

# Exodus 5 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [Exodus 5:1](#)
- [Exodus 5:2](#)
- [Exodus 5:3](#)
- [Exodus 5:4](#)
- [Exodus 5:5](#)
- [Exodus 5:6](#)
- [Exodus 5:7](#)
- [Exodus 5:8](#)
- [Exodus 5:9](#)
- [Exodus 5:10](#)
- [Exodus 5:11](#)
- [Exodus 5:12](#)
- [Exodus 5:13](#)
- [Exodus 5:14](#)
- [Exodus 5:15](#)
- [Exodus 5:16](#)
- [Exodus 5:17](#)
- [Exodus 5:18](#)
- [Exodus 5:19](#)
- [Exodus 5:20](#)
- [Exodus 5:21](#)
- [Exodus 5:22](#)
- [Exodus 5:23](#)

Irving Jensen ([Online](#)) - Used by Permission  
 Click to Enlarge  
 View Chuck Swindoll's chart of Exodus.

Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus									
<b>DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION</b>					<b>PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP</b>				
Redemption from Egypt Ex 1:1-18:27					Revelation from God Ex 19:1-40:38				
Getting Israel Out of Egypt					Getting Egypt Out of Israel!				
Narration					Legislation				
Birth of Moses Ex 1-2	Call of Moses Ex 3-6	Conflict with Pharaoh Ex 7-10	Exodus from Egypt Ex 11-12	Red Sea Crossed Ex 13-15	Journey To Sinai Ex 16-18	Law Given Ex 19-24	Tent Plan Ex 25-31	Idol Worship Ex 32-34	Tent Built Ex 35-40
Subjection			Redemption		Instruction				
Suffering and Liberation of People of God			Guidance of God		Worship of God				
Moses and Burdens of Israel		Pharaoh and Plagues Upon Egypt		Red Sea Deliverance	Wilderness Provision	Sinai Instructions			

<b>Bondage and Oppression</b>		<b>Deliverance and Provision</b>		<b>Law Pattern and Construction</b>			
<b>Israel in Egypt</b> Ex 1:1-13:16		<b>Israel to Sinai</b> Ex 13:17-18:27		<b>Israel at Sinai</b> Ex 19:1-40:38			
<b>God's People Enduring Bondage</b>		<b>God's Grace Revealed in Redemption</b>		<b>God's Glory Manifested in Worship</b>			
<b>Egypt</b> <b>430 Years</b> (15% of Exodus)		<b>Wilderness</b> <b>2 Months</b> (30% of Exodus)		<b>Mt Sinai</b> <b>10 Months</b> (55% of Exodus)			
<b>From Groaning</b>							<b>To Glory!</b>

- [Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament](#) - online

Click to Enlarge

- [Click for Excellent Map of Route of the Exodus](#)
- [Click another Exodus from Egypt](#)
- [Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH  
(from Believer's Study Bible)

**Exodus 5:1** And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, **Let My people go** that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness."

BGT Exodus 5:1 κα μετ τατα ε σ λθεν Μωυς ς κα Ααρων πρ ς Φαραω κα ε παν α τ δε λ γει κ ριος θε ς Ισραηλ ξαπ σπειλον τ ν λα ν μου να μοι ορτ σωσιν ν τ ρ μ

NET Exodus 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Release my people so that they may hold a pilgrim feast to me in the desert.'"

LXE Exodus 5:1 And after this went in Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, and they said to him, These things says the Lord God of Israel, Send my people away, that they may keep a feast to me in the wilderness.

NLT Exodus 5:1 After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness."

KJV Exodus 5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

ESV Exodus 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'"

NIV Exodus 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.' "

ASV Exodus 5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said unto Pharaoh, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

CSB Exodus 5:1 Later, Moses and Aaron went in and said to Pharaoh, "This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: Let My people go, so that they may hold a festival for Me in the wilderness."

NKJ Exodus 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"

NRS Exodus 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.'"

YLT Exodus 5:1 And afterwards have Moses and Aaron entered, and they say unto Pharaoh, 'Thus said Jehovah, God of Israel, Send My people away, and they keep a feast to Me in the wilderness;'

- **and said to Pharaoh** - 1Ki 21:20 Ps 119:46 Eze 2:6 Jon 3:3,4 Mt 10:18,28 Ac 4:29
- **may celebrate a feast** - Ex 10:9 Isa 25:6 1Co 5:8
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THE UNCOMPROMISING MESSAGE: "LET MY PEOPLE GO!"**

The conflict between Moses and Pharaoh begins here and continues through Exodus 12:36 with the plagues described in Ex 7:14-12:36. I will be 80 in a few years if the Lord gives me length of life, and frankly I cannot imagine engaging in an antagonistic encounter with the most powerful man in the world! So while I see "flaws" in Moses, I am awestruck by his courage and willingness (even hesitatingly) to follow through on God's commission.

### **Review Outline**

1. The man Moses (Ex 2:1–25)
2. The call of Moses (Ex 3:1–4:17)
3. The return to Egypt (Ex 4:18–31)
4. A preview of the contest with Pharaoh (Ex 5:1–6:1)
5. The call renewed (Ex 6:2–7:7)

UBS - Chapter 5 should be thought of as a preview of the long negotiations with Pharaoh in chapters 7 and following. As such it deals more with the relationship of Moses to the Pharaoh than with his relationship to the Lord. It tells us about the very first encounter between Moses and the Pharaoh and how it failed, making the oppressive situation of the Israelites much worse than before.

There are four episodes in chapter 5 that tell the story of the "Preview of the contest with Pharaoh" and lay the groundwork for chapter 6 and the renewal of Moses' call:

- a. The first encounter with Pharaoh (Ex 5:1–9)
- b. The increased oppression (Ex 5:10–14)
- c. The plea of the Israelite foremen (Ex 5:15–21)
- d. Moses' complaint (Ex 5:22–6:1)

**And afterward** - Expressions of time always beg a question, in this case the question is "After what?" The "what" is the positive reaction from the elders and the people of Israel which fittingly culminated in reverential adoration and worship as described in Ex 4:31 (Read Ex 4:29-31+) "So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then **they bowed low and worshiped.**" Moses must have thought, obeying God and doing God's will is exciting. So having experienced a "spiritual high" Moses and Aaron would be ready for their dramatic confrontation with the Pharaoh who instead of softening, actually stiffened the requirements for his Hebrew slaves so that their conditions markedly deteriorated resulting in a spiritual low for Moses toward the end of Exodus 5. **Remember...**

**Mountain top experiences are wonderful, but the direction off of most mountains is down.**

**And so it is not uncommon to experience adversity after we have encountered the Lord in special ways.**

In Exodus 4:29-31 Moses has "been to the mountaintop," an experience which had been orchestrated by God and an experience

which undergirded his confidence and prepared him for the ensuing titanic struggle with Pharaoh, a battle ultimately between good and evil, light and darkness, the power of Satan versus the power of God, indeed a battle representative of the struggle every believer of every age would be thrown into when God rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of light, the eternal kingdom of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:12-13+). However, Moses would soon discover that mountains are always located next to valleys and he would soon go down into the valley that felt like death to self as the Pharaoh resisted and retaliated against the people who had just bowed down to Jehovah. Pharaoh, the representative of the evil one, desired they bow down to him and his authority. The result was despondency for the people, and confusion for Moses, probably mixed with a degree of dejection and despondency as we see the spiritual war unfold in the rest of chapter 6. Beloved, can we not all identify with this great man -- he is not yet a finished product, but a work in progress and he had not yet seen the end of the story. And as with all of us who are children of light, his story would ultimately prove to be God's story, God's plan for his life and the nation of Israel. So too in our lives, for we like Moses are God's workmanship, God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we might walk in them (Eph 2:10). Let us consider Jesus Who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that we will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:3) Indeed, let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap the eternal fruit the Lord has prepared for each of us to enjoy throughout eternity if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Read Galatians 6:7-10+) Father, fill us with Your Word and Your Spirit that we might be supernaturally enabled to fight the good fight of faith for the glory of the Lamb, Who Alone is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing forever and ever. Amen (Rev 5:12+) (Read 1 Timothy 6:12-16+) (See [illustration from Pastor David Thompson below](#)).

**NET Note** says that "The enthusiasm of the worshipers in the preceding chapter turns sour in this one when Pharaoh refuses to cooperate. **The point is clear that when the people of God attempt to devote their full service and allegiance to God, they encounter opposition from the world.** Rather than finding instant blessing and peace, they find **conflict**. This is the theme that will continue through the plague narratives. But what makes chapter 5 especially interesting is how the people reacted to this opposition. The chapter has three sections: first, the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh (Ex 5:1–5); then the report of the stern opposition of the king (Ex 5:6–14); and finally, the sad account of the effect of this opposition on the people (Ex 5:15–21).

**Warren Wiersbe** comments that "If Moses and Aaron had been privileged to listen to Jonathan Edwards preach his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," they probably would have shouted "Amen!" when Edwards said: *All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater.* (Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch)

**Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh** - Keep in mind this is not the Pharaoh who had killed all the Hebrew male infants in Exodus 1. We know that is the case because God had told him "all the men who are seeking your life are dead." (Ex 4:19). The elders are not described as present but may have been in light of God's specific promise in Exodus 3:18 where God says "**you with the elders of Israel will come tot he king of Egypt...**". Here we surely see God behind the scenes making the paths of Moses and Aaron (and probably the elders) straight. Why? Because the Hebrews were shepherds and considered an abomination by the Egyptians! And yet they gain entree to most powerful man on the planet. This is something only God would orchestrate! And here we also see the faith of both men in action (faith is an "action" word), because in ancient times it was dangerous to go into the presence of a monarch, much less to go with a demand/command! This took courage! And remember that presumably Aaron is speaking for Moses the Words God gives Moses. We see Moses opt out of speaking in Ex 4:13 which caused the LORD's anger to burn, but in mercy and grace He allowed Aaron to substitute for Moses. Then in Ex 4:15 God tells Moses he is to speak the words to Aaron which God speaks to Moses. In Ex 4:16 God says Aaron "shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him."

**Guzik** - An inscription by a Pharaoh on an ancient Egyptian temple gives the idea: "I am that which was, and is, and shall be, and no man has lifted my veil." (Meyer) The Pharaoh was more than a man; he considered himself a god, and the Egyptians agreed. Having grown up in the royal courts of Egypt, Moses knew this well; but he also knew that Pharaoh was just a man. With the authority of the living God, Moses confronted Pharaoh.

## **MOSES AND AARON ISSUE A DECLARATION OF WAR**

**Wiersbe** notes that Moses and Aaron "were sent by God to inform Pharaoh that if he didn't release the Jewish people, Jehovah would **declare war on him and his gods** and wouldn't stop attacking Egypt until the people of Israel were set free. God's two ambassadors had one message from the Lord: "Let My people go—or else!" **Let My people go** is found seven times in the pre-Exodus narrative: Ex 5:1, 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1,13; 10:3. (Ibid)

**Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel** - So these are the Words from Jehovah to Moses which presumably are actually vocalized by Aaron. In either event these are not men's words but God's very words to Pharaoh! First they emphasize that Jehovah says He is God and specifically the God of Israel. The conflict begins to "fire up" for Pharaoh actually considered himself to be a god and expected to be treated like one! Here God's men are commanding Pharaoh to obey someone else, something he has likely never heard in his adult life! He was the one who gave orders and here we see lowly shepherds giving him orders! This is a direct assault on Pharaoh's pride.

**ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRICE OF PRIDE AND A "GOD" COMPLEX** - [Captain James Cook](#) was an English explorer and navigator (1728-1779). He is the man credited with discovering Hawaii. When he first landed on those Pacific islands the natives thought he was a god and gave him divine treatment. He did nothing to discourage their perception; he embraced the role of god. All worked well for Cook until he left the isles. A storm forced him to sail back to the island for shelter. The natives believed no god would be hindered by a storm, so they felt betrayed and killed Captain Cook for pretending to be a god. When we assume the role of deity, our destiny is death. Pride causes us to assume that kind of thinking (Pr 11:2).

Exodus 5:1-5 is the first of two occasions that God through Moses demanded the release of His firstborn son, Israel, the second occasion being in Ex 7:10-13. The result on each occasion was exactly what God had promised in Ex 4:21 "I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."

**Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness** - The fact that Jehovah claimed the sons of Israel were "My people" would be especially irksome to Pharaoh who considered them as **HIS slaves, HIS property** to do with as he saw fit. This is essentially the Word Moses had received from Jehovah in Ex 3:18 "'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'" So without apology, God's men begin with a clear command from God. Notice the first person pronouns **My** and **Me**. This parallels the words from Jehovah in Ex 4:22+ that "Israel is My son, My firstborn." The sons of Israel were God's possession, not Pharaoh's possession. This is straight from the Throne Room of Heaven to the Throne Room of Pharaoh on earth. This is like Light meeting darkness. Good going against evil. God against Satan (who surely empowered the evil anti-Semitic pharaoh). This is not a power struggle, because the final victory by the omnipotent God is certain. But this victory will involve several scenes and supernatural manifestations from God.

Apparently from historical records Egyptian laborers were also granted time off for the performance of religious duties (see Constable's note below).

**Let My people go, that they may serve Me** - This command is repeated some 9 times (Ex 5:1+; Ex 7:16+; Ex 8:1+; Ex 8:20+; Ex 8:21+; Ex 9:1+; Ex 9:13+; Ex 10:3+; Ex 10:4+)

**NET Note** - The form שְׁלַח (shallakh), the Piel imperative, has been traditionally translated "let [my people] go." The Qal would be "send"; so the Piel "send away, release, dismiss, discharge." B. Jacob observes, "If a person was dismissed through the use of this verb, then he ceased to be within the power or sphere of influence of the individual who had dismissed him. He was completely free and subsequently acted entirely on his own responsibility" (Exodus, 115).

**NET Note on celebrate a feast** - The verb כָּחַג (khagag) means to hold a feast or to go on a pilgrim feast. The Arabic cognate of the noun form is [hajj](#), best known for the pilgrim flight of Mohammed, the hajira.

**Mattoon** - The word "feast" is a pilgrimage festival. It was not an unreasonable request. Pharaoh's temper toward Israel is known. Yet courageously, and by faith, Moses and Aaron walk into the cobra pit. God has already warned them that Pharaoh would not let them go! They did what the Lord commanded any way. God help us to have this same kind of courage.

**Constable** has an interesting quote on labor practices in ancient Egypt taken from Kenneth Kitchen, "Labour Conditions in the Egypt of the Exodus," Buried History (September 1984):

"Exodus 5:1–5 introduces another aspect of labour in Egypt: claims for time off work, and specifically for worship or religious holidays. On this topic, useful background comes from the extensive, fragmentary and often very detailed records kept for the activities of the royal workmen (who lived at the Deir el-Medina village), who cut the royal tombs in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens in Western Thebes, c. 1530-1100 B.C.

"Daily notes were kept for the men's attendances at work or of their absences from it. Sometimes reasons for absence are given. . . . The entire workforce might be off for up to 8 or 14 days, especially if interruptions, official holidays and 'weekends' came together. In Ancient Egypt—as elsewhere—major national festivals (usually main feasts of chief gods) were also public holidays. Then, each main city had its own holidays on main feasts of the principal local god(s). Besides all this, the royal workmen at Deir el-Medina can be seen

claiming time off for all kinds of reasons, including 'offering to his god,' '(off) for his feast'; even 'brewing for his feast' or for a specific deity. Not only individuals but groups of men together could get time off for such observances. And a full-scale feast could last several days.

"What was true in Thebes or Memphis would apply equally at Pi-Ramesse (Raamses). So, when Moses requested time off from Pharaoh, for the Hebrews to go off and celebrate a feast to the Lord God, it is perhaps not too surprising that Pharaoh's reaction was almost 'not another holiday!'"

---

**Steven Cole - Serve the Lord faithfully even in the face of opposition and setbacks.**

Moses and Aaron were coming off a spiritual high. The people had accepted their testimony and believed that the Lord was concerned about their affliction (Exod. 4:31). Moses, Aaron, and the Israelite elders all had worshiped the Lord. Probably the spiritual high made them forget that the Lord had said that He would harden Pharaoh's heart and that he wouldn't let Israel go except under compulsion (Exod. 3:19; 4:21). So Moses and Aaron marched boldly into Pharaoh's presence, but hit a brick wall. Pharaoh wasn't sympathetic in the slightest. In fact, he made things more difficult than they already were for the Hebrew slaves.

Has that ever happened to you when you tried to serve the Lord or obey His calling for your life? When Marla and I moved to Dallas so that I could finish my seminary degree, we had a very hard time finding an apartment. We finally found one we could afford and moved in just before classes started. Three days later, we were mugged at gunpoint as we walked from the carport to our door. I tore my hand open on the gunsight of the mugger's gun and had to get four stitches. Then, a couple of weeks later, I slipped on a muddy sidewalk and cut my finger badly on a Thermos I was carrying. So I started classes living in an apartment that was maybe in an unsafe neighborhood, and with both hands bandaged! At such times, it's easy to wonder, "Did I miss God's will for my life? Maybe I was supposed to take an off-ramp a couple of miles back!"

But don't assume that encountering difficulties means that you're not in God's will. Often, God uses the difficulties to bring us to the end of ourselves so that we trust totally in Him (2 Cor. 1:8-9). Chuck Swindoll (Moses [Thomas Nelson], p. 162) observes, "**The best framework for the Lord God to do His most ideal work is when things are absolutely impossible and we feel totally unqualified to handle it.**" ([The Plan Isn't Working Exodus 5:1-6:30](#))

---

**ILLUSTRATION FROM PASTOR DAVID THOMPSON** - A while back, there was an interesting thing that happened on our web site. I went to check to see if any one had written any emails to us and discovered there were two. I opened the first one and it was a wonderful encouraging letter that expressed gratitude for the web site of TCBC. The person writing the letter said that they loved our approach to the word of God and that they were listening to Bible book studies and doctrines and growing. As I read this letter, my spirit soared.

When I completed reading the first email, I opened the second one. This email was from a disgruntled person who did not like our approach to Scripture. In fact, this person actually contacted our web site carrier and said they should not even let us be on their network. This individual was mad because we dared take doctrinal stands that did not square with his position. So within the span of a few minutes because of our approach to God's word we go from a high to a low, from praise to protest, from a positive to a negative.

That is the way it always works in the true work of God. When it comes to obeying God's word and doing God's will we may be sure that one minute there may be great exhilaration and the next minute great humiliation. In the work of God, you can go from being very high to being very low. Some one can praise you one minute and someone else can demean you the next minute. That is the lesson Moses is about to learn right here:

**OBEYING GOD'S WORD AND DOING GOD'S WILL ALWAYS LEADS TO GOD'S BLESSINGS BUT BEFORE THOSE BLESSINGS COME THERE WILL BE A SOVEREIGNLY DESIGNED PROCESS THAT WILL FEATURE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES; EMOTIONAL ELATION AND EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION**

**This is the lesson we need to learn too. When we purpose to understand and obey God's word and do God's will, we are guaranteed that God will bless us. But the path to His blessings will be sovereignly designed by Him and that path will include some negative things. All of that is part of His sovereign plan.**

---

**Exodus 5:2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."**

- **Who** - Ex 3:19 2Ki 18:35 2Ch 32:15,19 Job 21:15 Ps 10:4 12:4 14:1
- **I do not know the LORD**- 1Sa 2:12 Joh 16:3 Ro 1:28 2Th 1:8
- **I will not let Israel go**- Ex 3:19 Jer 44:16,17
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PHARAOH ASKS WHO IS THE LORD?**

God had forewarned Moses that the Pharaoh would resist his call to let the sons of Israel go, declaring "But I know that the king of Egypt **will not permit you to go**, except under compulsion." (Ex 3:19+)

**But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"** Pharaoh is NOT asking for information. He is expressing bold-faced arrogance. He is saying in essence "Who is the Lord to tell me what to do?" I bet he knows "who is the LORD" today as he is imprisoned in Sheol awaiting his sentence at the Great White Throne judgment! (Rev 20:11-15, note esp v12 = "I saw the dead, the **great** [THOSE LIKE PHARAOH] and the small, standing before the throne."

**Wiersbe** adds "If Pharaoh obeyed the edict, he would be acknowledging a deity greater than himself, and he wasn't about to do that. In his pride and false security, Pharaoh wouldn't listen to the words of the living God." (Ibid)

**Shepherd's Notes** - The title **Pharaoh** means "great house." Egyptians applied the title to their kings from about 1500 B.C. on. An ancient pharaoh was an absolute monarch and considered to be a god himself. An example of his divine power was his daily performing of an early morning ritual in which he broke the seal to the statue of the sun god, waking the deity up with a prayer.

**Guzik** - Pharaoh did not have the right heart, but he did ask the right question. Moses asked Who am I? (Exodus 3:11) The relevant questions were not about the identity of Moses or Pharaoh, but who is the LORD? If Pharaoh really knew who the LORD was, he would have gladly released Israel.

**I do not know the LORD** - Pharaoh says "I don't know the Lord and I am not going to obey what He says." As an idol worshiper of a number of false gods, Pharaoh did not know of this God named Jehovah. He was not in his panoply of deities. As a result of the 10 plagues bringing great judgments on Egypt, Pharaoh and all the "Egyptians shall know" Jehovah (Ex 7:5). One writer says that the phrase "I don't know the LORD" means "I don't recognize the authority of your God."

**THOUGHT** - Little did Pharaoh realize that this choice, this crucial decision was going to open the garage door to discouragement, distress, disease, destruction, and death for him and his people. Little do we realize sometimes how one decision can change the whole course of our lives. The decision to obey or disobey, to sin or remain pure, to yield to the Lord or fight Him are many times life-changing decisions that have consequences that affect us for the rest of our lives and sometimes for all of eternity. (Mattoon) (See Illustration of Aaron Burr below)

**Sailhammer** - "Thus as the plague narratives begin, the purpose of the plagues is clearly stated: 'so that the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD' (Ex 7:5). Throughout the plague narratives we see the Egyptians learning precisely this lesson (8:19; 9:20, 27; 10:7). As the narratives progress, the larger purpose also emerges. The plagues which God had sent against the Egyptians were 'to be recounted to your son and your son's son . . . so that you may know that I am the LORD.'"

"Knowing the Lord" is a main theme fleshed out in the book's rhetorical shape (Ex 1:8; 5:2; 6:3, 7; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14; 10:2, 7, 26; 11:7; 14:4, 18; 16:6, 12; 18:11; 23:9; 29:46; 31:13; 33:12, 13, 16-17).

**And besides, I will not let Israel go** - Pharaoh flatly refuses to obey the command.

**THOUGHT** - The interaction with the powers of darkness (Pharaoh) with children of the light (Moses and Aaron) demonstrates that when we obey the Lord we may (probably will) experience opposition, resistance and/or difficulties. This is an important principle especially for young believers in Jesus, especially if they have been told God has a wonderful plan for your life (which He does) but are not forewarned that they are almost certain to experience difficulties. As I like to tell my pastor friends "Preach the Word and duck!"

**Rod Mattoon** asks "Are you a quitter? The next ten chapters of Exodus (five through fourteen) focus on the great contest between Moses and Pharaoh. The gauntlet is thrown down and the tug-of-war of wills begins. It is a fierce ordeal which tested the metal of Moses and his people, and also revealed the power and care of Almighty God for His people. The chapter confronts us with the reality that we may have times of provision or straw but also times of hardship, suffering or stubble. In those difficult times, however, God knows what is going on and working behind the scenes."

---

## David Thompson - There are at least nine reasons why God wants this conflict between Himself and Pharaoh:

- 1) It shows God has superior power and sovereignty over Pharaoh and false gods of Egypt.
- 2) God would use this confrontation to strengthen the faith of His people- they would see and trust that God did have a major national plan for Israel.
- 3) God would use this conflict to heighten the anticipation and appreciation for redemption.
- 4) God would use this conflict to show how His will overrules man's will, yet man is still responsible for choices he makes.
- 5) God would use this conflict to show that there are serious consequences for those who persist in sin and rebellion against Him.
- 6) God would use this conflict to show that no one can stop what He wants to do.
- 7) God would glorify Himself through the witness and spread of the facts of this conflict.
- 8) God would use this Egyptian conflict to teach the nations they better give Israel her land (Josh.2:9)
- 9) God would use this Egyptian conflict for evangelistic purposes (i.e. Rahab- Josh.2:10-13)

---

**ILLUSTRATION** - A revival swept through the university at Princeton, New Jersey. [Aaron Burr](#) (February 6, 1756 – September 14, 1836) came to the president of the university and said: "Mr. president, I have made up my mind to consider the claims of Christ. Now, Mr. President, what would you do?" The old president of the university gave him this advice. He said, "Burr, if I were you, I would wait until the excitement of the revival had subsided, and then I would think it out carefully." Aaron Burr bowed his head a moment, and then he said, "Mr. President, that is exactly what I will do." And, it is stated as a fact, that never again in his life did he express a desire to be a Christian, and they say he died without such an expression. Beloved, make sure God's blessing and approval are on your decisions and choices by studying His Word, praying for direction, and getting wise counsel. If you do not know the Lord as your Savior, put your faith in him right now. (2 Cor 6:2) The attitude of Pharaoh of "I don't know or need God" is the same attitude of many unbelievers today. We live in the "Don't Tell Me What to Do!" generation. People spurn God's authority only later to regret it.

---

## TEMPTED AND TRIED Exodus 5 - James Smith

Like Nehemiah, Moses meets with many unexpected difficulties in seeking to fulfil the task given him of God. Who has ever achieved great things for Him without having overcome bitter and desperate opposition? This chapter is full of deep and practical teaching. Let us try and gather up the facts under the following points.

**I. A Great Demand. "Let My people go"** (v. 1). This peremptory claim declares to us that God would have His people (1) SAVED, (2) SEPARATED, (3) SERVING. It was not enough that they should be taught, they must be emancipated. Jesus Christ came not only to teach, but to "give His life a ransom" (Matt. 20:28).

**II. An Unyielding Enemy.** "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (v. 2). Instead of letting them go their bondage and their burdens are increased. Pharaoh, like the god of this world, never yields anything except when it is going to profit himself. Satan always adds to the burden of those who have an eye to deliverance. The devil will always resist the claims of the people of God, till, like Pharaoh, he is overwhelmed in the deep, "the lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20).

**III. A Vain Effort. "The officers of the children of Israel cried unto Pharaoh"** (v. 15). His answer was, "Ye are idle, ye are idle." This was a well-meant but foolish and presumptuous attempt to take the matter of their deliverance in their own hands, ignoring Moses and Aaron, the God-appointed intercessors. Perhaps they hoped to compromise with the heartless tyrant; they may have thought that Moses and Aaron were just asking too much. Ah, man is so ready in the pride of his heart to dictate or to modify the claims of God. Leave your deliverance in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ the divinely appointed deliverer. He is "mighty to save" (Isa. 63:1).

**IV. A Heart-piercing Charge.** The officers met Moses and Aaron after their feeble attempt to help themselves, and charged them as being the cause of this greater misery coming upon them (v. 21). Do you know experimentally what this means? Then you have indeed been made a partaker of the suffering of Christ. Faithfulness to God often brings blame from the poor sin-convicted but mind-blinded worldling.

**V. A Noble Example.** How did Moses act under this most unjust imputation? "Moses returned unto the Lord" (v. 22). Having been stung to the quick, he unburdens his heavy heart to the Lord his God. His words reveal a state of intense perplexity. "Why is it that



Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy Name he hath done evil to this people. Neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all" (vv. 22, 23). We do not look for too much when we expect God to do all that He hath promised. Moses had been preaching that God was about to deliver them, but instead of liberty the furnace of their affliction was made the hotter. What a trial to faith! Oh, how often appearances seem to contradict the promise! Be not faithless, but believing; the darkest hour is the hour before daybreak. So it was here. Now we have—

**VI. A Soul-inspiring Answer.** Chapter 6:1 tells us that, "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do." God's NOW had come, just at the heels of man's WHY? All the resources of Omnipotence are now called into action for the fulfilment of the divine word. Perplexed soul, tarry in God's almighty NOW; wait on the Lord. With regard to salvation, God's NOW has already come. "Behold, now is the accepted time" (2 Cor. 6:2). All the resources of grace and truth are presently in action through His Son Jesus Christ. "Now shalt thou see what I will do." Write these wonderful words across the life and death of God's redeeming Son. Have you seen all that the love and power of God has done for you in and through Him?

---

## **PHARAOH: A TYPE OF THE DEVIL Exodus 5–10 - James Smith**

The King of Egypt, like the god of this world, finds his greatest difficulties in connection with the people of God. He looks upon them as a source of great danger to his kingdom. His chief object is to blind the minds, burden the hearts, and destroy the lives of those who oppose him. Like the devil—

**I. His Enmity is Inveterate.** It is of long standing (Gen. 3:15). Such fire and water can never unite. He—

1. DENIES THE LORD. "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him" (v. 2). The great adversary of souls knows nothing of obedience, he may be compelled, but there is no willing submission. What is true of Satan is true also of all those under his power. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

2. DESPISES THE MESSAGE. He called it "vain words" (v. 9). Yet they were the words of the living God, a message of mercy and deliverance to his crushed and downtrodden subjects. But it is always so, "the preaching of the Cross (redemption) is to them that perish, foolishness." "Yea, hath God said," is still a favourite dodge of the devil. If he can only get men to depreciate the Gospel of Christ he knows that they will remain under his slavish rule.

3. OPPRESSES WITH BURDENS. The straw is denied, yet the full tale of bricks is demanded (vv. 17, 18). This is truly devilish. Paul was once caught in the meshes of this net, for he said, "I thought that I should do many things." He tried to kill the spirit of liberty by multiplying the works of the law.

4. REMAINS UNCHANGED. In Pharaoh's case the professions of repentance were frequent, but the tears of repentance were never seen; his heart, like Satan's, remained unchanged and unchangeable. The devil cannot improve; like Pharaoh he will perish in the flood while in the act of persecuting the redeemed of the Lord (Rev. 20:10).

**II. His Devices are Cunning.** We are not ignorant of his devices. If he cannot succeed with open scorn and oppression he will try the secret snare of compromise. Observe his manner—

1. GO AND SACRIFICE IN THE LAND (chap. 8:25). He offers them liberty to sacrifice to God if they kept within the land under his rule. This means: Be Christians if you will, but don't cast off the yoke of darkness; don't break the link of your connection with sin. The devil will allow us to sacrifice to God if we only remain his slaves. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). His next device is—

2. GO, ONLY NOT VERY FAR AWAY (v. 28). As much as: If you must go beyond the boundary of my kingdom I will let you go if you don't go so far away as to be out of sight. Alas, that so many seem to have accepted this condition, and try to live the Christian life with their eyes on Egypt. "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). The dividing line should be as emphatic as death and resurrection (Rom. 6:8). Are you an out of sight Christian, having escaped the corruption that is in the world. There is no getting within sight of Canaan until we get beyond the sight of Egypt. He went a step further, and said—

3. GO, YE THAT ARE MEN (chap. 10:11). Save yourselves, but leave your wives and children behind. Entire separation is what Pharaoh and the devil dreads. He knew that they would not go too far, or remain away, who had left their families in Egypt. Such half-hearted service never does the kingdom of Satan much damage. Household salvation is a most alarming doctrine to the prince of darkness. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). "The promise is to you, and to your children" (Acts 2:39).

4. GO, BUT LEAVE YOUR FLOCKS (chap. 10:24). To leave their flocks meant to serve their God without a sacrifice. When the devil cannot possibly hinder you from going out of his kingdom, how he does seek to mar and murder your influence for good. The Israelites could not serve their God acceptably without personal sacrifice. No more can we. If the adversary can get between us and the sacrifice separation and God-pleasing service will be impossible. How many to-day, in this matter, have gone the way of Cain in offering to God a service that has not been consecrated by blood. Let our answer to these wiles of the devil be the answer of Moses, the servant of God, "Not a hoof shall be left behind" (Exod. 10:26).

**Exodus 5:3 Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."**

- **The God of the Hebrews** - Ex 3:18
- **otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence**- De 28:21 2Ki 17:25 2Ch 30:8 Ezr 7:23 Eze 6:11 Zec 14:16-19
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES AND AARON'S SECOND APPEAL**

**Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us** - Literally, "The God of the Hebrews is on our side." Their second appeal is a somewhat milder! Now they avoid the Name Jehovah (at least at the outset), the Name which was not known to Pharaoh. One writer thinks that by changing the Name of the God to the "**God of the Hebrews**" was to emphasize that He was the God of Pharaoh's Hebrew slaves. That is possible but it still did not work to convince Pharaoh.

**Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God** In their first words in Ex 5:1 they commanded, but now they "politely" request, "Please." And now in contrast to their opening salvo, they also give the rationale for their request. Why did they need to go into the wilderness? They needed to be out of sight of the Egyptians because the animals they were going to sacrifice were considered sacred to the Egyptians and if they were seen sacrificing them, it would have incited a riot. In Ex 8:26 "Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we will sacrifice to the LORD our God what is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, **will they not then stone us?**"

There is another reason they would want to sacrifice at some distance away. Exodus 8:26 = "But (responding to Ex 8:25) Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we will sacrifice to the LORD our God what is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not then stone us?"

**Constable on sacrifice to the LORD our God** - The Egyptians regarded the sacrifices that the Israelites would offer as unacceptable since almost all forms of life were sacred in Egypt. They believed their gods manifested themselves through cows, goats, and many other animals. "The Egyptians considered sacred the lion, the ox, the ram, the wolf, the dog, the cat, the ibis, the vulture, the falcon, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, the cobra, the dolphin, different varieties of fish, trees, and small animals, including the frog, scarab, locust, and other insects. In addition to these there were anthropomorphic gods; that is, men in the prime of life such as Anen, Atum, or Osiris. (from William Ward)"

**Wiersbe on three days journey** - Six days of travel and one day of worship would add up to a week away from their work, but Moses said nothing about how long they would be gone or when they would return. This omission made Pharaoh suspicious, and he wondered if the purpose of their journey was escape rather than worship....The Lord had promised that the nation would worship Him at Mount Sinai (Ex 3:12), but they could never reach Sinai in three days (Ex 19:1). However, Moses knew that Pharaoh wouldn't let the people go (Ex 3:12-22); therefore, **his words, though sincere, were but the first "volley" in God's war against Pharaoh.** God's command gave Pharaoh an opportunity either to submit to the Lord or to reveal the sinfulness of his own proud heart. (Ibid)

**NET Note on three days' journey** - It is not saying that they will be gone three days, but that they will go a distance that will take three days to cover (see Gen 31:22-23; Num 10:33; 33:8).

**Steven Cole on three days' journey** -- Scholars debate why the Lord told Moses to ask for a three days' journey when the real objective was to leave Egypt permanently. Some liberals accuse God of being dishonest or deceptive! Probably this was an initial test to expose Pharaoh's hardness of heart. Moses was asking a reasonable request: "May we go for three days to worship our God?" There were precedents for such requests. A manuscript and a limestone tablet dating to the time of the ancient pharaohs indicates that Egyptian slaves were sometimes given time off to worship their gods (Philip Ryken, Exodus [Crossway], pp. 140-141).

**Otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword-** In one sense this theoretically might have appealed to Pharaoh because a dead slave is certainly no use to him. This is a difficult statement to understand. **Warren Wiersbe** offers this comment - Moses mentioned that the Israelites might be in danger of being killed if they failed to obey the Lord. Why bring that up? Perhaps Moses was hinting that Pharaoh's stubbornness might cost him his slaves and that he'd be better off to give the Jews a week off and thereby protect his cheap labor. However, there's another factor involved: Moses was telling Pharaoh that the God of the Hebrews was a powerful God who could kill the Egyptians as well as the Jews. Pharaoh needed to understand that the demands Moses and Aaron were making were not to be taken lightly, for this was a matter of life and death. (Ibid)

**Walter Kaiser** has a slightly different explanation - God's servants warned Pharaoh that should he disallow this temporary release, he could suffer untold losses; for this God might allow all sorts of pestilence to break out, or he might even send an invader across the eastern frontier where Israel lived in vulnerable exposure.

**John MacKay** has another thought - There is no divine word that corresponds with this in the previous chapters. Both plague (9:3) and sword represent sudden death, coming in forms which would have been interpreted as judgment proceeding from offended deities. It seems probable that this arises from Moses' recent experience on the way to Egypt (4:24-26) and his realisation that it is not trivial to disobey God's commands, and it may incur divine wrath at any moment. If that were to happen against the Israelites, then Pharaoh would lose the very people whose labour he is so determined to exploit. (Mentor Commentary-Exodus)

**NET Note** - The last clause of this verse is rather unexpected here: "lest he meet [afflict] us with pestilence or sword." To fail to comply with the summons of one's God was to invite such calamities. The Law would later incorporate many such things as the curses for disobedience. Moses is indicating to Pharaoh that there is more reason to fear Yahweh than Pharaoh.

**Exodus 5:4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!"**

- **why do you draw the people away from their work** - Jer 38:4 Am 7:10 Lu 23:2 Ac 16:20,21 24:5
- **Get back to your labors** - Ex 1:11
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **YOU ARE DISTRACTING MY HEBREW SLAVES**

**But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work?"** - Now Pharaoh is really irritated and responds more harshly than in his first response. This is not a question but an accusation! Pharaoh is saying that you are just trying to "cause the people to refrain from their work" (NET). Pharaoh's priority was to keep the Egyptian economy moving, not to listen to the request of shepherds and slaves to worship a God he did not know.

**MacArthur** says that "Pharaoh saw this (THREE DAYS JOURNEY) simply as a ruse to reduce the hours put in by his slave work force." (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Get back to your labors!"** - This command is even directed at Moses and Aaron -- they are to get back to work!

**Mattoon** - This message is still echoed today. Christians are in the way of Satan's schemes. We are to be the salt of the earth. We are in the way when we speak about political corruption, educational corruption, and social corruption such as abortion, homosexuality, gambling, immorality, pornography, and alcohol. The message that the world screams at us is, "Conform to our ways. Do what we say! Live like us!" Such a message is pure hypocrisy and a total contradiction of the world's other message which says, "Do your own thing! Be yourself! You are your own boss!" This world is very confused about what it believes because those without Christ follow the author of confusion, Satan. He is their father and all that he can offer is emptiness, burdens, and destruction. His cookies may seem sweet at first, but they eventually become bitter.

**Exodus 5:5 Again Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!"**

- Ex 1:7-11 Pr 14:28
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Again Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now many-** Notice Pharaoh's name for the sons of Israel is **the people of the land** which is most likely a denigrating description. This Pharaoh was not afraid of their great numbers as was the Pharaoh described in Exodus 1:9-14. Their numbers mean a vibrant Egyptian economy!

**and you would have them cease from their labors!"** - To Pharaoh it was all about the economic machinery! Pharaoh implies that the loss of so much labor would cripple the economy.

**Exodus 5:6 So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying,**

- **taskmasters** - literally oppressors. Ex 5:14. Ex 5:10,13,15,19 1:11 Pr 12:10
- **their foremen** Ex 2:14. Nu 11:16 De 1:15 16:18 Jos 8:33 24:1,4 2Ch 26:11
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Parallel - Exodus 1:11+ (see also Ex 3:7+) So they appointed **taskmasters** over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.

## **FUMING PHARAOH ISSUES COMMANDS**

**So the same day** - Pharaoh is fuming and wastes no time in reacting to the command from God through Moses and Aaron. One effect of Pharaoh's immediate reaction was to demonstrate his authority, in effect saying "I AM THE BOSS IN EGYPT!"

**NET Note** - In Ex 5:6–14 the second section of the chapter describes the severe measures by the king to increase the labor by decreasing the material. The emphasis in this section must be on the harsh treatment of the people and Pharaoh's reason for it—he accuses them of idleness because they want to go and worship. The real reason, of course, is that he wants to discredit Moses (v. 9) and keep the people as slaves.

**Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying** - The **taskmasters** are the Egyptian bosses (slave drivers mentioned in Ex 1:11+), while the **foremen** ( ) are Hebrews with some degree of authority. The Septuagint of **foremen** (writers) is the Greek word [grammateus](#) which in the NT describes scribes, suggesting these Hebrews were keeping records of the slaves and the brick production (See [Constable's note](#) above). These Hebrew **foremen** had been selected for their ability to keep proper records of the work done and who had to ensure that the work done came up to what was expected.

**Taskmasters** (drive hard)([05065](#))([nagas](#)) is actually a verb meaning to oppress, to require payment and refers to forcing someone to do something, as when forcing persons to labor (Isa 58:3); of forcing or exacting payment of money (2 Ki 23:35). Taskmasters were responsible for keeping slaves productive and Egyptian taskmasters of the Israelites whom Moses led from the land of Goshen are mentioned five times (Exo. 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13f). There is also a good taskmaster (overseer) for **nagas** is used figuratively of righteousness being a good foreman or overseer (Isa. 60:17) in a restored Jerusalem. Nagas is used to describe the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, in Isa 53:7+ as "**oppressed** (nagas) and He was afflicted."

**Nagas** - 23x in 23v - drive hard(1), driver(1), exact(2), exacted(1), hard-pressed(2), oppressed(2), oppressor(4), oppressors(2), overseers(1), ruler(1), taskmaster(1), taskmasters(5). Exod. 3:7; Exod. 5:6; Exod. 5:10; Exod. 5:13; Ex 5:14; Deut. 15:2; Deut. 15:3; 1 Sam. 13:6; 1 Sam. 14:24; 2 Ki. 23:35; Job 3:18; Job 39:7; Isa. 3:5; Isa. 3:12; Isa. 9:4; Isa. 14:2; Isa. 14:4; Isa. 53:7; Isa. 58:3; Isa. 60:17; Dan. 11:20; Zech. 9:8; Zech. 10:4

**Foreman** ([07860](#))([shoter](#)) means a scribe, an official, a magistrate, a record keeper, and an officer. The word is used primarily to denote an officer or overseer. TWOT says shoter "is a general term, widely used for an official in many areas of government and society. It names the Jewish sub-officials under the Egyptian overseers who drove the Hebrews to hard labor (Exodus 5:6, 10), being accountable for both the amount and quality of the work (Exodus 5:14-19). During the years of wandering in the wilderness (Numbers 11:16), it designates the sub-officials of the seventy elders of Israel whom the Lord gave to Moses to share the weight of administration (Deut. 1:15). Throughout the early days of Israel, they seem particularly attached to the elders, sometimes in the civil administration (Deut. 31:28) or in matters relative to military affairs (Deut. 20:5ff.; Joshua 1:10; Joshua 3:2). The position apparently continues into the united and divided monarchies where they are involved in military affairs (1 Chron. 27:1; 2 Chron. 26:11) and as Levites, in judicial and religious matters (1 Chron. 23:4; 1 Chron. 26:29; 2 Chron. 19:11; 2 Chron. 34:13)." atterson)

**Gilbrant** - From the Syriac, we recognize an association with the art of writing used in very ancient times forensically, hence, the idea of "judge," "magistrate" or "prefect" of the people. Especially, shātar is used for the prefects of the people of Israel in Egypt, translated "the taskmasters of the people, and their officers" (cf. Exo. 5:6-19). Clearly, these men were leaders responsible for oversight of the group, in this case, the Israelite slaves who made bricks for Egyptian architectural projects. The prefects were beaten when the work slacked off (v. 14).

Overseers are noted also in the desert after Israel's departure from Egypt, such as the seventy "elders" who received a portion of the spiritual anointing of Moses (Num. 11:16), the officers who spoke to the army before battle (Deut. 20:9) and the officers who accepted God's covenant in the land of Moab (29:10). Moses commanded that all the elders and prefects of the people assemble to hear and learn the words of his song which bore witness to the testimony of God's laws (31:28). Joshua commanded the officers of the people to prepare the people for the crossing of the Jordan River (Josh. 1:10), and these same officers instructed the people regarding the procedures for following the Ark of the Covenant into the river (3:2ff). The officers are included and named as participants in the ceremonial blessings and cursings on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (8:30-34). In his old age, Joshua summoned all the leaders of Israel, including elders, heads, judges and officers, to admonish them to serve the Lord only (23:2, 11).

Shātar is also used of magistrates, such as the judges to be appointed in all the towns of Israel in Palestine, to "judge the people with just judgment" (Deut. 16:18). These magistrates were commanded not to pervert justice, not to show partiality and not to take bribes. Magistrates are mentioned in the organization of the Levites who were designated for service in the time of King David (1 Chr. 23:4ff). Certain Levites appointed for magistrate's duties are named in 26:29. Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites as magistrates in Jerusalem, "for the judgment of the Lord" and to decide disputed cases (cf. 2 Chr. 19:8, 11). Josiah also appointed Levites for prefect or magistrate work (34:13). Ants seem a wise and diligent group who work hard without the apparent oversight of prefects or magistrates, so why not the lazy person (cf. Prov. 6:6-9)? (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**Exodus 5:7 "You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves.**

- **Straw** - Ge 24:25 Jdg 19:19
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PHARAOH RATCHETS UP THE PRESSURE**

**You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously-** Pharaoh ratchets up the pressure by reducing the provision of straw to the Hebrew slaves. "Chopped straw was mixed in with the clay to make the bricks more pliable and stronger by first binding the clay together and then by decaying and releasing a humic acid similar to glutamic or gallic acid. This acid, also known as tannin, is also used in tanning animal skins to make leather. What it does is produce compounds that resist decomposition. When mixed with clay, it causes the clay of the brick to dry and harden. This is why it was important. This straw was provided by the Egyptians, but now Pharaoh tells them to get their own, believing they are goofing around because they want to do something he thought was a waste of time. The world today still has the same attitude as the Pharaoh. Society believes that worship is a waste of time. They still wonder why Christians go to church on Sunday and Wednesdays, etc." (Mattoon)

**MacKay** - The bricks were made of red clay gathered from the soil near the Nile. Chopped straw was mixed in with the clay to keep it workable, and also to help bind it together. The bricks that were formed were larger than modern bricks. (MC)

**Let them go and gather straw for themselves** - This will make the labor even more onerous. Pharaoh is actually being irrational for he wants more bricks but makes it now more difficult to fill the quotas!

MacKay - The totalitarian government seeks to keep the people under control by giving them more to do. (MC)

**Guzik** - To punish Israel for the request and to give them more work ("You seem to have enough time to make these crazy requests—then you must have enough time to work more!"), Pharaoh commanded that the Israelites must gather their own materials (specifically, straw) for making bricks.

**Kaiser** - "Chopped straw was mixed in with the clay to make the bricks more pliable and stronger by first binding the clay together and then by decaying and releasing a humic acid."

**Clarke** - The eastern bricks are often made of clay and straw kneaded together, and then not burned, but thoroughly dried in the sun. This is expressly mentioned by Philo ... 'because straw is the bond by which the brick is held together.' "

**THOUGHT** - Sometimes (or perhaps many times) when we obey the call of God, things do not get better, but they actually get worse!

Now in Exodus 5:6-14 we see a description of the severe measures ordered by the king to increase the difficulty of the brick making by forcing the slaves to provide their own straw. The NET Note adds that "The emphasis in this section must be on the harsh treatment of the people and Pharaoh's reason for it—he accuses them of idleness because they want to go and worship. The real reason, of course, is that he wants to discredit Moses (v. 9) and keep the people as slaves."

And yet clearly God is allowing the conditions to worsen for the Hebrews, even though it will have a temporary impact on Moses' credibility as the people blame him for the Pharaoh's increasingly harsh requirements. These worsening conditions will make it far less likely that the Hebrews would want to stay in Egypt when they finally are set free by Pharaoh. Years later after the 70 years of exile in Babylon when "Cyrus issued his decree permitting the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple, **most of the exiled Jews remained in Babylon**, where they had settled down and prospered during the exile period." But given the worsening labor conditions with Pharaoh, the Jews would gladly leave Egypt for the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So although Pharaoh meant it for evil, God used it for good, just as He had with Joseph's situation which he described in Ge 50:20 "As for you (HIS BROTHERS), you meant evil against me (JOSEPH), but God meant it for good **in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.**" And so by analogy, God would use the increasingly difficult circumstances to motivate the entire nation of Israel to follow their deliverer Moses.

**Mattoon** - Years ago, a small group of Japanese believers were heckled and abused whenever they assembled to worship the Savior, but the persecutors could not shake the faith of the new converts. Each time the Christians gathered, the mob would throw stones at them, but they still faithfully continued to have their weekly meetings. Eventually the opposition became so great that the outdoor services had to be temporarily abandoned. Later, when a time of relative peace and tolerance had come to the community, many were won to Christ. Returning to the spot where the believers had frequently been attacked, they began to pick up some of the rocks. Using them as part of the building materials, they constructed a small house of worship, rejoicing that God had worked all things together for good. Jesus says that His followers will meet with suffering and heartache, but He admonishes them not to be discouraged. Earth's sorrows are meant to be stepping stones in the process of sanctification. Glorifying in affliction will turn our troubles into spiritual triumphs!

**Exodus 5:8 "But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it. Because they are lazy, therefore they cry out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'**

- lay - Ps 106:41
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **LAZY LOAFERS SLAVES ARE SLACKERS!**

A slacker is one who shirks (avoids, neglects) work or responsibility.

**But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it** Pharaoh is a hard master, which reminds me of Pharaoh's "ruler" Satan who is a hard "master" to all who are still in bondage to sin and Satan! Dear believer, do not fall into a sin and back under the yoke of slavery to sin and Satan, because Christ has set us free to live as free men in the power of His Spirit (cf Ro 8:13<sup>±</sup>) and His blessed easy yoke (Mt 11:28-30<sup>±</sup>).

**J Ligon Duncan** - Isn't it interesting friends, the god of Egypt says, "Work, no rest, no Shiva." The true God says, "Rest." Now that's a battle we still fight today. The god of this world says, "Work, work, work, no rest." The God of heaven and earth, the one true God says, "On My day rest." My friends, that's not oppression, that's liberation. Can you imagine the children of Israel after being under this regime being told by God in the fourth Commandment. "And by the way for you there will be seven and a half weeks of mandatory vacation every year." Do you think there would have been any grumbling there? No, because God gives His people rest.

**Mackay** - Extant Egyptian records show that absenteeism was a major problem among those conscripted into the state workforce,

and not infrequently the excuse that was recorded was that a workman was offering to his god. Pharaoh's next statement therefore fits in with the contemporary situation in Egypt. They had time on their hands to think about other things and to suppose that there might be the opportunity for time off for a pilgrimage. The answer was to increase the work that they had to do. (MC)

**Because they are lazy, therefore they cry out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'** - Pharaoh reasoned that they had been slacking up on their work and now as a result they had extra time to think about going to worship.

**Lazy** (07503)(**raphah**) means to sink, to become slack, to relax, to cease (Jdg. 8:3; 2 Sa 24:16; Neh. 6:9; Ps. 37:8), to desist or leave alone (Ex. 4:26; Dt. 9:14; Jdg. 11:37; Job 7:19), to become discouraged, to become disheartened, to become weak, to become feeble, to let drop or let go (Job 27:6; = figuratively; Pr. 4:13 = figuratively; Song 3:4 = literally), to discourage, to leave alone, to let go, to forsake or abandon someone (Deut. 4:31; 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; 10:6; Ps. 138:8), to be lazy (Ex. 5:8, 17; Josh. 18:3; Prov. 18:9).

**Exodus 5:9 "Let the labor be heavier on the men, and let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words."**

- **they will pay no attention to false words** - 2Ki 18:20 Job 16:3 Jer 43:2 Zec 1:6 Mal 3:14 Eph 5:6
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHARAOH'S PERVERSION OF GOD'S WORDS

To pervert means to corrupt or interpret wrongly, which is exactly what Pharaoh did to the inerrant, inspired Word of truth from God! Like father like son, and Pharaoh was a pawn of Satan the ultimate perverter of God's Word when he said "**hath God really said?**" (Ge 3:1+). Satan's children continue in their incessant attempts to pervert the truth of God's Word, even to the point of calling it false! That is the height of deception! And when a person is deceived, they do not even know they are deceived! Pharaoh and his ilk remind me of men Peter's admonition "that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." (2 Pe 3:3-4+)

**Let the labor be heavier on the men**- Literally "let the work be heavy." "Pour it on" is the idea! Pharaoh's logic was reasonable - poor more work on the Hebrew slaves and blame it on Moses' demands and this would drive a wedge between the leader of the "rebellion" (so to speak) (Moses) and the sons of Israel. As we see in subsequent passages Pharaoh's scheme worked!

**Rayburn** - The [draconian](#) requirements that were imposed on the Israelites were intended to separate them from the propaganda they were hearing from Moses. And, as we will see, the punishment had its intended effect.

**And let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words**- Pharaoh is deceived. He is the one with "**false**" words and worships false gods. Pharaoh says that God's words spoken through Moses and Aaron "**lying words**" (דְּבָרֵי־שֶׁקֶר, *divre-shaquer*) and constitute the main reason for Pharaoh's new policy of oppression, reasoning that the oppressive conditions would discredit Moses. Notice the utter irony as here Pharaoh (representative of this fallen, Satanically controlled world) was saying that God's words were vain, empty and deceptive even though they actually were calling people to a higher order. Soon God would reveal that His words were true words and He would in fact have the last word, so to speak!

**Robert Rayburn** - The great stone monuments of ancient Egypt exist to this day in almost undiminished splendor. They were, however, largely confined, with the exception of statues of kings and gods, to temples and tombs. More ordinary dwellings, even palaces, were built of sun-dried bricks. Unlike in Mesopotamia, these bricks were not kiln-dried until a much later period. Straw was not, in fact, necessary; better bricks could be made without it in a kiln, but either nobody in Egypt realized this at the time or the abundance of free labor made a better technology unnecessary.

**J Ligon Duncan** - Pharaoh dares to call God's words **false**. "Don't listen to these false words. Make them worker harder so that they won't listen to these false words." Just as Satan did in the Garden (Ge 3:1+). As we've said before, the **Exodus is a battle between the Lord and Satan**. Vanderwaal says this: Pharaoh is an Old Testament Herod; he represents the seed of the serpent (Ge 3:15+), which seeks to kill the seed of the woman." But as we see Pharaoh attempting **todemoralize Israel and discredit** Moses, we learn one more thing for ourselves. We must not fail to factor the work of Satan himself in the difficulties and trials of our own lives and ministries. Oh, I know that there are people out there that find Satan literally under every rock. And I know that there are people out there that blame Satan for things that they have done themselves. But we would be foolish not to factor in the reality of the evil one and his [stratagems](#) working against the people of God (cf his [schemes](#) - Eph 6:11+), working against the plan of God, working against the deliverer of God. **And what we see here in Pharaoh's actions is nothing but the designs of the old serpent**

**against the seed of woman.** Now in your own lives, I don't know how that works out in every particular circumstance. But it does mean this: In your own difficulties and trials, you must never, ever forget that there is one who prowls about like a roaring lion who seeks to devour you (1 Pe 5:8+). But the one who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4+). And that in and of itself, doesn't it, presses us right back to the great challenge of Israel; to trust in God, trust in His word, walk in His ways.

**False** (08267)(**sheqer**) deception, disappointment, falsehood, lie, vanity. Speaks of words or activities which are false in the sense that they are groundless, without basis in fact or reality (Ps 38:19). The **false** witness of Exodus 20:16 (Dt. 19:18) involves a false accusation, an accusation that is groundless, not based on fact. The first use is by Satan's tool the Pharaoh in Ex 5:9 where the Septuagint translates **sheqer** with the word **kenos** which means empty, without truth, futile, without result. **Sheqer** defines a way of life that goes contrary to the law of God. The psalmist, desirous of following God, prayed: "Remove the **false** way from me" (Ps 119:29; cf false way in Ps. 119:104, Ps 119:128). **Vine** says "As "faithfulness" is a relational term, "falsehood" denotes "one's inability to keep faith" with what one has said or to respond positively to the faithfulness of another being.

Jeremiah 23:32 speaks of those who "prophesy lying dreams," that are founded on nothing more substantial than the dreamer's imagination. He speaks similarly of those who prophesy falsehood in Jeremiah 27:10 (cf. also Zech. 10:2; Zech. 13:3). No matter how persuasively or "logically" the prophet might speak, his words are groundless and false unless they are based on God's self-revelation. Isaiah 59:13 forms part of repentant Israel's confession. Included in this is the statement that they had conceived and uttered from their hearts lying (sheqer) words. Micah 2:11 portrays this attitude of Israel by saying that if a man whose way of life is "wind and falsehood (sheqer)" were to come to them with lies, that is the one they would choose as their prophet. (TWOT)

**Idols** are called sheqer in a number of passages (e.g. Isa 44:20; Jer 51:17). Jer 10:14-15 says of them that they are **sheqer** because "there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of mockery" (NASB). Habakkuk 2:18 speaks similarly of idols, asking what value they have, being 'teachers of falsehood,' that is, making empty promises and raising vain hopes. **Idols** were also described as deceptions, for people worshiped them even though the idols had no life in them (Jer. 10:14f). They were described as teachers of falsehood because of the empty promises associated with them. A person who makes an idol carries a lie in his hand and is too deluded to realize that there are no grounds for worship; it is a piece of stone or wood (Isa. 44:20; Jer. 51:17; Hab 2:18).

Other examples - **false** witness (Dt. 19:18, 20:16); **false** prophets (Jer. 5:31; Jer 20:6; Jer 29:9); of telling lies (Lev. 19:12; Jer. 37:14); a **liar** (Pr 17:4). Can describe **something done in vain** (1 Sa. 25:21; Ps 33:17); or an action without cause (Ps. 38:19[20]; 119:78, 86). About 35v describe the nature of deceptive speech -- spoken falsehood = Isa 59:3, teaches falsehood = Isa 9:15, to prophesy false vision = Jer. 14:14). It may also indicate a "deceptive character," as expressed in one's acts: "to deal treacherously" (2 Sa 18:13); "to deal falsely" (Hos. 7:1).

**Sheqer** - 109v - deceit(2), deceitful(3), deceiving(4), deception(3), deceptive(3), false(17), false hope(1), falsehood(19), falsehoods(1), falsely(19), liar(1), lie(14), lies(5), lying(12), lying visions(1), perjury\*(1), slander\*(1), treacherously(1), useless(1), vain(1), wrongfully(3). Exod. 5:9; Exod. 20:16; Exod. 23:7; Lev. 6:3; Lev. 6:5; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 19:18; 1 Sam. 25:21; 2 Sam. 18:13; 1 Ki. 22:22; 1 Ki. 22:23; 2 Ki. 9:12; 2 Chr. 18:21; 2 Chr. 18:22; Job 13:4; Job 36:4; Ps. 7:14; Ps. 27:12; Ps. 31:18; Ps. 33:17; Ps. 35:19; Ps. 38:19; Ps. 52:3; Ps. 63:11; Ps. 69:4; Ps. 101:7; Ps. 109:2; Ps. 119:29; Ps. 119:69; Ps. 119:78; Ps. 119:86; Ps. 119:104; Ps. 119:118; Ps. 119:128; Ps. 119:163; Ps. 120:2; Ps. 144:8; Ps. 144:11; Prov. 6:17; Prov. 6:19; Prov. 10:18; Prov. 11:18; Prov. 12:17; Prov. 12:19; Prov. 12:22; Prov. 13:5; Prov. 14:5; Prov. 17:4; Prov. 17:7; Prov. 19:5; Prov. 19:9; Prov. 20:17; Prov. 21:6; Prov. 25:14; Prov. 25:18; Prov. 26:28; Prov. 29:12; Prov. 31:30; Isa. 9:15; Isa. 28:15; Isa. 32:7; Isa. 44:20; Isa. 57:4; Isa. 59:3; Isa. 59:13; Jer. 3:10; Jer. 3:23; Jer. 5:2; Jer. 5:31; Jer. 6:13; Jer. 7:4; Jer. 7:8; Jer. 7:9; Jer. 8:8; Jer. 8:10; Jer. 9:3; Jer. 9:5; Jer. 10:14; Jer. 13:25; Jer. 14:14; Jer. 16:19; Jer. 20:6; Jer. 23:14; Jer. 23:25; Jer. 23:26; Jer. 23:32; Jer. 27:10; Jer. 27:14; Jer. 27:15; Jer. 27:16; Jer. 28:15; Jer. 29:9; Jer. 29:21; Jer. 29:23; Jer. 29:31; Jer. 37:14; Jer. 40:16; Jer. 43:2; Jer. 51:17; Ezek. 13:22; Hos. 7:1; Mic. 2:11; Mic. 6:12; Hab. 2:18; Zech. 5:4; Zech. 8:17; Zech. 10:2; Zech. 13:3; Mal. 3:5

**Exodus 5:10** So the taskmasters of the people and their foremen went out and spoke to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I am not going to give you any straw.



- **taskmasters** - Ex 1:11 Pr 29:12
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So the taskmasters of the people and their foremen went out and spoke to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I am not going to give you any straw - The people is the Hebrews. And thus the "net impact" of Moses' words to Pharaoh is to make things worse for the Hebrews not better! And as we will soon see, this accentuated adversity would test both the people and Moses.**

**Exodus 5:11 "You go and get straw for yourselves wherever you can find it, but none of your labor will be reduced."**

- **but none of your labor will be reduced** - Ex 5:13,14
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SEARCH FOR STRAW BUT SAME QUOTA**

**You go and get straw for yourselves wherever you can find it** - You Hebrew slaves are to search for your own straw.

**But none of your labor will be reduced** - The number of bricks produced was not to decrease.

As old **John Trapp** said Things commonly go backward with the saints before they come forward, so the corn growth downward ere it grow upward."

**Exodus 5:12 So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw.**

- **stubble** - Ex 15:7 Isa 5:24 47:14 Joe 2:5 Na 1:10 Ob 1:18 1Co 3:12
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SLAVES SEARCHING FOR STUBBLE**

**So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw** - Stubble or chaff would be found where fields had been harvested and the worthless chaff remained.

**Rayburn** - This is the typical Hebrew extravagance. All over that part of Egypt where they lived is all that is meant. The straw that had been provided before them up to now was cut from the fields, was of even length and easy to use. Now they used whatever they could find lying on the ground.

**Stubble** ([07179](#))(**qash**) refers to chaff, the short dry stumps of grain, corn, wheat, etc., left in a field after harvesting. Chaff burned quickly (Mal. 4:1), was of little value, was not highly prized and was a poor substitute for straw in brick making (Ex. 5:12). Chaff was regarded as worthless (Job 13:25; Isa. 33:11) and lacking the ability to resist opposition (Job 41:28f; Isa. 41:2). Figuratively, the Lord consumed the army of Egypt as easily as chaff (Ex. 15:7). Dhaff is easily driven away by the wind, and figuratively depicts man's inability to resist God's judgment (Ps. 83:13; Isa. 40:24; Jer. 13:24). Since chaff is easily consumed by fire, it figuratively described man's being consumed by the fire of God's wrath (Isa. 5:24; 47:14; Joel 2:5; Obad. 18; Nah. 1:10; Mal. 4:1).

**Qash** - chaff(5), straw(1), stubble(10). Exod. 5:12; Exod. 15:7; Job 13:25; Job 41:28; Job 41:29; Ps. 83:13; Isa. 5:24; Isa. 33:11; Isa. 40:24; Isa. 41:2; Isa. 47:14; Jer. 13:24; Joel 2:5; Obad. 1:18; Nah. 1:10; Mal. 4:1

**Exodus 5:13 The taskmasters pressed them, saying, "Complete your work quota, your daily amount, just as when you had straw."**

- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LET'S BREAK THEIR SPIRIT BUT GET THE BRICKS

**The taskmasters pressed them** - The idea of the Hebrew word translated pressed means to hasten, urge or insist and expresses a sense of urgency. Occasionally the word may point to "pressing" or "urging" people to do something they do not want to do. In Egypt, the slave drivers are described as "ones hurrying," or "ones pressing," the Hebrew slaves to complete their quota of work for the day.

**Saying, "Complete your work quota, your daily amount, just as when you had straw."** - Less straw but same number of bricks.

**Exodus 5:14 Moreover, the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not completed your required amount either yesterday or today in making brick as previously?"**

- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Moreover, the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not completed your required amount either yesterday or today in making brick as previously?"** - As Thompson points out "Now we will be the first to admit, we do not, at this point, really see the hand of God in any of this. If you are living this nightmare, it is difficult to actually see God at work. But He is at work. This is all setting the stage for the most remarkable deliverance of Israel in its history." ([Sermon](#))

**Mattoon** - The manner of beating may be similar to what is done today in the Middle East. The culprit lies on his belly, his legs being turned up behind erect, and the executioner gives him so many blows on the soles of the feet with a stick. This is a very severe punishment. The sufferer is unable to walk for many weeks after, and some are lamed by it for the rest of their lives.

**Exodus 5:15 Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why do you deal this way with your servants?"**

- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAELITES CRYING OUT TO PHARAOH NOT GOD!

**Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why do you deal this way with your servants?"** - The Hebrew **foremen** (Lxx - [grammateus](#) - scribes in NT) come to Pharaoh. Notice the shift in the **sons of Israel** compared to their cry in Ex 2:23+ - "they **cried out**; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God." Now they cry out to the Pharaoh (who claims to be a god). **Cried out** means to cry out (loud complaining) with an appeal for action, and usually in time of difficulty. (Also used in Ex 14:10 in fear of Pharaoh) They are crying out to the wrong person! Have you ever done this?

As **Thompson** says "They wanted to know why he was doing this. They wanted to know why he was demanding they get their own straw, maintain the same number of bricks and why they were being beaten. The real answer to their "why" question is that he is a man with a hardened heart against God and His word....The one Person they should be crying out to is God. When God's people cry out to God and seek Him, God hears and will help. But when God's people cry out to worldly men or worldly leaders, they are crying out to the wrong person." ([Sermon](#))

**Rayburn** - These Israelite foremen found themselves caught in the middle. They had been given an assignment that they could not possibly fulfill – the people could not make as many bricks as before if they had also to provide the straw – and so were being beaten for a failure they had no power to prevent. So they took their case to Pharaoh himself.

**J Ligon Duncan** - The Lord wanted them to cry out to Him, not to Pharaoh. Originally, they cried out to the Lord. In their hardship they cried out to Pharaoh (Ex 2:23). After learning their lesson at the Red Sea, they cried out to the Lord in hardship (Ex 14:10). The Lord answered, Pharaoh didn't. What's Moses telling you? God wants your devotion, your loyalty, your trust in the time of hardship.

**THOUGHT** - The sons of Israel had lost their focus. Does this not happen to us when we are experiencing adversity and cry out to God and then experience another or a series of adversities causing us to take our

sight off God and look for solutions from men? Bad things will happen. We will all encounter unexpected bumps in the journey of life. That is a given because we live in a fallen world and not yet in Heaven. So the question is when the "pharaoh's" of this world come at us, whether specific harsh people or adverse circumstances, to whom do we cry out? To other men or to the Rock of our salvation (Ps 89:26)?

**Exodus 5:16 "There is no straw given to your servants, yet they keep saying to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are being beaten; but it is the fault of your own people."**

BGT Exodus 5:16 χυρον ο δ δοται το ς ο κ ταις σου κα τ ν πλ νθον μ ν λ γουσιν ποιεν κα δο ο πα δ ς σου μεμαστ γωνται δικ σεις ο ν τ ν λα ν σου

NET Exodus 5:16 No straw is given to your servants, but we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are even being beaten, but the fault is with your people."

LXE Exodus 5:16 Straw is not given to thy servants, and they tell us to make brick; and behold thy servants have been scourged: thou wilt therefore injure thy people.

NLT Exodus 5:16 "We are given no straw, but the slave drivers still demand, 'Make bricks!' We are being beaten, but it isn't our fault! Your own people are to blame!"

KJV Exodus 5:16 There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.

ESV Exodus 5:16 No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people."

NIV Exodus 5:16 Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people."

ASV Exodus 5:16 There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault it in thine own people.

CSB Exodus 5:16 No straw has been given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' Look, your servants are being beaten, but it is your own people who are at fault."

NKJ Exodus 5:16 "There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, 'Make brick!' And indeed your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people."

NRS Exodus 5:16 No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' Look how your servants are beaten! You are unjust to your own people."

YLT Exodus 5:16 Straw is not given to thy servants, and they are saying to us, Make bricks, and lo, thy servants are smitten -- and thy people hath sinned.'

NAB Exodus 5:16 No straw is supplied to your servants, and still we are told to make bricks. Look how your servants are beaten! It is you who are at fault."

- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE SYSTEM IS UNFAIR!

**There is no straw given to your servants, yet they keep saying to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are being beaten; but it is the fault of your own people."** - The phrase **fault of your own people** means the Egyptians were not giving them the straw they needed for the bricks and the system is unfair! Yes, they are correct but that was exactly Pharaoh's evil plan - to not play fair with the Hebrews! Pharaohs wicked rationale was to design the brick making business as unfair so that the sons of Israel would reject the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Mark it down beloved, our enemy Satan does not play fair, so don't be duped into thinking that he does and will treat you fairly. He won't! "It is the sort of rational argument that many oppressed people have made in the expectation that self-interest would lead the tyrant to give more reasonable instructions. But they were as misguided in this hope as were the Jews almost 3500 years later who plead with the concentration camp directors that starving and freezing the workers was bound to diminish their productivity. (Robert Rayburn)

While we know the Hebrews did not enjoy their slavery (cf Ex 2:23), they enjoyed it more than the even harder conditions. "Yet what God allows and even performs in the work of bringing freedom made it feel worse, at least for a time." (Guzik)

Note the repetition of the phrase **your servants** (those who belong to Pharaoh) (Ex 5:15-16) In using this phrase it suggest they are trying to assure Pharaoh that they were loyal to him. "This is significant, though it was certainly civic protocol to refer to yourself in a subservient sort of way to the great king of Egypt. It adds to the sense that Israel is conflicted in the matter of whom to serve. No man can serve two masters, as Jesus said. The foremen are emphasizing their devotion, their loyalty to Pharaoh." (J Ligon Duncan)

**NET** - The word rendered "**fault**" is the basic OT verb for "sin"—תִּחַטֵּא (vékhata't). The problem is that it is pointed as a perfect tense, feminine singular verb. Some other form of the verb would be expected, or a noun. But the basic word-group means "to err, sin, miss the mark, way, goal." The word in this context seems to indicate that the people of Pharaoh—the slave masters—have failed to provide the straw. Hence: "fault" or "they failed." But, as indicated, the line has difficult grammar, for it would literally translate: "and you [fem.] sin your people." Many commentators (so GKC 206 §74.g) wish to emend the text to read with the Greek and the Syriac, thus: "you sin against your own people" (meaning the Israelites are his loyal subjects).

**Exodus 5:17 But he said, "You are lazy, very lazy; therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.'**

- Mt 26:8 Joh 6:27 2Th 3:10,11
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LAZY SLAVES

**But he said, "You are lazy, very lazy-** NET has " "You are slackers! Slackers!" ESV has "You are idle, you are idle." Pharaoh completely dismisses the cry of the Hebrew foremen and refuses to address it, instead resorting demeaning them with vicious "character assassination" as idle, lazy, slacker!

**Duncan** - The only reason you want to go out and worship, he says, is because you're lazy. You don't want to do any work. False gods, my friends, are unforgiving taskmasters. They may have a certain appeal at first, but they will always exact a heavy toll. The children of Israel are learning that lesson right now.

**Lazy...lazy (07503)(raphah)** means to sink, to become slack, to relax, to cease (Jdg. 8:3; 2 Sa 24:16; Neh. 6:9; Ps. 37:8), to desist or leave alone (Ex. 4:26; Dt. 9:14; Jdg. 11:37; Job 7:19), to become discouraged, to become disheartened, to become weak, to become feeble, to let drop or let go (Job 27:6; = figuratively; Pr. 4:13 = figuratively; Song 3:4 = literally), to discourage, to leave alone, to let go, to forsake or abandon someone (Deut. 4:31; 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; 10:6; Ps. 138:8), to be lazy (Ex. 5:8, 17; Josh. 18:3; Prov. 18:9).

**Therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.'** - Pharaoh's conclusion is it is their laziness which is motivating them to want to go and sacrifice to the LORD. Notice that here Pharaoh actually uses the Name Jehovah.

**Exodus 5:18 "So go now and work; for you will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the quota of bricks."**

- deliver - Eze 18:18 Da 2:9-13
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHARAOH PERSISTENTLY IMPLACABLE

**Implacable** means impossible to appease.

**David Thompson** - Now keep in mind "God is hardening Pharaoh's heart here." So when God is setting up a leader for His judgment by hardening his heart, one of the things He does is make that leader totally insensitive to real rational thinking. Things will appear to get worse for God's people before they get better." ([Sermon](#))

**So go now and work** - The idea is "go back to work" serving "me" (pharaoh). The Hebrew word **abad** (Lxx = **ergazomai**) is used He is saying serve me not your so-called LORD! Compare Ex 4:22 we read God's words that are to be spoken to Pharaoh "'Let My son

go that he may **serve** Me." What's going on in the heavenlies? There is a "lordship" battle and the question is who is lord, Pharaoh or God? The one you serves is your "lord." In Mt 6:24 Jesus made it very clear that "No one can **serve** two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot **serve** God and wealth." (Mt 6:24+)

**Work** (serve, worship) ([05647](#))(**abad**) means to work, to serve (be enslaved - Ex 6:6), worship. **Abad** is translated labor (Israel in Egyptian bondage - Ex 1:13,14, Ex 5:18, but **abad** translated **worship** after redemption (see below). In the NT the idea of **latreuo** is to render service to God, to worship, to perform sacred services or to minister to God in a spirit of worship.

**Uses of abad in Exodus** - Note that after Exodus 7:16 every use in a message to Pharaoh is translated serve and the Septuagint verb is **latreuo**. Ex 1:13; Ex 1:14; Ex 3:12; Ex 4:23; Ex 5:18; Ex 6:5; **REFERRING TO AFTER REDEMPTION** -- Ex 7:16; Ex 8:1; Ex 8:20; Ex 9:1; Ex 9:13; Ex 10:3; Ex 10:7; Ex 10:8; Ex 10:11; Ex 10:24; Ex 10:26; Ex 12:31; Ex 13:5; Ex 14:5; Ex 14:12; Ex 20:5; Ex 20:9; Ex 21:2; Ex 21:6; Ex 23:24; Ex 23:25; Ex 23:33; Ex 34:21

**Ligon Duncan** explains that "God is calling on His people to serve Him. The Lord God demands the complete and allegiance of His people, and He calls upon them to look to them for help. And this, by the way, is the repeated story in the history of Israel, as Israel looks to other nations for help against their enemies instead of looking to the Lord God. As that esteemed theologian, Bob Dylan, once said, "**You may serve the devil, or you may serve the Lord, but you all got to serve somebody.**" Exodus is about calling the people of God to serve Him, for we all have to serve somebody. The Israelite foremen here are showing their true colors as they cry out to Pharaoh for help. It's the Egyptian monarch who is the recipient of their plea, not the Lord, the God of Israel. They are not properly recognizing the authority and the power and the sovereignty of the Lord. Is that something that you struggle with? Do you run to Christ last of all? Is He your last resort when you're in a fix. You finally say, "Well, nothing else has worked, I guess I'll go to Him." This is still a struggle for the people of God, as it was in this day.

Pharaoh got meaner  
Provisions got leaner

**For you will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the quota of bricks**- Pharaoh's cure for what he thought was laziness is more work and harder work. That would cure these lazy Hebrews! And besides if they were working more, they would be more exhausted which would in turn alleviate their agitation and unrest. "Tyrants rarely admit to mistakes, however foolish, however likely to create trouble even for themselves." (Rayburn)

**Durham** quips "This Pharaoh, so unreasonable with men and so stingy with straw, is about to be shown up before Yahweh as no more than a man of straw."

**NET** - Jacob is amazed at the wealth of this tyrant's vocabulary in describing the work of others. Here, תִּקְחֶן (tokhen) is another word for "quota" of bricks, the fifth word used to describe their duty (Exodus, 137).

**Exodus 5:19 The foremen of the sons of Israel saw that they were in trouble because they were told, "You must not reduce your daily amount of bricks."**

- **they were in trouble** - De 32:36 Ec 4:1 5:8
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TROUBLE FOR THE HEBREW FOREMEN

**The foremen of the sons of Israel saw that they were in trouble because they were told, "You must not reduce your daily amount of bricks** - The Hebrew foremen (Lxx - **grammateus** - scribes in NT) were in the greatest trouble because they were the one's likely to be punished for the inevitable failure of the Israelites to meet their quota of bricks.

**Exodus 5:20 When they left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them.**

- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FOREMEN EXIT

## PHARAOH'S PALACE

**When they left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them** - Moses and Aaron must have been outside the palace, aware of the Hebrew foremen's attempt to get Pharaoh to lessen the load. Pharaoh's plan of divide and conquer is working at this point. He is pressuring the people to divide them and make matters difficult for Moses.

**NET** - Moses and Aaron would not have made the appeal to Pharaoh that these Hebrew foremen did, but they were concerned to see what might happen, and so they waited to meet the foremen when they came out.

**Exodus 5:21 They said to them, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."**

- **May the LORD look upon you** - Ex 4:31 6:9 Ge 16:5
- **you have made us odious** - Ec 10:1 Joe 2:20 2Co 2:15,16 Heb. to stink, Ge 34:30 1Sa 13:4 27:12 2Sa 10:6 1Ch 19:6
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HEBREW FOREMEN BLAME MOSES AND AARON

**They said to them, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight**(Literally - in the eyes of) **and in the sight of his servants** - "Moses, you have made us stink!"

"The foremen vented their anger on Moses and Aaron..."May Yahweh look on you and may he judge" could mean only that God should decide if Moses and Aaron are at fault, but given the rest of the comments it is clear the foremen want more... "so that he may judge [you]." (NET)

**Wiersbe** - It's unusual that slaves would have access to the king, but Pharaoh knew what he was doing. He told them what Moses and Aaron had demanded of him, and this turned the Jewish foremen against the leaders God had given them. The foremen told Moses and Aaron what they thought of them and then slandered them among the Jews. This wouldn't be the last time Moses would be opposed by his own people who didn't understand what the Lord was doing. Instead of going to Pharaoh to complain, the foremen should have gone to Moses and Aaron and suggested that they summon the elders and have a prayer meeting. They should have reminded themselves of the promises God had given Israel and claimed them by faith. What a difference that would have made for them and for their leaders! Alas, during the next forty years, complaining about God's will and criticizing God's leaders would be characteristic of the people of Israel; but are God's people much different today? (Ibid)

**David Thompson** - This is typically what the people of God do when things don't work out in a seemingly good way- they blame management who may or may not be responsible for the problem. They blame the God ordained leadership. Instead of the Hebrew leadership saying, we need to get our people to cry out to God for His help; they just start blaming Moses and Aaron for the trouble. This was not Moses and Aaron's fault." ([Sermon](#))

**J Ligon Duncan** - Remember the foremen were something like middlemen. They were Hebrews themselves, but they had apparently been handpicked by the Egyptians to serve as sub-taskmasters over their own people. And so they had a vested interest in the system working as it did. They got certain rewards as certain quotas were met. And so having realized that that little neat and tidy system was now wrecked because of Moses and Aaron's audience with Pharaoh, now they encounter Moses and Aaron, and they hurl verbal abuse at them. In verse 21, you can see that they basically blame Moses and Aaron for all their problems. In verse 19, they recognize that they are in trouble, but in verse 21, they say, "And you know who the source of this trouble is?" Not the taskmasters, it's not Pharaoh, it's Moses, Aaron. Then they're the problem. Can you hear the words of the King of Israel? Who are you? You troubler of Israel. And here again the foremen are accusing Moses and Aaron of being the troublers of Israel. They do it with a very hard word, because the prayer or the words that they use actually reflect the language of the traditional prayer of an innocent suffer. You will find language like this in the Psalms where David, having been wrongly dealt with, prays that God would judge those who had wrongly dealt with him. And now here is Moses, who has given up much for his people, being told that he has wronged the people of God, and hearing his own people say, "We call for God to judge you for what you've done." That must have hurt.

The phrase **for you have made us odious** means "you have made our aroma stink." This is the very word in Ex 7:21 of "fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became **foul**." The Septuagint translate the Hebrew (baash) with the verb **bdelusso** (from **bdéo** = stink or reek) which means literally to emit a foul odor or to render foul and figuratively means to strongly detest something on the basis that it is **abominable** (as used in Rev 21:8) (abominable = quite disagreeable, worthy of

disgust, whatever is odious to the mind or offensive to the senses). In Secular Greek usage **bdelusso** meant to feel a nausea or loathing for food and so came to be used of disgust in general. And so the verb **bdelusso** pictures one turning away from a stench as in disgust.

**Duncan** - It's also interesting, isn't it, that the foremen say that Moses and Aaron have caused them literally **tostink in the eyes of Pharaoh**. Isn't it interesting that in just a few verses, Moses will cause the Nile to stink before the Lord. Once again we see God sovereignly responding to the strategies of Satan and trumping it. For the Nile was divine, and God by His servant Moses will cause it to be odorous in the eyes of the Egyptians and before Him, showing again that He is the Almighty One, the powerful One. Moses and Aaron are faithful, and yet they meet with the immediate rejection and with the opposition of the people of God. Does that refrain sound familiar to you?

**Odious** (0887) (**baash**) means to have a bad smell or to stink. To be repulsive. It denotes a bad physical smell (blood in the Nile - Ex 7:21) or odor of spoiled manna (Ex 16:20). In a figurative sense, it speaks of a person who becomes strongly revolting to another, a metaphorical "stench in the nostrils."

**Louis Goldberg** - When Moses struck the water of the Nile, the fish died and the river became foul (Ex 7:18, 21). After the plague of the frogs, the land was foul (stank). When some tried to save their allotted share of manna, it bred worms and emitted a stink (Ex 16:20). But the double portion gathered on the sixth day did not become foul (Exodus 16:24). This term, stink, is also used by the Hebrew foremen of the Israelite slave force who complained to Moses and Aaron that they had made Israel's savour odious in Pharaoh's presence (Ex 5:21). Other usages for stink or foul: David cried out because his wounds were foul and festering on account of his folly (Ps 38:5). Jacob exclaimed to Levi and Simeon that their actions caused him to be odious to the people of Canaan with drastic consequences (Ge 34:30). Qohelet says that dead flies ferment and make perfumed oil stink (Eccl 10:1). The idea of abhorrence is seen in David's decision to fight for the Philistines. They thought that David had made himself odious to the Israelites (1 Sa 27:12). The affair of Absalom and his father's concubines was calculated to make Absalom abhorrent to David and to bring about misunderstanding between father and son (2 Sa 16:21). Other shades of meaning are seen in the actions of wicked men who are loathsome (or act disgustingly, Pr 13:5). Thus this word either describes objects that have a foul odor, bad relationships between people creating abhorrence, and the general principle that evil deeds are so rotten that they have a bad smell in God's nostrils. (See [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

**Baash** - acts disgustingly(1), became foul(3), become foul(2), become odious(2), grow foul(1), made(1), made themselves odious(1), made yourself odious(1), making me odious(1), odious\*(1), stink(2), surely made(1), surely made himself odious(1). Ge 34:30; Ex 5:21; Ex 7:18; Ex 7:21; Ex 8:14; Ex 16:20; Ex 16:24; 1 Sa 13:4; 1 Sa 27:12; 2 Sa 10:6; 2 Sa 16:21; 1 Chr. 19:6; Ps 38:5; Pr 13:5; Eccl 10:1; Isa 50:2

**To put a sword in their hand to kill us"** - Their reputation is now so bad that Pharaoh might gladly put them to death. They are saying that Moses and Aaron had only provided Pharaoh with a sword to kill them, it appeared that the prophet Moses was not going to be honored in his own land.

**F B Meyer** - "The Lord God brought a vine out of Egypt, but during the four hundred years of its sojourn there, it had undeniably become inveterately degenerate and wild."

**John MacArthur** - Whether Moses and his brother remonstrated with the foremen about their strong and wrong evaluation remains a moot point. Rather, the focus is upon Moses, who remonstrated with the Lord in prayer. Evidently, Moses did not anticipate what effect Pharaoh's refusal and reaction would have upon his own people. Confrontation with Pharaoh so far had provoked both angry resentment of Israel by the Egyptians and of Moses by Israel—this was not the expected scenario! (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

---

**Steven Cole** - **When you serve the Lord you will face opposition both from without and from within.**

Moses' first opposition came from the scoffing Pharaoh. We don't know how Moses and Aaron managed to get an interview with him, but the meeting didn't go well! You can understand why he didn't want to let two million slaves go free when they were the cheap labor force for the Egyptian economy. But as I just explained, God graciously gave Pharaoh an easier request at first: Rather than demanding that he immediately free all of the slaves, Moses simply asked for a three-day break so that they could worship God. But Pharaoh brazenly replied (Exod. 5:2), "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go."

Pharaoh was not impressed with this God whom Moses identified as "the Lord God of Israel" and "the God of the Hebrews" (Exod. 5:1, 3). He probably scoffed to his aides, "Some god that is who lets his people be our slaves for hundreds of years! Why should we

obey a god like that?"

Even so, today some may scoff, "Why should I bow before a crucified Savior? What kind of God would allow His Son to be killed in such a horrible way?" In fact, one leader in the emergent church called Jesus' death on the cross "cosmic child abuse"!

But Pharaoh's question is the crucial question for every person to answer: "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" Jesus asked His disciples (Matt. 16:13), "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied (Matt. 16:14), "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Then Jesus asked them the crucial question (Matt. 16:15), "But who do you say that I am?" Peter responded with his well-known confession, (Matt. 16:16), "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Everything in this life and for eternity depends on answering that crucial question correctly!

When you encounter opposition from those outside the faith, try to keep the conversation focused on the crucial question: "Who do you say that Jesus Christ is? Are you open to examine the evidence?" Invariably, a skeptic will bring up many objections, just as Pharaoh could have objected to obeying a God who let His people remain in slavery for hundreds of years. (I have two sermons on the church website that explain how to answer the most common objections.) But almost always, the underlying reason a person is hostile toward Christ is not intellectual; it's moral. Pharaoh didn't want to damage the economy and he didn't want to obey any god! The skeptic does not want to submit to Jesus as Lord because he loves his sin. But just as Moses eventually had to warn Pharaoh of the consequences if he did not obey the Lord, we gently need to warn hostile skeptics of the judgment to come that they will face if they don't submit their lives to Jesus as Lord.

But, Moses not only faced opposition from without. He also incurred the wrath of those within. When Pharaoh increased the workload on the Hebrew slaves, their foremen complained, only to find Pharaoh unsympathetic. He accused them and their people of laziness. When they left that encounter, they met Moses and Aaron and angrily said (Exod. 5:21), "May the Lord look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."

At this point, the Hebrew leaders were more concerned about relieving their harsh conditions while remaining enslaved than they were about being freed from slavery. They still identified themselves as Pharaoh's servants (Exod. 5:15, 16), not as servants of the living God. But they were God's people whom Moses had come to redeem. But Moses was not their favorite guy at this point, to say the least!

When you serve the Lord, you expect opposition from those outside the faith. After all, they're in Satan's domain of darkness and they do not know the Lord. They buy into this world's values, so when you confront them with sin, righteousness, and judgment, they don't like it. But you don't usually expect opposition from the Lord's people. We're all on the same team, aren't we? We're supposed to love one another, aren't we?

But in my experience, the most painful attacks you'll get when you serve the Lord don't come from outside the camp, but from within. You shouldn't immediately conclude that your critics are tools of the devil and dismiss all of their criticisms. Maybe they have some valid points, even if they're expressing them in a hostile manner. After listening, you may need to try to help them learn how to state their concerns in a better way. But, be prepared! When you serve the Lord, you will encounter opposition both from without and even from within! ([The Plan Isn't Working Exodus 5:1-6:30](#))

**Exodus 5:22 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me?"**

- **returned to the LORD**- Ex 17:4 1Sa 30:6 Ps 73:25 Jer 12:1
- **Why did You ever send me** - Nu 11:14,15 1Ki 19:4,10 Jer 20:7 Hab 2:3
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES' BLAMES GOD!**

**Then** - **Then** is an important [expression of time](#) and marks progression in the sequence of events, in this case Moses responding to the worsening conditions of the Hebrews and the railing accusations from the foremen of the Hebrews.

**Moses returned to the LORD** ([Jehovah - Yahweh](#)) - Note only Moses is going to the LORD, not Aaron, Moses' "mouthpiece." God had warned Moses that Pharaoh would harden his heart and would not let the people go, but God had not told him any specific details. He certainly had not told him that the work conditions would become even more oppressive and onerous. And so Moses faith



begins to falter. When our faith begins to fail, we often begin to question God rather than rest in God.

**And said, "O Lord (['adonay](#)), why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me?**- Note in these 2 passages of complaint Moses uses "You" three times, so he is directing his "attack" on the LORD! Now this is a man who has heard the LORD from a burning bush and he is still shaky! Moses seems to be having a crisis of faith. He blames God for Pharaoh's harsh treatment with the phrase **why have You brought harm**. Moses also asks why God had even sent him, a question to which he knew the answer. It was for deliverance of God's people Israel. Moses was taking his eye off the prize, so to speak.

**Harm** is the Hebrew [raa](#) which is evil in the sense of pain, calamity, trouble, or affliction, and not always in the sense of sin. Certainly not here. That God had allowed Pharaoh to oppose them had brought greater pain to the Israelites.

**David Thompson** - Moses never wanted this job in the first place. He is an 80 year old man who did every thing in his power to get out of this assignment and now this appears to be one big mess and disaster. Moses says, I came here in good faith and you have not delivered them at all. Moses has apparently forgotten what God told him. Now look at this. Moses is blamed for the bad treatment of the Israelites. God is blamed for the bad treatment of the Israelites and the one guy who is actually responsible for the bad treatment- Pharaoh- he is not blamed at all. This is exactly how Satan works- he calls good bad and bad good. The wrong people are being blamed here, and the one person who should be blamed isn't. Now carefully look at the question Moses asks God- "Why?" Why have you brought this evil to these people? Why did you ever send me here? It is a question we tend to ask God all the time- "Why, Why, Why?" You just want to say "quit whining and shut up and watch." ([Sermon](#))

**NET** - In view of the apparent failure of the mission, Moses seeks Yahweh for assurance. The answer from Yahweh not only assures him that all is well, but that there will be a great deliverance. The passage can be divided into three parts: **(1) The complaint of Moses** (Ex 5:22–23), **(2) The promise of Yahweh** (Ex 6:1–9), **(3) The instructions for Moses** (Ex 6:10–13). Moses complains because God has not delivered his people as he had said he would, and God answers that he will because he is the sovereign covenant God who keeps his word. Therefore, Moses must keep his commission to speak God's word. See further, E. A. Martens, "Tackling Old Testament Theology," JETS 20 (1977): 123–32. The message is very similar to that found in the NT, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet 3:4). The complaint of Moses (5:22–23) can be worded with Peter's "Where is the promise of his coming?" theme; the assurance from Yahweh (6:1–9) can be worded with Peter's "The Lord is not slack in keeping his promises" (2 Pet 3:9); and the third part, the instructions for Moses (6:10–13) can be worded with Peter's "Prepare for the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Pet 3:12). The people who speak for God must do so in the sure confidence of the coming deliverance—Moses with the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, and Christians with the deliverance from this sinful world.

---

**Steven Cole** - **When you serve the Lord you will face setbacks that make it seem like you're on the wrong path.** After the Hebrew foremen angrily confronted Moses, he complained to the Lord (Exod. 5:22-23), "O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all." Later, when the Lord told him to return to Pharaoh and demand that he let Israel go, Moses pessimistically replied (Exod. 6:12), "Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?" He was overwhelmed with his inability to speak well or to get through either to the Israelites or to Pharaoh. He had forgotten that it was God, not he, who would deliver Israel from Pharaoh's hand (Exod. 3:8). And, **Moses was not remembering that the Lord has reasons for His delays, even if we don't know what those reasons are.** The more Pharaoh resisted the Lord's appeals through Moses to let Israel go, the more it revealed God's patience and His righteous justice when He finally judged him. Also, Israel needed further humbling under Pharaoh's harsh treatment so that they would appreciate the Lord's deliverance when it came (A. W. Pink, Gleanings in Exodus [Moody Press], pp. 46-47). And, Moses needed to learn more about patiently waiting on the Lord. He needed to recognize that when deliverance finally came, it wasn't primarily due to him or his gifts, but to the Lord's sovereign grace toward His people. Setbacks in serving the Lord do not necessarily mean that you're on the wrong path, but rather that the Lord has further lessons to teach you and to teach those you're trying to serve. But be careful how you approach the Lord! Some say that we should imitate Moses' example here in being honest before the Lord, even if it means wrongly accusing Him. Rather than admitting that he doesn't understand and humbly asking for wisdom, Moses accuses the Lord of not delivering His people as He had promised to do. While I agree that we should be honest with the Lord (He already knows how you feel!), there is a right and wrong way to talk to the Almighty Lord! When my kids were young and they felt that I had disappointed them in some way, I wanted them to feel free to come to me with their complaints. But their attitude was crucial! If they came defiantly, accusing me of being unfair or uncaring, the accusation may have been legitimate (I wasn't a perfect father!), but their defiance was wrong. So I would say, "You're free to complain, but you need to talk to me in a respectful way; then I'll listen and try to help." So, if you face setbacks in serving the Lord, go to Him and pour out your complaint, but do it submissively, fearing Him. Acknowledge that you don't understand why He isn't working as you thought He should, but don't imply that you know better than He what needs to be done! He is the Lord and you're not! You may not understand the setbacks or delays, but He has His reasons and He's not under obligation to share those reasons. But we still need to keep serving Him. ([The Plan Isn't Working Exodus 5:1-6:30](#))

---

## **F B Meyer - Why is it that Thou hast sent me?**

Before God can use us, He must bring us to an end of ourselves. When Paul was summoned to the greatest epistles and labors of his life, his strength was drained to utter weakness, and he despaired even of life. So in the case of Moses and Israel.

Moses, for forty years, had been undergoing the emptying process; but perhaps when God called him to this great enterprise, there may have been a slight revival of confidence in himself, in his mission, his miracles, the eloquence of Aaron's speech. So in the rebuff he received from Pharaoh, in the bitter remonstrance of the elders of his people, in the sad consciousness that his efforts had aggravated their condition, the lesson was still further taught him — that of himself he could do absolutely nothing.

Israel also had begun to hope something from his mission. Through the brickfields the story ran of his early years, his uncompromising speech to Pharaoh, of his miracles; and the wretched slaves cherished faith in him and Aaron as their heaven-sent deliverers. They had, however, to learn that all such hopes were vain, and to see that the brothers, at the best, were as weak as themselves. Then the way was prepared to lean only on God.

Ourselves. — By repeated failures all along our life-course God is teaching us the same lesson. We fail to justify and then to sanctify ourselves. Our efforts to serve and please Him only end in increasing perplexity. The tale of bricks is doubled; the burdens augment; the strength of our purpose is broken; we are utterly discouraged; and then, when the soul is utterly desolate, the heavenly Bridegroom draws near and says, "I will do all; I am Alpha and Omega; I am thy salvation."

**Exodus 5:23 "Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all."**

- **to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name** Ps 118:26 Jer 11:21 Joh 5:43
- **You have not delivered Your people at all** - Heb. delivering, thou hast not delivered, Isa 26:17,18 28:16 Heb 10:36,37
- Exodus 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **QUESTIONING GOD'S PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE**

**Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all** - Moses says his words have created more bad than good. Pharaoh denied knowing the name of God and it essentially set up a confrontation in which Pharaoh set about to prove his absolute authority and discredit the words of Moses (and in essence the words of Yahweh). So the stage is set for a titanic battle between good and evil and Moses feels now like evil is winning out. He has to remember like we all do that "delay is not denial." God's timing for the fulfilling of His promises does not necessarily coincide with our finite human reasoning, for only He has the "grand picture" of His plan for the ages which will begin with the nation of Israel. "As the Israelites turned on Moses, now Moses turns on the Lord. Moses had, you remember, expressed misgivings about the Lord's plan from the beginning and now it seems all of those misgivings had been confirmed by events. By doing what the Lord had told him to do matters had become worse not better." (Rayburn)

**Wiersbe** - God's chosen servants must expect opposition and misunderstanding, because that's part of what it means to be a leader; and leaders must know how to get alone with God, pour out their hearts, and seek His strength and wisdom. Spiritual leaders must be bold before people but broken before God and must claim God's promises and do His will even when everything seems to be against them. (Ibid)

**Mattoon** - Moses had God on a time table. We tend to rush God too, and be impatient with Him. It's in times like these we need to learn to trust in Him and wait. (Pr 3:5-6, Ps 27:14)

When her husband, Edmund Gravely, died at the controls of his small plane while on the way to Statesboro, GA, from the Rocky Mount-Wilson airport, NC, his wife Janice kept the plane aloft for two hours until it ran out of fuel. During this time she sang hymns and prayed for help. As the plane crossed the South Carolina-North Carolina border, she radioed for help: "Help, help, won't someone help me? My pilot is unconscious. Won't somebody help me?" Authorities who picked up her distress signal were not able to reach her by radio during the flight because she kept changing channels. Mrs. Gravely finally made a rough landing and crawled for 45 minutes to a farmhouse for help. How often God's people cry out for help to God, but switch channels before God's message comes through. They turn to other sources for help, looking for human help. When you cry out to God for His intervention, don't switch channels! Be still and wait for His direction and guidance.

Moses seems to have forgotten that God had forewarned him that Pharaoh would not let the people go unless he was compelled (Ex 3:19+) "But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, **except under compulsion** (ESV = "unless compelled by a mighty hand.")" So Moses should not have been totally surprised by Pharaoh's refusal when they quoted Jehovah's command to "**Let** My people **go!**"

**THOUGHT** - I think we are all at least at times like Moses. We forget the truth of the Word of God and we misinterpret circumstances and fail to interpret them based on the truth (and promises) of God.

**J Ligon Duncan** - The protest of Moses is one of the most amazing passages in all of the Bible. In this passage, Moses says three things to God.

Look at verse 23. First, he says, "Lord, You are responsible for this evil." Now I know that you are looking for those words. But he says it in a question. He says, "Oh Lord, why have you brought harm to this people, but don't be fooled by the form of the question. You see what Moses is saying. "Lord, you are responsible for this." The very question assumes that God must answer for having done something wrong. Why have You done evil to this people, Moses says.

Secondly, he says, "Lord, You shouldn't have sent me." Again, he does it in the form of a question. "Why did you ever send me?" But behind that question is actually a charge. "Lord, You should never have sent me in the first place." And then it gets worse.

Thirdly, he says, "Lord, You failed on the promise that You made, and you've made things worse than they were. And again, he forms that charge with a question, but here is the language. "Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your People at all."

Now this is a fascinating exchange. But I want you see two things that are happening simultaneously. One bad and one good. First, Moses is wrong to accuse the Lord. And in accusing the Lord wrongly, Moses is revealing what we often do when we don't like God's providence. Moses accuses God here of being unconcerned for His people. Wait a minute, time out. Who had had to convince Moses to go to Egypt to help his people? Had Moses done so willingly? I heard Your word. Send whomever You want. Not me. Now wait a second. Moses is acting as if he is the one with the heart of compassion. So often, when we face trials or worse, when we see those that we love with all our hearts face trials, our first reaction is to think, Lord God, how could You do this. Because for a moment Satan blinds us to the deviousness and the wickedness of our own hearts, and lets us believe that we are more compassionate than God. And that's precisely what Moses is doing here. "Lord, if I were God, I wouldn't do this. And yet only a few days before, Moses had to be coached to come to the aid of his people. Who cared more about the people of God? God or Moses? There's no comparison. There's no question. God had the heart for His People, and yet Moses thinks he's more loving. Beware when you think that you are more loving than God.....

But there's something else here that just boggles my mind. It's happening at the same time. Do you realize that even though Moses lashes out against God, do you realize that God, even in that, is building His heart in Moses? I mean, Moses just a few weeks before, had had to be coaxed into going to the children of Egypt. Now his heart is genuinely broken when he sees his people being treated in the way they are being treated. You see, it's not that Moses is more compassionate than God. It's that Moses is being brought up to speed, with the pre-existent, with the eternal compassion of God for His People. Moses is being molded into the image, into the heart of His God in compassion for His people; to the point that over and over in the book of Exodus, Moses, at crucial points, because of his heart for God's people, worked in him by God's Grace, will intercede for the people of God, and call on God to show them favor even though they don't deserve it. Though Moses doesn't know it here, as his heart is breaking for his people, he is merely emulating the eternal love and compassion of God for the children of Israel.

The Lord responds mercifully. In mercy, he tell Moses, and you'll see it in verse 1 of Exodus 6, then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for under compulsion he shall let them go. And under compulsion, he shall drive them out of this land." The Lord in His mercy tells Moses that Pharaoh will not only let Israel go, he'll drive them out of the land. He will be delighted to be rid of them when the Lord is finished. God is in control, not Pharaoh.

**A W Pink** - Moses did well in turning to the Lord in the hour of trial, but it was most unseemly and irreverent of him to speak in the way that he did—alas that we, in our petulant unbelief, are so often guilty of asking similar questions. It is not for the servant to take it upon him to dictate to his master, far less is it for a worm of the earth to dispute with the Almighty. These things are recorded

faithfully for “our admonition”. There was no need for Jehovah to hurry. His delay in delivering Israel and His permitting them to endure still greater afflictions accomplished many ends.

1. It furnished fuller opportunity for Pharaoh to manifest the desperate wickedness of the human heart. It gave occasion for the Lord to demonstrate how that He “bears with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction”.
2. It served to show more clearly how righteous God was in visiting Pharaoh and his subjects with sore judgment.
3. And, too, Israel needed to be humbled: they also were a stiff-necked people, as is clear from the words of their leaders to Moses and Aaron on this occasion. Moreover, the more they were afflicted the more would they appreciate the Lord’s deliverance when His time came.

Let, then, the writer and reader take this to heart: the Lord always has a good reason for each of His delays. Therefore, let us recognize the folly, yea, the wickedness of murmuring at His seeming tardiness. Let us daily seek grace to “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him”.

**Deliver** (05337) (**natsal**) means primarily to deliver, often by the power of one entity overcoming another. The Lxx is [rhuomai](#) which means to rescue out of danger.