

# EXODUS

## Chapter 7

### *Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh*

**And the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. 2 You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. 3 But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, 4 Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. 5 The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.” 6 Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. 7 Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh. 8 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 9 “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Prove yourselves by working a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.’” 10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. 12 For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. 13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.**

**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** *miraculous signs.* 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)

*multiply my signs and wonders.* 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.* 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)

**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 ... sorcerers.* 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)

**7:1–13** 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 First Plague: Water Turned to Blood*

**14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. 16 And you shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness.” But so far, you have not obeyed. 17 Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall**

**know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. 18 The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.”” 19 And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, “Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.”” 20 Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. 21 And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. 22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. 23 Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. 24 And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile. 27 Seven full days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile.**

**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. (CSB)

*the water of the Nile ... shall turn 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 precipitated 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)

*vessels of wood and in vessels of stone*. 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 Hapi, 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)

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

The 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)