



THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

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The Ten Plagues of Egypt are recorded in **Exodus 7-12** and demonstrate God's judgment against Pharaoh and Egypt's idolatry while showing His power to deliver His people, Israel. Scripture does not always specify the exact time between each plague, but based on context and the nature of the events, biblical scholars generally believe they occurred over a span of several months, likely 5-10 months in total. Here is a list of the plagues, with details regarding their duration and timing as inferred from the text:

1. WATER TURNED TO BLOOD (FIRST PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 7:14-24

Details: The Nile River, a key source of Egypt's life and economy, turned to blood. Fish died, and the water became undrinkable.

Turning the Nile River into blood was both a direct judgment against Pharaoh's hardened heart and a challenge to Egypt's reliance on the Nile as the source of life. The Nile was central to Egypt's economy, agriculture, and religion. It provided water for drinking, irrigation for crops, and sustenance for fish, which were a critical food source. Additionally, the Egyptians worshiped the Nile as a god (Hapi), often referring to it as the lifeblood of their nation. By turning the Nile to blood, God demonstrated His power over nature and Egypt's false deities, specifically targeting their faith in the Nile god Hapi, the so-called god of fertility and life.

The consequences of this plague were devastating. The water throughout the Nile turned to blood, killing the fish and making the river's waters foul and undrinkable. The stench of dead fish filled the land, and the Egyptians were forced to dig along the banks of the river to find drinkable water. Pharaoh's magicians were able to replicate the plague on a

small scale, which hardened Pharaoh's heart further and prevented him from heeding Moses and Aaron's warning. This plague was significant because it disrupted every aspect of Egyptian life—economic, agricultural, religious, and practical—revealing that their source of security and sustenance was powerless before the one true God, Yahweh.

Duration: 7 days (**Exodus 7:25**).

Time Between Plagues: The text does not specify, but enough time passed for Pharaoh's magicians to replicate the sign and for Pharaoh to remain unrepentant.

2. FROGS (SECOND PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 8:1-15

Details: Frogs swarmed the land, entering homes, food, and living spaces. Pharaoh pleaded for relief but hardened his heart once the frogs were removed.

After Pharaoh's refusal to release the Israelites, God instructed Moses to tell Aaron to stretch out his staff over the waters of Egypt, causing frogs to come up and cover the land. The frogs swarmed everywhere—into homes, bedrooms, ovens, and even food preparation areas. This plague would have been a severe disruption to daily life, as frogs infiltrated every aspect of the Egyptians' existence, making their homes unclean and their food inedible. It directly targeted the Egyptian goddess Heqet, who was often depicted as a frog and associated with fertility, life, and childbirth. By overwhelming the land with frogs, God demonstrated His supremacy over Egypt's false gods, exposing their inability to protect or control their own symbols of power.

In response, Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and pleaded for relief, promising to let the Israelites go to worship the Lord. Moses prayed, and God caused the

THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

frogs to die, leaving them in massive, stinking heaps throughout the land. However, once the plague ended, Pharaoh hardened his heart again, refusing to fulfill his promise. This pattern of Pharaoh's false repentance and hardened heart revealed his pride and unwillingness to submit to God's authority. The plague of frogs served as both a judgment against Pharaoh's disobedience and a powerful display of God's control over nature, further affirming His sovereignty.

Duration: Not specified, but Pharaoh sought relief, and the frogs died soon after. The land reeked of their carcasses.

Time Between Plagues: Likely a few days, allowing time for Pharaoh's negotiations and for the frogs' removal.

3. GNATS/LICE (THIRD PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 8:16-19

Details: The dust of the earth turned into gnats (or lice), infesting people and animals. Pharaoh's magicians acknowledged, "This is the finger of God".

Without warning to Pharaoh, God instructed Moses to tell Aaron to stretch out his staff and strike the dust of the ground. As Aaron obeyed, the dust miraculously transformed into swarms of gnats, covering the land and causing immense irritation and discomfort. This plague was particularly significant because it directly targeted Egypt's reliance on the land, which was seen as a source of life and prosperity. The sheer volume of gnats overwhelmed the Egyptians, rendering them helpless and unclean according to their customs.

The Egyptian magicians, who had previously replicated the first two plagues (water to blood and frogs), were unable to reproduce this miracle. They acknowledged to Pharaoh, "*This is the finger of God*" (**Exodus 8:19**), recognizing that the power behind this plague was beyond human or demonic ability. This

statement marked a turning point, as even Pharaoh's trusted magicians admitted Yahweh's divine authority. However, despite this recognition, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he refused to release the Israelites. The plague of gnats demonstrated God's power over the earth itself, humbling the Egyptians and exposing their inability to oppose the one true God.

Duration: Not specified.

Time Between Plagues: Likely brief, as Pharaoh refused to relent, and the next plague followed in quick succession.

4. FLIES (FOURTH PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 8:20-32

Details: Swarms of flies filled Egyptian homes and devastated the land. However, the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was spared.

God commanded Moses to confront Pharaoh once again, warning him to release the Israelites so they could worship the Lord. If Pharaoh refused, God would send swarms of flies that would fill Egyptian homes and ruin the land. When Pharaoh did not comply, God unleashed the plague, and the flies swarmed everywhere—invading homes, covering people, and devastating the land. The Hebrew word used for "flies" can also refer to biting or stinging insects, suggesting that this plague caused significant physical suffering and destruction, further disrupting daily life.

A key detail of this plague is that God made a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites: while the Egyptian land was filled with flies, the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was spared. This demonstrated God's power not only to bring judgment but also to protect His people, further proving that the plagues were acts of divine intervention and not mere natural disasters. Pharaoh, overwhelmed by the devastation, temporarily

THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

relented, allowing the Israelites to sacrifice to God but insisting they remain within Egypt. Moses refused to compromise, insisting on full obedience to God's command. After Moses prayed and God removed the flies, Pharaoh again hardened his heart and reneged on his promise, refusing to let the Israelites go. This plague highlighted God's sovereignty over Pharaoh, Egypt's land, and nature itself while reinforcing His commitment to His people and their deliverance.

Duration: Not specified, but Pharaoh again pleaded for relief and hardened his heart when the plague ended.

Time Between Plagues: Likely a few days to a week, allowing time for Pharaoh's refusal and negotiations.

5. DEATH OF LIVESTOCK (FIFTH PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 9:1-7

Details: A severe pestilence killed the Egyptian livestock (horses, donkeys, cattle, camels, sheep). The Israelites' livestock were untouched.

Moses was instructed to confront Pharaoh once again with God's demand: "*Let My people go, that they may serve Me*" (**Exodus 9:1**). If Pharaoh refused, God warned that He would strike the Egyptian livestock—horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, sheep, and goats—with a devastating plague. True to His word, the next day the plague spread across Egypt, killing a large number of animals and crippling Egypt's agricultural economy. Livestock were essential to Egyptian life for transportation, farming, food, and religious sacrifices, so this plague would have caused widespread economic and social disruption.

A significant aspect of this plague is the clear distinction God made between the Egyptians and the Israelites. While Egypt's livestock perished, none of the livestock belonging to the Israelites in the land of Goshen were harmed. This miraculous preservation demonstrated God's sovereignty and care for His

people, proving that the plague was not a random disease but a targeted act of divine judgment. Pharaoh even sent messengers to verify this, and when he saw that Israel's livestock were untouched, his heart remained hardened, and he still refused to let the Israelites go. This plague further exposed the impotence of Egypt's gods, such as Apis (a bull god) and Hathor (a cow goddess), while affirming Yahweh as the true and living God, sovereign over life, health, and creation.

Duration: Likely a single day.

Time Between Plagues: Not specified, but possibly several days, as Pharaoh investigated whether the Israelites' livestock had been spared.

6. BOILS (SIXTH PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 9:8-12

Details: Festering boils broke out on the Egyptians and their animals. The magicians could not stand before Pharaoh because of the boils.

This plague began when the Lord instructed Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of soot from a kiln and scatter it into the air in Pharaoh's presence. As the soot spread, it caused painful, festering boils to break out on the skin of the Egyptians and their animals throughout the land. The use of kiln soot is significant because kilns were likely used to bake the bricks that the Israelites, in their oppression, were forced to make (**Exodus 1:14**). Thus, what had been a tool of Israel's suffering became an instrument of Egypt's judgment.

The severity of this plague was evident, as the boils were not only physically painful but also humiliating. The Egyptian magicians, who had previously tried to replicate God's plagues, were rendered powerless and could not even stand before Pharaoh because they were afflicted with the boils themselves. This event further demonstrated the supremacy of

THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

Yahweh over Egypt's false gods, particularly deities associated with health and healing, such as Imhotep (a god of medicine) and Sekhmet (a goddess of healing and protection). Despite the intensity of the plague and the suffering of the people, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he continued to resist God's command to let the Israelites go. This plague emphasized God's power over human health and exposed the utter helplessness of Pharaoh and Egypt's magicians before the God of Israel.

Duration: Not specified but likely lasted until the next plague.

Time Between Plagues: Likely short, as Pharaoh showed no change of heart.

7. HAIL (SEVENTH PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 9:13-35

Details: God sent a devastating hailstorm that destroyed crops, animals, and people in the open fields. This plague included thunder and fire (lightning). The land of Goshen was protected.

This plague began with a warning from God through Moses to Pharaoh, declaring that God could have already wiped out Egypt completely, but He allowed Pharaoh to persist so that God's power and name would be proclaimed throughout the earth (**Exodus 9:16**). Moses instructed Pharaoh to bring any people or animals in the open fields to shelter, as the storm would strike with unparalleled ferocity. Some of Pharaoh's servants heeded the warning and brought their animals and servants indoors, while others ignored it, leading to severe consequences.

When Moses stretched out his staff, the plague began. Hail mixed with fire fell from the sky, devastating everything left unprotected—people, animals, and crops alike. The hail destroyed the flax and barley crops, indicating that it was likely early spring during the agricultural season (**Exodus 9:31-**

32). This destruction crippled Egypt's economy and food supply. However, as with previous plagues, the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was untouched, highlighting God's protection over His people. Pharaoh, overwhelmed by the destruction, confessed his sin and promised to let the Israelites go, but as soon as the plague ceased, he hardened his heart again and refused to release them. This plague demonstrated God's complete control over nature, His judgment against Pharaoh's pride, and His ability to protect His people while displaying His glory to all the earth.

Duration: A single day.

Time Between Plagues: Pharaoh acknowledged his sin but later reneged on his promise to let Israel go, suggesting a short time before the next plague.

8. LOCUSTS (EIGHTH PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 10:1-20

Details: Locusts devoured all remaining vegetation, leaving Egypt barren. Pharaoh again pleaded for relief but hardened his heart after the locusts were driven away.

Before the plague began, God instructed Moses to confront Pharaoh again, explaining that these signs and wonders were meant to demonstrate His power and teach future generations about His greatness (**Exodus 10:1-2**). Pharaoh was warned that if he refused to let the Israelites go, God would bring locusts so numerous they would cover the land and consume everything left after the devastating hailstorm, leaving Egypt completely barren. This warning emphasized the severity of the judgment and revealed that Egypt's resources were being systematically destroyed.

When Pharaoh refused to relent, Moses stretched out his staff, and an east wind brought swarms of locusts that covered the land, eating every green plant, tree,

THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

and crop. The plague was so severe that nothing green remained in Egypt, further crippling their food supply and economy. The locusts would have been particularly terrifying to an agrarian society like Egypt, where agriculture was central to survival. Pharaoh, overwhelmed by the destruction, confessed his sin again and pleaded with Moses to intercede with God to remove the locusts. God responded to Moses' prayer, driving the locusts into the Red Sea with a strong west wind. However, as soon as relief came, Pharaoh hardened his heart once more and refused to let the Israelites go. This plague highlighted both God's absolute control over creation and Pharaoh's persistent rebellion, while further demonstrating the futility of Egypt's false gods to protect their land and people.

Duration: Not specified but described as overwhelming and destructive.

Time Between Plagues: Likely a few days, as Pharaoh negotiated with Moses and Aaron but refused to fully comply.

9. DARKNESS (NINTH PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 10:21-29

Details: A deep, tangible darkness covered Egypt for three days. The Israelites, however, had light in their dwellings.

Unlike the previous plagues, this one came without a warning to Pharaoh. God instructed Moses to stretch out his hand toward heaven, and a supernatural darkness fell upon Egypt, described as so intense that it could be "felt" (**Exodus 10:21**). This darkness was not merely the absence of light but a profound and oppressive gloom that immobilized the Egyptians—no one could see or move from their place for three days. The darkness was likely a direct judgment against Ra, the Egyptian sun god, who was one of the most worshiped deities in Egypt. By blotting out the sun, God demonstrated His power over creation

and the futility of Egypt's idols.

In contrast to the Egyptians' suffering, the Israelites had light in their dwellings, showing once again God's favor and protection over His people in the land of Goshen. This clear distinction between Egypt and Israel underscored God's sovereignty and His ability to preserve His people in the midst of judgment. Pharaoh, feeling the weight of this plague, attempted another compromise: he agreed to let the Israelites go to worship their God but insisted that their flocks and herds remain behind. Moses rejected this compromise, stating that all their livestock must go, as sacrifices to the Lord were required. Pharaoh, enraged, hardened his heart once more and dismissed Moses, warning him never to appear before him again, saying, "*On the day you see my face, you shall die*" (**Exodus 10:28**). Moses agreed but declared that Pharaoh's continued rebellion would bring about one final, devastating judgment. This plague served as a powerful prelude to the climactic tenth plague and reinforced God's supremacy over Egypt's gods and Pharaoh's stubborn pride.

Duration: 3 days.

Time Between Plagues: The next plague (death of the firstborn) followed after God gave final instructions for the Passover, indicating a short interval.

10. DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN (TENTH PLAGUE)

Reference: Exodus 11:1-10; 12:29-32

Details: At midnight, God struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from Pharaoh's household to the lowliest slave. Only those who applied the blood of the lamb to their doorposts (the Israelites) were spared. This event finally broke Pharaoh's resistance.

This devastating judgment came after Pharaoh's repeated refusal to let the Israelites go, despite God's previous warnings and the nine preceding plagues. Through Moses, God warned Pharaoh that He would

THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

bring one final, decisive plague: the death of every firstborn, from Pharaoh's own son to the firstborn of slaves and even the firstborn of cattle. God made a clear distinction, however, between Egypt and Israel, promising that no harm would come to the Israelites who obeyed His command to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb (**Exodus 12:7, 13**). This act of obedience demonstrated faith in God's provision for salvation.

At midnight, God carried out His judgment. The firstborn in every Egyptian household died, causing great mourning and despair throughout the land, as *"there was not a house where someone was not dead"* (**Exodus 12:30**). Pharaoh, finally broken by the overwhelming loss, summoned Moses and Aaron during the night and told them to take the Israelites, along with their flocks and herds, and leave Egypt immediately. He even asked for their blessing as they departed (**Exodus 12:31–32**). This final plague was not only a judgment against Pharaoh's hardened heart but also against Egypt's gods, particularly those tied to fertility and life. It demonstrated Yahweh's ultimate power and sovereignty. For the Israelites, the application of the lamb's blood on their doorposts prefigured Christ, the Lamb of God, whose blood delivers believers from eternal death and judgment. This moment marked the fulfillment of God's promise to deliver His people from bondage, paving the way for their exodus and freedom.

Duration: A single night.

Time Between Plagues: The preparation for Passover indicates a short interval, as God instructed the Israelites to prepare the lamb and mark their doorposts.

TOTAL DURATION OF THE PLAGUES

While the Bible does not provide exact timelines between the plagues, scholars estimate the plagues occurred over a period of 5–10 months based on: Seasonal references (e.g., hail destroyed the barley,

suggesting early spring; Exodus 9:31).

The sequence of Pharaoh's repeated refusal and God's continued warnings.

THEOLOGICAL INSIGHT

The plagues were not random acts of destruction but deliberate judgments:

- They demonstrated God's power over Egypt's false gods.
- They revealed God's justice against Pharaoh's oppression.
- They displayed God's mercy in sparing the Israelites and providing a way of salvation through the Passover lamb (**Exodus 12**).

Ultimately, the plagues prepared the way for Israel's deliverance, pointing forward to Christ, the ultimate deliverer and Passover Lamb.