

I. Exodus 5 &6: Moses makes it worse

- Moses and Aaron follow God's direction and have an audience with Pharaoh, requesting his leave so that the people of Israel can go into the wilderness for three days to worship their God. They tell Pharaoh that if they do not do this, then God will punish them. The proposal may seem questionable to Pharaoh, considering they have not requested this before in over 400 years.
- Pharaoh counters by making the Israelites work harder, forcing them to find their own straw for making the bricks instead of the Egyptians providing it. The daily production quotas are not reduced in light of this complication.
- Conflict arises between the taskmasters and the Israelite foremen when they fail to meet these quotas. Their excuses are not accepted. The foremen complain to them about the new arrangement regarding the straw, but no mercy is shown.
- The foremen blame Moses and Aaron for bringing this burden on them. Moses turns back to God and wonders why the Lord has allowed greater strain to be placed on His people.
- The Lord informs Moses that the Egyptian king will see the great power He is about to display and will indeed release the Israelites.
- God reassures Moses about the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It will come to pass and God is aware of the sufferings of His people. He tells Moses to return to the people and pass on these reassurances. He does so, but it falls on deaf ears because the additional workload has crushed their spirits.
- Moses and Aaron are sent back to Pharaoh to begin the next phase of negotiations. Moses is still complaining that he is of impeded speech. Moses is probably very reluctant to stir up any more trouble.

II. Exodus 7-10: The Front Nine

- God tells Moses that Moses will take the role of God before Pharaoh and Aaron will be as his prophet. Moses is to pass on what God tells him to Aaron and Aaron will speak to Pharaoh.
- Oddly enough, God tells them beforehand that He will harden Pharaoh's heart and that the response to their request will still be no. God informs them that He will "lay his hand" upon Egypt and they will know He is God.
- Moses' and Aaron's ages are finally mentioned. Once again in the Hebrew narrative, the younger brother is in the more prominent role.
- God gives them instruction about the first miracle to perform in front of Pharaoh, this time it will be Aaron's rod that turns into a snake.
- They go before Pharaoh and demonstrate the rod miracle. Pharaoh is unimpressed because his sorcerers/diviners could do the same thing. The fact that Aaron's serpent consumed the others does not motivate Pharaoh to release the Hebrews.
- The first nine plagues begin and come in groups of threes. There are some common characteristics and noticeable trends:
 1. Before the first plague in each group, God sends Moses to Pharaoh in the morning (7:15; 8:20; 9:13). Before the second Moses is told to go, but the time of day is not specified. No audience is commanded before the third in each group.
 2. The first two plagues in each group are preceded by warnings to Pharaoh, while the third is not.
 3. The first three plagues are all brought on by actions of Aaron (7:20; 8:6; 8:17).
 4. The fourth and fifth plagues come by direct action of God (8:21, 24; 9:3, 6)
 5. The last four are all brought on by actions of Moses (9:10, 23; 10:13, 22).
 6. Before each group of three, God tells Moses the main lesson that they will teach (7:17; 8:22; 9:14)
 7. The magicians can duplicate the first two (in reality making them worse) but can reverse the effects of none. They recognize by the third that this is the hand of the Divine (8:19), and flat out stop trying upon the sixth (9:11).
 8. The first plague appears to dissipate on its own after seven days. The third, fifth and sixth appear to conclude or abate on their own. The ninth lasts three days. Others (2nd, 4th, 7th and 8th), are reversed by Moses' actions.

9. Pharaoh heart is described as hardened after all nine of the plagues. He agrees to let the Israelites go after the 2nd, 4th, 7th, and 9th plagues.
- The first nine plagues are:
 1. The waters of the “river” (Nile?) and other bodies of water are turned into blood. Consequences are the death of fish (not amphibians) and resulting stench. Also, the Egyptians had to dig wells to find drinking water. Lasts 7 days.
 2. Frogs are sent to invade the land and homes of the Egyptians. Even after the plague is abated, the stench of the dying frogs pains the people.
 3. The dust of the land becomes lice.
 4. Flies are sent in swarms. They are on people, animals and in houses. The calamity does not affect Goshen.
 5. A pestilence is sent upon the cattle, horses, donkeys, camels, oxen and sheep of the Egyptians and they die. The livestock of the Israelites are unaffected.
 6. Boils come about on man and beast after Moses throws ashes in the air.
 7. Hail is sent in enormous quantities. Those among the Egyptians who feared the Lord were told about and heeded the warnings regarding the coming storm. They protected their livestock and themselves. Those who did not fear God did not heed the advice and their livestock were killed. Fire is even seen upon the ground (lightning?). Man, beast and livestock were hurt, killed or damaged. Goshen was unaffected.
 8. Pharaoh is warned that locusts will come upon the land of Egypt, consuming any crops that were not destroyed by the hail. They will also be like the flies and frogs and fill the houses. Pharaoh’s servants plead with him to let them go. He proposes to allow just the men to go, but this is unacceptable and God sends the plague. Pharaoh appears to be repentant, but only to get relief.
 9. Darkness falls across the land, described as so dark it could be “felt” (10:21). For three days, the Egyptians could not leave home or see one another. There was, however, light in Goshen. Pharaoh agrees to let the people go worship, but their livestock had to remain (what would they sacrifice?).

III. **Exodus 11: This is the last straw**

- God has shown the Egyptians His power over the forces of nature and belittled the tricks of the magicians, but one last demonstration remains. His authority over human life itself.
- Pharaoh, after the ninth plague, has only partially relented. There will be no mercy provided to Pharaoh this time. God tells Moses that the king will not only let them go, but force them out and give the Israelites plunder from the land.
- The Lord causes the Egyptians to look favorably upon the Israelites and admire Moses greatly.
- Moses announces the Lord’s plan about the upcoming disaster for the Egyptians-the death of every firstborn. The punishment God has decided parallels the murder of the Hebrew babies that was ordered over 80 years before.
- God foretells the great cry that will rise from the Egyptians, but contrasts that not even a dog will whine among His people.
- He appears to make the announcement before Pharaoh (11:8), but in 10:29, Moses appears to have left Pharaoh’s sight, never to see him again.
- God informs Moses that Pharaoh will not heed this warning either. It is a high cost that the Egyptians will pay so that God’s “wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt”.
- It noted again in 11:12, that the Lord had a part in hardening Pharaoh’s heart.

Reading for next week: Exodus 12-18 & Psalms 120-130