

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Old Testament

## SESSION 4 – EXODUS 1-20

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### Can lying ever be justified (1:19-20)?

This is certainly a difficult moral dilemma. They are praised for their outright refusal to take infant lives, and God gave them “families.” The midwives may have lied to Pharaoh, or they may have attempted to avoid answering Pharaoh’s question directly, and therefore commented on what was true without giving all the details. There are also those who believe they should have told Pharaoh the truth and trusted the Lord to protect the infants.

– *The NIV Bible Commentary*

### Why these particular signs (4:1-9)?

These miracles would validate both God’s messenger, Moses, and God’s message. There are disagreements over the precise meaning of each of these signs. The first sign, the staff and snake (which some think were Egyptian symbols of power and life), would underscore God’s power over Egyptian dominance. The second sign, the leprous hand, would highlight God’s power over dread diseases and warn Pharaoh that Moses, an ambassador of God, had the power to inflict sickness. And the last sign, turning water from the Nile (worshiped by Egyptians) into blood would demonstrate God’s power over their gods.

– *The Quest Study Bible*

### Is God responsible for disabilities (4:11)?

The answer is unclear, clouded by the notion that a loving God couldn’t permit so much pain, much less cause it. This verse, taken alone, paints a picture of a capricious God, who randomly scars certain

people. But three facts help us see a more correct picture: (1) God loves us. (2) All people are scarred, to one degree or another. (3) God works through the weaknesses of wounded, broken people. Our disabilities, however great or insignificant, become a showcase for God's abilities. Because Moses was "slow of speech and tongue" (v.10), God was better able to speak through him (v.12).

– *The Quest Study Bible*

## **Why would God want to kill Moses (4:24)?**

The narrative was included at this point to demonstrate that an additional factor was needed in the preparation of God's commissioned servant: the preparation of Moses' family. In Gen 17:10-14 God had commanded Abraham to circumcise every male on the eighth day as a sign of the covenant; any uncircumcised male was to be cut off from his people. However, in this case the father was suffering for his refusal to circumcise his son. Thus for one small neglect, apparently out of deference to his wife's wishes, or perhaps to keep peace in the home, Moses almost forfeited his opportunity to serve God and wasted eighty years of preparation and training!

– *The NIV Bible Commentary*

## **Did the Israelites experience these plagues (8:22-23)?**

Some think the Israelites were spared from only the plagues where a clear distinction was made, as in this instance (9:4,6,26; 10:23; 11:7). However, Goshen, a region of Egypt where the Israelites lived, may have been spared from all the plagues.

– *The Quest Study Bible*

## **Why did the Egyptian magicians display the power (according to Exod. 8:7) of performing miracles as Moses and Aaron did (cf. also Exod. 7:11, 22)?**

Scripture indicates that Satan has power to perform "lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9) through his wicked agents for the express purpose of leading mankind astray. Christ warned that "false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). From Exodus 7 and 8 we learn that Satan displayed this power and employed this strategem even in the time of Moses. Counterfeit miracles, then, are Satan's stock in trade. Yet it should be carefully noted that Satan-empowered miracles are based largely on deception and illusion and generally involve some kind of clever trickery. But when they failed in their attempt to reproduce the

stinging gnats that Aaron's rod had brought forth, they had to admit to Pharaoh that their art was merely human (or merely satanic, at least); for this new plague could only be explained as "the finger of God" (Exod. 8:19).

*–The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*

## **Did God really harden Pharaoh's heart (9:12 and 10:1)?**

It should be noted that there are nine other passages in the book of Exodus which indicate that Pharaoh hardened his own heart or that circumstances may have helped harden him. It was not until the sixth plague that God explicitly hardened Pharaoh's heart. Many conclude from this that the danger of resisting God is that he will eventually give us over to our own choices (see Romans 1:24-28).

Ultimately, Pharaoh was responsible for oppressing the Israelites as well as for his own unbelief. At the same time, on another level, God was also at work. Moses, writing years after the events, could say confidently that God was at work even in Pharaoh's hard heart.

*–The Quest Study Bible*

## **Instead of ten plagues, why not skip right to the last one (11:9-10)?**

The number and choice of plagues had both religious and diplomatic significance. The plagues progressively demonstrated God's power over each of Egypt's principal gods (Nile–Hapi; sun/darkness–Ra; cattle–Hathor/Apis; frogs–Hept). Each plague also induced Pharaoh to move closer to Moses' ultimate objective: Israel's freedom. Initially, Pharaoh agreed to let Israel sacrifice "here in the land" (8:25). He then agreed to permit only the men to go (10:11), then to permit all of the people to go but without their livestock and possessions (10:24). Ultimately, Israel was to be "driven out" with not only their own possessions but also the wealth of the Egyptians (11:1-2).

*–The Quest Study Bible*

## **How serious an offense is grumbling (16:7)?**

God takes grumbling very seriously! Through the Old Testament and also in the New Testament, grumbling is held up as a serious sin. In 1 Corinthians 10:6-13 Paul gives a warning about three sins that the people of Israel committed in the desert: sexual immorality, testing God, and grumbling. All three of these are presented as sins that break the heart of God.

As we read the history of God's people in the book of Exodus, we discover that the sin of grumbling was

a recurring problem. Sadly, in many churches this is still the case. We need to remember that this breaks the heart of God today in the same way it did in the days of Moses.

**–Kevin Harney**

## **What's wrong with wanting water (17:2)?**

Israel's sin was not their desire for water, but their attitude toward God. Although God had already demonstrated that he could provide water (15:25), bread (16:15) and meat (16:13), the people were quick to resist Moses' leadership and doubt God's care.

**–The Quest Study Bible**