

MOSES RETURNED TO EGYPT

Exodus 4:29 - 7:13

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh

Key-location: Egypt

Key-repetitions:

- Moses used the excuse that he stuttered (Ex 4:10; 6:13, 30).
- Moses prayed; God responded (Ex 5:22-6:1).
- The Lord spoke to Moses (Ex 6:1, 10, 13; 7:1, 9).

Key-attitudes:

- Israelite leaders' gratitude when Moses first told them that God was concerned about them.
- Pharaoh's rage when Moses and Aaron challenged his absolute authority as king.
- Israelites' anger at Moses when Pharaoh increased their workload.
- Moses' disillusion when Pharaoh increased the Israelites' suffering.
- God's determination to free his people.

Initial-situation:

God promised to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan. Joseph, a descendant of Abraham, became governor of Egypt and saved the country during a prolonged drought. During the drought, Joseph invited his family to move to Egypt. Joseph, his brothers and their families continued living in Egypt after the drought ended, and they had everything they needed. Years later, Egypt had a king who knew nothing about Joseph, was afraid of the Israelites, and made plans to destroy them.

About 350 years went by with the Israelites in Egypt before Moses was born. Moses was adopted by the princess and lived as a prince in the Pharaoh's palace for forty years. Moses tried to help the Israelites by killing a cruel Egyptian. Then Moses fled to the desert, where he became a shepherd for forty years. God instructed Moses to return to Egypt to liberate the Israelites from slavery, but Moses objected. God answered Moses' objections, until Moses obeyed and returned to Egypt.

Initial-problem:

Moses and Aaron gathered Israel's leaders and told them everything the Lord had told Moses. The Israelites were thankful the Lord had heard their cries.

Final-situation:

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and it turned into a snake. Egyptian magicians threw down their staffs, which also turned

into snakes. But Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs. Yet, Pharaoh's heart became hard and he wouldn't listen to them, just as the Lord had said.

BIBLE STORY

Moses and Aaron with the Israelite Leaders

Moses and Aaron met with the leaders of Israel and told them everything the Lord had told Moses. The leaders believed. They heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their sufferings. They bowed down and worshiped the Lord (Ex 4:29-31).

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.'"

Pharaoh replied, "I don't know this Lord and I won't let Israel go! Moses and Aaron, you're stopping this multitude of people from working" (Ex 5:1-5).

Pharaoh ordered the slave masters, "Don't supply the Israelites with straw for making bricks; make them gather their own. If they work harder, they'll stop listening to lies."

Slave masters beat the Israelite foremen and asked them, "Why didn't you meet your quota of bricks?"

Pharaoh told the Israelite foremen, "You're lazy! That's why you whine, wanting to sacrifice to your Lord. Get to work" (Ex 5:5-18).

The Israelite foremen told Moses and Aaron, "May the Lord punish you for making Pharaoh and his officials hate us! You gave them an excuse to kill us."

Moses prayed, "Lord, why are you treating this people so badly? Is this why you sent me? Since I spoke to Pharaoh in your name, things have gotten worse for your people!" (Ex 5:19-22).

The Lord spoke to Moses, and Moses quoted the Lord's words to the Israelites, "I am the Lord. I'll free you from the oppression of the Egyptians. I'll bring you to the land that I promised to give Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It will be your own country. I am the Lord."

The leaders didn't listen to Moses; their spirits were beaten down by harsh slave conditions (Ex 6:1-9).

Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh

The Lord told Moses, "Tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go from his country."

Moses answered, "If the Israelites won't listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen?" (Ex 6:10-30).

The Lord told Moses, "I'll multiply miraculous signs and wonders, but Pharaoh will not listen to you. I'll bring out my people, the Israelites, with mighty acts of judgment. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (Ex 7:1-7).

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh. Aaron threw down his staff in front of Pharaoh and it turned into a snake. The Egyptian magicians threw down their staffs; which also turned into snakes. But Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs. Pharaoh's heart became hard and he wouldn't listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said (Ex 7:8-13).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were Pharaoh's reactions when Moses told him that the Lord wanted him to let the Israelites leave Egypt?
2. How did the Israelites react when Pharaoh increased their labor?
3. How did Moses react when he obeyed God and things got worse for the Israelites?
4. Why does obeying God sometimes result in things getting worse before they get better?
5. After Pharaoh increased the Israelites' work and oppression, why would they not listen to Moses sharing God's word?
6. What were some of the occasions when Moses prayed and God responded?
7. What are some ways God has answered your prayers?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **People who do not know God may listen to neither God's word nor his messengers.** Pharaoh neither knew nor respected God. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron (Ex 5:3).
2. **God's people may suffer for doing good in an evil world.** Moses and Aaron obeyed God and took their message to Pharaoh. As a result, the Hebrews suffered harder work and more oppression (Ex 5:4-9).
3. **Leaders may suffer as a result of sharing God's vision for his people.** The Israelites suffered as a result of Moses obeying God (Ex 5:-9). The Israelite foremen wanted God to punish Moses and Aaron for making Pharaoh and his officials hate them and making things worse for them (Ex 5:15-21).
4. **God's time schedule and his methods may be different from the desires of people.** Moses obeyed God and spoke to Pharaoh (Ex 5:2-3). Pharaoh increased the Hebrews' workload. Moses objected that God had not rescued his people. Moses expected faster results and fewer problems (Ex 5:6-9, 22-23).

5. **People whose spirits have been broken by harsh conditions, have a hard time listening to God's word.** Israelite leaders didn't listen to Moses after Pharaoh increased their workload. Their spirits were beaten down by harsh slave conditions (Ex 6:1-9).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Invite four volunteers to imagine themselves participating in two different dialogues.

1st Two volunteers imagine they are Egyptians and they are justifying why the Israelites need to work harder and suffer more oppression.

2nd Then two other volunteers imagine they are Israelites talking about how things got worse after they listened to Moses giving his message from God.