

- *Moses and Pharaoh – twelve encounters*

The first miracle – the Nile into blood

- *Yahweh – the God of the Hebrews is real*

- *Pharaoh’s magicians – imitation but not reversal*

The second miracle – the plague of frogs

- *The whole land will get to know what is happening*

- *Imitation again but no reversal*

- *Pharaoh’s promise to release Israel to worship Yahweh*

- *Moses an intercessor*

Twice Moses had been to see Pharaoh. At first he needlessly antagonised him. Then he went again to present miraculous credentials. After that, Moses went nine more times to Pharaoh^{¶1¶2¶3¶4} and then was told never to come again^{¶5}. But after the tenth miracle took place it was not that Moses went to Pharaoh; rather Pharaoh called for Moses^{¶6}. Altogether he had twelve interviews with Moses.

The first miracle was that of the turning of the Nile into blood^{¶1}. Moses is sent to speak to Pharaoh about his unwillingness to hear God’s demand^{¶2}. He is to work a miracle to confirm the authenticity of God’s word. Moses must explain that ‘Yahweh’ is ‘the God of the Hebrews’. He takes the staff which had been used before; this will remind Pharaoh that he had already seen signs which should convince him of the reality of God’s power. The miracle was announced before it happened^{¶3}. It was designed that Pharaoh would know that ‘Yahweh’ was real. He had said ‘Who is Yahweh?’^{¶4}. He is getting an answer. While Pharaoh was watching, the Nile turned to blood^{¶5}. The River Nile was the source of life and fertility for Egypt. But God could end its provisions for Egypt at any time He wished.

Pharaoh’s magicians could imitate the miracle^{¶1}, but they could not reverse it. Their miracles were always miracles bringing further judgement, never miracles of healing or restoration. They could not miraculously reverse God’s miracle of judgement. It would have been more impressive if they had turned the blood to water! Pharaoh still resisted God’s voice^{¶2} although the effects of God’s judgement continued for some time^{¶3}.

Seven days later came **the second miracle, the plague of frogs^{¶1}.** Again Pharaoh is told in advance what will happen^{¶2}. This time there will be greater suffering involved. There was no suffering when Moses’ staff became a snake. There was some inconvenience when the Nile became blood. But now the plague of frogs will bring great disaster. The frogs will be in Pharaoh’s palace, in the beds, in the places where bread is made – everywhere. The death of the frogs and the smell of dead frogs everywhere was to be a hint of what God could do if He wished to bring the life of the Egyptians to an end. The whole land will get to know what is happening^{¶3}.

The miracle takes place^{¶1}. The magicians again can imitate the miracle but they cannot reverse Moses’ miracle^{¶2}.

There is now a hint that Pharaoh might be yielding. He summons Moses and Aaron (a thing he had not done before). He knows they can bring the judgement to an end; his magicians cannot^{¶1}. He promises to release Israel to worship Yahweh (something he has not done before). He agrees to let the people go if the frogs are taken away. Moses makes an offer that the timing should be chosen by Pharaoh^{¶2}; this will make it plain that there is a sheer miracle taking place. Pharaoh will have enough evidence to convince him not only that Yahweh is real^{¶3} and the God of Israel is the all-powerful God^{¶4}, but also that God is unique^{¶5}. It happens as Moses said it would. Moses is called to be an intercessor for the unsaved Pharaoh^{¶6}.

¶1 7:15
 ¶2 8:1,16,20
 ¶3 9:1,8,13
 ¶4 10:1,21
 ¶5 9:28-29
 ¶6 12:32

¶1 7:14-24
 ¶2 7:14-16
 ¶3 7:17-18
 ¶4 5:2
 ¶5 7:19-21

¶1 7:22a
 ¶2 7:22b-23
 ¶3 7:24

¶1 7:25–8:15
 ¶2 8:1-2
 ¶3 8:3-4

¶1 8:5-6
 ¶2 8:7

¶1 8:8
 ¶2 8:9-10a
 ¶3 7:5
 ¶4 7:17
 ¶5 8:10b-11
 ¶6 8:12-14

• Pharaoh's heart and will unchanged

But there was no change in Pharaoh's heart. Here was all the proof he needed, but he yielded to God's word only when forced to do so. There was a mixture of knowledge and denial in his heart. He knew God was real but he refused to allow that knowledge to have any weight with him. He 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie'¹. He admitted that Yahweh was a God of power but his acknowledgement did him no good since it had no affect upon his heart and his will.

¹ Rom 1:25

The third miracle – plague of gnats

• Pharaoh was seeing the hand of God in history

The third miraculous judgement was the plague of gnats¹ or perhaps mosquitoes. God was speaking powerfully to Pharaoh. This time there was no warning.

¹ 8:16-19

• No imitation and no yielding

God speaks to everyone in one way or another. All hear the voice of God in creation¹. Pharaoh was getting something over and above the voice of God in creation. He was seeing the hand of God in history and Moses was there to interpret what was happening. Miraculous signs were coming alongside God's word. At first Pharaoh would not yield at all. After the second miracle he was forced to acknowledge Yahweh's power.

¹ Rom 1:21

• The first three miracles also mocked the gods of Egypt

When Moses was told to strike the ground a plague of gnats invaded the land of Egypt¹. This time the magicians could not imitate the miraculous judgement² and even the magicians were insisting 'This is the finger of God', but Pharaoh would not yield³.

¹ 8:16-17
² 8:18
³ 8:19

• But they are unworthy of even having their names mentioned

It is likely that these various judgements were intended to show God's power to Pharaoh; they were also ways of ridiculing the gods of Egypt. It is possible that the various plagues actually referred to the gods and goddesses of Egypt. The first plague showed the powerlessness of the god of the Nile. The second judgement ridiculed a goddess whose symbol had a frog's head – and so on.

• Only Moses' God announces what is to happen – and then does it

The various gods of the world are worthy of being ridiculed and the Bible pours scorn on them. It does not mention their names. They are not even worthy of having their names mentioned! Only those who are honoured are worthy of having a name.

Moses' God can announce what is to happen and then He can do what He has said He will do.

¹ Isaiah 41:22-24

'Bring the gods near and let them tell us what is going to take place! Declare the things that are going to come afterwards, That we may know that you are gods...Behold, you are less than nothing and utterly worthless!' ¹

God's salvation begins by ridiculing the gods. No one and nothing can act in the way He can act, and it is such a God who saves by the blood of a lamb.



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