



"Jealousy in God is not a 'green-eyed monster' but a 'red-faced lover' who will brook no rivals in His relationship with His people."
—Sam Storms

06-Feb-26

Judging Egypt's Gods (Part One)

In [Numbers 33:3-4](#), [God](#) gives a reason why He sent the ten plagues upon Egypt:

[The Israelites] departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the [Passover](#) the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments.

This short passage explains that the plagues served several purposes for God. First, they gave Israel confidence in God and His servant, [Moses](#). They showed that God was working through Moses, proving to the people that they could rely on them. Their trust was short-lived, but it was enough to prod them to leave Egypt and walk out into the wilderness behind Moses.

Second, the plagues weakened Egypt in terms of its power, wealth, agriculture, and leadership. It also made the Egyptians fear what would happen next, causing them to let God's people go.

Third—the subject of this essay—the plagues exhibited the absolute weakness of Egypt's gods, and the towering strength of Israel's God. The true God was so superior that He judged and destroyed the Egyptians' gods before their eyes.

The Egyptians were an extremely superstitious people. They had gods for everything: a god in the tree and a god in the stone—and fish, animals, water, and so forth. Because their gods dwelled all around them, everything in their environment held a much higher value in their eyes than we place on it. They saw cosmic meanings in the most mundane and absurd things. Will Durant's *Our Oriental Heritage* states that the Egyptians considered the scarab beetle rolling a ball of dung into its burrow to be a type of Ra, the sun god, driving his fiery chariot, the sun, across the sky. How ridiculous! But a people who believe an insect is divine will believe that its actions reflect theological reality.

Many native animals were considered sacred to certain gods, and some were sacred to certain cults. Cats, especially black cats, were sacred to Bast, the goddess of music and dance and, later, the goddess of war. The goose was sacred to Geb, the god of the earth. The crocodile was sacred to Sebek, the god of death and burial and the protector of kings. These are only a tiny sampling of sacred animals. It seems as if every creature had some connection to a god.

Knowing that God says the plagues were judgments on the Egyptian pantheon, we can understand how this worked by reviewing a few of them. [Exodus 7:14-21](#) describes the first plague on Egypt, when God turned the waters of the Nile into blood. Notice verses 17-19:

Thus says the LORD: "By this you shall know that I am the LORD. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river." Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become

blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone."

This shocking plague must have been horrible. But God sent this appalling act of judgment to strike deep into the heart of Egypt's religion. As depicted in *The Ten Commandments*, it may have occurred when Pharaoh went down to the Nile to perform a religious rite, perhaps making an offering to the river god. Such ceremonies were performed to ensure the periodic flooding of the Nile because only by its flooding could Egyptian farmers grow their crops, both for the moisture and to replenish the soil. It is for good reason that Egypt has been called "the gift of the Nile." The river is Egypt's sole lifeline, as the country receives very little rain.

So, being very thankful for the Nile, Egyptians made it into a god, whom they called Hapi. Here is a hymn they sang to Hapi:

Hail to thee, O Nile,
that show us thyself in this land,
coming in [peace](#), giving life to Egypt.
O concealed one,
thou leadest the night onward to the day,
a leading that rejoices the heart.
Thou overflowest the gardens created by Ra.
Thou givest life to all animals.
Thou water the land without ceasing
from the path of heaven descending,
lover of good, bestower of corn,
giving life to every homestead.

In transforming the waters of the Nile to blood, God turned the pagan Egyptian god, arguably their primary god, who gave life to Egypt, into a bringer of fear, stench, suffering, and death. He could hardly have made a more powerful statement to the Egyptians.

In turn, this plague profaned and condemned other Egyptian gods, for instance, the fish. The Egyptians considered the *lepidotus*, the *oxyrhynchus*, the eel, and the *carpasensa* to be sacred. Other water creatures, such as crocodiles and frogs, also suffered and died from this plague.

It may be worthwhile to understand that the ancients believed that their gods exercised their power only in certain places, their own domain. In Canaan, for instance, Baal was considered powerful only within the land's borders. Each god, then, had a limited seat of influence. Elijah challenged and defeated the prophets of Baal at that god's supposed stronghold, Mount Carmel, and their defeat testified that Israel's God was the true God ([I Kings 18:20-40](#)). He could easily crush Baal and his prophets on their own turf.

This idea of a geographically limited power base is also why Naaman the Syrian carried home buckets of earth from Israel so he could worship Israel's God ([II Kings 5:17](#)). He believed he could worship Israel's God only on Israelite soil. He did not quite understand that God is sovereign everywhere and is almighty everywhere.

A similar principle was at work in Egypt when God struck the Nile River. He hit the Egyptians right where it hurt them most, showing His superiority over their most obvious, strongest god.

Moreover, in addition to losing their drinking water, the Egyptians had to go without bathing for a week. One might think going without a bath is not all that bad, but the Egyptians had a fetish about cleanliness. Among the ancient peoples, only the Chinese may rival them in fastidious cleanliness. Egyptian priests took four baths a day—two in the morning and two in the evening. So, as part of the plague, God made them feel personally unclean.

We should not forget the major component of the Egyptian diet: fish, of course! Exodus 7 says that all the fish in the Nile died. God also made them hunger. And all this resulted from just one plague!

In Part Two, we will consider a couple more plagues and draw some spiritual lessons from God's execution of judgment on Egypt's gods.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

New Transcripts

[1847A: Loyalty](#)

Given by James Beaubelle on 22-Nov-25

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Given by Clyde Finklea on 20-Dec-25

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The First Commandment: Idolatry](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Idolatry is the most frequently committed sin, with five of the Ten Commandments dealing directly with covetousness and idolatry, emanating from an excessive concern with self. Our individual system of beliefs from where we regulate our lives and derive our ethical code is just that—our own unique system of ethics, morality, and worship that seems right to us. Each of us is technically the god of our own system of beliefs. God challenges us to either defend our body of beliefs or drop them in favor of His. Since every system of law (secular and religious) is a system of ethics and morality, every system of law is in itself a religion with the object of adoration a "god," as was the case of Caesar and will be with the future Beast. Human government is a religious organization, the worship of the state, a worship of secularism, in which Christianity is becoming rapidly irrelevant. If we make a covenant with God, we must stay loyal, obeying God rather than man. Character is forged in making the choice between God and the world, creating a perpetual war within our minds. In the current secular progressive climate, God is disregarded, and His Laws have been watered down to situation ethics, with compromise and pragmatism determining moral decisions. If we revere God, we will extricate ourselves from the world's systems and follow Him only. Our goal and spiritual motivation should emanate from God's Laws, statutes, precepts, testimonies, and ways.

From the Archives: Featured Article

The Jealousy of God

by Ronny H. Graham

Deuteronomy 4:24 may strike an astute reader as somewhat controversial, if not contradictory. How can our holy and perfect God be jealous? Knowing that the Bible is consistent in its revelation of God, Ronny Graham reasons that since God's Word is not at fault, it is our limited understanding of godly jealousy that must be expanded.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 06-Feb-26) will be **Abraham (Part Two)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday** (EST) and all day Saturday.

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