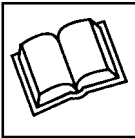


temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17,18).

For any brother or sister who has ever lost a child, I pray that you find the same comfort I have found in God’s Word. For all who have never lost a child, I pray that you will never experience this veil of tears. Please keep those of us in this grievous category in your prayers as we are never the same again.

Losing a child brings the darkest hour ever, just as the sun became darkened when Christ died; but eventually the sun will shine again in your life as you find spiritual peace and strength through our holy Creator, Yahweh Elohim: “For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11).



Exposition

EDITOR: Eric Marshall, The White House, Lynn Road, Castle Rising, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, PE31 6AA. Tel./Fax 01553 631279; e-mail testimony@marshalle.co.uk

The Exodus

A commentary on Exodus 1–15

F. The first nine plagues (Exodus 7–10)

Part 2: The plague cycle introduced (Ex. 7:1-13)

Mark Vincent

The format of the commentary

The narrative has been broken down into several **major sections**, of a chapter or two each; some of these will be covered in one month, others will take longer. An **Introduction** is provided for each of these major sections, which sets out the major events and themes dealt with in those chapters.

Each major section is broken into **subsections** or **episodes** (these are typically between five and twenty verses each). For each the **AV text** is followed by a **Comment**, which draws out the major lessons and items of interest from the text. The AV text also contains **Footnotes**, in which additional ‘one-off’ points are made for those wanting to work through Exodus more slowly.

Introduction

PRIOR TO THE three cycles of three plagues which tell of the demise of Pharaoh and the land of Egypt, Exodus 7 presents two introductory scenes. The first is an intimate conversation between God and Moses in which Moses’ and

Aaron’s respective roles are spelled out; the second is Moses’ and Aaron’s new visit to Pharaoh’s court following the abortive attempt of chapter 5.

God’s commission

- 7:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made¹ thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.
- 7:2 Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send² the children of Israel out of his land.
- 7:3 And I will harden³ Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.
- 7:4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth Mine armies,⁴ and My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.
- 7:5 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.

7:6 And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.

7:7 And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old,⁵ when they spake unto Pharaoh.

Comment

This passage seems to be an expansion of the original conversation between God and Moses recorded in 6:10-13.* At the end of chapter 6 Moses had again raised the issue of his uncircumcised lips, and now God responds with the most dramatic of pronouncements.

The force of 7:1 should not be underestimated. "See", God tells him, "I have made thee God to Pharaoh!". The words really are as emphatic as that. There is no word for 'as' or 'like' (in the sense 'I have made thee as God' or 'I have made thee My representative'), there is no word for 'a' ('I have made thee a god to Pharaoh'), nor is there any necessity (or desirability, in my opinion) to lessen the force by translating the Hebrew *elohim* in some other way than 'God'. Of course God is God, and there is none other; the words plainly do mean, in effect, that Moses is to be His representative or ambassador, and that Pharaoh's channel of communication with God is to come solely through Moses—but the way in which this is expressed is in the strongest and most striking terms.

Just as God has prophets who do His bidding, so Moses (in God's stead) was to have a prophet—in this case his brother Aaron. The implications of all this are staggering. To think that God should deign to be represented by man like this! To think that God should so exalt a man to take on such a role! It is one of the great wonders of His ways that He works through humans in this way. Of course Moses prefigures the Lord Jesus Christ here, but it is also a principle that all of us are in some more limited sense ambassadors for God and are to represent Him to other men and women upon earth. It is almost too much to take on board.

A chain of communication is thus established in this passage. God speaks to Moses, Moses speaks to Aaron, Aaron speaks to Pharaoh. God would not condescend to speak to Pharaoh directly, and neither would He speak to the Israelites or to Aaron except through Moses the mediator. It seems appropriate to draw a parallel with the work of Jesus. In the New Testament order of things God speaks to Jesus, and he in turn speaks either directly to us in his words in

the Gospels, or else through his apostles and their words recorded in Scripture. Just as Moses has a prophet in the person of Aaron his brother, so too Jesus sent out apostles into the world to communicate the wonder of him and his Father. We too take on that mantle of Jesus's spokesperson when we speak of God to those people who are in the world. Just as Aaron the prophet was the brother of Moses the mediator, so our Mediator was made like his brethren and it is our privilege now to speak on his behalf.

There are two other themes in the passage, which will be developed here. The first is the precision with which Moses and Aaron must follow the edict of God, brought out by three separate phrases in verses 1-13:

"[Moses must speak] *all that I command thee*" (v. 2);

"Moses and Aaron *did as the LORD commanded them, so did they*" (v. 6—notice the double emphasis);

"Moses and Aaron . . . *did so as the LORD had commanded*" (v. 10).

This emphasis is important because it brings out a principle that is enacted time and again in the next chapters, which document the plagues. Moses and Aaron did precisely what God commanded them; the deliverance was thus totally under the control and command of God—it was not of their own devising. This point is made later on by the way in which the text frequently records God's commanding Moses and Aaron what they should do, and then describes their doing of it, often using precisely the same language in quite a repetitious fashion. God's instructions are to be obeyed and followed meticulously. There is to be no extemporisation or improvisation. God means what He says, and is to be taken at His word.

A final point is the rather surprising object of what God will achieve through Pharaoh's hard heart and the multiplication of God's wonders (vv. 5-7). He will bring them out with great judgments, indicating that condemnation and destruction was to come upon what was left behind, just as it must be for us. God had already made it clear in 6:7 that by the end of the Exodus the Israelites would know that He was the true God; 7:5 tells us that it would not only be the Israelites that would know this, but the Egyptians as well (compare Pharaoh's sarcastic "Who is the LORD

* See [Feb. 2002, p. 36](#).

...?” on his first meeting with Moses; he is now about to find out). The whole world is ultimately to know that God is Lord over all.

In this case, then, even those who are destined for destruction are to know and understand the significance and the consequence of the path they have chosen. God’s Name and character are to be proclaimed even by their destruction, and it is one of the objects of His pur-

pose that even they should know. This may be counter-intuitive, so it is important that it be taken on board. God predicts Pharaoh’s stubborn heart before it is manifest, but even that obstinacy He will use to reveal Himself. It is an occasion to multiply His wonders and to educate even His enemies in His ways. The spirit of all this is captured powerfully by Paul in Romans 9.

Moses and Aaron revisit Pharaoh

- 7:8 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
- 7:9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron,⁶ Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.⁷
- 7:10 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.
- 7:11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.
- 7:12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.
- 7:13 And he hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

Comment

While the first encounter was apparently all victory for Pharaoh, in this their second meeting Moses begins to assert his authority as ‘God’ before Pharaoh. God predicts that Pharaoh will ask for a sign, with the challenge, “Shew a miracle for you”! A similar challenge would later be given to the Lord Jesus by an unbelieving people. I wonder if they realised they were echoing the request of the evil Pharaoh. But no sign would be given to that generation, save the sign of the prophet Jonah, for it is an evil and adulterous generation which seeks one (Mt. 12: 38,39).

There was apparently a particular variety of snake in Egypt which under certain circumstances would become rigid and sticklike, so when Aaron’s rod becomes a serpent Pharaoh might well be lulled into blissful unconcern. Per-

haps he recognises this as a standard part of an Egyptian magician’s repertoire (rather like a bunny out of a hat). Perhaps he smirks to himself in amusement that Moses should consider such a stunt so impressive. So he calls his magicians to repeat the feat, and they summarily oblige.

Whether this imitation of the miracle is indeed the stick-snake which the magicians were particularly adept at handling cannot be determined for certain. By contrast, it may be that God ‘helps them out’, as it were, with a genuine miracle, only to pull ahead a moment later. The phrase, “they also did in like manner with *their* enchantments” (v. 11), does tend to mitigate against this latter possibility, however, and implies that by some means or other Egyptian magical techniques or illusions were up to the task of producing some such rod-snake conversion.

It is a fascinating thing that God chooses to give Moses and Aaron a sign which He knows full well the Egyptians will be able to mimic! He seems to be inviting them to be puffed up with that oh-so-human pride and self-assurance which mocks the power of God and trusts in its own cleverness (‘Oh, so I suppose you think that’s smart do you [referring to Moses’ miracle]? Well that’s nothing—elementary in fact; any magician worth his salt can do that!’).

But if God allows them to play along with Him for a brief moment, in the next He shatters their illusion with a menacing *coup de grâce*. In what must have been quite a gross display, Aaron’s rod now swallows up the others in a mighty portent of how much greater the power of the Lord is when compared with the power of Pharaoh.

One can only wonder how Pharaoh can deny the supreme obviousness of what has been enacted before him. Yet for the moment, and for a good many moments to come, he cares for none of these things.

1. **v. 1 made thee a god.** The verb translated 'made' here is the regular verb 'to give'. In this case it is perhaps best translated 'appointed'. It emphasises that the commission is one of a superior to an inferior, an honour bequeathed by God. 'God' is the Hebrew *elohim*, without an article. While it is used elsewhere in the plural sense to refer to angels and to the elders of Israel as judges, the usage here is distinctive because it is used of a singular individual who is not God, namely Moses. Although plural in form, the word governs a singular verb in almost all of its occurrences, since it usually refers to God Himself. In a manner somewhat akin to that in which the angel of the Lord bears His Name and is referred to as 'LORD' in Genesis, here Moses is to 'be' (in the sense of 'represent') God to Pharaoh. [See further the comment.](#)
2. **v. 2 send.** The idea of *sending* is one that recurs through the plague accounts. If space does not permit returning to it in a later article, the occurrences may be easily checked in a concordance.
3. **v. 3 I will harden Pharaoh's heart.** Not one of the usual two words for hardening, *chazaq* or *kabad*. Here the word is *qashah*, 'severe', 'harsh', 'hard(-pressed)', the only occasion on which it is used in Exodus 1-15. The phenomenon of hardening was discussed [last month](#).
4. **v. 4 armies.** Literally, 'hosts', not necessarily with a military connotation (see note on 6:26, [Feb. 2002, p. 39](#)).
5. **v. 7.** The biographical detail of the ages of Moses and Aaron again serves to demarcate the mission to Pharaoh and the plagues which will follow. All the preliminaries are now in place, and the main narrative may now begin.
6. **v. 9 say unto Aaron, Take thy rod.** It has been suggested that Aaron himself performs the signs as long as the Egyptian magicians are present; if they are not then Moses may perform them instead. This would imply that Moses speaks to Pharaoh as an equal; when Pharaoh has company then both leaders have representatives who perform their signs for them.
7. **v. 9 serpent.** The word here is *tanniyn*, normally a word for a large reptile, whale/sea monster (*cf.* Job 7:12; Lam. 4:3), or even dragon. The Septuagint does indeed adopt the translation 'dragon' in this passage, the term being different from the usual word for 'snake', *nachash*, found in the other rod-snake passage, Exodus 4:3. Most interpreters take *tanniyn* to be a term with a fairly broad range of meanings, and prefer to take it as a regular snake here, but one could take the dragon/reptile sense. Pharaoh is addressed by the same word in Ezekiel 29:3; compare also Isaiah 51:9.



Encounter

Reprinted items from earlier issues, chosen by
the Publishing Editor

The Law given through Moses*

13. Internal evidence

Islip Collyer

WHEN A NATION possesses a law which has been revered for thousands of years, and when it also has a written history claiming to deal with national beginnings, we should certainly expect to find a record of the manner in which the law came into being. A history may contain errors, and the writers may have been prejudiced, but in all that claims to be historical there is nearly always a substratum of fact. Surely any reader may be absolutely convinced of such a basis of truth in the records

of the Jews. The time has long gone by when an unbeliever could dismiss all the ancient history of Israel as fictitious. So much has been confirmed by modern discovery that even those who only pay heed to outside evidence now recognise the historical basis.

Mr H. G. Wells, although distinctly sceptical in outlook, freely admitted the factual foundation

* First published January 1948.