

The Ten Plagues of the Exodus in Light of the Bahá'í Writings

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The biblical narrative of the ten plagues is one of the most memorable accounts in the Hebrew Bible¹ and plays a central role in the larger story of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. While traditionally assumed to be a record of ancient history, research in archaeology as well as studies in ancient literature over the past century report a lack of extra-biblical evidence of the Exodus events. This is of interest to Bahá'ís because the Central Figures² of the Bahá'í Faith mention elements of the Exodus in Their Writings. Questions arise: how are we to understand the Bahá'í references to the Exodus? Are the Central Figures using superhuman knowledge to confirm the historical accuracy of some elements of the Exodus story, or is there another explanation? Is belief in the historicity of the Exodus important in the Bahá'í Faith? The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the historical accuracy of the Exodus story is not essential to a Bahá'í appreciation of that scripture. To this end, it will review the story of the Exodus, look at a sample of scholarship regarding the historicity of the Exodus in general and the ten plagues specifically, examine a selection of Bahá'í teachings regarding ancient scripture, and explore possibilities on the contemporary significance of the story of the ten plagues in light of the Bahá'í Writings.

The setting of the Exodus narrative is generally dated to the thirteenth century B.C. in the Nile Delta area of Egypt.³ As presented in the Book of Exodus the Israelites, who had come

as immigrants to Egypt about four hundred years earlier, were under the control of a tyrannical Pharaoh⁴ who kept them in forced labor. Despite this treatment, the Israelites strengthened and multiplied. Pharaoh, noting their strength and numbers, became fearful of an uprising and consequently ordered the murder of all baby boys born to Israeli women. From this oppression arose the heroic figure of Moses.

Speaking from the Burning Bush, God commissioned Moses to confront Pharaoh and deliver the Israelites from Egypt. Pharaoh responded by increasing the people's workload. After another refusal by Pharaoh, God, through Moses, smote the land with a series of ten plagues: the Egyptian waters turning into blood; an invasion of frogs; gnats as numerous as the dust; swarms of flies; diseased livestock; festering boils on people and animals; thunder, fire and hail; an invasion of locusts; three days of darkness; and the death of every Egyptian firstborn.⁵

After the last plague, Pharaoh agreed to release the Israelites, who were then led by Moses out of Egypt by way of the Red (Reed⁶) Sea. The refugees had travelled just a few days when Pharaoh changed his mind and set out with his army and charioteers to retrieve them. As the Egyptian forces approached, Moses stretched His hand over the sea, the water parted, and the Israelites crossed through this dry passage. When the Egyptians pursued, Moses stretched His hand over the sea once more, the waters closed, and all of the Egyptian forces were drowned. Thus, the Israelites escaped oppression in Egypt and Moses continued to lead the people through the wilderness toward the Land of Canaan – roughly present day Israel.⁷

The story of the Exodus has endured well over two thousand years⁸ and is commemorated annually by the Jewish holiday of Passover. But does it represent historical fact? Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl,⁹ a renowned Near Eastern scholar of the early 20th century, points out the lack of evidence of any of the Exodus events up to that time. He states, "No trace has been found of

Moses' mission to the Israelites, their plea for salvation from Pharaoh's tyranny through Moses' leadership, or their emigration to the plains of Syria under his standard."¹⁰ He says that "those with insight" should note this lack of evidence:

For it is unimaginable that the Egyptians, who depicted on walls every event, great or small, and inscribed in stone everything that happened in Egypt, whether temporal or religious in nature, should have neglected to mention such extraordinary and stupendous occurrences as Moses' demonstration of amazing signs and the drowning of Pharaoh and his huge army.¹¹

Since the time of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl much has been learned about the history of the ancient Israelites, but evidence regarding the Exodus is still lacking. As recently stated by the eminent Egyptologist Donald B. Redford, the entire Exodus story "remains the most elusive of all the salient events of Israelite history. The event is supposed to have taken place in Egypt, yet Egyptian sources know it not."¹² While the general situation of immigrants being conscripted into forced labor in the delta region of ancient Egypt is verified, extra-biblical evidence of a large group of Israelites in Egypt, the ten plagues, or the movement of the Israelites from Egypt to the Land of Canaan is lacking.¹³ Eric H. Cline, professor of ancient history and archeology at George Washington University, states, "there is currently virtually nothing that sheds a specific light on the historicity of the Exodus — all is inference so far."¹⁴ Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, both noted archaeologists and historians, describe the rigorous Egyptian monitoring and record-keeping of the Egypt/Canaan border at the calculated time of Moses and point out the unlikelihood of an unrecorded mass escape:

The border between Canaan and Egypt was thus closely controlled. If a great mass of fleeing Israelites had passed thorough the border fortifications of the

Pharaonic regime, a record should exist. Yet in the abundant Egyptian sources describing the time of the New Kingdom in general and the thirteenth century in particular, there is no reference to the Israelites, not even a single clue. We know of nomadic groups from Edom who entered Egypt from the desert. The Merneptah stele refers to Israel as a group of people already living in Canaan. But we have no clue, not even a single word, about Israelites in Egypt: neither in monumental inscriptions on walls of temples, not in tomb inscriptions, nor in papyri. Israel is absent – as a possible foe of Egypt, as a friend, or as an enslaved nation.¹⁵

The eventual settlement of the Israelites in the Land of Canaan is historical fact.¹⁶ The Israelites enslavement in or mass escape from Egypt has not been confirmed. Considering this lack of empirical evidence in Egypt as well as other information gleaned through study of extra-biblical texts and extensive archaeological research in Israel,¹⁷ the story of the Exodus is, in many circles, thought of as “not a miraculous revelation, but a brilliant product of the human imagination . . . woven together from an astonishingly rich collection of historical writings, memories, legends, folk tales, anecdotes, royal propaganda, prophecy, and ancient poetry” sometime in the sixth or seventh century B.C.^{18,19} Today, among biblical scholars, the Exodus narrative is often referred to as one of “the founding myths of Israel.”²⁰

While the historical record thus far indicates a lack of evidence of the Exodus events, there have been many attempts to prove the physical truth of the ten plagues through the earth sciences. Some of these ‘natural cause’ theories have taken on an aura of fact as they have become popularized by television documentaries. Velikovsky’s hypothesis, the earliest of the natural cause theories, proposes that the series of plagues was initiated by a comet passing too close to earth.²¹ Another

suggests that the plagues were initiated by the concurrent flooding of the Nile, a red tide of algae, and widespread anthrax infection.²² The medical team of Marr and Malloy suggest the possibility that *Pfiesteria*, a toxic microorganism fatal to fish, contaminated the Nile and caused widespread havoc.²³ Perhaps the most popular proposal, the Thera Theory, places the cause of the plagues on two ancient volcano eruptions on the Greek Island of Thera (present day Santorini) in the Aegean Sea.²⁴

While the details of the natural cause theories vary, in general they propose a domino-like series of catastrophes such as: a weather anomaly causing poisoned water resulting in dead fish; frogs escaping the water and invading the land; a consequent overgrowth of gnats, flies, and locusts; pollution of the food supply resulting in disease; and (in some theories) human sacrifice of the firstborns in an effort to appease the gods who were blamed for all the chaos, thereafter remembered as the death of the firstborns. Some theories include a parting of the waters caused by a tsunami initiated by post-volcanic seismic forces.²⁵

The common theme of the various natural cause explanations is that the plagues and the parting of the waters were caused by a sequence of natural events that may or may not have been intentionally initiated by God Himself. However, despite the popularity of these theories, definite proof is still not forthcoming.²⁶ Refuting the natural cause model, physicist and theologian Mark Harris, University of Edinburgh's Lecturer on Science and Religion, states, "considerable scholarship, both scientific and biblical . . . indicate that this model cannot be reasonably sustained."^{27,28} To date, there is no conclusive evidence of the Exodus events in the historical records disclosed by archaeology, the study of ancient Near Eastern literature, or the earth sciences.

The lack of evidence of the Exodus events in the historical record is noteworthy. But how important should the extra-biblical historical record be to the Bahá'í community in its

understanding of the story? According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the historical record is important and can be used as an indicator of whether biblical verses should be understood literally or symbolically. In response to a question about the historicity of certain other biblical events,²⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states, “*As these events have not been recorded in any history, it is evident that they are not to be understood literally but according to their inner meaning.*” [SAQ 44] In light of this guidance, it follows that Bahá’ís should look for inner meaning in the Exodus narrative as, to date, the historicity of these events has not been corroborated by extra-biblical records. Indeed, seeking spiritual truth without being attached to the necessity of having a literal interpretation is a fundamental principle in a Bahá’í approach to the Bible. As explained in a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: “When ‘Abdul-Bahá states we believe what is in the Bible, He means in substance. Not that we believe every word of it to be taken literally or that every word is the authentic saying of the Prophet.” [LOG 494] Therefore, the possibility that the Exodus narrative is not journalistic history and that one should focus on its allegorical meanings is consistent with Bahá’í teachings.

In the process of investigating the symbolic nature of the Exodus narrative, it is fascinating, even a little surprising, to see that all of the Central Figures of the Bahá’í Faith mention a key element of the story – the enslavement of the Israelites under a tyrannical Pharaoh – in Their Writings.³⁰ For example, in a commentary on the Mosaic Dispensation in *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states, “*The enslavement . . . of the Hebrews was such that they were not able to provide any defense for their wives and families against the tyranny of their Pharaonic captors.*” [SDC 75] How is this reference, and others similar to it, to be understood? Does mention of an Exodus event in the Writings of the Central Figures of the Faith indicate its literal truth, or is there another way to interpret these references? How are Bahá’ís to understand it when the

Central Figures mention a biblical story that modern scholars largely identify as parable – not fact?

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl addresses this question directly by explaining that the Prophets often speak to the traditional understandings of the people. He states:

[T]he prophets have indulged the people in regard to their historical notions, folk stories, and scientific principles, and have spoken to them according to these. They conversed as was appropriate to their audience and hid certain realities behind the curtain of allusion. . . .

Finally, it is well known that neither the Prophet Muhammad nor the rest of the Prophets ever engaged in disputes with the people about their historical beliefs, but addressed them according to their local traditions.³¹

Addressing students ‘where they are’ in the process of moving them forward is a universal method of effective teachers and one described by Bahá’u’lláh as a strategy of the Divine Educator. He states, “*All that I have revealed unto thee with the tongue of power, and have written for thee with the pen of might, hath been in accordance with thy capacity and understanding, not with My state and the melody of My voice.*” [AHW #67] Knowing that the Prophets speak to the capacities of the people includes awareness that the words of the Prophets are not limited to cultural connotations. The Universal House of Justice states:

Although, in conveying His Revelation, the Manifestation uses the language and culture of the country into which He is born, He is not confined to using terminology with the same connotations as those given to it by His predecessors or contemporaries; He delivers His message in a form which His audience, both immediate and in centuries to come, is capable of grasping. [8 February 1998]

Cultural connotations could be literal understandings as well as other culturally imposed perceptions. Considering the above guidance, it follows that when the Central Figures of the Faith draw on the imagery of a biblical story in Their teachings additional information may be required to determine if that event is historical fact or cultural tradition.

An examination of the complete passage from *The Secret of Divine Civilization* previously mentioned offers additional information which suggests that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is conforming to the audience’s traditional understandings of the Exodus. Before His commentary on the Israelites captivity under a tyrannical Pharaoh and their movement from Egypt to the Promised Land, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states,

The events that transpired at the advent of the Prophets of the past, and Their ways and works and circumstances, are not adequately set down in authoritative histories, and are referred to only in condensed form in the verses of the Qur’án, the Holy Traditions and the Torah. . . . To preclude once and for all objections on the part of any of the world's peoples, We shall conduct Our discussion conformably to those authoritative accounts which all nations are agreed upon. [SDC 75]

If historical happenings are “not adequately set down” but “condensed” to essential meanings, it may be possible that the final product could be mythology, legend, parable, fable, poetry, or any number of literary forms suitable for conveying higher significances to the heart. However reliably these figurative forms of language may communicate significant meanings, they may or may not express historical facts. Also, considering ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that He is reviewing the story of the Israelites “conformably” to that which is generally agreed upon, it is important to note that this commentary was written in 1875 which was just at the dawn of higher biblical criticism (the application of analytical measures to biblical

texts).^{32,33} At that time it was largely thought that Moses wrote the Torah and that it represented historical fact. Indeed, Finkelstein and Silberman report that until the 1970s even the science of archaeology in the land of the Bible was driven by an acceptance of the narratives of the Torah “at face value”.^{34,35}

After this introduction, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions the Israelites’ captivity in Egypt and eventual movement toward the Promised Land in a manner that directs the reader’s focus to the spiritual essence of the story: the Divine guidance of the Manifestation, the enlightenment of the people, and the evolution of unity. For example, He states:

In the midst of the Israelites, He [Moses] blazed out like a lamp of Divine guidance, and by the light of salvation He led that lost people out of the shadows of ignorance into knowledge and perfection. He gathered Israel's scattered tribes into the shelter of the unifying and universal Word of God, and over the heights of union He raised up the banner of harmony, so that within a brief interval those benighted souls became spiritually educated, and they who had been strangers to the truth, rallied to the cause of the oneness of God, and were delivered out of their wretchedness, their indigence, their incomprehension and captivity and achieved a supreme degree of happiness and honor. [SCD 76]

The above passage engages the imagery of the Exodus while simultaneously widening the concept of ‘captivity’ by equating bondage with conditions of the mind and the spirit, such as ignorance – thereby making this element of the Exodus story universally relevant.³⁶ It also confirms the spiritual transformation engendered by the Mosaic Dispensation in the general context of the Exodus narrative without focusing on historical details that require literal interpretation.

In light of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that He was conducting His discussion of the Israelites development under Moses

“conformably” to what was “agreed upon”, His focus on the inner meaning of the captivity of the Israelites in the same passage, His guidance that lack of evidence in the historical record indicates that biblical scripture should be understood for its inner (not literal) meaning, and the lack of evidence of the Exodus events in the historical record to date, I propose that when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions the Israelites enslavement under a tyrannical Pharaoh He is not giving a history lesson – He is giving a spiritual lesson delivered through the imagery of a cultural tradition.

In addition, given Bahá’u’lláh’s statement that the Manifestation of God speaks according to the capacity of the people, and also taking into account the elucidation by the House of Justice that cultural connotations cannot be assumed in the words of the Manifestation, I would propose that it would not be unreasonable to understand Bahá’u’lláh’s and the Báb’s occasional mention of the Israelites’ captivity under Pharaoh in the same symbolic manner.

When asked why symbolism was such an integral part of religious scripture, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained,

Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parable in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come. When the spiritually minded dive deeply into the ocean of their meaning they bring to the surface the pearls of their inner significance. [ABL 79]

One wonders about the inner significances of the ten plagues – this ancient story that continues to engage imaginations over two thousand years after its composition. Fortunately, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provides an authoritative interpretation for the first plague of waters turning into blood.³⁷ His explanation comes in an unexpected context – the section of *Some Answered Questions* entitled “Commentary on the Eleventh Chapter of the Revelation of John” (the last book of the New Testament).

Throughout this commentary, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains how the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation foretells events in the Dispensation of Muhammad. Revelation 11:6 draws on the imagery of water turning to blood. In the process of interpreting this verse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also unveils an interpretation of the first plague of the Exodus:

“And have power over waters to turn them to blood.”
 [Rev 11:6] *This means that the prophethood of Muhammad was similar to that of Moses, and the power of ‘Alí like that of Joshua. That is, it was in their power, had they so desired, to turn the waters of the Nile into blood for the Egyptians and the deniers – or, in other words, to turn, in consequence of their ignorance and pride, that which was the source of their life into the cause of their death. Thus the sovereignty, wealth, and power of Pharaoh and of his people, which were the source of that nation’s life, became, as a result of their opposition, denial, and pride, the very cause of their death, ruin, destruction, degradation, and wretchedness. Hence these two witnesses have power to destroy nations.* [SAQ 58]

From this explanation it can be understood that the Nile, in all aspects the water of life to the Egyptians, symbolizes the traditional source of sovereignty, wealth, and power that became outdated with the appearance of the Mosaic Revelation. This same dynamic repeated itself with the appearance of the Muhammadan Revelation as prophesied in the Book of Revelation. In Abdu’l-Bahá’s explanation, the spoiling of the river is symbolic of the way that denying the Manifestation of God and holding onto outdated forms of sovereignty, wealth, and power can be oppressive. Archetypal truth is expressed in figurative terms as waters turning to blood.

While direct explanations for the other nine plagues are not found in the Bahá’í Writings,³⁸ examining the plague terms as

they are used in other contexts in the Writings can inform personal reflection and help lovers of the plague narrative to discover spiritual meanings for themselves. For example, the following statement by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá where He compares rumormongers with the “croaking of frogs” and the “buzzing of flies” inspires ideas of what the plagues of frogs and flies may symbolize today:

Verily, I, through the grace of my Lord, have never heeded these souls, even to reading their articles, inasmuch as their articles signify no other than the buzzing of flies to the hearing of an eagle, or the croaking of a frog of the material world to the ears of the leviathan of the sea of the Kingdom. Is it to be considered as anything? No, by no means! Verily, the eagle soareth high in the supreme apex while the flies rumble in the lowest rubbish. [TAB2 349]

Along the same vein, the plague of gnats comes to mind in Bahá’u’lláh’s encouragement to not become disheartened by the peoples of the world who are “filled with dismay”:

Take heed lest Thou falter on that Day when all created things are filled with dismay; rather be Thou the revealer of My name, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Assist Thy Lord to the utmost of Thine ability, and pay no heed to the peoples of the world, for that which their mouths utter is like unto the droning of a gnat in an endless valley. [SLH 10]

The plague of lightening, thunder, and hail becomes something more than violent weather when considered through ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of these images in a New Testament verse:

“And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” [Revelation 11:19], meaning that after the appearance of

the Book of the Testament there will be a great storm, and the lightnings of the anger and the wrath of God will flash, the noise of the thunder of the violation of the Covenant will resound, the earthquake of doubts will take place, the hail of torments will beat upon the violators of the Covenant, and even those who profess belief will fall into trials and temptations. [SAQ 69-70]

Similarly, the plague of darkness takes on fresh meaning when one considers Bahá'u'lláh's teaching that God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is "*first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding.*" [GWB 79]

Reflection on a sample of the plagues in light of the above Bahá'í quotations demonstrates the value of focusing on inner meanings. Instead of one-time frogs, flies, gnats, darkness, lightning, thunder, and hail that may or may not have caused mayhem three thousand years ago, these afflictions become powerful symbols in an easy-to-remember story that reminds us of the ultimate futility of falsehood and dismay, the dangers of the violation of the Covenant, the inevitability of doubts and temptations, and the suffering caused by ignorance. There is no need to argue about whether or not the plagues happened three thousand years ago — these are things that plague us today.

While the above Bahá'í quotations may inspire ideas about the spiritual meanings of the plagues, the suggested interpretations are not offered as a primitive exegesis. We may never know the intent of the storytellers who passed on the images of the plagues, or know how later editors and redactors understood them — and that is perfectly acceptable because reading the Bible is not all about historical context. Noted theologian Gerald L. Bruns points out that, "The whole orientation of Scripture is toward its future, not toward its past."³⁹ One of the greatest values of pondering the inner meanings of biblical Scripture is not necessarily to focus on the

context of ancient cultures, but to nurture the heart today and tomorrow. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

All the texts and teachings of the holy Testaments have intrinsic spiritual meanings. They are not to be taken literally. I, therefore, pray in your behalf that you may be given the power of understanding these inner real meanings of the Holy Scriptures and may become informed of the mysteries deposited in the words of the Bible so that you may attain eternal life and that your hearts may be attracted to the Kingdom of God. [PUP 459]

More historical information concerning the physical journeys and circumstances of the Israelites in the early days of the Mosaic Dispensation may be discovered by archaeology and other disciplines in the future, or may be lost to time, but the Bahá’í Writings indicate that inner meanings related to the Mosaic Dispensation live in the biblical story. Whether or not the details are confirmed in the historical record, the Bahá’í Writings acknowledge the biblical text as a spiritual guide to the Kingdom.

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NOTES

- ¹. The Hebrew Bible correlates in general to the Old Testament of the Christian Bible.
- ². The Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith are Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- ³. Killebrew, p. 151.

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4. The Pharaoh is not named. According to Fokkelman, “Pharaoh” is probably an emblematic title meant to encompass all of the Egyptian kings who exploited generations of Israelites in the Exodus story (Fokkelman, p. 59).
 5. The ten afflictions are variously referred to as signs and wonders, plagues, and blows (Houston, p. 73).
 6. Hebrew *Yam Suph*; that is, Sea of Reeds (Exodus 15:4 NIV, note a.).
 7. Biblical and historical terms for this land area include Land of Canaan, the Promised Land, the Holy Land, Palestine, Israel and Judah, the State of Israel, and the Southern Levant. Biblical boundaries of this land area vary. See Genesis 15, Exodus 23, Numbers 34, and Ezekiel 47.
 8. The current understanding based on the Documentary Hypothesis is that the Book of Exodus was created from a variety of materials through a long two-stage process of authorship. One source (referred to as J or Jawist/Yawist) composed the bulk of the work probably in the sixth or seventh century B.C. The second (P or Priestly) author expanded on the story in the late sixth or fifth century B.C. (Houston 68). For more information on the Documentary Hypothesis see Friedman 1987, 2005.
 9. Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl-i-Gulpáygání: “The most outstanding scholar of the Bahá’í Faith”; lived at the time of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; named one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh by Shoghi Effendi (Momen, pp. 6-7).
 10. Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl-i-Gulpáygání, p.15.
 11. *ibid.* p. 16.
 12. Redford, p. 408.
 13. Finkelstein and Silberman, pp. 52-54.
 14. Cline, p. 92.
 15. Finkelstein and Silberman, pp. 59-60.
 16. For example, the Merneptah stele indicates the existence of a people referred to as “Israel” in the Land of Canaan at the very end of the thirteenth century B.C.; archaeological evidence shows signs of a distinct Israelite presence in the Land of Canaan in the Iron Age; the Tel Dan inscription shows evidence of the existence of the House of David in the ninth century (Finkelstein and Silberman, pp. 57, 118-119, 129).
 17. Extensive archaeological research in Israel over the past thirty years reveals a story that differs from the Hebrew Bible – that being the gradual emergence of the Israelite tribes from within the Land of Canaan. In the words of Finkelstein and Silberman, “There was no mass Exodus from Egypt. There was no violent conquest of Canaan” (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 118). It is noteworthy that Israel Finkelstein, one of the authors of this statement, is the past Director of the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University, the leading

archaeologist of the Levant, and a recipient of the 2005 international Dan David Prize – a one million USD award for achievement that “expands knowledge of former times” (DanDavidPrize.org).

¹⁸. Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 2.

¹⁹. On the topic of the writing of the Book of Exodus, also see Redmond, pp. 408-422; Friedman, pp. 7-31, 119-189; Houston, 67-68; Schniedewind, 118-138.

²⁰. Wright, p. 161; Meyers, p. 81-82.

²¹. Velikovskiy.

²². Hort, pp. 84-103.

²³. Marr and Malloy, pp. 16-24.

²⁴. “The Ten Plagues of the Bible.”

²⁵. Trevisanato, pp. 9-59; Booyson, 289-309.

²⁶. Cline, p. 93.

²⁷. Harris, p. 21.

²⁸. For example, the Thera hypothesis suffers in that it is now known that the eruption was much less violent and occurred much earlier than what was originally assumed by theorists. (Harris, pp. 18-21).

²⁹. Matthew 27:51-53.

³⁰. For example: Bahá’u’lláh, ESW 63; Bahá’u’lláh, KI 63; The Báb, SWB 26; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, SDC 74-76; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, SAQ 17.

³¹. Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl-i-Gulpáygání, pp. 9, 14.

³². Walton, p. 15-17.

³³. For a study of the value of higher biblical criticism in light of the Bahá’í Writings, see Stockman, pp. 107-114.

³⁴. Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 21.

³⁵. Divine authorship of the Bible is still a popular view. In the 1996 Gallup pole it was reported that 35% of Americans believed that the Bible is the literal and inerrant word of the Creator of the universe (Gallup, 1996).

³⁶. The concept of captivity as a condition of the soul is a prominent theme in the Bahá’í Writings. Bahá’u’lláh states, “*He is indeed a captive who hath not recognized the Supreme Redeemer, but hath suffered his soul to be bound, distressed and helpless, in the fetters of his desires*” [GWB 169].

³⁷. Exodus 7:19-21.

³⁸. That is, at this time, this writer has not found direct interpretations of biblical plagues two through ten in the Bahá’í Writings that are available to her in English.

³⁹. Bruns, p. 629.