

## **FIGHTING AGAINST GOD**

– *AUGUST 3.* – *PSALM 105:23-36; EXODUS 7:11.* –

**"Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled: whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted."** – Matthew 23:12. R.V.

THE practice of injustice injures both parties – the afflicter as seriously as the afflicted. If this principle were generally recognized, fewer would attempt to practise injustice – inequity – iniquity. The Bible especially disclaims against all forms of iniquity and upholds justice, which is but another name for righteousness. All sins are great and grievous in proportion as they are injustices affecting the rights of others. No lesson seems so difficult for people in general to learn as the lesson of justice, which the Master briefly comprehended in His Golden Rule, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you."

There is no individual who does not need to guard himself along this line. With the coming of the opportunity to take advantage of another comes the test. It has a thousand forms, but is always the same – injustice. It may be practised by employer against employee, by parent against child, by husband against wife, by neighbor against friend; or reversely. In every case, however, we may be sure that the one who practises the injustice will suffer as severely in the end as the one against whom it is practised. This principle finds a forceful illustration in today's Study.

## **SLAVERY'S COST TO THE EGYPTIANS**

On various pretexts the Egyptians justified their treatment of the Hebrews. They were becoming numerically strong, and might aid the enemies of Egypt in case of an invasion. Therefore the Egyptians wished to hinder the increase of that people. Unsuccessful in this they enslaved the Hebrews. The slavery proved so

satisfactory and profitable to the Egyptians that they afterwards thought that they could not get along without the slaves. Hence, at the time of this Study, the Egyptians were ready to hold their slaves at almost any cost.

Injustice – inequity – iniquity – got such a hold upon the Egyptians that the plagues necessary for the deliverance of the Hebrews were doubtless a full compensation of justice upon them, equivalent to the injustices which they had practised. Truthful is the proverb which says, "He who sins shall suffer" – a just recompense, somehow, sometime.

The Egyptian plagues were miraculous from one viewpoint; not so from another. We are apt to style everything beyond our own experiences as miraculous, and everything within our range of experiences as natural. Thus Telephony and Wireless Telegraphy would rank as miraculous, did we not have ability to reproduce them, and to know how the results are secured. Similarly, the perfect flowers of our day, as contrasted with the inferior ones of fifty years ago, would be miraculous to us without the knowledge of how the improvements have been produced.

On the other hand, from God's standpoint nothing is miraculous, since everything is accomplished in harmony with Wisdom and Power Divine. As we become familiar with the laws of nature and discern how the Almighty has accomplished certain things which we in the past **[R5271 : page 204]** called miraculous, it should not lessen our respect for the wonder itself, nor for the One who produced it.

Applying this principle to today's Study, we find that the various plagues upon the Egyptians can be accounted for with more or less of reasonableness, but the people of God should all the more reverence Him who exercised that power. It is supposed that the ten plagues upon the Egyptians covered a period of ten months.

Evidently they were part of a contest between the gods of the Egyptians and Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews.

The Pharaohs claimed to be the representatives of the sun god, while their slave people, the Hebrews, worshiped the great unseen, unmanifested Jehovah. Thus, when Moses by Divine direction appeared before Pharaoh, he told him that the God of the Hebrews sent him word that the Israelites were to go out of Egypt to worship Him. Derisively Pharaoh inquired, "Who is this God of the Hebrews?" The intimation is that he did not recognize Him. He considered the sun god of the Egyptians the powerful one.

Moses was instructed to give certain signs by which his authority as God's representative would be recognized. One of these was to cast his staff upon the ground, and it would turn into a serpent. It was a notable sign, but Pharaoh called in his magicians, and they performed a similar feat, or appeared to do so. Some have surmised that they performed a trick said to be common in India – hypnotizing a serpent and making it rigid in catalepsy, so it would appear like a staff. Then, released from the hypnosis, it would manifest itself as a serpent. We are not sure, however, that the magicians did not do more than this, for the other duplications of the work of Moses through Aaron cannot be accounted for on the basis of deception.

What power did they use? We reply that according to the Scriptures there are but two sources of occult power – Divine and satanic. Unquestionably God has for centuries permitted Satan and the fallen angels, called demons, to exercise great power. In no other way can the psychic phenomena of India and, more recently, in Europe and America, be accounted for. And in thus saying, we are not charging that the spirit mediums are knowingly the servants of the evil spirits who personate the dead. Rather, we are excusing them as thoroughly deceived – blind leaders of the blind – who more and more are bringing the world under the power of these evil spirits,

and rapidly increasing the numbers of the insane, who already number one out of every hundred adults.

## **WATERS TURNED INTO BLOOD**

It is supposed that the plagues began in June and ended the following March. The first one, the turning of the waters into blood, was almost as miraculous as the turning of the water into wine by our Lord at Cana. Some think that they find the explanation of the miracle. We have no reason to doubt that some day we shall fully know how God exercised His power in performing this wonder, and also how the Lord Jesus operated chemically on the water to change it into wine. Undoubtedly the process is a simple one, if we only know how it was done. All the grape juice was originally water, and passed through chemical changes in the vine. More and more our chemists are learning of the secrets of nature, and the flavors of fruits are now produced by what is termed the synthetic process. Some are hoping to produce milk by this process very soon – the full equivalent of cows' milk – directly from the grass.

Travelers tell us that in the early spring, before the freshets, they have seen the water of the Nile as red as blood. This color is produced by some micro-organisms in the water. If this were the method God used for turning the waters of Egypt into blood, or to look like blood, Pharaoh had probably heard of such changes before, and the miracle would consist chiefly in the ability of Moses and Aaron to effect the change suddenly – at **[R5272 : page 204]** their command – and in turn to abate it. The effect was sufficiently disastrous, for the fish of the river were killed, and the people could not drink the water. Still Pharaoh and his court held on to the injustice, and refused to let the Hebrews go.

The second declaration of the authority of Jehovah in commanding the release of the Israelites was backed by the threat that a plague of frogs would come. And they did come. Everywhere the land was alive with frogs and toads – in the streets, in the fields,

in the houses, in the bedrooms and the beds, in the troughs mixed with their food – frogs everywhere. Frogs in vast numbers are said to come to Egypt at times, but apparently never in so great numbers as on this occasion. It was a notable matter. Still Pharaoh, when there was respite, was unconvinced that he was fighting against Jehovah; and still he held on to the injustice of slavery. Pharaoh's magicians in some way were able to duplicate the first two plagues, but they merely added to the difficulty. They were unable to take away the frogs. Pharaoh was obliged to appeal to Moses, saying, "Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs."

The third plague was of lice. Dr. Merrins says: "The word lice probably means 'dust ticks,' so common in Egypt. This little creature fastens itself on to the victims, sucks the blood, and in a few hours distends from the size of a grain of sand to that of a pea. At certain seasons, it is as if the very dust of the land were turned into lice. The decaying heaps of frogs would inevitably be the breeding place of innumerable insects." He quotes Sir Samuel Baker as saying, "I have frequently seen dry desert places so infested with ticks that the ground was perfectly alive with these vermin, which are the greatest enemy of man and beast." The miracle in this case would consist in the producing of these ticks in unusual numbers and unusual places – not merely in the desert wilds, but throughout Egypt.

It is well worthy of note that these first three plagues were shared by the Israelites as well as by the Egyptians, but in the succeeding plagues, as Moses pointed out in advance, the Israelites were spared. The Land of Goshen was protected.

The plague of flies apparently, as the Psalmist says in this Study, was of various kinds – gnats, mosquitoes, house flies and cattle flies. The poor Egyptians were in torment – suffering a just retribution in offset to their own injustice, while the Israelites were preserved in this plague. Pharaoh relented and declared, "I will let the Israelites go, but not far away." But when God's mercy took

away the plague, he hardened his heart again. He doubted, after all, whether their experiences had been any special chastisement from the Lord, and refused to let them go.

## THE CATTLE PLAGUE

The cattle plague came next. It was a very grievous murrain (from the Latin, *morior*, to die), a disease much resembling the Russian Epizootic, which a few years ago spread sickness and death among the cattle of the world. The Israelites were cattle raisers and shepherds, yet this murrain was kept from them in the Land of Goshen, thus proving God's care, "that thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth." The monetary loss by [R5272 : page 205] the murrain must have been very great. Then came the plague of ulcers and sores. Imagine the nation, from the king to his humblest servant, afflicted with distressing carbuncles!

The seventh plague was a cyclone, hail and flaming fire. "He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land." This was a fearful storm, "thunder and hail and fire ran along upon the ground" or rained down unto the earth. (R.V.) "Hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous." Their crops were destroyed, and their property injured.

The eighth plague was one of swarms of locusts, and probably resembled the plague of grasshoppers which some years ago created such havoc in Kansas and Nebraska. Immense swarms of locusts have at other times come upon Egypt from Nubia. They covered the ground for miles, and sometimes to a depth of fifteen inches. Harmless of themselves, they are an enemy that cannot be disposed of. They are apt to eat everything that is green, before they fly away. In the midst of this calamity, Pharaoh confessed his sin and asked forgiveness. Yet, when the danger was passed, he again hardened his heart to resist the Lord's way, the way of righteousness. The success of injustice and the hope of future profit therefrom led him to brave what he now recognized to be the Power of the Almighty.

The ninth plague was one of darkness over all the land. It probably resembled the London fogs, in which it is impossible to see, and in which lights are of little avail, and which brings business to a general standstill. This darkness may have been produced by dust in the air, as some believe, or in a thousand other ways that the Almighty might choose. Yet the Land of Goshen where the Israelites dwelt was exempt – another proof to Pharaoh that he was dealing with the God of Israel.

Deeply impressed, Pharaoh yielded a little more than before, and offered to let the people go with their children, providing they left their flocks and herds in Egypt. When this proposal was refused, he commanded Moses to leave his presence and to see him no more upon penalty of death. To this threat came the calm reply of Moses: "Thou hast well spoken: I will see thy face no more." The next plague, as Moses knew, would be the final one, to which the hard heart of Pharaoh would succumb.

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