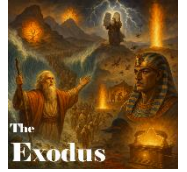




**I Have Seen, I Have Heard, I Have Come Down:
The Compassionate God of Exodus
Exodus 3:1-22
(Lesson #3)**



3:1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

As we come today, Moses has been in Midian for 40 years. So as we skipped over almost 40 years from his birth to when he fled Egypt, we now jump 40 years from his arrival in Midian until now.

We learn that it was 40 years from Stephen's sermon to the Sanhedrin:

"29 At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons. 30 ¶ "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush." (Ac 7:29-30 ESV)

So Moses, content to dwell with Reuel, began keeping his father in law's flock.

Notice from a **son of a Pharaoh's daughter**, one of the most powerful men in Egypt, **to tending a flock**, and not even his own flock, but the flock of his father-in-law.

Moses, once a son of Pharaoh's daughter once according to Acts 7:22 ***"instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds."***

Moses, once a son of Pharaoh's daughter, who according to Josephus, was a mighty Egyptian general. This Moses is now keeping the flock of his father-in-law in the land of Midian.

Moses who had spent 40 years in prosperity, has now spent 40 years in obscurity.

Last week, we told you that Moses' father-in-law was called Reuel (Friend of God) and here he is called Jethro (excellence or abundance).

As I told you last week many scholars believe his name was Reuel and his title was Jethro.

Also, we discussed how there is a possibility that he descended from Abraham through Keturah (Ge 25:1-2).

We are told, once again, here that Reuel (Jethro) is the priest of Midian. We cannot be sure if he is a priest to some foreign god or gods or the true and living God. But he is indeed a priest.

Now we know generally where Moses is. **Moses is in Midian**, modern day Saudi Arabia. We said his trip from Egypt would have been 300-350 miles as a crow flies. He fled a long way to escape the long arm of the Egyptian empire.

There in the land of Midian, for reasons we are not told, Moses takes Jethro's flock to the ***west side of the wilderness.***

He then came to a mountain called Horeb. The name Horeb means **"desert."** Here Moses also refers to this mountain as **the Mountain of God.**

Did he name it the mountain of God, because of what is about to happen, or was he told by Reuel that it was the mountain of God?

We cannot be sure, but I suspect he refers to it here, by that name, because of what is going to happen, right now, at that mountain.

But for now, what I want you to see is that Horeb (AKA Mountain of God) is located in Midian. We might even say westish Midian.

SO YOU KNOW: Most Scholars believe that Mt Sinia and Mt Horeb are the same mountain. The name **Horeb** means **desert**, the name **Sinai** means **thorny**.

Horeb is used **17 times** in the Old Testament while Sinai is used **35 times**. In the New Testament Sinai is mentioned in **4 verses**, while the name Horeb is not mentioned.

Although not all scholars would agree with what I am about to say. I feel fairly confident that they are the same place. We have a number of verses that attribute some of the same things happening at both, but the clencher are these two sets of verses (Ex 3:1-10 and Acts 7:29-34).

If the New Testament interprets and sheds light on the Old Testament, which it does. Then Stephen tells us plainly that the events we are reading about today, that happened at Mt Horeb are accredited to Mt Sinai.

Different name, same place.

Let me show you one more thing and we will leave this point alone for today. As Paul is writing to the church in Galatia. He is writing about Sarah and Hagar and how these two women represent two different covenants, and he says this:

“24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.” (Ga 4:24-25 ESV)

The location of Mt Sinai will come back around in the coming weeks, but I wanted you to see it now.

But in Midian, after 40 years, Moses arrives at Mt Horeb, the Mountain of God!

Vs 2 - And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

Then we are told the **angel of Yahweh** appeared to Moses.

This is the first use of **God’s covenant name** (Yahweh) in the book of Exodus. It is first used here to say that the **Angel of Yahweh**, appeared in the burning bush.

The Hebrew word translated angel is מַלְאָךְ (**mal’ak**). It can be used of an angelic being or it can be used for a **messenger** or a **representative**.

At this point, Moses is likely a little ahead of his skis in explaining this to us. For what I believe he knows at this time is that there is a burning bush. He sees that, but he knows nothing more.

In the heat and dry conditions, we are told that burning bushes were a normal occurrence. Interesting, but not extremely uncommon.

But notice, Moses looked and behold the bush was indeed burning, **but it was not consumed**.

Now regardless as to whether or not Moses had ever seen a burning bush, this one was quite a spectacle, for this bush was burning but it was not consumed.

This would have been **quite an astounding event**. Imagine, you are watching a scraggly **tumbleweed looking bush burn**, but that tumbleweed bush is **not consumed by the flames!**

This, for different reasons reminds us of something Jesus said (Mr 9:43-48).

Vs 3 - And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

Then Moses says inside his own head: *"I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."*

Moses records, third person of himself, **"he looked"** and he **said to himself**, I will go check this out, this great sight, the bush that burns, but is not consumed!

Vs 4 - When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

When Yahweh saw.

Here Yahweh is used a second time in the book of Exodus, but this time it is clear that it is **Yahweh Himself** that is the subject!

When Yahweh saw that Moses sought to see and understand what was happening here...

The bush wasn't the message, the bush was to get Moses' attention. God sometimes does very dramatic things to get our attention so that we will hear His words!

Then, **God called out of the bush**. Now catch that. It was not an angel (powerful spiritual being) that called out of the bush, **but it was God**.

The Hebrew word is of course **אלהים ('elohiyim)**, the one almighty God with the **plural name**.

This messenger (vs 1) did not simply **speak for God**, this messenger **spoke as God!** This is what Theologians call a **Theophany** or many refer to as a **Christophany**.

The fire here is likely meant to represent God:

"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." (De 4:24 ESV)

Or listen to how Moses described it when God descended on Mount Sinai:

"Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel." (Ex 24:17 ESV)

When Yahweh saw, God called out of the bush to Moses: **"Moses, Moses!"** Notice, Yahweh called Moses **by name**.

This is significant for all of us who are **saved** were **called out of darkness into light** by God Himself!

At this point can you imagine that **Moses was intrigued by the bush**, but **now the bush talks and calls his name... Twice**.

We are right to imagine that Moses' heart rate when from 60 to 160! In an instant.

PAUSE: Maybe God is calling you right now. Not to condemn you, but to tell you that He loves you.

Then Moses responds to the bush that is burning, but is not consumed: "*Here I am.*"

Vs 5 - Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Then the response comes from the bush... "*Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.*"

We can only imagine what is going through Moses' mind. But God surely wants him to **understand one thing**. God is holy, He is in some sense **unapproachable by fallen man**.

There is separation between a Holy God and sinful man.

Man can only approach God on God's terms. He is the Sovereign Creator of the universe.

APPLICATION: Today, we can only approach God, if we do so in the name and person of Jesus!

Remember what happened with Isaiah when he received a glimpse of God (Is 6:1-5).

God wants to ensure Moses understands His holiness.

Vs 6 - And he said, "I am the God of your 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 at God.

It seems that Moses removed his sandals and drew closer to the burning bush. He drew closer to God calling out of the burning bush.

God then makes it clear to Moses who He is: "*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*"

Now notice how **God describes Himself**: I am the God your mother likely told you about. I am the one true God. I am the God of your ancestors. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now why would God describe himself this way?

Jesus comments on these verses in Mark 12, and I want us to see it. To set this up, the Sadducees had come to Jesus and created a scenario that they thought would disprove the resurrection. We pick up at his response in (Mar 12:24-27).

I am the one true and living God the God of your ancestors are with me, right now, in heaven. I am the God of the ones who are alive right now!

PAUSE: All of us have loved ones who were saved but have gone on to be with the Lord, family members who have passed away and are right now alive and they are in the presence of God.

Back to our story... Then we read: *And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*

Although Moses was not seeing God, only the **glory of God** in this burning bush. Moses likely felt his unholiness **against the holiness of this one mighty God**.

Moses, once again fear gripped his heart. The Hebrew word is **ירא (yare')** and it means fear. This is the same Hebrew word for the fear that had gripped Moses' heart in Egypt, once again fear grips his heart, this time in **Midian**.

But this time, his fear does not cause him to run. But to cover his face. His fear causes his **gaze to leave the bush**. For he is **afraid to look upon this holy God**, even though he is not even seeing Him, only His glory!

Put yourself in the shoes of Moses, consider all that is going through your heart and mind!

God wants Moses, and you and I by way of extension to understand that there is a separation between God and man! But yet, this God is approachable! That is the lesson for you and I!

But there is another point worth mentioning at this point. Who is Moses at this point in the story? Yes, he is nobody. But do not miss it, God is not looking for pedigree, He is looking for availability.

God is not looking for strength or wisdom. He has those things to give to us. Instead, God is looking for humility and someone who sees they are indeed in need of God.

I hope this piece of the story brings great hope and consolation.

Vs 7 - Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,

What has been a **dialogue**, now shifts to a **monologue**.

Then **Yahweh speaks**. The Lord says to Moses and I want you to **see the verbs!**

- I have **seen their affliction** (the poverty and the misery) of my people in Egypt.
- I have **heard their cries** (their outcry), because of the taskmasters and the harsh treatment.
- I **know their sufferings**. I know their sorrow, I know their pain, I know.

Now God wants us to see something else. As much as there is **separation between God and man**. There is **sympathy from God for man's plight**. **God is sympathizing** with the Hebrews and what they are going through!

APPLICATION: I hope the amazing reality of this verse is not lost on us. I hope we see clearly that God **hears our prayers**, He sees what is **happening in our lives**, He **knows**, He **sympathizes**, and **He responds**.

God is separate and holy, but **He is by no means distant or unconcerned**.

Vs 8 - and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

I have come down. Yahweh comes down, but more than that. He has not simply come down in the burning bush. In fact, that is not even what He means.

I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. I have come down to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

I have come down to take them to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

The land of Canaan, the Promised Land. The land I promise to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now you should begin wondering how has God come down?

This is of course once again **anthropomorphic language**. God does not need to move. He wants us to understand that He is **entering the equation**, He is **entering Egypt on behalf of His people**.

Now **tuck this thought away** for just a **second**, and you will see how God has come down!

Vs 9 - And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

He reiterates, to ensure Moses understand. The cry of the people of Israel has come to me.

I have heard their cries and I have seen the oppression that they are enduring!

Vs 10 - Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Come, literally in the Hebrew, **GO**. This is a command in the Hebrew. God is saying I have come down to deliver my people and I am sending you, to deliver my people.

I am sending you to my people. More specifically, **I will send you to Pharaoh.**

Now wait a minute. I thought God had come down. Moses would have been right to ask God am I going to do this or God are you going to do this? **God's response, yes.**

God delivers his people. Moses delivers the nation of Israel. Both are true. This is how God operates in our world. Through His people!

Imagine all that must have gone through Moses' mind. He left Egypt 40 years ago. He left in fear and humility. Now, forty years later, God is calling to Moses and He is saying I am sending you!

DO NOT MISS THIS: So we have Moses in the **presence of God**, and God provides **clarity** on who **God is** and **who Moses is**, and then God provides Moses' **commission**.

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

Some believe Moses immediately begins to make excuses. I feel like this is where Moses is: **Who am I? No one will listen to me.**

It is of course a **lack of faith** and of course it is a **lack of trust** in the resources of God.

APPLICATION: Have you ever been there? You have this sense that God wants you to do something, but you also have a sense of your own weaknesses, your own limitations.

Moses responds... **Who am I?** Stated differently, **I am a nobody, how can you use me?**

Forty years earlier Moses likely would have answered, well God it is about time! After 40 years in the desert, Moses instead answered **Who Am I?** Moses had **learned the lesson in Midian**. It took 40 years, but he **truly understands who he is**.

Who I am that I should go to Pharaoh? Who I am that I should lead Israel out of Egypt?

Do not miss what happens next. God does not say, like we might say to a friend or one of our children, hey, you can do this, you've got this. That is not what God says to Moses. You know why? Moses does not have this. To pull this off, Moses will need God to intervene. Moses is indeed a nobody and this is indeed a **mission impossible**.

Now let's look at what God does say.

Vs 12 - He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Yahweh responds to **Moses' "who I am"** with: **I will be with you**.

Who we are matters little, who God is matter much!

What a promise! The sovereign creator of the universe says: **"I will be with you!"** But we have the same promise (Is 41:10; Jos 1:9; Rom 8:38-39; Heb 13:5).

Yahweh responds to Moses, I will be with you. **Also**, I will **give you a sign**, that you can be sure I am with you.

I am going to tell you how this will play out, so that as it is playing out, you can rest in the assurance that this is exactly how I told you it would play out.

This is the sign:

When you bring the people out of Egypt, you will lead them here, back to this mountain and you and **Israel shall serve God here**. On this **very mountain**.

As Exodus unfolds, the first sign, we should expect to see that nation of Israel comes back to this **mountain in Midian** and **"serves" Yahweh**.

The Hebrew word translated serve is עבד (**'abad**) means to **serve**, to **work**, or to **worship**.

The nation will come back here and serve Yahweh at this mountain.

Vs 13 - Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

Then Moses, likely still with some level of uncertainty in his voice says to God: *"If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"*

This is **extremely interesting**, for it appears that although Moses may have heard stories about this God, **אלהים ('elohiym)**, he did not know His name.

Moses was likely **quite accustomed** to the **gods of Egypt**, and they **all had names**, based upon their essence and what they oversaw. The God his mom had taught him about seems to have simply been referred to as GOD.

So, Moses is asking God His name, he is asking him about his essence.

Moses says to God, in the event the Hebrews in Egypt, who are also surrounded by the pagan gods of Egypt ask; who sent you? How should I answer that?

Vs 14 - God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God's answer was not a noun, but **two Hebrew verbs, היה (hayah), היה (hayah).**

We could translate this **"to be"** or **"I am"**. It seems Yahweh is saying I am, I am. I am the one who has always been. I am the one who always was. I am the one who will always be.

You shall say to the people of Israel that the great **היה (hayah)** sent you.

Dr. Steven Smith in his sermon on Exodus 3 said in this answer God is saying three important things about Himself:

- 1) **God is uncreated.** God is unlike anything in nature. He is the great and indeed only uncaused cause. Everything else in existence had a cause, except God. He has always been, and He will always be. God has no source, He simply is.
- 2) **God is unchanging.** You and I change, we grow, we mature, we change. God is the uncreated unchanging God. God is perfect in every way, and He cannot improve. The theological term is immutable.
- 3) **God is eternal.** He has always been, and He will always be. There is not a second in time past or in time future where God is not there.

But I suppose what is most amazing as you consider all of this is that this Yahweh, says to Moses, I will be with you and He says the same thing to you and I. **That is indeed a mind-blow!**

APPLICATION: Sorry to interrupt our lesson, but I cannot help when I hear Yahweh say this, I cannot help but think of Jesus (Jn 6:35; 8:12; 8:58, etc).

God has no equal, the only way to define God is God. I cannot show you something and say God is like that. **God is like God alone!**

Vs 15 - God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Further, God said to Moses, to say to the people of Israel:

Yahweh the אלהים ('**elohiym**) of your fathers, the אלהים ('**elohiym**) of Abraham, the אלהים ('**elohiym**) of Isaac, the אלהים ('**elohiym**) of Jacob sends me to you!

This is my name forever, here God clearly provides His name, and this is how he is to be remembered throughout their generations. **He is Yahweh**. The eternal God, who has always been and will always be!

Vs 16 - Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt,

Go... Gather the elders of Israel, living in Egypt. Moses likely thought they did not accept me last time. But Yahweh speaking, instructs Moses to gather the leaders and say to them:

FIRST: "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt,

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

SECOND: I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

The land I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A land that is flowing with milk and honey. A highly desirable land. A land I have prepared for you.

Vs 18 - And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

Then Yahweh walks Moses through what will happen. Yahweh tells Moses how this will all play out:

FIRST, they, the **nation of Israel** will **listen** to your voice.

SECOND, you and the **elders of Israel shall go the king** of Egypt, to the ruling Pharaoh.

THIRD, you shall say to the Pharaoh: '**Yahweh**, the **Elohiym** of the Hebrews (עברי ('**Ibriy**), (people from beyond) has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to **Yahweh** our **Elohiym**.

Vs 19 - But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.

FOURTH, but **know in advance**, that the king of Egypt will not let you go until **compelled by a mighty hand**. Understand the king of Egypt will not let you go unless and until he is forced by a mighty hand to let you go.

Vs 20 - So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.

FIFTH, therefore, for that reason, he will not let the nation go. I (Yahweh) will **stretch out my hand and strike (smite or strike) Egypt with wonders (multiple)** that I (Yahweh) will do in Egypt. After those multiple wonders that I will smite Egypt with, then **Pharoah will let you go!**

Vs 21-22 - And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, 22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

SIXTH, I (Yahweh) will give this people **favor in the sight of their Egyptian masters**, and when you finally leave Egypt, you will not go away empty handed.

In fact, each woman shall ask her neighbor and the women they live with for her silver, gold jewelry, and for clothing. Then you shall put those things on your sons and your daughters. The clothing and jewelry of Egypt on the children of slaves.

SEVENTH, Thus, in doing this... **You shall plunder Egypt.**

God's seven points that will occur, that Moses is now **pre-informed and prewarned about:**

- **FIRST**, they, the nation of Israel will listen to your voice.
- **SECOND**, you and the elders of Israel shall go the king of Egypt, to the ruling Pharoah.
- **THIRD**, you shall say to the Pharoah...:
- **FOURTH**, but know in advance, that the king of Egypt will not let you go until compelled by a mighty hand.
- **FIFTH**, therefore, for that reason, because Pharoah will not let the nation go. I (Yahweh) will stretch out my hand and strike (smite or strike) Egypt with multiple wonders and then Pharoah will let you go!
- **SIXTH**, I (Yahweh) will give this people favor in the sight of their Egyptian masters, and when you finally leave Egypt, you will not go away empty handed.
- **SEVENTH**, thus, in doing this... You shall **plunder Egypt.**

We will see this sevenfold prophecy, given here by Yahweh to Moses perfectly fulfilled as promised! Because nothing is impossible with God!

We have to leave Moses here, but Lord willing we will pick right back up here, at the burning bush and continue to walk through what happened after Moses had been in Midian for forty years.
