



THE BURNING BUSH

Exodus 2:11-4

Moses spent much of his childhood in the comfort of Pharaoh's palace, with plenty to eat, a warm bed, and probably some cool clothes too! But as Moses grew older, he saw the mistreatment of the Israelite people — how they were ground down and beaten, how they were forced to work long, hot days. Moses also came to understand that he was different. Even though he had grown up surrounded by Egyptian royalty, he was an Israelite.

One day, Moses saw an Egyptian being especially harsh to an Israelite man. In a pure rage, Moses struck the Egyptian. We're not sure if Moses meant to deliver a fatal blow, but intentional or not, Moses killed the Egyptian and buried his body in the sand.

Moses thought his act had gone unseen, but two men came to him the next day, asking why he had killed the Egyptian.

Moses panicked. He was a member of the royal family. Surely he would be punished. Moses wanted to protect his people, but at that moment, all he wanted to do was hide his head in the sand so nobody would find him. So, that very day, Moses ran away.

Now you might be thinking, "Wait... Moses killed a guy and then ran away!? I thought he was the hero?"

It's important to stop here and remember that none of the men and women of the Bible were perfect. Moses found himself in a tough spot, but as we'll see, God loves to rescue sinners. He has a way of taking our worst days and turning them upside down. But Moses didn't quite understand that yet.

Moses also thought that running away would solve his problems. Unfortunately, all of us, including your parents, are still learning that hiding from the truth is never a good answer!



Full of fear, Moses ran as fast and as far as he could to a land called Midian, which was over 300 miles away. The message, for us, is that Moses was scared out of his mind. He wanted to get as far from danger as possible! Moses rested near a well, out of breath, tired, and exhausted.

While Moses sat at the well, seven girls came to draw water for the father's sheep. These girls were the daughters of a priest named Jethro. Unfortunately, other men at the well were mean to the girls and forced them away.

Moses, however, protected them as the mean men tried to send the girls back home. He walked Jethro's daughters back to the well and drew water for them to take home.

When the girls returned home, they told their father what happened, and because of the kindness that he had shown, Jethro asked Moses to stay at his house. Eventually, Moses married one of Jethro's daughters, Zipporah, and they had a son named "Gershom." Their son's name meant "a stranger there" because, while Moses was loved, he was still a stranger in the land of Midian.

Moses left his home in Egypt, but he found a new home and family in Midian; even though deep down he had to know he didn't belong there. After all, he was royalty in Egypt, but in Midian, his new job was shepherding stinky, smelly sheep.

One day while Moses was out with the flock, he found himself near Mt. Horeb, which was known as "the mountain of God." Something on the mountain caught Moses's eye. As he walked closer, he couldn't believe what he saw.

There, on the mountain, was a brilliant fire blazing from a bush. But, unbelievably, the bush was not burning up! Instead, just when Moses thought things were getting weird, they got downright strange. He heard a voice coming out of the flames!



This voice was not just any old voice, and it wasn't a friend playing a funny trick. From the bush and the fire, Moses heard the voice of God.

"Moses, Moses!"

"Here I am," Moses nervously replied.

"Do not come near; take your sandals off, for the place where you're 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 just as fast as he could because he was truly, and rightly, afraid to look at God.

God again spoke to Moses, telling him that He had heard the cries of the Israelites and had seen their suffering. God told Moses that the time had come to rescue His people from Egypt. Then God told Moses that his job was to lead them home to the Promised Land.

But as Moses heard God's words, an old fear crept into his heart. He'd grown comfortable in his new life in Midian and even settled down to start a family. And now, God was calling him to return to the place where he was known as a murderer.

Moses asked God, "Who should I say sent me back to Egypt?"

God replied with a short and resounding answer, "I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people, 'I AM sent you.'"

This may seem like a strange way to introduce yourself, but what God told Moses was simply this: "I'm not like anyone else. I am unchanging. I am in control of all things."

Of course, Moses still had his doubts (I mean, how often do you hear words coming from a fiery plant!?) and proceeded to give several excuses. Finally, Moses asked God, "What if they don't listen to me?"

So God showed His power by turning Moses's staff into a snake and then back into a staff. God even had Moses place his hand inside his coat, and when he pulled it out, it was covered in leprous sores! Then, miraculously, when he returned his hand to his coat and pulled it out again, the sores were gone.

God told Moses that if the people did not believe his words, they would be shown signs and wonders like these.

Then Moses, still quite worried, said, "But I'm no good at speaking! I stutter and stammer, and they just won't like that one bit!" So, God assured Moses that his brother, Aaron, would be his travel companion and speak for him.



That night Moses returned home to tell Jethro that the time had come to return to Egypt. God again spoke to Moses to remind him of his safety — that no one in Egypt was after him for his crime. So, Moses loaded up his donkey and his family and made his way back to his former home, not quite sure what would happen, but with a promise from God.

Now, if you are picturing this scene in your mind, you might find that it's missing some important pieces. Moses was tasked with setting his people free from Egypt. But he didn't even have a sword. So, you would think he might need a little more backup than just his family and a few donkeys. Even still, Moses stepped forward in faith.

Moses would lead his people, but it would be with God's power, not his own. Our story's hero held no sword, only his staff in his hand.

If this donkey-riding, weapon-less Moses reminds you of someone else, you're not alone! You may remember a similar story of another shepherd named Jesus. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and with no weapons at His side.

But He was not there to set the Israelites free from Pharaoh. Instead, Jesus rode into Jerusalem to save all who would believe in Him as the Son of God and the savior of sinners.

The same power that Jesus held was what Moses had at this moment — the very presence of God. But this rescue was a mere whisper of the rescue God's people need and find in Jesus.

Kaleidoscope Corner

What's in a Name?

The book of Exodus was written in Hebrew, a language used in Israel in the days of Moses. The first words of Exodus are "We'el-leh Sh'mot."

Now, we commonly translate Exodus as "departure," but did you know that in the Hebrew language, the book of Exodus was known as "Sh'mot," which means "Names." In fact, "We'el-leh Sh'mot" means "These are the names."

So what's in a name anyway? It's truly remarkable.

1. God knew His people by name. Though Israel had spent years in slavery and far from home, God had not forgotten His people or His promise.
2. God revealed His name to Moses. The name that God told Moses to call Him by was "I AM." Though Moses didn't exactly know what that meant at the burning bush, God would show him who He was and what He was like through his mighty acts of rescue (more to come on that!).

I guess you could say there's more to a name than meets the eye!