

# Exodus 4:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

## Analysis

**And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go** (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלֹכְתֶּךָ לְשׁוֹב מִצְרַיָּה רָאָה כָּל־הַמְּפֹתִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי בְּיַדְךָ וְעַשְׁתָּם לִפְנֵי פְּרֻעָה וְאַנְּבָא  
—הַיּוֹם אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלֹכְתֶּךָ לְשׁוֹב מִצְרַיָּה רָאָה כָּל־הַמְּפֹתִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי בְּיַדְךָ וְעַשְׁתָּם לִפְנֵי פְּרֻעָה וְאַנְּבָא—God previews the confrontation: **do all those wonders before Pharaoh**—the signs aren't just for Israel but for Egypt. **But I will harden his heart** (וְאַנְּבָא אֶחָזֵק אֶת־לִבּוֹ) —the famous problem of Pharaoh's hardening. The Hebrew uses three verbs throughout Exodus: **חַזֵּק** (chazak, "strengthen/harden"), **קָבַד** (kaved, "make heavy"), and **קָשָׁה** (kashah, "make stiff"). Sometimes Pharaoh hardens his own heart (8:15, 32; 9:34), sometimes God hardens it (9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10). Both are true: God's judicial hardening confirms Pharaoh's chosen rebellion (Romans 9:17-18). God will use Pharaoh's obstinacy to multiply signs, displaying His glory before Egypt and Israel (7:3-5).

## Historical Context

The hardening theme raises theological questions about divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Paul addresses this in Romans 9:14-24, arguing God has right to show both wrath (Pharaoh) and mercy (Israel) to display His glory. The

multiple plagues served pedagogical purpose—demonstrating YHWH's supremacy over all Egyptian gods systematically. Pharaoh's hardening ensured full revelation of God's power.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does Pharaoh's hardening teach about the judicial consequences of persistent rebellion against God's revealed will?
2. What does God's advance warning to Moses about Pharaoh's hardening teach about trusting God's purposes when circumstances seem to worsen despite obedience?

## Interlinear Text

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מִצְרַיִם וְאֶתְמָר יְהֹוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּלֹכְתָּב לְשׁוֹן וּבְלֹכְתָּב מִצְרַיִם  
said And the LORD unto Moses to return into Egypt

H559 H3068 H413 H4872 H1980 H7725 H4714

בְּנֵי בָּנָה שְׁמַנְיָה כָּל רָא הָאָשָׁר הַמְּפַתִּים אֲשֶׁר  
see all those wonders which I have put in thine hand

H7200 H3605 H4159 H834 H7760 H3027

וְלֹא לְבָב אַת אֶתְמָר פַּרְעֹה הַלְּפִתְּר יְהֹוָה אֲבֹת  
that thou do before Pharaoh but I will harden

H6213 H6440 H6547 H589 H2388 H853 H3808

בְּעִמָּךְ אַת יְשַׁלֵּח  
go that he shall not let the people

H7971 H853 H5971

## Additional Cross-References

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**Romans 9:18** (Parallel theme): Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

**Isaiah 63:17** (References Lord): O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

**Joshua 11:20** (References Lord): For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

**Exodus 14:8** (References Lord): And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

**John 12:40** (Parallel theme): He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

**Exodus 3:20** (References Egypt): And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

**Exodus 7:13** (References Lord): And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

**Exodus 9:12** (References Lord): And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

**Exodus 10:20** (References Lord): But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

**Exodus 7:3** (References Egypt): And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.