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Put Your Hand Inside Your Cloak

4: 1-9

Put your hand inside your cloak **DIG:** In light of his previous experience, why would Moses be skeptical that the Israelites would accept him and the message he would bring?

REFLECT: Do you worry about the future? Do you have anxious thoughts about tomorrow? God uses what we have. What do you have that He could use?



The chapter division here is artificial. In reality, the scene at the burning bush continues until **4:17**. **Moses** now raises a third objection: **What if they do not believe me or listen to me** and say: **ADONAI did not appear to you (4:1)?** One can understand why **Moses** would be concerned about this. Forty years earlier, when **he** wanted to be **Isra'el's** deliverer, **he** was rejected. At that time **he** was told: **Who made you ruler and judge over us (2:14)?** Therefore, **Moses** was not only concerned whether **Pharaoh** would recognize **his** authority, but whether **Isra'el** would.⁵⁵ As a result, **God** graciously gave **Moshe** that ability to perform **three miraculous signs**.

The first sign was the turning of Moses' staff into a snake. **God** could have used some mind-boggling trick, like making the sun stand still, but **ADONAI** merely said to him, **"What is in your hand?"** He replied: **A staff (4:2)**. This is the first time we read of the **staff** by which **Moses** and **his brother Aaron** would later perform miraculous signs and wonders with in **Egypt**. With it **they** bring the ten

plagues on the land and destroy **the Egyptian** army in the Sea of Reeds (**14:16**). The use of **a staff** was a deliberate attack on **Egyptian** culture and belief. Now **Moses' staff** was probably **his** shepherd's crook and **the Egyptians** detested shepherders. The irony was that **Moshe** and **his brother** used a symbol of the very thing they detested to humiliate and defeat them.⁵⁶

Then **God** told **His** prophet: **Throw your staff on the ground. Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. ADONAI** said: **Reach out your hand and take it by the tail. So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.** The purpose of the first sign was that the people would **believe** that **God** had sent **Moses**. **God** said: **This is so that they may believe that ADONAI, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you (43:3-5).** It was also a sneak preview of the **snake** confrontation in **7:8-13**, where the Egyptian magicians appear to perform the same miracle; but, **Moses' staff** swallowed their staffs, thereby proving **God's** sovereignty over **Egypt**.

God always begins by using what we have **in hand**. Page after page of **God's** Word reveals that there is a chance for true usefulness, in the consecrated employment of what we already possess. In the Book of **Judges**, Ehud had a double-edged sword in his left **hand**, and Shamgar had an oxgoad. Gideon's three hundred had only jars and lamps, and Samson the jawbone of a donkey. When David went to kill Goliath, he only had a sling in his **hand**. Elisha needed only a little oil from the widow to fill her pots, six stone water jars were all that were needed for **Jesus'** first miracle at Cana, and five small barley loaves and two small fish were sufficient when **He** fed the five thousand.⁵⁷ **God** will use what little we have to show how great **He** is if we use our faith.

The second sign was that of the leprous hand. Then **God** said to **His** servant: **Put your hand inside your cloak. So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was leprous, like snow.** That must have shaken **him** up. **God** then said: **Now put it back into your cloak. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.** The purpose of the second sign is given in **verse 8**, to cause faith if the first sign was not believed. Then **ADONAI** said to **him**, **"If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second" (4:6-8).**

The third sign was changing water into blood. God equipped **Moshe** with more than one miraculous sign because **the people** were living by sight and not living by faith. **The people** needed a physical confirmation and **YHVH** provided it. Living by sight, and not by faith, becomes a central theme in **Exodus** from here on out.⁵⁸ So **ADONAI** said: **But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground (4:9).** This would have been especially damaging to **Egypt** because the Nile was considered the lifeblood of **Egypt**.

*There were three purposes for these three signs. The first purpose was to strengthen the faith of **Moses**. The second purpose was to authenticate the mission of **Moses** to **the Jewish people**. And the third purpose was to show Pharaoh the superiority of **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. Now **Moshe** was without excuse. From **God's** perspective **Moses** is fully equipped. But however convincing these miracles are to you and I, evidently they were not convincing enough for **Moses**, because **he** raised a fourth objection.*

If you have the tendency to lose hope over lost opportunities or if you **worry** about the future, ask yourself this question: "What is right in front of me?" In other words, what circumstances and relationships are currently available to you? This question can get your focus off of a past regret or a scary future and back to what **God** can do in your life.

It is similar to the question **YHVH** asked **Moshe** at the burning bush. **Moses** was troubled. Aware of **his** own weakness, **he** expressed fear about **God's** call for **him** to lead **Isra'el** out of bondage. So **ADONAI** simply asked **Moses**, "**What is in your hand?**" **The Lord** shifted **Moses'** attention away from **his** anxiety about the future and suggested **he** notice what was right in front of **him** – a shepherd's rod. **The LORD** showed **Moses** that **He** could use that ordinary staff to perform miracles as a sign for unbelieving **people**.

Jesus said it like this: **I tell you, don't worry about your life - what you will eat or drink, or about your body - what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds flying about! They neither plant nor harvest, nor do they gather food into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they are? Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to this life?**

And why be anxious about clothing? Think of the fields of wild irises, and how they grow. They neither work nor spin thread, yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as beautifully as one of these. If this is how God clothes grass in the field - which is here today and gone tomorrow, thrown in an oven - won't He much more clothe you? What little trust you have!

So don't be anxious, asking, "What will I eat?" or "What will I drink?" or "How will I be clothed?" For it is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Don't worry about tomorrow - tomorrow will worry about itself! Today has enough worry already (Matthew 6:25-34 CJB)!

Therefore, do you think about past failures too much? Do you have **anxious** thoughts about **tomorrow**? Recall **ADONAI's** question, "**What is in your hand?**" What current circumstances and relationships can **God** use for your benefit and **His** glory? Hand them over to **Him**. **Look at the birds flying about! Aren't you worth more than they are?**