

MOSES AND THE TEN PLAGUES

Exodus 7:14 - 12:40

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh

Key-location: Egypt

Key-repetitions:

- Moses prayed; God responded (Ex 8:12-13, 29-34; 9:33; 10:18-19).
- Plagues (ten in number).
- After second through ninth plagues: Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron; asked for the Lord to free Egypt from the plague; promised to let the Israelites go; Moses prayed; God removed the plague; Pharaoh saw relief from the plague; Pharaoh's heart hardened and he wouldn't let the Israelites leave.
- Competition between Moses and the Egyptian magicians (Ex 7:9-12, 20-22; 8:5-7, 16-19; 9:11).
- The Lord told Pharaoh to let the Israelites go (Ex 8:1; 9:1, 13; 10:3).
- The Lord spoke to Moses (Ex 7:14; 8:1, 16, 20; 9:8; 10:1, 12, 21).
- God made a distinction between Israel and Egypt. The Israelites didn't suffer the plagues that punished the Egyptians (Ex 8:22; 9:4-7, 25-26; 10:22-23; 11:6-7; 12:12-13).
- Pharaoh's heart hardened, just as the Lord predicted (Ex 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19; 9:12, 35).
- Israelites asked their neighbors for clothes and jewels (Ex 11:2-3; 12:35-36).

Key-attitudes:

- Pharaoh's rage when his absolute authority as king was challenged.
- Pharaoh's stubborn persistence in struggling against God.
- Conflict between Moses, Pharaoh, and the magicians.
- God's determination to free his people.
- Egyptians' affliction after the death of their firstborn.
- Egyptians' anxiety for the Israelites to leave after the tenth plague.

Initial-situation:

About 350 years went by with the Israelites in Egypt before Moses was born. Moses was adopted by the princess and lived as a prince in the king's palace for forty years. Moses tried to help the Israelites by killing a cruel Egyptian. Then Moses fled to the desert, where he became a shepherd for forty years. God instructed Moses to return to Egypt to liberate the Israelites from slavery, but Moses objected. After God answered his objections, Moses obeyed and returned to Egypt.

Initial-problem:

One morning, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh by the Nile River. Aaron struck the river with his staff. All the water became blood.

Final-situation:

After living 430 years in Egypt, the Israelites left Egypt and headed to Canaan.

BIBLE STORY

Ten Plagues

1st Plague: Water to Blood

One morning, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh by the Nile River. Aaron struck the river with his staff. All the water became blood; the fish in the Nile died; the river stunk; the Egyptians couldn't drink its water.

Egyptian magicians did the same thing using their magical skills. Pharaoh's heart became hard. The Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water (Ex 7:14-24).

2nd Plague: Frogs

Seven days after the Lord struck the Nile River, Aaron stretched his hand over the waters of Egypt, and frogs came up and covered the land. Magicians did the same thing by their secret arts; they also produced frogs.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and requested, "Pray to the Lord to rid us of these frogs and I'll let your people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord."

Moses prayed. The frogs died. Pharaoh saw the relief from the frogs, but Pharaoh hardened his heart and wouldn't let the Israelites leave Egypt (Ex 7:25 - 8:15).

3rd Plague: Gnats

Aaron struck the ground with his staff and the dust on the ground throughout Egypt became gnats. The magicians couldn't produce gnats by their secret arts. They told Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh wouldn't listen, just as the Lord had predicted (Ex 8:16-19).

4th Plague: Flies

Moses confronted Pharaoh, "The Lord says, 'If you don't let my people go, I'll send swarms of flies on your people. But I'll deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no flies will be there. I'll make a distinction between my people and your people.'"

The next day, the land of Egypt was ruined by flies.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I'll let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert. Now pray for me."

Moses left Pharaoh and prayed; every single fly left. But Pharaoh hardened his heart and wouldn't let the people go (Ex 8:20-32).

5th Plague: Death of the Egyptians' Livestock

The Lord struck the Egyptians' livestock with a plague. All the Egyptians' livestock died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. Pharaoh's heart was unyielding and he wouldn't let the people go (Ex 9:1-7).

6th Plague: Boils

Moses and Aaron took fistfuls of soot and tossed them into the air in Pharaoh's presence. The dust caused festering boils on men and animals. The magicians were covered with boils. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, just as the Lord had predicted to Moses (Ex 9:8-12).

7th Plague: Hail

The Lord sent lightning, thunder, and hail. Hail smashed everything growing in the fields and it stripped every tree. However, the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was free from the hailstorm.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the Lord, for we've had enough thunder and hail. I'll let you go."

Moses spread out his hands. The thunder and hail stopped. Pharaoh's heart turned rock-hard. He refused to let the Israelites go, just as the Lord had predicted (Ex 9:13-35).

8th Plague: Locust

The Lord sent a persistent east wind which brought locusts that ate everything not destroyed by the hail. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land.

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I've sinned against the Lord your God and against you. Pray to the Lord your God to take this deadly plague away from me."

Moses prayed. The Lord reversed the east wind into a strong west wind which took every single locust and dumped them into the Red Sea. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he wouldn't let the Israelites go (Ex 10:1-20).

9th Plague: Total Darkness

Total darkness covered Egypt for three days. However, there was light where the Israelites lived. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he wouldn't let the people go (Ex 10:21-29).

10th Plague: Israelites' First Passover; Death for Egyptians

Moses told Pharaoh, "About midnight the Lord will pass throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. But there will be silence among the Israelites: not even a dog will bark. Then you'll know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel" (Ex 11:1-8).

Moses instructed the Israelites to prepare for the tenth plague: every Israelite family was to take a healthy one year old male sheep or goat; slaughter it; take its blood and put blood on the sides and tops of the houses' doorframes; roast and eat the meat; no one could leave his house until morning (Ex 12:1-27).

The Israelites did exactly what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.

At midnight the Lord struck down every firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, right down to the firstborn of the prisoner locked up in the dungeon. There wasn't an Egyptian house without someone dead! (Ex 12:28-30).

Exodus from Egypt

That night, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Get out of here, you and your Israelites! Go; worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you've insisted, but go!"

The Egyptians wanted to get rid of them in a hurry. The Israelites asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold, and for clothing. The Lord made the Egyptians readily give the Israelites what they asked for; so they picked the Egyptians clean (Ex 12:30-36).

The Israelites started their journey with about two million and five hundred thousand people. They took with them large herds of livestock. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the day, the Lord's people left Egypt (Ex 12:31-41).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What powers did the magicians, Pharaoh's spiritual leaders, have?
2. What were some of the occasions when Moses prayed and God responded?
3. What actions did God take to persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt?
4. How did God make a distinction between the Israelites he was saving and the Egyptians he was punishing?
5. The next time God makes a distinction between those he is saving and those he is punishing, which group will you be in?
6. What powerful actions of God can be seen today?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God, being all-powerful, can dominate human cruelty and can even use evil intentions for good.** God used Pharaoh's rebellion to show the Egyptians that the Lord is the only living, true and powerful God, and that the Egyptians' gods were unable to protect them from the God of Israel.

2. **Spiritual leaders, whose source of spiritual power is not from God, increase people's problems instead of solving them.** With their arts, the Egyptian magicians were able to reproduce the first two plagues (Ex 7:20-22; 8:6-7). They did not have the power to revert the process of the plagues.
3. **Events that punish God's enemies may at the same time benefit those who trust the Lord.** The plagues had a double nature: punishment and salvation. The plagues manifested God's punishment against Egypt, while also manifesting divine action to liberate the Israelites. Christians should interpret each event as part of God's good purpose for their life (Rom 8:28). Since no event can destroy a believer's faith, each event contributes to increasing faith that overcomes the world (1 Jn 5:4).
4. **Every time a person resists God, he becomes more stubborn.** Pharaoh struggled against God and thought that the Lord could not make him give in. Even after all the terrible plagues, Pharaoh was stubborn and refused to free the Israelites (Ex 11:10).
5. **God makes distinction between those he is saving and those who are destined for punishment.** God made a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians (Ex 9:6-7; 11:7). God made a distinction between Noah's family inside the ark and those outside (Gn 6:21-23). Believers in Jesus will be protected from the punishment that will afflict those who reject Jesus.
6. **God only liberates those who accept his salvation plan.** During the Exodus, only those inside houses with blood on the doorposts escaped death (Ex 12:1-36). The Lord rejected the garments Adam and Eve made for themselves (Gn 3:21). He refused Cain's offering (Gn 4:5, 7). Noah built the ark exactly as God instructed. During the flood, there was only one ark and it only had one door (Gn 6:16). The New Testament reveals that Jesus is the only way to God (Jn 14:6).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Drama:

Invite some of the listeners to dramatize a family killing a lamb and putting its blood on the door post. The person pretending to be the father should explain to the children why they are putting the lamb's blood on the door post.