

Exodus Chapter Three

Read **Exodus 3:1-8** – The Burning Bush

v.1 “NOW MOSES KEPT THE FLOCK OF JETHRO HIS FATHER IN LAW, THE PRIEST OF MIDIAN: AND HE LED THE FLOCK TO THE BACKSIDE OF THE DESERT, AND CAME TO THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD, EVEN TO HOREB.”

Moses now makes his living as a shepherd, serving the family of his wife. The relationship between Moses and Jethro is a matter of discussion as the Hebrew word translated “FATHER-IN-LAW”, literally means “relative by marriage” according to the commentators that I read. We had already established in the last chapter that he was a priest of God, much like Melchizedek in Genesis.

He is described as being on the “BACKSIDE” of the “DESERT” or “WILDERNESS (ASV). As we can see on this map he is in the area between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba in what is today called the Sinai Peninsula. We know that he is on the west side of Sinai because in the Hebrew front is east, and backside is west according to the Baker Commentary.

It is thought that the original name for the mountain was Horeb, though it does have two peaks, and that it became Sinai after God appeared to Moses there. The name Sinai is taken from the Hebrew word seneh, which means “bush” (Clarke’s Commentary).

This part of the Sinai Peninsula is not entirely desert, hence the difference in the translation between the KJV and the ASV where one reads “DESERT” and the other “WILDERNESS”. There is sufficient graze there, especially in spring, to support flocks of sheep and goats and Bedouin shepherds still use it today.

v.2 “AND THE ANGEL OF THE **LORD** APPEARED UNTO HIM IN A FLAME OF FIRE OUT OF THE MIDST OF A BUSH: AND HE LOOKED, AND, BEHOLD, THE BUSH BURNED WITH FIRE, AND THE BUSH **was** NOT CONSUMED.”

The “ANGEL OF THE **LORD**” appears to Moses. Jesus confirms this account in his own teaching during a discussion with the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection.

Mark 12:26-27 “AND AS TOUCHING THE DEAD, THAT THEY RISE: HAVE YE NOT READ IN THE BOOK OF MOSES, HOW IN THE BUSH GOD SPAKE UNTO HIM, SAYING, I **am** THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB? HE IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD, BUT THE GOD OF THE LIVING: YE THEREFORE DO GREATLY ERR.”

The bush burned but was not burned up. This is another sign of the presence of God. Bushes that catch fire burn up, especially if like in the high desert of Eastern Washington they are sagebrush with a high content of creosote.

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v.3 “AND MOSES SAID, I WILL NOW TURN ASIDE, AND SEE THIS GREAT SIGHT, WHY THE BUSH IS NOT BURNT.”

Stephen also references this occurrence in his sermon at Jerusalem:

Acts 7:31 “WHEN MOSES SAW *it*, HE WONDERED AT THE SIGHT: AND AS HE DREW NEAR TO BEHOLD *it*, THE VOICE OF THE LORD CAME UNTO HIM,”

Moses “WONDERED AT THE SIGHT” of this bush that burned but did not burn up. Any of us would also.

v.4 “AND WHEN THE **LORD** SAW THAT HE TURNED ASIDE TO SEE, GOD CALLED UNTO HIM OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE BUSH, AND SAID, MOSES, MOSES. AND HE SAID, HERE *am* I.”

There are two observations to make about this verse. First of all the “**LORD SAW**” but “**GOD CALLED**”. Obviously the words translated Lord and God are different words; thus they represent both the Father and the Son. Secondly the double use of Moses name indicates urgency and the need for Moses’ undivided attention.

v.5 “AND HE SAID, DRAW NOT NIGH HITHER: PUT OFF THY SHOES FROM OFF THY FEET, FOR THE PLACE WHEREON THOU STANDEST *is* HOLY GROUND.”

Moses was told to “PUT OFF THY SHOES”. Aside from it being a command from God, why was this instruction given? It was a sign of respect, much like a gentleman today removing his hat when he enters a home, house of worship or any other covered structure. It was common practice, even among the heathen who did not worship God, to remove their shoes before entering a place of worship or a holy place. It is still practiced today by Muslims, Brahmins in India, Parsi worshippers in Western Asia and in the time of the apostles by many Jews.

v.6 “MOREOVER HE SAID, I *am* THE GOD OF THY FATHER, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. AND MOSES HID HIS FACE; FOR HE WAS AFRAID TO LOOK UPON GOD.”

God identified himself much the same as Jesus describes him in his confrontation with the Sadduces in **Matthew 22:31-32** and **Mark 12:26**. Stephen also makes mention of Moses unwillingness to look up or look toward the sound of the voice of God.

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v.7 “AND THE **LORD** SAID, I HAVE SURELY SEEN THE AFFLICTION OF MY PEOPLE WHICH **are** IN EGYPT, AND HAVE HEARD THEIR CRY BY REASON OF THEIR TASKMASTERS; FOR I KNOW THEIR SORROWS;”

God knows and sees all, but this verse has a deeper meaning. He has not just seen the oppression that the children of Israel are enduring but he feels compassion for them as Moses wrote:

Exodus 2:25 “AND GOD LOOKED UPON THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AND GOD HAD RESPECT UNTO **them.**”

v.8 “AND I AM COME DOWN TO DELIVER THEM OUT OF THE HAND OF THE EGYPTIANS, AND TO BRING THEM UP OUT OF THAT LAND UNTO A GOOD LAND AND A LARGE, UNTO A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY; UNTO THE PLACE OF THE CANAANITES, AND THE HITTITES, AND THE AMORITES, AND THE PERIZZITES, AND THE HIVITES, AND THE JEBUSITES.”

The time that God has appointed to establish his children in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has come. The children of Israel are in bondage, under cruel oppression and it is now time for Him to deliver them. In doing so he is keeping two promises. The first in His covenant with Abram:

Genesis 15:18 “IN THE SAME DAY THE **LORD** MADE A COVENANT WITH ABRAM, SAYING, UNTO THY SEED HAVE I GIVEN THIS LAND, FROM THE RIVER OF EGYPT UNTO THE GREAT RIVER, THE RIVER EUPHRATES:”

And he goes on in the verses that follow to name the same groups of people listed here and a couple more.

It is also to be a fulfillment of a promise that God made to Jacob:

Genesis 46:4 “I WILL GO DOWN WITH THEE INTO EGYPT; AND I WILL ALSO SURELY BRING THEE UP AGAIN: AND JOSEPH SHALL PUT HIS HAND UPON THINE EYES.”

When Jacob sought the counsel of God before entering Egypt, God had made him this promise. First, he will go with Jacob into Egypt and secondly that he will bring Jacob out of the land of Egypt again. So now Egypt prepare to fulfill that promise.

Read **Exodus 3:9-14** – Moses' Mission

v.9 “NOW THEREFORE, BEHOLD, THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IS COME UNTO ME: AND I HAVE ALSO SEEN THE OPPRESSION WHEREWITH THE EGYPTIANS OPPRESS THEM.”

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Just as God heard the cries of Israel and saw their oppression in Egypt he hears the cries and prayers of his children today. No matter what our troubles, no matter how much we feel alone and without hope, if we are God's children we have God as a source of strength.

v.10 "COME NOW THEREFORE, AND I WILL SEND THEE UNTO PHARAOH, THAT THOU MAYEST BRING FORTH MY PEOPLE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT."

God has prepared for himself a leader for his people. Moses was educated and trained in the household of the ruler of the greatest empire of the world at that time. He has now been seasoned with the practical, "school of hardknocks" experience in the Sinai Wilderness as a shepherd. Now the time has come for God to send him to accomplish that purpose for which he has been prepared.

v.11 "AND MOSES SAID UNTO GOD, WHO AM I, THAT I SHOULD GO UNTO PHARAOH, AND THAT I SHOULD BRING FORTH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT?"

Men that God chooses for his work and his purpose haven't always been eager to accept the challenges that God is putting before them. Jeremiah the prophet:

Jeremiah 1:6 "THEN SAID I, AH, LORD **GOD!** BEHOLD, I CANNOT SPEAK: FOR I AM A CHILD."

We see that Jeremiah uses much the same excuse that Moses did in a later verse of Exodus. But strong, faithful but humble men are the ones that God chooses to do his work, and the kind of men that we need in his kingdom on earth today.

This also emphasizes the fact that bringing Israel out of Egyptian bondage could not have been accomplished without the power of God. Without God's intervention in the lives of the Egyptian people and especially their ruler, they could not have been set free.

v.12 "AND HE SAID, CERTAINLY I WILL BE WITH THEE; AND THIS *shall be* A TOKEN UNTO THEE, THAT I HAVE SENT THEE: WHEN THOU HAST BROUGHT FORTH THE PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT, YE SHALL SERVE GOD UPON THIS MOUNTAIN."

God assures Moses that he will be with him just as he had assured Jacob when he told him to leave Haran and return to Canaan:

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Genesis 31:3 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO JACOB, RETURN UNTO THE LAND OF THY FATHERS, AND TO THY KINDRED; AND I WILL BE WITH THEE.”

And as we studied in the book of Genesis, God was with Jacob throughout his sojourn in Canaan and in Egypt. Moses assures Israel in the same way as Joshua prepares to lead them into the land promised:

Deuteronomy 31:3 “THE **LORD** THY GOD, HE WILL GO OVER BEFORE THEE, *and* HE WILL DESTROY THESE NATIONS FROM BEFORE THEE, AND THOU SHALT POSSESS THEM: *and* JOSHUA, HE SHALL GO OVER BEFORE THEE, AS THE **LORD** HATH SAID.”

A token or sign of God’s care for them would be that they would return to this same mountain and serve him. All of these promises that God makes and keeps bolster our faith and assurance as does the words of Paul to the Roman brethren:

Romans 8:31 “WHAT SHALL WE THEN SAY TO THESE THINGS? IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO *can be* AGAINST US?”

v.13 “AND MOSES SAID UNTO GOD, BEHOLD, *when* I COME UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AND SHALL SAY UNTO THEM, THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS HATH SENT ME UNTO YOU; AND THEY SHALL SAY TO ME, WHAT IS HIS NAME? WHAT SHALL I SAY UNTO THEM?”

Moses has been rejected before by his people because he went about trying to do for them in the wrong way. As we remember; in **Exodus 2:12** he killed a man who was abusing an Israelite slave and those that knew about it asked:

Exodus 2:14 “AND HE SAID, WHO MADE THEE A PRINCE AND A JUDGE OVER US? INTENDEST THOU TO KILL ME, AS THOU KILLEDST THE EGYPTIAN? AND MOSES FEARED, AND SAID, SURELY THIS THING IS KNOWN.”

So Moses is understandably concerned about being accepted by the Hebrew people when he returns to Egypt.

He wants to know what He should call God, how does he explain to his Hebrew brethren who is sending him to them, by what authority is he doing what he is doing.

v.14 “AND GOD SAID UNTO MOSES, **I AM THAT I AM**: AND HE SAID, THUS SHALT THOU SAY UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, **I AM** HATH SENT ME UNTO YOU.”

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God assures him by identifying himself as the “I AM” and that He was the “I AM THAT I AM” or as the ASV1901 translates this phrase “I AM BECAUSE I AM”. This indicates the eternal nature of God. He was, is and always will be, thus He exists perpetually in the state of “I AM”. By this the elders and leaders of the Hebrews will know that Moses is a man sent by God. This is the same way that Jesus identified himself in his confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees:

John 8:58 “JESUS SAID UNTO THEM, VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM.”

A declaration for which they wanted to stone Jesus, because he placed himself on a plain equal with God.

Read **Exodus 3:15-22** – God’s Message to Israel

v.15 “AND GOD SAID MOREOVER UNTO MOSES, THUS SHALT THOU SAY UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THE **LORD** GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB, HATH SENT ME UNTO YOU: THIS *is* MY NAME FOR EVER, AND THIS *is* MY MEMORIAL UNTO ALL GENERATIONS.”

In addition to his description of being the I AM, the eternal one with no beginning nor without end God tells Moses his name. In the Hebrew it is **Yehovah Elohim** the two words from which we translate into English the words “**LORD GOD**”. The **LORD GOD** is the name that was recorded for God at the very beginning of time:

Genesis 2:4 “THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF THE HEAVENS AND OF THE EARTH WHEN THEY WERE CREATED, IN THE DAY THAT THE **LORD GOD** MADE THE EARTH AND THE HEAVENS,”

He further identifies himself as the “GOD OF ABRAHAM, GOD OF ISAAC AND GOD OF JACOB.” These Hebrews have passed down through their generations, of which there haven’t been many, the relationship with God and blessings that their patriarchs enjoyed from God during their time on earth.

v.16 “GO, AND GATHER THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL TOGETHER, AND SAY UNTO THEM, THE **LORD GOD** OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, OF ISAAC, AND OF JACOB, APPEARED UNTO ME, SAYING, I HAVE SURELY VISITED YOU, AND SEEN THAT WHICH IS DONE TO YOU IN EGYPT:”

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Moses is to tell the nation of Israel that the one who has sent him is the LORD GOD of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the only identification that God needs to provide. He is to tell them further that God has visited them, knows their plight and now it is time for them to be removed from Egypt into the land promised to their forefathers.

We see that Moses is directed to tell this to the "ELDERS OF ISRAEL". It would appear that Israel already has a form of government of their own, even while under the domination of Egypt, that Israel developed a semblance of government. Tribes or clans within tribes were led by elders, or their elderly men; a pattern that would have carried over from the time of the Patriarchs.

v.17 "AND I HAVE SAID, I WILL BRING YOU UP OUT OF THE AFFLICTION OF EGYPT UNTO THE LAND OF THE CANAANITES, AND THE HITTITES, AND THE AMORITES, AND THE PERIZZITES, AND THE HIVITES, AND THE JEBUSITES, UNTO A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY."

God will bring them up, God will remove them from the source of their affliction, away from Egypt to the land that he had promised the Patriarchs. The fact that God is saying he will do this should be enough. We know and they will learn that God is as the Apostle Peter describes him:

II Peter 3:9 "THE LORD IS NOT SLACK CONCERNING HIS PROMISE, AS SOME MEN COUNT SLACKNESS; BUT IS LONGSUFFERING TO US-WARD, NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH, BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE."

God will keep his promises!

v.18 "AND THEY SHALL HEarken TO THY VOICE: AND THOU SHALT COME, THOU AND THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, UNTO THE KING OF EGYPT, AND YE SHALL SAY UNTO HIM, THE **LORD** GOD OF THE HEBREWS HATH MET WITH US: AND NOW LET US GO, WE BESEECH THEE, THREE DAYS' JOURNEY INTO THE WILDERNESS, THAT WE MAY SACRIFICE TO THE **LORD** OUR GOD."

God assures Moses that the Hebrews will follow him, that he and the elders of Israel are to present themselves to the King of Egypt whom we know as Pharaoh. He instructs Moses not to ask for everything God wants at the beginning but simply to ask Pharaoh for the privilege of going to worship God. We will see the reaction when Moses presents this request to Pharaoh in **Exodus 5**.

The Baker's Commentary states that this request was in keeping with the customs of Egypt at the time it was made. Apparently it was common for the Egyptians to go and worship for a span of time of this nature. We can also observe that this could have been done without any real effect on Egypt in any way. Other's speculate that this three day journey was bring Israel to Mount Sinai though we will see later that when they left Egypt it took considerably longer than three days.

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v.19 “**And** I AM SURE THAT THE KING OF EGYPT WILL NOT LET YOU GO, NO, NOT BY A MIGHTY HAND.”

God warns Moses that Pharaoh will not respond to this request but that it will take the power of a “MIGHTY HAND” to get him to bend to the will of God. We see the result in:

Exodus 5:2 “AND PHARAOH SAID, WHO IS THE **LORD**, THAT I SHOULD OBEY HIS VOICE TO LET ISRAEL GO? I KNOW NOT THE **LORD**, NEITHER WILL I LET ISRAEL GO.”

v.20 “AND I WILL STRETCH OUT MY HAND, AND SMITE EGYPT WITH ALL MY WONDERS WHICH I WILL DO IN THE MIDST THEREOF: AND AFTER THAT HE WILL LET YOU GO.”

God assures Moses that when Pharaoh rejects his requests that he will “SMITE EGYPT” with all his power and wonders. Egypt is profiting greatly from the labor of Israel and will not be willing give that up. But after Egypt has been properly punished, they will let Israel go.

v.21 “AND I WILL GIVE THIS PEOPLE FAVOUR IN THE SIGHT OF THE EGYPTIANS: AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT, WHEN YE GO, YE SHALL NOT GO EMPTY.”

Not only will Egypt let the Hebrews go they will do so in such a fashion that they will not go empty handed. God in his providence and as a result of his power is providing for the physical wellbeing of the future generations of his people.

v.22 “BUT EVERY WOMAN SHALL BORROW OF HER NEIGHBOUR, AND OF HER THAT SOJOURNETH IN HER HOUSE, JEWELS OF SILVER, AND JEWELS OF GOLD, AND RAIMENT: AND YE SHALL PUT THEM UPON YOUR SONS, AND UPON YOUR DAUGHTERS; AND YE SHALL SPOIL THE EGYPTIANS.”

Through this provision Israel will gain it’s material wealth in terms of gold, silver, and garments from those that have profited by their labor. They will not take or steal anything but rather, it will be given willingly because of the Egyptians fear of God and awe at God’s power. A fear generated by enduring the punishment God has prepared for them.