

## What can we learn from the relationship of Moses and Aaron?

Aaron was the elder brother of Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery. Aaron was three years old when Moses was born (see Exodus 7:7), but we don't know how old their sister, Miriam, was at the time. There may have been a significant age gap between Miriam and Moses, because Miriam was entrusted with the care of her infant brother when Pharaoh's edict resulted in the killing of the male Hebrew babies (Exodus 1:22; 2:1-4).

God intervened to protect Moses, and the infant was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and taken to live in the palace as her son (Exodus 2:5-10). The Bible seems to imply that Moses was allowed to continue a relationship with his birth family. Although raised as an Egyptian prince, Moses still identified with his Jewish roots and considered the Hebrews his brothers. When he saw a Hebrew being mistreated by an Egyptian, anger rose up inside him, and he killed the abuser (Exodus 2:11-12). Fearing for his life, Moses fled into the desert where he spent the next 40 years as a shepherd (Exodus 2:15; 3:1).

The Bible is silent on those years, so we can only speculate whether or not Aaron knew where Moses was and if he came to visit. It seems likely that Aaron and Moses kept in touch on occasion. When God called Moses from the burning bush and Moses protested that he could not speak well, God said, "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well, and he is now on his way to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. . . . I will help both of you to speak. . . . He will speak to the people for you. He will be your spokesman, and it will be as if you were God to him" (Exodus 4:14-16).

We know little of Aaron in those early years, but he must have maintained a relationship with the Lord because, when God told him to go meet Moses, Aaron was not at all surprised and obeyed at once (Exodus 4:27-28). Because of Aaron's reputation in the Hebrew community, he had the connections necessary to assemble the Jewish leaders to hear what God had told Moses (Exodus 4:29-31).

In a day when elder brothers were respected and held a place of honor in the family, God flipped that expectation upside down. God chose the younger brother to be exalted to a place of leadership, and He chose the elder brother to be the assistant. In this arrangement, Aaron seemed to work well. Just once did he reveal a resentment against his brother, when Aaron and Miriam "began to talk against Moses" (Numbers 12:1-2). God dealt with that situation, and both Aaron and Miriam were forgiven.

Through the years, Aaron was indispensable to Moses. Together they faced Pharaoh, brought the ten plagues on Egypt, and led the Israelites out of captivity (Exodus 7:1-2). God spoke to Moses, Moses spoke to Aaron, and Aaron presented the messages to the people. Together Moses and Aaron were the vessels the Lord used to bring His people out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land. Aaron, along with a man named Hur, held up Moses' hands in a battle with the Amalekites, so that the Israelite forces miraculously prevailed (Exodus 17:10-13).

When Moses went up Mt. Sinai to meet with God, he left Aaron in charge of the Israelites. Within a few days, the people became restless, and Aaron demonstrated that he was not the effective leader that his brother was. Aaron quickly caved to the people's demands for a golden idol (Exodus 32). When Moses came down the mountain, he was horrified to see the people engaging in pagan worship around a golden calf. Aaron

tried to pretend he had nothing to do with it, but God brought a plague on the Israelites for their terrible sin.

Moses and Aaron worked in tandem as the leaders of God's people. Moses was God's chosen prophet, and Aaron was God's chosen high priest (Exodus 28:1-2). In fact, Aaron was the first high priest, and it was from his descendants that future high priests were chosen. Both Moses and Aaron were guilty of unbelief and disobedience at Meribah (Numbers 20:8-11), and both were prohibited from entering Canaan (verse 12).

We learn from the relationship between Moses and Aaron that God knows our hearts and our capabilities, and He places us in positions suited for us. Aaron had to humble himself to accept God's choice, and Moses had to accept the help. By working together, the brothers accomplished much more than either of them could do alone. By serving faithfully as the spokesman for Moses, Aaron compensated for his brother's weakness and feelings of inadequacy. Aaron, in turn, was given "dignity and honor" (Exodus 28:2). Because of their cooperation with each other and with the Lord, the nation of Israel survived a difficult and challenging time.