

The Call of Moses

Three Signs

Bloody Bridegroom

Exodus 3-4

< **SLIDE:** GOOD MORNING MOSES >

Good morning saints!

Good Morning Moses! We’re continuing thru the Book of Exodus. There’s an old Yiddish saying that goes “*A man makes plans and God laughs*”, meaning that people believe and make plans for how their lives will be going, thinking that they are in control of events. All the while, we are oblivious to the destiny that God has prepared for them.¹

This was the situation with Moses. Here he is, working as a shepherd in Midian and now is 80 years old, and he has no idea of the history-transforming role to which God will appoint him. At this age, he has forgotten all his plans regarding the delivery of the Israelites, and he has resigned himself to working for his father-in-law as the caretaker of a bunch of wooly-faced sheep who are constantly complaining about needing food and water – which is somewhat prophetic about what will happen for the next 40 years.

- Suddenly, God appears to him in a burning bush and the history of the world changes forever.

You will remember that Passover week occurred two weeks ago, and Jesus is Risen – He is risen indeed! The 1st Passover is recorded in Exodus, and we could talk about many exciting events that are associated with it, such things the plagues, the Israelites putting blood of the Passover lambs on the doorposts, the angel of God killing the Egyptian firstborns, the exodus and crossing of the Red Sea – there's a lot of exciting stuff.

Exciting stuff is great – that's what the movies try to capture – but I recommend that not skip over what many consider as boring stuff. You know – when we're trying to put together a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle, we all like to find the corner pieces and then build the outer border of the puzzle. Nothing wrong with that – good starting point that gives a general outline of the picture – but eventually you get down to the less-exciting pieces that you need to figure out how they fit together. And at this point, the puzzle remains incomplete on the kitchen table because I may not want to commit the extra effort.

It's that way with Scripture also. There are parts of the text that are usually skipped over and that never seem to get into the movies or documentaries on the Exodus. For example, after God speaks to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3), the story usually fast forwards to Moses going into the palace and confronting the Pharaoh (Exodus 5).

- But what is normally skipped is most of Exodus Chapter 4, where God gives Moses three signs that he can use to convince the elders of Israel that God did actually appear to him and will deliver them from slavery.

Many people have not even heard that there were three signs given to Moses. Moses didn't want to accept God's call to go back to Egypt and confront Pharaoh. He says to God, in effect, "*Look – You've got the*

wrong guy, just forget about it, they're never going to believe me, they're not going to believe that You appeared to me. This whole thing isn't going to work." God then gave him three signs that he can show to the elders to convince them that his story was real. These three signs, which at first glance *look like* supernatural magic tricks, are actually a **lens through which to view the entire exodus story.**²

I'm going to pick up the story of the burning bush incident where we left off last time – verse 16 of Exodus chapter 3. Moses has already given God two excuses why he is the wrong person for the assignment. Verse 16 – God is speaking to Moses...

Exodus 3:

Vs. 16 "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt...

18 They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.' But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.

"And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. 22 **Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for**

articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters.

– MOSES NOW COMES UP WITH ANOTHER EXCUSE... –

Exodus 4

[Excuse #3] Then Moses said, "What if they (the elders) will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'" The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." 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. 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— "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."

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

[Excuse #4] 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." 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? Now then go,

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

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

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

Now the Lord had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead." So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

The Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, '**This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, 23 and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.**'"

Vs. 24 At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. "Surely you are a **bridegroom of blood to me,**" she said. So the Lord let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)

The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him.

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....

Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and **they believed**. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

"May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, (O) LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14

Ok – quite a story! Here is the brief outline of the narrative:

< **SLIDE:** OUTLINE OF NARRATIVE >:

1. **THE CALL.** God calls Moses to go back to Egypt. "Now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." Moses is extremely unenthusiastic about the plan and offers a series of excuses why God has picked the wrong man. But God guarantees that Moses will succeed and also seals the deal by saying that when they leave Egypt, the women will go on a shopping spree! (vs. 21-22) So, he has ½ of the congregation already on his side.
2. **THREE SIGNS.** But Moses whines that the Israelite elders won't believe that God appeared to him or that He is going to rescue them from slavery. So, God then gives Moses three signs that are guaranteed to convince the Israelite elders that He actually DID appear to Moses. Moses then offers another excuse and finally says "Send someone else". God gets angry.

3. **KILL MOSES?** At this juncture, Moses knows that he is in trouble and that he cannot *safely* continue to resist God’s calling, so he relents and agrees to go back to Egypt. He starts out with his wife Zipporah and his 2 kids. But – amazingly – at one point along the journey, God is about to kill Moses but he is saved when his wife Zipporah circumcises their son.

Quite a story. Moses – the great mediator and prophet of God – the former prince of Egypt – objects out a lack of self-confidence; God shoots-down his objections; Moses reluctantly agrees to go back – and then God almost kills him on the journey.

Strange narrative. Let’s look at Moses’ objections, because they are common to all of us when God is calling us to do something we are not sure or which we flatly don’t want to do.

The Call of Moses and His Excuses

We covered the first two excuses last time. *‘WHO AM I?’*

< SLIDE: EXCUSES #1 >

Moses’ first excuse was *‘WHO AM I?’* (Exodus 3:11) No doubt, he could remember back 40 years when he – as a prince of Egypt – tried to break up a fight between two fellow Israelites; the initiator of the fight turns and says to him – “Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”^a In other words – *“Who do you think YOU are? You may have standing as a prince of Egypt but you have no creds in the Israelite community.”* Well, Moses thinks, nothing

^a Exodus 2:14

had changed in that regard, and now he also has no credibility in the Egyptian community either, as he is a man wanted for murder.

- God says to him: ***“My presence will give you all the creds that you need!”***
- In other words, *“you’re thinking too much like a man. I will be with you”* – **that’s all that matters!**

Well, Moses couldn’t argue with that, so he comes up with a second argument as to why he should not go.

‘WHO ARE YOU?’

<Click>: Moses’ first excuse to God was *‘WHO AM I?’*, his next one was essentially *‘WHO ARE YOU?’* (Exodus 3:13) Moses asks God for His personal name. Up to know, God has only been known by *titles*, such as El Shaddai.

Question: WHY did Moses think that raising the issue about God’s Personal Name would somehow be a winner? Don’t know for sure, but it might have been a suspicion that God would not *want* anyone to know His Name because the prevailing pagan magical belief at that time was that if you knew a god’s name, you had some degree of power over him.

To Moses’ surprise, God enthusiastically reveals that He NOW wants His Name to be known. He says that His Name is ‘I AM THAT I AM’ and then He says that His Personal Name is spelled ‘Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey’ - what we usually translate as Yahweh.

I note that the scholars give several expanded meanings to “I AM THAT I AM”. I can imply ‘I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE’ and “I WILL BE THERE AS I WILL BE THERE”. -> God will show up as he determines, not necessarily as we expect (example: Jesus on the cross).

- STRIKE TWO

[THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME.](#)

<Click: EXCUSE #3 >

Undeterred by the magnitude of God revealing His Personal Name, Moses’ says that the elders of Israel are not going to believe him or even listen to him. (Exodus 4:1). Here we see that “Moses *flat-out didn’t believe God. Because in Chapter 4 verse 18, God tells Moses, unequivocally, that the elders and people would listen and pay attention to Moses. Now, Moses turns right around and says to God, in essence, ‘no they won’t’*”.³

But, with a Father’s patience, God gives Moses a series of proofs – the Bible typically calls them signs – that will demonstrate to the elders that He (God) did speak to Moses.

- We’ll look at these signs in a minute. -

By the way, this is something never been done before: God gives a man the power to bring about miracles. But, of course, we know that this power is of the Holy Spirit – it is NOT Moses doing them – it is God working through Moses. Moses did NOT become a godly magician.

You would think that this would have been enough. If I could perform these miracles at my beck and call, what more assurance do I need?

- However, insecurity is easier to experience than it is to understand. Most of us know what insecurity feels like.

Put yourself in Moses' sandals for a minute. How would you feel about going before a group of skeptics – and later the President – and try to convince them that the God of the Universe appeared to you in a burning bush in the desert; however, no one else was there to witness the event. **Most people don't easily accept claims like this.**

I AM NOT ELOQUENT

<Click #4>: Moses then throws out one last ditch effort to avoid God's calling: he says that he is "no man of words", and "my words come slowly, and my tongue moves slowly". Or, most literally, "I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue".⁴

Moses offers the excuse that he is not a gifted communicator.

- Moses is still hung up about his inabilities rather than relying upon God's abilities.
- And his excuse seems to contain a passive-aggressive jab. Listen: "Oh, *Adonai*, I'm a terrible speaker. I always have been, and I'm no better now, **even after you've spoken to your servant!** My words come slowly, my tongue moves slowly."^b

Q: DID YOU DETECT IT?

- Moses tells God that his ability to speak hasn't gotten any better since they first started talking.
- *"You see, God, we've been rapping here for a while but I don't feel any different. **Nothing's happened to me since You started to talk**"*

^b Exodus 4:10 Complete Jewish Bible

to me. No miracle of eloquence has come to me. God, I can't do what You ask because YOU did not make me good enough."

- This passive-aggressive jab is similar to how Adam essentially blamed God for his sin, saying that it was Eve – the woman You gave me – that caused him to eat of the fruit. (Genesis 3:12)

What the exact nature of Moses’ speech difficulty isn’t clear. Jewish tradition is that he had forgotten how to speak Hebrew well (only spoke it as a child). Others think that perhaps he was concerned that he no longer spoke Egyptian well enough to approach the King of Egypt. However, the majority opinion seems to be that Moses stuttered.

I believe that Moses is fudging the truth here a little bit. He may have been correct in saying that he is not eloquent at THAT time, but I have my doubts when he said “*nor in time past.*” I say this because...

- Stephen – in the NT Book of Acts – states: “When he (Moses) was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was **powerful in speech and action.**” (Acts 7:21-22)

Perhaps something happened to Moses during the 40 years in Midian that is not recorded, like a stroke or a head injury – things that sometimes can cause a person to stutter.⁵ Whatever the reason, Moses says he is not eloquent enough for the task.

God responds to Moses’ sarcasm with a bit of His own: “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.” “ Exodus 4:11-12

God reminds Moses that, as his Creator, He fashioned him precisely as He intended. God says that, *no matter how well or how badly you speak, Moses, I had a hand in fashioning that condition – so get on with the job!*

PLEASE SEND SOMEONE ELSE.

< SLIDE: ANYONE BUT ME >

Moses has run out of excuses, but still he doesn't want to go. He says, *"please send somebody else. God, I'm certain You've got the wrong man. You don't know what You're doing."*

➤ **WRONG ANSWER!**

God is longsuffering and patient, but now He is angry – and Moses knows it! *If you noticed, none of Moses' excuses was because he was afraid of the Pharaoh – they were about his inadequacies. But, now he IS afraid!*

We do not know precisely what physical manifestation God made to demonstrate His anger, but it must have scared Moses half to death because he raises no more excuses as to why he should not go.

As Moses is cowering, God tells him that He has already contacted his brother Aaron and he is coming out to meet him. While Moses was arguing with God about his lack of eloquence, God has provided a remedy. God secretly prepares the way.

- The game plan is that God will speak to Moses, Moses will tell Aaron what God said, and then Aaron will relay that info to the elders or to the Pharaoh. They must have looked like a strange pair before Pharaoh – Aaron leaning over to hear what Moses says and then repeating it.

Think about this scene for a moment: God *could* have sent thousands of angels to wipe out Egypt and deliver His people but He send two old men in their eighties – one a criminal, the other a slave – who communicate in a way that looks like a scene from *Saturday Night Live*.

- It would have been a lot simpler to send angels – angels speak plainly and do as they're told.
- But instead, God quietly goes about preparing men or women for an assignment, using people's experiences and physical abilities *and disabilities* in a way that only He knows will work best in a particular situation.

The Holy Spirit

When we read about incidents in the Old Testament where God speaks to people, we need to keep in mind **HOW** the Holy Spirit was working then. God tells Moses that He will be there "*with him*" when he goes to Pharaoh. However, at this time in history, the Holy Spirit does *not* yet dwell WITHIN man; that was still 1400 years into the future at the birth of Jesus.

- So, what did it mean when God said, "*I will be there with you*"?
- HOW was the Holy Spirit going to "*be there*" with Moses and be speaking with Moses?

We don't know specifically. God later would speak to Moses in the tent of meeting "face to face, as a man speaks to a friend." (Exodus 33:11). Did he whisper in Moses' ear in Egypt? Did God directly form Moses' thoughts? We don't know, but however that was, we can only say that it

is EXTERNAL to Moses... this is NOT like how the Holy Spirit living literally *within Christians* as He does today. In the OT, we see the Holy Spirit “UPON” a man.....not “WITHIN” that man. “Upon” is an “external” condition; “within” is an internal condition.

YOU WANT TO BE A PROPHET?

< SLIDE: WHO WANTS TO BE A PROPHET? >

- Q: WHO WANTS TO BE A PROPHET?

For some reason, Christians don’t often think of Moses as a prophet, but the Jews consider him as the greatest of the OT prophets. In fact, Moses was inspired to write about Jesus: Deuteronomy 18:15–16 – “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.”

- One major OT commentator cites Moses at the burning hush incident as a great example of the CALLING OF A PROPHET – not just in Biblical times, but for all time.⁶

Before I detail an observation about prophets today – **please listen closely so there’s no mistake what I’m saying.**

- My comments are NOT talking about someone who prophesies in a LOCAL church, because we all can do that at any time when God so choses.
- I’m talking about a man or woman who claims to speak for God as a Prophet to the Christian CHURCH or to America, or whatever. **This is a Prophet with a Capital “P”.** And there are many of them around today issuing monthly newsletters of their latest prophesies – most of which turn out to be demonstrably wrong. This, of course, scripturally disqualifies them from that office, but they are undeterred by their failures.

- How does some get to believe that they are a modern-day Prophet (capital P)? Usually it was because someone *else* TELLS THEM that they are, which confirms their own suspicions. *Someone else* claims to have a word of knowledge or prophesy regarding your calling and it's a done deal in the minds of many.

Compare this with the example of Moses's calling:

First: It is God that initiates the contact. Sometimes it's in a vision, or a dream or being knocked off a horse, but God initiates the communication. . In Moses' case, it is a direct contact with God at the burning bush.

- The prophetic calling is not validated because *someone else* TELL you that you're a Prophet – or Apostle for that matter. This amounts to ZERO validation, no matter who says it.

And, there are specific Scriptural criteria that you have to meet in order to be a Prophet – and the claim that the Holy Spirit revealed it to someone else isn't one of them.

Second, the one chosen is almost^c always either reluctant or outright refuses the call at first. **Moses** says to God: "Who am I that I should go Pharaoh?" **Jonah** ran away. **Isaiah** fell apart. **Jeremiah** wrote: "Lord Yahweh," I said, "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!"^d Being reluctant seems to be the normal reaction to being chosen to be a prophet God.

- Are you determined to be a Prophet for God? Then most probably you are NOT a candidate.

^c There are exceptions, such as Elisha

^d Jeremiah 1:6

Third, the prophet (male or female) returns to society – or wherever God sends him – without concern for the opposition he will receive, undeterred by the skeptical nature of the many who will scoff at him– and most of the time living day-to-day off scraps and without large bank accounts, silk suits or new Mercedes in the driveway.

- God picks someone who does NOT think, “Pick me, I have what it takes!” No personal ambition must be present.
- Folks, if you have ever WANTED to be a prophet of God..... chances are that you are NOT a candidate. If you *think* you might make a good prophet..... you are disqualified. If any man or woman is ambitious in this regard, that person will not be chosen.⁷

Now – some would counter that Paul states that we are to earnestly desire spiritual gifts^e. True, but the MOTIVATION behind our desiring can be wrong. When I look back to the early 1970s when I first accepted Christ, I can see now that my desire for the gifts was quite selfish.

- It was similar to how I sometimes try to bargain with God – if You lets me win the \$500 million Lottery, I'll give 50% to charity and only keep \$250 million for my own use – *that's way beyond a tithe, ain't I great, God?*

I think many of us have traveled this same roadway and ran thru similar potholes of pride.

PERSONAL NOTE: I have gone into this today because the issue highlights a concern that I have expressed to the elders and others.

^e 1 Corinthians 12:31

- Christians today all-too-often give undeserved credibility to individuals who *claim* titles like “Prophet” and “Apostle”.
- From what I see in the Scripture, most of these individuals are essentially imposters – *perhaps sincere* to some degree but still imposters.

There is a great potential for deception when individuals are given undeserved status and authority in the church.

- Bottom line – we are required to look closely at the men and women who profess to speak for God.

Is everyone OK? If not, we can talk more on this matter afterwards.

The Three Signs

OK – Let’s look for a minute at the three signs given to Moses. These signs **never seem to be covered** in the movies about the exodus story – no one talks about them. They always seem to play *second fiddle to the plagues*.

- What was the PURPOSE OF THE SIGNS? They were given to Moses to convince the Israelite **Elders to BELIEVE** that Moses had actually met with God.^f

Who were the “elders”? They were *not* the overall leadership of the tribes or of the clans within the tribes. They were a sort of elected or appointed class of leaders representing of the COMMON PEOPLE – they

^f Exodus 4:8-9

were appointed or elected leaders and they operated under the authority of the tribal leaders.⁸

< SLIDE: THREE SIGNS >

The three signs given to Moses were... (no clicks are needed)

1. Staff into snake
2. Diseased hand
3. Water from the Nile turning into Blood

- 1ST SIGN = THE SNAKE >

There have been many analogies and allegories put forth to explain the meaning of this sign, and it's hard to know for sure which is right. But, it is no coincidence that the staff was turned into a snake. The snake represented the patron cobra-goddess of Lower Egypt. It was the official Egyptian symbol for royal power and authority, both religious and civil, and the Pharaohs wore an image of a serpent their headgear.

- Thru this sign, God was showing the Israelite elders that a simple Shepherd was going grab the Serpent Egypt by its tail and shake it.

- 2nd: the DISEASED HAND >

If the first sign didn't convince all the elders, Moses would use a second sign where he inserted his clean hand into his coat and it was while with a skin disease, and when he did it again, it would come out completely healthy.

Most translations say something like "*leprous – it had become as white as snow.*" But, this was NOT actually Leprosy per se. The Hebrew

word for this affliction is Tzard'at⁹ (*tsaw-rah'-ath*) and it is nowhere as serious as leprosy (Hansen's disease) because it evidently was often curable back then, as can be seen in the Levitical laws pertaining to the reinstatement of a cured person back into the community.¹⁰

- **3rd sign: Water into Blood** >

The third sign is the water from the Nile River turning into blood. If – after the first 2 signs – there were still some elders who were not convinced that Moses met with God, God says that this one third will!

< SLIDE: NILE water >

"...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." Exodus 4:9

We should note that this 3rd sign would NOT have been demonstrated at the burning bush. The text says that Moses is to take some water from the Nile, pour it on the ground and it will turn into blood on the ground.⁹ Since Moses was several hundred miles away from the Nile at this time, this third sign could therefore only happen after he gets to Egypt. (Exodus 4:31). This third sign will be repeated on a grander scale before Pharaoh.

Question: Why does the water HAVE TO BE from the Nile River?
Wouldn't ANY water be equally as good to use as a demonstration?

Certainly Moses had water with him or close by at the burning bush. Why MUST the water be from the Nile River? We'll get to this in a minute.

⁹ Exodus 4:9

What's up with **THESE** signs

[The following line of discussion regarding the three signs is from Rabbi David Fohrman. ¹¹]

Let's ask a couple of questions about all three signs.

Question #1: The signs are pretty neat, but... Are they just Divinely-inspired magic tricks? Could God just as well have used *any* sign? How about Moses levitating Aaron off the ground? Or, pulling a rabbit out of an elder's hat? Is that what these three signs are – just impressive, magic tricks? That's what the Pharaoh will take away – when he saw the staff turn into a snake and the Nile water into blood, the Pharaoh just walked away because his magicians could duplicate the “trick” to some degree.

Okay – that's one question –here's another question:

Question #2: WHY did THESE particular signs impress the Israelite elders? Leaders were leading men in the community who would undoubtedly be shrewd Jewish boys and would have been well-aware of the abilities of Egyptian magicians.

- WHY would these three signs cause them to believe?
- And believe WHAT?

Were they meant to demonstrate that Yehovah EXISTS? I don't think so – these three signs are a pretty *lousy* way of demonstrating that God *exists* if the magicians can duplicate them. God *could* have picked

signs that no one else could replicate, but He didn't. *Of what* did they convince the Elders?

I think that the **MEANING IN** three signs convinced them that the Being Who met Moses WAS the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. Not just *any* god – Egypt had thousands of them – **it was the COVENANT God that they had heard about all this time but Who had been completely silent until now!**

- You see, the elders would probably have accepted Moses' claim of an encounter with some spiritual being by virtue of his ability to perform these signs. The question would be – *Which spiritual being did he encounter?* That's the KEY to the purpose of the signs!

<https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/water-into-blood>

- The particular nature of the signs rekindled their memory of the God of Abraham Who promised them so much.
- The signs were recognized as an **unmistakable message** to them – **just any old sign would not do**. They revealed what KIND of God they're dealing with – the KIND of God that was PRECISELY NEEDED at this point in their history.

< SLIDE: The MESSAGE **IN** THE SIGNS >

1. Their Covenant God will deliver them.
2. He has seen their suffering

Click>: It is the 2nd one that was just as important to them as the 1st.

Remember how – right before God revealed these signs to Moses at the burning bush – He gives him a message to deliver: Gather together all of the elders of Israel and tell them God – Yuh, Hey and Vav, Hey – appeared to you. Tell them this – I have **REMEMBERED THEM AND SEEN THEIR SUFFERING**. And I'm going to redeem them.

- Not ONLY have I remembered THEM and am I about to redeem them, but I have **remembered WHAT WAS DONE** to them in Egypt.

Note:

We can note that when the elders saw the three signs, Scripture says that 'they believed.' (vs. 29–31) But it was when they heard that "the Lord was concerned about them and had SEEN their misery, (then) they bowed down and worshiped." (vs. 31)

- They had **REDISCOVERED** the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was *not* just that they would be redeemed, but that He loved them and saw what was done to them.

Question: What was it about these signs that so impressed the elders?

Well– the first sign – Moses takes his staff and throws it down; it turns into a snake; he picks it up by the tail and it turns back into a wooden rod. Egypt was symbolized by the snake, and God was going to use Moses to grab the snake by its tail and reduce its power to harm them anymore. Moses would have Egypt by the tail. **This gave them hope of physical redemption.**

< SLIDE: DISEASED HAND >

The 2nd sign, Moses putting his hand into his cloak and it coming out diseased, and then putting it back into his cloak and coming out completely healed – would have a special impact on the Israelite conscious. God's chosen people began pure in Egypt, and then they

became impure by their free-will choices. Part of this was human nature – how hopeless they must have grown over those years when God was silent. Surely, some faithful hearts still trusted and hoped and perhaps crept off at night to visit Joseph's grave and cry to God. But, most of them became discouraged and joined in Egyptian idolatry.^h

The key to understanding this sign is that the Hebrews considered this skin condition as an *outward* sign of the infected person's *internal* spiritual condition – the individual had violated God's holiness in some way and was rotting away spiritually.

- The 2nd sign showed that God can redeem and cleanse. He can take the most defiled person, or nation, and purify him/her. This gave them hope of **spiritual redemption**.

< **SLIDE: WATER INTO BLOOD** >

The 3rd sign – the water of the Nile River turning into blood – **was the clincher** for the elders. Remember – God told Moses that if the first two signs didn't convince all the elders, the third one would clinch it. The text says that Moses "...performed the signs in the sight of the people."ⁱ This *implies* that Moses DID perform this 3rd sign, **so evidently it was needed to seal the deal**.

It also PREFIGURES the First plague when all of the water in the Nile turns into blood. But why did it so impress the *elders* when it obviously would NOT impress the Pharaoh when it was later performed in front of him?

- **QUESTION:** Was there any sort of rationale for THAT being the FIRST plague?

^h Joshua 24:14; Ezekiel 20:6-9

ⁱ Exodus 4:30

We look back and see the miracle as a **jazzy way to kick off the series of plagues**, demonstrating God's power over the Nile, a major god of Egypt and the lifeblood of Egypt. And it was such a demonstration! But – why FIRST?

Let's look at this from the *standpoint of the Israelites*, not the Egyptians.

Question: Why would the 3rd sign – water from the Nile River turning into BLOOD – be the *clincher* for the elders?

- Think back – **what would you say is the WORST thing the Egyptians ever did** to the Israelites over the long centuries of enforced slavery? It wasn't just the backbreaking labor; it wasn't the fact that they didn't get paid for their work; it wasn't even the cruelty of the taskmasters in the field. It was something else...

< **SLIDE: BABIES THROWN INTO NILE** >

- **It was the babies being thrown into the Nile.**

Pharaoh had decreed that all newborn Israelite baby boys were to be thrown into the Nile to drown. Why the Nile? What was in it for the Egyptians to do it *that way*?

- **It's because the Nile would cover up the crimes.**

You wouldn't have any visible reminder of the victims – there would be **NO GRAVES TO VISIT AND PLACE FLOWERS ON**. The Nile would just look like its placid self, just slowly meandering on its way. Everything was **NORMAL**. **NATURE ITSELF SEEMED TO BE COVERING UP THE CRIME.**

And compounding the crime was Pharaoh's command **all of his people** to throw the children into the Nile. (Exodus 1:22) "*All of his people*" suggested the townsfolk, your neighbors. The crime wasn't always carried out by uniformed representatives of the Egyptian Government; *some* of your neighbors would find a Jewish child and cast him into the Nile.

- Knowing human nature, I don't believe the average Egyptian did this, but almost as hurtful would be **their COMPLACENCY** with the horror of the crime. They just ignored that it was happening!

The night would be full of screams and anguish, babies ripped from the arms of their parents – and then – in the morning – you would go outside and somehow **EVERYTHING WOULD LOOK NORMAL**.

- The Nile look the same as it did before, your Egyptian neighbors are out there sunbathing on the shore, reading the latest Oprah Winfrey autobiography or sipping Pina Coladas watching fishing boats drift by.
- **And the Israelites are left alone in their pain.**

< **SLIDE: THE HURTS OF THE ABUSED** >

- In abuse cases, the victim feels so much pain. But for the perpetrator, life seems so normal for them, they seem so oblivious to what they've done.
- Alone with their grief, they often wonder whether THEY'RE the crazy ones to think that something was VERY wrong about what was done.

- For the abuser, life just goes on as normal – laughing with friends, teaching high school math classes, being a respected usher at church.

And the one who is abused often thinks – he looks so normal, I must be the irrational one. I must be going crazy.

- That's why it wasn't enough *just* for God to set the Israelites free, to take them out of bondage in Egypt. He couldn't just redeem the people, **He had to redeem what was DONE to them also.**
- GOING FREE DOESN'T HEALS ALL WOUNDS. All sorts of scars linger and one of the most tragic effects is the nagging suspicion so often felt by people WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED that somehow THEY DESERVED what happened to them. **It was their fault that this happened.**

That's WHY what was DONE to the Israelites NEEDED to be redeemed.

- Because while the people needed to believe something about the *future*, but they also needed to believe something about the PAST. All last two signs in particular would somehow be the vehicle for this. It would help them understand that God HAD seen the PAST – God HAD seen their PAIN. That's every bit as important to their wellbeing as their freedom.
- And the VICTIM NEEDS to see that the aggressor is confronted with what they've done, it's out there, it's real, I'm *not* crazy. I didn't deserve this! It wasn't my fault!

So, how do you both redeem the Israelites and set them free *physically*, and at the same time **redeem what was *emotionally done to them***? This 3rd sign was THE DEAD GIVEAWAY FOR THE ELDERS!

- WHEN THE WATER OF THE NILE WAS TURNED INTO BLOOD, THE COVERUP IS REVEALED!
- ❖ NO LONGER WOULD WATER ASSIST EGYPT IN PRETENDING. This sign is the first act of justice for this greatest of all crimes.

Because the truth will now be known – the crying infants ripped from their parents and murdered in the Nile – it's on all the nightly news shows – there's no hiding anymore. The aggressor is confronted with the reality of his crimes, and the abused now knows that GOD knows, that EVERYONE else now knows also.

- It's like in WWII – when **Eisenhower** had the townspeople living near the **concentration camps** paraded thru the camps and be FORCED to see the horror – they can't deny it any longer.
- Justice for the aggressor is the beginning of healing for the abused.

The lies are over, the disconnect is over – I wasn't crazy, everyone knows now. Even more than that, God shows that He knows. “*I know what they did to you.*” The abused people can now drop the burden of re-remembering – they can leave the remembering to God.

This is what the Elders saw with the signs from Moses, this is why they believed it was the God of Abraham Who appeared to Moses. They had REDISCOVERED the God Who they heard about – the God Who is compassionate and loving and will heal their grief.

But if after that plague Egypt does not let you free, there will be more truth telling, not just the first plague, but the tenth one.

Point:

Now –when this sign was later demonstrated to Pharaoh as the first plague, the **EGYPTIANS HAD A CHOICE** – and this is IMPORTANT TO NOTE: *“Confronted with the reality of their crime, they could choose to own up to the crime, to let the Israelites go, to apologize, and it could all be over here, justice would have been done. {In other words, make amends, admit their guilt, and ask forgiveness of God and of those harmed.} But if they don't do this, if they continue to oppress the Israelites and they continue to live the lie, then things would progress further, more lies would have to be uncovered until we finally reach the 10th plague.”*¹² And so it progressed.

OK – Moses receives these three signs and finally runs out of excuses. This is not the same man who leaped into the fray to kill the first man he could grab his hands on 40 years earlier. Very reluctantly he resigns himself to God's call. Moses packs his wife and two sons into the new Motor Home and heads off for Egypt.

Things are looking up... and then...

BLOODY BRIDEGROOM

< SLIDE: KILL MOSES ?>

As Moses and the *fam* (family) are on their way to Egypt, we encounter the strange story in Exodus 4. Here we see Moses' wife, Zipporah, in a rather nasty mood. And God is none too pleased, either.

They stopped at a local Ramada Inn along the way and Moses has some type of medical crisis that would have ended in death except for the quick action taken by Zipporah. She took a flint knife, circumcised her son, and touched Moses feet with the foreskin, and then said – “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me.” At the end of verse 26, Moses notes “...because of the circumcision.”

Because of Zipporah's actions, God spared Moses' life. Apparently, one of Moses two sons had not yet been circumcised – probably the 2nd one. Jewish Tradition says that Moses knew full well he was to circumcise his son, but Zipporah wouldn't let him up to now because she didn't want that pain inflicted on another of her children.

- Zipporah was also mad at Moses because he had *“chosen”* this God that demanded such a thing.

That was the thinking in those days – men were not chosen by the gods, *gods were picked by men*, and sometimes you would dump your gods in favor of another gods. Don't like your gods? – get a whole new batch!

- Somehow, Zipporah realized that the situation was over the circumcision that Moses' God demanded, and she acted and saved Moses' life!
- And then gave him an earful because of it, calling Moses a *“bridegroom of blood.”*

Now – this story sounds odd, doesn't it? And it seems so out of place here. God finally gets his man and orders him to go to Egypt and then He is about to kill him on the way. But this is *not* the only time in Scripture where something like this happens. We came across a somewhat similar incident in the Book of Numbers... anyone remember? The Angel of God is about to kill Balaam while he was riding on his talking donkey?

Balak, the king of Moab, sends some men to invite Balaam, a world-famous sorcerer, to come to Moab and curse the hoard of Israelites camped in his back yard. Balaam asks God for permission to go, and God says: "If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them; but do only what I tell you." Numbers 22:19

Balaam, a professional dealmaker, believes that he will be able to convince God to allow him to curse Israel and thereby collect a big fat paycheck from the King of Moab. But on his way the Moab, the angel of the Lord holding a gigantic sword blocks his path and is about to kill Balaam.

- Why? Didn't God say that he could go with Balak's men?
- The answer is Yes, but there are very different ways in which you go WITH someone else.

Suppose I get into Bonny and Clyde's car as they're on the way to rob a bank. If I'm part of the Barrow gang, I get into their car with the intention of being a *participant* in the robbery. But if I'm just be an innocent hitchhiker who is looking for a ride into town, I have no intention of participating in the event. One is "*with*" the gang in their intent to rob the bank, the other is "*with*" them only in physical proximity.

- Balaam was "*with Balak*" in **intent** – in other words, he was hoping to find a way to curse Israel.
- Moses actually was just the opposite – he was going to Egypt *physically* but was still not completely on-board *with* God's program. This is plainly obvious by the fact that Moses hadn't even circumcised one of his sons. Circumcision of the child on the 8th day after birth was an essential part of God's Covenant with

Abraham^j, and the Covenant was the reason of why God was going to free the Hebrews from slavery.

Both Moses and Balaam had a brush with death because of improper *intent*, and God straightened them out. – Somewhere in there may be a lesson for all of us.

I find it very revealing of Moses' true humble character that he includes this incident in Scripture. I'm sure that this was not the kind of incident of which he would be proud. But since Moses did include it...

Question: what does this incident mean, and what are WE to learn from it?

I believe that this was included to demonstrate **the absolute NECESSITY of entering into God's Covenant.**

In Moses' day, the "*gospel*" or "*good news*" was that God entered into covenant with Abraham and his descendants. The way one embraced the covenant was thru Circumcision. It was the ONLY WAY that God had set down that man should accept the covenant. And Moses had neglected it!

A man who was not circumcised was out of the covenant – he was cut-off *spiritually* from God's people. The ONLY way into the covenant of Abraham – the ONLY way to appropriate it for myself, to experience it in my life – WAS TO FOLLOW GOD'S MANDATE OF CIRCUMCISION.

➤ And yet Moses had not yet circumcised his own son.

** God in effect says, "*Moses, you go no further. I'm going to lay the judgment of death upon Egypt because of My Covenant with Israel. You'd*

^j Genesis 17

better understand, Moses, you're worthy of death yourself for your lack of action."

Note:

Evidently, Moses had entirely missed the significance of the 2nd sign – the curing of the diseased hand. Did you notice that **only two** of the three signs that were given to Moses were later shown to Pharaoh and the Egyptians? The rod changing into a snake and the Nile water turning into blood were shown to Pharaoh, but **THE SIGN OF THE HEALING OF THE DISEASED HAND WAS NOT** – it was shown **ONLY** to the Israelites! Why?

- Because **ONLY** for the people of the covenant is there the hope of the healing hand of the Covenant God. Only to the servants of Yehovah is healing offered.

This OT incident regarding Moses and his lack of circumcision for his son can raise two cantankerous issues today"

#1 Infant Baptism

God was about to kill even Moses for not abiding by the "good news" of that day.... Moses himself evidently had been circumcised and believed in Yehovah, so he was considered redeemed. However, he had not circumcised his son when eight days old, which violated the founding principle of entrance into the Covenant.

- If there was a NT parallel incident to Moses' bloody bridegroom encounter, it would be that a child's father would be punished by God for not having baptized his newborn child.

Well – there is no record of this occurring in the NT or in Church history – which is great, otherwise there'd be a lot more orphans out there today.

But, how does the concept of infant baptism fit in today? We don't have enough time to properly examine the issue today, but just briefly to say that the main argument *against* infant baptism is that a child is too young to have any spiritual awareness to comprehend what Baptism means. Well – neither did any of the Israelite children who were required to be circumcised when they were 8 days old as part of the covenant with Abraham. Jesus Himself went thru the ceremony at that age (Luke 2:21). Many Christian baptisms today occur when the child is approximately a month old – *older than Jesus* was at the time of His ceremony.

- A main argument *in favor* of infant baptism is that – both the OT act of circumcision of the infant and NT infant baptism both point to the reality that salvation is 100% the work of God – the child can contribute *nothing* to salvation.
- A major difference between the two events is that circumcision was necessary to enter into the Abrahamic covenant, whereas physical baptism – while recommended – it was not absolutely necessary to enter the New Covenant.
- However, under both the OT and NT, an individual also had to embrace the God and the Covenant when he reached the stage of spiritual maturity in order to truly activate the covenant for themselves.

A basic question is this: *“Is Baptism the work of God or the work of Man?”*

- If Baptism of a child who is predestined by God for salvation is the work of God, then one's age or intellectual ability is essentially irreverent. The Holy Spirit is sealing that individual with the sign

of the cross traced on his forehead and will give that person the faith to accept Christ in God's good timing.

- But if Baptism is just the work of Man, then Infant Baptism can rightly be declared of no real value until a person comes to the point of consciously accepts Christ.

That's the issue in a nutshell. Perhaps someday we can discuss this further.

With issues like this, it is important to remember the maxim: **"In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things charity."** Luther and Wesley practiced infant baptism, while Baptists like Spurgeon and Billy Graham did not. While we may debate this issue vigorously, we must never divide over it because infant baptism is not an essential. Just like in the OT, the person must commit to the terms of the NT covenant – salvation thru Christ Alone – in later life.

#2 Cut Off

The other cantankerous issue is regarding the incident with Moses as it relates to Romans 11 and *the Christian life* – Paul there uses the illustration of the Olive Tree:

"But if some of the branches were broken off, and you- a wild olive- were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, 18 then don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, **the root is supporting you.** 19 So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified! 21 For if God did not spare

the natural branches, he certainly won't spare you! 22 So take a good look at God's kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, **God's kindness toward you- provided you maintain yourself in that kindness!**
Otherwise, you too will be cut off!

Paul appears to make it clear that just as many Hebrews – who were *at one time* circumcised and redeemed (and therefore made branches of the Olive Tree) – were removed from that tree for falling away from God, so it is with ANYONE (Jew or gentile) who at one time receives a spiritual circumcision and redemption but falls away from God; they too will be cut off of that tree for failing to maintain their trust.

The cantankerous part of the issue is trying to figure how Exodus 4 and Romans 11 fit in with the “*Once Saved – Always Saved*” concept¹³ that seems to be implied in other NT texts.^k

But – whether you hold with infant baptism or not, or whether you hold with the “Once Saved Always Saved” notion or not, both are nonessentials for your salvation. The essential thread is that belief and acceptance of Christ Alone as Lord and Savior is what counts.

OK – Moses' wife's rebukes him, and it was well-deserved, and Moses recorded it for posterity.

We later find out that Moses evidently sent Zipporah and the two kids BACK to Zipporah's father Jethro after this incident (Exodus 18:2). This was either over concern for their safety (Pharaoh might react: “*you*

^k John 10:28-30, John 3:15-18

kill my child, I’ll kill yours”) or the fact that Moses wants to be undistracted by a nagging spouse. It’s not easy looking holy in front of an audience when your spouse who knows you so well is staring at you.

So, Moses meets up with his bother Aaron at Mt. Horeb, tells him all that has happened, and they journey to Egypt.

The Anticipation

Try to picture the scene back in Egypt. Quote from John Paterson Smyth – an Anglican priest born in Ireland – from a book he wrote in 1901¹⁴ entitled *Moses and the Exodus*:

“... after all these years comes a vague rumour through the brick-fields and along the great canal about the two old men from far-off Midian with a most startling message. Who (are they)? What message? And one, it was said, was that Moses, whose exciting story their aged elders still talked about, the story that had so stirred the slave settlements long ago – when a prince of Egypt, who was one of themselves, had, for their sakes, refused to be called the son of the pharaoh’s daughter.

*Then came the secret message from Moses and Aaron to the heads of the families. Before going to Pharaoh, they must first be sure that their leadership will be accepted by the people. You can imagine the secret gatherings from Zion to Pithom and Ramses and Memphis, and along the canals – the secret midnight meetings such as slaves must hold away in the desert or in the inaccessible swamps – desperate men assembling at the risk of their lives, such as one reads in Uncle Tom’s Cabin... Can’t you shut your eyes and imagine the whole scene? The old slaves, the elders of the tribes, with the first dawn of hope in their eyes. Did they believe? Were they glad? How did they show it? Ah, poor wretches, one needs to have suffered like them **to understand the goodness of finding on that day that God cared after all.**”¹⁵*

Note:

Well – Moses and Aaron speak to the elders and Moses’ fears turn out to be ill founded, as fears *always* are when they come from a failure to trust God’s Word. In spite of all his misgivings, the signs convince the elders, just as God promised. That’s so true, isn’t it? **Often our real struggle is at the point of deciding whether or not to follow God.** Once the decision to follow Him is made, things just fall into place and we are again able to recognize God’s sovereignty and hand over our lives.¹⁶

With the elders supporting them, Moses and Aaron go to meet with the Pharaoh – and let the fireworks begin. We’ll get into that at the next time –

Ragamuffins

< SLIDE: RAGAMUFFINS >

In closing, I want to briefly touch on a topic that Bill started several weeks ago – *Ragamuffins*. Bill used the term as descriptive of each and every one of us. According to the Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary, a ragamuffin is “*a child who is dressed in rags and is usually dirty and poor.*”¹⁷

- Bill’s message was that we should REJOICE. “*God chooses little things to do big things.*”

< SLIDE: RAGAMUFFINS 2 >

And GARY’s recent message was basically that Stupidity causes us to look in the mirror and see ourselves as pretty hopeless individuals. We should rather look into the mirror and see ourselves as God sees us – pretty hopeless individuals who are redeemed, who are His kids, and who can do all things thru Christ.

LYLE's message was an encouragement to BELIEVE in all circumstances.

I want to mention an incident that happened to be as a child. It occurred at a place named Frontier Town...

< **SLIDE: FRONTIER TOWN** >

- Frontier Town was a great western theme park about 100 miles north of Albany - just north of Lake George - but now is a ghost town. My folks took my sister and myself there when I was approx. 10 years old. It closed in 1999¹⁸, which is quite a few years after I was there, so I don't believe I had anything to do with its demise.

- Stagecoaches, train robberies, covered wagons, you got a sheriff's badge with your name engraved on it - great!
 - Archery range - bow and *warped* arrows - so warped that I was slightly afraid they would be like *a boomerang* and come back at me!
 - I had completely missed the target will every one of my previous 9 arrows. Pulling back the bow for my last arrow -- I was distracted by something off to my side - I turned my head to look and I accidentally released the arrow. That crooked arrow hit the bulls-eye DEAD CENTER. I couldn't believe it - it was like a RobinHood movie. People all around looked to see who made this incredible shot. **Of course, I acted nonchalant, pretending that I'm just that good!**
- At the time, I considered it to have happened *totally by accident* - now, I think that it was ORCHESTRATED by the hand of God SO THAT I COULD TELL THIS STORY TODAY.

Point:

What's the point? The point is that our lack of ability isn't as important as just "SHOWING UP" for God to use. **God can hit the bullseye with warped instruments and distracted actors.** Moses would learn this by the end of the plagues.

Mother Angelica quotes¹⁹:

- *God is not hindered if He wants to use you, whether you are lonely or popular, perfect or imperfect, good or bad. He can speak thru an ass if he wants to. And he did (with Balaam)... So there's hope for all of us.*
- *"The apostles were dodos, Dummies. But all the intelligent people in the world at that time wouldn't take chances. That is the same problem we have today. The world is looking for intellectuals and God is looking for dummies. That's why I'm here."²⁰*
- *The apostles wouldn't pass the seminary today. Heck, I doubt if they'd make it past the **psychological screening.**"*
- *[St. Peter] "was so holy that his shadow healed (Acts 5:15). Can you imagine a shadow healing? He was a big, blustery fisherman – just like you, without the fish. He was a man who always spoke before he thought. He was convinced he could do everything better than everybody else, **then he forgot to do it. Peter should give us great hope.**"*
- *"...65: Moses' position was 'Look, I'm not up to the job. You shouldn't have picked me.' The Lord reply was: 'Of course you're not up to the job. (66) I knew that when I chose you for it. The point is not your ability but mine.'*

- The Lord does not call us *because* of our adequacy, nor is His presence conditional on our *becoming* adequate. (God's promises are)... rather promised to those who are inadequate. The Lord says *'You needn't tell me (that you're inadequate), but I will be with you'*.
- The Lord's reaction was not to make Moses adequate, somehow to transform him into someone who is up to the task. (Although he did to that as time went on). What He did promise was the sufficiency of His own presence, in other words, He called Moses to a position of faith – to get into the work not expecting to be a different man but expecting a sufficient God. He met Moses' inadequacy with the pledge of His sufficiency, and called Moses to believe the promises and demonstrate the obedience of God."²¹
- *Unless you are willing to do the ridiculous, God will not do the miraculous. When you have God, you don't have to know everything about it; you just do it.*

When Moses protested that he was not eloquent enough for the job, God asked several rhetorical questions:

“Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

Exodus 4:11-12

God was reminding him that He made him **EXACTLY THE WAY HE WANTED TO MAKE HIM.**

If that is the case, then our abilities, inabilities, and even disabilities are ordained by Him. God himself equipped us with every talent we need to do His will. He made us the way we are for His glory.²²

Point:

And even if our gifts are limited when viewed from *purely a human standpoint*, we're still required to use them for God's glory. This is what Jesus taught in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30) – whether we have 1 talent or 10, Jesus will hold us accountable for how we used what we were given.

< SLIDE > Be the SAINTS WE ARE CALLED TO BE >

"Let us not be confused by the talents and missions of other saints. Let us be the kind of saints we were created to be." Mother Mary Angelica

The Jewish theologian Martin Buber recounts the famous story of the Hasidic Rabbi Zusha, of the late 1700s, who before his death said, *"I'm afraid!" said Zusha. "Because when I get to heaven, I know God's not going to ask me 'Why weren't you more like Moses?' or 'Why weren't you more like King David?' I'm afraid that God will ask 'Zusha, why weren't you more like Zusha?' And then what will I say?!"*²³

- *There are only two things you have that God asks of you: your will and your sin. Give your sins and imperfections to him. He has come to call sinners, and if you respond, he will work with you.*

By Your Side

Tenth Avenue North

*Why are you striving these days?
Why are you trying to earn grace?
Why are you crying?
Let me lift up your face, just don't turn away
Why are you looking for love?
Why are you still searching as if I'm not enough?
To where will you go child?
Tell me where will you run, to where will you run?
'cause I'll be by your side wherever you fall
In the dead of night whenever you call
And please don't fight these hands that are holding you
My hands are holding you
Look at these hands at my side
They swallowed the grave on that night
When I drank the world's sin
So I could carry you in and give you life
I wanna give you life
And I'll be by your side wherever you fall
In the dead of night whenever you call
And please don't fight these hands that are holding you
My hands...*

Endnotes:

¹ Rabbi Joseph Talushkin, *Biblical Literacy*, pg. 100

² Rabbi David Fohrman, Aleph Beta, *The Three Signs* <https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/the-three-signs/autoplay>

³ Tom Bradford, *TorahClass*, Exodus Lesson 5, Chapter 4, <http://www.torahclass.com/old-testament-studies/35-old-testament-studies-exodus/124-lesson-5-chapter4>

⁴ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 68.

⁵ <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stuttering/basics/causes/con-20032854>

⁶ Tom Bradford, Exodus Lesson 4, Chapter 3, <http://www.torahclass.com/old-testament-studies/35-old-testament-studies-exodus/123-lesson-4-chapter3>

⁷ Ibid.

- ⁸ Tom Bradford, Exodus Lesson 2, Chapter 1, <http://www.torahclass.com/old-testament-studies/35-old-testament-studies-exodus/121-lesson-2-chapter1>
- ⁹ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Hebrew #6883
- ¹⁰ The Jewish Encyclopedia, LEPROSY, "In the Biblical description, one is immediately impressed by the absence of all allusion to the hideous facial deformity, the loss of feeling, and the rotting of the members. If such conspicuous manifestations had existed they could not possibly have escaped observation. The Levitical code prescribed that the several examinations of the person suspected should be made at intervals of seven days, thus enabling the priest to note the progress of the disease. Leprosy is an exceedingly slow disease, particularly in the beginning, and a fortnight would show absolutely no change in the vast majority of cases. Moreover, the "lepra Hebræorum" was a curable disease. When the leper was cured the priest made an atonement before the Lord, and expiatory sacrifices in the form of a sin-offering and a trespass-offering were made also. Modern leprosy is, except in isolated instances, incurable", <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9774-leprosy>
- ¹¹ Rabbi David Fohrman, Aleph Beta, <https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/the-three-signs#sthash.FxOV47nZ.dpuf>
- ¹² Rabbi David Fohrman, Aleph Beta, <https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/water-into-blood>
- ¹³ Once Saved, Always Saved, <http://www.allaboutgod.com/once-saved-always-saved.htm>
- ¹⁴ Joel Scheller, *The Writings of J. Patterson Smyth*, <http://jpatersonsmyth.com/page2.html>
- ¹⁵ J. Paterson Smyth, *Moses and the Exodus*, p. 50
- ¹⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus (ESV Edition): Saved for God's Glory*, Chapter 10
- ¹⁷ <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/ragamuffin>
- ¹⁸ Donna Liquori, NY Times, *A Western Theme Park Turns Into a Ghost Town*, 2004
- ¹⁹ *Mother Angelica's Little Book of Life Lessons And Everyday Spirituality*. Ed. Raymond Arroyo
- ²⁰ Mother Angelica
- ²¹ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Exodus*, p. 66
- ²² Ryken, *ibid*.
- ²³ Ask the Rabbi, *As Great as Moses*, http://www.aish.com/atr/As_Great_as_Moses.html