Exodus 4:1-17

**Review:**

On mount Horeb (Heb. “waste” or “desolate”). The angel of the Lord is in a bush that is blazing but not consumed. The LORD (YHWH, the God of the Covenant) calls Moses’ name out of the bush and says that the place is holy ground. Moses hides his face out of fear. God has come down to free his people, from the Egyptians, and deliver them to a land that is presently the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Moses responds, “Who am I?” (Protest 1) God says he will be with him. Moses asks what he should tell the Israelites that God’s name is (protest 2). God says, “I AM WHO I AM”. And, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ and ‘The LORD (YHWH), the God of your ancestors, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob has sent me to you.’” God tells Moses to assemble and tell the elders of Israel that God has appeared to Moses and knows what has been done to the Israelites. God declares that he will bring them out of the misery of Egypt, to a land flowing with milk and honey. God assures Moses that the elders will listen to his voice and that Moses and the elders will tell the king of Egypt that God has met with them and they want to go three days’ journey into the wilderness to make sacrifices to their God. God says that the Egyptian king will not let them go unless compelled by a mighty hand, so God will strike Egypt with all God’s wonders and after that, the King of Egypt will let them go. God says that God will bring the Israelites into such favor with the Egyptians that they will not leave empty-handed. Their neighbors will give them jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and the Israelites will put them on their sons and daughters; the Israelites will plunder the Egyptians (to the Israelites, the spoils of war). We said that Moses was curious, humble, low in confidence, brave to stay in the presence of God, remained cool under stress, was a good listener, asked intelligent questions, and educated in Jewish belief. We said that God can use anyplace (a mountain named Desolate) or anyone to do his work, be anywhere, is present in past, present and future, and has a plan. Reminder: This story is to the Israelites what Good Friday and Easter is to Christians.

**Exodus 4:1-5**

**Vs. 1:** Moses asks what if the elders do not believe him, or listen to him, or say that God did not appear to him (protest 3).

*Why would Moses think the elders would not believe him or listen to him?*

**Vs. 2-3:** God asks Moses what is in his hand and Moses replies that it is a staff. God tells Moses to throw it on the ground. It becomes a snake and Moses draws back from it.

Note: The staff was probably the typical shepherd’s staff.

*Why do you think the snake caused Moses to draw back?*

**Vs. 4**: God tells Moses to reach out and grab it by the tail. Moses does so and it becomes a staff again.

*What is the message that God is giving Moses with this first sign?*

**Vs. 5:** God says this is so that the elders will believe that the LORD (YHWH, the God of the Covenant), the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has appeared to Moses.

*If you were an elder of all the Israelites, would this convince you?*

**Exodus 4:6-9**

**Vs. 6:** God tells Moses to put his hand inside his cloak. Moses does so and when he pulls it out, it is leprous, as white as snow.

Note: Leprous is a term for several skin diseases. The precise meaning is uncertain. In Leviticus 13:4, we read that if the hair has turned white and the disease is more than skin deep, it is Leprous.

*What would your reaction have been if you had been Moses?*

**Vs. 7**: God tells Moses to put his hand back inside his cloak. He does so and when he pulls it out, it is restored, like the rest of his body.

*Why would this sign be more likely to make the elders believe than the first sign?*

*What is the message that God is giving Moses with this second sign?*

**Vs. 8**: God says that if they do not believe the first sign, they may believe the second.

**Vs. 9**: God says that if they do not believe either of these signs, then Moses should take water from the Nile, place it on dry ground and it will become blood.

Note: The Nile was a deity of the Egyptians and life for everyone living there.

*Why is this sign more likely to make the elders believe than the first two?*

*What is the message that God is giving Moses with this third sign?*

**Exodus 4:10-17**

**Vs. 10:** Moses says, “Oh my LORD (YHWH), I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

(Protest #4)

*What is your opinion of this response by Moses?*

*What exactly is Moses telling God?*

**Vs. 11-12:** Then the LORD (YHWH) says, “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.”

*What is God feeling at this point in the conversation? Why?*

**Vs. 13:** Moses asks God to please send someone else.

*Have you ever done this?*

**Vs. 14:** God’s anger is kindled and asks about his brother Aaron the Levite. God says that Aaron can speak fluently, is coming to see Moses and his heart will be glad when he sees Moses.

Note: This is the first time in the Old Testament where God is described as angry.

*What other feelings are below this anger?*

*Why is using Aaron a good solution? Or is it?*

**Vs. 15:** God tells Moses to speak to Aaron and God will put the words in the mouths of Moses and Aaron and God will teach Moses what he will do.

**Vs. 16:** God says that Aaron shall speak for Moses to the people and serve as a mouth for Moses, and Moses will serve as God (Elohim; creator God) for Aaron.

*What does God mean that Moses will serve as God for Aaron?*

**Vs. 17:** God reminds Moses to take the staff, with which Moses will perform the signs.

*What have we learned about Moses?*

*What have we learned about God?*

*What have we learned about how we should behave around God?*