

Bible Stories

MOSES at the BURNING BUSH

Exodus 3:1-2

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The descendants of Israel have lived in Goshen for 70 years. Joseph and all his brothers have died, but the Israelites continued to multiply until they filled the land.

A new ruler came to the throne who did not recognize Joseph nor his accomplishments on behalf of Egypt. All he saw was a huge number of foreigners living on some of the best land in Egypt. More than that, he saw them as a threat to national security – if they chose to side with an enemy, Egypt could be destroyed ---- the solution? Enslave every last one of them.

So, the Egyptians put slave masters over the Children of Israel and oppressed them – they worked them mercilessly – and the people's lives became bitter because of the hard labor. Even so, Pharaoh's plan to reduce their numbers backfired:

- **Exodus 1:12** - But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so, the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.

So, Pharaoh came up with a new plan – kill all the newborn males at birth. To accomplish this, he employed 2 midwives – Shiphrah and Puah.

His scheme didn't work, however, because the midwives secretly refused to help.

- **Exodus 1:18-19** - Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" ¹⁹ The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

Pharaoh became increasingly frustrated because the Children of Israel were multiplying at an alarming rate, so he came up with a new and improved plan – throw all newborn males into the Nile. To accomplish this new plan, he enlisted the help of the Egyptian population, who had no moral dilemma in following his orders.

It was into this nightmare that an unnamed child was born. His parents went to extraordinary lengths to save his life. Finally, it became clear that they could no longer hide him. They were going to have to let him go. His mother, Jochebed, placed him in a reed basket and set him adrift on the Nile – to go wherever the current took him. His sister, Miriam, was sent to keep an eye on him.

God's hand was on this unnamed child, because that morning, the daughter of Pharaoh went down to the river to bathe and she saw the basket among the reeds. After her slave girl retrieved the basket, Pharaoh's daughter opened the basket, saw this tiny crying baby and felt sorry for him.

- **Exodus 2:6-10** - "This is a Hebrew baby," she said. ⁷ Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" ⁸ "Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So, the woman took the baby and nursed him. ¹⁰ When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

40 years would go by, but the Bible is silent on those years. All we know is that Moses grew up in the palace – right under the nose of the man who had sought his death.

He would have been educated in the language and culture of Egypt, in military tactics and in all the things that the son of a royal princess should know. Life was good for Moses – better than it could have been.

- **Exodus 2:11-15** - One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹² Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?" ¹⁴ The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known." ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian....

It is in Midian that Moses will spend the next 40 years. Instead of leading mighty armies and being adored by 1000's, Moses will tend sheep and learn the ways of the desert. He will marry Zipporah, one of the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian and have 2 sons. He will be content with his new life, but one day, God will show up and **"ruin"** everything.....

Moses, now 80 years old, led his flocks of sheep to Mt. Horeb – known to us as Mt. Sinai. There, as the flock scattered to look for food, Moses saw something that immediately caught his attention – a bush alight that was not being consumed. Moses, thought, ***“Interesting. I think I’ll wander over and see why this bush is not being burned up.”*** So, off he went, when suddenly a voice from the bush stopped him in his tracks {Exodus 3:1-4:20}:

God: Moses! Moses!

Moses: Yes

God: Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals. The place where you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses did what any self-respecting person would do – He hit the dirt and hid his face – afraid to look at God.

God: I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries because of what they suffer at the hands of the Egyptians, so, I have come down to rescue them. I am going to bring them up out of Egypt into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey -- the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. You’re the one I’ve chosen to go before Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt ---- {by the way, all the men who wanted to kill you are dead}.

Moses: Who, me? I’m just a shepherd. Why would you choose me to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?

God: I will go with you. Here’s a sign to prove I am telling the truth - when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will return here and worship Me on this mountain.

Moses: Suppose I go and tell the Israelites, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they want to know Your name? What shall I tell them?

God: Simple, **‘I AM WHO I AM.’** Tell them, **'I AM** has sent me to you. The God of your fathers -- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob -- has sent me.'

This is my name. The name by which I am to be remembered forever.

Go, assemble the elders and say to them, 'The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites -- a land flowing with milk and honey.' They will listen to you.

Then you and the elders are to go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to our God.' He will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him, so I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

I will cause the Egyptians to look on the people with favor, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. They will give you everything you ask for - silver, gold and clothing - and so, you will plunder Egypt.

Moses: What if they don’t believe me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?

God: What is in your hand?

Moses: A staff.

God: Throw it on the ground.

Moses threw his staff to the ground and it began to wriggle and hiss – Moses ran....

God: Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.

Moses did and the snake became a staff once again.

God: This, is so that they may believe that the LORD -- the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob -- has appeared to you.

Now, put your hand inside your coat.

Moses did and when he took his hand out again it was covered with leprosy.

God: Now put your hand back into your coat.

Moses did and when he took his hand out again it was restored - clean and smooth.

God: If they don't listen to you or believe the evidence of the 1st sign, they may believe the 2nd. But if not, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the ground. The water will become blood.

Moses: Lord, I am a terrible speaker – always have been. My words come very slowly.

God: Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Get up and I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say.

Moses: Please, Lord, send someone other than me. **ANYONE** else will do.

At this, the LORD became angry with Moses:

God: What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? He's a good speaker. As a matter of fact, He's already on his way to meet you, and he'll be happy to see you. You will give him the words to speak and I will teach you both what to do. He will be your spokesman before the people. In effect, he will be your mouth and you will be like God to him. Don't forget your staff. You will perform many miraculous signs with it.

Moses went home and informed Jethro that he needed to return to Egypt to see if any of his family were still alive, than he took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

What do we do with this story?

God had a plan and worked within the evil plans of men to accomplish His own will.

- **Isaiah 55:10-11** - As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
- **Ellen White {CC 250.3}** - In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . .

Like his family before him, Moses chose not to wait for God's timing and took matters into his own hands – He committed murder.

Like Joseph, Moses had many things to learn and unlearn, so God placed him where it would do him the most good – herding sheep.

God made a promise:

- **Genesis 15:13-14** - Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.
- **Genesis 15:18-21** - On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates -- ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."
- **Genesis 46:2-4** - And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he replied. ³ "I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again.

And when the time was right, He was faithful to fulfill that promise:

- **Exodus 3:7-8** - I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries because of what they suffer at the hands of the Egyptians, so, I have come down to rescue them. I am going to bring them up out of Egypt into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey -- the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.