



**FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM** | *The Story of Israel*  
the books of EXODUS & LEVITICUS & NUMBERS

**CLASS INSTRUCTIONS**

Every Class will have Biblical reading for preparation. However, *we will not read the whole text in classes.* Please **pre-read** before the class. *Take Home Review Sheets* for notes will be provided on a weekly basis.

Regarding Health and Safety, we will sit in comfortable distanced seating during class – and it is recommended that masks be worn to your seat and as you leave.

**#FALL 2020**

LESSON SCHEDULE

1.	9/8	<b>Introduction to the Class and the Exodus of Israel</b>
2.	9/15	<b>Bondage and the Rise of the Deliverer</b>   Exodus 1-2
3.	9/22	<b>The Call of the Deliverer</b>   Exodus 3:1-4:23
4.	9/29	<b>Liberation Begins</b>   Exodus 5:1-6:30
5.	10/6	<b>The Prophet and The Power of God</b>   Exodus 7:1-11:10
6.	10/13	<b>The Prophet and The Power of God (2)</b>   Exodus 7:1-11:10
7.	10/20	<b>The Passover* and Feast of Unleavened Bread</b>   Exodus 12-13 with Leviticus 23:4-8
8.	10/27	<b>The March to Freedom</b>   Exodus 14-15
9.	11/3	<b>The Journey of Complaint and the Testing of the People</b>   Exodus 16-17
10.	11/10	<b>Jethro and Moses, the Law Giver</b>   Exodus 18-19
11.	11/17	<b>Covenant Is Made with Ten Commandments: The Moral Code</b>   Exodus 20
12.	12/1	<b>Covenant Ordinances (Ex. 21:1): Obedience and Disobedience</b> (Lev. 26:14-46 with Deuteronomy 28-30) and <b>Capital Crimes</b> (Exodus 21).
13.	12/8	<b>Covenant Ordinances: Holiness</b> (Ex. 22:31; Lev. 19:1-3; 20:7, 26): <i>"You must be holy" involves many things, including respect, Sabbath and the Tithe</i> (Ex. 22:29-30; 23:19; Lev. 27:30-34).
14.	12/15	<b>The Covenant Calendar</b>   Special days of the Tabernacle (Ex. 23:14-17; 31:12-17; 34:18, 21-26; 35:1-3; Lev. 16:1-34; 19:30; 23:1-44; 25:1-24; 26:2): The Sabbath Day (Ex. 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:1-3; Lev. 19:30; 23:1-3; 26:2); The Sabbath Year (Lev. 25:1-7). The Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-24); *The Passover (Lev. 23:4-5); The Festival of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 34:18; Lev. 23:6-8); The Festival of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14); The Festival of Harvest (Lev. 23:15-22); The Festival of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25); The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32); The Festival of Tabernacles (Shelters) (Lev. 23:33-44).

## Lesson 5

**The Prophet and The Power of God | Exodus 7:8-11:10**

The plagues God delivered against the Egyptians were a judgment of Pharaoh and his people for their oppression of His people, the Israelites (cf. Gen. 15:13-14; Deut. 11:1-4; Ps. 78:44-52). This judgment is given a significant amount of space in the Book of Exodus. As such, it was important to God for us to reflect on this aspect of the story. Not only does Moses go into a great deal of detail in describing the plagues of the Exodus, but this incident is frequently referred to throughout the Old Testament and the New – especially and namely the defining 10<sup>th</sup> plague of redemption through death.

In response to Israel's suffering (1), God called the prophet Moses, whom He protected and prepared for the task of delivering His people as prophet (2-4). After several attempts to defer to another, the reluctant Moses went to Egypt. After being initially received by the elders and the people, Moses was rejected by Pharaoh and then also the foremen (along with many Israelites) (6). In chapter 7 we come to the beginning of the plagues God brought through Moses and Aaron.

The resistance (hardened heart) of Pharaoh and the resulting plagues come as no surprise to Moses. God foretold it: *"But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go"* (3:19-20). Pharaoh found the petition to release Israel for three days especially annoying. Another God would have to be acknowledged if he were to relent and then, if religious observances necessitated a "day off" (and there seem to have been a sufficient number of those already), Israel's God must mean something. And so Pharaoh dismissed Israel's God as nothing more than an excuse for idleness, an obscure Semitic god deserving no honor or priority (6:8, 17).

As noted last week, many Egyptians took "off" for religious offering. One Egyptian source recorded journals of work giving a day-to-day record of absenteeism, names of absentees, and reasons. One noted Royal Tomb workmen who were "idle" at one period for 30 out of 48 days saying that several workmen were 'offering to his god' and marked 'idle,' showing Egyptian contempt for other deities. Perhaps, the worship of other gods was a big temptation for Israel because the worship of Egyptian deities would have granted them, without the censure of "laziness," to have rest from the hard labor they faced.

When we look at these plagues together, there are some who look at them as nothing more than mere myth. Some believe they are mere myths fabricated to dramatically communicate religious belief. This view cannot be taken seriously, for it fails to take the Bible seriously. Some say the plagues did occur but were not miraculous and instead, natural disasters common to Egypt that Moses made to be an act of divine judgment (i.e., the Nile turned to blood is viewed either as having reached flood stage, laden with red colored silt, or with some kind of micro-organism, which gave the river a red color. All of the other eight plagues are a kind of aftermath, a natural outworking, of the first plague).

Yet, while nature is certainly employed (frogs, storms, locusts, etc.), the presentation of these events were more than natural disasters. They were interventions in nature by God. Even the Egyptian magicians said, "This is the finger of God" (8:19). While metaphor and figurative language does occur in Scripture (c.f. Joel 2:31; Revelation 6:12), the first premise of exegesis is to take it literally unless it is not possible. If miracles can exist, these can be miraculous plagues.

Joseph P. Free lists five unique aspects of the plagues which set them apart as miraculous events. These are as follows: (1) **Intensification**. While frogs, insects, murrain and darkness were known in Egypt, these were intensified far beyond any ordinary occurrence. (2) **Prediction**. The fact that Moses predicted the moment of the arrival and departure sets them apart from purely natural occurrences (cf. 8:10, 23; 9:5, 18, 29; 10:4). (3) **Discrimination**. Certain of the plagues did not occur in the land of Goshen where Israel was living (8:22, no flies; 9:4, no murrain; 9:26, no hail). (4) **Orderliness**. There is a gradual severity in the nature of the plagues concluding with the death of the firstborn. (5) **Moral Purpose**. "These were not freaks of nature but were designed to teach moral precepts and lessons" (Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971, 84-85).

So what did the Magicians do? The first two plagues were, to Pharaoh's satisfaction, reproduced by his magicians. First, it might be that their "miracles" were only apparent, performed by some kind of illusion or sleight of hand. It is said that the cobra can be made rigid by applying pressure at the proper spot at the back of the creature's head. Thus, the staffs of the magicians were really serpents all along, only appearing to be sticks. Or second, the "miracles" were supernaturally empowered by Satan or his demonic helpers. Since it appears the magicians were able to reproduce the first two plagues, they were still prevented from removing the plagues or reproducing others. In the case of the gnats, the text seems to indicate that the magicians thought they could produce gnats and tried, unsuccessfully, to do so (8:18). Some have said this is more than just a contest between Moses and the magicians, it is God challenging the gods of Egypt (Exod. 12:12), behind which is Satan and his demonic assistants.

The plagues came from God upon the Egyptians for specific purposes.

- 1) The plagues were an indictment and judgment of the gods of Egypt. *"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt; I am the Lord"* (12:12; cf. 18:11; Num. 33:4; Isa. 19:1). Not only did the Egyptians need to renounce their pagan gods as no-gods, but so did the Israelites (cf. Josh. 24:14).
- 2) The plagues were a demonstration of God's existence and power. Pharaoh rejected Moses' request that he allow the Israelites to travel three days into the wilderness to worship God (5:1-2). The plagues were a rebuttal to Pharaoh's response. They proved that Israel's God alone was Lord. *"And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it"* (7:5; cf. also, 7:17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 16; 10:2).
- 3) The plagues were a judgment on Pharaoh and the Egyptians for their cruelty. *"But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions"* (Gen. 15:14).
- 4) The plagues were God's means of forcing Pharaoh to release Israel from Egypt. *"But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go"* (Exod. 3:19-20; cf. 6:1; 7:4-5; 12:31, 33, 39; 13:3).
- 5) The plagues were a prototype, a sample of God's future judgment. The plagues which came upon the Egyptians for their sin were like those which Israel would experience, if this nation disobeyed the Law which God was soon to give them: *"The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured"* (Deut. 28:27).

Having considered the plagues as a whole, what did the plagues mean individually?

**PLAGUE ONE: THE NILE TURNED INTO BLOOD (7:14-25).** The Nile is virtually the "life blood" of Egypt. Without the silt provided during its times of overflow and the water with which it constantly sustained life, Egypt would be almost uninhabitable.

Were it not for this inundation Egypt would be as desolate as the deserts on either side. The Egyptians fully recognized this fact, and in thanksgiving for the blessings of the Nile, hymns were written. Not only were gods associated with the Nile, but fertility, blessing, and happiness were also associated with the faithfulness of this river. From the New Kingdom period comes a document known to us today as the "Hymn of the Nile," a composition which may have originated in the Middle Kingdom period. The words of this hymn best tell the story of the importance of the Nile River to the Egyptian: *Hail to thee, Oh Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive! ... He that waters the meadows which Recreated, in order to keep every kid alive. He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant from water: that is his dew coming down (from) heaven* (ANET, 'Hymn to the Nile,' trans. by John A Wilson, 272, as cited by Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt. 91.)

The meaning of this miracle of turning the Nile to blood can best be understood in the light of the later prophecy God gave through Ezekiel:

*"Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. Speak to him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster lying among your streams. You say, 'The Nile is mine; I made it for myself.' But I will put hooks in your jaws and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales. I will put you out from among your streams, with all the fish sticking to your scales. I will leave you in the desert, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the open field and*

not be gathered or picked up. I will give you as food to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air. Then all who live in Egypt will know that I am the Lord” (Ezek. 29:2-6).

**PLAGUE TWO: THE FROGS** (8:1-15). Frogs were also regarded as having divine power:

“In the Egyptian pantheon the goddess Heqet had the form of a woman with a frog’s head. From her nostrils, it was believed, came the breath of life that animated the bodies of those created by her husband, the great god Khnum, from the dust of the earth. Therefore frogs were not to be killed. (ibid).

Frogs were not uncommon in Egypt, especially around the Nile river. But there had never been so many. They got into the food, into the kneading troughs, ovens, everywhere. The fact that the magicians of Egypt could produce even more frogs must have been a real delight to the Egyptians. What they wanted was no frogs, not more frogs. And only Moses could take the frogs away. Moses gave Pharaoh the option of naming the time for the frogs to be removed. Pharaoh chose the next day. I would imagine that he did not ask for the frogs to be removed immediately, hoping that they would go away by themselves, before the appointed time, thus showing that Moses was not in control of the situation.

**PLAGUE THREE: THE GNATS** (8:16-19). It is not altogether certain what is meant by the Hebrew term translated “gnat” in the NIV. The KJV renders the term “lice,” which is also possible. Some have suggested that it was a plague of mosquitoes. Having suffered from mosquitoes in the past, I find this at least a believable option. These pests plagued both men and animals. The importance of this plague is that the magicians of Egypt *were unable to produce* these gnats, even though they tried. This was convincing enough for the magicians to say to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (19). From the other places where this same expression is found (Exod. 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3; Luke 11:20), it seems to refer primarily to the power of God, directly intervening in the affairs of men. Nevertheless, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he refused to listen.

#	PLAGUE	EGYPTIAN DEITY TARGETED
1	Water turned to blood <i>Ex 7:14-25</i>	Hapi — god of the Nile Osiris — Nile was his bloodstream Khnum — guardian of the Nile
2	Frogs <i>Ex 8:1-15</i>	Heqet — goddess of birth, with a frog head Hapi — frog goddess of Egypt
3	Gnats/mosquitoes <i>Ex 8:16-19</i>	Seb — god of the desert
4	Flies <i>Ex 8:20-32</i>	Uatchit — the fly god of Egypt
5	Livestock epidemic <i>Ex 9:1-7</i>	Hathor — goddess with a cow head Apis — the bull god, symbol of fertility Mnevis — sacred bull of Heliopolis
6	Boils <i>Ex 9:8-12</i>	Sekhmet — goddess with power over disease Sunu — the pestilence god Isis — goddess of healing
7	Hail <i>Ex 9:13-35</i>	Nut — a sky goddess Osiris — god of crops and fertility Set — god of storms Seth — protector of crops
8	Locusts <i>Ex 10:1-20</i>	Nut — a sky goddess Osiris — god of crops and fertility Seth — protector of crops
9	Darkness <i>Ex 10:21-29</i>	Re, Aten, Atum, Horus — all sun gods Nut, Hathor — sky goddesses
10	Death of the first born <i>Ex 11:1-12:30</i>	Min — god of reproduction Isis — goddess who protected children Heqet — goddess of birth Pharaoh’s first born son — a god

**PLAGUE FOUR: THE FLIES** (8:20-32). In this second sequence of three plagues, there is a distinction made between the Egyptians and the Israelites. While we cannot be certain of the exact type of fly, we would probably be safe in assuming they were bigger and bit harder than the gnats. In this case, Pharaoh was willing to negotiate with Moses and offered to let Israel worship their God but only if they were to stay in Egypt (8:25). When Moses refused this offer, Pharaoh counter-offered they could “go into the desert, but not very far” (8:28). Pharaoh’s request, “Pray for me” (v. 28) shows how self-centered he still is. Moses left, but with the warning that there must be no more deceit on Pharaoh’s part regarding his promise to let Israel go. But when the flies were gone, so was Pharaoh’s motivation to let Israel go.

**PLAGUE FIVE: LIVESTOCK KILLED** (9:1-7). Directed against the livestock of the Egyptians and not the cattle of the Israelites, the cause of their death is unknown. By whatever means, God virtually wiped out the cattle of the Egyptians. Since wealth was measured largely in terms of cattle, this was an economic disaster. The gods of Egypt were once again proven to be lifeless and useless: “

... many animals were sacred (cf. 8:26), particularly, as stated earlier, the bull which represented the god Apis or Re, and the cow which represented Hathor, the goddess of love, beauty, and joy. Hathor was depicted in the form of a woman with the head (or sometimes only the horns) of a cow. Also Khnum was a ram-god (ibid).

**PLAGUE SIX: BOILS** (9:8-12). Another god worshiped by the Egyptians, fearfully aware of epidemics, was Sekhmet, a lion-headed goddess with alleged power over disease; Sunu, the pestilence god; and Isis, goddess of healing. And even here the priests and priestesses of these gods and their magicians are not

only unable to rid the land of Egypt of the boils, they are also so afflicted themselves that they cannot even show up to stand before Moses.

**PLAGUE SEVEN: THE STORM** (9:13-35). Usually, this plague is referred to as “the plague of hail” (cf. NIV). This, however, is only partly true. In reality, the plague is the worst thunderstorm in Egypt’s history (9:18). The death and destruction which occurs is the result of both hailstones, lightning and fire (24). The result is chaotic. This plague begins with a long extended warning that unless Pharaoh releases the Israelites, God will “send the full force of His plagues against Pharaoh and Egypt” (14). God could have legitimately and easily wiped out all of Egypt in one blow, but He did not (15). Now, if Pharaoh persists in his hardness of heart, things will get considerably worse.

In this plague, in verse 16, Moses explains why God has allowed Pharaoh’s stubbornness to persist. God raised Pharaoh up for the purpose of hardening his heart and thus of providing the occasion for God to manifest His power to men. That God is free to do so is the point Paul makes in Romans chapter 9, citing this statement to Pharaoh as an example.

**PLAGUE EIGHT: LOCUSTS** (10:1-20). The previous plague of the thunderstorm had destroyed the flax and barley crops, but the wheat and spelt crops were not destroyed because they mature later (9:31). The locusts would wipe out the wheat and the spelt crops. And God said that this would give the Israelites something to tell their grandchildren about (10:1-2). When Moses foretold of the coming of the locusts on the next day, Pharaoh’s officials pled with the king to let the Israelites go (10:7). Egypt, they protested, was ruined, so why incur any further disasters? Pharaoh offered to let the men go, but not the women, and then drove Moses and Aaron out of his presence (10:10-11). When the plague struck Egypt, Pharaoh confessed that he had sinned against God and against the Israelites. He asked Moses for forgiveness, and that he pray for the plague to be removed (10:16-17). A strong west wind carried the locusts into the Red Sea. When the plague was removed, Pharaoh returned to his old ways, and would not let Israel go (10:20).

**PLAGUE NINE: DARKNESS** (10:21-29). The ninth plague was that of a darkness so intense that it produced a dread in the hearts of the Egyptians. **For three days** the Egyptians and the Israelites were confined to their homes. For the Egyptians, it would seem that their homes were darkened as well but for the Israelites, there was light in their homes (10:22-23). Some have suggested that this “darkness” was only a partial darkness, created by a dust storm. This can hardly be the case, for the darkness which is described here is much more intense. The three days of darkness must have had a tremendous emotional and psychological impact on everyone. The experience may have been something like the 3 day period of blindness which Saul experienced prior to his conversion (cf. Acts 9:8-12).

This plague of darkness struck hard at the Egyptian deities:

This plague was aimed at one of the chief Egyptian deities, the sun god Re, of whom Pharaoh was a representation. Re was responsible for providing sunlight, warmth, and productivity. Other gods, including Horus, were associated with the sun. Nut, the goddess of the sky, would have been humiliated by this plague ... (Ibid).

The ninth plague, like the third and the sixth plagues, came upon the Egyptians without warning, which would have given them no opportunity to prepare for the disaster, either physically or psychologically. Pharaoh’s response to the plague was to offer to allow all the Israelites to leave Egypt to worship God, but that the cattle must remain behind (10:24). When this offer was rejected, Pharaoh angrily warned Moses that he must leave his presence, and to return would be his death. Moses agreed, but he had yet one more plague to proclaim before his final exit from Pharaoh’s presence. This tenth plague, he threatened, would bring about the release of the Israelites.

**NEXT WEEK | 10/13 | The Prophet and The Power of God (2) | Exodus 7:1-11:10**