

Bi151 Old Testament

Lesson Bi151- 20 The First Seven Plagues (Ex 6-9)

Most people enjoy a good contest. In sporting events we cheer for our favorite team. Political contests are more serious and have longer lasting results. In the next two lessons you learn about the most significant kind of contest, a religious one. These are often referred to as 'power encounters.' The issues are: "Who has the most power?" and "Who is the true God?"

In this contest, Pharaoh, his magicians, and the false gods of Egypt stood against Moses, Aaron and Yahweh, the one true God. The Israelites had known Him as God Almighty, but now He was going to reveal himself further, as the great 'I AM,' the Redeemer. In this contest Pharaoh repeatedly hardened his own heart against God and refused to listen to God's servants. So God allowed him to make his choices.

After journeying from Sinai to Egypt Aaron stood before the Israelite elders and told them that the Lord had seen their misery and was concerned about them. He showed them the signs God had given Moses. The people were truly amazed with what they were hearing and seeing. They believed Moses and Aaron, and bowed down and worshipped God (4:31).

Then Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord God of Israel says. 'Let my people go into the wilderness for three days so they can worship me.'"

Pharaoh was arrogant, "Who does the God of the Hebrews think he is—telling me what to do? I don't know him, and I am certainly not going to let my slaves go into the desert." The Egyptians worshipped many gods; hoping to please as many as possible, and thus protect themselves from danger. In his anger Pharaoh ordered that no more straw be given to the slaves for making bricks. They had to find their own straw and still make the same number of bricks per day. The Israelites complained bitterly against Moses and Aaron for making their lives harder.

Moses took the complaints to God, who said, "Moses you are about to see what I will do to Pharaoh. Because of My mighty hand, he will let them go. Tell the people that I am the Lord, the great 'I AM.' I have heard their groaning and I have remembered my covenant with them. I am about to take them back to the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Say to the Israelites, 'I will free you from being slaves and I will redeem you with mighty acts of judgment on the Egyptians'"(Ex 6:6). Moses reported this to the people, but they would not listen because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.

Then the Lord told Moses to go and ask Pharaoh again to let the Israelites go. But Moses replied, "I'm not any good at this. If the people of Israel won't listen to me, why would Pharaoh?"

The Lord said, "Moses, go and I'll give you the words to say."

Moses was 80 and Aaron was 83 when they stood before Pharaoh and asked him to let the people of Israel to go and worship. When Pharaoh asked for a sign, Aaron threw his staff on the ground and it became a snake. The court magicians and sorcerers threw their staffs on the ground and they also turned into snakes. But suddenly Aaron's snake swallowed up the rest of the snakes! Still, Pharaoh would not listen.

The Lord told the brothers to go to Pharaoh in the morning when he was walking along the Nile River. The Egyptians worshipped the life-sustaining waters of the Nile as the god Hapi. Moses told him, "Because you refuse to free our people, the waters of Egypt will turn to blood. The fish will die and the water will be undrinkable." Aaron struck the water with his staff and it turned into blood. The ponds and reservoirs, even water in wooden buckets and stone jars became blood. The court magicians also turned some water into blood. So Pharaoh ignored Moses and Aaron and the people had to dig wells to find fresh water to drink.

After seven days, Moses told Pharaoh, "The Lord says, 'Let my people go and worship me. If you refuse, frogs will fill your land.'" The frog too was worshipped in Egypt. Aaron stretched out his staff, and frogs started coming up out of the river. The magicians also made some frogs appear. Soon frogs covered the land. They came into people's houses and into their food—even into their beds!

Then Pharaoh said to Moses, "I've changed my mind. Your people can go into the wilderness and worship their God. Pray to Him to take away the frogs." So Moses did and the next day the frogs died, and people gathered them up into big piles. Soon they were stinking! But Pharaoh changed his mind again and refused to let the people go, just as God had said he would.

Next, Aaron struck the ground with his staff and the dust turned into gnats. Soon, all the people and animals throughout Egypt were infested with gnats. Pharaoh's magicians were unable to do this. They said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" Still he would not listen.

After warning Pharaoh again, God sent a fourth plague—dense swarms of flies to cover the land. But there were no flies in the part of Egypt where the Hebrews lived. Pharaoh agreed to let the people go. Moses promised that the flies would be gone the next day, but he warned, "Do not change your mind again!" However, that is exactly what Pharaoh did. Once the flies were gone, he stubbornly refused to let the people go.

Then God sent a fifth plague, killing the livestock in the fields, for the Egyptians worshipped animals, especially cows and rams. Many herds of animals the Egyptians owned died, but none of the herds of Israel were affected. It was a great loss to Egypt, yet Pharaoh was unyielding. So God told Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of ashes and tossed it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. It became a fine dust that spread through all of Egypt causing festering boils on all the Egyptians and their animals—a sixth plague. The magicians could not stand before Pharaoh because of their boils! Pharaoh was angry, and still he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses.

Sometime later Moses went to Pharaoh with a special message from God. He said, "Up to this point I have restrained my hand against you. I could have wiped you off the earth, but I

raised you up for this purpose, that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Tomorrow I will send a hailstorm like you have never seen before! All people and animals are to stay under shelters, or they will die!” (Ex 9:13-19).

Some Egyptians believed Moses and put their animals and slaves under shelters. But others did not, and their livestock and slaves died when fierce hail mixed with fire came down the next day. Yet the hail did not fall in the land where the Israelites lived. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. “I know I have sinned. I am wrong and God is right. Please pray and ask Him to stop this terrible thunder and hail and rain. I will let your people go.”

Moses replied, “This storm will stop as soon as I leave here.” He started to leave and then turned to Pharaoh saying, “I know you do not yet fear the Lord God.” And it was true. As soon as Pharaoh saw the storm and the hail stop, he stubbornly turned against God and his people. God had shown his power over every false god the Egyptians trusted in, including Pharaoh, who was viewed as a god-man. Yet because Pharaoh and his officials hardened their hearts, the contest was not yet over.

This story is **important** because it shows the contest between the forces of evil, seen in the gods of Egypt and Pharaoh, and the forces of righteousness, represented by Moses and Aaron. God acts through His representatives to accomplish what He wills in His time, for His children. Even the ungodly, like Pharaoh, can be used by God to fulfill His purposes and cause His name to be proclaimed, the Apostle Paul reminds us (Rom 6:17).

The main **truth** of this story is that God will deliver from bondage those who trust in His promises and wait patiently for Him to act on their behalf. He delivers His people, not only for their sakes, but so that others will see and acknowledge His love and power.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions.

1. What question did God want Pharaoh to answer as a result of the plagues?
A. [Pause.] If you said, “Who is the true God?” you are correct.
2. What was the heart response of Pharaoh after each plague?
A. [Pause.] If you said, “he stubbornly turned against God and the people of Israel,” you are correct.
3. What was God’s final purpose in sending the plagues?
A. [Pause.] If you said, “God said, ‘When I am done, all the nations on earth will know I am the Lord!’” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly. Tell this story to someone who has not heard it before. Share it in the context of a sporting event or a political debate currently happening in your country. Introduce Moses and what God did through him, emphasizing that he was simply obeying God who enabled him to accomplish his task.