

Exodus, Part 5

We left our story last session with Moses losing the first round in his bout with Pharaoh. Not only that, but the Israelites have turned against him, concluding he is only making the problem worse.

And now suddenly in the middle of the narrative, we have a genealogy that seems to be an unnatural and disruptive insertion. However, it was placed here to identify Moses and Aaron more precisely because of the prominent position they were assuming as representatives of the people before the Egyptian state. Thus, the purpose of this genealogical digression is to focus on Moses and Aaron's pedigree and their authority to lead the people from Pharaoh's grasp.

The Genealogy of Moses and Aaron

Exodus 6:14 These are the heads of their fathers' houses: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the clans of Reuben. ¹⁵ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon. ¹⁶ These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. ¹⁷ The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. ¹⁸ The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. ¹⁹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. ²⁰ Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years. ²¹ The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. ²² The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. ²³ Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ²⁴ The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites. ²⁵ Eleazar, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans.

²⁶ These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said: "Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts." ²⁷ It was they who

spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.

Two parenthetical notes amplify this section of Exodus. The ancestry of Moses and Aaron is given in 6:14–27. They were Levites of the clan of Kohath. Amram their father had married his aunt Jochebed. That type of marriage would later be forbidden in the Law of Moses (Lv 18:12; 20:19). Aaron’s family is mentioned for the first time here. His wife Elisheba was of the tribe of Judah. By her, Aaron had four sons who played prominent roles in later events.

Exodus 6:28 On the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ the Lord said to Moses, “I am the Lord; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.” ³⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?”

The story resumes in vs 28–30 with the repetition of comments already made in vs 10–13 where Moses is instructed by the Lord to go back to Pharaoh and tell him all that the Lord has said to Moses. Understandably, Moses asked if the Israelites did not believe him, what likelihood was there that Pharaoh would? In response, God reassured Moses of his ability to overcome Pharaoh and lead the people out of Egypt.

Exodus 7:1 And the Lord said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. ² You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. ³ But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. ⁵ The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.” ⁶ Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the Lord commanded them. ⁷ Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

God stated that Moses would be “like a God to Pharaoh,” and Aaron would be his prophet (7:1–2). With that statement, God is granting Moses power

over Pharaoh. He was authorized to speak and act in God's name and stead, and, under the divine direction, was endowed with a divine power and invested with a divine authority to demand obedience from a sovereign prince and punish disobedience. Moses was a *made* god, a god only by commission, and a god only to Pharaoh. The living and true God is a God to all the world.

With such assurances, Moses should remain confident of success. The divine speech also anticipates the miraculous signs and wonders that are to dominate chapters 7–14. Furthermore, mention is made of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and of the mighty acts of judgment by which God will lead Israel out of Egypt. The Lord says, "I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt," "I will lay my hand on Egypt ... by great acts of judgment," and "I stretch out my hand against Egypt". As a result, "The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (v. 5).

Thus, the scene is set for the cycle of judgments that comprises 7:8–11:10.

Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh

Exodus 7:8 Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹ "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.' " ¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. ¹¹ Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. ¹² For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. ¹³ Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

The Lord expected Pharaoh to demand some kind of proof to support their claim to have been sent by Him. The opening salvo in this battle would be the rod-to-serpent miracle. Moses and Aaron did exactly as told. Once in the presence of Pharaoh and having presented their petitions, Pharaoh demanded proof of authority. Aaron stepped forth and cast down his staff

before Pharaoh, and it became a serpent. The Hebrew word is sometimes translated as “crocodile,” but a snake is the likely application here.

Unimpressed, Pharaoh called out his wise men and sorcerers, the magicians of Egypt, and they cast down their rods that also became serpents.

No doubt beaming with the pride of “victory,” Pharaoh must have assumed a haughty pose.

But then Aaron’s serpent/rod swallowed up those of Pharaoh’s magicians! His brief victory turned into defeat merely served to harden Pharaoh’s heart just as the Lord had said would happen.

Enough of the games, Moses is forced to up the stakes and turns to the plagues.

The First Plague: Water Turned to Blood

Exodus 7:14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent.”

We begin round 2 of this bout. The Lord tells Moses to go to Pharaoh the next morning as he “is going out to the water,” probably meaning to bathe in the Nile. He is told to take with him “the staff that turned into a serpent”. Based on verse 10 the staff that turned into a snake would be Aaron’s staff.

This rod/staff business is a little confusing. Both the staff of Moses and the staff of Aaron are being used to perform these miracles. Furthermore, it is Aaron’s staff or rod that will later be used to establish the authority of the Aaronic order of the priesthood. Some commentaries suggest that the staff that Aaron used was Moses’ and he was passing it over to Aaron to use on his behalf. However, that implies that the miraculous power resided in the staff, thus a specific staff needed to be used because God could only work through that one staff that Moses owned. We know that no such limitation is placed on the power of God.

Maybe what we are seeing here is more of a delegation of authority and power. Moses could delegate his instructions to Aaron and either pass his staff to Aaron or Aaron could use his own staff. In either case, it was God who was doing the work either through Moses or Aaron or whichever rod/staff was used.

The word used here in Exodus is *matteh*, *mattah* /*mat-teh*/ and is translated as either a rod *or* a staff. To confuse matters even more, we have Psalm 23 where David refers to God's "rod *and* his staff" comforting him.

Ps 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

We have two different words here. "Rod" is *shebet* /*shay-bet*/ and "staff" is *mish'enah* /*mish-ay-naw*. There is a difference between the two. This "staff" is the long stick with a hooked end used by shepherds for managing the sheep. They guide the flock with the long straight end of the staff while the hook is used to reach into the briars to drag out sheep that are entangled there.

This rod, on the other hand, is more of a weapon for defending the sheep, like a spear or a bludgeon. Thus, David referred to two instruments he was accustomed to using as a shepherd to describe his relationship with the Lord. The Lord's (shepherd's) staff guided him and got him out of dangerous situations while His rod protected him from threats. In these two instruments (actions) of the Lord on his behalf, David found comfort.

The instruments used by Moses and Aaron do not appear to be the same rod or staff used by David. Though the words are translated the same or similar, the Hebrew is different. I conclude that the rod/staff of Moses and Aaron is a straight walking stick probably about five feet in length that is used to aid in navigating rough terrain.

Exodus 7:16 And you 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 so far, you have not obeyed. ¹⁷ Thus

says the Lord, “By this, you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. ¹⁸ The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.” ’ ” ¹⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’ ” ²⁰ Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. ²¹ And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

As God’s ambassador, Moses employed the traditional messenger formula “Thus says ...” which was employed by high-ranking diplomats when bearing messages from a superior king to his subordinates. This was to credential his claim to be the spokesman of deity.

Moses is instructed to again ask Pharaoh to release the children of Israel. He is to tell him, “But so far, you have not obeyed...” and follow that with a miracle. Moses is to strike the Nile and turn the whole river into blood. Then all the fish in the Nile will die, the whole place will stink of corruption, and the water will be undrinkable. This not only includes the Nile but also all the waters of Egypt, the rivers, canals, ponds, and any pools of water.

Some commentators have suggested that the water did not literally become blood, but simply became reddish in color and this red color came through fungi and other red vegetable matter, or tiny insects of a reddish hue. This, however, does not explain the suddenness of this miracle or the extensiveness of death to the fish. Though the chemical makeup of the red substance is unknown, to the Egyptians it looked and tasted like blood.

Since the Nile was so vital to Egypt’s agriculture and economy, this miracle was alarming. Several Egyptian gods were associated with the Nile including Hapi, Isis, and Khnum. Other gods supposedly protected the fish in the Nile. The yearly miraculous rebirth of Osiris, a god of the earth and

vegetation, was symbolized by the flooding of the Nile. The Egyptians also believed the Nile was Osiris' bloodstream. It is kind of ironic that it turned into blood.

Exodus 7:22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. ²³ Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. ²⁴ And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile. ²⁵ Seven full days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile.

The Egyptians duplicated the miracle, but how is not explained in the text. Furthermore, if all the water became blood, where did the magicians obtain water to duplicate the feat? The answer seems to be in verse 24: the waters in the Nile were stricken but not the natural springs or waters filtered through the soil. The people had to abandon the Nile to have water to drink. A person can go a long time without food, but three days is about the limit one can go without water. The Egyptians dug wells along the Nile where they found sweet water to survive.

This fouling of the Nile lasted seven days (v. 25). Some say this means seven days intervened between the first plague and the second plague. However, since intervals are not stated between any of the other plagues, it seems better to assume that the first judgment lasted seven days.

“Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them” (v.22). Because the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate this miracle somehow, this probably convinced Pharaoh that it wasn't because the God of Israel was superior.

There are at least three reasons given for these plagues.

1. The first was *to demonstrate God's own power*. As a result, the people would know that He alone was God and that He was going to show His superiority over all the gods of Egypt (12:12). Indeed, God says that this was the purpose for which He raised up Moses: “To show you My power, so that My Name may be proclaimed in all the earth” (9:16). With each plague, there came an increasing demonstration of the omnipotence of God.

2. A second reason was that God would *distinguish between the Egyptians and His people, the Israelites*. In 8:23 He gives this as an explanation of why there would be no swarms of flies in Goshen where His people lived: “I will put a division between My people and your people.” That is evident in the plagues; for example, when darkness covers the land, “all the people of Israel had light where they lived” (10:23). This was a judgment on Egypt, and with it, God distinguished between those who were His and those who were not.
3. Finally, the plagues were a means for *hardening the heart of Pharaoh*. This is clear, for example, in 10:1, where God says to Moses that the signs he has worked among them have resulted in Pharaoh’s further rebellion. God’s power and works are no guarantee of compliance and obedience; in Pharaoh’s case, they work the very opposite until he is defeated. Even then he changes his mind and chases after the escaping Israelites.

The Second Plague: Frogs

Exodus 8:1 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 plague all your country with frogs. ³ The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. ⁴ The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants.” ’ ” ⁵ And the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals 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 But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

God told Moses to return to Pharaoh with an ultimatum to release the Israelites or face further judgment, this time frogs. Frogs were normally abundant in the Nile, especially after the waters receded in December. The frogs would normally stay near the Nile but now they left the Nile, invading the houses (8:3), courtyards, and fields (v. 13).

The Egyptians regarded frogs 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.

God said He would cause another of their deities to be a curse to them, not a help. These sacred animals would multiply and infiltrate people's homes. Here the frogs entered people's kitchens, crawled on the people themselves (vv. 3–4), and even tormented them in their bedrooms. Frog plagues were common in Egypt. The miracle here lies in the abnormal multiplication of these creatures.

Following God's instructions, Moses commanded Aaron to enact the judgment which he did. In the first three plagues, Aaron used his staff (7:19–20; 8:5–6, 16–17), and in plagues seven and eight Moses used his own staff (9:23; 10:13).

The Egyptian magicians also brought up frogs, but could not remove those that God sent. In Revelation 16:13 the unclean spirits which came *out of the mouth of the dragon* are said to be like frogs, which go forth to the kings of the earth, to deceive them, which probably alludes to these frogs because it follows the account of the turning of the waters into blood. The dragon of the Tribulation, like the magicians, intended them to deceive, but God intended them to destroy those who would be deceived. The Egyptian magicians may have been able to duplicate the feat, but ironically they only increased their own distress (8:7).

Exodus 8:8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Plead with the Lord to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord." ⁹ Moses said to Pharaoh, "Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile." ¹⁰ And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God. ¹¹ The frogs shall go away from you and your houses and your servants and your people. They shall be left only in the Nile." ¹² So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the

Lord about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh. ¹³ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. ¹⁴ And they gathered them together in heaps and the land stank. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

“Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron.” During this plague of frogs, Pharaoh *summoned* Moses and Aaron for the first time. He turned to them for help, which showed that his knowledge of the God of the Hebrews was somewhat improved. Being so distressed by all these frogs croaking and hopping around everywhere he was willing to grant Moses his wish. Pharaoh sought divine aid. He would allow the Israelites to go and offer their sacrifices if the frogs were removed. Moses challenged Pharaoh to name the time for the removal. He then announced that the frogs would be removed, according to the word of Pharaoh, that is the next day.

Moses allowed the king to set the timetable for relief from the plague, but Moses wanted him to know the reason, “Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God” (v. 10). If Pharaoh was not moved by the plague of the frogs to recognize the superior power of the God of Israel, then perhaps he would be moved to recognize that power when the frogs were removed at the time he had specified.

We should understand that the notion that the God of the Israelites was more powerful than the gods of Egypt probably never crossed Pharaoh’s mind until near the end of the plagues. Just as Egypt had gods, so also did the other surrounding tribes and nations, and each thought their gods were the most powerful. As with Egypt, they all went into battle “supported” by their gods, preyed for prosperity and blessings, and sought personal favors from their gods. For them, any failure meant the respective god or gods must be angry with them. But this battle is indifferent. Pharaoh will eventually come to understand that he is not dealing with some “ordinary” gods against which his gods might have parity or to whom might even be superior. Pharaoh is facing off with the One True God. That fact has not hit him yet.

Moses and Aaron cried unto the Lord, and the frogs died out on the land. The rotting carcasses were piled up throughout Egypt, and the land reeked of them. Pharaoh saw that his land had relief, however, he hardened his heart just as the Lord had predicted. In light of our understanding of the pagan gods, with the withdrawal of the plague, did Pharaoh see that as a “weakness” in the God of the Israelites to be exploited?

The Third Plague: Gnats

Exodus 8:16 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt.’ ” ¹⁷ And they did so. Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt. ¹⁸ The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. ¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Unlike the previous two plagues, this one seems to have come without warning which was also true of the sixth and ninth plagues. This may have been because of Pharaoh’s false promise to release the Israelites (vv. 8, 15). The judgment was sudden. Aaron struck the dust with his staff, and flying, biting insects covered man and beast.

The Hebrew word for gnats is *kinnîm*, which occurs only here in the Old Testament. Other translations translate it as “lice”. The word is used to describe any small insect such as lice, gnats, mosquitos, or sand fleas.

The text seems to suggest this was not a normal infestation. “All the dust of the earth became gnats” (v. 17). “*All* the dust” may be a bit of an exaggeration but certainly intended to convey the idea that the infestation was extremely severe and well beyond what might normally be experienced. Both gnats and lice are especially annoying because of how difficult they are to deal with. Gnats buzz around your head, and when they bite the bite itches profusely. As for lice, while they don’t fly, they do jump

from infected animals to you. They seek dark places under clothing and their bite itches.

This plague may have been an attack against Set, the god of the desert. It may also have been directed against the Egyptian priesthood. The priests prided themselves in their purity with their frequent washings and shavings, and their wearing of linen robes. Here the Lord polluted the religionists with pesky insects.

The magicians, unable to duplicate this miracle, admitted that it was God's doing, "This is the finger of God" (v. 19). "As the Lord had said," Pharaoh remained obstinate and unrepentant.

The Fourth Plague: Flies

²⁰ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. ²¹ Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. ²² But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. ²³ Thus I will put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen.' " ²⁴ And the Lord did so. There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarms of flies.

The first round of plagues ended as it had begun, with the freedom demand accompanied by a threat. The next day swarms of flies would attack the Egyptians, but note that Goshen where the Israelites lived would not be affected. That is exactly what happened. Only the Egyptians would be affected. Pharaoh was to understand that God was doing this so that he "may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth" (v. 22) and God is able to discern between the Egyptians and His people. In other words,

Pharaoh is to understand that he is not dealing with some ordinary God but the God of All who is far superior at any of his gods.

The words “of flies” do not appear in the original text, only the word for “swarms” is there. The Hebrew word *‘arob /aw·robe* refers to diverse kinds of swarming insects and probably means very many such “swarming insects”. Jewish tradition makes this the plague of “vermin,” but probably the blood-sucking dog fly is intended. The dog fly is also called the “stable fly” and is about the size of a common house fly. As blood-sucking vermin, they are a particular nuisance around animal stables, thus the name, but can also be a problem for people as well.

No mention is made of the use of the rod in producing this plague.

Exodus 8:25 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” ²⁶ But Moses said, “It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the Lord our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? ²⁷ We must go three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he tells us.” ²⁸ So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you must not go very far away. Plead for me.” ²⁹ Then Moses said, “Behold, I am going out from you and I will plead with the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow. Only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.” ³⁰ So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. ³¹ And the Lord did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained. ³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

Pharaoh was now ready for compromise. He was willing to allow the Israelites to sacrifice to God as long as they did it in the land of Egypt.

Moses countered by saying that the Israelite sacrifices would antagonize the Egyptians to the point of a murderous attack. Sheep were an abomination to the Egyptians (Gn 46:34), and bulls and heifers were

sacred to the Egyptians. Considering how the Egyptians felt about those animals to be sacrificed, the Egyptians would not be pleased by the killing of them. “If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?” (v. 26). Moses urged that they must go further into the wilderness to avoid offending the Egyptians.

Pharaoh offered a second compromise. The Israelites could go into the desert to offer their sacrifices if they did not go far. Moses interpreted this as equivalent to the three-day journey that he had been demanding, so he agreed to pray for the cessation of the fourth plague. In answer to Moses’ prayer the flies totally disappeared.

But ... Pharaoh again hardened his heart.