

Exodus 7:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Analysis

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: Again the formula of obedience—ka'asher tzivah YHWH (כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה). The repetition from verse 6 brackets their ages (v. 7) with obedience, emphasizing that faithful response to God matters more than human qualifications.

And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Aaron, not Moses, performs the sign as God ordained (7:9). The rod (matteh, מַטֵּה) becomes a serpent (tannin, תַּנִּין)—not the common snake (nachash) of 4:3, but a great sea creature or dragon, the term used for primordial chaos monsters (Genesis 1:21, Psalm 74:13, Isaiah 27:1). In Egyptian theology, the cobra (uraeus) symbolized Pharaoh's power and divine authority, worn on the royal crown. Aaron's rod becoming a tannin challenges Egyptian cosmic order at its foundation. This sign declares: YHWH controls chaos itself; Egypt's symbols of power are nothing before Him.

Historical Context

Egyptian court magicians held official positions as hartummim (חֲרֻטְמִים, priest-magicians) who interpreted dreams, performed rituals, and demonstrated supernatural knowledge. Archaeological evidence from Egypt shows magical

practices involving rods, incantations, and serpent manipulation. The court setting—"before Pharaoh, and before his servants"—made this a public challenge to Egyptian religious authority in the throne room itself. The distinction between tannin (cosmic serpent-dragon) and nachash (ordinary snake) is significant: the Nile god Sobek was depicted as a crocodile, and Apophis (the chaos serpent) represented forces even Egyptian gods struggled to control. Aaron's rod becoming tannin asserted YHWH's supremacy over both Egyptian magic and Egyptian theology.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the transformation of Aaron's rod into a *tannin* (not mere snake) demonstrate God's authority over cosmic forces, not just natural phenomena?
2. What does this confrontation in Pharaoh's throne room teach about boldly demonstrating God's power in hostile environments?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּבֹא	וְאַהֲרֹן	וְכָל	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וַיָּבֹאוּ	לְפָנֵי
went in	And Moses	and Aaron	H413	Pharaoh	and they did	H3651
H935	H4872	H175		H6547	H6213	H834
וַיִּצְוֶה	וַיֹּאמֶר	וְכָל	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וַיָּבֹאוּ	לְפָנֵי
had commanded	so as the LORD	cast down	and Aaron	H853	his rod	and before
H6680	H3068	H7993	H175		H4294	H6440
וַיִּצְוֶה	וַיֹּאמֶר	וְכָל	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וַיָּבֹאוּ	לְפָנֵי
Pharaoh	and before	his servants	H1961	and it became a serpent		
H6547	H6440	H5650		H8577		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 4:3 (References Moses): And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

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