

Study Notes: Exodus 9:8-12
September 27, 2026: “Boils!”
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Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on people and animals throughout the land.”

- Much like the third plague of gnats, the sixth plague comes without warning or Pharaoh being told to let the people go. YHWH spoke to Moses and Aaron and told them to go into the presence of Pharaoh and have Moses toss soot from a furnace in the air.
 - The furnace would have been used to make the bricks that the Israelites had been conscripted to make for Pharaoh. It represented their bondage and the pain of their labor. This would now be a source of pain for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary notes, “There was also a logical connection between the soot created by the sweat of God’s enslaved people and the judgment that is to afflict the bodies of the enslavers.”
- The result would be a fine dust over the land, which caused festering boils to break out on both people and animals.
- The New American Commentary explains, “This plague is brought about by a transformation of one substance into another, as was the case with the initial signs God gave Moses as proof of his being a true prophet...The transformation in this case involved filling his cupped hands full of soot from a furnace and throwing it skyward in the sight of Pharaoh. What started as a small amount of soot was changed and vastly multiplied by divine fiat into a huge amount of fine dust, covering Egypt and causing festering boils on both humans and animals.”

So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on people and animals.

- Once again, Moses and Aaron obeyed, and things happened just as YHWH promised.

The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians.

- The magicians, who may have been summoned to Pharaoh’s court, could not stand or oppose Moses, because they were afflicted with the boils, just as every other Egyptian.
- This represents the power of YHWH even over some of the most respected and powerful people in the court of Pharaoh.
- This is the last time in Exodus the magicians were mentioned. The New American Commentary explains two reasons they were mentioned here, “The first is to help the reader appreciate the fact that Pharaoh probably used the magicians as advisors in dealing with the various plagues. To the Egyptians the magical, the medicinal, and the miraculous were all closely linked, and anything the magicians could do to alleviate the effects of a given plague or to show it to be something that they themselves could also do (on a small scale) would help bolster Pharaoh’s resistance to the demands made by

Yahweh. The second is that if the physicians could not heal themselves (i.e., the magicians could not make themselves well from the boils) then the power of God over the powers resorted to by Pharaoh was obvious. The magicians need not be mentioned again. They had been proved impotent in the face of real power. The boils were obviously debilitating; so sick and in pain were the Egyptians from them that they were not physically able to be available for any sort of confrontation with Moses of the sort seen in the first three miracle accounts.”

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

- Much like the other plagues, Pharaoh refused to listen and obey the words of Moses and Aaron, just as YHWH said. However, unlike the first five plagues, where Pharaoh hardened his own heart, this time, YHWH was the actor. Pharaoh made his choice, and now YHWH was confirming it.