

Exodus 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

Analysis

And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it וַיֹּאמֶר הַשְׁלִיכוּ אֶרְצָה וְשָׁלַיכְהוּ—(אֶרְצָה יְהִי לְנַחַשׁ תְּבֻסֵּס מֹשֶׁה מִפְתַּח)—Cast it on the ground—obedience precedes miracle. The rod becomes a **serpent** (נַחַשׁ, nachash), and **Moses fled** (יָבַז)—natural reaction to a snake. The serpent imagery is significant: serpents represented Egyptian power (uraeus on pharaoh's crown), divine authority, and satanic opposition (Genesis 3:1). Moses' rod-turned-serpent will later swallow Pharaoh's magicians' serpents (7:12), symbolizing YHWH's supremacy over Egypt's gods and Satan's power. Moses must learn to handle what terrifies him—through God's power.

Historical Context

Egyptian magicians used serpent-charming techniques, sometimes employing cobra catalepsy (pressure on snake's neck induces rigidity, appearing like a rod). But Moses' sign was genuine miraculous transformation, not sleight of hand. The serpent sign directly challenged Egyptian religious symbolism—the cobra (uraeus) represented royal power and the goddess Wadjet. God was demonstrating His authority over Egypt's sacred symbols.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Moses' fleeing from the serpent teach about initial fear when God reveals His power through us?
2. How does the rod-to-serpent transformation illustrate God's power to overcome forces of evil represented by Satan (the serpent)?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶל־רֹאשָׁה	וַיַּשְׁלַח	הַזְּבֹב	וַיַּשְׁלַח	אֶל־רֹאשָׁה	וַיֹּאמֶר
And he said	And he cast	it on the ground	And he cast	it on the ground		
H559	H7993	H776	H7993	H776		H1961
וְלֹא־יָנַח	מִפְנִים	מֵשֶׁה	וְיָמָת	וְלֹא־יָנַח	מִפְנִים	וְיָמָת
and it became a serpent	fled	and Moses	from before	and Moses	fled	and it became a serpent
H5175	H5127	H4872	H6440	H4872	H5127	H5175

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