

PHARAOH'S ATTEMPTS AT COMPROMISE--THEN

By Keith Greer

During the time the Israelites lived in Egypt, they underwent terrible bondage and finally cried out to God to ask for help and freedom. God heard their cries and remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He sent Moses to the Egyptian Pharaoh to petition for release of the slaves. Then, when Pharaoh refused, God sent plagues upon the Egyptians to convince him. Rather than release the Israelites, Pharaoh attempted, on several occasions, to negotiate a **compromise** with Moses. What did Pharaoh want Moses and the Israelites to do?

Sacrifice in Egypt. *“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, ‘Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.’ And Moses said, ‘It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us? We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He will command us.”* {Exodus 8:25-27} Pharaoh was willing to let them go, with his blessing, but only on his terms. Moses knew that offering sacrifices in the land of Egypt would be an abomination to the Egyptians. He told Pharaoh they must journey into the wilderness and offer the sacrifices prescribed by God. Pharaoh’s solution was a compromise. Moses refused.

Don’t go very far. *“And Pharaoh said, ‘I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me.’ Then Moses said, ‘Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the LORD, that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.’”* {Exodus 8:28,29} Again, Pharaoh sought for compromise—they can go out of Egypt, but not very far. He wanted things to be done on his terms instead of God’s. The great multitude would have to travel a distance in order to bring the entire assembly to a place where they could offer their animal sacrifices. Some might think Pharaoh was just trying to make it convenient for them, but such is not the case. He still wanted to be the one who had authority and control. Again, Moses told him no. Give Pharaoh some credit. He did not give up easily.

Let the men go. *“So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, ‘Go, serve the LORD your God. Who are the ones that are going?’ And Moses said, ‘We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD.’ Then he said to them, ‘The LORD had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go! Beware, for evil is ahead of you. Not so! Go now, you who are men, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desired.’ And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.”* {Exodus 10:8-11} Pharaoh was trying to divide and conquer. Again, Moses refused.

Leave the flocks behind. *“Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said, ‘Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you.’ But Moses said, ‘You must also give us sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. Our livestock also shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind. For we must take some of them to serve the LORD our God, and even we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there.’”* {Exodus 10:24-26} If they left the livestock behind, they would have nothing to offer to God in their sacrifices. This was just another of Pharaoh’s dodges to get Moses to compromise his faith in God.

Why did Pharaoh seek to get Moses and Aaron to compromise? Sadly, he still believed that he could control the situation because of his position of power and authority. Remember, he was the leader of the power seat of the world in his time—so he believed. Pharaoh finally learned that God would not change His requirements to suit Him. Compromise was rejected, and God's ways were followed.

In the beginning he had told Moses He did not know God and he would not let them go. Beginning at that moment God introduces Himself to Pharaoh and the land of Egypt—even the entire world. Events in Egypt would cause many other nations to worry about facing God's people with the understanding God was leading them. God is still leading His people today! ***