

**Episode:** Promised Land Series No. 02

**Narrator:** Zipporah

**Primary Scriptures:** Exodus 4:18-28

**Story Summary:** Moses travels from Midian to Egypt to confront Pharaoh

**Location:** Egypt, Midian

**Time:** c. 1526 BC Birth of Moses

c. 1446 BC The plagues and exodus

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Exodus 4:19, 4:24

This episode covers only eleven verses, but a lot can be gleaned from them. These verses follow Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush. In that experience, God reveals that Moses will lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Pharaoh will resist until God prevails, Moses will be an unwilling participant, and the soon-arriving Aaron will be chosen as Moses' assistant.

In this lesson, Moses returns from the burning bush to his home with his father-in-law, Jethro. Apparently, Moses is secretive about the burning bush experience, because he requests permission to return to Egypt to see if his enemies are dead, even though God had already revealed this to Moses. Moses is asking permission as a courtesy, because he is taking Jethro's daughter and grandchildren with him.

Jethro would not have noticed such a mundane thing as Moses taking his staff with him on the trip. Jethro does not know that Moses' staff has been converted into the staff of God, useful for performing wondrous signs.

Exodus 4:21-22 give a preview of the coming plagues and Pharaoh's response. God calls Israel his "firstborn son." This is an interesting name, because Israel (as Jacob) was born after Esau, making him a natural second-born son.<sup>1</sup> It appears that Israel became the firstborn son by purchasing the birthright of Esau.<sup>2</sup> In these verses, we see unmistakable evidence that God had foreknowledge of the plague of the firstborn.

It is important to realize that the writer of Exodus moves from talking about firstborn sons to the subject of circumcision. Somehow, Zipporah was able to relate the circumcision of Abraham and his family to this circumstance with Moses and their uncircumcised son. Her actions apparently saved the life of Moses.

Moses' older brother, Aaron, is introduced in Exodus 4:14 as being a Levite, a person of the tribe of Levi. That verse also says Aaron was on his way to Moses at the time of the burning bush. Wouldn't it have been fun to have been at their meeting? The Bible isn't clear, but it is possible that Aaron had not known Moses as an adult but had been in Egypt while Moses had been in Midian and that Aaron did not know much, if anything, about God.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 25:25

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 25:31

### Discussion Questions:

1. Who was Zipporah, and what do you know about her?
2. Who was Jethro, or Ruel, and what do you know about him?
3. Why wasn't the son of Moses circumcised prior to the trip back to Egypt?
4. While in Midian, what contact with Egypt did Moses have?
5. Based on Exodus 4:21, did Pharaoh have any choice over his response to Moses?
6. Explain Exodus 4:24-26 in your own words.

1. Zipporah was a daughter of Ruel, a priest of Midian. Moses met her when he went into exile from Egypt, and she became his wife. According to Number 12:1, she was a Cushite, possibly the land near the Red Sea or modern Ethiopia. She was not respected by Miriam or Aaron since she was a Cushite. 2. According to Exodus 18, Ruel, or Jethro, was a priest of Midian was the father-in-law of Moses. When Moses was tending the sheep of Jethro, he had had the burning bush encounter. It appears that Jethro cared for Moses' wife and children when Moses went back to Egypt, and then brought them to Moses at Sinai. He advised Moses on how to better rule over his people. 3. The rite of circumcision was given to Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 17:1-14. According to Joshua 5:2-5, the Israelites continued the rite through the time of the Exodus, but temporarily stopped it during the forty years in the wilderness. 4. It appears he did not know anything about his family or the court of Egypt except that those who wanted to harm him had died.

### Application Questions:

1. Aaron is the older brother of Moses. Do you think it was easy for him to serve under Moses' leadership? What challenges might you face in a similar situation?
2. What skills and talents have you acquired in the last ten years that might be useful in helping grow God's kingdom?
3. Do you think Aaron's prior reputation helped him deal with the elders of Israel?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Based on Exodus 4:14 and 4:27, how do you think Aaron knew to go meet Moses in Sinai? Do you think Aaron escaped slavery in Egypt to do so? How do you think God prepared Aaron to help Moses?
2. Are you willing to prepare yourself to do important things for God long before those things are to happen? What might that preparation look like? In what ways might preparation to serve God look different from the ways of worldly preparation?