

WATER·FIRE·STONE

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MOSES

Session 4 – Exit Strategy, Part Two | Exodus Chapters 7–10

Egypt experienced one calamity after another. The people, the land, even the animals suffered because of Pharaoh. Every time he refused to let God’s people go, Pharaoh invited disaster on his own people.

The plagues were more than a random series of catastrophes to force Pharaoh to release the Hebrew slaves. With these judgments, God demonstrates His power over creation and exposes Egypt’s powerless gods. The plagues occurred over a period of about nine months.



ex·it strat·e·gy (*noun*)

A preplanned means of extricating someone from a situation that is likely to be difficult or unpleasant.

Icebreaker

What is the most disturbing natural disaster/end-of-the-world movie you can think of?

Goals for this Session:

- Discover how God used specific plagues to dismantle Egypt’s false security and beliefs.
- Consider the difference between seeking relief and seeking repentance.
- Pray honest prayers that relinquish idols, embrace mercy, and worship the Lord in truth.

1 Read Exodus 7:1–13 | These verses provide the background leading up to the plagues. God sends Moses back to confront Pharaoh again. The Lord tells Moses what to expect and what he must do. What happens? Describe the situation in your own words.

- a. The Lord told Moses, “I will make you seem like God to Pharaoh” (verse 1). When Pharaoh challenged Moses to work a miracle (verse 9) what was he trying to prove?

Good to Know

Ancient Egyptians believed that Pharaoh was a god on earth; a human incarnation of the great god Horus, who defeated the forces of chaos and restored order to the world.

- b. “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.” This does not mean that God caused Pharaoh to sin.* The Lord searches hearts and knows precisely what is there (1 Chronicles 28:9). Simply put, God saw the depth of Pharaoh’s stubborn resistance and said *so be it*. From verses 4–5, what was God’s stated purpose for the plagues?

2 As Egypt’s supreme ruler, it was Pharaoh’s responsibility to maintain *ma’at* (balance and harmony) throughout the land so his people could live the best possible life.

Briefly describe the disruptive effect of each plague. What consequences (physical, psychological, economically) were the Egyptians experiencing? Note Pharaoh’s response each time.

- a. Exodus 7:14–25 | Water to Blood

The Nile was worshipped as the source of all life; among its many gods, **Khnum** was supposed to protect the water.

Pharaoh’s response:

- b. Exodus 8:1–15 | Frogs

Heqet the frog goddess. Since frogs were sacred to Egyptians as a symbol of fertility and life, they could not be destroyed.

Pharaoh’s response:

* Two different Hebrew words are translated as *harden*. When the Lord *hardens* Pharaoh’s heart, it means “to bind, strengthen, make firm.” When Pharaoh *hardens* his heart, it indicates being “stubborn, heavy with pride, calloused.”

c. Exodus 8:16–19 | Gnats (Lice)

Set was a desert god who caused and controlled the wind, storms, and chaos.

Pharaoh's response:

d. Exodus 8:20–32 | Swarms of Flies

Uatchit was a fly goddess, the keeper of light and life all along the Nile delta.

Does Pharaoh appear to be weakening at all? In what way?

3 The first four plagues made life miserable but Pharaoh refused to budge. What made him so stubborn? Like every Egyptian king, Pharaoh built monuments to himself. The glyphs and statues declaring his glory have turned back to dust and rubble, but he is remembered for his famously stubborn heart! He ignored the warning signs but we can learn from him.

- a. ***I don't care.*** Pharaoh's lack of compassion, even for his own people, is a warning. He didn't care how his choices affected others. Should we? Explain why, in your own words.

Proverbs 11:17

Philippians 2:3–4

Colossians 3:12–13

- b. ***I won't change.*** All Pharaoh wanted was relief. What's the difference between seeking relief and seeking repentance? Use the verses below for help. Answer in your own words.

Psalms 81:11–12

Romans 2:4

Acts 3:19

Hard-hearted Pharaoh

Ancient Egyptians believed that the heart of a deceased person was weighed on a scale. If it was heavier than the "feather of truth" the soul was devoured.

When a pharaoh died, a scarab (a sacred amulet in the shape of a beetle) was placed on the heart. The scarab would encase the heart in a protective shell to keep the soul from confessing sin in the presence of Osiris, the judge of the afterlife. The amulet was inscribed with a spell:

Oh my heart which I had on earth, do not rise up against me as a witness...do not bring up against me anything I have done...

Egyptian Book of the Dead

- c. ***I won't listen.*** Pharaoh wanted Moses to entreat the Lord, but when the pressure was off he wasn't interested in anything Moses—or even his own magicians—had to say. Think about it. What is the difference between hearing and *listening*? Consider what the Bible says and answer in your own words.

Psalm 119:9–11

Proverbs 1:29–33

James 1:22–24

- d. What stubborn tendencies can you see in yourself? How has it affected your life and the lives of those around you? What will you do to cooperate with God and grow in this area?

Memory Verse

He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed,
and that without remedy.

Proverbs 29:1 NKJV

Which part of this verse resonates most with you today? How or in what way?

4 Up until now, the plagues have been a miserable nuisance. Because Pharaoh continues to resist, the plagues are going to increase in intensity. Briefly describe each plague and how it pushed Pharaoh’s people and land deeper into crisis.

a. Exodus 9:1–7 | Diseased Livestock

Apis a sacred bull and the cow goddess **Hathor** were symbols of strength and fertility and protection.

Pharaoh is given 24 hours warning but decides to wait it out. What does he do *after* the plague?

b. Exodus 9:8–12 | Boils

Healing gods worshipped for their powers to cure disease include **Sekmet**, **Isis**, and **Imhotep**.

Pharaoh’s response:

c. Exodus 9:13–35 | Hail

Nut, a protecting goddess of the sky and **Shu** ruled the wind and air.

With this plague, how does Pharaoh’s response differ? How does it remain the same?

d. Exodus 10:1–20 | Locusts

Geb was the god of earth and vegetation. **Osiris** the god of agriculture. **Anubis** guardian of the fields.

How does Pharaoh respond this time?

5 Read Exodus 10:21–29| Darkness may not seem ominous compared to the devastation that came before it, but this plague was the most terrifying one yet. Egypt was wrapped in a shroud of thick, black air. No sun. No moon or stars. No warmth. No escape.

a. Have you ever been in darkness so thick you couldn't see your own hand? Do your best to describe what it would be like if your world suddenly went dark with no warning. What would you be thinking, wondering?

Egyptian worship centered on the sun god **Amun-Ra** who controlled the cycle of sunrise and sunset. Every night he battled a serpent god of darkness to keep the world from spinning out of control.

b. This was a direct strike against Egypt's biggest deity and against Pharaoh himself. What were the people to think when the sun went out and Pharaoh could do nothing about it?

As such, he was master of all life, over all the gods. His son, **Horus**, was god of the sky and Pharaoh's inner guide (often depicted as a falcon perched on Pharaoh's neck and whispering into his ear).

c. Meantime, how are things in Goshen?

Since Pharaoh was idolized as the personal embodiment of **Amun-Ra**, it was inconceivable to Egyptian minds that he was unable to defeat the darkness.

d. Look at Pharaoh's response this time. He expresses no remorse nor does he ask for God to lift the darkness. Pharaoh doesn't tell Moses to go and worship the Lord because he's finally ready to surrender to God. What does he still believe about himself?

“

A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word *darkness* on the walls of his cell.

C.S. Lewis

6 **Severe Mercy.** We may dismiss Egypt's gods as myth and nonsense, but what competes for our worship? If the plagues teach us nothing else, let's be clear: They came from the hand of God. The Lord's mercy is over *all* His work (Psalm 145:9) even acts of righteous judgment.

a. No crisis strikes deeper to the soul than losing your faith. But when faith is misplaced to begin with, it needs to be lost! By now, Pharaoh has as much evidence as Moses to know that God is in control. Both experienced God's judgment and mercy, but they respond differently. What do their choices say about them?

b. What do our choices say about us? The stubborn truth is, there's a little pharaoh in us all. It surfaces when we try to bargain with, or ignore, God when He says **LET GO** of serving that . . . pursuit, self-image, attitude, relationship, habit, possession, fill in the _____.

God strengthened Pharaoh's rebellious will, and He will also strengthen our surrendered will. Identify whatever needs to be surrendered here.

Action Steps ►► As you think through this part of Moses' story, what is the most important takeaway point for you personally? How will you put what you've learned into action?

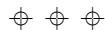
Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. —Ephesians 6:18 NIV

Adoration – Giving praise and honor to God for who He is and what He does.

Confession – Honestly deal with sin; acknowledge to God the ways (and whys) you fall short.

Thanksgiving – Verbalize your gratitude; express your praise and a thankful heart.

Supplication – Pray specifically for the needs of others, ourselves, our church, our nation.



Close your discussion time by praying together. Use the A·C·T·S pattern as a group focus and keep it simple. No need to be lengthy or profound, just authentic.
