

Exodus 5

Verses 1 - 2

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.’”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.”

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.’”

The elders may have gotten word to the king through the Hebrew foreman that Moses and Aaron wanted an audience with Pharaoh.

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.”

The previous king would have known about the Lord because of Joseph and his ability to explain dreams.

See Genesis 41:16

¹⁶ Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, “It has nothing to do with me; God will give Pharaoh an answer for his own good.”

However, this new king did not know Joseph or The Lord.

Verses 3 - 4

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.”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!”

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.”

It would have been impossible for the Hebrews to sacrifice in Egypt.

See Exodus 8:25 – 26

²⁵ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” ²⁶ But Moses said, “It is not permissible *for us* to do so, because we will sacrifice to the Lord our God that which is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice that which is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?”

Moses & Aaron gave the king a strong argument in favor of them sacrificing to the Lord. If they didn't sacrifice to Him the Israelites would be struck with a fatal disease which would severely hurt their production of work and it might also spread to the Egyptians. In the case of a war, Egypt would stand alone against the invader and the slaves might even join forces with the invader.

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!”

The king accused Moses and Aaron of being trouble makers and told them to get back to work.

Verses 5 - 9

⁵ Again Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!” ⁶ So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying, ⁷ “You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 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.’ 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.”

⁶ So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying,

The king used managers and supervisors to complete his projects. The taskmasters were Egyptians with responsibility over the foremen and the foremen were slaves that were given responsibility over their fellow Israelites.

The king made three arguments why the slaves should not leave.

1. The king's 1st response to let my people go is found in verse 7.

⁷ “You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves.”

Mud bricks were made of Nile mud, a mixture of clay and sand, mixed with straw and manure and then pressed into molds. The straw made the mud easier to handle and increased the stability of the brick before it was dried.

See Video 505 Making bricks

<http://www.levickfamily.com/8.12.html>

2. The king's 2nd response to let my people go is in verse 8.

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.’

This is how evil slave masters respond to their subjects.

3. The king's 3rd response to let my people go is found in verse 9.

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.”

The king wanted to destroy any faith that the Hebrews had in Moses & Aaron and this started by calling them liars. This was the plight of the Hebrew slaves under their current king. There was no room for mercy or concern in his hardened heart. He sounds somewhat like the plantation owner in Django Unchained.

Verses 10 - 14

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.’” ¹¹ You go *and* get straw for yourselves wherever you can find *it*, but none of your labor will be reduced.” ¹² So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ The taskmasters pressed them, saying, “Complete your work quota, *your* daily amount, just as when you had straw.” 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?”

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.

The taskmasters and their foreman passed on the edict of the king which severely increased the work load for all of the slaves.

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?”

Bad news always runs downhill and the lowest level of management takes the brunt if the goal is not met. In this case they were beaten because they were slaves and had no rights.

Verses 15 - 18

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

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?”

It is surprising that the foremen could get an audience with the king but this may have been allowed so the king could drive a wedge between the slaves and Moses.

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

A slave owner can be as harsh and vindictive as he wishes because his slaves have no one to be their advocate. This is also why unions became so powerful in the 1940's and 1950's but as working conditions improved over the years many unions lost a good bit of their power.

This is also why the Rule of Law is so important to a democracy. Those who have little need the protections afforded in our constitution or evil would become rampant and there would be no justice. And God will not bless a nation that does not protect their weakest members.

Verses 19 - 23

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.” ²⁰ When they left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them. 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.” 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? 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.”

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.”

The foremen heard a message of freedom from Moses but now they had been physically beaten and saw no resolution in sight. They were justified in their critique of Moses and Aaron.

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? 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.”

So Moses told God that he is good all the time.....Right. NO, he did not do that. However, Moses did do what every believer should do in moments of frustration; he went straight to God with the problem.

Does this frankness from Moses surprise you? After all, he is talking to God, and he is blaming Him for making things worse. In the next chapter we will see how God responds to Moses concerning his accusation.