

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 came and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”
- 2 But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go.”
- 3 Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”
- 4 But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get *back* to your labors!”
- 5 Again Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!”

Pharaoh Responds By Making the Israelites Work Even Harder

- 6 So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying,
- 7 “You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves.
- 8 “But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it. Because they are lazy, therefore they cry out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’
- 9 “Let the labor be heavier on the men, and let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words.”
- 10 So the taskmasters of the people and their foremen went out and spoke to the people, saying, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I am not going to give you *any* straw.
- 11 ‘You go *and* get straw for yourselves wherever you can find *it*, but none of your labor will be reduced.’”
- 12 So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw.
- 13 The taskmasters pressed them, saying, “Complete your work quota, *your* daily amount, just as when you had straw.”
- 14 Moreover, the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not completed your required amount either yesterday or today in making brick as previously?”
- 15 Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, “Why do you deal this way with your servants?
- 16 “There is no straw given to your servants, yet they keep saying to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And behold, your servants are being beaten; but it is the fault of your *own* people.”
- 17 But he said, “You are lazy, *very* lazy; therefore you say, ‘Let us go *and* sacrifice to the LORD.’
- 18 “So go now *and* work; for you will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the quota of bricks.”

The Israelites Berate Moses

- 19 The foremen of the sons of Israel saw that they were in trouble because they were told, “You must not reduce *your* daily amount of bricks.”
- 20 When they left Pharaoh’s presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them.
- 21 They said to them, “May the LORD look upon you and judge *you*, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh’s sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

Moses Complains to Yahweh

- 22 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me?
- 23 “Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all.”
- 6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.”
- 2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD;
- 3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them.
- 4 “I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned.
- 5 “Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.
- 6 “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.
- 7 ‘Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
- 8 ‘I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you *for* a possession; I am the LORD.’”
- 9 So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of *their* despondency and cruel bondage.

Israel's First Rebellion (late 1447 BC)

Ezekiel 20:5–9

5 and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God,
6 on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands.
7 "I said to them, 'Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.'
8 "But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.
9 "But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they *lived*, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them 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 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
11 "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the sons of Israel go out of his land."
12 But Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?"

Excursus—Genealogy of Moses and Aaron

13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and gave them a charge to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt.
14 These are the heads of their fathers' households. The sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn: Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben.
15 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon.
16 These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari; and the length of Levi's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years.
17 The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their families.
18 The sons of Kohath: Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the length of Kohath's life was one hundred and thirty-three years.
19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations.
20 Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses; and the length of Amram's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years.
21 The sons of Izhar: Korah and Nepheg and Zichri.
22 The sons of Uzziel: Mishael and Elzaphan and Sithri.
23 Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.
24 The sons of Korah: Assir and Elkanah and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites.
25 Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' *households* of the Levites according to their families.
26 It was *the same* Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their hosts."
27 They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the sons of Israel from Egypt; it was *the same* Moses and Aaron.

Recapitulation of Command to Return

28 Now it came about on the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,
29 that the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the LORD; speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you."
30 But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I am unskilled in speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?"

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

Exodus 7:1–13

- 1 Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I make you *as* God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.
 2 “You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land.
 3 “But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.
 4 “When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments.
 5 “The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.”
 6 So Moses and Aaron did *it*; as the LORD commanded them, thus they did.
 7 Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.
 8 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,
 9 “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Work a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw *it* down before Pharaoh, *that* it may become a serpent.’”
 10 So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.
 11 Then Pharaoh also called for *the* wise men and *the* sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. [[2 Tim 3:8](#)]
 12 For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs.
 13 Yet Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

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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

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.

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 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.

