

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

EXODUS 3:1-12

LESSON: MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH —July 2, 2017

INTRODUCTION:

In the **first Chapter of the Book of Exodus**, we learned of the cruel oppression of the Israelites by the Egyptians. Joseph had brought his family to Egypt and protected them there. But after his death and they multiplied into a nation, they were forced into slavery. God's blessings of the Israelites caused the Egyptians to fear them and this began with enslavement and harsh treatment. When this failed, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the Israelite boy babies at birth. This also failed to accomplish the goal of annihilating the Israelites as a race because the midwives feared God and didn't obey the king. The first chapter ends with the order of Pharaoh to the entire Egyptian population that they must throw the Hebrew boy babies into the Nile.

Chapter 2 focuses on one Hebrew boy baby, Moses, who is destined to become the Deliverer of the nation. The parents of this child hid him for three months, refusing to obey Pharaoh's order. Eventually they concede to partially obey, "casting Moses into the Nile" in a woven ark. What could well have been the death of Moses became his deliverance, as he was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter and eventually taken into the palace to be raised as her son. There came a time, however, when Moses decided to identify himself with his own people, and thus he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He was raised as Egyptian royalty until he went out among his people, and saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, and killed the oppressor (an Egyptian). When Pharaoh sought to kill him for this, he fled into the wilderness. It was in the wilderness that he met the seven daughters of the priest of Midian. The family invited Moses to eat bread. He ended up marrying Zipporah, one of the daughters, and together they had a son named "Gehr-SHOHM", (meaning *foreigner*). For he said, "*I have been a stranger in a foreign land.*" The chapter ends with the king of Egypt dying and the children of Israel crying to God because of their bondage. God heard their cry and remembered His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and He acknowledges them.

LESSON: I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MOSES Exodus 3:1

3:1 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 has become a shepherd, pasturing the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. At this point his life was so humble that he didn't even have a flock of sheep to call his own - the sheep belonged to his father-in-law. He leads them to Horeb, another name for Mt. Sinai. "*Horeb*" means "*desert*" or "*desolation*," and the name gives an idea of the terrain. It is called the mountain of God. "*Horeb*", or "*Mt. Sinai*" interchangeable terms through the book of Exodus. ²Being a shepherd on the *backside of the desert was probably a better condition than being a slave under the regime of Pharaoh. Moses was destined to lead the nation of Israel out of captivity, but the timing was not his. It was in God's hands. Moses could not have known what was about to happen. It is in those forty years that he spent as a shepherd in the land of Midian, where many of us find ourselves today. When we look at the life of Moses, his life will be basically divided into three major sections.

1. His first forty years was spent in Egypt in the Pharaoh's court.
2. The next forty years he was a shepherd in the land of Midian.
3. His final forty years he would lead the people of Israel from Egypt into the Promised Land, although he was

¹ <http://bible.org/seriespage/burning-bush-exodus-31-15>

² <http://www.scionofzion.com/backside.htm>

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disallowed by God from entering in because of disobedience.

Now, God's Divine Introduction was about to change his life forever. It was a call to service after running away, and waiting forty years in a foreign place, now God's path leads him into his full circle of life. God wasn't through with him!

NOTE:

*The backside of the desert: Many times we Christians go through a time of testing or time of tribulation, which does not end in a short time. Someone may have lost a job and can't find employment for over a year or someone might be burdened with an illness which keeps them isolated or unable to function for a long period of time.

POINT:

When you are on the backside of the desert, you will be surprised as how well you can live with less. Sometimes God may want us to just clean out our attic and have a garage sale and return to simplicity: physically and spiritually. Many times we have trouble distinguishing a need from a want, but God doesn't have that problem. If there is one thing that we can count on is that God does nothing in the believer's life that does not have a purpose attached to it.

Look at Moses on the backside of the desert.

1. God supplied him with a wife who was part of a big family, so there was no chance for loneliness.
2. He was given a task as a shepherd, although it looked menial on the surface, it was a training program for him.
 - a. He was to tend sheep for forty years.
 - b. He was to complete this task until called to lead Israel (God's sheep) out of Egypt.

Now, Moses had to be thoroughly familiar with the characteristics of sheep. Why?-Because humans tend to act like dumb sheep. By Moses tending, living with, and learning about sheep, he was being trained for the huge task which was to be placed upon him just about a time in life when most men are already retired. Age has no factor in the Lord's work. If He gives you the strength to perform what He has called you to do, then do it.

II. THE DIVINE APPEARANCE Exodus 3:2-6

3:2 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 appeared to Moses in the midst of a bush that was burning but not consumed. This is no mere created angel, but it was the messenger of Jehovah Christ Himself! The word "angel" means "messenger," and can apply not only to angelic messengers, but human men, and even Christ Himself. The "angel of the Lord" is the second Person of the Trinity. "Fire" is an emblem, in Scripture, of the Divine holiness and justice. It is also of the afflictions and trials with which God proves and purifies His people; and even of that baptism of the Holy Ghost, by which sinful affections are consumed, and the soul changed into the Divine nature and image of God.

3:3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. As Moses is caring for the sheep, he looks up and sees a spectacular scene. It was a bush on fire, but it was not burnt up. A bush on fire apparently wasn't a rare occurrence in the dessert. It has been known to occur when lightning strikes in the desert sun. It ignites dead plants in the Sinai wilderness. Instead of Moses running into the other direction, he says to himself "I will turn aside to see this great sight."

3:4 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. **Four things happened:**

1. Moses said I will now turn aside and see...
2. The Lord saw that he turned aside to see...
3. God called unto him..."Moses, Moses."

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4. And Moses said, "Here am I."

It's always good to turn aside and come to God. But it's even better when God turns aside and comes to you. The point is: we have to see that this is a God moment, and then take action to come to God. God didn't speak to Moses until He first got his attention.

When we come to Church each Sunday, we turn aside from the business and routine of our lives to seek God. And God speaks whether we're listening or not. Every time we come into God's house; every time we open our Bibles with a sincere heart; every time we lift up our spirits in prayer, we can draw near to the burning bush, to the Lord who dwells in the bush, as Moses saw it. At that moment everything depended upon Moses' willingness to interrupt his normal routine to find time for God. It goes for us also.

Consider this: at this very moment God is using unexpected sources to communicate with us to get our attention. *If you hear an ambulance siren, do you pray?; see an accident, do you pray?; read the Amber Alerts, do you pray?* Do not let your busyness prevent you from hearing God and receiving His instructions for your life. Moses could have ignored the sign and kept on going as usual, but by so doing, he could have missed God and the great things that God had called him to do. He was no longer a young man, yet God's timing sometimes conflict with ours because our standards are way below God's. And God called him by name: Moses, Moses. God knew who he was. And when Moses returned an obedient answer, he was saying: *"Here I am God, not only to hear what is said, but to do what I am bidden."*

3:5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. God told Moses two things:

1. ³Do not draw near this place (First, He told Moses to keep a distance). This was a holy place; and because God is holy, there will always be a distance between God and man. Cleanliness and holiness can only approach God. That's why we ask for forgiveness. It was the holy ground on which he found himself that made the encounter so memorable and so powerful. And it was the fact that the living God came down from heaven and called him by name.
2. Take your sandals off your feet (Second, to show a reverence for God's presence). This same thing happened to Joshua before the battle of Jericho (Josh. 5:15). Removing the sandals showed an appropriate humility, because the poorest and most needy have no shoes, and servants usually went barefoot. It also recognizes the immediate presence of God. In many cultures, you take off your shoes when you come into someone's house, and now Moses was in God's "house," so to speak, a place of His direct presence.

3:6 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 revealed Himself to Moses by declaring His relationship to the patriarchs. This reminded Moses that God is the God of the Covenant, and His Covenant with Israel was still valid and important. Moses understood precisely who this God was by his reaction to what he was told. Obviously he couldn't see God, but Moses didn't even want to look at the fire, the symbol of God's presence. ⁴He hid his face, as one both ashamed and afraid to look upon God. God has spoken, *"I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."*

III. THE DIVINE MESSAGE Exodus 3:7-10

3:7 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 says three things:

1. "I HAVE SURELY SEEN THE AFFLICTION OF MY PEOPLE."
2. "I HAVE HEARD THEIR CRY."

³ <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/0203.htm>

⁴ <http://www.commandtheraven.com/?p=1745>

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3. "FOR I KNOW THEIR SORROWS."

God tells Moses of His intimate knowledge of Israel's affliction. The Israelites, had been praying and asking for deliverance for a long time, but God now let's Moses know that He knows of their cry from the harsh and cruel taskmasters of Egypt who brought them sorrow.

3:8 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. God now gives an important promise.

- "AND I AM COME DOWN TO DELIVER THEM."

They were in the hands of the Egyptians. It's time to bring them out of that land into a good land; a land that's large, flowing with milk and honey. Many different tribes were living in Canaan already, but God had promised very definitely to give Canaan to His people. ⁵The land of Canaan belonged to Israel since the day God promised it to Abraham.

3:9 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. God notices and hears the cries of the afflictions of Israel; their sorrows; even the secret sorrows are known. Their cries have broken through the wall of bondage into the heavenly sphere, and God sees the affliction and oppression they endured, however, the highest and greatest of their oppressors are not above Him. Even now, those whom God, by His grace delivers out of a spiritual Egypt, He is able to bring them to a heavenly Canaan. We are grateful that God knows and is well able to help in our time of need.

3:10 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 could do it all by Himself, but it is God's plan to work with and through people - we are workers together with Him (2 Corinthians 6:1). God let's Moses know that He was going to do it, but He still wanted to use Moses. God begins to tell Moses of His plan to send him to Pharaoh in Egypt, (yes, the place he had run from). This is Moses' true purpose; his true assignment. Instead of him trying to do it all by himself before; his inadequacies are God's possibilities. God says "*Come Now...*" Now is the Time! God don't always do it according to our time. It is when He says it!

IV. THE OBJECTION OF UNWORTHINESS Exodus 3:11-12

3:11 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' question and God's reply:

- Moses' Question
1. "Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh?" 40 years before, Moses thought he knew who he was—a prince of Egypt; a Hebrew; he was God's chosen instrument to deliver Israel. After forty years of chasing sheep around the desert, Moses didn't have the same self-assured confidence that he had before.

3:12 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. This is a certainty!

- God's Reply
1. "I will certainly be with you:" God's reply is intended to take Moses' focus off of himself and onto where it should be - on God. Therefore, God never answered the question "Who am I?" Instead, He reminds Moses and gives another promise: "*I will certainly be with you.*"

The issue here is not who Moses is, but whose he is. God, the "*I Am*" has sent him, and it is God who will be with him. In fact God doesn't want us to be free-lancing. God wants us to be depending upon Him to accomplish whatever He has called us to do. The task seemed impossible, humanly speaking, but with God, all things are possible (Gen.18:18). God

⁵ <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/0203.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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assured Moses that when he brings the people out of Egypt, he will serve God upon that mountain. The sign given: "...and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee." The sign was the "mountain"; the same mountain Moses is encountering God at this very moment. This was to be the sign that God had sent Moses. They were to meet at the same mountain again when he bring the people out of Egypt.

SUMMARY:

Moses was once in the palace of Pharaoh, now his circumstances have changed and he now keeps sheep on the backside of the dessert. Coming to the mountain of God, Horeb, he is being prepared for God's use **(3:1)**.

Moses has a divine appearance from God in a burning bush that would not burn up. God calls him by name from the bush and he replies here am I. His shoes are to be taken off in the presence of God because it was holy ground. God introduces Himself, and Moses being afraid, hides his face **(3:2-6)**.

I Am was speaking to Moses. God has heard the cries of the children of Israel that were oppressed by the Egyptians. This was that time for Moses to go back to Pharaoh with this message to deliver God's people out of Egyptian bondage. God gives an important promise: "I Am Come Down To Deliver Them!" This was Moses' true purpose. God says "Come Now" **(3:7-10)**.

Moses questioned "who am I that I should go", and God assures him that when he brings the people out of Egypt, he will serve God upon that same mountain, for God Himself would certainly be with him. The sign God gives was the "mountain"; the same mountain Moses is encountering God at that very moment. The people would be brought back to this mountain he was standing on **(3:11-12)**.