

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: September 10, 2017
Lesson Title: "Confrontation"
Lesson Passage: Exodus 7:1-13

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In Exodus 6:28, the Lord repeats the command recorded in Exodus 6:11, "Tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of this land." And Moses once again expresses his doubt that he can speak persuasively to the Pharaoh, because he is not an eloquent speaker. To reassure Moses, the Lord repeats His intention to send Aaron with Moses as a spokesman, and to provide "signs and wonders" and "acts of judgment" to persuade the recalcitrant Egyptian ruler. Armed with these divine promises, Moses and Aaron go to the court of the Pharaoh and carry out the Lord's command.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Explain why the mission assigned to Moses would be difficult.
- (2) Explain why Moses felt he was not capable of carrying out this mission.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Invite your class to explain why this lesson was titled, "Confrontation." Suggest that Exodus 6:10-13 tells us why there was a confrontation between Moses and the Egyptian Pharaoh. (The mission of Moses was to "bring the Israelites out of Egypt," but the Pharaoh was determined not to let them leave the country.) Then ask: "Why did the Pharaoh want to keep the Israelites in Egypt?" As class members discuss this question, refer to Exodus 1:8-14, then comment: The Israelites had become the major source of slave labor in Egypt, and to lose this supply of cheap labor probably would have a serious impact on the economy. (That was a major argument against abolition of slavery in the Southern USA, in the 19th century. The pro-slavery people argued that, without slave labor, crops would rot in the fields.)

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Suggest that the dialogue between the Lord and Moses featured in our lesson passage actually begins in Exodus 6:28. Read Ex. 6:28-30, then comment on the meaning of Moses' response in v. 30: His protest, "I am of uncircumcised lips," is not a reference to the religious ritual of circumcision; Moses means that he does not have "open lips," i.e., he does not speak well enough to persuade the Pharaoh.

2. Interpret what the Lord says to Moses in Ex. 7:1-2: (1) "I make you as God to Pharaoh" means that in the struggle with Pharaoh Moses will possess the authority of God. (2) Once again, Moses is told that Aaron will be God's spokesman (v. 2)

3. *Refer to verses 3-5:* (1) The Lord once again anticipates the Pharaoh's stubborn resistance (v. 3). "Signs and wonders" refer to displays of God's power in the plagues. These are called "great acts of judgment" in v. 4. (2) These signs and wonders will dramatize the defeat of the gods of Egypt, so that the Egyptians shall know that God alone is the Lord (v. 5). COMMENT: The whole structure of ancient Egyptian society rested on their religion. Because they believed that their 2,000 gods controlled all the forces of nature and maintained the universe, they constantly sought to appease them through rituals and offerings. The Pharaoh, their supreme ruler, was thought to possess divine power, and was venerated as the go-between between the people and their gods. So, the fulfillment of God's promise in v. 5, "the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord," would mean more than the loss of their slave labor. It would threaten their whole culture.

4. *With reference to Exodus 7:7, note that Moses' life was divided into three equal periods of forty years each:* (1) Acts 7:23 tells us that he was forty years old when he first fled from Egypt. (2) Ex. 7:7 says that he was eighty years old when God commissioned him to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. (3) And Deut. 34:7 tells us that Moses was 120 years old when he died.

5. Note God's provision of magical powers that Moses and Aaron can use to convince Pharaoh that they are acting upon divine orders (Exod. 7:8-9): (1) These magical powers were intended to influence Pharaoh, not the people in general. They had previously used similar "signs" to win over the "elders of the children of Israel" (Ex. 4:29-30). (2) The rod belongs to Aaron, but he will use it in response to Moses' commands (Ex. 7:9). (3) When Aaron casts the rod to the ground in front of Pharaoh, it will become a serpent. NOTE: The Hebrew word (*tannin*) translated "serpent" actually denoted a dragon or primeval monster.

6. Discuss Moses's and Aaron's confrontation with Pharaoh (Exodus 7:10-13): (1) Moses and Aaron carry out the Lord's command before Pharaoh and members of the royal court. Aaron casts his rod down in front of them, and it becomes a serpent (v. 10). (2) But Pharaoh summons his magicians ("sorcerers") and they duplicate Aaron's feat (v. 11). NOTE: The "magicians of Egypt" were thought to be custodians of the powers of Egyptian gods. So, we are reminded once again that Moses and Aaron were not only challenging Pharaoh's authority; they were also demonstrating the superiority of the living God over the mythical deities of Egypt. (3) Aaron's serpent devours all the other serpents, thus demonstrating how Israel's God will vanquish all foreign powers and their gods. (4) But, amazingly, the Egyptian sovereign remained stubborn, even in the face of this show of divine power (v. 13). (However, Moses and Aaron had been warned that this would happen (Ex. 7:3).

CLOSING THE LESSON

A final comment: This initial confrontation demonstrated the sovereignty of Israel's God, His power to vanquish all opponents.

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