

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 7

Moses and Aaron are ordered to go to Pharaoh, and require the dismissal of the people of Israel, but they are told before hand that Pharaoh's heart would be hardened, and would refuse to let them go, until the hand of the Lord was stretched out, and great judgments were brought down upon, Egypt, and then they should come forth, (^{<1170>}Exodus 7:1-5), which orders Moses and Aaron obeyed, and their age is observed, when this was done, (^{<1176>}Exodus 7:6,7) and they are bid to work a miracle, when Pharaoh should demand one, by turning a rod into a serpent, which they did; but Pharaoh's magicians doing the same in appearance, his heart was hardened, (^{<1178>}Exodus 7:8-14) and then they are directed to meet him at the river, and require the same as before; and if he refused, to smite the waters of the river with the rod, and turn them into blood, which they did, (^{<1175>}Exodus 7:15-21), but Pharaoh's magicians doing the same by enchantments, he did not regard it, though the plague lasted seven days, (^{<1172>}Exodus 7:22-25).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] In answer to his objection, taken from his own meanness, and the majesty of Pharaoh, and from his want of readiness and freedom of expression:

see; take notice of, observe what I am about to say:

I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; not a god by nature, but made so; he was so by commission and office, clothed with power and authority from God to act under him in all things he should direct; not for ever, as angels are gods, but for a time; not in an ordinary way, as magistrates are gods, but in an extraordinary manner; and not to any other but to Pharaoh, being an ambassador of God to him, and as in his room and stead to, rule over him, though so great a monarch; to command him what he should do, and control him when he did wrong, and punish him for his disobedience, and inflict such plagues upon him, and do such miracles before him, as no mere man of himself, and none but God can do; and even exercise the power of life and death, as in the slaying of the firstborn, that Pharaoh should stand

in as much fear of him, as if he was a deity, and apply to him to remove the plagues upon him, as if he was one:

and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet; to declare the will of God revealed to him by Moses from the Lord; so that this seems to be more than to be the mouth and spokesman of Moses and interpreter and explainer of his words, or to be acting the part of an orator for him; for Moses in this affair being God's viceregent, and furnished with a knowledge of the mind and will of God respecting it, as well as with power to work miracles, and inflict plagues, was made a god to both Pharaoh and Aaron; (see ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾Exodus 4:6) to Pharaoh in the sense before explained, and to Aaron, he being his prophet, to whom he communicated the secrets of God, and his will and pleasure, in order to make the same known to Pharaoh. Thus highly honoured was Moses to be a god to a sovereign prince, and to have Aaron to be his prophet.

Ver. 2. *Thou shalt speak all that I command thee*, etc.] That is, to Aaron his prophet, whatever the Lord made known to him in a private manner as his will to be done:

and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh; whatsoever should be told him by Moses, as from the Lord:

that he send the children of Israel out of his land; this was the principal thing to be insisted upon; and all that was said or done to him was to bring about this end, the dismissal of the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Ver. 3. *And I will harden Pharaoh's heart*, etc.] (See Gill on "⁽¹⁰⁵⁾Exodus 4:21")

and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt; work one miracle and wonderful sign after another, until they are all wrought intended to be wrought; and which he had given Moses power to do, and until the end should be answered and obtained, the letting go of the children of Israel.

Ver. 4. *But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you*, etc.] Regard not what they said, nor answer the demand they made, or obey the command of God delivered by them to him: this the Lord apprised them of, that they might not be discouraged, and conclude their labour would be in vain, their attempts fruitless, and they should never gain their point, but spend their time, and expose themselves to danger to no purpose:

that I may lay mine hand upon Egypt; the inhabitants of Egypt, smiting them with one plague after another, and particularly with the last, slaying their firstborn; every plague was a stroke of his hand, and an effect of his mighty power and vengeance, and more especially that:

and bring forth mine armies; the children of Israel consisting of 600,000 men, besides women and children, (^{<12:37>}Exodus 12:37) which, divided into twelve tribes, made twelve fine armies, 50,000 men in a tribe or army upon an average:

and my people the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; the word “and” need not be supplied; if any supplement is necessary, the word “even” would be better, since this clause is added by way of explanation, showing who are meant by the armies of the Lord, his people to be brought out:

by great judgments; inflicted upon the Egyptians.

Ver. 5. *And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord*, etc.] Jehovah, the one only true and living God; this they should know by the judgments executed upon them, and be obliged to acknowledge it:

when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt: especially the last time, to destroy the firstborn:

and bring out the children of Israel from among them; by which it would appear that he was mightier than they, and obtained the end for which the plagues were inflicted on them.

Ver. 6. *And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them*, etc.] After this they never showed any reluctance, or made any objection to any message they were sent with, or any work they were ordered to do, but went about it at once, and performed it with all readiness and cheerfulness:

so did they; which is not a superfluous and redundant expression, but very emphatic, showing with what care and diligence they did every thing, and how exactly they conformed in all things to the divine will.

Ver. 7. *And Moses was eighty years old*, etc.] At this time, which is observed partly to show how long Israel had been afflicted in Egypt; for their great troubles and miseries began about the time of the birth of Moses, or a little before, as appears from the above history; and partly to show the patience and forbearance of God with the Egyptians, and how

just and righteous were his judgments on them; with this perfectly agrees Stephen's account of the age of Moses, (^{<4072>}Acts 7:23,30) and Aaron eighty three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh; so that they were men that had had a large experience of things, and had been long training up for the service designed to be done by them; they were men of wisdom and prudence, of sedate and composed countenances, and fit to appear before a king, whose age and venerable aspect might command attention to them. Aben Ezra observes, that

“in all the Scripture there is no mention of any prophets that prophesied in their old age but these, because their excellency was greater than all the prophets.”

By this it appears that Aaron was three years older than Moses. A Jewish chronologer says ^{f186}, that it is affirmed in an exposition of theirs, that Aaron prophesied to the Israelites in Egypt eighty years, which is making him to be a very young prophet when he first entered into the office. The Arabic writers ^{f187} say, Miriam was at this time eighty seven, so was seven years older than Moses, and four years older than Aaron; (see ^{<0000>}Exodus 2:4).

Ver. 8. *And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron*, etc.] After he had given them their commission, and instructions to go to Pharaoh, and a little before they went in to him:

saying, as follows.

Ver. 9. *When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, show a miracle for you*, etc.] To prove that they came from God, the Jehovah they said they did, and that they were his ambassadors, and came in his name, and made the demand for him; which when he seriously reflected on things, he would be ready to require, hoping they would not be able to show any, and then he should have somewhat against them, and treat them as impostors:

then thou shalt say unto Aaron, take thy rod; the same that Moses had in his hand at Horeb, and brought with him to Egypt; this he had delivered into the hand of Aaron, who was to be his agent, and with this rod do signs and wonders as he did, and on account of them it is sometimes called the rod of God:

and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent; as it became one before at Horeb, when Moses by the order of God cast it on the

ground, and afterwards became a rod again, as it now was, (⁽¹⁰⁴⁾Exodus 4:2-4) Hence Mercury, the messenger of the gods with the Heathens, is represented as having a “caduceus”, a rod or wand twisted about with snakes ^{f188}.

Ver. 10. *And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh*, etc.] Into the palace of Pharaoh boldly, and with intrepidity, clothed with such power and authority, and assured of success;

and they did as the Lord had commanded; they demanded in his name the dismissal of the children of Israel, and upon his requiring a miracle to confirm their mission, wrought one as follows:

and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and it became a serpent: or a “dragon”, as the Septuagint version; this word is sometimes used of great whales, (⁽¹⁰⁰²⁾Genesis 1:21) and of the crocodile, (⁽²²¹⁾Ezekiel 29:3) and it is very likely the crocodile is meant here, as Dr. Lightfoot ^{f189} thinks; since this was frequent in the Nile, the river of Egypt, where the Hebrew infants had been cast, and into whose devouring jaws they fell, and which also was an Egyptian deity ^{f190}. Though no mention is made of Pharaoh’s demanding a miracle, yet no doubt he did, as the Lord had intimated he would, and without which it can hardly be thought it would be done; and Artapanus ^{f191}, an Heathen writer, expressly asserts it; for he says,

“when the king required of Moses to do some sign or wonder, the rod which he had he cast down, and it became a serpent, to the amazement of all, and then took it by its tail and it became a rod again;”

which is a testimony from an Heathen of the truth of this miracle.

Ver. 11. *Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers*, etc.] The cunning men and wizards, a sort of jugglers and deceivers, who pretended to great knowledge of things, to discover secrets, tell fortunes, and predict things to come, and by legerdemain tricks, and casting a mist before people’s eyes, pretended to do very wonderful and amazing things; and therefore Pharaoh sent for these, to exercise their art and cunning, and see if they could not vie with Moses and Aaron:

now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments; or by their secret wiles and juggles, making things seem to appear to the sight when they did not really, but by dazzling the eyes of

men by their wicked and diabolical art, they fancied they saw things which they did not; for the word has the signification of flames of fire, or of a flaming sword, or lance, which being brandished to and fro dazzles the sight. The Targum of Jonathan gives the names of two of these magicians, whom he calls Jannes and Jambres, as does the apostle, ((see Gill on “⁴⁻³⁸⁸2 Timothy 3:8”)). Josephus ^{f192} calls these magicians of Egypt priests, and Artapanus ^{f193} says, they were priests that lived about Memphis. According to the Arabs ^{f194}, the name of the place where they lived was Ausana, a city very ancient and pleasant, called the city of the magicians, which lay to the east of the Nile: their name in the Hebrew language is either from a word which signifies a style, or greying tool, as Fuller ^{f195} thinks, because in their enchantments they used superstitious characters and figures; or, as Saadiah Gaon ^{f196}, from two words, the one signifying a “hole”, and the other “stopped”; because they bored a hole in a tree to put witchcrafts into it, and stopped it up, and then declared what should be, or they had to say.

Ver. 12. *For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents,* etc.] That is, they seemed to be so, as Josephus ^{f197} expresses it, but not really, in which he is followed by many; though some think that the devil assisted in this affair, and in an instant, as soon as the rods were cast down, removed them and put real serpents in their room:

but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods; that is, the serpent that Aaron’s rod was turned into, swallowed up the rods of the magicians, which never were otherwise than rods only in appearance; or if real serpents were put in the room of them, these were devoured by his serpent called his rod, because it was before turned into a serpent, as Aben Ezra observes; though the Targums of Jonathan, Jarchi, and R. Jeshua, suppose this was done after the serpent became a rod again; which makes the miracle the greater and more wonderful, that a rod should devour other rods; and supposing them real serpents, this was what the magicians could not make their rods do, and in which they were outdone by Aaron.

Ver. 13. *And he hardened Pharaoh’s heart,* etc.] Or, “notwithstanding the heart of Pharaoh was hardened” ^{f198}; though he saw the rods of his magicians devoured by rod; or “therefore” ^{f199} his heart was hardened, because he saw that the rods of his magicians became serpents as well as Aaron’s; in which there was a deception of sight, and which was suffered for the hardening of his heart, there being other wonders and miracles to be wrought, for showing forth the divine power, before Israel must be let go:

that he hearkened not unto them; to Moses and Aaron, and comply with their demand, to dismiss the people of Israel:

as the Lord had said; or foretold he would not.

Ver. 14. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened*, etc.] Or "heavy"^{f200}, dull and stupid, stiff and inflexible, cannot lift up his heart, or find in his heart to obey the will of God:

he refuseth to let the people go; which was an instance and proof of the hardness and heaviness of his heart, on which the above miracle had made no impression, to regard what God by his ambassadors had required of him.

Ver. 15. *Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning*, etc.] The next morning, a time in which the mind is most composed and sedate, and fit to attend to what may be suggested:

lo, he goeth out unto the water; the river Nile, either to take his morning's walk, and to refresh himself at the waterside, as the Jerusalem Targum; or to observe divinations upon the water, as a magician, as the Targum of Jonathan. So in the Talmud^{f201} it is said, that the Pharaoh in the days of Moses was a magician. Or rather, as Aben Ezra thinks, which he says is a custom of the kings of Egypt to this day, to go out in the months of Tammuz and Ab, i.e. June, and July, when the river increases, to observe how many degrees it has ascended, by which the fruitfulness of the ensuing season was judged of. (See Gill on "~~3188~~ Amos 8:8") Or else he went to worship the rising sun, or the Nile, to pay his morning devotions to it: for not only Jarchi, and other Jewish writers, say it was their chief god, but Plutarch^{f202} also affirms, that nothing was so much honoured with the Egyptians as the Nile; and both Theodoret on this place, and Athanasius^{f203} elsewhere says, that they reckoned it a god, and worshipped it as such; and it has been usual with other nations to worship rivers, as Aelianus^{f204} reports:

and thou shall stand by the river's brink against he come; over against the brink of the river Nile, in order to meet him:

and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand; as a terror to Pharaoh, on sight of which he might be put in mind of what had been done, and by means of which he might fear other wonders would be wrought; by this it appears, that after the rod had been turned into a

serpent, it became a rod again, as it did at Horeb, (⁽¹⁰⁰⁾Exodus 4:4). Moses having previous notice of all this, shows the prescience of God, and his certain knowledge of future contingent events.

Ver. 16. *And thou shalt say unto him*, etc.] Upon meeting him:

the Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee; still appearing in the character of the ambassador of Jehovah, the God of the children of Israel:

saying, let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness; the demand is once more renewed, before any punishment is inflicted for refusal, that the patience and forbearance of God might be the more visible, and his judgments appear the more righteous when inflicted, as well as Pharaoh be left more inexcusable. The reason of the demand is observed,

that they may serve me; keep a feast, and sacrifice to him, as is before expressed, and the place where is pointed at:

in the wilderness; at Sinai, in Arabia, where were the mountains of Sinai and Horeb; but the time of their service is not here expressed, as elsewhere, namely, three days:

and, behold, hitherto thou wouldst not hear; and obey the voice of the Lord, upbraiding him with his disobedience, and the hardness of his heart; but signifying it was not now too late, though it was advisable to be quick, or the blow would be given, and the plagues inflicted.

Ver. 17. *Thus saith the Lord, in this thou shalt know that I am the Lord*, etc.] By the following instance of his power and vengeance:

behold, I will smite with the rod that is in my hand; which though in the hand of Moses, (⁽¹⁰¹⁾Exodus 7:18) yet he being his ambassador, and representing him, is said to be in the hand of the Lord; and with this he threatens to smite

upon the waters which are in the river; the river Nile, and the canals thereof:

and they shall be turned to blood; and if this river was their god, it would abundantly appear that the God of the Hebrews was Jehovah, and above all gods, and particularly above theirs.

Ver. 18. *And the fish that is in the river shall die*, etc.] Their element being changed, and they not able to live in any other but water:

and the river shall stink; with the blood, into which it should be congealed, and with the putrefied bodies of fishes floating in it:

and the Egyptians shall loath to drink of the water of the river; the very colour of it, looking like blood, would set them against it, and create a nausea in them; or “shall be weary”^{f205}, tired of drinking it in a little time, through the loathsomeness of it; or be weary in digging about it, (⁽¹⁰⁷²⁾Exodus 7:24) to get some clear water to drink of; or in seeking to find out ways and methods to cure the waters, that so they might be fit to drink of, as Jarchi interprets it.

Ver. 19. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] Pharaoh still being obstinate, and refusing to let the people go:

say unto Aaron, take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt; upon all of them in general, what were in the river Nile, or derived from it, as follows:

upon their streams; the seven streams of the river Nile, ((see Gill on “⁽²³¹¹⁵⁾Isaiah 11:15”)).

upon their rivers; the canals that were cut out of the river Nile, for the watering of their fields and gardens, for they had no other river:

and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of waters; which were dug near the river, or to which pipes were laid to convey the water thither:

that they may become blood; and so not fit to drink:

and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone; in which water were kept in private houses, fetched from the river for the use of families; all which were to be turned into blood everywhere, in all parts of the land, and in all places mentioned, immediately upon Aaron’s taking his rod, and smiting the waters with it in that part of the river that was before him.

Ver. 20. *And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded*, etc.] Moses delivered the rod to Aaron, who took it and went to the water side:

and he lift up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river; or “in that river”^{f206}, the river Nile, on the brink of which Pharaoh then stood:

in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; his nobles and courtiers who tended him in his walk to the water; for this was done before he returned to his palace:

and all the waters that were in the river were turned into blood; not only the face of the waters looked like blood, but they were really turned into it; and not only the surface of the water, but all the water that was in the river, wherever it flowed, and as far as it flowed in the land of Egypt.

Ver. 21. *And the fish that was in the river died*, etc.] Which was a full proof that the conversion of it into blood was real; for had it been only in appearance, or the water of the river had only the colour of blood, and looked like it, but was not really so, it would not have affected the fishes, they would have lived as well as before; and this plague was the greater affliction to the Egyptians, not as it affected their drink but their food, fish (^{401B}Numbers 11:5) being what the common people chiefly lived upon, ((see Gill on "^{239B}Isaiah 19:8")) and the river stunk; the blood into which it was turned being corrupted through the heat of the sun, and the dead fishes swimming upon it being putrefied;

and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and they had no other water to drink of ^{f207}; for rain seldom fell in Egypt, though sometimes it did in some places, ((see Gill on "^{344B}Zechariah 14:18")). The water of the river Nile was not only their common drink, but it was exceeding pleasant, and therefore the loss of it was the greater; it was so remarkable for the sweetness and delicacy of its taste, that in the time of Pescennius Niger, when his soldiers murmured for want of wine, he is reported to have answered them,

“what! crave you wine, and have the water of the Nile to drink?”

which Mr. Maillett, who lived sixteen years consul for the French nation at Grand Cairo, confirms, and says, that it is grown to be a common proverb, that whoever has once tasted it will ever after pine for it ^{f208}; with this compare (^{402B}Jeremiah 2:18):

and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt; in the river, wherever it flowed, in all its streams and channels, and wherever any water was collected out of it, or fetched from it, let it be in what reservoir it would. This is the first plague executed on the Egyptians, and a very righteous one by the law of retaliation for shedding the blood of innocent babes, through casting them into this river; and this will be the second and

third vials of God's wrath, which will be poured on antichrist, or mystical Egypt, who will have blood given to drink because worthy, (see ~~(old)~~ Revelation 16:3-6). Artapanus ^{f209}, an Heathen writer, bears testimony to this miracle, though he does not so fully and clearly express it as it was; he says,

“a little after, that is, after the former miracle of the rod turned into a serpent, the Nile, that river whose swelling waves overflow all Egypt, was smitten with the rod; and the water being gathered and stagnated, boiled up, and not only the fishes were destroyed, but the people perished through thirst.”

Ver. 22. *And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments*, etc.] Who were either in company with Pharaoh and his nobles, or were immediately sent for to try their art, and confront Moses and Aaron with it; and who very probably got a little water in a vessel, and by some juggling trick imposing upon, and deceiving the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, made it look like blood; and the devil might help them to a sufficient quantity of blood, and discolour the water with it, and make it appear as if it was blood, and which was a poor business; had they turned the bloody river into water again, they would have equalled the miracle of Moses and Aaron, and done some service to their country; but to deceive the sight of people, or to spoil a small quantity of water that was good, by mixing it with blood, was but a mean and unworthy action. Should it be asked from whence they had this water, when all was turned into blood? it may be answered, either from Goshen, as the Targum of Jonathan, the waters of the Hebrews not being affected with this plague: though Aben Ezra thinks they were; or from the sea, as Theodoret; but both these places were too far distant to fetch water from, in the time that Pharaoh stayed here before his return home: rather therefore this water was had from some habitation of the Israelites in the city near at hand, where Pharaoh lived, or was dug for immediately by the magicians, as in (~~(old)~~ Exodus 7:24) or it may be that all the waters were not immediately turned into blood, but successively and gradually, first the river, and then its streams, etc. so that there might be near at hand a pool of water, not yet turned into blood, and a vessel of water might be fetched from it, on which they exercised their juggling art:

and Pharaoh's heart was hardened: by seeing his magicians do what was similar to what Moses and Aaron had done; and therefore concluded that it

was not by the hand of God, but owing to a magic art they were masters of, as his magicians were:

neither did he hearken unto them; to Moses and Aaron, and what they said to him, to let the people go:

as the Lord had said; had before told he would not hearken to them, (⁽¹⁰⁾Exodus 7:4).

Ver. 23. *And Pharaoh turned, and went into his house*, etc.] Turned away from Moses and Aaron, and turned back from the river to which he came, and went to his palace in the city; it being perhaps now about dinner time, when all before related had passed:

neither did he set his heart to this also: had no regard to this miracle of turning the waters into blood, as well as he had none to the rod being turned into a serpent, and devouring the rods of the magicians; he neither considered the one nor the other, or seriously and closely thought of this, any more than of the other.

Ver. 24. *And all the Egyptians digged round about the river*, etc.] On each side of it, in order to get clear water; and Aben Ezra thinks the Hebrews also, who were affected with this, and the two following plagues, the frogs and lice: but it is much more reasonable to conclude that they were free from them all. This they did

for water to drink: for there was none in the river, streams, ponds and pools, or in vessels, in which they used to reserve it, and therefore could come at none but by digging; and whether they obtained any in that way is not said:

for they could not drink of the waters of the river; it being turned into blood, and stunk so exceedingly; and though they might strain it, and make it in some measure, drinkable, and might make use of the juice of herbs, and other things, to extinguish their thirst, and the better sort might have a stock of wine, yet multitudes must be greatly distressed, and many perish, as Philo^{f210} the Jew says they did.

Ver. 25. *And seven days were fulfilled*, etc.] Or there were full seven days, a whole week:

after that the Lord had smitten the river, and turned it into blood; here the miracle is ascribed to him; Moses and Aaron, and the rod they used, were

only instruments, nothing short of almighty power could do such a miracle; it seems this lasted seven days at least. It began, as Bishop Usher^{f211} computes it, on the eighteen day of the sixth month, or Adar, part of February and part of March, and ended the twenty fifth of the same. It is not said that Pharaoh requested to have it removed, though Philo^{f212} says he did; his stubborn heart not being humbled enough as yet to ask such a favour, and therefore perhaps it was taken off without asking for it, to make way for another.