

Moses, God, and the Plagues- A Pharaoh's View  
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Ramses the Second took a stack of papyrus and a quill and ink from the scribe's desk. His dark face was droopy, his eyes sunk. The writing implements were special, designed by Haqqiz, a brilliant engineer who'd proven priceless with his innovative methods in pyramid and statue building. Haqqiz's special quills made for remarkably clean lines which allowed Ramses to write far more on a single piece of papyrus than would normally be allowed.

Ramses was a little nervous about writing for himself. Under usual circumstances he had an entire stable of people trained to write down his every word.

But not this time- not for this task.

It was the duty of Ramses to chronicle, if only briefly, the terribly bizarre events of the past several months. His entire city was on the edge of chaos, the massive unrest and slaughter having pushed the citizenry to the limits of their tolerance. Ramses knew that there was even a chance for rebellion. Events of such magnitude could not be left to the hands of mere mortals. The definitive account of events was going to be written by him and him alone.

The once proud and powerful Pharaoh looked out over what would later be known as the Giza Plateau, at the sight of his latest monument. Of them all, this one was the hardest to build. Not because of the stone or for the massive technical details, although the structure was the most difficult thing his men had ever attempted, but because he hated it. He watched with a ferocious scowl on his face as the men below swarmed over the thing like ants.

Ramses wished he could order the thing crushed down into dust. But he could not. The statue was part of his truce with the creature.

The one the people called... God.

The monument that so inspired the Pharaoh's ire?

The Sphinx.

It was a monument to evil, to the weakness of the Egyptian Gods, and to his own vulnerability and failures.

Even though the entire city worked very hard to dispose of the masses of dead, there was still a stench that hung in the air five years after the Exodus. It lingered, a terrible incense of death that soaked into the sand itself. To smell it made Ramses want to retch and cry at the same time.

The bones of Ramses own son were still drying in the sun. He would have been mummified, but the creature didn't leave the body in any shape to have anything done to it at all. Instead Ramses left the bones as an angry taunt to Ra.

He had the remains lain to rest atop the highest spire in the city so that Ra could not help but to see them every time he looked upon his kingdom.

Ramses religious faith was destroyed, which was especially difficult because his entire Gestalt was based on his being divine. Still, there could be no doubt, if he was divine, the creature called God was much more so.

The thought such a thing could be true shook the leader of the largest civilization on earth to the core.

After a bit of wandering around, Ramses found a place in the sun where he could write his account of what happened. Except for one earlier aborted attempt, it would be the only thing he would set to paper in his own hand during his entire reign as Pharaoh, so be forgiving if the handwriting isn't exactly the most elegant.

It began...

"I am a noble and just leader. The people of Israel are hard workers. Not Egyptians of course, but strong of will and heart. My own brother is Moses, the man who led their rebellion. I wish the world to know that I don't blame him. He, like all of us, was merely a puppet on a stage. The creature, the monster Yahweh, it is he who is the puppet master and it is he whom I hold solely responsible for what has transpired here.

It began when Moses came to me with a sudden demand- that I release all of his people from their responsibilities of work. This I could not do. I tried to offer concessions, but he wouldn't listen.

Then, with no warning he turned his helper Aaron's staff into a serpent.

It was a good trick, I was impressed. But I too had priests who could do such things. I called on them and they demonstrated the same trick, albeit in a less convincing manner, and so I looked back to Moses. Then Moses held his staff over the water and it turned to blood. My priests then did the same. So far, I saw no reason to be all that impressed.

So then he left for a while and came back. Again he was demanding I let everyone go free. I tried to explain to him the economic necessity of the slave economy and he wouldn't listen.

Then he made the damn frogs come, raining from the sky like a deluge. Moses called them down like a plague. There were frogs everywhere- we were up to our knees in them.

It was the most ridiculous trick I'd ever seen.

On the command of Moses these same frogs then suddenly died off. My initial reaction was to melt a couple of hundred pounds of butter and have a frog leg feast. But within a week the carcasses had left the entire country sitting in a stink such that you can only vaguely imagine. I had to sleep with my head wrapped in perfume soaked silks and even then the smell of gone-over seafood snickered into my nostrils.

No sooner had we gotten that mess cleaned up a second attack came.

Gnats this time.

They were everywhere, in our eyes, in our nostrils- it was terrible. My priests could neither reproduce nor banish the pestilence and so I gave up. I admitted that whatever God or Gods wanted the Israelites free, I would bow to the superior strength. Indeed, what choice did I really have?

When Moses appeared again and I tried to tell him that he and everyone else were free to go I opened my mouth and different words came out. I wanted to set the Israelites free, but apparently the creature Yahweh wasn't prepared to let me admit my mistake so gracefully.

When I spoke I heard myself refusing to free Moses and his friends. Then suddenly there were flies everywhere. Moses said he had to go out into the desert to pray.

I said 'Sure, go! Do what you need to do. Just make the flies go away.'

By this point my people were very angry with me. It's hard to claim to be divinity on earth when you can't make the damn flies and frogs disappear.

When Moses again showed up I tried to acquiesce to his requests and again I was unable to express my words with my mouth. Other traitorous words came out instead.

Next it was a pestilence that wiped out all our livestock. Then boils all over our bodies. Then hail bigger than your fist and just for kicks another wave of insects- locusts this time.

Then the sun disappeared, plunging us into darkness.

For weeks.

Each and every time I did my absolute best to tell the Israelites that they could have their freedom. Once I even tried to write it down and when I re-read what I'd written- none of the words I'd intended were written on the papyrus.

Truth be told, I cannot even begin to explain how terribly screwed up my country was at this point. I no more could've stopped the Israelites from leaving than I could've turned myself into a cantaloupe.

Then, as if things weren't bad enough, there came the threat of what came to be known as Passover. The Israelites slaughtered thousands of lambs and rubbed the blood on their doors as a marker so the creature would know which houses to skip.

The first-born son of every family in Egypt was killed, including my own.

I can write now what I could not write then, that I didn't want to hold the Moses and his people in bondage. I wanted to let them go, but I physically could not do it no matter how hard I tried.

The creature Yahweh killed us on that night. He came out of the desert like a storm. I saw him with my own eyes. I watched the thing kill my son and there was nothing I could do but sit and watch. I was stone solid, my own muscles betrayed me. It was not cowardice; I have fought armies with nothing but my staff and trembled not at all.

I watched as the creature swept in through the window of the palace like a bird- albeit one without wings. It swept into my son's room and tore him limb from limb like a jackal. The lion's limbs with their ferocious claws shredded my boy, it's snake's head holding preternaturally still while it's lower half was a blur of terrible activity. My son's body was strewn across the room like rose petals. And so it went throughout Egypt. Thousands were slaughtered. The blood, to the mind of my citizens, is all on my hands.

I am drowning in it.

Finally, after that terrible night my lips were unsealed and I could finally say what I, what any sane man would want to say. I told the Israelites they were free and to please never return with their insane God of vengeance and death.

In the brief time before Moses and his people left, I had an opportunity to speak with him. I must say, Moses too had the same freaked out look in his eyes that was in my own. I strongly believe he had no more control over what he was doing than I did. As I said, we were puppets, with no free will, no intentionality of our own.

I say again that I have seen the thing with my own eyes. I have included a drawing of it here with these papers. If you see it- run. Not that you shall be able to do anything against its permission. I know I couldn't, and I am a God.

But if you can, do so, for it portends nothing but pain and death."

The Pharaoh, finished with his account, set down his quill and set his eyes on the sun. The warm rays felt really nice on his face. He felt like a weight was lifted and for the first time he really thought he could let what happened go.

Not because he was OK with what happened.

Far from it.

Now that he'd set down his version of events he would leave the earthly plane and take up his unhappiness with Ra himself. Ramses took the pile of papyrus he'd written and waited for the sun to dry the ink completely. Once he was sure they wouldn't smudge, he took them, and placed them into a black onyx urn specially designed lid by Haqqiz to hold out water for 5,000 years or more.

Ramses believed the urn really could last that long, Haqqiz knew his stuff.

He looked back at the Sphinx again, not at the statue itself, but at the ground between the feet. He pictured the chamber in his mind's eye. It was where the urn would be laid to rest.

Once he'd sealed the urn the way Haqqiz instructed him, Ramses called forward two runners to take it to its chamber. He watched the two men come and go, both looking down at the ground so as not to meet the Pharaoh's gaze directly. To do so would be seen as a massive insult. They took the thing away at a trot. Ramses watched them pass from his sight.

Once the runners were out of sight Ramses turned on his heel and walked to his chambers. He took from a long elegant table a thin bladed knife. He'd used it to cut his meat since he was a child, but it was still as sharp as the first time he'd cut himself as a tyke. Ramses felt like he was looking at himself from a distance as he absent-mindedly turned the knife over and over in his hands.

That night, under a fat yellow moon, Ramses the Second climbed to the top of the Pyramid of Cheops and laid down, his face to the sky. With two hard fast slashes to his wrists the Pharaoh cut himself open, his own blood draining down the stones and onto the sand the way his people's had. It mixed together, making a dark mud and staining the stones.

In the continuing grief of the Egyptian peoples, the loss of Ramses was a blow, but for the most part there was very little emotion left to vent. Like a wounded animal, the entire Egyptian nation concentrated on healing itself, and licking its own wounds.

In time, it healed.