

- More answers

3. God answers Moses' fear of being ineffective

- The stick becomes a snake

- 'Take what is within your grasp!'

- God can make the harmless dangerous and the dangerous harmless

- The hand that becomes leprous

- The water that becomes blood

4. God answers Moses' fear that he lacks sufficient gifts of speech

- Every gift and capacity is within God's control

God continues to answer all of Moses' questions.

3. **God answers Moses' fear that he will be ineffective**^{□1}. 'What if they do not believe me or listen to me...?' he asks^{□2}. God answers him with the promise of three miracles, all of which are symbolic.

□1 4:1-9
□2 4:1

The stick which becomes a snake. First God says, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff', Moses replies^{□1}. 'Throw it on the ground', says God, and as Moses does so it turns into a writhing dangerous snake^{□2}.

□1 4:2
□2 4:2-3

It is God's way of saying 'Take yourself as you are, take the situation as it is, take what you have within your grasp. You may feel yourself to be nothing but a dead piece of wood, but throw yourself down before me and I will turn you into something that Pharaoh will fear!'

Then God tells Moses to reach out for the snake and 'take it by the tail'^{□1}. Moses obeys God and it turns back into a harmless stick again. The tail is not the best part of a snake to grasp. If dangerous, it should be killed by crushing its head! It is God's way of saying 'Grasp boldly after the most dangerous things and I will make them harmless to you'. This sign is not for Moses only but for the people of Israel. When Moses works these signs in Egypt it will be a confirmation of Moses' claims^{□2}, but it will also be a message about how God can make what is harmless into something dangerous, and can make what is dangerous into something harmless.

□1 4:4

□2 4:5

The hand that becomes leprous. Then God says 'Put your hand inside your cloak'. Moses does so and when he takes it out his hand is full of leprosy^{□1}. It is as if God is saying: 'Your sense of weakness and fear' comes because you feel leprosy within yourself. Moses puts his hand on his heart, so to speak, and finds leprosy within. Then he puts the leprous hand back in his cloak and when he takes it out it is clean and restored^{□2}. God is saying 'I am able to deal with the leprosy within', 'I am able to cleanse you within'. This too is to be a sign for the people of Israel^{□3}.

□1 4:6

□2 4:7
□3 4:8

The water that becomes blood. God offers a third sign. Moses is to take water from the Nile and pour it out on the ground. It will turn into blood. The Nile was the source of all life and fertility for Egypt and was worshipped as a god. Moses' sign takes the life-giving water which was worshipped and it becomes blood, the symbol of death. It is God's way of saying 'Don't be afraid of Egypt. I am able to ridicule the gods of Egypt'.

4. **God answers Moses' fear that he lacks sufficient gifts of speech**^{□1}. Moses thinks he lacks the appropriate gifts. 'O Yahweh I have never been good at speaking...' ^{□2}. God answers his difficulty. 'Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf? ... Who gives him sight?' ^{□3}. All gifts and capacities are given by God or withdrawn by God. If Moses needs gifts of speaking, if the people need the ability to hear, if Pharaoh's heart is to be allowed to remain hard – every ability of communication or receptivity is within God's control, to give or to withhold. Why is Moses speaking about lacking gifts of speech?

□1 4:10-12
□2 4:10

□3 4:11-12

5. God is angry at Moses' continued reluctance

5. **God is angry at Moses' continued reluctance**^{□1}. Moses pleads that someone else should be sent^{□2} and at this point God becomes angry. Moses loses part of his call! Part of the work that God was offering for Moses to do is now to be given to Aaron^{□3}. However it must be noted this is God's responding to Moses in anger. It is possible to lose part of what God is calling us to do. At last Moses is willing to respond to God. He goes to Jethro and tells him what he plans to do^{□4}.

□1 4:13-17
 □2 4:13
 □3 4:14-17
 □4 4:18

• *Plenty of encouragement*

It is worth noting that at this point Moses gets plenty of encouragement. His family is sympathetic. Jethro is happy for him to go^{□1}. Moses sets out for Egypt and his wife and sons go with him^{□2}. He discovers that the Pharaoh he feared has died^{□3}. God gives him further instructions^{□4}. Again he is given a full revelation of what will happen when he gets to Egypt^{□5}.

□1 4:18
 □2 4:19-20
 □3 4:19
 □4 4:21
 □5 4:22-23

• *Another important lesson – obedience in small things*

However there is another lesson for him to learn. As he goes back to Egypt he almost died. God was about to kill Moses^{□1}! Why was this? It was because Moses had not bothered to circumcise his sons. God had told Abraham 'Every male . . . shall be circumcised ... Any uncircumcised male ... will be cut off...' ^{□2}. Moses had married a Midianite woman and had neglected the circumcision of his son. It seemed a small thing, but how can Moses be the servant of God if he will not keep the sign of God's covenant to Abraham? It is God's covenant to Abraham which is about to be fulfilled. How can part of it be ignored? Zipporah takes action and circumcises her son^{□3}, associating Moses with what she has done^{□4}. Then Moses recovers^{□5}.

□1 4:24
 □2 Gen 17:10,14
 □3 4:25
 □4 4:26
 □5 4:26

• *Faithfulness in every detail*

Moses is having to learn faithfulness. God wanted an obedient servant. Even Moses came under God's fatherly anger. Later Moses would build the tabernacle for God, and God would want him to be faithful in every detail. Moses is learning faithfulness in detail even now.

• *As Moses moves forward in obedience God is utterly faithful*

Then he is given another encouragement. Aaron meets him^{□1}. They go to Israel and the elders of the people are convinced about what they say^{□2}. Moses had had so many fears, but as he moves forward in obedience to God, all of his fears prove to be groundless. This is the way it is when we are in God's will. He stays with us. He gives us the knowledge and the guidance that we need. He enables us to be effective for Him, giving us the gifts that we need. He works both in leaders and in followers. He is utterly faithful.

□1 4:27-28
 □2 4:29-31



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