

# Limits of Knowledge

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

The long saga of plagues finally comes to an end and Pharaoh literally drives the Children of Israel out of Egypt. What was the point of the plagues and why didn't God simply start with the last one and avoid the whole charade?

Pharaoh was convinced his society; its values and religion was the most advanced and technically superior to any other in his day. Moses had to find a way both of changing his mind and persuading the Children of Israel that they themselves had a religion that could offer them something Egypt could not. It is not very different to those nowadays who think that modern society because it is technically advanced no longer needs religion.

The plagues all show the limits of the physical world and the shortcomings of Pharaoh's magicians and priests. The water supply is affected. Lice and boils attack the people the way viruses do nowadays. The produce of the earth and its livestock are destroyed. The winds bring locusts, the skies hail and the atmosphere brings pollution and death.

The wise Egyptian 'scientists' are shown to be ineffectual and their gods powerless. It's a classic case of undermining and showing the limitations of everything the Egyptians relied upon.

And so it is today. All the false gods of wealth, fame, security and stability have been undermined. Politicians are incapable of acting together. Scientists cannot help our souls or fill the spiritual vacuum.

God, religion does not replace all these of course but it does point out their limitations of the physical world. To feel genuinely at peace and happy we need the spiritual as well. But we are set in our ways. We think we are right and we have no need for another way of looking at things. And that's why too often, only tragedy or disaster get us to rethink and change direction.