
EXODUS 7:1 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I have made you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

The dignified mission of Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh - the one to be as God, the other as a prophet of the Most High, Exo 7:1, Exo 7:2. The prediction that Pharaoh's heart should be hardened, that God might multiply his signs and wonders in Egypt, that the inhabitants might know he alone was the true God, Exo 7:3-4. The age of Moses and Aaron, Exo 7:7. God gives them directions how they should act before Pharaoh, Exo 7:5, Exo 7:9. Moses turns his rod into a serpent, Exo 7:10. The magicians imitate this miracle, and Pharaoh's heart is hardened, Exo 7:11-13. Moses is commanded to wait upon Pharaoh next morning when he should come to the river, and threaten to turn the waters into blood if he did not let the people go, Exo 7:14-18. The waters in all the land of Egypt are turned into blood, Exo 7:19, Exo 7:20. The fish die, Exo 7:21. The magicians imitate this, and Pharaoh's heart is again hardened, Exo 7:22, Exo 7:23. The Egyptians sorely distressed because of the bloody waters, Exo 7:24. This plague endures seven days, Exo 7:25.

Verse 1

I have made thee a god - At thy word every plague shall come, and at thy command each shall be removed. Thus Moses must have appeared as a god to Pharaoh.

Shall be thy prophet - Shall receive the word from thy mouth, and communicate it to the Egyptian king, Exo 7:2.

EXODUS 7:2 You shall speak all that I command you; and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.

EXODUS 7:3 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

Verse 3

I will harden Pharaoh's heart - I will permit his stubbornness and obstinacy still to remain, that I may have the greater opportunity to multiply my wonders in the land, that the Egyptians may know that I only am Jehovah, the self-existent God. See Clarke's note on Exo 4:21.

EXODUS 7:4 But Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will lay my hand on Egypt, and bring out my armies, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgements.

EXODUS 7:5 The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand on Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them."

Verse 5

And bring out the children of Israel - Pharaoh's obstinacy was either caused or permitted in mercy to the Egyptians, that he and his magicians being suffered to oppose Moses and Aaron to the uttermost of their power, the Israelites might be brought out of Egypt in so signal a manner, in spite of all the opposition of the Egyptians, their king, and their gods, that Jehovah might appear to be All-mighty and All-sufficient.

EXODUS 7:6 Moses and Aaron did so. As the LORD commanded them, so they did.

EXODUS 7:7 Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Verse 7

Moses was fourscore years old - He was forty years old when he went to Midian, and he had tarried forty years in Midian; (see Exo 2:11, and Act 7:30); and from this verse it appears that Aaron was three years older than Moses. We have already seen that Miriam their sister was older than either, Exo 2:4.

EXODUS 7:8 The LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

EXODUS 7:9 "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Perform a miracle!' then you shall tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it become a serpent.'"

Verse 9

Show a miracle for you - A miracle, מופת mopheth, signifies an effect produced in nature which is opposed to its laws, or such as its powers are inadequate to produce. As Moses and Aaron professed to have a Divine mission, and to come to Pharaoh on the most extraordinary occasion, making a most singular and unprecedented demand, it was natural to suppose, if Pharaoh should even give them an audience, that he would require them to give him some proof by an extraordinary sign that their pretensions to such a Divine mission were well founded and incontestable. For it appears to have ever been the sense of mankind, that he who has a Divine mission to effect some extraordinary purpose can give a supernatural proof that he has got this extraordinary commission.

Take thy rod - This rod, whether a common staff, an ensign of office, or a shepherd's crook, was now consecrated for the purpose of working miracles; and is indifferently called the rod of God, the rod of Moses, and the rod of Aaron. God gave it the miraculous power, and Moses and Aaron used it indifferently.

EXODUS 7:10 Moses and Aaron went in to 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.

Verse 10

It became a serpent - תנין tannin. What kind of a serpent is here intended, learned men are not agreed. From the manner in which the original word is used in Psa 74:13; Isa 27:1; Isa 51:9; Job 7:12; some very large creature, either aquatic or amphibious, is probably meant; some have thought that the crocodile, a well-known Egyptian animal, is here intended. In Exo 4:3 it is said that this rod was changed into a serpent, but the original word there is נחש nachash, and here תנין tannin, the same word which we translate whale, Gen 1:21.

As נחש nachash seems to be a term restricted to no one particular meaning, as has already been shown on Genesis 3; See Clarke's note on Gen 3:1. So the words תנין tannin, תנינים tanninim, תנים tannim, and תנוות tannoth, are used to signify different kinds of animals in the Scriptures. The word is supposed to signify the jackal in Job 30:29; Psa 44:19; Isa 13:22; Isa 34:13; Isa 35:7; Isa 43:20; Jer 9:11, etc., etc.; and also a dragon, serpent, or whale, Job 7:12; Psa 91:13; Isa 27:1; Isa 51:9; Jer 51:34; Eze 29:3; Eze 32:2; and is termed, in our translation, a sea-monster, Lam 4:3. As it was a rod or staff that was changed into the tannim in the cases mentioned here, it has been supposed that an ordinary serpent is what is intended by the word, because the size of both might be then pretty nearly equal: but as a miracle was wrought on the occasion, this circumstance is of no weight; it was as easy for God to change the rod into a crocodile, or any other creature, as to change it into an adder or common snake.

EXODUS 7:11 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers. They also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same thing with their enchantments.

Verse 11

Pharaoh - called the wise men - חכמים chacamim, the men of learning. Sorcerers, כשפים cashshephim, those who reveal hidden things; probably from the Arabic root kashafa, to reveal, uncover, etc., signifying diviners, or those who pretended to reveal what was in futurity, to discover things lost, to find hidden treasures, etc. Magicians, חרטומי chartummey, decipherers of abstruse writings. See Clarke's note on Gen 41:8.

They also did in like manner with their enchantments - The word להטים lahatim, comes from להט mor lahat, to burn, to set on fire; and probably signifies such incantations as required lustral fires, sacrifices, fumigations, burning of incense, aromatic and odoriferous drugs, etc., as the means of evoking departed spirits or assistant demons, by whose ministry, it is probable, the magicians in question wrought some of their deceptive miracles: for as the term miracle signifies properly something which exceeds the powers of nature or art to produce, (see Exo 7:9), hence there could be no miracle in this case but those wrought, through the power of God, by the ministry of Moses and Aaron. There can be no doubt that real serpents were produced by the magicians. On this subject there are two opinions:

1. That the serpents were such as they, either by juggling or sleight of hand, had brought to the place, and had secreted till the time of exhibition, as our common conjurers do in the public fairs, etc.
2. That the serpents were brought by the ministry of a familiar spirit, which, by the magic flames already referred to, they had evoked for the purpose.

Both these opinions admit the serpents to be real, and no illusion of the sight, as some have supposed. The first opinion appears to me insufficient to account for the phenomena of the case referred to. If the magicians threw down their rods, and they became serpents after they were thrown down, as the text expressly says, Exo 7:12, juggling or sleight of hand had nothing farther to do in the business, as the rods were then out of their hands. If Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods, their sleight of hand was no longer concerned. A man, by dexterity of hand, may so far impose on his spectators as to appear to eat a rod; but for rods lying on the ground to become serpents, and one of these to devour all the rest so that it alone remained, required something more than juggling. How much more rational at once to allow that these magicians had familiar spirits who could assume all shapes, change the appearances of the subjects on which they operated, or suddenly convey one thing away and substitute another in its place! Nature has no such power, and art no such influence as to produce the effects attributed here and in the succeeding chapters to the Egyptian magicians.

EXODUS 7:12 For they each cast down their rods, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

Verse 12

Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods - As Egypt was remarkably addicted to magic, sorcery, etc., it was necessary that God should permit Pharaoh's wise men to act to the utmost of their skill in order to imitate the work of God, that his superiority might be clearly seen, and his powerful working incontestably ascertained; and this was fully done when Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. We have already seen that the names of two of the chief of these magicians were Jannes and Jambres; see Clarke on Exo 2:10 (note), and 2Tim 3:8 (note). Many traditions and fables concerning these may be seen in the eastern writers.

EXODUS 7:13 Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as the LORD had spoken.

Verse 13

And he hardened Pharaoh's heart - ויחזק לב פרעה vayechezak leb Paroh, "And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened," the identical words which in Exo 7:22 are thus translated, and which should have been rendered in the same way here, lest the hardening, which was evidently the effect of his own obstinate shutting of his eyes against the truth, should be attributed to God. See Clarke's note on Exo 4:21.

EXODUS 7:14 The LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn. He refuses to let the people go.

Verse 14

Pharaoh's heart is hardened - כבד cabed, is become heavy or stupid; he receives no conviction, notwithstanding the clearness of the light which shines upon him. We well know the power of

prejudice: where persons are determined to think and act after a predetermined plan, arguments, demonstrations, and even miracles themselves, are lost on them, as in the case of Pharaoh here, and that of the obstinate Jews in the days of our Lord and his apostles.

EXODUS 7:15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Behold, he goes out to the water; and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand.

Verse 15

Lo, he goeth out unto the water - Probably for the purpose of bathing, or of performing some religious ablution. Some suppose he went out to pay adoration to the river Nile, which was an object of religious worship among the ancient Egyptians. "For," says Plutarch, *De Iside.*, ουδεν ούτω τιμη Αιγυπτιοις ως ο Νειλος "nothing is in greater honor among the Egyptians than the river Nile." Some of the ancient Jews supposed that Pharaoh himself was a magician, and that he walked by the river early each morning for the purpose of preparing magical rites, etc.

EXODUS 7:16 You shall tell him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness:" and behold, until now you haven't listened.

EXODUS 7:17 Thus says the LORD, "In this you shall know that I am the LORD. Behold, I will strike with the rod that is in my hand on the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

Verse 17

Behold, I will smite - Here commences the account of the Ten plagues which were inflicted on the Egyptians by Moses and Aaron, by the command and through the power of God. According to Archbishop Usher these ten plagues took place in the course of one month, and in the following order: -

The first, the Waters turned into Blood, took place, he supposes, the 18th day of the sixth month; Exo 7:20.

The second, the plague of Frogs, on the 25th day of the sixth month; Exo 8:2.

The third, the plague of Lice, on the 27th day of the sixth month; Exo 8:16.

The fourth, grievous Swarms of Flies, on the 29th day of the sixth month; Exo 8:24.

The fifth, the grievous Murrain, on the 2d day of the seventh month; Exo 9:3.

The sixth, the plague of Boils and Blains, on the 3d day of the seventh month; Exo 9:10.

The seventh, the grievous Hail, on the 5th day of the seventh month; Exo 9:18.

The eighth, the plague of Locusts, on the 8th day of the seventh month; Exo 10:12.

The ninth, the Thick Darkness, on the 10th day of Abib, (April 30), now become the first month of the Jewish year; Exo 10:22. See Clarke's note on Exo 12:2.

The tenth, the Slaying the First-Born, on the 15th of Abib; Exo 12:29. But most of these dates are destitute of proof.

EXODUS 7:18 The fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall become foul; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink water from the river.'''''

Verse 18

The Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water - The force of this expression cannot be well felt without taking into consideration the peculiar pleasantness and great salubrity of the waters of the Nile. "The water of Egypt," says the Abbe Mascrier, "is so delicious, that one would not wish the heat to be less, or to be delivered from the sensation of thirst. The Turks find it so exquisite that they excite themselves to drink of it by eating salt. It is a common saying among them, that if Mohammed had drank of it he would have besought God that he might never die, in order to have had this continual gratification. When the Egyptians undertake the pilgrimage of Mecca, or go out of their country on any other account, they speak of nothing but the pleasure they shall have at their return in drinking of the waters of the Nile. There is no gratification to be compared to this; it surpasses, in their esteem, that of seeing their relations and families. All those who have tasted of this water allow that they never met with the like in any other place. When a person drinks of it for the first time he can scarcely be persuaded that it is not a water prepared by art; for it has something in it inexpressibly agreeable and pleasing to the taste; and it should have the same rank among waters that champaign has among wines. But its most valuable quality is, that it is exceedingly salutary. It never incommodes, let it be drank in what quantity it may: this is so true that it is no uncommon thing to see some persons drink three buckets of it in a day without the least inconvenience! When I pass such encomiums on the water of Egypt it is right to observe that I speak only of that of the Nile, which indeed is the only water drinkable, for their well water is detestable and unwholesome. Fountains are so rare that they are a kind of prodigy in that country; and as to rain water, that is out of the question, as scarcely any falls in Egypt." "A person," says Mr. Harmer, "who never before heard of the deliciousness of the Nile water, and of the large quantities which on that account are drank of it, will, I am sure, find an energy in those words of Moses to Pharaoh, The Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river, which he never observed before. They will loathe to drink of that water which they used to prefer to all the waters of the universe; loathe to drink of that for which they had been accustomed to long, and will rather choose to drink of well water, which in their country is detestable!" - Observations, vol. iii., p. 564.

EXODUS 7:19 The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'"

Verse 19

That there may be blood - both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone - Not only the Nile itself was to be thus changed into blood in all its branches, and the canals issuing from it, but all the water of lakes, ponds, and reservoirs, was to undergo a similar change. And this was to extend even to the water already brought into their houses for culinary and other domestic purposes. As the water of the Nile is known to be very thick and muddy, and the Egyptians are obliged to filter it through pots of a kind of white earth, and sometimes through a paste made of almonds, Mr. Harmer supposes that the vessels of wood and stone mentioned above may refer to the process of filtration, which no doubt has been practiced among them from the remotest period. The meaning given above I think to be more natural.

EXODUS 7:20 Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

Verse 20

All the waters - were turned to blood - Not merely in appearance, but in reality; for these changed waters became corrupt and insalubrious, so that even the fish that were in the river died; and the smell became highly offensive, so that the waters could not be drank; Exo 7:21.

EXODUS 7:21 The fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians couldn't drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt.

EXODUS 7:22 The magicians of Egypt did the same thing with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as the LORD had spoken.

Verse 22

And the magicians - did so - But if all the water in Egypt was turned into blood by Moses, where did the magicians get the water which they changed into blood? This question is answered in Exo 7:24. The Egyptians dug round about the river for water to drink, and it seems that the water obtained by this means was not bloody like that in the river: on this water therefore the magicians might operate. Again, though a general commission was given to Moses, not only to turn the waters of the river (Nile) into blood, but also those of their streams, rivers, ponds, and pools; yet it seems pretty clear from Exo 7:20 that he did not proceed thus far, at least in the first instance; for it is there stated that only the waters of the river were turned into blood. Afterwards the plague doubtless became general. At the commencement therefore of this plague, the magicians might obtain other water to imitate the miracle; and it would not be difficult for them, by juggling tricks or the assistance of a familiar spirit, (for we must not abandon the possibility of this use), to give it a bloody appearance, a fetid smell, and a bad taste. On either of these grounds there is no contradiction in the Mosaic account, though some have been very studious to find one.

The plague of the bloody waters may be considered as a display of retributive justice against the Egyptians, for the murderous decree which enacted that all the male children of the Israelites should be drowned in that river, the waters of which, so necessary to their support and life, were now

rendered not only insalubrious but deadly, by being turned into blood. As it is well known that the Nile was a chief object of Egyptian idolatry, (See Clarke's note on Exo 7:15), and that annually they sacrificed a girl, or as others say, both a boy and a girl, to this river, in gratitude for the benefits received from it, (Universal Hist., vol. i., p. 178, fol. edit)., God might have designed this plague as a punishment for such cruelty: and the contempt poured upon this object of their adoration, by turning its waters into blood, and rendering them fetid and corrupt, must have had a direct tendency to correct their idolatrous notions, and lead them to acknowledge the power and authority of the true God.

EXODUS 7:23 Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he didn't even take this to heart.

EXODUS 7:24 All the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink; for they couldn't drink of the water of the river.

EXODUS 7:25 Seven days were fulfilled, after the LORD had struck the river.

Verse 25

And seven days were fulfilled - So we learn that this plague continued at least a whole week.

The contention between Moses and Aaron and the magicians of Egypt has become famous throughout the world. Tradition in various countries has preserved not only the account, but also the names of the chief persons concerned in the opposition made by the Egyptians to these messengers of God. Though their names are not mentioned in the sacred text, yet tradition had preserved them in the Jewish records, from which St. Paul undoubtedly quotes 2Tim 3:8, where, speaking of the enemies of the Gospel, he compares them to Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses. That these names existed in the ancient Jewish records, their own writings show. In the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel on this place they are called יניס וימבריס Janis and Jambris; and in the Babylonian Talmud they are named Joanne and Mambre, and are represented as chiefs of the sorcerers of Egypt, and as having ridiculed Moses and Aaron for pretending to equal them in magical arts. And Rabbi Tanchum, in his Commentary, names them Jonos and Jombrus. If we allow the readings of the ancient editions of Pliny to be correct, he refers, in Hist. Nat., l. xxx., c. 2, to the same persons, the names being a little changed: *Est et alia magices factio, a Mose et Jamne et Jotape Judaeis pendens, sed multis millibus annorum post Zoroastrem*; "There is also another faction of magicians which took its origin from the Jews, Moses, Jamnes, and Jotapes, many thousands of years after Zoroaster;" where he confounds Moses with the Egyptian magicians; for the heathens, having no just notion of the power of God, attributed all miracles to the influence of magic. Pliny also calls the Egyptian magicians Jews; but this is not the only mistake in his history; and as he adds, *sed multis millibus annorum post Zoroastrem*, he is supposed by some to refer to the Christians, and particularly the apostles, who wrought many miracles, and whom he considers to be a magical sect derived from Moses and the Jews, because they were Jews by nation, and quoted Moses and the prophets in proof of the truth of the doctrines of Christianity, and of the Divine mission of Christ.

Numenius, a Pythagorean philosopher, mentioned by Eusebius, names these magicians, Jamnes and Jambres, and mentions their opposition to Moses; and we have already seen that there was a tradition among the Asiatics that Pharaoh's daughter had Moses instructed by the wise men Jannes and Jambres; see Abul Faraje, edit. Pococ., p. 26. Here then is a very remarkable fact, the principal

circumstances of which, and the chief actors in them, have been preserved by a sort of universal tradition. See Ainsworth.

When all the circumstances of the preceding case are considered, it seems strange that God should enter into any contest with such persons as the Egyptian magicians; but a little reflection will show the absolute necessity of this. Mr. Psalmanazar, who wrote the Account of the Jews in the first volume of the Universal History, gives the following judicious reasons for this: "If it be asked," says he, "why God did suffer the Egyptian magicians to borrow power from the devil to invalidate, if possible, those miracles which his servant wrought by his Divine power, the following reasons may be given for it:

1. It was necessary that these magicians should be suffered to exert the utmost of their power against Moses, in order to clear him from the imputation of magic or sorcery; for as the notion of such an extraordinary art was very rife, not only among the Egyptians, but all other nations, if they had not entered into this strenuous competition with him, and been at length overcome by him, both the Hebrews and the Egyptians would have been apter to have attributed all his miracles to his skill in magic, than to the Divine power.
2. It was necessary, in order to confirm the faith of the wavering and desponding Israelites, by making them see the difference between Moses acting by the power of God, and the sorcerers by that of Satan.
3. It was necessary, in order to preserve them afterwards from being seduced by any false miracles from the true worship of God."

To these a fourth reason may be added: God permitted this in mercy to the Egyptians, that they might see that the gods in whom they trusted were utterly incapable of saving them; that they could not undo or counteract one of the plagues sent on them by the power of Jehovah; the whole of their influence extending only to some superficial imitations of the genuine miracles wrought by Moses in the name of the true God. By these means it is natural to conclude that many of the Egyptians, and perhaps several of the servants of Pharaoh, were cured of their idolatry; though the king himself hardened his heart against the evidences which God brought before his eyes. Thus God is known by his judgments: for in every operation of his hand his design is to enlighten the minds of men, to bring them from false dependencies to trust in himself alone; that, being saved from error and sin, they may become wise, holy, and happy. When his judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants learn righteousness. (See Clarke's note on Exo 4:21).