

Vaera – Exodus - Shemoth (6.2-9.35)

When Moses and Aaron asked Pharaoh to let the Hebrew slaves off work for three days so they could worship God, Pharaoh refused and made the slaves work harder. God told Moses, "I am God. I revealed Myself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God All-Sufficing. I established My Covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan. Now say to the sons of Israel: "I have heard your cries. I have remembered My Covenant. I shall take you out of slavery. I shall rescue you. I shall redeem you. I shall take you to Myself as a people and I will be to you, God. You shall always know then that I am God, your God, the One Who took you out of your burdens of slavery in Egypt to receive the land of Canaan as an inheritance."

Moses said, "I don't have the self-confidence to speak."

God said, "Observe. I will make you like a Master to Pharaoh and your brother Aaron will be your prophet and speak for you."

Moses was 80 and Aaron was 83 years old when they did as God commanded and spoke to Pharaoh about letting the Hebrews go worship in the wilderness. When Pharaoh demanded proof of God, Moses did as God said and told Aaron to throw down the rod and the watched it turn into a serpent. The Pharaoh's magician then turned his rod into a serpent. But Aaron's serpent ate the Pharaoh's serpent.

Still, the Pharaoh did not believe Moses. God then said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh after his bath in the Nile River and tell him God will turn the water to blood if he does not let the Hebrews leave." When the Pharaoh refused, the Nile turned to blood and the fish died and the water could not be drunk. But the Pharaoh's magicians also changed water to blood so the Pharaoh did not keep his promise, just as God predicted.

After Pharaoh had been warned, God then sent frogs as did the magician's but the Pharaoh's magicians could not remove the frogs. Pharaoh asked Moses to have God remove the frogs and if God did, they could go worship. The frogs died and were stacked in high piles and stank. But the Hebrews slaves were not freed.

Pharaoh remained obstinate and God told Moses to have Aaron hold out his staff and strike the dust of the earth. And Aaron did and lice appeared and attacked. Pharaoh's magicians tried to also make lice but couldn't. They said, "This is the finger of God."

Moses warned Pharaoh that God would send wild beasts and destroying the land of Egyptians but not the land of God's people. And throngs of beasts attacked the palace and only the land was being devastated. Pharaoh promised Moses they could go worship nearby. But he broke his promise and did not let them go.

Moses then went to Pharaoh, "God said, 'Let My people leave and serve Me for if you don't your livestock will die while the Israelite's livestock go unharmed.'"

God fulfilled this promise too with a deadly epidemic that killed Egyptian livestock and the miraculous distinction of the entire livestock of the Hebrew still living. But Pharaoh was obstinate and would not let the people leave.

This time God told Moses and Aaron to throw some dust toward heaven before Pharaoh's eyes. And they did and all the Egyptians and their animals broke out in painful, ugly blisters. The boils on the Pharaoh's magicians were so bad, they could not stand up. But still the Pharaoh was stubborn, just as God predicted.

God had Moses go again to Pharaoh and say, "The only reason I let you survive was to show you My Strength so that My Name will be talked about all over the world. Since you refuse to let My people leave, I will bring hail so hard you must spread the word for everyone to shelter their livestock and themselves lest they be pelted to death." But Pharaoh refused and only some Egyptians took shelter.

God had Moses point his staff at the sky and thunder and flashing lightning and hail so big it killed all the Egyptian or livestock left outside. Only in Goshen where the Hebrews lived, there was no hail. Pharaoh called to Moses and Aaron "This time I am guilty. God is Just. It is I and my people who are wrong. Pray to God to stop it and I will let you leave." Moses said, "Watch. When I spread out my hands to the Lord then the thunder and lightning and hail will stop and you will know that the earth is the Lord's; the world belongs to God." God stopped the storm but the Pharaoh did not keep his promise, just as God predicted to Moses.

Questions: 1) How do you understand "the earth is the Lord's"? 2) What does it mean that Hebrews are a people? 3) Why doesn't Pharaoh agree to let the slaves go worship?

Illustration Ideas: Moses and Aaron telling Pharaoh to let Hebrews go...Moses' rod turning into a serpent...Nile River turning into blood...the plagues of frogs, lice, bugs, hail...