

VISION 2012

Looking BACK... UP... & IN... so we can Look FORWARD!

January 29-February 26

Exodus 3:1-17b NLT (almost forgot AGAIN...BUT, I remembered :0)

¹ One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. ³ "**This is amazing,**" Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? **I must go see it.**" ⁴ When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied. ⁵ "Do not come any closer," the LORD warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ⁶ I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the LORD told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. ⁸ So **I have come down to rescue them** from the power of the Egyptians **and lead them** out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. ⁹ Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. ¹⁰ Now go, for **I am sending you** to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt."

*I.---BEFORE YOU CAN ENJOY THE THRILL OF **EVEN HEARING HIS AGENDA**, YOU MUST FIRST ALLOW HIM TO INTERRUPT YOURS ☺*

Oftentimes we miss extraordinary adventures with God for no other reason that we are too driven by our own.

II.---BEFORE YOU SURRENDER TO ANY AGENDA, MAKE SURE ITS HIS NOT YOURS OR ANYONE ELSE'S!

*NOTICE AGAIN, **THIS IS HIS AGENDA**, NOT MOSES. -Moses had not gone on a "vision quest". He did go looking for a "vision" or some exciting thing he could do for God. THE "VISION" FOUND AND CALLED HIM.*

NOW WE TURN A CORNER IN THE DIALOGUE...LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT...

¹¹ But Moses protested to God, “**Who am I** to appear before Pharaoh? **Who am I** to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?”

¹² God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.”

¹³ But Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘**What is his name?**’ Then what should I tell them?”

¹⁴ God replied to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM**. Say this to the people of Israel: **I AM** has sent me to you.” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.

This is my eternal name,

my name to remember for all generations.

¹⁶ “Now go and call together all the elders of Israel. Tell them, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, “I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you.” ¹⁷ I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey

(MORE EXCUSES WILL FOLLOW Exodus 4:1-17)

¹ **But Moses protested again, “What if they won’t believe me or listen to me?** What if they say, ‘The LORD never appeared to you?’” ² **Then the LORD asked him, “What is that in your hand?”** “A shepherd’s staff,” Moses replied. ³ “Throw it down on the ground,” the LORD told him. So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back.

⁴ Then the LORD told him, “Reach out and grab its tail.” So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd’s staff in his hand. ⁵ “Perform this sign,” the LORD told him. “Then they will believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you.” ⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now put your hand inside your cloak.” So Moses put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out again, his hand was white as snow with a severe skin disease. ⁷ “Now put your hand back into your cloak,” the LORD said. So Moses put his hand back in, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body. ⁸ The LORD said to Moses, “If they do not believe you and are not convinced by the first miraculous sign, they will be convinced by the second sign. ⁹ And if they don’t believe you or listen to you even after these two signs, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on the dry ground. When you do, the water from the Nile will turn to blood on the ground.”

¹⁰ **But Moses pleaded with the LORD, “O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.”**

¹¹ **Then the LORD asked Moses, “Who makes a person’s mouth?** Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.”

¹³ **But Moses again pleaded, “Lord, please! Send anyone else.”** ¹⁴ **Then the LORD became angry with Moses. “All right,” he said. “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you.** ¹⁵ Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. ¹⁶ Aaron will be your spokesman to the people. He will be your mouthpiece, and you will stand in the place of God for him, telling him what to say. ¹⁷ And take your shepherd’s staff with you, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you.”

III. Before you can be used by God to do something extraordinary, you must first submit to the truth that “i am not, but i know I AM” (Giglio).

It’s not about you, never has been, never will be its all, all about HIM!
So surrender to the truth that you are weak, flawed and incapable of doing anything apart from HIM.

Romans 8:7 (ESV)

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not **submit** to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.

IV. ONCE you do look BACK and on who you are and WHO HE IS, GOD MOVES IN WAYS THAT WILL BLOW YOUR MIND!!!

Eph. 3:20-21 (NLT)

²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹ Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

SUBMIT - MERRIAM WEBSTER...intransitive verb

to defer to or consent to abide by the opinion or authority of another

---WHAT, MY FRIEND, IS KEEPING YOU, HOLDING YOU BACK FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY VISION HE HAS FOR YOU. IT'S TIME TO LOOK BACK AT WHO YOU ARE AND THAT IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU...LET THE TRUTH OF WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE CAN DO THROUGH YOU SET YOU FREE...SET US FREE TODAY!!!!!!!

JOHN 8:31-32 (NLT)

³¹ Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. ³² And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

DIVE DEEPER MATERIALS...

Exodus 3 - Moses and the Burning Bush

A. God's call to Moses from the burning bush.

1. (1-3) Moses and the burning bush on Mount Horeb.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

a. **Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law:** "The Hebrew suggests that this was his habitual occupation." (Cole) By now, it was 40 years that Moses lived as an obscure shepherd out in the desert

of Midian. At this point his life was so humble that he didn't even have a flock of sheep to call his own - the sheep belonged to his father-in-law.

b. **Came to Horeb, the mountain of God:** Moses brought the sheep to this mountain, also later called Mount Sinai. **Horeb** probably means "desert" or "desolation," and the name gives an idea of the terrain.

c. **The bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed:** It wasn't just that Moses saw a bush burning; apparently, it is not uncommon for a plant like this to spontaneously ignite out in that desert. Nevertheless, two things were distinctive about that bush: **the Angel of the LORD appeared . . . from the midst** of the bush; and though the bush burned, **the bush was not consumed**.

i. The bush burning but not being consumed was a magnetic sight to Moses - it drew him in for a closer examination. Some say the burning bush here is a picture of God's grace that draws us to Him. In this picture, you have a thorn-bush (the original Hebrew word comes from the word "to stick or to prick," this meaning a thorn-bush or bramble) which is a figure of the curse (Adam was cursed to bring forth **thorns and thistles** from the earth, Genesis 3:18). The "curse" is burned (a picture of judgment) without being consumed - therefore, a picture of God's mercy and grace.

2. (4-6) From the burning bush, God calls to Moses.

So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground." Moreover He said, "I *am* the God of your father; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

a. **When the LORD saw that he turned:** God didn't speak to Moses until He has Moses' attention. Often God's Word doesn't touch our heart the way that it might because we don't give it our attention.

i. The burning bush was a spectacular phenomenon that captured Moses' attention; but it changed nothing until Moses received the Word of God there.

b. **God called to him from the midst of the bush:** Moses didn't see anyone in the burning bush; yet God, in the presence of the *Angel of*

the LORD (Exodus 3:2) was there, calling out to Moses from the midst of the burning bush.

i. Undoubtedly, this is another occasion where Jesus appeared before His incarnation in the Old Testament as *the Angel of the LORD*, as He did many times (Genesis 16:7-13, Judges 2:1-5, Judges 6:11-24, Judges 13:3-22).

ii. We say this is God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, because of God the Father, it is said *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him* (John 1:18), and that no man has ever seen God in the Person of the Father (1 Timothy 6:16).

c. **Moses, Moses!** God's first words to Moses call him by name. This shows that even though Moses was now an obscure, forgotten shepherd on the backside of the desert, God knew who he was, and Moses was important to God.

d. **Then He said:** God told Moses to do two things. First, He told Moses to keep a distance (**Do not draw near this place**). Second, to show a reverence for God's presence (**Take your sandals off your feet**). Moses was to show special honor to this place because of the immediate presence of God.

i. **Do not draw near** literally has the sense of "stop coming closer." Moses was on his way for an up-close examination of this burning bush when God stopped him short.

ii. This was a holy place; and because God is holy, there will always be a distance between God and man. Even in perfection man will never be equal to God, though we will be able to have closer fellowship with Him than ever.

iii. **Take your sandals off your feet:** Removing the sandals showed an appropriate *humility*, because the poorest and most needy have no shoes, and servants usually went barefoot. It also recognized the *immediate presence* of God. In many cultures, you take off your shoes when you come into someone's house, and now Moses was in God's "house," a place of His immediate presence.

e. **The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob:** God revealed Himself to Moses by declaring His relationship to

the patriarchs. This reminded Moses that God is the God of the covenant, and His covenant with Israel was still valid and important. This isn't a "new God" meeting Moses, but the same God that dealt with **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**.

i. God will reveal Himself to Moses more intimately than He had to any of the patriarchs; yet it all begins with God reminding Moses of the bridge of covenant they meet on.

ii. Some in the days of Moses might have thought that God neglected His covenant for the 400 years of Israel's slavery in Egypt, since the time of the patriarchs. Nevertheless, God was at work during that time, preserving and multiplying the nation.

f. **Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God**: God asked of Moses to do what is appropriate for a creature before their Creator - a reverence and recognition of holiness. Moses responded as a man who knew he is not only a creature, but a sinful creature - he **hid his face**.

i. In his years in the wilderness of Midan, Moses must have often remembered how he murdered an Egyptian and how proud he was to think he could deliver Israel himself. Moses might have remembered a thousands sins, both real and imagined - now, when God appeared, he responded in a way completely different than he might have 40 years before.

B. God's commission to Moses.

1. (7-10) God explains His general plan to Moses, and Moses' place in the plan.

And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

a. **I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land**: Obviously, God did not just then decided to give Israel the land of

Canaan - it was the land that He promised to the patriarchs some 400 years previous to this.

b. **I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry:** So Moses and Israel can see the compassionate heart of God, He emphasized that He would deliver Israel from the taskmasters of Egypt.

i. The land of Canaan belonged to Israel since the day God promised it to Abraham. God will move Israel there *now* because of the compassion of His heart. The actions were ordained long ago, but the timing was prompted by God's heartfelt love for His people.

c. **I have come down to deliver them . . . I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people:** There was a connection between the principles. God was going to do it, but He still wanted to use Moses. God could do it all by Himself, but it is God's plan to work with and through people - we are *workers together with Him*(2 Corinthians 6:1).

2. (11-12) Moses' answer, and God's reply to that answer.

But Moses said to God, "Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this *shall be* a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

a. **Who am I?** 40 years before, Moses thought he knew who he was: he was a prince of Egypt and a Hebrew, God's chosen instrument to deliver Israel. After forty years of chasing sheep around the desert, Moses didn't have the same self-sure confidence that he once had.

b. **I will certainly be with you:** God's reply is intended to take Moses' focus off of himself and on where it *should be* - on God. Therefore, God never answered the question "**Who am I?**" Instead, He reminded Moses "**I will certainly be with you.**"

i. This was a great opportunity to deal with Moses' "self-esteem" problem, but God ignored the solutions we usually use regarding this "problem." Moses only had a self-esteem problem when he was too confident in his own ability to deliver Israel.

ii. **Who am I?** wasn't the right question; "*Who is God?*" was the proper question. God's identity was more important than who

Moses was. When we know the God who is with us, we can step forth confidently to do His will.

iii. **I will certainly be with you:** After this, Moses had no right to protest further. From here his objections move from a godly lack of self-reliance to an ungodly lack of faith.

c. **When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain:** As Moses tended his flock in the wilderness, it probably seemed totally unlikely that he would lead all three million of his people to this same **mountain** - but God promised that this would be so, as **a sign to you that I have sent you.**

3. (13-14) The revelation of God's name to Moses.

Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What *is* His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM ." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AMhas sent me to you.'"

a. **And they say to me, "What *is* His name?" what shall I say to them?** Rightfully, Moses sensed he needed credentials before the people of Israel. Before, he thought he had the credentials because he was a prince of Egypt. 40 years of tending sheep took away his sense of self-reliance.

i. When God revealed Himself to man in the days of the patriarchs it was often associated with a newly revealed name or title for God.

- Abraham, in the encounter with Melchizedek called on *God Most High* (Genesis 14:22)
- Abraham later encountered *Almighty God* (Genesis 17:1)
- Abraham came to know the LORD as *Everlasting God* (Genesis 21:33), and *The-LORD-Will-Provide* (Genesis 22:14)
- Hagar encountered *You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees* (Genesis 16:13)
- Jacob met *El Elohe Israel* (Genesis 33:20) and *El Bethel* (Genesis 35:7).

ii. Now, when Moses comes to the elders of Israel with a "new message" from God, it is logical to think they would ask, "What

name did He reveal Himself to you under? What new revelation from God do you have?"

b. **And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."** Is there a difference between **I AM WHO I AM** and **I AM** and *Yahweh*? Not really, because each of these sayings express the same idea.

i. Cole on: **I AM WHO I AM**: "This pithy clause is clearly a reference to the name YHWH. Probably 'Yahweh' is regarded as a shortening of the whole phrase, and a running together of the clause into one word." In verse 15, when God says: *Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: "The LORD God of your fathers . . ."*, God is referring back to the name **I AM WHO I AM**.

ii. *Yahweh* was not a new name, nor an unknown name - it appears more than 160 times in the book of Genesis. Moses' mother's name was *Jochabed* meaning, *Yahweh is my glory*. Moses and Israel knew the name *Yahweh*. God did not give Moses a "new and improved" name of God, but the name they had known before. God called them back to the faith of the patriarchs, not to something "new."

iii. How did this name come to be pronounced *Jehovah*? The pious Jews of later years did not want to pronounce the name of God out of reverence, so they left the vowels out of His name and simply said the word *Lord* (*adonai*) instead. If the vowels of the word *adonai* are put over the consonants for *YHWH*, you can get the name "Jehovah." All this came about much later; in the days of Bible, the name was pronounced *Yah-weh* or *Yah-veh*.

c. **I AM has sent me to you**: God tells Moses His name is **I AM** because God simply *is*; there was never a time when He did not exist, or a time when He will cease to exist.

i. The name **I AM** has within it the idea of *aseity* - that God is completely independent; that He relies on nothing for life or existence (Isaiah 40:28-29; John 5:26). God doesn't need anybody or anything - life is in Himself.

ii. Also inherent in the idea behind the name **I AM** is the sense that God is "the becoming one"; God becomes whatever is lacking in our time of need. The name **I AM** invites us to fill in the blank to meet our need - when we are in darkness, Jesus says *I am the light*; when we are hungry, He says *I am the bread of life*, when we

are defenseless, He says *I am the Good Shepherd*. God is the becoming one, becoming what we need.

d. **I AM**: This is a divine title that Jesus took upon Himself often, clearly identifying Himself with the voice from the burning bush.

i. *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that **I AM** [He], you will die in your sins.* (John 8:24)

ii. *Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I AM** [He], and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things."* (John 8:28)

iii. *Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, **I AM**."* (John 8:58)

iv. *Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that **I AM*** (John 13:19)

v. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "**I AM** [He]." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, "I am [He]," they drew back and fell to the ground.* (John 18:4-6)

4. (15-18) God tells Moses what to say to the elders of Israel.

Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.' Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and *seen* what is done to you in Egypt; and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'" Then they will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, 'The LORD God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'"

a. **Thus you shall say to the children of Israel**: After four hundred years in Egypt, Moses had the job of announcing that *now* was the time

for the children of Israel to go back to Canaan, and take the land God promised to their fathers.

i. This was probably totally contrary to what the elders and people of Israel desired. In four hundred years, you set down roots. They probably had no desire to return to the Promised Land; all they wanted was to be made more comfortable in Egypt.

b. **Then they will heed your voice** is a precious promise to Moses. Forty years before, when it seemed that he had everything going for him, the people of Israel rejected him as a deliverer for the nation. Surely, he must be wondering why they would listen to him now, when it seemed he had nothing going for him.

i. But Moses had *God* going for him now; they would indeed listen to Moses' message.

5. (19-22) God tells Moses how it will go with the Egyptians.

"But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put *them* on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

a. **I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go**: God knew this from the beginning. He knew what it would take to move the heart of Pharaoh, and the plagues and calamities to come were engineered for a specific purpose and they were not haphazardly planned.

i. Moses asked God about how his fellow Israelites would receive the news of the deliverance from Egypt, but getting the people of Israel behind Moses was only a small part of the struggle ahead - what about the Egyptians? How would they ever agree to let this free labor force leave the country? Without Moses asking, God answered this question.

b. **I will give this people favor . . . you shall not go empty-handed**: God promised to arrange things not only to move Pharaoh's heart, but also to move the heart of the Egyptian people so that when Israel did depart, they would be showered with **silver** and **gold** and **clothing**. This

was not stealing or extortion, it was the appropriate wages for the years of forced labor.

i. In Deuteronomy 15:12-14, God says that if you have a slave, and his time of service is up, *you shall not let him go away empty-handed*. God was not going to let Israel leave their slavery in Egypt empty-handed; instead, they would **plunder the Egyptians**.

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Exodus 4 - Moses' Commission from God

A. God gives Moses signs to confirm his ministry.

1. (1) Moses asks, "How will they believe me?"

Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

a. **But suppose they will not believe me:** It was not wrong for Moses to initially ask *Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?* in Exodus 3:11; this was a logical question considering how great the task was. Yet God answered this question more than adequately in Exodus 3:12: *I will certainly be with you*. After that point, and in this passage, Moses' questions show unbelief more than sincere seeking.

b. **But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice:** In Exodus 3:18, God promised that the leaders of Israel *would* listen to Moses. He said, "*they will heed your voice*." When Moses makes this protest he may as well be saying, "But what if you are wrong, God?"

i. It was good when Moses had no confidence in the flesh; but it is bad that he now lacked confidence in God.

2. (2-5) The first sign: Moses' rod turns to a snake and back again.

So the LORD said to him, "What *is* that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take *it* by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

a. **What is that in your hand:** This reflects a precious principle regarding how God uses men - God used what Moses had in his **hand**. Moses'

years of tending sheep were not useless. Those years had put into Moses **hand** things he could use for God's glory. God didn't use the scepter that was in Moses' royal hand when he lived in Egypt, but He did use the simple shepherd's staff.

i. God likes to use what is in our hand.

- God used what was in Shamgar's hand (Judges 3:31)
- God used what was in David's hand (1 Samuel 17:49)
- God used the jawbone of a donkey in Samson's hand (Judges 15:15)
- God used five loaves and two fish in the hand of a little boy (John 6:9)

b. **He said, "A rod"**: That rod of Moses would part the Red Sea. It would strike a rock and see water pour forth. It would be raised over battle until Israel was victorious. It would be called *the rod of God* (Exodus 4:20; 17:9).

c. **It became a serpent**: Not only did Moses' rod become a snake; it became a real snake that was frightening enough to Moses that he ran from it.

d. **Reach out your hand and take it by the tail**: We see the faith of Moses when he reached out to grab the snake when God commanded him to. The tail is the most dangerous place to grab a snake; yet Moses was unharmed.

i. In this little incident Moses learned how to do what God tells him to do even when it is uncomfortable.

e. **That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers . . . has appeared to you**: This miracle would make the children of Israel realize that **the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob** was with them and that the God of the covenant had not forsaken them.

3. (6-9) The second and third signs: Moses is made leprous and whole again; water turns to blood and back again.

Furthermore the LORD said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was*leprous,

like snow. And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his *other* flesh. "Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour *it* on the dryland. And the water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry *land*."

a. **It was restored like his other flesh:** Each of the first two signs have to do with *conversion*. Something good and useful (a rod or a hand) is converted to something evil (a serpent or a leprous hand), and significantly, they are then converted back again.

i. There was a real message in the first two signs. The first said, "Moses, if you obey Me, your enemies will be made powerless." The second said "Moses, if you obey Me, your pollution can be made pure." Doubts in each of these areas probably hindered Moses, and before those signs ministered to anyone else, the ministered to Moses. This is the pattern with all God's leaders.

b. **The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land:** The third sign is simply a sign of judgment. Good, pure waters were made foul and bloody by the work of God and they did not turn back again. This showed that if the miracles of conversion did not turn the hearts of the people, then perhaps the sign of judgment will. **If they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice** shows that if the sign of judgment is only given when unbelief persists in the face of the miracles of conversion right before them.

4. (10) Moses makes an excuse: "I can't speak well."

Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue."

a. **O my Lord, I am not eloquent:** After these remarkably persuasive signs, Moses still objected to God's call. Moses revealed that he was not confident with his ability to speak - **slow of speech** is literally "heavy of mouth."

b. **I am slow of speech and slow of tongue:** It seems that Moses' excuse was not justified. Clearly 40 years before this Moses was not **slow of speech and slow of tongue**. Acts 7:22 says *Moses was*

learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

i. In those years of silence - preaching only to the sheep - Moses had to deal with all the discouragement and sense of failure and condemnation that accumulated over 40 years. It isn't hard to see why he now believes he can't do what he clearly thought he could do before.

ii. Instead of Moses "regressing" in speaking ability during those years in the desert, it is far more reasonable to believe that he has simply lost confidence in himself - something that can be good, but not if it makes him lose confidence in what God can do in him.

5. (11-12) God's response to Moses' excuse.

So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have not I, the LORD?* Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

a. **Who made man's mouth?** The fact that Moses believed that he was not eloquent is completely beside the point. The God who created the most eloquent mouths who ever lived was on his side.

b. **Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?** This is a dramatic statement revealing the sovereignty of God, and God reveals it in the context of an invitation to trust God and to work with Him.

i. There is not the slightest sense of fatalism in this declaration of God's sovereignty. It is *never* "God is so mighty we can't do anything," but it is *always* "God is so mighty, He can work through us if we make ourselves available."

c. Some have thought it cruel that God would say He **makes the mute, the deaf, . . . the blind**. Nevertheless the point here is not to analyze the origin of evil, but to show that God is so mighty that He can even call the mute, the deaf, and the blind to do His work. Moses' perceived inadequacies don't matter at all.

i. If Moses was a poor speaker, was this news to God? Does God have trouble keeping track of who is deaf, who is blind, and who is mute? Does Moses really think God made a mistake here?

ii. If Moses was a poor speaker, it didn't matter - the mighty God said, "**I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.**" By extension, God is sufficient for us, no matter what real or imagined inadequacies we have.

6. (13-17) Moses' unwillingness, and God's reply.

But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever *else* You may send." So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."

a. **Please send by the hand of whomever else You may send:** Finally, Moses is done with excuses and declares the real state of his heart. Simply, he would much rather that God send someone else. His problem isn't really a lack of ability, it is a lack of willingness.

i. "It's common for men to give pretended reasons instead of one real one." (Benjamin Franklin)

b. **So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses:** God was not angry when Moses asked, "*Who am I?*" (Exodus 3:11). He was not angry when Moses asked, "Who should I say sent me?" (Exodus 3:13). He was not angry when Moses disbelieved God's Word and said, "*suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice*" (Exodus 4:1). He was not even angry when Moses falsely claimed that he was not and had never been eloquent (Exodus 4:10) - but God was angry when Moses was just plain unwilling.

i. There may be a hundred understandable reasons why Moses was unwilling, some of them making a lot of sense. Perhaps Moses really *wanted* to serve, but was unwilling because of past rejection. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that Moses was *unwilling*, not *unable*.

c. **Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well:** When God brought Aaron to help lead with Moses, it was an expression of His chastening to Moses, not of His approval or "giving in" to Moses. Aaron was more of a *problem* to Moses than help.

i. Aaron did turn out to be a source of problems for Moses. Aaron instigated the worship of the golden calf, fashioning the calf himself and building the altar himself (Exodus 32:1-6). Aaron's sons blasphemed God with impure offerings (Leviticus 10:1-7). At one time, Aaron openly led a mutiny against Moses (Numbers 12:1-8).

ii. As these episodes unfolded, Moses surely looked back at why the LORD gave Aaron to Moses as a partner - because God was angry at Moses' unwillingness.

d. **I know that he can speak well:** Aaron was a smooth talker, but a man weak on *content*. Moses had to put the words of God into the mouth of Aaron (**you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth**). In this sense Aaron was like a modern-day news anchorman, who does nothing but read what others have written for him.

i. Aaron wasn't God's spokesman; he was the spokesman of Moses. God doesn't need leaders like this. It isn't God's way to have a man minister as a smooth talker but not be qualified for leadership. God wants to combine the offices of "talker" and "leader."

B. Moses leaves Midian, goes to Egypt.

1. (18) Moses asks leave of his father-in-law Jethro to go to Egypt.

So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who *are* in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

a. **So Moses went:** When the fire fades from the burning bush and when the voice of God is silent across the desert, then it is upon us to *obey*, and to do what God told us to do. More than one person has had a spectacular "burning bush" experience and then carried on as if it had never happened.

i. Did Moses have any idea what he was getting into when he agreed to take the LORD's call? Could he see the Egyptian army closing in, and God parting the Red Sea through Moses' hand? Could he see the song of victory, the water from the rock, the manna from heaven, the battles won through prayer? Could he see vision of God on Mount Sinai, the voice of God from heaven, the tablets of stone, the golden calf? Could he see the tabernacle built,

the priests consecrated? Could he see the spies sent forth into Canaan, the response of unbelief, and a thirty-eight year sentence to wander the wilderness? Could he see a lonely climb to the top of Mount Pisgah, where he would die looking out over the land of promise? Could he see the honor of sitting beside the LORD on the Mount of Transfiguration? Did Moses have any idea what he was getting into?

b. **Please let me go:** Moses is a good example of the truth that serving God doesn't mean neglecting your employer. Moses made sure that it was clear for him to go.

c. **Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive:** As well, Moses didn't really tell his father-in-law the story behind his desire to return to Egypt. Perhaps he just felt it was too fantastic, and would rather let God demonstrate His Word through fulfilling it.

i. It is far more important - and more beneficial - for others to see the fruit of God's guidance in your life than to hear you explain all you believe God said to you.

2. (19-23) God tells Moses how events will unfold in Egypt.

And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead." Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand. And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn." "

a. **The men who sought your life are dead . . . I will harden his heart:** God knew Moses was safe in Egypt, and so eased his mind from this anxiety; but God also knew that He would **harden** Pharaoh's heart, and that it would take the death of the firstborn before Pharaoh would agree to release the children of Israel.

i. Sometimes, it says that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh (Exodus 4:21). Sometimes it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15). Sometimes it says simply that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, without saying who did it (Exodus 7:13).

ii. Who really hardened Pharaoh's heart? We might say that it was both God and Pharaoh; but whenever God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He never did *it against* Pharaoh's will. Pharaoh never said, "Oh, I want to do what is good and right and I want to bless these people of Israel" and God answered, "No, for I will harden your heart against them!" When God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He allowed Pharaoh's heart to do what Pharaoh wanted to do - God was giving Pharaoh over to his sin (Romans 1:18-32).

iii. "God does not harden men by putting evil into them, but by not giving them mercy." (Augustine)

b. **Israel is My son, My firstborn**: As a picture, God regarded Israel as His **firstborn** and God knew that there would be an exchange of His **firstborn** (Israel) and Egypt's firstborn.

3. (24-26) Moses' life is spared on the way.

And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, 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 *Moses'* feet, and said, "Surely you *are* a husband of blood to me!" So He let him go. Then she said, "*You are* a husband of blood!"; because of the circumcision.

a. **The LORD met him and sought to kill him**: This is a mysterious event; but it seems that God is confronting Moses - in the strongest possible way - because Moses had not circumcised his son. God demands that this be set right before Moses enter Egypt and begin to fulfill the call of God.

i. There is often a point of confrontation in the life of the leader where God demands that they lay aside some area of compromise, and will not allow them to progress further until they do.

b. **Surely you are a husband of blood to me!** Perhaps Zipporah objected to the rite of circumcision. She was not an Israelite and may have thought it a barbaric custom. Perhaps this was why God held Moses accountable (for not doing what was right, even though his wife didn't like it), but disabled Moses so that Zipporah had to perform the circumcision itself.

i. Some wonder why Moses' wife seems so bitter here. Perhaps for the first time she recognizes the serious nature of her husband's

call and how important it is for their whole family to walk in the ways of the LORD.

4. (27-31) Moses and Aaron present themselves to the people of Israel.

And the LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. So Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

- a. **So he went and met him on the mountain of God:** God told Moses that He would send Aaron to him (Exodus 4:14), and now it happens. God is showing Moses that He keeps His promises.
- b. **So the people believed:** It happened just as God said. God had promised *then they will heed your voice* (Exodus 3:18), and the people of Israel did - and their excitement was real as they anticipated the deliverance of the nation.
- c. **When they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel:** Years before when Moses offered himself as a deliverer to Israel, they rejected him. Now the time and the circumstances are right, and God's destiny for Moses' life will begin to be fulfilled.