

# Exodus 7:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

## Analysis

**But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.** God prophetically declares Pharaoh's resistance while revealing His sovereign purpose behind it. The phrase **shall not hearken** (לֹא-יִשְׁמָע, lo-yishma) uses the verb shama (שָׁמַע), meaning to hear, listen, or obey—Pharaoh will refuse to heed Moses' demands. Yet this disobedience serves divine purpose.

The crucial phrase **that I may lay my hand upon Egypt** reveals God's redemptive-judicial aim. The Hebrew לְמַעַן (lema'an, "that" or "in order that") indicates purpose: Pharaoh's hardness becomes the occasion for demonstrating Yahweh's power over Egypt and its gods. God's **hand** (יָד, yad) symbolizes His power—the same hand that would part the Red Sea, provide manna, and write the commandments. Here it executes judgment on Egypt's false gods (12:12) and liberates Israel.

**Bring forth mine armies** (אֶת-צִבְאוֹתַי, et-tziv'otai) describes Israel as Yahweh's tzava'ot—His hosts or armies. This military language elevates Israel's identity: not merely escaped slaves but Yahweh's organized forces marching out in divine order (12:51, 13:18). The plural **my people the children of Israel** emphasizes covenant relationship: Israel belongs to Yahweh, not Pharaoh. Egypt's stubbornness cannot

thwart God's redemptive plan.

**By great judgments** (בְּשִׁפְטִים גְּדוֹלִים, bishphatim gedolim) anticipates the ten plagues. The noun shphatim comes from shaphat (שָׁפַט, "to judge"), indicating these weren't mere natural disasters but divine judicial sentences against Egypt's false deities. Each plague targeted specific Egyptian gods—the Nile (Hapi), the sun (Ra), etc.—revealing their impotence before Yahweh. This prefigures God's ultimate judgment on all evil and idolatry, culminating in Christ's victory over sin, death, and Satan (Colossians 2:15; Revelation 20).

## Historical Context

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Exodus 7 inaugurates the plague cycle (chapters 7-12), Egypt's ten judgments. Ancient Egypt was a superpower—the dominant civilization with advanced architecture, agriculture, military might, and religious sophistication. Egypt's pantheon included hundreds of deities governing natural forces, cosmic order, and daily life. Pharaoh himself was considered divine, the living incarnation of Horus and son of Ra. For Yahweh to challenge Egypt meant confronting the world's greatest power and its elaborate theological system.

The phrase "my armies" reflects ancient Near Eastern conquest narratives where gods led their people to victory. However, Israel's exodus differed radically from typical ancient warfare—Yahweh alone fought while Israel witnessed His salvation (14:13-14). The exodus became Israel's foundational narrative, shaping national identity, worship, and theology. Prophets repeatedly referenced the exodus when calling Israel to faithfulness (Jeremiah 2:6, Amos 2:10, Micah 6:4).

The statement that Pharaoh "shall not hearken" raises the theological problem of divine hardening (explored in 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, etc.). Reformed theology interprets this as God's judicial hardening of those already resistant—God gives them over to their chosen rebellion (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Pharaoh's initial refusals were his own (7:13-14, 22-23; 8:15, 19, 32), then God confirms him in that hardness to accomplish redemptive purposes. This mysterious interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility appears throughout Scripture.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's use of Pharaoh's hardness to accomplish redemption help us trust His sovereignty when people resist the gospel?
2. What does Israel's identity as God's "armies" teach about the church's spiritual warfare and identity as God's people?

## Interlinear Text

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וְלֹא	יִשְׁמַע	אֲלֵכֶם	כִּי	וְנִתַּתִּי	אֵת
H3808	shall not hearken	H413	But Pharaoh	unto you that I may lay	H853
	H8085		H6547	H5414	
יְדִי	מִצְרַיִם	וְהוֹצֵאתִי	אֵת	צְבָאוֹתַי	אֵת
my hand	of Egypt	and bring forth	H853	mine armies	H853
H3027	H4714	H3318		H6635	
					עַמִּי
					H5971
בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	מֵאֶרֶץ	מִצְרַיִם	בְּשֻׁפְטֵי	גְּדֹלִים:
the children	of Israel	out of the land	of Egypt	judgments	by great
H1121	H3478	H776	H4714	H8201	H1419

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 11:9** (References Egypt): And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

**Exodus 6:6** (Judgment): Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

**Exodus 12:51** (References Israel): And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

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