

Lent Devotional March 26, 2026

Scripture

Exodus 7:25-8:19

25 Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 2 If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. 3 The river shall swarm with frogs; they shall come up into your palace, into your bedchamber and your bed, and into the houses of your officials and of 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 officials.'" 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, the canals, and 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 brought frogs up on the land of Egypt.

8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron, and said, "Pray to the LORD to take away the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, "Kindly tell me when I am to pray for you and for your officials and for your people, that the frogs may be removed from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile." 10 And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "As you say! So that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God, 11 the frogs shall leave you and your houses and your officials and your people; they shall be left only in the Nile." 12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh; and Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the frogs that he had brought upon Pharaoh. 13 And the LORD did as Moses requested: the frogs died 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, just as the LORD had said.

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 throughout the whole land of Egypt.'" 17 And they did so; Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and gnats came on humans and animals alike; all the dust of the earth turned into gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt. 18 The magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, but they could not. There were gnats on both humans and animals. 19 And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

Devotion

Andrew (Hill) Schleupner '23

Since graduating with my M.Div., I've become something of a property management expert within my presbytery. Given the amount of time I spend shoring up problems with old buildings that can quickly spiral out of control, I'm reading the story of the plagues with a perspective I didn't have in seminary. The plagues begin with the water of the Nile turning into blood. Next, God sends an overwhelming number of frogs up from the river and, once they've invaded everyone's homes, kills them on site. Then gnats swarm on everything: people, animals, rotting frog corpses, you name it. Interestingly, God doesn't kill the gnats, and the internet tells me that they generally live for about a week, so let's presume that between the stinking mounds of dead frogs and clouds of swarming gnats, the Egyptians had quite a week.

Does that sound about right for the life of a pastor, especially during lent? Have you had an exhausting week? Perhaps your church isn't overrun by frogs and gnats, but maybe you've had problems with heat, pests, leaks, mold, or worse. Perhaps one way to interpret the plagues is that it wasn't a series of isolated events but a chain reaction: the river became blood, which sent the frogs into the city, where they died, then the gnats multiplied without the frogs to eat them and the flies multiplied like crazy eating all the gnats and then spread disease to the livestock, and perhaps that somehow led to skin boils which attracted all the locusts, and then maybe everything went dark because the earth had had enough and needed a nap. Like most things about the Old Testament, this isn't a perfect modern analogy, so let's end it before we get to the final plague.

Here's what I'm seeing in this story through the eyes of presbytery property manager: God wanted to deliver God's people from an aging system of oppression, and I'm suggesting that some of our congregations need deliverance from their buildings that are constantly suffering plagues. If your building seems to experience annual chain reactions that require repairs upon repairs, you know the oppression your building wields over your ministry budget. Perhaps it's time to act like your building is Pharaoh, and tell it to let God's people go.

Prayer

Lord, we thank You for the buildings we worship in, the lands You consecrate with Your holy presence. We ask that You continue to bless us with the energy and the funds to care for the property You've blessed Your people with, and give us the wisdom to know when it's time to release it. No matter what season of life our property is in, fill us with gratitude for how Your church has grown within its walls and an awareness for how it is growing beyond the building.