

# Exodus 10:21-29

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-10/exodus-1021-29/>

*Verses 21 – 29 describe the ninth plague. As with the third and sixth plagues, it was unannounced. There was no bartering between Moses and Pharaoh, so there was no warning given. It involved a darkness that has never been seen in a country where the sun almost shines every day. As in previous plagues, Israel was not affected by this plague.*

*The ninth plague can be outlined as follows:*

- *The plague itself (21 – 23)*
- *Confrontation with Pharaoh (24 – 29)*

The ninth plague began the way the others did. *The Lord said to Moses.* His instructions were very short – *Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.*

To initiate the plague, *Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.* Perhaps the three days of darkness parallel the three days Moses asked Pharaoh to let Israel travel into the wilderness to worship God (5:3). The source of the darkness is not known, but it has been explained in various ways. Some have said that it was the result of a severe dust storm, but it is unlikely that a dust storm could result in the utter darkness mentioned here. Others have thought that it was a solar eclipse, but the fact that the Israelites in Goshen had light (verse 23) makes this very unlikely. The best explanation is that it is a miraculous work of the LORD in overruling the normal cycle of nature.

That the darkness was completely void of any light can be seen in the fact that *they did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days.* This may indicate that the people did not build fires in their fireplaces or carry torches with them had they dared to leave their houses. It was complete and utter darkness in the streets and in the homes for three days, and it doubtless was a very frightening experience. But as in plagues four (flies) and seven (hail), Goshen (where the Israelites dwelt) was exempted from this darkness because *all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.*

In the midst of his misery and desperation, *Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you.* Some think that the phrase "little ones" refers to both women and children. This seems to be supported by the fact that Moses only mentions livestock in verse 25, because he would have demanded that the women be allowed to leave if Pharaoh was trying to keep them as well. If true, Pharaoh was trying to negotiate with Moses by allowing the men, women, and children of Israel to go but keep the livestock to ensure their return. Once again, Pharaoh was not unwilling to allow Israel to permanently leave Egypt and slavery.

In verse 25, Moses countered Pharaoh's offer by telling him *you must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice them to the Lord our God.* In order to obey the LORD's requirements for what was an acceptable sacrifice, Moses was uncompromising with Pharaoh in that he said *our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the Lord our God.* He then gave Pharaoh the reason they have to take the livestock with them – *and until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the Lord.* Moses seems to be saying that the Israelites need to take all of their livestock because they would not know what animals were acceptable sacrifices until they arrived at the place the LORD wanted them to go.

Instead of agreeing with Moses about letting the livestock go with the Israelites, *the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart* (yet again – see 9:10, 10:20), *and he was not willing to let them go.* The result of the hardening was a combative and angry Pharaoh. In his rage, *Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!"* An equally belligerent *Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"*

This plague demonstrates that the LORD is the God of creation and is totally sovereign over it. The world began in darkness ([Genesis 1:2](#)), and the LORD's creative acts put a limit on the darkness ([Genesis 1:3-5](#)).

The plague of darkness is also a mockery of what was the chief god in Egypt – Re, the sun god. Re was believed to be the provider of light and warmth. Not only that, Pharaoh was considered the physical representation of Re. Other gods that could be considered here are Horus, a god of the sky and one of the most widely worshipped Egyptian god, and Nut, goddess of the sky and all of the heavenly bodies (including the nighttime sky). All of these Egyptian deities would have been shamed by this plague.

The plagues of Revelation are similar to the plagues of Egypt, and include darkness that will accompany the LORD's second coming ([Isaiah 60:2](#), [Joel 2:31](#) et al.).

### **Biblical Text:**

<sup>21</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt." <sup>22</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. <sup>23</sup> They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings. <sup>24</sup> Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you." <sup>25</sup> But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice *them* to the Lord our God. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the Lord our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the Lord." <sup>27</sup> But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go. <sup>28</sup> Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!" <sup>29</sup> Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"