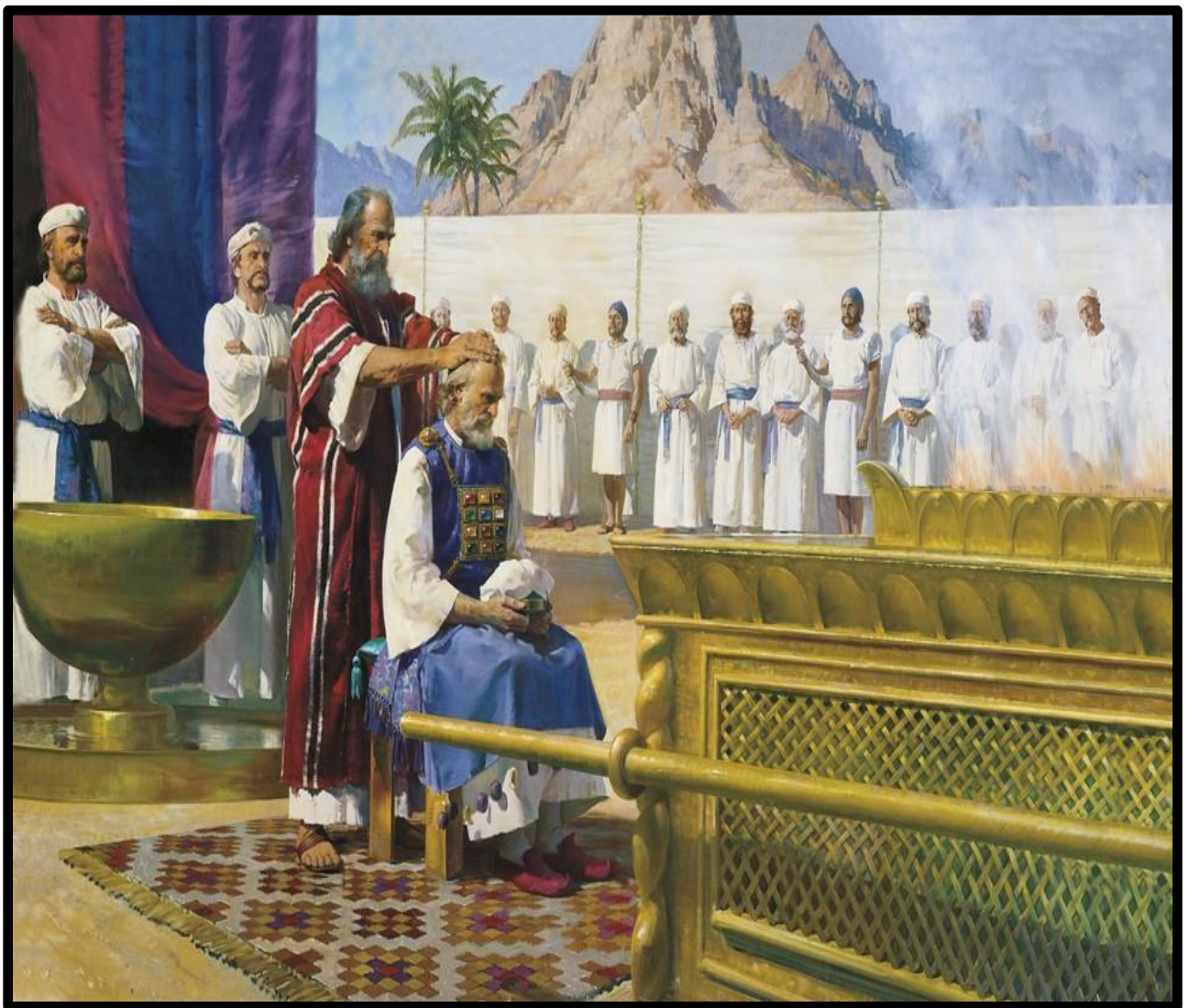


LIVING GODS WILL

Vessel of God

AARON



Moses Calls Aaron to the Ministry by Harry Anderson

Born: 1530 BC – Goshen, Egypt

Died: 1407 BC – Mount Hor (123)

Aaron was the **elder brother of Moses. (3 years his senior)**

Aaron was the **first Levitical High Priest.**

Aaron was **Moses spokesperson during their Exodus from Egypt.**

Aaron made the **golden calf and led the Jews in worshipping it.**

Aaron is best known for his role in the exodus and for being the first of the Levitical, or Aaronic, priesthood. He was born to a family of Levites during Israel's enslavement in Egypt and was **Moses' older brother, three years his senior (Exodus 7:7)**. We are first introduced to **Aaron** in **Exodus 4** when **God** tells Moses that He will send **Aaron**, Moses' brother, with him to free the Israelites from Pharaoh.

The Israelites remained in Egypt after Joseph and his generation died, and they became quite numerous. A new Pharaoh feared the Israelites would rise up against the Egyptians, so he put slave masters over them and enacted harsh laws (**Exodus 1:8–14**). He also ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the baby boys as soon as they were born.

When the midwives refused, Pharaoh ordered all the people to throw the Hebrew male infants into the Nile. These laws had been enacted by the time Moses was born. Presumably **Aaron** was born prior to the laws, or he escaped death because the midwives feared **God** rather than obeyed Pharaoh (**Exodus 1:15–22**). We read nothing of **Aaron** until **God** sends him to the **eighty-year-old Moses**.

When **God** spoke to Moses through a burning bush, calling him to go back to Egypt and demand that Pharaoh free the Israelites (**Exodus 3–4**), Moses gave reasons why he was not a good choice for the job. Moses eventually requested that **God** send someone else (**Exodus 4:13**).

"Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, 'What about your brother, **Aaron** the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you'" (**Exodus 4:14**). **God** went on to tell Moses that **Aaron** would be Moses' spokesperson (**Exodus 4:15–17**).

God also spoke to **Aaron**, telling him to meet Moses in the wilderness. **Aaron** obediently went. Moses told **Aaron** what **God** had said, including **God's** instructions about the signs they would perform in front of Pharaoh. In Egypt, Moses and **Aaron** gathered the elders of the Israelites, and **Aaron** told them what **God** had said to Moses (**Exodus 4:27–31**). It is interesting to note how quickly **Aaron** responded to **God** in obedience and how he quickly believed what Moses told him. **Aaron** seemed to be up to the task to which **God** called him without question, willingly helping his brother and speaking to the people on his behalf.

Aaron perhaps also served as an intermediary between Moses and the Israelites, since Moses had been living apart from his people all his life—first in the Egyptian courts and then as a fugitive in Midian.

As the exodus story unfolds, we see both Moses and **Aaron** before Pharaoh, making their requests for Pharaoh to let the people go and performing many signs. **God** used **Aaron's** staff in many of the signs and plagues. The men were obedient to **God's** instructions, and the Israelites were ultimately freed.

Aaron continued to lead with Moses during the Israelites' desert wandering, serving somewhat as his aid and spokesperson. When the Israelites grumbled against Moses and **Aaron** (**Exodus 16:2**), "Moses and **Aaron** said to all the Israelites, 'In the evening you will know that it was the **Lord** who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the **LORD**, because he has heard your grumbling against him.

Who are we, that you should grumble against us?'" (**Exodus 16:6–8**). Moses told **Aaron** to call the people together to come before the **Lord**, and the glory of the **Lord** appeared before them in a cloud (**Exodus 16:10**). It was at this time that **God** provided quail and manna. **God** instructed Moses to keep an omer of manna in a jar that would be kept for generations to come; Moses asked **Aaron** to collect it (**Exodus 16:32–35**).

In the aftermath of Korah's rebellion against Moses and **Aaron**, **God** performed a miracle to confirm that **Aaron** and his descendants were indeed chosen to minister before the **Lord's** presence. Twelve staffs were collected, one from each tribe. The staff representing the tribe of Levi had **Aaron's** name inscribed on it.

The staffs were laid in the tabernacle in front of the ark of the covenant overnight, and the next morning **Aaron's** staff "had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds" (**Numbers 17:8**). **God** commanded Moses to place **Aaron's** staff inside the ark as well, saying, "This will put an end to their grumbling against me" (**verse 10**).

During a battle with the Amelekites, Joshua, the commander of the Israelite army, had victory only when Moses' hands were raised. Moses became fatigued, so **Aaron** and Hur put a stone under him and held up his hands. In many ways, this is a picture of much of **Aaron's** service to Moses. He supported his brother, whom **God** had chosen to lead the Israelites out of captivity.

At Mount Sinai, **God** warned the people to keep their distance as **God** met with Moses and gave him the Law. On one of Moses' ascents, **God** told him to bring **Aaron** with him (**Exodus 19:24**). Later, when Moses stayed on the mountain with **God**, he put **Aaron** and Hur in charge to handle any disputes that might arise (**Exodus 24:14**).

Unfortunately, things did not go well for **Aaron** while he was in charge. The people became impatient waiting for Moses to return and asked **Aaron** to make them a god. Seemingly without resistance to the people's urge, **Aaron** requested their golden

jewelry, formed it into the shape of a **calf**, and created an idol. **Aaron** even built an altar in front of the calf and announced a festival for it (**Exodus 32:1–6**).

It may seem difficult to understand how a man who had so willingly obeyed **God's** call to help his brother lead the people out of Egypt, seen **God's** amazing works firsthand, and just recently seen **God** on **Mount Sinai** could do such a thing. **Aaron's** failure is a demonstration of our human natures. We don't know **Aaron's** motivation, but it is not hard to imagine that he might have doubted **God** and feared the people.

When **God** told Moses what was happening with the people and the golden calf, He threatened to destroy the people and make a great nation out of Moses instead. Moses intervened on behalf of the people and returned to them (**Exodus 32:7–18**). When Moses actually saw what was occurring, "his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain" (**Exodus 32:19**).

The tablets contained **God's** covenant; it seems Moses destroyed them not just in a moment of anger, but also because the people had broken the covenant through their disobedience. Moses burned the idol, scattered its ashes in the water, and made the Israelites drink it (**Exodus 32:20**).

When Moses asked **Aaron** why the people had done this and why he'd led them into it, **Aaron** was honest about the people's complaining and request for him to make a god, but he was not forthcoming about his own role.

Aaron admitted to his collection of their jewelry but claimed that, when he "threw it into the fire, . . . **out came this calf!**" (**Exodus 32:24**). "Moses saw that the people were running wild and that **Aaron** had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies" (**Exodus 32:25**).

Moses called those who were for the Lord to him. The Levites rallied to him, and then Moses instructed them to kill some of the people. Moses, again, interceded for the people. **God** reassured Moses but also sent a plague on the people for their sin (**Exodus 32:33–35**).

The **golden calf** incident was not **Aaron's** only blunder. In **Numbers 12** **Aaron** and **Miriam (Aaron and Moses' sister)** oppose Moses: "Miriam and **Aaron** began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. 'Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?' they asked. 'hasn't he also spoken through us?'" (**Numbers 12:1–2**). Such pride is not godly, but it is a common danger among leaders; many of us perhaps relate with **Aaron**.

God called the three siblings out to meet Him, defended Moses to **Aaron** and Miriam, and asked why **Aaron** and Miriam hadn't been afraid to speak against him. When the cloud from which the **Lord** spoke lifted, **Miriam was leprous**.

Aaron pleaded with Moses on her behalf; Moses cried out to **God**, and, after seven days outside the camp, Miriam was healed (**Numbers 12:3–16**).

It is interesting that Miriam suffered leprosy whereas **Aaron** did not. It is also interesting to see **Aaron's** plea to Moses, acknowledging his foolish sin and asking him not to allow Miriam to suffer. It seems that **Aaron** was truly repentant.

Aaron and his sons were appointed by **God** to be priests for the people, and **Aaron** was the **first high priest**. **God** gave Moses commandments about the priesthood, including how to consecrate priests and what garments they should wear, on Mount Sinai. **God** told Moses that the priesthood would belong to **Aaron** and his descendants by lasting ordinance (**Exodus 29:9**).

Aaron was made the high priest, and his family line continued to serve as priests until the destruction of the temple in AD 70. The New Testament book of Hebrews spends much time comparing **Jesus'** permanent priesthood to the **Aaronic priesthood**.

Priests of the Levitical line had to offer sacrifices for their own sins and sacrifices on behalf of the people continually. **Jesus** was without sin, and His sacrifice on behalf of the people was made once and is finished (see **Hebrews 4–10**).

While **Aaron's** sons did follow him into the priesthood, two of his sons—**Nadab and Abihu**—were killed by **God** when they offered "unauthorized fire before the **LORD**, contrary to his command" (**Leviticus 10:1**).

When Moses told **Aaron** that this is what **God** meant when He said He would be proved holy, **Aaron** remained silent (**Leviticus 10:3**). **Aaron** did not try to defend his sons, nor did he accuse **God** of wrongdoing. It seems **Aaron** truly understood **God's** holiness and accepted His judgment on his sons.

Like Moses, **Aaron** was not permitted to enter the **Promised Land** due to their sin at **Meribah** (**Numbers 20:23**). **God** instructed Moses, **Aaron**, and **Aaron's son Eleazar** to go up **Mount Hor**. There Eleazar would be made high priest, and **Aaron would die** (**Numbers 20:26–29**).

Aaron's life is a demonstration of **God's** holiness and His grace. **Aaron** began as an obedient and faithful servant, willingly going to Moses and serving as an intermediary. He also faithfully served as a priest in the sacrificial system **God** used as a picture for His ultimate plan of salvation in **Jesus Christ**.

Like any other human, **Aaron** was a sinner. After having seen **God's** mighty work, he still **made the golden calf and led the people in worshiping it**. But **Aaron** seems to have learned and grown, admitting his sin in speaking against Moses and accepting the deaths of his unfaithful sons. From **Aaron** we learn about serving others, sharing in the responsibility of leadership, and submitting to **God**.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Exo 7:7 And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Exo 4:27 And the Lord said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. **28** So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. **29** Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. **30** And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. **31** So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

Exo 16:10 Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

Num 17:8 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds.

Num 20:1 Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there. **2** Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

Num 20:25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; **26** and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there." **27** So Moses did just as the Lord commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. **28** Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.



Adoration of the Golden Calf by Nicolas Poussin