

The Exodus Series – The Plagues

1. **Exodus 7:14 - 25** – Water into Blood for Seven Days
2. **Exodus 8:1 – 15** – The Country is Plagued with Frogs
3. **Exodus 8:16 – 19** – Gnats in All the Land
4. **Exodus 8:20 - 32** – Great Swarms of Flies
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8. **Exodus 10:1 – 20** Locusts Cover the Land
9. **Exodus 10:21 – 29** Pitch Darkness for Three Days

The first 9 plagues are in 3 sets of 3 – they can be broken into triads:

This means the order and shaping of this is well thought out - there's a literary design here.

First Triad	Plague 1, 4, and 7 - water becomes blood, the flies, and the hail	All begin with Moses confronting Pharoah in the morning while he is going to the Nile according to his daily routine.
Second Triad	Plague 2, 5, 8 - frogs, a plague on livestock, locusts	All begin with Moses going to warn Pharoah in his palace.
Third Triad	Plague 3, 6, 9 - gnats, boils, darkness	All come with no warning

Remember, God is doing more than punishing the Pharoah and the Egyptians

He is also judging the gods of the Egyptians.

Exodus 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.

Numbers 33:4 while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them. On their gods also the LORD executed judgments.

All of these plagues were falling on the areas of life that were supposed to be protected and blessed by the gods they worshipped. There were over 2,000 deities in the Egyptian pantheon all clustered around the three great natural forces in Egypt: the Nile, the land, and the sky

Deuteronomy 4:33 - 35

33 Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live?

34 Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35 To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.

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First Plague: Exodus 7:14 - 25 – The Water of The Nile Is Turned into Blood for Seven Days

Verse 14: Then the LORD said to Moses

The phrase begins the narrative of each plague (7:14; 8:1, 16, 20; 9:1, 8, 13; 10:1, 21; 11:1). This not only textually indicates the sequence of the plagues, but also indicates the events are governed by the Word of the LORD.

Verse 15: The Nile

Remember the significance of the Nile to the Egyptian people. Their whole kingdom, culture, and worship were formed from it. It is certainly significant that the Nile is the first target. As it was seen as the lifeblood of all Egypt and the source of all of their gods. So the LORD strikes at the heart of all of it with the first move.

Additionally, there is a symbolism and an irony at play here: these were the same waters that Pharaoh commanded, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile” (Exodus 1:22), and Moses was “drawn out” of the Nile. God remembered the innocent blood of those children and the first sign from Moses is a plague on the waters he was placed in.

Verse 17: By this you shall know I am the LORD

This will be spoken to Pharaoh and Egypt all through this text (7:17; 8:10, 22, 9:14, 29; 10:2), but we should remember before any of this, it first needed to be spoken to Moses “and you shall know that I am the LORD your God” (6:7).

Verse 19: Even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone

Far beyond what could have been explained by natural causes, even waters stored in separate containers were transformed into blood. In order to have a potable source, the Egyptians will have to dig to find drinking water.

Verse 22: But the magicians of Egypt did the same

We see here again, as with the staffs turning into serpents, the magicians with their secret arts are able to replicate the sign and the effect on Pharaoh’s heart to harden in response. Notably, their power is always inferior and unhelpful. Their staffs are eaten by Aaron’s and for seven days the Egyptians could not drink from the Nile.

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Second Plague: Exodus 8:1 – 15 – The Country Is Plagued with Frogs

Verse 3: Frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom

The extent of this plague will extend beyond the waters of the Nile frogs will come into their houses, their bedrooms, their beds, their ovens, their kneading bowls, and even come on the people themselves.

Verse 8: Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people

Pharaoh is giving tacit admission that his magicians and his gods were unable to remove the frogs. He conditionally promises to let the people go if the LORD answers his plea.

Verse 12: Moses cried to the LORD about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh

As was agreed, Moses intercedes for Egypt. Moses will play the role of interceder for the rest of his ministry; he will stand between God and Israel time and again to ask for relief and mercies (**15:25; 17:4; 32:11 – 14; 33:12 – 16**).

Verse 14: They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank

Just as the people of Egypt had additional burdens digging for water from the first plague, they have to clean up the mess of all the dead frogs. Pharaoh's choices are causing hardships and heavy labors for his own people.

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Third Plague: Exodus 8:16 – 19 – Gnats in All the Land

Verse 19: This is the finger of God

With the signs before, the magicians had been able to use their secret arts to replicate them (the serpents, water into blood, frogs everywhere), but they are unable to bring gnats from dust.

Which is so poetic, because Egypt is monumental with great statues and impressive works. But their mighty magicians are beaten by fleas! Additionally, they admit the failings of all their combined strengths applied cannot match the mere “finger of God.”

Now some of Pharaoh’s servants are begging to recognize what Pharaoh refuses to see. The God of the Hebrews has greater power over Egypt than Pharaoh has. Pharaoh’s defiance of him is harming him and all of his own people.

Fourth Plague: Exodus 8:20 - 32 – Great Swarms of Flies

Verse 22: I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell

The prior plagues affected the Israelites as well as the Egyptians, but not God is putting a “division between my people and your people” for Pharaoh. The LORD is saying and showing Israel are “my people” (not yours) and this plague will be on Egypt, “your people.”

The land of Goshen

Historians suggest this area was on the eastern delta in Egypt. This was the land originally given to Joseph and his family (**Genesis 47:4 – 6**). The purpose of separation was because the Israelite trade of being shepherds was “an abomination to the Egyptians” (**Genesis 46:34**).

Verse 25: Go, sacrifice to your God within the land

Pharaoh is trying to find a way to “have his cake and eat it too.” Moses of all people knew the differences between Egyptian and Hebrew cultures. He responds that Israelite sacrifices to the LORD “are an abomination to the Egyptians” and if the Egyptians saw them doing so, “will they not stone us?”

Verse 28: Only you must not go very far away

Pharaoh again seems to relent and release the Israelites, but he still desires to keep them under his power by governing the extent of their freedoms. Moses agrees to plead again to the LORD on his behalf, but he adds the warning, “only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.”

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Fifth Plague: Exodus 9:1 – 7 – Death of the Livestock

Verse 3: very severe plague upon... the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks

Again there is a “division between my people and your people” for Pharaoh. The next day, “all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died.” (Verse 6) Pharaoh even sends a representative to check to see if none of the “livestock of Israel was dead,” but still his heart was hardened.

Sixth Plague: Exodus 9:8 – 12 – Boils on Man and Beast

Verse 8: Take handfuls of soot from the kiln

Again, we see meaningful symbolism and irony at play here. These kilns would have been used by the Hebrew slaves to make bricks for Pharaoh's great works. Now soot from their fires is going to cause boils that would break out into sores on both man and beast in the land of Egypt.

Verse 11: the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils

While they at first seemed able to reproduce the first signs, they have been powerless since the gnats of the third plague. Now with this sixth plague, as mere humans, they are unable to stand before Pharaoh because of the pains of the boils all over their bodies.

Verse 12: But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh

Here at the sixth plague, we see the transition of Pharaoh hardening his own heart to God Himself stepping in and causing Pharaoh to double down on his choice. It seems without the magicians able to stand before Pharaoh to influence him with their spiritual delusions, the LORD himself takes a more active role to bring His purposes to pass.

Seventh Plague: Exodus 9:13 – 35 – Severe Hail, Thunder, and Lighting

Verse 14: this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself

This time the sign would be unique, God would give an explicit explanation of the power and purpose of the plagues (verses 14 – 17), and for the first time offer a way to avoid the effects of the plague (verses 18 – 19).

Repeated references to the earth are all throughout this text:

- **Verse 14:** ...so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.
- **Verse 15:** ...by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth.
- **Verse 16:** ... for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.
- **Verse 29:** ...The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's.

Verse 27: This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong

Pharaoh's admission with “this time” echoes the opening words of the LORD's warning and again he asks for Moses to plea for him in intercession.

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Eighth Plague: Exodus 10:1 – 20 Locusts Cover the Land

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

These events would be historical and vital to the Hebrews as a people to always remember. They were never to forget how God redeemed them from Egypt with mighty signs so that they would never forget that He is the LORD.

Verse 7: Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us?"

Again, Pharaoh's own counselors plead with him to let the Hebrew people go. They even say, "Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?" So, Pharaoh calls Moses and Aaron back in to negotiate.

Verse 8: "Go, serve the LORD your God. But which ones are to go?"

Again, Pharaoh tries to over his power over them by limiting the extent of their freedoms. Last time, it was with limited distance, this time he tries by limited attendance. Moses is clear all of them are to be let go, "we will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds" (**verse 9**). Pharaoh in his pride drives them from his presence.

Verse 14: A dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again.

The LORD had said to Moses that these locusts would "eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left." (**Verse 12**) By the end of the plague, "not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt." (**Verse 15**)

Ninth Plague: Exodus 10:21 – 29 Pitch Darkness for Three Days

Verse 21: Darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt

This would immobilize the Egyptians from any activity. These final signs are increasingly foreboding the coming death in the final plague, as Pharaoh himself recognized when he previously said of the locusts "remove this death from me." (**Verse 17**)

Themes of light and dark; life and death

The locusts had covered "the face of the land" (**verse 5**) so that "the land was darkened" (**Verse 15**). However, this plague of darkness now made it so that the Egyptians couldn't see the faces of the people, and "they did not see one another." (**Verse 23**)

The darkness lasted three days (symbolizing lasting death) as no one for that time "did rise from his place" (**Verse 23**). However, God ensured in contrast to the Egyptians sitting in death's shadows, "but all the people of Israel had light where they lived."

Verse 24: Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also... only let your flocks and your herds remain

Again, Pharaoh tries to over his power over them by limiting the extent of their freedoms. Now Pharaoh tries to insist that all the people may go, but the livestock must remain. Remember, no Egyptian has any livestock left! Moses is clear the livestock are coming with them; their purpose is to present burnt offerings of sacrifice to the LORD.

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Exodus 10:28 – 29

28 Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.”

29 Moses said, “As you say! I will not see your face again.”

- Pharaoh sends Moses away with a threat.
 - Little does he know, his request will be granted – but of course, the LORD will ensure it's not Moses who will die, but Pharaoh by his own undoing.