Okay. So after all this time, we've finally gotten somewhere. The Exodus wasn't just about God bringing His favourite nation out of Egypt. It was about something much larger; something much grander . It was about God actually revealing who He was , that He wasn't just some power, but he was actually the Creator of it all; the Creator of the Universe, the Creator of mankind. What we need to really ask ourselves though is Why and How? First let's talk about 'How'.If you were God, and you wanted to reveal to humanity that you were not just one of a whole bunch of polytheistic gods, but you were the One True Creator; how would you do that? Anything that happens, people could just chalk it up to one of the whole bunch of a polytheistic gods. Because remember, the Egyptians were not Atheists; it's just that they didn't believe in God , they believed in gods. So how would you disabuse them of this notion somehow through the Exodus? So this is the question of how? But, why would you want to do that?

Why is it so important to sort of demonstrate that you are the Creator God? Are you just sort of being egotistical? Aright. So people will worship you like one of many gods. Why is it crucial that they would need to see you as the Creator God?

So what I want to do with you is just kind of compare monotheism - the notion that there is a Creator God behind it all; and polytheism - the reigning system of worship at the time. In polythestim, there is a pantheon of gods, there is a whole is a whole bunch of different gods. Now, these gods don't particularly get along with each other; they are not necessarily friend with each others. How do you decide who to worship in such a bewildering array of forces? Well, you decide through self-interest.

So, for example, if you occupied the fertile plain near the sea. So if you were the Philistines there ,you would worship the Dagon, you would worship the fish god because you know, you're fish people and therefore you need the good graces of the fish god. If you were in Egypt and your crops were irrigated through the inundation of the Nile, you'll worship the sun god. So you decide who to worship by looking at your self interest. And then when you do worship, you have to realise that no god is all powerful because there is many of them so they each have their strenght and their weakness; and therefore worship is consist of sort of bartering where I try to provide for the needs of the gods,I try to appease the gods by providing for their needs and giving them stuff that they might kind of want. And if you think about why I would do that? The answer is I would do that because of fear. Fear is the great motivator for worship - "I'm afraid, I need to live and if we don't appease the gods they will get mad at me and hurt me". This is how it works in polytheism.

Okay. Now let's contrast this to monotheism. In monotheism there is One God and that One God is the Creator of all; and that has many ramifications. Here is some of them:

God is all-powerful - so how am I going to worship the one God who has no needs. If God has no needs, why would he even want worship? What can I give him that he would be interested in? My motivator for worship is not fear, but it is something else; it's love and gratitude. When you give something out of love and gratitude, it's not actually so important than giving something that fulfills a need in the being. Love actually comes in the picture, yes, fear might be there, there might be some trepidation, but the great novelty in monotheism is love. In addition to that there is actually a moral component to worship which is that, there is an idea that it's the right thing to do; it's that you are my

Creator,I should rise to the expectations of you. I serve you out of love;not solely because I am scared.

So this is how monotheism is very different than polytheism which answers why it is so important for God to reveal that he is the Creator God. It's all of these things; it's the implications that flow from the idea that there is one God. The fact, that there is a moral component to worship, that there is there is love rather than self interest that motivates worship. All of these things are crucial because it affects the nature of our relationship with God. God wants to make sure that we have a real relationship with him. In polytheism, there is no relationship. There is nothing. All there is is fear.

There is of course one other difference between monotheism and polytheism here. And that is in polytheism, you sort of make your own god and then you don't ever hear from the god again. In monotheism, that's not the case. In monotheism, God can speak to you and tells us what it is that he wants from us and this will come into play as well.

Okay. So now, with this in the background, let's come back to some of our questions; having answered to some extent the question of why right. Why would want to do this? He want to do this because it changes our relationship with him if we understand he is the one monotheistic God. So now let's get to the question of how?

If you were trying to demonstrate that you were the Creator, how could you possibly do it? I think now we're in a position to understand why the Ten Plagues could do it, even though any individual plague; blood, frogs, lice and then going all the way down, you know. If you were a good polytheist you would say " blood, hmm, okay, so let's see; the Nile is turned to blood so evidently the Nile god is angry with us,"and that wouldn't prove that you're the Creator of the universe. But then when the frogs it's like "okay, so I guess the water god teamed up with the amphibian god, and then they must have gotten together with the insect god over here and then the god of the ground and then", what happens is that the slow accumulation of evidence starts to poke holes in the theory of an alliance. Remember, in a polytheistic system, each of the gods don't particularly like the other gods so alliances would be few and far between. So at some point, you know, how many gods are angry at us? The simplest explanation is their is one force in charge of all of this. So the accumulation of Ten Plagues is one way you might show that you're Creator. Ten Plagues show something that any one plague doesn't.

But, it's not just the amount of the plagues; it's precision versus power. Remember how pharaoh wasn't so interested in power, it was really the precision by which the plague was waged that really caught his attention. What makes perfect sense, you see, in a polytheistic system, you could see power, right. The water god is going to be powerful. Every god would be powerful. What you wouldn't see is a lot of precision. Why? Because the way the universe works in the polytheistic mind, right, there is a lot of chaos. One day there is rain, another day there is sun; there is battles between the sun god and the rain god and nature is unpredictable. You can never really tell what's going to happen. So in a polytheistic universe, you would see power; what you wouldn't see is control. So, what gets Pharaoh's attention is "one second. You said you can turn it off tomorrow with precision in time?" " You said the plague will only affect here and no affect there whatsoever. Are you willing to predict that precision in space?"

That's the kind of thing that really get's Pharaoh's attention. That's not something you see in a polytheistic universe. Another indication that you are dealing with the Creator God; the author of time and space.

Okay. So these are two ways in which God can make manifest the idea that he is Creator through the Exodus and as we will see shortly, there are other ways as well. We are going to see this by actually going through the plagues one -by-one and reading them very carefully. But before we do that, I want to ask, not just how it is that God is going to show himself as Creator through the Exodus,but why?

What exactly is God after? Now I think the answer is this.

What if the monarch of the most powerful polytheistic society ever recognise the Creator. You have to remember that Egypt was the greatest world power in the ancient world and they were also the society most voted polytheism. They worshipped a pantheon of gods and their Ruler, Pharaoh, was convinced that he was a god himself. What if you get that Ruler to understand that's it's all a lie, that in fact there is one God who is incharge of all powers in the universe, including him. To recognise that worship is not just a matter of bartering with whichever god which sorts of serve your self interest. But that there is actually an idea of morality, that people are duty bound to rise to the expectations of their Creator and that one of those people is Pharaoh himself. See, if you could get this to happen, this would stand forever as a historical testament of the truth of monotheism. If polytheists throughout the centuries would ever doubt the idea that there is one Creator God in charge of everything; they could just look back at the historical example of Egypt. There could be no greater historical testament to the truth on monotheism than this.

There is only one problem; it all depends upon Pharaoh. You see, in order for this to work, Pharaoh needs to get this of his own free will. No one can interfere. So the interesting question is "what if it fails?" " How is God going to deal with this?" It's inconceivable that the master of the universe would have a plan for his revelation of the truth of who he is in the world, would depend upon one person. There must have been a Plan B. That Plan B comes back to some issues that we talked about earlier on in this series - the two words that the Torah uses to describe the changing of Pharaoh's mind chizuk halev on the one hand verse kibud halev on the other hand.

Now, I mentioned to you before that just if you translate these words, the translation is not the same as the JBS translation over here suggest when it translates them both as 'hardened'. This word doesn't really means hardened and I suggest that the best word for it is actually strengthens. Chazak means to be strong and vayichazek would mean to strengthen. That's different than vayachbed libo would have to be translated as either 'to hardened' or 'to become heavy'. Let's talk about what the difference between these two things are.

First of all, one has a negative connotation, one has a positive connotation. You think biologically, a hard heart is going to die, it won't be able to pump ay blood; a strong heart is actually supple and vibrant and actually flexible which makes me gets to the difference between these. You might say that a heavy or hard heart is a stubborn heart, it conveys a sort of inability to see the truth, even if it's sort of staring you

in the face. A flexible or strong heart, we might actually call that courage, a courageous kind of person. Now, this gives us a very fascinating possibility in terms of how God might deal with the two possibilities which were suggested above.

Well yes,okay, you know, let's accept this idea that God wants to use the Exodus as a way of demonstrating that he is the Creator of the Universe and that he is going to do so by seeing if he can get Pharaoh to recognize this. But of course we said something could get in the way. Pharaoh might give in but for the wrong reasons, right. What if he let's the Jews go not because he theologically capitulates and realises that God is the Creator but just because it's too hard for Egypt to continue to fight the battle.

What if he gives in for tactical reasons but not actually for moral or theological reasons. Well, one obvious solution suggests itself. Because in that situation we might say that Pharaoh suffers from a lack of courage to see his vision through. So, maybe God could give him that courage. If God gave him the strength of will and the strength of heart to be able to continue to pursue his vision we actually wouldn't consider that taking away Pharaoh's free will at all; I'm strengthening your free will. A mean, if you even think about someone going through a hard time and you give them a pep-talk and you can give them courage, you haven't taken away their free will,you've given them the power to achieve the vision they want.

So really, what God might to be saying to you is like Pharaoh look, you know, " if you ever want to give in because you think it is too hard to continue, but you would rather continue fighting, I will give you the courage to see your vision through. You decide. Do you think it makes sense to give up? If you ever do that well then of course I am not going to interfere in your free will." But it's the idea that chizuk halev might well be an enhancement of Pharaoh's free will. And then, over and over again, if you look at the language; what God does is this language of strengthening - God strengthens his free will. So what I actually want to do with you is go through the plagues and see how this plays out because of course, there is another way that things could get in the way. What if the opposite happens? What if instead of giving in too easily, for the wrong reasons, what if Pharaoh never gives in at all? What if it's plain as day the God is the Creator but Pharaoh is too stubborn to give up? What would God do then? Is there sort of a Plan B to deal with that situation?

I am thinking back to these two speeches that Moshe makes to Par'oh and the last time we looked at these we thought that the speeches were kind of strange because Moshe is rebuffed by Par'oh in his first speech and then seems to come back with much weaker argument. I think we will actually see that there were kind of two different agendas here. Vaachar bau Moshe v'Aharon vayomru el-paroh and they said ko amar Hashem. Now the first thing to notice about this speech is how different it is in terms of the name of God that's used with reference to the next page. Thus says God, God is directly addressing you in first speech. Look at the second speech. Elohei haivrim - the power of the Hebrews. Remember this word, a very generic word. Over here, this is God's actual name. Which name? The Creator God name. The first thing he is saying, thus says the Creator God. Then who is this Creator God? He is elohei yisrael - He is the power of the Jewish people. And yisrael, of course, is that special name for the Jewish people; that covenantal relationship that they get God through God changing Yaakov's name. This is not some pagan god who could care less about people; this is a God who takes a personal interest and even have a special relationship with them and considers them His people, shalach et-ami, these are my people.

So, here is the Creator God who has a special relationship with His people Israel and He is addressing himself directly to Egypt with expectations. He is in charge of everything. He is even in charge of you and He is directing himself to you. Send out these Jews. And what does God want them to do? Yachogu li bamidbar, let them celebrate with me in the desert.

Now, none of this of course,makes any sense to Pharaoh; I mean, it's all completely new to him. So vayomer paroh mi Hashem asher eshma bekolo, who is this Creator God that you are talking about? This yud key vav key God outside of time that I should listen to his voice? He speaks to people. A God that actually communicates his will directly to mankind. This is all theologically nonsense. Lo yadaati et Hashem, I don't know anybody by that name of yud key vav key. The Midrash says he looks through his list of polytheistic gods and say "nope! Nothing here like that!" And anyway, I am not sending out the Jews." Now, at this point, Moshe retreats with an entirely different strategy. Second speech.

Vayomru, Moshe and Aaron said " Okay. Elohei haivrim nikra aleinu - let me put this in terms you can understand. Let's leave out this yud key vav key stuff, let's just say the 'power of the Hebrews' nikra aleinu, happened upon us. He didn't really speak to us. Nelcha na derech shloshet yamim, we really want to go for three days. Notice "we want to go", God did not command us or you directly. We're trying to figure out what God says. Vanizbecha laHashem elokeinu, we think we should sacrifice before God. No, none of this joy stuff, forget joy . We should sacrifice before our God because if we don't pen-yifgaenu badever o bechrev, he might strike us down with a sword or with pestilence. So please help us."

Now, this is actually something that Pharaoh can understand. So now if you look at Pharaoh's response, it's very different than his response to the first one. Lamah moshe v'aharon tafriu et-haam, why are you disturbing the people, lechu lesivloteichem, they've got a lot of work to do. Hen-rabim atah am haaretz vehishbatem otam misivlotam, you're keeping the slaves away from doing their work." Now notice, there is no theological objection whatsoever. Pharaoh perfectly understands this sort of theological world, it's very pagan, it makes perfect sense to him. It's just that the argument that you're making is that " the people are worried that their God might get mad at them and hurt them. Well, that mean that they

must not be sufficiently worried that I am going to hurt them. I have to make life a little bit harder for them . Forget about this allegiance to their pagan god and stop worrying about him, they should worry about me more." It's a whole different response. Why is Moshe doing this? Why the two approaches? I think it sets the tone for what's about to happen.

Moshe and God owed it to Par'oh to just tell him the truth. There is a Creator God, this is the nature of his relationship, this relationship of joy,has direct relationship with all, he has expectations for you. Even if Pharaoh is not going to get it right now, but this is the truth. Now, Pharaoh rejects it; it's too new to him. At that point, the process begins. It's a process of education. Let's start with something you do understand and we'll work our way up from there.

We asked earlier " why does Moshe talks about these three days? Didn't God have the power to take them out immediately?" This wasn't a lie - "let us go out for three days." If Pharaoh would have said "yes", they would have come back after the three days. It's like okay. That was step 1. You've granted them the religious freedom to worship their polytheistic god. Now let's tell you something more; let's teach you something more about this God; little bit different from the polytheistic god. And then slowly, Pharaoh could have learned. It's a process of education and it begins now.

Pharaoh can either learn the nice way - by agreeing to let them go for three days and then to learn more and more about that kind of God; or he can learn the harsh way - and the harsh way is the plagues.

Pharaoh rejects this, education has to take harsh path instead. And when we come back we're going to see how the process of education to bring home to Pharaoh the truth of God being Creator, plays out in the Ten Plagues.

Okay. So let's actually roll up our sleeves and actually make our way through the Ten Plagues. And as we do so, I think we'll find that these plagues are building towards something, a sort of gradual accumulation of the evidence that God is the Creator of the world. And I think what we'll see is that it's going to happen through two parallel streams over here - the gradually increasing power of the plagues, but also precision in time and space increase as we go along. One of the barameters which we're going find, I think for just the sheer powers of the plagues, is actually Pharaoh's Astrologers. But remember, as the plagues increase in force, there is a danger which increases as well - that Pharaoh may give in; not on principled reasons, but simply because the power of the plagues have become too much to bear. So, two things to watch for:

The role of the Astrologers ; and

These two kind of magic words kibud halev on the one hand and chizuk halev on the other hand.

So let's see what we find. So we're going to start our look at the plagues right over here. Moses and Aaron come to Pharaoh and they performed their first sign. So let's watch what happens.

Vayavo Moshe v'Aharon el-paroh vayaasu chen kaasher tziva Hashem vayashlech Aharon et-matehu, "Aaron throws down his staff," lifnei paroh velifnei avadav vayehi letanin, "and it becomes a serpent". And at that point, vayikra gam paroh lachachamim velamechashefim vayasu gam-hem chartumei Mitzrayim belahateihem ken. At this point, Pharaoh is able to replicate the plague by virtue of his own wisemen, by virtue of his own Astrologers. They too, using Magic, do the same thing. So, if you look at what happens over here, the language interestingly is vayechezak lev paro v'lo shama alehem - that Pharaoh "strengthens his heart". He sees that he is dealing with a practiced Magician perhaps , so he gives himself courage to withstand the battle against Moses and Aaron. V'lo shama alehem- " and he doesn't listens to them". But you'll notice something interesting also. Look at what God says vayomer hashem

el-Moshe kaved lev paro, God actually uses different language to speak about this. Pharaoh's perspective is he is just giving himself courage. That's not God's perspective. Kaved lev paro, he's made himself stubborn. It seems like if Pharaoh looked carefully, there would have been some indication here that in fact these are not just Magicians he's dealing with, but these are representatives of the Master of the Universe.

So if you go back and look at exactly what happened over here after the Astrologers were able to replicate this supposed Magic. Vayivla mateh-Aharon et-matotam, " And the staff of Aaron then goes and swallow all the other staffs". And what does that kind of indicate? That indicates, well, you know, if there is other powers here who is the Master of all of them? Aaron's staff; representing the staff of the Creator. And if Pharaoh wanted to see that, he could have; and his failure to see that can be described as nothing other than kibud halev, than stubbornness.

Okay. So let's continue. We actually come to the very first plague of the Nile becomes blood and the Egyptians can't find anything to drink. And then, what happens? Before Pharaoh reacts vayaasu-chen chartumei Mitzrayim belateihem, the chartumim come in and they were able to do this too. They were

able to take water that they find and also turn it into blood through again the arts of Magic. So one more time, Pharaoh gives himself courage by chazak lev paroh, he strengthens his heart and he didn't pay attention to this sign either.

So now if we advance to the next plague, the plague of the Frogs, we now can find something interesting and we had talked about this a little bit before. This is the plague where Moses kinds of get into this strange dance with Pharaoh and he says over here, hitpaer alai, "glorify yourself over me. Make me do something you don't think I can do." lematai atir lecha velaavadeicha uleamecha lehachrit hatzfardeim mimecha umibateicha rak bayeor tishaarnah- " when exactly would you like me to turn off the frogs?" And Pharaoh's response says lemachar, "do it tomorrow." Why? lemaan teda kiein keHashem elokeinu, "this is going to demonstrate that there is no one like yud key vav key, "like the Creator God."

Now, what happened over here? For the very first time, there is not just the power of the plague that's descending upon Pharaoh, but there is an indication in precision as we've talked about. That Pharaoh might be dealing with something other than garden variety of pagan magic. There is a force in the world that can predict exactly when this thing is going to turn off? That is something you don't find in the polytheistic universe. And in fact, when Pharaoh changes his mind after this plague, look at the language vayar paro ki haytah harvacha v'hachbed et-libo, he hardens his heart" hu v'avodav. Over here, he has to sort of make himself stubborn. He's seen an indication that God is not just powerful but precise and he ignores it. He's been stubborn v'lo shama aleihem, "and he doesn't hear them".

Let's go to the next plague, the plague of Lice. Vayaasu-chen hachartumim belateyhem lehotzi et- hakinim velo yacholu. You find an interesting thing here for the first time, the chartumim find themselves stumped, they cannot replicate the plague of Lice. The Astrologers come to Pharaoh and they say etzba Elokim hi, "this in fact is the hand of God." This is beyond their power and at that point they say " it has to be God behind it". But, notice this language over here etzba Elokim, the specific language for God is not yud key vav key, not the special creator name of God but rather "the finger of a power".

This is a deity that's dealing, this is not human magic. At least we're dealing with a pagan god over here. And what's Pharaoh's response? Vayechezak lev paroh velo shama alehem, he strengthens his heart.

We're now dealing with a real power, he's not dealing just with magic. Let's go on.

The plague of wild animals.V'hifleiti bayom hahu et-eretz goshen, "at area of Goshen" God says " I will wondrously distinguish between Egypt and the land of Goshen where the Jews live." Lemaan teda ki ani Hashem bekerev haaretz, "this is going to prove that I am yud key vav key, "I am the Creator God in the land." The fact that not only can I bring this plague, but I can wonderously distinguish, not just in space but in time, V'samti fedut bein ami uvein amecha lemachar yiheyeh haot hazeh, "and it's going to happen tomorrow." So what you have is precision in time, precision in space, both of these working together and what's Pharaoh's response? vayachbed paroh et-lebo, "he hardens his heart". So what was happening again is that the power of the plague were ramping up and simultaneously the precision by which the plagues are being waged are also ramping up.

Next is the plague of dever - the death of livestock. Again, precision! But precision this time to an even

greater extent. V'hiflah Haashem bein mikneh Yisrael ubein mikneh mitzraim, " God will wondrously distinguish between the cattle of the Egyptian and the cattles of the Israelites," v'lo yamut mikol-livnei Yisrael davar, "and there will not even be one piece of Jewish cattle that will die," vayaaseh Hashem moed lemor mahar yaaseh Hashem hadavar hazeh baaretz, " and this is going to happen tomorrow." So again precision time and space, but this time, "there's is not even going to be one piece of Jewish cattle that will die." Vayaas Hashem et hadavar hazeh mimacharat, and God in fact made this happen tomorrow. Again, look at Pharaoh's response: vayishlach paro v'hineh lo-met mimikneh yisrael ad- echad. Pharaoh is not even looking at the power of the plague. He is looking to see this kind of precision. "Not even one piece of Jewish cattle is dead, all of my cattle is dead?" You just don't find this in polytheistic universe and he doesn't listen. But why doesn't he listen? Vayichbed lev paro, " he hardens his heart". He's again seen a more significant indication that he is dealing with the Creator but he simply will not listen.

Let's go to the next plague, the plague of shchin. So boils descended upon all of Egypt and it's our favourite Astrologers, they are back again. But look at what they are doing now. Lo yachlu hachartumim la'amod lifnei Moshe, not only are they unable to replicate the plague, they can't even stand there before Moses because they too are afflicted with the boils. What's happening? Again,Astrologers are the barometer of power, but the power of the plague is so intense that the Astrologers can't even stand there anymore. And now, with the power of the plagues at a kind of Apex, for the very first time, God enters the picture. Vayechazek Hashem et-lev paro, God actually strengthens Pharaoh's heart, because if God had not gotten involved, he would have given in because the power of the plagues had overwhelmed him. God cannot let that happen and therefore vayechazek Hashem et-lev paro, He gave Pharaoh courage. Did he actually interferes with Pharaoh's free will? In a certain way yes; but in a certain way what he is really doing is enhancing his free will. He is giving him the courage to pursue his vision and Pharaoh doesn't listen. He has the courage given by God now, to continue to persevere. And that brings us up to the turning point of the plagues - the plague of Hail.

A plague of Hail, when you think about it, just seems like any old plague. But if you look at the language the Torah uses to set it up, it seems like it's being set up as a different kind of plague. Listen to this.

Vayomer Hashem el Moshe, "God says to Moses," hashchem baboker, "wake up in the morning, stand before Pharaoh, tell him," ki bapaam hazot, "because this time" ani sholeach et-kol magefotai el-libcha, "I am going to send all of my plagues into his heart." It's like somehow, this is the equivalent of all of the plagues before that and all of the plagues, interestingly, are going into Pharaoh's heart. Baavur teda, " in order to teach you" ki ein kamoni bekol-haaretz " that there is none like me, I am utterly unique in the entire land. I am not just a pagan god, I am the Creator God." What is it about hail in particular that's going to do this? You begin to get this sense that something is going to change. That we're reaching a kind of climax, because, you know, if you are wondering Pharaoh " why is it that you're still around?

Why am I doing this with you?" Baavur zot he'emadticha, " I have allowed you to continue to fight against me " baavur haroticha et-kochi, "so that I can show you my power" ulemaan saper shmi bechol- haaretz, " and that my name should become known and throughout the whole land." And I do get the sense here that God is warning Pharaoh that " you know, I am doing this for you so that you should come to a recognition, and we can either do this with or without you. There is a Plan B. If you refuse to

recognize the truth of my being the Creator, then it won't be that the eternal truth of monotheism will come from Pharaoh recognizing me but it will be through your destruction." Let's see how this plays out.

What will be different about hail? In addition to the precision in time, hineni mamtir kaet machar, "exactly tomorrow that this will happen," somthing new happens, something which we haven't seen in any plagues - a warning as to how the victims of the plague could escape the harsh effects of the plague. "If you want to escape the plague," Moses says, "take everybody inside." What else is different? Varad v'esh mitlakachat betoch habarad, "as the Hail comes down, there is fire frozen into the Hail", which seems to be a physical impossibility. What the common denominator between these two different things? But when would you give a warning? You only give a warning if you are an overwhelming force. If I am so assured of victory that a warning doesn't even matter and I feel a sense of compassion for my foe; that's when I warn. A God that has compassion for his foe? I don't know. That doesn't really sound like a pagan god. A Creator God might has passion for a rebellious child ; not a pagan god. And what about fire and ice together in the same hail stone? If you go back to the pagan mindset. So, what two gods would be at greater odds with each other than the fire god on the one hand and the ice god on the other. I mean, they're never going to cooperate. Only one Being could put together that and that, right, and that is in fact the Creator; the Creator of both fire and ice together can make peace between them. All of these indications of God as Creator, comes together in Hail. And finally, a breakthrough.

Vayishlach paro vayikra leMoshe uleAharon vayomer alehem chatati hapaam, "I have sinned this time." Pharaoh says, "I have sinned;" he's never spoken that way before. That's moral language. You don't sin against a pagan god; you only sin against your Creator before whom you've rebelled. Hashem hatzadik, yud-keh-vav-keh, "the Creator God is the righteous one" va'ani v'ami hareshaim, "and me and my people, we are the wicked ones." Pharaoh had gotten it! Plan A has succeeded! He has recognized the truth of God as Creator, it should be over. So why are there three more plagues? Ah, because it's not over. Because Pharaoh changes his mind. God doesn't change his mind; Pharaoh changes his mind.

Vayar paro ki chadal hamatar v'habarad, "and Pharaoh saw that there was no more Hail." Vayosef lachato, this is the very first time that the narrator has accused Pharaoh of sinning and again only because Pharaoh himself has said that he's sinned. Vayachbed libo. How did he sin? By making himself stubborn. This is a sin. You see, the other's Pharaoh had never consciously realise that God was Creator; he had subconsciously resisted it. Subconscious resistance can't necessarily be described as a sin. Conscious, willful, rebellious resistance - that's a sin.

Something has changed now. Pharaoh has actually seen the truth. He has recognized God as Creator and now, he is taking the conscious realization of God as Creator and throwing it out of his heart! That's a sin! And after he's made himself stubborn, vayechezak lev paro, he gives himself courage to be able to continue in this foolish quest. V'lo chilach et-benei Yisrael, he didn't let the Jews go. What's God's response? It's time for Plan B.

Vayomer Hashem el-Moshe, God says to Moses, bo el-paro, "come to Pharaoh" because ki ani hichbadeti

et levo v'et-lev avadav. Interestingly, just before it had said that "Pharaoh had hardened his heart", now God is saying " you know what, he has indicated now consciously that that's what he wants." First your vision was you didn't think I was God, so I'll strengthen your heart. But now, what you are trying to do, is consciously turn your back on all the evidence that you know to be true. That's your vision? I'll facilitate that vision too, because now you're just a pawn. Ulemaan tesaper beaznei vincha uven-bincha, God says to Moses "this is that you should be able to tell your children and your children's children," et asher hitalalti bemitzrayim, "the way I have played with Egypt." This is new language. I am now going to play with Egypt as if it's my toy. This is my new agenda. v'et ototai asher samti vam, "through all the miracles that I have put in them," vidatem ki-ani Hashem. All of the language before that was viyadu Mitzrayim ki-ani Hashem - " that Egypt will know that I am God; that isn't on now. It is no longer about Pharaoh knowing that I am God. You must know that I am God. It's about what you see through Pharaoh's destruction. And from here on in, Pharaoh is a pawn . We have plagues 8, 9 an d10; at which point the Jews finally go free.

I want to end now by talking about : "what does it mean to be the people that came out of Egypt through these signs and wonders, through these acts that constituted a historical demonstration of the truth of monotheism ? What does it means to be borned into nationhood in that way? "

Okay. We've talked a lot about the Exodus,we've answered a lot of questions, but we've done so really from God's perspective. We've taken a look at God's agenda, as it were, to try to reveal himself to the world as the Creator of the world. But, what does that mean for us? How does that impact our view of the holiday? That takes us back to some questions that we asked at the very, very beginning of these Series. Questions about the little black boxes, questions about the name of the holiday , questions about preponderance of idea of bechor. We need to come back to these questions now, put them together, to finally understand our response to the Exodus that demonstrates God as the Creator of the world.So the tenth plague, as I mentioned to you before, was very different than all the others. There was no automatic immunity ; the Jews actually had to slaughter a goat and put blood on the door and if they didn't do that, they would die like everyone else. And we asked, why is that the case?

So, it brings us back to something earlier. You know, way back at the beginning of the plagues, God said to Moses to tell Pharaoh ko amar Hashem beni bechori Yisrael, "my first born child is the Jews and tell Pharaoh send forth my first child and if you don't send him out" hineh anochi horeg et-bincha bechorecha, "I am ultimately going to kill your first born child in this plague - the tenth plague." It's interesting that in the context of the tenth plague, the Jews are viewed as beni bechori Yisrael, "my firstborn child of Israel". But when did Jews become the "first born child of Israel"? I would like to suggest to you that the answer is right now. God says all the bechorot, all firstborn, are going to be killed in this plague. Only those who become my first born are going to survive."

What does it mean to call the Jews the "firstborn of God" and how did they become that "firstborn"? So, to understand that, we've got to talk about, in general, what does it mean to be a firstborn; forget the "firstborn of God", that's very theological. What does it mean to be a firstborn at all? Or to put it another way " what unique role does a firstborn play within a family?"

And the answer is: "the firstborn is a kind of transition figure between the children and the parents". You know, we say "well, first born is a kind of leader among children". Why do I need a leader among children? The answer is " because of something we are fond of calling the generation gap". Every child wants to emulate their creator, every child wants to be like their parents. "But how do you be like my parents? My parents go to Board Meetings. How do I live the values of an entirely different world?" That's where the first born comes in. The firstborn, when it works well, is the child that can take the values of the parents and translates them and live them in a child's world. So you want to know what it looks like? Follow this example.

Well if we take this out of the human realm, we bring it back into the theological realm, parents are God. God loves all of his children and wants a relationship with all of his children just like any good parent loves all of the children in a family but there is a role for a first born. Because, a nation wants to be like God, "what does it means to be good? Means to be God-like? To do the Will of God? What does it means to do the Will of God ? I have no idea what that mean. God-you can't touch him, you can't feel him? What does it mean to be like God?" God says " I need a nation to be my firstborn, to actually do what it is that God says needs to be done in the world then all the other nations can look at them and say 'oh, that's what it looks like to do God's will. We get that." I need somebody to do that for me." God

says. "Will you be my bechor? "

The Jews becomes God's bechor at the moment that they take the goat that the Egyptians worship and slaughter it and put their blood on the door and say " the values of Egypt stops at this door. This is a monotheistic household." The Jews dedicate themselves with the first act that signifies their commitment to monotheism - how a human being monotheistic acts in the world with the blood of the Passover offering. And it's with that blood that they become the bechor of God .

So God passes over all the houses that have blood on the door and the holiday that commemorates this gets called 'Passover'. Passover is not a little detail within the Ten Plagues; it's the point of it all. It's what it means to us. We were 'passed over' while all other bechor were killed . We as a Jews was born as a nation the way that no other nation was. The master of the universe came out with signs and wonders and through our Exodus from Egypt, made manifest that he is the Creator of the world . How did we respond? We stepped up to the plate and we said "we'll be your bechor." The God of love, the God who really needs nothing - what' the only thing the God of love needs? A conduit to allow his love to reach the world;to transfer his values to his children. "We'll be that conduit for you. We're human being; you're not human God. We'' show other human beings what's it like to live a Godly life in this physical world."

And that's why the idea of bechor is in tefillin. Think about what tefillin is. These little black boxes that we wrap on our arm, begins with the recognition of monotheism. Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad. It then goes to a declaration of love. Because it's one thing to cognitively think "wow, God is one." But if you really believe that God is one, that God is your Creator, there is an emotion that comes from that. And that emotion is love. A creature loves their creator; a creator loves their creature. And therefore,the next part of tefillin is v'ahavta et Hashem Elokecha b'kol levavcha ubekol nafshecha ubekol meodecha, should love the Lord your God. But then, there is another part of tefillin - the idea of bechor. We remember the Exodus of Egypt because we remember our role as God's bechor and we do things to commemorate that. It's not just about knowing God is one ,it's not even about feeling that God is one; it's about doing it. It's about acting in consonance with the will of our Creator in the world, sort of being his bechor in the world. The Gemara in tractate Berakhot 6a vav lamed aleph says a fascinating thing. It says "God wears tefillin, too." What's written in them?

It begins with umi keamcha Yisrael goy echad baaretz. Our tefillins begins with the recognition of the uniqueness of God. God's tefillin begins with the recognition of the uniqueness of Israel. Who is like Israel? One nation in the land. It then goes on to verses that describe God's love for us but then it goes to a verse that describe what God does for us. O hanisah elokim lavo lakachat lo goy mikerev goy bemasot beotot, "have you ever seen a time in world history where God had gotten involved with world nations and politics with signs and wonders and miracles and took one nation out of another nation?" That's the verse that indicates God's commitment to us; what God does to us. Because that's the way love works.

It's that continuum of what I think in my head, what I feel in my heart and what I do with my hands. There is that continuum in God love for us that's expressed in, so to speak, God's tefillin; God's recognition of our uniqueness, God's love for us and God's action and his commitment towards us and

taking us out of Egypt. And then there is the way we reciprocated in our tefillin, the way we recognize God as unique, our love for him and our willingness to commit ourselves to be his bechor in the world. And that really is what it means to be chosen. It's not that God loves us best, that God only cares about one child; a parent cares about a whole family. But in order to care about the whole family, you need to be able to transmit your values effectively to them, and that's the special role we're meant to play in the world.

All of this really gets down to one thing. As I sit down to my seder, what am I really trying to accomplish? If I am trying to live Pesach meaningfully what am I trying to get out of the holiday? And I think the real answer is that " on our national birthday, on the day the we became a bechor, it means dedicating ourselves as an individual to be a part of a community that's designed to bechor, that's designed to be firstborns somehow in God's family." And that means that :

We care about the whole family - we don't just care about ourselves, we care about the rest of the world; and

It also means that we're dedicated to strengthening our relationship with a God that is not just a God among many, not just a powerful God, but a God of yud keh vav keh, a God that's outside of space and time that is transcended. But then we can relate very tangibly through the actions that we perform in consonance with his will. A God whose love we recognise because he is the Creator of us all and when we dedicate ourselves to him with those timeless words shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad, "that God is the one monotheistic God", the very next thing we say is v'ahavta et Hashem Elokeicha, that we should love God passionately, because when we really understand that that's true, passionate love follows in it's wake and passionate love can't stay in the heart, passionate love has to express itself in action otherwise it dies. Which is why we are a nation that performs mitzvot.

When we commit ourselves to that continuum,to that understanding of who the God that we worship is, that he is the Creator God, We love him and that we want to respond to him , I think we are living up to what Pesach really asks of us. Have a happy Pesach.

Hi everybody, Rabbi David Fohrman here and I want to start with you by considering some very basic questions [about the Exodus](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/passover-exodus-story) that we may never have even have bothered thinking about. But, I would like to begin with this one, and it focuses on the name for the holiday.

What

Does

the

Word

Passover

Mean?

We all know that the name for the holiday is Pesach, translated as Passover. And I want you to consider whether you think Passover is really the best name for the holiday, maybe we can sort of do this as a kind of thought experiment.

Imagine you were one of the Angels who was called upon to counsel God; you were on the nomination committee for naming of this holiday and you have to come up with some really good names. So you say, "what's this holiday about?" It's commemorating the Jews going out of Egypt. "So wouldn't it be great to call it Independence Day or you can call it Freedom Day or something like that?"

But then imagine some Angels in the back of the room raises their hand and said "no. I have a great idea. Let's call it Passover. Passover is a really terrific name." So you say, "That's a strange name for the holiday. Why should we call it Passover?" Then you say "see you don't really get it because see, God made all these plagues to let the Jews go and then there was this tenth plague and in [the tenth plague, all](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/tenth-plague-of-egypt-meaning) [of the firstborn children of the Egyptians got killed](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/tenth-plague-of-egypt-meaning). But the Jews got to go free and God sort of 'passover' their firstborn and didn't kill them. You get it? So He 'pass-over' their first born; so let's call it passover. You get it? It's kind of like a pun." I mean, none of the other angels would be impressed, right? But God decides "yes! Let's call it Passover!" This actually wins the day.

We do call [the holiday Passover](https://www.alephbeta.org/passover). Why? Passover just focuses on one little detail of the holiday. [In all of](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/ten-plagues-theological-significance) [the ten plagues](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/ten-plagues-theological-significance), why are we focusing on this one little detail?

Okay. Now, stick with me here. Here is Question 2.

Question 2 kinds of follows from Question 1. We talked about Passover – this name for the holiday and Passover [focusing our attention on the tenth plague](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/tenth-plague-of-egypt-meaning). So let's take a moment to actually look at the tenth plague and to notice kind of how strange it is in many respects.

Passover:

The Origin of

God's

Chosen

People?

The strange part of the plague really is that if you think about all of the other plagues that happened before the tenth plague, the Jews had sort of automatic diplomatic immunity, you know, they had United Nations licence plates. The Jews got to park anywhere also without fear of getting tickets, they were not subject to darkness when it was dark in Egypt; they were not subject to having their water turn into blood, it sort of automatically worked out well for them, they didn't have to worry about all these things.

[But that all changes in the tenth plague.](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/ten-plagues-theological-significance)

In the tenth plague, all of a sudden, the Jews have to actually do something. They had to slaughter this

goat and put the blood on their door otherwise they are subject to the effects of the tenth plague just like the Egyptians. Why is that? You know, why couldn't God dispatched the Angel of Death, you know, with a GPS to tell where the Jewish homes were as opposed the Egyptians home. How come they were sort of granted automatic diplomatic immunity from the tenth plague all of a sudden?

Now, another interesting aspect of this plague is actually sort of the justice behind the plague. There seems to be a kind of tit-for-tat which is happening in this tenth plague. And you see that right over here in this text in God's warning to Pharaoh through Moses that such a plague might eventually come to pass.

This is what God tells Moses to tell Pharaoh v'amarta el-paro, say to Pharaoh, koh amar Hashem beni vichori Yisrael, my first born son is Israel. Vaomar eleicha, and tell him shalach et-beni, send forth my son Israel, v'yaadevni, and let him serve me, vatmaen leshalchu, and if you refuse to set him free hineh anochi horeg et-binecha bechorecha, I will kill your first born. Now, you see the tit-for-tat over here? It's that God is saying "well, if you keep my first born enslaved, I am going to get rid of your first born."

But this whole notion that the Jews are like the first born of God just seems like a really strange thing to say.

Why would he call the Jews the first born? They weren't the first born nation of God. What does that even mean? It's just a strange kind of thing.

There is something odd about this plague that focuses like a laser beam on Pharaoh's firstborn children as if that's somehow justified [because he is enslaving the Jews](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/why-did-god-allow-slavery). I mean, millions of people are dying because God is taking this comparison very seriously. It's not just Biblical poetry "oh, the children of Israel are like my firstborn child", it seems to be literally true in God's eyes. So why is that?

And that question brings us to sort of the third question, and that is the question about what I call the 'little black boxes'.

Connecting Firstborn

the Spiritual Significance of

Passover

and the

So that little black box is of course, a mean the filings that we put under our our arms and the head, and now, these little black boxes, again, if we were playing God you imagine, okay, you're coming up with our own religion with this great idea. We're going to have these little black boxes, we're going to take these representative parts of the Torah and we are going to make people wear these black boxes; seems so wonderful, so spiritual. And now, we Angles, you know, we're on the Nominating Committee, we've now switched to the Black Box Committee. We've got to figure out what are we going to put in these black boxes? We can take any little sections of the Bible we want. We want to sort of focus on something that's really very important; you know, the basics of Judaism. So what should we put in the black boxes?

Well, you might say we want the basic creed our Jewish faith so we put the shema in the black boxes – "hear oh Israel the Lord our God is one" – is a great idea. Maybe we'll put the next paragraph that we should "love the Lord with all our hearts and with all our soul, v'ahavta et Hashem Elokecha." All that is really wonderful and sounds really spiritual. But imagine some Angel in the back of the room says "oh, I have this really great idea , let's put this law of the broken neck donkey in there." Everyone turns around and says "What? The law of the broken neck donkey?" And you say "yes! Take a look over here, over here in Exodus, v'hayah ki-yeviacha Hashem el-eretz hakenaani, and when God brings you into the land of the Canaanites, v'haavarta chol-peter-rachem leHashem, the first born child of all of your animals should go to God, v'chol-peter-sheger behemah asher yiheyeh lecha hacharim laHashem, all the first born male children and animal should go to God, should be offerings. And, if you actually have an animal that is not fit to be an offering, like a donkey, you actually have to redeem it with an animal which you could offer. But if you don't redeem it v'arafto, then you have to break the donkey's neck.

V'chol bechor adam bevaneicha tifdeh, you also have to redeem the firstborn of the children and you have to do this for all generations. Why don't we put that in the little black boxes?" And then everyone one turns around and looks at the Angel like he's crazy "why would we put that little detailed law in the black boxes?"

But the fascinating thing is that this wins the day; the law of the broken neck donkey does make it in the black boxes. It's one of the things besides shema, besides love your God with all your heart; you have this story having to do, again, with [the idea of the bechor of first born](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/israels-role-as-gods-firstborn).

This notion of firstborn that just keeps on popping up and somehow essential to whole idea of what it is to be a Jew, what it is [to remember the exodus from Egypt](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/understanding-the-exodus-from-egypt). But again, it seems to be just a detail in the tenth plague, the very name for the holiday comes back to it – Passover. It's all getting to this idea of the harness, the day when we were passed over, almost like the day we became first born; it's just like a very strange thing.

Understanding What It Means to

Be Chosen by

God

It really all get down to this, the idea of 'firstborn-ness', somehow seems very essential to Judaism as a whole and the Exodus in particular. Why is that?

Hi everybody, we asked a lot of questions in our last video, we're going to ask a lot more in this video. Do not freak out! I know it's a lot of questions. If you do bear with me, what you will see is that these questions are actually answers.

So, in the coming videos, I am going to lay out some of the questions that I have in [looking at the story](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/passover-exodus-story) [of the Exodus carefullyhar](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/passover-exodus-story). Two kinds of questions. Questions about HOW the Exodus took place, some strange oddities in the way things took place. Why did they have to happen that way? And also as we begin to understand the 'hows', trying to get to understand some of the 'whys', was it really just about getting the Jews free or was something else going on? I want you to come with me in a somewhat more detailed look at what actually went on in the Exodus. When we actually read it, I think we will find some very surprising things indeed.

Okay. So let's jump in and talk about the Exodus story itself. And again I want to invite you to sort of play 'If you regard'. And if you regard, would it really have taken you ten plagues to get the Jews out of Israel? This I think is a very significant question and I think the answer for most of us would be 'no'. We could have thought of much more creative ways to get the Jews out of Egypt, simpler ways than actually requiring ten whole different plagues to make this happen . Even if you had gone to the tenth plague; last plague, and done that firstly it might have done the trick - that's sort of the atom bomb of the plagues. Why wait until the tenth plague that could have perhaps done it all on it's own? But even without any of the ten plagues, a mean even if you were sort of a pacifist God and you didn't want to have any plagues at all, you just sort of Alibaba the Jews out with a magic carpet and let the Jews go without any bloodshed whatsoever, without any plagues whatsoever, just a very simple; and by the way if you think this little fairy tail couldn't really have happened; it could have happened. As a matter of

fact , there were plagues that actually took place within these ten plagues which had the making of this sort of magic carpet trick. And of course, what we are referring here to is the great plague of darkness. In the plague of darkness, what happens?

Well, the Egyptians are stricken with darkness, they can't see a blasted thing. The Jews have light, they can see whatever they want . What better opportunity could you possibly imagine for the Jews to simply slip out of Egypt without the Egyptians knowing a thing? If we are worried about the Jews being hit by some random arrows, we can actually invoke some other thing which happens when the Jews are going out of Egypt and they are confronted at the sea by a pursuing Egyptian army. So then God sort of erected erected the equivalent of force field; it has the pillar of clouds separating between the Jews and the Egyptians and the pillar of cloud absorbs all the threatening arrows from the Egyptians because you know,so let's sort of combine the pillar of cloud over here with the plague of darkness and we're good!

The Jews are fine! They can leave! Why bother with these very elaborate ten plagues that's just completely not necessary?

Okay. So let's continue with this theme: 'If you were God' - it actually leads us to a couple of other questions as we continue, sort of, to follow the story of the Exodus. So remember in the beginning, Pharaoh and Moses begin their face-off with Moshe asking " for three days; just let us go for three days. We will serve God and we'll come back." Now, again, think; if you were God, why would you put

Moshe up to that? I mean, let's just face it, it's not nice to say it but, isn't that a lie? If you have the power to set the Jews free, a mean,why don't you just take the stance, "look, send the Jews free and let them go!" If you think of sort of the stylised Hollywood portraits of the Exodus , like the Ten Commandments with Charlton Hasting, or the Prince of Egypt - Steven Spielberg, they don't have the 'three days' a mean that get's left in the cutting room floor. But in the actual Bible it's there. Why ask Pharaoh for three days? Why not just say "Let my people go!" and then that's it!

Now, as a kind of follow up to that question, we might ask the same thing of these kind of lengthy bargaining sessions between Moses and Pharaoh. If you look carefully at the Exodus story, there are these long, sort of haggling sessions; you know, Moshe says " I want the Jews to go" and Pharaoh says "well,who do you want to go? Maybe you could just take the men." So Moses say "No. we have to take everybody". So Pharaoh says " well you take everybody, but why don't you leave the kids behind?" "No! We've got to take everybody to." So Pharaoh gets angry and then there is another plague and it get seven more ridiculous, at the very end, Pharaoh says "fine, you can all go! But just leave your cattles behind." Moses says " No. You know we have to take our cattles. Not only that, you have to give us cattles. We have no idea what we're going to serve God with until we go out. Who knows, maybe he'll ask for sacrifices hippopotamus, giraffe, we've got to take everyone. We're not going to leave a huff behind!" A mean, this is the language that Moses uses when arguing with Pharaoh and it just sort of almost seems like a farce. A mean again, if you were God and you had all of this power, you don't need any of these bargaining sessions. You don't even need Pharaoh's agreement at all. The three days, and the bargaining session together, really seems to suggest that the Jews, for some reason, aren't going anywhere unless Pharaoh says they can go.

If that's true, [why does God hardened Pharaoh's heart?](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/why-did-god-harden-pharaohs-heart) You might be familiar or not with the Exodus story to know that, even though at the beginning of the story, Pharaoh changes his mind all the time his mind all the time; whenever it is that he has agreed to let the Jews go to after one plague and another plague he changes his mind, but towards the end of the story, God actually gets involved and hardened Pharaoh's heart, seems to divinely mess with Pharaoh's free will and changes Pharaoh's mind. Now, why would he do that? When I say "why does he do that?' I don't mean , you know, from a moral standpoint why would he do that. That's a very interesting question. But that's not the question I am asking now.

The question I am really asking is a tactical question. If you are God, and we care about Pharaoh's will, when Pharaoh finally says yes, you know, Pharaoh's consent is important, so don't go changing his mind. I mean you've got to know what you want. So what are we going to conclude? That maybe we don't care about Pharaoh's consent. Well if we don't care about Pharaoh's consent, then don't bother trying to get his consent in the first place. This is a very important question. Either it's this or it's this. Do you care about his consent or don't you care about his consent? The truth is whole issue of Pharaoh's free will and kind of unravelling the role of Pharaoh's will and consent within our story is a tough one; one which we will come back to.

Let's look at the text. Here we have one of the verses that discusses God sort of changing Pharaoh's mind. Now look at the language. Vayare paroh ki-chadal hamatar v'habarad v'hakolot, this is after the plague of hail, Pharaoh saw that the hail was off there was no more hail, vayosef lachato, he continued to sin,

vayachbed libo hu vaavadav. Now look at this language over here vayachebed libo hu vaavadav, it literally means " and he hardened his heart, he and his servants". But if you pay attention to that word, the shoresh over here is chebed, he hardened his heart; what' strange about it is that it's not the only word that is used to describe this process of the changing of Pharaoh's mind. So for example, take a look at this verse over here, vaychazek Hashem et-lev paroh. Oh, that's interesting. That's a different word. Chazak. God sort of strengthened his heart. Here over here in English, you have it mistranslated as hardened in both cases but you can see very clearly it's different right. You can seen in one case I have vayachbed, chebed; chaf, bet, dalet, and over here I have the vaychazek, chazak, which actually mean two different things. So these are actually mistranslations; there should be two different translations. So the question is, what's the best translation of these words? Chazak actually literally means to strengthen and vayachbed probably does mean to harden. So the question is what is the difference between these things and are there two different processes going on?

I think there are two different processes going on. And if you look very carefully, throughout the plagues you will notice something else going on too, which is that sometimes, God is the one doing the hardening and the changing of mind and sometimes it is not so clear. Sometimes it is actually Pharaoh that seems to be doing it. Over here vayachbed libo, he hardened his heart, it is unclear who the 'he' is. If you actually look carefully, it actually sorts of looks like it's Pharaoh.

Before we leave this issue of Pharaoh's will, I want to just call your attention to one other thing and that is this. Over the course of the plagues, Pharaoh sorts of goes back and forth as we have talked about.

Now, generally speaking, in these times when Pharaoh capitulates to Moses, does he say "oh well, I am sorry. I did a terrible thing. I sinned" or is it just that he gives in because he says, you know "look, you won and you can go"? Its different thing to surrender because you think you are wrong than to surrender because you think that you were beaten. So generally speaking, when Pharaoh surrenders after each one of these plagues and then he sort of changes his mind; does he surrender on moral ground or not. And generally we think the answer is no, of course not, he doesn't. And that's true. But there is one exception and the exception strangely enough comes right over here after plague number seven - the plague of barad. Look at this language over here. So Pharaoh calls to Moshe and to Aaron and he says to them chatati hapaam, I have sinned this time, Hashem hatzaddik vaani v'ami hareshaim, God is the righteous one and me and my people are wicked. A mean this is like moral language. It seems like Pharaoh for the first time is like convinced that he was wrong -I mean very strange.

So one of the thing we want to come back to is what was happening in plague number seven that makes Pharaoh sort of comes to this realisation that he was wrong on moral terms, and we will come back to that. But also I want you to think about the fact that this is very significant for understanding this issue which we've been talking about; which is what does it means that God changed Pharaoh's mind, hardened Pharaoh's heart? Because as I mentioned before in the beginning of the plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart and changes his own mind. Then at a certain point, God is the one who seems to interfere with Pharaoh's free will and changes Pharaoh's mind for him, as it were. Well, when is it that God is the one who starts to hardened Pharaoh's heart?

It turns out that that happened right after plague number six, the plague right before this, the plague of boils. Take a look at this, vaychazek Hashem et-lev paroh. This is the first time that you really get this language. And God was the one who actually went in and changed Pharaoh's mind. Okay. So isn't it strange then that in the very next plague, Pharaoh morally capitulates and says that he was wrong and says that he sinned; those are moral words. There is greater expression of free will more than that. What is going on here? If that's the best God can do - depriving Pharaoh of free will, doesn't look like he's done a very good job. How is it that we understand this? But again, the issues involving Pharaoh's free will are again very, very complex and we're going to come back to them. But before we do, we are going to treat with some other issues too. So let's take a look at some of those other issues now.

Okay. So in the last video, I asked a bunch of 'How' questions concerning the Exodus. I just want to ask a couple more 'How ' questions before we get to the 'Why'; and specifically I want to focus on something that I call power versus precision. And I understand that right now you have no idea about what I am talking about. But come with me to this exploration of the tenth plague and let me show you what I mean.Okay. I want to share with you a thing I find very strange. It begins with a strange comment by Rashi based on a Midrash that he cites. And it begins here with this verse , which is a prelude to the final plague machat bechorat- the killing of the first born. So here is Moshe warning Par'oh about this. If I'm hearing Moshe, Moshe says, vayomer Moshe koh amar Hashem kachatzot halaylah ani yotze betoch mitzrayim. Moshe says thus says God, at approximately midnight, kachatzot halaylah, I will go out in the night and I will kill out all the firstborn. So Rashi is bothered by this word right over here kachatzot halaylah, at approximately midnight it literally means. Like why is Moshe fudging it? Just say it - "at midnight", God knows when midnight it; just say "at midnight, I will go out and I will destroy all the firstborn". What's the idea behind this?

So Rashi over here citing a Midrash says something interesting. He says that look "God obviously knows when midnight is. God didn't have to pull any punches as far as he was concerned. But he was concerned that Par'oh and Par'oh's Astrologers would not be aware of exactly when midnight is and they might be off by a few minutes. And if that would happen, then in the morning, Par'oh would come back and would say "ah, look, you were off. You said that it would happen at midnight , Moshe badai hu, Moshe is a fool; but if you just stop and imagined this for a moment, would it really played out like that? A mean, contemporary times. Imagine some prophet faxed into CNN these warnings that at "exactly 4:03 p.m. tomorrow, simultaneous lightning bolts will descend from heaven and destroy the seats of governments in all capitals in the United Nations General Assembly." Right. So you know, everyone ignores it, nobody even bothers reporting it because it's obviously some crank.

But imagine that at exactly 4:01 in the afternoon, it really happened, I mean, what would the headlines be? "Prophet a Fool - Prophet says destruction will happen at 4:03; destruction in fact happens at 4:01". That's not what the headline would be. What is Rashi telling us over here? That God had to pull his punches and says kachatzot halaylah, it's going to happen at approximately midnight. How are you suppose to really make sense of this interpretation?

So I want to suggest to you that the Rabbis didn't just make this up, there is actually support for this. The Rabbis were extrapolating a pattern that they saw in the text and the patterns you begin to see in the plagues; and they simply take it one more step. Let's take a look at Moses' response to the frogs. So remember there is frogs everywhere; Pharaoh has had enough of frogs. He really just wants to get rid of the frogs, he is willing even to let the Jews go as long as Moses can get rid of the frog. So he calls Moses in for an audience and he says "look , I want you to plead with God and just get rid of the frog." So let's read this through for a moment and I want you to actually imagine that you were Pharaoh, okay and you can imagine that I am Moses and I am talking to you. How is it that you would respond?

Vayikra paro lemoshe uleaharon, so Pharaoh goes and call Moses and Aaron and says, hatiru el-Hashem, please beg God, v'yaser hatzefaredim, if he can just get rid of these frogs, I will even let you go. Okay.

Now listen to Moshe's response. Hitpaer alai, Moshe says, lematai atir lecha ulaavadeicha lehachrit hatzefaredim mimecha umibateicha, exactly when would you like Pharaoh, for me to get rid of these frogs? It's like you tell me when, and I will stop it right then. If you were Pharaoh, what would you say? "Yesterday would be good! Now would be even better! Like, let's get rid of them already! Stop playing games with me" ! Look at Pharaoh's actual response . Vayomer lemachar, 'tomorrow', he says " do it tomorrow." What is he talking about do it tomorrow? The man is willing to wait an extra 24 hours because he wants to take Moses as bait. He wants to see if Moses can really pull it off tomorrow.

Vayomer, then Moses says, kidvarecha, just as you say lemaan teda - just to prove ki-ein kaHashem Elokeinu. What is going on? Exactly when you're going to turn it off tomorrow, you're going to prove that there is no one like God? But it sounds like Moses and Pharaoh are on the same page. Moses taunted Pharaoh with this challenge knowing that Pharaoh would go for it. What is it that Moshe knows about Pharaoh over here? That Par'oh is more so interested in time; that Pharaoh is willing to put up with frogs for 24 more hours. And you see this same pattern as you go further on in the plagues. For example, look at the plague of dever.

Dever is this plague that kills Egyptians livestocks. You are the sovereign of Egypt and now all of your cattles are going to die. So now imagine the first reports are coming in from the various provinces - "there's been these plagues Sir; we don't know exactly what it is". If you are a responsible Egyptian sovereign, the first thing you do you know, you would want a damage report; let's see how bad it is.

Look at Par'oh actual response. vayaas Hashem et-hadavar hazeh mimacharat, God did what Moshe had promised, vayamat kol mikneh mitzrayim, all the livestocks of the Egyptians died, all the cattles; and look what Par'oh is looking for, vayishlach paroh v'hineh lo-met memikneh yisrael ad echad, Par'oh does not even bother looking at his losses. The only thing he looks at is how many did the children of Israel lose? They didn't lose one. That's all he cares about. He is not even interested in what it is that he lost. He just want to know "did this prediction happen?" They didn't lose anything; not even one.

For some reason, Pharaoh seems to be more interested in the precision with which God wages a plague against the Egyptians than the power that the plague actually has. The precision in time, for example, he wants to know; can you turn it off tomorrow if I pick tomorrow? He is more interested in precision in space. Can it affect only there but not here? It's not so much the power of the plague that impresses him as the precision of the plague. Which is very strange because, you know, if I were the sovereign of Egypt,we wouldn't care a wimp about the precision; we just care about how powerful it is. But that's not true for Pharaoh for some strange reason. He is interested in the precision to such an extent, that I think the Sages of the Midrash extrapolated this and argued that in the tenth plague, Moshe was forced to say that it would happen at about midnight because if he said that it would happen at midnight, that would be the only thing Pharaoh would care about. There would be millions of dead Egyptians firstborn all around and the obsessive focus of Pharaoh's mind would be "how precise was it? You were off by three minutes." It just would have drained everything from the plague. Pharaoh wouldn't have been impressed at all.

Now, it sounds crazy and maybe it is crazy, but you know, there is method to every madness. You've got to figure out 'what is it that Pharaoh is thinking?" "Why is it that precision matters to him so much more

to him than power?" I think that's a clue to a kind of hidden agenda that underlines these plagues. A hidden agenda that comes into very close focus in the very first discussion that Moshe has with Par'oh about letting the Jews go.

vVachar bau moshe v'aharon vayomru el-paroh, so Moses and Aaron came to Par'oh and they said, ko- amar Hashem Elokei Yisrael, thus says God, the God of Israel, shalach et ami v'yachogu li bamidbar, send forth my people and let them celebrate before me in the desert. Okay. So pretty straightforward. Now I am Par'oh; here is my response. Vayomer paroh mi Hashem asher eshma bekolo, who is God that I should listen to his voice, leshalach et-Yisrael, or to send forth the Jews? Lo yadati et-Hashem, I don't know anybody by the name of God. V'gam et-Yisrael lo ashaleach, well anyway, I am not sending out the Jews. Stop right there. If I said this and it was your turn to speak and you were Moshe, what would you do now? You know, God had told you " Go to Par'oh, give him this message and tell him to send out the Jews", so what would you do next?

So to me, there is kind of two options. One things is to go back to God and say look " I failed. I tried, what do I do next? You know, you sent me, I did it. Your turn." Now, the other thing you could do is is you could 'up-the-ante' with Par'oh . You could say "Par'oh, you don't realise who you are talking to. I mean, this is God, okay. And God has a lot of power. We don't even want to know what's going to happen if you get God mad. There is not going to be much left of Egypt if you mess with God and of course you know that he can back up your threats; I mean, look what actually happened in the Exodus." Strangely though, Moshe does not do either of these two options. He picks a third option; a third option which is really kind of strange. Let's read it through right here.

Elokei haovrim nikra aleinu, the God of the Hebrews happens to call out to us, nalcha na derech shloshet yamim bamidbar, let's just go out for three days in the desert, v'nizbecha leHashem Elokeinu, and we will offer offerings to our God, pen-yifgaenu badever o becharev, we've got to do this for God because if we don't, who knows what God is going to do. He might inflict us with pestilence or with plague or with swords. So,we're just do scared of God, you just have to let your loyal servants go and serve him.

Do you really think that Pharaoh is going to agree to this? I mean, he already totally said no. And Pharaoh by the way doesn't agree. Take a look at what Pharaoh actually says over here.

Vayomer alehem melech mitzrayim lamah moshe v'aharon tafriu et-haam, what are you doing disturbing the people? Let them go back. And then Pharaoh gets angry and he actually doubles the work load on the people - I mean it backfires terribly. Couldn't we have predicted this? I mean, what were you thinking? If you want to 'up-the-ante' with him, 'up-the-ante' with him ; if you want t go back to God, go back to God. But don't give this sort of weak need sort of thing that " well Pharaoh, we really got to go serve this God. Who knows what he is going to do to us." Pharaoh doesn't believe in him. What were they thinking? There must have been a plan. There was sort of a Plan A and a Plan B. We've got to figure out what that was. There was again, a method to the madness and if we find that method to the madness, I think we will find a very, very breathtaking new view on what exactly was going on behind the scenes in the entire Exodus from Egypt. Let's come back and let's try to put that together.

So, God has a number of different names. But one of the reasons why you don't always pay attention to this is the fact that God himself never really make such a big deal about his name, with the exception of one place and that is right over here in the Exodus, right before the plagues starts.Vaydaber Elokim el- Moshe vayomer elav ani Hashem, God spoke to Moshe and said, "I am Hashem"; yud key and vav key, the special name that we don't often pronounce of God. But, vaera el-Avraham el-Yitzchak v'el-Yaakov beKel Shakai, "I'd appeared previously to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in a different name as El but ushmi Hashem, this new name Hashem, lo nodati lahem, I hadn't actually made that known to them." Now, what is God talking about over here?

First of all, it's not like this is the first time this special name appears, it appears all the way throughout Genesis. So, how come God is saying there is this special new name here and how come God is so concerned with his name? Before I used to be 'El' now I'm 'Hashem', like what exactly does this mean? Plus, it seems kind of contradictory, because earlier in the story, back at the burning bush in the Chapter 3, there too, interestingly, God sorts of make a big deal about his names, but we get a different view of God's names. Let's take a quick view of that.

So Moshe has question for God. He says " I am going to go to the Jews and I am going to say that the God of their fathers come to me, v'amru li mah shemo, they are going to want to know what your name is right? So, mah amar alehem, what should I tell them your name is?"

Okay. So this is the great opportunity right to say "oh well, I am glad you asked,you know . I just want to let everybody know that my name is yud and hey and vav and hey, right? I mean this is the way to do it. But strangely, that is not what God says vayomer Elokim el-Moshe. Instead he says, eheyeh asher eheyeh, which literally means "I am that which I am" or "I will be that which I will be". Vayomer ko tomar livnei Yisrael eheyeh shelachani aleichem, and say to the Jews, and then God seems to change his mind again. Vayomer od Elokim el-Moshe, God says "you know what, forget that whole business of eheyeh, just tell them Hashem Elokei avotechem Elokei Avraham Elokei Yitzchak v'Elokei Yaakov, instead tell them "the God of their forefathers of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob; he is the one that sent me to you. This is my name, zeh shemi leolam v'zeh zichri ledor dor, this is how I always want to be remembered."

So what is this like eheyeh asher eheyeh and then switches to something else and what happens about yud key and vav key? In the whole business, it's just very, very difficult to understand. But, I think that this is really a key to figuring out what's going on. In the revelations of these names lies, I think, kind of a hidden agenda that makes sense of what's going on in the Exodus. It all comes together in these names of God. So what I want to do with you next, is actually go through these names and just try to figure out what they mean. In order to do that, I want to ask you; what does a name mean when it's not a name of God? That will give us a clue to the particular nuances of these names are when they are the names of God and I think we'll begin to see something really fascinating emerge.

Okay. So let's go back to this text that we started looking at and kind of take it apart. God says to Moshe just before the plagues, he says "look, before we begin the fire and light show over here, there is one

thing that we need to get straight and that is ani Hashem, I am yud key vav key." And the question is whether these are names of God. So in minute we're going to talk about these names, yud and key and vav and key. Before we do that, I want to talk about the name that God says that he is not going to be called by anymore.

He says previously vaera el-Avraham el-Yitzchak v'el-Yaakov beKel Shakai, I have been known as Kel Shakai. Turns out that this word 'El' has another meaning in the Torah other than God; and what 'El' can mean actually is power. When we say it in the second Commandment lo yiheyeh lecha elohim acherim al-panai, it sounds like a very strange thing to say - you shall not have any other gods before me. How can you even call other things like the Sun and the Moon gods? The answer is elohim acherim doesn't really mean other gods; it means other powers. Judges are called elohim; Judges are powerful, they hold in their hands the ability to decide between life and death. So, what 'El' really means is power. So, God seems to be saying then "before I've been known as Kel Shakai, I have been known as this very powerful being. But now I am making myself known as yud and hey and vav and hey. What is the implications for that?

So, we can't really turn to the Hebrew language for guidance like what we did with the word El; because the word yud and hey and vav and hey does not mean anything other than God. Well, what do you do when you don't have any other reference point, any other time that this word appears? All you can do is just kind of etymologically take apart the word. And the interesting thing about looking at this word is if you take the Hebrew words for : 'was, is and will be' and overlay them on top of each other, you actually get yud and hey and vav and hey - the Hebrew word for 'was' hayah, the Hebrew word for 'is' hoveh. If you put hoveh on top of hayah then add on top of that the Hebrew word for 'will be' - to exist in the future yiheyeh, you can see right here yiheyeh becomes yud and hey and vav and hey. So what does that mean?

Sometimes you get translations of yud and hey and vav and hey as God is eternal; that he was,is and will be. Except that's not really the implications of the word yud and hey and vav and hey because remember, there is no state of existence in Hebrew that can be described by yud and hey and vav and hey . There is hayah, and there is hoveh, and there is yiheyeh, but there is none of that altogether and it implies that God exists with that all jumbled together. That's different than eternal. You see, if I exist eternally, then I am still travelling through, so to speak, the 'tunnel of time'.

The idea of yud and hey and vav and hey seems to be a simultaneous experience of past, present and future; that's the kind of existence which is fundamentally different than ours. God is outside of time. Now, why would God be outside of time? Because he is actually the creator of time. To give you an analogy.

Imagine a discussion between little Hat and little Shoe going around the monopoly board. So Hat says " do you believe in parker?" So little Shoe says "What do you mean parker?" So little Hat goes " you know, over here on the side of the board, it says 'made by Parker brothers'. Do you believe in Parker?" He says " well yes, what do you mean?" He said 'Look, I have been on this board a long time.I have passed 'Go', I

collect my $200 and I just never seen Parker. I just never bumped into him. I don't believe in Parker." So you know, what would you say to little shoe? You'd say "look, you idiot! Parker made the board, he is not going to be on the board!" We are within this world called space and time, God is outside of space and time, He is the Creator.

Now, if you come with me back to the burning bush, the other time God's name occupies front and center in the Exodus, I think this is what's going on there too; just in a different kind of way. Moses had wanted to know "what shall I tell them your name is?" So the response by God is eheyeh asher eheyeh, "I am that which I am" . What do you mean "I am that which I am?"

The first rule of definition says that to define something in terms other than itself. But God says " No. I am that which I am." God is really saying that" I am not definable. There is nothing in your world that can give you an approximation of that which I am." Now, the problem of course is, is that the more you think of God as separate from who we are, the less you feel you can sort of relate to him. You know, like I can't touch him, I can't feel him, is he really there? Which accounts for God's next thing that he says.

Vayomer od Elokim el-Moshe. And God then says to Moshe, ko tomar el-beni Yisrael, you know what you should tell them though? Just tell them, look Hashem Elokei avotechem shelachani aleichem - I am the God of your forefathers, Elokei Avraham Elokei Yitzchak v'Elokei Yaakov zeh shemi leolam v'zeh zichri ledor dor, this should be my name for generations.

Look, I had a relationship with your dad, so we can have a relationship with each other. That's how you should remember me. But fundamentally, I am very different. God is the Creator and God is making himself known in the Exodus. He says : before people could have thought about me, that I was just 'El', I was a Power, like any other power. What God is trying to say now is He is the one Power; He is the monotheistic source of it all and he is going to reveal that by virtue of the Exodus. How and why God is doing this is now something that we need to discuss.