

WHY TEN PLAGUES?

Source 1: Rabbi Michael Hattin reflects on the end of Parshat Shmot:

Last week's Parasha concluded with the disheartening failure of Moshe and Aharon's first mission to Pharaoh....Pharaoh dismisses their words with disdain and escalates the harshness of the servitude.... Encountering the people after their unceremonious exit from Pharaoh's palace, Moshe and Aharon can only bear the brunt of their understandable anger and disappointment... Disgruntled, Moshe returns to God and cries out: "Oh Lord, why have You dealt harshly with this people, and why did You send me? From the time that I have come before Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has made conditions worse for them, and You have done nothing to save your people!" Though not denying the thrust of Moshe's harsh words, God responds: "Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand he will send them forth, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land!"

The commentaries are in fact puzzled by Moshe's reaction to Pharaoh's intransigence. After all, God had informed Moshe on the dawn of his appointment that his initial demands for the peoples' release would be met with Pharaoh's fierce resistance. Pharaoh will not relent, God had explained, until "I send forth My hand and smite Egypt with all of My wonders that I shall do in its midst, and then he will send you forth." ..

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra explains that Moshe had expected that the severity of the servitude would decrease in the aftermath of his first confrontation with Pharaoh...*Ramban disagrees, claiming on textual grounds that Moshe not only expected the gradual reduction of servitude as the journey towards Redemption began, but rather the complete and immediate cessation of the oppression and the restoration of Bnei Yisrael to their ancestral land without delay. "In my opinion," writes the Ramban, "Moshe correctly understood God's caveat that Pharaoh would be obstinate, and unwilling to instantly accede to the demand of freedom. A sign or wonder would have little effect, and the stasis would continue until the God would perform His many mighty miracles. Moshe, however, mistakenly believed that God would unleash those grievous wonders in quick succession over the course of a few days...Instead, much time elapsed, and Moshe came to the realization that the process would be a protracted one..."*

Source 2: Mishna Edyot 2:10

אף הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים שֶׁל שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ. מִשְׁפֵּט דוֹר הַמְּבוּל, שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ. מִשְׁפֵּט אֵיזֹב, שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ. מִשְׁפֵּט הַמְּצָרִיִּים, שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ. מִשְׁפֵּט גּוֹג וּמְגוּג לְעֵתִיד לְבָא, שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ. מִשְׁפֵּט רְשָׁעִים בְּגִיהָנָם, שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ, שְׁנֵאמַר (ישעיה סו, וְהָיָה מִדֵּי חֳדָשׁ בְּחֳדָשׁוֹ. רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נוּרִי אוֹמֵר, מִן הַפְּסָח וְעַד הָעֶצְרָת, שְׁנֵאמַר וּמִדֵּי שַׁבַּת בְּשַׁבְּתוֹ :

Also he used to say that there are five things that last twelve months: The judgment of the generation of the flood [continued] twelve months; The judgment of Job [continued] twelve months; **The judgment of the Egyptians [continued] twelve months**; The judgment of Gog and Magog in the time to come [will continue] twelve months; The judgment of the wicked in gehinom [continues] twelve months, for it is said, and “It will be from one month until its [same] month” ([Isaiah 66:23](#)). [Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri](#) says: “[As long as] from Passover to Shavuoth, for it is said, “And from one Sabbath until its [next] Sabbath” (ibid.).

Source 3: Rav Alex Israel asks...

Traditionally, we assume that the plagues were enacted by God in order to gain Israel's freedom. But does God need to bring such damage, chaos and ruin to achieve this goal? If God is bringing miracles, then why not put the Egyptians to sleep for a week and let the Jews walk out unnoticed? Why not make one catastrophic plague that would tip the balance in one fell swoop? Why then does God design a system of plague after plague, an ongoing series of wreckage?

Source 4: Shemot 9:12

יב וַיִּחַזַק יְהוָה אֶת-לֵב פַּרְעֹה, וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם: כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה. {ס} **12** And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses. {S}

Source 5: Shemot 10:1

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, בֹּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה: כִּי-אֲנִי הִקְבַּדְתִּי אֶת-לִבּוֹ, וְאֶת-לֵב עֲבָדָיו, לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְנִי אֵלָה, בְּקִרְבּוֹ. **1** And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Go in unto Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these My signs in the midst of them;

Rav Israel: Commentators suggest that God wants Pharaoh to remain balanced. He wants Pharaoh to make a decision based on rational argument, rooted in “free will”, rather than under duress. But what is the point? God wants the Jews out! Why make things more difficult?

Source 6: Hagadah Shel Pesach

אלו These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

When saying the ten plagues, spill from the cup itself ten times, as stated above (and when spilling, again have in mind what was said above). The wine remaining in the cup (will have become "wine that causes joy," thus) is not to be spilled, but other wine is added to it [to refill the cup].

דם Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the Firstborn.

רבי Rabbi Yehudah referred to them by acronyms:

דצ"ך DeTzaCh (blood, frogs, lice); ADaSh (beasts, pestilence, boils); BeAChaV (hail, locust, darkness, firstborn).

- How and why did Rabbi Yehuda divide the plagues in this way?
- Why not two groupings of five or some other division?
- What is the unifying character of each group?

Source 7: Blood – Shemot Ch. 7 מכת דם

יד ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, כבד לב פרעה; מאן, לשלח העם. **14** And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Pharaoh's heart is stubborn, he refuseth to let the people go.

טו לך אל-פרעה בבקר, הנה יצא המימה, ונצבת לקראתו, על-שפת היאר; והמטה אשר-נהפך לנחש, תקח בידך. **15** Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thy hand.

טז ואמרת אליו, יהוה אלהי העברים שלחני אליך לאמר, שלח את-עמי, ויעבדני במדבר; והנה לא-שמעת, עד-כה. **16** And thou shalt say unto him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, hath sent me unto thee, saying: Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness; and, behold, hitherto thou hast not hearkened;

יז כה, אמר יהוה, בואת תדע, כי אני יהוה: הנה אנכי מכה במטה אשר-בידי, על-המים אשר ביאר--ונהפכו לדם. **17** thus saith the LORD: In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD--behold, I will smite with the

rod that is in my hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

Source 8: Frogs: end of Ch. 7 צפרדע

- כו** ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, בא אל-פרעה; ואמרת אליו, כה אמר יהוה, שלח את-עמי, ויעבדני.

26 And the LORD spoke unto Moses: 'Go in unto Pharaoh, and say unto him: Thus saith the LORD: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.
- כז** ואם-מאן אתה, לשלח: הנה אנכי, נגף את-כל-גבולך--בצפרדעים.

27 And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs.
- כח** ושרץ היאר, צפרדעים, ועלו ובאו בביתך, ובחדר משכבך ועל-מטתך; ובבית עבדך ובעמך, ובתנווריה ובמשארותיה.

28 And the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come into thy house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs.
- כט** ובכה ובעמך, ובכל-עבדך--יעלו, הצפרדעים.

29 And the frogs shall come up both upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.'

Source 9: Ch. 8 – Lice כינים

- יא** וירא פרעה, כי היתה הרוחה, והקבד את-לבו, ולא שמע אליהם: פאשר, דבר יהוה. {ס}

11 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken. {S}
- יב** ויאמר יהוה, אל-משה, אמר אל-אהרן, נטה את-מטף והד את-עפר הארץ; והיה לכנם, בכל-ארץ מצרים.

12 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Say unto Aaron: Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats throughout all the land of Egypt.'
- יג** ויעשו-כו, ויט אהרן את-ידו במטהו ונד את-עפר הארץ, ויתהי הכנם, באדם ובבהמה: כל-עפר הארץ היה כנים, בכל-ארץ מצרים.

13 And they did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and there were gnats upon man, and upon beast; all the dust of the earth became gnats throughout all the land of Egypt.

Source 10: Ch. 8 – Wild Beasts ערוב

טז וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה,
הֲשִׁיבֵם בְּבֹקֶר וְהִתְיַצַּב לִפְנֵי
פַרְעֹה--הִנֵּה, יוֹצֵא הַמִּיִּמָּה;
וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה,
שְׁלַח עַמִּי, וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי.

16 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him: Thus saith the LORD: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

יז כִּי אִם-אֵינְךָ, מְשַׁלַּח אֶת-
עַמִּי--הִנְנִי מְשַׁלֵּיחַ בָּךְ וּבַעֲבָדֶיךָ
וּבַעֲמָדְךָ וּבְבָתֶּיךָ, אֶת-הָעָרֹב;
וּמְלֹאוּ בָתֵּי מִצְרַיִם, אֶת-הָעָרֹב,
וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה, אֲשֶׁר-הֵם עָלֶיהָ.

17 Else, if thou wilt not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.

Source 11: Ch. 9 – Cattle disease דבר

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, בֹּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה;
וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו, כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים,
שְׁלַח אֶת-עַמִּי, וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי.

1 Then the LORD said unto Moses: 'Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him: Thus saith the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

ב כִּי אִם-מָאֵן אֶתָּה, לְשַׁלַּח, וְעוֹדָךְ, מִחֲזִיק
בָּם.

2 For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still,

ג הִנֵּה יַד-יְהוָה הוֹזִיָּה, בְּמִקְנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה,
בְּסוּסִים בְּחֻמְרִים בְּגִמְלִים, בְּבָקָר וּבְצֹאֵן--
דָּבָר, כָּבֵד מְאֹד.

3 behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which are in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the herds, and upon the flocks; there shall be a very grievous murrain.

Source 12: Ch. 9 – Boils שחין

- ז וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה--וְהִנֵּה לֹא-מֵת מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַד-אֶחָד; וַיִּכְבַּד לֵב פַּרְעֹה, וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת-הָעָם. {פ}
- 7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn, and he did not let the people go. {P}
- ח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאַל-אַהֲרֹן, קַחוּ לָכֶם מִלֵּא חֲפְנֵיכֶם, פִּיחַ כִּבְשׁוֹן; וַיִּזְרְקוּ מֹשֶׁה הַשָּׁמַיְמָה, לְעֵינֵי פַרְעֹה.
- 8 And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron: 'Take to you handfuls of soot of the furnace, and let Moses throw it heavenward in the sight of Pharaoh.
- ט וְהָיָה לְאַבָּק, עַל-כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם; וְהָיָה עַל-הָאָדָם וְעַל-הַבְּהֵמָה, לְשַׁחֵן פָּרַח אֲבַעְבֵּעֵת--בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.
- 9 And it shall become small dust over all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.'

Source 13: Ch. 9 – Hail ברד

- יג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, הִשָּׁכֶם בַּבֹּקֶר, וְהִתְיַצַּב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה; וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו, כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים, שְׁלַח אֶת-עַמִּי, וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי.
- 13 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him: Thus saith the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.
- טז וְאוּלָם, בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת הָעֲמֻדָתִיךָ, בַּעֲבוּר, הַרְאֵתָךְ אֶת-כֹּחִי; וְלִמְעַן סַפֵּר שְׁמִי, בְּכָל-הָאֶרֶץ.
- 16 But in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth.
- יז עוֹדָךְ, מִסִּתּוֹלֵל בְּעַמִּי, לְבַלְתָּנִי, שְׁלָחֵם.
- 17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against My people, that thou wilt not let them go?
- יח הֲנִי מִמְטִיר כְּעַתְּ מָחָר, בָּרֶד כָּבֵד מְאֹד, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הָיָה כִּמְהוּן בְּמִצְרַיִם, לְמֹן-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְעַד-עַתָּה.
- 18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now.

Source 14: Ch. 10 – Locusts ארבה

וַיָּבֹאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן, אֶל-פַּרְעֹה,
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים, עַד-מָתִי מֵאַנְתָּ
לָעֲנֹת מִפָּנָי; שְׁלַח עַמִּי, וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי.

3 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him: 'Thus saith the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me? let My people go, that they may serve Me.

ד כִּי אִם-מָאֵן אַתָּה, לְשַׁלַּח
אֶת-עַמִּי--הֲנִי מְבִיא מִחָר
אֲרֵבָה, בְּגִבְלֶךָ.

4 Else, if thou refuse to let My people go, behold, to-morrow will I bring locusts into thy border;

Source 15: Ch. 10 – Darkness חושך

וַיַּחֲזֶק יְהוָה, אֶת-לֵב פַּרְעֹה;
וְלֹא שָׁלַח, אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. {פ}

20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go. {P}

כא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, נִטָּה
יָדְךָ עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ, עַל-
אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם; וַיִּמַּשׁ, חֹשֶׁךְ.

21 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Stretch out thy hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.'

But what does it all mean?

- Why would three waves of plagues be necessary?
- Is there anything which differentiates one group from another?

PLAGUE	WARNING	INSTRUCTION	SOURCE
1.Blood	Yes	“station yourself ... in the morning”	7:14-24
2.Frogs	Yes	“Go to Pharaoh”	7:25-8:11
3.Lice	None	-	8:12-15
4.Beasts	Yes	“station yourself ... in the morning”	8:16-28
5.Pestilence	Yes	“Go to Pharaoh”	9:1-7
6.Boils	None	-	9:8-12
7.Hail	Yes	“station yourself ... in the morning”	9:13-35
8.Locusts	Yes	“Go to Pharaoh”	10:1-20
9.Darkness	None	-	10:21-23
10. Firstborn			11:4-7

Source 16: Shemot Ch. 7 - WAVE 1
The Egyptian magicians replicate the plague of blood

כא וַהֲדָגָה אֲשֶׁר-בַּיָּאֵר מָתָה, וַיִּבְאֵשׁ הַיָּאֵר, וְלֹא-יָכְלוּ מִצְרַיִם, לִשְׁתּוֹת מִיָּם מִן-הַיָּאֵר; וַיְהִי הַדָּם, בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. **21** And the fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians could not drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt.

כב וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-כֵן חֲרֹטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם, בְּלִטְיֵיהֶם; וַיַּחֲזֶק לֵב-פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא-שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה. **22** And the magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken.

Source 17: Rav Amnon Bazak:

We are told nothing of how the plague is removed; despite the severity of the disaster, the Egyptians manage to overcome the problem - "And all of Egypt dug around the river to find water to drink" (7:24), and hence the plague of blood has failed, in effect, to prove anything. All that has been demonstrated is that Moshe's power is equal to that of the sorcerers.

Source 18: Ch. 8 - The Egyptian magicians replicate the plague of frogs

ב וַיִּט אַהֲרֹן אֶת-יָדוֹ, עַל מִימֵי
מִצְרַיִם; וַתַּעַל, הַצִּפְרֹדֵעַ, וַתִּכַּס,
אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.
2 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the
waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and
covered the land of Egypt.

ג וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-כֵן הַחֲרָטְמִים, בְּלִטְיָהֶם;
וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת-הַצִּפְרֹדֵעִים, עַל-אֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם.
3 And the magicians did in like manner with
their secret arts, and brought up frogs upon
the land of Egypt.

Rav Bazak:

We detect some progress when it comes to the plague of frogs. Here, too, the sorcerers succeed in performing the same wonders as those shown by Moshe and Aharon - "And the sorcerers did the same with their arts, and they brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt" (8:3), **but there is now a recognizable degree of distress in Egypt, causing Pharaoh to request of Moshe and Aharon: "Ask of God that He remove the frogs from me and from my nation" (8:4).** Here we already see the superiority of Moshe and Aharon, representing God, over the sorcerers. Indeed, Moshe hastens to make the most of this opportunity, suggesting to Pharaoh: "Challenge me - when should I ask for you and for your servants and for your nation, that the frogs be destroyed from you and from your houses...?" (8:5). And when Pharaoh answers, "Tomorrow," Moshe replies, "As you have spoken, that you may know that THERE IS NONE LIKE OUR GOD" (8:6). Here a certain victory has been achieved - God's power has been proven superior to that of the sorcerers.

Source 19: Ch. 8 - lice - Magicians cannot replicate or remove them

יד וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-כֵן הַחֲרָטְמִים
בְּלִטְיָהֶם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת-הַכְּנָנִים,
וְלֹא יָכְלוּ; וַתְּהִי, הַכְּנָם,
בְּאָדָם, וּבַבְּהֵמָה.
14 And the magicians did so with their secret
arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not;
and there were gnats upon man, and upon
beast.

טו וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחֲרָטְמִים אֶל-
פְּרֹעָה, אֲצַבֵּעַ אֱלֹהִים הוּא;
וַיַּחֲזֶק לֵב-פְּרֹעָה וְלֹא-שָׁמַע
אֲלֵהֶם, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר
יְהוָה. {ס}
15 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh: 'This
is the finger of God'; and Pharaoh's heart was
hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as
the LORD had spoken. {S}

Note: The magicians are absent from all subsequent plagues!

Source 20: Haftara for Parshat Vaéra – Sefer Yechezkel Ch. 29

ג וְדַבֵּר וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹה-אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה, הַנְּנִי עָלֶיךָ פֶּרְעָה מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם, הַתִּנִּים הַגְּדוֹל, הָרִבֵּץ בְּתוֹךְ יְאֲרָיו: אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לִי יְאֲרִי, וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי.

Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh - king of Egypt, the great crocodile that crouches in the midst of his river, who said, 'The river is mine; I made it for myself.

ט וְהִיְתָה אֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם לְשָׂמָמָה וְחֲרָבָה, וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה: יַעַן אָמַר יְאֲרִי לִי, וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי.

The land of Egypt will be desolate and waste, AND THEY SHALL KNOW THAT I AM GOD, for he said 'The river is mine and I made it.'

Rav Bazak: The third plague, which spreads "throughout the land of Egypt" (8:12), demonstrates that God's dominion is not limited only to the river, but rather His actions are felt throughout the land.

WAVE 2

Source 21: Ch. 8 – Wild Animals

ח וְהִפְלִיתִי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת-אֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן, אֲשֶׁר עַמִּי עֹמְדֵי עָלֶיהָ, לְבִלְתִּי הַיּוֹת-שָׁם, עָרֵב--לְמַעַן תִּדְעֶה, כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּקִרְבֵּי הָאָרֶץ.

18 And I will set apart in that day the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end that thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.

ט וְשָׂמַתִּי פְדֻת, בֵּין עַמִּי וּבֵין עַמֶּךָ; לְמָחָר יִהְיֶה, הָאֵת הַזֶּה.

19 And I will put a division between My people and thy people--by to-morrow shall this sign be.'

Source 22: Ch. 9 – Animal Disease

- ג הִנֵּה יַד-יְהוָה הוֹיָה, בְּמִקְנֶךָ
אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה, בַּסּוּסִים בְּחֻמְרֵים
בְּגַמְלִים, בְּבָקָר וּבַצֹּאן--דָּבָר,
כִּי־ד מָאֵד.
- 3 behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle
which are in the field, upon the horses, upon the
asses, upon the camels, upon the herds, and upon
the flocks; there shall be a very grievous
murrain.
- ד וְהִפְלָה יְהוָה--בֵּין מִקְנֵה
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבֵין מִקְנֵה מִצְרָיִם;
וְלֹא יָמוּת מִכָּל-לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,
דָּבָר.
- 4 And the LORD shall make a division between
the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt; and
there shall nothing die of all that belongeth to the
children of Israel.'
- ה וַיִּשֶׂם יְהוָה, מוֹעֵד
לֵאמֹר: מָחָר, יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה
הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה--בְּאֶרֶץ.
- 5 And the LORD appointed a set time, saying:
'Tomorrow the LORD shall do this thing in the
land.'

Source 23: Ch. 9

- ז וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה--וְהִנֵּה לֹא-מָת
מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַד-אֶחָד;
וַיִּכְבַּד לֵב פַּרְעֹה, וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת-
הָעָם. {פ}
- 7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not
so much as one of the cattle of the Israelites
dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn,
and he did not let the people go. {P}

Source 24: Ch. 9 Boils

- יא וְלֹא-יָכְלוּ הַחֹרְטָמִים, לַעֲמֹד
לְפָנֵי מֹשֶׁה--מִפְּנֵי הַשָּׁחִין: כִּי-הָיָה
הַשָּׁחִין, בְּחֹרְטָמִים וּבְכָל-מִצְרָיִם.
- 11 And the magicians could not stand
before Moses because of the boils; for the
boils were upon the magicians, and upon
all the Egyptians.

Rav Amnon Bazak

The plague of boils, representing the third plague of this group, comes without warning, and therefore there is no mention of a division between Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians. We might still have expected Pharaoh to conduct an investigation, as he did in the case of the previous plague, to find out whether once again Bnei Yisrael had survived the plague unscathed. No

such investigation is explicitly mentioned, but it would seem that this is precisely the intention of the text in its description of how "the sorcerers could not stand before Moshe because of the boils, for the boils were upon the sorcerers AND UPON ALL OF EGYPT" (9:11). **This is the first plague where Pharaoh and the sorcerers are completely passive, and for this reason they are physically prevented from assessing the situation among Bnei Yisrael.**

WAVE 3

Source 25: Ch. 9 Hail

- ז עוֹדָהּ, מִסְתּוֹלֵל בְּעַמִּי, לְבַלְתִּי, שְׁלָחִם. 17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against My people, that thou wilt not let them go?
- יח הִנְנִי מִמָּטִיר פֶּעֶת מָחָר, בְּרֹד כְּבֹד מְאֹד, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הָיָה כְּמֹהוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם, לְמֹן-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְעַד-עַתָּה. 18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now.
- כד וַיְהִי בְרֹד--וְאֵשׁ, מִתְּלַקַּחַת בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּרֹד: כְּבֹד מְאֹד--אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הָיָה כְּמֹהוּ בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, מֵאֲזַי הָיְתָה לְגוֹי. 24 So there was hail, and fire flashing up amidst the hail, very grievous, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

Source 26: Ch. 10 Locusts

- ו וּמְלֵאוּ בְּתֵיךָ וּבְתֵי כָל-עַבְדֶיךָ, וּבְתֵי כָל-מִצְרַיִם, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-רָאוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְאֲבוֹת אֲבֹתֶיךָ, מִיּוֹם הַיּוֹתָם עַל-הָאֲדָמָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה; וַיִּפֹּן וַיֵּצֵא, מֵעַם פְּרָעֹה. 6 and thy houses shall be filled, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; as neither thy fathers nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day.' And he turned, and went out from Pharaoh.
- יד וַיַּעַל הָאֲרָבָה, עַל כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וַיִּנַּח, בְּכָל גְּבוּל מִצְרַיִם: כְּבֹד מְאֹד--לִפְנֵינוּ לֹא-הָיָה כֵּן אֲרָבָה כְּמֹהוּ, וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא יְהִיָּה-כֵּן. 14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the borders of Egypt; very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.

*Unprecedented paralysis in the plague of **Darkness**:*

כג לא-ראו איש את-אחיו, ולא-קמו איש מתחתיו--שלשת ימים; ולכל-בני ישראל היה אור, במושבתם. **23** they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Rav Alex Israel: THREE WAVES - THREE THEOLOGICAL LESSONS.

** The first wave of plagues is aimed to demonstrate to Pharaoh the fact of God's EXISTENCE - "I am the Lord".*

*** The second group will teach of God's involvement in the affairs of man, God has the ability to effect and control events "in the midst of the land". This lesson teaches of God's PROVIDENCE.*

**** The third wave is aimed at proving God's OMNIPOTENCE - that God has ultimate power high above any other being.*

Source 27: Sefer Shemot Ch. 4

כ ויקח משה את-אשתו ואת-בניו וירכבם על-החמור וישב ארצה מצרים ויקח משה את-מטה האלהים בידו: כא ויאמר יהוה אל-משה בלכתך לשוב מצרימה ראה כל-המפתיים אשר-שמתי בידך ועשיתם לפני פרעה ואני אחזק את-לבו ולא ישלח את-העם: כב ואמרת אל-פרעה בה אמר יהוה בני בכרי ישראל: כג ואמר אליך שלח את-בני ויעבדני ותמאן לשלחו הנה אנכי הרג את-בנך בכרך:

4:20 Moses took his wife and sons and, putting them on a donkey, set out to return to Egypt. He also took the divine staff in his hand.

4:21 God said to Moses, 'On your way back to Egypt, keep in mind all the wondrous powers that I have placed in your hand. You will use them before Pharaoh. But I will make him obstinate, and he will not allow the people to leave.

4:22 You must say to Pharaoh, 'This is what God says: Israel is My son, My firstborn.

4:23 I have told you to let My son go and serve Me. If you refuse to let him leave, I will [ultimately] kill your own first-born son.'

Source 28: Shemot Ch. 12

כּו וְהָיָה, כִּי-יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם: מָה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת, לָכֶם. 26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you: What mean ye by this service?

כִּז וְאָמַרְתֶּם זָבַח-פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה, אֲשֶׁר פֶּסַח עַל-בְּתֵי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם, בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת-מִצְרַיִם, וְאֶת-בְּתֵינֵנוּ הִצִּיל; וַיִּקַּד הָעָם, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ. 27 that ye shall say: It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for that He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.' And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

Source 29: Berachot of Shema

You killed all of their firstborns and redeemed the firstborns of Israel

פְּדִיתֵנוּ. כָּל-בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם הֲרַגְתָּ וּבְכוֹרְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל גָּאַלְתָּ. וַיִּם סוּף לָהֶם בְּקַעַת. וְזוּדִים טַבְעַת. וַיִּדְיִדִים עָבְרוּ יָם. וַיִּכְסּוּ מִיָּם צָרִיָּהֶם אֶחָד מֵהֶם לֹא נוֹתֵר: עַל זֹאת שִׁבְחוּ אֱהוּבִים וְרוֹמְמוֹ לְאֵל וְנִתְּנוּ יְדִידִים זְמִירוֹת שִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבְּחוּת בְּרָכוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת לְמֶלֶךְ אֵל חַי וְקַיִם. רַם וְנִשְׂא. גְּדוּל

Source 30: Tehilim 136

(ח) אֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְמַמְשָׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ;
 (ט) אֶת־הַיָּרֵחַ וְכּוֹכָבִים לְמַמְשָׁלוֹת בַּלַּיְלָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ;
 (י) לְמַפָּה מִצְרַיִם בְּבְכוֹרֵיהֶם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ;

8 The sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures for ever;

9 The moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures for ever.

10 To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born, for His mercy endures for ever;

Source 31: Rambam Hilchot Shemitta and Yovel 13:13

ולא שבט לוי בלבד אלא כל איש ואיש מכל באי העולם אשר נדבה רוחו אותו והבינו מדעו להבדל לעמוד לפני יי לשרתו ולעובדו לדעה את יי והלך ישר כמו שעשהו האלהים ופרק מעל צוארו עול החשבונות הרבים אשר בקשו בני האדם הרי זה נתקדש קדש קדשים ויהיה ייי חלקו ונחלתו לעולם ולעולמי עולמים ויזכה לו בעה"ז דבר המספיק לו כמו שזכה לכהנים ללוים, הרי דוד ע"ה = עליו השלום = אומר ייי מנת חלקי וכוסי אתה תומיך גורלי. בריך רחמנא דסייען.

Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world²⁷ whose spirit generously motivates him and he understands with his wisdom to set himself aside and stand before God to serve Him and minister to Him and to know God, proceeding justly as God made him, removing from his neck the yoke of the many reckonings which people seek, he is sanctified as holy of holies.²⁸ God will be His portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world like He provides for the priests and the Levites.²⁹ And thus David declared [Psalms 16:5]: "God is the lot of my portion; You are my cup, You support my lot."

Source 32: Rav Zechariah Tubi The Saga of the Birthright in Sefer Bereishit

Several times throughout Bereishit the "birthright" theme repeats itself. We find that the eldest son is always losing his birthright in favor of his younger brother.

1. The younger Hevel received Hashem's favor, while Cain, the firstborn, was rejected, as it says: "To his offering He did not turn." (Bereishit 4:5)
2. Shem was chosen from among Noach's sons, though he was the youngest.
3. Yishmael, Avraham's eldest, loses his birthright in favor of Yitzchak.
4. Esav, Yitzchak's eldest, sells his birthright to Yaakov.
5. Menashe is Yosef's firstborn, yet Yaakov passes the birthright on to Efraim.

Source 33: Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik

The Jewish concept of Bechora and the Egyptian concept are mutually exclusive. On the night of the fifteenth of Nissan, the Judaic concept of Bechora emerged victorious over the Egyptian concept. The main conceptual conflict between Paroh and Moshe and Israel and Egypt revolved around whether Bechora is a symbol of Kedusha or one of power.

Source 34: Dr. Amos Bardea, Bar Ilan University

...כוחו של נס מכת בכורות, האחרונה במכות מצרים, מבטל את כוחם המגי של הבכורים. בתהליך הדרגתי של הוצאת עם ישראל מה"מצריות" חלה תמורה במעמד הבכורים בעם ישראל: תחילה הוקדשו לגבוה, ולאחר מכן הועברו מהם התפקידים הציבוריים והוטלו על בני שבט לוי, שבט שגאל עצמו מתרבות מצרים האלילית ובניו נמנעו מלהשתתף בפולחן חטא העגל. מעמד הכהונה מיוסד אפוא גנאולוגית על אחד משבטי ישראל, כמו שההשתייכות לעם ישראל מיוסדת גנאולוגית על מי שנולד לבת ישראל. ואולם, להבדיל מהתרבות האלילית, מעמדו הבחירי של האדם מישראל אינו נקבע על-פי השתייכותו הגנאולוגית, ו"ממזר תלמיד חכם גדול מכוהן גדול עם הארץ". בכורתו של האדם אינה קובעת את בחירתו, וכידוע לנו מתוך התורה, וכפי שנראה להלן, בחיר ה' אינו הבכור, אלא מי שנמצא ראוי. לדוגמא, במשפחת אדם נבחר קודם הבל ואח"כ שת; מצל אברהם נבחר יצחק ולא ישמעאל; במשפחת יצחק נבחר יעקב הצעיר בין התאומים; מבין בני יעקב נבחרו יוסף ויהודה על פני ראובן; במשפחת יוסף נבחר אפרים הצעיר על פני מנשה הבכור, ועוד.