

About Face: Pharaoh - The Man Who Would Not Bow

Exodus 5:1-2; 7:14-19, 22; 9:8-12; 11:9-10; 12:29; Hosea 5:4; 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 12:31-32

This week we are starting a new series entitled 'About Face.' We will be looking at the lives of four individuals that were given an opportunity to lay aside their evil and turn towards God. Each week we will be handling an individual who reacted in their own unique way. Kind of covering all the options that one might have in such an encounter. This first week, we will be looking at Pharaoh: The man who would not bow.

The Backstory:

The descendants of Abraham had been rescued from a famine by one of the sons, Joseph, essentially earning a job in Egypt. It's a much longer story than that, but this will suffice for now.

After a few years, that family grew into a large Nation within Egypt. The Egyptians became afraid of their numbers, and enslaved them. Eventually, Egypt became even more afraid of their numbers, and they decided to kill all the firstborn Hebrew boys as infants in order to prevent them from becoming an army against them.

Moses was rescued from this in a basket, raised in Pharaoh's household, got angry at the whole slavery thing, and was forced to flee Egypt on a murder rap. After marrying a shephardess in Midian, Moses met God in a burning bush, and God told him to go confront the pharaoh in Egypt about this whole slavery thing.

So that's the backstory, but this time around we will be focusing on Pharaoh himself.

Pharaoh:

We know that Pharaoh was very proud. We know that Pharaoh was very concerned about his public image and how strong he came across. Looking at Pharaoh's reaction to the plagues, it's safe to say that he had no conviction on behalf of his gods. He didn't really stick it out through the hard times like Moses did. We also know that Pharaoh was given a very simple request.

Read Exodus 5:1-2. So the ask was simple. It wasn't freeing the slaves, it was a request for a religious holiday. Maybe, had Pharaoh said yes, Egypt and Israel would have stayed together. But his response was proud. He staked his welfare on his gods, not recognizing that his prosperity was the result of God's patience in allowing Egypt time to correct itself.

Pharaoh is most well known for going through the 10 plagues. Let's see what we can learn from these happenings.

The Plagues:

Not 10 Plagues. 5 & 5. For starters, as far as recognizing God's authority, Pharaoh was without excuse. Nine of the 10 plagues were all about showing how Yahweh controlled

everything that was attributed to the Egyptian gods. All of them. These plagues are actually the origination of the Hebrew number 5 being associated with God's grace.

The 10 Plagues - Jehovah Versus the Gods of Egypt			
	PLAGUE	GODS OF EGYPT	INTERESTING NOTES
1	WATER TURNED TO BLOOD Exodus 7:14-25	• Khnum - Guardian of river's source. • Hapi - Spirit of the Nile. • Osiris - Nile was his bloodstream.	• Duplicated by the Egyptians. • Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived. • Dead fish — putrid smell
2	FROGS Exodus 8:1-15	• Hapi } Frog goddess to Egypt. • Heqt } Both related to fertility	• Duplicated by the Egyptians • Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived.
3	LICE Exodus 8:16-19	• Seb - The earth god of Egypt	• Not duplicated by the Egyptians • Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived. • Attributed to the "finger of God."
4	FLIES Exodus 8:20-32	• Uatchit - The fly god of Egypt.	• God now makes a separation between the Egyptians and the Israelites. • No more plagues will come upon the Israelites.
5	DISEASE ON CATTLE Exodus 9:1-7	• Ptah } Egyptian gods associated • Mnevis } bulls and cows. • Hathor } • Amon	• Affects property. • Death of livestock.
6	BOILS Exodus 9:8-12	• Sekhmet - Egyptian goddess of Epidemics • Serapis } Egyptian gods of healing. • Imhotep }	• Affects physical bodies. • Pharaoh's magicians cannot even appear in court.
7	HAIL Exodus 9:13-35	• Nut - Egyptian sky goddess. • Isis & Seth - Egyptian agriculture deities. • Shu - Egyptian god of the atmosphere.	• Historical uniqueness for such a storm in Egypt. • Pharaoh confesses his sin but later changes his mind.
8	LOCUSTS Exodus 10:1-20	• Serapia - Egyptian deity protector from Locusts	• Pharaoh offers a compromise. • The compromise is rejected. • Pharaoh again confesses his sin.
9	DARKNESS Exodus 10:21-29	• Re } Egyptian sun gods. • Amon-re } • Aten • Atum } • Horus • Thoth - Egyptian moon god.	• Dark in Egypt at midday. • Apparently light was still provided for the Israelites in Goshen.
10	DEATH OF FIRSTBORN Exodus 12:29-36	This plague was a judgment on all of Egypt's gods, including Pharaoh himself. In Exodus 1, Pharaoh had killed the sons of Israel. Now the Lord kills the firstborn sons of the Egyptians (Exodus 11-12). Pharaoh will now let Israel go. He will later loose his army to death in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:4-31).	

As I cover these, we're going to look at the first plague and how it started, then we will look at the turning point, then we will look at the last plague.

Read Exodus 7:14-19, 22. So at the first plague, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. He continued to do so for the plagues of frogs, gnats/lice, flies, and livestock. When he got to the plague of boils, something changed.

Read Exodus 9:8-12. Here, God hardened the pharaoh's heart for him. But that sounds mean!! Keep in mind: Read 1 Samuel 16:7. God knows the heart, and God knows where the limit lies. The point of no return.

Five times, God gave Pharaoh a genuine chance where Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Five times, God hardened Pharaoh's heart for him because he understood that pharaoh would never give up doing things his own way. There was no return. God was done with him.

This is why the number five is associated with God's grace in the Hebrew tradition. That was the number of Grace for the pharaoh. A constant reminder that there is a point of no return for your heart. We can find the full horror of this turning point in the last plague.

The Final Plague:

When someone turns a corner, whereby their heart will not turn away from a self-centered, self-seeking, self-indulgent way of life, there is a terrible switch that is flipped. I have heard it put this way: God will give us all available chances to say, "Lord, your will be done." But if we will not say that, He will look to us and say, "Oh small man, *your* will be done."

God's will for us is full of all the best things we could ever want for ourselves. But if we will not take that, then the worst thing that could ever happen to us will immediately befall us. At that point God will give us exactly what we want, leaving us to our own imperfect way. If we will not accept Mercy for our sins then we are choosing Justice for our sins. God's grace and God's law work together as one.

Read Matthew 12:31-32. The only sin that can condemn us is rejecting God's mercy. God's will is for us to accept His mercy in the interest of becoming the righteous version of ourselves. If we do not allow His Mercy to deal with our sin, His Justice must deal with our sin. We can see this reflected in the last plague.

Read Exodus 11:9-10 and 12:29. If we do not allow his Mercy to deal with our sin then His Justice must deal with our sin. It had been 80 years since the pharaoh of Egypt had murdered all the firstborn of Israel. Egypt and Pharaoh had 80 years to turn around from murdering the innocent. If you refuse mercy, then you play by the rules of Justice. If you play by the rules of Justice, then turn about is fair play.

The last plague was the crime that Egypt committed being paid back upon itself. They suffered that which they had dealt. How long until the US is repaid for the condemnation of children in the womb? We saw what happened in Massachusetts.

This last plague is an illustration, if we will not accept Mercy for our evil through repentance, then we shall be repaid for every evil we have dealt out. Justice.

But how does someone get to that point? Read Hosea 5:4. Hardening your own heart takes time. It takes many self-seeking deeds and a lot of self-interested thinking to get to that point. A spirit of self-indulgence dwelling within. Too many self-care days frankly.

Modern connection: We can hear sermons, experience miracles, witness God moving, and still resist Him. A hard heart is rarely created overnight; it is formed through repeated refusal.

Conclusion:

Hard hearts do not come from a lack of proof. They come from a buildup of pride. Pharaoh saw many miracles and didn't budge. His pride, our pride, is directly proportional to our irrationality.

Pharaoh was a man on the wrong side of righteousness that had a direct encounter with God, but he ultimately would not bow after a lifetime of building up his own pride in his own heart until it had become calloused and hard to anything that suggested pursuing something apart from his own Glory.

Pharaoh is the character who encountered God and would not turn about face. Will you be the one to say unto God, “your will be done”? Or will He be the one to say unto you, “no, your will be done”?

Will you accept Mercy on your way to righteousness? Or will you condemn yourself to fair play/justice and be paid back everything you dealt out?

Bonus:

Read Romans 6:20-23. This is saying that you can be a slave to sin, but that will free you from righteousness. You can do anything but you can't be good...because you are free from righteousness. That is how you get your own way.

If you free yourself from sin, you will be a slave to righteousness. You will have to do the right thing. You will serve a master.

The biggest lie Satan ever said was “Reject righteousness to be your own master.” Wrong! If you reject righteousness, selfishness is your master. You will serve selfishness and sin or you will serve God and righteousness. (God & righteousness is the same thing and cannot be separated.) You will serve one or the other. You *will* be a slave to something.

Pharaoh had Hebrew slaves and he had pride. What he didn't know was that he was already a slave himself.

Worship is attributing credit to something/someone. Every time you have a favorite ‘influencer’ and you say their content is wonderful, that is offering a tribute to them. You are assigning worth to them. And when you attribute worth, that is worship. So we have all these little ‘worships.’ It is ok to say somebody is good at something, but you do not need to start basing your life on that or mimicking another human. You need to mimic God. Why? God deserves all righteousness and good to be attributed to HIM.

You WILL be a slave to something. You WILL worship something. So are you going to worship a content creator, worship yourself, or worship God sticking it out through whatever He gives you no matter how difficult it is? When you do go through a difficulty, it is when God will show you what He can do. Wait for what He has.

Pharaoh didn't realize he was a slave to his own sin, but we can.

Reflection Questions:

- Are there areas in your life where God has been calling you to change, but you continue to resist Him?
- What repeated choices or attitudes could be slowly hardening your heart toward God?
- What are you truly serving or worshipping—God and righteousness, or your own desires, pride, and selfishness?
- What would it look like for you to genuinely say, “Lord, Your will be done,” in an area where you have been insisting on your own way?