EXODUS

Chapter 7

**Then the Lord said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. 2 You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. 3 But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, 4 he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. 5 And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.” 6 Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them. 7 Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.**

**7:1**  *like God to Pharaoh*. Moses would reveal the divine will to Aaron and act as executor of God’s will to Pharaoh. (TLSB)

*Aaron shall be your prophet*. To announce to Pharaoh the revelations of Moses. Moses is also promised divine authority and power over Pharaoh, who would eventually bow before him. (TLSB)

**7:1–2** As God transmits his word through his prophets to his people, so Moses will transmit God’s message through Aaron to the pharaoh. The prophet’s task was to speak God’s word on God’s behalf. He was God’s “mouth” (4:15–16). (CSB)

**7:3** *harden.* See note on 4:21. (CSB)

*miraculous signs.* See notes on 3:12; 4:8. (CSB)

Exponentially amplified natural events showed that God was true to His Word. Signs provided assurance (Jsh 2:12–13), gave testimony (Is 19:19–20) and warning (Nu 17:10), and encouraged faith. (TLSB)

**7:4** *My* *hosts*. Israel was organized as an army, according to tribes (6:26; 12:51; Nu 1–2). (TLSB)

*mighty acts of judgment.* See note on 6:6. (CSB)

Lit, plural. Judgments of condemnation for Egypt (Law) and salvation for Israel (Gospel). Cf 6:6. (TLSB)

**7:5** *Egyptians shall know that I am* *the Lord*. Here, the judgment is condemnation (however, cf 6:6). Later, the Lord will also plan to save Egyptians. (TLSB)

**7:6** God’s Word affirmed Moses and Aaron in their calling. The Israelites will not express doubt again until 14:15. (TLSB)

**7:7** *Moses was eighty years old.* See notes on 2:11, 15. (CSB)

At birth and ages 40, 80, and 120, Moses experienced significant events in his life (Heb 11:24–29). At 80, Moses received the Lord’s divine pledge to uphold all he was called to do. (TLSB)

*Aaron’s Staff Becomes a Snake*

**8 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 9 “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ then say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,’ and it will become a snake.” 10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. 11 Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: 12 Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. 13 Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.**

**7:9–10** *snake.* The Hebrew for this word is different from that used in 4:3 (see Ps 74:13, “monster”). A related word (also translated “monster”) is used in Eze 29:3 as a designation for Egypt and her king. (CSB)

Probably a cobra, the snake typically used by Egyptian charmers. (TLSB)

**7:9** *Prove yourselves by working a miracle*. The divine mission will be attested by a sign. God’s messengers confirmed their calling in the presence of the king (vv 10–13). (TLSB)

**7:11** *wise men and … magicians.* See note on Ge 41:8. According to tradition, two of the magicians who opposed Moses were named Jannes and Jambres (see 2Ti 3:8; the first is also mentioned in the pre-Christian Dead Sea Scrolls). (CSB)

They belonged to the priestly caste educated in human wisdom and sorcery. (TLSB)

*did the same things by their secret arts.* Either through sleight of hand or by means of demonic power. (CSB)

Incantations and spells were used by the Egyptians. Sleight of hand could also have tricked people into believing a miracle took place. (TLSB)

**7:12** *they became serpents*. The magicians practiced the art of turning snakes into sticks by squeezing the nape of a snake’s neck, compelling it to become rigid and appear dead. Here, they also turned their sticks into snakes, raising the suspicion that the sticks had been only rigid snakes. These acts could also have been the lying wonders of Satan (cf 2Th 2:9). (TLSB)

*Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs.* Demonstrating God’s mastery over the pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. (CSB)

Demonstrated the supremacy of Yahweh over the gods of Egypt. Tertullian: “The verity of Moses swallowed up their lying deceit” (*ANF* 3:234). (TLSB)

**7:13** *heart became hard.* See note on 4:21. (CSB)

**7:1–13** According to God’s divine plan of salvation, Moses and Aaron are His “god” and “prophet” who speak His Word before Pharaoh in order to rescue the Israelites from 430 years of bondage. God’s plan continues through His greater prophet, Jesus, who fulfilled all of God’s promises and became the living Word in order to rescue us from an eternity of bondage to sin. • Lord God, heavenly Father, through Your Holy Spirit, You call, gather, and enlighten Your children. Through the same Spirit, give us a right understanding of Your love toward us, even when our cross and sufferings are unbearable. Comfort and strengthen us, we pray, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Plague of Blood*

**14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the water. Wait on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that was changed into a snake. 16 Then say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert. But until now you have not listened. 17 This is what the Lord says: By this you will know that I am the Lord: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. 18 The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.’ ” 19 The Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs’—and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars.” 20 Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. 21 The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. 22 But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh’s heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said. 23 Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart. 24 And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river.**

**7:14–12:32** Egyptians worshiped creatures as deities, which were judged by the various plagues. Moses and Aaron were empowered by God to force the release of Israel by a series of miracles as penalties. While these plagues were not altogether unknown to the Egyptians, the fact that they came upon the land with overwhelming force and in close succession proved to Pharaoh that the Lord is the Lord of heaven and earth and He rules over the powers of creation, sin, and death with unrestricted freedom and omnipotence. (TLSB)

**7:14–10:29** The first nine plagues can be divided into three groups of three plagues each—7:14–8:19; 8:20–9:12; 9:13–10:29—with the first plague in each group (the first, the fourth and the seventh) introduced by a warning delivered to the pharaoh in the morning as he went out to the Nile (see v. 15; 8:20; 9:13). (CSB)

**7:15** Pharaoh went to the Nile to walk, bathe, check the water level, and present daily worship (cf 2:5). (TLSB)

**7:17** *my hand*. Moses and Aaron are God’s servants. (TLSB)

*my.* Moses’. *the water of the Nile … will be changed into blood.* See Ps 78:44; 105:29. The first nine plagues may have been a series of miraculous intensifications of natural events taking place in less than a year, and coming at God’s bidding and timing. If so, the first plague resulted from the flooding of the Nile in late summer and early fall as large quantities of red sediment were washed down from Ethiopia, causing the water to become as red as blood (see the similar incident in 2Ki 3:22). (CSB)

The same sense as in Jl 2:31, where the moon is to be turned into blood; thus it was not a chemical change into real blood, but a change in appearance, possibly because of red algae. *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage* (late third millennium BC) refers to the Nile as being turned to blood. (TLSB)

**7:18** A natural chemical phenomenon was immediately intensified and pre cipitated by the hand of God and affected all the tributaries of the Nile. Dead fish made the river stink. (TLSB)

**7:19** *your staff.* Aaron was acting on Moses’ behalf (see v. 17). (CSB)

*in the wooden buckets and stone jars.* Lit. “in/on the wooden things and in/on the stone things.” Some think that, since the Egyptians believed that their gods inhabited idols and images made of wood, clay and stone (see Dt 29:16–17), the plague may have been intended as a rebuke to their religion (see 12:12). (CSB)

Used to filter, transport, and store water from the Nile for daily use. The appearance of “blood” here would prove that this was no ordinary natural event. (TLSB)

**7:20** The Egyptians may have seen the river’s blood-red hue as portraying death and concluded that Israel’s God had slain Hapi, the Nile god believed to be the giver of life and sustenance. (TLSB)

*Nile.* Egypt’s dependence on the life-sustaining waters of the Nile led to its deification as the god Hopi, for whom hymns of adoration were composed. See note on v. 19. (CSB)

**7:21** *all the land of Egypt*. Bounded by Libya, the Great Sea, the Red Sea, and Cush. (TLSB)

**7:22** The magicians would have plied their arts on water that was unaffected, which is described in v 24. (TLSB)

**7:23** *did not take even this to heart*. Indicated a hardening against the basic needs of his people. (TLSB)

**7:24** *dug along the Nile to get drinking water.* Filtered through sandy soil near the river bank, the polluted water would become safe for drinking. (CSB)

Fine sediment along the river purified the water of its chemical instability, making it drinkable. (TLSB)

*The Plague of Frogs*

**25 Seven days passed after the Lord struck the Nile.**

**7:25** *Seven days passed.* The plagues did not follow each other in rapid succession. (CSB)

**7:25** *Seven full days passed*. Plagues did not come daily, though they did occur speedily. (TLSB)

**7:14–25** The Lord strikes at the very heart of Pharaoh’s idolatry by striking the Nile and the resources provided by the river, which are associated with Egyptian gods. He begins to deliver His people from Egypt through water, by which He will later destroy Pharaoh’s army and set Israel apart. Today, praise God, who has likewise delivered you through a water miracle: Holy Baptism. • Dear Father in heaven, guard us from the craftiness of the devil, who would seek to undo us and draw us away from Christ. In a world of idols and self-made “gods,” remind us that Satan has been judged and his weapon of deceit will soon be fully extinguished, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)