

Ex. 4:1 And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

Ex. 4:2 And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

Ex. 4:3 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.

Ex. 4:4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

Ex. 4:5 That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

Ex. 4:6 And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow.

Ex. 4:7 And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.

Ex. 4:8 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

Ex. 4:9 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*.

God has just taken great pains to detail what will happen; but Moses says, "What if they do not believe me, and don't believe that the Lord appeared to me?" (After all, Moses is looking at a burning bush; maybe he isn't sure it is God speaking to him.) The Lord made us. He understands well how our minds work, so He patiently gives Moses a sign. God asks Moses what he has in his hand. Moses answers, "a rod." The Lord tells him to throw it on the ground. Moses did, and it became a snake and he ran from it. Then the Lord tells him to reach out his hand and take it by the tail. Moses obeys, and it becomes a rod again. The Lord told Moses that this was a sign that he could use to prove who had sent him. Then the Lord tells Moses to put his hand inside his cloak. He did; and when he pulled it out, it was white as snow like a leper's. Then he was told to put it back in his cloak. He did; and when he took it back out, it was normal again. Now he has a second sign if they don't believe the first. But God doesn't stop there; He gives Moses a third sign. If the first two signs don't work, he is to take some water from the Nile and pour it on dry ground. The water will turn into blood on the ground.

Ex. 4:10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

Ex. 4:11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?

Ex. 4:12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

Moses is a very reluctant vessel. Now he complains that he is not eloquent enough to speak to these people; he is slow of speech and tongue. (He certainly

doesn't seem to have any problems coming up with excuses in front of Almighty God.) So the Lord confronts him with the obvious. "Who hath made man's mouth? Who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?" (Moses is getting under the Father's skin, so to speak. Just like any parent with a stubborn child.) Again, God tells Moses to go; He will help him speak and tell him what to say.

Even though we don't have the privilege of hearing God's voice audibly, we sometimes recognize just as clearly when He is speaking to us. Sometimes our responses follow the same pattern as Moses. We start making excuses because we aren't really sure about what we "heard." God just wants us to step out in faith with the first step, and He will take care of all the details. He just wants our obedience in faith.

Ex. 4:13 And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of *him whom thou wilt send*.

Ex. 4:14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.*

Ex. 4:15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

Ex. 4:16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.*

Ex. 4:17 And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

Finally, Moses quits making excuses. He just doesn't want to go and says so. He asks God to send someone else. The Lord was angry with Moses, but just like any good father, He expects Moses to obey. In spite of His anger, He makes one more stab at boosting Moses' confidence. He tells Moses that Aaron, his brother (a Levite) is on his way to meet him. God knows that Aaron speaks well, and he will be glad to see Moses. God tells Moses to tell Aaron what to say, and God will help both of them speak and teach them what to do. Aaron can speak to the people as he is directed by Moses, who will be directed by God. Moses is also to take his rod with him so he can perform miraculous signs with it.

Ex. 4:18 And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which *are in Egypt*, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

Ex. 4:19 And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

Ex. 4:20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

Finally, Moses is obedient. He goes back home to his father-in-law and asks him to let him go back to his own people in Egypt and see if any of them are still alive. (My how society has changed in the attitude of deference toward parents!) Jethro told him to go and wished him well.

It is interesting that even though Jethro is a priest, Moses doesn't tell him about his encounter with the Lord (at least we aren't told that he did). You would think that a priest, of all people, would understand. Neither are we told that he told his wife the truth.

In verse 19 we are given more information regarding what God told Moses. He told him that all the men who had wanted to kill him in Egypt were dead. Next thing you know, Moses has taken his wife and sons (notice there are more than one now) and headed back to Egypt. As instructed by God, he had the "rod of God" with him.

Ex. 4:21 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.

Ex. 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, *even* my firstborn:

Ex. 4:23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy firstborn.

In verse 21 it sounds like the Lord is speaking to Moses again; in fact, the next set of verses make me think that this was a new conversation. The Lord tells Moses to be sure he performs all the miracles that God has given him the power to do in the presence of Pharaoh. Then God says that He will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let the people go.

These kinds of truths are always hard to understand. It is very important that we keep in mind all the attributes of God when studying the scripture. God has the prerogative to choose any person/nation/or whatever to accomplish His purpose. God is all-knowing; He knows every part of our life before we are even born. God is not willing that any should perish, according to scripture. God is just using Pharaoh's choices to accomplish His will. There is a point when God will give you over to your own choices and your eternity is sealed.

When Pharaoh refuses to let the people go, Moses is to give him a message from the Lord. He is to say—"Israel is my firstborn son, and you are to "let my son go so he may worship me." Because you have refused, I will kill your firstborn son."

I think Israel is referenced as God's firstborn, since it will be from the nation of Israel that the Messiah would come—God's only begotten Son. God is saying to Pharaoh that His firstborn son is as precious to Him as Pharaoh's is to him. To deprive Him of the relationship/communication/fellowship of His child's worship is like losing His child, so He will let Pharaoh understand this through firsthand experience—through the death of his son.

Ex. 4:24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.

Ex. 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast *it* at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband *art* thou to me.

Ex. 4:26 So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband *thou art*, because of the circumcision.

These verses are like a parenthesis in the story with many pertinent facts missing. All I can do is make conclusions of my own from the information provided. Moses and his family stopped at an inn. It would seem that the Lord makes a bodily appearance and shows intent to kill Moses. We aren't told if they recognized the Lord, but the context indicates they did. Obviously, Moses' firstborn son had not been circumcised. Although they may seem like a parenthesis, these verses are strategically placed right after God's discussion with Moses regarding the importance of the firstborn son. It would seem that Zipporah heard this part of God's conversation with Moses. Zipporah seemed to be the one to understand what God was trying to get Moses to recognize by bringing his family into obedience with the sign of God's covenant. Moses could not rightly represent God to Pharaoh when he was in disobedience to God regarding his own family. Evidently, Moses had explained his circumcision to his wife. She obviously didn't understand why the sign had to involve such a disgusting process; but as most any loving mother, she was willing to do whatever was necessary to protect her family.

(3/05) According to Exodus 18:2, Moses must have sent his family back to the home of his father-in-law at this point.

I am reminded that Moses and Zipporah have been married approximately 40 years, since Moses was 40 when he left Egypt and 80 when he confronted Pharaoh. These boys were probably young men at this time. Zipporah was a Gentile—not a Jew, yet she was the one that understood why God would have to kill Moses and took action to save him. It's interesting how often Gentile women figure into the purposes of God for His people (i.e., Tamar, Rahab, Ruth) just as the Gentile bride of Christ will be used to provoke Israel to jealousy and point her to the truth about the Messiah.

Ex. 4:27 And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

Ex. 4:28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

Ex. 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

Ex. 4:30 And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

Ex. 4:31 And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Here we are told that the Lord spoke to Aaron (how doesn't really matter) and told him to go into the desert and meet Moses. So he did. He met Moses at the mountain of God, Sinai, and kissed him. Moses could finally share his whole experience with God. He told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say. He also told him about all the miracles he had been commanded to perform.

Verse 29 finds them back in Egypt and meeting with the elders of the Israelites. Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. They also showed them the miraculous signs—and they believed. When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and knew their misery, they bowed down and worshipped. (Thought—God knows us intimately. He knows exactly what we need and when we need it to enable us to make the right decisions.)