The Burning Bush
And
THE DIVINE
COMMISSION
Of Moses

The Great Escape
Series of The Book Of Exodus
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After forty years of living in royal surroundings in Egypt, Moses incurred the wrath of Pharaoh and was banished from the country. During his next forty years, he lived in the desert area of Midian. Midian was the region southeast of the Dead Sea. In his 80th year, Moses would have an encounter with the Holy God of Israel that changed the course of history.

Exodus 3:1-3

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. [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. [3] And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

Moses’ initial attempt to assist his fellow Jews ended in disaster when he killed an Egyptian. Fearing the vengeance of Pharaoh, he fled into the land of Midian where he spent the next forty years. Here he was favorably received in the home of Reuel, a priest of Midian, who was also known as Jethro. In the course of time Moses married Jethro’s daughter Zipporah and settled down to a shepherd’s life in the Midian wilderness. Through experience gained from shepherd ing flocks in the area surrounding the Gulf of Aqaba, Moses undoubtedly acquired a thorough knowledge of this territory. Without being conscious of its relevance he received excellent preparation for leading Israel through this desert many years later.

The holiness of God is clearly manifest in these next verses:

Exodus 3:4-6

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. [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. [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.
“Take off your shoes, Moses!” Anytime you are in the presence of God, you are on Holy Ground. Our friend Geron Davis has penned the great song:

We are standing on holy ground /  
And I know there are angels all around /  
Let us praise Jesus now /  
We are standing in His presence on holy ground!

In far too many churches today there is no such concept. We have seen any number of pastors (especially young ones) standing to preach, wearing jeans with holes in the knees and ratty T-shirts. They claim they are identifying with people who cannot afford to “dress up” for church. Noble claim, but false. They are denigrating the sanctity of the pulpit, the nobleness of the ministry, the cause of King Jesus.

There should be a sense of awe in the presence of God. If Jesus were physically present in the service, there would be a different appearance, I assure you. Physically He may not be, but spiritually and in every real sense, Jesus is present!

Note carefully Moses’ reaction:

Exodus 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.

It is not a mystery; Moses would have died had he seen God face to face. John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. The only way you and I can see God now is to know Him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next moments in Moses’ life took place on probably a very ordinary day - in an ordinary place. One never knows when life-changing encounters will take place. Forty years had passed since Moses had left Egypt. Four decades! I doubt if he ever thought he would be back in the land of the Nile....or that he would lead the greatest escape ever performed. But....there near a burning bush....that is exactly what would begin to transpire:

Exodus 3:7-10

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; [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
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. [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.

The question must be asked: Why did God wait so long to deliver the Jews from Egypt?
A better question would be: Why did it take so long for Moses to get to the place where
God could use him for such a venture?

There may be multitudes who miss Heaven because no “deliverer” ever got to them.
These rescuers were not ready, or not willing to be used of God. Paul was right when he
wrote: Romans 10:12-15 For there is no difference between the Jew and the
Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. [13] For
whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. [14] How then shall
they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him
of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? [15]
And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are
the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good
things!

Scriptures promise that God is not willing that any perish, but all have eternal life. It
will not be the fault of God if they are lost; it will be because someone said “No” to Him.

Note Moses’ initial response:

Exodus 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?

What would have happened to millions of Jews had Moses never obeyed the divine
commission? His initial response was that he just couldn’t be used in such a profound
deliverance. He didn’t feel that way 40 years earlier, apparently, when he took the life
of an Egyptian. He was wrong. It was not “his might” or “his position” that God could
utilize. But now, after 40 years at BUSH UNIVERSITY (where the school colors are
black and blue) he had graduated to the point God could use him.

Someone will pull back to say, “But I can’t....I can’t do this or that.” Here again Paul
helps us: 1 Cor. 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to
confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound
the things which are mighty; When Moses was “the prince of Egypt” he could not bring about the deliverance of Israel. But when he was a “nothing,” forgotten for decades, a shepherd in a far off wilderness, THEN he could be used. For as Zechariah reminded us, Zech. 4:6 This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

At this point God promised Moses some things: Exodus 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.

THE GREAT IDENTITY

Moses then asked the smartest question of his life:

Exodus 3:13-14
And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? [14] And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

You and I probably would have had the same question. Paul did, on the road to Damascus: “Who are you...Lord?” Moses was concerned that the Jewish slaves in Egypt would not accept him any longer. He was not still a prince. The slaves would want to know by what authority he confronted the hierarchy of Egypt. God answered, “I AM THAT I AM.”

“There is undoubtedly more included in the name “I AM” than has ever been brought out, but there are several things or primary importance that should be considered. The name “I AM” is a tetragram - or a word of four letters. We translate it JEHOVAH or YAHWEH. It became a sacred name, a holy name, to the children of Israel to such an extent they actually forgot how to pronounce it. To avoid profaning His name, they did not use it. In Genesis God is Creator. He is Elohim, the mighty God, the self-existing One; I AM WHO I AM. This is the God who is sending Moses to deliver the children of Israel.”

Furthermore, God had this to declare to Moses: Exodus 3:15-20

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my
memorial unto all generations. [16] Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: [17] And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. [18] And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

[19] And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. [20] And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

Interesting, this divine plan. God told Moses to first explain to the Jewish leadership Who it was that authorized this outlandish proposal. Who? “The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob!” And to reiterate God’s promise to “bring you out of the affliction of Egypt” to the Promised Land.

Moses’ first approach to Pharaoh was not to let the people free permanently, but rather to “journey into the desert for three days to sacrifice to God.” Yes, that was God’s edict; however, God told Moses Pharaoh would never go for it. “And I am sure the king of Egypt will not let you go....” This would not be an easy assignment! There would be some defeats before there were victories. But God would enforce the issue: “I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders....and after that he will let you go.” (Verses 3:20)

God made an incredible promise to Moses that not only would the people finally be released from Egyptian slavery, but that they would leave with provisions: Exodus 3:21-22 And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: [22] But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

Those funds would certainly be used properly sometime later when the people followed the Lord’s edict in building the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Stanford Research Institute did a study on the Tabernacle and determined that the Jews spent $13.5 million dollars on it. So...where did these homeless people get that kind of money? From the Egyptians! The Jews would leave Egypt recompensed for all their years of travail and slavery.
But, as they say, money is not everything; the people also left Egypt as a broken, hurting and confused people. Even being led out of 400 years of slavery, some of them preferred the bondage rather than to face the unknown of the wilderness. It is to Moses’ resume that not only did he get them freed, through God’s miraculous intervention, but he held them together as they began crossing the desert. We are talking about a hot, often snake-infested, dry and brutal “moonscape.” How in the world did they make it?

But - back to the burning bush. Moses was still not convinced he was the one to be used of God in this incredible deliverance:

The First Test - The “Snakey Rod”

Exodus 4:1-5

And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. [2] And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. [3] And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. [4] And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: [5] That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

When I was just a boy in Iowa, I used to catch non-poisonous snakes just for fun. I don’t ever recall killing one. As a result I’ve never had a fear of them. That’s a good thing, living in our Florida swamps. Moses had by now spent forty years in the wilderness and he would have known the “critters” in that part of the world. Verse 3 informs us that Moses fled from the “serpent.” He must have recognized that it was dangerous.

But then God told him to pick it up by the tail, which he did. This is not the same thing as some of the folks in Jolo, West Virginia, do in that infamous snake-handling church. What they do is not only NOT scripture, as they claim, but it is insane! Several of the leaders in that church have died of snake poison.

So Moses was not doing something here that would spawn a snake-handling cult. He was learning of the power of that “rod” he carried around. That rod became a divinely-used instrument used by God. We will see that in ensuing chapters.

The Second Test - The Leprous Hand

Exodus 4:6-8

And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom.
And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. [7] And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. [8] And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

God was showing Moses His creative power – but also His destructive power. It would not be Moses’ great skills (which he doubtless had) that would save Israel; No, it would God’s power and all praise would go to Him!

Moses’ Continued Protest

Exodus 4:10-16

And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. [11] And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? [12] Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. [13] And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. [14] And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. [15] And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. [16] And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

Here we are re-introduced to Aaron, Moses’ old brother (remember he also had an older sister - Miriam). There can be little question that Aaron helped his brother when they got to Egypt; however, Aaron caused Moses lots of trouble down the way, as we shall see. In the book of Numbers Aaron was involved in making a golden calf for Israel to worship while Moses was on Mount Sinai, hearing from God. THE FACT IS GOD DID NOT NEED AARON TO BE INVOLVED AT ALL... HE JUST NEEDED AND WANTED MOSES! It was hard at first for Moses to have the faith needed for the coming accomplishments. Yes, we should understand our weakness so we don’t “rejoice in ourselves.” But that self-understanding should never replace our faith in God, the God who flung the stars in space and who calls us to His service and work.

Moses finally relented and agreed to obey: Exodus 4:17-18

And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.
[18] And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, 
Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see 
whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

GOD BECOMES FURIOUS AT MOSES - WHY?

Exodus 4:24-26

And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to 
kill him. [25] Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son. 
and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. [26] So he 
let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

Moses was a Jew. He was one of God’s chosen people. Circumcision of male babies 
was the seal of the covenant God made with Abraham long before. Moses had married 
Zipporah (a name meaning “little sparrow” or “Lady Bird”). She had blessed Moses 
with several male children, whom Moses never had circumcised.

In Moses’ married life there was a problem. God called Moses at the burning bush and 
commissioned him to go to Egypt. The Pharaoh who banished Moses forty years earlier 
was dead and it was safe for Moses to return. But as Moses started his journey to 
Egypt, God attempted to kill him. Why? Moses had neglected the rite of circumcising 
his son, Gershom. Circumcision was the badge and seal of God’s covenant with 
Abraham that was designed to teach the Israelites to have no confidence in the flesh. 
The flesh was to be cut away and each Israelite was to put his trust in God. Apparently 
Zipporah had resisted the ordinance of circumcision and Moses had not insisted upon it. 
Perhaps Moses did not feel this act was so important and obviously his wife felt it was a 
foolish and bloody thing to do. Moses could stand up to Pharaoh but he could not stand 
up against his wife. Moses could tell Israel when they were wrong but he did not oppose 
his wife when she was wrong. This is the reason Scripture warns against believers and 
non-believers getting married.

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Moses and Aaron Re-unite

Exodus 4:27-31

And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, 
and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. [28] And Moses told Aaron all the 
words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded 
him.

[29] And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the 
children of Israel: [30] And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken 
unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. [31] And the people
believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and
that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and
worshipped.

THE JEWS - GOD’S PEOPLE

Again and again in Scripture God refers to the Jews as “my people.” This relationship
goes way back to Abraham and the book of Genesis.

Genesis 12:1-9

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy
kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: [2] And I
will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and
thou shalt be a blessing: [3] And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that
curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. [4] So Abram
departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram
was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. [5] And Abram took
Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had
gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into
the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

[6] And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain
of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. [7] And the Lord appeared unto
Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar
unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. [8] And he removed from thence unto a
mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and
Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the
name of the Lord. [9] And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

It could well be that Abraham has been the most famous person in history. Three world
religions trace him well: Judaism, Christianity and Islam (in that order).

God made three huge promises to him:

● I AM GOING TO SHOW YOU A LAND AND I AM GOING TO GIVE IT
TO YOU!

The dimension of the land: east to the Euphrates River (Iraq), north to the Hittite nation
(in central Turkey), south to the river of Egypt (Not the Nile, but a river to the east of
Cairo). This is 360,000 square miles. The most Israel has ever controlled is 30,000
square miles; but God is going to fulfill His promise to Abraham so keep your eyes on the
Middle East.
There are some who say God’s promise to Abraham was severed because of Israel’s subsequent sins and unbelief. However, you cannot find such a thing in Scripture.

Others say God is finished with the Jews and is completing His work through the Church. This is called “supercessionism” and refutes Scripture which informs us in Revelation that the ultimate redemption of the world in the Tribulation comes through 144,000 sealed, Spirit-filled Jews

- **I WILL MAKE OF THEE A GREAT NATION AND I WILL BLESS THEE**

In so many key areas of life we are blessed by the Jews: medicine, science, literature, hi-tech, culture, value system, friendship, etc.

- **I WILL BLESS THEM THAT BLESS THEE AND CURSE THEM THAT CURSE THEE**

  Consider: Babylon / Antiochus and the Greeks / Germany

- **Our Lord Jesus Christ was a Jew. The Gospel came first to the Jews.**

In our next study, Moses and Aaron will confront the Egyptian Pharaoh and the great escape story continues!