

KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, PART 2

EXODUS 8

The first judgment on Egypt has come and gone, the waters of the Nile turned to blood, and Pharaoh's stubbornness was going to result in the next judgment which was an infestation of frogs in the land. This would not just be a noticeable increase in frogs in the land, it would be a plague of frogs that got into everything, including homes, kitchens and bedrooms, and that disrupted any sense of a normal life. The Egyptians were going to be immersed in frogs. At the end of it, the whole land would be a fouled and filthy place to live, but that was still just the beginning stages of the judgments!

It was normal for frogs to increase during the annual Nile flood. Their presence was ordinarily a good sign because the Nile had flooded and brought sufficient water for the following year's needs. The frogs croaking in the waters that were spread around the area as the river receded back to its banks was a pleasant reminder that the annual flood was sufficient to provide the necessary agricultural productivity. Frogs and the sacred Nile River were intimately connected. What made this judgment different from the normal annual appearance of the frogs was the immense numbers of them that left the water for land and overwhelmed the country thereby becoming more than a nuisance. They became a dangerous health hazard.

Frogs were sacred and they were not to be killed; even killing a frog by accident was considered a serious offense punishable by death. The frog god-

dess, Heqt, was the deity of childbirth and fertility, the giver of the breath of life, and she was involved in the resurrection of the dead. The frog represented fruitfulness and the assurance of a harvest. Heqt was thought to be the wife of Khnum. "From her nostrils ... 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."¹

Exodus 8:1 ¹Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, Let My people go, that they may serve [עֲבָדוּ] Me.

The first judgment did not convince Pharaoh to let the people go, so God sent Moses back to him to announce the coming of the next judgment which would be the plague of frogs in the land. After God turned the Nile to blood, Pharaoh "went into his house" (Ex. 7:23) and now it appears that Moses and Aaron went into Pharaoh's house to relay Yahweh's command to let His people go. This must have been the palace at Memphis which was close to Goshen. The palace at Thebes was too far to the south to allow easy access by Moses and Aaron and it is though the Pharaoh of the Exodus lived at Memphis.

God's stated purpose for the release of the Israelites changed a bit from the first request which was, "Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness" (Ex. 5:1). It became, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."

¹ John D. Hannah, "Exodus" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2000), 121.

The word serve, עָבַד, as used in this context is very interesting. It means to serve, to be a slave, to be indentured; it refers to giving considerable energy and intensity to give aid to another in a social arrangement of having lower status than being a free person. It also means to serve, worship, or minister by giving energy and devotion to God or to pagan gods. God is saying to Pharaoh something like this: "Let this people go because they belong to Me. They are my slaves; they are not your slaves. They are to worship Me, they are not to worship you." This is a declaration that God's intent was to liberate the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and take them to Himself—and Pharaoh knew it. To be in service to God is not onerous work; it is joyful service as opposed to the harsh, tortuous slave labor imposed on the Israelites by Pharaoh. When we read this in English it is not as emphatic as it would have sounded to Pharaoh which was how it was intended to sound.

Exodus 8:2–4 ²But if you refuse to let *them* go, behold, "I will smite your whole territory [אֶרֶץ] with frogs. ³The 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. ⁴So the frogs will come up on you and your people and all your servants."''

Territory, אֶרֶץ, means a territory, region, or district; it is a land region as a governmental administrative area indicating a smaller unit of the whole of the nation's land. Since Egypt was largely desert and almost all the people lived within just a few miles of the Nile from which the frogs would originate, it seems likely the Nile River valley and the delta are the territory that will be inundated

with these frogs. That essentially affects the whole country while only occurring in the area of the Nile River and its delta including Pharaoh's palace at Memphis.

These creatures will be so numerous they will be everywhere and get into everything. Can you imagine the horror of getting into bed and laying on a bunch of slimy little frogs? Or, going into the kitchen and finding them on your dishes and in your cooking/food preparation utensils? That's pretty gross just to imagine!

Even worse, it would have been impossible to avoid crushing them as you walked or sat down which means you were killing a goddess of Egypt. That probably would have frightened the average Egyptian citizen nearly to death all by itself. It may have been almost impossible to walk anywhere with secure footing with those slick little creatures constantly underfoot. While this judgment would not have harmed the people like some of the judgments to come would, it had to have been extremely unpleasant to have to live in these repugnant, unsanitary conditions for any length of time. They also had to wonder what offense Heqt would take concerning all this. The frog goddess stuff was real to them; we know it means nothing, but they didn't think that way. Not only are there physical dimensions to these judgments on the Egyptians, the spiritual dimensions may have been much more significant to them.

This plague is going to affect everyone. Pharaoh and his household were not to be spared from the unpleasant effects of this frog invasion. No Egyptian

and no place belonging to the Egyptians in the territory was going to be spared from this judgment.

Exodus 8:5–7 ⁵Then 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.’” ⁶So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered [כָּסָה] the land of Egypt. ⁷The magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

God, working through Moses in the presence of Pharaoh had Aaron stretch out his staff over the waters for the second time and a supernatural event began to take place. Pharaoh saw this once before and the waters turned to blood. This time he saw an infestation of frogs cover the land to torment him and his people. Frogs in large numbers were nothing new, but this was an unprecedented event. They were a hoard that must have been like a blanket covering everything and getting into everything. Frogs in these numbers had never been seen before. Covered, כָּסָה, means to be covered, shrouded, or concealed. The frogs were so numerous the ground was covered to the point of being concealed by frogs.

The court magicians were able to duplicate this event, probably on a very small scale and that was their third such exhibition, but it would be the last time they were enabled to do so. This was not a trick; they were allowed by God to use their secret, demonic arts to bring forth frogs. What Pharaoh really wanted and needed was the removal of the frogs back to the river where they belonged, but his magicians were incapable of stopping the plague and removing

them. One commentator suggested pagans are capable of introducing evil but incapable of removing it once introduced.

How long this went on before Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron back to stop the plague is not noted but summon them back he did.

Exodus 8:8–11 ⁸Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Entreat [עָתָר] 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.” ⁹Moses 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?” ¹⁰Then 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. ¹¹The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile.”

By this time, Pharaoh was apparently willing to acknowledge, at least to some extent, that the God of the Israelites was the power enabling these calamities to befall him, but he was still not willing to listen to Yahweh and let the people go. It was only a few days earlier when Pharaoh said he did not know the Lord at all (Ex. 5:2). He summoned Moses and Aaron into his presence in order to order them to entreat God to withdraw the frogs from him and from his people. Entreat, עָתָר, means to pray but here it is in the form of a command; he wasn't asking for prayers on his behalf, he was ordering them. I'm not real sure just how effective prayers are when someone orders you to pray on their behalf, but, in this case, God listened to Moses as part of His plan to identify Himself to this pagan king. By ordering Moses to pray to Yahweh for him, the king was putting on display his ignorance of God. It wasn't Moses' prayer that would cause God to stop the plague; rather, it was through the prayer of Moses God would act and

prove Himself to be the God who controls nature. Pharaoh changed the command he received from God for the people to serve the Lord to one of simply sacrificing to the Lord. This fell far short of the Lord's demand to free the Israelites and it would soon be noted that he would back off that concession as well.

Some theologians believe Moses was being humble when he said, "the honor is yours" thereby allowing Pharaoh to set the time of his relief from the frog invasion, but given the totality of these verses, that is unlikely. It is more likely that through Moses, God was setting Pharaoh up to learn even more about Yahweh's power to control nature and display His omnipotence. By allowing Pharaoh to name the time the plague would be stopped God was showing that impotent Egyptian king that the King of the universe was in charge. Pharaoh could set the time, but Pharaoh couldn't stop it in his own power; only God could do that. Because the time was according to Pharaoh's request, he was going to "know that there is no one like the Lord our God" when Yahweh stopped the plague exactly when Pharaoh requested it be stopped.

Why the time delay? Why didn't Pharaoh tell Moses he wanted the frogs immediately removed? No one really knows. Tomorrow doesn't have to mean a twenty-four hour period, it could have meant as soon as possible the next day and we don't know what time of day this took place. Perhaps he thought the frogs might go away on their own and he wouldn't have to consider giving God the credit for removing them. At any rate, they would be removed the next day.

Exodus 8:12–15 ¹²Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh. ¹³The LORD did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courts, and the fields. ¹⁴So they piled them in heaps, and the land became foul. ¹⁵But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

God stopped the plague just as Moses said He would so that Pharaoh would know He was God and it probably served to let Pharaoh know that Moses was intimately connected with the powerful God who was seriously affecting his kingdom. The frogs died and the people piled them up in what was described as “heaps.” It seems rather obvious what kind of stench would pervade the land with this huge number of frog carcasses lying around rotting in the hot Egyptian sun. In a sense, the plague lingered on by means of the stinking mess of dead frogs that was everywhere. The remaining frogs retreated to their normal habitat in the waterways of Egypt.

As soon as Pharaoh realized the plague had ended, he refused to let the people go. He lied to begin with simply to try to get out from under this onerous infestation of frogs. He hardened his heart. This is a deliberate hardening in rebellion against God even though he knew God was the powerful force behind this judgment.

What is the secular, rationalistic argument for the judgment of the frogs? This rationale builds on the belief the blood judgment of the Nile was really a toxic algae bloom. Since the fish in the Nile died, the pollution from their decaying bodies in the water drove the frogs onto land. Once there they sought out light

and heat in order to find insects to eat and that led them into people's homes. Once these frogs moved away from their natural habitat, they were unable to find enough food to survive so they suffered dehydration and starved to death and that ended the plague.² One variation on this scenario claims the polluted Nile with the rotting fish in it created favorable conditions for bacillus anthracis bacteria to become established which caused anthrax and that disease killed the frogs as well as the livestock in a later judgment.

There are several problems with this line of reasoning in addition to the denial of the truth of the Word of God and the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy. The number of frogs in the land cannot be accounted for by natural means; there were far too many. Egypt had never experienced frogs in those numbers before. Another problem is the frogs didn't gradually appear and disappear; they appeared as soon as Aaron waved his staff over the waters and they died as soon as God stopped the plague. Anthrax is a highly contagious disease and with frogs covering everything in sight, the animal population in total, not just the frogs, would have been decimated by that infectious disease, but that didn't happen at that time. With all the frogs that were in the homes and particularly in the beds and kitchens, people would have contracted the disease as well and that didn't happen. The frogs were everywhere; if they had any kind of infectious, contagious disease, it would have spread throughout the population with devastating consequences. While devastating consequences

² Colin J. Humphreys, *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 119-121.

were going to come, they would come by the hand of God and Pharaoh and his people would know it. We've noted that one of the purposes for the plagues was so that Pharaoh and his people would know that the Creator God of the universe was real and judging them for their treatment of the Israelites.

The next plague is generally thought to be some sort of flying insect infestation variously translated as gnats, lice, flies, maggots, or mosquitos. The TANAKH translates it "swarms of insects" which may be best since we really don't know exactly what insect is in view. Most lexicons define this word [בְּנֵי] by preferring gnats or lice to be the meaning; both are extremely annoying. Lice physically attack the body and are very uncomfortable. Gnats bite and buzz around the face and eyes, getting into facial orifices and simply driving you crazy. I'm not sure which would be worse. Many theologians believe the term for gnats covers a multitude of flying, biting insects, therefore, mosquitos are most likely in view. Davis does not believe lice is the correct interpretation at all and he believes the word is describing a very small, nearly invisible, biting gnat.³

Exodus 8:16–17 ¹⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust [עֲפָר] of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'" ¹⁷They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats [בְּנֵי] on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats [בְּנֵי] through all the land of Egypt [אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם].

In this instance, there was no appearance before Pharaoh to request the release of the Israelites and there was no warning to Pharaoh for his failure to

³ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lakes, IN: BMH, 1986), 111.

comply. This judgment was simply instituted by God through Moses and Aaron. It must have been a very debilitating plague because it got the attention of Pharaoh and his court right away.

Again, Aaron stretched out his staff and the dust became these gnats that encompassed all the land of Egypt. This plague encompassed the land area of the nation rather than just the territory of the Nile. Everything is affected, man and beast.

This was a supernatural act of God that instantly turned the dust of the earth into these annoying, flying insects. Dust, עֶפֶר, is earthen dirt; the natural earthen material which may vary from solid (even packed) earth to dry, coarsely crumbled soil, to a very fine dust or sand. There is no getting around the fact that through Moses and Aaron God turned this dirt into insects.

The magicians of Pharaoh's court tried to do this through their magic arts, but God was no longer allowing them to do so. Once that happened, they knew this was the work of whatever God Moses and Aaron served and they were now powerless in the face of it.

Exodus 8:18–19 ¹⁸The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast. ¹⁹Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God [אֱלֹהִים].” But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

The magicians told Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” implying they were powerless to combat it and therefore Pharaoh should heed His command—but he didn't. They knew there was a force far more powerful than any force they

had at their disposal, a force that empowered Moses and Aaron, that was bringing about these miraculous events. The “finger of God” is an acknowledgment of God’s creative powers their demonic gods were no longer allowed to express beyond the point they had already gone. They may or may not have been acknowledging the God of the Bible; they were acknowledging the God of Moses and Aaron no matter who he was. It is very likely; however, they were beginning to develop some knowledge of the one true God and just how powerful He was; therefore, I believe they were acknowledging the true God even though they didn’t understand much about Him at that time. We certainly shouldn’t consider this to be any sort of confession of faith in the God of the Bible. The word used for God in verse 19 is Elohim which does not have to refer to the God of the Bible, it may refer to pagan gods as well. At any rate, Pharaoh refused to listen to them and he continued to rebel. Their failure to duplicate this miracle did remove any excuse to deny God that Pharaoh could rely on when his magicians duplicated God’s work. This was not unexpected; God knew Pharaoh would harden his heart.

Some theologians believe the inability of the magicians to duplicate this miracle proves they were simply performing tricks when they duplicated the three earlier miracles, but that is not the conclusion that should be drawn. “The very fact that the magicians had attempted to duplicate the miracle indicates that they fully expected to perform something that would be credible in the eyes of Pharaoh. The appropriate interpretation of this expression of failure

seems to be that the Egyptian magicians were limited by the omnipotence of God who restrained demonical powers which the magicians had used for their own purposes before."⁴ The demonic world knows it has limitations, and Pharaoh's court magicians simply no longer had God's permission to proceed and they knew it. In Job 1 & 2, God limited the powers of Satan to afflict that faithful man of God. In Mark 1:34, the Lord prohibited demons from speaking and in Luke 8:32, demons had to ask the Lord's permission to enter a herd of swine. They knew they had limits.

There does not appear to be any specific pagan Egyptian god this judgment attacked. Some believe it is Khepri which was a dung beetle god, supposedly a flying beetle. He was the god of creation, the movement of the sun, and rebirth or resurrection. This seems to be a forced effort to link some pagan god, any god, with this judgment. It just doesn't fit; this beetle isn't the kind of flying, annoying insect that gnats are. We don't have to assume every judgment is an attack against a pagan god in order to validate the fact that God was defeating many pagan gods in order to convince the Egyptians their gods were powerless in the face of Yahweh and to bring about the release of the Israelites.

The standard secular humanist argument for this plague is that it refers to mosquitos. They assume the mosquitos would breed in the pools of water left after the annual flood producing the insects of the third judgment. Another view is

⁴ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lakes, IN: BMH, 1986), 113.

the gnats are an insect called midges. These midges feed on the microorganisms in decaying animals such as the dead fish from the Nile and the dead frogs resulting from the first two judgments; therefore, the swarms of insects arising from the dust of the ground were midges that looked like insects being created out of the dust and swarming into the air. One theological critic claims if God was to create these insects from the dust in the ground, then all the dust in Egypt would have been consumed making those bugs. That's a silly assertion. God can make how many or how few He wants to make simply by speaking them into existence out of the dust of the ground without consuming all the dust. That is simply an argument born of unbelief.

In addition to denying the supernatural works of God and the inerrancy and inspiration of the Word of God, these theories fail in several ways. These naturalistic explanations require time for the mosquitos or midges to reach maturity, lay eggs, hatch, and become a nuisance. This ignores the biblical record declaring they immediately came into existence when Aaron stretched out his staff over the land. These insects were always part of Egyptian life, but this was a supernatural infestation beyond anything seen before or since.

This brings us to the fourth judgment which was swarms of flies.

Exodus 8:20–24 ²⁰Now the LORD said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he comes out to the water, and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Let My people go, that they may serve [עֲבָד] Me. ²¹For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies [עָרֹב] on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of flies [עָרֹב], and also the ground on which they dwell. ²²But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are

living, so that no swarms of flies [עֲרֹב] will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land. ²³ will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur.””” ²⁴ Then the LORD did so. And there came great [כְּבֹד] swarms of flies [עֲרֹב] into the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants and the land was laid waste [שָׁמָה] because of the swarms of flies [עֲרֹב] in all the land of Egypt.

Again, Moses is told to meet Pharaoh at the water where he can be confronted as he comes up out of the water. This may imply he went there to bathe, but I don't think we can discount some ritual religious service being performed by the king as well. This has now happened twice so it seems Pharaoh has a routine, for whatever reason, that includes a visit to the Nile in the mornings. Pharaoh was probably none too happy to see Moses show up again.

Moses issued a command from the Lord to let the people go so they may serve Him. Once again, this is a clear signal to Pharaoh that God intends to permanently take His people out of Egypt. The reference to going into wilderness is gone; Yahweh simply says, “Let my people go” and coupled with the word “serve,” the meaning is clear. The Israelites belong to God and He is taking them out of Egypt to be His people. The consequences for Pharaoh's refusal to obey are then set forth. This judgment will consist of a swarm of flies that will cover everything and everyone including Pharaoh and his house. The swarm of flies, עֲרֹב, refers to some sort of noxious winged insects for which there has been no exact identification. Whatever they were, they were obviously a very difficult, uncomfortable critter with which to deal. In the Septuagint, the Greek speaking Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt, translated the Hebrew עֲרֹב “flies” with the Greek

word κυνόμυια translated “dog-fly” in the Lexham Septuagint. Since those translators lived in Egypt over 2,000 years ago, one may assume they were familiar with the insects in that country. The dogfly or gadfly was a blood-sucking insect that would attack not only the body but also one’s eyes and cause blindness.⁵ This insect was feared and hated with good reason.

There was an exception to the extent of this plague, however. The Israelites in Goshen would not be subjected to this infestation of flies. Many people think the Israelites were subjected to the first three plagues, but that may not be so even though this makes it sound as though this was a possibility. The purpose of the plagues was to convince Pharaoh and the Egyptians to let the people go. The Israelites had already believed when Moses first came to them and performed the signs (Ex. 4:30-31). They didn’t need to be subjected to any of the plagues in order to believe Moses and the God he was serving, but the Egyptians needed to be subjected to them. The purpose of these judgments was not to punish the Israelites but to judge and punish the Egyptians for their sins against God’s people and to convince them to let the people go. There is a purpose behind God’s explicit statement that the Israelites will be spared this plague and that is to further prove to Pharaoh that the Lord is so powerful he can keep this swarm of flies out of a section of Egypt where His favored people just happen to be. In that way, Pharaoh would know that God was the one true God who was in Egypt and controlling his destiny. Pharaoh had no control over his own desti-

⁵ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lakes, IN: BMH, 1986), 114.

ny; he was completely at the mercy of God. Moses told Pharaoh when this sign would take place which would be the next day. And it was so. This sign would serve the purpose of authenticating God in Pharaoh's sight building on the previous signs Pharaoh had received.

The word "great" modifying "swarms of flies" is, כְּבֵד, meaning severe; pertaining to a great degree of intensity. It refers to being oppressive or burdensome. While these flies were not uncommon in Egypt, they were covering the land to a degree not even remotely seen before. The ruin or the state of being laid waste refers to the quality of life of the Egyptians. Laid waste, שָׁחָת, means corrupted, ruined, or marred to the point of becoming useless. They were miserable and life as they knew it could no longer be enjoyed as long as these insects were attacking them in such suffocating swarms. Society may have been at a standstill and couldn't function. What we don't know is how long these flies were plaguing Egypt before Pharaoh relented a bit and told Moses they could go into the wilderness to sacrifice to Yahweh. Whatever period of time it was, it was long enough to get the attention of Pharaoh and his people. We also don't know how much pressure was being put on him to end the suffering of his people. We do know the magicians warned him a deity bigger than anything the Egyptians knew about was doing these things and he ignored them. Despotic, dictatorial kings are generally do not care what their people are suffering as long as they can pay their taxes, but these plagues were directly touching the king as well as the people and the land.

Pharaoh was now beginning to get the big picture even though it would not be enough to get him to change his mind yet. Pharaoh enters into some bargaining with Moses and appears to soften his position, but in the end, he hardens his heart and violates his word. He sent for Moses and Aaron and told them they could go offer a sacrifice to Yahweh. That's not what God told Pharaoh He wanted; He wanted to redeem the Israelites as His own people evidenced by His use of the word "serve."

Exodus 8:25–28 ²⁵Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land." ²⁶But Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we will sacrifice to the LORD our God what is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not then stone us? ²⁷We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He commands us." ²⁸Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Make supplication for me."

Not only does Pharaoh change the nature of the request from "serve" to "sacrifice," but he demanded they stay in the land rather than going farther away into the wilderness. Pharaoh knows the requests to go into the wilderness to worship Yahweh are actually statements they are going to permanently leave Egypt. He wants them to stay close by in the vicinity of Memphis and Goshen so he can insure they don't leave the country. Moses counters with the argument that their sacrifice will inflame the sensibilities of the Egyptians to the point they will want to kill the Israelites; therefore, they need to go a three day's journey into the wilderness in order to avoid offending the Egyptians. "Three day's journey" is an idiom for making an official, foreign visit, or it can mean very

far away.⁶ The point is, Pharaoh knew they were requesting to leave Egypt and never come back.

Moses had not made this argument prior to this meeting with Pharaoh. The Egyptians personified many of their gods with animals including rams and bulls, but they themselves sacrificed these animals so why would that be an offense? It would probably offend them to see people offering animals that represented their gods to another God as a sacrifice and without going through the proper Egyptian procedures for preparing those sacrifices. It would be seen as an insult to their pagan religious practices. The God of the Israelites was not an Egyptian god and that alone might arouse some sort of jealous rage if they were staging a very large worship service in the area of the Nile River in the shadow of the capital at Memphis.

Pharaoh told Moses he would let them go. Pharaoh still thought he was somehow in command of the situation and he could agree to let them go or not. At that point, that was somewhat true, but there was a greater end in store for him and in the end, Pharaoh would be exposed as an impotent tool of Satan who could not stand up to the power of the omnipotent Yahweh and ultimately, he had to let the people go. It would be under compulsion, but he would let them go (Ex. 6:1). Pharaoh reiterated the command they could not go far away from Goshen.

⁶ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 218.

Pharaoh also commanded Moses to pray for him in order to relieve the plague of the flies. It wasn't a request; it was a command. It's a little puzzling how a man can be so defiant to God on the one hand, observe and downplay His amazing displays of omnipotence, and then, on the other hand, command someone to pray on his behalf to the very God he is minimizing, even ridiculing, and rejecting. Pharaoh was playing a very dangerous game of cat and mouse, but what he doesn't realize is that he, probably the most powerful man on earth at the time, was the mouse! Pharaoh has apparently realized that God listens to the prayers of Moses, hence the command to pray for him.

Moses told Pharaoh he would pray to Yahweh that the plague of flies would end and he warned Pharaoh to keep his end of the bargain.

Exodus 8:29 ²⁹Then Moses said, "Behold, I am going out from you, and I shall make supplication to the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow; only do not let Pharaoh deal deceitfully again in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

Moses did pray for the end of the plague of flies and they stopped the next day after Moses prayed to Yahweh to stop the infestation of flies, but as soon as it stopped, Pharaoh reneged on his promise.

Exodus 8:30–32 ³⁰So Moses went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD. ³¹The LORD did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people; not one remained. ³²But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.

We shouldn't be surprised when those who serve Satan lie in order to achieve their ends. The one they serve is the father of lies.

John 8:44 ⁴⁴You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The secular humanist explanation for the swarms of flies identifies them as stable flies. They have “a painful bite that punctures the skin and leaves behind an open wound, exposing the victim to infection. Stable flies also swarm and can breed very rapidly, with a female laying up to five hundred eggs at a time.”⁷

This completely ignores the fact the plague of flies began immediately and arose out of the dust of the earth and it stopped exactly when Moses said it would. This plague was not the result of naturally occurring forces; it was supernatural.

⁷ Colin J. Humphreys, *The Miracle of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 123.