

and he did the signs in the sight of the people. We hardly feel that Aaron himself actually did the signs (see 4:3-9). He probably announced that they would be done, and Moses did them. Note how prominent Aaron was as the spokesman here at the beginning of Moses' work of delivering Israel. Aaron's prominence later diminished.

32. *What was Israel's response to the news of deliverance?* (4:31)

They believed, and bowed their heads in worship. The people believed, as God had foretold they would (3:18), and not as Moses feared (4:1).

God twice gave encouragement to Moses as he began his great task: (1) Aaron met Moses, as God had predicted; (2) the people believed, as God had foretold.

On *visit*, see 3:16 and Gen. 50:25.

The Israelites believed when they first heard Moses. Their faith did not stand up in subsequent tests. But they started well, and God only gave them one test at a time. Each experience could lead into a harder test to follow, and to the opportunity for even greater victories of faith.

The Text of EXODUS
TRANSLATION

5 And afterward Mo-ses and Aar-on came, and said unto Pha-raoh, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of Is-ra-el, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. (2) And Pha-raoh said, Who is Je-ho-vah, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Is-ra-el go? I know not Je-ho-vah, and moreover I will not let Is-ra-el go. (3) And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto Je-ho-vah our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword. (4) And the king of E-gypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Mo-ses and Aar-on, loose the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. (5) And Pha-raoh said, Behold, the people of the land are now many, and ye make them rest from their burdens. (6) And the same day Pha-raoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, and their

officers, saying, (7) Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. (8) And the number of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish aught thereof: for they are idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. (9) Let heavier work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard lying words.

(10) And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pha-raoh, I will not give you straw. (11) Go yourselves, get you straw where ye can find it; for nought of your work shall be diminished. (12) So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of E-gypt to gather stubble for straw. (13) And the taskmasters were urgent, saying, Fulfil your works, *your* daily tasks, as when there was straw. (14) And the officers of the children of Is-ra-el, whom Pha-raoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task both yesterday and to-day, in making brick as heretofore?

(15) Then the officers of the children of Is-ra-el came and cried unto Pha-raoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? (16) There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people. (17) But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and sacrifice to Je-ho-vah. (18) Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the number of bricks. (19) And the officers of the children of Is-ra-el did see that they were in evil case, when it was said, Ye shall not diminish aught from your bricks, *your* daily tasks. (20) And they met Mo-ses and Aar-on, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pha-raoh: (21) and they said unto them, Je-ho-vah look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pha-raoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.

(22) And Mo-ses returned unto Je-ho-vah, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou dealt ill with this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? (23) For since I came to Pha-raoh to speak in thy name, he hath dealt ill with this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FIVE
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading of the chapter, propose a very brief topic or theme for it.
2. What people went in to talk to Pharaoh? (5:1; Compare 3:18)
3. What request did they deliver to Pharaoh? (5:1)
4. What particular wilderness (or desert) did the people propose to go into? (14:3, 12; 15:22)
5. Did they promise that the people would come back?
6. What did Pharaoh imply about the LORD by asking, "Who is the LORD?"
7. What did Pharaoh NOT know (perhaps deliberately)? What did he refuse to do?
8. What did the Hebrews request to do in the desert? (5:3)
9. What threat upon themselves did Moses use to strengthen his request to Pharaoh? (5:3)
10. What effect did Pharaoh assume that Moses' request would have on the people? (5:4)
11. Where did Pharaoh think that Moses and Aaron ought to be? (5:4)
12. Did Pharaoh regard Moses and Aaron with any honor?
13. What order did Pharaoh give the Egyptian taskmasters to deliver to the Hebrews? (5:6-8)
14. How was straw used in brick making? (Look this up in some Bible dictionary.)
15. Did Pharaoh really believe the people were idle, or was this just an excuse to burden them more? (5:8)
16. What "vain" (or lying) words does Pharaoh speak of in 5:9?
17. Where were the people to get straw for brickmaking? (5:11)
18. How far did the people go looking for straw? (5:12)
19. What did the people gather instead of straw? (5:12)
20. Were the taskmasters patient? (5:13)
21. Who were beaten? Why? (5:14)
22. Who came and cried unto Pharaoh? (5:15) Why did they not have Moses go do their pleading?
23. By what title did the Israelite officers refer to themselves before Pharaoh? (5:15)

24. Where did the blame rest for making fewer bricks? (5:16)
25. How did Pharaoh respond to the protest? (5:17-18)
26. What did the Israelite officers realize after they heard Pharaoh's response? (5:19)
27. Where were Moses and Aaron standing? (5:20)
28. How did the Israelite officers feel toward Moses and Aaron? (5:21)
29. Did the Israelite officers now believe that the LORD had sent Moses to deliver them? (5:21)
30. Explain "Ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh." (5:21)
31. Explain the figurative meaning of "put a sword in their hands to slay us." (5:21)
32. What did Moses do after the Israelites criticized him? (5:22)
33. How did Moses feel just then? (5:23)
34. What questions did Moses ask of God? (5:23)
35. How had Pharaoh's responses matched Moses' hopes and beliefs?
36. What did the LORD tell Moses that he would see? (6:1)
37. What sort of manner is "with a strong hand"? (6:1)
38. Would Pharaoh *let* them go or drive them out? (6:1; Compare 12:31-33).

EXODUS FIVE: RESISTANCE TO GOD'S MAN

- I. RESISTANCE FROM SINNERS (Pharaoh); 5:1-14.
 1. Willful resistance; 5:1-5.
 2. Cruel resistance; 5:6-14.
 3. Intractable resistance; 5:15-18.
- II. RESISTANCE FROM GOD'S PEOPLE; 5:15-21.
 1. Bypassing Moses; 5:15-19.
 2. Criticizing Moses; 5:20-21.

It is not surprising that God's man should get resistance from sinners and outsiders. But the resistance from God's people is unexpected and more painful. Nonetheless, every man of God experiences it.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FIVE

1. *Whose authority did Moses mention first when he confronted Pharaoh? (5:1)*

He mentioned first the authority of Jehovah (Yahweh), the God of Israel. By mentioning Jehovah's name first of all, Moses and Aaron set the tone for the whole conflict that was to come (chs. 5-11). It was fundamentally a conflict between Jehovah God and the gods of Egypt (which included Pharaoh himself). Moses went in to Pharaoh in God's name, speaking as a prophet. Compare Amos 1:3; Jer. 2:2.

It took a lot of courage to go in before great Pharaoh and demand that he let Israel go. Moses had had plain warning that Pharaoh would NOT let them go (3:19).

Moses requests that they be allowed to hold a feast unto Jehovah in the wilderness. God had told Moses to request permission to keep such a feast (or sacrifice; see 3:18; 10:9). Israel had to go into the wilderness for the sacrifice, because they would sacrifice animals sacred to the Egyptians (and almost EVERY animal was sacred to the Egyptians). This could infuriate the Egyptians like the slaughter of a cow would upset a Hindu mob. See 8:25-27.

2. *Who actually confronted Pharaoh? (5:1)*

Only Moses and Aaron. The elders had been instructed to go in with Moses (3:18). Where were they? The Jewish *Midrash*¹ says, very plausibly, that they stole furtively away, singly and in pairs.

This confrontation occurred somewhere in the Nile delta area, even though the capital of XVIII dynasty Egypt was in far-off Thebes to the south. XVIII dynasty kings frequently visited the important Nile delta area.² The fact that Pharaoh could communicate the "same day" (5:6) indicates that Pharaoh was near the Israelites, who lived by the delta.

¹Amos W. Miller, *Understanding the Midrash* (New York; Jonathan David, 1965), p. 159.

²G. L. Archer, *A Survey of O. T. Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), pp. 215-216.

3. Was Israel's request to Pharaoh unreasonable?

Not at all. Every nation presents sacrifices and worship to its gods. Work-journals belonging to the New Kingdom period (time of Moses) in Egypt have furnished, among other reasons for absenteeism, the offering of sacrifices by workmen to their gods.³

Pharaoh's refusal shows his complete lack of consideration for people, and his lack of fear of God. By refusing a small request, his real heart-nature was exposed and his conduct condemned. His heart did not need very much hardening to be totally solid!

Note that Moses refers to the God of *Israel*. This is one of the earliest references to Israel as a people, or nation. Previously, *Israel* is used only as a man's (Jacob's) name; hereafter, it is mostly the name of the people as a whole.

4. What did Pharaoh know about Jehovah? (5:2)

Perhaps nothing. He asks, "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken to his voice?"

Nonetheless, it seems very doubtful that Pharaoh was completely ignorant of Jehovah. The facts of how the Hebrews' God had saved Egypt in the days of Joseph were not secrets. Most likely Pharaoh was wilfully ignorant. Pharaoh regarded himself as a god.⁴ So he disregarded any God other than Egypt's gods.

Pharaoh was soon to regret saying, "Who is Jehovah?" He was to become VERY well acquainted with the power of Jehovah. Sennacherib of Assyria in later years asked a similar question about Jehovah, with equally disastrous results (II Kings 18:35).

Unbelieving critics argue that it had been only a short time (a few months) before when Jehovah revealed himself to the Hebrews by the name Jehovah.⁵ By this idea Pharaoh could

³A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* (1894), pp. 124f; quoted in R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the O. T.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 577.

⁴Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁵*Broadman Bible Commentary* (1969), p. 339.

not have known the name since the Hebrews had only recently been introduced to Him. We feel that this idea goes against the Bible's teachings. See notes on 6:2.

In spite of Pharaoh's harsh refusal of Moses' request, God later graciously told the Israelites, "Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian" (Deut. 23:7).

5. *How did Moses reinforce his request that Pharaoh let Israel go? (5:3)*

He declared that the God of the Hebrews had "met" them, and demanded that they sacrifice unto Him, lest he fall on them with a pestilence (disease) or the sword (war). They faced danger if they did not obey God. See notes on 3:18.

Even though Moses' request was strong, it was rather politely worded: "Let us go, we pray thee."

Again, we emphasize that Moses was under no illusions that Pharaoh would grant their request. It was only their first barrage in the assault on Pharaoh.

6. *How did Pharaoh regard the Hebrews? (5:3)*

He probably regarded them only as one of the assorted Semitic peoples who had at various times in history entered into and "squatted" in Egypt. The Hyksos had been such a people. Such peoples were a threat to the "native" population. The Egyptians contemptuously referred to them as sandcrossers. They are also called the Habiri (or Habiru, or Khapiru, or Apiru), a name applied to peoples in various places who existed outside the normal establishments of society, somewhat like our "Gypsies."

7. *How did Pharaoh regard Moses and Aaron? (5:4)*

He regarded them as nothing more than slaves who ought to be out working with the rest of their people, at "your burdens."

Pharaoh had apparently already learned of the meeting of the Israelites with Moses and Aaron (4:29). This had created considerable stir among the Egyptian rulers, because the Israelites had taken time off from their toils to meet with Moses.

8. *Who were the "people of the land"?' (5:5)*

Apparently they were the Hebrews. The exact implications of this expression are not clear, but it is obviously not complimentary. Perhaps Pharaoh refers to "people of the *land*" as contrasted with the city-dwelling "high-class" Egyptians. The people of the land were the working-class serfs, the riff-raff.

Or it may be that Pharaoh spoke of them as his private property. He owned all the land (Gen. 47:20), and they were the "people of the land," people who were permanently associated with the land use.

In any case, the large number of these people was disturbing to Pharaoh, just as their numbers long before had disturbed an earlier ruler of Egypt (Ex. 1:9).

9. *How did the Egyptians feel about idleness? (5:5)*

They did not tolerate it in slaves. A painting in an Egyptian tomb dated about 1450 B.C. (the very time of the oppression!) shows slaves making bricks while their supervisor watches with a stick in his hand. In the writing along the side of the painting the taskmaster is quoted as saying, "The rod is in my hand; be not idle!"⁶

10. *To whom is Ex. 5:5 addressed?*

It is addressed to "ye," apparently to Moses and Aaron, just as is 5:4. However, it sounds somewhat like a monologue, as if Pharaoh were thinking out loud while talking to Moses.

Martin Noth claims that verses 4 and 5 are remains of two distinct source documents, giving two different accounts of Israel's confrontation with Pharaoh. He says that verse 4 is a fragment of E. . . . inserted into the context of J.⁷ It seems to us that there is no clash at all between the verses, and that verse 5 is only somewhat of a repetition for emphasis by Pharaoh.

11. *What three classes of officials were over the Hebrew workers?*

(1) "Taskmasters" (Heb. *sare missim*), Egyptian officers

⁶Ira M. Price, E. L. Carlson, O. R. Sellers, *The Monuments and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1958), p. 168.

⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 53.

apparently over large labor gangs. (1:11)

(2) "Taskmasters" (Heb. *nogesim*). Literally, the title means oppressors; it seems to refer to Egyptian supervisors of smaller work crews. (5:6, 14)

(3) "Officers" (Heb. *shoterim*). Literally, the title means writers, scribes, officers, leaders. It seems to refer to Hebrew workers assigned to crews with them. Perhaps they were responsible to turn in written reports of their productivity each day.

12. *When did Pharaoh issue new work orders?* (5:6).

"The same day!"

13. *What new work-order did Pharaoh issue?* (5:7-11).

He ordered that the Hebrew slaves go find their own straw for brickmaking, but make just as many bricks as they did when straw had been brought to them. Obviously specific daily quotas of bricks had been assigned to be made.

Pharaoh's response was harsh and unreasonable. For requesting a three-day holiday for religious sacrifices, the people are sentenced to much heavier work on an apparently permanent basis. Probably Pharaoh sensed that their request was only the beginning of bigger aspirations.

14. *What did the straw serve for in brickmaking?* (5:7, 12)

Egyptian mud sticks together well enough that straw is not actually needed to hold mud bricks together. Therefore, bricks made without straw are found in Egypt, as well as bricks with straw. However, the straw contains an enzyme that makes the mud much easier to mix and handle.⁸ Not having straw would make the Hebrews' work much harder and more abrasive.

These mud bricks work well in a dry land like Egypt, where absence of rainfall prevents houses from being softened and washed away.

15. *Why did Pharaoh accuse Israel of being idle?* (5:8)

Because he was cruel, and was looking for something to

⁸Joseph Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1972), pp. 91-92.

accuse them of, so he could oppress them. They had not really been idle, except for the one meeting with Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh still said they were idle even after the Israelite workmen themselves told him their true situation (5:16-17). This shows that his charge of idleness was only an excuse to treat them cruelly.

16. *How did Pharaoh regard the words of Moses and Aaron? (5:9)*

He regarded them as vain, or lying, words, which offered false hopes to the people. Pharaoh seems to have heard indirectly of God's promise to Moses to deliver Israel. By overburdening the people, he attempted to crush their spirits, remove all hope from them, and destroy all their confidence in Moses and Aaron.

AMENHOTEP II, (1448-1422 B.C.), Pharaoh of the exodus.

We can understand Pharaoh's reactions to Moses much better when we have read the unbearably boastful writings by Amenhotep II, telling of his exploits as a sportsman.

Now, further his majesty appeared as king as a goodly youth. When he had matured and completed eighteen years on his thighs in valor, he was one who knew every task of Montu [the god of war]: there was no one like him on the field of battle. He was one who knew horses; there was not his like in this numerous army. There was not one therein who could draw his bow. He could not be approached in running.

Strong of arms, one who did not weary when he took the oar, he rowed at the stern of his falcon-boat as the stroke for two hundred men. When there was a pause, after they had attained half an iter's course [probably five-eighths of a mile], they were weak, their bodies were limp, they could not draw a breath, whereas his majesty was (still) strong under his oar of twenty cubits in its length [about 34 feet!].

.....

He drew three hundred stiff bows in comparing the work of the craftsmen of them, in order to distinguish the ignorant from the wise. When he had just come from doing this which I have called to your attention, he entered into his northern garden and found there had been set up for him four targets of Asiatic copper of one palm in their thickness [A little less than 3 inches], with twenty cubits between one post and its fellow. Then his majesty appeared in a chariot like Montu in his power. He grasped his bow and gripped four arrows at the same time. So he rode northward, shooting at them like Montu in his regalia. His arrows had come out on the back thereof while he was attacking another post. It was really a deed which had never been done nor heard of. . . .⁹

17. *What did the Israelites use for straw? (5:12)*

They used stubble. The long clean wheat straw that had been cut with sickles, tied into bundles, and probably kept in barns, was no longer brought to them for brickmaking. Instead they had to go out and pull up stubby ends of wheat stems attached to the roots still in the ground. Along with wheat and barley stubble would be all kinds of field rubbish, weeds, twigs, etc. These had to be uprooted, carried home, cleaned, sorted, and chopped.

The presence of stubble indicates this occurred after the barley and wheat harvest, near the end of April, or early May. At this season the pestilential sand-wind blows over Egypt, often for days on end. The Israelites' sufferings must have been intense! Why would they ever at later times have longed to return to Egypt (Ex. 16:3)?

18. *Could the Israelites fulfill the heavier work demands upon them? (5:14)*

By no means! Thereupon the Hebrew "straw bosses" were beaten with sticks by the Egyptians, because their crews had

⁹From "Pharaoh as a Sportsman," translated by John A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 244. Used by permission.

not made the daily assigned quotas of bricks. The Egyptians had set this up deliberately. The impossibly difficult work quotas were just the excuse for the persecution they intended to lay on them.

19. *Who went to Pharaoh to protest the beatings?* (5:15-16)

The Israelite officers themselves went. They took matters into their own hands. Moses had failed initially to get them delivered, and so they went to Pharaoh seeking fair treatment. Observe that the Israelites meekly referred to themselves three times as "thy servants."

20. *Whom did the Israelites blame for their troubles?* (5:16)

They blamed Pharaoh's taskmasters, "thine own people." This was only partly true: the fault was really in Pharaoh himself. His people were only following his orders.

The Greek O.T. (LXX) reads in 5:16, ". . . thy servants have been scourged; thou wilt therefore injure (or deal unjustly with) thy people." Both this translation and that of the Hebrew Bible show how submissive the Israelites felt.

21. *What did the Israelites realize about their situation after their conference with Pharaoh?* (5:19)

"They did see that they were in an evil situation." It impresses us that they were extremely slow in figuring this out. The root of their trouble was Pharaoh himself, not his taskmasters. Perhaps in their desperation they had believed what they wanted to believe, that surely Pharaoh would help them when he knew the truth about them. That hope was now dashed. To whom could they turn now for help? They did not turn to God. Instead they turned to bitterness (5:21; 6:9).

22. *Where did the Israelites meet Moses and Aaron?* (5:20)

Moses and Aaron were standing in the road from Pharaoh's house, evidently having stationed themselves there, probably expecting to hear a more hopeful report.

23. *What use of Jehovah's name did Israel make toward Moses?* (5:21)

They called on Jehovah to judge (condemn, punish, or damn) Moses and Aaron. Their statement is nearly a curse.

What perversity this shows! While calling upon Jehovah to

judge and punish Moses, they show by their complaining that they have no confidence in God or His power to save.

24. *What effects did the Israelites feel that Moses' meeting with Pharaoh had had upon them?* (5:21)

(1) "You have made us stink in the eyes (nostrils?) of Pharaoh. *Savor*, or smell, here means reputation or standing. Similar expressions can be found in Gen. 34:30; II Sam. 10:6; I Sam. 27:12. In truth, the Israelites did not have a very good "savor" before Pharaoh even before Moses arrived; they were already enslaved then (2:23-24).

(2) "You have put a sword in their hands to slay us." You have given them the provocation and excuse to harm us.

These first accusations of the Israelites against Moses were only the beginning of a torrent of such objections to his leadership that would later grieve Moses. See Ex. 14:11; 15:24; 16:2; and on and on.

25. *What did Moses do when the Israelites rejected him?* (5:22)

He returned unto Jehovah. This expression is beautiful in its simplicity, implying constant communion with God. God's man must have such closeness with God constantly.

Then he *prayed*, asking God why He had done evil to the Israelites. Moses' words are not critical, but words of inquiry and prayer. They spring from faith instead of doubt. But his words are urgent: "Why did you ever send me?"

By the word *evil* Moses referred to calamity, misfortune, or other adversities, rather than to moral evil. Compare Gen. 43:6; Num. 20:15; Job 24:20.

Moses' prayer here is the first of many prayers he uttered after the times when the people challenged his leadership. Compare Ex. 32:1, 11; Numbers 11:11.

26. *What answer did God give to Moses' prayer?* (6:1)

"You shall see what I will do to Pharaoh . . . he shall drive Israel out of his land."

"By a strong hand" means "with a powerful force" and "with urgency." It refers to Pharaoh's hand, rather than to God's hand. God indeed laid His hand heavily upon Pharaoh (7:4-5; 13:3). This broke Pharaoh's resistance, so that

Pharaoh himself thrust Israel out of his land (See Ex. 12:33, 39.)

27. *How do we relate to Moses' experiences?*

Few people can read Exodus chapters 1-6 and fail to see therein a reflection of their own experiences with God and His people. In Moses we see our own aspirations and disappointments, faith and fears, hopes and hesitancy, dreams and despair. Moses as God's man is a picture of every man of God.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

6 And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pha-raoh: for by a strong hand shall he let them go, and by a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

(2) And God spake unto Mo-ses, and said unto him, I am Je-ho-vah: (3) and I appeared unto Abraham, unto I-saac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Je-ho-vah I was not known to them. (4) And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Ca-naan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. (5) And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Is-ra-el, whom the E-gyp-tians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. (6) Wherefore say unto the children of Is-ra-el, I am Je-ho-vah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the E-gyp-tians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an out-stretched arm, and with great judgments: (7) and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am Je-ho-vah your God, who bringeth you out from under the burdens of the E-gyp-tians. (8) And I will bring you in unto the land which I sware to give to Abraham, to I-saac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am Je-ho-vah. (9) And Mo-ses spake so unto the children of Is-ra-el: but they hearkened not unto Mo-ses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

(10) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (11) Go in, speak unto Pha-raoh king of E-gypt, that he let the children of Is-ra-el go out of his land. (12) And Mo-ses spake before