**The First Nine Plagues in Egypt**

**A Bible Story From**

**Exodus 7:14–10:29**

**Bible Story Number: 1010510**

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**Bible Story**

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**Background**

God made a profound promise to Abraham (called a covenant):

I will bless you and make you the father of a great nation.

I will make you famous throughout history.

I will protect your allies and punish your enemies.

I will bless the entire world through your descendants.

This promise (covenant) was passed on to Isaac and Jacob. God reconfirmed His promise to the descendents of Abraham. The nation of Israel continued to be God’s chosen people.

The Israelites (descendents of Jacob) moved to Egypt as a part of God’s plan. God used what Joseph’s brothers intended as evil as a way to bless Joseph and rescue the entire family.

This Bible story is longer than most in this series. A group leader may choose to divide this story into two or three parts.

It is also important to note that the total amount of time that elapsed during theses plagues is not given in the Bible. There is a reference to the passing of seven days between the first and second plagues (see Exodus 7:25). But references to time are very limited and do not provide enough information to reconstruct the actual length of time. The Bible simply does not provide this information. It is logical to assume, from this reference and other information given, that these events occurred over a number of weeks or months.

These nine plagues are followed by one additional plague known as the Passover. These events are part of the history of the Israelites and are God’s demonstration of His power and might. God told the Israelites to tell these events to their children and grandchildren. It is much more than history. It is God’s fulfillment of His promise (covenant) with His people.

**Story from the Bible**

**Exodus 7:14–10:29**

This is what the Bible says.

*The Plague of Blood*

God told Moses that Pharaoh’s heart was set against God and he was refusing to let the Israelites go. He told Moses to go to Pharaoh the next morning at the time Pharaoh would go out to the river. He told Moses to confront Pharaoh there and to take his staff with him.

Moses was to tell Pharaoh that he was sent by God, the God of the Hebrews. God’s message was the same: “Let My people go, so that they may worship Me in the wilderness.”

But Pharaoh did not listen. So God, through his spokesman Moses, told Pharaoh that He would demonstrate that He was God. Moses told Pharaoh that Aaron would strike the water of the Nile River and it would be changed into blood. Moses told him all the fish would die and the river would stink. He said all the water in Egypt would be turned to blood. The water in streams and canals, ponds and reservoirs, and even the water in wooden or stone containers would all turn to blood. He also said that the Egyptians would not be able to drink the water.

This all happened just as God had said. The water all across Egypt turned to blood when Aaron lifted his staff.

The Egyptian magicians did the same thing by their secret arts. Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh returned to his palace and did not pay any attention to what had happened. The Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water because the river water was not fit to drink.

*The Plague of Frogs*

Seven days passed and then God spoke to Moses again. He told him to go to Pharaoh and tell him, this is what Yahweh says: “Let My people go, so that they may worship Me.”

God told Moses to tell Pharaoh if he did not let them go, He would send a plague of frogs on the whole country. He would send frogs everywhere. He told Pharaoh they would come from the Nile River and be in the palace, in his bedroom, in his bed, in the houses of his officials, on the people, in the ovens and kneading troughs.

Then God told Moses to tell Aaron to stretch out his hand with the staff. As he did, frogs began to come just as God had said.

But again the magicians did the same thing by their secret arts. They also made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Ask Yahweh to remove the frogs from me and my people. Then I will let the people go and they can sacrifice to Yahweh.”

Moses told Pharaoh he could set the time for the removal of the frogs and all of Egypt would be free of frogs, except in the Nile River. Pharaoh answered, “Tomorrow.”

Moses said, “As you have said, so you may know there is no one like Yahweh our God.”

After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, Moses prayed. God did as Moses asked. The frogs died everywhere, except in the Nile River. The frogs were piles high and the smell of dead frogs was everywhere. Yet, Pharaoh would not listen to Moses and Aaron, even though the evidence was all around. This all happened just as God had said.

*The Plague of Gnats*

Next, God instructed Moses to have Aaron stretch out his staff and strike the dust of the ground. He told them that then the dust would become gnats. They would be everywhere.

Moses and Aaron did as God commanded and it happened just as God had said. Gnats covered Egypt and were on the people and the animals. All the dust became gnats.

However, this time when the magicians tried to duplicate the plague, they were not able to produce gnats by their secret arts. They told Pharaoh that this was the finger of God. Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he refused to listen.

*The Plague of Flies*

God spoke to Moses again. He told him to get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh at the time he would go out to the river. God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let God’s people go so they may worship Him. Moses was to tell Pharaoh that if he failed to obey, God would send swarms of flies on him, his officials, and on all his people. Egypt would be covered with flies.

God told Moses to tell Pharaoh that this time the plague would be different. In the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, there would be no swarm of flies. God said this would demonstrate that He is God.

That is exactly what God did. There were dense swarms of flies all around Egypt. The Pharaoh’s palace was not spared.

Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. He told them they could go and make sacrifices to God in Egypt.

But Moses said, “It would not be right to do that, because what we will sacrifice to the Lord our God is detestable to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what the Egyptians detest in front of them, won’t they stone us? We must go a distance of three days into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as He instructs us.”

Pharaoh said he would let them go a little ways into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to their God. He asked Moses to pray for him.

Moses assured Pharaoh that as soon as he left, he would pray to God and the next day the flies would be gone. He also warned Pharaoh not to go back on his commitment to let the Israelites go and worship as he had done before.

Then Moses did exactly what he said he would do. He prayed and the next day God took the flies away, all of them.

Once again, Pharaoh hardened his heart. He would not let the Israelites go.

*The Plague of Livestock*

God spoke to Moses and sent him to Pharaoh again. He told Moses to deliver a similar message. God told him to tell Pharaoh: “This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. But if you refuse to let them go and keep holding them, then the Lord’s hand will bring a severe plague against your livestock in the field—the horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks. But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that the Israelites own will die.”

God set the time. So Moses told Pharaoh that God was going to do this the next day. And God did just what He said He would do. All the livestock of the Egyptians died and not one of the Israelites’ animals died.

Pharaoh’s heart was still hard and he refused to let the Israelites go.

*The Plague of Boils*

God gave Moses instructions for another plague. Moses was to take a handful of soot from a furnace and toss it into the air in Pharaoh’s presence. The soot became a fine dust and covered the whole land of Egypt. It caused feasting boils to break out on the people and animals.

This time, the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils. Again, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh would not listen to Moses and Aaron. It all happened just as God had said.

*The Plague of Hail*

God spoke to Moses and told him, “Get up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh.”

Moses was to tell Pharaoh: “This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews says: Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. Otherwise, I am going to send all My plagues against you, your officials, and your people. Then you will know there is no one like Me in all the earth. By now I could have stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with a plague, and you would have been obliterated from the earth. However, I have let you live for this purpose: to show you My power and to make My name known in all the earth. You are still acting arrogantly against My people by not letting them go. Tomorrow at this time I will rain down the worst hail that has ever occurred in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. Therefore give orders to bring your livestock and all that you have in the field into shelters. Every person and animal that is in the field and not brought inside will die when the hail falls on them.”

Some of Pharaoh’s officials feared the message from God and hurried to bring their slaves and livestock inside. But others ignored the warning and left their slaves and livestock in the fields.

Then God told Moses to stretch out his hand toward the sky and hail would fall in all of Egypt. When Moses did, God sent thunder, lightning and hail. It was more severe than ever. Hail killed every person and livestock in the fields. The hail beat down the plants and trees. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. He told them, “Yahweh is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the guilty ones. Make an appeal to Yahweh. There has been enough of God’s thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don’t need to stay any longer.”

Moses told Pharaoh that as soon as he would leave the city, he would lift up his hands and pray to God. Then the thunder and hail would stop. That way Pharaoh would know that God is the God of all the earth. But Moses told him that he knew that he and his officials still did not fear God.

Everything happened just as Moses had said. When the storm was over, Pharaoh sinned again. He and his officials hardened their hearts. Pharaoh would not let the Israelites leave.

(The flax and barley were destroyed in the storm, since the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom. The wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they were going to ripen later.)

God spoke to Moses again and told him that Pharaoh and his officials were still hard-hearted. But God was doing all of this so He could demonstrate that He is the one true God. He wanted the Israelites to tell their children and grandchildren that He is God and to tell all the things He had done for them.

*The Plague of Locusts*

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh again and delivered God’s message: “This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may worship Me. But if you refuse to let My people go, then tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. They will cover the surface of the land so that no one will be able to see the land. They will eat the remainder left to you that escaped the hail; they will eat every tree you have growing in the fields. They will fill your houses, all your officials’ houses, and the houses of all the Egyptians.’”

Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh.

Pharaoh’s officials pleaded with him to let the Israelites go and worship their God. They complained that Egypt was already in ruin.

So Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron. He told them they could go and worship their God. Then he requested that they tell him who would be going.

Moses answered, “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 must hold Yahweh’s festival.”

Pharaoh agreed to let the men go, but he accused Moses of an evil intention because he wanted to take everyone, even the women and children.

Then God told Moses to stretch out his hand over Egypt so that the locusts would swarm over the land and destroy everything left after the hail. So he did and there was

an east wind all day and night. The next morning the locusts came. They covered the ground until it was black. They devoured everything that was green.

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against Yahweh your God and against you. Please forgive my sin once more and make an appeal to Yahweh your God, so that He will take this death away from me.”

Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to God. Then God changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. The locusts were gone, but God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he would not let the Israelites go.

*The Plague of Darkness*

Then God told Moses to stretch out his hand toward the sky so that darkness would cover Egypt. It would be a darkness that could be felt.

Moses obeyed God and all of Egypt was dark for three days. It was so dark that the people could not see each other and could not move about. However, the place where the Israelites lived had light.

This time, Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship Yahweh. Even your families may go with you; only your flocks and herds must stay behind.”

Moses explained to Pharaoh that they had to take the animals with them because they were going to offer sacrifices to God. They had to take all the animals because they would not know which animals they would need until they got there.

Again, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. He was not willing to allow them to go. Pharaoh said to Moses, “Leave me! Make sure you never see my face again, for on the day you see my face, you will die.”

Moses answered Pharaoh, “As you have said, I will never see your face again.”

That concludes this story from the Bible.

**Retelling the Story**

Let’s review this story by retelling it as a group. We want to retell it as faithfully as we can to the story from the Bible. We do not want to add to it or leave out anything important. Who will get us started?

**Questions**

* How were Pharaoh’s magicians able to duplicate the first two plagues?
* What did God do that Pharaoh’s magicians were not able to do? Why do you think that is important?
* Why did God send these plagues?
* Why did God harden Pharaoh’s heart?
* What did you like about this story?
* What did you not like about this story?
* What did you learn about God from this story?

**Prayer**

Prayer is more than a way to end the session. It is time to talk to God. Public prayer is a model for others. Boldly ask God to guide participants to use the Bible story with others. Ask God to give you and the participant’s insight and understanding as you think about this biblical event.