

First Plague – Blood

By Mark E. Benjamin

The first of the ten plagues is the turning of the Nile river in Egypt into blood. I would venture to guess that most already know this, not just those having a religious background, but also those of a secular upbringing. But, I would also guess that many of those same people may not know of some wonderful connectivity between this event and ones that took place many years later. About 1,500 years later. Furthermore even fewer may know of the inter-workings of the original event itself.

Let's first do some review on what took place during the first plague. Read **Exodus 7**, but specifically **Exodus 7: 17-21** for the background. With instructions from GOD Moses used his staff and turned not just the Nile river into blood, but all water in Egypt. **Exodus 7:19 The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt-- over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs'-- and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars."** Everywhere there was water it was now blood. First off, and I think everyone would agree on this, is Yuck! Not only was there no water to drink, wash or cook with, but think of the intense grossness of the scenery. The smell of all those dead fish, the blood lapping on the banks of the Nile, what foul surroundings.

Why start with the Nile?

For Moses to start with the Nile as a plague was very appropriate since Moses started his life there. The male Israelite babies were thrown into the Nile (**Exodus 1:22**). Although Moses did end up in the Nile, it was by his own Mother and not by Pharaoh's hands.

This had two major results. First, as stated in Exodus, it helped to reduce the overpopulation of the Hebrews, a twisted plot of pharaoh's. The second, it would have been a great sacrifice offered to the gods associated with the Nile. However, the life giving Nile did not devour all given to it; it returned one of the babies. Moses, by the plan devised by his mother, made it look like life was being given back. To the Egyptians, and specifically Pharaoh's daughter, it would have been interpreted as a gift from their gods.

Therefore, when Moses performs the first plague and the Nile gods' blood spilled, the very life given from the Nile (Moses) is the very life that kills the Nile gods. Also with all the life that was thrown into the Nile to die, death of the Nile was a very significant first step. It would have been a symbol of retribution for the death of the countless Hebrew babies.

Just as Moses was life (physical life) from the pagan Nile gods, Jesus was life (eternal life) from the one true God. Moses came from the life giving water of the Nile to deliver the Hebrew nation. Jesus was the living water given to deliver all the nations (**John 4**).

Why blood?

GOD could have had the Nile turn into anything. Like maple syrup, orange juice or just simply have it dry up. However, He chose to turn it into blood. I believe we can

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find several reasons for the selection of blood. First and simplest, to change into blood would be much more dramatic than any other liquid. Even for the non-religious, that would have been an unforgettable sight. Furthermore, those of even the slightest of knowledge in the gods of the land would have been distraught over the event.

The Egyptian god Osiris was the god of the underworld and the Nile believed to be his bloodstream. Not only did the Nile give life to the desert land in a real and practical way, but was also thought to be the visible life substance of Osiris. Changing it to blood showed the death of Osiris, as it did the gods Hapi (spirit of the Nile) and Khnum (guardian of the Nile).

Blood also would be a key element in the tenth and final plague. Whereas blood showed death in the first plague, in the last plague blood gave life. Blood used in the last plague protected the Israelites from God, but blood with the first plague showed the lack of protection by the Egyptian gods. Blood showed the imminent death of slavery and Egyptian rule with the first plague, freedom and the birth of the nation of Israel with the tenth plague.

Blood and Wine

The fact that water turned to blood was to be the first plague is no whim or random act of God. It was very significant in nature. Fast forward one and a half millennium and we see in [John 2:1-13](#), Jesus performs his first miracle. He turned water into wine, this was also not a random act or whim of the Lord.

Why wine? Here too, He could have chosen any other liquid but it was wine not grape juice or cough medicine and certainly not blood. For part of the answer, look at the last and greatest miracle of Jesus. His death and resurrection. Wine plays a very intricate and important roll here. The Passover cups were partaken during what Christians refer to as the last supper (Passover). Jesus did not drink one of those cups at the Passover meal, but drank it when he was on the cross. [John 19:30\(NIV\)](#) **When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.** (See also [Matt 26:42](#) for reference to the cup he was to drink.)

Wine, in the context of Passover (the last supper), is the representation of the blood of Jesus. His spilled blood on the cross. It was the final cup to end His ministry on earth. Likewise the first cup, at the wedding feast, was to start His ministry. To sanctify it with the traditional first cup of wine. Therefore, the first miracle had to deal with wine, so as to properly sanctify what was to come.

Signs and Redemption

Like Jesus' first miracle, the first plague was to signify the start of something, Jesus ministry on earth, and Moses leading the people out of Egypt. The first cup is known as the cup of sanctification. The water to wine and the water to blood, was to be the sanctification of Jesus and Moses and their missions that lay before them.

The first miracle of Jesus and the first plague of Moses were also foreshadowings of the final tasks for the redemption of the people. For Moses and the Hebrews, the last

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plague was the redemption found in Passover. For Jesus and all the people of the world, it was during Passover that we can find the redemption from our sins.

Although, the first plague did not deliver the Hebrews from the Egyptians and slavery, it was a foreshadowing of the blood that was to be spilled during the last plague, the last and greatest plague that would deliver them. Just as the first miracle of Jesus was not a redeeming act, it showed that redemption would come in the symbol of wine. The wine that represents His redeeming blood.