

## Exodus 8:15-9

(Exodus 8:15 NKJV) But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

Pharaoh hardens his own heart when he realizes that the Frog plague was stopped. This is about as irrational as it gets. Blood and Frogs did not change his heart. What makes it worse is that these were not “natural” disasters which he might have taken as a sign from his own gods. He knew they came from the God of Moses and Aaron. And, with the frogs, he knew his own magicians were powerless over them – oh, they could bring more, but they could not get rid of them.

It’s hard to understand Pharaoh’s thinking. And it gets harder as we read on. What kind of king would not want these things to come upon his people? What kind of people were they that they did not rise up against him? Fearful.

We are going to witness the undoing of a king who, from plague to plague, remains hard but that hardness is cracking. He is a god who meets the True God. At first there is blustering and chest pounding, but soon not even his magicians can replicate the plagues and they give up. Soon he will ask for intercession but once relief comes, his heart re-hardens like a spoiled child who is pacified when he gets what he wants but soon returns to his obstinate and stubborn ways.

Well, if blood and frogs wouldn’t work, how about some lice?

### The Third Plague! Lice.

(Exodus 8:16 NKJV) So the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become **lice** throughout all the land of Egypt.' " (Exodus 8:17 NKJV) And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. (Exodus 8:18 NKJV) **Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not.** So there were lice on man and beast. (Exodus 8:19 NKJV) Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "**This is the finger of God.**" But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.

Lice can also be translated gnats. Either way it was certainly annoying.

The Egyptian God targeted by God is **Khepri- Egyptian God of creation. The phrase “dust of the earth” is familiar to us from the Creation account. As Pharaoh represents Satan (or is certainly possessed by him), adds to its meaning.**

This third time seems different though. There’s no “Let my people go” declaration and no apparent warning. It doesn’t mean that Moses and Aaron weren’t in the presence of Pharaoh since that’s a distinct possibility. Without the declaration, no mercy was shown.

The magicians could not replicate the sign. They tell Pharaoh, “**This is the finger of God**”. The sense of the Hebrew is a finger that has them in its grasp. Perhaps our saying, “under his thumb” might also work here. God is certainly applying pressure on Pharaoh but, being the

head of the country, everyone suffers because of Pharaoh! And Pharaoh's heart shrank two sizes that day and his heart remained like stone.

The plagues seem to come in threes. The first 3 are certainly bothersome, but not painful. But with plague 4 thru 6, pain comes upon the people or livestock and their stubborn king. Strangely, the first plague in each group (1, 4, 7) start in the morning as commanded by God.

Another pattern emerges as well: the first three plagues were brought upon the land by the Rod of Aaron. The next three (flies, cattle and boils) were directly from the LORD and no Rod is used.

There are other interesting things but the message is clear: the LORD God is in control of everything that takes place here; and, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is to be worshipped, and all manmade gods, whether made in his imagination or fashioned by hand, are to be forsaken.

#### **Fourth – Biting “flies”.**

(Exodus 8:20 NKJV) And the LORD said to Moses, "**Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water.** Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. (Exodus 8:21 NKJV) Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, **I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand.** (Exodus 8:22 NKJV) And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order **that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land.** (Exodus 8:23 NKJV) I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be." ' ' (Exodus 8:24 NKJV) And the LORD did so. Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, *into* his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies. (Exodus 8:25 NKJV) Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God **in the land.**"

The next and fourth plague is a swarm of flies. It is believed that **Hathor-Egyptian Goddess of Love and Protection is the target.**

It appears that while Moses warned Pharaoh, the LORD acted alone in bringing this plague about. The stated purpose from God was to show them that the LORD is at the center of all things. There was no rod involved. And, the timing was the LORD's. The fact that it would be the next day speaks of both the control of the LORD over creation, and of mercy...for Pharaoh could have easily said, "Please, no flies – I will let Your people go!"

This is the first time that it is explicit stated that the LORD put up a wall, so to speak, between Israel and the Egyptians. Flies would not enter Goshen where they lived. I said before that none of the plagues touched Goshen, but I was wrong. I don't know why the LORD allowed the first 3 plagues to affect the Israelites. My thought is that it too was a warning to any of them that had started to worship any of the Egyptian gods (the Golden Calf incident certainly testifies to their rebellious hearts).

Swarming flies or some other insects were sent out over the land. It is believed that these insects had the ability to bite so that they were more than a nuisance, they hurt both man, beast and crops. (someone called these "blood sucking dog flies").

Finally, Pharaoh calls for the brothers to entreat the LORD to take the flies away. Then he

says, "Go, sacrifice to your God **in the land.**"

Finally, he tells them to go!!! **BUT WAIT!**

(Exodus 8:26 NKJV) And Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we would be **sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians** to the LORD our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us? (Exodus 8:27 NKJV) **We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He will command us.**"

(Exodus 8:28 NKJV) So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. **Intercede for me.**" (Exodus 8:29 NKJV) Then Moses said, "Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the LORD, that the swarms *of flies* may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

Moses is attentive to Pharaoh's 'offer'; Stay in the Land and sacrifice to your God. But Moses knows that the animals the Israelites might sacrifice would be sacrilegious to slay. And if the people see them sacrificing animals they revered, then they would stone the Israelites.

Moses counter-offers Pharaoh with "Let us go 3 days journey into the wilderness". Actually, Moses doesn't ask, he tells Pharaoh, "We WILL go". Once again Pharaoh asks him to intercede because he and his magicians are powerless to intercede. Moses issues one warning, "I will intercede but do not deal with deceitfully with the people of Israel."

(Exodus 8:30 NKJV) So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD. (Exodus 8:31 NKJV) And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms *of flies* from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained. (Exodus 8:32 NKJV) But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

And just like a typical Hallmark Movie plot where there is tension between the main characters, followed by some a relationship, followed by some drama and finally a kiss - Moses Pleads, God agrees and the King hardens his heart and therefore does not let them go.

### **The Fifth Plague! Blight on Livestock**

(Exodus 9:1 NKJV) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, 'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. (Exodus 9:2 NKJV) For if you refuse to let *them* go, and still hold them, (Exodus 9:3 NKJV) behold, the **hand of the LORD will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence.** (Exodus 9:4 NKJV) And the LORD will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all *that* belongs to the children of Israel." ' ' (Exodus 9:5 NKJV) **Then the LORD appointed a set time**, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." (Exodus 9:6 NKJV) So the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died. (Exodus 9:7 NKJV) Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.

Once again (are we bored yet?), Moses warns Pharaoh about a severe pestilence on all forms of animals: cattle, horses, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep.

The LORD offers Pharaoh one day to change his mind. He didn't and all the livestock in Egypt died! Well, all but the livestock in Goshen!

Isis is the Goddess of Medicine and Peace. She was not able to cure the livestock – of course she doesn't exist, which is a major factor...

And repentance was not granted to Pharaoh because he hardened his heart! The plague was certainly painful to the livestock (KJV: very grievous murrain) but also to the people for some of them represented their gods and others were used for food and labor were killed.

NOTE: this was all by the Hand of the LORD upon his enemies.

BTW: if ALL the livestock were killed, where did the livestock come from in plague of Hail (verses 20-21). Two possibilities are: 1) the word ALL is an exaggeration or 2) the plague only affected the livestock that were in the fields and not under cover. (this is preferred and is supported by verses 20-21).

### **The sixth plague: boils.**

(Exodus 9:8 NKJV) So the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh. (Exodus 9:9 NKJV) And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, **and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast** throughout all the land of Egypt." (Exodus 9:10 NKJV) Then they took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered *them* toward heaven. And *they* caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast. (Exodus 9:11 NKJV) **And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians.** (Exodus 9:12 NKJV) But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

#### ***Nut- Egyptian Goddess of the Sky is targeted with this plague.***

The ash came from furnaces used for smelting and producing metals. Moses was told to take handfuls and toss the ash into the air; so, he did, and the ashes caused painful boils to break out on everyone except the children of Israel. There's some irony here because the ash was also used to make soap.

Once again, the magicians and even Pharaoh were powerless over this plague. The imagery of scattering the ashes upwards to heaven emphasizes the power of the LORD over their gods.

This time it was the LORD who hardened Pharaoh's heart.

### **The seventh plague: Hail.**

(Exodus 9:13 NKJV) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me, (Exodus 9:14 NKJV) **for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that *there is none like Me in all the earth.*** (Exodus 9:15 NKJV) Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people

with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. (Exodus 9:16 NKJV) **But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up**, that I may show My power *in* you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. (Exodus 9:17 NKJV) As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go.

This plague starts the next set of plagues. These will come in the form of natural disasters. The command to “let My people go” is the same. But the tone has changed. And, the telling of the 7<sup>th</sup> plague takes up 21 verses.

As I noted before, this 7<sup>th</sup> plague starts in the morning. The first plague of blood started in the summer (July/August) when the Nile rose up. Now it is 5-6 months later in January according to verse 31 that indicates that the barley is ripe, and the flax has started to blossom. The time between this plague and the remaining plagues is short (a matter of a 2-3 months). The pressure of God’s hand is growing, and the time is growing shorter.

First, the phrase “at this time” certainly indicates the LORD’s intention for the last 4 plagues. These were designed to affect Pharaoh’s heart and all the peoples of Egypt. The main affect is to convince them that there is none like the LORD in all the earth.

Verses 16 and 17 are the LORD’s words to Pharaoh. God declares that even Pharaoh’s kingship is from God. Then the LORD tells him that He is not unaware that up to now, Pharaoh has exalted himself against His People and has hardened his heart and not let them go.

*After these plagues are complete and the Children of Israel are released from the king’s bondage and cruelty, Moses will record this entire event in what will become the 5 Books of Moses or the Torah. Through these 5 books, His Name WILL be known throughout the earth! Just in the last 50 years there have been 3.9 billion bibles sold. The next contender coming in at 820 million is the “Quotations of Mao Tse-tung”. BTW: I suspect that the Bible will be banned in some very blue communities in the near future. They are already targeting statues and images of Jesus for destruction.*

(Exodus 9:18 NKJV) Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now. (Exodus 9:19 NKJV) Therefore send now *and* gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, **for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die.** " " "

(Exodus 9:20 NKJV) He who feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses. (Exodus 9:21 NKJV) But he who did not regard the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

And once again, the LORD waits until tomorrow to give Pharaoh a chance to repent. It will also give the Egyptians a chance to gather their livestock in from the fields to protect them. And, everyone else who does not take shelter will be killed by the hailstorm.

This plague targeted Nut, the goddess of the Sky, Osiris the god of the crops and Set, the god of the storms.

(Exodus 9:22 NKJV) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt." (Exodus 9:23 NKJV) And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven;

and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. (Exodus 9:24 NKJV) So there was hail, **and fire mingled with the hail**, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. (Exodus 9:25 NKJV) And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. (Exodus 9:26 NKJV) Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.

Moses is back stretching his hand towards heaven. The word for hand actually means a rod so it becomes curious as to why the NKJV translators chose “hand”. What comes down from the LORD is hail, lightening and mysteriously, fire. The fire may have been ground lightning because the text “darted to the ground” is literally “walked across the ground”. This is one of those times where we just believe what is said and not try to figure it out. This was unique as it says that no hail like this ever rained upon the land since it first became a nation.

(Exodus 9:27 NKJV) And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, **“I have sinned this time. The LORD *is* righteous, and my people and I *are* wicked.** (Exodus 9:28 NKJV) Entreat the LORD, that there may be no *more* mighty thundering and hail, for *it is* enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” (Exodus 9:29 NKJV) So Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth *is* the LORD’s.

Pharaoh confesses his sin and the sin of his people; he confesses that the LORD is righteous. He pleads with Moses to intercede on his behalf. And he adds that he will let the Children of Israel go!

Moses agrees and he adds “when it has stopped, you will know that the earth is the LORD’s.

**(Exodus 9:30 NKJV) But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the LORD God.”**

But a red-flag goes up in Moses’ spirit. He tells Pharaoh that he does not yet have a deep reverence for the LORD. The literal translation says “you will not yet have a deep reverence before the face of the LORD God”.

**(Exodus 9:31 NKJV) Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley *was* in the head and the flax *was* in bud.** (Exodus 9:32 NKJV) But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they *are* late crops.

A time marker indicating we are in January.

(Exodus 9:33 NKJV) So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth. (Exodus 9:34 NKJV) And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, **he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants.** (Exodus 9:35 NKJV) **So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had spoken by Moses.**

Pharaoh would say anything to have the plagues stopped.  
Makes you wonder if he told his people that the God of the Hebrews caused all of this but he

was able to stop it...just curious.

Next week we will cover plague 8 and 9: locusts and darkness.

For now, we can see that these plagues were not haphazard. They were an attack on the Egyptian world-view that was dependent on a pantheon of so-called gods. Their security was tied up in a god that was responsible for each aspect of their lives. They would feel secure that the “gods” were taking care of them – especially Pharaoh. The plagues targeted these gods and crushed them. They could not stop the plagues. We see this in their representatives (court officials for the king, magicians) and their king as they come to the realization that replicating a plague is quite different from removing it.

Now, as to Pharaoh, we have a grand battle of wills. We see that it is futile to resist His will. Plague after Plague came because Pharaoh refused to humble himself in the sight of the LORD. We also see in him that partial or insincere repentance or false sorrow avails nothing.

Pharaoh was told about this LORD God:

(Exodus 7:17 NKJV) Thus says the LORD: "By this you shall know that I am the LORD. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood.

that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land.

for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth.

But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.

This God is utterly unique, sovereign over His creation and desires worship of His people. He even tells Pharaoh that all His plagues are designed that Egypt would know the One True God. It wasn't God's doing that Pharaoh resisted His will. It could have ended after the Nile turned to blood. God told him in 9:15 "Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth." He could have done it without warning and with such force as to wipe Egypt off the map.

But God knew that wouldn't solve the issue, so He gave the king over to his own stubbornness and sin to prove that he was truly not any kind of god except in his own vain imaginations.

That's what makes this account so important. That's what makes this entire salvation from bondage so remarkable. The very people who the LORD is rescuing, and redeeming will themselves test Him with unbelief, stubbornness, rebellion and idolatry. It happened then and it happened throughout their history and it is happening now. And, it's the same with gentiles – even with gentile “believers” who try to take advantage of God's saving grace and never give up their lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and their pride.

The results will be the same: brokenness for some, condemnation for many. The Tribulation will see no peace, famine, pestilence, hail, fire, blood, locusts, boils/sores, darkness, death. And that's not all of it! Those whose hearts are softened to their sin will be saved. Those whose hearts remain as hard

as stone will perish. This is the only warning we can give.

Invite a friend or family member to our Bible studies. Both Exodus and Revelation are extremely important to our world today.

We all need to hear about the insurmountable, overwhelming sin-filled flesh we live in. There is no self-help book, no pill, no drink, no amount of pleasure and no depth of depravity where our LORD God and Savior Jesus cannot handle. The Bible cannot be used as a self-help book but only a road-map to the One who owns the solution and is freely offering it to anyone who believes in his/her heart that He was raised from the dead to bring us eternal life. In Exodus, the Great I AM came down to rescue a small nation. In the Gospel of John we read of the GREAT I AM who was born into this world but sent by God to rescue all mankind.