

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 264

Exodus 4:1-17

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Episode Summary

Exodus 4:1-17 continues Moses' conversation with God at the burning bush after the revelation of the divine name. It is marked by Moses' unwillingness to do what God has tasked him to do. This episode covers God's compassionate responses to Moses and also his anger when Moses refuses the job. The conversation takes us into supernatural sign acts, Egyptian magic, and the concession by God of bringing Aaron (and the Aaronic priesthood) into his plan for Israel.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 264: Exodus 4:1-17. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike. How are you doing?

MH: Pretty good. Again, I'm ready and fresh to start a new chapter in Exodus. [laughs]

TS: I know, it's crazy. Here we are in mid-March, and it seems like half the year... I can't believe how fast the year goes by. It's already March and we're still just scratching the surface of Exodus. It's crazy.

MH: Yeah, all I can say is, "You were warned." [laughs]

TS: Hey, you all voted for it, so you knew what you were getting into.

MH: Yep. What can you do? [laughs]

TS: There are no apologies for it.

MH: Yeah, I guess that's a good way to look at it. We are indeed going into Exodus 4 today. We're going to do the first 17 verses. I'm going to leave the famous (or infamous) "Bridegroom of Blood" passage for next time. So let's just start by reading the 17 verses here that we'll get into, and we'll do what we usually do, just go through and make some comments on some things that are interesting.

Then Moses answered, "But behold [MH: He's still arguing with God], they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'" ² The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." ³ And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴ But the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ⁵ "that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." ⁶ Again, the Lord said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. ⁷ Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸ "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign." ⁹ If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." ¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." ¹¹ Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." ¹³ But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." [MH: I love that line!] ¹⁴ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart." ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. ¹⁶ He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. ¹⁷ And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

That is Exodus 4:1-17. There are some interesting things lurking around in here. This is actually Moses' third objection to God's call. The previous two were in Exodus 3. In verse 11, Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel... I'm a nobody." And then Exodus 3:13, "If I come to the people of Israel and say, 'The God of your fathers has sent me,' and they ask me, 'What's his name?' what shall I say to them?" He's making excuses. And now God delivers the divine name which had something to do with

5:00

his presence, and God was promising to be with them and give the power to do something new here. And we get into chapter 4 and here he is again. Moses has not broken stride. [laughs] “Behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you.’” He’s treading water here. He’s making excuses. And God responds by giving Moses three signs to perform to validate Yahweh is with him. In verses 2-5 we get the rod and the snakes. In verses 6-7 we get the skin-diseased arm and its healing. And then, of course, following that we get the water to blood. Sarna, in his commentary, has something interesting to say that kicks us off here. He says:

[Moses] is instructed how to dissipate popular skepticism should it materialize. Deuteronomy 13:2–6 discusses the role of the sign in the legitimation of a prophet in Israel. Here, the signs, which will be executed in Egypt, possess a distinctly Egyptian coloration. This is not surprising, for magic was a pervasive ingredient of everyday life in Egypt, deeply embedded in the culture. The signs taught to Moses are intended, first and foremost, to validate his claim to be the divinely chosen instrument for the redemption of Israel. On a secondary level, they also function to establish the superiority of Moses over the Egyptian magicians and, by extension, to affirm the superior might of Israel’s God over those whom the Egyptians worshiped as gods.

Moses, however, is not a magician. He possesses no superhuman powers and no esoteric knowledge; he is unable to initiate or perform anything except by precise instructions from God; he pronounces no spells, observes no rituals, and employs no occult techniques, and often he does not know in advance the consequences of the actions he is told to perform.

The last paragraph, I think, is really interesting because when you read the stories, it’s true. Moses never does any ritual. He never utters an incantation—no “abracadabra” stuff. He never casts a spell. He has none of the techniques that Egyptian magicians (and Egyptians generally) would have expected. He just says, “Look. I listen to my God. This is what my God said. Now let’s just all watch.” Because Sarna is correct. As you read the story, there are a number of situations where Moses would not really quite have known what to expect—what the fallout would be—and he finds out with everybody else. And that would have spoken something to an Egyptian, because the Egyptians are expecting, “Well, you’re a magician, right? You do what magicians do.” “No, actually, I’m not a magician. I’m just a servant of the Most High God, so... You need to let us go.” There are differences there that are important.

So let’s talk about the first set (the serpents and the staff). The LORD says to him, “What’s in your hand?” He said, “A staff.” “Throw it on the ground.” He throws it on the ground. It becomes a serpent. And we know the rest of it. Moses gets scared and God says, “Hey, take it by the tail.” It becomes a staff in his hand.

Now the English translation here... And if you compare the translation here to Exodus 7:9-10, when Moses and Aaron actually do this... Right now, God's just telling him what to do. But when you get into Exodus 7, they actually do this. The English translation sort of obscures an interesting item that some would call a problem. I'm going to read you the way the way the ESV translates Exodus 7:9-10 just to make the point that this isn't very detectable in English.

⁹ “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Prove yourselves by working a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.’” ¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

You say, “Well, what’s the difference?” I’m going to read you a selection from John Currid’s book. Currid is trained as an Egyptologist at the University of Chicago. He teaches at one of the Reformed seminaries—I think in the Midwest (don’t quote me there, but it is one of the Reformed seminaries). He has a book called *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*. It’s a 1997 title. I’m going to give you some sections of pages 86-92. Currid writes:

When Aaron was ordered by Moses to throw down his staff (maṭṭeh) before Pharaoh (vv. 9–10) [MH: He’s commenting specifically on Exodus 7:9-10 here in this section], it was transformed into a tannîn. One would have expected it to change into a nāḥāš because the first sign given to Moses (Exod. 4:2–3) that he was to perform in Egypt was the turning of a maṭṭeh into a nāḥāš. Why is a different Hebrew term used in the two accounts?

10:00

Let me just stop there. So back in Exodus 4, where we are, the Hebrew term for what the staff becomes (this snake) is *nāḥāš*, but in Exodus 7, it’s *tannîn*, which elsewhere gets translated something like “dragon.” So Currid points this out, which you can’t really see in English. You say, “What’s the deal with the two different words?” He continues now:

Many scholars argue that the alteration of terminology is due to the change in scene; they argue that tannîn is a crocodile [MH: Because that word can mean “dragon”] rather than a serpent, and thus more accurately reflects the Egyptian environment. Umberto Cassuto [MH: famous Jewish commentator] comments: “Instead of the serpent most appropriate to the desert, in which form the sign was transmitted to Moses, comes here the dragon or crocodile most appropriate to the Egyptian milieu.” Supporting that position is the fact that the biblical authors often use the word tannîn of large reptiles that were more formidable than the simple nāḥāš (e.g., Gen. 1:21; Ps. 74:13; 148:7; Isa. 27:1). Other scholars argue that the variation in terms is merely a matter of poetic license...

Now Currid... Here's where he's at. He says:

It is doubtful that the Exodus writer meant anything more than that the rods of Aaron and the magicians turned into large snakes. [MH: So he says it's not a crocodile, it's snakes.] In the first place, *tannîn* and *nāḥāš* appear to be used interchangeably in the early chapters of Exodus. Thus, shortly after the serpent contest, God commands Moses, "Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent (*nāḥāš*)" (Exod. 7:15).

In other words, the *tannîn* word is not used there right at the Nile, which you would think if it's a crocodile that's the word they would use. But he's referring back to the incident in chapter 7 where *tannîn* was used. But here, later on in Exodus 7:15 (same chapter, a few verses later) what was in front of Pharaoh—what Pharaoh and his magicians were confronted with—was not a *tannîn*. It was a *nāḥāš*. So the terms get interchanged. Back to Currid. He says:

Clearly, the writer is referring here to the immediately preceding story, where the term *tannîn* is employed.

The Septuagint is of little help in this matter. Although it translates *tannîn* into the Greek *drakōn* ("dragon, large reptile"), it also applies *drakōn* to numerous instances of *nāḥāš* (e.g., Job 26:13; Isa. 27:1; Amos 9:3). If anything, the Septuagint supports the idea of the two Hebrew words often being used synonymously.

That's the end of Currid. Now I just introduced that because I thought it was interesting. And you may... This is the kind of thing you're going to find on a website, "Oh, contradictions in the Bible..." Could we actually spend a little bit of time looking to see if the terms are interchanged elsewhere where it really doesn't matter? Might be a good idea. So I wanted to introduce it here because of the novelty of it and so that you would know, yeah, people have noticed this and scholars have written about it. But the two terms in Exodus do just really appear to be interchangeable. And in the mind of the translator of the Septuagint, the same thing is true. So we're probably just dealing with snakes here and not crocodiles.

Verse 5... I wanted to draw your attention to a word here. We have a repetition of what we saw in the previous week's episode (in chapter 3) about God appearing, using that "appeared" language. We get it again in verse 5:

⁵ "...the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

It's the same language that we talked about last time with the burning bush, and it's reinforced here. Verse 6:

⁶ Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow.

We covered this in our series on Leviticus. This term used in Hebrew is not actually leprosy. You can go back to the episodes in Leviticus where we talked about this. The term used there (and the description, more importantly) that is given in the book of Exodus is not consistent with what we know as leprosy today. So Sarna writes here:

15:00

Hebrew *tsara'at*, usually mistranslated "leprosy," has none of the major symptoms of that malady, and the descriptions of *tsara'at* given in Leviticus 13–14 are incompatible with Hansen's disease [MH: which is what we know today as leprosy]. The comparison to snow is not in respect of its whiteness but of its flakiness. Apart from the startling phenomenon of the sudden appearance and disappearance of the encrustation, this particular sign has an ominous aspect to it in that it is seen in the Bible as a divine punishment for human misbehavior.

So I just wanted to park on that a little bit and hearken back to our earlier episodes in Leviticus, just when it comes to that particular issue. Verses 8 and 9:

⁸ "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. ⁹ If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

So this sign (the Nile turning into blood) turns out to be used for the first plague as the actual story unfolds. It seems significant that at the continued resistance to the signs that Moses is giving, Moses runs out of signs. He has his staff there with the changing it into a serpent and he can stick his hand in his cloak, but if Pharaoh doesn't believe those two, he's kind of out of ammunition as far as objects or parts of himself that can demonstrate anything. So at this point, essentially, with the third sign here (the water turning into blood), God has to take over. And I think that might be the point. Pharaoh's resistance to a sign where clearly Moses isn't doing any... He's not manipulating an object. He's not doing slight-of-hand magic. (Hand in the cloak, out of the cloak, back in again. "Oh, look at that!") He's not doing any of that stuff after the second sign. The third sign is literally an act of God. Again, this isn't new to me. Lots of commentators have pointed this out. It seems like Pharaoh's resistance brings God forward (center

stage) and he says, “Okay. Here we go. Watch. I’m going to turn the water of the Nile...” which was super-significant, because it’s the lifeblood of Egypt (pun intended)... “I’m going to turn it to blood. It’s going to pollute the land. This is an act of God.”

So this actually launches the series of what will become known as the Ten Plagues. It’s a transition point. Pharaoh’s resistance to what Moses is doing turns out to be like the last straw. And then God says, “Okay, I’m going to take over from here.” And the confrontation (when God enters the picture, as it were—when it’s an undeniable act of God) therefore shifts to not Moses versus Pharaoh or Moses versus Pharaoh’s magicians. Now it’s God versus Pharaoh, who is the living Horus in Egyptian thinking. Pharaoh was considered the incarnation of a deity. In Egyptian theology, the pharaoh was thought to be the living incarnation of Horus, the son of Ra. And as soon as the pharaoh dies, his son (the next in line) becomes the new Horus. (This was the thinking.) The first name of Pharaoh’s fivefold titulary... In Egypt, the pharaoh had five names, and they represented different aspects of either his rule or his nature or something—fivefold name, fivefold titulary. And the first of those was his Horus name. Now Hoffmeier has a *Bible Review* article on “the son of God” language in the Old Testament—how that compares or maps over to Egyptian thinking. Hoffmeier teaches at Wheaton. He’s an Egyptologist by training. He points out in his article:

During the OK [Old Kingdom] (2700-2200 BC), the epithet “great god” (ntr 3’) was applied to the king, only to be replaced by the less exalted “good god” (ntr nfr) in subsequent periods. Additionally, the pharaoh could be called the “image” (twf) of a deity. For example, Twt-ankh-amun (“living image of Amun”).

20:00

So the evidence is very clear that the Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was the incarnation of Horus (the deity) and they would refer to the pharaoh as the “great god.” So when God says, “Okay, I’ll take over from here,” [laughs] and starts pounding Pharaoh and pounding the nation, that speaks volumes. And Pharaoh’s heart is going to harden. He’s not surrendering the title any time soon. He knows what’s at stake in terms of his own reputation. Pharaoh is supposed to be the regulator of the divine order. And the divine order says that the Nile floods at the same time every year and gives the land life—life-giving soil—on either side of the Nile, the black land... That’s what Egypt called itself: the black land, the “kemet”—the black land where things grow. This is miles of arable land out there in the middle of the desert. The gods keep Egypt alive. This is why Egypt is great—because of the Nile. And God says [laughs], “Pardon me. I’m going to turn that to blood for a while. We’ll see how that goes.” So it’s a shift in the confrontation and how it would have been read and parsed by Egyptians in light of their own theology.

When we go down to verse 10, we get another objection of Moses before the showdown actually happens. His fourth objection:

But Moses said to the Lord, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.”

I take “your servant” as a generic reference to his servants. Or you could say there’s a little bit of space here between this conversation and the burning bush. It could be, but it could be generic as well. He says, “I can’t talk well.” And it is true that you could look at those Hebrew terms there and it could be that Moses was a stutterer. That’s certainly possible. It’s not terribly important because even if he’s not, he’s making another excuse: “I can’t do it. Just can’t do it.” And, of course, God says, “Well, who makes a man’s mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Isn’t it I? Get off your butt and go. I’ll be with your mouth. I’ll teach you what you should speak.” But Moses isn’t having any of it. So this is the fourth objection. And God has been patient, to say the least, up to this point. He has answered Moses’ objections with, “I’ll give you signs. You’ll do this. I’ll step in with the water turned to blood. Once you get into Egypt, I’ll help you with what you say. I am. I’m present” (going back to our discussion of the name). And Moses just is resistant. So by the time you get to verses 13 and 14, God is angry.

But he [Moses] said, “Oh my Lord, please send someone else.”

Now he doesn’t even bother making an excuse. He says, “I don’t want to go.” [laughs] It’s pretty simple. “You’ve handled my objections and my excuses. Let’s just get down to it. I don’t want to go. I’m scared, or I’ve got some other... I don’t want to go. Please send someone else.”

¹⁴**Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses...**

He still doesn’t just fry Moses on the spot, which you almost see... Like, that would be the outcome.

...and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well [he doesn’t have your problem; he doesn’t stutter]. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

So God has already anticipated this. God has already tapped Aaron on the shoulder. “Get out to the desert. Moses is out there. You need to go see him. You shall speak to him.” God says, “You shall speak to Aaron and put the words in his mouth. You tell Aaron what to say. I’ll tell *you* what to say; you tell Aaron what to say. I’ll be with you both. I am giving you the words and you’re going to give him the words. You’ll be to him like I am to you.” That’s why God says, “You will be like an *elohim* to him. You’re going to play my role. The role I’m playing in relationship to you, you’re going to play in relationship to Aaron. This is how we’ll work it. He’s on his way.”

Now this is going to become significant later on when we get to (in the next episode) the “bridegroom of blood,” because Moses apparently just takes off. He doesn’t even wait for Aaron. They never have the conversation. Then God gets real angry. He’s about to kill Moses. That’s not the only reason that God is really, really angry with him. We’ll see that next time. But this is part of it. He doesn’t even wait. He really doesn’t want to go. [laughs] It’s pretty evident.

25:00

What I want to focus on here, though, for this episode is that it’s at this point that we have to go back and revisit something that we talked about in our earlier Hebrews series. This is when you get Aaron entering the picture. And once Aaron is in the picture, this is the beginning point of Aaron’s role as intercessor for Moses to compensate for Moses’ weakness. And honestly, I think there’s a bit of a punishment in here as well. Aaron is going to be part of the picture now and he’s going to have an intercessory role in the place of Moses between... For Pharaoh, and also between the people in some instances, specifically things like the Day of Atonement ritual, where only Aaron (only the high priest) was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies. Moses didn’t get to do that. It’s at this point where that starts. Aaron becomes part of the picture. And it is a concession to Moses’ unbelief—his resistance.

We talked about this in our series in the book of Hebrews because back then, we spent a lot of time talking about Melchizedek. “You shall be a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” This language about Jesus. And we asked the question back in our Hebrews episodes, “What in the world is going on here? I thought Israel had a high priest, and it was Aaron. Why does the writer of Hebrews go back to Melchizedek?” Of course, the time of Abraham predates Aaron. And we spent a lot of time talking about Melchizedek and his priesthood. Part of our discussion was the notion in scholarship... This isn’t unique to Mike. Mike’s not making this up. You’ll see this discussion in a number of places. The whole presence (the whole piece) in Israelite thinking and Israel as a nation... In the worship of Israel, the whole element of the Aaronic priesthood arose out of this conversation. In other words, it was not God’s original intention. It was a concession to Moses. It was God being kind. God could have very well said, “Okay, we’re done here. Fried.” Or “Just go home. You’re done. I’ll go get somebody else.” He doesn’t do that. He gives Moses an out. There’s a concession here. He’s merciful. But this is where the Aaronic priesthood starts. It was not part of God’s original plan. And we talked about how that fits in with kingship and Melchizedek (who’s the king of Salem—Jerusalem) and how that became the model for the messiah. You can go back to episode 167 and listen to that. I’m just going to pick out a few summary statements here from that material.

But this is an issue for biblical theology. It helps to understand the Aaronic priesthood as being a concession. It helps to parse what’s going on with Melchizedek. And just generally what the template was supposed to be and why... In the perfect Servant (the one who doesn’t make excuses)—the Messiah, Jesus—why both of these things: the kingship (the leadership, the rulership, the

political leadership of the nation) is blended with the priestly relationship—why it's blended into one person. That was the typical pattern; that was the intended pattern. Because up until this point (this is just a general comment and then I'll get into a few more specifics here) God is working through single individuals, not pairs. He's not doing Batman and Robin. There is no Robin. He's not working with his people as a group through pairs (through teams or duos). They're single leadership. This is the point of transition, and this is a departure from the heretofore normal template of doing things.

So the original kingship of Jerusalem... Think about it a little more broadly here, and I'll draw some material in from our earlier episode (episode 167), where we're talking about Melchizedek. The original kingship of Jerusalem didn't go back to David. It goes back to Melchizedek. Melchizedek was the model. He was the king of Salem. ("Jerusalem"—get it? There's this connection here.) He was the prototype. The original kingship of Jerusalem also entailed a priestly role. Melchizedek was also a priest—a priest of the Most High God. The priestly role would not be inherited by the sons of Aaron when it came to the messiah; it would be inherited by these descendants of Abraham. It has chronological priority over the Aaronic priesthood. The whole Melchizedek thing has chronological priority.

30:00

So the Aaronic priesthood... When that comes into view, it splits the role. It gives Israel two leaders instead of one. The political leader was Moses; the priestly leader was Aaron. The argument that Aaron's priesthood was supposed to be the original design just doesn't work. There's a good argument (I think Exodus 4 makes it pretty clear) to be made that Aaron's priesthood was a concession to the lack of faith on Moses' part. It was Plan B. Plan A would have been to have Moses be both the political leader and the priestly leader to intercede for the people with respect to God. But that isn't how it emerges. The role splits because of this. Now you can say, "Well, Moses still interceded for the people with God, and think about the wilderness wanderings..." Yeah, he does that stuff. But when they get into the land... The land is going to be the place where they build the Temple. God's going to come and be their God and they will be his people. When they get into the land, that ain't the case. It's split in two. It's two separate offices instead of one. So it's at this point in Exodus 4 that Aaron's status is elevated to essentially co-leader. That'll be his status. It'll lead to him becoming the High Priest. This is how it works.

Think about what happens after this scene in the Exodus story. Moses apparently (if we look at Exodus 4:24-27) leaves for Egypt without Aaron. In this incident (the "bridegroom of blood" incident with Zipporah, where God's going to kill Moses [laughs] which we'll talk about next time), Moses apparently left for Egypt without Aaron. God had told him, "Look, your brother Aaron is on the way. Talk to him. Here's how it's going to be." Moses gets out of Dodge. That might indicate that Moses is just a screw-up. It probably indicates plain old disobedience. He leaves Aaron behind after all this wrangling with God and after

God's anger and his compassionate concession—all of that right after he says, “Can you send somebody else?” God gets angry and said, “Look, here's what we'll do. We'll bring Aaron into the picture.” After hearing that, Moses just takes off without him—without ever telling Aaron that he was part of God's plan.

Now we'll cover that scene (the “bridegroom of blood” scene) next time. But after you get past that, think about what Aaron does. Aaron repeats the signs that God originally told *Moses* to perform. So not only can you... “Well, Moses does priestly things. He meets with God. And he intercedes with God, ‘Don't blot them out, God.’” Yeah. But Aaron also actually does Moses' things as well. They're co-leaders now, when the original plan was to have one. So Aaron repeats signs that God originally told Moses to perform. An example is Exodus 4:29-30, where we read this (we're still in chapter 4 here, but we're past the “bridegroom of blood” thing):

²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰ Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people.

And of course, the outcome is positive. The elders believe, just like God said they would, despite Moses' unbelief. Aaron acts in the place of Moses at other times (Exodus 4, 5, and 6). You see this going on. In Exodus 6:12, for instance, Moses again does not believe the people will listen to him if he speaks God's words with them. I'll just read you the verse.

¹² But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?”

He's complaining: “I can't talk. I told you, God, I can't talk. You're not going to listen.” So Aaron is brought on the scene in verse 13 in Exodus 6 to get the job done—and he does. And in the rest of Exodus 6, we get the... You're reading along in Exodus 6, and Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh are duking it out—all this stuff. And then right in the middle of that, you get what? You get a genealogy. We'll hit this when we get to chapter 6. We get the genealogy of Moses and Aaron. And then the text adds what feels like an explanation for why the genealogies are even there. Here's verse 26 with the comment on the genealogies. So you have Moses and Aaron. Aaron's the co-leader. He's doing what Moses won't do. And then you get a genealogy right in the middle of that, just thrown in there. And then you hit verse 26 right after the genealogy. This is what it says:

²⁶ These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said: “Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts.” ²⁷ It was they who spoke to

Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.

Notice the plural language. *These* are the Aaron and the Moses to whom the Lord said (to both of them), “Bring out the people of Israel from the land.” It was *they* who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.”

²⁸ On the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ the Lord said to Moses, “I am the Lord; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.” ³⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?”

The writer actually brings verse 12 back at the end of the genealogy and explains why it's there. It's because on the day that the Lord spoke to Moses in Egypt and said, “You tell Pharaoh, ‘I am the Lord,’” Moses said, “Look, I can't talk well.” [laughs] An editorial hand here has actually put verse 12 right back here, right after the genealogy, to tell you why it's there—to tell you why there were co-leaders. If you look at the situation, Moses saying “I can't talk” is what prompted... That's part of the transition to include Aaron way back at the burning bush in chapter 4. So the writer or the editor is telling you, “This is why we have two and not one.” So it's basically saying, “This is why. There you go. Aaron is here because Moses chickened out, or he was just a rebel. He was disobedient. Faithless.”

Take that against the context of the wider flow of biblical history. The leadership up to this point had been one individual. (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob...) You can almost count Joseph, but we'll just stick with the major patriarchs here. So you have at least three. You can throw Joseph in there if you want. And then you hit Moses. They're single leaders, single mediators. There's no duo. There's no duet. There's no team. Here, with Moses, it splits. Aaron's priesthood is the result of Moses' unbelief. From the very beginning, it's a concession. Incidentally, this makes the golden calf incident all the more tragic (we'll get to that in the future, too), because it's Aaron's fault. Aaron screws up there. Moses gets better, but by then, the Aaronic priesthood is in place.

So this whole situation (this whole episode) in these first 17 verses (and picking up toward the end of chapter 4 as well... we'll save the “bridegroom of blood” for next week) is kind of important. I think it's important because of the role it plays and the role it will play later, like with Melchizedek in the New Testament. It creates a context for why Jesus re-fuses the two leadership roles back into one. There are kings like David (you can go back and listen to Episode 167) who do some priestly things. There are hints of this. And it's important that it's David. It's important that it's Solomon. Because these are the archetypal figures (especially

David). And it's his dynastic line. This is the line through which God will produce the ultimate son of David—the messiah. And when we get that in the New Testament, the two things are brought back together. We get back to God's original ideal of one person who is both the political/military deliverer and the mediator between God and men. So this helps us understand why, when there were two in so many other contexts, it goes back to one. Because it was originally one, and this is a concession. So I think that's important.

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The other thing I think that we can get out of this is the tolerance of God. Even though he gets so angry with Moses (and he's going to get angry with Moses on other occasions, too), he doesn't allow Moses' obstinacy to thwart what he wants Moses to do. That's not the case with everybody. Sometimes God just does say, "goodbye, so long" and he moves to another. He does that with the kings of Israel (the monarchy). He doesn't do it here, which I think is significant. But it's really interesting.

We'll end with this. What's really interesting is when you actually read through the story, you get Aaron not only speaking for Moses but actually doing things that Moses was supposed to do. And you get this weird, "Let's throw in a genealogy here so that our later readers know who we're talking about. It was these two guys. These two guys are who you think they are. It was the same Moses and Aaron that did..." And the reason why we had two is because Moses just chickened out. He didn't want to do it. So God had to bring Aaron back into the picture. I think there are wider implications here, as well, for people who are hung up on priestly stuff as being somehow... We need to connect priestly stuff to Jesus so that we do Jesus right, or worship Jesus right... Or that we're disciples like Jesus. We have to throw in this Levitical stuff. Actually, that wasn't the ideal. It really wasn't. So we should really check ourselves and not make it the ideal right now. That's contrary to the patterning here that goes from one to two and back to one. It's contrary to that. And really, ultimately, it's just completely unnecessary. So I think chapter 4 has some good things to teach us. But we want to stop here and devote a full episode to the "bridegroom of blood." Because that's just kind of weird. It'll be fun.

TS: Alright, Mike. Yep, looking forward to that one for sure. Can you give us a little teaser about that?

MH: Yeah, it's fair to say that I have written up something on my website on this long ago. [Laughs] Let me just throw this in. The "bridegroom of blood" is really not a hill to die on. But when I wrote that thing up on my website (five or six years ago), we actually had somebody leave my church over it. [laughs] "I'm leaving the church because of what Heiser said about the bridegroom of blood." Really? "Yep, really."

TS: Oh, wow. Somebody left your church? That's crazy.

MH: Yeah, I would think there are other hills to die on. But there you go. [laughs]

TS: Hey, we're looking forward to that. We'll see how many people we can get to leave the podcast. [laughter] If you're going to leave the podcast over that episode, please email me and let me know, so we can report back on that.

MH: [laughs] There you go. Yep.

TS: Alright, Mike, we're looking forward to that next week, and we want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.