

Aaron

I am Aaron, first high priest of the chosen people of the Lord God Jehovah. If you hear my name, it is usually preceded by the name of my younger brother, Moses. Sibling rivalry has been present from the time of the first siblings, Able and Cain, (which did not turn out well). Then, of course, there was Ishmael and Isaac (with near disasters), Joseph and his brothers (in which case God turned evil into good) and then Miriam, Moses and me. We got attached to Moses as a helpless infant because he was under a death threat, just for being a boy. I had to be on the boys' side, of course, and Miriam got to be his babysitter and co-caregiver while he was nursed by our mother. Obviously, God had plans for Moses.

But after he was weaned, we did not see him for a long time while he was growing up. And then, as soon as he went public, he went into exile. When God much later called him to be leader of the nation, he insisted on making me his spokesman. I think he was mostly trying to get out of the assignment, not demonstrating any confidence in me. But God was also planning on teaching Moses an unexpected lesson— as you may know, and I will explain in a moment.

We together saw the power of God demonstrated against the most powerful, sophisticated and idolatrous nation on earth. When our people were released from Egypt and saw the destruction of Pharaoh's army, it was clear that we could not turn back and must go on, despite serious questions about logistics.

I have several insights to share with you. One is that God does not only choose perfect people. I was anointed as high priest after a major mess-up that should have gotten the death penalty. You may know the story: Moses was on the mountain for a very long time getting the Law from God and the people began complaining. Does complaining get results? As any young child wearing down its parents knows, it can if you persist.

The people gathered around me and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." It is bad enough that the people had such short memories and feeble faith, but incredibly, I went along with them. Be glad your life is not recorded in the Scripture!

I proceeded to come up with the most ridiculous excuse since Adam blamed "The woman you gave me" for his disobedience. When Moses asked me what happened, I explained that I had told the people, "'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" Not only was this fabrication unworthy of a four-year-old, I had no idea that Moses had just pleaded with the Lord – for the sake of His Name -- to not kill ALL the people for their sin.

And, ironically, do you know what Moses had *just* received from the Lord on that visit? The instructions for ordaining and outfitting me as high priest! I and my sons were sanctified by the sacrifice of perfect, innocent animals whose blood was shed on our behalf. Then we performed the sacrifices for the people. The sacrificial system had begun with the Lord God's sacrifice to create skin clothing for the newly fallen Adam and Eve. This was recorded by Adam and handed down eventually to Noah, Shem, Abraham and eventually got down to Moses.

When the detailed system of sacrifices was recorded by Moses, it seemed almost too complicated. We thought of that and you probably have also – but it was the words of the LORD! There are two lessons. One is that sin is terrible. The other is that in order to, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength," we ought to want to obey all His commands. I and my sons were the start of a priesthood who studied and remembered all these requirements, but we also learned from the LORD that it was the attitude of the heart, not the just the letter of the Law that mattered most.

I did not see the Promised Land but died in the desert. Was it punishment for my disobedience or part of a larger plan by the LORD? It is not for me to know but only to accept the forgiveness of the LORD and carry out the assignment He gave. When performing the sacrifices for the sins of my fellow Israelites, I had no reason to look down on them because of their sins. I had been humbled for the sake of compassionate service.

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy