

The Call of Moses

Read Exodus 2:23 - 3:22

Around the time of the Exodus, Egypt is ruled by a series of warrior kings. They extend Egyptian influence in western Asia to the borders of the Hittite empire. Through military campaigns, trade, diplomatic gifts, and tribute, Egypt attains a level of wealth previously unknown.

When Isaac, his sons and their families came to Egypt to live with Joseph at Pharaoh's invitation, they were seventy in number. They settled in the land of Goshen, on Egypt's border. 300 years after Joseph's death, the Hebrew population had grown so large that it is a cause of alarm for Pharaoh.

Egypt, who gathered much of its wealth through war, looked at the large population of Hebrews within their border and became anxious at the possibility of the Hebrews siding with their enemy during a war. To prevent this from happening, the Egyptians forced the Hebrews into slavery. This would have destroyed the Hebrew forms of selfgoverning, making the Hebrews dependant on the will of the Egyptians for their very existence. However, even while in slavery, the Hebrew population grew, along with the anxiety of the Egyptian rulers. Finally, the Egyptians issued a decree that every male child that was born of a Hebrew woman was to be killed.

Moses was born after this decree was made. For three months, his mother hid him. When she could not hide him any longer, she wove a basket, covered it with pitch to make it water tight, put Moses inside, and placed it in the reeds by the water's edge. Pharaoh's daughter came to the river to wash. Seeing the basket, she had one of her maids bring it to her. Pharaoh's daughter opened the basket and Moses began to cry. Pharaoh's daughter knew that Moses was a Hebrew child; but she had compassion on him. Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses as her son. Moses was a prince of Egypt.

The story of Moses is summarized in Acts 7:20-44. Verse 22 states, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."



When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his brethren in bondage. Seeing one of the Hebrews being mistreated by an Egyptian, Moses chose to avenge the Hebrew and killed the Egyptian. Acts 7:25 tells how Moses believed that God through his (Moses') hand would deliver the Hebrews. God would indeed deliver the Hebrews from bondage, but the time was not right. Also, the Hebrews would not be released from bondage through a person's crusade; but because of the power and might of God.

Moses' act of killing the Egyptian was witnessed by a Hebrew, and Moses fled to the land of Midian. There he lived as a shepherd for forty years.

Moses was 80 years old when he saw a miraculous sight while he was tending the flock - a bush was burning, but it was not consumed. An angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the midst of the flames. When Moses came closer, the voice of God called to him, instructing Moses to go to Pharaoh and bring the Hebrew people out of the land of Egypt.

Moses had no desire to return to Egypt. He made many excuses, but God said he would be with Moses. God sent Aaron, Moses' brother, to help Moses.



God Appears to Moses in the Burning Bush. Painting from Saint Isaac's Cathedral, Saint Petersburg. 1848.

Prayer: I may not be Moses who you chose to lead the Hebrews out of slavery to the Promised Land, but I know that you have plans that you would like me to do. Help me to listen with my heart for things you wish to say to me. Help me to read the Bible and seek your will. Show me ways that I can let your love shine through me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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It was more than 300 years since Joseph had moved his family to Egypt. Joseph had been a Vizor in Egypt. Joseph had overseen the collecting and storing of food during the seven years of abundant harvest. Then Joseph oversaw the distribution of food during the seven years of drought. Joseph's hard work had saved the Egyptians and his family from starvation.



Joseph is Governor by Owen Jones 1869

The centuries rolled by. Different Pharaohs ruled Egypt. People forgot what Joseph had done. The new Pharaohs were obsessed with accumulating wealth. Every spring the Egyptian army of chariots, horses and foot soldiers would leave Egypt to invade other countries. At that time, chariots were the greatest of all war machines. An army of foot soldiers had no chance of surviving a battle with Egyptian chariots. The Egyptians would take the gold and treasures of the conquered country along with food and weapons. The next year the Egyptians would return demanding tribute - more gold. Then the Egyptians would move on to invade a different country. Egypt became the wealthiest country in the world.

The descendants of Joseph and his brothers lived on Egypt's border. They were known as the children of Israel, or Hebrews. Over the years, they had children, and those children had children until there were so many Hebrews the Egyptian rulers were concerned. Because Egypt was always making war with other countries, they had many enemies. The new Pharaoh worried, "What would happen if an army came to invade Egypt and the Israelites decided to fight with the enemy? Egypt might lose the war." To stop this from happening, the Pharaoh made slaves of the Hebrews. Even as slaves, the Hebrews had many children; and their population grew.

The Pharaoh made another plan. This plan was very cruel. The Pharaoh made a decree that any boy baby that was born to a Hebrew woman was to be put to death. The Hebrews tried very hard not to obey this rule.

One woman hid her boy baby for three months. When she thought she could hide him no longer, she made a basket and covered it with pitch to make it water tight. She put her baby boy in the covered basket and put the basket in the plants along the river edge. The baby's older sister stood some distance away to watch and see what would happen.

The daughter of the Pharaoh with her maidens came to the river to bath. As she walked along the river, she saw the basket among the plants. She sent one of her maids to fetch the basket. When Pharaoh's daughter opened the basket, the baby began to cry; and she had compassion on him. She said to her maidens, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

The baby's sister ran up to Pharaoh's daughter and said, "Should I go and call a nurse for you of the Hebrew women, so that she may nurse the child for you?" Pharaoh's daughter agreed, and the baby's sister brought the baby's mother to Pharaoh's daughter.

Pharaoh's daughter told the mother, "Take the child away and nurse it for me. I will give you wages." So the baby's mother took the baby and cared for him until he was a young child. Then she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. The boy became Pharaoh's daughter's son. She called him Moses. Moses grew up in the palace as a prince of Egypt. The Bible tells us in Acts 7:22 that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds."

When Moses was forty years old, he thought that he might be the person to free the Hebrews from bondage. When he saw an Egyptian abusing a Hebrew man, he decided to avenge the wrong and he killed the Egyptian. Moses thought no one saw him, but he was wrong. When he learned that someone knew of his crime, Moses fled to the land of Midian.

Moses lived in the land of Midian for forty years. He worked as a shepherd watching the flocks of his father-in-law. One day when Moses was out with the flocks, he saw a miracle. A bush was burning, but the bush was not being consumed by the flames - the bush was still green. It was not turning to ash.

The angel of the Lord appeared in the midst of the flames. Moses decided to get closer to investigate.



And when Moses got close to the burning bush, God called to Moses from the midst of the burning bush and said, "Moses, Moses."

Moses answered, "Here I am."

Then God said, "Do not come closer. Take off your shoes, for the place you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look upon God.

The Lord went on to tell Moses that he had seen the troubles of the Hebrews, his people, in Egypt. God said he would deliver the Hebrews out of the land of the Egyptians, and give them a new land to live in.

God told Moses, I will send you to the Pharaoh to bring the Hebrews out of Egypt. Moses did not want to go back to Egypt, but God said he would be with Moses. God would also send Moses' brother, Aaron, to help Moses.

And Moses said to God, when I speak to the children of Israel and I say, "The God of your fathers has sent me." What do I tell them when they ask, "What is his name?"

And God answered, " I AM THAT I AM. Say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you."

Moses followed the commands that God had spoken from the midst of the fiery bush. Moses was eighty years old when he journeyed back to Egypt to speak with Pharaoh. The journey was filled with many miracles in which God showed his strength and power to the Egyptian people.

Prayer: When Moses heard your voice coming from the burning bush that did not turn to ashes, you promised you would be with him as he journeyed back to Egypt. You promise to be with me also. In the Bible you tell me, "For behold, I am with you always." Your words in the Bible also say, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Thank you for always being with me. Thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus, who died on the cross so that I might live with you forever in Heaven. Amen.

Picture credit: God Appears to Moses in the Burning Bush. Painting from Saint Isaac's Cathedral, Saint Petersburg. 1848.

The Burning Bush

I stopped and stared at the yellow and orange flames dancing in the sunlight.
The leaves of the burning bush remained a background of green.
There was no smoke. No falling ash. No acid smell of fire hung in the air.
Could I believe my senses? This was the most amazing sight I had seen.

Slowly I drew closer to get a better look. Then a voice called out, "Moses, Moses."
"Here I am," I answered. Did I just hear the burning bush speak?
"Do not come near, take your sandals off your feet. The ground you stand on
is holy." I began to shake and my knees felt weak.

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
I fell to the ground. Took off my shoes, and hid my face in fright.
"I have heard the cry of my people in Egypt. I have seen their suffering.
I will free them from bondage with my power and might."

God was sending me to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let the Hebrews leave.
But Pharaoh's heart was hard. He would not let the people go.
So God sent ten plagues, each more deadly than the last.
Then Pharaoh cried, "Make haste! Hurry! Go!!"

Six hundred thousand men, with women and children too,
hurried out of Egypt because of God's mighty hand.
With miracles of parting seas, pillars of clouds and pillars of fire,
God lead his chosen people to the Promised Land.



Illustration from the Holman Bible 1890

God Adds Fire

In Exodus 3:2-3, Moses looks and sees a bush that is burning, but it is not consumed by the fire. Moses decides to go closer to the burning bush to try to discover why the bush is not burnt. God speaks to Moses from the burning bush telling Moses to go to Egypt to free the Hebrews from bondage.

God is allpowerful. He is Lord over all things. God is above the laws of nature. God is not confined by the rules of science. Setting a bush aflame without the bush being burned and turned to ash, was the first time Moses saw God use fire outside of the laws of nature.

In Exodus 9:12-35, God sends a plague of hail upon the Egyptians to show his might and power. Moses raises his staff towards the sky, and God sent thunder and hail. And there was fire mingled with the hail. The fire ran along the ground. Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron to ask the Lord to stop the thunderings and hail, saying he would let the people go. God stopped the hail; but Pharaoh's heart hardened, and he would not let the Hebrews go.

After the tenth plague, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron in the night and demands that the Hebrews leave the land of Egypt with haste. So after 430 years of living in Egypt, the people of Israel flee towards the Red Sea with their families, and their cattle, and their flocks.

God was with the Israelites as they journeyed for forty years to the land they would settle and call home. The LORD guided them on their journey. God went before them in a pillar of cloud during the day to lead them, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light. This pillar of fire was another demonstration of God's power over nature, for the pillar of fire gave enough light for about two million people (600,000 men plus women and children) to see by night.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you are a God of power and might. There is nothing you cannot do. You used a pillar of fire to light the way for the Israelites as they journeyed to the Promised Land. You help to guide me on my life's journey by giving me the Bible. Help me to read it, study it, and to hold its words of truth close to my heart. Let your word be my light and my guide. Help me to remember what you said in Psalm 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Thank you for being with me as I journey through life. Amen.



US government photo

Important Words to Remember

God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and instructed Moses to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses said, "When I say the God of your fathers has sent me, and they ask me, "What is his name? What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. I AM has sent me to you." Exodus 3:13-14. This is the first of what is referred to as the "I Am" verses of the Bible.

John 6:48 states:

I am the light of the world. The person who follows me will never live in darkness, but will have the light that gives life.

God leads us out of the darkness of our sins into the light of eternal life.

I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. John 10:11.

A "good shepherd" will risk his life for his sheep when they are attacked by wild animals. Jesus gave his life for us on the cross so that we might have eternal life with him in Heaven.

**I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me will have life even if they die.** John 11:22.

Believing that Jesus' death and resurrection paid the price for our sins, means that even if we die, we will continue to have eternal life with God in Heaven. This is God's promise to us. He does not say you might have eternal life - or maybe...or if you do these things...or if you are good enough. God says, "those who believe in me *will have* life even if they die."

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. John 14.6.

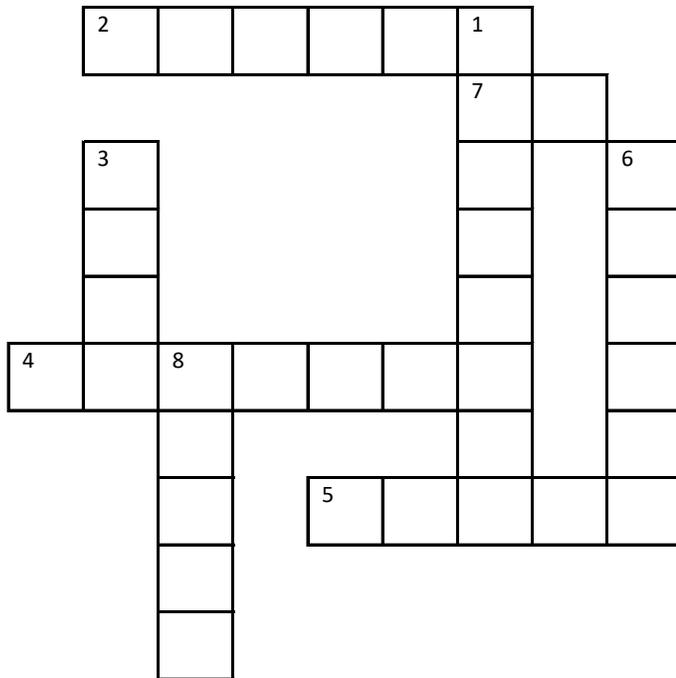
Jesus is the Way to find eternal life...the Way to find peace for our souls...the Way to find strength for our spirit. Jesus is the Truth...the Truth that tells us of God's love...the Truth that tells us of forgiveness of our sins...the Truth that tells us we are a child of God. Jesus is the Life...he brings us eternal life and stands by our side in our earthly life.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Rev 1:8.

This is God saying he is eternal. He always was. He is now. He always will be. God will always be with us. God will always love us. Our God is a forever God. His strength and power is forever. His glory is forever.

Prayer: God, your I AM words are mighty. They speak to us of your strength, and your power, and your love. Help us to believe in you and walk in your ways. Thank you for your promise of everlasting life. Amen.

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Across

2. The Pharaoh was so worried that the Hebrews might fight with Egypt's enemies that he made a rule that any boy child born to a Hebrew woman was to be _____.
4. The greatest war machine at the time of Moses was a _____. An army of foot soldiers had little chance of surviving a battle if the enemy had these. (Hint: They were pulled by horses.) Exodus 14:5-10.
5. How old was Moses when he fled to the land of Midian? _____ Acts 7:23.
7. Moses asked God, "What do I answer the Hebrews when they ask, "What is the name of the God who sent me?"" God answered and said, "I _____ has sent me to you." Exodus 3:13-14.

Down

1. Who raised Moses and called him her son? Pharaoh's _____.
3. When Moses was watching his father-in-law's flocks, he saw an amazing sight. It was a _____ that was burning, but it was not consumed by the flame.
6. How old was Moses when he journeyed back to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to set the Hebrews free? _____ Acts 7:23 and 29-30.
8. God told Moses he would send Moses' brother to help him. What was Moses' brother's name? _____ Exodus 4:10-14.

Review

1. The Pharaoh made a decree that any boy child born of a Hebrew woman was to be put to death. Pharaoh made this decision because the Egyptian rulers were afraid that if Egypt was invaded by an enemy, the Hebrews might side with the enemy and Egypt could lose the war. Do you think that Pharaoh had a legitimate reason for being worried? Pharaoh's first effort to prevent the Hebrews from becoming a danger to Egypt was to make slaves of the Hebrews. Sometimes countries cannot always avoid war. As Christians we need to strive for peaceful solutions. We need to make efforts that include love and compassion. God said, "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34.) Can you think of other things Pharaoh might have tried that didn't include slavery or killing the male babies?

2. When Moses was eighty years old, watching his father-in-laws' flocks he saw an amazing sight. A bush was burning. The flames were dancing and leaping; and yet, the leaves of the bush remained green. There were no ashes. There was no smoke. What does this tell you about God's power? Is God subject to the rules of nature? Is God confined by the laws of science?

3. Read and discuss some other examples of God's power over nature.

The three men in the fiery furnace, Daniel 3:8-25.

Feeding of the five thousand, Mark 6:30-44.

Raising Lazarus from the dead, John 11:38-44.