

Exodus 03 - The Burning Bush

I. Exodus from Egyptian bondage: Israel's redemption, liberation, and preservation (Ex 1:1—18:27)

(1) Redemption from Egypt (Ex 1:1—12:30)

(B) Preparation of the deliverer (Ex 2:1—4:31)

(d) Moses' calling (3:1-10)

(e) Moses' objections and God's responses (3:11—4:17)

(i) Moses' objections (3:11—4:14a)

(a) Inadequacy (3:11-12)

(b) Ignorance of God's name (3:13-22)

It is also interesting to watch Pharaoh, who tried desperately to cleanse the Hebrews from any uprising, ended up housing, schooling and empowering the very man who would rise up against him. God specifically sets up Pharaoh to be stubborn, and to give God the opportunity to show His power and strength. Pharaoh's resistance is predicted in advance. The 10 plagues we will see were the hierarchy of the things which the Egyptians worshiped.

Exodus 3

(d) Moses' calling (3:1-10)

1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to **Horeb**, the mountain of God.

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1 Meanwhile, Moses continued tending the sheep that belonged to his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the sheep to the western desert and came to Horeb, God's mountain, where

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.

- "...Horeb" - "desolate place"; another name for Sinai

2 Then the **angel of the LORD** appeared to him in a blazing **fire** from the midst of a **bush**; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not being

consumed.

2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

2 the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flaming fire from the center of a bush. As Moses continued to watch, amazingly the bush kept on burning, but was not consumed.

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.

- Moses is familiar with the area, a bush on fire would not be too unusual in the desert. But this bush was burning and burning and not being consumed.

- "...angel of the LORD" - clearly a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (Cf. v4,6,7)

— This was the first time God had revealed Himself to Moses, or anyone else as far as Scripture is concerned, for over 430 years (Cf. v4)

- "...bush" - only one other passage (Deut 33:16)

— A burning thorn bush is not uncommon in the Sinai desert; sometimes these bushes burst into flame spontaneously

— This bush was unusual in that it did not "burn up"

— Scholars have long seen the bush as a symbol for Israel; the fire symbolizes the affliction of Egyptian bondage (Cf. Deut 4:20. As the Israelites suffered as a result of this bondage, they were not consumed.

— Because Israel has frequently been in the furnace of affliction throughout history, though not consumed, Jews have identified "the burning bush" as a symbol of their race. This symbol often appears on the walls of synagogues or in other prominent places, not only in modern Israel, but also in settlements of Jews around the world.

- "...fire" - symbolizes the presence of God dwelling among His people (Cf. Gen 15:17; Ex 19:18; 40:38)

3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burning up!"

3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

3 Then Moses told himself, "I'll go over and see this remarkable sight. Why isn't the bush burning up?"

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from the center of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

He said, "Here I am."

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.

- Angel of the LORD according to v2, yet here the voice is attributed to God

5 Then He said, "**Do not come near** here; **remove your sandals** from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

5 Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Remove your sandals from your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground."

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.

- "...Do not come near" - Moses could not approach a holy God; the idea of God's holiness is a central theme in the remainder of the book

— The whole structure of Israel's worship of God at the tabernacle is based on a view of God as the Holy One who has come to dwell in their midst

— However, at the same time God warns Moses to stand at a distance, He also speaks to Moses "face to face" (Cf. Num 12:8)

- "...remove your sandals" - a show of respect, in Moses' day and even today

6 And He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

6 Then he said, "I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

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.

A Key Principle

The Sadducees did not believe in a physical resurrection from the dead as did the Pharisees. The Sadducees liked to ask the Pharisees tricky questions to make them look stupid, and one day the Sadducees tried one of those tricky questions on Jesus: A woman

was married successively to seven brothers: in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? (Matt 22:23-32).

Jesus answered that the Sadducees did not understand God's power and they did not understand the nature of the resurrection. Then to prove the resurrection, Jesus quoted where God said: *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (Ex 3:6). That one statement was enough to prove the resurrection. How did it prove the resurrection? The phrase "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" was the OT formula for the Abrahamic Covenant. In that covenant, God made specific promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they all died without the fulfillment of those promises. Because God is a covenant-keeping God, His covenant with them *obligates God to resurrect* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to fulfill His promises. *(And so David, in like manner: in the Millennial Kingdom!)*

7 And the LORD said, "I have certainly seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their outcry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.

7 The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.

7 The LORD said, "I have certainly seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry caused by their slave masters. I really do understand their pain,

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;

- "...seen...heard...know" -

8 So **I have come down to rescue them** from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to **a land flowing with milk and honey**, to the place of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

8 So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

8 so I have come down to deliver them from their domination by the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the territory of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

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.

- "...I have come down to rescue them" - there is no discrepancy between this phrase and "I will send [Moses] you" (v10)

— If God has Himself come down to do the work of redemption, why did He need Moses? Could He not utter a word to remove the bondage and release the Israelites?

— Why did God decide to summon a shepherd, a lonely and unbefriended man, a man who had already failed once, past his prime, to work out with painful elaboration, and through a series of bewildering disappointments, the purposed emancipation?

— This is not an isolated case...it's how God has worked throughout human history, and continues to work today. God always speaks to men, and works for them, through the instrumentality of men. Chosen agents are called into the inner circle to catch the Divine thought and mirror the Divine character, and then sent back to their fellow man to cause them to partake.

- "...a land flowing with milk and honey" - a description of Israel, the Promised Land

— It pictures an abundance of grass, fruit trees and flowers, where cattle, goats and bees thrive, and where the best food and drink abound

— This pastoral lifestyle that relies on rainfall is in contrast to Egypt, which relied on the Nile River

- Moses lists six distinct, idol-worshipping tribes as possessing Canaan here; sometimes he mentioned seven (Deut 7:1), 10 (Gen 15:19-21) and 12 (Gen 10:15-18)

9 And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

9 Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

9 Now, listen carefully! The cry of the Israelis has come to my attention about how severely the Egyptians have been oppressing them.

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.

10 And **now** come, and **I will send you to Pharaoh**, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

10 Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

10 So go! I am sending you to Pharaoh. Bring my people the Israelis out of Egypt."

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.

- "...now" - not tomorrow (vs. 40 years earlier for Moses) (Acts 7:25; Ex 2:11)

- "...I will send you to Pharaoh" - Moses could return to Egypt because the Pharaoh ruling at the time of his departure was dead. At the death of a Pharaoh, Egyptian authorities dropped all pending charges, even in capital cases.

(e) Moses' objections and God's responses (3:11—4:17)

(i) Moses' objections (3:11—4:14a)

(a) Inadequacy (3:11-12)

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

11 But Moses told God, "Who am I? How can I go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelis out of Egypt?"

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?

- Moses became humbled by his time in Midian (Cf. Num 12:3)

— Earlier, an Israelite asked Moses, Who made you a ruler and judge over us (2:14); now Moses asked the same thing of God

— The son of Pharaoh's daughter had become a shepherd and felt himself too weak and ineffective to confront Pharaoh

— Moses was reluctant because he was too self-conscious and not God-conscious enough; we need to learn to balance the truth of John 15:5 ("without Me you can do nothing") with the truth of Phil 4:13 ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me")

— Our success as God's servants does not depend on our natural abilities, but in our level of trust and obedience

— This is the first of five protests that Moses against accepting God's commission

Moses' Protests Against God's Command

1. Who am I? I don't think I can do this (3:11)
2. No one else thinks I can do this either (3:13)
3. I don't have the respect of the Israelites (4:1)
4. Not eloquent (4:10)
5. I'm not as qualified as others (4:13)

12 And He said, "Assuredly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

12 And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

12 Then God said, "I certainly will be with you. And this will be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, all of you will serve God on this mountain."

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.

- Who Moses is is not the question; it is rather who is *with* Moses

- God gave Moses a sign to inspire his courage and confidence that God would make his mission a success (Cf. Gen 37:5-11): that Moses, along with the Israelites, would return to this very mountain and worship Him.

(b) Ignorance of God's name (3:13-22)

13 Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

13 Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

13 Moses told God, "Look! When I go to the Israelis and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors sent me to you,' they'll say to me, 'What is his name?' What should I say to them?"

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' fear that the Israelite elders would not accept him is understandable: God had not revealed Himself to His people in over 400 years

— Moses question is asking God how he could demonstrate and prove to the Israelite elders that it was the God of their fathers who had sent him

14 And God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**"; and He said, "This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: ' I AM has sent me to you.'"

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

14 God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM," and then said, "Tell the Israelis: 'I AM sent me to you.'"

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.

- "...I AM WHO I AM" - the repetition of "I AM" suggests uninterrupted continuance and boundless duration; it means that God is eternal, and will reveal Himself in His actions through history

— It is not so much a name as it is an assertion of authority

— Moses asked "Who am I?" implying complete inadequacy for his calling; Moses said the Israelites would ask, "Who is He?" implying that the One who sent Moses was unknown to them. God replied, "I AM WHO I AM" clarifying that He was the God who had been, is, and will always be, the same God their forefathers worshipped.

The issue was not who Moses was, but who God is. He proved Himself long ago as completely adequate to meet all your needs, so it really doesn't matter who you are Moses.

— Many "Jehovah passages" in the OT are applied to Jesus in the NT: Ps 102:12,25-27 (Heb 1:10-12); Ex 3:14 (John 8:58; 18:5-6); Is 6:5 (John 12:41); Deut 10:17 (1 Tim 6:15); Is 6:1,8-10 (John 12:39-40); Is 53:1 (John 12:38); Ps 110:1 (Matt 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44; Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13).

15 God furthermore said to Moses, "This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is the name for all generations *to use* to call upon Me.

15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

15 God also told Moses, "Tell the Israelis, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and this is how I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

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.

- "I AM" became the new name for God here (v14); here God gave them His older name, by which the Israelites would know Him

16 Go and gather the **elders of Israel** together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has appeared to me, saying, " I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.

16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.

16 "Go and gather the elders of Israel. Tell them, 'The LORD God of your ancestors, appeared to me—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and he said, "I have paid close attention to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt.

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:

- "...elders of Israel"- first mention; the leaders of the various groups of Israelites

17 So I said, I will bring you up out of the oppression of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

17 So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

17 I have said that I will bring you out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—to a land flowing with milk and honey.""

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.

18 Then they will pay attention to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt, and you will say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

18 They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

18 "The elders of Israel will listen to you, and then you and they are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now, let us take a three-day journey into the desert to sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

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 reassured Moses that the Israelites would listen to him

- Moses is told to first request Pharaoh's permission for the Israelites to leave Egypt; when he doesn't comply (v19), God will "up the ante" (v20)

- "...three days' journey" - the request was a sincere one; God first gave Pharaoh this option, but He knew (and told Moses, v19) that Pharaoh would not grant this request

19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion.

19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion.

19 I know that the king of Egypt won't allow you to go unless compelled to do so by force,

19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

20 So I will reach out with My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.

20 So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.

20 so I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will do there. After that he will release you.

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.

- The miraculous signs that God would give Moses and the Israelites would demonstrate that their God was again actively working for them (Cf. 4:2-9)

21 I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed.

21 I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed.

21 I will grant this people public favor with the Egyptians, and as a result, when you leave you won't go empty-handed.

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:

22 But every woman shall ask her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house for articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. So you will plunder the Egyptians."

22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians."

22 Each woman is to ask her neighbor or any foreign woman in her house for articles of gold and for clothing, and use them to clothe your sons and daughters. You will plunder the Egyptians."

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.

- The Israelites were to ask the Egyptians for material belongings to humiliate the Egyptians even further. This would demonstrate the superiority of God over the gods of Egypt.

— They would also obtain tools and materials needed for the wilderness march and the construction of the tabernacle

— This loot could also be considered partial payment for the slave labor the Egyptians had stolen from them during their years of slavery (Deut 15:12-15)