

GOD'S PURPOSE IN PHARAOH TO REVEAL HIS POWER  
AND MANIFEST HIS COVENANT NAME

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Bsac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
HB	Hebrew Bible
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJ	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

## GOD'S PURPOSE IN PHARAOH TO REVEAL HIS POWER AND MANIFEST HIS COVENANT NAME

### **Introduction**

The words of Moses to Pharaoh in Exod 9:13-16 declare God's sovereign purpose in the onslaught of the plagues due to Pharaoh's obstinacy. According to his gracious initiative, God "remembered" his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and determined to save his chosen race out of the land of Egypt that they might delight in serving him (Exod 2:24; 3:16-17). This he would do with a mighty outstretched arm, so that through the display of his power and glory working for Israel, the earth would know that there is no one like the Lord. Thus, God's purposeful triumph over Pharaoh and the Egyptians not only brings salvation to Abraham's seed, but moreover, gives occasion for him to manifest his name in all the earth.

### **Literary Context of Exodus 9:13-16**

Interpretation of Exod 9:13-16 must consider the entire narrative of chs. 1-15. Exodus quickly draws attention to the captivity of Abraham's seed in 1:1-8. Deliverance, however, is near in God's commission of Moses (2:24; 3:8, 10). As God's servant, Moses is to go before Pharaoh and ask for the release of the Hebrews. Nevertheless, Pharaoh was not going to let the people go, "except by a strong hand" (3:19-20). The Lord's compulsion manifests itself in ten impressive plagues persistently sent upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the last of which causes them to encourage the Hebrews' leave (7:14-12:39). Shortly after their departure, Pharaoh's heart is again hardened so that he and his

army chased Israel to the Red Sea (14:8). The Lord, however, splits the sea to save his people, and destroys the Egyptian army by covering them with the same waters (14:21-29). In this way, the Lord proves to be merciful to Israel and faithful to his covenant (Gen 15:5, 13-14; Exod 3:8)—and so the sons of Israel sing in 15:1-21.

Immediate for the concerns of this paper is what is told up to the point of 9:13. After 9:11 finishes the account of the sixth plague, the narrator adds, “Nevertheless, the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses” (9:12). Doubtless, the Exodus narrative once again highlights God’s sovereign control over all things, including Pharaoh’s obstinacy.<sup>1</sup> The Lord’s actions, however, are never arbitrary. As shown in 9:13-16, and according to the exegesis below, Pharaoh’s resistance and the terrible plagues sent upon Egypt were designed by God for a good purpose; namely, to display God’s power and reveal his name.

### **Translation of Exodus 9:13-16**

(13) Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go early in the morning in order to present yourself before Pharaoh and you say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, in order that they may serve me, (14) for this time I am going to send all my plagues upon you and on your servants and on your people, so that you may know

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<sup>1</sup>That God freely caused Pharaoh’s heart to be hardened is persistently demonstrated in the pre-plague narrative (3:18-7:5), the plague narrative itself (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17), the phrase *כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה* (“just as the Lord had said;” 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19 [MT 11, 15]; 9:12; cf. 9:35), and the objection raised in response to v. 18 in Rom 9:19. Although Pharaoh genuinely hardened himself against God, this is not apart from God’s ultimate initiative and design. For a thorough analysis of the ‘hardening’ texts see G. K. Beale, “An Exegetical and Theological Consideration of the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart in Exodus 4-14 and Romans 9,” *TrinJ* 5 (1984): 129-154. That this hardening was God’s sovereign response to Pharaoh’s own actions see Robert Chisholm, “Divine Hardening in the Old Testament,” *Bsac* 153 (Oct-Dec 1996): 410-434. Forster and Marston provide a similar argument, but with much poorer exegesis (*God’s Strategy*, 72-74, 155-177)

that there is no one like me in all the earth. (15) For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with the pestilence, so that you would have been effaced from the earth, (16) but for this reason I have caused you to stand, in order to show you my power, and in order to make known my name in all the earth.”””

### Exegesis of Exodus 9:13-16

#### Moses' Commission to Proclaim the Lord's Word to Pharaoh (9:13)

After the plague of boils falls upon the Egyptians, and the narrator highlights Pharaoh's unreasonable opposition, the narrative continues in v. 13 with, **יְהוָה אֵל-מוֹשֶׁה** **וַיֹּאמֶר** (“then the Lord said to Moses”). The *wāw* consecutive serves to continue the Exodus narrative. Chronologically, the coming interaction between God, Moses, and Pharaoh follow the plague of boils. **יְהוָה** often serves as the subject of the preterite form of **אָמַר** in Exodus. In every case since the awesome encounter at the burning bush (3:2-6), **יְהוָה** is directing his words toward (**אֵל**) his servant, Moses. Each time the Lord speaks to Moses, he commissions him to serve in either word (e.g. in speaking to Pharaoh) or deed (e.g. in bringing about the plagues). The Lord has directed all of the events in this narrative, and carries them out through Moses. Thus, the reader observes the inauguration of a new scene in each case. **יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר**, therefore, serves as the sign posts of the plague narrative (see Appendix 2).

This sign directs the reader to yet another command, which Moses is to heed. The Lord tells Moses, **הַשָּׁכֶם בְּבֹקֶר וְהִתְיַצַּב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה** (“Go early in the morning in

order to present yourself before Pharaoh”).<sup>2</sup> Evidently, Pharaoh made his way down to the Nile River early each morning (Exod 7:15; 8:20). Egypt largely depended on the Nile for its resources and healthy crops (Gen 41:1-37; Isa 19:6-8).<sup>3</sup> The people often considered the king of Egypt the one who controlled the Nile (cf. Ezek 29:3, 9).<sup>4</sup> A timely and healthy flood meant fertile soil and good crops. As a result, the king would have a prosperous reign. Perhaps Pharaoh’s trips to the banks of the water were to pay homage to the great river, or at least convince the Egyptians of his sovereignty over it. God, who created the Nile and controls its course (Ps 78:44; Ezek 30:12; Amos 9:5; Zech 10:11), commands Moses to meet him at this time.

וַיֵּצֵא יְהוָה אֱמֶתֶת is a consecutive imperative and is in simple coordination with הִשְׁכַּחֲמֶךָ.<sup>5</sup>

Though the former is further explaining Moses’ task to meet Pharaoh, the force behind it is the same as the latter. The use of the *hithpa’el* stem of יָצָא expresses a direct reflexive (i.e. “the subject is the direct object of the verbal notion”).<sup>6</sup> In other words, when Moses goes to Pharaoh, he is to present *himself* before him. The logical sequence expressed by the *wāw* confirms that Moses is to go early *in order to* present himself before Pharaoh.

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<sup>2</sup>Each time the Lord tells Moses to go before Pharaoh בַּבֹּקֶר (“in the morning”), a new set of three plagues is anticipated (7:15; 8:16; 9:13). These sets help determine the flow of the narrative prior to the final plague and release of the people. For more literary comments, see William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmens, 1982), 137-8.

<sup>3</sup>John D. Currid discusses this in *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 35, 109-110.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 243-244.

<sup>5</sup>E. Kautzsch, ed. *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §110 *a, f*.

<sup>6</sup>Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §26.2 *c*.

Moses' stand, however, was not to be a silent one. Instead, the Lord has still another message for Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

The second half of v. 13 continues the narrative sequence with וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו (‘‘and you say to him’’). That אָמַר is a perfect with the *wāw* consecutive following an imperative shows that this verb also has the same force as the previous imperatives. Moreover, it expresses what God requires of Moses in the near future.<sup>7</sup> Moses' going before Pharaoh requires that he speak the word of God to him. In a sense, Moses was to be God's mouthpiece (cf. Exod 4:15). Precisely in this sense is the next phrase used.

The phrase כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה (‘‘thus says the Lord’’) is used ten times in the Exodus narrative (4:22; 5:1; 7:17, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3; 11:4; 32:27). All but one of these occasions (32:27) hark back to the original of 4:22, when God commissions Moses to go before Pharaoh. This phrase proceeds many times over from the lips of God's prophets. Clearly, Moses' task is not merely to perform God's miracles (important as this is), but at the same time to proclaim his word, and do so by God's covenant name, יְהוָה. This is rather fitting since the Lord desires Egypt to know that he is יְהוָה (7:5). With each message spoken, therefore, the name of the God who has covenant with Israel goes forth.

This conclusion obtains further support from the construct chain, אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים (‘‘God of the Hebrews’’). It stands in apposition with יְהוָה and expresses that the Lord is the God who is in covenant relationship with the Hebrew people.<sup>8</sup> The particular chain only appears in the plague narrative of Exodus, and each time serves to affirm God's

<sup>7</sup>Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §112 *p, r*.

<sup>8</sup>According to the context, אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים should be considered a genitive of relationship (Exod 3:6-7, 14-18; 6:6-7; 7:4). That the Lord's relationship is covenant-based is obvious from the repeated reference to his relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (e.g. 2:24; 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5; 6:3; cf. Gen 15:13-14).

loyalty to the Hebrews over the Egyptians (3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). Indeed, the only manner in which the Egyptians are to know the Lord is by their observation of his power working to save his people. Doubtless, this is the case considering the previous three plagues made a clear distinction between Israel, who remained unharmed, and Egypt, who suffered the plagues. Thus, part of the proclamation and reminder to Pharaoh is God's faithfulness and covenant loyalty in the deliverance of the Hebrews.

In light of his faithfulness, the Lord's word to Pharaoh is, for the sixth time, a demand for his people's freedom: **שְׁלַח אֶת-עַמִּי וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי** ("Let my people go in order that they may serve me"). The *pi'el* stem of **שְׁלַח** sends a clear message: Pharaoh is to busy himself with all the necessary measures to ensure the Hebrew people are quickly set free.<sup>9</sup> He shall no longer exercise his authority in keeping Israel captive, but in directing his servants and citizens to liberate them. The word is to Pharaoh, yet the Egyptian kingdom as a whole is to concern themselves with the Lord's business.<sup>10</sup>

Israel's release is not without a goal. The jussive use of **עֲבֹד** following the imperative **שְׁלַח** signifies purpose.<sup>11</sup> Liberation for God's people is for the purpose of **עֲבֹד**. At times, **עֲבֹד** relates to serving in any sort of worshipful activity. The Lord often prohibits anyone from bowing down to or *servicing* foreign gods and false idols (20:3; 23:24, 25, 33; Deut 5:9; 7:4; 30:17). The Psalmist encourages the people to "serve the

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<sup>9</sup>Kautzsch notes that the idea of the *pi'el* stem is "to busy oneself eagerly with the action indicated" (*Gesenius*, §52 *f*).

<sup>10</sup>Eventually, the plagues drove them to act in such a manner (12:31-34). Prior to this, even the "God-fearers" in Egypt wanted the release of the Hebrews, in spite of their leader's reluctance (10:7).

<sup>11</sup>Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction*, §34.6 *a*. Concerning the jussive as dependent on the imperative Kautzsch writes, it is used "to express...an assurance of a contingent occurrence" (*Gesenius*, §109 *f*). Cf. Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2 vols. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1991), §116 *d*. The *wāw* should thus be translated, "in order that."

Lord with gladness” and “come into his presence with singing” (Ps 100:2). Furthermore, there shall be a people that God creates to praise him, and when this happens, “the nations will gather together, and the kingdoms to *serve* the Lord” (Ps 102:22 [MT 23]). Acknowledging the Lord in worship, therefore, closely links itself to the participation in a certain array of loyal deeds for him.<sup>12</sup> This meaning of עִבַּד agrees with the way it occurs here in the plague narrative. For example, in response to Moses’ objection in 3:11, the Lord promises him, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall *serve* (תַּעֲבֹדוּן) God at this mountain” (Exod 3:12; cf. 4:23). In other words, their freedom was to give way to loyal service to the Lord at Mount Horeb (7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). Indeed, it is for this purpose that God demands Pharaoh to free them, that they might serve him in worship as the Hebrew people, the Israelites to whom the promises were given. No longer were they to serve (עִבַּד) Pharaoh and the Egyptians in slavery (1:13, 14; 5:18), but to serve (עִבַּד) the Lord in freedom.

### **The Lord’s Sovereign Purpose in Pharaoh and the Plagues (9:14-16)**

The Lord’s message to Pharaoh is by no means finished. In 9:13, as in the previous encounters (5:1; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1), he commanded Pharaoh to release Abraham’s seed that they might serve him in the wilderness. Now, in vv. 14-16, he thoroughly unpacks *why* he has struck Egypt with the plagues and caused Pharaoh to

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<sup>12</sup>Claus Westermann, “עִבַּד *‘ebed* servant,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 829. The particular deed that they are to perform at Horeb is described in 5:1 as a celebration of a feast (NASB). This is another example of the worshipful activity associated with עִבַּד (cf. 4:23; 7:16; 8:1, 20 [MT 16]; 9:1, 13; 10:3; 12:31). The NJB often translates עִבַּד in these texts as “worship.”

stand in such obstinacy. Through a combination of several assertions and purpose and result clauses, the Lord announces his sovereign power over Pharaoh and his commitment to make his own covenant name known in all the earth.

Moses is told to continue with the words, **כָּל־מִגִּפְתֵי אֱלֹהֵיךָ וּבַעֲבֹדֶיךָ וּבַעֲמֹךָ** (“for this time I am going to send all my plagues on you, your servants, and your people”). The particle **כִּי** is functioning logically, and connects the command of v. 13 with the consequences of any further refusal to free the Hebrews in v. 14.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the previous six plagues, terrible as they were, Pharaoh refused to submit himself to the Lord’s demand. Such persistent stubbornness would only gain him not only more plagues, but also even worse plagues in the near future.<sup>14</sup> Several features in the text emphasize this. First, the future sense of the participle **שֶׁלַח** places great emphasis on the time of the plagues.<sup>15</sup> Rather than just saying he would respond at a later time with plagues if Pharaoh did not concede, the Lord makes it plain that the plagues are indeed imminent. They are *going* to come upon him soon.<sup>16</sup> Second, there is a play on words in vv. 13-14. God commands Pharaoh to release (**שֶׁלַח**) his people, otherwise God will continue to release (**שֶׁלַח**) the plagues on Pharaoh. Third, the Lord stresses that he is

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<sup>13</sup>Calvin notes that an “unexpressed condition” is “implied” (*Commentaries on The Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of A Harmony*, vol. 1, trans. Charles William Bingham [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003], 182). If Pharaoh remains obstinate, these plagues await him and his people.

<sup>14</sup>The phrase, **בַּפְעַם הַזֶּה** (“this time”), includes the time that is at hand and that which follows in the following plagues (so George Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus* [Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1981], 115).

<sup>15</sup>Waltke and O’Connor discuss this future use of the participle in *Introduction*, §37.6*f*. Furthermore, placing **בַּפְעַם** at the beginning of the clause and adding the demonstrative **הַזֶּה** gives even more emphasis to this time aspect.

<sup>16</sup>There are other places in the OT where **שֶׁלַח** occurs as an active participle and is expressing a future idea (e.g. Exod 23:20; Jer 16:16; 25:9, 16; 26:5; 43:10; Joel 2:19; Mal 3:1; 4:5).

about to send “all of [his] plagues” (כָּל־מִגַּפְתֵּי) upon him. Only here is the plural of מִגַּפָּה used in the OT. Additionally, it occurs with the absolute sense of כָּל, which qualifies the measure of the plagues.<sup>17</sup> Not only have there been six previous plagues, but also now, *all* of the plagues would come with the force and destruction of the remaining four.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the most dreadful of the ten plagues in this narrative was just over the horizon.

The approaching plagues will not merely fall upon the land of Egypt; moreover, it will affect its inhabitants—Hebrews excluded. Pharaoh, his servants, and his people are the victims described. For his reference to Pharaoh, the Lord makes it quite personal. The Hebrew text states that these plagues will actually come upon Pharaoh’s “heart” (לֵב).<sup>19</sup> By this, the Lord means that he will send the plagues upon Pharaoh, even to the effecting of his innermost being. To this point, Pharaoh’s heart has been utterly hardened. Without doubt, these coming plagues will cause him to give in—especially following the death of his firstborn. Furthermore, God will send them upon Pharaoh’s closest servants, so that even those most loyal to him would eventually beg for the

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<sup>17</sup>The word מִגַּפְתֵּי is a genitive of measure (see Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction*, §9.5.3 f). In addition, note Kautzsch’s comments on the use of כָּל before a determinate genitive (*Gesenius*, §127 b).

<sup>18</sup>Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 231. Bush describes the sense of כָּל (“all”) in terms of a “concentrated terribleness, so that each one should come upon [Pharaoh] as if with the accumulated weight of all the rest” (*Notes*, 115). For a similar argument see Peter Enns, *Exodus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 220; as well as the NIV’s translation: “...I will send the *full force* of my plagues on you” (emphasis mine).

<sup>19</sup>The RSV recognizes this translation (“...all my plagues upon your heart”).

Hebrew's release (10:7). Still more, the plagues are going to stretch across Egypt, so that even her citizens suffer their unique terror.<sup>20</sup>

The Lord does not stretch out his arm against Pharaoh and the Egyptians with such mighty force, however, without a specific end in view. The second half of v. 14 tells of the anticipated result: *בְּעִבּוֹר תִּדְרַע כִּי אֵין כְּמוֹנִי בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ* (“so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth”). This result clause (*בְּעִבּוֹר*) explains that the forthcoming plagues exercised against Pharaoh and his Egypt would have a peculiar consequence. It is contained within the object clause marked by the particle *כִּי* (“that”); namely, a comprehension within Pharaoh that there are no other gods but the Lord. In all the earth, there is only one creator, God, who controls all things; only one *יְהוָה*, who has made covenant with Israel and aims to deliver them.

In Exod 5:1-3, this theological setting for the plague narrative is first set forth. After receiving a positive response from the Hebrew people, Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh and told him, “Thus says the Lord, God of Israel, ‘Let My people go in order that they may celebrate a feast to me in the wilderness’” (5:1). Pharaoh answered them, “*Who is the Lord* that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? *I do not know* (*יִדַע*) *the Lord*, and also, I will not let Israel go” (5:2). Then, the remainder of the narrative provides numerous accounts of the Lord manifesting himself not only through powerful acts, but also by the proclamation of his covenant name (7:17; 8:10, 22 [MT 6, 18]; 9:14, 29; 10:7). Unmistakably, the plagues are going to demonstrate *who* the Lord is as the

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<sup>20</sup>The approaching plagues are “unique” by the narrator’s comments. For example, it states in 9:18, “...I will send a very heavy hail, such as *has not been seen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now*” (cf. 9:24; 10:6).

sovereign creator over all things and merciful covenant-keeper towards Israel.<sup>21</sup> The imperfect tense (תִּרְעַע) following the final conjunction is modal here, and conveys that Pharaoh’s knowledge of the Lord is in connection with the coming events.<sup>22</sup> By Pharaoh’s own reflection on the Lord’s exhibited might, he would understand that no one compares to the God of Israel.

The preposition, כְּמוֹ (“like”), marks the comparison being made between God and all other beings in the earth (הָאֲרֶצֶת). Although the term אֲרָץ is often used to refer to particular lands (e.g. Exod 1:7, 10), or other earthly regions (e.g. 1 Chr 13:2), there is no doubt that it is being used here in reference to the entire earth—hence, כָּל. Thus, the comparison is between God and all others on the planet. However, אֵין (“none”) rejects any notion that there would be even one remotely worthy to compare with God. The Lord, God of the Hebrews, is the only sovereign, true God. The result of the approaching plagues, therefore, is to show Pharaoh that there is no other God in all the earth who is like the Lord. Already, there is a hint of how grand God’s purposes truly are with Pharaoh and the mighty plagues—more of which will be explicitly mentioned in the following verses.

Commencing vv. 15-16 is an explanatory clause that is, for the first time, informing Pharaoh himself of the divine reason for his enduring the previous plagues. Introduced by the particle כִּי, this clause serves in a manner that actually confirms the

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<sup>21</sup>John H. Sailhamer is correct to observe that even though they are called “plagues,” throughout Exodus they are demonstrations which testify of “God’s power over nature” (*The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 252). This is confirmed in that the Lord’s power and name are revealed not only in sending the plagues, but also in their removal (e.g. Exod 9:29).

<sup>22</sup>Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §107 m, q.

truth resting in the previous result clause.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, through the plagues, the Lord will show Pharaoh who he is, and in fact, this is exactly what he has intended to do. The first part of v. 15 reads, כִּי עַתָּה שָׁלַחְתִּי אֶת־יָדִי וְאֶדְ אֹתְךָ וְאֶת־עַמְּךָ בַדָּבָר (“for by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with the pestilence”).

The perfect tense verb, שָׁלַחְתִּי, is being used in a unique manner. Kautzsch even refers to Exod 9:15 when he observes that the perfect tense can be used “to express actions and facts, whose accomplishment in the past is to be represented, *not as actual, but only as possible*” (emphasis mine).<sup>24</sup> Reflecting this interpretation is the majority of respected English translations, which either add the past tense of the verbal auxiliary, “could” (e.g. HCSB, ESV, NIV, RSV), or form the sentence to communicate an implied condition (e.g. NASB, NKJ, NJB).<sup>25</sup> Thus, even though God could have stretched out his hand in such a severe manner before, he did not. Duram finds this interpretation unacceptable. He argues that there is nothing in the text, which suggests conditionality.<sup>26</sup> Instead, the text is stating “what he [God] is doing and is about to do.”<sup>27</sup> This conclusion leads him to translate 9:15a as, “Indeed, now I *will* let loose my power” (emphasis

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<sup>23</sup>Muilenburg observes that when כִּי is used with עַתָּה, it introduces “a climactic affirmation” or gives “force to the predication” (James Muilenburg, “The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle כִּי in the Old Testament,” in *Hearing and Speaking the Word: Selections from the Works of James Muilenburg*, ed. Thomas F. Best [Chico: Scholars Press, 1984], 211).

<sup>24</sup>Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §106 p.

<sup>25</sup>Whether the English translation supplies “could” or “if,” the condition is still implied in both. The latter is simply more explicit.

<sup>26</sup>John I. Duram, *Exodus*, WBC, vol. 3 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 127. Here, Duram even notes that he is aware of the discussion in *Gesenius*: 106 p, 112 ff-mm, and 159 a-k.

<sup>27</sup>Duram, *Exodus*, 127.

mine)—a translation quite similar to the KJV.<sup>28</sup> Though Duram’s exegesis of vv. 14-16 is consistent, and would find favor with the LXX,<sup>29</sup> it fails to be convincing on at least three observations. First, there must be an explanation for the significance of כִּי עַתָּה (“for now”). Kautzsch notes that a conditional sentence is often “found in an abridged form.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, at times, the condition must be supplied from the preceding context in order to complete what was introduced by כִּי עַתָּה.<sup>31</sup> Second, one must give careful attention to the context. The Lord is not merely reiterating what he is about to bring upon Pharaoh, but *why* he has caused him to endure the previous, and lesser, plagues. Making the clauses of v. 15 conditional portrays this more clearly. Lastly, Duram does not allow the strong adversative אֲוִלָּם (“but”) to have its full force in v. 16, even treating it ascensively in his translation (“in fact”).<sup>32</sup> Beginning v. 16 with אֲוִלָּם makes more sense if one translates v. 15 in a conditional manner.<sup>33</sup>

The next verb in the same clause, נָאָה (“and struck”), contains a *wāw* consecutive that signifies the action logically following the Lord’s hand stretching out

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 124.

<sup>29</sup>The LXX translates v. 15, νῦν γὰρ ἀποστείλας τὴν χεῖρα πατάξω σε καὶ τὸν λαόν σου θανάτω καὶ ἐκτριβήσῃ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς (“for now, having sent forth my hand, I *will* strike you and your people to death and I *will* destroy you from the earth”).

<sup>30</sup>Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §159 *dd*.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.; cf. Jouon, *Grammar*, §167 *a, f*. There are other places in the OT which use כִּי עַתָּה when expressing similar conditionality in the sentence (e.g. 1 Sam 13:13; Job 3:13; 14:16; Hos 10:3; cf. 1 Sam 14:30). Additionally, see HALOT, s.v. “כִּי,” esp. §2 *c*.

<sup>32</sup>Duram, *Exodus*, 124. Although he still notes אֲוִלָּם as “an adverb with an adversative sense, qualifying the sweeping assertion of v. 16” on p. 125, his translation and comment seem to suggest otherwise.

<sup>33</sup>Waltke and O’Connor (*Introduction*, §39.3.5 *e*) and HALOT (s.v. “אֲוִלָּם”) note differently.

against Pharaoh and the Egyptians.<sup>34</sup> Since it is continuing what was begun by the previous perfect, then one should also translate it in a similar manner, and so reflecting the conditional sense of v. 15 (i.e. “struck” instead of “will strike”).

בַּדָּבָר is normally translated, “with pestilence” (e.g. ESV, NASB, NJB, RSV). This, however, does injustice to the definite article, and removes some of the severity of the words to Pharaoh. Every time דָּבָר is used with the definite article in the OT, it is referring to a particular pestilence or plague that would cause people to die (Exod 5:3; Num 14:12; Deut 28:21; Ps 78:50; Ezek 7:15). By no means did “the pestilence” refer to mere sickness, harmful weather, or destruction of land; moreover, it meant these things resulted in death.

At this point in the narrative, there is no question of what could have happened to Pharaoh. The reader already anticipates the possible consequences (*wāw*) of the severity of God’s hand,<sup>35</sup> which the remainder of v. 15 mentions: מִן־הָאָרֶץ (“so that you would have been effaced from the earth”). Without doubt, the *niph'al* stem of כָּחַד highlights Pharaoh’s demise under “the pestilence.” Indeed, had God stretched out his hand with such severity, Pharaoh would have been terminated out of existence on earth. The Lord uses such a hypothetical statement, however, to make it plain that the extent and the effects of the previous plagues were so that Pharaoh would remain longer in his obstinate state, and not be effaced immediately. In this way, God would purposefully manifest more of his power before Israel, Egypt, and the rest of the

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<sup>34</sup>Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §111 a, x.

<sup>35</sup>Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 158.

watching world. The final verse covered in this exegesis makes the Lord's global purpose in Pharaoh's obstinacy even more obvious.

The first half of v. 16 states, **בְּעִבּוֹר זֹאת הֶעֱמַדְתִּיךָ בְּעִבּוֹר הַרְאֵתְךָ אֶת-כְּחֹי** וְאֵלֶּם (“but for this reason I have caused you to exist, in order to show you my power”). As noted above, the strong adversative **וְאֵלֶּם** begins v. 16, and serves to qualify, or restrict, the hypothetical statement of v. 15.<sup>36</sup> God could have wiped out Pharaoh well before the seventh plague, *but* caused him to remain. The LXX is rather vague when it translates the adversative with the conjunction *καί* (“and”). Most likely, this is because translators sought to be consistent with their use of future tense verbs in v. 15. There is no need for an adversative in v. 16, if v. 15 is explaining what God *will* do. The Apostle Paul, on the other hand, changes the LXX's *καὶ ἕνεκεν τούτου* (“and because of this”) to *εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο* (“for this very purpose”).<sup>37</sup> For his exegetical purposes in Rom 9:17, he removes the ambiguity of the LXX, and better favors the HB's emphasis.

The phrase, **בְּעִבּוֹר זֹאת** (“for this reason”), marks the specific divine purpose vv. 14-15 have been aiming to explain.<sup>38</sup> This sovereign purpose not only involves Pharaoh, but also is revealed to Pharaoh as a testimony of God's supremacy over him. Indeed, God has caused him to stand (**הֶעֱמַדְתִּיךָ**), instead of destroying him sooner, and this to accomplish his own ends. This is further clarified by (1) the *hiph'íl* stem of **עִמַּד**, which signifies causation, and (2) the perfective sense of the same verb, which expresses

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<sup>36</sup>Jouon, *Grammar*, §172 b.

<sup>37</sup>So E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1981), 14. Furthermore, see Appendix 3 for a comparison of Rom 9:17 (NT) and Exod 9:16 (LXX, MT).

<sup>38</sup>**זֹאת** is functioning to specify the purpose explained by the remainder of v. 16 (Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §136 a).

that God’s previous actions with Pharaoh extend into the future.<sup>39</sup> According to his sovereign purpose, therefore, God has caused Pharaoh to remain, and is still keeping him exactly where he wants him to be.

Here too, the LXX’s διετηρήθης (“you were kept”) seems to depart from the force of the MT. Paul again makes an interpretive decision for his own quotation of the Exodus text (Rom 9:17), and uses ἐξεγείρω, a term used in the LXX and the NT, to communicate the idea of raising someone up in history.<sup>40</sup> There is no doubt that God raised up Pharaoh in history. Perhaps the apostle’s aim is to focus on God’s sovereign action in the whole of the Exodus narrative.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, this is more so the emphasis of the *hiph’il* stem of עמד in the MT. In 1 Kings 15:4, the Lord establishes (עמד) Jerusalem, and does the same for Israel in 2 Chron 9:8. According to Prov 29:4, “By justice, a king gives stability (עמד) to the land.” In Ps 18:34, the Lord makes David’s feet like those of a deer, and sets him secure (עמד) on the heights. Using עמד in a similar manner, the word to Pharaoh is that the Lord has caused him to stand firm. Pharaoh’s actions in the plague narrative are not only rebellious, but are, at the same time, in accordance with God’s sovereign will. Providentially, God caused Pharaoh to stand, and thus, even his rebellious actions are serving God’s purposes.

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<sup>39</sup>Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §106 g.

<sup>40</sup>Albrecht Oepke, “ἐξεγείρω,” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:338. After searching the LXX and the NT with *Bibleworks*<sup>7</sup>, it seems that of the seventy-two occurrences of ἐξεγείρω, at least eight express this idea: Num 24:19; Judg 2:16; 2 Sam 12:11; Jer 6:22; Ezek 23:22; Hab 1:6; Zech 11:16; Acts 13:22.

<sup>41</sup>Similarly, John Piper argues that Paul understands the *hiph’il* of עמד in the lexical sense of “to ‘appoint’ to a task, or ‘to set up,’” and so, uses ἐξήγειρά σε “to refer to God’s initial historical act of raising up Pharaoh to be king of Egypt” (*The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993], 167).

בַּעֲבוּר plus the infinitive construct forms a final clause, which signifies a definite purpose.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the first divine reason given for Pharaoh's endurance is that the Lord might show Pharaoh his power. The pronominal suffix and the marker of the accusative make this statement unmistakable: God acts specifically to show Pharaoh his power. Through these acts, God is causing (*hiph'il*) Pharaoh to observe that he is Lord over all. The Lord's might, however, is not to be divorced from its exercise on behalf of his covenant people.<sup>43</sup> God is faithful to the Hebrews, and he demonstrates his power particularly before Pharaoh and the Egyptians in light of such covenant loyalty. He promised to deliver them, and nothing shall stand in his way.

The Lord's message continues in the rest of v. 16: וְלִמְעַן סִפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ ("and in order to make known my name in all the earth"). וְלִמְעַן marks the final purpose clause of this selected pericope. It shows that God caused Pharaoh to stand not merely to show his strength, but also to reveal his unswerving allegiance to manifest his name in all the earth. God's purpose to show Pharaoh his power is penultimate. His commitment to make his name known is ultimate. This is stressed by the frequentative use of the *pi'el* stem of סִפֵּר, which expresses that there shall be reverberations of the name of God in all the earth.<sup>44</sup> Because of the plagues, his name shall be made known, not once or twice, but

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<sup>42</sup>Jouon, *Grammar*, §168 f.

<sup>43</sup>I make this note to clarify that in the plague narrative, God is not out just to destroy people. The context of Exod 3:10-17 show that he is indeed rescuing Abraham's seed, Israel, in order to make his *covenant* name known. God is not only placing fear in the hearts of people, such as Rahab (Josh 2:8-14) or the Gibeonites (Josh 9:1-27), but associating his name with the salvation and deliverance of his covenant people. Thus, the fear of the Lord is surely to be associated with the one who is mighty to save. This is consistent with the testimony of the OT (e.g. Exod 20:24; 1 Kgs 8:16; Isa 48:9; Jer 16:21; Ezek 20:14; 36:23; Mal 1:11).

<sup>44</sup>Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction*, §24.5 a-b; cf. Kautzsch, *Gesenius*, §52 f. Furthermore, the phrase, בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ, often accompanies the idea of God's fame going forth in all the earth (e.g. Exod 34:10; 2 Kgs 5:15; 1 Chr 16:14, Pss 8:2, 10; 105:7; Isa 12:5).

many times over; indeed, so that it would continue to go out again and again. God wanted his name (יהוה) revealed not only to Pharaoh (7:17; 8:10; 9:29), or to the Egyptians (7:5; cf. 8:19; 9:20, 27; 10:7), or to the Hebrews (6:6-7; 10:1-2), but to the ends of the earth. Together, these purpose clauses in v. 16 clearly explain that the sovereign purpose of the Lord in causing Pharaoh to stand is to reveal his power and manifest his name. Israel's delayed deliverance due to Pharaoh's obstinacy is a divine design; that is, wrought, so that God's purpose to display his power and reveal his name is accomplished.<sup>45</sup>

### **Conclusion**

According to the exegesis above, Exod 9:13-16 unpacks God's purpose in Pharaoh to reveal his power and manifest his covenant name. In v. 13, the Lord commissions Moses to go before Pharaoh and demand the release of his covenant people. Due to Pharaoh's continued obstinacy, God intends to strike the Egyptian kingdom soon with several severe plagues that testify the Lord has no equal (9:14). Why, then, has Pharaoh remained this long, and not been swept off the face of the earth? According to 9:15, the Lord could have done so. On the other hand, the Lord caused him to stand in order to accomplish his sovereign purpose. Though Pharaoh was unmoved by the Lord's demands, his rebellion served God's ends, so that the earth might marvel at God's power and know his covenant name (9:16).

As part of God's covenant people, mercifully grafted in to the Abrahamic promises by the cross-work of Jesus Christ, Christians should allow these verses to accomplish at least three objectives. (1) Allow the sovereign purposes of the Lord to

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<sup>45</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 128. Indeed, because of the Exodus, God's power and the glory of his name are later revealed in Canaan (Josh 2:9-10).

bring about celebration, not merely speculation. Exod 15:6 teaches the people to sing, “Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.” (2) Allow God’s own passion to manifest his name in all the earth to be the foundation and drive for missions and evangelism. Unless the church’s passion is rooted in God’s, her attempts to win the lost will be misdirected and man-centered. (3) Allow the Lord’s faithful commitment to fight for the salvation of his elect to produce trust in the Lord within the hearts of believers. In Christ, there is only omnipotent grace working for them.

## APPENDIX 1

### **Translation of Exodus 9:13-16 Reflecting Syntactical and Exegetical Decisions**

<sup>13</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go early in the morning in order to present yourself before Pharaoh *once again*, and you say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord—*that is, the one who is the God of the Hebrews*—“Let my *covenant* people go *now*, in order that they may serve me *in worship*, <sup>14</sup>for this time *very soon* I am *going* to send all my plagues upon you *in your innermost being*, on your servants, and on your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. <sup>15</sup>For by now I *could* have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with the pestilence, so that you, *Pharaoh*, would have been effaced from the *face of the earth*, <sup>16</sup>but *I did not, because it is* for this *very* reason I have caused you to stand *firm*, in order to show you my *sovereign* power *over the universe*, and *ultimately* in order to make my *covenant* name known in all the earth.

APPENDIX 2

The Use of **וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה** in the Flow of the Plague Narrative

<b>Event in Plague Narrative Who the Lord is Addressing</b>	<b>Use of <b>וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה</b> in Plague Narrative</b>
Plague Narrative Begins	
Instructions for Moses when before Pharaoh	7:1
Encountering Pharaoh:	
Instructions for Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh	7:8
First Plague: Nile Turned to Blood	
Instructions for Moses to go before Pharaoh	7:14
Further Instructions to Moses	7:19
Second Plague: Frogs	
Instructions for Moses to go before Pharaoh	[MT 7:26] 8:1
Instructions for Moses to speak to Aaron	[MT 8:1] 8:5
Third Plague: Gnats	
Instructions for Moses to speak to Aaron	[MT 8:12] 8:16
Fourth Plague: Flies	
Instructions for Moses to go before Pharaoh	[MT 8:16] 8:20
Fifth Plague: Pestilence on Livestock	
Instructions for Moses to go before Pharaoh	9:1
Sixth Plague: Boils on Egyptians	
Instructions for Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh	9:8
Seventh Plague: Hailstorm	
Instructions for Moses to go before Pharaoh	9:13
Instructions for Moses concerning the hail	9:22
Eighth Plague: Locusts	
Instructions for Moses to go before Pharaoh	10:1
Instructions for Moses concerning the locusts	10:12
Ninth Plague: Darkness	
Instructions for Moses concerning the darkness	10:21
Tenth Plague: Death of Firstborn	
Words to Moses concerning the <i>last</i> plague	11:1
Words to Moses concerning Pharaoh's obstinacy	11:9
The Passover	
Words to Moses and Aaron about the Passover	12:1

### APPENDIX 3

#### Comparative Analysis of the Exodus 9:16 Citation in Romans 9:17

Romans 9:17 (GNT)	Exodus 9:16 (LXX)	Exodus 9:16 (MT)
εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐξήγειρά σε	καὶ ἕνεκεν τούτου διετηρήθης	וְאוֹלָם בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת הָעֲמֻדָּתִיךָ
ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ τὴν δυνάμειν μου	ἵνα ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ τὴν ἰσχύν μου	בַּעֲבוּר הַרְאִתְךָ אֶת־כֹּחִי
καὶ ὅπως διαγγελη τὸ ὄνομά μου	καὶ ὅπως διαγγελη τὸ ὄνομά μου	וּלְמַעַן סַפֵּר שְׁמִי
ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῆ	ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῆ	בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ

## APPENDIX 4

### **Exegetical Outline of Exodus 9:13-16**

God's purpose in Pharaoh is to reveal his power and manifest his covenant name in all the earth.

- I. God commissions Moses to go before Pharaoh in order to demand the release of his covenant people (9:13).
- II. God's purpose in raising up Pharaoh is to reveal his power and manifest his covenant name in all the earth.
  - a. Due to Pharaoh's continued obstinacy, God intends to strike the Egyptian kingdom soon with several severe plagues that testify the Lord has no equal (9:14)
  - b. The Lord could have effaced Pharaoh from the face of the earth; however, he caused him to stand instead (9:15)
    1. According to his sovereign purpose, the Lord caused Pharaoh to stand in order to show him his power (9:16a).
    2. According to his sovereign purpose, the Lord caused Pharaoh to stand in order to make his name known in all the earth (9:16b).

## APPENDIX 5

### **Sermon Outline: So That The Earth Will Know the Lord**

God's purpose in Pharaoh (*subject*) is to reveal his mighty power and manifest his covenant name in all the earth (*predicate*).

- I. God commissions Moses to go before Pharaoh in order to demand the release of his covenant people (9:13)
  - a. *Explanation:* God's faithfulness and covenant loyalty to the Hebrew people means that he will fight for their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, in order that they might delight in serving him in freedom.
  - c. *Application:* The Lord's faithful commitment to fight for the salvation of his elect should produce trust in the Lord within the hearts of all believers.
- II. God's purpose in raising up Pharaoh is to reveal his power and manifest his covenant name in all the earth.
  - a. *Explanation:* Due to Pharaoh's continued obstinacy, God intends to strike the Egyptian kingdom soon with several severe plagues that testify the Lord has no equal (9:14). The Lord could have previously effaced Pharaoh from the face of the earth; however, he caused him to stand instead (9:15). The Lord caused him to stand so that his sovereign purpose might be accomplished; namely, so that the earth might marvel at God's power and know his covenant name (9:16).
  - c. *Application:* (1) The sovereign purposes of the Lord should bring about celebration, not merely speculation. Christians must seek to write God-centered songs that speak of his majesty. (2) God's own passion to manifest his name in all the earth should be the foundation and drive for missions and evangelism.

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