

Moses and Aaron Confront Pharaoh (late 1447 BC)

Exodus 5:1–6:9

Moses and Aaron Go to Pharaoh

- 5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.
- 2 And Pharaoh said, Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.
- 3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.
- 4 And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.
- 5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now *are* many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

Pharaoh Responds By Making the Israelites Work Even Harder

- 6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,
- 7 Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.
- 8 And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish *ought* thereof: for they *be* idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go *and* sacrifice to our God.
- 9 Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words.
- 10 And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.
- 11 Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished.
- 12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.
- 13 And the taskmasters hasted *them*, saying, Fulfill your works, *your* daily tasks, as when there was straw.
- 14 And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, *and* demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to day, as heretofore?
- 15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?
- 16 There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants *are* beaten; but the fault *is* in thine own people.
- 17 But he said, Ye *are* idle, ye *are* idle: therefore ye say, Let us go *and* do sacrifice to the LORD.
- 18 Go therefore now, *and* work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.

The Israelites Berate Moses

- 19 And the officers of the children of Israel did see *that* they *were* in evil *case*, after it was said, Ye shall not minish *ought* from your bricks of your daily task.
- 20 And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh:
- 21 And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.

Moses Complains to Yahweh

- 22 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why *is* it *that* thou hast sent me?
- 23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.
- 6:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.
- 2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* the LORD:
- 3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.
- 4 And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.
- 5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.
- 6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I *am* the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:
- 7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
- 8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I *am* the LORD.
- 9 And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

Israel's First Rebellion (late 1447 BC)

Ezekiel 20:5–9

5 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I *am* the LORD your God;

6 In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands:

7 Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

9 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they *were*, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

A Renewed Call to Action (early 1446 BC)

Exodus 6:10–30

Yahweh Sends Moses and Aaron Back to Pharaoh

10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

11 Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.

12 And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who *am* of uncircumcised lips?

Excursus—Genealogy of Moses and Aaron

13 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

14 These *be* the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi: these *be* the families of Reuben.

15 And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman: these *are* the families of Simeon.

16 And these *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari: and the years of the life of Levi *were* an hundred thirty and seven years.

17 The sons of Gershon; Libni, and Shimi, according to their families.

18 And the sons of Kohath; Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel: and the years of the life of Kohath *were* an hundred thirty and three years.

19 And the sons of Merari; Mahali and Mushi: these *are* the families of Levi according to their generations.

20 And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram *were* an hundred and thirty and seven years.

21 And the sons of Izhar; Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri.

22 And the sons of Uzziel; Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Zithri.

23 And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

24 And the sons of Korah; Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph: these *are* the families of the Korhites.

25 And Eleazar Aaron's son took him *one* of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these *are* the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families.

26 These *are* that Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.

27 These *are* they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these *are* that Moses and Aaron.

Recapitulation of Command to Return

28 And it came to pass on the day *when* the LORD spake unto Moses in the land of Egypt,

29 That the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I *am* the LORD: speak thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say unto thee.

30 And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?

Moses' and Aaron's Second Confrontation With Pharaoh (early 1446 BC)

Exodus 7:1–13

1 And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.
 2 Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.
 3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.
 4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, *and* my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.
 5 And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.
 6 And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.
 7 And Moses *was* fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.
 8 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
 9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast *it* before Pharaoh, *and* it shall become a serpent.
 10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.
 11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. [\[2 Tim 3:8\]](#)
 12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.
 13 And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

Scripture quotations are from The King James Version (KJV). The KJV is in the public domain.

Chronological Notes

- 1) The rebellion of Israel mentioned in Ezekiel 20:5–9¹ is presented here as part of the Exodus narrative. That this rebellion occurred in Egypt itself, prior to the crossing of the Red Sea, is seen in v. 8 where God was determined to “vent my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt” (Ezek 20:8).² In light of this, it seems likely that the plagues were not meant for Pharaoh and the Egyptians alone—indeed, there is no indication that Goshen was spared from the first three plagues. It is only in the fourth plague that a distinction was made between the Israelites and the Egyptians (Exod 8:22–23). This distinction, although not explicitly referenced in the following narrative (it's missing in the sixth and eighth plagues), seems to have continued throughout the remaining plagues.
- 2) The Pharaoh of the Exodus.³
 - A) When Moses returned to Egypt, he and Aaron spoke to the new king, Amenhotep II. This powerful and militaristic monarch conducted a major campaign in Canaan in his third year (ca. 1450) and another in his seventh (ca. 1446). His seventh year coincides with the traditional date of the exodus, 1446, and one cannot help but wonder if the decimation of Pharaoh's army at the Sea of Reeds might not have followed this second campaign, and had such a demoralizing impact as to discourage further immediate adventurism, especially to the north.
 - B) Our identification of Amenhotep II as the pharaoh of the exodus is supported by two other considerations. First, although most of the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty made their principal residence at Thebes, far to the south of the Israelites in the Delta, Amenhotep was at home in Memphis and apparently reigned from there much of the time. This placed him in close proximity to the land of Goshen and made him readily accessible to Moses and Aaron. Second, the best understanding suggests that Amenhotep's power did not pass to his eldest son but rather to Thutmose IV, a younger son. This is at least implied in the so-called dream stela found at the base of the Great Sphinx near Memphis. This text, which records a dream in which Thutmose IV was promised that he would one day be king, suggests, as one historian says, that his reign came

¹ Other references that mention Israel's idolatry while in Egypt include: Leviticus 17:7; Ezekiel 23:3, 8, 19; Joshua 24:14.

² Keil & Delitzsch comment: “It is true that there is nothing expressly stated in the Pentateuch as to the refusal of the Israelites to obey the command of God, or their unwillingness to give up idolatry in Egypt; but it may be inferred from the statements contained in Ex. 6:9 and 12...” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, “Ezekiel Daniel,” *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 154). See also Steven Tuell's comments on Ezekiel 20:5–9 (Steven Tuell, “Ezekiel,” *UBCS*, 128).

³ Sourced from Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, Second Edition, (Baker Publishing, 2008), 80.

about “through an unforeseen turn of fate, such as the premature death of an elder brother.” It is impossible to prove, but one cannot help but speculate as to whether this premature death was not caused by the judgment of Yahweh, who in the tenth plague struck dead all the firstborn of Egypt, who were unprotected by the blood of the Passover, “from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon” (Exod 12:29).

Textual Notes

1) Genealogy of Moses.

