**Exodus 11:4-8**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-11/exodus-114-8/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-11/exodus-114-8/)

*Verses 4 – 8 contain the message that Moses gave to Pharaoh concerning this last plague.*

There is a question as to how this statement of Moses might have taken place since in 10:29, Moses stated that Pharaoh would never again see his face. We are not told, so we don’t know. It could have been spoken through an intermediary, such as Aaron, and Moses be situated such that his face was not shown to Pharaoh. It is possible 11:4 – 8 can be translated using the pluperfect tense. Instead of translating it (as the NASB does) *Moses said*, it could be translated “Moses had said.” This would allow for this message to have been given to Pharaoh before the message of 10:29 and then described here.

Chapter breaks are not original, and were added long after the text was written. It could be that the first three verses of Chapter 11 provide a parenthetical, and Moses’ description of the tenth and last plague was given during the same conversation as at the end of Chapter 10. Perhaps Moses left Pharaoh *in hot anger* after delivering the message of the tenth plague after being told by Pharaoh he would be killed if Pharaoh ever saw his face again. Chapter 11 is likely in logical but not sequential order.

The LORD’s message about the plague is in verses 4 – 7. Through Moses, the LORD told Pharaoh that *about midnight*(literally “about the middle of the night”)*I am going out into the midst of Egypt*. The word “I” is emphatic in Hebrew, stating that the LORD Himself would be “going out” to inflict this plague. There was nothing that anyone could do to stop it. What was about to happen? *All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die*. The firstborn in Egyptian culture was highly significant and very treasured. Along with being symbols of strength and vitality, firstborn sons were the ones through whom a family line descended. And there was no firstborn more important than Pharaoh’s. Since Pharaoh was believed to be divine (both the god Re, the sun god, and also the god Horus, a god pictured as a falcon who was supposedly the god of heaven in human form), his firstborn son was thought to be divine also. When one Pharaoh died, he was believed to become Osiris, king of the dead. His firstborn became Horus. To kill Pharaoh’s firstborn would mock the idea that the Pharaohs were divine kings.

The scope of this plague was universal in Egypt, *from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones***.**This is an example of a figure of speech called a merism, the use of opposites to dictate totality. Our use of searching “high and low” for something is similar. It emphasized that the plague was not limited to specific parts of society – all who are in Egypt would be affected.

The plague would also affect *all the firstborn of the cattle as well*. This raises a question because Chapter 9 states that all the Egyptians’ cattle died. If all the cattle are dead, then how did the Egyptians get cattle for the firstborn to die?  There are several possibilities. It is possible that the Egyptians had restocked, and sufficient time had passed to allow new births to be on the ground. We are not told how much time has lapsed. The trade routes at that time spanned from Egypt to Asia, so there were substantial trade arteries to support a substantial trade volume. The Egyptians also could have restocked from the stock of the Hebrews, whose cattle was unaffected. [It is also possible that the translators’ choice to translate the single Hebrew word miqneh as “all the cattle” in [Exodus 9:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+9.6&t=NASB95) could to be rendered “numerous cattle,” leaving ample cattle such that there are first born available to die.]

The effect of this plague on Egypt would be unprecedented – *there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again*.

Once again the LORD did not endanger His people. Verse 7 states that *against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark*. This probably means that there would be no danger or even the threat of danger to the Israelites, because their LORD was on their side. This lack of danger applied *whether against man or beast* to show Pharaoh*that you may understand how the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel*. This would communicate to Pharaoh yet again that the LORD was the God of the Hebrews and sovereign over all. It would also demonstrate that the LORD was going to deliver His people by bringing dire judgment upon the Egyptian people and upon their gods.

Verse 8 contains Moses’ own prediction. He said to Pharaoh that*All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, ‘Go out, you and all the people who follow you,’ and after that I will go out.”* After this plague, even Pharaoh’s own servants would come to Moses (remember, he would not go to Pharaoh again) and beg him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

After this, Moses *went out from Pharaoh in hot anger*. At the end of chapter 10, it was Pharaoh that was angry (10:28), and here it is stated that Moses was very angry.

**Biblical Text:**

**4Moses said, “Thus says the Lord, ‘About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, 5and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. 6Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been *before* and such as shall never be again. 7But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not *even* bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’ 8All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, ‘Go out, you and all the people who follow you,’ and after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.**