

EXODUS

Chapter 8

The Second Plague: Frogs

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. 2 But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs. 3 The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. 4 The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants.”’” 5 And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!’” 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. 7 But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt. 8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, “Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.” 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, “Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile.” 10 And he said, “Tomorrow.” Moses said, “Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. 11 The frogs shall go away from you and your houses and your servants and your people. They shall be left only in the Nile.” 12 So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh. 13 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. 14 And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

8:1 If God’s people are to serve and worship Him, they must be free from bondage. (TLSB)

8:2 *plague.* Lit, “strike.” (TLSB)

I will plague your whole country with frogs. The frog (or toad) was deified in the goddess Heqt, who assisted women in childbirth. (CSB)

Small Nile frogs. The Egyptian goddess Heqt was thought to take the form of a frog that helped women as they gave birth to children. This is the second plague. The first three plagues covered the whole land and fell upon both Israelites and Egyptians. (TLSB)

8:3 *come up.* The frogs abandoned the Nile and swarmed over the land, perhaps because the unusually high concentration of bacteria-laden algae had by now proved fatal to most of the fish, thus polluting the river. (CSB)

8:8–10:24 Note Pharaoh’s responses: plead (8:8); sacrifice (8:25); I have sinned (9:27); only men may go (10:11); forgive my sin (10:17); only people may go (10:24). Over time, he recognized his inability to resist the Lord’s purpose. (TLSB)

8:8 Pharaoh regarded the God of Israel as the author of the plague and entreated Moses to intercede with God to remove it. (TLSB)

8:9–10 *Be pleased to command me.* Showing humility, Moses placed himself under Pharaoh’s authority. Ambrose : “[Moses] knew that the king would not keep true to his promises, yet he thought it right and good to pray when asked to do so, to bless when wronged, to forgive when besought” (NPNF 2 10:82). (TLSB)

cut off. Can mean they were restricted, but is also an expression for death. (CSB)

Tomorrow. Moses let Pharaoh set the time for the frogs to be removed. The timed conclusion of the plague would again demonstrate its miraculous character. (TLSB)

8:11–13 *The frogs shall go away ... The frogs died.* God may have used the red, putrid waters of the Nile to kill the frogs.

8:12 *Moses cried to the LORD.* Earnest prayer, after which God removed the plague, though perhaps not as Pharaoh expected. *as ... agreed.* Moses acted in good faith. (TLSB)

8:13 *the LORD did according what Moses asked.* For similar occurrences see v. 31; 1Sa 12:18; 1Ki 18:42–45; Am 7:1–6. *The frogs died.* Probably because they had been infected by the bacteria (*Bacillus anthracis*) in the Nile algae. (CSB)

The Lord hears and answers out of His divine, fatherly goodness and mercy. (TLSB)

8:15 *respite.* Relief from overpowering pressure. (TLSB)

would not listen. Pharaoh proved himself a liar, a sin he had charged to Moses (5:9). (TLSB)

8:1–15 This sets a recurring theme of sin, oppression (the plagues), repentance, and deliverance. Magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans can not stop the power of God. As the intensity of temporal punishment increases in terms of social and economic impact, God still remains slow to anger and desires to deliver sinners by His grace. • Lord, when I am weak in faith, strengthen me. When I am cold in love, warm me so that the love Christ first worked in me through His Word and Spirit may go out to my neighbor. Uphold me that I might remain in You even unto life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)

The Third Plague: Gnats

16 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 in all the land of Egypt.’” 17 And they did so. Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt. 18 The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. 19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

8:16 *dust will become gnats.* The word “dust” is perhaps a reference to the enormous number (see, e.g., Ge 13:16) of the gnats, bred in the flooded fields of Egypt in late autumn. The word translated “gnats” occurs only here and in Ps 105:31; perhaps insects known to us as mosquitoes. (CSB)

They usually breed in the flooded fields of Egypt in late autumn. But here they arise miraculously from the dust Aaron struck. Barely visible to the eye, they sting and cause painful skin irritation; they creep into eyes and noses. (TLSB)

8:18 *The magicians ... could not.* The Egyptian magicians displayed the impotence of their secret arts next to the creative power of the true God. (TLSB)

8:19 *finger of God.* A concise and colorful figure of speech referring to God’s miraculous power (see 31:18; Ps 8:3). Jesus drove out demons “by the finger of God” (Lk 11:20). Cf. the similar use of the phrase “hand of the LORD” in 9:3. (CSB)

Denotes creative omnipotence. Generic Hbr *’elohim* is used here instead of the specific *yahweh*. The magicians realized their powers had been surpassed. Trickery was now out of the question. (TLSB)

8:16–19 The plague of gnats is more intense than the previous plagues, and the magicians concede that there is a God greater than the ones they serve. God’s judgment increases in magnitude as this plague drives Pharaoh and his magicians toward despair. People who trust Christ the Lord are drawn closer to Him in times of tribulation, seeking His forgiveness, comfort, strength, and healing for the sake of His cross and resurrection. • O God, our Father, what would we be if You would forsake us? What would we do if You would withdraw Your hand? How quickly the prudent become simple; the wise become fools. In Christ Jesus, daily increase our faith that we may recognize Your loving hand at work in our lives. Amen. (TLSB)

The Fourth Plague: Flies

20 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. 21 Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. 22 But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.[e] 23 Thus I will put a division[f] between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen.’”” 24 And the LORD did so. There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants’ houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarms of flies. 25 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” 26 But Moses said, “It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the LORD our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? 27 We must go three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he tells us.” 28 So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you must not go very far away. Plead for me.” 29 Then Moses said, “Behold, I am going out from you and I will plead with the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow. Only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.” 30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. 31 And the LORD did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained. 32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

8:21 *I will send swarms of flies.* Probably *Stomoxys calcitrans*, which would have multiplied rapidly as the receding Nile left breeding places in its wake. Full-grown, such flies infest houses and stables and bite men and animals; mentioned only here and in Ps 78:45; 105:31. (CSB)

More aggressive than gnats, buzzing the ears and landing esp on the edges of the eyelids. The Egyptians venerated flies and beetles. (TLSB)

8:22 *I set apart.* See 33:16. God makes a “distinction” (v. 23) between Moses’ people and the pharaoh’s people in this plague as well as in the fifth (see 9:4, 6), the seventh (see 9:26), the ninth (see 10:23) and the tenth (see 11:7)—and probably also the sixth and eighth (see 9:11; 10:6)—demonstrating that the Lord can preserve his own people while judging Egypt. *Goshen.* (CSB)

The Lord condemned the Egyptians but delivered the Israelites from evil (9:4, 11, 26; 10:6, 23; 11:7). He proved that Israel had His blessing. (TLSB)

8:24 *the land was ruined*. Flies killed plants and caused disfiguring swelling in humans. (TLSB)

8:26 *detestable to the Egyptians*. The sacrifices would not be pure according to the rites of the Egyptians. This would be blasphemy toward their gods, and they would likely stone the Israelites. (TLSB)

stone us? The penalty for blasphemy could be delivered by a mob, without Pharaoh's consent. (TLSB)

8:27 *three days' journey ... wilderness*. Where Israel is beyond Pharaoh's domination and oversight (cf Gn 30:36). (TLSB)

8:28 *you must not go very far*. A counterproposal that still exerted Pharaoh's and Egypt's control and standards. (TLSB)

Plead for me. That the swarms be removed. (TLSB)

8:20–32 The Lord distinguishes between Egypt and Israel by protecting His people in Goshen from the plagues. Pharaoh wants the Israelites to sacrifice and worship according to his expectations, but Moses could never allow this. The means and character of worship must be subject to God's Word rather than the will of any government or mob. The Lord distinguishes us by His grace and redemption. • O dreadful and severe Judge, wonderful and mysterious are Your judgments. You are so jealous for Your people's pure praise, sanctified by the blood of Your beloved Son. Keep us in the one true faith. Amen. (TLSB)