

**Exegetical Notes, Exodus 10:1-20**  
**“The Humbling Hand of God, Part #7: Locusts”**  
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**Exodus 10:1-20**

**Verse 1-2**

*Then YHWH said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am YHWH.”*

- In Exodus 9:13-17 God declared his purpose in afflicting Egypt. It was so that Pharaoh and all Egypt, and with them all of the world, would know that YHWH is EL SHADDAI, that God is God Almighty. However, Pharaoh refused to learn this lesson. With the approach of the eighth plague God’s focus shifted.
- This passage begins with the ominous words from YHWH, **“I have hardened his (Pharaoh’s) heart and the hearts of his officials.”** Pharaoh is no longer offered a choice. He can no longer respond favorably to God’s request. God has closed the door. Pharaoh had been given many opportunities to obey YHWH and to honor God’s request. He had refused each opportunity and, in the last one, had arrogantly attempted to outsmart God. Though God had given opportunity to Pharaoh, God knew how Pharaoh would respond. But for the sake of those who would respond positively, and some among Pharaoh’s officials did so respond, God extended mercy to Pharaoh.
- However, at this point in the story, YHWH has given up his focus on Pharaoh and Egypt and the world. From this moment on in the story, YHWH’s focus is Israel. He will now do all that he does so that Israel will see his power and tell their children and grandchildren how God rescued them from the most powerful nation in the world, Egypt, and the most powerful man in the world, Pharaoh.

### Verse 3-6

*So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, “This is what YHWH, the God of the Hebrews, says, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow. They will cover the face of the ground so that it cannot be seen. They will devour what little you have left after the hail, including every tree that is growing in your fields. They will fill your houses and those of all your officials and all the Egyptians --- something neither your fathers nor your forefathers have ever seen from the day they settled in this land till now.’” Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh.*

- Notice that in this speech there is no opportunity given to Pharaoh to respond. His response no longer matters to YHWH. God’s focus is no longer Pharaoh and Egypt. God’s focus is Israel.
- Locusts are small grasshopper-like bugs. Throughout history swarms of locusts have been a potential threat to farmers. It is estimated that a square mile of ground can contain 130,000,000 locusts when they swarm. Within a very short time frame a swarm of locusts can devour hundreds of acres of crops. They are indiscriminate eaters destroying everything that gets in their way. God says that he will send such a swarm of locusts upon Egypt to destroy everything that the hail did not destroy. Moses’ words indicate that the locusts will finish what the hailstorm began and Egypt will be left with nothing.
- Such a swarming of locusts is mentioned in Ezekiel 38:15, Daniel 11:40, Joel 2:1-11 and in Revelation 6:12-13, 8:12, 9:1-12. Invasions of locusts are an apocalyptic image of God’s final judgment upon the sinfulness of mankind. This plague is a foreshadowing of the great judgment which will fall on the world at the end of time.

### Verse 7

*Pharaoh’s officials said to him, “How long will this man (Moses) be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship YHWH their god. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?”*

- YHWH/EL SHADDAI had beaten Egypt to her knees. His powerful humbling hand had brought the richest most powerful nation on the face of the earth down, and he had done it with such little things. No great armies, no war. YHWH had beaten Egypt with bugs and frogs! Pharaoh’s own officials know that YHWH has “ruined” Egypt and

they urge Pharaoh to recognize the facts and surrender to the power of God. They urge him to release the Hebrew slaves.

### **Verse 8-11**

*Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. “Go, worship YHWH your God,” he said. “But just who will be going?” Moses answered, “We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to YHWH.” Pharaoh said, “YHWH be with you -- if I let you go, along with your women and your children! Clearly you are bent on evil. No! Have only the men go; and worship YHWH, since that’s what you have been asking for.” Then Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh’s presence.*

- Pharaoh, at the advice of his officials, summoned Moses and Aaron and gave permission for the Hebrews to go into the desert to worship YHWH. However, he is not fully broken before God even yet. Pharaoh wants only the male Hebrews to go. The women and children will be left behind as hostages to be sure that the men return.
- Pharaoh accuses Moses of having evil intentions, and he still thinks that he can bargain with God. Pharaoh still believes that he is an equal with YHWH in this negotiation. At the end of the interview, he treats Moses and Aaron, YHWH’s spokespersons, with contempt driving them out of his presence as if he has settled the matter by his proclamation that the men may go into the desert to worship YHWH. Pharaoh has still not gotten things right!

### **Verse 12-15**

*And YHWH said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over EGYPT so that locusts will swarm over the land and devour everything growing in the fields, everything left by the hail.” So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and YHWH made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts; they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail -- everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.*

- Egypt was totally destroyed by the humbling hand of God!

## **Verse 16-20**

***Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against YHWH your God and against you. Now forgive my sin once more and pray to YHWH your God to take this deadly plague away from me.” Moses then left Pharaoh and prayed to YHWH. And YHWH changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. Not a locust was left anywhere in Egypt. But YHWH hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.***

- Once again Pharaoh was forced to bend to the overwhelming weight of God’s humbling hand. But at this point, the opportunity for Pharaoh to do things God’s way had passed. His heart was made hard by God and he was no longer given the opportunity for true, meaningful repentance. Though Moses prayed and the plague ended, Pharaoh’s mind was still closed. He would not let Israel go as YHWH requested.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Humbling Hand of God! Part # 7: Locusts*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)