

# KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, PART 1

## EXODUS 7:8-25

At this point in the Exodus narrative, God is going to begin the process that will convince Pharaoh to let His people go. This will be accomplished by means of great signs, miracles, and wonders performed by God through His prophets, Moses and Aaron. It is vital to remember that the purpose of signs, miracles, and wonders is always and only to validate God, God's message, and the messengers through whom He is delivering that message. The period under discussion here in Exodus is one of only four periods of time thus far in history that have been characterized by an intense display of signs, miracles, and wonders.

I preached a sermon on May 19, 2013, entitled "Signs, Miracles, & Wonders" and it is in our lesson library under the tab "Miscellaneous Lessons," and I urge you to listen to that as foundational background information on the subject that will help you understand this issue much better, if you feel a need to do that. The whole issue of miracles is terribly abused today and you can get swept up into some very false teaching if you are not biblically educated about the doctrine of signs, miracles, and wonders.

God revealed the specific purpose for the miraculous judgments on Egypt and that purpose was to bring the Egyptians to the position whereby they knew that Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, was the one true God. Whether or not they placed their faith in Him, is a separate issue, but they would know who He was whether they liked it or not.

Exodus 7:5 <sup>5</sup>"The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

Exodus 9:14–16 <sup>14</sup>"For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. <sup>15</sup>"For *if* by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. <sup>16</sup>"But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

These miracles were not only meant to validate Yahweh to the Egyptians, but they were meant to validate Yahweh in the sight of the Israelites as well. This truth is presented several places in the Scriptures, but Moses' words in Deuteronomy express it well.

Deuteronomy 4:32–35 <sup>32</sup>"Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *inquire* from one end of the heavens to the other. Has *anything* been done like this great thing, or has *anything* been heard like it? <sup>33</sup>"Has *any* people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard *it*, and survived? <sup>34</sup>"Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within *another* nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? <sup>35</sup>"To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him.

By means of application, these miraculous events also serve to validate Yahweh to every person who reads the revelation of these supernatural acts in Exodus and the rest of the Scriptures. In other words, we learn things about God—His person, His nature, and His plan for history—by means of these miracles, and they serve to reveal Him to unbelievers who may read them as well. This is no different than John's purpose statement in his gospel. Signs, wonders, and miracles, serve a revelatory, validating purpose then and now.

John 20:30–31      <sup>30</sup>Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

The judgments that God is going to unleash on Egypt, with the exception of the final one, the death of the firstborn, were all events that could have occurred naturally to some degree. What sets these apart as supernatural events and destroys any notion that they were naturally occurring as so many humanistic rationalists want to do, is the severity of them which was far beyond where any naturally occurring event would go, the restrictions placed on some of them concerning location and who they effected, the increasing severity of them as one succeeded another, and their beginning and cessation exactly as Moses said they would begin and end. It became so evident these judgments were far beyond any normally occurring events that even Pharaoh's magicians admitted they were from God early on when they couldn't counterfeit the third judgment.

The plagues were preceded by a miraculous act designed to get Pharaoh's attention and convince him Moses and Aaron were sent from and acting as prophets of God, but, at this point, Pharaoh did not know God, did not want to know God, and was not about to be convinced that he had to know and obey God. Pharaoh thought he was a god himself; he didn't think there was any other god superior to him.

Exodus 7:8–10      <sup>8</sup>Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, <sup>9</sup>“When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Work a miracle [מִוִּפְתַּי],’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw *it* down before Pharaoh, *that* it may become a serpent [תִּנְיָן].’” <sup>10</sup>So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just

as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

Miracle, מִוִּפְתּוֹת, is a wonder, miracle, sign, portent, or a token. It is a marvelous sign showing power and it is often a display of God's power. In Exodus, their purpose is to validate God's sovereignty over the created order, including Egypt, and His superiority over the pagan gods of Egypt. The miracles are not an end in and of themselves; they have a purpose to validate and reveal Yahweh and to create the conditions that will bring about the freedom of the people God has been forming into a nation who He will then place into a land of their own as His people through whom He will reveal Himself to the world.

God directed Moses and Aaron to present their credentials to Pharaoh, so to speak, by appearing before him and performing this miracle which was the authenticating sign accompanying the message God sent with them. This was done in response to a request from Pharaoh. He probably thought they were lightweight pretenders and he could get rid of them by asking them to do something he thought would be impossible for them to do. The men of God had not performed any miracles in the presence of Pharaoh to this point or warned him about any miraculous plagues prior to this appearance before the king. They had performed the three signs God gave Moses for the Israelites (Ex. 4:1-9), the staff into a serpent, the hand sickened with leprosy and restored, and the water from the Nile turning to blood when poured on the ground, in the presence of

those Israelites in order to authenticate the prophet's message to them (Ex. 4:30-31) and the people responded in belief.

Exodus 4:30–31 <sup>30</sup>and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. <sup>31</sup>So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.

Serpent, תַּנִּינִיךְ, refers to a sea monster, sea dragon, or sea creature, but it may also refer to a snake. Some theologians therefore believe the serpent is a crocodile rather than a cobra and the text doesn't elaborate beyond the use of the word. In Exodus 4:3, when God changed Moses' staff into a serpent, the word used was נָחָשׁ meaning serpent, snake, or viper, but whether that indicates a difference between the two pericopes or not I'm uncertain. On a purely rational level, it seems more likely a staff would turn into a snake rather than a crocodile and given the fact that Moses was told to pick it up by its tail (Ex. 4:2-4) suggests a snake. Picking up a several feet long crocodile is a little difficult; it's heavy and unwieldy. That's not to say God couldn't bring that about, but a snake just seems to fit the narrative a little bit better and it fits Egypt's view of snakes better. It seems that Aaron's serpent staff swallowing the occultist's serpent staff (Ex. 7:12) is more suggestive of a snake and the power of God over Pharaoh's objects of worship that wouldn't be so obvious if the serpent was a crocodile. There is some evidence that crocodiles fit the narrative in Exodus documented in what is called the Westcar Papyrus "where magicians are credited with changing wax crocodiles into real ones only to be turned back to wax

again after seizing their tails."<sup>1</sup> It is unclear to me, based on the words used, whether crocodiles or snakes are the subject, but snakes fit into the overall context of dealing with Egypt and Pharaoh better. The cobra was the deity of Lower Egypt where this took place. The crocodile was worshiped in the form of a god named Sepek, but he was not the patron deity of Lower Egypt where this took place; that was the cobra god. The worship of the crocodile god was centered in Thebes in the south where crocs were more numerous.

The Egyptians had a love-hate relationship with the cobra. They are a very deadly snake and the Egyptians had charms to keep them away and to cure the person who was bitten. In their pagan theology, the god Seth had to fight some great snake in order to protect the sun as it made its nightly journey through the underworld. The cobra was also a religious and national icon. Several pagan Egyptian deities were snake gods. Renenutet was a cobra goddess who was the guardian of Pharaoh and Edjo was the cobra goddess who was the deity of Lower Egypt. That's why Pharaoh's crown had a cobra, usually depicted rearing up and called the uraeus, on it. It usually appeared alongside Nekhbet, the vulture goddess and patron deity of Upper Egypt together signifying the unification of Egypt under the Pharaoh's rule.<sup>2</sup> They were often depicted together in Egyptian religious art tending to Pharaoh. The language allows for this to be a snake nor does it require it to be a crocodile. Clearly, the cobra had

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<sup>1</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Exodus" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 347.

<sup>2</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *Kregel Exegetical Library: A Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2014), 275.

major significance in Lower Egypt as the patron deity of the area more so than the crocodile.

The sorcerers and the magicians of Pharaoh's court were able to duplicate this miracle.

Exodus 7:11–12 <sup>11</sup>Then Pharaoh also called for *the* wise men and *the* sorcerers [כְּשָׁף], and they also, the magicians [מְרַטְמִים] of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. <sup>12</sup>For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

Sorcerers, כְּשָׁף, refers to those who engage in witchcraft and practice the black magic arts. Magicians, מְרַטְמִים, are soothsayer priests, one who interprets dreams and who also perform supernatural acts. There is no reason to suppose practitioners of the black magic arts cannot conjure evil supernatural feats to further their master's ends.

Many theologians do not believe those who operate in the dark side can perform supernatural acts, but they can. They can perform true miracles, but what makes their miracles false is they do not serve to validate God and His message but instead validate Satan, his message, and his messengers. What makes them true or false is who they are identifying or validating; it isn't about whether or not they are tricks or sleight of hand. Here is an example of a theologian who doesn't think the sorcerers and magicians in Pharaoh's court could actually turn a staff into a snake.

It continues to remain a mystery how a staff could suddenly become a snake/serpent. Kitchen speaks for many when he says, "If charmed and deftly pressured at its neck muscles, the Egyptian cobra can be rendered immobile (cataleptic), becoming a 'rod'—

and, of course, released." If that explanation is correct, then it qualifies Aaron as an excellent snake handler, and so to his resume of priest and prophet is now added "snake handler." It would also make it easy to explain how in v. 11 Egyptian artisans can do the same, given the specialization of some of them in "serpentineology."<sup>3</sup>

This is a clear denial of the Scriptures that reveal Satan's agents can and will perform supernatural feats. It is an exhibition of at least skepticism, if not unbelief, concerning the inerrancy of the Scriptures. For those of us who allow the Scriptures to speak, there is no problem understanding the nature of false, satanic signs, wonders, and miracles. It is interesting to note that most of the theologians who deny that these occultists could perform this miracle, have no problem understanding that God's serpent swallowed Satan's serpent in order to show the superiority of God over Egypt's practitioners of the dark arts. That seems to be inconsistent, to say the least. The biblical fact ignored by these theologians is the sorcerers of Pharaoh's court threw down their staffs that became snakes; they didn't manipulate a snake from the start.

As we move through the plagues narrative in Exodus, we will note the practitioners of satanic powers in Pharaoh's court will be able to duplicate several of God's miracles—but only to a certain point. After the first three, they will no longer be able to do so. God allows satanic forces to perform supernatural acts to a point but no further. For example, when God allowed Satan to test Job, he used miraculous acts to attack the man but he could only do so much

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<sup>3</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 117-118.

and no more. When the magicians in Pharaoh's court could no longer duplicate the miracles, they realized they could do no more and acknowledged these things to be from "the finger of God" (Ex.8:19).

We know that false prophets, agents of Satan, can perform miracles because Moses told us they could do them, but Moses also told them the false prophet would do miracles that took them away from God rather than to Him. In other words, the miracles were not identifying and validating God and that is what rendered them false; they were still real supernatural acts. Knowing the Word of God is the key to discerning the false from the true. Developing the discernment skills to know when someone is leading you away from God to something else is the key to avoiding the trap.

Deuteronomy 13:1–3 <sup>1</sup>"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, <sup>2</sup>and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' <sup>3</sup>you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

This is not only an Old Testament warning; it is applicable today. Both Christ and Paul warned that the Antichrist and his minions will also perform miracles of the false kind.

Matthew 24:24 <sup>24</sup>"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

2 Thessalonians 2:8–10 <sup>8</sup>Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; <sup>9</sup>that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all the deception of

wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

People will be deceived by these false wonders because they reject the truth of the Word of God and are either unwilling or incapable of discerning the false nature of these supernatural acts. Pharaoh had the same problem.

It is interesting to note that Aaron's staff swallowed up the magician's staffs. That's a clue. God was mightier and His works more powerful than the works of the satanic sorcerers and magicians serving Pharaoh, but Pharaoh was unwilling to accept the truth that was right before him. God was mightier and more powerful than Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh ignored the clues God was clearly providing him.

Despite all the biblical evidence that Satan and his agents are empowered, to the extent God allows, to perform supernatural miraculous feats, many theologians deny that truth. There are three common explanations that attempt to claim, without any biblical proof, that Satan and his agents cannot perform this miracle. They merely create an optical illusion or they perform a trick or sleight of hand or they charm a snake as suggested above. The presupposition is these things can't happen; therefore, the argument must be crafted to support the presupposition no matter what the Bible has to say about it. This backwards exegesis. The presupposition should be the Bible has spoken; therefore, what did it say? The plain reading of the biblical text suggests Satanic forces can indeed perform supernatural feats within the parameters God has set for them to do so.

In contrast with the Israelites who saw the signs and believed, Pharaoh was not moved by the sign and he remained in unbelief.

Exodus 7:13 <sup>13</sup>Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Could Pharaoh have positively responded to the miracle and let the people go? Certainly, but God knew He wouldn't do that and God knew what it was going to take to get Pharaoh to let His people go. Pharaoh's heart was already hardened and predisposed to keep the Hebrew slaves in Egypt and under his control. God knew Pharaoh would not let them go until He had exhausted Egypt's wealth and resources and only after that would they be allowed to leave.

Exodus 3:19–20 <sup>19</sup>“But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. <sup>20</sup>“So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.

Many theologians have developed scenarios to explain some sort of structural relationships between the plagues, but all of them seem to me to be forced and artificial, therefore, I'm not going to report on them. The only differences of consequence seem to be that some of them are against the land and the rest deal with the lives and the deaths of animals and people.

The first destructive miracle or judgement was about to be unleashed on Egypt and it would strike at the very heart of what made it a powerful nation, the Nile River.

Exodus 7:14 <sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh's heart is stubborn [קָבֵד]; he refuses [מָאָס] to let the people go.

Stubborn, נָבֵד, describes something heavy, great, grievous referring to something that is heavy, weighty upon things. Negatively, in this verse it refers to a hard, stubborn, unbelieving heart. Refuses, מָצָן, means to refuse, resist. In this context, it means to be in a state of rebellion and to be defiant to authority. You can imagine how haughty and arrogant a king who thinks he is the preeminent god of the universe would react to a couple of lowly shepherd slaves telling him what to do. Pharaoh had a choice; he refused to release the people as God, through Moses and Aaron, commanded him to do. Now he was going to begin to understand the consequences for rebellion against the one true God and it was going to take a lot of convincing to get him to change his mind.

Moses received instructions from God for what to do for this first meeting with Pharaoh outside the palace walls.

Exodus 7:15–16 <sup>15</sup>“Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent. <sup>16</sup>“You shall say to him, ‘The LORD [יהוה], the God [אלהים] of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.”

The reason for Pharaoh's visit to the Nile that morning is unknown. It is also not known whether this was a regularly scheduled visit to the river or whether it was simply an occasional foray. Many different suggestions have been offered, which only serves to highlight the fact that we don't know. Speculation includes bathing, checking the level of the Nile, some form of ritual worship, or out exercising by taking a walk. I read an account on a Jewish Torah web site that

claimed all of Pharaoh's ritual worship duties as the high priest of the nation were conducted in the morning but were indoors in a temple and not at the river [<http://thetorah.com/why-pharaoh-went-to-the-nile/>]. The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt and was represented by pagan deities the Egyptians worshiped as gods so we shouldn't find it out of the ordinary that Pharaoh would be in and around it a lot, but the fact still remains that we don't know why he went that particular morning. I suspect it had to do with performing some sort of ritual worship that was done on a regular basis, perhaps daily. What is known is that God knew Pharaoh would be going to the Nile that morning and he instructed the men of God to go there, wait for his arrival, and deliver God's message when he arrived.

God identified Himself first as Yahweh and then as Elohim (God) of the Hebrews. The use of Yahweh, the name of God only recently revealed to Moses, is meant to convey the power and sovereignty of God to this pagan king who was relying on nonexistent gods. It is God's intent that Pharaoh understand who is bringing this miraculous sign to pass in his sight and to his detriment. Moses was the instrument of the one true God and it was God who Pharaoh had to acknowledge, not Moses. To this point, Moses and Aaron had appeared twice before Pharaoh and he refused to grant their request to let the people go in order to worship Yahweh in the wilderness. This was more than a request to worship God, it was a demand for freedom and Pharaoh knew it. God designed a

program to get him to listen, but in the meantime, not only Pharaoh but Egypt will suffer the consequences of his stubborn refusal to heed the Word of God.

We also have to remember that God had already been identified as Yahweh the God of Israel and Pharaoh's reply was, "I don't know this God; why should I obey Him?"

Exodus 5:1–2      <sup>1</sup>And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" <sup>2</sup>But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."

In Exodus 7:16, Moses used the same identifying name for God except this time He identified Him as "God of the Hebrews" instead of the "God of Israel." The first time, no authenticating sign was given; Moses simply made the request to let the people go. This time, there will be a destructive, authenticating sign that will serve to validate His Name and display His power. This will be the second authenticating sign Pharaoh will see.

Exodus 7:17–19      <sup>17</sup>Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood [דָּם]. <sup>18</sup>The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul [שֶׁמֶט], and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile.'"<sup>19</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'"

The purpose of this sign is clearly stated: "By this you shall know that I am the Lord." Only Abraham (Gen 15:7), Jacob (Gen. 28:13), Moses (Ex. 6:2, 29),

and the Israelites in Egypt (Ex. 6:6-8 [three times]) had heard this self-identifying statement, "I am the Lord," from Yahweh, but this is the first time those words were said to a Gentile. God is unique, omnipotent, and sovereign all of which are attributes Pharaoh is going to see up close and personal before he lets the people go.

Once Moses struck the water of the Nile it turned to blood. The word blood, דָּם, means blood and we have no reason for suggesting it means anything else. Foul, רָעַח, means to stink, to smell, to have a stench such that it is loathsome and difficult to be around. Turning to blood doesn't mean the water remained water, turned red, and was polluted with some microscopic organisms; it means it turned to blood. This fouled the river to the extent the fish died and the people obviously could not drink it. We taste as much or more with our sense of smell as we do with our taste buds, and it is nearly, if not impossible to force ourselves to drink something that has an obnoxious, repellent stench. Fish couldn't breathe in this blood and humans couldn't drink it. But it wasn't only the Nile River that was affected. God had Aaron stretch out his hands holding his staff and he turned the water of the nation to blood. The streams, the pools of water, and the reservoirs turned to blood. Whatever measures the Egyptians took to store water failed to keep the water from turning to blood. The water contained in the vessels in which people put water for personal use turned to blood. As noted in verse 24, the only way people could get water to drink was

by digging in the ground down to the water table in order to obtain potable water; God's command didn't pollute the already existing ground water.

Imagine the horror of the pagan priests, not to mention fear, when the holy water from the Nile they stored in their temples to wash their idols turned to blood.

Exodus 7:20–25     <sup>20</sup>So Moses and Aaron did even as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood. <sup>21</sup>The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup>But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. <sup>23</sup>Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. <sup>24</sup>So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile. <sup>25</sup>Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Moses and Aaron obeyed the Lord and did just as instructed and God performed this miracle on the Nile River and the water in Egypt.

This is the second of three miracles the Lord allowed the magicians to duplicate. They obtained some water, apparently from ground water, and turned it into blood which only served to confirm in Pharaoh's heart what he wanted to believe anyway and he didn't pay any attention to the consequences of this miracle. Once his magicians turned water into blood, his already arrogant, hard heart was hardened even further and he walked away from the men of God and went about his daily business seemingly unconcerned about the affect this miracle would have on his people. This lasted for seven days and it must have disappeared from the waters as quickly as it appeared.

The Ipuwer Papyrus has some things to say about this miracle. Ipuwer was apparently an eye witness to these things.<sup>4</sup>

“Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere” (Ip. 2:5,6).

“The river is blood. Men shrink from tasting—human beings, and thirst after water” (Ip. 2:10).

That is our water! That is our happiness! What shall we do in respect thereof? All is ruin” (Ip. 3:10-13).

“Behold Egypt is poured out like water. He who poured water on the dry land, he has captured the strong man in misery” (Ip. 7:4).

Church believes the last quote about pouring water on dry land refers to Moses pouring water from the Nile on the ground and subsequently turning to blood. He believes Ipuwer must have seen this done in the presence of Pharaoh. The problem with that thought is this sign was only done in the presence of the Israelites and not in the presence of Pharaoh. It is possible Ipuwer heard of it and wrote it down because the Israelites certainly would have been talking about it. Overall, it seems he was writing about this miracle as an eyewitness. Skeptics cannot allow this witness to stand so they claim Ipuwer wrote during the first intermediate period when Egypt was experiencing a time of internal chaos without effective leadership and control of the country.<sup>5</sup> The commentator making this claim then goes on to describe the exact kind of conditions that resulted from God’s actions on Egypt except he moves them to a period of time that occurred earlier in Egypt’s history. “According to this text [Ipuwer Papyrus],

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<sup>4</sup> J. R. Church, “An Egyptian Description of the Exodus” in *Prophecy in the News*, (June 2017), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Garrett, 283.

thieves and robbers became wealthy, routine maintenance of facilities in the land was neglected, and prosperity disappeared. Wild animals such as crocodiles were out of control, unemployment was rife, and people despaired of life."<sup>6</sup> This sure sounds like the results of the Exodus narrative to me! This theologian can't let that stand because he doesn't believe God supernaturally intervened in history by performing these miracles because he wants to believe all the miracles were catastrophes explainable in terms of a humanistic rationalistic understanding of them as naturally occurring phenomena.

One purpose for the miraculous judgments exercised against Egypt was to show the omnipotent power of God set against the complete powerless nature of the pagan gods worshiped in Egypt.

Exodus 12:12      <sup>12</sup>For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD.

Exodus 18:11      <sup>11</sup>Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people."

What gods did the judgment on the Nile disrespect? The Nile of course was considered to be a sacred river and many of the Egyptian gods were associated with it. What better way to show up the pagan gods than to attack what was literally the lifeblood of the nation apart from any sort of spiritual significance? If there is no viable Nile River, there is no viable Egypt. But God can at-

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<sup>6</sup> Garrett, 283.

tack both the life of the nation and the pagan spirituality surrounding it in one miraculous event.

The god Khnum was the guardian of the sources of the Nile River. “Khnum was originally a water god who was thought to rule over all water, including the rivers and lakes of the underworld. He was associated with the source of the Nile and insured that the inundation deposited enough precious black silt onto the river banks to make them fertile.”<sup>7</sup>

Hapi was the god of the annual flood. “[T]he river flowed from Hapi’s home through the heavens and the land of the dead before emerging from a cave somewhere in the mountains. The inundation was referred to as the ‘Arrival of Hapi’ and during the flood the Egyptians would place statues of the god in the towns and cities so that they could implore his assistance at that time. They would throw offerings to the god in order to ensure the innundaton [sic] was not too low (leaving insufficient water for the crops) or too high (risking the destruction of their mud-brick homes).”<sup>8</sup> He was the spirit and dynamic essence of the Nile.

Osiris, the god of the underworld, and Isis were the Egyptian manifestation of the Babylonian mother-child cult, started by Nimrod and Semiramis, which was the basis for paganism throughout the world and exists today. The interesting fact about this pagan god and the Exodus is the Egyptians believed the Nile

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/khnum.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/hapi.html>

River was the bloodstream of Osiris.<sup>9</sup> What better way to humiliate this premier god than to turn his myth into judgmental, catastrophic reality?

What is the standard naturalistic explanation for water turning into blood? Every summer beginning in June and cresting in late summer, the Nile rises due to the rains in Central Africa and the African highlands of Ethiopia and Sudan. This is the cause of the annual flood Egypt depended on to keep the Nile healthy, to provide the water necessary for agriculture and for life, and to deposit silt to replenish the soil and create new tillable land in the delta. This African watershed covers areas that are red dirt; therefore, the Nile can turn red during this annual flood which would look like the water had turned to blood. This theory is embellished by assuming the water carried with it microscopic organisms and other bacteria that fouled the water and killed the fish. This argument does not exegetically stand up to scrutiny. According to the Word of God, the water turned to blood when Moses put his staff into the river and when Aaron raised his staff toward the rest of the nation implying a result that began immediately and was completed very quickly. The Bible also says it lasted only seven days. Seven days is a far cry from about ninety days. Since the river began rising in June and didn't crest for about ninety days, the red soil in the water theory doesn't hold water!

Another problem with this theory is the water of the Nile turned red every year at time of the annual flood. The red river in and of itself would not cause

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<sup>9</sup> John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH), 102.

any alarm among the Egyptian people; that was an annual event, and it also never caused the fish to die and the water to become so foul that it was undrinkable. The river was dead for a week; that didn't happen during the annual flood they saw every summer.

Some theologians argue that since the Bible symbolically speaks of the moon turning to blood in other Scriptures, therefore, the river turning red must be symbolic in Exodus as well. They cite Joel 2:31 and Rev. 6:12.

Joel 2:31 <sup>31</sup>“The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

Revelation 6:12 <sup>12</sup>I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;

One problem with equating these two verses with Exodus 7:17-25 is they are apocalyptic literature and Exodus is narrative. We need to differentiate between what is meant to be literal and what is figurative and Exodus is describing a literal, historical past event that actually happened. The other two passages are describing future events using apocalyptic imagery. This is the exegetical error we call the illegitimate totality transfer. Joel and Revelation do not control the meaning of blood in Exodus. There is no excuse for a serious student of the Bible to make this argument; it is truly a case of comparing exegetical apples to oranges.

One commentator, on the basis of Exodus 7:24, claims that because the text records that the Egyptians dug around for water to drink because the water

of the Nile was undrinkable, the conclusion must be that literal blood cannot be the meaning of the previous verses; therefore, water cannot mean blood.<sup>10</sup> “Water” was used in this verse because that is how people speak. No matter what happened to the Nile, people will still refer to it as water. It may be foul and undrinkable but in the conventional mode of human thought processes, they will still call it water. But the fact is, they were searching for potable water and they found it in the ground water. He also erroneously claimed they dug in the sand to filter the water to make it potable. What they did was dig in the sand/ground to reach ground water; they were not filtering the river water.

A rationalistic scientist claimed the blood was actually an algae bloom, called a red tide, that occurs in the ocean and in tidal estuaries.<sup>11</sup> He claims the red tide only occurred in the delta and not in the main channel of the Nile River. For him, even though the Scriptures say the waters of Egypt turned to blood, it had to be confined to a small area in the delta.

The final argument some use is that blood would have coagulated and created a hazardous waste problem that would not have been resolved for years.<sup>12</sup> Isn't it just as plausible that the God who turned the water to blood could restore the water its normal state just as quickly as he caused it to turn to blood in the first place and remove the environmental effects to whatever extent He so desired? I think it is entirely plausible.

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<sup>10</sup> Garrett, 284.

<sup>11</sup> Colin J. Humphreys, *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 114-118.

<sup>12</sup> Garrett, 284-285.