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And the Lord said to Moses,
“See, I have made you like God to
Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall
be your prophet. You shall speak all that
I command you, and your brother Aaron
shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of
Israel go out of his land.

Exodus 7:1-2 ESV

But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.

Exodus 7:3-5 ESV

Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

Exodus 7:10b-12 ESV



Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 8:19 ESV

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Luke 11:20 ESV

Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent.

Exodus 7:15 ESV

They did not remember his power or the day when he redeemed them from the foe, when he performed his signs in Egypt and his marvels in the fields of Zoan.

He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them.

Psalm 78:42-43, 45 ESV

hazaq: to stiffen or strengthen;
to make resolute or determined

qasa: to be hard

kabed: to be heavy, not work properly

The strengthening of Pharaohs heart is not about making him act contrary to his own will. Rather, it is the reverse; it is about giving him the boldness or courage to do what he most desires.

~T. Desmond Alexander

Exodus gives no sign that Pharaoh longed to submit to Yahweh as his sovereign and was prevented from doing so... His attitude of rebellion is “confirmed,” so to speak, and repeatedly displayed rather than hidden or compromised for the sake of expediency.

~D. G. Coover-Cox

But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

Exodus 9:16 ESV

Anyone who knows the Exodus story would understand that God raised up Pharaoh with a negative rather than a positive purpose. By resisting God's will to deliver his people from bondage, Pharaoh caused that deliverance to assume a more spectacular aspect than it would have otherwise.

~Douglas Moo

Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewal of
your mind, that by testing you may
discern what is the will of God, what
is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2 ESV

