

## Why the Plagues?

First of all: Why the plagues? Before anything has happened, God says to Moses, ‘You know they won’t do any good, they won’t accomplish anything, because along with the plagues I am going to harden Pharaoh's heart; but when the contest of the firstborn comes, that’ll be it!’ Why the plagues? Why does God bring the Egyptians through this long, drawn-out series of calamities? If it is the contest of the firstborn that is going to bring home the bacon, well why the large frogs, lice... and all the others? I suggest to you the answer is this: because God is giving us here an object lesson, a full spelling out of the fact that he ever mingles forbearance with his judgment. He doesn't spring catastrophic judgment upon people. He approaches them with gentler, less disastrous judgement. He allows the cock to crow in their ears, if perchance they would hear the crowing of the cock and would heed the word of God. And when that fails, well he’ll try again. And in all he will try nine times, so that when the judgment comes it has been established beyond doubt that here is a people set in its opposition to God and unwilling to hear his word. He will only bring in judgment when forbearance has been exhausted.

(J. A. Motyer, *Old Testament Covenant Theology: Four Lectures*; These lectures were tape-recorded at the 1972/73 Theological Students Fellowship Conference and were subsequently transcribed. London: (not a formal publication), 13)