

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 4

This chapter is a continuation of the discourse that passed between God and Moses; and here Moses makes other objections to his mission; one is taken from the unbelief of the people of Israel, which is removed by giving him power to work miracles, by turning the rod in his hand into a serpent, and then into a rod again; and by putting his hand into his bosom at one time, when it became leprous, and again into the same place, when it became sound and whole, and by turning the water of the river into blood, (^{<0004>}Exodus 4:1-9), another objection is formed from his want of eloquence, which is answered with an assurance, that God, that made man's mouth, would be with his mouth, and teach him what to say; and besides, Aaron his brother, who was an eloquent man, should be his spokesman, (^{<0004>}Exodus 4:10-17) upon which he returned to Midian, and having obtained leave of his father-in-law to depart from thence, he took his wife and his sons, and returned to Egypt, (^{<0004>}Exodus 4:18-20) at which time he received some fresh instructions from the Lord what he should do before Pharaoh, and what he should say unto him, (^{<0004>}Exodus 4:21-23) then follows an account of what befell him by the way, because of the circumcision of his son, (^{<0004>}Exodus 4:24-26) and the chapter is closed with an account of the meeting of Moses and Aaron, and of their gathering the elders of Israel together, to whom the commission of Moses was opened, and signs done before them, to which they gave credit, and expressed their joy and thankfulness, (^{<0004>}Exodus 4:27-31).

Ver. 1. *And Moses answered and said,* etc.] In reference to what Jehovah had declared to him in the latter end of the preceding chapter:

but, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; this seems to contradict what God had said to him, (^{<0003>}Exodus 3:18) that they would hearken to his voice; but it can hardly be thought, that so good a man, and so great a prophet as Moses was, would directly fly in the face of God, and expressly contradict what he had said. To reconcile this it may be observed, that what the Lord says respects only the elders of Israel, this all the people; or Jehovah's meaning may be, and so this of Moses, that neither

the one nor the other would regard his bare word, without some sign or miracle being wrought; for as his call was extraordinary, so it required something extraordinary to be done that it might be credited:

for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto me: in the bush, as he would affirm he did, and might do it with the greatest assurance; yet the thing being so marvellous, and they not eyewitnesses of it, might distrust the truth of it, or be backward to receive it on his bare word; and this Moses might rather fear would be the case, from the experience he had had of them forty years ago, when it was more likely for him to have been a deliverer of them.

Ver. 2. *And the Lord said unto him,* etc.] Not reproving him for contradicting him, or showing any diffidence of what he had said; but rather as approving the hint he gave of having some sign or miracle wrought, to command from the Israelites an assent unto him, as commissioned of God to deliver them:

what [is] that in thine hand? which question is put, not as being ignorant of what it was, but to lead on to what he had further to say, and to the working of the miracle:

and he said, a rod; or staff, such as shepherds use in the management of their flocks, for Moses was now feeding the flock of his father-in-law; but Aben Ezra seems rather to think it was a walking staff, such as ancient men lean upon, since Moses did not go to Pharaoh after the manner of a shepherd; yea, it may be added, he went with the authority of a prince or ruler of Israel, and even with the authority of the ambassador of the King of kings.

Ver. 3. *And he said, cast it on the ground,* etc.] That is, the rod or staff:

and he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; not in appearance only, but in reality, it was changed into a real living serpent; for God, who is the author of nature, can change the nature of things as he pleases; nor is it to be supposed that he would only make it look to the sight as if it was one, by working upon the fancy and imagination to think it was one, when it was not; no doubt but it was as really turned into a true serpent, as the water was turned really and truly into wine by our Lord; this was the first miracle that ever was wrought, that we know of. Dr. Lightfoot^{f129} observes, that as a serpent was the fittest emblem of the devil, (~~ORIG~~ Genesis 3:1 ~~GEN~~ Revelation 12:9) so was it a sign that Moses did not these miracles

by the power of the devil, but had a power over and beyond him, when he could thus deal with the serpent at his pleasure, as to make his rod a serpent, and the serpent a rod, as he saw good:

and Moses fled from before it; the Jews say^{f130} it was a fiery serpent, but for this they have no warrant: however, without supposing that it might be terrible and frightful, inasmuch as a common serpent is very disagreeable to men, and such an uncommon and extraordinary one must be very surprising, to see a staff become a serpent, a living one, crawling and leaping about, and perhaps turning itself towards Moses, whose staff it had been. Philo the Jew^{f131} says, it was a dragon, an exceeding large one.

Ver. 4. *And the Lord said to Moses, put forth thy hand, and take it by the tail*, etc.] Which to do might seem most dangerous, since it might turn upon him and bite him; this was ordered, partly that Moses might be assured it was really a serpent, and not in appearance only; and partly to try his courage, and it suggested to him, that he need not be afraid of it, it would not hurt him: the above learned doctor observes^{f132}, that he is commanded to take it by the tail; for to meddle with the serpent's head belonged not to Moses, but to Christ that spake to him out of the bush:

and he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand; as it was before. Some think this refers to the threefold state of the Israelites, first to their flourishing estate under Joseph, when they were as a rod or staff, then to their dejected state, by this rod cast to the ground, and become a serpent, and lastly to their restoration and liberty, by its becoming a rod again: others refer it to Christ, who is the power of God, and the rod of his strength, and who in his state of humiliation was like this rod, cast to the ground and became a serpent, of which the brazen serpent was a type, and who by his resurrection from the dead regained his former power; but perhaps they may be most right who think it refers to the service and ministry of Moses, which seemed terrible to him at first, like a hurtful serpent, from which he fled; but after he was confirmed by the word of God, he readily undertook it.

Ver. 5. *That they may believe*, etc.] The elders and people of Israel; for this miracle was wrought not for the confirmation of Moses's faith; for, as Aben Ezra observes, the sign of the burning bush was given to him to confirm his faith, that it was God that appeared to him, and called him to this work; but this was wrought to confirm the faith of the Israelites in his divine mission:

that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee; ((see Gill on “^{
Exodus 3:6}”).

Ver. 6. *And the Lord said furthermore unto him,* etc.] Continued his discourse, and gave him another sign:

put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; within his coat, under that part of the garment next to his breast:

and when he took it out, behold, his hand [was] leprous as snow; that is, white as snow, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, through the leprosy that was upon it; it was a leprosy of the white sort, and which is reckoned the worst and most difficult to be cured, (see ^{
Leviticus 13:3,4} ^{
Numbers 12:10}). It is highly probable that this gave rise to the story told by several Heathen writers, as Manetho ^{f133}, Lysimachus ^{f134}, Trogus ^{f135}, and Tacitus ^{f136}, that Moses and the Israelites were drove out of Egypt by the advice of an oracle, because they had the leprosy, itch, and other impure diseases upon them.

Ver. 7. *And he said, put thine hand into thy bosom again,* etc.] With the leprosy on it:

and he put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out of his bosom; quickly after he had put it in:

and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh; it was cured of the leprosy, and recovered its colour, and was as sound as before, and as any other part of his body. This was a very astonishing miracle, that he should be at once smote with a leprosy; that this should be only in his hand, and not in any other part of his body; and that it should be cured immediately, without the use of any means; and by this miracle Moses, and the Israelites, might be instructed and confirmed in the power of God, that he that could so suddenly inflict such a disease, and so easily cure it, was able to deliver them out of captivity, which was as death; and that however until Moses might be in himself to be a deliverer of the people, signified by his weak and leprous hand, yet being quickened and strengthened by the Lord, would be able to answer to the character; though, after all, the deliverance must be imputed not to his hand and power, but to the mighty hand and power of God.

Ver. 8. *And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee*, etc.] Will not give credit to the commission he had from God, but question the truth of it:

neither hearken to the voice of the first sign; which miracle wrought, spoke plain enough that he that wrought it, or for whose sake it was wrought, must be one come from God, or such a miracle would never be wrought by him or for him; but should any of the Israelites be still incredulous, it is supposed,

that they will believe the voice of the latter sign; which had a voice in it commanding belief that he was a messenger of God; the first sign respects his rod, the other his hand.

Ver. 9. *And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs*, etc.] Performed before their eyes; for these were done over again when Moses came into Egypt to the Israelites, and yet some of them might still remain unbelievers to his commission, and so to the voice of these signs, which loudly called for their faith:

neither hearken unto thy voice; affirming he came from God, and was sent to be the deliverer of them:

that thou shalt take of the water of the river; of the river Nile, when he should come into Egypt; wherefore Josephus^{f137} is mistaken when he intimates that this was done at the same time with the other signs; and was water he took near at hand and poured on the ground: but Philo^{f138} truly refers this to Egypt, where it was done, as it ought to be:

and pour [it] upon the dry land, and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land; by which it would appear how easily the Lord could destroy the land of Egypt, and make it a barren land, whose fertility was owing to the overflow of the river Nile as a means; and this would be a specimen also of what he would do hereafter, in turning the waters of the river into blood, thereby avenging the blood of innocent babes drowned there by the Egyptians.

Ver. 10. *And Moses said unto the Lord*, etc.] Notwithstanding the above miracles, he seems unwilling to go on the Lord's errand to Pharaoh and to the Israelites, and therefore invents a new objection after all his other objections had been sufficiently answered:

I am not eloquent; or “a man of words”^{f139}, that has words at command, that can speak well readily, and gracefully; such an one, he intimates, was proper to be sent to a king’s court, that was an orator, that could make fine speeches, and handsome addresses, for which he was not qualified:

neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant; neither in his younger years had he ever been an eloquent man, nor was there any alteration in him in that respect, since God had given him this call:

but I [am] slow of speech, and of a slow tongue; had some impediment in his speech, could not freely and easily bring out his words, or rightly pronounce them; so Lucian^{f140} the Heathen calls Moses slow tongued, or one slow of speech, and uses the same word the Septuagint does here, which version perhaps he had seen, and from thence took it.

Ver. 11. *And the Lord said unto him, who hath made man’s mouth?* etc.] Made that itself, and put in it the power and faculty of speech, even into the mouth of the first man, Adam, as the Targum of Jonathan; and so of every other man, did not the Lord do it? none else could, and therefore he that made it, and made it capable of speaking, could remove any impediments in it, and cause it to speak freely and fluently:

or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? as all the senses, and the perfection of them, are from him, so all the imperfections in them are according to his good pleasure; what he suffers to be, and can remedy when he thinks fit: it is he that gives the seeing eye and hearing ear, can and does make blind and deaf, that gives also the speaking mouth, and makes that dumb, and can open it again as he pleases! and what is it that he cannot do?

Ver. 12. *Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth*, etc.] And put words into it, and cause it to speak readily and powerfully; and so it appears that he was mighty in words, as well as in deeds, (^{<4472>}Acts 7:22):

and teach thee what thou shalt say; to Pharaoh, to the Israelites, and to Aaron, that was to speak for him, as is hereafter observed.

Ver. 13. *And he said, O my Lord*, etc.] Acknowledging his dominion, his sovereignty, his power to do the above things: or “on me, O Lord”^{f141}, be the blame for making such objections; or on me let this work be devolved, since it is thy pleasure:

send, I pray thee, by the hand [of him whom] thou wilt send. Many of the ancient Christian fathers understand it of the Messiah that was to be sent, and as if Moses thought this was a fit time for the sending of him: and so Cocceius is of opinion, that nothing better can be understood, than that Moses desired that God would rather send him, whom Israel expected to be sent, even the Angel that should go before them; of whose mission (see ^{<1231>}Exodus 23:20), but no particular person is intended, unless himself; and the common interpretation is, that God would send a more fit and proper person than he was; and that he would rather send anyone but him, and entreats to be excused; but I see not why this may not be understood of Moses assenting to his mission, and acquiescing in the will of God; as if he should say, since it must be so, the will of the Lord be done, let him send by whom he will, and since it is his pleasure to send by me, I submit; what may seem to contradict this is, the Lord's anger and resentment expressed in the following words; but that might be notwithstanding, since Moses had been so backward and reluctant, and made so many objections before he consented.

Ver. 14. *And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses,* etc.] For the objections, excuses, and delays he made with respect to his mission. In what way this anger was expressed is not easy to say, whether by not removing the impediment of his speech, or not giving him the priesthood, which Jarchi thinks he otherwise would have had, and Aaron been only a Levite, as he is called in the next clause; or whether it was by joining Aaron to him, and so lessening his honour in this embassy, though that seems to be done to encourage him; or by not suffering him to lead the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, which yet is ascribed to another cause. However, though the Lord was angry with Moses, yet without any change of affection to him, he still retained and expressed a great regard to him; did not reject him from his service as he might have done, but employed him, and preferred him to his elder brother. Moses shows himself to be a faithful historian in recording his own weaknesses, and the displeasure of God at them:

and he said, is not Aaron the Levite thy brother; he was, and his elder brother, he was born three years before him, (^{<1232>}Exodus 7:7) though Justin ^{f142}, an Heathen writer, says he was his son, and calls his name Aruas, and speaks of him as an Egyptian priest, and that he was made king after Moses's death; hence, he says, was the custom with the Jews for the same persons to be kings and priests; in all which he is mistaken. But Artapanus

^{f143}, another Heathen writer, calls him the brother of Moses, and by his right name, Aaron; and says it was by his advice Moses fled into Arabia, and speaks of his meeting him afterwards, when he was sent to the king of Egypt. Aaron is called the Levite, because he was a descendant of Levi, and yet so was Moses; perhaps this is added here, to distinguish him from others of the same name in other families, as Aben Ezra thinks; for as for what Jarchi suggests, as before, is without any foundation; and it is much more likely that Moses added this title to him, in his account of this affair, because he was the first of the tribe of Levi that was employed in the priestly office:

I know that he can speak well; or “in speaking speak”^{f144}, speak very freely, fluently, in an eloquent manner; in which he was an eminent type of Christ, who is our advocate with the father, and has the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season; and does speak and plead for the conversion of his people, for the comfort of them, for the discoveries of pardoning grace and mercy to them; and for the carrying on the work of grace in them, and their perseverance to the end, and for their eternal glorification. The prayer in (~~670~~John 17:1-26) is a specimen of this:

and also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee; having had an intimation from God of Moses’s call to come into Egypt, and deliver his people from their bondage, he immediately set out to meet him, whereby he showed more faith, zeal, and courage, than Moses did; and this is said to animate him, and was a new sign, and would be a fresh confirmation of his faith, when he should see it accomplished, as he did:

and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart: sincerely glad, and not only secretly so, but would express his cordial joy with his lips; not only because of his having a sight of his brother once more, whom he had not seen for forty years past, but because of his coming on such an errand from God, to deliver the people of Israel; and therefore, as he would express such gladness on this occasion, it became Moses to engage in this work with the utmost pleasure and cheerfulness.

Ver. 15. *And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth*, etc.] Or “things”^{f145}, the matter and substance of what he should say, who being a man of words, an eloquent man, and a good spokesman, would put them into proper language, and express them fluently:

and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do; or speak what Moses should say to Aaron, and what Aaron should say to Pharaoh, and to the people of Israel; so that as Aaron was under Moses, and at his direction, they were both dependent on the Lord, and under his direction; and the one, as well as the other, needed his assistance, even Aaron that could speak well. Moses furnished him with matter, he put it into words, and both were instructed and influenced by the Lord what they should say and do.

Ver. 16. *And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people*, etc.] And open to them Moses's commission from God, and the end of his mission into Egypt, and to them, and declare what signs had been, and would be done, in confirmation of it:

and he shall be, [even] he shall be to thee instead of a mouth; or an interpreter, as all the Targums explain it, and so Jarchi; as he was an orator and master of language, he should speak to the people for Moses, and explain his sense and meaning, and put it into plain, proper, easy language, to be understood by the people; and this may be done where a different language is not spoken, but the same in plainer words, in more pertinent expressions, and better pronounced, and this is repeated for the certainty of it:

and thou shall be to him instead of God; Aaron was to stand between Moses and the people, and speak for him; and Moses was to stand between God and Aaron, and in God's stead, and tell him what orders he had received from him, and which he should communicate; and so some Jewish writers^{f146} interpret it of his being to him instead of a master or teacher, one that received doctrine from the Lord, and instructed him in it, and taught him the mind and will of God: or, as Onkelos paraphrases it; "for a prince", and so Jarchi, a civil magistrate, one that had the power of life and death; the administration of civil affairs belonged to Moses, and Aaron, though the elder brother, was subject to him; and in this sense Moses was a god to him; and so in after times, the judges of Israel, they that sat in Moses's chair, were called gods, (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 82:1).

Ver. 17. *And thou shall take this rod in thine hand*, etc.] Which he then had in his hand, and was no other than his shepherd's staff:

wherewith thou shall do signs: wondrous things, meaning the ten plagues inflicted on Egypt.

Ver. 18. *And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law,* etc.] With his flock of sheep he kept, (^{<0100>}Exodus 3:1): and said unto him,

let me go, I pray thee, and return to my brethren which are in Egypt; the Israelites, who were so by nation and religion; as Jethro had been kind and beneficent to him, he did not choose to leave him without his knowledge and consent, and especially to take away his wife and children without it:

and see whether they be yet alive; it seems by this that Moses had heard nothing of them during the forty years he lived in Midian, which may be thought strange, since it was not very far from Egypt; and besides the Midianites traded in Egypt, as we learn from (^{<0172>}Genesis 37:28,36) but this must be ascribed to the providence of God, that so ordered it, that there should be no intercourse between him and his brethren, that so no step might be taken by them for their deliverance until the set time was come. Moses did not acquaint his father-in-law with the principal reason of his request, nor of his chief end in going into Egypt, which it might not be proper to acquaint him with, he being of another nation, though a good man; and lest he should use any arguments to dissuade Moses from going, who now having got clear of his diffidence and distrust, was determined upon it: though some ascribe this to his modesty in not telling Jethro of the glorious and wonderful appearance of God to him, and of the honour he had conferred on him to be the deliverer and governor of the people of Israel:

and Jethro said to Moses, go in peace; he judged his request reasonable, and gave his full consent to it, and wished him health and prosperity in his journey.

Ver. 19. *And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian,* etc.] After he had obtained leave of his father-in-law to quit Midian, but before he left it;

go, return into Egypt: that is, directly, immediately; before he had only given him a commission at large to go thither, but had not fixed the time when he should go; but now he orders him to set forward at once:

for all the men are dead which sought thy life; to take it away, the king of Egypt, and his ministers, and the friends of the Egyptian Moses had slain; and this is said to encourage him to go; and though Moses had never expressed his fear on this account, or made it an objection, yet it might lie secretly in his heart, and be one reason of his backwardness to go into Egypt, and which was now removed.

Ver. 20. *And Moses took his wife, and his sons,* etc.] Gershom and Eliezer; by which it appears that he intended to stay in Egypt, and that he believed that God would work deliverance by him:

and set them upon an ass: which though with us a mean creature, yet in those times and countries were rode upon by great personages; and these, as Aben Ezra says, were reckoned in Egypt more honourable than mules. It may be the singular is put for the plural, and that each of them was set upon an ass, with servants to take care of them:

and he returned to the land of Egypt; that is, he set forward to go thither; for before he got thither, various things are related which befell him:

and Moses took the rod of God in his hand: his shepherd's staff, so called, because God ordered him to take it; and besides, he had wrought signs and wonders by it already, and would do many more.

Ver. 21. *And the Lord said unto Moses,* etc.] At the same time he appeared to him in Midian, and ordered him to go into Egypt, even before his departure thither:

when thou goest to return into Egypt; and when got thither; for before the thing directed to in the next clause could not be done:

see that thou do all these wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand; not the three signs or wonders, related in the preceding part of the chapter, for they were to be done not before Pharaoh, but before the children of Israel; but these are the wonders he was to do in the sight of Pharaoh, by inflicting the various plagues on him and his people, for refusing to let Israel go, and which God had put in the power of Moses to perform, and that by means of the rod in his hand he ordered him to take with him, (⁽¹⁰⁴⁷⁾Exodus 4:17):

but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go; that is, not directly, not for some time, not until all the wonders are wrought, and plagues inflicted to bring him to it: he first hardening his own heart against God, and all remonstrances made unto him, it was but a righteous thing in God to give him up to the hardness of his heart, to deny him his grace, which only could soften it, and to leave him to the corruptions of his nature, and the temptations of Satan; and by leaving him to strong delusions, to believe the lying miracles of his magicians: this the Lord

thought fit to acquaint Moses with, lest he should be discouraged by his refusal to dismiss Israel.

Ver. 22. *And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, etc.*] When arrived in Egypt, and in his presence:

thus saith the Lord; he was to declare to him that he came in his name, and by his orders, and, as an ambassador of his, required the dismissal of the children of Israel out of Egypt:

Israel [is] my son, [even] my firstborn; as dear to him as a man's firstborn is, or as his only son: adoption is one of the privileges peculiar to Israel after the flesh, even national adoption, with all the external privileges appertaining to it, (~~6004~~ Romans 9:4,5).

Ver. 23. *And I say unto thee, let my son go, that he may serve me, etc.*] Worship God according to his will in the place he had designed for him, and where he might be safe and free; and which service was due from him as a son, and to be performed not in a servile way, but in a filial manner, and therefore as a servant he could demand his dismissal, and much more as his son; and this is required in an authoritative way, for saying is here commanding, insisting on it as a point of right to be done:

and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn; meaning, not only in a strict and literal sense Pharaoh's firstborn son, and heir to his crown, but the firstborn of all his subjects, which in a civil sense were his. This was not to be said to Pharaoh at the first opening of his commission to him, but after all methods had been tried, and the several other plagues designed were inflicted on him to no purpose, he was to be told this, which was the last plague, and succeeded; but this is told to Moses before hand, that when other messages he should be sent with to him, and all that should be done by him would prove ineffectual, this, when sent with and performed, would have the desired effect.

Ver. 24. *And it came to pass by the way, in the inn, etc.*] As Moses and his family were travelling in their way to Egypt, at an inn where they stopped for the refreshment of themselves and cattle, or in order to lodge all night: so it was, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him; not the uncircumcised son of Moses, as some think, but Moses himself, who had neglected the circumcision of his son; that from the context, and the fact of Zipporah, after related, seems to be the reason of the divine displeasure, and not his bringing his family with him, supposed to be an hinderance of

him in his work, nor of his staying too long at the inn, and not hastening his journey, which are the reasons given by some: and Moses's neglect of circumcision was not owing to the disuse of it among the Midianites, who being the descendants of Abraham, it is highly probable they retained this rite, and that it was used in Jethro's family, since Zipporah well understood the nature of it, and how to perform it; and it looks as if her eldest son had been circumcised before, seeing only one was now circumcised by her; but the Midianites perhaps followed the same practice as the Ishmaelites did, who were their neighbours, and the descendants of Abraham also, who deferred it till their children were thirteen years of age; or if this child was a very young one, it might have been put off, because of the journey they were just about to take, and purposing to do it when come into Egypt; but this was resented by the Lord in Moses, who had such knowledge of the law of God; and this displeasure of Jehovah might be signified either by inflicting some disease upon him, as Aben Ezra and Kimchi think, which threatened him with death, or by appearing in a terrible manner, as the angel of the Lord did to Balaam, with a drawn sword in his hand.

Ver. 25. *Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son,* etc.] Perceiving that it was the neglect of circumcising her son was the cause of the divine displeasure against her husband; and he being either so ill through the disease upon him, or so terrified with the appearance of the Lord to him, in the manner it was, that he could not perform this rite himself, she undertook it; and, according to the Jewish canons^{f147}, a woman may circumcise; and having with her no instrument more proper to do it with, took a sharp stone, very probably a flint, of which there was great plenty in Arabia Petraea, where she was, and did it; and so the Jewish writers say^{f148}, they circumcise with a flint stone, with glass, or anything that will cut; and such like actions have been performed with sharp stones among the Heathens^{f149}: and cast it at his feet; not at the feet of the infant Eliezer, as R. Samuel in Aben Ezra; the blood of the circumcision running down to his feet, as Lyra interprets it; and so touched his feet^{f150}, as some render the words; not cast at the feet of the destroying angel, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, in order to pacify him; but at the feet of Moses, as the Jerusalem Talmud^{f151}; and so Jarchi and Aben Ezra:

and said, surely a bloody husband art thou to me; those who think it was at the feet of the child the foreskin was cast, take these words to be spoken of that, and observe that it is usual for women, at the circumcision of a child, to call it a bridegroom or husband, because it is then espoused unto,

and reckoned among the people of God; but this is not well supported; it is a custom of too late a date to give any countenance to such a sense of the words, which seem plain enough to be spoken to and of Moses; but not in an angry upbraiding way, as if he was a bloody cruel man to oblige her to do such an action, but rather in a congratulatory way, as being thankful and rejoicing, that by this means, through the blood of the circumcision, she had saved her husband's life; and as it were in that way had bought him, and afresh espoused him to herself as her husband; or otherwise it would have been all over with him, but now to her great joy he was delivered from the threatened destruction, and restored to her; and so the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase the next verse,

“then Zipporah gave praise, and said, how amiable is the blood of circumcision, which hath delivered my husband from the hand of the destroying angel.”

Ver. 26. *So he let him go*, etc.] That is, the Lord let Moses go; suffered him to go on his journey without any further interruption; as the Targums, “it”, the angel, ceased from him, or left him; or the disease and trembling departed from him, as Aben Ezra, and he was quite well and easy; though Grotius, after Lyra, understands it of Zipporah, she departed from him, that is, from Moses, and returned to Midian again, as it seems she did; but this the grammatical construction of the words will not bear, being masculine, though sometimes the masculine is used of women, as in (⁽⁴⁰¹²⁾Exodus 1:21):

then she said, a bloody husband thou art because of the circumcision; this is repeated, partly to give the reason of her calling him a bloody husband, because of the circumcision, and partly because of her great joy on occasion of her husband's restoration to her by this means.

Ver. 27. *And the Lord said unto Aaron*, etc.] He appeared to him in a dream or vision, and to this reference is had in (⁽⁴⁰²⁷⁾1 Samuel 2:27)

go into the wilderness to meet Moses; in the wilderness of Arabia, through which Moses was to pass into Egypt, and who was now set out on his journey thitherward:

and he went; immediately, being obedient to the heavenly vision: and met him in the mount of God; in Horeb, where the Lord had appeared to Moses, and therefore called the mount of God, and where afterwards the

law was given, and the covenant made with the people of Israel; and so the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it,

“in the mount on which the glory of God was revealed:”

and kissed him: as relations and intimate friends used to do at meeting or parting, to testify affection and respect; and Aaron must on all accounts be glad to meet Moses, both as he was his brother, whom he had not seen for many years, and as he was come to be a deliverer of the people of Israel. And it is observed, that it was but two days' journey from the land of Midian, where Jethro lived, from whence Moses set out; and that a common traveller cannot conveniently make the journey from Ramesses, or Grand Cairo (from whence it may be supposed Aaron set out), to Mount Horeb, in less than a fortnight, though he be carried on the back of a camel^{f152}; and yet Aaron reached this place by the time that Moses did, which shows that either he delayed setting out on his journey, or was detained long at the inn on the road, on account of what happened there.

Ver. 28. *And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord, who had sent him*, etc.] He declared his mission and commission from God, and gave him the particulars of what was to be said both to the people of Israel and to the king of Egypt; and this he did, because Aaron was to be his spokesman unto them:

and all the signs which he had commanded him; to do, first before the children of Israel, and then before Pharaoh; before the one to obtain credit of them, as being sent of God, and before the other to get leave of him for the departure of Israel out of Egypt.

Ver. 29. *And Moses and Aaron went*, etc.] Set forward for Egypt: and being come thither,

gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel; the heads of tribes and families, as many as they could conveniently get together in one place; probably in the metropolis of the kingdom, where Pharaoh's palace was, since we quickly hear of their going in to him.

Ver. 30. *And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses*, etc.] As Moses had related to him, being his mouth and spokesman:

and did the signs in the sight of the people; not Aaron, but Moses, and these were the turning of his rod into a serpent, and the serpent into a rod

again; putting his hand into and out of his bosom, when it was leprous, and then doing the same when it was well again; and taking water out of the river, and changing it into blood, which he did for the confirmation of his mission.

Ver. 31. *And the people believed*, etc.] That Moses was sent of God, and would be the deliverer of them:

and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel; in a way of grace and mercy, by raising such a redeemer and deliverer in the midst of them:

and that he had looked upon their affliction; with an eye of pity and compassion:

then they bowed their heads, and worshipped; adoring the goodness of God, and expressing their thankfulness for the notice he took of them, and signifying their readiness to obey all instructions and directions that should be given them.