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Go Back to Egypt, All Who Wanted to Kill You are Dead **4: 18-23**

Go back to Egypt, all who wanted to kill you are dead DIG: What promptings, promises and provisions does Moses receive to encourage him on his way home? In what way was Isra'el God's firstborn son?

REFLECT: You cannot stay where you are and follow ADONAI. He requires change. Hearing the LORD's voice, changing, and obeying is not a one time thing. It happens throughout our lives. How do you feel about that? Are you a child of God?

Then Moshe left the burning bush and **went back to Jethro, his father-in-law**. This was necessary because **he** had **Jethro's** flock under **his** care and he couldn't just leave them stranded without making some provisions. In addition, **he** needed to ask **Jethro's** permission to leave because **Jethro** was the head of the household. **Moses said to him, "Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are alive."** Jethro replied: Go in peace; I wish you well **(4:18)**.



Now back **in Midian**, evidently **YHVH** had to prod **Moses** to return **to Egypt**. **He** was lingering. Apparently **he** was afraid to go back and face **Thutmose III**, the Napoleon of **Egypt**, who had **wanted to kill him** forty years earlier. But **ADONAI said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead"** (4:19). There was an incident in the early life of **Jesus** that mirrored this event. In **Matthew 2:19-20**, **Joseph** and Mary took the baby **Yeshua** and fled **to Egypt** because **Herod** wanted

the baby killed. **But after Herod died, an angel of ADONAI appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said: Get up, take the child and His mother and go to the land of Isra'el, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.** Therefore, both deliverers were forced to flee from tyrannical rulers and they return only after they were dead.

So Moses took his wife and two sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. It is interesting that **he** took **his family** with **him**. **He** must have been thoroughly convinced that **they** would be protected by **YHVH in Egypt**. **And he took the staff of God in his hand.** On his way to Egypt, ADONAI spoke to **Moses** again and said: **When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh the three miracles that I have given you the power to do (4:20-21a).**

But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go (4:21b). This concept of the hardening of **Pharaoh's heart** will be the leading motif in the conflict between **God** and **Pharaoh** in **Chapters 4 to 14**. The ancient **Egyptian** texts teach that the **heart** was the essence of the person, the inner spiritual center of the self. **Pharaoh's heart** was particularly important because **the Egyptians** believed it was the all-controlling factor in both history and society. It was further held that the hearts of the gods Ra and Horus were sovereign over everything. Because **the king of Egypt** was the incarnation of those two gods, **his heart** was thought to be sovereign over all creation. The whole point was that **ADONAI** controlled the **heart of Pharaoh**.⁶⁵

To understand this, we need to look at the book of **Romans**. Rabbi Sha'ul writes: **What shall we say then? Is God unjust? Not at all! For He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion," It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.** For the B'rit Chadashah says to **Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth."** Therefore, **God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy (Romans 9:14-18).**

*The main point of the **Romans** passage is this. **God** does not **harden** the hearts of men and women so that they can be lost; **God hardens** their hearts because they already are lost. When we are born, we inherit Adam's sin nature and are lost, separated from **God**. But **He** does not leave us in this hopeless spiritual condition. **He** woos us so that we might believe in **Him**. **He** pursues us so that we might accept **Him** as our **Savior**. **He** does this in various ways through different people and circumstances because **He** does not control our decision.*

We can say no to **God** and make it stick. In the final analysis, **He** gives those who reject **Him** over to their sin (**Romans 1:24-32**). This breaks **His** heart. But our free will to choose or reject **Him** is too important to violate. Therefore, **God** hardened **Pharaoh's heart** because **he** had already rejected **Him**.

Another factor in **God's** hardening of **Pharaoh's heart** is that it was a reversal of an **Egyptian** belief. **The Egyptians** believed that when people died their **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 their lifeless corpse to suppress their natural tendency to confess their sin, which would subject them to judgment. **The Egyptians** believed that the scarab would prevent a *hardening of the heart*, and 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 (**9:27** and **34, 10:16-17**), and **his** sinfully heavy **heart** resulted in judgment. For **the Egyptians**, *hardening of the heart* resulted in silence (or the absence of confession of sin) and therefore salvation. But **God's** hardening of **Pharaoh's heart** resulted in acknowledgement of sin, and therefore, judgment.⁶⁶

Then **Moses** was to say to **Pharaoh**, "This is what **ADONAI** says: **Isra'el** is my firstborn son, and I told you, 'Let My son go, so he may worship Me.' But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son" (**4:22-23**). Just as **Isra'el** has a unique relationship with **God**, and is called **His firstborn son** (**Jeremiah 3:19, 31:9; Hosea 11:1**), **the Egyptians** had a unique relationship with their deity **Pharaoh**. Since **Pharaoh** wouldn't let **Isra'el** go, **God** wouldn't let **Pharaoh's firstborn son** go in the tenth and final plague.

God the Father said of **Jesus**, "This is My Son, whom I love" (**Matthew 3:17**). This idea of sonship gets to the heart of the special relationship that **YHVH** has with **His people Isra'el**. But if you are a believer in **Yeshua**, **God** is your **Father** also. **Yochanan** wrote: **How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God** (**First John 3:1**). If you have had a bad experience with your imperfect earthly father, I would encourage you to allow **ADONAI** to be your perfect heavenly **Father**.

So in **Chapters 3** and **4** **YHVH** has appeared to **Moses** three different times with a similar commission. The first time at the foot of **Mount Sinai** at **the burning bush**. The second time in the land of **Midian**, and now a third time on **his way to Egypt**. The message from **ADONAI** has been consistent: **Go to Pharaoh** and tell **him** to let **My people** go.