

PLAGUES OF EGYPT

Exodus 7 – 12

God told Moses and Aaron to go down to the River Nile where Pharaoh went in the morning. They had a message from God to give to Pharaoh, 'Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness.' Pharaoh refused.

So Aaron did what God had instructed and struck the River Nile with his staff. The water was changed to blood. Fish died, the Egyptians could not drink the water and the river smelt.

Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing by their secret arts. Pharaoh refused to obey God and turned and went back to the palace.

Seven days later, God told Moses to tell Aaron to stretch his staff over the streams, canals and ponds to make frogs come out onto the land.

Pharaoh's magicians used their secret arts and were able to do the same.

Frogs were everywhere and Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron.

'Pray to your God to take the frogs away from my people and I will let your people go,' promised Pharaoh. Moses replied, 'So you will know there is no one like God, the frogs will leave you and your houses tomorrow.'

Moses prayed to God and He answered. Frogs died in the houses, courtyards and fields. The dead frogs were piled into heaps and the smell was really bad.

Pharaoh, however, broke his promise and refused to let the Hebrews go and worship God in the wilderness.

So God told Moses to tell Aaron to strike the dust with his staff and the dust would become gnats. Pharaoh's magicians tried but could not do this. 'This is the finger of God,' they told Pharaoh.

Gnats were on people and animals everywhere.

Pharaoh still had a hard heart and refused to let the Hebrews go and worship God.

Early in the morning as Pharaoh went down to the river, Moses and Aaron told him what God had planned next. Swarms of flies would buzz around the Egyptians but not the Hebrew slaves living in Goshen.

Dense swarms of flies came into the palace and the houses of the Egyptians.

But the flies stayed away from the Hebrew slaves.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. 'I will let you go and offer sacrifices to your God but you must not go far. Now pray to God to stop the flies.'

Moses prayed and the next day the flies left. But Pharaoh broke his promise and refused to let the Hebrew slaves go.

Moses went to Pharaoh again. 'If you refuse to let my people go, tomorrow God will bring a terrible plague on your horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, sheep and goats. But livestock of the slaves will be spared.'

The next day the livestock of the Egyptians died.

Pharaoh investigated and found out that the animals belonging to the Hebrew slaves were alive and well, but he refused to let God's people go and worship Him in the wilderness.

Moses took soot from a furnace and threw it into the air in front of Pharaoh. 'God says, this soot will become a fine dust and people and animals will get festering boils.'

Pharaoh's magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that broke out on them and the Egyptians. But Pharaoh still refused to let God's people go.

God sent Moses to tell Pharaoh that he was going to show his power by sending the worse hailstorm Egypt had ever had. Anyone not sheltering inside would be risking their life.

The officials of Pharaoh who feared God brought their families and animals indoors. But those who ignored God stayed outside. When Moses raised his staff the worst storm anyone had ever seen blew up.

Lightning filled the skies and large hailstones came pounding down.

Those caught outside were killed. But the storm did not hit the slaves living in Goshen.

'I have sinned. The Lord is right,' Pharaoh told Moses. 'I will let you go.'

Moses went out of the city and spread out his hands to God. The thunder and hail stopped.

Pharaoh, however, then changed his mind and stubbornly refused to let God's people go. He thought he could defy God but God was not finished with him yet.

Moses had another warning for Pharaoh. 'If you refuse to let the God's people go He will bring a plague of locusts on the land – something your parents and ancestors have never seen.' Pharaoh's officials advised him to let God's people go.

But when Pharaoh found out that all the Hebrew slaves would be leaving he only gave permission for the men to go and worship God. Then he ordered Moses and Aaron to get out of his presence.

So Moses raised his staff over Egypt. An east wind blew all night bringing in a swarm of locusts. They covered the ground making it look black and ate everything growing in the fields until nothing green remained on plant or tree.

'I have sinned against God,' Pharaoh told Moses. 'Forgive me once more and pray to God to take this deadly plague away.'

When Moses left Pharaoh and prayed, the wind changed direction and blew from the west, carrying the locusts into the Red Sea.

Pharaoh became stubborn again, broke his promise and refused to let God's people go and worship Him.

Moses stretched out his hands and total darkness came over the land for three days. Only in Goshen where the Hebrew slaves lived was there light.

The Egyptians could not see anyone else or move about.

Pharaoh summoned Moses. 'Go and worship God. Take your women and children as well but you must leave your animals behind.' 'Our animals must travel with us,' insisted Moses. 'Some are needed to offer sacrifices to God.'

'Get out of my sight,' ordered Pharaoh. 'Don't ever appear before me again. If you do, you will die.'

'Just as you say,' replied Moses. 'I won't appear before you again. But God has one more plague to send. About midnight the firstborn son of every family and animal will die and there will be weeping and wailing everywhere – except among God's people.'

Moses was red with anger. 'Then your officials will come and bow before me and tell us to leave. After that I shall leave.' Moses then turned and walked out of the palace.

The Lord then told Moses to tell His people that on the 10th day of the month every man who was head of a family was to sacrifice a lamb. Those who couldn't afford a lamb should join with a family that had one. The lambs must be one-year-old males without defect.

God's people obeyed and each family sacrificed a lamb. God then told them to put some of the blood of the slain lamb into a basin. Then, using a bunch of hyssop dipped in the blood, they should smear the top and sides of the door frame of the house where they were going to eat the meat.

God explained that that night He was going to pass through the land to bring judgement. But if He saw blood on the doorposts of a house He would pass over and those inside would be spared. So the Hebrews did as God instructed.

That evening, God's people got dressed ready to leave Egypt and sat down for a meal they would later call the Passover (for God would pass over them).

Moses explained that the Passover meal was to be celebrated every year. And when children asked what it meant they were to explain its meaning and tell how God had spared those homes covered by the blood of the lamb and set His people free.

At midnight the Lord passed over the land and the firstborn son of Pharaoh and every Egyptian family was found dead. The first born of every animal was slain too.

There was weeping and wailing in every house except those houses with blood on the doorposts.

That night, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Up. Leave my people and go and worship the Lord God. Take your families and animals with you. Please bless me.'

God's people packed their belongings. The Egyptians, afraid that they might all die, gave them gifts of silver and gold. 'Hurry and leave,' they urged.

God's people rushed off so quickly they did not have time to add yeast to the dough they had made for bread. They had been slaves for 430 years and now they were free. Just as God had promised.

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