

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 4, Exodus 7-8

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Exodus, Session 4, Exodus 7-8, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. John Oswalt's lecture analyzes Exodus chapters 7 and 8, focusing on the first four plagues. **He explores the theological significance** of the plagues as demonstrations of Yahweh's power and a means to reveal God's identity to both the Israelites and Egyptians. **Oswalt discusses the Egyptian magicians' ability** to initially mimic the plagues, highlighting God's purpose in allowing this to underscore the divine nature of the events. **The lecture also touches on free will versus determinism**, using the Pharaoh's hardened heart as a case study, and concludes with a reflection on humanity's tendency to seek God's blessings while retaining control, ultimately emphasizing God's desire for complete surrender and a loving relationship.

**2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Oswalt, Exodus, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Pentateuch → Exodus).**



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3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 4, Exodus 7-8

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Exodus 7-8:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 7-8

Overview: This lecture focuses on Exodus chapters 7 and 8, covering the first four plagues and exploring their significance within the larger narrative of God's deliverance of the Israelites. Dr. Oswalt emphasizes the revelatory nature of these events, highlighting that God's primary goal is for both the Israelites and the Egyptians (and, by extension, all people) to recognize Him as the one true God ("I AM"). The lecture delves into the themes of God's authority, the nature of miracles, human free will versus divine sovereignty, and the dangers of seeking blessings without a full surrender to God.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Authority of God and the Role of the Messenger:

- God's commands to Moses and Aaron evolve. Initially, it's to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go (Exodus 6). Later, it's a more emphatic "tell Pharaoh everything / tell you." (Exodus 6).
- This shift emphasizes that Moses and Aaron are ambassadors, not acting on their own authority. "You are simply speaking for me, and if Pharaoh doesn't like it, it's not your problem. I think that's an important thing for anyone in the ministry to remember. We are ambassadors."
- This establishes that the message is divine in origin, and rejection of it is a rejection of God Himself.

1. Purpose of the Plagues: Knowing God:

- The plagues are not solely for the Israelites' liberation but also for the Egyptians (and all people) to know that God is Yahweh. "They're going to know I am the Lord when I stretch this out."
- This "knowing" is experiential, involving a personal encounter with the reality of God's power. "In the biblical sense, it is you who have experienced this and, as a result, have this experiential awareness."
- God desires a correct understanding of reality. A false view of reality is at the core of sin. "There is no salvation unless we come to that understanding." The two

essentials to enlightenment are: "Number one, there is a God. Number two, you're not him."

- The Bible is about the Creator's passionate desire that we know him. "The Bible is all about the Creator's passionate desire that we should know what life is about."

1. **Miracles and Their Reception:**

- The Egyptian magicians' ability to replicate some miracles (turning staffs into snakes, for example) is allowed by God, not to prove that magic works but rather to clarify that God is operating on a different level. "God permits this precisely so that you can't argue that this was black magic."
- Eventually, the magicians admit their limitations, acknowledging the plagues as "the finger of God".
- God doesn't force belief. He enables those who choose to believe and assists those who choose not to. This concept aligns with the idea that, "if you don't want to believe, I'll help you not believe, which is pretty frightening."
- Miracles are signs, not just spectacles. They point to God's power and identity.

1. **The Nile and the Source of Life**

- The turning of the Nile to blood attacks the Egyptian belief that it is the source of life. "God is the source of life, not the river."
- In a broader sense, anything believed to be the source of life apart from God becomes a source of death. "Whatever you think is the source of life apart from the life-giver, the I am, is death."
- Jesus's miracles operate oppositely; he turns death-dealing situations into life-giving ones.

1. **Pharaoh's Hardened Heart:**

- Pharaoh's heart is not hardened against his will but rather as a consequence of his previous choices. "God has made the world so that our choices eventually become inescapable."
- While God is ultimately the one who hardens the heart, it is a process that involves choices and consequences.
- This counters the idea of a "mechanical" hardening where God forces a person to act against their own will.

- Our choices shape us and impact future choices.

1. **Free Will and Divine Grace:**

- The lecture briefly addresses the theological debate between Pelagianism, which emphasizes the human's ability to choose, and Calvinism, which emphasizes God's sovereignty in salvation.
- Dr. Oswalt presents an Arminian perspective, stating God's grace gives people the capacity to choose to do right. "God, in his grace, gives humans the capacity to choose, but not because they're innately good."

1. **The Significance of Egyptian Idolatry**

- The plagues are direct attacks on the objects of Egyptian worship - not just the river, but also the amphibians (frogs), and insects. They worshipped these things as they believed they could bring life, but God proves that they can bring death.
- The Egyptians' fascination with life and their concern about death are explored. Their efforts to ensure a good afterlife reveal their desire for security and a better life but they are misplaced in their idolatry.

1. **The Nature of Miracles: Intensity, Timing, and Discrimination:**

- Dr. Oswalt gives three characteristics of miracles: intensity, timing, and discrimination. These distinguish a miracle from a natural event. He gives an example of a volcano to show how this can be true.
- The specific timing of the plagues, as well as their intensity and their discrimination (such as the flies avoiding Goshen), proves these are not natural events.

1. **Worship and Relationship with God:**

- The purpose of the Israelites' release is ultimately so that they may worship God, not simply to be free in Canaan. "Let my people go so that they may worship me."
- Pharaoh's attempts to control the Israelites' worship demonstrate the human tendency to want to control our relationship with God and to try and "bargain" with God.
- The lecture underscores that God wants our whole selves, not just our acts of service. "God's in love with you...He doesn't want what we can do for him. He's God. He wants us."

1. The Danger of Seeking Gifts Apart from the Giver:

- Drawing from Psalm 106:15, Dr. Oswalt notes that God will sometimes give people what they ask for, but without a true relationship with Him, this can lead to a "leanness of soul."
- The focus is on the importance of seeking a relationship with God and total surrender, not just blessings and benefits.

Key Quotes:

- "We are ambassadors. We're simply carrying the message."
- "They're going to know I am the Lord when I stretch this out."
- "There is no salvation unless we come to that understanding."
- "Number one, there is a God. Number two, you're not him."
- "God permits this precisely so that you can't argue that this was black magic."
- "if you don't want to believe, I'll help you not believe, which is pretty frightening."
- "God is the source of life, not the river."
- "Whatever you think is the source of life apart from the life-giver, the I am, is death."
- "God has made the world so that our choices eventually become inescapable."
- "God, in his grace, gives humans the capacity to choose, but not because they're innately good."
- "Let my people go so that they may worship me."
- "God's in love with you...He doesn't want what we can do for him. He's God. He wants us."
- "So, he gave them what they asked for, but sent them leanness of soul."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's lecture emphasizes that the Exodus story, particularly the plagues, is not merely a historical event but a revelation of God's character and his desire for a relationship with humanity. The plagues are a powerful demonstration of God's supremacy, challenging false views of reality and revealing the dangers of idolatry and partial obedience. The lecture encourages listeners to examine their own hearts, asking if they are fully surrendered to God or are, like Pharaoh, trying to maintain control while seeking God's blessings.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 4, Exodus 7-8

Exodus 7-8 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What is the primary difference between the commandments given to Moses in Exodus 6:11 and 6:29?
2. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the primary purpose of the plagues beyond just freeing the Israelites?
3. What two essential points must one understand for true enlightenment, according to Dr. Oswalt?
4. How does Dr. Oswalt interpret the magicians' ability to replicate some of Moses' miracles?
5. What does the plague of the Nile turning to blood symbolize?
6. How does the lecture describe Pharaoh's heart being hardened? Is it against his will?
7. What does Dr. Oswalt say is the difference between a natural event and a miracle?
8. What does the appearance of the frogs and other plagues reveal about the Egyptian's false gods?
9. In Exodus 8, what does Pharaoh's attempt to bargain with God about where to worship reveal about Pharaoh's nature and our own?
10. According to Psalm 106:15, what is the result of seeking God's gifts without seeking God himself?

Quiz Answer Key

1. In 6:11, Moses is told to go tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, while in 6:29, Moses is commanded to tell Pharaoh everything the Lord tells him. The second command implies a higher level of authority, emphasizing Moses as an ambassador of God's message, not his own.

2. The primary purpose of the plagues is not just to free the Israelites but to reveal God's identity to both the Israelites and the Egyptians. God wants everyone to know that He is the Lord and to understand the true nature of reality.
3. The two essential points for true enlightenment are, first, that there is a God, and second, that you are not Him. This understanding is crucial because it acknowledges God's ultimacy and our own creaturely status.
4. The magicians' ability to initially replicate miracles shows that miracles can be counterfeited, but God allows it to show the limits of their powers. By ultimately admitting they cannot duplicate them, they prove that Moses and Aaron are operating under divine power.
5. The plague of the Nile turning to blood symbolizes that God is the true source of life, and whatever is believed to be a source of life apart from God is actually a source of death. This challenges the Egyptians' reliance on the Nile as their life-giver.
6. Pharaoh's heart being hardened is not against his will but is the culmination of the choices he has made. His pride keeps him from surrendering to God, making his heart hard, with God allowing him to follow his chosen path of unbelief.
7. A miracle differs from a natural event through intensity, timing, and discrimination. A miracle occurs with supernatural force, at a specific time chosen by God, and often with a deliberate selection or exemption of specific targets.
8. The appearance of the frogs and other plagues demonstrates that what the Egyptians worship as life-giving forces are actually sources of death. This shows the falsity of their gods and reveals God as the true source of life.
9. Pharaoh's bargaining reveals his ongoing struggle for control and his attempt to manipulate God to fit his terms. This mirrors our tendency to try to control our lives while simultaneously seeking God's blessings.
10. According to Psalm 106:15, seeking God's gifts without seeking God himself results in leanness of soul. This means that while one may receive what they ask for, their souls remain empty, lacking spiritual nourishment and fulfillment.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer these questions in a well-developed essay format, demonstrating your understanding of the source material.

1. Explore the theme of revelation in Exodus 7-8. How do the plagues reveal God's character and challenge the false gods of Egypt, and why is this revelation important for the Israelites and the Egyptians?
2. Discuss the concept of "hardened hearts" as portrayed in these chapters. How does Dr. Oswalt explain the interplay of divine sovereignty and human choice in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, and what does this reveal about human free will?
3. Analyze the significance of the plagues as attacks on Egyptian gods. How do specific plagues challenge the Egyptians' understanding of their deities, and how does this relate to the idea that only God is truly the source of life?
4. Explain the concept of "intensity, timing, and discrimination" as a way to distinguish between natural events and miracles. How does it apply to the specific plagues in Exodus 7 and 8, and what does it teach about the nature of God's power?
5. Discuss the parallel drawn between God's love for humans and the nature of romantic love. In light of the lecture's discussion, how does our desire to give God only "this much" or "that much" reveal our misunderstanding of what He really desires?

Glossary of Key Terms

Ambassador: A person sent as a representative for a cause, carrying a message or position of authority. In this context, Moses is described as an ambassador for God, emphasizing that his words are not his own but come from God.

Experiential Awareness: Knowledge that results from personal experience and a deep, personal engagement with something. It is a kind of knowing that is more profound than just intellectual understanding, as seen in the way Egyptians and Israelites will come to know Yahweh.

False View of Reality: A misunderstanding of the true nature of existence and ultimacy, particularly in relation to God. At the core of sin is the belief that one is ultimate and does not need to organize their life around God.

Finger of God: A phrase used by the Egyptian magicians to acknowledge that the miracles performed by Moses were not merely tricks but an expression of divine power. This recognition was a concession to the power of God at work.

Hardening of the Heart: A process, described in the text, where one's choices against God lead to a state of resistance and rebellion. It's portrayed as both a result of one's choices and, at the same time, part of God's plan for the purposes of revelation.

Leanness of Soul: A state of spiritual emptiness that results from seeking God's gifts without seeking God Himself. This is a condition where material blessings bring no true satisfaction or spiritual fulfillment.

Miracle: A supernatural event that defies the laws of nature, often used as a sign of God's power and authority. Dr. Oswalt defined miracles by the nature of their intensity, timing and discrimination.

Pelagian View: The theological perspective that humans are inherently good and capable of choosing to do right on their own, without the necessary intervention of God's grace.

Scarabs: Small beetle-shaped amulets, often found in Egyptian tombs. Dung beetles were considered sacred in Egyptian culture because of their ability to turn manure into new life.

Signs: Events, like plagues or miracles, that point to a deeper meaning or truth. In the context of Exodus, these events point to God's power and authority over both the natural world and the false gods of Egypt, and thus are designed to change beliefs about God.

Yahweh: The personal name of God revealed in the Old Testament, emphasizing the idea of "I Am." This name highlights God's unique and self-existent nature, contrasted with the false gods of Egypt.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Exodus, Session 4, Exodus 7-8, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Exodus 7-8: The Plagues and God's Revelation

- **What is the primary purpose of the plagues in Exodus, according to Dr. Oswalt?**
- The plagues are primarily meant to reveal God's identity and power to both the Egyptians and the Israelites. While the Exodus of the Israelites is a significant result, the deeper purpose is for people to experientially "know" that Yahweh is the one true God, not just intellectually understand it. This knowledge is essential for true worship and relationship with God, combating false views of reality that lead to sin. Essentially, the plagues are revelatory in nature, designed to show that the source of life is not the things people put their trust in (like the Nile or Egyptian gods) but rather God alone.
- **How does God's command to Moses change from chapter 6 to chapter 7, and what is the significance?**
- In chapter 6, Moses is commanded to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. In chapter 7, the command shifts to "I am the Lord. Tell Pharaoh everything I tell you." This change signifies a shift in authority. Moses is not just conveying a message but acting as God's ambassador. He is speaking on behalf of God, not from his own wisdom, and Aaron serves as a further conduit for this message. It emphasizes that the message's authority comes directly from God, not from Moses' own abilities or personality.
- **Why did God allow the Egyptian magicians to initially duplicate some of the miracles?**
- God allowed the magicians to replicate the early miracles to demonstrate that their power was limited and ultimately inferior to God's. This was not to give credibility to their powers, but rather to prove it was not mere 'black magic' being performed by Moses and Aaron. By eventually showing that they could not continue to duplicate these plagues, it became undeniable that Moses and Aaron were operating under divine authority – they eventually admit that it is the "finger of God." This serves to differentiate God's power from mere magical trickery.

- **How does the plague on the Nile, turning it to blood, relate to Egyptian culture and beliefs?**
- The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt, viewed as sacred and essential for their survival. By turning it to blood, God was demonstrating that he, not the river, is the true source of life. Further, the plague brought about death through what was perceived as life-giving, highlighting that anything seen as the source of life apart from God ultimately leads to death. This directly challenged the Egyptian's understanding of their world and the basis of their religious beliefs.
- **What is the significance of the timing, intensity, and discrimination of the plagues?**
- These three aspects distinguish a miracle from a natural event. *Intensity* refers to the severity and scale of the event. *Timing* is the precise moment it occurs, often at God's word or command, like when Moses said he would remove the frogs "tomorrow". And *discrimination* is the way the plague is controlled, such as when it is withheld from the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived, which showed that God was directing these events and that they were not simply natural disasters. The combination of these elements points to a divine hand rather than a random occurrence.
- **How does the hardening of Pharaoh's heart function in the narrative, and what does it teach us about free will?**
- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is presented in different ways: at times, God is said to harden it, and at other times, it is said that Pharaoh hardened it himself. This indicates that God doesn't force Pharaoh's decisions against his will but allows Pharaoh's choices to shape his destiny. God created a world where repeated choices solidify one's path. Though Pharaoh believes he has total freedom, the continuous refusals made him incapable of choosing otherwise because of his pride. The ultimate point being that the choices one makes can, over time, limit future choices.

- **What is the central purpose of the Israelites' release from Egypt, and how does it relate to worship?**
- The primary purpose is not simply the freedom and settling of the Israelites in the Promised Land but, rather, that they may worship God. Freedom, in this sense, is a means to an end; the end being a right relationship with God as the I AM and to participate in his purpose in the world. God wanted to free them so that they could worship him, not simply to grant them liberty in a geographical sense. This emphasizes that freedom is not just the absence of slavery but also the opportunity for true worship.
- **How does Dr. Oswalt connect the plagues in Exodus to Jesus' miracles in the New Testament?**
- Dr. Oswalt presents Moses and Jesus as two sides of the same coin. The plagues demonstrate that sources of life apart from God lead to death, whereas Jesus turns death-dealing events into life-giving ones (healing sickness, raising the dead). Jesus's miracles show his authority over the powers of death by reversing the death of the plagues. Jesus is presented as the life-giver who overcomes the death of the fallen world, while the plagues highlighted the true power and sovereignty of God.