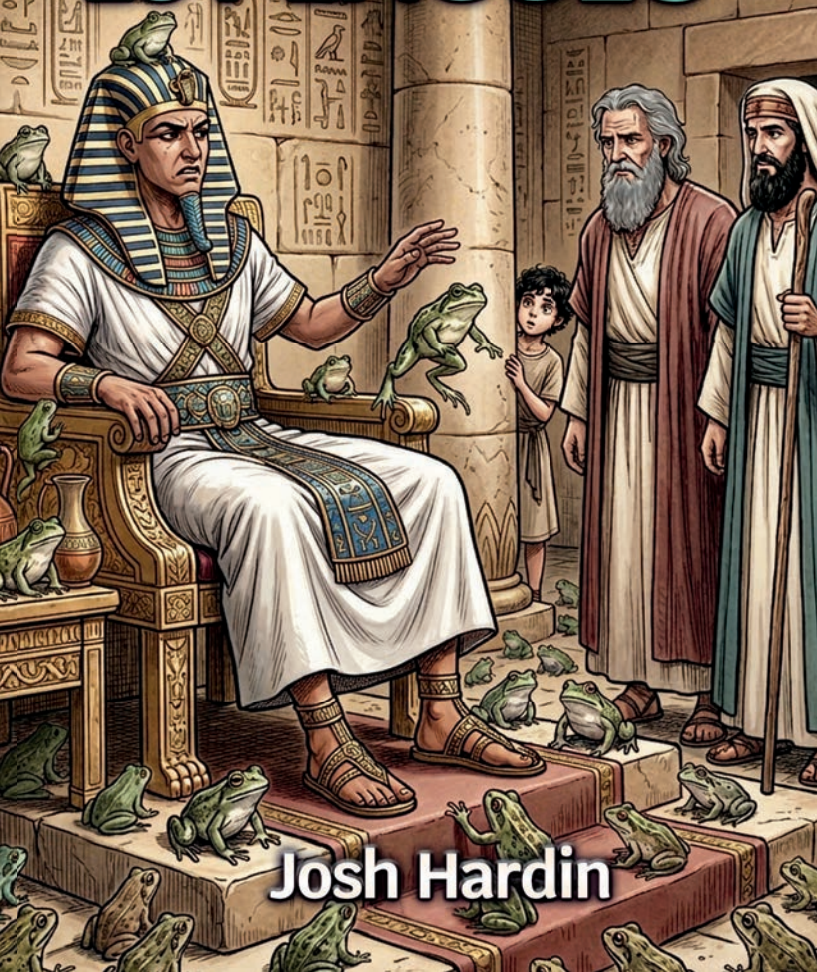


the **WITNESS** series

Eliakim AND THE 10 PLAGUES



Josh Hardin

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the **WITNESS** series

The **Witness Series** is a collection of books based on biblical stories but told through the eyes of a fictional character who might have been present at a particular event. The character who witnesses each story is a young person, usually between the ages of eight and seventeen.

I took great pains to be sure that the story in your hand does not change **any details** that are included in the Bible. Since many of the characters in this story are fictional, there will be some elements, especially dialogue, that are not included in the Bible. However, these should in **no way** contradict what the Bible says. If they do, it is unintended. So always remember that the story happened the way God says it happened in the Bible.

The series has this thought at its foundation: “Suppose that we could hear this Bible story from the eyes of a young person who saw it first-hand, who was there when it happened.” Each of the stories in this series will be based on that idea.

—Josh Hardin





In this book, we will suppose we can read the story of the ten plagues and the Exodus from Egypt from the perspective of a boy who was an Israelite slave in the household of Pharaoh. What did he see and hear as he tried to serve Pharaoh, even while the palace was filled with flies and frogs? As each plague unfolds, Eliakim must wrestle with questions of fear, faith, and freedom. Why would God allow the suffering of His people? Can Pharaoh's power really stand against God? And what does it mean to trust God when everything feels uncertain?





Chapter 1

“Who is this God of Moses?” roared Pharaoh as he threw the clay pitcher against the wall. It burst like a firework, and Eliakim ducked as shards of pottery and wine sprayed his face. Somehow, miraculously, he balanced the food tray in his hands without dropping it. Even so, bits of clay fell in among the fruit and the drinks.

“Who is He to order our slaves to leave?” Pharaoh turned and glared at Eliakim, who stood holding the tray. Pharaoh barely seemed to notice him.

“Don’t take it out on Eliakim,” said Pharaoh’s sister as she examined the tray Eliakim held. “And don’t take it out on the food. You’ve shattered the pitcher and ruined your meal.” She turned to Eliakim. “Run, bring us a new tray, Eliakim,” she said, smiling at him.

“How can I eat?” He glared at his sister. “How can you eat, when our empire is on the brink of ruin?” He waved his arms, and Eliakim was sure he would have thrown something else if he could reach it. Instead, Pharaoh continued to roar. “And who is Moses? Who is he to ask such a thing?” Even as Eliakim rushed to the kitchen for a new tray of food, he could still hear Pharaoh shout.

Eliakim was not Egyptian. He was Hebrew. He had been born a slave in Egypt, just like the rest of the Hebrew people. Most of them had hard jobs in the fields or on work crews for Pharaoh’s building projects. But two years earlier, when Eliakim had turned ten, he became a servant to Pharaoh’s sister, part of Pharaoh’s household. He carried messages and food and ran whatever errands he was told to do. Other servants his age had been dismissed because they hadn’t learned their jobs well. They were sent back to their families to work in the fields, or, if they were lucky, they were sent to other Egyptian families for a last chance serving in a house.

Eliakim’s father, Hadriel, told him on his first day training for Pharaoh’s house, “This is a big opportunity for you, Eliakim. Work hard, make friends, and you will have many opportunities and choices in your life. Perhaps you won’t be forced to work in the fields or on Pharaoh’s construction crews making bricks, as I do.”

“How am I supposed to work hard for Pharaoh?” asked Eliakim. “He’s the one who keeps all of us as slaves.”

His mother, Sheerah, knelt beside him. “Don’t put too much on him, Hadriel,” she said. “He’s only ten.” She looked her son in the eye. “You work as if working for the Lord Jehovah, not for Pharaoh.”

“Mother,” he asked, “why hasn’t Jehovah freed us? Why does He let us live as slaves? Aren’t we His people?”

“Jehovah will free us in His time,” she said. “He promised our father Abraham, and He never forgets a promise. You will see.”

“But how...?” Eliakim started to ask.

“Enough questions,” said his father. “You can’t be late for work on the first day.”

So for two years Eliakim had worked hard. Even though he worked for Pharaoh and his house, Eliakim told himself, “I work for Jehovah.” He worked and made friends with everyone in the palace. Now all the people in the palace, from Pharaoh’s children to the Egyptian servants, trusted him, and he could come and go wherever he wished. He ran so many chores that he knew every nook and corner of the palace. He had become good at listening, and watching, and

going unnoticed because everyone thought he was on an errand for Pharaoh or his sister or one of their children.

Because of that, he often knew things before anyone else, even before his parents or other Hebrew adults. He came home each day and reported what he had overheard. Soon, not only his family but all the Hebrews relied on him to tell them Pharaoh's plans so that they could prepare. The people often had supplies ready before Pharaoh announced a new construction project or changes to the work required. It kept them safe because they never fell behind, and it also kept Pharaoh happy because his projects were completed more quickly.

But Eliakim had never seen Pharaoh so mad as he was now! Eliakim burst into the kitchen at full speed—or, as fast as he could go while carrying a tray—and clanked the ruined food on the shelf where the kitchen workers prepared the meals. “Zorah, another tray,” he called as he emptied the ruined food from the dishes and cleared the tray.

“What’s happening?” asked Zorah, the chief baker. He and the rest of the kitchen staff stood staring at Eliakim, frozen in fear by the distant shouting coming from Pharaoh’s chamber. “I thought maybe he’d killed you. Did you drop a tray?”

“No,” said Eliakim, cringing at the thought of

what might happen if he had dropped a tray. He looked up and saw Zorah and the others weren't moving. "Quick!" he said.

Zorah clapped his hands, and the kitchen staff leaped to work, fast as a gazelle. Each quickly brought new food to Eliakim, who arranged it on the tray for balance. There was one spot still open, right in the middle. "And a new pitcher," said Eliakim as he adjusted the empty cups around the open spot on the tray.

"What happened to the other pitcher?" demanded Zorah as one worker brought the replacement.



Eliakim lifted the tray and bolted for the door, expertly balancing the tray so that nothing even wiggled. “Pharaoh threw it,” he called over his shoulder as Zorah tried to ask more questions. “I’ll tell you later!”

“I don’t care if Moses was a prince in Egypt,” Pharaoh shouted at his sister as Eliakim brought the new tray of food and set it down, out of Pharaoh’s reach. She nodded at Eliakim, then waved him back. He backed away and stood, as he had been taught, out of the way yet ready to obey a command.

“He is a Hebrew,” continued Pharaoh. His sister opened her mouth, but Pharaoh stopped her with a raised hand. “I know the story of how he was taken in and raised in this palace. This very palace! But what did that get us? Now here he is, returned. And to serve Egypt? No! To rob us of our slaves!”

“He doesn’t want to rob us of our slaves,” she replied. “He only asked to leave for a three-day festival. You know we let other workers go and worship the gods when the gods require it.”

“Our gods!” roared Pharaoh. “Our gods,” he repeated, more quietly. “They should worship the gods of Egypt. The Hebrews are in Egypt.” He waved his hand, taking in all of Egypt, but

pointing somewhere out where the Hebrews lived. "They are our slaves. They should worship *our* gods, not some other god that can tell them what to do." Eliakim could feel Pharaoh's anger.

"Do you think I don't know the stories of how their God Jehovah promised to free them and give them a country of their own? Do you think I've forgotten the history? One of their own sat as the head of Egypt, with only Pharaoh himself above him. They nearly ruled Egypt as their own country! Now Moses, raised as a prince of Egypt already, shows up and claims to have words spoken from their God. I know what Moses wants. He himself would be at their head, and the head of Egypt!" He stopped and thought, then looked at his sister. "Is that what you would have, too? Would you have them replace me as Pharaoh?" This last question pained him, because as much as he roared and ranted, he valued his sister's approval and opinion.

"You know I don't, brother," she said. She handed him a new cup to drink and placed her hand on his arm.

He looked at her eyes, then relaxed. "I know you don't," he said, taking the cup from her. "You are always with me, even if no one else is."

"I am always with you," she said, "and with Egypt.

I simply think it would be wise to appease them now. If they are happy, they won't grumble, and you will have their services forever. Who is their God, and what has He done for them? Nothing, compared to Pharaoh," she said.

Pharaoh turned away, thinking. He took a drink. "Yes," he said. "I, Pharaoh, am their god," he said. "The Hebrews must learn to do as I say, not some God Jehovah who is unknown to us and has done nothing for them. And they must learn that Pharaoh is their god."

He turned on his sister. "But not a god to appease them. No. Not a god who does as they ask. A god they must obey." He turned, determined, and set down the cup. He clapped his hands, and an official approached from his position in a corner, where he had silently awaited commands.

"Brother, what will you do?" asked his sister, worried.

He gave her a look, then turned to his official. "Tell the slave drivers and the foremen of the Hebrews: You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks. Let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota."

"Brother!" gasped his sister.

His head whirled to face her, his eyes storming. "They are lazy! That is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Make the work harder for the men, so that they keep working and pay no attention to the lies of Moses and Aaron." He waved the official away. The official bowed and left to give the commands.

Pharaoh looked at his sister. "You question Pharaoh's commands?" he demanded.

"Pharaoh's commands are law," she said, then added, "but are they wise?"

Pharaoh's eyes narrowed, thinking. Then he said, "You would be too easy on them." He shrugged. "But even if the command is not wise, all the better. They will learn to obey all of Pharaoh's commands, wise or not."

"Pharaoh's commands are law," repeated his sister, bowing her head slightly.

Eliakim stood still, trying hard not to move. But he could barely wait to run home and report the news. His people would need to know this, and quickly. Bricks without straw! How would they do it? What could Jehovah do now?

