

KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, PART 4

EXODUS 10

Chapter 10 began with a command from the Lord for Moses to once again appear in Pharaoh's presence.

Exodus 10:1–2 ¹Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, ²and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery [עָלַל] of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

At this point, God was hardening the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants; they have had hardened hearts all along, but now it suited God's purposes to insure their hard hearts would continue to defy God in order that He would finish His program for freeing the Israelites from slavery and take them to the land of Canaan. It was not only Pharaoh who had a continually hard heart; the officials of his court had also continued to have hardened hearts against Yahweh although they seemed to be wavering towards the end while Pharaoh stood firm. The point of this hardening is possibly suggesting that the opportunity for Pharaoh to submit to Yahweh has passed and the full fury of God was going to be unleashed on this stubborn, pagan tyrant. God's purposes were going to be accomplished and He would be glorified because Pharaoh's heart was continually in rebellion against God to the point that God insured his heart was going to continue down this path until God's will was accomplished. Romans 1 in total, but 1:24, 28 specifically suggest how and why this can happen.

Romans 1:24, 28 ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.... ²⁸And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

At some point, God simply allows people to go their own way when He has been continually rejected in order to allow them to reap what they have sown. It is never too late to repent or change one's mind until physical death, but it gets harder and harder to believe as a person progresses through life.

As we previously noted, one of the major purposes of God's work in Egypt was to authenticate Himself to the Israelites. God specifically revealed the authenticating purpose of the signs He performed one of which was to let the Israelites know that He was Yahweh. At that point in the nation's history, the Israelites really didn't know God. They had been in Egypt nearly four hundred years exposed to Egyptian paganism. Abraham and Isaac were long dead. Jacob and Joseph had died in Egypt many years before. They had to learn the identity of their God. Subsequent events during the Exodus, particularly the episode with the golden calf (Ex. 32:1-10), exposed how deeply they had been affected by and embraced the idolatry they were surrounded by in Egypt. One thing they had not forgotten in Egypt was circumcision, the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Joshua 5:5), so they hadn't completely forgotten their heritage. Circumcision wasn't so much a sign of relationship with God to them, it was a sign of inclusion into the Hebrew clan within the family of Abraham. This may have served

to keep them set apart from the Egyptians and to keep them together as a people group.

The ultimate purpose for God's signs was to educate the Israelites across the generations from that point forward that He is Yahweh. This once great nation, Egypt, was helpless in the face of the work of the Creator God, the God of Israel.

Mockery, *עָלַל*, means to inflict, deal with, abuse, treat severely. It means to do something which causes pain or suffering to another, justified or not, with the focus that this is done with considerable zeal or energy. Our English translation, mockery, suggests derision or ridicule and that can be the meaning of the word in this verb form, although in this context that seems to be a secondary consideration. The RSV translates it "made sport of" and the NET Bible translates it "made fools of." The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon defines this verb form to mean "how I have made a toy of Egypt," but they add, "esp. deal wantonly, ruthlessly with." There may be an element of toying with or making sport of Egypt, but the primary consideration seems to be the incredible amount of damage and punishment God inflicted on Egypt. Considering that damage, I think the HCSB has the best understanding of the use of the word in this context by translating it "how severely I dealt with." Cassuto has it, "how I dealt ruthlessly with the Egyptians"¹ and that also seems to be a better rendering considering the overall context concerning the judgments. God wasn't simply toying with or

¹ U. Cassuto *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1967), 123.

playing with them; He was destroying their way of life, removing their wealth, and changing them from a powerful nation to an impotent nation in terms of military might and international relationships. While they did recover somewhat, the effects of these judgments seem to play a role in the condition Egypt finds itself in to this day.

The point is, these miraculous, punishing miracles of God have been performed so the Israelites would come to know God and how omnipotent He is. Perhaps most importantly, they were to know He was Yahweh, the God of Israel, the Creator God of the universe.

To this point, seven judgments have befallen Egypt and there are three more to go. The next plague will be a plague of locusts. This is not an unheard of problem in the Middle East; it has happened in the past, it happens now, and it will happen again in the future. Actually, locust plagues happen around the world. What sets this plague apart from all the others, is the sheer magnitude of it. This plague of locusts will be far worse than any infestation at any other time in history. One description of a locust plague said they could be 10-12 miles in length, 4-5 miles wide, and so deep they can blot out the sun in that area.² That's a huge plague, but that is nothing when compared to the plague that covered the area in Egypt this will cover. One locust infestation in Africa began in about 1926, lasted 14 years, and devastated 5 million square miles of Africa.

² Merrill F. Unger, s.v. "animal kingdom, locusts" in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Chicago, Moody Press, 1988), 74.

They can cover small areas and they can cover large areas, but they destroy all the vegetation in their path.

It is a little unclear just what this insect is. Most people seem to think they are grasshoppers and some believe “locust” and “grasshoppers” are synonyms. An artist’s rendering of a desert locust looks just like a grasshopper to me and pictures of them certainly look like grasshoppers. Locust infestations can happen any time of the year, if conditions are favorable. They eat their body weight, about 2 grams, each day. One ton of locusts, which isn’t very many in terms of the magnitude of these plagues, eats the same amount in a day as 10 elephants or 25 camels or 2,500 people.³ They have a life cycle that begins with laying eggs in the ground, and a wingless stage when they are called “hoppers” in which they stay on the ground to move around and eat, and finally a winged stage where they can ride the winds wherever it takes them. This takes time. This plague came upon Egypt in full force in one day and stayed that way until it completely ended in one day. If this happened as the result of a natural process, eggs would have continued to hatch and the infestation would have gradually receded instead of abruptly ending all at once.

Exodus 10:3–6 ³Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble [עָנָה] yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve [עָבַד] Me. ⁴For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts [אַרְבֵּה] into your territory [גְּבוּל]. ⁵They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has escaped—what is left to you from the hail—and they will eat every tree which sprouts for you out of

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, 2004), 134.

the field. ⁶“Then your houses shall be filled and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, *something* which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day that they came upon the earth until this day.” And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

The request is once again to let the people go in order to serve (עֲבַד) their God, and once again Pharaoh knows this is a request to permanently leave Egypt. Yahweh is identified again as the God of the Hebrews. Pharaoh is obviously a very slow learner! He is warned that if he fails to let the people go, locusts will be unleashed on his territory, גְּבוּל, which is a subdivision of the nation. It is the same word used for the geographical extent of the infestation of frogs as opposed to the plague of gnats which was throughout the land of Egypt (אֶרֶץ (מִצְרַיִם). This seems to indicate the Nile River valley and the delta are the areas that will be affected by this plague because this is where the crops and the people are. Almost all the Egyptian population resided in the delta and within five miles of the Nile River channel at that time. Since there is nothing for locusts to eat out in the desert, the geographical limitation apparent in the word “territory” makes sense.

Humble, עָנָה, means to be afflicted, disturbed, or oppressed; to be in a state of feeling anxiety and distress. It also means to bow down, to humble oneself, to be humbled. In this verb form, it is used only four times in the Old Testament and the other three all refer to suffering or to being afflicted. This word seems to suggest God has been afflicting Pharaoh and his people with powerful, severe judgments which should have resulted in Pharaoh's recognition of

God's omnipotent power and divine nature and as a result he should be obediently answering God's request to let My people go rather than defiantly rejecting it. He should recognize that a King more powerful than he is demanding something of him and that he should obey. The end result is rather than Pharaoh humbling himself, God will humble him with judgments that will essentially destroy his kingdom. Even after all of God's wrath is finished and the Israelites are delivered, we don't know whether or not Pharaoh ever humbled himself or not. Given Pharaoh's mindset concerning his divinity and his absolute dictatorial powers, it's extremely doubtful.

The consequence for refusing God's request this time will be a plague of locusts. This plague will not look like any other plague of locusts in Egypt's history. The Egyptians did have a pagan deity named Senehem that was supposed to protect them from locust plagues, but the plague God sent would totally humiliate this god. They also had fertility gods for insuring good crops that were defeated by this plague. The bugs will be so thick the land will be completely covered. While that is probably not unheard of in any specific local area during locust infestations, this time the entire Nile River valley and the river delta will be carpeted by these insects. There will be so many of them in this plague that Egyptian homes will be filled with them. They will cover everything like a thick quilt; the land will not be visible. This had to completely disrupt any semblance of normal life; refuge could not be found even in one's home. This plague will destroy whatever vegetation is left in Egypt. Much of it was already destroyed in

the hail storm, but every last shred will be eaten by these voracious insects. Once that happens, starvation is a very real possibility for Pharaoh's people.

Even Pharaoh's advisors began to question Pharaoh's stubborn resistance to God's demands presented to him through God's prophets, Moses and Aaron. Actually, they recognized just how much God's judgements were destroying their country. Pharaoh's satanic heart wouldn't acknowledge it, but his servants could clearly see what was happening. At that point, they had no idea just how much worse it was destined to get before it was over.

Exodus 10:7 ⁷Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare [מִוֶּקֶשׁ] to us? Let the men go, that they may serve [עֲבֹד] the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed [אֶרֶץ]?"

What they apparently didn't yet understand was who was causing these judgements to fall upon them. They were blaming Moses. They acknowledged Yahweh was the God of the Israelites, but they hadn't put it all together yet.

Pharaoh's servants did understand what God meant when He said He wanted the people to serve Him. They knew this was a command to permanently release the Israelites which is why they urged Pharaoh to let the "men" go rather than men, women, and children altogether.

Snare, מִוֶּקֶשׁ, means ensnarement, entrapment; it refers to what captures and controls another as a figurative extension of a fowler's net or trap. The implication is that Moses is putting them into a predicament from which they will not be able to extricate themselves. That's true except it is not Moses doing it to them; it is the Creator God of the universe doing it to them. This is more than a

little ironic. The people who had ensnared the Israelites in bondage from which they were powerless to extricate themselves were now helpless in the face of God's judgments ensnaring them in a situation from which they could not extricate themselves.

Pharaoh's servants recognized the immense amount of destruction the nation had already undergone. Destroyed, אָבַד, means to destroy, annihilate, exterminate, or wipe out; it is to cause to destroy an object. What they didn't realize was just how much more they were going to suffer before Pharaoh finally relented and allowed Moses to take the Israelites and leave.

Exodus 10:8–11 ⁸So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God! Who are the ones that are going?" ⁹Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD." ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind. ¹¹Not so! Go now, the men *among you*, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desire." So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Perhaps Pharaoh's advisors knew more about the widespread damage done to Egypt than Pharaoh did, but that seems unlikely. These judgments had been all around Pharaoh's palace and even invaded it. He knew; he was simply doing what people do when they are serving Satan in all out rebellion against God.

More likely, Pharaoh, like so many tyrannical leaders, was so full of himself that he couldn't imagine anything or anyone defying and defeating him. Belshazzar partying away while the Persians were about to destroy his kingdom is an example (Dan. 5:1-31). Roman emperors ignored the dire straits their empire

was in when it was in decline and Hitler thought he could still win the war right up to the end when the Russians were in Berlin. Satanic deception is a powerful thing. We mustn't forget that Pharaoh thought himself to be god and that had to impact his ability to make good decisions. He thought he was making divine decisions when, in fact, he was making decisions that were the product of the fallen mind.

Apparently, Pharaoh's advisors prevailed upon him to relent and he brought Moses and Aaron back. He wasn't agreeing to let the people go, but he did tell Moses to go and serve His God. But when he asked Moses who would be going and Moses basically said everyone including flocks and herds, Pharaoh restricted it the men only. Pharaoh still knew this request was a statement that the Israelites were leaving the country and he wasn't about to allow that to happen. He accused Moses of plotting evil and basically said he would not let the people leave Egypt.

Exodus 10:12–15 ¹²Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt [אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם] for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, even all that the hail has left.” ¹³So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt [אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם], and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. ¹⁴The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt [אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם] and settled in all the territory [גְּבוּל] of Egypt; they were very numerous. There had never been so many locusts, nor would there be so many again. ¹⁵For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened [הִשְׁקֵד]; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt [אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם].

Moses stretched out his hand over Egypt and the Lord sent this locust plague into Egypt from the east. The locusts came into the land and ravaged all the areas where any vegetation grew. Obviously, most of Egypt has no plant food for locusts so they didn't inundate the entire nation. They came up "over all the land of Egypt," but they landed in the territory, the subdivision of Egypt, that supported plant life suitable for a food supply for the locusts. The locusts were drawn to the areas where the hail storm hit Egypt because that is where the vegetation, the trees, and the fruit would be found.

The context does not demand that "land of Egypt" refer to the entire nation. Instead, it refers to that area of Egypt that was inhabited by the majority of the people on land that was suitable and able to grow any vegetation the locusts could eat. Generally, but perhaps not exclusively, this was the Nile River valley, the delta, and anyplace else in Egypt where vegetation was able to grow which probably included the oases. One map I have concerning agricultural production also shows pasture land in northwest Egypt, otherwise, agriculture is generally confined to the territory of the Nile River and a few oases here and there. I have heard reports that 95% of Egypt is essentially uninhabitable.

The hail storm did not hit the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived (Ex. 9:26); therefore, it seems certain the locusts did not enter Goshen either. The locusts were sent by God to glean the vegetation, the plant food that was left in Egypt from the hail storm which excludes Goshen since they didn't get hit by the

hail. Besides, at this time, God is focused on judging Egypt and preparing Pharaoh for the time when he would be compelled to let the people go (Ex. 6:1).

No matter how many times Egypt had seen locust plagues, there had never been one before nor would there be one since like this one sent from God. The locusts were like a heavy blanket on every surface of the populated, agriculturally productive parts of the nation; anyplace any sort of vegetation grew would be covered in locusts, but they were so numerous they simply covered every surface everywhere they were found. Every surface was so thick with locusts it was blackened; whatever was under them could not be seen. Black is not referring to the color of the insects which was generally golden or brown; it refers to the fact they covered everything to such an extent that nothing could be seen under them. Darkened or blackened, אָשָׁף, means to be black; it refers to the color black as an extension of darkness as the absence of light. The vegetation, the trees, and the fruit of the trees were all destroyed by this plague. It would have been impossible to walk, sit, lay down, eat, or do anything without being enveloped in cloud of these locusts or without stepping on them or sitting on them. Just as the frogs invaded homes, the locusts invaded homes as well. Life could not be normal in this situation.

Exodus 10:16–17 ¹⁶Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. ¹⁷Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death [מָוֶת] from me.”

The text does not reveal Pharaoh's motivation for calling Moses and Aaron back. The officials of his court may have convinced him to do so, but given the fact that he admitted he had sinned against Yahweh, Moses' God, and the fact that his palace was just as inundated with locusts as every other inhabited place was covered with them, he may have been genuinely alarmed at the destruction he was seeing for himself. It was not unknown to them just how much damage a severe locust infestation could do to an area and this was much worse than anything Egypt had ever seen before. Pharaoh even referred to the plague as "death" because he knew how much damage an infestation of locusts of this magnitude would cause to the agricultural productivity of the land. Death, מָוֶת, means the physical death of the body which would certainly be the long-term result of this locust plague because agricultural production was destroyed and the people would eventually starve. It also means a plague, a pandemic disease that causes death to a body. Both of these meanings may have played into Pharaoh's mindset at that time. The judgments sent by God upon Egypt were more than just an inconvenience, they were introducing a progression of severity that would lead to, over time, the death of the people of Egypt. Even a stubborn pagan king, can figure out that if all his people die, he no longer has a nation over which to rule. Once again, we are reminded that Pharaoh was only going to let the people go by means of compulsion.

After the hail storm, Pharaoh simply said he had sinned (Ex. 9:27), but in the midst of the locust plague, he admits he has sinned against Yahweh and

against Moses and Aaron. He also requested prayer during this plague which he had previously requested after the frogs (Ex. 8:8), the flies (Ex. 8:28), and hail (Ex. 9:28). It is doubtful he was sincerely admitting to personal sins, but we also have to recognize that at this point in God's program with Pharaoh and Egypt, Yahweh was insuring that the king's already hard heart stayed that way. He had seemingly begun to soften his stance before only to change his mind when that particular judgment was ended. We should keep in mind there is a vast difference between being sorry for one's sins and being sorry that one is reaping the consequences for committing personal sins.

Why did Pharaoh keep asking Moses to pray to Yahweh for him? He didn't even believe in Yahweh. He apparently thought this God of Moses' listened to His prophet. Why did God set it up so Moses would pray to Him to stop the judgments? God could start and stop them whenever he wanted. The answer seems to be that He was revealing himself to Pharaoh and his people through His prophets which is how He works. Pharaoh could pray to his phony gods all he wanted, and nothing would happen, but Moses could pray to Yahweh and results always, without fail, followed. God is simply showing up the pagan gods of Egypt and creating doubt in Pharaoh's mind about their power while at the same time putting His omnipotent power on full display.

Exodus 10:18–20 ¹⁸He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD. ¹⁹So the LORD shifted *the wind* to a very strong [מֵאֹד קָזַק] west wind [יָם רְיָח]; which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea [יָם סוּף]; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt. ²⁰But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

Moses prayed to Yahweh and He stopped the plague by means of an opposite wind to that which brought the locusts into Egypt. This wind was a greatly severe wind [מֵאֵד הַזֶּזְק] that came off the Mediterranean Sea. יַם רִיחַ literally means a wind of the sea which in Egypt would produce a west or a northwest wind. Perhaps it took a very strong, severe wind to dislodge the insects in order to remove every one of them from the length and the breadth of the country wherever they were located. The locusts were driven into the Sea of Reeds and presumably drowned there.

Many commentators believe יַם סוּף (*yam sup*) should be translated the Red Sea although the literal rendering is the Sea of Reeds. The TANAKH has a note that says Red Sea may be the traditional interpretation but it is incorrect. It may be that people translate it the Red Sea in order to eliminate some perceived difficulties about where the Exodus crossing took place, but that is not necessary. יַם סוּף was applied to both gulfs on the north end of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqabah. North of the Gulf of Suez is an area of marshes and what is called Great Bitter Lake and Little Bitter Lake. The northern area of the Red Sea has been collectively called the Red Sea for a very long time. Scripture refers to both Gulfs as יַם סוּף when they are clearly referring to these Gulf arms of the Red Sea. Translating יַם סוּף as the Red Sea is not literal, but it doesn't seem to be strictly incorrect either. In other words, the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqa-

ba are both called the Sea of Reeds in the Hebrew text; therefore, יַם סוּף does not just refer to the areas of marsh that lie north of both of these Red Sea gulfs.

Numbers 33:10–11 ¹⁰They journeyed from Elim and camped by the Red Sea. ¹¹They journeyed from the Red Sea [יַם סוּף] and camped in the wilderness of Sin. [lower east side of the Gulf of Suez]

1 Kings 9:26 ²⁶King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea [יַם סוּף], in the land of Edom. [northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba]

Whether or not the locusts were driven into Gulf of Suez or into the main body of the Red Sea is of no consequence. God caused a west wind that blew the locusts into the Red Sea in one place or another and ended the infestation. The same situation applies to the crossing point of the Red Sea. Any interpretation that insists יַם סוּף must mean the marshy area around the Bitter Lakes north of the Gulf of Suez is incorrect.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart, but that was the consequence of his will to maintain his hard heart in the first place. Once the plague was over, he refused to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt. "It would have been smart for him to have obeyed the initial advice of his counselors or at least after the plague had come about. But he was not able to do the smart thing. He was being manipulated and humiliated by the only wise God, made to look the fool that he was for having carried on the oppression of the Israelites in the first place."⁴

⁴ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus*, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 254.

The rationalist explanation for the locust plague in Exodus insists it is simply one of many locust plagues that occurred in Egypt then and now, but this is false. This plague started and ended exactly at the command of God. An east wind blew the insects into Egypt in massive numbers that never occurred before or since even though history records devastating locust plagues since that time. At the command of God, a fierce wind came out of the opposite direction and carried the locusts out of Egypt and drowned them in the Red Sea. Locusts in these massive numbers do not naturally occur in a matter of hours and are not completely eliminated in mere hours either.

The next plague is the judgment of darkness.

Exodus 10:21–23 ²¹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness [חֹשֶׁךְ] over the land of Egypt, even a darkness [חֹשֶׁךְ] which may be felt.” ²²So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick [אֲפֵלֶה] darkness [חֹשֶׁךְ] in all the land of Egypt for three days. ²³They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings [מִזֻּבָּב].

What is the nature of this plague? Rationalistic skeptics claim it is simply a sandstorm or a dust storm. What they can't rationally explain is just how a sandstorm or dust storm can darken a nation encompassing a large land mass without darkening one small area wholly contained within the overall area that is darkened. Even in severe storms of this type, light is not completely blocked out; the kind of thick, heavy darkness of this plague is not in the same category. This theory also fails to explain how the Israelites could have light in their dwellings but the Egyptians couldn't have light in their homes.

Darkness, אֲדָמָה, means darkness; the lack of light in a space; it means the opposite of light. It is used as a metaphor for wickedness which is certainly an element of this judgment on Egypt. Egypt, a totally pagan nation, had been existing in darkness from its beginning. You don't have to read the Bible much before it becomes obvious that light and dark are metaphors for good and evil, for the things of God and the things of Satan. Darkness is connected with the Day of the Lord which is the ultimate period of judgment.

Joel 2:2 ²A day of darkness [אֲדָמָה] and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

Zephaniah 1:15 ¹⁵A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness [אֲדָמָה] and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

When God imposes this kind of darkness, it is accompanied by gloom and distress. Human beings do not like to be in total darkness; it's frightening and especially so when it is supposed to daylight. Moses described this as a darkness that could be felt. Some commentators try to explain and minimize the meaning of felt by claiming it simply means they had to feel their way around, but total darkness brings with it an oppressive, heavy feeling that makes a person think they can feel the darkness. Humans feel like this type of darkness is closing in on them and this feeling is quite real. It is a suffocating kind of feeling. The fact is, the Egyptians weren't feeling their way around; they couldn't move anywhere. This is highlighted in Exodus 10:22, where darkness is modified by thick, אֲדָמָה,

which is itself a word that means darkness; it is a physical state of lacking light so as to be unable to see or function often with an associative meaning of gloom, depression, or terror. There is no exegetical reason to minimize the meaning of darkness in this judgment; the only reason for minimizing it is to deny the truth of the text. It brought upon the Egyptians a desperate feeling of helplessness and fear and this wasn't just normal darkness; it lasted three days. Thick, black, darkness is not normal during what should be daylight hours. It is a well-known phenomenon that people who live in the northern latitudes where the sun doesn't shine during the day in winter can suffer from a light deprivation caused depressed state. But even then, at its darkest they have some sort of faint presence of light even if it is just a dim glow. The darkness God imposed on Egypt was the absence of light.

Dwellings, מוֹשָׁב, is referring to the homes of the Israelites, the places where they lived. Apparently, they were able to light their homes while the Egyptians were not. This means God was supernaturally preventing the lighting of lamps in Egyptian homes. This would have been another serious blow to the psychological well-being of the Egyptians, especially those close to Goshen who would have been able to see the lights in the homes of the Israelites.

What was probably most alarming to the Egyptians was the humiliation this God of the Hebrews was inflicting on their sun gods. Re (or Ra), the premier sun god deity, was at the top of their pantheon of pagan gods. He never failed

to show up day after day, but all Moses had to do was stretch out his hand and his God, the true God, caused the sun to go away for three days.

Ra was the creator god and the Pharaohs were thought to be the Son of Ra. He represents sunlight, warmth, and growth. He was depicted as a man with a falcon head topped with a sun disc circled by the uraeus, a cobra. The cobra symbolized royalty, sovereignty, and divine authority. During the day, Ra was thought to sail across the heavens in his boat. At night, he sailed across the underworld leaving the moon in his place to light the world and in the morning, he was reborn from Nut the goddess of the sky and heavens who swallowed him every evening and gave birth to him every morning.⁵

Aten was worshipped as the deified sun disc.

Khepri was the beetle god and since he was thought to be a creator god he became associated with Ra.

There are more, but you get the idea. The sun was certainly a major, if not the premier object of worship in the Egyptian pagan religious system. The judgment of darkness was a serious, frightening revelation for the Egyptians that the God of the Hebrews was the real God, the omnipotent God, and their gods were impotent and worthless.

Exodus 10:24–26 ²⁴Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, “Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you.” ²⁵But Moses said, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice *them* to the LORD our God. ²⁶Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some

⁵ <http://www.ancient-egypt-online.com/egyptian-god-ra.html> (accessed 21 July 2017)

of them to serve the LORD our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the LORD.”

Once again, Pharaoh crumbled under the immediate effects of the darkness, and probably the shock of seeing the sun fail to rise and shine for three days, and called for Moses to appear before him.

After the locust plague, Pharaoh was only willing to let the Israelite men go to worship Yahweh, but now he says he will allow their children to go as well but their livestock had to stay behind. Moses countered and said they needed their livestock for sacrifice to Yahweh and they didn't know what specific animals they would need for the sacrifice so they needed to take them all. Again, this is all part of a coy Middle Eastern bargaining strategy and this is a demand to let the people leave Egypt and Pharaoh knew it and he knew they could not and would not leave under the conditions he set.

Exodus 10:27 ²⁷But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go.

God's plan recognized the fact Pharaoh would not let the people go except under compulsion (Ex. 3:19) and God's plan would not be complete until the firstborn of Pharaoh was dead (Ex. 4:23) because he would not let God's firstborn son, Israel, go free. God's plan was about to be fulfilled. At that point, Pharaoh banished Moses, under penalty of death, from his presence.

Exodus 10:28–29 ²⁸Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!” ²⁹Moses said, “You are right; I shall never see your face again!”

At this point, Pharaoh is so exasperated with all that has happened to him and his country that he has decided to murder Moses if he sees him again. That does not, however, mean he will willingly let the people go. God had one more step in his plan and Pharaoh's already hard heart was hardened to allow for the plan to culminate with the final judgment.

Moses' reply indicates Pharaoh is correct; he will not see Moses again because Moses is going to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Pharaoh doesn't realize that just yet, but he will realize the truth soon enough.