

## Exodus, Part 4

We left off the last session with the doubting Moses commissioned by God to return to Egypt and deliver the children of Israel out of bandage. Fully understanding his limitations and the size and complexity of the task he was being called to accomplish, Moses was humbled into a place where his only alternative was to trust that God would be with him in all that he was being called to do. He would come to understand what Paul would say many years later, “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).

### Moses Returns to Egypt

**Exodus 4:18** Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” <sup>19</sup> And 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 had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

The deceased king is Thutmose III, the Pharaoh of the oppression who was followed on the throne by Amenhotep II the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

The Lord said, “Go back to Egypt.” And Moses asked Jethro for permission to return to his people in Egypt because he was concerned for their welfare. Jethro granted him leave with his blessing.

The Lord had revealed to Moses that in his 40-year sojourn in Midian, those who had sought his life were dead so he needed to have no fear of reprisal. He took with him his wife Zipporah and sons. His first son was Gershom and the second son was Eliezer, named later in 18:4. It isn't clear when Eliezer was born, but Acts 7 tells us both were born in Midian,

**Acts 7:29** ... Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.”

Could all fit on one donkey? Yes, the “donkey” is singular in Hebrew. Possibly it is a scribal error and more than one donkey was used. Donkeys

are tough animals but three people might be a bit much. If only one donkey was used, it is assumed that the two boys, Gershom and Eliezer (first mentioned by name in Ex 18:4), were very young with Eliezer yet a babe in arms having been born soon after Gershom. The fact that one of the boys (who was not mentioned but probably Eliezer) needed to be circumcised (vv. 24-26) which was required on the eighth day after birth does support the probability that he was a newborn. If so, then the three could easily ride on one donkey.

**Exodus 4:21** And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that 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 firstborn son, <sup>23</sup> and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’ ”

Then God told Moses about his future ministry before Pharaoh. Moses would demonstrate God’s power to Amenhotep II. But God said it would be of no avail because He would harden Pharaoh’s heart and he would refuse to let the people of God go.

## Hard Hearts

On numerous occasions in Exodus, God is said to have hardened Pharaoh’s heart. The Hebrew word is *chazaq* /*khaw-zak*/ which means to harden, make rigid, to strengthen. To some people, God’s hardening seems to preclude Pharaoh’s exercise of his own will. But it is also said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (7:13, “became hard”; 14, “unyielding”; 22, “became hard”; 8:15, 19, “was hard”; 32; 9:7, “unyielding”; 34, “hardened”; 35, “was hard”. In Exodus 13:15, we have *qashah* /*kaw-shaw* which is translated as “stubbornly refused,” another Hebrew word meaning “hardened”).

The first two references to God’s hardening Pharaoh’s heart (4:21; 7:3) were actually *predictions* that He would do it in the future. Then in the next seven references Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart (7:13–14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7), and that was *before* God is said to have hardened it (9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8). God’s first hardening came

after the sixth plague. Pharaoh hardened his own heart six times by his refusals. Then later he hardened it again in response to the seventh plague, and God hardened his heart after each of the plagues.

Another way to look at the idea of God hardening Pharaoh's heart is to see God's actions as like sunshine. That shining sun will melt a block of butter left exposed to it. Expose a block of modeling clay to that same shining sun, and the clay turns into stone. The same sun had two different effects that depended upon the object and how it reacted to the sun. God's message can be *received* with a receptive heart, or that same message can be *resisted* with a hardened heart. Pharaoh will resist God's message with a hardened heart. Thus, it is said the message, in this case, a call to release the Israelites from bondage, was not received well by Pharaoh. The more he heard that call the more obstinately he reacted to it – like the clay. That is until the plagues finally broke him. Since Pharaoh's heart would remain calloused, it was ultimately necessary to compel him by the last of the plagues, the death of the firstborn.

Another factor in God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart is that it was a reversal of an Egyptian belief. Egyptians believed that when a person died his heart was weighed in the hall of judgment. If one's heart was "heavy" with sin, that person was judged. A stone beetle scarab was placed on the heart of a deceased person to suppress his natural tendency to confess sin which would subject him to judgment. This "hardening of the heart" by the scarab would result in salvation for the deceased.

However, God reversed this process in Pharaoh's case. Instead of his heart being suppressed so that he was silent about his sin and thus delivered, his heart became hardened, he confessed his sin, as we shall see in 9:27, 34; and 10:16–17. His sinfully heavy heart resulted in judgment. For the Egyptians "hardening of the heart" resulted in silence (absence of confession of sin) and therefore salvation. But God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart resulted in acknowledgment of sin and the judgment that followed.

**Exodus 4:24** At a lodging place on the way 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 touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are

a bridegroom of blood to me!”<sup>26</sup> So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision.

And suddenly, we come to this passage where God is about to kill Moses. The designated leader of God’s people had neglected to circumcise his youngest son. God disciplined Moses through deathly sickness to remind him of his obligations. A leader must first set things right in his own household. This narrative contains a warning for every Israelite. Even the great prophet Moses could not get by with failing to circumcise his son. Although God had assured him that He would deliver the Israelites out of Egypt because of His covenant with Abraham, Moses had failed to circumcise his own son as required by God under that very covenant (*cf.* Gn. 17:10–14). The incident serves as a reminder of the danger of failing to take God seriously.

Circumcision is a badge and a seal of God’s covenant with Abraham that was designed to teach the Israelites to have no confidence in the flesh. The flesh was to be cut away, and each Israelite was to put his faith in God.

Apparently, Zipporah had resisted the ordinance of circumcision, and Moses had not insisted upon it. Maybe Moses did not feel it was important. Such may not seem strange when we consider that for almost all of his life, he had not identified as a Hebrew but mainly as an Egyptian. His one “moment” of identification as a Hebrew had resulted in him killing an Egyptian and having to escape from Egypt with his life.

Seeing her husband so sick and near death that he was unable to do it himself and understanding somehow the cause, Zipporah grabbed a flint knife and circumcised her son. Zipporah’s act of “touching” Moses’ feet with the bloody foreskin (the KJV says, “cast *it* at his feet”) suggests her disdain for the practice. That plus her statement in verses 25 and 26 where she calls him “a bridegroom of blood” suggests she might have thought it was a foolish and bloody thing to do. Zipporah had resisted the ordinance, and Moses had not stood up to his wife. There is a real danger when husband and wife do not agree on spiritual matters. That is the reason Scripture warns against believers and non-believers getting married. Moses’ sudden illness was a warning that he must obey God wholly to fulfill his mission.

At this time, Zipporah and the sons may have returned to Jethro as noted in Exodus 18:2–3 where it says, “Now Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses’ wife, after he had sent her home, <sup>3</sup> along with her two sons.” The reason is not stated but could have to do with the disagreement over the circumcision incident.

**Exodus 4:27** The Lord said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. <sup>28</sup> And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. <sup>29</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. <sup>30</sup> Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. <sup>31</sup> And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

Aaron was told to go into the wilderness (Sinai) and meet Moses. They met on Mt Sinai, the Mountain of God, where Moses had seen the burning bush. Moses briefed Aaron on their mission and all that Aaron was to say.

They then gathered the elders of Israel and explained it all to them. Contrary to what he expected, Moses received a favorable welcome. Despite Moses’ previous doubt that the Israelites would believe him, they were excited that the Lord had seen their affliction and “bowed their heads and worshiped” Him.

**Exodus 5:1** Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” <sup>2</sup> But Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.” <sup>3</sup> Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

This must have been a dramatic meeting! As emissaries of God, Moses and Aaron, both in their 80s, confidently faced Pharaoh Amenhotep II,

whom his people considered a god. They went before Pharaoh and asked for permission for the Israelites to go into the wilderness to worship. They claimed the Lord had told them to do so, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go...’” And they suggested the Lord might discipline them if they didn’t do as He said.

As expected, Amenhotep II replied that he didn’t know this Lord they speak of, and who is this Lord that the great Amenhotep II should listen to him? Pharaoh does not know the Lord but he is about to become well acquainted with Him.

And so the contest begins. We should understand that this is actually a battle between the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the gods of Egypt. Each of the 10 plagues to come will be directed at a specific god the Egyptians worshiped, as Yahweh demonstrates His superiority over their idols.

## **The Ten Plagues**

There were thousands of temples, millions of idols, and about 3,000 gods in Egypt. There was satanic power in the Egyptian religions. Satan granted power to those who worshiped him.

God directed His plagues against the idolatry of Egypt, against Pharaoh, and against Satan. It was a battle of the gods. God exposed the gods of Egypt as false and revealed to Israel His power and ability to deliver them. These Israelites were born in the brickyards in the midst of idolatry, and God had to show them that He was superior.

A brief outline of each plague may be helpful here to show there was some sense to them. When Moses first stood before Pharaoh, he changed his rod into a serpent, and the “wise men of Egypt” performed the same miracle. This reveals that Satan has definite power of his own. After this came the ten plagues.

1. *Water turned to blood (Exodus 7:19-25)* – The fertility of the land of Egypt depended upon the overflow of the Nile River to bring both rich soils and water. Thus, the river was sacred to the god Osiris whose all-seeing eye was found in many Egyptian paintings. Pagan

rites were held every spring when the river brought life out of death. When the water was turned to blood, it brought death out of life. The wise men of Egypt imitated this with their sorcery.

2. *The plague of frogs (Exodus 8:1-15)* – One of the most beautiful temples in Egypt was the one dedicated to Heka, the ugly frog-headed goddess. It was an offense to kill the sacred frog, but if you found them in your house, your bed, your food, and everywhere, as the Egyptians did, you might consider killing them. The wise men of Egypt also duplicated this plague.
3. *The plague of lice (Exodus 8:16-20)* – Egyptians worshiped the earth-god Geb. But the dust of the land became lice throughout the land of Egypt. Thus, that which was sacred to Egyptians became despised. The sorcerers could not reproduce this pestilence. This was an indication that the One who brought this plague was superior to the gods of Egypt.
4. *The plague of flies (Exodus 8:20-32)* – It is thought that some of the swarms of flies were actually masses of the sacred beetle. Khepara was the beetle god. The beetle or scarab was found painted on the walls in Egyptian tombs and speaks of eternal life. These beetles were sacred to the sun god Ra.
5. *The plague of the murrain (Exodus 9:1-7)* – A murrain is an epidemic that's limited to sheep and cattle, though the term is sometimes used to refer generally to a plague or other outbreak of disease. The second-largest temple that Egypt ever built was in Memphis for the worship of the black bull god Apis. This plague caused the Egyptians to worship a sick cow.
6. *The plague of boils (Exodus 9:8-17)* – In order to serve in the temples, the priests of all the religions of Egypt had to be spotless with no mark or blemish on their bodies. This plague caused a ceasing of services in the Egyptian temples because none of the priests could qualify to serve. This was a judgment on the entire system of religion in Egypt.
7. *The plague of hail (Exodus 9:18-35)* – God demonstrated His power with a plague of hail over the sky goddess who was powerless in her own domain.
8. *The plague of locusts (Exodus 10:1-20)* – The plague of locusts was against the insect gods and meant that crops were cursed.

9. *The plague of darkness (Exodus 10:21-29)* – This was God demonstrating His superiority over Egypt’s chief god, the sun god Ra. The sun disk is the most common symbol found in Egyptian ruins. This plague shows the utter helplessness of Ra.
10. *The death of the firstborn (Exodus 11-12:36)* – According to the religion of Egypt, the firstborn belonged to the gods of Egypt. With this plague, God took for Himself what was for Egypt’s gods. He was teaching Egypt who He was and that He was more powerful than the gods of Egypt and able to take what was to be theirs. He was convincing Pharaoh that He was God and more powerful than all their gods. He was also bringing the Israelites to a place where they would be confident in His ability to deliver them and they would recognize Him as their God. This final act of judgment would free Israel from the Egyptians. We should also note that Pharaoh Amenhotep II was succeeded to the throne by a son who was not his firstborn.

It is important to understand that there was a purpose in the plagues of Egypt. God challenged the gods of Egypt to a contest and defeated them.

Imagine the extent of the gods and idols in Egypt at that time, yet God through Isaiah predicted there would come a time when the idol would disappear from Egypt. Today Egypt is a Muslim country that forbids idols. Every idol has disappeared, as God said it would.

## **Make Bricks Without Straw**

The contest continues –

**Exodus 5:4** But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.” <sup>5</sup> And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!” <sup>6</sup> The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, <sup>7</sup> “You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. <sup>8</sup> But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and



offer sacrifice to our God.’<sup>9</sup> Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.”

Pharaoh responded to the divine demand with four utterances:

1. He asked an arrogant question: “Who is Yahweh that I should obey his voice?” He had never heard of a God by this name (5:2).
2. He categorically rejected the demand of Yahweh. Since he did not know Yahweh, he did not intend to release Israel (5:2).
3. He attacked Moses and Aaron, accusing them of taking his workers away from their labors. Since they were now numerous people (an admission of the failure of past government policy), they were a threat to the crown (5:4, 5).
4. He issued a new directive to his taskmasters and foremen (lit., scribes, or tally men). No more were they to supply straw to the Israelites. Yet the daily quota of bricks was not to be diminished.

As Pharaoh saw it, the Israelites were simply lazy, and they were using the proposed religious pilgrimage as an excuse for suspending the work. They were being misled by Moses (5:6–9). He intended to drive a wedge between his Israelite slaves and their would-be deliverer. And he was successful.

Straw was used in the making of the mud bricks. It served to help the mud go further. That straw was supplied by Pharaoh, but in anger, he ordered that the Israelites would henceforth have to gather their own straw. Furthermore, even with this added burden of work, the Israelites were to maintain their previous production levels – not one brick less than before.

**Exodus 5:10** So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you straw. <sup>11</sup> Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.’ ” <sup>12</sup> So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. <sup>13</sup> The taskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw.” <sup>14</sup> And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?”

The hardness of Pharaoh's heart is evident in his actions when he set about to make the burden of the Israelites more oppressive. Pharaoh's orders were carried out but the work was so much more demanding and time-consuming that the daily quota of bricks could not be met. That the slaves would fail to meet their brick quotas was inevitable. As a result, the Israelite foremen over the people were beaten by Pharaoh's slave drivers who demanded that they comply with Amenhotep II's directives.

**Exodus 5:15** Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, "Why do you treat your servants like this? <sup>16</sup> No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people." <sup>17</sup> But he said, "You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' <sup>18</sup> Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks." <sup>19</sup> The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, "You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day."

The Israelite foremen "cried out to Pharaoh" about how they were being treated. They charged that it was that the loss of production was the "fault is in your own people" because they no longer supplied straw and the Israelites had to gather their own.

Pharaoh's argument seems to be that people in bondage dream of freedom only when they have excessive free time or are allowed to idle away valuable time. To solve this problem he told the slavemasters to require the same quota of bricks but no longer to help the people by bringing the straw. Busy with work, they would not have time to think of going on any journeys to worship.

**Exodus 5:20** They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; <sup>21</sup> and they said to them, "The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

This was an additional heavy burden on an already heavy burden. The Israelite foremen found Moses and Aaron waiting for them when they came

out of the meeting, and they bitterly attacked the brothers. They called upon Yahweh to judge the two for having made the Israelites odious to Pharaoh and his servants. Far from delivering them from oppression, Moses and Aaron had given the Egyptians an excuse to kill Israelites, “(You) have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

**Exodus 5:22** Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? <sup>23</sup> For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.”

Moses immediately turned to the Lord in a lament. He agreed with the foremen that the latest oppression of the Israelites resulted from his confrontation with Pharaoh. No deliverance had been effected by presenting God’s word to Pharaoh. On the contrary, the plight of the people was worse than before. Moses wondered why he had been sent to Pharaoh at all if only to bring trouble. Moses’ query was motivated by a heavy heart, not distrust of God, though his language, “You have not delivered your people at all” is abrupt.

## **God Promises Deliverance**

**Exodus 6:1** But the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

Moses was sorrowful because his demand for freedom ironically had *increased* his people’s burden, not eased it. So the Lord comforted and reassured his messenger.

God again told Moses what He would do to Pharaoh, and then He reviewed His promises to His people. God assured Moses that He would indeed deliver His people. He was arranging circumstances so that Pharaoh would let them go and would even compel them to do so.

**Exodus 6:2** God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. <sup>3</sup> I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. <sup>4</sup> I also

established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. <sup>5</sup> Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

The word of God is a powerful antidote for discouragement. God responded to Moses' discouragement by reminding him of four things:

1. His promise – Because of God's strong hand (twice mentioned), Pharaoh would not merely allow Israel to leave Egypt, he would "drive them out" (6:1).
2. His name – In patriarchal times God had revealed himself as *EI Shaddai*, God Almighty, the God whose power worked in the lives of faithful men. Now he was revealing himself as Yahweh ("I am the Lord"), the eternal, self-existing, self-consistent God. This name he had not made known (i.e., explained, clarified) in the days of the patriarchs (6:2–3).
3. His covenant – God's covenant with the patriarchs was that he would give them the land of Canaan where they lived as aliens (6:4).
4. His compassion – God had taken note of the groaning of his people, and he remembered his covenant (6:5).

This reference to Yahweh in verse 3 ("the Lord ") raises an important question: was the name Yahweh known before the time of Moses? Scholars are divided in their responses to this question. Some point to the frequent use of the term in Genesis. Others suggest that the occurrences of the term in Genesis are later additions. While it is possible to demonstrate that in certain places in Genesis the term "Yahweh" may have replaced an earlier divine title (e.g. 16:11, 13), this is not always possible (e.g. 15:7; 22:14). It is apparent, however, that other divine names, and in particular *EI Shaddai* (God Almighty), were popular among the patriarchs. However, the statement that follows, " But by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them" seems to suggest this is the first instance of its use.

**Exodus 6:6** Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord

your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup> I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’ ”

God then told Moses to put aside his broken spirit and feelings of inadequacy and return to the people. Seven times in these three verses God said, “I will,” thus emphasizing that He is the promise-keeping God. The “I wills” cluster around three promises:

1. Deliverance from Egypt (v. 6: I will bring you out ... I will free you ... I will redeem you),
2. Possession of the people as His own, “I will take you to be my people” (v. 7),
3. And the gift of the land, “I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession” (v. 8).

Further, the passage begins and ends with the same declaration, “I am the Lord.”

The people’s deliverance would become the basis of a covenantal relationship which would result in their being in the land. These verses present a cameo of Israel’s history from the release from Egypt to the Conquest under Joshua. God’s redeeming them with an outstretched arm (v. 6) meant that His power would be evident (cf. Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; Ps. 136:12; Ezek. 20:33). And the “uplifted hand” (“I swore” Ex. 6:8) was a gesture used when making an oath (as it still is today; cf. Gen. 14:22; Deut. 32:40; Neh. 9:15; Ps. 106:26; Ezek. 20:5–6, 15, 23, 42; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14). Moses’ sagging spirit was again buttressed by a revelation of God’s character and purposes.

**Exodus 6:9** Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. <sup>10</sup> So the Lord said to Moses, <sup>11</sup> “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land.” <sup>12</sup> 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?” <sup>13</sup> But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of

Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Moses obeyed the Lord and delivered the message. The discouragement of the Israelites, however, was so great that they would not listen to the words he spoke (6:9).

Again God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him to release the Israelites. Moses hesitated, his zeal dampened by the people's response (v. 9). Since he did not have the power to influence his own people, how could he persuade Pharaoh? He must have thought that his lack of success with the people was caused by his lack of oratorical ability. "I am circumcised of lips," that is, morally unclean and incapable. This objection was answered by the Lord's command (He gave them a charge) — this time to both Moses and Aaron — to lead the people out of Egypt.