

Exodus Chapter 8 Continued

Exodus 8:19 "Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This [is] the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said."

“This is the finger of God”: The failure of the magicians to duplicate this plague elicited from them this amazing evaluation, not only among themselves, but publicly before Pharaoh. Who nevertheless remained defiant, unwilling to acknowledge the power of God.

We see here, that these magicians were wiser than the Pharaoh. They finally recognized this as the finger of God. These magicians actually started the process of unbelief of the Pharaoh, when they turned their rods into serpents and when they did something to compete, with the water turning to blood. Pharaoh did not take the magicians warning. Pharaoh further hardened his heart as he would not listen as the Lord had predicted.

Verses 20-32: Each of the plagues in a new cycle (the first, the fourth, and the seventh) proceeds with a warning from Moses as he stands before Pharaoh early in the morning as “he cometh forth to the water”. The second plague in each cycle (the second, fifth and the eighth), has only a warning from Moses; and the last ones do not receive a warning, but they come unannounced.

Moses conveyed to Pharaoh the additional distinction that “the land of Goshen,” the area where Israel lived, would be unaffected by the plague “to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.”

“Division” (in verse 23), actually means a “ransom, redemption” in the Hebrew text, but the Septuagint, Syriac Peshitta and Vulgate (notable ancient versions of the Old Testament), have a different root, meaning “distinction, difference.” The word “distinction, difference” does appear (in 9:4; 11:7 and 33:16) and is a significant concept in that God does “distinguish” between His people and the heathen when judgment comes. And (in 33:16), it is His very presence with Israel, His people, that sets them apart from all other peoples.

The act of sacrificing (“the abomination of the Egyptians”), seems to be related to the sacrifice of sheep. This is supported by the warning of Joseph (in Genesis 46:34). Some have suggested it was the sacrifice of heifers, the cow being the animal sacred to the goddess Hathor. Another view is that the Israelites would not carry out the rigid regulations with regard to the cleanness of the sacrificial animals. Pharaoh’s response, “Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land,” is the first of four compromises he proposed, which may be paraphrased as follows:

- (1) “Stay in the land” (verse 25).
- (2) “Do not go very far away” (verse 28)
- (3) “Leave your families with me” (10:11).
- (4) Leave your possessions with me” (10:24).

Satan makes the same basic appeals to Christians today. The text carefully notes that “Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also.” Moses had plainly told Pharaoh (in verse 29), not to “deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord (Gen. 3:1), and Satan’s tactics). Satan has been a murderer and liar from the beginning (John 8:44).

Exodus 8:20 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me."

Of the day following, the twenty eight of Adar, or February, according to Bishop Usher. This was the best time to meet with Pharaoh, and the most likely to make impressions on him.

"And stand before Pharaoh": Meet him as he comes along and stop him, stand before him as having something to say to him. This was using great boldness and freedom with a king. But as Moses was ordered to do it by the King of kings, it became him to obey him.

"Lo, he cometh forth to the water" (see Exodus 7:15).

"And say unto him, thus saith the Lord, let my people go, that they may serve me": Which had often been required before, but to no purpose, and in case of refusal he is threatened as follows (in verse 21).

Here again we see Moses being instructed to catch the Pharaoh at the edge of the water early in the morning when Pharaoh took his daily trip to the water. Over and over they told Pharaoh to let the people go.

Exodus 8:21 "Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms [of flies] upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms [of flies], and also the ground whereon they [are]."

“Swarms”: The LXX translates “swarms” as “dog-fly”, a blood-sucking insect. The ichneumon fly, which deposited its eggs on other living things so the larvae could feast upon it, was considered the manifestation of the god Uatchit. “The land was laid waste because of the swarms” (verse 24), is hardly an evaluation propitious for any insect-god! Whatever the specific type of fly might have been, the effect of the plague was intense and distressful.

“Flies” were common pests in arid Egypt, but now they were an affliction of unprecedented magnitude (Psalm 78:45). Except where God’s people lived (“Goshen”).

These plagues just got worse and worse. This, like the frogs, was a plague inside the house even more than outside. This particular species of flies had a terrible bite. Flies by the millions were more than a nuisance; they were a health hazard as well.

Exodus 8:22 "And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms [of flies] shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I [am] the LORD in the midst of the earth."

“In that day the land of Goshen”: For the first time in connection with the plagues, God specifically noted the discrimination to be made, Israel would be untouched! The term “sign” (verse 23), describes the distinction which was being drawn and which was also specifically noted for the fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth plagues. Coupled with the repeated emphasis on “My people” in God’s pronouncements. The specific distinguishing between Israel in Goshen and Egypt itself highlighted both God’s personal and powerful oversight of His people.

This is the first plague in which God singled out the Egyptians and protected the Hebrew people (see note on 7:14).

The first plagues all came on Hebrew and Egyptian alike, but suddenly here the Hebrews were separated from the Egyptians. This is another point to be made about the first 3-1/2 years of the tribulation being endured by the world and Christendom and the last 3 1/2 years (wrath of God), being just on the worldly. The Hebrews were in Egypt, but not of Egypt; just as we Christians are in the world, but not of the world. God was telling Pharaoh: I am making a separation between the saved and the unsaved. God was showing Pharaoh that He was the God of the Hebrews.

Exodus 8:23 "And I will put a division between my people and thy people: tomorrow shall this sign be."

“Tomorrow”: The plague-warning on this occasion stated exactly when it would strike, giving Pharaoh and his people opportunity to repent or yield. “Tomorrow” was also the due time for the fifth, seventh, and eighth plagues (9:5, 18; 10:4). And “about midnight” was the stated time for the ninth plague to commence (see note on 11:4).

God, for that matter, has always had a division between His people and the world. God will build a hedge around His people and protect them from the enemy. The hedge is the shed blood of Jesus. When the plagues came on all the people with no separation, the legalist tried to analyze it away by saying it was just a natural phenomenon. When the separation was distinct, there was no way they could justify this logically, as this was spiritual all the way.

Exodus 8:24 "And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm [of flies] into the house of Pharaoh, and [into] his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm [of flies]."

And this he did immediately of himself without any means. Not by the rod of Aaron, to let the Egyptians see that there was nothing in that rod, that it had no magic virtue in it, and what was done by it was from the Lord himself. Who could as well inflict plagues without it as with it (see Psalm 105:31). And there came a grievous swarm of flies; or a "heavy" swarm, which was both very numerous, and very troublesome and distressing.

“Into the house of Pharaoh, and into the houses of his servants, and into all the land of Egypt”: Into the palace of Pharaoh, and into the palaces of his nobles, ministers, and courtiers, and into the dwelling places of all his subjects, throughout the whole land, excepting the land of Goshen.

"The land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies": Josephus says, the land lay neglected and uncultivated by the husbandmen; it may be, the air was infected by the flies, which produced a pestilence that took many of the inhabitants. So, among the Eleans, as Pliny reports, a multitude of flies produced a pestilence. However, it is certain many of the inhabitants of Egypt perished by them. They might sting them to death, suck their blood, and poison them with their venomous stings (see Psalm 78:45).

There is nothing nastier or more aggravating than flies in the house. One fly can nearly drive you crazy, but to have literally millions in one house would be revolting. The noise would be deafening and there would be no way you could eat. This would be a terrible predicament to be in.

Exodus 8:25 "And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land."

Moses rejected the ploy to let the Hebrew people make sacrifices "in the land" of Egypt (verse 26). Citing the "abomination" that Israel's sacrificial sheep would be to the Egyptians. Because the Egyptians considered these animals unclean, such sacrifices came with the risk of the Hebrews being stoned (Gen. 43:32; 46:34). Pharaoh's offer of a short trek into the "wilderness" was similarly refused. God will not accept compromise when He has issued a command.

Here Pharaoh is suggesting that these Hebrews go ahead and sacrifice to their God but do it in Egypt. Even though he would do almost anything to get rid of these flies, he still wants to run everything. He wants God to do it his way.

Exodus 8:26 "And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?"

"Sacrifice ... we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians": An attempt at appeasement by compromise on the part of Pharaoh. "Sacrifice ... before their eyes" was countered by Moses' pointing out that Israel's sacrifices would not be totally acceptable to the Egyptians, who might even react violently, "will they not stone us?" This evaluation Pharaoh immediately understood. Either their strong dislike of shepherds and sheep (Gen. 46:34), or Israel's sacrificial animals being sacred ones in their religion brought about Egyptian aversion to Israel's sacrifices.

The very animals that the Egyptians worshipped were some of the animals that the Hebrews sacrificed to God. We see here an offer of Pharaoh wanting to give these Hebrews a time off from their labors, but he wants them not to leave Egypt. As I said, this will never work. If these Hebrews (Israelites), were to sacrifice to God, the Egyptians would be greatly offended in their religious practices. The Israelite people and the Egyptian people would probably wind up fighting a religious war. You can easily see why this wouldn't work. Moses' statement (will they not stone us), has to do with the sacrificing of cows by the Hebrews, which the Egyptians forbid, because they worshipped the cow. You can see what a mess this would be. Pharaoh should be able to see this too.

Verses 27-29: We will go ... I will let you go”: The first declaration showed the decision to travel no less than 3 days beyond Egyptian borders was a non-negotiable item. The second declaration showed Pharaoh trying to keep that decision to travel and sacrifice strictly under his authority and not as a response to the Lord’s request for His people.

Exodus 8:27 "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us."

Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. Between impatient anxiety to be freed from this scourge and reluctance on the part of the Hebrew bondsmen, the king followed the course of expediency; he proposed to let them free to engage in their religious rites within any part of the kingdom. But true to his instructions, Moses would accede to no such arrangement; he stated a most valid reason to show the danger of it.

And the king having yielded so far as to allow them a brief holiday across the border, annexed to this concession a request that Moses would entreat with Jehovah for the removal of the plague. He promised to do so, and it was removed the following day. But no sooner was the pressure over than the spirit of Pharaoh, like a bent bow, sprang back to its usual hard heartedness, and, regardless of his promise, he refused to let the people depart.

Here we see the original request repeated again. God will direct the sacrifice. This will be a safe distance from Egypt.

Exodus 8:28 "And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me."

“Intreat for me”: An abbreviated request, applying not only to himself but also for the removal of the plague as previously asked in connection with the second plague (8:8).

Now, we see the real reason Pharaoh did not want the Israelites to go into the wilderness. They were almost free labor and he did not want them to escape to freedom. These flies were so bad, he would agree to almost anything to get them stopped. He asked Moses to speak to God for him, and get the flies stopped (intreat for me). Intreat and Entreat means the same; earnest request: beg, plead or implore.

Exodus 8:29 "And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will entreat the LORD that the swarms [of flies] may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

“But let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully”: Moses’ closing exhortation underscored the deceptive nature of the king’s words.

We see here, that Moses set the next day for the removal of the flies but he warned Pharaoh that he had better carry through with his promises and not renege on them as he did before. God would punish Pharaoh severely, if he didn't do what he said he would do. He told Pharaoh: If you promise, I will go and talk to God for you.

Exodus 8:30 "And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the LORD."

He did as he promised he would, and prayed to the Lord to remove the flies from Pharaoh and his people.

Exodus 8:31 "And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms [of flies] from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one."

“Remained not one”: This declaration of the total divine removal of the flies, a demonstration of God’s answering Moses’ entreaty, did not persuade Pharaoh at all. Once again, removed from the humiliating effects of a plague, his stubborn resistance resurfaced (verse 32).

Moses spoke to God for Pharaoh believing that Pharaoh would follow through with his promise. God did exactly what Moses had promised. God did not leave even one fly in Pharaoh's houses. God is always true to His Word. God always tells the truth. Pharaoh (a type of Satan), seldom ever told the truth, because he had no moral character. You could not trust him. He had no conscience.

Exodus 8:32 "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go."

As he did before, when he found the plague was removed, and the flies were gone.

"Neither would he let the people go": Through pride and covetousness, being loath to have the number of those under his dominion so much diminished, and to lose so large a branch of his revenues arising from the labor of these people.

We see here, the same as the time before. The minute the plague stopped, Pharaoh would not keep his promises. He hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

Exodus Chapter 8 Continued Questions

1. What did the magicians say to Pharaoh?
2. What did Pharaoh do on their advice?
3. Where was Moses to go and speak to Pharaoh?
4. What was Moses to tell Pharaoh would happen to him, if he did not let the people go?

5. To what extent would this plague reach?
6. This was not just a nuisance, but a _____.
7. What was the exception to the plague?
8. Why?
9. These Hebrews are in Egypt but not _____.
10. What can we Christians see in this?
11. The legalist tried to analyze the plagues by saying they were _____.
12. How was the land corrupted?
13. What 2 specific problems would this many flies bring?
14. When Pharaoh could stand the flies no longer, what did he do?
15. What was Pharaoh's plan?
16. Why would it not work?
17. What did Moses call the animals that the Egyptians worship, to God?
18. What would probably happen, if the Israelites were to sacrifice to God in Egypt?
19. What was the main animal in question?
20. What did Moses tell Pharaoh was the only acceptable plan?
21. What was the real reason Pharaoh did not want them to go into the wilderness?
22. He wanted Moses to immediately do what?
23. When did Moses say this would happen?
24. What did Moses warn Pharaoh about?
25. What did the Lord do?
26. How many flies were left?
27. Compare Satan (Pharaoh), and God.
28. What foolish thing did Pharaoh do?