

I am the Lord

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Have you ever walked into a situation thinking you were doing God's will, only to run into a brick wall? What are we supposed to do? Did we mishear God? Did God fail to come through? Moses obeys God and runs smack into Pharaoh. What can we learn from Pharaoh's Reaction, Israel's Response, and YHWH's Reveal.

Pharaoh's Reaction

Moses barges into the palace like a bull in a china shop, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness (1). He's obeying with gusto! Pharaoh rejects him out of hand, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?" I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go" (5:2). What? I thought he was supposed to let your people go? Instead, Pharaoh makes things worse: he doubles Israel's workload. Why God? I thought I was doing what you told me to do? *Actually*, Moses, you're not. In Exodus 3, Moses is told to *go with the elders of Israel*; he doesn't. He is told to tell Pharaoh the *Lord, the God of the Hebrews has met with us*; he doesn't. He is instructed to say, *Please let us go*; instead, he demands. Moses is obeying, *but he's off the mark*. Why? He didn't pay close attention to God's words. This happens today when people read the Bible out of context. People who read *that ministry to orphans and widows is pure and undefiled religion*, decide foster, adopt, move to Africa, but become so invested in their mission they judge others who don't join them. How's that out of context? The verse immediately prior says *those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless* (Jas 1:26). Obeeyed one verse but not another. Listen carefully to God. Honor him with your words and your actions. Moses and Aaron poke the bear, and the bear swipes back.

Pharaoh snaps, Get back to your burdens! Then calls in the Egyptian taskmasters and the Hebrew foremen. He tells them to double Israel's work without reducing their quota. Now they must find the straw that holds bricks together *and* produce the same amount! Why would he overtax his workforce? *Because he senses the threat*. YHWH has challenged his power. He issues fake news: *They're idle, they're idle; pay no attention to their lying words*. It's a *political move* as much as it is dictatorial. Pharaoh knows if he can get the Hebrews to

fight among themselves, they'll be distracted from YHWH's challenge to his power. They'll be so busy infighting they won't work together for YHWH's mission. And that tactic is alive and well today. Behind the important issues of race, gender, and sexuality is a greater opponent, agitating Christians, seeking to confuse and divide. If I can just get the church to judge and fight one another, I don't have to worry about people worshipping God or pressing into his mission. Over the past year churches have fought over whether to wear masks, to gather in person, the right response to seismic events like the presidential election and murder of George Floyd. There's been more passion around these events *than love for one another*. But Jesus said, the world will know them by their love? Now there's a place to discuss these things, even disagree, but remember James 1. Keep a tight rein on your tongue or your religion is worthless.

Israel's Response

Pharaoh's political guile creates a domino effect. The Hebrew foremen judge Moses; Moses judges God. The foremen go to Moses and Aaron, *The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us*" (21). The Lord judge you, Moses, you put a gun in their hand! Now, it's just not true. Moses *is* obeying God? Perfectly, no. What's happening? Israel is falling for Pharaoh's tactics but this time excoriating their leaders, which leads Moses to say, "*Why did you ever send me?*" A recent survey revealed that, in 2020, 29 percent of Protestant pastors gave "real, serious consideration to quitting." How do you support your leaders? Do you offer as much encouragement as you harbor criticism? Do your leaders only hear from you when you have a problem? What was the charge against Moses? *You put a gun in their hand?* Now we often **say things we don't mean** when we're suffering. It doesn't make them good, right, or wise, but we do. Why? Because the burden is so great, the pain so intense. Israel is enduring, like many minorities, systematic oppression, injustice, and exploitation. It's cruel and evil. The Hebrew foremen whipped when Israel fails to meet the quota. This chapter is here to reveal the bitterness of injustice, yet, but also the spiritual agenda behind it. The conflict is greater than it often appears, **things get worse before they get better.** Have you ever noticed when you step out in faith to obey God, things get worse before they get better? An agnostic put their faith in Jesus and he was immediately

grilled by his friends about his LGBTQ views. When people really start to hunger for God, or pray, conflict breaks out, marriage hits the rocks. Why? The Pharaoh of this world does not want you free, and he certainly doesn't a united people off worshipping God. There's a greater conflict taking place. You see, *God's mission isn't only to get Israel out of Egypt; it's to get Egypt out of Israel.* A critical spirit, bitter infighting, lack of love? Repent. Turn back to Jesus. Now, leaders aren't flawless. Moses joins the callout culture, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people... you have not delivered your people at all" (22-23). He questions God's *goodness, calling, and word.* Lord knows I've questioned my calling. Leaders are not immune from these deceits, which is why it's all the more important for the *whole church* to live as though the *conflict is greater than it appears. To fight together not one another.* How? *By selecting weapons fit for the warfare.* You don't take a slingshot into the Coliseum. We need weapons that work—the word of God and prayer. Praying like there is a greater conflict, asking God to unify his people, sharing the word with one another and the world to bring glory to his name.

YHWH Reveal

How does the LORD respond to Moses? "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land" (6:1). Moses brazenly questions God *and* YHWH says, Just you wait, Moses. Remember who's in charge. *The story is bigger than you and its bigger than Israel.* Pharaoh is going to not only let my people go; he'll escort them out! Sure enough in chp 12 Egypt pleads with them to leave. See, Moses, I am doing something **you still don't comprehend. I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them** (Ex 6:2-3). What doesn't he comprehend? *I am the Lord.* God rehearses *what he has done* and then describes *what he will do* with seven *I will* statements. They fall into three categories. **Redemption:** I bring, I deliver, I redeem. **Covenant:** I will take you to be my people; I will be your God. **Inheritance:** I will bring you into the land and I will give it to you as an inheritance. A litany of undeserved, unexpected graces. The covenant love of God on display, which we see up close in the face of Jesus, who when scorned forgives, when mocked is silent, when crucified says, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.* Have you sinned against

God this week? Have you fought with others online, judged your leaders, been tempted to give up? Look at this God. Stare him in the face, beaming with the glory of forgiveness and depth of perfect love. It reminds me of a line in a Shins song, “I told you about all those fears and away they did run / you sure must be strong / like an ocean being warmed by the sun.” Are you fearful about justice not being done? Bring your fears to God and watch them run. Have you sinned against your sister? Bring your sins and watch them melt. Is your heart cold to the Lord? Bring your heart and be warmed by the sun! **What doesn't Moses comprehend? I AM**. It frames these seven redemptive statements: I am the Lord. (2, 8). That's what this is all about. God does it all that you shall know that I am the Lord. His providence, his grace, his patience, his victory, his love. So if you run into a brick wall remember: *It's there for a reason*. God is accomplishing 10,000 things including the wall, his plan so complex that, if he told us we would melt. The story is much bigger than the part you play. The exodus is not primarily about Pharoah, Moses, or Israel. It is about *I AM* revealing himself in history: *you shall know that I am the Lord*. Your fathers knew me as God Almighty, but now you will know me as *Yahweh*, the covenant-making, people-redeeming, Egypt-toppling, inheritance-giving God. And that's just the start.