REVISTA VIA TEOLÓGICA

Volume 21 – Número 42 – Dezembro / 2020

ISSN 1676-0131 (IMPRESSA)
ISSN 2526-4303 (ON LINE)
DEZEMBRO / 2020

A Reexamination Of Pharaoh's Hard Heart With Regard To Egyptian Religion

Dr. Jerry M. Hullinger

ISSN 1676-0131 (IMPRESSA)
ISSN 2526-4303 (ON LINE)
DEZEMBRO / 2020

A Reexamination Of Pharaoh's Hard Heart With Regard To Egyptian Religion

Um reexame do endurecimento do coração do Faraó baseado na religião egípcia

Dr. Jerry M. Hullinger[1]

1 Jerry M. Hullinger, Th.M., Th.D., professor of Bible, Piedmont International University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

ABSTRACT

The hardening of the Pharaoh's heart is normally discussed as a theological issue. While this is valid, this article has made the suggestion that the true meaning of the Exodus narrative (at least in the Old Testament) may be understood better if examined from the religious perspective in vogue when the event occurred. To one of the most religious societies to ever exist, God made it clear that he would prove himself to be the only true God. The way he did this was by turning objects of veneration into objects of cursing and disgust. God turned the entire system "inside out". In keeping with this motif, the hardening of the heart was actually viewed as something that was positive in Egyptian religion because it would enable the deceased to avoid judgment allowing them to attain eternal life. However, just as with the plagues, this religious concept was also turned to cursing in that it led Pharaoh to more judgment and eventual death. The words of Jethro spoken to Moses are true: "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods".

RESUMO

O coração do faraó é normalmente discutido como uma questão teológica. Embora isso seja válido, este artigo sugere que o verdadeiro significado da narrativa do Êxodo (pelo menos no Antigo Testamento) pode ser melhor entendido se examinado da perspectiva religiosa em voga quando o evento ocorreu. Para uma das sociedades mais religiosas que já existiu, Deus deixou claro que ele provaria ser o único Deus verdadeiro. A maneira como ele fez isso foi transformar objetos de veneração em objetos de maldição e repulsa. Deus transformou todo o sistema "de dentro para fora". De acordo com esse motivo, o endurecimento do coração era realmente visto como algo positivo na religião egípcia, porque permitiria ao faleci-

do evitar o julgamento, permitindo-lhe alcançar a vida eterna. No entanto, assim como as pragas, esse conceito religioso também se tornou uma maldição, pois levou o Faraó a mais julgamento e eventual morte. As palavras de Jetro ditas a Moisés são verdadeiras: "Agora eu sei que o Senhor é maior que todos os deuses".

INTRODUCTION

When one reads the phrase "the hardening of Pharaoh's heart", historic images arise regarding the debates between Augustine/Pelagius, Calvin/Arminius, Luther/Erasmus in addition to current day discussions regarding the tension of God's sovereignty and man's free will. While this is an important issue,[2] it is the modest suggestion of this article that this theological controversy, while having merit in the arena of theology, has actually obscured the real significance of the hardening motif in the Exodus narrative. It is the purpose of this study to examine Pharaoh's hard heart from a religious rather than a theological perspective in an attempt to discover what this would have meant in the 15th century BC Egyptian setting.[3]

2 One is reminded of the frustration expressed by Luther with regard to Erasmus' seeming failure to grasp the importance of the issue when he wrote that it is not irreligious, idle, or superfluous for a Christian to know whether or not his will has anything to do in matters pertaining to salvation (Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, trans. Henry Cole [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983] 30). For a helpful discussion of hardening in the Old Testament from a theological and textual perspective, see Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Divine Hardening in the Old Testament," Bibliotheca Sacra 153 (October—December 1996): 410-34; and, John Piper, The Justification of God (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

3 It is affirmed that the Exodus Pharaoh was Amenhotep II. For support of this date see: Gleason Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 231; John Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986) 34-39; Joseph Free, Archaeology and Bible History (Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, 1986) 90, 98-99; Eugene Merrill, Kingdom of Priests (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 63; and, William Shea, "Amenhotep II as Pharaoh of the Exodus," Bible and Spade 16 (Spring 2003): 41-51. Therefore, the time of the Exodus would have occurred during the New Kingdom period of the 18th and 19th dynasties during which time Egypt probably enjoyed its most influential role (Leon Wood, A Survey of Israel's History [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970] 110-12; and, Clyde T. Francisco, "The Exodus in Its Historical Setting," Southwestern Journal of Theology 20 [Fall 1977]: 10-11). For an overview of the divisions of Egyptian history, see William Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940) 113-18; and, George Steindorff and Keith Seele, When Egypt Ruled the East (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 274-75.

1. The General Religious Background Of The Plague[4] Narrative

1.1 Basic Egyptian Religion[5]

1.1.1 The Importance Of Religion

If one is to understand ancient Egypt, one must understand ancient Egyptian religion. Never has there been a civilization which revolved more around its religious ideas than did Egypt. Montet stated well that "the Egyptians were the most scrupulously religious of mankind. They regarded the gods as the owners of the entire universe and the fount of all prosperity, aware of all human desires and capable at any moment of taking a hand in mortal affairs".[6]

1.1.2 The Complexity Of Religion

Given the fact that religion so permeated every area of the culture, there is a degree of frustration in attempting to find some cohesion in the system. Therefore, it is important to rea-

4 It should be stated at the outset that this study will regard the plagues to have been a direct and miraculous intervention by the hand of God. Such a statement must be mentioned because many give a naturalistic explanation of them (Ian Wilson, Exodus: The True Story Behind the Biblical Account [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985] 115-27; Pierre Montet, Egypt and the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 94-100; Greta Hort, "The Plagues of Egypt," Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 69 [1957]: 84-103; Joel Block, "The Ten Plagues of Egypt," Religious Education 71 [1976]: 519-26; and, K. A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1966] 157-58. Compare the fine words of Durham: "The effect of Yahweh's blow is that the Nile turns into blood not into muddy or algae-laden and thus redlooking water the 'naturalistic' commentators never tire of suggesting. We simply must never lose sight of the fact that the mighty-act narratives are theological accounts, not phenomenological reports. Yahweh struck the Nile, and instantaneously, before the eyes of Pharaoh and his court, it changed into blood. Whatever the difficulties such an assertion may pose for the readers of another age, they must not be allowed to diffuse or even to alter what the text actually says, for that inevitably either obscures or removes entirely the real point of the narrative in the first place" (John Durham, Exodus [Waco: Word, 1987] 97).

5 For an excellent survey of Egyptian religion, see Leonard Lesko, "Egyptian Religion", in The Encyclopedia of Religion, 15 vols., ed. Lindsay Jones (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 5:37-69.

6 Pierre Montet, Everyday Life in Egypt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981) 274.

lize at the outset that this religion is a complex and seemingly contradictory collection of a multitude of gods and goddesses. The complexity is further compounded by the facts that these gods and goddesses were represented in many forms, as well as being responsible for many, often overlapping, areas of responsibility. DeVries noted, "the religion of ancient Egypt is a vast labyrinthine subject. Much of the religious literature appears as a hodgepodge of heterogeneous conflicting statements. In general, the religion may be described as a complex polytheism".[7] In a similar manner, Cerny observed:

> It is impossible to sketch a picture of a belief which is uniform and logical in all its details, and valid for the whole of Egypt, for such a uniform belief never existed. The Egyptian religion is not the creation of a single thinker, but an outcome of local political and cultural divergences and there was never a strong enough force in Egypt to eliminate all local beliefs or to unite them in a general theological system.[8]

As intimated by Cerny, part of the reason for the complexity of the system was the fact that as people emigrated from one city to another, they brought their local gods with them and erected new shrines for their worship. Oftentimes, the god of a particular locale gained a reputation for some special power due to a supposed miraculous cure or intervention.[9]

1.1.3 The Gods Of The Religion

It appears that the great national deities were thought to be of the highest rank. These were cosmic gods who presided over

7 Carl DeVries, "Egypt, Land of", in The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, ed. Merrill Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 236.

8 Jaroslav Cerny, Ancient Egyptian Religion (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1952) 39. For an extended discussion of this seeming contradictory nature of Egyptian religion, see Henri Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1961) 3-8.

9 Steindorff and Seele, When Egypt Ruled the East, 134; Charles F. Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964) 21.

the forces of nature such as the sun, moon, sky, air, and water.[10] Following these national gods were the many local gods which each particular community venerated. Though lower in rank, these local gods were believed to influence everyday personal life more than did the national deities.[11] Besides national and local gods, the people believed in yet others. Pfeiffer remarked:

> In addition to the numerous city gods, an ancient Egyptian was concerned with a multitude of lesser gods, demons and spirits who might either help or injure man. There were gods who assisted women in childbirth, gods of the household, and the gods of harvest. In times of illness, spirits provided healing, and others were particularly active in time of war.[12]

As if this were not enough, any object which assisted the average man in his daily needs might become his god.[13]

1.2 The Contest Between The Gods And God

The stage for the confrontation between God and the pantheon of Egypt was set when Pharaoh asked Moses: "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go" (Exod 5:2)? To the powerful Pharaoh, the God of Israel was simply one god

10 Angela P. Thomas, Egyptian Gods and Myths (London: Shire Publications, 1986) 19.

11 Wood, Survey of Israel's History, 113.

12 Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus, 22. See also Robert Stieglitz, "Ancient Records and the Exodus Plagues", Biblical Archaeology Review 13 (November/December 1987): 46, 48; and, John Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, Israelite and Judaen History (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 199.

13 For three examples of daily life in which a person is helped by a "god" where a memorial is erected on its behalf, see J. B. Bury, S. A. Cook, and F. E. Adcock, eds., Cambridge Ancient History, 7 vols. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1928) 2:159. It is also significant that throughout the maze of these gods, four major themes emerged in which the people saw the divine at work. The themes were creation, fertility, resurrection, and kingship. Importantly, all of these were challenged by Yahweh in the plagues (Gary Smith, "The Concept of God/The Gods as King in the Ancient Near East and the Bible", Trinity Journal 3 [Spring 1982]: 29). One of the interesting features regarding Egyptian art was the manner in which these gods were depicted in drawings and statues. Thomas explained, "gods might be depicted in theriomorphic or animal form, in anthropomorphic or human form, or in a therianthropic or hybrid form with human body and animal head. The early animal links were therefore retained either in the god's shape, in the attributes assigned to him, or in his association with certain animals deemed to be sacred to him" (Thomas, Egyptian Gods and Myths, 11). See also, H. M. Tirard, The Book of the Dead (London: S. P. C. K., 1910) 108.

among many gods, and certainly if He did exist, the God of Israel was inferior to the gods of Egypt. Wood noted the significance of this question.

> This question is understandable in terms of standards of deity evaluation accepted in that day. Since Yahweh's people had no land of their own, no army, and no independent status, Pharaoh thought that Egypt's gods were much greater. But God would not let this thinking stand. ... People believed that the domain of the gods of a country extended as far as the borders of that country, and measured their strength by the size of it, the victories of its armies, and the degree of prosperity.[14]

The confrontation motif becomes one of the major themes in the plague narrative. For example, Kyle wrote, "this discrediting of the gods of Egypt is marked at every step of the progress of the plagues".[15] Hyatt remarked, "the story of the plagues is the account of a confrontation between Yahweh... and the gods of Egypt".[16] Furthermore, Francisco observed, "the contest between Moses and Pharaoh was primarily a conflict between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt, between the Hebrew faith and the Egyptian religion".[17] The conflict is evident by the repeated emphasis of Yahweh on His divine name (Exod 4:5; 6:2, 3, 7; 7:16); it is also seen by the repetition of the phrase "The Egyptians shall know[18] that I am the Lord" (Exod

14 Wood, Survey of Israel's History, 127, note 67; and, Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus, 46. See also John Sailhammer, The Pentateuch as Narrative (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 249, though he questioned whether or not the Egyptian concept of ma'at (the well-balanced system of the universe which was maintained by the pharaoh) is in view (252-53).

15 M. G. Kyle, "Plagues, of Egypt," in International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 4 vols., ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 4:2406.

16 J. Philip Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Ltd, 1971) 99.

17 Francisco, "The Exodus in Its Historical Setting," 13, 15; see also Douglas Fox, "The Ninth Plague: An Exegetical Note," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 45 (June 1977): 219; Stieglitz, "Ancient Records and the Exodus Plagues," 48; and, Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus, 31.

18 When God said the Egyptians would "know" that He is the Lord, this did not merely mean they would know about Him, for this could simply put Him as one god among many. Rather, as Brueggemann observed, the idea of the term "know" is that they would recognize or answer to Him (Walter Brueggemann, "Pharaoh as Vassal: A Study of a Political Metaphor," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 57 [January 1995]: 35-37).

7:5; 8:10, 19; 9:14, 16, 29). Furthermore, in the song of the redeemed after the crossing of the Red Sea, the people declared "who is like unto thee, O Lord among the gods" (Exod 15:11)? Finally, Jethro spoke to Moses about the deliverance from the Egyptians and confessed, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods (Exod 18:11). The confrontation also served as a reminder to Israel of the greatness of their God. As a consequence of this, they were to keep the Passover as a memorial of their deliverance and victory wrought by Yahweh (Exod 12:14).[19] Though lengthy, Jamieson's words described this conflict well.

> They [the plagues] must have produced a profound sensation amongst intelligent and reflecting observers, who could not fail to see the God of the Hebrews asserting his supremacy. ... It was against this monstrous system of idolatry, the source or the type of all heathen worship in succeeding ages, that the momentous contest in Egypt was waged... It is in this way, as demonstrating the utter helplessness and insignificance of the gods, that the true character and design of those plagues are to be seen. These miracles . . . formed a grand religious triumph where the majesty of God was vindicated in the presence of a people foremost in the rank of civilization.[20]

The purpose of this section has been to give a very general description of Egyptian religion, which will help in making better sense of the specifics given in the next section.

19 Durham suggested that the number of the plagues was for this very purpose. He wrote that Pharaoh was prevented from believing so that Israel could come to a full belief. "The mighty-act accounts are written from faith to faith. They were compiled that the generations of Israel to come might know that Yahweh is, and so know also the redemption of exodus, whatever their bondage" (John Durham, Exodus, 99-100).

20 Robert Jamieson, A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 1:308-313. Consequently, it is easy to understand why no Egyptian records mention these plagues. Aling explained, "the peoples of the ancient Near East kept historical records to impress their gods and also potential enemies, and therefore, rarely, if ever, mentioned defeats or catastrophes. Records of disasters would not enhance the reputation of the Egyptians in the eyes of their gods, nor make their enemies more afraid of their military might" (Charles Aling, Egypt and Bible History: From Earliest Times to 1000 B.C. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981] 103). Bright also commented: "That Egyptian records do not mention it is not surprising. Not only were Pharaohs unaccustomed to celebrate reverses, but an affair involving only a party of runaway slaves would have been altogether of minor significance" (John Bright, A History of Israel [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959] 112).

2. The Specific Religious Backgrou-nd Of The Plague Narrative

The purpose of the following discussion is to provide some specific background information with regard to ancient Egyptian religion which will further illuminate the significance of Pharaoh's hard heart.

2.1 The Divinity Of The Pharoah

One of the recurring incidents in the plague narrative is the appearances of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh (believed to be Amenhotep II)[21] and the exchange among them. It would be distressing enough to stand before the monarch of the greatest empire on earth with an unpopular request. Add to this the fact, however, that he was not considered to be only a man, or even a mere representative of the gods, but himself divine. It is no wonder that Moses devised several excuses to avoid this confrontation. The Pharaoh was believed to be the incarnation and patron of the falcon-god Horus, and therefore a god in his own right.[22] In addition, he was also considered to be the physical son of the sungod Re.[23]

The Pharoah's alleged diety is further illustrated by a recorded prayer to Re of Rameses III (second king of the 20 th Dynasty) in which he prayed "I am your son, whom your two

21 Finegan observed that even in his youth, Amenhotep II distinguished himself by his strength and valor. He was unsurpassed in rowing, archery, and horsemanship. Furthermore, "when the great warrior's mummy was found in 1898 in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes, his famous bow, which he boasted no other man could draw, was still beside him. It bore the inscription 'smiter of the cavedwellers, overthrower of Kush, hacking up their cities—the Great Wall of Egypt, Protector of his soldiers" (Jack Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959] 102-03; for further exploits of Amenhotep II, see Steindorff and Seele, When Egypt Ruled the East, 68ff.).

22 Cerny, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 32; Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus, 21.

23 S. R. K. Glanville, Daily Life in Ancient Egypt (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1930) 193. Pierre Montet also commented: "The king was certainly far above ordinary mortals. In official stelae he was often called neter nefer, the perfect god. A courtier even described him as neter aa, the great god" (Eternal Egypt [New York: The New American Library, 1964] 57).

arms brought forth. You have set me up as sovereign over every land. For me you have made perfection on earth. I perform your duty in peace".[24] An Egyptian poem further confirms the divine attributes of the Pharaoh.

> He is Perception which is in (men's) hearts,
>
> And his eyes search out everybody.
>
> He is Re, by whose beams one sees,
>
> He is one who illumines the Two Lands more than the sun disc.
>
> He is one who makes the land greener than (does)
>
> a high Nile,
>
> for he has filled the Two Lands with strength and life.[25]

As a god, the Pharaoh was able to communicate with all of the gods. Consequently, he became the high priest of every cult, and was the sole officiant in the temple rituals unless delegated to other priests. He was therefore the link between the world and the gods and goddesses.[26] Not only did the Pharaoh have these religious duties, he also had social and political duties because of his position. Smith explained, "since the Pharaoh was divine, kingship in Egypt remained a channel through which the powers of nature flowed into the body politic to bring human endeavor to fruition. Thus the maintenance of nature and civilization were dependent on the king".[27] The "divinity of the Pharaoh" can also be explained by the Egyptian belief in world order. They believed that Ma.a.t represented world order and was established in primeval time; it was thought that this

24 Pierre Montet, Everyday Life in Egypt, 193.

25 J. B. Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 431

26 Thomas, Egyptian Gods and Myths, 26. For a description of the temple and its rituals, see Karol Mysliwiec, Eighteenth Dynasty Before the Amarna Period (The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1985) 6-12.

27 Gary Smith, "The Concept of God/The Gods as King in the Ancient Near East and the Bible," 29.

order would prevail regardless of adverse circumstances since it was primarily actualized by Pharaoh who was divinely qualified. Bleeker noted the significance of this responsibility.

> Though several pharaohs undoubtedly were guilty of abuse of power . . . they were all conscious of the heavy responsibility which they had to bear. For it was their obligation to establish Ma.a.t in their kingdom by a good and wise government... For that reason the pharaoh also acted as high priest. Being a son of a god he could mediate between heaven and earth.[28]

2.2 The Hard Heart Of Pharoah

One of the best known motifs of the whole exodus account is the hardening[29] of Pharaoh's heart.[30] The concept is normally discussed from a theological perspective dealing with divine sovereignty and human responsibility which seeks to answer the question: who initiated the hardening process? The aspect of hardening is not germane to this study, however, there is a possible cultic belief that forms this idea.

2.2.1 The Myth Of Osiris

It was believed that Osiris, a good king, was killed by his wicked brother Seth who dismembered his body and scattered the parts over the earth. The sister and wife of Osiris (Isis) found his remains and erected a monument over each part. When their son Horus grew to maturity, he avenged the death of his father by winning a victory over Seth. Magically, he was able to bring

28 Claas Jouco Bleeker, "The Pattern of the Ancient Egyptian Culture," Numen 12 (1965):79-80; see also, Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 43.

29 Robert Chisholm Jr. is correct that the Piel stem is used in this instance with a factitive nuance with the idea of "to make rigid, unyielding, resolute, stubborn" ("Divine Hardening in the Old Testament," 415); this sense will be seen to correspond nicely with the religious background of this concept.

30 For a discussion of the "heart," see Gregory K. Beale, "An Exegetical and Theological Consideration of the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Exodus 4-14 and Romans 9," Trinity Journal 5 (Autumn 1984): 132-33.

Osiris back to life. Osiris became (among other things) the judge and ruler of the underworld. The Egyptian found solace in this myth for it gave the account of one who had attained life after death. Thererfore, they too had the hope of immortality, for Osiris could give eternal life to others because he had been made incorruptible and immortal.[31]

2.2.2 The Hall Of Judgment

From this general myth of Osiris, there developed a rather sophisticated belief in the judgment of the dead; it was held that the deceased would enter a great hall of judgment or righteousness. In a sort of balcony in this hall were seated forty-two assessor gods.[32] The deceased turned to these gods and repeated the "Negative Confession".[33] The Negative Confession was a list of various crimes and shortcomings which the deceased denied having committed during his earthly life. The person would repeat some of the following:

31 Francisco, "The Exodus in Its Historical Setting", 15; E. A. Budge, The God's of the Egyptians: or Studies in Egyptian Mythology (New York: Dover Publications, 1969) 141; and, Yves Camberfort, "Le Scarabee dans l'Egypte Ancienne," Revue de l'Histoire des Religions 204 (Année 1987): 3-46. Before one scoffs at this logic, it is interesting to remember that the Christian religion bases its hope on One because He conquered death. The only difference, of course, is that in the one case this really occurred, however the logic is the same.

32 For a description of this whole ritual of judgment, see Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians: or Studies in Egyptian Mythology, 142-144; Thomas, Egyptian Gods and Myths, 51; Alexandre Moret, In the Time of the Pharaohs (London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1911) 236-37; and, Montet, Eternal Egypt, 303.

33 The Negative Confession was part of chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead (Thomas, Egyptian Gods and Myths, 51). The Coffin Texts, The Book of the Dead, and The Book of Gates, in addition to the whole funerary literature of Egypt is literature regarding the Egyptians' fear of death, particularly imagined judgment in the afterlife (Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 117). Moret observed that the purpose of the Book of the Dead "is to give the key to the essential problems, concerning gods and men, and to meet the wishes of the devout souls who hunger for religious belief, are curious about their origin, and full of anxiety concerning their own destiny" (Moret, In the Time of the Pharaohs, 239). It is no wonder, then, as Moret continued: "the mummification of innumerable corpses and the countless papyrus scrolls, called The Book of the Dead laid near them for their protection in every Egyptian necropolis... There was therefore, slipped into the collection of the necessary texts... This Book of the Dead is found by the thousands deposited near the mummies" (ibid. 218-19, 221). Moret's observations are in keeping with the fact that the tombs were filled with objects which would supposedly aid the dead in their trek through the afterlife (cf. Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus, 28). Besides food and drink, furniture and other necessities of life, Wood noted that in early days even servants were slain and placed beside their master's bodies (Wood, Survey of Israel's History, 113).

I have not blasphemed a god.
I have not made anyone sick.
I have not made anyone weep.
I have not killed.
I have not defiled myself.
I have neither increased or diminished the grain--measure.
I have not seen evil.
I have not defamed a slave to his superior.
I have not committed evil against men.
I have not committed sin in the place of truth.
I put no check on the water in its flow.

The confession ended by the deceased repeating, "I am pure!" four times.[34] Also in the Hall of Judgment was a pair of scales similar to that with which the Egyptian was acquainted in daily life. In one pan of the scales the person's heart was placed since it was thought to represent the thoughts, actions, and conscience of the person.[35] In the other pan was placed a feather which represented truth and justice. If the heart was heavy with sin, the scales were tipped and the person was condemned. However, if the heart maintained an equilibrium with the feather, the person was passed into eternal life. Thoth, the scribe of the gods, stood by the scaled to record the results.[36] On the standard balance of the scales sat a dog-headed ape, who was the companion of Thoth. The jackal-headed god Anubis examined the pointer to make certain that the beam was exactly balanced. Also by the scales was the half crocodile, half hippopotamus Amait who would turn its jaws toward Osiris and

34 Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 34.

35 Budge, The God of the Egyptians, 142. E. A. Budge commented further, "the heart was not only the seat of the power of life, but also the source of both good and evil thoughts; and it sometimes typified the conscience. It was guarded after death with special care, and was mummified separately" (Egyptian Magic [New York: University Books, n.d.] 29).

36 Veronica Ions, Egyptian Mythology (Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1968) 86. Considered as the scribe of the gods, Thoth was also credited with having written with his own hand all of the wisdom of the world into forty-two volumes (Margaret Murray, The Splendor that was Egypt [New York: Hawthorn Books, 1963] 161).

ask permission to devour the newcomer.[37] After the weighing of the heart, Anubis would relay the result to Thoth who would record the results and declare to Osiris: "The deceased has been weighed in the balance; there is no wrong in him; his heart is in accordance with truth, the balance is exact; there is no doubt; all his members are perfect".[38] The deceased would then be granted eternal life by Osiris.

2.2.3 The Hardening Of The Heart

As a thinking Egyptian reflected on his eventual appearance in this great hall before the gods and a ravenous monster with jaws agape, there was one thing which terrified him. In spite of his recitation of the Negative Confession, he knew perfectly well that his confession was not completely true, for no one had perfectly abided by all of the statements. The comparison would be like someone confessing to God that he had not violated the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. Accordingly, there was a fear that in spite of the Confession, the heart would belie its owner and be heavy in the scales leading to his condemnation. As Moret asserted: "the most implacable accuser of man is the heart whose assertions cannot be contested, he himself, his own heart, which is fully aware that often he violated the moral law that he knew perfectly".[39]

In order to avert this danger, a magic ritual was devised that would give the deceased protection in the world to come by overcoming the forty two gods and the reading of the scales. During the procedure of mummification,[40] the heart was

37 Moret, In the Time of the Pharaohs, 235; Montet, Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt, 303. For other possible punishments such as drowning, snakes with multiple heads, wings and long legs, and the slaughterblock, see Leonard Lesko, "Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egyptian Thought," in Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, 4 vols., ed. Jack Sasson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995) 3:1769

38 Moret, In the Time of the Pharaohs, 236-37.

39 Ibid. 256.

40 For a discussion of embalming procedures, see Ions, Egyptian Mythology, 131-32; and, Scott Langston, "Egyptian Mummification," Biblical Illustrator 29 (Summer 2003): 78.

removed from the body and replaced with a scarab[41] amulet.[42] An incantation was pronounced or even inscribed on the amulet transferring magical powers to it. The process was described by Budge: "The words of it were recited over a hard, green stone scarab, which shall be laid in the breast of the deceased where the heart ordinarily would be. In the description of the amulets which the Egyptians used, both the substance of the amulet and the words which were inscribed upon it possessed magical powers".[43] Cerny offered the following explanation.

> Chapter 30 of the Book of the Dead is another instance of getting around the ethical requirements of sinlessness in the judgment of the dead by a magical incantation; this chapter is addressed to the heart, which the Egyptian held to be the most important factor whose favour had to be sought. This he did with the following words: "O my heart of my mother, O my heart of my mother! O my breast of my forms, O my breast of my forms! Stand not forth against me as witness, combat me not in the assembly (of judges), be not hostile to me before the Keeper of the Balance." This spell is found carved on the flat bases of large stone amulets the upper part of which is cut in the form of a scarab. ... It served as a substitute for the heart of the dead and was, therefore, placed on the chest of the mummy on top of its wrappings.[44]

41 The scarab was a beetle which was associated with the life of the sun-god Re. The association had an interesting biological origin: "Ancient Egyptians had observed that the scarab beetle laid its egg in dung and then pushed it around on the ground until it became a ball. The Egyptians imagined that the ball symbolized the sun because it was round, gave off heat, and was their source of life" (Robert Armour, Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt [Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987] 26).

42 An amulet was something carried or worn. The name was broadly applied to any kind of ornament or jewelry to which supernatural powers were attributed (Budge, Egyptian Magic, 25).

43 Ibid. 33; see also Fred Wood, "Mourning of the Deceased," Biblical Illustrator 29 (Summer 2003): 72; Lesko, "Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egyptian Thought," 3:1766.

44 Cerny, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 90-91; see also, Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 118. Tirard further commented that this chapter of the Book of the Dead was the "most important of this series. . . . If he repeats these words aright the heart will listen to his prayer, and will be found to balance exactly with truth, to weigh neither too heavy or too light" (The Book of the Dead, 71-72, 128).

Consequently, this affirmation was regarded as a magic spell which was sufficient to prevent the heart from betraying the soul and thereby deceiving the divine judges.[45] Since it would be natural for the heart to confess to sin and thus become "heavy" and tip the scales, this scarab magically suppressed this tendency of the heart. The suppression of the heart came to be known as a "hardening of the heart".[46] Hermann stated this belief well.

> The discrepancy between the insisted incalculateness and the reality is especially expressed with the presence of the two hearts, in which the stone heart is expressly admonished to suppress the natural movements of the fleshly heart in order to receive an acquittal and to stand justified in the judgment. As such, the artificially induced hardness of the heart has to go against the truth in order to verify the harmony... It was the task of the stone heart to help the unruly corporeal heart so that, in strength and hardness... it will be able to face the moral demands of the beyond.[47]

3. The Connection Between Religious Hardening And The Plague Narrative

It was previously stated that the text of Exodus confirms that the purpose of the plagues was to demonstrate to Egypt and Israel that Yahweh was the only true God. The means which God chose to do this was through a mockery of the whole Egyptian religious system. It has become common knowledge that

45 Ions, Egyptian Mythology, 135-36.

46 J. Zandee, Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960) 259-62; Adolf Erman, A Handbook of Egyptian Religion (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1907) 142-43. Note also the following paraphrases of the concept: "unresponsive to reason" (Nahum Sarna, The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus, [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991] 23), "the human action of resistance" (Brevard Childs, The Book of Exodus [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976] 170), and "a heavy heart would be difficult to sway" (William Propp, Exodus 1-18 [New York: Doubleday, 1998] 323).

47 Cited by G. Kimball Beale, "The Exodus Hardening Motif of YHWH as a Polemic" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976).

each plague was an attack against specific Egyptian deities, but what is often missed is that in doing this, God took something that was good to the Egyptians and turned it into something bad. A few examples will suffice beginning with the Nile River. The Nile was the "heartbeat" of Egypt,[48] and therefore was deified, and became one of the earliest and greatest gods which was even reflected in Egyptian hymnology.[49] When Pharaoh went to the water,[50] it was turned to blood which resulted in the death of the fish in the river (Exod 7:21).[51] What was divine to the Egyptian ceased to be a source of blessing. Hapi brought stench instead of blessing.[52]

A second example of God changing something good into something bad has to do with the next plague of frogs. Frogs were quite plentiful in Egypt but were not viewed as something

48 DeVries, "Egypt, Land of," 235; Francisco, "The Exodus in its Historical Setting," 7.

49 Kyle, "Plagues, of Egypt," 4:2404; see also, Tirard, The Book of the Dead, 140; Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 372-73 (for the hymn), and Cerny importantly noted that the Nile also had an association with Osiris. One myth communicated that when his body was scattered, all the pieces landed in the Nile. Another suggested that he was drowned in the Nile. Whichever was most widely affirmed, there was still an association (Cerny, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 36). To substantiate this association, the Egyptians viewed the Nile as his bloodstream (Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt, 102). The god who was most associated with the Nile was Hapi (Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians, 44).

50 The action was probably on the occasion of a religious ceremony over which he presided, quite possibly occurring on the commencement of the annual rise of the river called the "Red Nile in June" when certain rites were performed to the river god (Jamieson et al., A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical, 1:296; Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, 105). It was customary to carry the wooden statue of a god in procession from the local temple to the river (Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus, 22; Steindorff and Seele, When Egypt Ruled the East, 139-40). To tamper with the Nile was very serious (as reflected in the Negative Confession) and was punishable by death even as late as Roman times (Tirard, The Book of the Dead, 131) and yet the God of Israel did so to demonstrate His lack of regard for this god.

51 Many kinds of fish in the Nile were worshiped, the most important being the Oxyrhynchus. Budge noted that it was sacred throughout Egypt and in some places it would not be eaten. The Phagrus, or eel, was worshiped in Upper Egypt where mummified eels have been found in small sepulchral boxes (Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians, 382-83). It is also possible that the water affected in the wooden buckets and stone jars is significant. While this may refer only to the extent of the plague, it should not be missed that "wood and stone" usually signify idols in the Bible and the Egyptian priests would wash images of their gods in water every day early in the morning. Possibly even the water poured over the idols turned to blood (U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus [Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1983] 99).

52 For an excellent discussion regarding the nature of the duplication performed by Pharaoh's magicians, see Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt, 89-92.

loathsome;[53] however, because of their countless numbers were regarded as a symbol of fertility,[54] and consequently, there were a number of toad deities in Egypt, the most popular of which was Heqt[55] of whom the toad was a theophany. It is no wonder then that even the involuntary slaughter of one of these creatures was punishable by death.[56] As with the previous plague, the nauseating multiplication of these creatures was an attack on a god of Egypt. Noth suggested, "the frog, instead of appearing as a representative of the renewal of life, becomes a fearful plague".[57] Cassuto averred: "Pentateuchal narrative intends to convey that Israel's God alone rules the world, and that He only bestows on His creatures, according to his will, the power of fertility, and that these frogs, which were considered by the Egyptians as a symbol of fecundity, can be transformed, if He so desires... from a token of blessing to one of blight".[58]

Cassuto's statement that the frog was transformed from a "token of blessing to one of blight" is the consistent theme regarding the plagues on the dust of the ground,[59] the swarms

53 Ibid. 107.

54 Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, 101; Cerny, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 24.

55 As with other Egyptian gods, there are variant spellings suggested. For this particular one, it is also spelled Heket or Hekat. She was believed to have had a role in creation, to have assisted women in childbirth, and to have the ability to bestow life through resurrection (Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, 101; Kyle, "Plagues, of Egypt," 4:2404; Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians, 378; R. Alan Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985) 91; Ailing, Egypt and Bible History, 106; Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, 108; Budge, Egyptian Magic, 63.

56 George Rawlinson, "Exodus," in Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959) 1:214. It is interesting to note regarding the frog cult that "the frog, as a sacred symbol, survived the disappearance of old Egyptian religion. Lamps of early Christian time have been found in the form of a frog, bearing this legend: 'I am the resurrection'" (Tirard, The Book of the Dead, 86-87).

57 Martin Noth, Exodus: A Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 75.

58 Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, 101.

59 See Barbara Waterson, The Gods of Ancient Egypt (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984) 114; Montet, Eternal Egypt, 177; James Hoffmeier, "The Arm of God Versus the Arm of Pharaoh in the Exodus Narratives," Biblica 67 (1986): 381.

of flies,[60] the livestock,[61] the blisters,[62] the hail and lightning,[63] locusts, darkness,[64] and the slaying of the firstborn.[65] Again, in every plague, what was worshiped and considered good was turned into a curse and something bad.

Since this is essentially the pattern of the entire narrative, is it not possible, therefore, that the same thing occurred with the hardening of Pharaoh's heart? Something that was good and would lead one into eternal life was turned into something bad and actually led into more judgment through the successive plagues and eventually death in the Red Sea—just the opposite of what was believed. What was supposed to lead to no confession of sin, eventually lead to confession of sin (Exod 9:27, 34; 10:16-17). Surely, this made a mockery of the Egyptian scheme of salvation.[66]

60 Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt, 114; Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, 111.

61 Murray, The Splendor that was Egypt, 162; Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus, 24; John N. Oswalt, "The Golden Calves and the Egyptian Concept of Deity," Evangelical Quarterly 45 (January—March 1973): 13-14.

62 Robert Stieglitz, "Ancient Records and the Exodus Plagues," Biblical Archaeology Review 13 (November/December 1987):48; Ions, Egyptian Mythology, 118-19; Cerny, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 50; Armor, Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt, 133-34.

63 Jamieson et al., A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical, 1:303-04; Wood, Survey of Israel's History, 124; John Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt, 128; Ions, Egyptian Mythology, 55; Aling, Egypt and Bible History, 106; Steindorff and Seele, When Egypt Ruled the East, 141.

64 Tirard, The Book of the Dead, 101; Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 367-68; Walter Beyerlin, Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 5; Daniel Redford, "The Monotheism of the Heretic Pharaoh: Precursor of Mosaic Monotheism or Egyptian Anomaly" Biblical Archaeology Review 13 (May/June 1987): 24, 25, 27; S. A. B. Mercer, The Religion of Ancient Egypt (London: Luzac & Co., 1949) 210; Samuel Rosenblatt, "A Reference to the Egyptian God Re in the Rabbinic Commentaries on the Old Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature 60 (1941): 184-85; D. J. Wiseman, Peoples of Old Testament Times (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1973) 89; Douglas Fox, "The Ninth Plague: An Exegetical Note," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 45 (1977): 219.

65 Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, 133; Waterson, The Gods of Ancient Egypt, 90.

66 The longevity of this cult is incredible. Brandon observed, "this Osirian mortuary cultus remained effective for nearly 3,000 years. It is in fact the longest lived faith in the history of religions. It was already well established by the middle of the third millennium, and it was still being practiced when the pagan cults were suppressed in favour of Christianity in the fourth century A. D." (S. G. F. Brandon, "The After-Life in Ancient Egyptian Faith and Practice", Expository Times 76 [1964]: 219).