

## Exodus Chapter 4

**Exodus 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."**

“Moses answered and said”: In a third objection, Moses gave an unworthy response, after the lengthy explanation by God to Moses (in 3:14-22). At this point, the hypothetical situation proposed became more objection than reasonable inquiry.

Here we see again, that feeling of inability on Moses' part to carry out the task that God had called him to do. He suddenly felt panic that they would not believe him even though God had already promised him success and favor with Pharaoh. In a way, Moses was feeling sorry for himself and said they (the people), won't believe him.

Verses 2-9: In response to the hypothetical situation of Israel's rejecting God as having appeared to him, Moses was given 3 signs to accredit him as the chosen spokesman and leader. Note the purpose stated: “That they may believe that the LORD God ... appeared unto thee” (verse 5). Two of these signs personally involved Moses right then and there, the rod to snake and back, the hand leprous and healed. No matter what the situation Moses could envision himself facing, God had sufficient resources to authenticate His man and Moses was not to think otherwise.

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

Moses' “rod” was probably nothing more than a long walking stick. Although it had no supernatural properties, the Lord would include it in the many miracles pertaining to the delivery of His people.

Notice here, God uses whatever is at hand. We are not told for sure whether this was a shepherd's staff, or whether this was a rod the elderly use. We do know that it doesn't matter with God what it is, He can use it. Egyptians loathed shepherds and a shepherd's staff would have been an offense to them. As I said, whatever this piece of wood was, God would make use of it.

**Exodus 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."**

The rod was really changed into a serpent. There was a significance in this sign: it intimated what and how pernicious his rod would be to the Egyptians. It became a rod in his hand. When stretched forth by the hand of Moses or Aaron, it became a token to Israel of guidance, encouragement, and protection. But to Egypt, like the bite of the most poisonous serpent, it betokened desolating judgments.

The "He" that said this, was God of course. All of this was to build Moses' faith. Probably God used this particular sign, because the magicians of Egypt would bring this very sign against Moses. The difference being that Moses' or God's serpent would swallow the Egyptian serpents. This would be a show that God's power was greater than Satan's power.

**Exodus 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:"**

Those who venture to handle poisonous snakes, like the modern Egyptians and the inhabitants of the coast of Barbary, generally take hold of them by the neck, in which case they are unable to bite. To test the faith and courage of Moses, the command is given him to lay hold of this serpent "by the tail."

"He put forth his hand": Faith triumphed over instinct. Moses had "fled from" the snake when first he saw it (Exodus 4:3). Now he is daring enough to stoop down, put his hand on the creature's tail, and so lift it up.

"It became a rod": Its real nature returned to it. Once more it was, not a stiffened serpent, but an actual staff, or walking-stick.

Here we see that God was showing Moses to have no fear, God had given Moses power to overcome. Moses overcame the fear he felt in the last verse and on instructions from God, had picked up this serpent by the tail and God had transformed it into a rod. I believe God had chosen this sign to use, because the Egyptians had such a fascination with snakes.

**Exodus 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."**

These are God's words to Moses, in continuation of those which form the first portion of the preceding verse. The clause describing the action of Moses (in Exodus 4:4), is parenthetic. The words give divine sanction to the view, so strangely combatted of late, that the power of working miracles is given to men. Primarily and mainly, for its evidential value to accredit them as God's messengers. Without the gift of miracles neither would Moses have persuaded the Israelites, nor would the Apostles have converted the world.

Here we see that God gave this to Moses as a sign, not only for the Egyptians, but for the Hebrews as well. They probably had seen these Egyptian magicians demonstrate this very thing many times. The clincher that Moses was actually from God was when his serpent swallowed up the magician's serpents. This just says one more time, that God was more powerful than the Egyptian false gods.

**Exodus 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."**

"Leprous": The instantaneous production and cure of the most malignant and subtle disease known to the Israelites was a sign of their danger if they resisted the command, and of their deliverance if they obeyed it. The infliction and cure were always regarded as special proofs of a divine intervention.

Leprosy was a very dreaded disease, and was thought to be incurable. The whiteness spoken of here meant the disease had progressed to a very bad stage. This would strike terror in the hearts of not only the Egyptians, but in the Hebrews as well.

**Exodus 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."**

The inflicting of this disease, and curing it again in an instant, was so much the greater miracle, as the leprosy is a disease generally reckoned incurable by human art, especially the white leprosy. So called, because it overspreads the skin with white spots like snow.

This verse right here, is what would convince them that this was God's power, because there was no cure at this time for leprosy. Here Egyptians and Hebrews alike could plainly see God at work. To the leper, it also held out some hope; that hope being Jesus.

**Exodus 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."**

Will not give credit to the commission he had from God, but question the truth of it.

"Neither hearken to the voice of the first sign": Which miracle when brought, spoke plain enough that he that brought it, or for whose sake it was brought, must be one come from God, or such a miracle would never be brought by him or for him. But if any of the Israelites be still incredulous:

"That they will believe the voice of the latter sign": Which had a voice in it commanding belief that he was a messenger of God. The first sign respects his rod, the other his hand.

Miracles do have a voice, not a literal voice, but a speaking. You see signs and wonders have been the voice of God throughout the Bible. Even Jesus said to believe Him for the very works' sake.

John 14:11 "Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

The people who followed Jesus believed because of the signs and wonders.

**Exodus 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]."**

The last of the "signs" God gave Moses foreshadowed the first plague: "water ... shall become blood".

It was almost unbelievable that they would doubt both of these miracles, but God would not have mentioned it if it wouldn't happen. Water was very important in Egypt because it is such a dry land. The Egyptians depended so much on the Nile River for water to keep the crops going, that they worshipped the Nile as one of their false gods. This, miracle then, was a personal attack on their false god. This would destroy their way of life. Turning the water from the Nile into blood should convince them that God was greater than any or all of their gods.

In the first miracle, the ones who wanted to believe would, fear might drive some to believe in the second. In the third, those who were really indoctrinated in worshipping false gods should surely be convinced that God was greater than their false gods.

**Exodus 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."**

"I am not eloquent": With his fourth argument, Moses focused on his speech disability, describing himself literally as not being "a man of words," as being "heavy in mouth and heavy in tongue," i.e., unable to articulate his thoughts in fluent, flowing speech.

Moses' objection that he was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" likely means he was not eloquent (Jer. 1:6). Among the Egyptians, eloquence in speech was not only a desirable quality, but could bring about social justice and positive decision. However (Acts 7:22), say he "was mighty in words and in deeds."

He did not need an oratory refresher course; he needed to trust the Lord. If God could speak from a burning bush, He could speak through Moses in front of Pharaoh.

"Neither heretofore, nor since": This is a pointed and inappropriate, if not impolite, criticism that somehow in all the discussion God had overlooked Moses' speech disability. Unless this disability changed, Moses believed that he could not undertake the assigned task (6:12).

Frankly I do not believe that God calls those who are eloquent of speech to speak for Him. God does not want us to speak in our own ability. God wants to speak through us. Most ministers will tell you that they were very shy before the Lord moved upon them. God is not interested in our ability, just our willingness. It appears to me, that Moses was just looking for excuses.

**Exodus 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?"**

Moses' reticence led to the Lord's anger and a change of direction.

“Who hath made man’s mouth?” Three rhetorical questions from God shut the door on any complaints or criticisms about being clumsy of speech. The follow-up command, “Now then go!” (in verse 12), including its promise of divine help in speech forbade all such objections.

It appears to me here, that God was getting a little bit annoyed with Moses. If God had called Moses to do a job He could certainly loose his tongue and make him an eloquent speaker, if that was what it took. God was reminding Moses that God was the power, not Moses. He is the Creator of it all. Nothing is impossible to God. This is a lesson we all need to learn. If God calls you to do a job, don't worry about whether you can do it or not, God will make you able.

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

Moses would continue to the leader of the people, but Aaron would be Moses’ “mouth”.

Here again, we see Moses would be anointed of God to do this job. God would empower him. Moses just had to open his mouth and God would speak through him. There are too many ministers today who rely too much on worldly training and not on God. God really doesn't care how much education you have. God just needs you to have a willing heart and He provides everything else.

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

Rather, pray send by whom thou wilt. A curt, impatient and scarcely reverent speech by Moses means that he will undertake the task if God insists; but that God would do far better to send another. Hence the “anger of the Lord” against him (Exodus 4:14), leading to Aaron’s association with him as joint leader of the people.

Moses’ fifth and final statement, notwithstanding the opening supplication, “O my Lord,” was a polite way of bluntly saying “Choose someone else, not me!” The anger of God toward this overt expression of reluctance was appropriate, yet the Lord still provided another way for His plan to move forward unhindered. Providentially (verse 27), Aaron would meet his brother Moses, and positively respond to being the spokesman.

Moses had gone too far.

**Exodus 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."**

“Aaron” was the brother of Moses and a descendant of Levi. He was commissioned by God to serve as Moses’ spokesman to Pharaoh (7:1-2). He held up Moses’ hands, with Hur’s assistance, as Israel prevailed over the Amalekites (17:8-12) In spite of his sinful lapse in making the golden calf (32:5), he was later consecrated and anointed as high priest (Lev. 8). A position he served throughout the remainder of his life. Later, the budding of his rod was a testimony against those

who rebelled against his authority, and the rod was kept in the ark of the covenant. Aaron eventually died at age 123 on Mount Hor, near Petra (Num. 33:38-39; Deut. 10:6).

Here, Moses had made a terrible mistake. Aaron was not as close to God. Aaron was the very same one who would make the golden calf. Even though God was angry with Moses, He was not angry enough to punish him severely. The only punishment was that God withholds the loosing of Moses' tongue to speak because of Moses' lack of faith to receive it.

God foreknew what Moses would do and had Aaron already on his way. We also see here a look into the future when Aaron would be a high priest. A priestly family to take care of the temple and the spiritual needs of the people would be taken care of in the separation of the Levites for that purpose on the way to the Promised Land.

**Exodus 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."**

“And will teach you”: The plural pronoun “you”, means that God had promised to assist both of them in their newly appointed duties.

Here, we see that God would not speak directly to Aaron. God would speak to Moses, and Moses would convey the message to Aaron. God would guard Aaron's mouth to make sure truth came forth.

**Exodus 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."**

“And thou shalt be to him instead of God”: Aaron would speak to the people for Moses, even as Moses would speak to Aaron for the Lord.

In this section, we learn the biblical meaning of the word prophet: a “spokesman” for the Lord (6:28-7:6).

Here again, we just see the line of command. God spoke to Moses and Moses spoke to Aaron, and Aaron spoke to the king. What a shame that Moses didn't believe God for the ability to speak himself.

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

“This rod ... wherewith thou shalt do signs”: Moses, despite God’s anger at his unwillingness, retained superiority in that he had the instrument by which miracles would be done so that it was identified as “the staff of God (verse 20).

These signs were for Moses to do, not Aaron. The power was given to Moses to do these miracles, not Aaron. Aaron was just the mouth.

## Exodus Chapter 4 Questions

1. Moses said, the people would not believe him, and would say what?
2. What was Moses forgetting?
3. God asked Moses, what was in thine hand, and Moses answered what?
4. What should we notice in this?
5. Why was this, probably, not a shepherd's staff?
6. What did God tell Moses to do with the rod?
7. What happened when Moses did it?
8. What did Moses feel, when he saw it?
9. What did God tell Moses to do the second time?
10. What did the serpent become?
11. What is this symbolic of to the believers?
12. Why did God, probably choose this sign?
13. In verse 5, God called Himself the God of 3. Who were they?
14. What was the clincher that Moses' God was more powerful than the Egyptian false gods?
15. What was the second sign God told Moses to use?
16. Why was white mentioned?
17. Why would they believe more on the second miracle than the first?
18. What was the 3rd thing God would have Moses do?
19. In John 14:11, Jesus told them to believe Him for what?
20. What shall the water turn into?
21. What false god does this attack?
22. Even after all this, Moses had another excuse. What is it?
23. Why does God call people, who are not eloquent to speak, to work for Him?
24. In verse 11, what questions did God ask Moses?

25. If God calls us to do a job, should we give excuses?
26. Who would empower Moses?
27. What angered God at Moses?
28. Who did God send to help Moses?
29. What relation was he of Moses?
30. What did God prophetically call him?
31. Moses would be to Aaron as what?
32. What was Moses to do with the rod?