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Questions About The Exodus – Part 2

by Bryan Hodge

Continuing article from last weeks' bulletin knowing that there are other common questions asked about the account of the exodus will provide more concise answers . . .

4. Did the Israelites steal from the Egyptians?

This question is asked due to the reading found in the King James Version. It says that the Israelites “borrowed” of the Egyptians jewels of silvers, and jewels of gold, and raiment (Exodus 12:35; 3:22; 11:2). Moreover, it says that the Egyptians “lent” such to them (Exodus 12:36). Furthermore, they left Egypt with silver and gold (Psalm 105:37). Yet, the Bible says “The wicked borrows and does not repay” (Psalm 37:21).

The New King James used the words “asked” and “granted.” The original word means “ask” (Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Lexicon). It can mean “ask... for temporary use i.e. borrow... it is however, not clear that there is any pretext of mere temporary use” (ibid). The term can also mean “let one ask [successfully], give or lend on request” (ibid). Adam Clark, “The original word *shaal* signifies simply to ask, request, demand, require, inquire, etc., but it does not signify to borrow in the proper sense of that word, though in a very few places of scripture it is thus used” (Commenting on Exodus 3:22).

This was slavery reparations. God had promised such (Genesis 15:14). The asking was instructed by God (Exodus 3:21-22; 11:1-2; 12:35-36).

5. How did God harden Pharaoh's heart?

While the Bible says that God, in some way, hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:8), it also says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15; 8:32; 9:34; 9:35). Therefore, it must be that God hardened Pharaoh's heart indirectly and not directly, mediately and not immediately.

Consider: (1) Pharaoh's heart was hardened after his magicians were able to simulate the signs done through Moses and Aaron (Exodus 7:10-13; 7:19-23). (2) Pharaoh's heart was hardened after God gave him “relief” from plagues (Exodus 8:12-15; 8:29-32; 9:34-35). While the plagues were in progress, Pharaoh's heart was softened (Exodus 8:8; 8:24-25; 9:27-28; 10:4-8). He even acknowledged personal sin (Exodus 9:27; 10:16-17). However, when relief was granted, he hardened his heart. (3) Pharaoh's heart was hardened when learning of Israelite exemption (Exodus 9:6-7). Guy Woods said, “The first three plagues... appear to have fallen upon all the territory of Egypt, and thus to have included the enslaved Israelites. From the fourth... to the tenth... the land of Goshen where the Israelites had their houses were granted immunity (or at least provision for immunity cf. Exodus 12:21-23, B.H.) from the affliction which fell upon the people of Egypt (Questions and Answers, Vol. 2, p. 162). Israelites were exempted from at least some of the plagues (Exodus 8:21-23; 9:3-6; 9:25-26, 29; 10:21-23; 11:5-7). Some non-Israelites may have been wise enough and God-fearing enough to prepare for some of the plagues (Exodus 9:18-20; 12:38).

Man today can be hardened the same ways. (1) Some allow false teachers to deceive them into rejecting God's words (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 1 Kings 22:5-25, 28). God will let man hear and see things to justify in his

mind his actions, if he does not really want to follow God's word. (2) Some turn to God when times are bad, but forget Him when things get better. (3) Some allow envy to lead to bitterness and hardness of heart.

6. Did Pharaoh's magicians work real miracles?

Consider the following: (1) The used "enchantments" (NKJV) or "secret arts" (ESV) according to Exodus 7:11. Rex Turner Sr. remarked, "Magicians had some knowledge of the laws of nature which were not accessible to people in general" (Daniel, p. 32). Perhaps, this is so. (2) Magicians and wisemen could not do everything. They did not possess all knowledge (Genesis 41:8; Daniel 2:1-3, 17). They did not possess all power (Exodus 8:16-19). (3) When the magicians of Egypt had prior knowledge of what they were to duplicate, they were able to do so (Exodus 7:17-18; 8:1-7). Even in the case of the rod becoming a serpent Pharaoh's magicians had same advanced warning. Darrell Conley has written, "Pharaoh sent for his magicians... you can be sure they knew what was required of them before they got there" (The Gospel Versus Occultism, p. 19). (4) When they had no advanced warning, things were different (Exodus 8:16-19). Darrell Conley has written, "It is both interesting and significant to note that Moses and Aaron announced beforehand that God would turn water to blood, and bring a plague of frogs upon Egypt. Being forewarned, the magicians of Egypt were able to counterfeit these miracles. But when, without prior announcement, Aaron smote the dust of the ground and produced lice, the magicians, caught off-guard were unable to imitate it. It is also interesting to notice that in explaining and excusing their failure they told Pharaoh, regarding this production of lice by Aaron, 'this is the finger of God'" (ibid). (5) Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron to entreat the LORD to take away the frogs (Exodus 8:8-15). Why did he not call for his magicians to do so? Moreover, Have you noticed that they simulated water to blood, but they did not remove the blood and purify the water? Have you noticed that they added frogs, instead of removing them? Did they not have this power? Wouldn't it be more useful to undo a plague, than to reproduce it? (6) There are fake miracles. (a) Simon evidently performed such (Acts 8:9-13). (b) Elymas did so (Acts 13:8-12). (c) Consider the words of 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10. Leon Crouch commented, "the word 'lying' evidently describes all three nouns: powers, signs, wonders" (1 & 2 Thessalonians, p. 126). (7) Clever magicians can do amazing things. Such does not mean that supernatural power is involved. I see no reason to conclude that supernatural power was involved in what the Egyptian magicians did.

Adam Clark commented "If it be asked why God did suffer the Egyptian magicians... it was necessary that these magicians should be suffered to exert the utmost of their power against Moses, in order to clear him from the imputation of magic or sorcery; for as the nation of such an extraordinary art was very rife not only among the Egyptians, but all other nations, if they had not entered into this strenuous competition with him, and had been at length overcome by him, both the Hebrews and the Egyptians would have been apter to have attributed all his miracles to his skill in magic, than to the Divine power" (Commenting on Exodus 7:22).

7. How long were the children of Israel in Egypt?

Many people believe that they were in Egypt 430 years (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:40-41; Acts 7:6). However, it seems to me that the 430 years refers to the entire sojourn in Canaan and Egypt (Galatians 3:16-17).

Josephus indicates that they were in Egypt 215 years (Ant. 2:318). It was 215 years from Haran to Egypt (Genesis 12:4 cf. 21:5 cf. 25:26 cf. 47:8-9). If 430 years included the entire sojourn, then they would be in Egypt 215 years. It is much easier to make 215 years fit with the genealogical record. Kohath was the grandfather of Moses (1 Chronicles 6:1-3; 23:12-13). He seems to have been born before the Israelites went into Egypt (Genesis 46:11). He lived 133 years (Exodus 6:18). Moses father Amram lived 137 years (Exodus 6:20). Moses was 80 years old at the time of the Exodus (Exodus 7:7). How can one get to 430 years?

Some might wonder if they could get to an estimated population of 2 million people at the time of the Exodus, if they had only 215 years in Egypt [Remember that we know that there were 603,550 males numbered at Sinai (Numbers 1:45-46)]. Henry Morris suggested that such was indeed possible. He wrote, “with an initial number of five people (Jacob and his four wives), they had already become a clan of, say one hundred people (that is, the seventy mentioned in Genesis 46:27 plus the wives of the sons and grandsons who accompanied them into Egypt). This growth had taken place in approximately fifty years, representing an average increase of over 6 percent each year. With a population of one hundred when they entered Egypt and over two million when they left... this large growth rate of 5 percent annually, for example, would increase the population from one hundred to two million in only 215 years” (The Genesis Record, p. 642).