

Exodus 8:1-15

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-8/exodus-81-15/>

The second plague involves an overwhelming infestation of frogs. There was to be no place in Egypt where the frogs were not present in large numbers. This plague would affect everyone from Pharaoh to servants. It was, as was the case in all the plagues, the result of Pharaoh's refusal to let the people of Israel go. Pharaoh's magicians reproduced the frog infestation, but they could not stop it. So, Pharaoh had to ask Moses and Aaron to ask their LORD to stop the plague. Moses allowed Pharaoh to choose when he wanted the plague to end. The LORD did so, leaving piles of dead, stinking frogs all over Egypt.

The second plague began with another confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. It happened, according to 7:25, seven days after the first plague. This gave Pharaoh plenty of time to release Israel, but he did not do so. In this plague, Moses was instructed by the LORD to *go to Pharaoh and say to him*. There is no time frame as with the first plague ("in the morning"). He relayed the message from the LORD *'Thus says the Lord, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me'*. This time, the LORD gave Pharaoh an ultimatum. Pharaoh must set the Israelites free to worship Him or suffer the consequences.

Here the demand is *that they may serve Me*, in the previous two demands, Pharaoh was told to let the Hebrews go three days into the wilderness to hold a festival to Him (5:1-3), and to serve Him in the wilderness (8:16) It is possible that the significance of *three days' journey into the wilderness* is that it would place them outside the border of Egypt and away from Pharaoh's control, it is also possible that the request truly was for a three day journey. However, it is more likely that the request to travel a three day journey did not imply to Pharaoh that they would return. It was clear to him and the Israelites from the beginning that a request to travel a distance of a three day journey or to go so that they may serve the LORD did not indicate that they would ever return. This commentary presumes that the request to go and serve the LORD indicated to everyone from the beginning that the Israelites would not be obligated to return.

The LORD also gave Pharaoh a warning – *But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite your whole territory with frogs*. This word for "frogs" is used

only here and in two Psalms, both of which refer to this passage (78:45, 105:30).

Frogs were considered sacred beings in Egypt. In some parts of Egypt, they were actually fearful of these creatures, thinking that they were inhabited by evil spirits that were capable of doing great harm. Some Egyptians would bow to the idols to drive away these evil spirits. It is interesting to note that the idea of frogs represented evil spirits is in the New Testament ([Revelation 16:13](#)).

In verses 3 – 4, the LORD went into detail about what is meant by the frogs swarming in “your whole territory.” First of all, *the Nile will swarm with frogs*, which is to be expected. It was normal for frogs to populate the shores of the Nile. Here, the swarm will be much greater than normal. Something very unusual and unexpected was to happen – the frogs *will come up and go into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed*, meaning that Pharaoh was directly affected by this plague. Every part of the palace, even his own bedroom, would be overrun by the frogs. Not only was Pharaoh to be affected, but also the frogs were to go *into the houses of your servants and on your people*, making the lives of Pharaoh’s servants and the rest of his people equally miserable. The frogs would even be found in the food preparation by going *into your ovens and into your kneading bowls*. Verse 4 summarizes what was to happen in this plague – *the frogs will come up on you and your people and all your servants*. So, everyone in Egypt, from Pharaoh to the general population, would experience this plague.

Verses 5 – 7 describe how the plague was to be implemented. Here, Moses was commanded to pass on the LORD’s words to Aaron. He was to “*Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’*” In the previous plague, Aaron was instructed to strike the Nile with his staff. Here, he is told to simply wave it over the Nile and other sources of water.

In obedience, *Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt*. Normally, the frogs inhabited the bodies of water in Egypt. The fact that they “covered the land of Egypt” means that they behaved in ways contrary to their nature. Instead of staying near water, they swarmed into places that had little or no water, meaning their normal behavior was altered by the LORD. The other remarkable fact of their covering Egypt is simply the magnitude of the infestation. To cover the land of Egypt would take many more frogs than existed in the waters of the Nile. So, it would seem that the LORD “created”

the frogs, similar to the creation account in [Genesis 1](#). God's creative power is seen in many of the plagues.

Remarkably, *the magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt*. As with the staffs-turned-into-serpents in 7:11-12, Egypt's magicians were able (likely through demonic power) to replicate the plague.

Verse 8 begins another confrontation between Pharaoh and Moses. Desperate to get relief from the plague, *Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Entreat the Lord that He remove the frogs from me and from my people."* The word translated "entreat" can also mean "pray, make supplication." This is the first time Pharaoh acknowledged the existence of the LORD. Also, the fact that Pharaoh called on Moses and Aaron to get rid of the frogs implies that the magicians of Egypt could create frogs, but they could not end the plague of frogs. So, Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron to intercede for him before the LORD to get rid of the frogs. In order to entice them to do so, he offered *to let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord*. It is interesting that Pharaoh tried to bargain with the sovereign LORD, thinking that He could be manipulated and flattered into doing what he wants. This should not be surprising, since that is how idolatry works – the power of gods are manipulated by bribes or service so "we can get what we want." Pharaoh is treating Yahweh like any Egyptian god.

In response, *Moses said to Pharaoh, the honor is yours to tell me*. How to translate this phrase has been debated. A simple translation would be "honor yourself." It has the idea of "do the honor of telling me." Pharaoh is allowed to state when to *entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, that they may be left only in the Nile?*" This gave Pharaoh an active role in ending the plague.

In response, Pharaoh *said, "Tomorrow."* Some have wondered why Pharaoh did not say "immediately." It was probably a combination of asserting his own sovereignty and of testing to see if Moses was manipulating things for his own end. Moses affirmed Pharaoh's request by saying *"May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God. Specifically, The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile."*

Verses 12-15 contain the aftermath of the latest confrontation with Pharaoh. *Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh*. In an

answer to Moses' prayer, *the Lord did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courts, and the fields.* The LORD stopped the infestation by killing the existing frogs that were not in the Nile. However, He did not clean up the mess. The people were forced to remove the dead frogs from their houses, and they *piled them in heaps, and the land became foul.* Because the dead frogs covered all of Egypt, all of Egypt stank.

Did Pharaoh keep his word to release the Israelites (verse 8)? On the contrary, *when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.* Notice that Pharaoh hardened (literally "make heavy") his heart, not God. This shows Pharaoh's true character. He was manipulative, dishonest, and self-absorbed. It was not a surprise, though, because the LORD (who knows the hearts of humans) knew that he would be this way.

This plague repudiated the Egyptian goddess Heqt, who was pictured with a woman's body and the head of a frog. She was the symbol of fertility and resurrection. It was believed that she could blow the breath of life into the nostrils of bodies made from dust. It was also believed she could help women through childbirth. So, it was illegal to intentionally kill frogs because they were considered a sacred being.

The LORD was also teaching both Egypt and Israel that, instead of Heqt being sovereign over life and resurrection, He was.

Biblical Text:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ² But if you refuse to let *them* go, behold, I will smite your whole territory with frogs. ³ The Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls. ⁴ So the frogs will come up on you and your people and all your servants.'" ⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" ⁶ So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. ⁷ The magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

⁸ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Entreat the Lord that He remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.” ⁹ Moses said to Pharaoh, “The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, *that* they may be left only in the Nile?”

¹⁰ Then he said, “Tomorrow.” So he said, “*May it be* according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God. ¹¹ The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile.” ¹² Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh. ¹³ The Lord did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courts, and the fields. ¹⁴ So they piled them in heaps, and the land became foul. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.