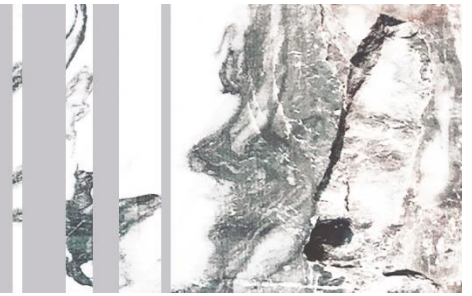


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 5



DAY ONE

Read Exodus 6:28-7:7.

God speaks to Moses in Exodus 7:1-5, describing what's about to happen. Moses and Aaron will go to Pharaoh and ask him to let the Israelites leave Egypt. Pharaoh's refusal will allow God to display His power through miraculous signs and wonders, but the signs and wonders will not move Pharaoh's hard heart—it will take "mighty acts of judgement" to do that (v. 4). Ultimately, God will demonstrate His power so the Egyptians will know that He is Lord, and He will bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

There. In four verses you have a summary of the events of the next six chapters of Exodus. This passage is God's statement of purpose. It's about to get crazy in Egypt, and without this explanation, it might be easy for Moses and Aaron (and us) to be confused by what comes next. Frogs and flies and boils—oh my! But no matter what happens, God's purpose is to demonstrate His power and rescue His people.

Read Exodus 7:6 again.

- Can you recall a moment in your life when you chose to obey a command of the Lord, even when it seemed hard? What effect did that experience have on your faith walk?
- What is your response to reading the ages of Moses and Aaron?

Read Exodus 7:8-13.

Pharaoh's magicians are able to copy Aaron's staff-to-snake exhibition. How? Scholars aren't sure. Either they knew some trick—an illusion akin to a contemporary "magic act"—or they were accessing actual demonic power. For a moment it appears that the gods of Egypt are just as powerful as the God of the Hebrew slaves. But then Aaron's staff/snake *swallows* their staff/snakes. Round one goes to the God of the Hebrews. Even so, Pharaoh's heart is hard. He refuses to listen.

There are many false substitutes in the world for God and His power. None can actually match him, but some can give a good impersonation for a little while.

Reflect for a few moments on any "God substitutes" you are drawn to.

- Why are you drawn to this substitute?
- In what ways does it fall short?
- How can you remind yourself to turn to God instead?

Spend a few moments talking to God about what you've discovered. Ask Him to reveal His power to you.

DAY TWO

Read Exodus 7:14-8:15.

Ancient Egypt was a civilization unlike any the world had ever seen, and it traced its success to the predictable, tameable, fertile ways of the Nile. The Nile provided abundant crops, freeing the Egyptians from subsistence farming and allowing them the ability to develop technology, art, and, well, pyramids (which probably had existed for a 1000 years by the time Moses was born). Naturally, the pagan Egyptians worshiped the Nile itself. So when God displays His power to make the Nile a source of death instead of life—blood instead of water—the Egyptians are understandably rattled.

Once again, Pharaoh's magicians are able to replicate the miracle with their own "magic arts," which further hardens Pharaoh's heart. It's natural to ask *how* they were able to do this, but perhaps a more important question is *why*. Why make things worse? Why duplicate destruction? If the magicians of Egypt had power equal to or greater than God's, wouldn't they *fix* the problem instead of exacerbating it? Why, in the next plague, do they *add* to the frog problem (8:7)?

It's an important reminder that our enemy, the devil, cannot create. He can only imitate—and destroy.

After the frogs, Pharaoh is ready to deal (8:8). He tells Moses that he'll let the Hebrews go. When Moses asks *when* he should pray for the frogs to die, Pharaoh replies, "Tomorrow" (8:10).

Did you catch that?

The frogs are *everywhere*. Why wait? Why not get rid of them *right now*?

Are there areas in your life like this? Areas of sin or struggle? God has the power to work in and through your life. Do you ever say, "Not yet"? Do you ever say, "Tomorrow"?

Sit quietly before the Lord. Ask Him to reveal areas of struggle in your life that you haven't yet surrendered to His power. Then don't say, "Tomorrow." Talk to him about what He wants to do *today*.

- What steps is God leading you to take today in your area of struggle?
- Make a plan to take the first step today.

DAY THREE

Read Exodus 8:16-9:12.

Take a moment to glance back over the passages you just read.

- What moments, phrases, and events stand out to you? Why?
- What do you notice is different about the plague of gnats? The plague of flies and livestock?

Plague three, gnats, marks a turning point in the impression that God is making on the Egyptians. It's the first plague that Pharaoh's magicians are unable to replicate. In fact, they acknowledge, "This is the finger of God" (8:19). But even their testimony isn't enough to soften Pharaoh's heart.

The plague of flies is the first time that the Lord announces that He will deal differently with the land of Goshen (the area where the Hebrews live). Remember, one of His stated goals is to demonstrate His power to the Egyptians. By not only causing the plagues, but also being able to control where the flies *go*, God does just that.

- What is Pharaoh's reaction to the plague of flies? (v. 25 and v. 28)
- When and where do you attempt to bargain or compromise with God? To put your own parameters around what God is asking you to do?

This portion of Scripture is heavy. But in the midst of the crisis in Egypt—and the way reading these verses challenges our own faith—it's good to be reminded that God has a sense of humor. Don't believe me? Re-read Exodus 9:11. *The magicians not only can't replicate this event, they can't even appear before Pharaoh because they are covered in boils.* Let that mental image make you smile.

Spend a few moments in prayer, asking God to show you today how His power is at work in the world and your life.

DAY FOUR

Read Exodus 9:13-10:20.

At the beginning of this passage, God sends Moses to Pharaoh with a warning about the coming plague of hail. Read verse 16 again.

This is God talking to Pharaoh through Moses. God says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed through all the earth." In another context, this proclamation would sound like high praise. "You've been picked! You're the one! It's through you that my name and power will be made known!" But in this case, it's Pharaoh's hard-hearted disobedience that provides God with the opportunity for an unprecedented display of power. Notice this: God can make Himself known through you whether you willingly follow or stubbornly resist. The difference is not whether God is made known; the difference is whether you experience His judgment or His mercy.

- What positions of power, responsibility, or authority has God placed you in? (At work, at home, in school, at church, in sports, the arts, or elsewhere)
- In what ways have you seen God display His power through your position?
- Quietly sit before the Lord and ask Him to reveal any areas in which you may be resisting His displays of power. Acknowledge that His power will be revealed, whether you cooperate or not.

What else do you notice in the passage you read today? Read over each of Pharaoh's responses (9:27-28, 9:34, 10:8-11, 10:16-20).

- Spend some time quietly before the Lord. You may choose to praise Him for His power, or confess your own struggles with acknowledging His authority.

DAY FIVE

Read Exodus 10:21-29.

Each of the plagues has been a challenge not only to the authority of Pharaoh but to the pagan beliefs of the Egyptians, who worshipped gods of the Nile, the land and harvest, and weather. But the “king of the gods” in ancient Egypt was Ra—the god of the sun *and* the patron god of the Pharaohs. God is working toward the culmination of His display of power over every false god and fake authority.

In this second-to-last plague, darkness spreads over Egypt—“a darkness that can be felt” (v. 21). However, in Goshen, where the Israelites live, light remained.

- When in your life have you experienced “a darkness that can be felt”?
- Have you ever experienced light in the places where you lived, even when the world around you seemed full of darkness?

In the face of darkness, and in response to the most direct challenge to the religious and political power of Egypt (thus far), Pharaoh summons Moses before him and agrees to let Moses and the people go.

Do you notice how Pharaoh has been slowly relenting? First he gives permission for them to go, but “not very far” (8:28), then agrees to allow only the men to leave (10:11), then the women and children but not the livestock (10:24). But Moses is a proponent of “No Hoof Left Behind” (10:26) and so Pharaoh’s heart is once again hardened.

So far, we haven’t addressed one of the most profound questions these chapters pose: If “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (10:27 and elsewhere), is Pharaoh to blame for his actions? Was he merely a pawn in God’s plan? Is it “fair” of God to harden someone’s heart?

What do you think? It’s OK to ask hard questions of Scripture. But it’s important to take those questions to the Lord. Spend a few moments meditating on the idea of Pharaoh’s hard heart. What lessons does the Lord have in mind for you from this passage?