

Exodus 8:8-11:10



Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron, and said, ‘Pray to the Lord to take away the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.’ Moses said to Pharaoh, ‘Kindly tell me when I am to pray for you and for your officials and for your people, that the frogs may be removed from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile.’ And he said, ‘Tomorrow.’ Moses said, ‘As you say! So that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God, the frogs shall leave you and your houses and your officials and your people; they shall be left only in the Nile.’ Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh; and Moses cried out to the Lord concerning the frogs that he had brought upon Pharaoh. And the Lord did as Moses requested: the frogs died in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart, and would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.

The Third Plague: Gnats

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron, “Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt.” ’ And they did so; Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and gnats came on humans and animals alike; all the dust of the earth turned into gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt. The magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, but they could not. There were gnats on both humans and animals. And the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God!’ But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.

The Fourth Plague: Flies

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. For if you will not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you, your officials, and your people, and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies; so also the land where they live. But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people live, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I the Lord am in this land. Thus I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign shall appear tomorrow.” ’ The Lord did so, and great swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh and into his officials’ houses; in all of Egypt the land was ruined because of the flies.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, and said, ‘Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.’ But Moses said, ‘It would not be right to do so; for the sacrifices that we offer to the Lord our God are offensive to the Egyptians. If we offer in the sight of the Egyptians sacrifices that

are offensive to them, will they not stone us? We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he commands us.' So Pharaoh said, 'I will let you go to sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness, provided you do not go very far away. Pray for me.' Then Moses said, 'As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his officials, and from his people; only do not let Pharaoh again deal falsely by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.'

So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. And the Lord did as Moses asked: he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his officials, and from his people; not one remained. But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and would not let the people go.

The Fifth Plague: Livestock Diseased

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh, and say to him, "Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, the hand of the Lord will strike with a deadly pestilence your livestock in the field: the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks. But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing shall die of all that belongs to the Israelites." ' The Lord set a time, saying, 'Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.' And on the next day the Lord did so; all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but of the livestock of the Israelites not one died. Pharaoh inquired and found that not one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he would not let the people go.

The Sixth Plague: Boils

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw it in the air in the sight of Pharaoh. It shall become fine dust all over the land of Egypt, and shall cause festering boils on humans and animals throughout the whole land of Egypt.' So they took soot from the kiln, and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses threw it in the air, and it caused festering boils on humans and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils afflicted the magicians as well as all the Egyptians. But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

The Seventh Plague: Thunder and Hail

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, and say to him, "Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. For this time I will send all my plagues upon you yourself, and upon your officials, and upon your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth. You are still exalting yourself against my people, and will not let them go. Tomorrow at this time I

will cause the heaviest hail to fall that has ever fallen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. Send, therefore, and have your livestock and everything that you have in the open field brought to a secure place; every human or animal that is in the open field and is not brought under shelter will die when the hail comes down upon them.”’ Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord hurried their slaves and livestock off to a secure place. Those who did not regard the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the open field.

The Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand towards heaven so that hail may fall on the whole land of Egypt, on humans and animals and all the plants of the field in the land of Egypt.’ Then Moses stretched out his staff towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire came down on the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt; there was hail with fire flashing continually in the midst of it, such heavy hail as had never fallen in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck down everything that was in the open field throughout all the land of Egypt, both human and animal; the hail also struck down all the plants of the field, and shattered every tree in the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were, there was no hail.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, and said to them, ‘This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the Lord! Enough of God’s thunder and hail! I will let you go; you need stay no longer.’ Moses said to him, ‘As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord’s. But as for you and your officials, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God.’ (Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they are late in coming up.) So Moses left Pharaoh, went out of the city, and stretched out his hands to the Lord; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured down on the earth. But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned once more and hardened his heart, he and his officials. So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.

The Eighth Plague: Locusts

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his officials, in order that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I have made fools of the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them—so that you may know that I am the Lord.’

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. For if you refuse to let my people go, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country. They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They shall devour the last remnant left you after the hail, and they shall devour every tree of yours that grows in the field. They shall fill your houses, and the houses of all your officials and of all the Egyptians—something that neither your parents nor your grandparents have

seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.”’ Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

Pharaoh’s officials said to him, ‘How long shall this fellow be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the Lord their God; do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?’ So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, ‘Go, worship the Lord your God! But which ones are to go?’ Moses said, ‘We will go with our young and our old; we will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, because we have the Lord’s festival to celebrate.’ He said to them, ‘The Lord indeed will be with you, if ever I let your little ones go with you! Plainly you have some evil purpose in mind. No, never! Your men may go and worship the Lord, for that is what you are asking.’ And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt, so that the locusts may come upon it and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left.’ So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night; when morning came, the east wind had brought the locusts. The locusts came upon all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever shall be again. They covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was black; and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left; nothing green was left, no tree, no plant in the field, in all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh hurriedly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Do forgive my sin just this once, and pray to the Lord your God that at the least he remove this deadly thing from me.’ So he went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. The Lord changed the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.

The Ninth Plague: Darkness

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand towards heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt.’ So Moses stretched out his hand towards heaven, and there was dense darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see one another, and for three days they could not move from where they were; but all the Israelites had light where they lived. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses, and said, ‘Go, worship the Lord. Only your flocks and your herds shall remain behind. Even your children may go with you.’ But Moses said, ‘You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt-offerings to sacrifice to the Lord our God. Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must choose some of them for the worship of the Lord our God, and we will not know what to use to worship the Lord until we arrive there.’ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was unwilling to let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.’ Moses said, ‘Just as you say! I will never see your face again.’

Warning of the Final Plague

The Lord said to Moses, 'I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you away. Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbor and every woman is to ask her neighbor for objects of silver and gold.' The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, Moses himself was a man of great importance in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's officials, and in the sight of the people.

Moses said, "Thus says the Lord: About midnight I will go out through Egypt. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock. Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt, such as has never been nor will ever be again. But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites—not at people, not at animals—so that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me, and bow low to me, saying, "Leave us, you and all the people who follow you." After that I will leave.' And in hot anger he left Pharaoh.

The Lord said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you, in order that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.' Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

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Questions for Discussion

After someone reads a portion of the above selection, prayerfully consider the following questions. Allow fifteen minutes or so for this pre-meeting Bible study.

1. What did you hear? Did anything surprise you?
2. How does what you heard apply to you?
3. How will what you've learned from this scripture affect your work together?