

Preceding Text

(Where are we? Chapters 1-15 **Redemption - Prelude**)

The initial conversation with Pharaoh did not go well. In fact, Pharaoh increased his expectations of the Israelites without as many resources. In turn, the people complained to Moses. Chapter 5 ended with Moses somewhat confused about why this plan of deliverance has not worked.

Chapter 6 opens with a great declaration of who God is and reaffirmation about his plans to redeem his people. He will be their God, and they will be his people—they will be family to him. Amazing! God also reaffirms that he will fulfill his promises to the ancestors, which includes giving his people a very specific land (a place where they are not). We are ready for a new conversation with Pharaoh.

Current Text: Themes and Background

Notice the beginning of the chapter when God says, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart...” This is an interesting thing in these chapters of Exodus. When we get to the plagues, we see that after each of the initial plagues, Pharaoh *hardens his own heart*. What does it mean for God to harden Pharaoh’s heart if Pharaoh himself is also hardening his heart? Commentators normally suggest this means God will give Pharaoh over to his own stubbornness.

There is also interesting Egyptian background here. You can read about the *Weighing of the Heart Ceremony* that was a part of Egyptian belief of the afterlife (along with great pictures) [HERE](#). In summary, after death a person was said to stand trial before the gods where the person’s heart was weighed against the feather of Maat (goddess of truth and justice). The heart of the person who led a decent life balanced with the feather. Considering Egyptian background, Pharaoh is hardening his heart and thus moving away from truth and justice.

Additionally, what if we read these perplexing words as a response to Moses’ protest in 6:30? If God is directly answering Moses, notice how he addresses what God himself is doing and then says he will harden Pharaoh’s heart “that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt.” God goes on to say that the outcome will be a magnificent display of his power, so that “the Egyptians shall know that I am YHWH...” It is almost like God says to Moses, “Of course Pharaoh will not be easily swayed, but not on account of your inadequacy. Rather, it is because I utilize his stubbornness in order to demonstrate My active Presence” (taken from Nahum Sarna’s Exodus commentary).

Engage the Text: Discussion Questions

1. What did you hear as the main point of the sermon? Or what was your primary takeaway?
2. How are the roles of God, Moses, and Aaron set up in 7:1–2. These are early days of the prophetic role in Israel. What are early guesses as to the role of the prophet in Israel?
3. If you read 7:3–5 considering Moses’ protest in 6:30 (I suggest slowly and out loud! Take note of each part of the response!), does it change how you perceive God’s reply? Try to

put the conversation in your own words. When Moses says, “Why would Pharaoh listen to me,” God replies....

4. Do you remember the symbolism of the snake from our discussion on chapter 4? What is the importance of this being the first attention grabber in this conversation between Moses/Aaron and Pharaoh (and the courtiers!)? How is it different from the first conversation with Pharaoh in chapter 5?
5. What is the text telling us about God’s character, God’s revelation, and God’s mission in the world?

Read for Next Week: Read Exodus 7–11