

# Exodus 7:1-7

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-7/exodus-71-7/>

*This passage is the LORD's response to the latest iteration of Moses using the excuse that he is not eloquent enough to talk to Pharaoh. The LORD accommodates him by restating His appointment of Aaron as his mouthpiece before Pharaoh. Moses will receive the LORD's message and then tell Aaron to convey it to Pharaoh. The purpose of this was to not only deliver Israel from Egyptian slavery but also to demonstrate that He is the sovereign God all creation. The section concludes with a statement of complete obedience by Moses and Aaron and also the ages of the two men when all this took place.*

Verse 1 begins the section (verses 1 – 7) describing the final preparation of Moses for his role as deliverer. Again, *the Lord said to Moses* several things that he needed to know, including answering Moses' question in 6:30 ("how then will Pharaoh listen to me?"). To alleviate Moses' fear of speaking, the LORD told him *I make you as God to Pharaoh*. The word for "God" used here is *Elohim*, the same as in [Genesis 1:1](#). It is used rarely to refer to humans, as in [Psalm 82:1](#) and [Psalm 82:6](#). Jesus quotes [Psalm 82:6](#) to answer the Jews' objection to Him claiming to be God in [John 10:33-39](#). The main idea of *Elohim* is an authority with power to rule. God is the ultimate *Elohim*, but there are others subordinate to Him. Angels are referred to as *Elohim* as well, as in [Psalm 8:5](#) ([Psalm 8](#) is about ruling and authority.)

Also, the Hebrew does not have the word "as" – it was added by translators to convey the meaning underlying that stated above regarding the word *Elohim*, namely that Moses did not suddenly become a divine being. Instead, it means that Moses would be a divine representative in the eyes of Pharaoh, an authority appointed by God to direct Pharaoh. This became apparent to Pharaoh when he spoke the words of the LORD to him and also when Moses seemed to be able to control the plagues.

In addition, the LORD told Moses that *your brother Aaron shall be your prophet*. A prophet's job was to speak the word of God. In this case, the *Elohim* or "god" was Moses. In other words, Aaron was to be the mouthpiece to speak directly to Egypt and Israel instead of Moses. This gracious provision settles once and for all Moses' reluctance due to not being a skilled speaker. Now, he was to relay the LORD's message to his prophet Aaron who was then to give Pharaoh the message.

The LORD then described in verse 2 what the procedure was be from now on – *You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh*. With this system, Moses did not need to speak to Pharaoh directly. This must have been a comforting thought to him. He only needed to speak to his older brother Aaron. However, the responsibility of leadership remained with Moses, and he continued to discharge his responsibility with great diligence.

The purpose and goal of all this is *that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land*. What was about to happen had the goal of Israel's deliverance.

The next part of the LORD's response (verses 3 – 5) concerns His dealings with the Egyptians. It begins with the LORD saying *But I will harden Pharaoh's heart*. This is an emphatic statement of the LORD's direct involvement with Pharaoh. The translators added "I" to the original text to show this. It could be translated "But as for me, I will ...." The imperfect tense of the word used here for "harden" (*qashah*) is used only in the section describing the plagues and is one of three terms used to describe Pharaoh's stubbornness. The imperfect tense here likely indicates that something is about to transpire, and God will see that it occurs.

The idea of the LORD hardening Pharaoh's heart and then holding him accountable for his decisions has caused much discussion and disagreement. How can a God of goodness and fairness dictate the results and still hold the person responsible for his/her actions? One view states that to "harden" a heart is a Hebrew idiom and should not be taken literally. However, it seems best to view the hardening as both imposed by God and as a result of natural stubbornness on Pharaoh's part. A general principle is that God's judgment is typically to give people what they desire. People rejecting God desire things that are destructive to themselves. We see this in [Romans 1](#), where God "gives" people who reject God "over to their lusts." In the case of Pharaoh, God was giving him what his heart had desired.

God shows mercy to whom He wants, shows favor to whom He wants, and He opposes whom He wants. In the example of Pharaoh, Pharaoh was already opposed to God, and resisted every method God used to communicate with him, whether it was Moses and Aaron literally telling Pharaoh what God commanded, or the many plagues God sent to cause chaos in Pharaoh's kingdom. God knew Pharaoh would defy Him at every turn, which is why God allowed him to be Pharaoh in the first place. He used a powerful, rebellious ruler to show that He, God, was vastly more powerful, and that the whole earth should see this.

Pharaoh sums up his own rebellious attitude toward God in [Exodus 5](#), where he asks Moses, *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.* What follows are the ten plagues of Egypt, resulting finally in the death of Pharaoh's son. Even then, Pharaoh pursues the Israelites to reclaim them as his slaves. God works against this wicked king, hardening, burdening him with commandments and plagues and devastation, and Pharaoh diligently replies, *Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?* The legacy of Pharaoh is just as Scripture claims: God showed His power, God rescued His people, and the world knew of the fall of that wicked king from whom the Israelites were set free, because of God's might and God's will.

Paul refers to this passage in [Romans 9:18](#) – “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.” The Greek word used here for “hardens” is the same used in the Greek Old Testament in 7:3. It is within God's sovereignty to harden Pharaoh's heart if it is part of His will. On the other side, there are three places in the plagues account in Exodus where Pharaoh hardens his own heart (8:15, 8:32, 9:34). Here, Pharaoh's stubbornness is the result of his unwillingness to realize that the plagues were out of his control and that he refused to acknowledge the true sovereign one in Egypt.

The LORD says that the purpose of the hardening is that He may *multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt*. The “signs” The LORD showed through His hardening of Pharaoh's heart and subsequently through the plagues is that He is greater and more powerful than the most powerful ruler in the world at the time.

In verses 4 and 5, the LORD told Moses what was about to happen *When Pharaoh does not listen to you*. Even though Moses was made a “god” to Pharaoh, he will not listen and it would appear to Moses that the plan was a failure. But the LORD proclaimed *I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments*. The phrase “lay a hand” denotes strong judgment involving actions that are hostile and can lead to death (see [2 Samuel 18:12](#) and [Luke 20:19](#) as examples). The LORD's point here seems to be that the confrontations of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh would not deliver the Israelites – it would be the LORD's work through His *great judgments*. The LORD is also letting Moses know in advance that more rejection from Pharaoh is coming, but that it fits His plan.

The LORD called the Israelites His “hosts.” This is a term frequently used to describe armies, as in “the LORD of hosts” ([Isaiah 1:24](#) is an example). The use of the term here implies that the Israelites will depart Egypt in an organized battle formation, not a disorganized mob.

The LORD then states that *the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst*. The phrase “stretch out My hand” is similar to “lay My hand on” in the previous verse. The Egyptians were to realize (“know”) that the LORD is causing the destruction of their land, not one of their own gods. By knowing that it was the LORD doing these judgments, the Egyptians will ask for relief. The Israelites will also “know” that the LORD was their deliverer.

In response to the LORD’s words, *Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did*. The repetition that they “did” what was commanded of them emphasizes that they did exactly what the LORD told them to do. Scripture will call Moses the most humble man in the entire earth ([Numbers 10:3](#)). The fact that Moses obeys God so completely in spite of reservations, and in spite of God foretelling the coming rejection by Pharaoh is the attitude of humility. Moses fully accepted his responsibility, and obeyed completely, in spite of doubts and concerns.

The section ends with a note about the age of Moses and Aaron. It says that *Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh*. Often in the Bible, a person’s age was mentioned when a significant event occurred or was about to occur ([Genesis 7:6](#), [16:16](#), [Joshua 14:7](#))

It is interesting that it took eighty years to prepare Moses for the task of delivering Israel from Egypt. D. L. Moody has been quoted as saying cleverly that “Moses spent forty years in Pharaoh’s court thinking he was somebody; forty years in the desert learning he was nobody; and forty years showing what God can do with somebody who found out he was nobody.” Moses will live another forty years, and still have the health of a young man when he dies on Mount Nebo ([Deut 34:7](#)).

### **Biblical Text:**

**<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. <sup>2</sup> You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. <sup>3</sup> But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of**

Egypt. <sup>4</sup>When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. <sup>5</sup>The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.” <sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron did *it*; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did. <sup>7</sup>Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.