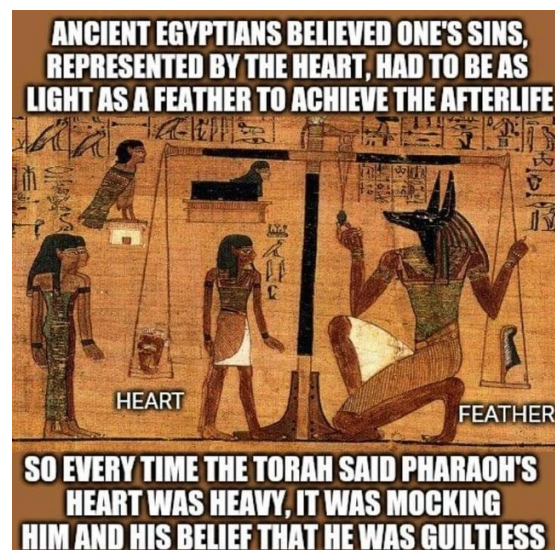


Harden Heart

-(Curtis Mitch) Twenty times in the opening chapters of Exodus we are told of Pharaoh's hardening heart. Ten times God hardens Pharaoh's heart, ten times it is Pharaoh himself. The Hebrew word translated "harden" is *kaved*, "to make heavy," and a heavy heart had a particular significance for ancient Egyptians. Among the tombs and temples in ancient Egypt it was common to find inscriptions depicting the final judgment of the dead as carried out by the weighing of a person's heart on a scale. Each heart was weighed against a feather representing truth and justice. If someone's heart was heavied by sins, that person was condemned. In the Exodus narrative, Pharaoh's heart is being weighed against the scales of truth and justice. Each time he refuses to follow God's command and acts against God and justice, he sins, and his heart becomes heavier. God is making Pharaoh's heart heavy inasmuch as he gives a just command that Pharaoh refuses to follow. In the end, the heaviness of Pharaoh's heart will condemn him—not because God forced him to harden his heart but because he was found wanting in his response to the demands of justice and truth.

-(Fr. Mike Schmitz) God is always good, and is goodness himself. God is truth itself, life itself, mercy itself. It's kinda like the sun. In the presence of the sun's heat, wax melts and becomes soft, whereas clay hardens and becomes stiff. That's an image of the disposition of one's heart. If my heart is open to the Lord, then it will become softened in the presence of the Lord, like wax; but, if my heart is closed to the Lord, then it will become hardened in the presence of the Lord, like clay in the heat. God is simply demonstrating reality, and Pharaoh, in the sight of that, hardens his heart.



10 PLAGUES

Jehovah God vs. gods of Egypt

The plagues of Egypt are well known, but a deep study reveals that each was a direct challenge to the various Egyptian gods and goddesses. The plagues affected the Egyptians' physical senses as well as their hearts with reminders that Jehovah God was far superior to any of their gods. He exercised power at will while the Egyptian gods remained helpless against Him.



PLAGUE 1: WATER TO BLOOD Exodus 7:14–25

The Egyptians were also able to turn water to blood, including the death of the fish and a smell that prohibited even trying to drink the water. Pharaoh's heart remained hard.

The Nile was the source of Egypt's power. There are several gods in their pantheon that draw life from the river.

Khnum was the guardian of the river's source.

Hapi was the god of annual flooding of the Nile and the lord of the fish.

Osiris had the Nile as his bloodstream.



PLAGUE 6: BOILS Exodus 9:8–12

This was the first plague to affect the body directly. God made a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Egyptian priests were unable to appear in court.

Isis was the goddess of health and Imhotep was the god of healing.



PLAGUE 7: HAIL Exodus 9:13–35

This plague affected the agriculture and livestock that was left in the field. Such a storm of hail was unique to Egypt.

Nut was the goddess of the sky. Her father Shu, god of the wind and air, was a calming god.



PLAGUE 2: FROGS Exodus 8:1–8:15

The Egyptians also produced frogs. Piles of dead frogs filled the land with a foul odor.

Heqt was an Egyptian goddess with the head of a frog.



PLAGUE 8: LOCUSTS Exodus 10:1–20

This plague would be told to Pharaoh's sons and grandsons, serving the purpose of showing God's power for generations.

Neper and Nepri were the god and goddess of grain. Set was the god of disorder.



PLAGUE 3: GNATS OR LICE Exodus 8:16–19

The gnats or lice came up from the dust of the earth. The Egyptian priests could not duplicate this miracle. They declared, "This is the finger of God."

Geb was the god over the dust of the earth.



PLAGUE 9: DARKNESS Exodus 10:21–29

It was so dark for three days that the darkness could be felt.

Ra, the god of the sun, was the most worshipped and revered god in Egypt after the Pharaoh. Jehovah God showed He had power even over the mightiest of the Egyptian gods.



PLAGUE 4: FLIES Exodus 8:20–32

This was the first plague that affected only the Egyptians.

Khepri had the head of a beetle and also moved the sun.



PLAGUE 10: DEATH OF FIRSTBORN Exodus 12:29–36

Establishes the Jewish Passover festival.

This plague was a judgment on all Egyptian gods, including Pharaoh himself. In Exodus 1, Pharaoh had ordered the killing of Israelite babies, and now the firstborn of all Egypt was killed.



PLAGUE 5: SICK CATTLE Exodus 9:1–7

God continued to distinguish between the Israelites and the Egyptians. This plague affected only the Egyptian herds.

Hathor was a fertility goddess who was often depicted with the head or horns of a bull and sometimes as a bull wearing the symbols of Hathor.