyptians and the Israelites would be freed. He only knew it was going to happen, but now God was telling His prophet the people would go free at the conclusion of this final assault on Egypt. Not only will Pharaoh let them go free, but the king will drive them totally out of the country. God had twice before told Moses what was going to happen and the purpose for His work among them, but He didn't tell His prophet the number of judgments nor did He tell him when He would complete His work. The first time God sketched out His plan was at the burning bush.

Exodus 3:19–22 ¹⁹But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. ²⁰So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. ²¹I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. ²²But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians."

The second time was just before God began His judgments on Pharaoh and on Egypt.

Exodus 7:3–5 ³But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

What God told Moses in the beginning has now reached its climax. Pharaoh, under the tremendous compulsion these judgments have exercised on his will, reached the point where he was going to let the people go—whether he liked it or not. Subsequent events would prove he really didn't like it very much because he attempted to recapture the Israelites and return them to slavery. Ultimately, that backfired on the king and led to the destruction of his army, but all that is yet to come. Pharaoh had been shown to be an impotent, helpless man, not god, when dealing with the reality of the omnipotent, Creator God of the universe. His gods had been shown to be incompetent and totally incapable of doing anything to help him. His country had been demolished and his people had been thoroughly demoralized. They thought they were the premier nation in the world and they had been reduced to what we might today call third world status. Their country had been destroyed worse than any invading army could destroy it.

The word translated plague in verse 1, **נִגַּע**, can mean an assault, a blow or strike that can cause a wound or trauma from physical impact. It refers to a physical blow, or to the punishment an overlord gives a subject. This word is used in Isaiah 53:8 to refer to the stroke Messiah would suffer for the transgressions of the people. Interestingly, the word is not used in Exodus to describe any of the previous judgments, but it describes this particular judgment which, considering that death at the hand of God is the end result, seems to be appropriate. This judgment is an assault on Pharaoh and on his people. Whether or not God ac-

tually struck people dead with a physical blow, I'm uncertain about that. The word certainly indicates that, but we also know that He who gives the breath of life can also remove it simply by giving the command in the exercise of His divine will.

Not only was the country's infrastructure and agricultural productivity demolished, but the Israelites were going to be given the wealth of Egypt in order to get rid of them.

Exodus 11:2–3 ²Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles [כֶּלִי] of silver and articles [כֶּלִי] of gold." ³The LORD gave the people favor [חֵן] in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses *himself* was greatly esteemed [גָּדוֹל מְאֹד] in the land of Egypt, *both* in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

God told Moses this was going to happen in Exodus 3:22 when God first called Moses at the burning bush. Clothing was included in that verse as well. The point is, the Egyptians were so beaten down, so afraid of the Israelites, Moses, and their God, so horrified at what had happened to them, and probably sick at the very sight of them, they wanted them gone and they were willing to give away their wealth to get them out of there. The people were afraid they would all be dead if they didn't kick the Israelites out of Egypt.

Exodus 12:33 ³³The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead."

There is an indication in all this that Pharaoh's stubbornness was not the people's stubbornness in the end. Pharaoh thought he was a god and his proud heart would not bow down to Yahweh. In his pride, he was willing to destroy the

lives of his people, but the people, devastated at the destruction Israel's God had accomplished at their expense, knew they wanted the Israelites out of there. Some of them almost certainly recognized their gods were of no use to them while the God of the Hebrews was putting on awesome displays of destructive power. It didn't take a lot of intelligence to figure that out; it had been literally pounded into their heads. It was going to take even more drastic action to convince Pharaoh to let the people go.

Articles, *קְלִי*, means objects, vessels, utensils; things or articles of many general shapes or sizes and materials. Many commentaries restrict the meaning of this word to jewelry and this may be a legacy of the King James Version which translates the word as "jewels." It can mean jewelry, but it shouldn't be restricted to jewelry. The Egyptians had many things made of gold and silver they handed over and what they were the text doesn't say. The text also doesn't say it, but the gold and silver may well have included currency. The Egyptians owed the Israelites back wages for centuries of slave labor and God insured they were paid in full. They plundered the Egyptians.

Exodus 12:35–36 ³⁵Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; ³⁶and the LORD had given the people favor [grace] in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered [*נָצַל*] the Egyptians.

The word plunder, *נָצַל*, means to recover, to spoil; it is the taking of objects from another's power. Recovery speaks to the wages the Israelites were owed; spoils refers to the near total, if not complete, acquisition of the wealth of Egypt. To

take the spoils of a vanquished enemy implies that everything of value was appropriated, but in this case, the Israelites didn't have to take their gold and silver from them by force; the Egyptians willingly gave it up. The wealth of Egypt would be used to build the Tabernacle and to support the people when they started building the nation of Israel.

God gave the people favor or grace in the sight of the Egyptians, Favor, חֵן, means favor or grace; it is the performance of acts which display one's fondness or compassion for another. This grace was extended to the Israelites by God through the transfer of wealth from the Egyptians to the Israelites. God gave grace to the Israelites; the Egyptians were simply the vehicle of his grace. It would not be in accordance with the overall context to suggest the Egyptians had grown fond of the Israelites and were extending grace to them because they liked them or wanted to help them. They may have developed some grudging respect for the Israelites because of their relationship to Yahweh, their powerful God the Egyptians were powerless to withstand, but if so, it was respect developed out of fear and hatred for their power rather than admiration. They were sick of seeing them and they wanted them gone and they were essentially being caused by God to pay them to go. The TANAKH translates this sentence, "The Lord disposed the Egyptians favorably toward the people."

The people also greatly esteemed Moses. Two words are used here. גָּבֹל means great and it emphasizes the importance, size, or significance of something. מְאֹד means greatly, great abundance, might, or power and exceedingly.

The Egyptian people realized the connection Moses had with this powerful God that was operating in their midst to free the Israelites from captivity and they recognized the significance of that relationship. Even Pharaoh recognized that because he asked Moses to pray for him to Yahweh several times with favorable results. In other words, when Pharaoh asked Moses to pray to Yahweh to stop a particular judgment, Moses prayed, and God stopped the plague. That did not escape Pharaoh's notice. That they respected him as a great leader is doubtful; they just knew he had a powerful connection to Yahweh that neither Pharaoh nor their priests had with their gods. He was a major and significant figure in Egypt at that time. Our English definition of esteem means to respect and admire someone and that certainly does not reflect either the Hebrew language or the context. The people of Egypt, less Pharaoh, recognized what a mighty prophet of God Moses was and how he was serving a mighty God the likes of which they had never experienced and they respected that, but whether or not they liked that and liked Moses is another question altogether. Many commentaries misread this and think the Egyptians, including Pharaoh's officials, developed "positive feelings" (suggested in *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*) for Moses, but the overall context works against that concept. The Egyptians had grown weary and fearful and they were willing to do just about anything to get Moses and the Israelites out of there. In that way, they were the vehicles of God's grace to the Israelites. I wouldn't concede that the Egyptian people respected and esteemed Moses and the Israelites in the way we use

those words in our language. They simply recognized the significance of Moses as a mighty prophet of Yahweh who was working on behalf of the Israelites and they developed a fear of Him that was certainly warranted.

Then Moses announced to Pharaoh what the final judgment on Egypt would be that would result in freedom for the Israelites slaves.

Exodus 11:4–8 ⁴Moses said, “Thus says the LORD [יהוה], ‘About midnight [לִּלְיָהּ] I am going out [יוֹצֵאת] into the midst of Egypt, ⁵and all the firstborn [בְּכֹרִים] in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶Moreover, there shall be a great cry [צְעָעָה] in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again. ⁷But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’ ⁸All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, ‘Go out, you and all the people who follow you,’ and after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger [חֲרֵי אֵף].

It is very common for Christians to refer to the Being who brought death to the firstborn as an angel of death or something similar. However, it was not an angel who went throughout Egypt killing the firstborn; it was Yahweh. Whether that is God the Father or God the Son, isn't specified. My personal conviction is God the Son is called Yahweh in the Old Testament just as God the Father is called Yahweh, and it is the Son who personally interacts with mankind often indicated by “the angel of the Lord,” but not in this case. In verse 4, it is Moses speaking the Word of God to Pharaoh, and Yahweh says, “About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt...” He never said He was sending an angel to do this work. This is also evident in chapter 12:23, 29. In 12:23, it says “... The Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians” and in verse 29, it says “... the Lord

struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt..." In all three of these verses, the Lord is יהוה which we pronounce Yahweh. Going out, יוצאת, in this context means just that: going out, but it indicates the intimate involvement of Yahweh as He enters into human history to exercise judgment against a specific segment of humanity in rebellion against Him. There is an added element in that He is identifying Himself to the Egyptians, the Israelites, and the world that they may know who He is.

God is the Creator of everything that exists and everything belongs to Him. We are all familiar with the metaphor of the potter and the clay. The potter can do as he wishes with what he makes out of the clay. He can make a beautiful vase or jar or he can make a spittoon out of the same lump of clay. He can allow his work to continue to exist and fulfill its purpose or he can destroy it and discard it for any reason whatsoever whether it is somehow defective or not. In the same way, the God who gives the life that belongs to Him can take that same life that belongs to Him in order to fulfill His higher purposes whatever they are. It is not our privilege to know nor our right to know these things apart from the revelation He has provided us in His Word. That revelation includes the fact that He gives life and He takes life, if it suits His purposes. That is the situation presented to us in this Passover pericope. It is God's prerogative to take the life of the firstborn in order to advance His cause and that is exactly what He did.

In all the previous judgments, God used what appeared to be, in some cases, natural phenomena in unnatural quantities to bring about His will. In this case, God Himself was going to do the work of this judgment and there was

nothing about it that appeared to be natural except people dying in large numbers throughout the land. If only a few people had died during that night, it possibly could have been passed off as normal; people did die every day in the normal course of events, after all. But they didn't die in the middle of the night or in their sleep in those numbers and they didn't ever die as predicted by the prophecy preached to Pharaoh by the prophet of God as they did here. The deaths of all these people and cattle could not be attributed to a specific illness because that's not what killed them. Their lives were instantaneously terminated by God whether by physical assault or simply the withdrawal of their life's breath, we are not informed. This was a totally supernatural act of God without any suggestion of a naturalistic cause.

Liberal theologians use this pericope, among many others, to claim the God of the Old Testament is a bloodthirsty, vengeful, murderous God, while the Christ of the New Testament is a God of love and only love and is therefore superior to the God of the Old Testament. Of course, this is untrue. Jesus is the God of the Old Testament as well as the God of the New Testament as is the Father and the Holy Spirit, and God does not, cannot, change. He is the God of love, but He is also the God of justice and righteousness and we, as sinful human beings, have no right to question Him in any way. As I noted a few minutes ago, I believe God the Son is Yahweh of Exodus 11 and 12 who goes throughout Egypt and performs this judgment and if that is true, then this caricature of God as

bloodthirsty and murderous is defeated from the outset because Jesus did it and He supposedly is the God who is all love and only love all the time.

Why was this done in the middle of the night? They didn't reckon time then as we do now, so we probably shouldn't think of this happening at midnight meaning 12 A.M. The Hebrew, לַיְלָה הַתְּשִׁיטָה, means middle of the night. Night was the time that people, both the Egyptians and the Israelite slaves, would be gathered together in their homes. This insured the Israelites could be protected from the judgment by obeying the Lord's instructions for the Passover; they needed to be in their homes. It is also interesting to note the night this would occur was not specified at the time, but it could not have been the night Moses spoke these words to Pharaoh. In Exodus 12:3, the instructions included the order to acquire the Passover Lamb on the tenth of the month, but it was not to be sacrificed until the fourteenth of the month. It would have to have been the night of the fifteenth when the plague would strike Egypt.

Does the concept of firstborn refer to only males or does it include females? The assumption has always been it refers to males. Firstborn, בְּכוֹר, is a masculine noun meaning firstborn. It can refer to the firstborn in general including animals. There do seem to be some biblical and cultural reasons for thinking this does, in fact, refer to males.

First, in the culture of the time, females were not considered to be of any real worth. Firstborn males succeeded their fathers as the head of the family and the clan or tribe, or, in the case of royalty, as the monarch. Males inherited their

father's property with the eldest receiving a double portion (Dt. 21:17). Firstborn males were entitled to their father's blessing (Gen. 27), to preferential treatment (Gen. 43:33) within the family, and they represented special qualities of life and strength (Gen. 49:3). In Exodus 4:22, God referred to Israel as His firstborn son to indicate that although they were the youngest of nations, specifically created by God to be a nation exclusively belonging to Him, they would be in a position of leadership and privilege over all the other nations in history.

This judgment seems to be parallel to and retribution for the slaughter of the Hebrew male babies at the time of Moses' birth. At that time, only the male babies were put to death (Ex. 1:16, 22). If the parallel between the two events is correct, then it is reasonable to conclude that the firstborn Egyptian males were the subject of this judgment.

Subsequent events during the Exodus itself suggest that male children were the subject of this judgment. In Exodus 13:2, the Lord said every firstborn of every womb, man and animal, belonged to Him and in Exodus 13:15, the males of the first offspring of every womb, not the females, were to be sacrificed to the Lord. In Exodus 22:29, 34:20, the Lord said the firstborn sons must be given to Him. In Numbers 3:40-51, the Lord consecrated the Levitical clan to God as substitution for the firstborn males of Israel. If all of this relates back to the Passover and to sparing the lives of the firstborn Israelite children during the final judgment against Egypt, then male children are the subject. That seems to be the most likely view to take.

Did this judgment strike the firstborn of all ages of every family or was it restricted to the Egyptian male children who had not yet fathered children of their own? It was probably restricted to the younger generation. For example, Pharaoh was probably a firstborn son and he did not die in this judgment, but his son did.

In the introduction to Exodus, I suggested the most likely Pharaoh of the Exodus was Amenhotep II. He was succeeded by Thutmose IV who was not his eldest son; therefore, it is likely Amenhotep's eldest son was the child of Pharaoh struck down in this final judgment against Egypt.

The death of Pharaoh's firstborn would have been a massive blow to the Egyptian worldview. They thought Egypt was the specially created land and the premier nation serving the premier gods of the universe and all of that was being proven untrue. The people were already thoroughly rattled by judgments they had experienced over the past few months that turned their world upside down. Now they have a child they consider to be at least a god in waiting, if not a god already, die at the hands of this God of the Israelites, Yahweh, Moses has been proclaiming in their midst. Everything they thought they knew about life and religion was being proved wrong. The NET Bible had a good explanation for how they viewed their god king. "[T]he firstborn of Pharaoh was most important. Pharaoh was considered a god, the son of Re, the sun god, for the specific purpose of ruling over Re's chief concern, the land of Egypt. For the purpose of re-creation, the supreme god assumed the form of the living king and gave seed

which was to become the next king and the next 'son of Re.' Moreover, the Pharaoh was the incarnation of the god Horus, a falcon god whose province was the heavens. Horus represented the living king who succeeded the dead king Osiris. Every living king was Horus; every dead king Osiris. To strike any firstborn was to destroy the heir, who embodied the hopes and aspirations of the Egyptians, but to strike the firstborn of Pharaoh was to destroy this cardinal doctrine of the divine kingship of Egypt." [The Net Bible, Exodus 11:5, n. 1, p. 141]. You can see what a serious blow this would be to the very core of reality as the Egyptians saw it. They must have been reeling from confusion, shock, and fear, not to mention despair at the extensive destruction they witnessed both personally and nationally. Their productivity was gone and they were so desperate to get rid of the Israelites, they were giving them their wealth to get them to leave. Finally, their firstborn sons died enmasse and they were losing their minds with grief and fear.

Social status didn't matter. From the most powerful family in the land to the lowliest of citizens, no family would be spared this judgment. Cattle were not spared either. This may have been because of the reverence people had for the Apis bull and Hathor the goddess of the heavens.

There would be mourning in Egypt to a degree that had never been before nor would ever be again. Cry, צַעֲקָה, refers to a cry of distress, an outcry, and wailing sounds which often indicate sorrow, despair, and pain. The word frequently describes a response to the absence of righteousness or a response to

the imposition of judgment. The latter, the imposition of judgment and the reaction to it, is clearly the situation in this case. Certainly, we can identify with the pain these people would be feeling over the loss of their children. This judgment reached the length and breadth of the nation. Even in the face of other disastrous calamities the nation had previously faced, not every family would be touched, but the entire nation was touched by this judgment. Consider that even after a massive military defeat, the number of soldiers lost in relation to the population of the nation would have been relatively small, but this judgment was huge in terms of the number of people touched by it. According to Exodus 12:30, "there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead." Mourning in the cultures of this time and place was practically an art form. They really displayed their grief. Amos 5:16 refers to "professional mourners of lamentation." They would hire people to loudly express the grief they felt, although in this case that was hardly necessary since everyone was in mourning and everyone was feeling this grief. There wasn't any pretense or show about this great cry throughout the land; it was real and it was heartfelt.

This is the same word used to characterize the outcry of the Israelites when they were under the yoke of Egyptian slavery in Exodus 3:7, 9. Concerning the Israelites, this was a situation where the word was characterizing the absence of righteousness resulting in suffering, but this cry was ultimately acknowledged by God and He responded to it. God's response to their cry was the imposition of the judgments Egypt experienced as retribution for their treatment of the Israel-

ites for so long, but they also served as persuasive acts to convince the Egyptians to let the people go. Just as the Israelites cried a great cry under the burden of slavery including the murder of their male children, so the Egyptians cried a great cry in response to the death of their children.

God had Moses inform Pharaoh that once again the judgment would not affect the Israelites; only the Egyptians would experience it. There is an interesting idiom in verse 7 translated “but against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not ever bark...” It literally refers to sharpening the tongue and it is relating the idea of a dog's angry growling. The idea is that not even a dog will growl at them or bite them much less the idea they will suffer the harm about to be inflicted on the Egyptians. No one will be harmed among the Israelites and their cattle will suffer no losses. This is not normal; there had to be supernatural intervention in order to keep the Israelites from suffering under the judgments as the Egyptians were suffering. You would think Pharaoh would catch on to this; it had been a pattern for some time. Pride and arrogance can get in the way of learning sometimes.

Moses also told Pharaoh, on the authority of God's Word, that the officials of his court would go to him, bow before him as beggars pleading with him to leave Egypt with the Israelites. He would not have to return to Pharaoh's court to hear these words; they would come to him and only then would he be leaving Egypt. The same people who bowed before Pharaoh on a daily basis would now bow before Moses. It is all of Pharaoh's servants who would do this. By this

time, every citizen of Egypt but Pharaoh had apparently had enough and wanted the Israelites out of there. These proud, arrogant, pagans would be on their knees before the man of God, begging him to leave.

Moses left in “hot anger” (תָּרִי אָף). Hot, תָּרִי, means fierceness, intensity, or burning; it is to be very angry, implying that the basal response makes one hot and the face flush. Anger, אָף, primarily means nose, nostril, or face, but when used with תָּרִי it denotes anger. By the use of breathing, emotions may be expressed. When used in the sense of anger, refers to the snorting of an angry person and the flaring of the nostrils. The two words used together, refer to the emotions being expressed in wrath and anger. Presumably, Moses was angered by Pharaoh's intransigence throughout this whole ordeal, but he may also have been angered by Pharaoh's death threat in Exodus 10:28. There is also the possibility that Moses was angered over the unnecessary deaths that were going to result from Pharaoh's refusal to let the people go. We know that Moses long ago identified with the Jewish people of his birth, but we also know he was raised in Pharaoh's court. The woman who raised him was an Egyptian. He certainly had Egyptian friends all those years ago. He had no innate hostility towards the Egyptians and he certainly knew the deaths of the firstborn could have been avoided. Finally, it could be that throughout this ordeal, Moses had exhibited the patience of God. Now that God's patience had run out and His wrath was about to be fully exercised and completed, Moses' patience was at an end as well. No one can say for certain what the source of his anger was, but any one or all

of these suggestions are possibilities. Moses didn't leave Pharaoh's presence when he was ordered to do so in Exodus 10:28, but he left now of his own accord after he had finished relaying the message from Yahweh that Pharaoh still needed to hear.

Exodus 11:9–10 ⁹Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt." ¹⁰Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

Pharaoh continued to be stubborn and obstinate and this culminated in the death of the firstborn in Egypt; his culpability in the Exodus account is firmly fixed. It is also fair to say that God, who is omniscient and knows the end from the beginning, had taken every detail into account and it was all consistent with His overall plan to take the Israelites out of Egypt. Part of the plan included insuring Pharaoh operated to the end in the way he was inclined to act all along. Even after all the miraculous events God produced in order to judge Egypt, Pharaoh would not allow the people to leave.

The Ipuwer Papyrus which seems to be the record of an eyewitness to the Exodus story seemingly writes of the last judgment. It also records the appropriation of the wealth of Egypt.

"He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere" (Ip. 2:13).

"It is groaning throughout the land, mingled with lamentations" (Ip. 3:14).

“Gold and lapis lazuli, silver and malachite, carnelian and bronze ... are fastened on the necks of female slaves” (Ip. 3:2).¹

Other texts have been found that refer to the death of the firstborn.

“that day of slaying the firstborn” (Pre-Mosaic Pyramid Texts, par. 339 a-b).

“that night of slaying the firstborn” (Pre-Mosaic Coffin Texts, VI: 178).

“that night ... that day of the slaying of the firstborn” (Pre-Mosaic Coffin Texts, II: 163 b-c).²

Even this miraculous plague has an anti-supernatural, rationalistic explanation. It is so far-fetched, it is laughable, but people want so desperately to believe there is no God of the supernatural that they go to great lengths to try and explain it away.

In this rationalistic view, the water soaked the grain on the ground and that grain was also fouled by waste from the locust infestation. The desperate, hungry Egyptians gathered this grain and put it into the storage facilities which were very low in food supplies due to the months of plagues where it quickly spoiled producing mycotoxins. Because the firstborn sons were the most privileged, valued members of the family, the grain at the top of the bin which would have spoiled first was removed and fed to the firstborn. The rest of the family ate grain that was not on top that had yet to be contaminated with mycotoxins; therefore, they lived while only the firstborn son died. The firstborn ani-

¹ J. R. Church, “An Egyptian Description of the Exodus” in *Prophecy in the News*, June 2017, 13.

² Mordechai Gilula, “The Smiting of the Firstborn: An Egyptian Myth?” *Tel Aviv* 4 (1977), 94-95) quoted in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 2:370.

mals were also fed the contaminated grain on the top of the pile. These animals were also considered to be very special because they would have been used in the pagan sacrifices and for the priest's food. Therefore, these animals would have been fed before the other animals and subsequently they died from eating the poisoned grain. The other animals were fed uncontaminated grain that was lower in the bin under the grain on top that contained the mycotoxins.

His reasoning concerning the animals is based on God's directions concerning firstborn animals and their importance in Judaism as revealed in Exodus 13:2, Deuteronomy 15:19-20 and Numbers 18:17-18. Of course, this reasoning is after the fact and cannot be applied *ex post facto* to the situation arising out of the death of the firstborn in the last judgment. It's actually just the opposite; the later revelation flows from what happened in the Exodus. This scientist admits he could find no correlation in any Egyptian literature that identified a correlation between God's instructions for the Israelites and the religious practices of the Egyptians, but he makes that connection anyway and then bases his theory on that faulty connection. His reasoning is that the Israelites regarded the firstborn male animals special; therefore, the Egyptians must have considered their firstborn animals special as well.³

³ Colin J. Humphreys, *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 136-143.