

**October 22, 2017 - Ex. 4:18 – 6:1 - Moses confronts Pharaoh**  
**Torah Reading: Exodus 4:18 – 6:1 - Moses confronts Pharaoh**  
**Psalm 44**  
**Haftarah: Isaiah 55:12 – 56:8**  
**2 Samuel 15:7-15, 37**

Recall that Moses contradicted God to his face. God had said “they shall hearken to thy voice.” Moses said, “They will not.” (**Exodus 3:18**)

“We are made of precisely the same material that Moses was. There is in us the same evil, unbelieving, rebellious heart, and our only safeguard is to cast ourselves in the dust before God, beseeching him to pity our helplessness and to keep down, subdue and overcome the desperate and incurable wickedness which indwells us. ... the truth is, God is sovereign, and uses whom he pleases.” - *Arthur W. Pink, Gleanings in Exodus*

More on the signs - the first “signs” ever in the scriptures:

### **The Rod**

The Rod of Moses, cast to the ground, turns into a serpent and Moses flees. Moses picks it up by the tail, and it returns to being a rod in his hand. (**Exodus 4:2-4**)

- The rod signifies Moses’ trust in God. “Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (**Psalm 23**) If he casts it down, he will be vulnerable to the serpent/Satan and will flee.

- The rod signifies governmental or ruling authority. Messiah will rule the nations with a rod of iron (**Psalm 2:9, Revelation 2:27**) Joseph had the ruling power, but then a pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph, and Israel was enslaved. Moses - as a picture of Christ- will take the serpent by the tail and the ruling power will return to Israel.

(The time for crushing the head of the serpent would come later, with Messiah)

**Psalm 110:2** - “The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.”

- The rod becoming a serpent signifies Christ becoming a curse on the cross. Moses later lifted up a brass serpent on a rod during the time of plague of fiery serpents upon Israel in the wilderness. “Everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” (**Numbers 21:4-9**)

**John 3:14-16** - “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

**Galatians 3:13** - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

### **Moses' leprous hand**

Moses' hand placed into his bosom and withdrawn as leprous would have served to humble Moses as a picture of his own evil heart, exposed. But Moses is also a type of Christ.

(Israel was to look for a prophet that God would raise up "like unto me.")

**Deuteronomy 18:15** - "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him."

Christ who was without sin, took on the leprosy of our sin and rebellion on the cross (**2 Corinthians 5:21**), then became clean again once it was atoned for.

**Isaiah 53:4** - "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

Talmud: "yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted" (Sanhedrin 98b)  
The Hebrew words stricken (*nagua*) and smitten (*mukkay*) are interpreted as referring to a leprous condition.

At Calvary, he bore his reproach "outside the camp" where lepers were relegated (**Leviticus 13:46**).

This also represents our pathway to repentance - to examine our heart, discover it is leprous and expose it through confession, and then to accept God's healing and wholeness.

### **Nile water turning to blood**

The third and last sign was to be used only if the two others went unheeded.

Water turned to blood, the Nile the life-source of Egypt to be turned into death. This was the first plague to fall on Egypt. Although it did not affect Israel in Goshen then, here it would be glimpsed in terror by them if they refused to listen to Moses.

### **Moses returns to Egypt**

**Exodus 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."

Rashi - That is the donkey that Abraham saddled for the binding of Isaac, and that is the one upon whom the King Messiah is destined to appear, as it is said: "humble, and riding a donkey" (**Zech. 9:9**). — [from Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 31]

See **Matthew 21:1-11**

**Exodus 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.”

“Harden” = *chazaq* - to fasten upon, to sieze

God will “squeeze” Pharaoh’s heart to expose every drop of evil before he judges him.

**Exodus 4:22** - “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn”

“... and out of Egypt I called My son.” (**Matthew 2:13-15** cites **Hosea 11:1**)

### **Circumcision Neglected**

**Exodus 4:24-26** - “And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. 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. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.”

Rashi - The angel turned into a sort of serpent and swallowed him [Moses] from his head to his thighs, and then [spit him out and] swallowed him from his feet to his private parts. Zipporah therefore understood that it was because of [the failure to perform] the circumcision [that this occurred]. — [from Ned. 32a, Exodus Rabbah 5:5]

Zipporah had objected to circumcising their son, according to one tradition, and Moses sent her away (**Exodus 18:2**)

Another tradition says it was Jethro who had forbidden the firstborn son to be circumcised as a condition of Zipporah’s marriage to Moses.

Rubbing the foreskin and blood on Moses’ feet (or possibly on his male member, “feet” sometimes being a euphemism for private parts in the Bible), with Zipporah’s declaration that Moses was “a husband or bridegroom of the blood” was the signal that Moses could now continue on his journey, his family being in right covenant relationship. Like seeing the blood on the doorpost at Passover, seeing the blood ends the attack by God/ the angel.

Circumcision - like baptism for the Christian - is a foundational covenant ritual (**Genesis 17:10-14**). Without his own house in order, Moses could not have spoken with authority to the children of Israel.

An alternate tradition says Zipporah and the children were sent back to Jethro because Aaron objected to more Israelites entering the land of bondage. “Great enough is our sorrow through those who have been in Egypt from the beginning, and thou takest more into the land?”

Zipporah is the only woman in the Bible said to have performed a circumcision. But is a woman allowed to circumcise? Some sages argued that the fact that a woman is not required to be circumcised teaches that she is regarded as if she were already circumcised. Others disagreed.

See <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/zipporah-midrash-and-aggadah>

### **Moses accepted by the elders**

**Exodus 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.”

The elders knew that Jacob had imparted to Joseph the secret mark designating the redeemer, and Joseph had imparted it to his brothers. The last surviving brother Asher had imparted it to his daughter Serah in the following way: “He that will come and proclaim the redemption with the words of God, ‘I have surely visited you and seen that which is done to you in Egypt,’ he is the true redeemer.” Serah was still alive when Moses arrived and she confirmed his credentials.

- *Legends of the Jews*

The elders of Israel were to go with Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh, but they stealthily dropped out one by one along the way to his court. Their punishment was that later they were not allowed to accompany Moses up the mountain to receive the Law.

Moses is a type of Christ the Redeemer and Mediator. Redemption happens when God knows our pain and responds.

See **Exodus 3:7** - “And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.”

“Sorrows” is *mak'ob* - pain - the same word that is translated “a man of *sorrows*” in **Isaiah 53:3**

In fact, one midrash explains that God experiences the pain that humans are too inert to feel:

“Since dead flesh does not feel the scalpel, while I do know their pain, which they themselves do not feel.” (Midrash Lekach Tov in Torah Shemelah 3:126)

Even the pain and sorrow of bondage to sin and human exile in a fallen world.

Maybe more importantly, God “sees” his people and their affliction. When they know they are truly seen, they can imagine redemption is possible.

Rashi likens this to an expression of love in Song of Solomon 2:9. After giving up all hope of seeing the Bridegroom, she senses Him “peering through the lattice” at her.

“I thought myself doomed for many days, but He let me know that He was standing and looking through the heavenly windows at my fate: ‘I have indeed seen the affliction of my people.’”

(Quoted in ‘The Particulars of Rapture’ by Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg)

### **Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh**

At first, Moses and Aaron perform no signs, just present God’s command that Israel be released to go three days into the wilderness to worship Him through a sacrifice and a feast.

God desires to feast with man, but sin requires a sacrifice. Three days journey is the distance between death and resurrection, between the cross and the empty tomb.

**Exodus 5:2** - “And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”

Then Pharaoh sent to fetch the books of the chronicles of his kingdom from his archives, wherein are recorded the names of the gods of all the nations, to see whether the name of the God of the Hebrews was among them. He read off: "The gods of Moab, the gods of Ammon, the gods of Zidon--I do not find your God inscribed in the archives!" Moses and Aaron exclaimed: "O thou fool! Thou seekest the Living in the graves of the dead. These which thou didst read are the names of dumb idols, but our God is the God of life and the King of eternal life." - *Legends of the Jews*

**Exodus 5:4** - “And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens.”

Our accusing minds tell us “get you to your burdens” while God’s Spirit is trying to relieve us of them.

**Exodus 5:8** - “And the talley of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.”

God causes Israel’s bondage to get worse, becoming extreme, so they will really want to leave Egypt.

**Exodus 5:17** - “But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the LORD.”

Faith and dependence on God are seen as “idleness” by our practical reason. We should be doing something, not waiting on God, our minds will tell us.

## A Savor of Death Unto Death

**Exodus 5:21** - “And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.”

The Gospel is always abhorrent to the world.

**2 Corinthians 2:14** - “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”

**Ephesians 5:2** - “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”

**John 15:18** - “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”

**Exodus 6:1** - “Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.”

Rashi - You have questioned My ways [of running the world, which is] unlike Abraham, to whom I said, “For in Isaac will be called your seed” (Gen. 21:12), and afterwards I said to him, “Bring him up there for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:2), yet he did not question Me. Therefore, now you will see. What is done to Pharaoh you will see, but not what is done to the kings of the seven nations when I bring them [the children of Israel] into the land [of Israel]. — [from Sanh. 111a] (i.e., because your whole generation will die before entering the Promised Land)