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# “Exodus”

## Fall Series 1

### Lesson 5

## “Exodus 7:8-11:10”

**Objective:** To examine the account of the exodus from Egypt and to learn as much as we can about the nature of God, His mercy and what He desires for His creation. We will seek to do this by examining the historical background of the Exodus account, the interpretive history of Exodus amongst both Jewish and Christian scholars, where helpful. We will seek to understand the message of Exodus for us as Christians living in the 21st century American context.

**Materials:** The Bible, Ancient translations, Commentaries, both ancient and modern, Books, journal articles, dictionaries, the internet, and other resources as may be appropriate.

### Procedures

1. To explore the message God of hope that the original audience will have understood from this text.
2. To understand how this text has inspired, challenged, and educated people down through the centuries guiding them not only in their personal lives, but the destinies of governments and nations.
3. We will seek to find out how these beliefs have played a role in the history of Christianity and how they continue to impact our existence and service to Jesus Christ today.
4. We will provide a sheet to take home as a reminder of what has been examined and to provide additional opportunities for consideration of these truths and their application in our daily living out of our eternal destiny beginning now. This sheet can be used as a discussion guide for small group discussion. We have several groups using this effectively.

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Moses and Aaron are prepared by *Yahweh* for what will happen when they appear once again before Pharaoh. The first encounter had gone very badly for Moses and the people of Israel. The result of that encounter had made Moses look inept, had increased the pressure on the people, and alienated Moses and Aaron in some senses from the people of Israel. In truth, it had set the stage for this next encounter and those that would follow so that the focal point of attention would be upon *Yahweh* and His power and not upon the competence of Moses and Aaron, or their great skill as negotiators or as magicians. The competition that had been set in the previous section was now to begin in earnest.

This first of these new encounters would entail Moses being asked by Pharaoh to “perform a wonder” (תָּנִינוּ לָכֶם מוֹפֵת). Pharaoh was asking for a demonstration of the power of *Yahweh* (7:9). It appears that such contests as the one introduced here were not seen as exceptional. Perhaps it had been the case that such contests had happened before. In any case, Pharaoh does not seem to be addled by the fact that Moses throws down his staff and it becomes a “serpent,” a “crocodile,” or a “dragon” (תַּנִּין - *tannin* - absolute singular form). The word used here for

“serpent” is not the usual word for serpent, like the word that was used at Exodus 4:3 (*nahash* - נָחָשׁ). The word that is used here is the same word as is used at Genesis 1:21 in reference to the great sea creatures, or monsters (*tanninim* - תַּנִּינִים - plural form).

Some would suggest that this term has special relevance to Pharaoh, who is addressed in Ezekiel 29:3 as follows:<sup>1</sup> **Speak, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon** (הַתַּנִּינִים הַגָּדוֹל - the same word *Tannim* is used here) **sprawling in the midst of its channels, saying, “My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.”**<sup>2</sup> Cassuto gives an alternate translation at Exodus 7:9 and instead of translating it as “serpent,” or “snake” translates the word as “crocodile.” He said that this sign is then more in keeping with the environment of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> One might also wonder if there is not at least a hint here that *Yahweh* is proclaimed as the God of creation: The one who made everything, and the creator of all the creatures of the earth. The Old Greek translation appears to add to the

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<sup>1</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, in the JPS Torah Commentary series (Philadelphia PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> NRSV.

<sup>3</sup> U. Cassuto, trans. by Israel Abrahams, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1987), p. 94.

confusion and perhaps the aura of mystery here as it translates our Hebrew word using the Greek word for “dragon” (δράκων). There is no way to be certain which of these is the correct translation here.

At 7:10 we have Moses and Aaron actually going to Pharaoh and they do just as *Yahweh* had commanded them. At 7:11 Pharaoh then summons the “magicians” of Egypt. In the Jewish traditions the names of these two Magicians are Jannes and Jambres and they are said to be, in some of those traditions, the sons of Balaam. There is an extensive and fantastical tradition surrounding these figures filled with a great many wild and imaginative details.<sup>4</sup> The names of these magicians are also mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:8.<sup>5</sup> They are there used as a sobriquet for corrupt minded people of counterfeit faith that oppose the truth there. This citation in 2 Timothy indicates their awareness of a knowledge of the truth and a refusal to accept it for reasons that indicate corruption and faithlessness. The names of these people came to be considered the epitome of evil opposition to that

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<sup>4</sup> Albert Pietersma, ed. and trans., *The Apocryphon of Jannes & Jambres the Magicians*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, Vol. 119 (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> **As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth.** NRSV.

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which was true, and that which was considered to be oriented toward faith.

Note in 7:11 that Pharaoh summons these magicians who are said to have done the “same” (יָדָה) thing as Moses did with his staff by their “secrets arts.” The tendency here is for us in the West, and as children of the enlightenment, to discount what happens here as if it is trickery and false power and the sticks really were not transformed. To come to such a conclusion is to disbelieve that there is here some secret power that we lack awareness of, and instead rationalize this account. Certainly people of faith have done this for many years, but this also damages the intended meaning of this story. Our narrator is not saying that Pharaoh and his magicians had no power. That is the wrong message. Nor is he saying that they were merely tricksters who are using some type of sleight of hand, or some trick as we think of when we contemplate magic today. The text indicates that there was as much a transformation of the staff of the magicians as there was a transformation of the staff of Moses. One is as real as the other is real. Whatever happened to one happened to the other.



The contest is not so much seen in the transformation of the staffs as it is to be perceived in what happens once the staffs are transformed, whether it be into serpents as we have traditionally told this story, or into crocodiles, or dragons. The animal of Moses devours the animals of the magicians and thus shows a greater power behind Moses than is the power behind the magicians of Egypt. This is the beginning of God demonstrating His superiority over the gods of Egypt and the powers that they possessed. Some today would say, but there is nothing at all behind these gods.

This was not the view of the ancients, and certainly that perspective does not appear to align with the views of Paul who at 1 Corinthians 10:20 wrote: **“No, but this kind of sacrifice is sacrificed to demons and not to God. I don’t want you to be sharing in demons.”**<sup>6</sup> Paul is here speaking of the ancient gods which were in Jewish thought demons pretending to be gods.

There is something powerful and dangerous behind the gods of the ancient world it is not nothing, and it not merely the figment of a lucid imagination. There is real power; power that is opposed

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<sup>6</sup> CEB.

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to what is right, decent, and Godly. Hence why they are called “magicians,” and what they do is called “magic.”

The competition between the two powers is to be seen in 7:12, with the staff of “Aaron” swallowing that of the two magicians. Note the shift in names again so that the focal point is not on Moses. The focal point is here, as it is throughout, is on what *Yahweh* is doing. The result of the competition is found in 7:13 with Pharaoh’s heart still being hardened and with him not listening just as *Yahweh* had indicated would happen before the contest began. Thus ends this first phase of the competition, with *Yahweh* being the victor and yet still no real progress to be seen in freeing the Israelites.

At 7:14, note the emphasis on the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart. This is the impasse, the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart is the real issue that stands at the core of the competition not only with Pharaoh, but with all human beings. It is the hardness of our hearts that acts as a barrier to us submitting to the will of God. If we can open our hearts and admit God then our lives can be placed on a totally different trajectory. As it is, Pharaoh has, through the hardness of his heart, set himself on a collision course

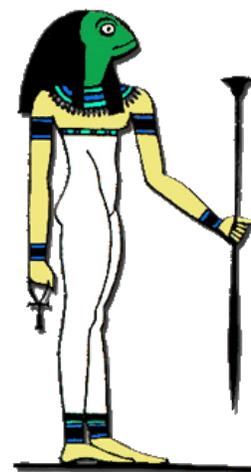
with *Yahweh*. At 7:15, the next round of the competition is set in motion; the very next morning. At 7:16 Moses is told what he is to say in this next phase of this contest and it is the same message, which is to let the Hebrew people go to worship in the wilderness. At 7:17, there is no indication that an answer is the catalyst for the next phase of the competition and the staff is immediately used to strike the water of the Nile and it will be turned to blood, not red water, not muddy water, but into “blood” (דָּם).

The fish in the river will die (7:18) and the water will have a “bad smell,” it will “stink” (רָחַץ), and will become water undrinkable to the Egyptians. Not only will the Nile be undrinkable, but at 7:19 the staff is to be stretched out over the “waters of Egypt” and its rivers, canals, its ponds and all its pools of water become blood, even in the vessels of wood and stone. This is more than sediment and mud being in the water of the Nile, this is pervasive and widespread. At 7:20 Moses and Aaron do just as *Yahweh* commanded; all in the sight of the officials of Egypt and everything happened just as *Yahweh* said it would. At 7:22 we are told once again that the magicians of Egypt did the same thing using their “secret arts.” Once again, Pharaoh hardens

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his heart and turns and goes back into his house without taking any of this to heart. At 7:24, we are told that all of the Egyptians had to dig along the Nile in order to get water to drink. They had to do this for seven days (7:25). The magicians were also able to turn water into blood. It looks to me like it would have been far more helpful for the magicians to turn the water back into fresh water rather than into more blood. However, that is not what happened.

Then at 8:1 Moses once again receives instructions from *Yahweh* to return once more to Pharaoh and to demand that the people be let go to worship Him. This time refusal is said to bear the consequence that the whole country will be plagued with frogs. There will be frogs everywhere. It is possible that this plague is to be seen as a judgment on Egyptian polytheism. The frog-headed goddess named Heqt was the consort of the god Khnum, who was credited in their stories as having fashioned man out of clay. Heqt was associated with fertility and was thought to assist women at the time of childbirth. It may be the case that this plague was a retribution for the



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decree ordering the midwives to kill the newborn male children of the Hebrews at birth.<sup>7</sup> At 8:7 we are told once again that the magicians of Egypt were able to do the same and brought frogs upon the land. Again I think it is significant even though they could bring the frogs on the land they could not cause them to go away. This seems strange to me that you can do something, but not undo it.

At 8:8 Pharaoh appears to have had enough frogs and calls for Moses and Aaron. He asks them to pray to *Yahweh* to take away the frogs and he says here that he will let the people go and sacrifice to *Yahweh*. Moses then asks Pharaoh to set the time for the prayer so that it will be absolutely certain that the prayer offered by Moses to *Yahweh* and the ending of the plague of frogs are clearly connected. I think I would have said something like in 10 minutes, or certainly a very short time, but he says tomorrow. It is interesting to me that the frogs did not just leave the houses when Moses prayed, they died and created an awful stench (8:14). Once again when the plague is past Pharaoh “hardened his heart” once again, and he would no longer listen to Moses and Aaron.

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<sup>7</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, in the JPS Torah Commentary series, p. 40.

At 8:16 then *Yahweh* once again speaks to Moses. Have you noticed the emphasis on the name of God throughout this encounter. It is repeated over and over again. This fact is obscured by our English Bibles following the Rabbinic tradition of substituting the word “Lord” (*Adonai* - אֲדֹנָי) for the sacred name of God (*Yahweh*). This, in my mind obscures an important part of the story and clouds our understanding of the fact that God is here making a “name” for Himself through His mighty acts of power. This fogging of the issue then will impact how we understand many New Testament passages that use the Greek term *Kurios* (κύριος) in places where we should understand the text to be referencing the sacred name and actions of *Yahweh*. God is defined by His actions and His actions are used to create an idea of His nature and His power, all of which are attached to this God of action through His verbal name, *Yahweh*.

Back to 8:16, and Moses and Aaron; Moses is told that Aaron is to take the staff and strike the dust of the earth. He does so, and gnats (the word here נִבְּרִים can mean either “gnats,” or “lice” in Aramaic the word is “vermin”) came on humans and animals alike, tormenting them throughout the whole land of Egypt (8:17).

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Some have even identified the insects here as mosquitoes though the exact meaning of this word is unknown. From the context it appears to be some form of small flying insect that produces a sense of torment. At 8:18 we are told that the magicians of Egypt tried to do the same, but here, for the first time, we are told that they “could not.” Then (8:19) they proclaim that the power behind this plague is “the finger of God” (אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים הוּא). Once again we find that Pharaoh’s heart is hardened and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron and release the people.

This episode has hidden depth as Sacks will say. He says here we find in the Torah the usage of humor by God. Here the pretensions of human beings are mocked. Human beings think they can emulate God. This makes God laugh.<sup>8</sup> Sacks says that satire is essential in understanding at least some of the plagues. The Egyptians worshipped a plurality of gods, most of whom represented the forces of nature. By their “secret arts” the magicians believed that they could control these forces. “Magic is equivalent in an era of myth to technology in an age of science. A

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<sup>8</sup> **The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> “Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.” 2:4 He who sits in the heavens **laughs**; the LORD has them in **derision**.** NRSV.

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civilization that believes it can manipulate the gods, believes likewise that it can exercise coercion over human beings.”<sup>9</sup>

The response of the Egyptians, to the first two plagues, was to see them as standing within their own frame of reference. They saw the plagues as forms of “magic” not as miracles. To the magicians of Egypt, Moses and Aaron are like they are, those who practice the “secret arts.” There is a sense of irony to be seen here too. The magicians are so eager to replicate the plagues of *Yahweh* that they make things worse rather than better by adding to the woes of the Egyptians: more blood and more frogs. The third plague was intended to produce an affect that the magicians could not replicate. They try, they fail, and then they immediately conclude that this is the “finger of God.” This is the first time that an interesting concept appears in the Torah that is surprisingly still persistent today in our thinking today, called “the god of the gaps.” This thinking holds to the idea that a miracle is something for which we cannot yet find a scientific explanation. “Science is

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<sup>9</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation - Exodus: the Book of Redemption* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books and The Orthodox Union, 2010), pp. 53-54.

natural; religion is supernatural. An “act of God” is something we cannot account for rationally.”<sup>10</sup>

The idea behind this kind of thinking is that anything that “magicians (technocrats)” cannot reproduce through their knowledge and skill must be the result of divine intervention. Such a perspective ultimately leads to the conclusion that science and religion are in opposition. This then leads us to perceive that the more we can explain scientifically, or control technologically, the less we see a need for faith. In such a scenario, as the scope of science expands, the place that we see God and that we need Him progressively diminishes and then can vanish altogether. The Torah makes the point that this is a pagan point of view and not a Biblical one. In admitting that the scope of the wonder performed through Moses and Aaron was indeed the “finger of God,” the Egyptians are admitting that Moses and Aaron are genuine prophets. The primary way in which we, as God’s people, experience Him is through His word, His revelation to us. Science does not replace God it reveals ever more intricacies of His nature and His wondrous creativity and power.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation - Exodus: the Book of Redemption*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation - Exodus: the Book of Redemption*, pp. 55-56.

The best argument against the worldview of the Egyptians was to be found in divine humor. They thought they could control the sun and the Nile and yet they could not even produce a tiny insect.<sup>12</sup> Rabbi Eleazar said, “On the basis of that statement (Exodus 8:19) we learn that a demon cannot make a creature smaller than a barley seed.”<sup>13</sup> The small insects produced by *Yahweh* were His joke at the expense of the magicians who believed that because they controlled the forces of nature that they were masters of human destiny. “They were wrong.” Technological prowess has led people time and time again to believe that they were like the gods, that they could storm heaven and displace God. In the wake of such beliefs the ruins of numerous civilizations are to be found as only relics of the past. “Humility is the only antidote to hubris.” However great we think we are we are indeed small by comparison to God. This is what the plague of gnats showed the Egyptians.<sup>14</sup>

At 8:20 Moses is once again given instructions to go out early in the morning to meet Pharaoh as he goes out to the water

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<sup>12</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation - Exodus: the Book of Redemption*, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> *Sanhedrin* 67B; Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud*, Vol 16, Tractate *Sanhedrin* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2005), p. 355.

<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation - Exodus: the Book of Redemption*, pp. 56-57.

to tell him to let the Hebrews go. This time there is the threat, from Moses, that if he will not comply (8:21) there will be flies that will be sent upon all the Egyptians. This time, however, this plague would not affect Goshen where the Hebrew people live (8:22). This separation is to be an additional sign of the power and authority of *Yahweh*. This all happens just as it was foretold and in 8:24 it says the land was “ruined” (תִּשָׁחַת) because of the flies. Once again Pharaoh seems to relent (8:25) with the condition that their sacrifices be offered within the “land.” Moses indicates that this is not acceptable as the sacrifices that the Hebrews offer “are offensive” to the Egyptians and they will “stone” us.<sup>15</sup> Pharaoh relents with the condition that they do not go very far into the wilderness. Moses agrees to pray for the flies to depart and warns Pharaoh not to deal falsely again with the people. As before again Pharaoh hardens his heart after the flies leave and he would not let the people go (8:32).

At 9:1 we go once again move into the familiar cycle with Moses receiving his instructions from *Yahweh* and then warning

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<sup>15</sup> A. E. Cowley, ed. and trans., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Ancient Texts and Translations series (Eugene Or: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), pp. 108-126. Stories from the 5th century B.C. of exactly this type of issue occurring as the Egyptians destroyed the Temple of *Yau* at the fortress on the island of Elephantine for offering a sheep as an offering. The Egyptians worshipped the Ram God Khnub.

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Pharaoh of a deadly pestilence striking the livestock this time (9:2-3). Once again *Yahweh* makes a distinction between the Egyptians and the Hebrews (9:6) and no livestock of the Hebrews are harmed. Pharaoh even investigates and finds that not a single animal of the Hebrews was dead. Pharaoh hardens his heart still and would not let the people go (9:7). At 9:8 we start the next plague cycle, this time with soot from the kiln, which causes festering boils on humans and animals in the whole land of Egypt (9:9). We are told at 9:11 that this time the magicians could not even stand before Moses because of the boils. With this plague (9:12) we have a change and *Yahweh* hardens the heart of Pharaoh (cf. previous discussion regarding the hardening of Pharaoh's heart).

At 9:13 begins the next plague cycle, this time an indication is made that the reason they have been allowed to "live" is in order to show *Yahweh's* power (9:16). Hail will fall (9:18) and the Egyptians are warned ahead of the event to bring their animals in from the fields to shelter. Those who "feared the word of *Yahweh* (9:20) brought their slaves and livestock to shelter. Moses stretched out his hand and the hail came with thunder and fire

(9:23-25). Everything that was not sheltered was struck down. Only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were was there an exemption from the hail. Pharaoh summons Moses (9:27) and admits that he has “sinned,” and pleads with Moses to pray and says he will release the people (9:28). The information in 9:31-32 indicates that this plague took place in early February.<sup>16</sup> As before, once the relief comes, Pharaoh once again recants and does not let the people go (9:34-35).

At 10:1 we have a continuing escalation of pressure and tension as not only does *Yahweh* harden the heart of Pharaoh, but He also hardens the heart of “his officials” (literally “slaves” or “servants” עֲבָדָיו). Life was very different in Ancient Egypt than it is today. These people worked in service to the king and were owned by him. Even in the first century A.D. it was sometimes the case that when a man became a City Manager they were sold into slavery to that City and were not paid a salary in the way we do today. In 10:2, *Yahweh* makes it clear that the reason he does this is in order to “act ruthlessly” with them, the Egyptians. He intends to make an example of them in order the Israelites would know

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<sup>16</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, in the JPS Torah Commentary series, p. 46.

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that He is *Yahweh*. At 10:3 Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and challenged him to “humble” himself before *Yahweh*. The threat is made that if he does not let the people go to worship Him *Yahweh* would bring “locusts” into his country.

At 10:7 Pharaoh’s officials pleaded for Pharaoh to let the people go to worship *Yahweh*. At 10:8 Pharaoh brings Aaron and Moses before him and begins to ask which ones shall go. Moses informs him that they all intend to go and Pharaoh refuses to let the little ones go (10:10). He offers to let the “men” go and drives Moses and Aaron from his presence (10:11). At 10:12 Moses receives his instructions to signal the coming of the locusts and the wind blew upon the land from the East all night and brought the locusts (10:13). They covered the land (10:15) and devoured every plant and tree. Once again Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron stating that he has sinned and he asks for forgiveness (10:16-17) and for the locusts to be removed. Moses goes out and prays, the wind changed to come from the West and it drove the locusts into the Red Sea (10:18-19), or “*Yam Suf*.” Once again *Yahweh* hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he would not let the people go.

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At 10:21 Moses is told to stretch out his hand toward heaven and when he did (10:22) darkness came on the land of Egypt for three days. This is a strange and miraculous darkness since all the Israelites had light where they lived (10:23). Once again Pharaoh summons Moses and this time tells him that all the people may go, but the flocks and herds must remain behind (10:24). He says even the children may go. Moses says that the flocks and herds must go (10:26) and once again Pharaoh's heart is hardened (10:27) and he was unwilling to let them go. He sends Moses away and threatens to kill him if he ever sees his face again (10:28).

At 11:1 Moses once again receives his instructions from *Yahweh* and at 11:2 He tells Moses to instruct the people to go and ask for gold and silver from the Egyptians. *Yahweh* gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians (11:3). Moses then informs Pharaoh of the last plague which will mean the death of all the firstborn of Egypt (11:4-5). He also says after this Pharaoh will let the people go and in "fierce anger" Moses leaves his presence (11:6-8). The stage is now set (11:9-10); Moses is informed that still Pharaoh will not listen as *Yahweh* had once

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again hardened the heart of Pharaoh in order to make a point. We leave this section perched on the cliff with a severely beaten Pharaoh and yet still he is holding out firmly in his resolve to resist *Yahweh* and not to release the people. The test of power and will continues. At this point Pharaoh has lost nine rounds and yet he still stands. The worst, for him, is yet to come and the ominous cloud can be seen rising on the horizon.

Pharaoh stands in opposition to the will of God and has apparently spent his last opportunity to repent. This section teaches many lessons. It teaches us of the might and power of *Yahweh*; it teaches us to not resist His will. It also teaches us that even those who are rich and powerful are nothing in comparison with *Yahweh* and the power He possesses. God defends the weak and the helpless against the tyrant of Egypt and all his power and might. The forces of darkness cannot stand against the power and might of *Yahweh*. This is a story that gives hope in the face of hopelessness and inspires people who are weak and humble to seek the face of God and not to despair.

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# Synopsis

In this section, the stage is set for a great battle between the gods of Egypt, commanded by Pharaoh, and the God of the Hebrews, *Yahweh*. In the first encounter that Moses and Aaron had with Pharaoh they came off looking pitiful, weak, and inept. Through a mighty sign and nine plagues the tables would be reversed and Pharaoh would be seen for what he truly is a pitiful human being with delusions of grandeur who is about to suffer a crushing defeat along with all of his minions and gods.

In encounter after encounter Pharaoh is defeated and several times comes to the point of admitting the superiority of *Yahweh* and of releasing the people. However, in the beginning he continually “hardens his heart,” and this continues to happen until the coming of the sixth plague when *Yahweh* begins to harden Pharaoh’s heart and it is clear that He will now make an example of His power and authority before all the earth. An example that would stand for all time.

There comes a point when the “slaves,” the officials of Pharaoh, plead with him to relent and to let the people go. These

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events would stand as a monument to the power and authority of *Yahweh*, but also of His desire to defend and protect the weak and to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The stage is set for the final plague which will break the will and grip of Pharaoh.

We are challenged by this material to soften our hearts to God and to recognize that God is God and we are not. We need to realize that we are not in control of our destiny and to believe that we are is an illusion. We are called to trust in God and in God alone.

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# Questions

1. What do you think it means to do combat with God?
2. What causes you to believe in God?
3. How do you balance controlling your own destiny with your faith in God?
4. When you think of the word “magician” what are some images that come to your mind?
5. How do you perceive “magic” and “science” to be the same, and how are they different?
6. How do you think the magicians of Egypt learned their craft?
7. Why do most people today not believe in “magic?”
8. Do you think the signs performed by Moses in Exodus are illusions, or real? Why?
9. Do you think the signs performed by the Egyptian magicians are illusions or real? Why?
10. What do you think it means to “harden your heart?”
11. Why do you think it matters what we do to our heart?
12. What do you think it means to have “freewill?”
13. What is the relationship between freewill and responsibility?
14. What are some of the things that you rely upon in your daily life that keep you from relying upon God?
15. What do you think it means for the name that God gives to Moses to be a verb instead of a noun?

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16. Where is a place that you see the “finger of God” in your own life?

17. What do you think about the statement made by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks that, “Magic is equivalent in an era of myth to technology in an age of science. A civilization that believes it can manipulate the gods, believes likewise that it can exercise coercion over human beings?”

18. What do you think of the statement: “Humility is the only antidote to hubris?”

19. How would you define sin?

# To Take Home

## **What is Important to know?**

It is important for us to know that God is the sovereign ruler of the universe and as much as we think we control our own destiny that is an illusion. It is important for us to know that there is actually very little that we can actually control in our world other than our own attitude. That is something that is controllable and that others cannot take away from us. It is important for us to trust in God and follow His directions for our lives. What are some things that you find really difficult to turn over to God?

## **Where is God in these words?**

God is in the words of this section redeeming His people from a tyrant who manipulates and even destroys the lives of others. This is a stance of immense arrogance and this arrogance blinds Pharaoh to the truth that he is not in control of his country, or even of his own destiny. God seeks to give Pharaoh multiple opportunities to turn away from his arrogance and at some point he has refused too many times to receive additional chances. Where are some places that God has helped you see things differently in your life?

## **What does any of this mean for how I live my life?**

The plagues of Egypt disrupted not only the life of Pharaoh, but also the lives of all of his people. In the end, the firstborn child of every family lost their life. We are not sure how many starved and were badly injured in the other plagues. Going against the will of God always has a consequence. I wonder, if the people had been given the opportunity to replace Pharaoh as leader what they would have done. What are some of the affects that the decisions made by our country's leaders have affected your life?

## **What is the word of God calling us to do?**

As you are reminded of the stories of the plagues against Egypt and the way Pharaoh responded to God I hope it makes you think about how you see God working in our world today. It is often the case that we can distance ourselves from these events and expect things to be different for us today. The fact is we face many of the same challenges today that were faced by the people of Egypt. We are challenged to recognize the place of God in our lives and our place with each other and with God. To get these things out of balance can put us in the position of being arrogant, or irresponsible, both of which have dire consequences. In what ways do these ancient stories challenge you to change the way that you live your life?