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EXODUS 4:1 Moses answered, "But, behold, they will not believe me, nor listen to my voice; for they will say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

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Moses continuing to express his fear that the Israelites would not credit his Divine mission, Exo 4:1; God, to strengthen his faith, and to assure him that his countrymen would believe him, changed his rod into a serpent, and the serpent into a rod, Exo 4:2-5; made his hand leprous, and afterwards restored it, Exo 4:6, Exo 4:7; intimating that he had now endued him with power to work such miracles, and that the Israelites would believe, Exo 4:8; and farther assures him that he should have power to turn the water into blood, Exo 4:9. Moses excuses himself on the ground of his not being eloquent, Exo 4:10, and God reproves him for his unbelief, and promises to give him supernatural assistance, Exo 4:11, Exo 4:12. Moses expressing his utter unwillingness to go on any account, God is angry, and then promises to give him his brother Aaron to be his spokesman, Exo 4:13-16, and appoints his rod to be the instrument of working miracles, Exo 4:17. Moses returns to his relative Jethro, and requests liberty to visit his brethren in Egypt, and is permitted, Exo 4:18. God appears to him in Midian, and assures him that the Egyptians who sought his life were dead, Exo 4:19. Moses, with his wife and children, set out on their journey to Egypt, Exo 4:20. God instructs him what he shall say to Pharaoh, Exo 4:21-23. He is in danger of losing his life, because he had not circumcised his son, Exo 4:24. Zipporah immediately circumcising the child, Moses escapes unhurt, Exo 4:25, Exo 4:26. Aaron is commanded to go and meet his brother Moses; he goes and meets him at Horeb, Exo 4:27. Moses informs him of the commission he had received from God, Exo 4:28. They both go to their brethren, deliver their message, and work miracles, Exo 4:29, Exo 4:30. The people believe and adore God, Exo 4:31.

#### Verse 1

They will not believe me - As if he had said, Unless I be enabled to work miracles, and give them proofs by extraordinary works as well as by words, they will not believe that thou hast sent me.

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EXODUS 4:2 The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?"

He said, "A rod."

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#### Verse 2

A rod - מַטֵּה *matteh*, a staff, probably his shepherd's crook; see Lev 27:32. As it was made the instrument of working many miracles, it was afterwards called the rod of God; see Exo 4:20.

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EXODUS 4:3 He said, "Throw it on the ground."

He threw it on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses ran away from it.

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#### Verse 3

A serpent - Of what sort we know not, as the word שׁנָי nachash is a general name for serpents, and also means several other things, see Gen 3:1 : but it was either of a kind that he had not seen before, or one that he knew to be dangerous; for it is said, he fled from before it. Some suppose the staff was changed into a crocodile; see Clarke on Exo 7:10 (note).

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EXODUS 4:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand, and take it by the tail."

He stretched out his hand, and took hold of it, and it became a rod in his hand.

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#### Verse 4

He put forth his hand, and caught it - Considering the light in which Moses had viewed this serpent, it required considerable faith to induce him thus implicitly to obey the command of God; but he obeyed, and the noxious serpent became instantly the miraculous rod in his hand! Implicit faith and obedience conquer all difficulties; and he who believes in God, and obeys him in all things, has really nothing to fear.

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EXODUS 4:5 "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."

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#### Verse 5

That they may believe - This is an example of what is called an imperfect or unfinished speech, several of which occur in the sacred writings. It may be thus supplied: Do this before them, that they may believe that the Lord hath appeared unto thee.

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EXODUS 4:6 The LORD said furthermore to him, "Now put your hand inside your cloak."

He put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, as white as snow.

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#### Verse 6

His hand was leprous as snow - That is, the leprosy spread itself over the whole body in thin white scales; and from this appearance it has its Greek name λεπτα, from λεπις, a scale. Dr. Mead says, "I have seen a remarkable case of this in a countryman, whose whole body was so miserably seized with it, that his skin was shining as if covered with snow; and as the surfuraceous scales were daily rubbed off, the flesh appeared quick or raw underneath." The leprosy, at least among the Jews, was a most inveterate and contagious disorder, and deemed by them incurable. Among the heathens it was considered as inflicted by their gods, and it was supposed that they alone could remove it. It is certain that a similar belief prevailed among the Israelites; hence, when the king of Syria sent his general Naaman, to the king of Israel to cure him of his leprosy, he rent his clothes, saying, Amos I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? 2Kgs

5:7. This appears, therefore, to be the reason why God chose this sign, as the instantaneous infliction and removal of this disease were demonstrations which all would allow of the sovereign power of God. We need, therefore, seek for no other reasons for this miracle: the sole reason is sufficiently obvious.

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EXODUS 4:7 He said, "Put your hand inside your cloak again."

He put his hand inside his cloak again, and when he took it out of his cloak, behold, it had turned again as his other flesh.

EXODUS 4:8 "It will happen, if they will neither believe you nor listen to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

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#### Verse 8

If they will not believe - the voice of the first sign, etc. - Probably intimating that some would be more difficult to be persuaded than others: some would yield to the evidence of the first miracle; others would hesitate till they had seen the second; and others would not believe till they had seen the water of the Nile turned into blood, when poured upon the dry land; Exo 4:9.

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EXODUS 4:9 It will happen, if they will not believe even these two signs, neither listen to your voice, that you shall take of the water of the river, and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take out of the river will become blood on the dry land."

EXODUS 4:10 Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before now, nor since you have spoken to your servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

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#### Verse 10

I am not eloquent - לא איש דברים lo ish debarim, I am not a man of words; a periphrasis common in the Scriptures. So Job 11:2, איש שפתיים ish sephathayim, a man of lips, signifies one that is talkative. Psa 140:11, איש לשון ish lashon, a man of tongue, signifies a prattler. But how could it be said that Moses was not eloquent, when St. Stephen asserts, Act 7:22, that he was mighty in words as well as in deeds? There are three ways of solving this difficulty:

1. Moses might have had some natural infirmity, of a late standing, which at that time rendered it impossible for him to speak readily, and which he afterwards overcame; so that though he was not then a man of words, yet he might afterwards have been mighty in words as well as deeds.
2. It is possible he was not intimately acquainted with the Hebrew tongue, so as to speak clearly and distinctly in it. The first forty years of his life he had spent in Egypt, chiefly at court; and though it is very probable there was an affinity between the two languages, yet they certainly were not the same. The last forty he had spent in Midian, and it is not likely that the pure Hebrew tongue prevailed there, though it is probable that a dialect of it was there spoken. On these accounts Moses might find it difficult to express himself with that readiness and persuasive flow of language, which he might deem essentially necessary on such a momentous occasion; as he would frequently be

obliged to consult his memory for proper expressions, which would necessarily produce frequent hesitation, and general slowness of utterance, which he might think would ill suit an ambassador of God.

3. Though Moses was slow of speech, yet when acting as the messenger of God his word was with power, for at his command the plagues came and the plagues were stayed; thus was he mighty in words as well as in deeds: and this is probably the meaning of St. Stephen.

By the expression, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant, he might possibly mean that the natural inaptitude to speak readily, which he had felt, he continued to feel, even since God had begun to discover himself; for though he had wrought several miracles for him, yet he had not healed this infirmity. See Clarke on Exo 6:12 (note).

EXODUS 4:11 The LORD said to him, "Who made man's mouth? Or who makes one mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Isn't it I, the LORD?"

#### Verse 11

Who hath made man's mouth? etc. - Cannot he who formed the mouth, the whole organs of speech, and hath given the gift of speech also, cannot he give utterance? God can take away those gifts and restore them again. Do not provoke him: he who created the eye, the ear, and the mouth, hath also made the blind, the deaf, and the dumb.

EXODUS 4:12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall speak."

#### Verse 12

I will be with thy mouth - The Chaldee translates, My Word, meimeri, shall be with thy mouth. And Jonathan ben Uzziel paraphrases, I and my Word will be with the speech of thy mouth. See Clarke on Gen 15:1 (note), and Lev 25:10 (note).

EXODUS 4:13 He said, "Oh, Lord, please send someone else."

#### Verse 13

Send - by the hand of him whom thou wilt send - Many commentators, both ancient and modern, have thought that Moses prays here for the immediate mission of the Messiah; as if he had said: "Lord, thou hast purposed to send this glorious person at some time or other, I beseech thee send him now, for who can be sufficient to deliver and rule this people but himself alone?" The Hebrew שלח נא ביד תשלח shelach na beyad tishlach literally translated is, Send now (or, I beseech thee) by the hand thou wilt send; which seems to intimate, Send a person more fit for the work than I am. So the Septuagint: Προχειρισαι δυναμενον αλλον, ον αποστειλεις· Elect another powerful person, whom thou wilt send. It is right to find out the Messiah wherever he is mentioned in the Old

Testament; but to press scriptures into this service which have not an obvious tendency that way, is both improper and dangerous. I am firmly of opinion that Moses had no reference to the Messiah when he spoke these words.

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EXODUS 4:14 the LORD's anger was kindled against Moses, and he said, "What about Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Also, behold, he comes out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

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#### Verse 14

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses - Surely this would not have been the case had he only in modesty, and from a deep sense of his own unfitness, desired that the Messiah should be preferred before him. But the whole connection shows that this interpretation is unfounded.

Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? - Houbigant endeavors to prove from this that Moses, in Exo 4:13, did pray for the immediate mission of the Messiah, and that God gives him here a reason why this could not be, because the Levitical priesthood was to precede the priesthood of our Lord. Is not Aaron the Levite, etc. Must not the ministry of Aaron be first established, before the other can take place? Why then ask for that which is contrary to the Divine counsel? From the opinion of so great a critic as Houbigant no man would wish to dissent, except through necessity: however, I must say that it does appear to me that his view of these verses is fanciful, and the arguments by which he supports it are insufficient to establish his point.

I know that he can speak well - *יָדַעְתִּי כִּי דַבֵּר יְדַבֵּר הוּא* yadati ki dabber yedabber hu, I know that in speaking he will speak. That is, he is apt to talk, and has a ready utterance.

He cometh forth to meet thee - He shall meet thee at my mount, (Exo 4:27), shall rejoice in thy mission, and most heartily co-operate with thee in all things. A necessary assurance, to prevent Moses from suspecting that Aaron, who was his elder brother, would envy his superior call and office.

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EXODUS 4:15 You shall speak to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do.

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#### Verse 15

I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth - Ye shall be both, in all things which I appoint you to do in this business, under the continual inspiration of the Most High.

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EXODUS 4:16 He will be your spokesman to the people; and it will happen, that he will be to you a mouth, and you will be to him as God.

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#### Verse 16

He shall be thy spokesman - Literally, He shall speak for thee (or in thy stead) to the people.

He shall be to thee instead of a mouth - He shall convey every message to the people; and thou shalt be to him instead of God - thou shalt deliver to him what I communicate to thee.

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EXODUS 4:17 You shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.”

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Verse 17

Thou shalt take this rod - From the story of Moses's rod the heathens have invented the fables of the thyrsus of Bacchus, and the caduceus of Mercury. Cicero reckons five Bacchuses, one of which, according to Orpheus, was born of the river Nile; but, according to the common opinion, he was born on the banks of that river. Bacchus is expressly said to have been exposed on the river Nile, hence he is called Nilus, both by Diodorus and Macrobius; and in the hymns of Orpheus he is named Mysus, because he was drawn out of the water. He is represented by the poets as being very beautiful, and an illustrious warrior; they report him to have overrun all Arabia with a numerous army both of men and women. He is said also to have been an eminent law-giver, and to have written his laws on two tables. He always carried in his hand the thyrsus, a rod wreathed with serpents, and by which he is reported to have wrought many miracles. Any person acquainted with the birth and exploits of the poetic Bacchus will at once perceive them to be all borrowed from the life and acts of Moses, as recorded in the Pentateuch; and it would be losing time to show the parallel, by quoting passages from the book of Exodus.

The caduceus or rod of Mercury is well known in poetic fables. It is another copy Of the rod of Moses. He also is reported to have wrought a multitude of miracles by this rod; and particularly he is said to kill and make alive, to send souls to the invisible world and bring them back from thence. Homer represents Mercury taking his rod to work miracles precisely in the same way as God commands Moses to take his. Ἑρμῆς δε ψυχὰς Κυλληνίος ἐξεκαλεῖτο Ἀνδρῶν μνηστῆρων· ἔχε δε ῬΑΒΔΟΝ μετὰ χερσίν Καλῆν, χρυσεῖην, τῆ τ' ἀνδρῶν ὀμματα θελγεί, ὧν ἐθελεῖ, τοὺς δ' αὐτὲ καὶ ὑπνῶντας ἐγείρει.

Odyss., lib. xxiv., ver. 1.

Cyllenian Hermes now call'd forth the souls  
Of all the suitors; with his golden Wand  
Of power, to seal in balmy sleep whose eyes  
Soe'er he will, and open them again.  
Cowper.

Virgil copies Homer, but carries the parallel farther, tradition having probably furnished him with more particulars; but in both we may see a disguised copy of the sacred history, from which indeed the Greek and Roman poets borrowed most of their beauties.

Tum Virgam Capiti: hac animas ille evocat Orco  
Pallentes, alias sub tristia Tartara mittit;  
Dat somnos, adimitque, et lumina morte resignat  
Illa fretus agit, ventos, et turbida tranat. Aeneid, lib. iv., ver. 242.  
But first he grasps within his awful hand  
The mark of sovereign power, the magic wand;

With this he draws the ghosts from hollow graves,  
 With this he drives them down the Stygian waves;  
 With this he seals in sleep the wakeful sight,  
 And eyes, though closed in death, restores to light.  
 Thus arm'd, the god begins his airy race,  
 And drives the racking clouds along the liquid space.  
 Dryden.

Many other resemblances between the rod of the poets and that of Moses, the learned reader will readily recollect. These specimens may be deemed sufficient.

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EXODUS 4:18 Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive." Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

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#### Verse 18

Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren - Moses, having received his commission from God, and directions how to execute it, returned to his father-in-law, and asked permission to visit his family and brethren in Egypt, without giving him any intimation of the great errand on which he was going. His keeping this secret has been attributed to his singular modesty: but however true it might be that Moses was a truly humble and modest man, yet his prudence alone was sufficient to have induced him to observe silence on this subject; for, if once imparted to the family of his father-in-law, the news might have reached Egypt before he could get thither, and a general alarm among the Egyptians would in all probability have been the consequence; as fame would not fail to represent Moses as coming to stir up sedition and rebellion, and the whole nation would have been armed against them. It was therefore essentially necessary that the business should be kept secret.

In the Septuagint and Coptic the following addition is made to this verse: Μετα δε τας ημερας τας πολλας εκινας ετελευτησεν ο βασιλευς Αιγυπτου· After these many days, the king of Egypt died. This was probably an ancient gloss or side note, which in process of time crept into the text, as it appeared to throw light on the following verse.

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EXODUS 4:19 The LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return into Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead."

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#### Verse 19

In Midian - This was a new revelation, and appears to have taken place after Moses returned to his father-in-law previous to his departure for Egypt.

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EXODUS 4:20 Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. Moses took God's rod in his hand.

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 Verse 20

His wife and his sons - Both Gershom and Eliezer, though the birth of the latter has not yet been mentioned in the Hebrew text. See Clarke's note on Exo 2:22.

Set them upon an ass - The Septuagint reads the word in the plural, ἐκὶ τὰ ὑποζυγία, upon asses, as it certainly required more than one to carry Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer.

The rod of God - The sign of sovereign power, by which he was to perform all his miracles; once the badge of his shepherd's office, and now that by which he is to feed, rule, and protect his people Israel.

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EXODUS 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back into Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go."

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## Verse 21

But I will harden his heart - The case of Pharaoh has given rise to many fierce controversies, and to several strange and conflicting opinions. Would men but look at the whole account without the medium of their respective creeds, they would find little difficulty to apprehend the truth. If we take up the subject in a theological point of view, all sober Christians will allow the truth of this proposition of St. Augustine, when the subject in question is a person who has hardened his own heart by frequently resisting the grace and spirit of God: Non obdurate Deus impertiendo malitiam, sed non impertiendo misericordiam; Epist. 194, ad Sixtum, "God does not harden men by infusing malice into them, but by not imparting mercy to them." And this other will be as readily credited: Non operatur Deus in homine ipsam duritiam cordis; sed indurare eum dicitur quem mollire noluerit, sic etiam excaecare quem illuminare noluerit, et repellere eum quem noluerit vocare. "God does not work this hardness of heart in man; but he may be said to harden him whom he refuses to soften, to blind him whom he refuses to enlighten, and to repel him whom he refuses to call." It is but just and right that he should withhold those graces which he had repeatedly offered, and which the sinner had despised and rejected. Thus much for the general principle. The verb קָזַח chazak, which we translate harden, literally signifies to strengthen, confirm, make bold or courageous; and is often used in the sacred writings to excite to duty, perseverance, etc., and is placed by the Jews at the end of most books in the Bible as an exhortation to the reader to take courage, and proceed with his reading and with the obedience it requires. It constitutes an essential part of the exhortation of God to Joshua, Jos 1:7 : Only be thou Strong, קָזַח קָךְ rak chazak. And of Joshua's dying exhortation to the people, Jos 23:6 : Be ye therefore Very Courageous, וַחֲזַקְתֶּם vachazaktem, to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law. Now it would be very strange in these places to translate the word harden: Only be thou hard, Be ye therefore very hard; and yet if we use the word hardy, it would suit the sense and context perfectly well: Only be thou Hardy; Be ye therefore very Hardy. Now suppose we apply the word in this way to Pharaoh, the sense would be good, and the justice of God equally conspicuous. I will make his heart hardy, bold, daring, presumptuous; for the same principle acting against God's order is presumption, which when acting according to it is undaunted courage. It is true that the verb קָשָׁה kashah is used, Exo 7:3, which signifies to render stiff, tough, or stubborn, but it amounts to nearly the same meaning with the above.



All those who have read the Scriptures with care and attention, know well that God is frequently represented in them as doing what he only permits to be done. So because a man has grieved his Spirit and resisted his grace he withdraws that Spirit and grace from him, and thus he becomes bold and presumptuous in sin. Pharaoh made his own heart stubborn against God, Exo 9:34; and God gave him up to judicial blindness, so that he rushed on stubbornly to his own destruction. From the whole of Pharaoh's conduct we learn that he was bold, haughty, and cruel; and God chose to permit these dispositions to have their full sway in his heart without check or restraint from Divine influence: the consequence was what God intended, he did not immediately comply with the requisition to let the people go; and this was done that God might have the fuller opportunity of manifesting his power by multiplying signs and miracles, and thus impress the hearts both of the Egyptians and Israelites with a due sense of his omnipotence and justice. The whole procedure was graciously calculated to do endless good to both nations. The Israelites must be satisfied that they had the true God for their protector; and thus their faith was strengthened. The Egyptians must see that their gods could do nothing against the God of Israel; and thus their dependence on them was necessarily shaken. These great ends could not have been answered had Pharaoh at once consented to let the people go. This consideration alone unravels the mystery, and explains everything. Let it be observed that there is nothing spoken here of the eternal state of the Egyptian king; nor does anything in the whole of the subsequent account authorize us to believe that God hardened his heart against the influences of his own grace, that he might occasion him so to sin that his justice might consign him to hell. This would be such an act of flagrant injustice as we could scarcely attribute to the worst of men. He who leads another into an offense that he may have a fairer pretense to punish him for it, or brings him into such circumstances that he cannot avoid committing a capital crime, and then hangs him for it, is surely the most execrable of mortals. What then should we make of the God of justice and mercy should we attribute to him a decree, the date of which is lost in eternity, by which he has determined to cut off from the possibility of salvation millions of millions of unborn souls, and leave them under a necessity of sinning, by actually hardening their hearts against the influences of his own grace and Spirit, that he may, on the pretext of justice, consign them to endless perdition? Whatever may be pretended in behalf of such unqualified opinions, it must be evident to all who are not deeply prejudiced, that neither the justice nor the sovereignty of God can be magnified by them. See Clarke farther on Exo 9:16 (note).

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EXODUS 4:22 You shall tell Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my son, my firstborn,

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Verse 22

Israel is my son, even my firstborn - That is, The Hebrew people are unutterably dear to me.

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EXODUS 4:23 and I have said to you, "Let my son go, that he may serve me"; and you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn."

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Verse 23

Let my son go, that he may serve me - Which they could not do in Goshen, consistently with the policy and religious worship of the Egyptians; because the most essential part of an Israelite's

worship consisted in sacrifice, and the animals which they offered to God were sacred among the Egyptians. Moses gives Pharaoh this reason Exo 8:26.

I will slay thy son, even thy first-born - Which, on Pharaoh's utter refusal to let the people go, was accordingly done; see Exo 12:29.

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EXODUS 4:24 On the way at a lodging place, the LORD met Moses and wanted to kill him.

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#### Verse 24

By the way in the inn - See Clarke's note on Gen 42:27. The account in this and the following verse is very obscure. Some suppose that the Exo 4:23 is not a part of the message to Pharaoh, but was spoken by the Lord to Moses; and that the whole may be thus paraphrased: "And I have said unto thee, (Moses), Send forth שְׁלַח shallach, my son, (Gershom, by circumcising him), that he may serve me, (which he cannot do till entered into the covenant by circumcision), but thou hast refused to send him forth; behold, (therefore), I will slay thy son, thy first-born. And it came to pass by the way in the inn, (when he was on his journey to Egypt), that Jehovah met him, and sought (threatened) to kill him (Gershom). Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut away the foreskin of her son, and caused it to touch his feet, (Jehovah's, who probably appeared in a bodily shape; the Septuagint call him the Angel of the Lord), and said unto him, A spouse by blood art thou unto me. Then he (Jehovah) ceased from him (Gershom). Then she said, A spouse by blood art thou unto me, because of this circumcision." That is, I who am an alien have entered as fully into covenant with thee by doing this act, as my son has on whom this act has been performed.

The meaning of the whole passage seems to be this: - The son of Moses, Gershom or Eliezer, (for it does not appear which), had not been circumcised, though it would seem that God had ordered the father to do it; but as he had neglected this, therefore Jehovah was about to have slain the child, because not in covenant with him by circumcision, and thus he intended to have punished the disobedience of the father by the natural death of his son. Zipporah, getting acquainted with the nature of the case and the danger to which her first-born was exposed, took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son. By this act the displeasure of the Lord was turned aside, and Zipporah considered herself as now allied to God because of this circumcision. According to the law, (Gen 17:14), the uncircumcised child was to be cut off from his people, so that there should be no inheritance for that branch of the family in Israel. Moses therefore, for neglecting to circumcise the child, exposed him to this cutting off, and it was but barely prevented by the prompt obedience of Zipporah. As circumcision was the seal of that justification by faith which comes through Christ, Moses by neglecting it gave a very bad example, and God was about to proceed against him with that severity which the law required.

The sharp stone mentioned Exo 4:25 was probably a knife made of flint, for such were anciently used, even where knives of metal might be had, for every kind of operation about the human body, such as embowelling for the purpose of embalming, circumcision, etc. Ancient authors are full of proofs of these facts. See Clarke's note on Gen 50:2. It is probable that Zipporah, being alarmed by this circumstance, and fearing worse evils, took the resolution to return to her father's house with her two sons. See Exo 18:1, etc.

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EXODUS 4:25 Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me."

EXODUS 4:26 So he let him alone. Then she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

EXODUS 4:27 The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." He went, and met him on God's mountain, and kissed him.

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#### Verse 27

The Lord said to Aaron - See Exo 4:14. By some secret but powerful movement on Aaron's mind, or by some voice or angelic ministry, he was now directed to go and meet his brother Moses; and so correctly was the information given to both, that they arrived at the same time on the sacred mountain.

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EXODUS 4:28 Moses told Aaron all the LORD's words with which he had sent him, and all the signs with which he had instructed him.

EXODUS 4:29 Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.

EXODUS 4:30 Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

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#### Verse 30

Aaron spake all the words - It is likely that Aaron was better acquainted with the Hebrew tongue than his brother, and on this account he became the spokesman. See Clarke on Exo 4:14 (note).

Did the signs - Turned the rod into a serpent, made the hand leprous, and changed the water into blood. See Clarke on Exo 4:6 (note) and Exo 4:8 (note).

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EXODUS 4:31 The people believed, and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

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#### Verse 31

The people believed - They credited the account given of the Divine appointment of Moses and Aaron to be their deliverers out of their bondage, the miracles wrought on the occasion confirming the testimony delivered by Aaron.

They bowed their heads and worshipped - See a similar act mentioned, and in the same words, Gen 24:26 (note). The bowing the head, etc., here, may probably refer to the eastern custom of bowing the head down to the knees, then kneeling down and touching the earth with the forehead. This was a very painful posture and the most humble in which the body could possibly be placed. Those who pretend to worship God, either by prayer or thanksgiving, and keep themselves during the

performance of those solemn acts in a state of perfect ease, either carelessly standing or stupidly sitting, surely cannot have a due sense of the majesty of God, and their own sinfulness and unworthiness. Let the feelings of the body put the soul in remembrance of its sin against God. Let a man put himself in such a position (kneeling for instance) as it is generally acknowledged a criminal should assume, when coming to his sovereign and judge to bewail his sins, and solicit forgiveness.

The Jewish custom, as we learn from Rabbi Maymon, was to bend the body so that every joint of the backbone became incurvated, and the head was bent towards the knees, so that the body resembled a bow; and prostration implied laying the body flat upon the earth, the arms and legs extended to the uttermost, the mouth and forehead touching the ground. In Mat 8:2 the leper is said to worship our Lord, προσεκυει αυτω· but in Luk 5:12 he is said to have fallen on his face, πεσων επι προσωπον. These two accounts show that he first kneeled down, probably putting his face down to his knees, and touching the earth with his forehead; and then prostrated himself, his legs and arms being both extended. See Clarke on Gen 17:3 (note).

The backwardness of Moses to receive and execute the commission to deliver the children of Israel, has something very instructive in it. He felt the importance of the charge, his own insufficiency, and the awful responsibility under which he should be laid if he received it. Who then can blame him for hesitating? If he miscarried (and how difficult in such a case not to miscarry!) he must account to a jealous God, whose justice required him to punish every delinquency. What should ministers of the Gospel feel on such subjects? Is not their charge more important and more awful than that of Moses? How few consider this! It is respectable, it is honorable, to be in the Gospel ministry, but who is sufficient to guide and feed the flock of God? If through the pastor's unfitness or neglect any soul should go astray, or perish through want of proper spiritual nourishment, or through not getting his portion in due season, in what a dreadful state is the pastor! That soul, says God, shall die in his iniquities, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hands! Were these things only considered by those who are candidates for the Gospel ministry, who could be found to undertake it? We should then indeed have the utmost occasion to pray the Lord of the harvest, εκβα λ λ ε ι ν , to Thrust Out laborers into the harvest, as no one, duly considering those things would go, unless thrust out by God himself. O ye ministers of the sanctuary! tremble for your own souls, and the souls of those committed to your care, and go not into this work unless God go with you. Without his presence, unction, and approbation, ye can do nothing.