

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 10:21-29
“The Humbling Hand of God, Part #8: Darkness”
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Exodus 10:21-29

Verse 21

Then YHWH said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt -- darkness that can be felt.”

- This is an unannounced plague. No warning is given to prepare Pharaoh or Egypt for this darkness. It must have seemed to come over them out of nowhere.
- There is no satisfactory explanation of the description that this darkness could be felt. The implication is that this darkness was so heavy that it gave the sense of being covered by it or in it.

Verse 22-23

So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.

- This was not an eclipse or other “natural” phenomenon as it lasted three days and did not affect the areas that were occupied by the Hebrews. Additionally, there was total darkness. There was no light for seeing anything.
- This denial of light by YHWH is a direct religious insult to Egypt. Egypt’s chief god was Ra, the sun god. YHWH is deliberately denying the power of the sun and thereby showing his supremacy over Ra.
 - YHWH also robes himself in light. Therefore, this denial of light is a symbolic denial of his presence in Egypt. Symbolically, YHWH has departed from Pharaoh.

Verse 24

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship YHWH. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind.”

- After three days of darkness, Pharaoh again decided to let the Hebrews go into the desert to worship YHWH, as God had demanded. However, he again attempts to limit Israel’s freedom in going by saying that they must leave the herds and flocks behind. This is the fourth time that Pharaoh has attempted to put limits on the deal. The previous three times, God refused Pharaoh’s limitations. But still Pharaoh tries to retain some control. He is not yet ready to admit that YHWH is EL SHADDAI.
- It is important to note that the darkness was connected with Moses and YHWH in the minds of the Egyptians. Pharaoh summoned Moses, and it is assumed by Pharaoh that the darkness is related to his refusal to bend to YHWH’s request.

Verse 25-26

But Moses said, “You must allow us to have sacrifices and burnt offerings to present to YHWH our God. Our livestock too must go with us; not a hoof is to be left behind. We have to use some of them in worshipping YHWH our God, and until we get there we will not know what we are to use to worship YHWH.”

- Moses simply explained the necessity for taking the animals into the desert and flatly refused to accept Pharaoh’s terms.

Verse 27-28

But YHWH hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go. Pharaoh said to Moses, “Get out of my sight! Make sure you do not appear before me again! The day you see my face you will die.”

- Pharaoh had decided to let Israel go. Then he freely changed his mind and decided not to let them go. When he altered his choice YHWH made it impossible for him to reverse his decision at that time. God hardened his heart.
- Pharaoh threatened Moses’ life out of his anger and frustration. He still thinks that he is in control of the events that are unfolding around him.

Verse 29

“Just as you say,” Moses replied, “I will never appear before you again.”

- With these fatalistic words Moses sets the scene for the final plague that will fall on Egypt. He agrees to never again enter Pharaoh’s presence.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Humbling Hand of God!* Part # 8: *Darkness*. 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*.)