

Study Notes: Exodus 7:1-13
August 9, 2026: “More Powerful”
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Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country.

- At the end of chapter 6, Moses asked YHWH how he should speak to Pharaoh because of his faltering or uncircumcised lips. YHWH didn’t directly answer Moses’ objection, but reminded Moses of what He already said, “YHWH will speak to Moses, who will speak to Aaron, and Aaron will speak to Pharaoh.”
- In this arrangement, Moses was speaking for God, and Aaron was acting as a prophet. Moses was to tell Aaron everything that YHWH said to him, and Aaron was to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.

But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.”

- Pharaoh, who already refused to listen to Moses and Aaron (see Exodus 5), would continue in his stubborn ways. YHWH would harden Pharaoh’s heart so much that even though YHWH would do multiple signs and wonders, Pharaoh still would not listen.
- As a result, YHWH would judge Egypt to bring His people, the Israelites, out of their bondage. This would result in the Egyptians knowing that YHWH is who He says He is, and these acts would prove that He alone is God.

Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

- Though they had been met with resistance and discouragement, Moses and Aaron now do everything that YHWH commanded of them. They went to Pharaoh and spoke about the message that they received.
- The author notes the ages of Moses and Aaron when these events occurred, making it clear that they were well advanced in years when God called them to this mission. The ages of Moses and Aaron make clear that YHWH does not consider age as a barrier or obstacle to service.
- The New American Commentary explains the significance of these verses, “Even the note about his and Aaron’s age in 7:7 is instructive: The two of them were called upon to lead a great movement at an age when most people have already died (Ps 90:10). Their contribution to the exodus was not their genius or their experience (what experience had they in leading an exodus?) or their credentials (Moses’ were essentially negative as far as most Israelites were concerned) or their vitality, or any such thing. What made them successful leaders was the fact that they ‘did just as the Lord commanded them (7:6).”

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ then say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,’ and it will become a snake.”

- Along with their message, YHWH told Moses and Aaron that Pharaoh would ask for some display of their power. Aaron was to take the staff that YHWH gave to Moses with unique abilities, and show Pharaoh the sign of the snake (see Exodus 4:2-5, 21).

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

- Pharaoh’s wise men and sorcerers were summoned, and they were able to turn their staffs into snakes, as well. However, to prove YHWH’s superiority over everything, Aaron’s staff (which was now a snake) swallowed up the other staffs.
 - The New American Commentary explains, “Moses and Aaron were not magicians. What God did through them was genuine—turning a piece of wood into an animal. The Egyptians, on the other hand, were magicians, and the simplest reading of the text is one that assumes they imitated by magical deception what Aaron had done by divine power.”
- Even though he saw a miracle and was shown that YHWH was more powerful than the powers of darkness, Pharaoh hardened his heart. This is exactly what YHWH said would happen. Pharaoh did not listen, which led to YHWH displaying His power through the ten plagues.
 - The New American Commentary explains, “Pharaoh, his mind made stubborn by God, now had an excuse for resisting, even if a lame one; he could for the time being content himself with the comforting belief that what Aaron had done was just a magic trick.”