

The Exodus

Read Exodus 14

Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh as God had commanded them. Per God's instructions, they tell Pharaoh to let the Israelite slaves journey three days into the desert so that they could make sacrifices to God. This angered Pharaoh, and he claimed that the Israelites made this request because they were idle. He commanded that the Israelites would no longer be supplied with straw to make their mud bricks, but they would have to find their own straw wherever they could. The Israelites would still be required to make the same quota of bricks.

Mud bricks were made from Nile alluvium, which is a conglomerate of clay and sand. The proportion of clay within that alluvium determines much of the properties of the mud used to make bricks. When the content of clay is proportionally high, mud bricks can be made without the use of straw. But when the content of clay is proportionally low, as is more typical, straw is needed as an additional ingredient to prevent a brick from falling apart as it dries.[1]

The drawing below shows steps in making mud bricks including: fetching water, kneading the clay, carrying moistened clay to the brickmakers, forming bricks using a mold, turning formed bricks out of the mold and leaving the bricks to dry in the sun.



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Every year in August and September, the Nile River overflows its banks. This was so important to Egypt, that the Egyptian calendar began its year when the Nile floods. The flooding deposited rich dark silt, which made for excellent fertile soil. Egypt was one of the first countries to use a series of dykes and dams to harness the floods of the Nile and create more land available for farming. Because of the rich soil, less farmers were needed to feed the population; and this freed persons to work on the Pharaoh's elaborate building projects, support a large priest class, and enabled Egypt's large army.

When Moses and Aaron first come before Pharaoh, following God's command, Aaron throws down his staff, and it becomes a serpent. Pharaoh called his wise men, and the sorcerers and magicians of Egypt. With their enchantments, they threw down their rods; and their rods became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their serpents.

[1.] A. Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1926), 7.

The first of ten plagues God brought upon the Egyptians was turning the water of the Nile to blood. Also the streams, rivers, pools, ponds, and water in vessels of wood and stone turned to blood. The plague lasted for seven days. With their enchantments, the magicians of Egypt also turned water into blood. Exodus 7:17-25.

The second plague was a plague of frogs. Again, the magicians of Egypt with their enchantments were able to bring up frogs. Ex 8:1-15.

The third plague was a plague of lice. The magicians of Egypt tried to create lice with their enchantments, but they could not. Ex 8:16-19.



The Rod of Aaron Devours the Other Rods. James Tissot, 1896 - 1902.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23:

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Just prior to this passage, Jesus says in Matthew 7:15-16:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.

The magicians of Egypt by using their enchantments were able to change their rods into serpents, change water into blood, and bring up frogs from the waters...but their power did not come from God. The persons that Jesus called "workers of lawlessness" also seemed to do miracles in Jesus' name - prophesying, casting out demons, and mighty works...but their powers did not come from God. God also warned of false prophets, who pretend to follow God, but actually do not. Jesus tells us that we are to recognize true followers of God by their fruits. God is warning us not to be deceived - even when our senses tell us we have seen a miracle. The word is to wait, to watch, to withhold judgement and look for the fruits of their actions. Look at their lives, do they portray the fruits of the Spirit - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Compare the words they speak and the actions they do against the words in Scripture.

God sent seven more plagues: flies, disease of cattle, boils, hail mixed with fire, locusts, darkness and the slaying of the firstborn. God wanted to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand - the hand of God. God wanted the Egyptians to know that it wasn't an army that

freed the Israelites, or a person who was able to persuade Pharaoh with brilliant speeches; it was the power of an almighty God.

After the last plague, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron in the middle of the night. He tells Moses to have the Hebrews leave immediately with haste. The Israelites flee with their families, their herds and flocks, and clothing and jewelry they borrowed from their Egyptian neighbors. And God lead them through the wilderness to the shores of the Red Sea.

Pharaoh changed his mind about letting the Israelites go. He pursued them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh and his horsemen and his army. The Israelites were trapped. The Red Sea was on one side of them, with Pharaoh's army on the other side. Moses said to them, "The Lord will fight for you." Following God's directions, Moses lifts his rod up over the Red Sea. God sent a strong east wind that blew all night and divided the waters so that the Israelites could cross on dry ground.

The pillar of cloud that had gone before the Israelites to direct them, moved and went behind them so that it was between the Israelites and Pharaoh's army; and it brought total darkness to the camp of the Egyptians. The Israelites on the other side of the cloud were bathed in light - enough light to allow almost two million Hebrews (six hundred thousand men plus women and children) to cross through the parted waters of the Red Sea on dry ground. In the morning, Pharaoh's army pursued the Israelites through the parted sea; but God fought for them, and broke the wheels of the chariots. The Egyptians realized that it was God fighting for the Israelities. They tried to turn around and flee; but at God's command, Moses lifted his hand over the waters and the sea came crashing back. Of all the host of Pharaoh that came into the parted sea after the Israelites, there remained not so much as one of them.

The greatest army in the world at that time, was defeated by the mighty hand of God as they chased after fleeing slaves who had no weapons and no army.

Prayer: Lord, help me to always remember that you are an awesome God filled with power and might. You fought for the Israelites and freed them from slavery. And you fought to the death for me, to free me from my sins. To you be honor and praise, now and forever. Amen.



Destruction of Pharaoh's Army.
Philip James de Loutherbourg, 1792.

The Exodus

The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years. To prevent the Israelites from joining with an enemy of Egypt if they were invaded, the Egyptians had turned the Hebrews into slaves of Pharaoh. The Israelites prayed to God and asked God to free them from their bondage.

God chose Moses to go before Pharaoh to ask Pharaoh to let the Hebrews make a three-day journey into the wilderness to worship God. This angered Pharaoh. He claimed that the Israelites wanted to make the journey because they were idle (they did not have enough work to do). So instead of letting the people go, Pharaoh increased the amount of work they had to do.

God sent Moses and his brother Aaron back to Pharaoh to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go many times. To show his might and power, God sent ten plagues. Often Pharaoh would call Moses and ask Moses to talk to God and he would let the people go. But when the plague was over, Pharaoh's heart would harden. Pharaoh would change his mind, and he would not let the people go.



John Martin, *The Seventh Plague of Egypt*, 1823, oil on canvas.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Wikimedia Commons.

The last plague was the worst of all. It was the death of the firstborn. The plague came at midnight, and a great cry rose up in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in the middle of the night and said, "Rise up and be gone, and get away from my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds." Exodus 12:31-32.

God told Moses to have the Israelites ready. They were to be all packed and waiting, wearing their traveling cloaks with their shoes on. So in the middle of the night, the Hebrews flee from the land of Egypt. God shows them the way using a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

God leads the children of Israel through the wilderness to the shores of the Red Sea. When Pharaoh learns that the Israelites do not intend to return to Egypt to be slaves again, Pharaoh is angry that he has let so many workers leave his kingdom. Pharaoh gathers up all his chariots, his horsemen, and

his army. They chase after the Israelites and find them camped at the edge of the Red Sea. The Israelites are filled with fear. They have no place to run. The sea is on one side of them, and Pharaoh's army is on the other side. They have no weapons and no army. They believe they are going to die. Moses tells them not to be afraid. The Lord will fight for you.

The cloud that God had used to guide the children of Israel, moved so that it was between the Hebrews and the Egyptian army. The cloud was so thick that the Egyptians were in total darkness. They could not move toward the Israelites, because they could not see.

On the other side of the cloud, where the Hebrews were, God made it as light as daytime. God instructed Moses, "Lift up your rod, and stretch your hand over the sea, and divide it. The children of Israel will go through the midst of the sea on dry ground." The Lord sent a strong wind from the east all night, and made the sea dry land. The children of Israel crossed the sea on dry ground with the waters like walls on either side of them.

When it was morning, God lifted the cloud and Pharaoh and his army saw that the Israelites had crossed to the other side of the sea. Pharaoh's army rushed between the walls of water, chasing the Israelites. The Lord broke the wheels of the chariots. Pharaoh's army became frightened, because they knew that God was fighting for the Israelites. They tried to turn around and go back, but God told Moses to lift his hand over the waters, and the sea came rushing back. All the people who were chasing the Israelites were drowned in the sea.

The story of the Hebrew people and their God who fought for them spread throughout the lands. The Hebrew people held of feast. They danced and sang. They praised God and thanked him for saving them from the Egyptian army.

Prayer: God you lead the people of Israel out of Egypt with your might and power. You guided them and protected them. Be with me as I journey through my life. Thank you for your love, and for your gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.



Destruction of Pharaoh's Army. Philip James de Loutherbourg, 1792.

A Song of Moses

By the mighty hand of God, the Hebrews crossed the sea.
God's wind parted the waters. The ground was dry as can be.

The Hebrews had no army with which to fight a war.
They believed that God would save them, as he had done before.

Every man, woman and child made it safely to the other side.
"Our God is mighty and full of wonders," they said with deepest pride.

Through the parted waters, Pharaoh's chariots and his army gave chase.
But it was not fleeing slaves with no weapons they were about to face.

The chariots stopped working for God made the wheels break.
The Egyptians soon realized crossing the parted sea was a mistake.

"The Hebrew God is fighting for them, " the Egyptians said with fear.
They tried to turn around, but the shore was no longer near.

God told Moses to stretch out his hand, and the sea came crashing back.
The waters covered the Egyptain army. They heard a mighty crack.

The Hebrew people knew that they were now truly free.
The mighty army of Pharaoh had been covered by the sea.

The Hebrews had a celebration to sing praises to their God most high.
The women danced and sang and raised their tambourines toward the sky.

The Lord is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation.
He is my God, and I praise his name with this celebration.



A Garden Alter. Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912).

Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums. CC BY-NC

Important Words to Remember

The story of Moses and the Israelites being freed from bondage is filled with miracles. There is the burning bush Moses saw in which the leaves stayed green and nothing turned to ash. There were the ten plagues that God visited upon Egypt in which God showed his might and power. There was a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire that God used to show the Israelites the direction to travel. God moved this cloud to stand between the Egyptian army and the Israelites to protect the Israelites. There was the strong east wind that blew and parted the waters to allow the Israelites to cross the Red Sea on dry ground. And God broke the wheels of the Egyptian chariots, and covered the Egyptian army in the waters of the Red Sea.

In Matthew 19:26 God tells us:

With God all things are possible.

Luke 1:37 states:

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

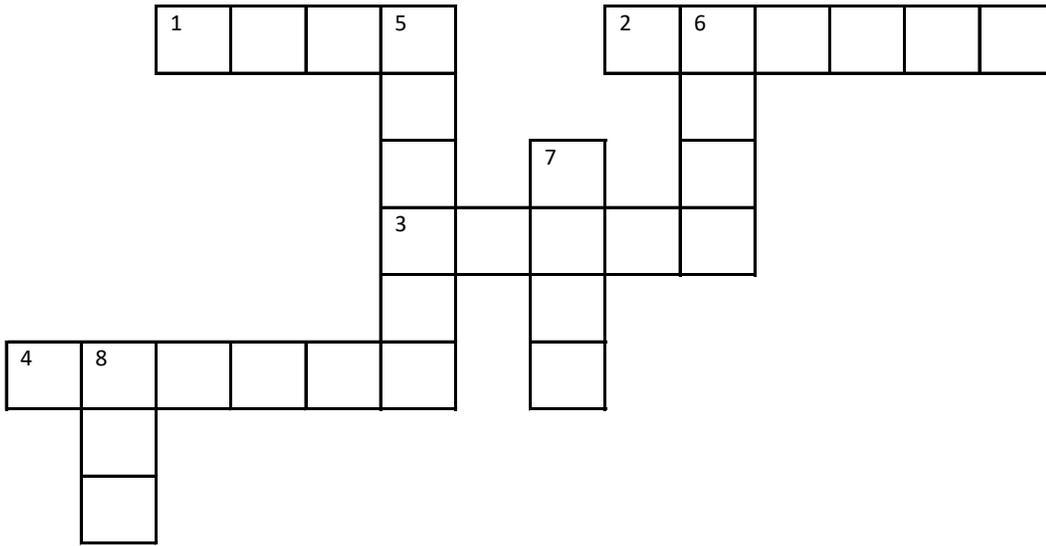
In Luke 18:27 God emphasizes that his strength and power is much greater than ours:

The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Our God is a God of miracles. There is nothing he cannot do. His love is greater than we can imagine. His forgiveness is often beyond our understanding. His gift of everlasting life can seem incomprehensible. That is how great our God is. He loves everyone, all the time, no exceptions. God may not love some of the things that people do, but that doesn't stop God from loving the person. No matter how big our sin, Christ died for it on the cross.

Prayer: Thank you God for the many examples you give us in the Bible of your power and might. Help me to understand that with you by my side, my soul is safe. Your gift of everlasting life with you in Heaven is secure. Your love for me will never waiver. When you look at me, you see not the sinner that I am; but a child of God, an heir of righteousness. Thank you for your love. Help me to show your love to others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

The Exodus



Across

1. What did God send from the east that caused the waters of the sea to go back? A strong _____. Ex 14:21.
2. To stop Pharaoh's chariots from reaching the fleeing Israelites, God broke the _____ of the chariots. Ex 14:25.
3. Pharaoh's army chased after the Israelites. The army found the Israelites camped by the Red Sea. The Israelites were trapped. The sea was on one side of the Israelites, and Pharaoh's army was on the other side. What did God put between the Israelites and Pharaoh's army to keep the Hebrews safe? A _____. Ex 14:19-20.
4. The children of Israel crossed between the walls of water on dry _____. Ex 14:22.

Down

5. The Israelites celebrated that God had defeated their enemy, the Egyptian army. Moses and the children of Israel sang. Miriam [the sister of Moses and Aaron] and the women played their timbrels [tambourines], and they _____. Ex 15:20.
6. To make the waters of the parted sea go back, what did God ask Moses to stretch out over the water? His _____. Ex 14:26.
7. When the Israelites saw the Egyptian army chasing them, they were afraid. Moses told them to, "Fear not. The _____ will fight for you." Ex 14:13-14.
8. What is the name of the sea that the Israelites crossed on dry ground, but Pharaoh's army drowned in? The _____ Sea. Ex 15:4.

