

## Exodus 4

Verses 1 - 5

Then Moses said, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’<sup>2</sup> The Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he said, “A staff.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.”

Then Moses said, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’

This is the 3rd of 4 objections.

3. What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say?

God had already assured him that the leaders of Israel would believe him.

See Exodus 3:18

<sup>18</sup> Then they will pay attention 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, so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’

<sup>2</sup> The Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he said, “A staff.”<sup>3</sup> 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.

The fact that Moses fled tells us this was not a common magic trick performed by the Egyptian magicians because Moses would have been familiar with it since he had spent 40 years in the Egyptian courts. However, the magicians will replicate something that appears to be similar to what the Lord had done so this new magic trick must have been developed by the magicians in the last 40 years while Moses was in Midian raising a family. The magicians learned rather quickly that Moses was not performing magic.

**<sup>4</sup> 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.”**

Even though God had promised that the leaders would believe in Moses, He gives this miracle to Moses to perform before the elders. It is likely that God may have done this more for Moses than the leaders. In either case, this is the 1st of 3 miracles that God will give to Moses.

Verses 6 - 9

**<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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*. <sup>8</sup> If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign. <sup>9</sup> 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.”**

**<sup>6</sup> 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.**

When God performed these signs they were miracles but later when the Egyptian magicians duplicate these signs we know it had to be some kind of illusion that made it look real.

**<sup>8</sup> If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign.**

This 2nd miracle, like the first, was given that “they” might believe. However, these signs were given to Moses because he was skeptical that the elders would believe that God had appeared to him

**<sup>9</sup> 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.**”

If the elders didn't believe the first two signs, do you think this 3<sup>rd</sup> one would do the trick? Miracles cannot create faith in those who have no faith but miracles can strengthen those who do believe but are weak in their faith.

Verses 10 - 13

**<sup>10</sup> 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.” <sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> 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.”**

**<sup>10</sup> 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.”**

This is the last of his four objections.

**4. For I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.**

Is this a true statement from Moses that he was slow of speech and slow of tongue?

See Acts 7:22

**<sup>22</sup> Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was proficient in speaking and action.**

**<sup>11</sup> 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?**

Not everyone is meant to be a leader or a speaker but this was not the problem with Moses. It seems that the reluctance of Moses was a matter of trust not ability.

**<sup>12</sup> 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.”

This is very similar to what Jesus promised the apostles.

See Matthew 10:19-20

**<sup>19</sup> But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given you in that hour. <sup>20</sup> For it is not you who are speaking, but *it is the Spirit of your Father who is speaking in you.***

Forty years earlier, Moses saw himself as the champion of Israel and tried to help his fellow Israelite by using his own ability. However, he had learned humility during the 40 years he spent in the wilderness and now he was not so self-assured. Being a leader with humility is much more difficult than being one who does it out of arrogance.

Verses 14-17

**<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.”**

**<sup>14</sup> 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.**

God had good reason to be angry with Moses because this was a direct, face to face, discussion with God. God got his attention with a burning bush, spoke to him, gave him a specific mission, and encouraged him by providing 3 miracles that he could perform if the people did not believe him. This was not the same as we see today when someone says they feel led to preach the gospel. This is not meant to minimize those who desire to preach the word via a public ministry (be a preacher) but their calling is not the same as the calling that God put upon many of the great bible characters in the bible.

Moses was unwilling to be the spokesman so God gave him a helper. But this was not what God wanted and Aaron will fail in his role as a leader in a major way when Moses receives the two tablets from God.

See Exodus 32:25

**<sup>24</sup> So I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.’ Then they gave *it* to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.” <sup>25</sup> Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to the point of being an object of ridicule among their enemies—**

Despite the fact that God was angry with Moses He did listen to him and provided someone to help in this mission. And He still left Moses in the more honorable leadership role.

**<sup>15</sup> 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.**

God would give a message to Moses and he would convey it to Aaron who would then tell it to the people.

Verses 18 - 20

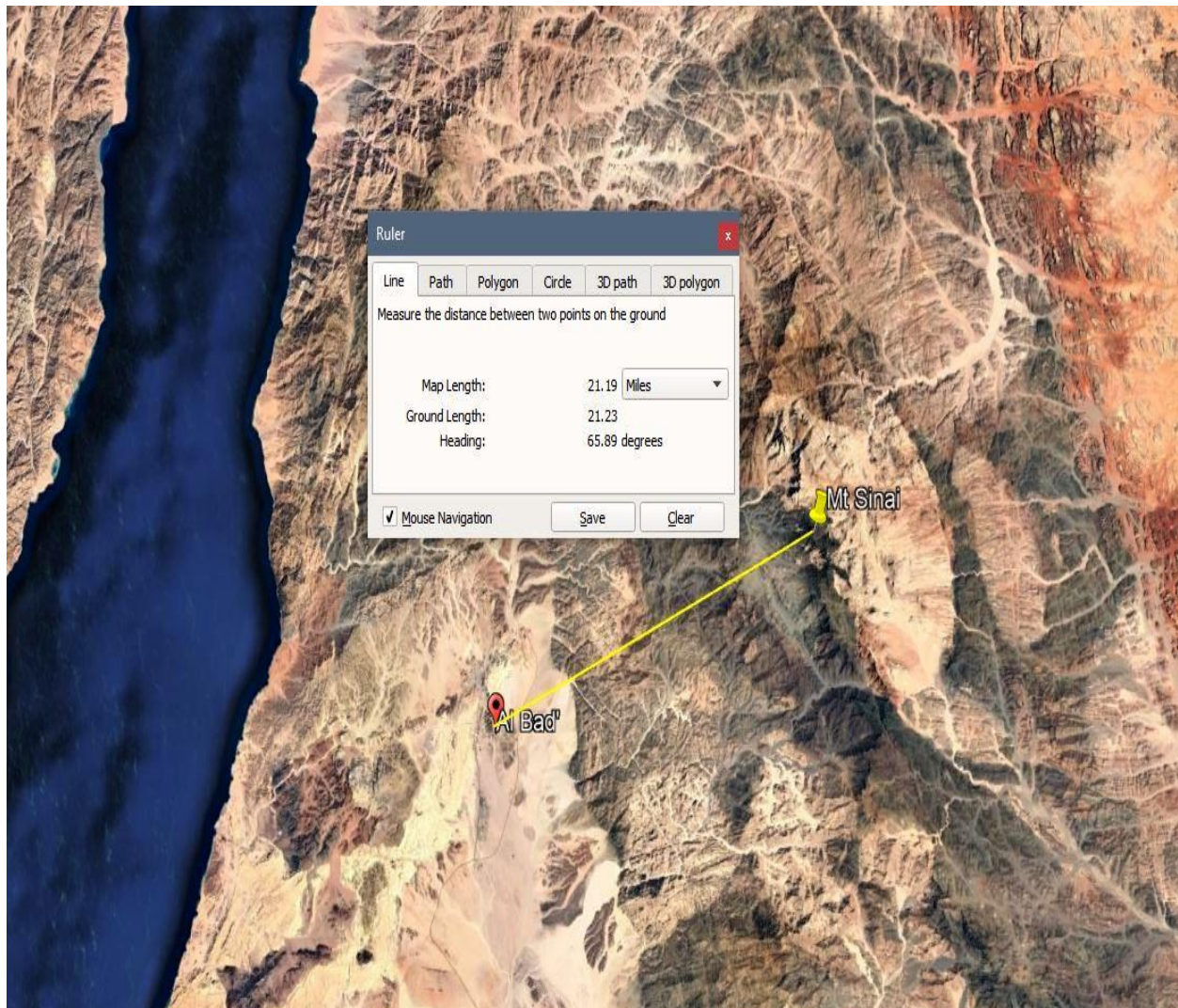
**<sup>18</sup> Then Moses departed and returned to his father-in-law Jethro, and said to him, “Please, let me go, that I may return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” <sup>19</sup> Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.” <sup>20</sup> So Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand.**

**<sup>18</sup> Then Moses departed and returned to his father-in-law Jethro, and said to him, “Please, let me go, that I may return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”**

Moses left Mount Sinai and went back to Midian.

See map 405 Thanks to Google earth.



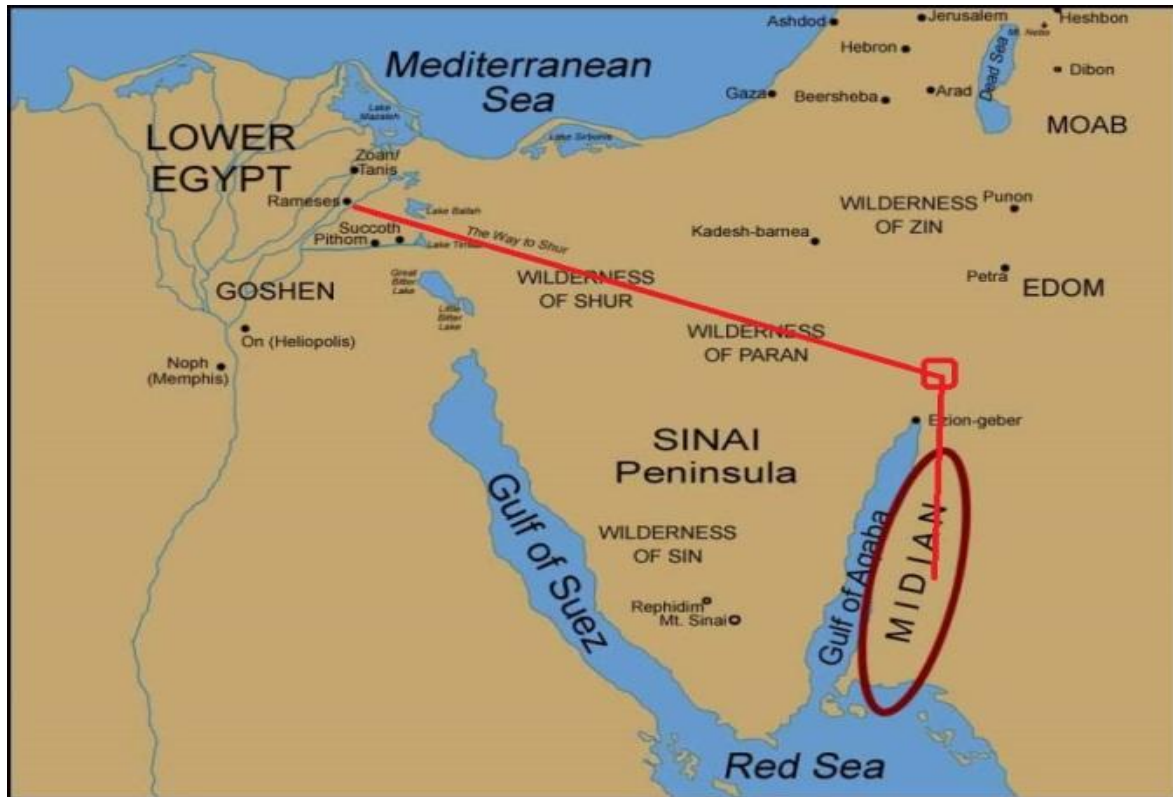


Through his marriage to Zipporah, Moses had become a member of the clan and tribal law may have required the permission of the tribal leader (Jethro) to leave, plus, he was still an employee of Jethro.

**<sup>19</sup> Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.”**

Moses had spoken with God at Mount Sinai and had been directed to deliver his brothers in Egypt from their slavery. However, Moses may have delayed his return to Egypt because he still feared those who wanted to kill him. So God reminds him to get going and tells Moses that those who were seeking his life were dead.

See map 410



<sup>20</sup> So Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand.

We knew about Gershom but this is the first mention of another son. The name of his other son is Eliezer.

See Exodus 18:4

<sup>4</sup> And the other was named Eliezer, for *he said*, “The God of my father was my help, and saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.”

Verses 21 - 23

<sup>21</sup> The Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. <sup>22</sup> Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is my son, my firstborn.” <sup>23</sup> So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.

**<sup>21</sup> The Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.**

God tells Moses that he will harden the king’s heart so he will not let the people go. We will find out later that in some cases the king will harden his own heart but when the king decides to do what the Lord demands then God will harden his heart. This is not a contradiction to what is said here it’s just that God doesn’t give Moses all of the particulars at this time.

**<sup>22</sup> Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is my son, my firstborn.**

Physical Israel was God’s firstborn and this came with special rewards just like it did with the firstborn of any Jewish family. But God will have another child (the Gentiles) that will also reap the benefits of His firstborn because they are part of the family of God.

**<sup>23</sup> So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.**

This will happen in the 10<sup>th</sup> and final plague. The king will pay a high price for willfully disobeying the Lord. However, we should remember that Moses will experience these plagues as they happen; he was not given the big picture before it all took place.

Verses 24 - 26

**<sup>24</sup> Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. <sup>25</sup> Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and threw it at Moses’ feet, and she said, “You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me.” <sup>26</sup> So He let him alone. At that time she said, “*You are a bridegroom of blood*”— because of the circumcision.**

**<sup>24</sup> Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.**

On their way from Midian to Egypt God was ready to kill Moses.



<sup>25</sup> **Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me."**

It seems that circumcision was repugnant to Zipporah, and it is possible that Moses had held off from performing this act for his wife's sake.

However, this was the sign and seal of the Jewish covenant and for any Hebrew to neglect this, especially the leader and deliverer of the nation, was something that had to be addressed immediately.

Oddly enough, the sons born in the wilderness wanderings were not circumcised.

See Joshua 5:4 - 5

<sup>4</sup> **This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised.**

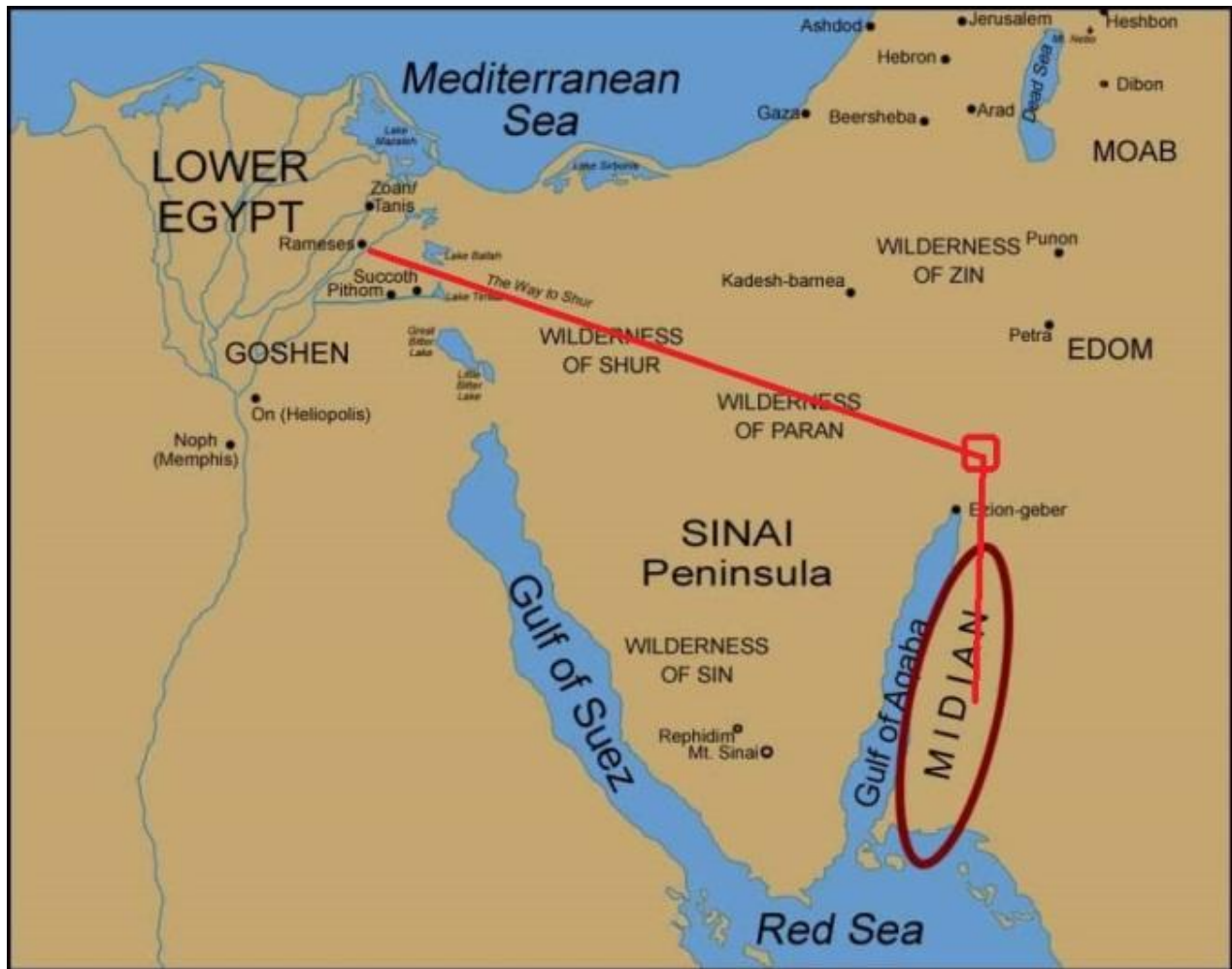
<sup>26</sup> **So He let him alone. At that time she said, "*You are a bridegroom of blood*"—because of the circumcision.**

As soon as the circumcision was complete, God backed away and left Moses alone.

It was probably here at the lodging place that Zipporah and Moses decided it would be better for her and the children to head back to Midian.

The 300 mile trip to Egypt would have been hard on the boys in their condition.

See Map 410 above.            Midian to Egypt



About a year later, after the Exodus had already taken place, Jethro brought Zipporah and the kids back to Moses

See Exodus 18:2-3

Since Moses was camped close to Sinai, the trip from Midian was only about 20 miles

Verses 27- 31

<sup>27</sup> Now the Lord said to Aaron, “Go to meet Moses in the wilderness.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. <sup>28</sup> 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*. <sup>29</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; <sup>30</sup> and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. <sup>31</sup> So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the

**sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.**

**Go meet Moses in the wilderness. So he met him at the mountain of God**

Where did Aaron come from?

Had he leave Egypt, fearing retribution, after his brother rebelled against the king

How about Miriam?

**<sup>28</sup> 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 updates his brother about what had taken place at Mount Horeb

**<sup>29</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel;  
<sup>30</sup> and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses.**

This is what God had told Moses to do back in Exodus 3:16

**He then performed the signs in the sight of the people.**

God had promised Moses that the elders would believe if he gave them the following message:

1. I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt
2. I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey

But Moses performed the signs before the elders could accept or reject the message based solely on the message

**<sup>31</sup> So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.**

It seems the message is what really persuaded the elders just as the Lord had said.

So who needed the miracles; Moses or the elders?