

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Master's Theses

Graduate Research

2017

Intensity Structure: An Exegetical Approach To Pharaoh's Heart Hardening

Anthony Joel Rodriguez
Andrews University, benhair1@hotmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/theses>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rodriguez, Anthony Joel, "Intensity Structure: An Exegetical Approach To Pharaoh's Heart Hardening" (2017). *Master's Theses*. 106.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/theses/106/>
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/theses/106>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

ABSTRACT

INTENSITY STRUCTURE: AN EXEGETICAL APPROACH
TO PHARAOH'S HEART HARDENING

by

Anthony Joel Rodriguez

Advisor: Richard M. Davidson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: INTENSITY STRUCTURE: AN EXEGETICAL APPROACH TO PHARAOH'S
HEART HARDENING

Name of researcher: Anthony Joel Rodriguez

Name and degree of faculty chair: Richard M. Davidson, Ph.D.

Date completed: July 2017

Problem

How can the LORD ascribe sin to humans if He Himself hardens their hearts in order to resist His will? This investigation was directed to find a tentative answer to the paradoxical story of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Various approaches to this phenomenon of hardening were explored. Among these views the most common are: (1) the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, (2) Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and (3) the LORD and Pharaoh played a part in the process of the hardening. None of these approaches were found to be fully satisfactory, and no scholarly consensus has emerged in dealing with the problem.

Method

This investigation focused on an exegetical analysis of the meaning of the verbs חזק, קשה, and כבד in the context of the Exodus narrative.

Results

The result of this investigation was the revelation of an “Intensity Structure” of the story of Pharaoh’s heart hardening.

Conclusion

This revelation of an “Intensity Structure” tentatively offers a new approach to the understanding of the story of Pharaoh’s heart hardening. This intensity structure suggests that the LORD never hardened Pharaoh’s heart, but rather He *acted severely against* Pharaoh’s heart in a gradual manner. The LORD started with a pacific message for Pharaoh, but Pharaoh refused to hear the LORD’s command. Then the LORD increased His power and became *severe* against Pharaoh, but Pharaoh became more obstinate, and the LORD had to act in an *overwhelming* manner with Pharaoh. After the heavy/overwhelming treatment of the LORD against Pharaoh, he let the people go out of Egypt.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

INTENSITY STRUCTURE: AN EXEGETICAL APPROACH TO PHARAOH'S
HEART HARDENING

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Religion

by
Anthony Joel Rodriguez

2017

©Copyright by Anthony Joel Rodriguez 2017
All Rights Reserved

INTENSITY STRUCTURE: AN EXEGETICAL APPROACH
TO PHARAOH'S HEART HARDENING

A thesis
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Religion

by

Anthony Joel Rodriguez

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Richard M. Davidson, Ph.D., Chair

Paul Z. Gregor, Ph. D.

Date approved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Thesis Statement	5
The Book of Exodus: Date, Authorship, and Historical Setting.....	5
Literary Structure	7
The Overall Literary Structure of the Book of Exodus.....	8
Pre-covenant signs and covenant, Exod 1:1-20:17.....	9
New Constitution, Exodus 20:18-24:18.....	10
Worship Systematization, Exodus 25:1-40:38.....	13
Merging Structure of Exodus and Genesis	14
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	17
God Hardened Pharaoh’s Heart	17
Pharaoh Hardened Himself.....	20
God and Pharaoh: The Agents of the Hardening	21
3. PHARAOH’S HEART HARDENING: KEY PASSAGES	23
Exodus 4:21-23	24
Hebrew text Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (<i>BHS</i>).....	24
Proposed translation.....	25
Justification of the translation.....	25
Exodus 6:1	39
Exodus 7:3	44
Hebrew text (BHS)	44
Proposed Translation	44
Justification of the translation.....	44
The mirror effect.....	45
Exodus 10:1	51
Hebrew text (BHS)	51
Proposed Translation	51
Justification of the translation.....	51
Secondary Key Passages.....	60

4. INTENSITY STRUCTURE	
Stage I: YHWH’s Specific Message to Pharaoh (Exod 5-6)	72
Stage II: YHWH’s Severe Treatment against Pharaoh (Exod 7:1-9:13)	76
First Sign: Aaron’s Rod Becomes a Serpent (7:8-14)	78
First Plague: Waters Becomes Blood (7:14-25)	78
Second Plague: Frogs (8:1-15).....	79
Third Plague: Lice (8:16-19; Increasing Power)	80
Fourth Plague: Flies (8:20-32).....	81
Fifth Plague: Livestock Diseased (9:1-7; Increasing Power)	81
Sixth Plague: Boils (9:8-12).....	82
Stage III: YHWH’s Heavy Treatment against Pharaoh (Exod 9:13-12:30).....	82
The Seventh Plague: Hail (9:13-35)	82
The Eighth Plague: Locusts (10:1-20)	84
The Ninth Plague: Darkness (10:21-29)	85
The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn (11:1-12:30)	86
Stage IV: YHWH’s blasting Stage, Death in the Red Sea (Exod 14).....	87
5. CONCLUSION.....	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	93

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AV 1873	The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of the Authorized English Version
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CJB	Complete Jew Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
GKC	Gesenius, Friedrich Wilhelm. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley. 2d English ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner, eds. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000.
KJV 1900	King James Version 1900
LEB	The Lexham English Bible
NASB95	New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update
NET	The NET Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The story of Pharaoh's heart hardening is a big iceberg with only its peak visible and tremendous theological power hidden under the frozen waters. It is easy to become confident with a quick reading of the Holy Text and make a premature interpretation of this story, and the miscomprehension of this event might lead the mind to think of God as arbitrary and unloving.

This Bible story is potentially one of the most paradoxical stories in the Old Testament. How can God be righteous and ascribe sins to men if He himself hardens people's hearts and leads them to sin? According to most Bible versions, the story of the hardening of the king of Egypt seems to portray that God chooses to control people's lives, leads them to do either good or evil, and predestinates them for either salvation or condemnation.

In other words, it seems that God chose Pharaoh for condemnation¹ as an unconditional election, but it is clear that this action is contrary to the lovely and righteous character of God that the Old and New Testaments reveal.

For some believers, it could be that God hardens people's hearts as an

¹ The text is very clear that the LORD did not choose Pharaoh for condemnation, but to show His power over him: "But indeed for this *purpose* I have raised you up, that I may show My power *in* you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth" Exod 9:16. What power? Is it the power to harden people's minds? Such a conclusion is not supported by the text.

unconditional election, but for others it is radically unrighteous. Some may argue that this inconsistency might be solved saying, “God is God and He does as He wants”²; we are the clay and He is the Potter³. However, the Holy Text consistently reveals that God is just and He is love. God never performs anything that is not just; all things that He does are naturally just and righteous; that is His nature. As Moses declared: “For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He” (Deut 32:3-4). The psalmist also said, “Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules” (Ps 119:137). “As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness” (Ps 48:10). “Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true” (Ps 119:142).

Then, if God is righteous and just, what might be the meaning of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart? This story, as commonly understood, teaches that God arbitrarily elects people for condemnation or salvation, thus promoting a kind of unrighteousness. In this story, many texts are seen to point toward this idea of unconditional election (see Exod 4:21; 7:3, 13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17, 18).

Most Bible translators and a majority of believers have accepted the idea that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Some scholars have tried to explain the phenomenon of this hardening, but they have failed to textually demonstrate that God was not the agent of this act. Those who openly agree that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart have also failed to

² “Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” Exod 33:19 (NKJV).

³ “Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” (Rom 9:21, NKJV).

clearly prove that assumption.

Consciously or unconsciously, those who read chapters 4 to 14 of Exodus as translated in the majority of modern versions accept the idea that God sovereignly acted against Pharaoh's will. However, it will be argued in this study that such misconception is due to the misunderstanding of the use of the verbs *הזק*, *קשה*, and *כבד*, which, are actually used to describe God's work against Pharaoh and his people instead of proposing a supernatural operation. For example, the ESV Bible reads this way: "And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden [אֶתְּזַק] his heart, so that he will not let the people go" (Exod 4:21). Here the verb *הזק* is translated as "harden". Therefore, readers get the idea of God's real action against Pharaoh. Likewise, Exodus 7:3 in the NIV Bible reads: "But I will harden [אֶקְשֶׁה] Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt..." The verb *קשה* is surrendered to the meaning of "harden". Finally, Exodus 10:1 in the ASV Bible reads: "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened [הִקְבַּדְתִּי] his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I may show these my signs in the midst of them..." Surprisingly, the verb *כבד* is translated as "hardened" like the other two verbs were. These common translations lead readers to accept that God was the agent of this hardening. The three texts chosen above (Exod 4:21, 7:3, 10:1) were intentionally selected because, as will be argued below, they mark the division of the structure.

On the other hand, some readers understand that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and this is because of the fact that two of these three verbs are applied to Pharaoh to show him as responsible for his hardening. "Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would

not listen to them, as the LORD had said” (Exod 7:13). “So the LORD said to Moses: “Pharaoh’s heart *is* hard [כָּבֵד]; he refuses to let the people go” (Exod 7:14).

To solve this theological problem, theologians have proposed many approaches to deal with this event. The most common approaches have been these three: The first one is that God did not harden Pharaoh’s heart, but Pharaoh himself hardened his own heart: “It was thus his own resistance to the light that hardened his heart.”⁴ God is excluded as the agent of this phenomenon. The second is that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.⁵ The third is that both God and Pharaoh worked in the process of Pharaoh’s hardening.⁶ This means the result of heart hardening comes from both human and God’s actions.

However, not one of the scholars considered in this investigation has presented a comprehensive exposition to substantiate their conclusions about the subject. It is true that they arrived at their own conclusions and developed them through their writing. However, on a difficult subject like this, it is imperative to write more than two or three pages to make a substantial claim. It is understandable that scholars write little on some subjects because sometime the texts are too clear and there is no need for a long explanation, but the case here is not that the text is clear, but that it is too difficult to solve. This difficulty is posed because some verses point to God as the agent of the hardening, while others point to Pharaoh as the agent of his own hardening.

⁴ Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 1:516.

⁵ Charles W. Carter, Ralph Earle, W. Ralph Thompson, *The Wesleyan Bible commentary*, 7 vols. (Grand Rapids,: Eerdmans, 1964).

⁶ Ted Cabal et al., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 91-92.

Thesis Statement

The purpose of this investigation is to reveal the “Intensity Structure” of the story of Pharaoh’s heart hardening based on an analysis of the meaning of the verbs קשה, חזק, and כבד in the context of the Exodus narrative. This investigation is presented with the hope that everyone who reads it may find satisfaction with the explanation exposed here, and can still see God as a loving and righteous LORD.

The Book of Exodus: Date, Authorship, and Historical Setting

Ascertaining the date and authorship of the book will make explicit the hermeneutical perspective of this thesis, and assist in identifying the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The identity of the Pharaoh will clarify that the LORD did not need to harden his heart as a matter of salvation, because his own sins disqualified him to be saved.⁷

For the sake of this investigation, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, including Exodus, is accepted from among the different views regarding the date and authorship of the book.

The view selected is supported by the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, which presents three major reasons why we should accept that Moses was the author: “These three considerations—the direct witness of the book itself, the indirect evidence that the author was educated in Egypt, and the testimony of Christ—all guarantee the accuracy of the Jewish tradition that Moses wrote the book of Exodus.”⁸

⁷ This is consistent with the biblical understanding that after humanity sinned, all humans are called to repentance, and the individual sinner is the only one responsible to respond or not, to harden his own heart or yield to the influence of the Spirit (Ps 95:7-8; Heb 3:7-8).

⁸ Nichol, *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:492.

From the internal evidence of the book, it is reasonable to accept that Moses was the author of Exodus, and this is affirmed by the testimony of Christ. Jesus acknowledged Moses as the author of book of Exodus: “But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*’?” (Mark 12:26) Here Jesus mentioned ‘the book of Moses’ and alluded to Exodus 3:6-15, thus attributing specifically the book of Exodus to Moses as the author.

For the date of the Exodus, there are two major positions: the “Early Date” and the “Late Date”. The Early Date suggests that the Exodus happened about 1450 BC, and the pharaoh of the Exodus was either Thutmose III (ca 1504–1450 BC) or Amenhotep II (ca. 1450–1424 BC).⁹ William Shea makes a strong case for the pharaoh of the Exodus being Thutmose III. Thus the Exodus would have occurred about 1450, and the conquest would have begun around 1410.¹⁰ If Moses lived 40 years after the Exodus, the book was written between ca. 1450 BC and 1410 BC.

On the other hand, the Late Date view suggests that the Exodus happened ca. 1290 BC This view suggests that the pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites was Seti I (Sethos, *c11*. 1304–1290 BC) and the pharaoh of the Exodus was Rameses II (Ramses, ca. 1290–1224 BC). The Exodus would thus have occurred ca. 1290, and the conquest of Canaan would have begun in 1250.¹² According to the “Late Date” view, it can be

⁹ William H. Shea, “Exodus, Date of,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 1982), 2:230-238.

¹⁰ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 737.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 737.

¹²

¹² *Ibid.*, 737

assumed that the book was written between 1290 BC and 1250 BC, according to the “Late Date” view.

Based on the arguments presented by *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, among others, it is reasonable to agree with the Early Date position.

(1) If the 4th year of King Solomon was 966 B.C., then the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 would place the exodus at 1446. (2) If the time of Jephthah was 1100 B.C., then the 300 years of Judges 11:26 would date the conquest at 1400. (3) The late date would not leave enough time for the period of the judges, which most chronologies indicate lasted between 300 and 400 years.¹³

If the pharaoh of the Exodus was Thutmose III, or Amenhotep II, with the Exodus as ca. 1450, then the archaeological records provide evidence of the cruelty and hubris of these pharaohs,¹⁴ and present a historical background consistent with the actions of the pharaoh of the Exodus described in the book of Exodus.

Literary Structure

This section is included because the literary structure is an important part of the argument to support the main idea of this thesis. The book’s structure seems to give some hints to find the connection between the three verbs used in this section of Exodus—*קָזַח*, *קָשָׂה*, and *כָּבַד*.

Various suggestions have been made regarding the literary structure of the book of Exodus, including the following examples:

¹³ *Ibid.*, 737.

¹⁴ See, e.g., William H. Shea, “Exodus, Date of.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 1982), 2:230-238.

Dillard and Longman: “Part One: Israel in Egypt (1:1-13:16); Part two: Israel in the wilderness (13:17-18:27) and part three: Israel at Sinai (19:1-40:38)”¹⁵

Carter, et al.: “The deliverance of Israel (Exod 1:1-15:21) and The discipline of Israel (Exod 15:22-40:38)”¹⁶

Bailey:

The oppression in Egypt—1:1–22; The birth, training, and call of Moses—2:1–7:7; The plagues, the Passover, and the Exodus—7:8–15:21; The journey to Horeb (Mount Sinai)—15:22–18:27; The giving of the Law at Sinai—19:1–24:18; The divine plan for the tabernacle—25:1–31:18; The idolatry of the Israelites and Moses’ intercession—32:1–33:23; The re-giving of the law—34:1–17; The construction and erection of the tabernacle—35:1–40:38¹⁷

The Overall Literary Structure of the Book of Exodus

It is evident that the book of Exodus can be outlined in many different ways. As there is not a consensus among the scholars about the structure of the book of Exodus, this thesis suggests two new structures, one for the book of Exodus, and one which combines the books of Genesis and Exodus. These structures will be used as arguments in the next chapters to support a third structure, the “intensity structure of the story of Pharaoh’s heart hardening.”

The first structure proposed is an overall structure for book of Exodus is: (A) Pre-covenant signs and covenant, Exod 1—20:17; (B) National constitution, Exod 20:18—24:18; and (C) Worship systematization, Exod 25—40:38.

¹⁵ Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 62.

¹⁶ Carter, et al., *The Wesleyan Bible commentary*, 1:161.

¹⁷ Randall C. Bailey, *Exodus*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 2005), 131.

Pre-covenant signs and covenant, Exod 1:1-20:17

This section is made of three parts: (1) Wonders on behalf of the people of God, Exod 1:1-19:25; (2) Covenantal formula, Exod 20:2; and (3) Climax or covenant, Exod 20:3-17.

Wonders on behalf of the people of God, Exod 1:1-19:25

In the way treaties or covenants were typically formed between nations in the time of the Exodus, there was first the historical prologue, indicating the past benefactions of the suzerain on behalf of the vassal nation.¹⁸ In harmony with this practice between nations, in the whole section of Exod 1:1–19:25, the LORD (as Suzerain) did not initially request obedience from the people of Israel to the Law, but instead He first helped them in an unconditional way. First, He did marvelous things in order to promote His name among this people (Exod 3:14-15; 6:1-8). Second, He chose them as His special people, even though they do not deserve it because of their holiness or faithfulness. He based His action on a promise (Exod 2:24). Thus, the Israelites in themselves did not have anything that promotes them to the favor of God. Third, even though they did not deserve God's favor, He delivered them and led them to a land that flowed with milk and honey. Thus, God's actions stimulated the hearts of the people to be grateful and prepared them to accept God's request.

Covenantal formula, Exod 20:2

All the events from 1:1–19:25 were the deontological way of God to create a name before the Israelites. However, His plan was apparently to lead His people to accept

¹⁸ See, e.g., Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law, and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 2012).

the Covenant. It could be implied from 20:2, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” This is a formula to encourage the Israelites to accept and obey the Covenant.

This idea leads us to understand that the climax of the first 19 chapters of Exodus is the pre-covenant formula: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Exod 20:2). God acted in the expected way of covenant-making—He first did things for the people in order to request obedience out of gratitude from them.

Climax or Covenant, Exod 20:3-17

After God revealed His character (name), He moved to ask the people to accept the Covenant, the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 4:13). God’s basis for requesting obedience from the people to the Covenant was what He did for them, taking them out of the house of bondage (Exod 20:2).

New Constitution, Exodus 20:18-24:18

Israel became a free nation after its liberation from the power of the Egyptians. Now Israel, as a new and free nation, needed a constitution/laws for guidance. It should be noticed that they received the Ten Words, but they needed more specific laws to be guided in the land they were to possess. This meant a constitution. The constitution seems to be ‘The Book of the Covenant,’ which shares some similitudes with codes of others surrounding nations.

It is very reasonable to see Exod 20:18-24:18 as a constitution for the following major reasons: (1) Israel became a new and free nation for first time, and every nation has

a constitution, a body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which the nation is acknowledged to be governed; (2) Exod 20:18-24:18 shares a lot of its laws with other nations (Hammurabi's code, Middle Assyrian's Code, Hittite's Code, etc.).

The similitudes between the Hebrews' code and some of these ancient codes cannot be denied. An explanation for these similarities among the codes could be a of the constitution. Since the Hebrews' code shares some laws with the Hammurabi code, it is relevant recognize that some fragments of the Hammurabi code have been found in different cities of Hammurabi's kingdom, which could mean that those cities absorbed these laws because they were considered constitutional and every city must obey them.

Archeologists have found that there was not just one monument of the stele of Hammurabi, but many of them. "Since mutilated portions of the Hammurabi's code of laws have been found in the library of Assurbanipal, and a small duplicate fragment of the epilogue was actually discovered at Susa itself, it seems natural to infer that copies of the code were made to be set up in the temples of various cities, Susa included."¹⁹

This event suggests that Hammurabi's code was considered as a constitutional code for the kingdom with its many cities, which were under the control of the successive dynasties of Hammurabi. Also, there is a possibility that the code existed as a set of authoritative laws only after the death of Hammurabi, because its origin was considered divine and not human. Also, we can understand that the Canaanite cities, where the Hebrews lived, were under the influence of Mesopotamia. It is possible that this situation

¹⁹ Stanley A. Cook, *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi* (London: A. and C. Black, 1903), 6.

passed to the new, incoming nation of Israel, to adopt some of the laws that the Canaanites had. This fact is more significant when both the Hammurabi and Hebrew codes are set next to each other in their original languages, and similarities of many laws is remarkable. In any case, the overlap of many basic laws implies a similar usage.

Another example of this constitutional matter is the Hittite Law Code. It is impressive that this code shares ten similitudes with the Hebrew's code: Article 10 (Exod. 21:18-19); Article 17 (Exod. 21:22-23); Article 67 [21:37 (Hebrew, 22:1-4)]; Article 94 (Exod. 22:1 [Heb. 22:2-3,7]); Article 98 (Exod. 22:6); Article 111 (Exod. 22:18; Deut. 18:10-14; 1 Sam. 28:3); Article 189 (Lev. 18:6-18); Article 193 (Gen 38; Deut. 25:5-10; Ruth 4); Article 195 (Lev. 18:6-18); Article 197 (Deut. 22:22-27).²⁰ Seven of these similitudes are exactly the same in the Hammurabi code.²¹

In addition, there is another code which came later—the Middle Assyrian Code. This code is a key point in the interpretation of the insertion of the Hammurabi Code into the Hebrews' Code. There are two important factors in this code: (1) the date of this code and (2) the 28 similitudes it shares with the Hebrews' Code.

First, the Middle Assyrian Code was created by Tiglath-Pileser I²², who reigned over Assyria from 1125-1100 B.C. The dating for the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I is evidence that the Middle Assyrian Code came after the Hebrews' Code. Second, there are 28 coincidences between the Hebrews' Code and the Middle Assyrian Code. It suggests

²⁰ Victor Harold Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 111-113.

²¹ It should be noticed that only the similitudes between the Hebrews' code and the Hittites' code are shown here. However, this does not mean that there are not more similitudes between Hammurabi's code and the Hittites' Code.

²² Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 107.

at least two things: (1) Tiglath-Pileser I's Code may involve an assimilation of the Hebrews' Code, with some additions (this is the argument of who came first) and (2) Tiglath-Pileser I endorsed some of the laws from the laws among the Middle East civilizations, because they were considered as constitutional laws (or good for the people).

Now it can be observed that basic laws found in Hammurabi's Code were also found among the Middle East civilizations: Hebrews' code, 1450-1405 B.C., Hittites' code, 1450-1200 B.C., and the Middle Assyrian code 1125-1100 B.C. When God gave Israel the "book of the covenant," with its various "judgments," He clearly included many laws that were common to other ancient Near Eastern nations. There is enough internal and external evidence to consider Exod 20:18-24:18 as the constitution of the new and free nation of Israel. This has been recognized by other scholars.²³

Worship Systematization, Exodus 25:1-40:38

This portion of the book reveals the systematization of worship. Israel will now worship in a systematic way, not as it was from the beginning. For example, family leaders performed the sacrificial rituals; there was not a designated person to perform the rituals, neither an order to present the sacrifice, nor a specific place to. But now, a set of laws was presented to Israel to present their offering and sacrifices to the LORD. Some people were chosen as priests to perform the rituals; also specific places were established to perform the worship.

²³ See Walter A. Elwell and Philip W. Comfort, eds., *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Carol Stream IL: Tyndale House, 2001), s.v. "Covenant" (p. 325): "The covenant provided the nascent state of Israel with a constitution, making it a theocratic state (a state ruled by God)." This is not to deny the many unique features of Israel's laws, based upon direct revelation from God, but emphasizes the continuity between ANE and Hebrew law codes in some respects.

In summary, the book of Exodus is arranged in three major parts: (A) Pre-covenant signs and covenant, Exod 1:1-20:17; (B) National constitution, Exod 20:18-24:18; and (C) Worship systematization, 25:1-40:38.

Merging Structure of Exodus and Genesis

In addition to the structure of Exodus outlined above, this thesis proposes a second structure, a structure merging Exodus and Genesis.²⁴ This structure portrays an ascending direction in the book of Exodus in counterpart to the book of Genesis, which is structured in a descendant way. It is like an ‘up’ and ‘down’, down and up journey in the human race in these two books.

Both books give hints of this ascending and descending idea. For example, in Exodus, the word ‘up’ appears 75 times and ‘down’ appears 30 times in the New King James Version (NKJV). In Genesis, ‘down’ appears 67 times and ‘up’ 79 times (NKJV). It is a total of 154 times for ‘up’ and 107 times for ‘down’. This could suggest a climactic trajectory in these books, one going down and the other going up. What does this mean? It means that in the chiasm created by the two books, the most significant parts are A, C, C’, A’. The first letter, A, represents the prime state (dwelling with God) of human condition, but this is lowered to C, which mean his final state (dwelling in the land of slavery, and Joseph’s bones a coffin in Egypt). The last letter is A’; this represent the prime state, but it emerges from C’, which is the final state of the human race, which is at the same time as the prime state in the book of Exodus. Therefore, it proposes that what was lost in A it is finally vindicated in A’.

²⁴ It is not claimed that this structure accounts for all the details of the two books, but shows a general trend in the macro-movements of the narrative flow.

The merging structure of Exodus and Genesis is the complementation of both books. Neither of the book's theological appeals is completed without the other.

Below is a summary of the overall trajectory of both books. The chiasm²⁵ may be set forth in the following way:

A. Eden Sanctuary (Dwelling with God), Gen. 1-3.

B. Pilgrimage, Gen. 4-46.

C. In Egypt (Dwelling in the land of slavery), Gen. 37-50.

C'. Out of Egypt (Free from the house of slavery), Exod 1-15.

B'. Pilgrimage, Exod 16-24.

A'. Earthly Sanctuary (Dwelling with God), Exod 25-40.

As it can be observed, the book of Genesis starts with God and humanity together in the Garden of Eden. Humanity was free and enjoyed peace with God. Then humanity sinned, was put out of the Garden of Eden, and ended in the context of slavery and a coffin in Egypt.

The Garden of Eden has many features that indicate that it was a sanctuary on earth created by God. One of the most significant features was the gate of the garden, which was at located toward the East (Gen 3:24). The gate to the East has been a symbol of the true worship in a sanctuary or house of worship (see Ezekiel 8:16; 10:19).²⁶

Genesis portrays human beings in a descending way—they started with God in a garden made by God and the book ends with “a coffin in Egypt” (Gen 50:26).

²⁵ This chiasm is not an exhaustive description of Exodus' structure, it is just a structural overview presented to point the beginning and the end of both books.

²⁶ For further evidence, see Richard M. Davidson, “Earth's First Sanctuary: Genesis 1-3 and Parallel Creation Accounts,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)* 53/1 (2015): 65-89.

On the other hand, the book of Exodus pictures the redemption of human beings, represented in the lives of the Israelites. The book begins with the children of God in slavery, but it presents an ascension from slavery toward God. Humanity was brought from slavery to freedom, to live with God again (Exod 25:8), but now humanity meets God not in the sanctuary/Garden of Eden, which was created by God, but in a tabernacle, tent, or sanctuary, created by human hands.²⁷

Therefore, if the general structure of the books of Genesis and Exodus runs from more to less (Genesis) and less to more (Exodus), it can be said that the book of Exodus is a *climactic book*. It moves from less to more, from down to up, from slavery to freedom. This structure needs to be remembered for the sake of this investigation.

²⁷ The creation of the tabernacle by human hands anticipates the creation of a new house created by God Himself.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is set to present the three major or more common approaches of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The order of the approaches in which they will be discussed is: (1) God hardened Pharaoh's heart, (2) Pharaoh hardened himself, and (3) God and Pharaoh, the agents of the hardening. Each section is presented in blocks, with the purpose to show the different views and some scholars who represent each view. Citations are given to provide a taste of the various scholars' views in their own words.

God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

And the LORD said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.' Exod 4:21

According to the readings of the majority of Bible translations, it is suggested that God was the agent of Pharaoh's heart hardening. Hence, many theologians have understood it in that way. For example, John D. Currid stated, "God is the cause of that hardening."¹ It means that Pharaoh's actions were not the cause of his hardening, but God's interventions were.

Willem Hendrik Gispen concurs: "Again Pharaoh's refusal was predicted, this time not as something that God knew beforehand, but as something that He Himself

¹ John Currid, *A study Commentary on Exodus* (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2000), 13.

brought about (cf. v. 21 with 3:19). This hardening (lit.: “I will make strong”) of Pharaoh’s heart is proof of God’s absolute omnipotence (cf. Rom 9:18)... If Pharaoh refused to let the people go, and thus showed his hardness of heart, it was ultimately caused by God Himself.”²

G. W. Ashby explains that God is the cause of every single event; therefore, He was the One who hardened Pharaoh’s heart. He said,

Further, since in Hebrew belief there can be no other basic causes for events apart from God (there is no god of evil who can frustrate the god of good), it is taken for granted that, if Pharaoh refuses to listen to Moses, it is God’s plan that he should refuse.³

Similarly, Carol L. Meyers writes, “In the first five wonders, ‘Pharaoh’ is the subject; in the subsequent ones, God is the subject and therefore the one who controls how the pharaoh responds. This shift keeps the overall sequence from seeming blatantly deterministic.”⁴

In addition, many other theologians have understood or claimed that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart as an act of divine judgment.

Among these theologians are F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller, who wrote, “Calamities which do not subdue the heart harden it. In the case of Pharaoh, the hardening was at once a righteous judgment, and a natural result of a long series of oppressions and cruelties.”⁵

² Willen Hendrik Gispem, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 62-63.

³ G. W. Ashby, *Go out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, International Theological Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI: Handsel Press, 1998), 26.

⁴ Carol L. Meyers, *Exodus* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70.

⁵ F. C. Cook, J. M. Fuller, *The Bible Commentary: Exodus-Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 16.

W. Jansen offers a similar appraisal:

The reverse situation, that God can and does change the hardness of the human heart to make possible new life under God, is almost a commonplace in the Bible. Sometimes this is expressed in terms of God's changing of a hard or stony heart (e.g., Ezek. 36:26f.; Jer. 32:38–40; cf. Jer. 31:31–34; 2 Cor. 3:3), but other vocabulary is frequently used. Thus, the psalmist can ask God to “create” in him “a clean heart” (Ps. 51:10). God shines in the heart “to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6; cf. Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:17; etc.). But if God works for salvation on the psychological plane, in and through the human heart/mind, we should not be surprised that God can also work judgment on that plane.⁶

Matthew Henry also pointed that:

Pharaoh had hardened his own heart against the groans and cries of the oppressed Israelites, and shut up the bowels of his compassion from them; and now God, in a way of righteous judgment, hardens his heart against the conviction of the miracles, and the terror of the plagues.⁷

Similarly, the writers of *The New Interpreter's Bible* suggest that the hardening of Pharaoh was an act of divine judgment:

The interpretation of man's stubbornness as a part of God's design is not to deny man freedom and responsibility but to attest that the result of wickedness can be used by God for his own ends, a view which leads to the prophetic doctrine of divine judgment (cf. I Thess 5:9).⁸

Janzen concludes,

On the other hand, Pharaoh does not exercise free will, an option he has forfeited by his well-established oppressive treatment of Israel. God deliberately hardens his heart as a means of destroying him, a judgment exercised on the psychological plane.⁹

Another scholar who believes that God hardened Pharaoh's as an act of divine judgment

⁶ Waldemar Janzen, *Exodus*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Waterloo, ON; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000), 142.

⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell), 289.

⁸ Abingdon Press, *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1: 881. Cf. Meyers, *Exodus*, 2005, 71.

⁹ Janzen, *Exodus*, 140.

was Don Levi. He wrote, “God did deprive pharaoh of free will as punishment for his cruel acts (Maimonides).”¹⁰

Pharaoh Hardened Himself

The opposite idea that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart is that Pharaoh hardened himself. For Benno Jacob, Pharaoh hardened himself and that action of stubbornness was what pushed God to judge Pharaoh:

Possibly in this we have three stages. First, the person knowingly hardened his own heart (8:15, 32; 9:34). Pharaoh set his mind to resist and oppose God’s will and thus made his heart more stubborn. Second, as a result, the heart is hardened by the action of psychological laws (“heart was hardened,” 7:14, 22; 9:7, 36). Third, when God saw that Pharaoh was determined to resist, He directly hardened the hard heart (7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 14:4, 8). This was done by divine judgment upon the individual (9:11-12) and by the extension of life, physical courage, and human power to continue his resistance to God.¹¹

Ellison considers that “Pharaoh’s heart was hard by nature...”¹² There was no participation from God in this hardening; Pharaoh’s heart was hard naturally.

Nahum M. Sarna suggests that Pharaoh was the only one responsible for his hardening. After his hardening, the divine causality entered in function. “Pharaoh’s personal culpability is beyond question.”¹³

According to *Apologetics Study Bible*, “Pharaoh’s own decision is certainly involved in his unyielding response....”¹⁴

¹⁰ Don Levi, “Did God Deprive Pharaoh Of Free Will?” *Philosophy and Literature* 32, no. 1 (2008): 58-73.

¹¹ Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1992), 243.

¹² H. L. Ellison, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 26-27.

¹³ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 23.

¹⁴ Cabal et al, *Apologetics Study Bible*, 91-92.

The *International Study Bible* concludes regarding the hardening of pharaoh's heart:

We today do not attribute results to the immediate action of God... The practical point is, the more we refuse to listen God's commands, the more incapable we become of obeying them, until the point is reached when it might seem as if God himself had hardened our hearts, so that we are unable to obey. But in fact, our hearts are hardened only because we ourselves have first hardened them.¹⁵

God and Pharaoh: The Agents of the Hardening

Beside these two positions, there is a third more conciliatory position: God and Pharaoh both contributed to the hardening.

A. H. McNeile claimed, "God and Pharaoh worked in the process of Pharaoh's hardening."¹⁶ Likewise, Terence E. Fretheim pointed, "Both need to be said: Pharaoh hardens his own heart, and so does God."¹⁷

Among those who believe that both God and Pharaoh were the agents of the hardening is the writer of the comments in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, who affirmed, "God governs man's heart, and yet gives him the prerogative of free-will. This involves the corresponding paradox, that God hardens those who harden themselves."¹⁸

In conclusion, there are at least three major positions or interpretations on who hardened Pharaoh's heart. Some believe that God hardened it; others believe that Pharaoh

¹⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: M. Pickering; Zondervan, 1986), 159.

¹⁶ A. H. McNeile, *The Book of Exodus, with Introduction and Notes* (London;: Methuen, 1931), 27.

¹⁷ Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus, IBC* (Louisville, John Knox Press, 1991), 98.

¹⁸ Matthew Black, et al., eds., *Peake's commentary on the Bible* (London, New York;: T. Nelson, 1964), 214.

was the agent of the hardening; and others believe that both God and Pharaoh had a part in the hardening. This thesis suggests the possibility of a new position as the solution for the discrepancies in the interpretations. In the remainder of this thesis, we explore the question: Who really hardened Pharaoh's heart?

CHAPTER 3

PHARAOH’S HEART HARDENING: KEY PASSAGES

For many years, the Israelites had been serving the Egyptians, yet they enjoyed peace in the land. However, after the death of Joseph and his brothers and all their generation, (Exod 1:6), “a new king” ascended to the throne of Egypt. This king did not recognize Joseph’s works in favor of the Egyptians. He began to mistreat the Israelite people. This action motivated the Israelites to get their freedom from the bondage of the Egyptians, so they cried unto God, and God heard their voice (Exod 2:24) and He decided to deliver them from their bondage.

To do the work of deliverance, God chose a newborn child—Moses. When Moses grew up, God called him. At the age of 40 years old, he was called to deliver the people of Israel and bring them to a land that flowed milk and honey.¹ God revealed to him His name—YHWH² (Exod 3:14-15). He also revealed to him what would be the course of action for the deliverance of the Israelites. He gave him a *prophecy*, saying, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall

¹ “So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.” Exod 3:8 (NKJV)

² This a transliteration of the Hebrew name of the LORD (commonly pronounced as JEHOVAH)

say to Pharaoh, Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, Let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son” (Exod 4:21-23).

This prophecy is the core text to understand the whole story of Pharaoh’s heart hardening. Beside this, there are others key passages that will help to understand better this fascinating phenomenon of the hardening, or, more than that, passages that, it will be argued, will make the story flow differently from the way it is usually presented.

Exodus 4:21-23

The climactic text to understand the story of Pharaoh’s hardening is Exodus 4:21-23. This text will set the platform for the development of the story. Therefore, we should focus on this text first. There are two main subjects that need to be explored: (1) the translation and (2) the genre of the text.

Hebrew text Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)

21

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלִכְתּוֹדָה לָשׁוּב מִצְרָיִם רְאֵה כָל־הַמִּקְרָתִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמַתִּי בְנִדְוָה וַעֲשִׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְאֲנִי
אֶחְזַק אֶת־לְבָבוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם:

22

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּנִי בְכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

23

וְאָמַר אֵלָיו שְׁלַח אֶת־בְּנִי וְנַעַבְדְנִי וְתִמְאַן לְשַׁלְחוֹ הִנֵּה אֲנִי הֵרָג אֶת־בְּנֶךָ בְּכֹרֶךָ:

Proposed translation

²¹“YHWH said to Moses, when you return to Egypt, see that you perform all the wonders, which I have set in your power, before Pharaoh, so *I will be very³ strong against his heart, because he will not send the people out.*” ²²“Thus you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘thus says the LORD: “Israel is My son, My firstborn. ²³Therefore, I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. *But* if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn” (Ex 4:21–23).⁴

Justification of the translation

Verse 21

To initiate this explanation, we note Fretheim’s words: “The traditional translation ‘harden’ is misleading, since we use ‘hard-hearted’ to connote cruelty.”⁵ For this scholar, the common translation of the verb in question is inappropriate, because it misleads the readers’ minds regarding the understanding of what the text really means. So, what should be an appropriate translation for this verb?

קָיָוֶה: “*I will be very strong*”. קָיָוֶה: verb, *piel*, imperfect, first person, singular, stative (strong or be strong). There are two important things to highlight with this verb: (1) the meaning of this verb is basically to *be strong* or to *act strongly*; it is a *stative verb*; and (2) this stative verb is in the *piel* stem. It is suggested in this thesis that this may imply that the verb in the *piel* remains stative but also carries the intensity of the *piel*

³ For the purpose of this investigation, the writer has opted to use the basic approach to the *piel* stem, “intensifying of the idea of the idea of the stem.” Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2d English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 141 (hereafter GKC). This thesis sets forth the hypothesis that the *piel* of a stative/intransitive verb may retain its stative/intransitive nature in the *piel*. Such a hypothesis is explored as a possibility in this thesis, and further research in another venue is needed to verify whether this hypothesis can stand the test of exhaustive examination of the use of stative verbs in the *piel* stem. Until such investigation is undertaken, the results of this investigation remain tentative.

⁴ The italicized words are the unique translations I am proposing for the text in Hebrew.

⁵ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 98.

stem as well becomes an intensive verb as well. Therefore, the translation should not be ‘I will be strong’ but ‘I will be very strong’⁶.

Besides this translation, it is important to realize that if this verb remains a stative verb in the *piel*, these stative verbs have a special particularity—they must be translated as adverbs with additional auxiliary verbs such as “act”, “deal”, “make”, “grow”, etc. Therefore, the alternate translation is “I will deal very strong” or “I will act very strong”. The same book of Exodus gives a good example of this kind of verb. In Exodus 1:10, which is part of the context of chapter 4, the word גַּתְּחַכְּמָה is translated with an adverb plus an auxiliary verb—“deal” “Come, let us *deal shrewdly* [גַּתְּחַכְּמָה] with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.”⁷

There are many other similar examples: Job 14:8—‘it *grows old*’, from the stative verb זָקַן; Joel 1:10: ‘it *dry up*’, from the stative הִבֵּשׂ; 2 Chr. 20:35—‘he *acted wickedly*’, from the stative verb הָרַשִׁיעַ, etc.

⁶ There is an important grammatical matter to notice in the translation of חָזַק in the stem of *piel* into English. There isn’t an exact English equivalent. The common result in the English translation is that in the imperfect of *piel* of חָזַק, it will become a transitive verb with the need of a direct object. This is the major bias that can be retained when translating this Hebrew combination into English. It must be considered that in Hebrew חָזַק is an intransitive verb, not a transitive verb, as it is translated into English. The basic problem is that English is a well-developed language and it is very difficult to translate underdeveloped languages into it. It is different with Spanish, which is similar to Hebrew; thus it seems to be easier to translate Hebrew into Spanish than into English. For example, the translation of this Hebrew combination into Spanish is “Yo seré ‘fuertísimo’”. *Fuertísimo* is an exact translation from ‘אֲחֻזָּק’. It carries the idea of the stative verb, intransitive verb, and *piel* stem. What’s interesting is that neither ‘אֲחֻזָּק’ or ‘*Fuertísimo*’ can be translated into an exact English word. Neither phrase, אֲחֻזָּק and ‘Yo seré fuertísimo’, exist in English in the way they are formed in Hebrew and Spanish. Therefore, it is necessary that the translation of this phrase should be arranged in a way that this denotes the function of an intransitive verb. It is like a monk that said “up” in French and a Hispanic guy translated it as “down”.

⁷ It must be acknowledged that this verb occurs in the *hithpael* stem in this verse, but the parallel of usage with the *piel* of Exod 4:21 seems likely.

Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, in their book *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*,

provide an explanation of the stative verbs. They write:

The *stative verbs*, which are ‘conjugated adjectives’, have two forms, a more frequent form *qatil* (cf. AKK *paris*), e.g. כָּבֵד *he is heavy*, and a less frequent form *qatul* (cf. Akk⁸. *maruṣ*), e.g. קָטַן *he is small*. To these two forms of the perfect corresponds a single form of the future with a second vowel *a*: יִכְבֵּד *he will be heavy*, יִקְטַן *he will be small*. As for the first vowel (that of the prefix), cf. § e.⁹

In the example above, Joüon and Muraoka clearly point out the addition of an auxiliary verb (in these cases) when a stative verb is used. The meaning of the verb יִכְבֵּד—*he will be heavy*—is “heavy”, but this verb takes the function of an adverb and the auxiliary verb “be” is inserted. This happens because this is a stative verb.

Beside Joüon and Muraoka, Martyn Summerbell, in making mention of the three main verbs used in the story of Pharaoh’s hardened heart, points to the basic translation of these verbs:

The three words in the original, which are rendered regularly by the single form “harden, deserve some mention. They are קשה to make hard, חזק to make strong and כבד to make heavy. With קשה is implied the idea of obstinacy, with חזק the thought of strength and encouragement, and with כבד the thought of despondency and sullenness.¹⁰

Like Joüon and Muraoka, he renders the verbs as adverbs plus additional verbs (or auxiliary verbs).

In *The Seventh-Day Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, these three verbs are translated as adverbs plus and auxiliary verbs: “Four of them (chs. 7:13, 22; 8:19;

⁸ Paul Joüon, T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), 116.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41b.

¹⁰ Martyn Summerbell, “Hardening Pharaoh's Heart”. *The Hebrew Student* 1 (1882); 8–9. Accessed at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3156160>.

9:35) use the word *chazaq*, ‘to make firm,’ five (chs 11. 7:14; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34) the word *kabed*, ‘to make heavy,’ and one (ch 13:15) the word *qashah*, ‘to make hard.’”¹²

Summarizing, the verb in question, קָזַח (he was strong), is a stative verb, and it is in an intensive stem. Therefore, it should be translated as “I will be very strong”, “I will act very strong”, or another equivalent translation.

It is also important to consider why should the verb קָזַח be translated as “strong” instead of “hard.” There are several reasons why it should be translated as “strong” instead of “hard”:

1. This verb, in its different forms, appears about 290 times in the Hebrew Bible, and the only part of the whole Bible where this verb is translated as “hard” is in the story of Pharaoh, and one part more, which can be seen in another way. It must be noticed that since in its 290 times this word has the predominant meaning of “making strong or be strong”, and this meaning should also be considered as the preferred translation in the context of the ten plagues, unless the context demands another meaning.
2. Many scholars are looking for a different meaning of קָזַח in the story of Pharaoh’s hardening. They are not satisfied with the usual meaning of the word elsewhere in the Bible, and thus they propose translations such as the following: “All three terms essentially function synonymously in Exodus, and although all three are typically rendered in most English translations as one variation or another on

¹¹ Nichol, *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:516.

‘harden the heart,’ that is, following the KJV literalistic wording, their meaning in normal modern English is simply ‘be/make stubborn.’”¹³

Stuart proposes the meaning of “stubborn,”. Implying that he is not satisfied with the common translation (“hard”). Nahum M. Sarna does not use the word “hard”; instead he changes it to “*will stiffen his heart.*”¹⁴ For him, hardening is a secondary or derivative meaning; for that reason, he chooses the term “stiffening”, which seems to be his preferred translation. This is also concluded from his statement: “The ‘hardening of the heart’ thus expresses a state of arrogant moral degeneracy, unresponsive to reason and incapable of compassion. Pharaoh’s personal culpability is beyond question.”¹⁵ Here he quotes the common translation in a derogative way and seeks to push toward a further meaning, which he called “obduracy”.¹⁶

3. The verb קָרַח is an *intransitive verb*; it means that the translation of the subject plus the verb must stand by itself, not needing a direct object when a prepositional phrase is taking place. Those verbs that need direct objects are transitive verbs, because “the action expressed by the verb pass over from the subject (the “agent” or “actor”) to the object (or “goal”).”¹⁷ When קָרַח, being an intransitive verb, is surrendered to the meaning of “hard”, maybe it will lose its

¹³ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus* (vol. 2; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 147.

¹⁴ Sarna, *Exodus*, 23.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 364.

real grammatical intention. This is the problem—if it is taken as a transitive verb, instead of what it is, the text will need a direct object to complete the sentence. Thus, the next part of the sentence in the text must be reduced to a meaning of direct object when it should be considered as a prepositional phrase. In the NKJV the expression: וְאֶנִּי אֶחְזַק אֶת־לִבּוֹ has been translated as: “But I will harden his heart, (Exod 4:21)”. It may be remarked that here, “harden” was taken as a transitive verb to make sense in the sentence. When this is done, the translator has to take the second part of the sentence as a direct object, and that is a huge problem here, because what should be a prepositional phrase after the verb חִזַּק is changed to a direct object.

4. One of the most impressive arguments against the common translation of the passage is the ‘Exodus’ motif’. Robert R. Wilson’s words provide a catapult: “The motif occurs twenty times between Exod 4:21 and Exod 14:17 and is an important constituent of the plague, Passover, and crossing narratives. Thus, one might suppose that the hardening played a key role in Israel’s view of the Exodus.”¹⁸ However, it is astonishing that there is not even one time in the Hebrew Bible or other literature of the time where the hardening motif is mentioned (as a divine act). Not only that, but nothing is found anywhere in the Old Testament that supports the idea that God hardens the heart of men (at least related to the three main verbs used in this story). Hebrew people did not discuss or acknowledge an event like this.

¹⁸ Robert R. Wilson, “The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly (CBQ)* 41 (1979): 18-36.

On the contrary, the motif of the mighty power of God against Pharaoh is found through the entire Bible. This motif is developed from the expression “I will be very strong”, which is the translation that I am proposing here. This ties the subsequent mentions of the mighty hand of God or stretched-out hands of Moses against Pharaoh and Egypt. Here, God is promising to Moses He will act very strong in the deliverance of His people. This motif is clear in the entire Bible. Hardening of one’s heart as an act from God is a mysterious and unsupported idea in the Bible. To arrive to an idea of a hardening like this one, one has to force the text toward an extreme with interpretations and mingling of philosophical ideas, while the idea of “God was acting strongly for the deliverance of His people” comes without any effort.

In summary, the verb *חזק* be translated as “strong” instead of “hard” for the following reasons: (1) The context of the verb—the whole Bible supports the translation of “strong” instead of “hard”; (2) many scholars are not satisfied with the expression of “hard” and they are trying to bring forward other parallel words; (3) the verb is an intransitive verb, and it must be translated as an intransitive verb, not as it is translated commonly, and (4) the Exodus’ motif of Pharaoh’s heart hardening is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible or other ancient literature (known to me).

וַאֲנִי אֶחְזַק אֶת־לְבָבוֹ. אֶת: Against. Commonly, the particle [את] in this portion of the text has been considered as a sign of direct object, at least that is inferred from the translations of modern Bible versions. However, should this particle be rendered as a direct object? In the section where the explanation of the verb [חזק] was explained, it was noted that if [חזק] is taken as a transitive instead of an intransitive verb, the text will need

a direct object to complete the sentence. So, the next part of the sentence in the text must be reduced to a meaning of direct object when, if it is an intransitive verb, it should be considered as a prepositional phrase.

What is the grammatical implication when the verb [הזק] is seen as an intransitive verb? The next portion of the sentence should be translated as a prepositional phrase. Therefore, the next part that follows the verb [הזק] is introduced by the particle [את], and this particle introduces the prepositional phrase. Thus, the prepositional phrase will be “*against* his heart”.

The particle [את] is found to have a negative connotation, and it is translated as “*against*” in many parts of the Hebrew Bible.

‘Against’ outside of the book of Exodus:

Josh 1:18: “Whoever rebels against (את) your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.”

(NET; English Standard Version, ESV; New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update, NASB95; New International Version, NIV; New Revised Standard Version, NRSV; King James Version 1900, KJV 1900; New Living Translation, NLT; Complete Jew Bible, CJB; The Lexham English Bible, LEB; The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of the Authorized English Version, AV 1873; New King James Version, NKJV).¹⁹

1 Sam 12:14:

If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against (m) the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well.” (NET, ESV, NASB95, NIV, NRSV, KJV 1900, NLT, CJB, LEB, AV 1873, NKJV)

¹⁹ See ‘List of abbreviation’ on this paper.

12:15: “However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against (תא) the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.” (NET, ESV, NASB95, NIV, NRSV, KJV 1900, NLT, CJB, LEB, AV 1873, NKJV)

1 Kgs 21:13:

And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against (תא) Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, “Naboth cursed God and the king.” So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. (NET, ESV, NASB95, NIV, NRSV, KJV 1900, LEB, AV 1873, NKJV).

Dan 11:2:

And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than *them* all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against (תא) the realm of Greece. (NET, ESV, NASB95, NIV, NRSV, KJV 1900, NLT, CJB, LEB, AV 1873, NKJV)

Ps 105:28: “He sent darkness, and made *it* dark; And they did not rebel against (תא) His word.” (KJV 1900, ESV, NASB95, NIV, NRSV, KJV 1900, LEB, AV 1873, NKJV)

Ps 78:56: “Yet they tested and rebelled against (תא) the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies,” ESV

Josh 22:19:

Nevertheless, if the land of your possession *is* unclean, *then* cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD’s tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against (תא) us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God. (NET, ESV, NASB95, NIV, NRSV, KJV 1900, NLT, CJB, LEB, AV 1873, NKJV)

Ps 106:33: “Because they rebelled against (תא) His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly with his lips.” NASB95, NIV, LEB, NKJV

Num 20:24: “Let Aaron be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against (תא) my command at the waters of Meribah.” ESV.

From the above examples, there are two important points to be considered: (1) in all the texts mentioned above, where the particle [תא] is translated as ‘against’ after the verb in the text, all of the verbs are or act as *intransitive verbs*, and (2) [תא] is not considered as a direct object but introduces a prepositional phrase.

The alternative translation for תא could be ‘with’ with a negative connotation. The NIV translates תא as ‘with’ 99 times in the whole Old Testament, and 18 of them are in the book of Exodus. For example: Exod 1:7; 6:8; 8:22; 12:39; 20:25; 29:5, 13, 22; 35:11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 16, 17; 39:40; 40:3, (NIV). Similarly, sometimes the preposition ‘with’ has a connotation of disadvantage or adversative as well, e.g., Ezek 39:14; 1 Kgs 11:15.

The ESV translates תא as ‘with’ 116 times, 16 times as ‘to’, 16 times as ‘named’, 14 times as ‘against’ (Gen 37:18; Num 20:24; Josh 1:18; 1 Sam12:14,15; 2 Kgs 6:32; Ps 105:28; Is 66:14; Jer 1:16, 4:17; 38:5; Ezek 5:6, 6), 10 times as ‘which’, etc.

In summary, the particle [תא]²⁰ will change the sentence from “I will harden his heart” to “I will be (or act) very strong against his heart”.

וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם: *because he will not send the people out.* This phrase is introduced by the conjunction *vav*. Commonly, this *vav* has been translated as a purpose clause in the modern Bible versions: “*so that he will not let the people go,*” thus giving the text the meaning of a God who orchestrated the stubbornness of Pharaoh. This view is

²⁰ There are many other places where this particle is translated as *against*, the difference is that it is prefixed to a personal pronoun. However, they can be explored too. See for example: Gen. 37:18; 2 Kgs 6:32; Jer 1:16; 2:35; 4:12, 17; 38:5; Josh 22:19; Num 20:24.

note supported elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. When the Israelites remembered this story, they saw that Pharaoh and the Egyptians made their hearts heavy, not that God did it or orchestrated it. In the first book of Samuel it is clearly stated, “Why then do you *make heavy*²¹ your (תִּכְבְּדוּ) hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh *made heavy* their (כִּבְדוּ) hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart?” (1 Sam. 6:6). Therefore, if the Exodus’ motif, hundreds of years later, tells that the Egyptians and Pharaoh were who made their hearts heavy, it is evident that a change must be executed in the translation and understanding of this portion of the text.

For this reason, I am proposing that this *vav* should be considered as a causal or explicative *vav*. This *vav* is introducing an explanation of why God will act very strong with Pharaoh. It tells that God will act very strong with Pharaoh because he will not listen to Him nor let the people go. “The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was evident first of all in the fact that he paid no attention to the demand of the LORD to let Israel go.”²² In other words, God foresaw that Pharaoh would refuse to let the people go, and consequently, He will have to be very strong with him.

This cause and effect is obvious in the story. For example, God told Moses to tell Pharaoh the following: “So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. *But if you refuse to let him go* [וְאִם־לֹא־יִשְׁמָעוּ], indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn” (Exod 4:23). The refusal of Pharaoh to let God’s firstborn go out would bring the death of his firstborn—cause and effect.

Likewise, other passages can be added, “*But if you refuse to let them go*

²¹ Italicized words are my suggested translation.

²² Nichol, *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:516.

[וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי לֹא־מְצַדֵּק אֶתְּךָ], behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs” (Exod 8:2; Heb. 7:27). “*For (causative) if you refuse to let them go, and still hold them*” (Exod 9:2). So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you *refuse* to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me” (Exod 10:3). “Or else (causative), *if you refuse* to let My people go [וְכִי אֲמַלְאֵךְ אֶתְּךָ לְשִׁלְחָם], behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory” (Exod 10:4; Heb. 9:2).

Exodus 10:4, the last warning to Pharaoh, presents the shifting between *vav* and the preposition [כִּי]. This means that every time Moses used the expression [וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי לֹא־מְצַדֵּק אֶתְּךָ²³] with a *vav*, the expression takes the significance of ‘but’ or ‘because’ in a causative way. In addition to this, this expression is introduced by the conditional ‘if’ (אִם), which means that the action that follows is the cause.

Beyond this point, the story attests that this *vav* should be considered as a causal or explicative *vav*. In chapter 5, in the first encounter between Moses and Pharaoh, is registered the starting point of the fulfillment of the cause and effect idea (causal or explicative *vav*) of Exod 4:21. “And Pharaoh said, ‘Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, *nor will I let Israel go*’” (Exod 5:2). God foretold to Moses this refusal in 4:21 and now it is fulfilled in chapter 5. After Pharaoh refused to free the people at this point, God entered into another mode. He became severe against Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exod 6-14). The proposed phrase fits perfectly with what happened in the story. God said: *because he will send not the people out*. Fulfillment:

²³ BHS: Exod 7:27.

Ex. 4:21a *I will act very strong* (effect)²⁴

Ex. 4:21b *because he will send not the people out* (cause)

Ex. 5:2c *nor I will let Israel go* (cause)

Exod 6-14 judgments (effect)

In addition, Exod 3:19-20 should be mentioned as a major key passage to endorse the translation above. “But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So, I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.” Here the LORD claimed that everything He would do against Pharaoh should be the result of the obstinacy of Pharaoh to let the people go (cause and effect).

In conclusion, the *vav* in consideration should be translated as a causal or explicative *vav* instead of purpose clause as it is in the modern translations, because the immediate context of the text suggests that. The translation could be: “*because he will send not the people out*”.

Genre. In general, the book of Exodus is a narrative in genre. However, it is understandable that the narrative genre can be portioned into different categories, such as parables, metaphors, prophecies, promises, etc. In the case of Exodus 4:21-23, it can be considered as a prophecy or promise in the narrative of the Exodus.

For example, Victor Hamilton considers it as a promise. He stated, “[4: 21– 23] For the first time, even before leaving Midian, Moses finds out that the LORD intends to toughen/ make strong/ harden/ make obstinate the heart of Pharaoh. The fulfillment of that promise will be found in the plagues section of Exodus (9: 12; 10: 20, 27; 11: 10; 14:

²⁴ Exod 4:21 a and b are the foretelling; Exod 5:2 and 6-14 are the fulfillment.

4, 8, all of which use the *piel* of ḥāzaq, as does 4: 21).”²⁵

On the other hand, others see it as a prediction or prophecy. W. H. Gispen wrote, “Again Pharaoh’s refusal was predicted, this time not as something that God knew beforehand, but as something that He Himself brought about (cf. v. 21 with 3:19). This hardening (lit.: ‘I will make strong’) of Pharaoh’s heart is proof of God’s absolute omnipotence (cf. Rom. 9:18) ... If Pharaoh refused to let the people go, and thus showed his hardness of heart, it was ultimately caused by God Himself.”²⁶ Likewise Motyer stated, “B² Divine preparation for the future (21-23).”²⁷

Whatever literary style it is, promise or prophecy, Exodus 4:21-23 reveals what YHWH will do in the short future.

This prophecy would mark the limits of YHWH’s actions in favor of the Israelites, from the first command to Pharaoh to let the people go until the death of his firstborn. The death of Pharaoh’s firstborn would be the climax of God’s power in delivering the people of Israel according to the prophecy. Also, it can be counted as the last sign for Moses to realize that the people will finally be delivered. This explains the multiple reactions of Moses, which lacked surprise, when he spoke to Pharaoh, who refused to let the people go. Moses understood that until the climax of the prophecy, the people would not get out of Egypt. As Walter Kaiser stated, “The penalty that Pharaoh would ultimately pay for his refusal to acknowledge Israel as Yahweh’s son and firstborn

²⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: an Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 78.

²⁶ Gispen, *Exodus*, 62-63.

²⁷ Motyer, *The message of Exodus: the days of our pilgrimage* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

would be aimed at his own firstborn.”²⁸ The death of Pharaoh’s firstborn will be the sign or climax of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Exodus 4:21-23, thus showing the time for deliverance.

Exodus 6:1

A second prophecy will sustain the idea that God will act strongly against Pharaoh. Exodus 6:1, was totally fulfilled in the process of the great deliverance. The LORD marked the climax for the deliverance of Israel, but He also predicted that He would be ‘strong’ or ‘hard’ in the process of rescuing His people. The direct object upon which He would show His power, strength or toughness would be Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

The text very clearly indicates that Pharaoh would be the direct object of YHWH’s strong hand:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עַתָּה תֵּרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפָרְעֹה כִּי בְיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֵם וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרֹשֵׁם
מֵאֶרֶץ־:

“But the LORD said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand [בְּיַד חֲזָקָה] he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land’” (Exod 6:1).

As it can be noticed, Pharaoh is clearly appointed as the direct object of YHWH’s determination/power/strong hand. לְפָרְעֹה / To Pharaoh. Here the preposition ‘lamed/ לְ’ has a special use—it is set to cut any misunderstanding of the principal object on which the LORD will pour out His wrath. Generally, the sign for a direct object in the Scriptures

²⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 383.

is *את*, though it could be a name or title²⁹. For example: “*בְּרָאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ*” (Gen 1:1). However, *את* is not used here to determine the direct object, but ‘lamed’ is used. The LORD’s strong hands would be shown against Pharaoh. Therefore, the preposition ‘lamed’ has a connotation of disadvantage.

Ronald J. Williams says this about the ‘lamed of disadvantage:

ל of disadvantage (against). The object of the preposition ל can be a person or thing to whose disadvantage something is. This is also referred to as an *adversative ל* and as the equivalent of the *dativus incommode*.³⁰

In order to create a subsequent idea for the waving of the story in question, it can be said that YHWH told Moses that he will see what the LORD will do *against* Pharaoh. The emphasis is on the preposition ‘*against*’; ‘lamed’ is bringing the connotation of ‘against’. Hence, if ‘lamed’ is considered as an adversative/disadvantage preposition, as it is in truth, the story will get an unusual and coherent meaning.

Understanding this idea of Pharaoh as the direct object will lead to a better appreciation of the meaning of the story. This thought needs to be kept for future explanations of the story. Without this explanation, it could be very difficult to understand the subsequent ideas presented in this investigation.

Following the first thought, the Scripture reveals the exact fulfillment of this second prophecy. The LORD determined to use a strong hand *against* Pharaoh in Exod 6:1 in consequence for the refusal of Pharaoh in Chapter 5. In order to see an exact fulfillment of this prediction, let’s remember that Exodus 6:1 is the prophecy of Exodus

²⁹ Comp. with Ps 78:56; Daniel 11:2.

³⁰ Ronald J. Williams and John C. Beckman, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 107.

3:19-20. In Exodus 3:19-20, there are specific details that should be noticed in relation to the strong hands idea. In this prophecy, the LORD said, “But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go”. This text presents some important points: (1) The only way to compel Pharaoh to let the people go out was by a *strong*³¹ hand. (2) The LORD will *stretch out His hand*, which would be the way He would show His strong hand. (3) The stretching out of His hands are the wonders that strike Egypt. 4) When the LORD stretches out His hands and strikes Egypt with the wonders, then Pharaoh will let the people go out.³²

The main idea in this is that the outstretched hands reveal strong hands and they bring the wonders/ten plagues—and only ten plagues. The tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, is the climax or final fulfillment of this prophecy, according to the text. In other words, each time, in the frame of the ten plagues, that it is written ‘outstretched hands’, it is pointing to the LORD fulfilling this prophecy.

The fulfillment of this prophecy comes in the frame of the ten plagues³³:

“And the LORD said to Moses,

Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff *and stretch out your hand* [וַיִּנְטֵהָ־יָדָךְ] over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone,’ (Exod 7:19).

“And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘*Stretch out your hand*

³¹ The New King James Version translates it as a mighty hand, but the Hebrew word is the same “בְּיָדַי הַחֲזָקָה”, which means strong hand.

³² It is clearly understood that the tenth plague, the last wonder before Israel was delivered, points to the climax of both prophecies. The death of Pharaoh’s firstborn is the sign for Moses.

³³ The texts are showed in full to highlight the Hebrew occurrence.

[גַּטְּהָ אֶת־הַדֶּגֶר] with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!” (Exod 8:5), (Exod 8:1, *BHS*)

And they did so. Aaron *stretched out his hand* [וַיִּטֵּא אֶת־הַדֶּגֶר] with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt, (Exod 8:17), (Exod 8:13, *BHS*).

Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘*Stretch out your hand* [גַּטְּהָ אֶת־הַדֶּגֶר] toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.’ (Exod 9:22).

Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘*Stretch out your hand* [אֶת־הַדֶּגֶר] over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left,’ (Exod 10:12).

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘*Stretch out your hand* [אֶת־הַדֶּגֶר] toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt,’” (Exod 10:21).

Then Moses said to the people, ‘Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a *strong hand* [בְּיָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten’, (Exod 13:3). And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a *strong hand* [בְּיָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] the LORD has brought you out of Egypt, (Exod 13:9).

“And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a *strong hand* [בְּיָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. (Exod 13:14).

“It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand [בְּיָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] the LORD brought us out of Egypt,” (Exod 13:16).”

All these passages distinctly show that YHWH fulfilled the prophecy exactly as He foretold to Moses, with a ‘strong hand’. It is imperative to notice this fulfillment in order to understand the story’s line proposed in the next chapter.

Beyond the book of Exodus, this story of God’s deliverance by a strong hand is remembered in Deuteronomy, 2 Kings, Nehemiah, Psalms, and Jeremiah:

Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by *a mighty hand* [יָבִיטְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] *and an outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ], and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? (Deut. 4:34).

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with *a mighty hand* [יָבִיטְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] *and an outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ]. Therefore, the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day, (Deut. 5:15).

the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, *the mighty hand* [יָבִיטְךָ הַחֲזָקָה], *and the outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ], by which the LORD your God brought you out. So, will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid, (Deut. 7:19).

“For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by *your outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ],” Deut. 9:29).

And consider today (since I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), consider the discipline of the LORD your God, his greatness, *his mighty hand* [אֲתֵּיְדוֹ הַחֲזָקָה] *and his outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ], ³ his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land, (Deut. 11:2-3).

“But you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power *and with an outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ]. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice,” (2 Kgs 17:36).

“They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power *and by your strong hand* [וּבְיָבִיטְךָ הַחֲזָקָה],” (Neh 1:10).

“*with a strong hand* [יָבִיטְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] *and an outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ], for his steadfast love endures forever;” (Ps 136:12).

“You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, *with a strong hand* [יָבִיטְךָ הַחֲזָקָה] *and outstretched arm* [וּבְרָחוּץ נְטוּיָהָ], and with great terror” (Jer 32:21).

Summary. YHWH used a strong hand to deliver His people. He displayed His

strong hand by commanding His servants to *stretch out their hands*, and different wonders were manifested. At first, Pharaoh was the direct object of these wonders, and then his people became objects of the *strong hand* of YHWH.

Exodus 7:3

Hebrew text (*BHS*)

וְאֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת־אֹתוֹתַי וְאֶת־מוֹפְתָי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:³⁴

Proposed translation

“I will *act severely against* Pharaoh’s heart; *I will multiply* My signs and My wonders against the land of Egypt” (Exod 7:3).

Justification of the translation

[אֶקְשֶׁה] “*I will act severely*”. קשה. This verb may be parsed as *hiphil*, imperfect, first person, singular, stative (“severe or be severe”), intransitive. Like the verb [הִזְק], this verb follows the same argument or rule: an intransitive stative verb that introduces a prepositional phrase. In order to avoid duplicate explanations, see the explanation on [הִזְק]. Both verbs follow the same rules for translation in these two cases.

However, there are two things to be mentioned here: (1) [קשה] is in the stem of *hiphil*, while [הִזְק] is in the Pi’el voice. This usage prepares the way to the second clause of the verse, which will take a second verb in the stem of *hiphil*, thus splitting the sentence into two clauses, the first taking the intransitive meaning of the Qal and the

³⁴ *BHS*: Exod 7:3.

second pulling toward the meaning of a causative transitive³⁵ *hiphil*³⁶: “(a) The causative conjugations (*Pi’ēl*, *Hiph’īl*, sometimes also *Pilpel*, e.g. פִּלְפֵּל Gn 47:12, &c.) of verbs which are simply transitive in *Qal*.”³⁷ This text does not make good sense when translated into English, because there is not a straight way to translate the whole sentence in a way that grasps the meaning of the Hebrew sentence. Therefore, my proposed translation does not carry the intentional meaning of the Hebrew text for the whole verse, so I will expose the meaning of it with many words to make sense of the proposed translation; (2) The meaning of the verb and its surpassing meaning over the *piel* stem. What is the meaning of the verb [קשה]? The immediate context of Exod 7:3 proposes that the meaning of [קשה] is ‘severity or act with severity’. It can be determined by the mirror effect of the book of Exodus.

The mirror effect

The mirror effect of the story reveals that the verb קשה must be translated with the connotation of severity in this story instead of hardening³⁸ as a supernatural event. Many writers have noticed and confirmed that God’s actions against Pharaoh were a divine retribution or judgment. For example, F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller stated, “In the case of Pharaoh the hardening was at once a righteous judgment, and a natural result of a long

³⁵ The second verb that appears in the second clause is a transitive verb [וְהָרַבִּיתִּי]. For that reason I made the mention of a transitive verb here in Exod 7:3b.

³⁶ This is concluded not by a certain rule, but the text itself gives the order of the verbs and their stems.

³⁷ GKC, 370.

³⁸ It is important to notice that the word ‘hard’ may have the connotation of severity. It is not my intention to reduce or make a separation of the use of the word in concern. This means that the context of the story points that the word should not be taken beyond the point of severity, as a super natural event, but in the order of severity.

series of oppressions and cruelties.”³⁹ Douglas K. Stuart wrote, “Second, the judgment of God displayed in all the plagues was more than merely an act of retribution. It was also a definitive display of his superiority to all other gods, that is, false gods, for the benefit of all seekers of the truth throughout all subsequent history (12:12; cf. 12:14, 24–27).”⁴⁰

John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, and Charles M. Mead said, “The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, following the last act of divine judgment upon Egypt, may be designated as the specific date of the victory of monotheism over the heathen gods, or of the theocratic faith over the heathen religions.”⁴¹ Bailey noted, “Still to come was the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, in retribution for Pharaoh’s murder of Israelite children.”⁴²

Below are presented some events that found their mirror in the same book of Exodus. Among these texts the word קשה finds its mirror too.

Acknowledgment

Exod 1:8: “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know [לֹא־יָדָע] Joseph.”

(Mirror) Exod 2:25: “And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged [וַיִּזְכֹּר] *them*.”

The new king that arose in Egypt did not recognize Joseph (the Israelites) and thus despised the good treatment of the Israelites. He did not recognize them, not because

³⁹ Cook and Fuller, *Exodus-Ruth*, 16.

⁴⁰ Stuart, *Exodus*, 265.

⁴¹ John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, and Charles M. Mead, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Exodus* (vol. 2; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 28.

⁴² Bailey, *Exodus*, 114-115.

he was unaware of who the Israelites were, but it was a depreciation of this nation. “The new king did not acknowledge Joseph, i.e., his great merits in relation to Egypt. לֹא יָדַע signifies here, not to perceive, or acknowledge, in the sense of not wanting to know anything about him, as in 1 Sam. 2:12, etc.”⁴³ When it happened, the mirror effect took place. In opposition to the attitude of Pharaoh, the LORD acknowledged the Israelites.

Death of the Firstborn

Ex. 1:16:

And he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see *them* on the birthstools, if it *is* a son, then you shall kill him; but if it *is* a daughter, then she shall live.

(Mirror) Exod 4:22: “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD:

“Israel *is* My son, My firstborn [בְּכֹרִי].”

Exod 4:23: “So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn [בְּכֹרְךָ].”

Exod 12:29:

And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn [בְּכוֹרִים] in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn [בְּכוֹרִים] of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who *was* in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock.

Into the River and Into the Sea

Exod 1:22— “So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

(Mirror)Exod 14:27:

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD

⁴³ C. F. Keil, Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, The Second Book of Moses*, Edinburg, (1972), Vol. 1., 420.

overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

Death of the Male

Ex. 1:22— “So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

(Mirror)Exod 14:28— “Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, *and* all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.”

Severity

Ex. 1:14— “And they made their lives bitter with *severe* [אִשָּׁרָה] bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve *was* with rigor.”

(Mirror) Exod 7:3— “And I will *act severely* [אִשָּׁרָה] *against* Pharaoh’s heart, *and/by the multiplication of* My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt” (paraphrasing).

Exod 1:14 and Exod 7:3 were left to be addressed last because they are the texts upon which we are focused. The other texts were quoted in order to sustain the mirror effect in the story. In 1:14, the word [אִשָּׁרָה] is used as an adjective and the main connotation of it is ‘severity’, not hardening. Pharaoh treated the Israelites with ‘severity’, so the LORD would treat him with severity (mirror effect). Pharaoh mistreated the Israelites; he made “their lives bitter with severe [אִשָּׁרָה] bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor [בְּפִרְיָה]”.

Pharaoh's infliction on the Israelites was very severe. The word rigor [בפרך] points out that his actions against them were very severe or rigorous. Note the discussion of this word in *HALOT* which links with the idea of "severe:" "פָּרַךְ: *פָּרַךְ, Bauer-L. *Heb.* 458s; SamP. (*bā*)*fērāk*, MHeb. frailness, force, JArm. פִּרְכָּא refutation; cf. Neo-Assyrian *parku* injustice, *פָּרַךְ: פָּרַךְ: *violence, slavery* (König *Wb.* 374f); always with כָּ, meaning violent Ex 1:13; Lv 25:43, 46, 53; Ezk 34:4.."⁴⁴ *HALOT* points out six nuances of meanings for this the word, several of which fit in the context of Exod 1:14. In view of this severity, the mirror effect was about to take place; the LORD was going to act severely against Pharaoh and execute divine retribution.

Multiplication

Ex. 1:11-12:

Therefore, they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied [יִרְבְּהוּ] and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

Ex. 7:3— "And I will *act severely against* Pharaoh's heart, and multiply [וְהִרְבִּיתִּי]

My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt."

As the hand of Pharaoh was against the Israelites, now the LORD would make retribution with him. Pharaoh afflicted the Israelites with many signs of power, thus the LORD would do it too; He would multiply His signs and wonders against Pharaoh; mirror effect; divine retribution.

⁴⁴ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner., eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 968. (Hereafter *HALOT*). The following abbreviations and symbols (with their meaning) are used in this citation: JArm. Jewish Aramaic; JArm.^b Jewish Aramaic of the Babylonian tradition; JArm.^g ~ Galilean tradition; JArm.^t ~ Targumic tradition; → HAL Introduction; Kutscher *Fschr. Baumgartner* 158ff. f. *confer*, comparable with; → see further; * hypothetical form.

[אָת־לֵב] “*against the heart*”. For an explanation of [אָת], see above in the discussion of Exod 4:21, where it was argued that this particle introduced a prepositional phrase in the verse. Like Exod 4:21, here this particle functions as a preposition [against] and the same rule applies to it.

[וְהִרְבֵּיתִי]: “*I will multiply.*” רבה: *hiphil*, perfect, first person, singular, (transitive causative *hiphil*), plus converse *vav*: become great, become much, many. As argued above, the combination of this transitive causative *hiphil* verb [וְהִרְבֵּיתִי] 7:3b and the intransitive causative *hiphil* verb [אֶקְשֶׁה] 7:3a do not make any sense if translated in a straight, literal manner into English. The various modern Bible versions do not make good sense when translating 7:3. For example, the ESV reads, “But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt...” (Exod 7:3, ESV). Likewise, the KJV reads, “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt” (Exod 7:3, ESV). As it can be noticed, there is a huge gap between parts A and B of this sentence, and this gap makes the whole sentence unintelligible. Verse 7:3a is completely disassociated from 7:3b.

There is not a literal⁴⁵ way to translate this combination: “I will *act severely against* Pharaoh’s heart; *I will multiply* My signs and My wonders against the land of Egypt” (Exod 7:3). The Hebrew word translated “I will act severely” [קִשָּׂה] is an intransitive causative stative *hiphil* and “I will multiply” [רִבֵּה] is a transitive causative *hiphil*. [קִשָּׂה] is an intransitive causative stative *hiphil*. Two points follow from this parsing: (1) the verb is intransitive—it stands by itself, thus with the capability of being

⁴⁵ It is appropriate to explain this phenomenon because I have found that translators try their best to bring the most accurate translation with the equivalent unit of words found in the original text. If it was not the case, I would just tell the meaning of the combination.

complemented by a prepositional phrase; in this case the following [את] in the verse in question will function as a preposition and not as a sign of a direct object. (2) The verb is causative—it will act as a Qal in function, but its stative nature dominates it and its causative essence turns it to agent for the second part of the sentence. Therefore, it may be inferred that the LORD will act severely against Pharaoh by means of His multiple⁴⁶ signs and wonders.

Exodus 10:1

Hebrew text (*BHS*)

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כִּי־אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת־לְבָבוֹ וְאֶת־לֵב עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְּתִי אֵלָה בְּקִרְבּוֹ:

Proposed translation

“And the LORD said to Moses: go to Pharaoh, *for I have been heavy against* his heart and the hearts of his servants, *in order to set* these *signs* of mine in his *inward part*”
Exod 10:1.

Justification of the translation

[הִכְבַּדְתִּי] “*I have been heavy.*” כבד: *hiphil*, perfect, first person, singular, stative, intransitive. What is the meaning of the verb כבד, and how it should be translated in Exod 10:1? Exodus 10:1 is generally translated as “harden”, but is “harden” the real meaning of this verb? Another option for the translation of it may be considered. First, the majority of scholars agree that the basic meaning of this verb is ‘to be heavy’. For example, *HALOT* gives this translation: “qal to be heavy, pi. to honour, hif. to become (or

⁴⁶ רבה (multiplication) must not be confused with the English sense of multiplication. This verb does not refer to multiplication as 2 x 2 in English, it refers to multitude or multiple in number.

make) heavy”.⁴⁷ Osborn pointed out that “The word for **hardened** here has the basic meaning of heavy or dull.”⁴⁸ Osborn is a strong supporter of the idea of heaviness instead of hardness for this verb. It is impressive to read all the instances where he mentions over and over that this verb has a meaning of heavy. Only within the scope of the story of Pharaoh, he mentions the word “heavy” 25 times, which clearly shows his firm resolution that כבד must be translated as “heavy” in the whole story of Pharaoh’s stubbornness. Likewise, in the *SDA Bible Commentary*, it is noted that the meaning of the verb כבד is heavy: “In ch. 10:1 a third word, *kabed*, is used, meaning that God had made Pharaoh’s heart ‘heavy,’ or insensible to divine influence.”⁴⁹ It can be said that scholars agree that the basic meaning of כבד is ‘heavy’ and not ‘hard’.

Besides the agreement of scholars, there is an intriguing fact about this verb. The verb כבד is found 113 times in the BHS, and only seven times is it translated as “harden”, and five of these times are found in Exodus. It is very interesting that a verb is found more than 100 times in the Bible and just in one specific story, its meaning is changed. This is without counting the root forms of the verb, which occur more than 300 times. More than 100 occurrences in the Bible testify against the translation of כבד as “hard,” unless there is solid evidence in the context of the Exodus narrative that demands this meaning.

⁴⁷ *HALOT*, 455.

⁴⁸ Noel D. Osborn, Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 235.

⁴⁹ Francis D. Nichol, ed., 516.

In conclusion, according to the number of scholars that agree with the meaning of כבד as “heavy”, and the 106 occurrences that testify against the common translation, it is reasonable to state that the meaning of כבד in Exod 10:1 is “heavy” and not “hard”.

How should כבד be translated in Exod 10:1? The verb כבד shares the same rules with the verbs חזק and קשה; all three verbs are intransitive and stative. This means that the verb will take an auxiliary verb and it itself will turn to an adverb. Thus, the verb should be translated into English as “I have been heavy”, “I have acted heavy” or “I have dealt heavy”, etc.

There is an important point in this translation that must be addressed. Regarding the first two verbs that were studied, חזק and קשה, the first was in the imperfect form, the second was in the perfect form but turned to imperfect form by the *vav* conversive, and now the third verb is in the perfect form and remains in the perfect form. What does this mean with regard to the proposed translation? Two primary implications may be drawn:

1. Exod 10:1 is pointing to a heavy action that the LORD performed, but that kind of action did not finish there; rather, the state of heaviness will continue actively.

Compare Exod 9:24-25:

There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very *heavy* [כִּבֵּד] hail, *such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation*. The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field.

As it can be observed, the state of heaviness that is mentioned in Exod 10:1 is pointing to the plague of hail. The LORD was very heavy against the land of Egypt, but that mood, according to Exod 10:1, will flow forward. It will be found that from now on the LORD will show a new mode against Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The next plagues

will smite Egypt, as the text testifies: “such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation” (Exod 9:24). “...such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again” (Exod 10:14). “...that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt” (Exod 10:21). “There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again” (Exod 11:6). All these last plagues were ruled by the verb כָּבַד, as the LORD turned from being severe to being heavy or overwhelming in power.

2. The proposed translation, according to the meaning of the verb and its semantic, carries the idea of an action that occurred in the past, yet is active in the present. In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek verb used as parallel to the Hebrew verb is ἐσκήρυνα, which is parsed as an aorist, active, indicative; this supports the conclusion that the translation into English should carry the idea of an action that started in the past, remained active in the present, and can be projected to the future.

In conclusion, this translation captures many of the features of the form of the verb plus creates a coherent line in the story. This translation recognizes the verb as intransitive, and thus the auxiliary verb was inserted as an adverb and carries the meaning of Qal, but its occurrence throughout in the perfect portrays an action that began in the past and is active in the present.

[אָת־לְבֹן]: “*against his heart.*” For an explanation of the particle אָת, see the explanation of Exod 4:21. This particle needs to be translated as an introduction to a prepositional phrase.

[לְמַעַן]: “*in order to.*” This preposition can be translated in many ways, but the basic intention is of ‘purpose’. I have opted to use “*in order to*” just to do justice to the verb that follows it and the interpretation I will propose. *HALOT* points out that when this preposition is set before an infinitive, it is translated as ‘in order to’. He wrote, “with inf *in order to...*”⁵⁰ Thus, the translations should run as: “*I have been heavy against his heart and the hearts of his servants, in order to*”. Now, there is a question remaining, which is “In order to what? What is the purpose? It has been noted above that the LORD had been heavy or acted heavy against Pharaoh’s heart, but what was the purpose? In order to show/display/demonstrate/perform His signs? It is suggested that the next verb will shed light to better understand this section.

[שִׁית]: “*to set.*” שִׁית: Qal, infinitive, construct; to set, to put. This verb is a key word to understand the insertion of לְמַעַן. First, we must determine the meaning of שִׁית.

The majority of Bible versions translate this verb as follow:

“*that I may show* these signs of Mine before him” (Exod 10:1, NKJV)

“*in order to display* these signs of mine before him” (Exod 10:1, NET Bible)

“*so that I may perform* these signs of mine among them” (Exod 10:1, NIV)

“*so that I can demonstrate* these signs of mine among them” (Exod 10:1, CJB)

“*in order to put* these signs of mine in his midst” (Exod 10:1, LEB)

All these translations could be accepted in some way. However, there is a problem with accepting the translations that used the words “show”, “display”, “perform”, and “demonstrate”. The *BHS* has 85 occurrences of the verb שִׁית, but this verb is never translated as “show”, “display”, “perform” or “demonstrate”. There is not even

⁵⁰ *HALOT*, 614.

one instance where this verb has any of these connotations. This verb always has the connotation of “putting”, “setting”, “placing”, etc. There is not any case where this verb is translated as was mentioned above. Some scholars give the translation of this verb as: “put, set”⁵¹; “(qal) place, put, set, i.e., lay an object in a space (Gen 48:14; 1Sam 2:8)”⁵²; “שׂית shith (1011a); a prim. root; to put, set.”⁵³. There is no doubt that this verb must be translated in a different way than how it has usually been translated. As I have proposed, the translation for this verb should be “set” or “put” with the nuance of setting, consistent with the meaning in the rest of the Old Testament.

After determining the meaning of the verb, we must reconcile the verb’s translation with the text. According to my proposal, the text should run this way: “And the LORD said to Moses: go to Pharaoh, *for I have been heavy against his heart and the hearts of his servants, in order to set...*” Now, the question is, “Set what?” The text points out that the LORD acted heavy against Pharaoh’s heart in order to set אֶת־תְּי אֱלֹהָ in his inward part [בְּקִרְבּוֹ].

Here אֶת־תְּי אֱלֹהָ, in the emotional dimension, does not refer only to miracles or even the plagues as a chastisement against the Egyptians. In this instance, it refers also to a memorial writing⁵⁴ in the בְּקִרְבּוֹ. It can be noticed that the word “wonders” does not

⁵¹ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 1011.

⁵² James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁵³ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

⁵⁴ I refer to “written” in the sense that each time the Lord sent a plague He was writing a story in the heart of people. I am pulling up this very truth no dismissing the idea that these signs refer directly to the plagues. The reason to do this is to find the ‘purpose’ of God’s actions.

appear here, but signs [אֹתוֹתֵי] is the only word that appears. When a אֹת (sign) proceeds to שִׁית or its equivalent in meaning שִׁים, the meaning of it is ‘mark’ or ‘sign’ as a remembrance of something. For example, when Cain received a אֹת (sign or mark) it was a remembrance of what happened in the past. “Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD put (וַיִּשֶׂם) a mark (אֹת) on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him” (Gen 4:15, ESV). Thus, [שָׂתָה אֹתוֹתַי אֵלֶיךָ] suggests that the LORD acted heavy against Pharaoh’s heart and his servants’ hearts with the purpose (לְמַעַן) of setting (writing) a sign (multiple marks or signs according to the text).

Where are these marks or signs set? The text states that they were set in his בְּקִרְבוֹ. The meaning of this preposition is illuminated by comparing the use of this preposition in these texts: “So Sarah laughed to herself (בְּקִרְבָּהּ), saying, ‘After I am worn out, and my LORD is old, shall I have pleasure?’” (Gen 18:12, ESV). “Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts (קִרְבּוֹ)” (Exod 12:9, ESV). “...They bless with their mouths, but inwardly (וּבְקִרְבָּנָם) they curse” (Ps 62:4 ESV). In this context, the preposition in question suggests that its primary meaning is related to the inner part of something.

What about the sense of בְּקִרְבוֹ in relation to the heart? The following passages show a deep relation between “his heart” (לִבּוֹ) and “his inward part” (בְּקִרְבוֹ) as “the seat of emotions or abilities.”⁵⁵

Note the following verses: “In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him (לִבּוֹ בְּקִרְבּוֹ), and he became as

⁵⁵ HALOT, 1135.

a stone” (1 Sam 25:37 ESV). “Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me (לִבִּי בְקִרְבִּי); all my bones shake...” (Jer 23:9, ESV). “My heart is in anguish within me (בְּקִרְבִּי); the terrors of death have fallen upon me.” (Ps 55:4, ESV). “For I am poor and needy, and my heart is stricken within me (וְלִבִּי חָלַל בְּקִרְבִּי)” (Ps 109:22 ESV). Evidently the relation between לבו and בקרבו draws one to realize that the LORD acted heavy against Pharaoh’s heart and his servants’ hearts in order to set (write) all His signs in his inward part (heart).

Some texts may be included that complement this idea in the context of the last plagues:

“For this time, I will send all my plagues on you yourself (אֶל־לְבָבְךָ), and on your servants and your people, *so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth*” (Exod 9:14 ESV).

“But for this purpose, I have raised you up, to show you my power, *so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.*” (Exod 9:16, ESV).

...and that you may (וּלְמַעַן) tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD (Exod 10:2).

These three texts summarize the purpose of why the LORD acted heavy against Pharaoh’s heart and what the LORD was writing, marking, or sealing in every person’s heart: (1) that people may know there is none like the LORD in all the earth, pointing out that through His signs and wonders He punished those who were known as gods; (2) that His name may be proclaimed in all the earth; by His strong hand against the Egyptians’ gods, His name would be proclaimed above all things on earth; (3) that others may tell in

the hearing of their sons and grandsons (a) how harshly God dealt with the Egyptians, (b) what signs He did among them, and (c) that He is the I AM WHO I AM.

In addition, it must be remarked that the LORD's purpose was revealed explicitly in the seventh plague. With this plague, there is a dramatic change in the story. The LORD's mode was propped up by the 'heaviness of Pharaoh's heart', and He entered into an extreme mode against Pharaoh and the Egyptians. This is the time when the LORD would prove that there is no one like Him.

The main points from the foregoing biblical passages may be summarized as follows.

1. Exodus 4:21-23:

YHWH said to Moses, 'when you return to Egypt, see that you perform all the wonders, which I have set in your power, before Pharaoh, so *I will be very strong against* his heart, *because he will send not the people out*. Thus, you shall say to Pharaoh, "thus says the LORD: Israel is My son, My firstborn. Therefore, I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. *But* if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn

This text is a prophecy and it is framing YHWH's actions from the first commandment to Pharaoh of letting the people go until the death of the firstborn of the king of Egypt. Also, YHWH foretold that He would be very strong *against* Pharaoh's heart.

2. Exodus 6:1: "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land," This is the same prophecy as found in Exodus 3:19-20. This prophecy announced that YHWH would use a strong hand *against* Pharaoh. The strong hand of YHWH will be displayed by a series of ten plagues, and the direct object of the wrath of YHWH would be Pharaoh. This text reiterates the idea that the

LORD would act strongly against Pharaoh's heart.

3. Exodus 7:3: "I will *act severely against* Pharaoh's heart; *I will multiply* My signs and My wonders against the land of Egypt..." This passage indicates that God would act with severity against Pharaoh's heart.
4. Exodus 10:1: "And the LORD said to Moses: go to Pharaoh, *for I have been heavy against* his heart and the hearts of his servants, *in order to set* these signs of mine in his *inward part*..." This passage indicates that God begins to be heavy (act overwhelmingly) against Pharaoh's heart, and expresses the purpose of the divine signs in proving that there was no one like Yahweh.

Secondary Key Passages

The secondary key passages are inserted here to propose a translation that may help the story flows coherently. Chapters 4:21, 7:3 and 10:1 were already treated above, thus the translation of these passages will be not discussed here again, but they are displayed here in order to see the story as a whole. For a better understanding of what these texts means and also to see the line that they follow, it is necessary to read the whole story from chapter 1-14 of Exodus and insert the translations here proposed.

The explanations of the passages are portrayed in three parts: (1) the text according to the NKJV, (2) the text in Hebrew and (3) the translation and a brief explanation.⁵⁶

4:21-23:

YHWH said to Moses, 'when you return to Egypt, see that you perform all the wonders, which I have set in your power, before Pharaoh, so *I will be very strong against* his heart, *because he will send not the people out*. Thus, you shall say to

⁵⁶ This section does not intend to be an exhaustive explanation of the texts, they are presented in a basic level just to keep the consistency in the translation of Exod 4:21, 7:3 and 10:1.

Pharaoh, thus says the LORD: Israel is My son, My firstborn. Therefore, I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. *But* if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.’

7:3: “I will *act severely against* Pharaoh’s heart; *I will multiply* My signs and My wonders against the land of Egypt...”

7:13: “And Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.”

וַיִּחַזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה:

Proposal: “And the heart of Pharaoh grew *strong*, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.”

In this case, the only change made was the substitution of the word: ‘hard’ for ‘strong’. As it was discussed before, the verb elsewhere appears in the Old Testament with allusion to ‘strong’ not to ‘hard’.

7:14 “So the LORD said to Moses: “Pharaoh’s heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go.”

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כִּבְד לֵב פַּרְעֹה מֵאֵן לְשַׁלַּח הָעָם:

Proposal: “And the LORD said to Moses: “the heart of Pharaoh *is heavy*; he refuses to let the people go.”

The word ‘hard’ was substituted by ‘heavy’, which is the main meaning of the verb. In this instance, the word [כבד] remained as an adjective.

7:22: “Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.”

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן חֲרֻטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּלַטְיָהֶם וַיִּחַזַּק לֵב־פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה:

Proposal: “Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and the heart of Pharaoh *grew strong*, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.”

The word ‘hard’ was substituted for ‘strong’, it is the same as in 7:13.

8:15: “But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.”⁵⁷

וַיֵּרָא פַרְעֹה כִּי הִיטְהֵל הַרְוּחָה וְהִכְבִּד אֶת־לִבּוֹ וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה:⁵⁸

Proposal: “But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, *he was heavy against his own heart*, and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.”

The context of this text suggests that Pharaoh betrayed his own heart. His heart was moved to repentance, and for an instance he showed some repentance, but he acted against himself allowing that pride comes again into his heart.

8:19: “Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This *is* the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.”

וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחֹרְטָמִים אֶל־פַּרְעֹה אֲצַבֵּעַ אֱלֹהִים הִוא וַיַּחֲזֹק לִב־פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה:⁵⁹

Proposal: “But, when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, *the heart of Pharaoh grew strong* and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.”⁶⁰

8:32: “But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.”

וַיִּכְבַּד פַּרְעֹה אֶת־לִבּוֹ גַם בַּפַּעַם הַזֹּאת וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם:⁶¹

⁵⁷ This is verse 11 in the *BHS*.

⁵⁸ 8:11 in the *BHS*.

⁵⁹ 8:15 in the *BHS*.

⁶⁰ Compare with 7:13 and 7:22.

⁶¹ 8:28 in the *BHS*.

Proposal: “But Pharaoh *was heavy against his heart* at this time also; neither would he let the people go.”

Pharaoh’s heart had yielded to the will of the LORD because of the plague of flies, a sign of repentance was shown in him. But after the flies departed, he subdued his heart, thus working against himself.

9:7: “Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.”

וַיִּשְׁלַח פְּרִיעָה וְהִזְיָה לֹא־יָמַת מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־אֶחָד וַיִּכְבֹּד לֵב פְּרִיעָה וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת־הַעֲמֹם:

Proposal: “Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But *the heart of Pharaoh became heavy*, and he did not let the people go.”

The word hard was substituted for heavy. See explanation of 10:1.

9:12 “But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.”

וַיַּחֲזֶק יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פְּרִיעָה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁ:

Proposal: “The LORD *was very strong against the heart of Pharaoh*, but he did not heed them, as the LORD had said to Moses.” This text falls in the same plain of 4:21, 7:3 and 10:1, ‘stative, intransitive’. This is the same structure of the passages mentioned above, the only difference is that this is in the third person, and that shift from first person to third person does not change the rule to translate it. It is just a matter of shifting time.

9:34: “And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants.”

וַיֵּרָא פְּרִיעָה כִּי־חָלַל הַמָּטֶר וְהַבָּרָד וְהַקָּלִית וַיִּסָּר לְחַטָּא וַיִּכְבֹּד לְבוֹ הוּא וְעַבְדָּיו:

Proposal: “And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and *his heart become heavy*, he and his servants.”

9:35: “So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had spoken by Moses.”

וַיִּחַזֶּק לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פְּאֻשֶׁר דָּבָר יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה:

Proposal: “And *the heart of Pharaoh became strong*, and did not let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had said by the hand of Moses.”

This text is just a reaction of Pharaoh toward the plague, his heart ‘became strong’.

10:1— “And the LORD said to Moses: go to Pharaoh, for I have been heavy against his heart and the hearts of his servants, in order to set these signs of mine in his inward part...”⁶²

10:20: “But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.”

וַיַּחֲזֶק יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Proposal: “The LORD *was very strong against the heart* of Pharaoh, and he not let the children of Israel go.”

This verse is an informative verse. It is indicating that the LORD did something, but the divine action failed to reach Pharaoh’s understanding. (Every time this text appears after a plague, it is informing the result of the plague which was sent to Pharaoh).

10:27: “But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go.”

וַיַּחֲזֶק יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא אָבָה לְשַׁלְּחָם:

⁶² This text was explained already.

Proposal: “The LORD *was very strong against the heart of Pharaoh*, but he was not willing to let them go.” Compare with 10:20.

11:10: “So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

וּמִלְשָׁה וְאֶהְרֹן עָשׂוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּפְתִּים הָאֵלֶּה לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וַיַּחַזֵּק יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא־שָׁלַח אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
מֵאֶרֶץ:

Proposal: “And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and *the LORD was very strong against the heart of Pharaoh*, but he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

This passage is a summary of everything the LORD did to convince Pharaoh to let the people go. The LORD acted very strong against Pharaoh showing wonders and signs, but Pharaoh did not release the people. In essence, the LORD is saying at this point, “I did everything to convince him, but now he has not given me another choice but to...”.

14:4: “Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.”

וַיַּחַזְקֵנִי אֶת־לֵב־פַּרְעֹה וַיַּרְדֵּף אַחֲרַיָּהֶם וְאֶכְבְּדָה בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל־חֵיָלוֹ וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן:

Proposal: “*I will be very strong against the heart of Pharaoh*, because he will pursue them, and I will be glorified over Pharaoh and over all his army, thus the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD. And they did so.”

This is a foretelling, the LORD is saying He will deal very strong against Pharaoh once again, but now He will be glorified. This second prophecy is different in some way

from the first prophecy (4:21-23). The prophecy of 4:21-23 was framed from the first signs and wonders to the death of the firstborn. That prophecy was fulfilled when the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed. In chapter 11:10 appears the limited point for the first prophecy: the LORD was very strong against Pharaoh's heart, but Pharaoh refused to let the people go. Since he did not pay attention to the fulfillment of this second prophecy, he had to experience the fulfillment of the first, in the death of the Egyptians' firstborn. Now, a new chapter is opened, in which the LORD will glorify Himself through Pharaoh.

14:8: "And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness."

וַיִּתְנַקֵּם יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְדֵּף אַחֲרָי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יָצְאוּ בְּיָד רָמָה:

Proposal: "The LORD *had been very strong against the heart of Pharaoh* king of Egypt, now he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness." (The text is informative, it informs what the LORD did before, and now it has brought some reactions).

As a result of the manifestation of the strong hand of the LORD against Pharaoh, the Egyptians and their children and their property, Pharaoh's heart got full of anger and pursued the children of Israel to revenge what he lost.

14:17: "And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So, I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen."

וְאֲנִי הִנְנִי מְחַזְקִים אֶת־לֵב מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאֶכְבְּדָה בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל־חֵיָלוֹ בְּרֶכְבוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו:

Proposal: “Behold, *I have been very strong against* the Egyptians’ heart, *but* they shall follow after them. *Therefore*, I will be glorified over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

Now the second prophecy will find its fulfillment after this verse. The LORD will repay the action of Pharaoh of pursuing the children of Israel.

14:18: “Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”⁶³

וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּהַכֹּתִי בְּפָרְעֹה בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְחֵיָוָיו:

⁶³ This text does not need to be changed, thus it has been left as it appears in the NKJV.

Chapter 4

INTENSITY STRUCTURE

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the intensity structure of the Exodus narrative. Based on the exegetical study of the verbs חזק, קשה, and כבד, it will be shown that these three verbs are arranged in a scale of intensity or increasing power from God against Pharaoh's obstinacy and his people.

The verbs חזק, קשה, and כבד often have been regarded as synonyms to describe a single state:

All three terms essentially function synonymously in Exodus, and although all three are typically rendered in most English translations as one variation or another on 'harden the heart,' that is, following the KJV literalistic wording, their meaning in normal modern English is simply "be/make stubborn."¹

"That the different words are used more or less interchangeably becomes evident from a study of the context."² It is possible that these words may be used somewhat synonymously. However, is it the case in this story?

As it was noticed above, these verbs have been used as synonyms, specifically in this story, but what if they are arranged in a special way to show something more than an artistic literary style? What if they are organized in a progressive way as it was slightly

¹ Stuart, *Exodus*, 147.

² Nichol, *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:516.

noticed? Scholars have recognized this possibility: “The three terms expressive of hardening, קָזַק, to make firm (ver. 21), קָשָׁה, to make hard (7:3), and כָּבֵד, to make heavy or blunt (10:1), denote a gradual progress.”³ Even though this commentary did not provide an explanation of this idea, it was noticed that these verbs *denote a gradual progression*.

Similarly, Martin Summerbell expressed his intrigue about the distribution of these verbs. He wrote, “The distribution of these three roots in the nineteen passages may be supposed to *possess significance*.”⁴ Is it possible that this story is arranged in a progressive way based on these three verbs, just as the book as a whole is structured in a gradual progress, as noted in our chapter on the literary structure?

Ellen White argues for such a gradual progression of intensity:

Every punishment which the king rejected would bring the next chastisement more close and severe, until the proud heart of the king would be humbled, and he should acknowledge the Maker of the heavens and the earth as the living and all-powerful God.⁵

“Every plague had come a little closer and more severe, and this was to be more dreadful than any before it.”⁶ “One more dreadful plague God brought upon Egypt, more severe than any before it.”⁷ Ellen G. White recognized a progression in the severity of the plagues of God’s punishment against Pharaoh. She saw that every time the king rejected the punishment it brought the next chastisement closer and more severe.

It will be argued below that the understanding of this structure will help to resolve

³ Lange, Schaff, and Mead, *Exodus*, 13.

⁴ Summerbell, “Hardening Pharaoh’s Heart,” 8-9. Emphasis mine.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (vol. 3; Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1858), 204.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 245.

the tension regarding who hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Many scholars have found that the story of the deliverance of the Israelites is organized in sets of 3-3-3-1 plagues.⁸ Among these scholars is Randall Bailey, who divided the plagues in three triads⁹:

1st Triad: Blood, Frogs, Gnats.

2nd Triad: Flies, Livestock, Boils.

3rd Triad: Hail, Locust, Darkness.

Final Plague: Death of Firstborns.

As it can be noticed Bailey divided the plagues by triad—first, second and third—plus the final plague. However, the story never uses terms such as “sets” or “triad” to structure or divide the story or plagues. There is something that has been overlooked for a long time—the story itself distributes the plagues among the three verbs *הזק*, *קשה*, and *כבד*, and these three verbs divide the story into three sets of trials. It is very intriguing that in the whole story of the plagues, with the exception of the recapitulation after the tenth plague, there are only three texts that are in the *first person*. Not only that, but also these three instances are distributed among the three main verbs of the story.

Ex. 4:21 [אֶתְּוֹקֶה] First Person (The LORD as subject)

Ex. 7:3 [אֶקְשֶׁה] First Person (The LORD as subject)

Ex. 10:1 [הִכְבַּדְתִּי] First Person (The LORD as subject)

In addition, the structure formed by these three verbs suggests a deep relation

⁸ See, e.g., Bailey, *Exodus*, 114-116; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 93; and Stuart, *Exodus*, 188-189.

⁹ For a full explanation of Bailey's structural division of the plagues, see: Bailey, *Exodus*, 114-116. Cf. Jonathan Grossman, "The Structural Paradigm of the Ten Plagues Narrative and the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart," *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 4 (2014): 590.

to the story of the liberation of Israel from Egypt and the Ten Commandments.

*First, after the verb **הזק** is used, a number of events transpired between Exod 4:21 and*

Exod 6:30:

- (1) Moses started a journey with his family and he was tested
- (2) Moses' rod became a serpent
- (3) Moses' hand became leprous
- (4) The people started to rest on the Sabbath¹⁰

(Note: this verb is the link verb between the LORD's prophecy and the increasing power.

The LORD's foretelling, "I will be very strong" will take strength or find its fulfillment in the midst of the successive verbs).

*Second, after the occurrence of the verb **קשה**, six plagues transpire:*

The First Plague: Waters Become Blood

The Second Plague: Frogs

The Third Plague: Lice

The Fourth Plague: Flies

The Fifth Plague: Livestock Diseased

The Sixth Plague: Boils

*Third, after the verb **כבד** come the last four plagues:*

The Seventh Plague: Hail

The Eighth Plague: Locusts

The Ninth Plague: Darkness

The tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn

¹⁰ The verb 'rest' [הִשְׁבִּיתָם] suggests that they started to rest on Sabbath. See Mathilde Frey, "Sabbath in Egypt? An Examination of Exodus 5," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 39/3 (2015): 249-263.

It is evident that there is a relation of structure; the first verb (חזק) is followed by a sequence of events in the life of Moses very similar to the whole story of the election of Israel as a holy nation: a people that went on a journey and are tested in the desert, and saw miracles. The parallel is striking.

The second verb (קשה) is followed by exactly six plagues, plagues that could be performed by humans, parallel to the six commandments related to men. The third verb is followed by four plagues, which brought unprecedented consequences. Perhaps this is not highly relevant for this investigation, but the structural parallels are striking nonetheless. The division of the story in these three sections, introduced by these three verbs, underscore the numbers four and six, which are the numbers for the division of the Ten Commandments. Also, it is impressive that these numbers are preceded by a section of history that is very similar in structure to Exod 1:1 - 19:25.

Regarding the relationship of the three introductory verbs, the account is structured in three stages that reveal the increasing intensity of God's actions against Pharaoh's mind: (1) The LORD's pacific message to Pharaoh (Exod 5-6); (2) The LORD's severe treatment against Pharaoh (Exod 7:1-9:13); and (3) the heavy treatment of the LORD against Pharaoh (Exod 9:14-12:30). In addition to these three stages, there is one more—the fourth stage; the blasting stage. In this stage, YHWH destroys His enemies in the Red Sea (Exod 14). In what follows we will examine each stage in turn.

Stage I: YHWH's Specific Message to Pharaoh (Exod 5-6)

לִי וְנִתְגַּבֵּר אֶת-עַמִּי שְׁלַח יְשַׁרְאֵל אֶל־הָיְהוָה כֹּה-אָמַר אֵל-פְּרֹעֹה וַיֹּאמְרוּ וְאֵהָרִן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ בָּאוּ וְאָמַר
בַּמִּדְבָּר:

“Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness’” (Exod 5:1, NKJV).

It is important to recognize that the LORD sent Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh and He did not perform any sign before him at this point. God did not work any miracle to harden Pharaoh’s heart. There was not any supernatural power to harden Pharaoh or provoke his refusal. The LORD, as God, demanded the liberation of His people, but He did not hurt Pharaoh or challenge him. The LORD requested what seemed just; He wanted His people back.

Pharaoh had several negative reactions to the LORD’s request. First, he did not recognize YHWH as God: “And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go’” (Exod 5:2, NKJV). The first man who experienced God acting in His character of YHWH was Moses: LORD’s name was Moses; no one had known it before. “And God spoke to Moses and said to him: ‘I am the YHWH. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name [in the character of] YHWH I was not known to them’” (Exod 6:2-3, NKJV).¹¹ Now Moses is revealing His name (character) to Pharaoh, and he is telling him that He is YHWH, the God of Israel.

The second negative reaction of Pharaoh was that he refused to hear the voice of the LORD and let the people go—“nor will I let Israel go” (v. 2). Pharaoh showed obstinacy against the LORD’s demand. It is indisputable that Pharaoh’s heart was already hardened before God performed any action in favor of the Israelites.

¹¹ The preposition *beth* here should be taken as a *beth essentiae* (also called *beth* of identity)—“in the character of.” See Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 198.

After the negative reaction of Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron were moved to plea to Pharaoh for the freedom of the Israelites. “So they said, ‘The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword’” (Exod 5:3, NKJV). In verse 1, it is stated that the YHWH commanded Pharaoh to release His people, but now in verse 3, YHWH is making a supplication to him through Moses and Aaron, “אֲנִי גֹלְלָהּ” (Exod 5:3, NKJV). The LORD is not provoking Pharaoh’s anger; instead, He is appearing humbly before Pharaoh. YHWH gave a spirit of meekness to Moses and Aaron to try to persuade Pharaoh to release His people, but he did not hear.

The third negative reaction of Pharaoh was to make the lives of the Israelites more bitter than before. He did not hear the supplication of Moses and Aaron, and he burned in anger. Then he commanded the taskmasters to give no more straw to the Israelites, yet required them to produce the same quantity of bricks they usually did. The text says that Pharaoh “did evil” to the people (see v. 23). Then Moses returned to the LORD.

This is the first stage of the intensity structure of the story of Pharaoh’s hardening. As it is noted above, the LORD did not perform any miracle to force Pharaoh’s will, but He only requested the liberation of His people. He sent an authoritative, but specific, message to Pharaoh, no more and no less. However, Pharaoh’s reactions were not good, but full of arrogance and hardening. He denied the authority of YHWH as God, refused to let the people go, and mistreated the people of Israel and made their lives more miserable than before.

These negative reactions from Pharaoh would push the LORD to change strategies for delivering His people from the power of Pharaoh.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עַתָּה תֵּרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֲעֲשֶׂה לְפָרְעֹה כִּי בְּיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחֵם וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֵׁם מֵאֶרֶץ־

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land’” (Exod 6:1, NKJV).

The LORD faced Pharaoh with a strong hand. This might be compared with the first encounter the LORD had with Pharaoh. The LORD presented Himself as God of the Israelites, then He requested the liberation of His people; He beseeched Pharaoh. However, now He is announcing that He will reveal Himself in another way to Pharaoh. He will reveal His strong hand. The attitude of Pharaoh led the LORD to change His course of action.

Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments’ (Exod 6:6, NKJV).

These declarations evidently show that God’s anger was burning. Notice the expressions He used: לֵכֵן אֶמַר לְבָנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה (Exod 6:6, *BHS*). First, He used the expression ‘לֵכֵן’, “surely”, denoting the assurance of what He will declare. Next, He used an imperative, אֶמַר, “tell”, to show the intensity of what He will announce to the Israelites. Then the Israelites became the objects of His favor, לְבָנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל. Then comes the first usage of the announcement: אֲנִי יְהוָה “I AM YHWH.” This declaration is an imperative announcement of the sovereignty of YHWH over everything, including every power and authority. This proclamation contrasts Pharaoh’s attitude to God’s name. Compare with Pharaoh’s denial in Exod 5:2.

The next expression He uses is “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage” (Exod 6:6). The LORD is reversing the

reactions of Pharaoh. Pharaoh refused to let the people go out, so now the LORD says that He will bring out His people. Pharaoh set a burden over the Israelites; the LORD says that He will deliver His people from this burden. The contrast is evident; the LORD will turn Pharaoh's 'mind,' 'heart,' thoughts.

How will the LORD change Pharaoh's thoughts? "I will redeem you with outstretched arm and great judgments" (Exod 6:6). These are the two tools the LORD will use to deliver His people—outstretched arm and great judgments. In Exod 14:27, these words find their fulfillment: "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So, the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea." This is the last time the LORD stretched His hand with great judgment over the Egyptians for the liberation of the Israelites.

Something that should be highlighted in this stage is that YHWH's first plan was to deliver His people without using His almighty power, but Pharaoh resisted the LORD's appeal. What will happen next?

Stage II: YHWH's Severe Treatment against Pharaoh (Exod 7:1-9:13)

This is the second stage of increased intensity in the story. It happened when Moses and Aaron returned to YHWH and YHWH sent them back once again to Pharaoh. However, Moses was discouraged for what had happened before. "But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?" (Exod 6:30, NKJV). YHWH, in chapter 7, made some assurances to Moses and Aaron before they went back to Pharaoh. He said:

So the LORD said to Moses: ‘See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them’ (Exod 7:1-5, NKJV).

These words encouraged Moses and Aaron, so they were ready to face Pharaoh again. However, it is important that some parts of this translation must be adjusted, because it fails to capture the trend of the story and its structure. For example, verses 3–5 need some adjustments, especially verse 3. As argued above, they might be read as follows:

I will *act severely against* Pharaoh’s *mind*; I will multiply My signs and My wonders against the land of Egypt. *But* Pharaoh will not listen you, *and* I will stretch out My hand against Egypt, and I will cause that My armies, the people of the children of Israel, comes out from the land of Egypt with great judgment. Therefore, the Egyptians shall know that I AM YHWH, that I stretch out My hand over Egypt, and I bring out the children of Israel from their midst.

Translating these verses in this way, it is obvious that YHWH does not harden Pharaoh’s heart. YHWH is announcing how severe He will be against Pharaoh. This is the second stage of intensity, which is very different from the first stage in chapters 5 and 6. In the first stage, YHWH only made some reclamations, but now He will act against Pharaoh’s obstinacy.

The seven first signs YHWH performed before Pharaoh form the second intensity stage. These signs will have a pattern that reveals the increasing power of YHWH against Pharaoh.

First Sign: Aaron's Rod Becomes a Serpent (7:8-14)

This involved the following steps:

1. God's miracle, v. 10
2. Magicians did the same, v. 11
3. God's serpent swallowed magicians' rods, v. 12
4. Pharaoh's heart grew strong, v. 13 (Qal)
5. Pharaoh did not obey, v. 14

This first sign/miracle gives entrance to the second stage of intensity. As noted above, the action of YHWH here is different from His first action in chapters 5 and 6. There is an increase of power. It is not much, but shows an increment in YHWH's actions. Also, this scene exposes that Pharaoh did not respond to YHWH's action in a positive way. The text says that "his heart grew hard", and not only that but he did not obey YHWH's command. It is evident the YHWH did not harden Pharaoh's heart. On the contrary, Pharaoh himself strengthened his heart and did not obey the command. This action from Pharaoh led YHWH to perform another sign.

First Plague: Waters Become Blood (7:14-25)

This involved the following steps:

1. Pharaoh's heart is heavy, 14
2. God's command for Pharaoh, v. 16
3. God's severity, v. 17, 20 (Stretch out and strike)
4. Stretch out your hand, v. 19
5. Magicians did the same, v. 22
6. Pharaoh's heart grew strong (Qal), v. 22

7. YHWH tried to change Pharaoh's attitude, v. 23

YHWH saw that Pharaoh's heart become strong after the first sign. Then He told Moses that Pharaoh's heart was heavy, and he did not let the people go, so YHWH determined to show another sign—turning the water into blood. At this instance, two new ideas are employed to describe the action of YHWH—"strike" and "stretch out the hand" (vv. 17, 19). This is the fulfillment of what YHWH announced in 7:3-5. The LORD is beginning to deliver His people with power.

When Moses and Aaron executed the miracle, the magicians did the same thing. Then, as a result, Pharaoh's heart became strong. This is the second time Pharaoh became obstinate, and he refused to let the people go.

Here in this sign, it might be pointed out that YHWH was trying to change the obstinate heart of Pharaoh (v. 23)—"Neither was his heart moved by this." However, Pharaoh stayed obstinate. It means that YHWH was interested in saving Pharaoh. The second sign is the first plague.

Second Plague: Frogs (8:1-15)

This involved the following actions:

1. God's command for Pharaoh, v. 1
2. Warning to Pharaoh, v. 2
3. God's severity, vv. 2, 5 (Stretch out and smite)
4. God's miracle, vv. 5, 6
5. Magicians did the same, v. 7
6. Pharaoh's first sign of repentance, v. 8
7. God takes away the plague, v. 12

8. Pharaoh was heavy against his heart, v. 15

Pharaoh refused to let the people go after the first plague, so YHWH again commanded Pharaoh to set His people free. YHWH warned Pharaoh that He would stretch out His hand and smite. Moses and Aaron performed the sign, but the magicians did the same thing. However, the plague was so bad that Pharaoh showed his first sign of repentance, but when YHWH took away the plague, he hardened his heart. Pharaoh deceived YHWH, and it brought a worse plague to the Egyptians—the third plague.

Third Plague: Lice (8:16-19; Increasing Power)

The following actions are involved:

1. There is not a warning or command for Pharaoh, v. 16
2. God's miracle, v. 17
3. Magicians could not do the same, v. 18
4. Pharaoh's heart grew strong, v. 19
5. YHWH judged Pharaoh and increased His power against him.

The introduction of this plague was different from the previous ones. This is a direct judgment against Pharaoh for what he had done during the second plague—deceiving YHWH. Not only that, but YHWH's anger began to burn. This idea is noted in that the magicians tried to do the same thing, but they could not. YHWH was increasing His power in this second stage.

However, what was the attitude of Pharaoh before this increase of power? He made his heart strong. Again, the text presents that the author of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was Pharaoh himself, and not YHWH. YHWH was showing His power so that Pharaoh would let His people go, but he refused to obey YHWH's command time

after time.

Fourth Plague: Flies (8:20-32)

The following elements appear in this plague:

1. God's command for Pharaoh, v. 20
2. God's warning, vv. 21-23
3. God's miracle, v. 24
4. Pharaoh's second sign of repentance, v. 25
5. God took away the plague, v. 31
6. Pharaoh was heavy against his heart, v. 32

YHWH's severity against Pharaoh continued in the fourth plague. The plague was so severe that Pharaoh showed his second sign of repentance. However, as before, when YHWH retracted the plague, he hardened his heart and deceived YHWH again. Pharaoh did not learn from the first time he deceived YHWH, so now he faced YHWH's increasing power in the fifth plague.

Fifth Plague: Livestock Diseased (9:1-7; Increasing Power)

This narrative involves the following steps:

1. God's command for Pharaoh, v. 1
2. God's warning, vv. 2-4 (heavy plague)
3. God's miracle, v.6
4. Pharaoh's heart became heavy, v. 7
5. Pharaoh refused to let go the people, v. 7

This is a heavy plague; the power of YHWH intensifies. A "very severe pestilence" fell

on the livestock. When Pharaoh saw that only their livestock were affected by the plague, his heart became as heavy as the plague was, and he refused to let the people go. When Pharaoh made his heart strong, YHWH sent one more plague that would mark the transition between the second and third stages of intensity.

Sixth Plague: Boils (9:8-12)

The narrative unfolds in the following steps:

1. There is not command for Pharaoh, vv. 8-9
2. God's miracle, v. 10
3. Magicians and Egyptians are affected by the plague, v. 11
4. Transition of stage, v. 12: "The LORD was strong against Pharaoh's heart, but he did not heed them, as the LORD has spoken to Moses."

YHWH did not send any warning this time to Pharaoh of what He would do. Moses was commanded to take ashes and scatter them toward heaven, and they would become fine dust, which would cause boils that would break out in sores on humans and beasts. These sores were so severe that the magicians could not stand before Moses, for even they were affected by this plague. However, this marvelous sign would not change Pharaoh's attitude. "The LORD *was strong against* Pharaoh's heart, but he did not heed them, as the LORD has been spoken to Moses" (Exod 9:12).

Stage III: YHWH's Heavy Treatment against Pharaoh (Exod 9:13-12:30)

The Seventh Plague: Hail (9:13-35)

The narrative of this plague involves the following steps:

1. God's command for Pharaoh, v. 13
2. God's warning, vs. 14-19
3. God's warning for the people, vv. 20-21
4. God's miracle, vv. 22-26
5. Pharaoh recognized his sin and the sin of his people, v. 27
6. Pharaoh's third sign of repentance, vv. 27, 28
7. God tried to save Pharaoh, v. 30
8. God took away the plague, v. 33
9. Pharaoh sinned more than ever, and his heart became strong, like his servant did, vv. 34-35.

The seventh plague was the transition between stages two and three. This plague passed from "severe" to "heavy". "Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy [Heb. כבד] hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now" (v. 18, NKJV). This warning section revealed how hard YHWH would be with Pharaoh and his servants.

What were the results of this blasting plague? For first time Pharaoh recognized that he had sinned against YHWH, that he and his people were wicked, and that YHWH is righteous. "I have sinned this time. YHWH is righteous, and I and my people are wicked," (v. 27). This scene suggests that this plague was not equal in any way to the previous ones.

After this unforgettable event, YHWH took away the plague, but Pharaoh strengthened his heart and sinned more than ever before (v. 34-35). However, this proud attitude of Pharaoh would increase YHWH's wrath.

The Eighth Plague: Locusts (10:1-20)

This plague may be outlined as follows:

1. Recalling the seventh plague the LORD said, “For I shall be heavy against his heart and the hearts of his servants”, v. 1b.
2. God’s command for Pharaoh, v. 3
3. God’s warning, vv. 4-6
4. Pharaoh’s servants are afraid, v. 6
5. Pharaoh’s fourth sign of repentance, v. 8
6. Pharaoh’s evilness, vv. 10-11
7. God’s miracle, vv. 12-15
8. Pharaoh’s fifth sign of repentance, vv. 16-17 (this was very different from the other times)
9. God took away the plague, v. 19
10. Announcement: “YHWH was very strong against Pharaoh’s heart, but he did not send the children of Israel out”, v. 20

Many scholars have translated Exod 10:1a as: “...Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants...” However, as argued above, it might be translated as: “...Go to Pharaoh; and I have acted heavily against his heart and the hearts of his servants.”

The severity of the eighth plague is underscored by the wording of the passage:

And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. They were very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt (vv. 14-15, NKJV).

This plague was so severe that Pharaoh begged for forgiveness (v. 17). This is ironic, because in stage one, Moses and Aaron begged Pharaoh to release the Israelites, but he refused. Now he is begging for forgiveness. The plague was too heavy to support it.

In the NKJV, it reads: “But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go” (v. 20). However, this translation breaks the meaning of the story. Another translation should read: “YHWH was very strong against Pharaoh’s heart, but he did not send the children of Israel out,” (v. 20). This might be a better translation, for this speaks about what YHWH had done previously, and the reaction of Pharaoh to YHWH’s plague. This was the pattern for the next plague also.

The Ninth Plague: Darkness (10:21-29)

This plague may be outlined as follows:

1. No warning for Pharaoh, v. 21
2. Plague severity, v. 21 (darkness which may be felt)
3. God’s miracle, v. 22
4. Pharaoh’s sixth sign of repentance, v. 24
5. Announcement: “YHWH was very strong against Pharaoh’s heart, but he was not willing to send them out”, v. 27
6. Pharaoh’s final refusal, v. 28

This is the penultimate plague, the last chance for Pharaoh to let the people go. In this plague, there was not any warning against Pharaoh. His refusal after the last plague made him worthy of a continuous judgment. At this time, YHWH covered the land of

Egypt with darkness, a darkness that may be felt by men (v. 21). This plague provoked the sixth sign of repentance of Pharaoh. However, he did not let the people go.

The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn (11:1-12:30)

The narrative may be outlined as follows:

1. Announcement of the last plague, 11:1
2. God's warning, vv. 4-8
3. Plague intensity, v. 6
4. God announced that Pharaoh would not heed, v. 9
5. God's miracle, 12:29-30
6. Pharaoh lets the people go, 12:31-33

The tenth plague was introduced by making the announcement of the death of the firstborns. This was the fulfillment of YHWH's prophecy (see Exod 4:21-23). This plague was more dreadful than the last two plagues of the third stage. "Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again" (11:6, NKJV). With this plague, the third stage of YHWH's wrath was fulfilled.

Ironically, YHWH announced to Moses that Pharaoh would not heed the warning. "But the LORD said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not heed you, so that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt'" (v. 9, NKJV). Pharaoh was very obstinate of heart.

Before YHWH performed the last plague of this stage, He pointed to what He had done before this plague, as well as the attitude of Pharaoh before His wonders. He said, "So Moses and Aaron have done all these wonders before Pharaoh, and YHWH was very strong against Pharaoh's heart, but he did not send out the children of Israel from his

land.” This text is a summary of what YHWH had done to Pharaoh from stages one to three and the reaction of Pharaoh before these.

After the tenth plague, Pharaoh desisted and let the people go (see Exod 12:31-33). The hand of YHWH was so strong that the Egyptian people rushed the Israelites out of the land (see v. 33). Here ended the wrath of YHWH against Pharaoh. The promise or prophecy of Exod 4:21-23 was fulfilled; YHWH acted strongly against Pharaoh’s heart until He delivered His people with the last plague, the death of the firstborn.

Stage IV: YHWH’s blasting Stage, Death in the Red Sea (Exod 14)

There is one more stage remaining that should be considered with the last three—the blasting stage. This stage is not included in the prophecy of Exod 4:21-23. This prophecy only extends through the death of the firstborns, no further. However, this stage was added because Pharaoh decided to pursue the Israelites and kill them in the desert. This action would provoke the wrath of YHWH at His highest point, killing the enemies.

There is one thing that should be remembered: Pharaoh had threatened Moses and Aaron. “Then he said to them, ‘The LORD had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go! Beware, for evil is ahead of you’” (Exod 10:10, NKJV). This passage provides a clue needed to translate some of the difficult texts that are in this last stage.

The following verses should be translated carefully, because they jump from one time to another.

- 1 וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
- 2 דַּבֵּר־אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁבוּ וַיִּחַנּוּ לִפְנֵי פִי הַחַיִּית וּבֵין מִגְדֹל וּבֵין הַיָּם לִפְנֵי בַעַל צְפֹן נִכְחוּ תַחְנוּ עֲלֵי־הַיָּם:
- 3 וְאָמַר פְּרַעֲהַ לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְבִכִים הֵם בְּאַרְצִי סָגַר עֲלֵיהֶם הַמַּדְבָּר:
- 4 וַחֲזַקְתִּי אֶת־לֵב־פְּרַעֲהַ וַרְדֵּף אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאֶפְבְּדָה בְּפְרַעֲהַ וּבְכָל־חֵילוֹ וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן־:

And it happened that YHWH spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel and return and encamp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea, before Baal Tsephon; you shall encamp in front of it by the Sea. For Pharaoh has said about the children of Israel, they are confused in the land, the wilderness has enclosed them. I was very strong against Pharaoh’s heart, and he has pursued after them, but I will be glorified on Pharaoh, and on all his army, then the Egyptians shall know that I AM YHWH.’ So they did (Verses 1-4).

- 5 וַיִּגְדַּל לְמִלְחָה מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעָם וַיִּהְיֶה לִבָּב פְּרֹעֶה וַעֲבָדוּ אֱלֹהֵי־מִצְרָיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִה־נָּזַאת עָשִׂינוּ כִּי־שָׁלַחְנוּ
אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַבְדָּנוּ:
- 6 וַיֹּאסֶר אֶת־רֶכְבוֹ וְאֶת־עַמּוֹ לָקַח עִמּוֹ:
- 7 וַיִּקַּח שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בָּחוּר וְכָל רֶכֶב מִצְרַיִם וְשָׁלֹשׁ עַל־בָּקָו:
- 8 וַיַּחְזֵק יְהוָה אֶת־לֵב פְּרֹעֶה מִלְחָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְדֹּף אַחֲרָיו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִצְאִים בְּיַד רָמָה:
- 9 וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁיגוּ אוֹתָם הַנְּגִים עַל־הַיָּם כָּל־סוּסֵי רֶכֶב פְּרֹעֶה וּפָרָשָׁיו וַחֲיָלוֹ עַל־פִּי הַחַיִּית
לִפְנֵי בַעַל זָפֹן:-

It was told to the king of Egypt that the people has run away, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was overturned toward the people. Then they said: “why we have done this, that we sent out the children of Israel from our service?” So he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. As YHWH was very strong against Pharaoh’s heart, king of Egypt, he pursued after the children of Israel, who came out with exalted hand. Also, the Egyptians were after them, and they reached those who were against the Sea, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army were by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Tsephon (Verses 5-9).

- 17 וַאֲנִי
הִנְנִי מִחוּזָק אֶת־לֵב מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאֶכְבְּדָהּ בַּפְּרֹעֶה וּבְכָל־חַיָּלוֹ בְּרֶכְבוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו:
- 18 וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּהַכְּבֹדִי בַּפְּרֹעֶה בְּרֶכְבוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו:-

And behold, I have been very strong against the Egyptians’ heart, but they will come after them. Therefore, I will be glorified on Pharaoh and all his army, against his chariot and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I AM YHWH, when I have been glorified over Pharaoh, his chariot, and his horsemen (Verses 17-18)

These passages might suggest that YHWH hardened the hearts of Pharaoh and his people, but in light of our discussion above, a different translation and interpretation is suggested. As was cited above in Exod 10:10, Pharaoh had bad intentions against the

Israelites once they left Egypt. Therefore, these texts should be translated in order to reveal YHWH's severity against Pharaoh and his people's obstinacy, rather than a supernatural heart hardening.

We now move to the end of this stage. Pharaoh and his people were very obstinate and strived to destroy the Israelites, but two miracles happened in the wilderness that would put an end to Pharaoh and his army—(1) The Angel of YHWH moved between the Israelites and the Egyptians and (2) YHWH split the Sea in half; the Israelites passed through, but the Egyptians died in it (see Exod 14:26-29).

So, the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus, Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so, the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses (Exod 14:30-31).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The focus of this investigation has been upon the relationship of the three main verbs in the story of Pharaoh's heart hardening—**הזיק**, **קשה**, and **כבד**. For a long time these verbs have created many misunderstandings regarding who hardened Pharaoh's heart. Many scholars have concluded that Pharaoh was responsible for his hardening; his own pride hardened his heart.

Others have claimed that it was the LORD who hardened Pharaoh's heart. Some within this interpretation point out that the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart because of Pharaoh's stubbornness. They consider that the hardeness was a divine judgment against Pharaoh. Others propose that the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart only by unconditional election.

In a more conciliatory way, there are other scholars who recognize that both the LORD and Pharaoh were the agents of the hardening. According to the first instances of hardening in the text, it is shown that Pharaoh started the hardening, then later on the LORD started to harden Pharaoh's heart.

None of these conclusions has been accepted as the consensus answer to the phenomenon of who hardened Pharaoh's heart. All three conclusions are supported by the mainstream Bible versions. Given the translation of key terms by modern Bible versions, it is difficult to choose among the conclusions presented by scholars.

In the midst of this ambiguity, this thesis tentatively offers a new proposal: “The Intensity Structure.” The book of Exodus gives many hints in order to show its intensity structure. For example, the relation between Genesis and Exodus shows a climactic style in both books. The book of Genesis starts with God and humanity living in perfect peace, but it ended with God’s people in Egypt and Joseph in a coffin. Meanwhile, the book of Exodus starts with God’s people in Egypt as slaves, but ends with God and His people together again in a tent (reconciliation). This pattern reveals that both books are climactic—one goes down and the other goes up. Besides this, the covenant formed with Israel shows a gradual relation between the LORD and the people. After certain sympathy between both parties, the LORD called the people to accept His covenant. Also, the books of Genesis and Exodus contain numerous occasions where the words down (for Genesis) and “up” (for Exodus) and “down” occur. Thus, it can be said that the book of Exodus is a climactic book. The book moves toward God redeeming humanity. There is an intensity/crescendo flowing throughout the whole book.

More fascinating than this is the placement of the three main verbs in the story of Pharaoh’s hardening. There are three main verbs and three main verses: *חזק*, *קשה*, and *כבד*; Exod 4:21, Exod 7:3, and Exod 10:1. Their positions are very intriguing: *חזק*, Exod 4:21, *קשה*, Exod 7:3 and *כבד*, Exod 10:1. If these verbs are translated according to their positions the results are: *חזק*—“strong,” *קשה*—“severe,” and *כבד*—“heavy or overwhelming.” The actions run from ‘strong’ to ‘severe’ and then overwhelming. Thus, there is evident a gradual ascension in the intensity of the first action. Also, the three verses create a fascinating structure for the plague distribution: Exod 4:21—First

encounters and miracles; Exod 7:3—the first six plagues; and 10:1 (alluding to the seventh plague in ch. 9 and what is to follow)—the last four plagues.

Finally, the three verbs in the three verses are the only ones in the first person (with the exceptions of the recapitulations after the plagues), and that person is always the LORD. The three verbs are stative and intransitive verbs, meaning that these verses should be translated as follows: Exod 4:21: “I will act/deal/be very strong against/with”; Exod 7:3 ‘I will act/deal/be severe against/with’; and Exod 10:1: “I have acted/dealt/been heavy/overwhelmingly against/with.”

The placement of these verbs within these specific three verses and their successive meanings suggest that these three verbs are arranged in a gradual format, ‘strong’, ‘severe’, and ‘overwhelming’. This intensity structure suggests that the LORD never hardened Pharaoh’s heart, but rather He acted severely against Pharaoh’s heart in a gradual manner. The LORD started with a pacific message for Pharaoh, but Pharaoh refused to hear the LORD’s command. Then the LORD increased His power and became ‘severe’ against Pharaoh, but Pharaoh became more obstinate, and the LORD had to act in an overwhelming manner with Pharaoh. After the heavy/overwhelming treatment of the LORD against Pharaoh, he let the people go out of Egypt.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abingdon Press. *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. 12 vols. Vol 1. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Andrews University. *Andrews Study Bible: Light. Depth. Truth*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010.
- Ashby, G. W. *Go out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Handsel Press, 1998.
- Bailey, Randall C. *Exodus. The College Press NIV Commentary*. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 2005.
- Black, Matthew, Harold Henry Rowley, and Arthur S. Peake, eds. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. London, New York: T. Nelson, 1964.
- Brown, Francis, Samuel Rolles Driver, Charles Augustus Briggs. *Enhanced Brown Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Bruce, F. F., ed. *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: M. Pickering; Zondervan, 1986.
- Cabal, Ted, Chad Owen Brand, E. Ray Clendenen, Paul Copan, J. P. Moreland, and Doug Powell, eds. *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007.
- Carter, Charles W., Ralph Earle, and W. Ralph Thompson, ed. *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*. 7 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.
- Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Translated by Israel Abrams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983.
- Cook, F.C., and J. M. Fuller. *The Bible Commentary: Exodus-Ruth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953.
- Cook, Stanley Arthur. *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*. London: A. and C. Black, 1903.

- Currid, John D. *A Study Commentary on Exodus*. Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2000.
- Davidson, Richard M. "Earth's First Sanctuary: Genesis 1-3 and Parallel Creation Accounts." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53/1 (2015): 65-89.
- Dillard, Raymond B. and Tremper Longman, III. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
- Ellison, H. L. *Exodus*. Daily Study Bible: Old Testament. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982.
- Elwell, Walter A. and Barry J. Beitzel, eds. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988.
- Elwell, Walter A., and Philip W. Comfort, eds. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2001.
- Frey, Mathilde. "Sabbath in Egypt? An Examination of Exodus 5," *Journal for the Society of the Old Testament* 39/3 (2015): 249-263.
- Fretheim, Terence E. *Exodus*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991.
- Gesenius, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley. 2d English ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
- Gispén, Willem Hendrik. *Exodus*. Bible Student's Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; St. Catharines, Ontario: Zondervan; Paideia, 1982.
- Grossman, Jonathan. "The Structural Paradigm of the Ten Plagues Narrative and the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart." *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 4 (2014): 588-610.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *Exodus: an Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Hannah, Jon D. "Exodus." *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.
- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell).
- Jacob, Benno. *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*. Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1992.

- Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997.
- Janzen, Waldemar. *Exodus*. Believers' Church Bible Commentary. Waterloo, Ontario; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000.
- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. "Exodus." Volume 1, pages 335–561 in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Vol. 1. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Kitchen, Kenneth A. and Paul J. N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law, and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 2012).
- Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner, eds. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000.
- Lange, John Peter, Philip Schaff, and Charles M. Mead, eds. *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Exodus*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008.
- Levi, Don. "Did God Deprive Pharaoh Of Free Will?" *Philosophy and Literature* 32, no. 1 (2008): 58-73.
- Matthews, Victor Harold and Don C. Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*. Fully rev. and expanded ed. New York: Paulist Press, 1997.
- McNeile, A. H. *The Book of Exodus, with Introduction and Notes*. Westminster Commentaries. London: Methuen, 1931.
- Meyers, Carol L. *Exodus*. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Motyer, J. A. *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Nichol, F. D., ed. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Vol. 1. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978.
- Osborn, Noel D., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on Exodus*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1999.
- Propp, William Henry. *Exodus 1-18: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. 1st ed. The Anchor Bible 2. New York: Doubleday, 1999.

- Purkiser, W. T., and A. F. Harper. *Beacon Bible Commentary in Ten Volumes*. Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1969.
- Sacks, Jonathan. *Exodus, the Book of Redemption*. 1st ed. Covenant & Conversation. New Milford, CT: Maggid Books & The Orthodox Union, 2010.
- Shea, William H., "Exodus, Date of." Volume 2, pp. 230-238 in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 1982.
- Spence-Jones, H. D. M. *Exodus: The Pulpit Commentary*. 51 vols. Vol. 1. New York, Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909.
- Stuart, Douglas K. *Exodus*. The New American Commentary 2. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006.
- Summerbell, Martyn. "Hardening Pharaoh's Heart." *The Hebrew Student* 1 (1882); 8–9.
- Swanson, James. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domain: Hebrew (Old Testament)*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997.
- Thomas, Robert L. *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael Patrick O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Williams, Ronald J. and John C. Beckman. *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*. 3rd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Wilson, Robert R. "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979): 18-36.