

Exodus 04 - The Rod & the Serpent; God's Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart (Timeline)

I. Exodus from Egyptian bondage: Israel's redemption, liberation, and preservation (Ex 1:1—18:27)

(1) Redemption from Egypt (Ex 1:1—12:30)

(B) Preparation of the deliverer (Ex 2:1—4:31)

(e) Moses' objections and God's responses (3:11—4:17)

(i) Moses' objections (3:11—4:14a)

(c) Incredulity of the Egyptians (4:1-9)

(d) Inarticulateness (4:10-12)

(e) Insubordination (4:13-14a)

(ii) God's responses (4:14b-17)

(a) Aaron as spokesman (4:14b-16)

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(h) Israel accepts Moses' calling (4:27-31)

Exodus 4

(c) Incredulity of the Egyptians (4:1-9)

1 Then Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

1 Then Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

1 Then Moses answered, "Look, they won't believe me and they won't listen to me. Instead, they'll say, 'The LORD didn't appear to you.'"

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.

- See chart: **Moses' Protests Against God's Command** at 4:11

- Moses was so worried about what *might* happen that he didn't hear God tell him what *would* happen; his mind was filled with imaginary scenarios

— To show His grace, mercy and patience with Moses, God indulged him with the ability to perform three miracles that would convince the Israelites that the God of their fathers had appeared to him. These miracles also bolstered Moses' faith.

2 The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A **staff**."

2 The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff."

2 "What's that in your hand?" the LORD asked him.

Moses answered, "A staff."

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

- "...staff" - this is the first mention of Moses' staff, which will have huge significance going forward

3 Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it turned into a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

3 Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

3 Then God said, "Throw it to the ground." He threw it to the ground and it became a snake. Moses ran away from it.

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.

4 But the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out with your hand and grasp *it* by its tail"—so he reached out with his hand and caught it, and it turned into a staff in his hand—

4 But the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand and grasp *it* by its tail"—so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—

4 Then God told Moses, "Reach out and grab its tail." So he reached out, grabbed it, and it became a staff in his hand.

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:

- God likely intended the first miracle to assure Moses and the Israelites that He was placing the satanic power of Egypt under God's and Moses' authoritative control

— The serpent was a common symbol of Egyptian royal authority; the pharaohs wore a religiously symbolic metal cobra around their heads

— By seizing the serpent's tail, it would comfort the Israelites showing Moses' (and God's) power over this Egyptian symbol; likewise, the serpent represented Satan (Gen 3:15)

5 "so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

5 "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

5 God said, "I've done this so that they may believe that the LORD God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you."

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.

6 The LORD furthermore said to him, "Now put your hand inside the fold of your robe." So he put his hand inside the fold, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow.

6 The LORD furthermore said to him, "Now put your hand into your bosom." So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow.

6 Again the LORD told him, "Put your hand into your bosom." He put his hand into his bosom and as soon as he brought it out it was leprous, like snow.

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.

- Leprosy was regarded as incurable in those days; it was also a repulsive, offensive type of illness

7 Then He said, "Put your hand inside the fold of your robe again." So he put his hand into the fold again, and when he took it out of the fold, behold, it was restored like *the rest of* his flesh.

7 Then He said, "Put your hand into your bosom again." So he put his hand into his bosom again, and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like *the rest of* his flesh.

7 Then God said, "Put your hand back into your bosom." He returned it to his bosom and as soon as he brought it out, it was restored like the rest of his skin.

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.

- This healing of the leprous hand assured Moses that God would bring them out of their defiling environment and heal them

8 "So if they will not believe you nor pay attention to the evidence of the first sign, they may believe the evidence of the last sign.

8 "If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign.

8 "Then if they don't believe you and respond to the first sign, they may respond to the second sign.

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.

9 But if they will not believe even these two signs nor pay attention to what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will turn into blood on the dry ground."

9 But if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

9 But if they don't believe even these two signs, and won't listen to you, then take some water out of the Nile River and pour it on the dry ground. The water you took from the Nile River will turn into blood on the dry ground."

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 third miracle demonstrated that God would humiliate the Egyptians by spoiling what they regarded as a divine source of life

— The Egyptians identified the Nile River with the Egyptian god Osiris, and credited it with all good and prosperity of their national life

— Moses possessed the power to change the life-giving water of the Nile into blood

— This would've also put the Egyptians on notice that Moses had the power to destroy the gods of Egypt and punish the land with death (Cf. 7:14-24)

Normally at least two witnesses were necessary to establish credibility under the Mosaic Law (Deut 19:15). A third witness further strengthened the truthfulness of the testimony. Here, God gave Moses three "witnesses" to confirm His prophet's divine calling and enablement. God entrusted Moses with His powerful word and endowed him with His mighty power. Moses was the first prophet with the power to perform miracles, as far as Scripture records.

(d) Inarticulateness (4:10-12)

10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, LORD, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

10 Then Moses told the LORD, "Please, LORD, I'm not eloquent. I never was in the past nor am I now since you spoke to your servant. In fact, I talk too slowly and I have a speech impediment."

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.

- Instead of inspiring confidence, God's three miracles frightened Moses...

— Moses' claim to not be eloquent was a flimsy excuse that Moses used in hopes of escaping his calling; Stephen said Moses was "proficient in speaking" (Acts 7:22)

— Apparently Moses felt like he didn't have sufficient eloquence to convince the Israelite elders or Pharaoh, but his limitation was psychological, not physical

11 But the LORD said to him, "Who has made the human mouth? Or who makes *anyone* unable to speak or deaf, or able to see or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?

11 The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?

11 Then God asked him, "Who gives a person a mouth? Who makes him unable to speak, or deaf, or able to see, or blind, or lame? Is it not I, the LORD?

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?

12 Now then go, and I Myself will be with your mouth, and instruct you in what you are to say."

12 Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."

12 Now, go! I myself will help you with your speech, and I'll teach you what you are to say."

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

- God reminded Moses that He is the Creator, and that He would enable Moses to to communicate effectively

(e) Insubordination (4:13-14a)

13 But he said, "Please, Lord, now send *the message* by whomever You will."

13 But he said, "Please, Lord, now send *the message* by whomever You will."

13 Moses said, "Please, Lord, send somebody else."

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

(ii) God's responses (4:14b-17)

(a) Aaron as spokesman (4:14b-16)

14 Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is

coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be overjoyed.

14 Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

14 Then the LORD was angry with Moses and said, "There is your brother Aaron, a descendant of Levi, isn't there? I know that he certainly is eloquent. Right now he's coming to meet you and he will be pleased to see you.

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.

- After hearing Moses' fifth excuse, the fact that he is not as qualified as others (v13), God became angry at Moses' disobedience

— However, God did not give up on His reluctant servant (Cf. Jonah); instead, He provided a mouthpiece for Moses in the form of his brother Aaron

— This was an aid for Moses, but also a discipline for his continued disobedience; on one hand Aaron was an encouragement to Moses, but on the other he proved to be a source of frustration as a mediator (Cf. Ex 32)

15 So you are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I Myself will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will instruct you in what you are to do.

15 You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do.

15 You're to speak to him and tell him what to say. I'll help both you and him with your speech, and I'll teach both of you what you are to do.

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.

- A prophet had one job: to accurately represent the message of the one who sent them. Moses would be as God to Aaron and tell him what to say, just as God would tell Moses what to say.

16 He shall speak for you **to the people**; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him.

16 Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him.

16 He is to speak to the people for you as your spokesman and you are to act in the role of God for him.

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.

- "...to the people" - apparently Aaron was to speak for Moses only to the Israelites (Cf. v30), not to Pharaoh

— It was later that God told Moses to speak to Pharaoh (v22); when Moses stood before Pharaoh, it was him doing the speaking, not Aaron

(b) Signs through staff (4:17)

17 And you shall take in your hand this **staff**, with which you shall perform the signs."

17 You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."

17 Now pick up that staff with your hand. You'll use it to perform the signs."

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

- "...staff" - again God mentioned Moses' staff, which will play a huge role in the coming chapters...

(f) Moses accepts his calling and returns to Egypt (4:18-23)

18 Then Moses departed and returned to his father-in-law Jethro, and said to him, "Please, let me go, that I may return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

18 Then Moses departed and returned to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please, let me go, that I may return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

18 Moses left and returned to his father-in-law Jethro. Moses told him, "Please let me go and return to my own people in Egypt so I can see whether they're still alive." Jethro told Moses, "Go in peace."

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

- Moses' pessimism about the welfare of the Israelites in Egypt after 40 years is evident in his request to Jethro (Reuel, Cf. 2:18)

— Moses didn't necessarily lie to Jethro, as checking on the status of his fellow Israelites may have been a small reason for his return to Egypt (at least in his mind), but God didn't tell Moses to go see how the Israelites were doing, He told him that He would free His people from bondage.

This section makes it possible for us to gain great insight into Moses' feelings about God's promises to his forefathers, and about his own life. Moses had become thoroughly disillusioned. He regarded himself as a failure, the objects of his ministry as hopeless, and God as unfaithful, uncaring, and unable to deliver His people. He had learned his own inability to deliver Israel, but he did not yet believe in God's ability to do so. Even the

miraculous revelation of God at the burning bush, and the miracles that God enabled Moses to perform, did not convince him of God's purpose and power.

One supernatural revelation, even one involving miracles, does not usually change convictions that a person has built up over years of experience. We not only need to believe in our own inability to produce supernatural change, as Moses did, but we also need to believe in God's ability to produce it. Moses had not yet learned the second lesson, which God proceeded to teach him.

19 Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."

19 Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."

19 The LORD told Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, because all the men who wanted to kill you are dead."

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

- God spoke to Moses again, this time when he was back in Midian from Horeb, and sent him back to Egypt

20 So Moses took his wife and his **sons** and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand.

20 So Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand.

20 So Moses took his wife and son, put them on donkeys, and headed back to the land of Egypt. Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

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

- "...sons" - Moses had more than one child; we're only told of Gershom (Cf. 2:22) likely because the meaning of his name served a theological point in that context (see notes there)

— Later we see that Jethro brought Moses' wife and two sons from Midian to Moses in the wilderness (18:2-7). Evidently Moses' family went back to Midian sometime after their arrival in Egypt.

21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform **before Pharaoh** all the wonders which I have put in your power; but **I will harden his heart** so that he will not let the people go.

21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

21 Then the LORD told Moses, "When you set out to return to Egypt, keep in mind all the wonders that I've put in your power, so that you may do them before Pharaoh. But I'll harden his heart so that he won't let the people go.

21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

- In v21-23, God gives Moses a preview of all that would happen while he was in Egypt and his dealings with Pharaoh

- "...before Pharaoh" - first mention from God that Moses was to perform the signs before Pharaoh

- "...I will harden his heart" - God is not saying that Pharaoh would be unable to choose whether he would release the Israelites or not (as Calvinism argues). God (at least initially) did not remove Pharaoh's volition (free will).

— While God gives Moses a preview of events that would take place in Egypt, He adds that He would harden Pharaoh's heart. Even though God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart was only the complement of Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart, God revealed only the former action here in order to prepare Moses for the opposition he would face.

— This hardening was foreknown by God, but also caused and effected by Him, but the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was as much his own act as it was the decree of God.

— God made Pharaoh's heart progressively harder as the king repeatedly chose to disobey God's will (Cf. Lev 26:23-24)

After the 5th plague (9:12), the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is invariably presented as his own. Pharaoh's hardening was the fruit of sin, a consequence of self-will, high-mindedness and pride which flowed from sin, and a continuous and ever-increasing abuse of that freedom of the will which is innate in man, and which involves the obstinate resistance to the word and chastisement of God.

God not only permits a man to harden his heart, He also produces the tenacity to not repent for the impenitent. It is the curse of sin that renders the hard heart harder and less susceptible to the gracious manifestations of God's love and patience. God gives time and space for the manifestation of human opposition, even to the utmost limits, and in time confirms the hard heart even harder so that it is no longer capable of returning, thus giving over the hardened sinner to the judgment of damnation. This is what happened with Pharaoh.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is ascribed to God 10x:

- 4:21: I will harden his heart (preview of things to come)
- 7:3: I will harden Pharaoh's heart (preview of things to come)
- 9:12: the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart (after the 6th plague)
- 10:1: I have hardened his heart (before the 8th plague-locusts)
- 10:20: the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart (after the 8th plague-locusts)
- 10:27: the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart (after the 9th plague-darkness)
- 11:10: the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart (after Moses' proclamation of the 10th plague-death of the firstborn)
- 14:4: I will harden Pharaoh's heart (to chase after the fleeing Israelites)
- 14:8: the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh (to chase after the fleeing Israelites)
- 14:17: I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians (to pursue the Israelites through the parted Red Sea)

But it is stated just as often (10x) that Pharaoh hardened his own heart:

- 7:13: Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Pharaoh hardened first)
- 7:14: the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn" (observation)
- 7:22: Pharaoh's heart was hardened (after the 1st plague-water to blood)
- 8:15: he (Pharaoh) hardened his heart (after the 2nd plague-gnats)
- 8:19: Pharaoh's heart was hardened (after the 3rd plague-frogs)
- 8:32: Pharaoh hardened his heart (after the 4th plague-flies)
- 9:7: The heart of Pharaoh was hardened (after the 5th plague-murrain)
 - **Now is when God began to harden Pharaoh's heart (9:12)**
- 9:34: He sinned again and hardened his heart (after the 7th plague-hail)
- 9:35: Pharaoh's heart was hardened (after the 7th plague-hail)
- 13:15: Pharaoh was stubborn about letting Israel go

According to this, the hardening of Pharaoh was quite as much his own act as the decree of God. But if, in order to determine the precise relation of the divine to the human causality, we look more carefully at the two classes of expressions, we find that not only in connection with the first sign, by which Moses and Aaron were to show their credentials as the messengers of Jehovah, sent with the demand that he would let the people of Israel go (7:13-14), but after the first five plagues, the hardening is invariably represented as his own. **It is not till after the sixth plague that it is stated that Jehovah made the heart of Pharaoh firm (9:12).** Looked at from this side, the hardening was a fruit of sin, a consequence of self-will, high-mindedness, and pride which flowed from sin, and a continuous and ever increasing abuse of that freedom of the will which is innate in man,

and which involves the possibility of obstinate resistance to the word and chastisement of God even until death.

God not only permits a man to harden himself; He also produced obduracy, and suspends this sentence over the impenitent. Not as though God took pleasure in the death of the wicked! No, God desires that the wicked should repent of his evil way and live (Ezek 33:11); and He desires this most earnestly, for 'He will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:4; Cf. 2 Peter 3:9). As God causes His earthly sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45), so He causes His grace to shine upon all sinners, to lead them to life and salvation.

See Rom 1:24-32 for a NT expression of this truth.

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

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

22 You are to say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: "Israel is my firstborn son.

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

- "...My firstborn" - first in rank and preeminence because God chose Israel to place His special blessing, by virtue of His sovereign choice

23 So I said to you, 'Let My son go so that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I am going to kill your son, your firstborn.'"

23 So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.'"

23 And I say to you, 'Let my son go so he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, then I will kill your firstborn son.'"

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

- Since Israel is God's firstborn son, the appropriate punishment against Egypt for harming Israel is for God to harm Egypt's firstborn son (Cf. 1:22). This was not an afterthought!

God's Sovereignty

The essence of the conflict between Pharaoh and Yahweh was the issue of sovereignty. Sovereignty refers to supreme power and authority. Regarding God, it refers to the fact that He has supreme power and authority, more than any other entity. Sovereignty does not specify how one exercises supreme power and authority. Specifically, it does not mean that God exercises His sovereignty by directly controlling everything that happens. Scripture reveals that this is not how He

exercises His sovereignty. Rather, He allows people some freedom, yet maintains supreme power and authority.

(g) God confronts Moses over his covenant unfaithfulness (4:24-26)

24 But it came about at the overnight encampment on the way, that the LORD met Moses, and **sought to put him to death.**

24 Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.

24 But later on, at the lodging place along the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him.

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

- "...sought to put him to death" - evidently God afflicted Moses, perhaps making him very ill, because of his disobedience in not circumcising at least one of his sons

— How could God use Moses during the Exodus, the basis of which was God's covenant with Abraham (Cf. 2:23-25), if Moses did not practice the token of the covenant on his own son

— Before God could use Moses, He had to put him under the Abrahamic Covenant

— It's possible that Moses kept at least one of his sons uncircumcised to please his Midianite family. Midianites practiced circumcision on a groom just before his marriage; Israel was the only ANE nation to practice circumcision on newborns.

— The penalty for not circumcising a son was death (Gen 17:14). Only after Zipporah circumcised Moses' son was Moses' life spared by God.

— Here, God was making Moses face his own incomplete obedience, which reflected his lack of faith in God. God was bringing Moses to the same spiritual place He brought Jacob when He wrestled with him at the Jabbok (Gen 32). He was getting Moses to acknowledge His sovereignty over him personally.

— It's interesting that God would rather have Moses die than have him take up His work with an unconsecrated heart and unsundered will

25 So Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet; and she said, "You are indeed a groom of blood to me!"

25 Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me."

25 Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin, and touched Moses' feet with it, saying while doing so, "...because you are a bridegroom of blood to me."

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

- Zipporah eventually consents to the circumcision, but she is upset
- Perhaps because of Zipporah's resistance to do the will of God, Moses sent her and his sons back to their father at this time. Because of this, Zipporah missed seeing God's sovereignty and provision in action during the Exodus,
- Whether Zipporah was sent back to Midian at this time or later, she joined Moses again at Sinai (18:2)

26 So He left him alone. At that time she said, "**You are a groom of blood**"— because of the circumcision.

26 So He let him alone. At that time she said, "*You are* a bridegroom of blood"—because of the circumcision.

26 Then the LORD withdrew from him, and she said, "...a bridegroom of blood because of circumcision."

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

- "...*You are* a groom of blood" - evidently means that Zipporah's circumcising her son removed God's hand of judgment on Moses and restored him to life and to her again

— It was as though God had now given Moses a second chance and he had begun life as her husband all over again, as a bridegroom

Verses 18-23 anticipate the consequences of Egypt not obeying God; verses 24-26 anticipate the consequences of Israel not obeying God.

Moses has been chosen and commissioned by God, but he has shown himself far from enthusiastic about confronting the Pharaoh and threatening him with the death of his son. *YHWH* sets about showing Moses that although he is safe from other men (Cf. v19) he faces a much greater danger to his life in the wrath of the God whom he is so reluctant to serve (Cf. v14). Like Jacob before him, Moses must undergo a night struggle with his mysterious God before he can become a worthy instrument of *YHWH* and can enjoy a completely satisfactory relationship with his brother.

If Israel is to survive the wrath of *YHWH*, it must be by virtue of the spilling of atoning blood...Gershom's blood saves Moses, just as the blood of the Passover lamb will save the Israelites. Since for the sin of the Pharaoh his son's blood will be shed, it is appropriate that the blood which saves Moses should not be his own, but that of his son. It is also fitting that this blood should be blood shed during the rite of circumcision. Since before the Passover lamb is eaten the participants must all be circumcised, it is right that the neglect of Gershom's circumcision (though this omission is not the cause of the attack) should be repaired. The boy cannot be circumcised by his father, who is otherwise engaged, so Zipporah takes it upon herself, acting on behalf of her absent father, Jethro (hence the

words to Moses 'You are my son-in-law by virtue of blood, the blood of circumcision'), to perform the rite, thus showing herself to be a worthy member of the elite class typified by Rahab the Canaanite harlot and Ruth the Moabitess—the foreign woman who puts Israelites to shame and earns the right to be held up as a model for imitation.

(h) Israel accepts Moses' calling (4:27-31)

27 Now the LORD said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses in the wilderness." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him.

27 Now the LORD said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses in the wilderness." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him.

27 The LORD told Aaron, "Go meet Moses in the desert." So Aaron went, found him at the mountain of God, and embraced him.

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

- Aaron was apparently in Egypt when God told him to go meet Moses in the wilderness, and subsequently he met Moses in Horeb

— Moses was on his way from Midian back to Egypt when Aaron met him

28 Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him *to do*.

28 Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him *to do*.

28 Moses told Aaron all of the LORD's messages that he had sent with Moses, and all of the signs that he commanded him to do.

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

29 Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel;

29 Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel;

29 Later, Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelis.

29 And 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. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people.

30 and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people.

30 Aaron spoke everything that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Moses performed the miracles before the very eyes of the people.

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

- Aaron, not Moses, spoke to the Israelites (Cf. v14-16); Moses performed the signs (Cf. v17)

31 So **the people believed**; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, they bowed low and **worshiped**.

31 So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.

31 The people believed and understood that the LORD had paid attention to the Israelis and had seen their affliction. They bowed their heads and prostrated themselves in worship.

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

- "...the people believed" - the Israelite population that left Egypt, received the Law at Sinai, and wandered in the wilderness after the failure at Kadesh Barnea, were a redeemed people

— This fact is further underscored in the Book of Hebrews, particularly 3:7–4:13, when the author compares the Israelite's wilderness wanderings to his readers, 1st century Jewish Christians

— "believed" - the Hebrew word in the Hiphil form means "to have faith, to trust (in)" and was used in the OT to express full confidence and genuine faith in *Yahweh*

— The genuineness of the people's faith is evidenced not only by their immediate worship (v31; 12:27) but also by their obedience. In response to the specific commands regarding Passover, Moses mentions twice that all of Israel "did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron" (12:28,50).

— Heb 11 also confirms the faith of the Exodus generation. With the events of Ex 14:30-31 in mind, he commended them for their exemplary faith (Heb 11:29).

- "...worshiped" - worship is a response to truth; the Israelites heard and believed the truth that Aaron and Moses spoke and demonstrated, thus they expressed their faith in worship.