

## Exodus 3-6 – Chapter Study

### INTRODUCTION

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- I. The Exodus • Chs. 1-13:16
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### CHAPTER 3

#### **C. Moses' Call • Ch. 3-4:17**

##### **1. 3:1-10 • God Speaks From the Burning Bush**

**<sup>1</sup>Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.**

During the recession of the mid & late 70's when the aerospace industry took such a huge hit in Southern CA, many people who'd held high positions, making a really good salary when it was boom-time, suddenly found themselves out of work.

Some of them, just to bring in some funds while they looked for better employment, went to work in positions they *never* would have thought they would ever do; fast food, delivering papers, auto sales.

That's Moses' story at this point.

He goes, in ch. 2, from being adopted by the house of Pharaoh and raised in all the culture and science of the world's premier power, to tending sheep.

And as we saw a few weeks ago in Gen. 46, shepherds were considered an abomination to the Egyptians!

Moses has gone from vice-president of *Microsoft* to counter-worker at *Taco Bell*.

These weren't even his sheep! They belonged to his father in law.

And he is now 80 years old!

We know he's 80 because in Acts 7:23 it says he was 40 when he

killed the Egyptian and had to flee.

Deut. 34:7 tells us he was 120 when he died, and he led the Children of Israel for 40 years after his call by God, so that makes him just about 80 years old at this point.

80! That's no spring chicken!

Imagine not receiving your life's calling, not embarking on your vocation until you were 80!

Today, most of us want to be well into our retirement when we're that old.

Moses was just getting started.

As I mentioned on Sunday when we covered these verses – the 40 years Moses tended the flock of his father-in-law were years of training and preparation, though it had to be hard for him to see them that way.

God was actually teaching Moses the principles of true leadership, and there was no better school than the life of a shepherd and no better classroom than the desert.

The *first 40 years* of his life had been spent in the schools of Egypt, living in the lap of luxury.

And Moses had a sense of divine purpose and destiny as a leader.

Having been raised in the palace, and having seen the world's idea of what it means to lead, he ventured to deliver his fellow Hebrews with his own wisdom and strength.

In Acts 7:20-29 Stephen was rehearsing the history of the nation of Israel and spoke of Moses -

**20**At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. **21**But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. **22**And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. **23**“Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. **24**And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. **25**For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand,

**but they did not understand. <sup>26</sup>And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and *tried* to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ <sup>27</sup>But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘*Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?*’ <sup>28</sup>*Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?*’ <sup>29</sup>Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.**

See – Moses thought that his rescue of his fellow Hebrew would be understood by them as an act of their champion – and that it would rally them behind him as he led a salvific uprising.

All it did was engender fear on their part – they saw him as just one more brutal overlord.

Moses was indeed destined to deliver his people from bondage – but not through his own strength and wisdom.

He needed to come to the place of dependence on God, and the route there lay through Midian, and 40 years of tending the flock of his father-in-law.

**And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.**

I’ve always found the description of where Moses’ call took place interesting; the “*backside of the desert.*”

What’s the “backside” of the desert? For many people, *all* of the desert is the backside!

I had a friend who lived in *Blythe* for a while.

He told me that at one point he had to drive through the “*bad-side*” of Blythe, and I thought to myself, “The bad-side of Blythe?! Isn’t every side of Blythe bad?”

The desert is a tough place; a dry and weary place and for Moses it was a dramatic come-down from the cosmopolitan surroundings of the Egyptian capital & court.

But here he is, and now he’s not even in the *nicer areas* of the desert, enjoying an oasis or one of the cooler spots of the wilderness – no, this is the *backside* of the desert; a lonely, dry, weary place.

He had to keep the flock moving, just to find enough grass for

them to eat.

And as he passed through this seemingly God-forsaken place, he came to realize, God hadn't forsaken it or him at all.

God may seem very distant because of the dryness of his circumstance, but God was right there all along.

In fact, God had been working over the last 40 years of his life to prepare him for *this very moment*.

We all have *desert times*, times when God *seems* no where!

When God seems no where - "Change the spelling."

It needs to go from, "God is no where" to "God is now here!"

God was there with Moses on the backside of the desert.

God is here with me no matter how alone or dry I *feel*.

**And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.**

Horeb is Sinai, and this mountain Moses came to would in just a short time will become the place where God manifests His glory, gives Moses the 10 Commandments, and Moses will spend 40 days in the Lord's manifest presence.

**<sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."**

As I mentioned Sunday, desert lightning and nomadic shepherds often kindle the bushes of the desert so this wasn't all that uncommon a sight.

What made it stand out for Moses was that this particular bush didn't go out; it kept burning and burning.

It was obvious there was something unusual going on with this particular bush and Moses went to check it out.

As we go on to see, it's God who spoke to Moses from the bush, and he calls Himself by his covenant Name – Yahweh.

But v. 2 tells us it was the Angel of the Lord who appeared in the flame of fire.

In other places in the OT, the Angel of the Lord is clearly a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. [Genesis 16:7-13, Judges 2:1-5, 6:11-24, 13:3-22]

So here, we have the person of Jesus Christ linked to the name

Yahweh – or as it is sometimes translated – Jehovah. [John 1:18  
1 Timothy 6:16]

Jesus is Jehovah! Contrary to the teaching of the Watchtower and  
the Jehovah's Witnesses!

**4 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."**

God waited until Moses came near, until he showed he was paying attention, then He spoke.

It's important we come to bible study and our times of reading God's Word with an expectant and ready heart & mind to receive, to hear from God.

Moses was confronted with a miracle in the burning bush, but it wasn't encountering the miracle that would change him – it was God's Word, what He would speak to Moses that would make the difference.

People get so excited about the miraculous – but the miraculous is only meant to increase our openness to the Word of God – that's what brings real, lasting change.

**5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."**

God told Moses to halt where he was, it was *close enough*.

In fact, where Moses stood was already holy ground, and his sandals, caked as they were with the dust of the desert, were not appropriate on such holy ground.

Removing one's shoes is a practice in the oriental culture which shows humility & respect.

Shoes are for *outdoors*, in the muck and mire of the streets.

But when you enter a house, you take your shoes off and leave all the filth they've picked up, at the door.

The floors of the house ought to stay free of such filth because this is where you live.

You lay down on the floor, you recline and relax and don't want to worry about becoming defiled with the world's muck.

God told Moses to stop where he was; or literally, "Stop coming closer."

Moses would have gone *closer still* unless God halted him.

One of the first lessons Moses needed to learn was that *God is holy* and no matter how close man *might* come, there is still a separation between God and man.

**6Moreover 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.**

God now identified Himself as the God of his people, the children of Israel.

This was the God he’d been told about being brought up in the home of Amram & Jochebed until he was old enough to be taken into Pharaoh’s house.

There has been no word from this God for 400 years and Moses is now stunned to realize the silence is broken.

The flame he’s been gazing at becomes a source of terror now that he realizes who it represents and he hides his face.

**7And 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.**

**8So 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. 9Now 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.**

In Ch. 2 we read that the children of Israel cried out because of their harsh oppression.

Here God says He *heard their cry* and would now move to deliver them.

He said that He’d taken note of the cruelty and injustice with which they were treated by their taskmasters.

What’s interesting is that it never says they cried out to God, just that they cried out!

No doubt some of their cries were directed at God, but most were just thrown up as protests.

What's important to notice is that God took note of their oppression, and judged Egypt for the injustice with which His people were treated.

Over and over in the OT prophets, we see God rebuking and reprimanding the nations because of their oppression of the weak and powerless.

God seems to take special note of the condition of the widows and the orphans and judges a nation on the basis of how they treat them.

This is an important insight for any civil government as it frames its laws and implements them through its judicial system.

God here tells Moses that His plan is to set the children of Israel free from their bondage, take them *out of* Egypt, and return them to the land of promise.

And Moses was probably super-stoked about this, until God added

...

**10** **Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.**"

What? Who? Me?

## **2. 3:11-4:17 • Moses Tries To Duck God's Call**

**11** **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?"**

Moses saw himself as disqualified to be deliverer of his people.

He'd already tried and it had failed miserably!

Besides, he'd committed a capital crime and there was a death sentence on his head in Egypt.

Moses asked, "Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" "WHO AM I?"

This proves that he's now ready to *be* the deliverer of his people!

The self-confidence and strength are gone!

Anyone who would be sued of the Lord must come to this place.

We must first ask sincerely, "Who Am I?" so that we might go on to the answer -

**12** **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.”**

To Moses’ “Who am I?” God says – “I will certainly be with you.”

Where God guides, God provides!

Notice that God doesn’t answer Moses specific question.

Moses asked, “Who am I?” to which he was likely expecting a direct answer –

“You’re the *mighty Moses!* You’re the powerful deliverer of your fellow Jews! You’re the great redeemer of Israel!”

No – God’s reply isn’t to affirm Moses’ identity but to ensure His presence and power *with* Moses!

He then gives Moses an affirming sign of his call and of God’s presence; the day will come when Moses will return to this very spot with the entire nation at his back, and he will lead them in worship there!

**13 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?”**

The thought of returning to Egypt brings to Moses’ mind the last thing he heard from the Hebrews when he first tried to be their deliverer; 2:14 - “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?”

Truth is, last time, MOSES had made *himself* such; now it was God who’d called him.

But Moses knows the question is still going to be asked of him and he wants to tell the people who’d sent him.

God had already identified Himself as the God of the patriarchs, but Moses had grown up in Egypt and knew each of the deities worshipped there had a name; he asks what God’s name was.

**14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

This is where we get the name *Yahweh* from.

It means, literally, the “One Who Is” and carries the idea of timeless self-existence.

It speaks of immanent presence and eternal power.

Some teachers, in an attempt to carry across *this meaning* of God’s



name, translate it this way – “The Becoming One.”

Because God eternally exists and is present and possesses all power, He becomes for us whatever is needed at that moment.

This was the special name that God had been known by for some time among the patriarchs, although not in the fullness or richness that would now come to mark His revelation to Israel.

This was God’s covenant name, and now that He is moving to fulfill an important part of the covenant he originally made with Abraham, He restores the use of His name to the people of the covenant.

You may be curious how the name *Yahweh* became the more common and popular *Jehovah*?

Pious Jews of later years did not want to pronounce the name of God out of reverence, so in order to keep anyone from saying the name when reading the scriptures, they omitted the vowels, leaving what is known as the *Tetragrammaton* – *YHWH*.

When they would read the scriptures out loud in the temple or synagogue, when they came to the Tetragrammaton, they would either just say, “*Ha Shem*” = *the name*, or they would say the word “*Lord*,” or in Hebrew, *Adonai*, which means “master.”

If the vowels of the word *Adonai* are stuck back into the tetragrammaton you get the name *Jehovah*.

**15 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.’”**

It’s crucial we note something at this point – What name, what memorial did God say was to commemorate Him forever and to all generations?

The name *Yahweh*, who is the God of WHO? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Not *Allah*, the God of *Ishmael*!

Islam today claims to be the original religion of God; the God of the Koran and the Bible.

Muslims claim Adam was the *first* Muslim, and Abraham &

Moses were Muslims too.  
In their scheme, Jews and Christians have corrupted the revelation of God which Mohammed restored.

**16**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; <sup>17</sup>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.”’ <sup>18</sup>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.’

God told Moses to return to Egypt and meet with the leaders of the tribes of Israel and tell them of his calling by the Lord.

God said this time they would listen, unlike his first attempt 40 years before.

Then they were to go *together* to Pharaoh and request a respite from their work in the slave pits to worship God in the wilderness.

We know it was Moses’ mission to liberate the Jews from bondage; he was even to tell the leaders of Israel this was the goal, so why this initial request to let the people go just for a few days so they could worship?

The answer to that is found in the next verses.

**19**But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand.

God knew what Pharaoh’s response would be ahead of time.

There was no way the Egyptians would willingly let go of this vast workforce.

God had Moses make the initial request of merely some time off in order to observe a religious duty, something the Egyptians ought to have been keen and sensitive to, seeing that they were

such a deeply religious society themselves.

Denial of this simple request would prove where Pharaoh's heart was and that the Egyptians were treating the Jews in a terribly unjust manner.

God never meant that Moses and the elders were to ask for this few days off to go worship, and then they would escape altogether.

No, this request was meant to reveal the *real attitude* of the Egyptians toward the children of Israel.

Once that attitude was laid bare, then God would work to effect their redemption with great power, but a power that was wielded in complete justice and equity.

**20** 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. **21** 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. **22** 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."

As was just, the Egyptians would recompense the children of Israel for their many years of slavery by giving them vast wealth when they finally left.

Egypt was the world's foremost power at that time – and as God set about to give birth to the nation of Israel, He wanted to make His people realize that no matter what earthly nations may seek to do, they cannot resist the Lord.

In delivering them from bondage, He would bring the great power of Egypt low.

You see, God knew that deliverance of His people meant more than *taking them out of Egypt*; He had to also *take Egypt out of them*.

By the plagues, He showed His power and supremacy over all the gods and power of Egypt.

## CHAPTER 4

**1** 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.'**"

Now we find Moses seeking to beg off his call. After God had just told him the elders would hear and follow him, he asks a *'what if'*; "What if the elders don't believe You sent me?"

God will now give Moses some signs to work to prove his calling.

**<sup>2</sup>So the LORD said to him, "What *is* that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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), <sup>5</sup>"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."**

Take note of that – when Moses returned to Egypt he was to take his shepherd's rod with him.

He knew the social status of shepherds in Egypt and would be disposed to leave behind his identity and past as a shepherd, but God tells him to maintain it.

He is still a shepherd, albeit, this time his flock will be a tad larger than Jethro's flock.

That humble tool - the shepherd's rod would become an emblem of his calling and the power of God given to him to accomplish his task.

You know, the cross was originally a sign of the epitome of shame.

Under Rome, only the most heinous criminals and those the Romans wanted to humiliate were crucified.

So shameful was the cross that the earliest Christians did not use it as a symbol of their faith.

It took some time before the Church realized how God had turned what the world considered shameful into the means of our glorification!

Today, the Cross is the universal symbol of the Christian faith, and a sign that God takes what is humble and useless in the eyes of the world and turns it into something powerful and useful in His hand.

Moses' rod stood contrary to all the glory of Egypt he'd been raised in and that marked his first attempts at being a redeemer.

It was a constant reminder that God was with him and that his calling was from the Lord and fulfilled by his dependence on God.

I worked in fast food management for 13 years.

I had a sense of God's call on my life but I had no idea to what. All I knew as, I was not meant to make burgers and fries and tacos and burritos for the rest of my life.

I'll never forget driving north on Victoria just south of Gonzales Rd. one day not long after moving here and thinking, "Where is my life headed? Am I really going to be a taco-bender when I'm 60? NO WAY!"

I felt a dark cloud of despair hovering over me and right then, as I cried out to God, I was moved to think of Moses and the 40 years he spent in the wilderness tending sheep.

He had a sense of destiny, or divine purpose, but spent what had to seem like many wasted years.

Actually, God used those years of shepherding to teach Moses how to lead a more important flock.

I came to trust that God must have been working in my life and career as a lead taco-bender, to teach me what I needed to learn so I could do whatever it was He had planned for me.

When we started the church, all the skills I'd learned in managing, administrating, and book-keeping all came into play, although this time on a far more important scale.

It may seem like you're in a wilderness place right now; don't worry – God is at work, molding and shaping you, teaching you what you must know so you can fulfill your destiny in His great plan.

God asked Moses, "What is that in your hand?"

God knew of course, but He was giving Moses the opportunity to see now how the previous 40 years were *not* wasted, God would use them.

Those years had put into Moses' hand things he could use for God's glory.

Maybe you've heard this before . . .

A basketball in my hands is worth about \$19.

A basketball in Michael Jordan's hands is worth about \$33 million.  
It depends whose hands it's in.

A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6.  
A baseball in Mark McGuire's hands is worth \$19 million.  
It depends whose hands it's in.

A tennis racket is useless in my hands.  
A tennis racket in Pete Sampras' hands is a Wimbledon  
Championship.  
It depends whose hands it's in.

A rod in my hands might keep away a wild animal.  
A rod in Moses' hands will part the mighty sea.  
It depends whose hands it's in.

A sling shot in my hands is a kid's toy.  
A sling shot in David's hand is a mighty weapon.  
It depends whose hands it's in.

Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in my hands is a couple of fish  
sandwiches.  
Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in God's hands will feed thousands.  
It depends whose hands it's in.

Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse.  
Nails in Jesus' hands will produce salvation for the entire world.  
It depends whose hands it's in.

It doesn't matter what's in your hand, with God's anointing and call,  
the ordinary becomes extraordinary and the common becomes  
special.

Because God's hand was on Moses, what was in *his* hand became a  
tool of the divine.

**6**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. **7**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.**

Leprosy was a dread disease from which there was no known cure, and those who were struck with it were deemed as having been judged by the gods for some especially heinous sin.

Moses’ being able to create, and then remove leprosy with such ease would communicate to others that the very power and judgment of God was with him.

**8“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. <sup>9</sup>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 dry *land*. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry *land*.”**

The Nile was the figurative life-blood of Egypt.

The entire kingdom was centered on the Nile and its entire prosperity was bound up in the river.

Taking water from it and turning it into *actual* blood would be a dramatic evidence of Moses’ power.

With these three signs now in his inventory, we might expect Moses to be packing his bags and heading to Egypt.

But that was not his response . . .

**10Then 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.”**

Moses knows that appearing before the elders of Israel and Egypt will demand the eloquence of a public speaker – and eloquence he does not possess.

He was a man of action, not words.

He’d been quick to defend the abused Hebrew years before, but when challenged on who gave him his authority to act as a judge, he’d run away!

Moses tries to beg off his calling now because he admits he cannot speak and the thought of appearing before the elders of Israel and

Pharaoh terrifies him.

Do you catch the tragic comedy here?

Moses, who is standing before God, talking to HIM, is afraid of the thought of standing before and talking to mere men?

If he possessed the spine to in a sense argue with God, why would he hesitate to speak to men?

God's response to Moses is classic . . .

**11** 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?* **12** Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

Yeah – so, you're not eloquent! So what, Moses?!?

I'm God and I said I would go with you. I'll be your speech writer and I tell you what to say.

God asked – "Who made your mouth?"

Really, God is asking Moses if he thinks God doesn't know all about his supposed lack of eloquence?

Did Moses think God was going to say, "Oh really, you aren't a good public speaker? Oh well, in that case, I'll find someone else."

Some critics have jumped at God's statement here about His making the mute, deaf, and blind and saying, "See, God is cruel!"

But that is not at all the *sense* of what God is saying here.

Moses has just said he cannot speak well and God replies by saying He will give Moses what he needs to get the job done, as the incredible signs He's just shown prove.

When God asks, "Who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind?" what he means is, no matter what physical limitations a person might have, when God calls them to a task, He gives them what they need to get the job done!

*Their* limitation does *not* limit God.

Do you see what Moses is doing here? The last vestiges of his *self-reliance* & strength are coming to the surface and being swept away by the Lord.

In the face of God's call, Moses looks at himself one last time for the inner ability to do the job.

When he finds himself lacking, he tries to worm out of the call,



but God is determined.

Actually, Moses probably wasn't a poor speaker – Acts 7 tells us that he was “mighty in word and deeds.”

As the years have worked to strip away his self-confidence, it seems that he's taken it too far and lost ALL confidence, even in the ability of God to use him.

That's expressed perfect by his next words . . .

**13But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever *else* You may send.”**

Here it is – Moses had no more excuses and just makes an appeal to be let off the Lord's call.

This is simply unbelief now, and God has had enough.

**14So 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. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.”**

Moses has come up with a lot of questions and excuses, but v. 13 reveals that the real problem was simply unwillingness!

And in the face of this, God's anger was kindled.

God is done discussing this with Moses.

Moses seems crippled by his lack of ability to speak and so consents to allow Aaron his brother to speak for him.

God will speak to Moses, and Moses will relay the message to Aaron, who will then speak to the elders and to Pharaoh.

God then says that even at that moment, Aaron was on his way to visit Moses and they would soon meet.

This may seem like a concession to Moses, but as we'll see, it's a concession Moses will later come to regret!

Aaron may seem like a ministry partner at this point, but he ends up being the source of real trouble to Moses' leadership later.

There will be times when Moses will look back to this time with regret that he had not simply accepted what the Lord said and went forth to do what he'd been bidden to do.

Aaron is the one who made the golden calf and started its worship at Mt. Sinai; Aaron is one of those who led in a time of rebellion against Moses' leadership; and he installed two of his sons into the office of priest who defamed the name of God and were judged for it.

#### ***D. Moses' Return To Egypt • Ch. 4:18-31***

**18** 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."

Jethro understood that Moses was not just asking for a vacation but to return to Egypt to live there.

It's interesting that Moses said nothing to Jethro of the burning bush and his call by God.

Some people speak of dramatic visitations and the call God had placed on them, but produce no fruit.

Moses chose to let the result of his return to Egypt stand as the evidence of his call.

**19** Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead."

Lest there be any anxiety on Moses' part regarding the sentence for his crime 40 years before, God says that that was all long past.

**20** 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.

**21** 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. **22** Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. **23** 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.'"

God is fore-warning that his task of securing the deliverance of the children of Israel will not be a piece of cake.

Pharaoh will not let go of them willingly. In fact, it won't be until Pharaoh loses his own son that he will relent.

Many people are disturbed by v. 21, in which God says that He will harden Pharaoh's heart.

But all we have to do is read on in the story to see what God means by this.

Pharaoh first hardened his own heart against the Lord.

He did this repeatedly and steadfastly.

God's hardening Pharaoh's heart was in answer to Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart.

God simply honored Pharaoh's choice to resist both the word and will of God, as was amply proven to him by the miraculous signs Moses showed him.

Here in vs. 21-23 God is telling Moses of the *end point*, the extent to which the whole confrontation with the king of Egypt will go.

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Now we come to a rather strange event . . .

**24**And it came to pass on the way, [back to Egypt] at the encampment, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him. **25**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!" **26**So He let him go. Then she said, "*You are* a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.

Something bizarre took place at one of their camping places as they made the journey to Egypt .

Suddenly Moses' life was in danger, how isn't made clear, but Zipporah, his wife discerned it was because Moses had failed to circumcise his son.

She quickly grabbed a stone knife and did the job, throwing it, literally, on his feet.

Her words indicate that she was not at all happy about the affair and that she'd had to do this.

Commentators are all agreed that interpreting this is a challenge. Just what is going on here?

How did God meet Moses? What form did the attack take?

What exactly do Zipporah's words mean; did she resent having to perform the operation or the fact that it was needed? Did she just disagree with the whole idea of circumcision to begin with?

These are a few of the questions that are asked of the text.

When all is taken into consideration, it's probably best to see that what's happening here is Moses being confronted with the seriousness of his calling before God.

This is the man through whom will come the Word & Law of God, and he's not been careful to obey it in his own household.

God had just said that Israel was His son, His firstborn.

And He had just renewed His covenant Name to Moses, identifying Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob – the God of the Covenant – a covenant that was given special evidence in what rite? Circumcision!

As Moses is now returning to Egypt to begin the fulfillment of the covenant he ought to have begun with his own family, his own son!

But he'd not given his son the sign of the covenant – because Zipporah had resisted it!

She didn't like circumcision, considering it a bloody and barbaric rite.

And in order to appease her, Moses had left off doing it.

When his life suddenly stood in danger, she quickly realized the source of the trouble, and out of concern for his survival, she went ahead and did that which she was loath to do.

The lesson for us from this story is that the work of the gospel has to begin in our own home first.

Those who would hold a place of leadership in the work of the Kingdom must make sure they're leading their own family first.

And a husband, as the God-appointed spiritual leader of the home, must lead, even when his wife resists.

Zipporah came to realize her resistance to circumcision was wrong.

But she also came to see that Moses had been *even more wrong* in his failure to assert his responsibility as leader and circumcise her son anyway.

It was Moses who ought to have performed the rite years before when the lad was only days old.

Now that it was performed on an older boy, it was an excruciating operation and tormented Zipporah to have to perform.

Moses' neglect of his duty thrust his wife into the awkward place of having to do that which God never intended her to do.

And that's what a husband's neglect of his spiritual leadership ALWAYS does, it puts his wife in an unprotected and precarious position.

For this, he will have to answer, just as Moses did here!

Men, spiritual leadership begins at home.

Before you can be effective in teaching others about the covenant, you have to make sure the terms of it are ruling your own home.

To those men who don't have a family altar, a regular time of family devotions, I want to put a simple challenge –

Pick one night a week, and set aside time to sit down with the entire family, read a chapter, and then pray together.

According to ch. 18, Zipporah turned around and went back to stay with Jethro at this point.

It seems her resentment toward him was too hot to go with him.

She was not ready to support him in his calling and went home to Papa, taking her son with her.

**27 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. 28 So Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him.**

The path to Egypt wound by Mt. Sinai, where Moses and Aaron met, as God had foretold.

Moses rehearsed everything God had told him, and Aaron listened with interest because God had appeared to him to tell him to go meet with Moses.

Then they both returned to Egypt.

**29 Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. 30 And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses.**

**Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. <sup>31</sup>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.**

This is really the beginning of a renewal of their relationship with God.

Having lived in Egypt with its many gods for 400 years they'd largely lost touch with Yahweh.

But Moses' report sparks a revival and the people begin to rejoice at the good news of their redemption from slavery.

Little do they know at this point that the path to deliverance lies through some tough days.