

Exodus 7:14-25

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-7/exodus-714-25/>

Since the account of the plagues upon Egypt begins here in verse 14 and extends to 12:32, it is useful to include a word of introduction.

The plagues occurred in the following order:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Water turned to blood | 7:14-25 |
| 2. Frogs | 8:1-15 |
| 3. Gnats | 8:16-19 |
| 4. Flies | 8:20-32 |
| 5. Cattle | 9:1-7 |
| 6. Boils | 9:8-12 |
| 7. Hail | 9:13-35 |
| 8. Locusts | 10:1-20 |
| 9. Darkness | 10:21-29 |
| 10. Death of first-born | 11:1-10; 12:29-32 |

At first glance, it would appear that there is no apparent logic or plan to the order of the plagues. However, it can be considered that the first nine plagues are organized in three cycles of three plagues each, culminating with the single last plague – the death of the first-born ([Exodus 11](#)).

- | <i>First Cycle</i> | <i>Second Cycle</i> | <i>Third Cycle</i> |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Water turned to blood | 4. Flies | 7. Hail |
| 2. Frogs | 5. Cattle | 8. Locusts |
| 3. Gnats | 6. Boils | 9. Darkness |

Each cycle has the following characteristics:

- In the first plague of each cycle, Yahweh commands Moses to warn Pharaoh “in the morning” ([Exodus 7:14-25](#), [8:20-32](#), [9:13-35](#))

- The second plague in each cycle has Moses warning Pharaoh at an unspecified time ([Exodus 8:1-15](#), [9:1-7](#), [10:1-20](#))
- The third plague in each cycle strikes without any warning ([Exodus 8:16-19](#), [9:8-12](#), [10:21-29](#))

Also, the plagues in the third cycle seem harsher and more intense than those of the first two cycles.

That they were done in a particular order emphasizes the fact that the plagues were not a random, disorganized series of natural phenomena. On the contrary, they are being controlled by God Himself. They involved nature, but the God of Moses controls nature (and everything else for that matter). This is what the Egyptians, the Israelites, and all people need to learn – He is the sovereign LORD of all.

The first plague on Egypt is described in 7:14 – 25. It involved the centerpiece of Egyptian life – the Nile River. The Nile was responsible for watering and feeding crops, thus providing life-sustaining food and water for the Egyptian people. As such, the Nile was also considered a god.

There are three sections in the telling of this plague:

- The LORD instructed Moses and Aaron on what to say and do (14-19)
- Moses and Aaron obeyed the LORD and started the plague (20-21)
- The Egyptians responded by duplicating the plague (22-25)

The account of the first plague begins with *Then the Lord said to Moses*. It shows that the source of the plague was the LORD, not Moses or Aaron. The LORD then repeats the current situation – *Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go*. The word “stubborn” here is the Hebrew word meaning “heavy”. Pharaoh was not moved by the turning of Aaron’s staff into a serpent (7:8-13).

As a result, the LORD instructed Moses and Aaron to *Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water*. The reason that Pharaoh went to the water (of the Nile) every morning is not explained. It could be that he was simply taking a bath, but it could also have pagan overtones as well. Since the Egyptians considered the Nile to be a god that was thought to be the source of life, it might be that Pharaoh went to the Nile to pay homage to the deity that gave life. Furthermore, Moses was instructed to *station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was*

turned into a serpent. In other words, Moses was told to be in a place where he could intercept Pharaoh and confront him.

Verses 16-18 contain what the LORD told Moses to *say to him* (i.e. Pharaoh). Moses identified the source of the message (*The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying*). Then he confronted Pharaoh about his failure to obey the LORD who said *Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness*. Pharaoh's mistake has been that he has not listened or consented so far. Notice the *But behold* to get Pharaoh's attention to the LORD's accusation – *you have not listened* (or "obeyed") *until now*. Because of this, the LORD told Pharaoh *By this you shall know that I am the Lord*. Pharaoh needed to acknowledge that the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, was the sovereign One who required obedience. To demonstrate His sovereignty, Moses, under orders from the LORD, declared *behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood*. As a result, *the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile*. So, in this plague, the LORD turned the Nile into being a source of death and misery rather than being the source of life and prosperity.

In verse 19, *the Lord said to Moses* what was to be done. Moses was to tell Aaron what actions to take. He was told to *Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood*. The result was that *there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone*. Notice that there was no negotiating with Pharaoh or asking him if he would now obey the LORD. The plague was going to happen no matter what. Notice also that the plague was not limited to the waters of the Nile – it included even "rivers" (note the plural) and "streams", "pools", "reservoirs", and "in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone." Thus, all water in Egypt that was flowing or being stored would be turned to blood.

Now that the pronouncement has been made, it was time for action. So *Moses and Aaron did even as the Lord had commanded*. What the LORD wanted from Moses and Aaron was obedience – He would do the rest. So, *Aaron lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood*. Note that there were multiple eyewitnesses to what Aaron did. Even the "god" Pharaoh saw what the sovereign LORD did through His representatives.

There are several views concerning the waters of the Nile being turned into blood. A popular view is that the waters turning to blood correspond to the flooding of the Nile which causes the red soil to be churned up. There is also red algae that might have contributed to the color. Thus, this view says that the plague occurred during the time of the Nile's flooding. This coincides with the view is that the water did not literally turn into blood – rather, it could be seen in the same light as [Joel 2:31](#), where the moon is said to be turned into blood. If [Joel 2:31](#) should not be taken literally, the argument goes, then the Nile's water into blood should not be taken literally either. There are certainly many instances of figurative language in Scripture, such as the [Joel 2](#) passage. The problem with the non-literal view of the Nile turning to blood is that if this was simply a normal occurrence in Egypt, Pharaoh would not be impressed by it.

The view that makes more sense is that the waters were actually turned into “blood,” by the work of the sovereign Creator. He started it at a particular time and ended it at a particular time. The Hebrew word translated “blood” is generally used to describe the blood of a person or animal, but is also used to describe the blood of a grape. We might not know the precise chemical composition, but it seems certain this was not a seasonal experience the Egyptians were accustomed to.

The result is what the LORD said – *The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt.* The result of the plague is that animal life (particularly creatures that lived in and around the Nile River) died and human life suffered hardship. A lack of drinking water in an extremely hot, arid environment would make life very difficult for everyone in Egypt.

Verses 22 – 24 describe the aftermath of the plague. First, *the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts.* How could the magicians turn water into blood if all the water was already turned into blood? It seems likely the explanation is found in verse 24; the Egyptians dug wells in and around the Nile in order to get fresh water. The magicians were then able to turn the water into blood through *secret arts*, likely demonic power, as seen in the previous section.

After the plague was matched by Egypt's magicians, *Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.* The word translated “hardened” here is the Hebrew word (*hazak*) meaning “strong”, indicating that Pharaoh's resolve to refuse Moses' request was strengthened

by this event. In a display of utter disdain for Moses and Aaron, *Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this*. In the meantime, when Pharaoh was in his palace acting care-free, *all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile*. Since the water of the Nile was contaminated with dead fish, it was undrinkable. So, the Egyptian people had to dig new wells to get water that was not polluted.

The account of the first plague ends with a mention that *seven days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile*. This was added probably to give the reader a context between the first plague and what follows in chapter 8.

This plague targeted the following Egyptian gods and goddesses:

- Hapi (Apis), the bull god of the Nile
- Isis, goddess of the Nile
- Khnua, ram god, guardian of the Nile

This plague also demonstrated that the LORD is the Sovereign One over the source of life, not the Nile.

Biblical Text:

¹⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent. ¹⁶You shall say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.” ¹⁷Thus says the Lord, “By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood. ¹⁸The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile.””” ¹⁹Then the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’”

²⁰ So Moses and Aaron did even as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that *was* in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that *was* in the Nile was turned to blood. ²¹ The fish that *were* in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt.²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said. ²³ Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. ²⁴ So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile. ²⁵ Seven days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile.