

No Other gods

By Doug Hamilton

The first two commandments that God gave the children of Israel on Mount Sinai should be an indication that He desired their undivided attention. He was giving the Law, including the Ten Commandments and the ordinances, and wanted them to know these two most important facts:

Commandment One: NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME!

- Exod 20:1-3 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

Commandment Two: NO IDOLS BEFORE ME!

- Exod 20:4-6 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

It does not matter where in the world one travels or under whatever government might be in power, we always find that the people of that culture are worshipping something or someone. Man was made to worship, but not to have man-made will-worship (Col 2:23). **Man can find many substitutes for God in his worship, but they are not acceptable substitutes.** It might be Buddha; it might be Mohammed; it might be a dead saint or Mary. It might even be money or power or drugs or alcohol or sex or television or food or any number of other things in the universe. Man is a worshipping-creature and he had better be careful concerning whom and what he worships. God does not and will not compete with other "gods" and idols for He is a jealous God. *Exod 34:14 "...for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."*

The purpose of this series is to acquaint us with the gods that are mentioned in the Bible for a better understanding of the scriptures in which they are found. In doing so, we should have a better understanding of Jehovah and His love for us as His followers. In the first three lessons, we will cover the gods of the plagues of Egypt, in the fourth Baalism, the god of the Canaanites, and the fifth the Roman and Greek gods of the New Testament. In one final lesson, we will cover the modern day gods facing the church today.

The Background

The people of Israel had been in Egypt for over four centuries and the pagan gods of the Egyptians had rubbed off. The chosen people of God were addicted to the Egyptian gods and Egyptian worship. They were not only spiritual slaves, but physical slaves, becoming the pyramid builders in a foreign land. Moses was called upon to speak for God to deliver the people and return them to the Promised Land. Moses demanded Pharaoh as spoken by God to "Let my people go!" *Exod 5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"* Was it just out of the land or was it also and foremost the need for His people to leave the gods behind? YES. They were desensitized to paganism and needed to be freed and reeducated. They had a **false-god problem** and it would not be tolerated by the **One True God**.

Because of this, it would be necessary to de-program the Israelites from this idolatrous mindset; therefore Jehovah would launch an all-out war against Egypt's top gods in an attempt to do so. *Exod 12:12 "...against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-- I am the LORD."* It was further confirmed in *Num 33:4*

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"...The LORD had also executed judgments on their gods." What we are about to cover is God's best attempt to have "No Other gods Before Him".

Part One, Two and Three: The gods of Egypt (8:1-12:36)

Part One: Hapi and Heqt

1) Turning the Nile to Blood

- Exod 7:20 So Moses and Aaron did even as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that {was} in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that {was} in the Nile was turned to blood.

Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses perspective concerning the one true God; therefore Jehovah gave Moses and Aaron the power to perform tremendous miracles to help Pharaoh change his mind. The first miracle performed was turning the Nile River water into blood. When the staff of Moses struck the Nile River, the waters were turned to blood for seven days.

Since the Nile was the primary source of drinking water for the Egyptians, the Egyptians had to dig holes in the ground to find an emergency source just to get by. Egyptians of that time period thought that eating salt-water fish made them impure; therefore they relied upon the freshwater fish of the Nile for food. That all changed as well because all the Nile fish were dead and floating.

Another thing of interest to make note of was the fact that the Egyptians firmly believed that the Nile was the life-blood of Egypt. There were even magicians that could perform a deceitful trick by turning small amounts of water into what appeared to be blood. *Exod 7:22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.*

Hapi: the river god #2

There appears to be more this story than bad water and dead fish. The Egyptians had a god of the Nile, named Hapi. Created by the merger of Nun (Goddess of water) and Min (God of fertility), he was a powerful image to the Egyptians. This Nile god was second only to Pharaoh in the eyes of the Egyptians for the country was absolutely dependent on the Nile river.



- He was often was pictured as holding tables on which were vases, flowers and fruit, for this was to show that Hapi was the source of all good gifts.
- He was usually pictured as having a large belly and the breasts of a woman to depict a fertility theme.
- As a water god, Hapi was a deity of fertility - he provided water, food and the yearly inundation of the Nile. He was also known as 'Lord of the Fishes and Birds of the Marshes,' indicating that he provided these creatures to the Egyptians along with the Nile itself. Now we see the significance of the dead fish.
- The Egyptians actually had a "Hymn of the Nile" which has the phrase, "THOU ART THE LORD OF THE POOR AND THE NEEDY. IF THOU WERT OVERTHROWN IN THE HEAVENS THE GODS WOULD FALL UPON THEIR FACES AND MEN WOULD PERISH."
- The Egyptians would often toss sacrifices, amulets and other offerings into the Nile at special places to appease Hapi and to ensure that he would provide an adequate inundation to water their fields. This now provides a deeper understanding to *Exod 1:22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you are cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are*



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to keep alive." Pharaoh was trying to deal with the Jewish population problem while at the same time appease Hapi for blessing and honor, for he is the giver of all. The false god Hapi, the Egyptian god of the Nile, was powerless before the One True God.

Simply put, their great god of the Nile, Hapi, became a worthless, lifeless image in the Egyptians' eyes for a whole week. They could cry out for Hapi to deliver them in their thirst and hunger, but he was helpless and hopeless to deliver them in their hour of need. It is almost as if God is saying, "You will not put Hapi before Me!" It is not Hapi that blesses, but Jehovah! It is not Hapi that will quench your thirst, but Jehovah! I am greater than Hapi!

God is greater than "Hapi".

- John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."
- John 7:38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"
- Rev 22:1-2 And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve {kinds of} fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

2) Plague of the frogs

- Exod 8:5-6 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

With a wave of the staff, there were frogs everywhere! These little critters were in the houses, on their beds, in their kitchens and their cookware. No matter where they looked, there were frogs. The magicians of Pharaoh also tried tricking people into thinking they could do the same on a smaller scale. ***Exod 8:7 And the magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt. Pharaoh begged for the frogs to be taken away. When Moses cried out to God, the frogs retreated to the Nile or died on the spot. There were so many that piles of them lay on the street in rotting piles.***

Normally, the Egyptians were very impressed with frogs. Each September, after the summer flooding by the Nile River, frogs would become very numerous in the small bodies of water left from the flooding. The Egyptians loved to hear the croaking of all of these frogs, for it meant that the gods had done their duty and had given the Egyptians enough water for a very fruitful year. This amphibian was so honored in Egypt at this time that there was actually a death penalty in place for anyone caught killing a frog even if by accident.

Heqt: the frog goddess

One might ask how a nation could be in love with the frogs of the land. This occurred because the Egyptians actively worshipped a frog-headed goddess named Heqt (also *heker* and *hekt*).

- They believed Heqt was a symbol possessing life-giving power. She was the goddess who oversaw the midwives who helped women bring forth their babies by blowing a breath of life into the newborn's nostrils. Many times the women would wear necklaces with her image in order to win her favor and allow their newborns to live.



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- Her husband, Khnum, was the god who made the bodies of babies on the potter's wheel from the dust of the ground.
- Heqt was so important to the Egyptians that she was pictured in one place as helping the god Anubis rebuild the body of Osiris after the god Seth had killed him. (Since the Egyptians had over eighty gods they worshipped, this might be hard to follow.) This was huge in the eyes of the everyday Egyptians. Heqt was definitely in the top ten of the Egyptian gods.

When the True God gave Moses and Aaron the power to bring forth frogs by the millions (Exodus 8:1-15), He was showing His power over Heqt. There were so many frogs that they were bringing destruction to the land (Psalm 78:45). No one could take a step without stepping on a frog. Their beloved frogs were everywhere!



Now what do they think of their life-breathing, frog-headed goddess of life? The whole land stinks from the dead frogs. This was a further demonstration by God to tell the Egyptians that Heqt had no power. Instead of breathing life into newborns, she is reduced down to a rotten stench in the nostrils of the Egyptians. Heqt is not the one that gives us life, but Jehovah! Heqt is not the one that allows our children to be born into the world, but Jehovah! Heqt is not a blessed reminder that the year will be bountiful and fruitful, but it is Jehovah!

Jehovah is greater than “Heqt”

- Gen 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
- Ps 139:13-14 For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. 14 I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well.
- 1 Chr 7:14 “...and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

Part Two: Geb, Khepera, Ptah and Thoth

3) Plague of the Lice

- Exod 8:16-17 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'" 17 And they did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand 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 through all the land of Egypt.

With a wave of the staff, the third plague, which God empowers Moses and Aaron to bring on the Egyptians, is lice. There has been much discussion for many years about what exactly these lice were. But the Greek version of the Old Testament (known as the Septuagint) uses the Greek word for louse so they evidently were indeed lice. The word for gnat in the verse is *kinnom*, referring to an insect that attached itself to or under the skin.

It is important to understand the devastation this would have brought on the Egyptians for they were “lice-phobic”. They were required to shave their entire body everyday and wear a single tunic to prevent lice on the body. Now these lice were all over their animals and themselves. It would have been a miserable time for them.

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Geb: the earth god

Notice that it was the ground that Aaron struck with his staff. This is where the third plague originated from. In fact the text states “All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt.” There are modern-day stories about areas of Egypt having such large outbreaks of the camel tick, which the baby ticks in the sand actually make it look like the sand is alive.

One of the primary gods of worship for the Egyptians was Geb, the earth god.



- According to the Heliopolis doctrine, he came from a line of important gods. His parents were Shu, the god of air, and Tefnut, the goddess of moisture.
- Geb was usually presented in the form of a man wearing a white crown with a goose on it. The goose was his sacred symbol.
- The Egyptians had a great respect for Geb, for his laughter was considered the cause of earthquakes. They believed the earth formed his body and the earth itself was considered the “House of Geb” in the same way that the sky was called the “House of Shu” and the heavens called the “House of Ra”. This is why he was often portrayed as laying on his side on the ground, for this was his environment.
- In ancient hymns and compositions, he played a very important role in the Book of the Dead. He was viewed as the one that could keep the wicked trapped in the earth, but would let the righteous ascend into the heavens.
- When the Egyptian magicians tried to bring forth the same, they failed miserably, saying in *Exod 8:19* “*This is the finger of God.*” This is significant because it was taught that Geb had some run-ins with Set, the god of the desert, storms and chaos. When Set would commit trouble for some of the other gods, the saying, “This is the finger of Set” would be spoken to describe the chaos. When the magicians saw the power of their out of control “earth god” and were powerless, they admitted by borrowing this phrase that this chaos upon them was the “Power of Jehovah”!
- This plague of lice was also against the Egyptian priesthood itself. The ancient writings tell us that the Egyptian priests would not have been able to be “pure” for their service to their gods if they would have had lice on them.



Now what were the Egyptians thinking about their all powerful Geb, Master over the earth which they stood, covered with lice that they abhor? The mere sight of lice covering the ground would have made them sick of their god. It is not Geb who is master over the earth, but Jehovah! It is not Geb that causes the earth to quake, but Jehovah!

Jehovah is greater than “Geb”!

- Ps 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth, who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!
- Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

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- Ps 18:7 Then the earth shook and quaked; and the foundations of the mountains were trembling and were shaken, because He was angry.
- Ps 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.

4) Plague of the insects

- Exod 8:24 Then the LORD did so. And there came great swarms of insects into the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants and the land was laid waste because of the swarms of insects in all the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh was still refusing to let the Israelites leave Egypt. So God had Moses meet Pharaoh early one morning. Moses told Pharaoh that God would bring flies upon all Egypt the next day. The entire land of Egypt would be filled with flies, except where the Israelites lived. The Israelites would be free of flies. This would show Pharaoh that they were God's people (Exodus 8:20-32).

The fourth plague to come upon the people was swarming insects, not flies. A few versions of the Bible actually add the word "flies", but that is not what the Hebrew text states. The word for swarms can mean "all kinds of" or "mixture". In Psalm 78:45, we are told that "divers sorts" came upon them. This means all kinds of flies and probably includes the dog-fly which is common there. The dog-fly bites any exposed skin and is painful. The bite usually swells and hurts. The horse-fly would also be included. It has a very painful bite. And it is very probable that the beetle is included in the word used for "fly". The ancient historian Josephus said that they were included.



Khepera: the god of resurrection

This plague was aimed at the Egyptian god Khepera.



- He was a major god that the Egyptians worshipped, being represented as a beetle-headed human or the scarab beetle itself.
- The scarab beetle also tends to lay its eggs in carcasses. When the ancients witnessed a newly hatched scarab coming out of the dead body, they tended to believe they brought about the afterlife. He was worshipped as the god of the resurrection (rising from the dead to go to heaven).
- The plague was also against another part of the Egyptians' religious belief. They believed that flies were involved in the process of getting to heaven. They wore ornaments of human-headed flies. These were supposed to help them get to heaven.
- In their "Book of the Dead" gives honor to the bird fly who was supposed to be able to bring a man to heaven. The flies would also make the Egyptians impure for their religious services.
- Because the scarab tends to push around spherical balls of dung, it was believed by the Egyptians that this contributed to the movements of the sun.

Pharaoh almost gives in to this plague. He tells Moses that the Israelites may sacrifice in the land of Egypt. Moses, of course, knows this is not possible. Pharaoh then tells him to take them just out of the land. Moses tells him not to go back on his word. The next day God takes the flies away but Pharaoh changes his mind and does not let the Israelites leave.

What do you think these scarab beetle fly worshipping Egyptians are thinking when the insects are swarming all around them? Do you think that they are holding to their belief that the beetle is resurrection-worthy? Do

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you think they are desiring to call out to Khepera for deliverance? They probably could not look another beetle!

Jehovah is greater than Khepera!

- John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
- 1 Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

5) Plague of Pestilence on Cattle

- Exod 9:2-6 "For if you refuse to let {them} go, and continue to hold them, 3 behold, the hand of the LORD will come {with} a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks. 4 "But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel." 5 And the LORD set a definite time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." 6 So the LORD did this thing on the morrow, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died.

Pharaoh continued to be stiff-necked unto the commands of Moses; therefore it was time for the fifth plague, the pestilence sent to the cattle. This would only affect the cattle of the Egyptians and not the Israelites for the Lord made a distinction. This would have been devastating since the Egyptians were heavily dependent on the use of their livestock from milking, consumption and clothing. To have all of their supply wiped out in one day would have put many in danger.

Ptah: the god of Creation

Though the Egyptians had many gods in their system, the one that stood out above all concerning creation was Ptah.

- He was the chief god of the city of Memphis and was viewed as the creator who brought all things to being by thinking of them with his mind and saying their names with his tongue.
- He was unique amongst Egyptian creation gods in that his methods were intellectual, rather than physical. According to the ancient writings of the priests of Memphis: "Everything in the universe was the result of Ptah heart and tongue; gods are born, towns are founded and order is maintained."
- Ptah was also the patron god of skilled craftsmen and architects. This may be due to the excellent sources of limestone near his temple in Memphis. As a craftsman, Ptah was said to have carved the divine bodies of the royalty.
- He is depicted as a bearded man wearing a skullcap and shrouded as a mummy. His hands emerge from wrappings in front of his body while he holds the scepter.



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That brings us to the Apis bull, the living incarnation of Ptah. The Egyptians believed that the Apis bull was the result of a relationship between Ptah and a virgin cow.

- It was this bull that the Egyptians believed was the herald to the great Ptah. They constantly watched the daily habits of the Apis bull, thinking it to be prophetic in nature. The bull would roam around throughout the temple grounds and bring great blessing to all who came into contact with it, including a supposed ability to heal with its breath.
- The Apis bull could be identified was chosen by Ptah's priests in Memphis, having a hawk-shaped mark on its bottom, a white mark on its neck, and a lump on its tongue shaped like a scarab.
- He was given special food, bathed and brushed daily, and even wore special clothes.
- When an Apis bull died, he was mummified and buried with honor just like a pharaoh. There is a tomb in Egypt with nothing but the burial chambers of these Apis bulls. It is estimated that it cost as much as \$100,000 to bury one of these bulls. And when one died, the priests would search the entire land to find a calf which met the requirements to be the Apis bull.
- It was this religion that the people of Israel reverted to when Moses was up on Mount Sinai gathering the tablets of the Law. *Exod 32:7-10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted {themselves.} 8 "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'"*



This was the god and guardian of the flocks and herds of Egypt. It appears that he did not do well in defense of the livestock. It is possible and probable that the Apis bull died in this plague. With most of the cattle ending up dead it would be very hard to find a replacement bull. Very few bulls would be born for the next several years until the Egyptians could bring cattle from other nations. With no Apis bull present, the Egyptian god Ptah would seem to be very weak.

Just as God predicted, all the livestock grew sick and died. The Egyptians would have had to carry their own loads for awhile because the beasts of burden would not be there for them. The Egyptians sacrificed animals to their gods. They would not be able to sacrifice these animals because they believed a diseased animal was impure. In the days of Egyptian rule, many times wealth was partly estimated by how many animals a person owned. The animals were used as money in transactions many times. When the cattle died, the Egyptians lost a great deal of wealth.

Ptah was supposed to be the creator god but now he is reduced down to the god of uselessness. Ptah is not the creator who spoke things into existence, but Jehovah! His incarnation is not over the flocks and herds, but Jehovah!

Jehovah is greater than Ptah!

- Ps 50:10 "For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.
- Gen 1:24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so.
- Heb 9:13-14 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

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6) Plague of the boils

- Exod 9:8-10 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and let Moses throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 "And it will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and will become boils breaking out with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt." 10 So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast.

Pharaoh still would not let the people of Israel depart from Egypt, hence the plague of boils. Moses and Aaron grabbed some ashes from the kiln and launched it into the air. It spread a fine dust throughout the whole land of Egypt. The result was a severe case of boils for the people and the remaining animals of the land. The priests hurt so bad they could not even stand before Moses.

Thoth: the god of science and health

The Egyptians worshipped the god Thoth.

- A man with the head of an Ibis. He is often seen wearing a lunar disk and crescent on his head or the Atef crown.
- Red bulls and very rarely even humans were sacrificed and burned on the grate of Thoth.
- The sacrifice was given the name Typhos. Then the ashes from the burned sacrifice was taken by the priests and thrown into the air. The Egyptians believed that if any of this ash fell on the skin of a living Egyptian, the person was safe from any defilement (anything that would cause the person to be physically ill and therefore spiritually unclean).

- Moses and Aaron did not take the ashes from the furnace of Typhon. The furnace which they took their ashes from was one that the Israelites used to make the mud bricks for the buildings of the Egyptians (the word in the Hebrew is the word for that type furnace). God was showing the Egyptians and particularly Pharaoh that Typhon was powerless. He was showing them that simple ashes from the slave furnaces could be made to have more power by the One True God than ashes from their 'holy' furnaces.
- The bad sores would again make the Egyptian priests unclean for their religious practices. This was also a way to show God's power against Imhotep, their god of learning and medicine. Imhotep had been a very wise man and architect many years before the time of Moses. He was regarded very highly when alive and after he died, therefore Egyptians believed he became a god.



Thoth was unable to prevent illness to come upon the Egyptians. Thoth's wisdom was nothing compared to God's wisdom. It is not Thoth that is the great Physician, but Jehovah! It is not Thoth that heals thee, but Jehovah!

Jehovah is greater than Thoth!

- Ps 103:3 Who pardons all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases.
- Ps 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.
- Exod 15:26 And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer."