

Exodus 5:10-6:1 • Not the Expected Response

Introduction

It might be useful to list all the things that God **DIDN'T** specifically state to Moses would happen and compare them to the things He **DID** provide in advance. The basic goals were given that God would redeem Israel, deliver them from Pharaoh, and guide them to the Promised Land, but He purposely left out a lot of the “in between” details. Yes, there would be resistance by Pharaoh, but there was no mention that Pharaoh would force the Hebrews to find their own straw and work under even more duress. But the lack of providing each and every detail was not a test of God’s Word but rather a test of man’s faith. At one time or another—perhaps even many times in the course of a lifetime—each of us is going to find ourselves in a place that we were sure God led us to but later causes us to doubt that was the case because things aren’t turning out the way we envisioned. We did not get the response that we expected.

¹⁰So 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. ¹¹You go and get straw for yourselves wherever you can find it, but none of your labor will be reduced.’”

¹²So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³The taskmasters pressed them, saying, “Complete your work quota, your daily amount, just as when you had straw.”

¹⁴Moreover, 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?”

¹⁵Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, “Why do you deal this way with your servants? ¹⁶There 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.”

¹⁷But he said, “You are lazy, very lazy; therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ ¹⁸So go now and work; for you will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the quota of bricks.”

¹⁹The 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.” ²⁰When they left Pharaoh’s presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them. ²¹They 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.”

[Read v.10-14]

Q: What is the difference between “taskmasters” and “foremen”?

A: “Foremen” are Hebrews in charge of groups of other Hebrews; “taskmasters” are Egyptians that are in charge of foremen.

Q: Who communicated Pharaoh’s new orders?

A: Both the taskmasters and foremen jointly.

Q: Who was punished when the quota was not met?

A: The foremen. This system is similar to U.S. prison systems that use “trustees” or inmates to guard and supervise other inmates. The idea is to get Hebrews to do the dirty work for the Egyptians.

Q: What was the purpose of these new rules?

A: It was Pharaoh’s attempt at quashing belief and devotion to God.

Q: How did God use these changes for His own purpose?

A: Unbeknownst to the Hebrews, God was preparing the people physically for the arduous pilgrimage to come.

[Read v.15-21]

Q: What is the word used repeatedly by the foremen in v.15-16 that may be designed to appease Pharaoh?

A: They repeatedly refer to themselves as “your [Pharaoh’s] servants”. It’s a term that attempts to evoke an image of the Hebrews that is contrary to Pharaoh’s previous statements concerning fear of the Hebrews as an enemy.

Q: Why does Pharaoh reject their plea?

A: Because of their request to serve God.

Point: One of the things at work here is God’s “sovereignty”; that is, who exactly is Lord and King? It’s an issue that must be settled for **BOTH** the Hebrews **AND** the Egyptians through Pharaoh that **BOTH** are to be brought into proper submission as **HIS** servants.

Q: Based on their phrasing in v.21, what lesson did the foremen learn that was conveyed—probably not consciously—in their complaint to Moses?

A: They no longer refer to themselves as “servants” of Pharaoh but recognize the taskmasters as such. “You have made us odious in Pharaoh’s sight and in the sight of his servants”. The crisis has forced them to see the truth that they do not belong to Pharaoh.

²²Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “O LORD, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? ²³Ever 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.”

¹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.”

Q: What are the foremen really questioning in their accusation, “May the LORD look upon you and judge you”?

A: It’s an expression of that day that strongly states that someone has misspoken in the name of the Lord. Because Pharaoh’s reaction was not what anyone expected, they are questioning whether Moses and Aaron are truly representing God accurately.

[Read v.22-23]

Q: What are some of the things we can learn about Moses’ response to God in a situation which is not turning out as we expected?

1. **Go to the Source.** Whereas the foremen blamed Moses and Aaron, Moses directly inquires of God.
2. **Be Honest.** State both your own feelings and the way you see things honestly, laying out the situation as it appears regardless of how negative.
3. **Don’t Embellish.** It is what it is—nothing more or less.
4. **Be Most Concerned for His Desire.** Moses sums it up with “*You have not delivered your people at all*”, showing that he is more concerned about God’s will being fulfilled than anything else.

[Read v.6:1]

Q: How would you paraphrase God’s response to all that’s happened?

A: “I am working according to My own ways and timing. You will see this come about through my dealings with Pharaoh.”

Q: Why do you suppose that everyone involved expressed one way or another whether God was working?

A: Because nothing was happening according to the way they envisioned. When they took God at His word that He would free them, they saw it happening in a certain way, perhaps just being automatically let go. It wasn’t happening in the way they wanted.

Q: How might this apply to us personally and prophetic Scripture in particular?

A: Other people are often part of the scope of God’s work in our own life, so that there may be interactions with others. In other words, God isn’t just working something in us alone but in others at the same time through the same process/situation. As far as Scripture is concerned, the result is just like God foretold, but He doesn’t always provide the granular details of the journey getting there. If you think about it, both these reasons are applicable in each case.

Overall Application

- *How do you judge whether something is going according to God's will? Is it only if everything seems to be going well? How do you deal with adversity or timing that isn't to your liking?*
- *Have you ever considered that part of a given process may be issues of lordship? That God is forcing you to first decide whether He is sovereign over you or not?*
- *How do you pray/communicate back to God in times of hardship and/or testing? Do you pray like you wish things were or do you plainly come before God with things as they are? Or do you not come before Him at all and look at something/someone else to blame?*
- *Do you see that just because things don't go the way **YOU** envisioned them that it doesn't mean that God is not working? Do you understand this to be a test of faith?*