



EXODUS

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

BIBLE TEXT | EXODUS 8:16-19

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.

DEVOTIONAL FOR EXODUS 8:16-19

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The third plague, gnats or lice depending on translation, marks a change in the pattern of the plagues. God sent Moses before the first two plagues to warn Pharaoh of the consequences if he doesn't let the Israelites go. On the third plague, God didn't show Pharaoh the mercy of a warning. I caught myself at this point thinking "that it's not very loving of God to not offer a warning or a chance at repentance." But when you take a step back, God didn't owe Pharaoh mercy at all. He wasn't deserving of it, none of us are. The fact that He had already given Pharaoh two chances to change his heart was a huge mercy that Pharaoh wasn't owed. I think in our society, we often have a sense of entitlement, thinking that we are owed something. All that God owes us is death. We are sinners which eternally separates us from Him (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23). In His love and mercy, though, God gave us a way out (John 3:16) just like he offered Pharaoh a way out of the suffering that the plagues would cause.

The plague of gnats was a judgement on the Egyptian god, "Set", who was their god of the desert. The gnats put a halt to the Egyptian's worship. The Egyptian priests had ritual cleansing that they had to do in order to worship their gods. The gnats would have made them unclean and unable to worship. Because the gnats were on every beast as well, it also put a stop to the Egyptian sacrifice system to their gods. The gods wouldn't accept unclean offerings. God put a halt to all idol worship with this one plague. He was clearing out the distractions and pointing both the Israelites and the Egyptians to Him as the true God and the only one to be worshiped.



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The other big difference that we see in this plague is that Pharaoh's magicians (advisors) weren't able to replicate the gnats. We see in Exodus 7:11-12 that the magicians were able to turn their staffs into snakes. In 7:22, they were able to make the water turn red, and in 8:7, they were able to make frogs come up onto the land. When we get to the gnats though, we see that they couldn't find a way to replicate it. This led the magicians to say, "This is the finger of God." We see a change in the hearts of the magicians here and they finally believe that it's really God who is doing these things. How much suffering could have been spared if Pharaoh had listened to his advisors? At this point, if Pharaoh had believed, along with the advisors around him, it would have saved the Egyptian people from seven more plagues including (spoiler alert!) one that will take Pharaoh's son from him. We see that, once again, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and it says "he would not listen to them."

When I read through this it made me think about times in my life when I haven't listened to those spiritual advisors around me speaking into my life. Sometimes we can get so caught up in our pride, in our plan, in what we think should happen, or how we think things should go, that we completely ignore signs from God and the wisdom of our advisors. And, just like in the case of Pharaoh, it can end up costing us much more than we ever imagined. Proverbs 12:15 (NASB) says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel."

Questions:

1. Can you think of a time that God eliminated an idol in your life to point you back to Him? Is there an idol in your life right now that is receiving your attention that should be eliminated to focus your worship on Him?
2. Read Proverbs 12:1 and 12:15. Do you listen to the advice of wise biblical counsel? Do you find it easy to love discipline? If you don't, pray and ask God to soften your heart towards the discipline and wise counsel of others.
3. Read Hebrews 3:12-13 and Galatians 6:1-2. Are you being a voice of wise, godly counsel to those around you? Are you gently admonishing and encouraging one another's hearts? What are a couple practical steps that you could take to do this daily?