

# **Exodus**

## **April 1, 2007**

### **Chapter 5**

#### **I. Down from the Mountaintop**

Moses and Aaron are at a high point at the end of the last chapter. Everything was falling into place. God was with them. He had given them great tools. They thought that they were ready for anything. How could they fail?

#### **II. Interaction #1**

**Ex 5:1-2**

**5:1** Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.'" **2** Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go." NIV

- Verse 1 In ancient times, it was not unusual for people to have audience with kings. Moses would probably not have been remembered after 40 years. Aaron as a leader in the Levites might have had some pull, or perhaps the elders arranged it. Although not indicated, the Israelite elders were probably accompanying them.
- Verse 2 Pharaoh response is very powerful. He had little problem dismissing the request and displaying his authority to the Israelite spokesmen. In a sense, though, when says, "Who is the LORD," Pharaoh is not suggesting that the LORD was totally unknown to him. Probably more importantly, he is questioning the power of the LORD and His authority over him.
- Verse 3 Pharaoh would have thought of himself as a god, not just a representative of the gods, and would feel that he had all the backing of the Egyptian gods backing him. He would not have been afraid of the God of Israel. The Israelites were his slaves. Why should he himself being a god be afraid of the God of slaves? He probably had a good chuckle from this episode.

#### **III. Interaction #2**

**Ex 5:3-5**

**3** Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

**4 But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!" 5 Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working." NIV**

- Verse 3 Pharaoh tells Moses and Aaron that he is not going to do what they want. However, the two Hebrews continue to make the demand, basically ignoring what Pharaoh has said except to threaten him.
- Verse 4 His response is filled with sarcasm, probably wondering internally why these slaves were bothering him at all. The king is accustomed to people doing whatever he says, not questioning him. One wonders what he would have done if Moses and Aaron had not threatened him with destruction from above. By questioning Pharaoh, especially if the elders of Israel were with them, they show that Israel might rebel, the very thing motivating Pharaoh into prosecuting the Israelites.
- Verse 5 Pharaoh's primary concern is that the Israelites should continue working.

#### **IV. Who's the BOSS?**

**Ex 5:6-9**

**6 That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: 7 "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. 8 But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' 9 Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies." NIV**

- Verse 6 Pharaoh wants to show who is boss. Moses and Aaron has argued with him and even threatened him. He also wants to show how ineffective that Moses and Aaron have been. Obviously, he is intolerant to anyone questioning him.
- Verse 8 The already overworked Israelite would now have to find straw too. Remember the Egyptians were already working them hard to kill off some of them. Since they were overburdened, this is likely to have made their work too much too do.

#### **V. Ramifications**

**Ex 5:10-14**

**10 Then the slave drivers and the foremen went out and said to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you any more straw. 11 Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.'" 12 So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. 13 The slave drivers kept pressing them,**

saying, "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw." 14 The Israelite foremen appointed by Pharaoh's slave drivers were beaten and were asked, "Why didn't you meet your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?" NIV

Verse 10 The slave drivers were probably Egyptians, and the foremen were probably the leader of the slaves, which meant that they were slaves as well.

Verse 12 "Stubble" would be the short part left in the ground after the main stock was removed. The shortness of the stubble would make it difficult to be a binding agent in mud bricks.

Verse 14 The pharaoh wants the people to be pushed...so, he asks the foremen to be beaten so that they would push the people. Apparently, they are not making the quota. Obviously, he is showing who is the boss.

## VI. Interaction #3...without Moses

Ex 5:15-18

**15 Then the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh: "Why have you treated your servants this way? 16 Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people."**

**17 Pharaoh said, "Lazy, that's what you are — lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' 18 Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks." NIV**

Verse 15 The foremen who have been beaten are trying to explain that the fault is that they have been given no straw.

Verse 17 The compassionate Pharaoh speaks again. Clearly we see that the men of Israel are no match for the authoritative Pharaoh.

Verse 18 Pharaoh does not allow his commands to be countered.

## VII. The Israelites' Reaction

Ex 5:19-21

**19 The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day." 20 When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, 21 and they said, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."**

NIV

Verse 21 Both the foremen and Moses have been beaten verbally (and the foremen physically). Now they meet each other. The good news is that they have not apparently lost whatever faith they had in the Lord; the bad news is that they blame Moses and Aaron for the situation.

## VIII. Moses' Reaction

Ex 5:22-23

**22** Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? **23** Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all." NIV

How would you characterize Moses' reaction?

Verse 22 "Lord, why have you \_\_\_\_\_." We can all fill it in. For some, it will be something big; for others, it might be smaller. In either case, it would be something that is important to us as individuals.

Verse 22 While we might question his choice of words, Moses returning to the LORD is a very positive thing. Moses is not filling positive. From his viewpoint, he has done everything that the LORD has told him to do. Yet, everything has gone horrible wrong.

Verse 23 Moses has had a start that would have appeared poor to him. He has a crisis now. The Lord told him to do something; he did it, and it appeared as though he and perhaps the Lord have failed. What is Moses missing?

-God has told him that he would be unsuccessful at first.

-Moses does not understand that God works in his own time, not ours.

-The trouble for the people will give them motivation to leave Egypt.

-He does not realize that he has something to learn from this situation.

-He does not know all that the LORD wants to show to the world in this situation.

-Moses must realize that he is still struggling with following the LORD fully.

Discussion Point: Is it ok to complain to the Lord? Answer: "YES" and "NO." In a sense, it shows that we do not have full faith in the Lord. In a sense, it shows that we do have some faith in the Lord. In my opinion, a Christian should never complain to the LORD, but if a Christian is in trouble and needs help, they should return to the Lord. It is better to pour out one's heart to the Lord, saying exactly what is on that heart, complaining though it is, than to hold it inside us, which the Lord can see anyway. The goal should be reconciliation with the Lord, realizing that He is in control. We need to realize that we must keep doing whatever the Lord has told us to do, including what is clearly stated in the Bible.

## IX. Next Steps

What should Moses do next? We will have to wait to Chapter 7 for that? Next week we have a chapter devoted to motivate Moses (and us). The LORD tells Moses his place in the scheme of things, although Moses does not fully get it.