

October 15, 2017 - Ex. 3:1 – 4:17 - Moses & the burning bush
Torah Reading: Exodus 3:1 – 4:17 - Moses & the burning bush
Psalm 43
Haftarah: Isaiah 40:11-18, 21-22

This passage includes the first mention of God's mountain, and the important incidents of the Burning Bush, God's revelation of his name, and the signs of Moses' staff changed into a serpent and the leprous hand.

Forty years had passed by now:

Acts 7:30 - "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush.

Exodus 3:1 - "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."

Mt. Horeb

Mt. Sinai, Horeb and "the mountain of God" are probably different names for the same place, but it's not really clear. Apparently the site of the burning bush, the giving of the Law and the mountain Elijah journeyed to are all the same.

Medieval Jewish commentator Abraham Ibn Ezra suggested that there was one mountain, "only it had two tops, which bore these different names." John Calvin took the view that Sinai and Horeb were the same mountain, with the eastern side of the mountain being called Sinai and the western side being called Horeb

In **Exodus 17:6** Moses was "upon the rock at Horeb" when he struck the rock to obtain water. It goes on to say that Moses "called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'"

In **Exodus 33:6**, Horeb is the location where the Israelites stripped off their ornaments and set off towards Canaan.

Moses recalled in **Deuteronomy 1:6** that God had said to the Israelites at Horeb, "You have dwelt long enough at this mountain: turn and take your journey", confirming the same suggestion that Horeb was the location from which they set off towards Canaan.

Elijah is described in **1 Kings 19:8** as traveling to Horeb, in a way which implies that its position was familiar when that was written, but there are no biblical references set any later in time.

1 Kings 19:8 - "So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God."

2 Chronicles 5:10 - "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt. "

Psalm 106:19 - "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped a molten image."

Malachi 4:3-5 - "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts. "Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD...."

The 'Moving Mountain' Tradition:

Mount Sinai and Moses had been predestined from the days of Creation to meet each other; and therefore the former, when Moses led his father-in-law's flocks toward it (**Ex. 3:1**), moved from its foundation and went to meet him. It stopped only when Moses was upon it; and both manifested great joy at the meeting. Moreover, Moses recognized that it was the mount of God on seeing that birds hovered over but did not alight upon it. According to another authority, the birds fell at Moses' feet (Yalkuṭ Re'ubeni, Shemot, quoting the Zohar).

God's choice to reveal himself fell on Mt. Sinai/Horeb because it was lower than the others and therefore more humble, and had not previously been used as a high place for idolatry.

The Burning Bush

The whole event at the burning bush can be seen as a kind of reversal of the curse in Eden in **Genesis 3:18**. The One who appeared in the Garden and pronounced the curse of thorns and thistles on the earth now reappears in the midst of the thorns, promising deliverance. Ultimately, He promises a land flowing with milk and honey, similar to the Garden. Final redemption was won by Christ, wearing a crown of these same thorns on his head, as he died on the cross.

Exodus 3:2 - "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."

Rashi - "from within the thorn bush": But not from any other tree, because of "I am with him in distress" (**Psalm 91:15**). — [from Tanchuma, Shemoth 14] Distress displayed in its thorns.

Probably the thorns of the acacia bush, from whose wood the ark of the covenant and parts of the tabernacle were made. Its oils protect it from decay. Christ's crown of thorns was probably made from acacia thorns. Thorns and thistles are evidence of the curse on the earth from **Genesis 3:18**.

“The fire that Moses saw in the bush was the appearance of the Angel Michael, who descended as the forerunner of the Shekinah herself to come down presently. ... In order to give Moses an illustration of His modesty, God descended from the exalted heavens and spoke to him from a lowly thorn bush instead of the summit of a lofty mountain or the top of a stately cedar tree.” - *Legends of the Jews*

(Later Jewish writings picture this encounter as an elaborate ecstatic experience in which Moses is taken up into the celestial regions.)

“Holy” ground - *admat kodesh* - set apart, sacred, consecrated, honored, especially meaningful.

Compare **Joshua 5:15** - “And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot: for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.”

Why take your shoes off? Probably for the same reason as leaving shoes *on* for the exodus Passover:

Exodus 12:11 - “And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.”

In the Promised land, the Passover would be celebrated reclining and with shoes off, at rest. Being in the presence of God was for Moses a time to listen and meditate on the divine presence. Shoes were for carrying out his mission later.

With shoes on, “I will not give sleep to my eyes Or slumber to my eyelids, Until I find a place for the LORD, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob” (**Psalms 132:4-5**).

Another reason - leather sandals indicated a death was involved in taking the skin of the animal. Thus a blood sacrifice served to separate someone from the earth. In God's presence that was not needed.

The Kabbalists considered the body as "the shoe of the soul," to protect it during its journey in the physical world.

Also, In mourning, Jews remove their shoes, to indicate no other business or comfort is distracting them from focusing on their lamentations:

“And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and went as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot” (**2 Samuel 15:30**)

Exodus 3:7 - “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”

Rashi - I set My heart to contemplate and to know their pains, and I have not hidden My

eyes, neither will I block My ears from their cry.

Fully realized in the Messiah:

Isaiah 53:3 - "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"

Moses balks at his call from God

Exodus 3:11-12 - "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? 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."

Rashi - And He said, "For I will be with you...": He [God] answered his former [question] first, and his latter [question] last. [Concerning] what you said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" This [mission] is not yours but Mine, "for I will be with you." And this vision which you have seen in the thorn bush, is the sign for you that it was I who sent you and that you will succeed in My mission and that I am able to save you. Just as you saw the thorn bush performing My mission and not being harmed, so will you go on My mission and not be harmed. [Concerning] what you asked, "what merit do the Israelites have that they should go out of Egypt?" I have a great thing [dependent] on this Exodus, for at the end of three months from their Exodus from Egypt they are destined to receive the Torah on this mountain.

"Moses entreated God to impart to him the knowledge of his Great Name, that he not confounded of the children of Israel ask for it. God answered, saying: "You desire to know my Name? My name is according to my acts. When I judge my creatures I am called Elohim, "Judge." When I rise up to do battle against sinners, I am Lord Sabaoth, "The Lord of Hosts." When I wait with long suffering patience for the improvement of the sinner, my name is El Shaddai. When I have mercy upon the world, I am Adonai. But unto the children of Israel shalt thou say that I am He that was, that is and that ever will be, and I am He that is with them in their bondage now and He that shall be with them in the bondage of the time to come." - *Legends of the Jews*

God's Name "I AM"

Exodus 3:13 - "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? 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."

"Ehyeh asher Ehyeh" - This is a phrase that can be translated many ways. "I am becoming who I am becoming, I will be who I will be, I am what I am."

Or more probably, "I am I AM."

The words “Ehyeh asher Ehyeh” of **Exodus 3:14a** are God’s Self-identification to Moses, just as they are understood in the Septuagint, and the absolute “Ehyeh” of **Exodus 3:14b** is the Personal name of God and translates into English as “I AM.”

So this could be translated:

Then God said to Moses, “My name is I AM”. And He said, “Thus you shall say to the Sons of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you’”

It was over this point that Jesus announced his divinity:

John 8:58-59 - “‘Truly, truly, I tell you,’ Jesus declared, ‘before Abraham was, I am!’ At this, they picked up stones to throw at Him.”

Exodus 6:2-3 - “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD (yahweh): And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (el shaddai), but by my name JEHOVAH (yahweh) was I not known to them.”

Yahweh - (the) self-Existent or Eternal.

From the root *haya* - to be, become, come to pass, exist

Some commentators explain that God’s proper name is Yahweh, and his personal name is Ehyeh.

YHWH

In Hebrew, Yahweh is written as YHWH - the “Tetragrammaton, the ineffable Name of God.” This is never pronounced by Jews. Instead they substitute “The Holy One, Blessed Be He” or HaShem “the Name.” Two of its letters can serve as vowels, and two are vocalic place-holders, which are not pronounced. Thus the first-century Jewish historian and philosopher Josephus said that the sacred name of God consists of “four vowels.”

Nevertheless, the correct pronunciation of the name was concealed later for fear it would be used in magical incantations and thus defiled. It was only pronounced one time a year at Yom Kippur when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies. Some time after the destruction of Solomon's Temple, the spoken use of God's name as it was written ceased among the people. It is only to be pronounced "Adonai" (Lord); and the latter name too is regarded as a holy name, and is only to be pronounced in prayer. "He

who pronounces the Name with its own letters has no part in the world to come!" according to the Mishnah. A rabbinic tradition holds that Jesus performed miracles by "stealing" the pronunciation of the name YHWH from the Holy of Holies, writing it on a note and inserting it in His thigh [Toldot Yeshu, chapter 3].)

Rashi - (I will be what I will be)": "I will be" with them in this predicament "what I will be" with them in their subjugation by other kingdoms. He [Moses] said before Him, "O Lord of the universe! Why should I mention to them another trouble? They have enough [problems] with this one." He said to him, "You have spoken well. So shall you say, etc." -[from Ber. 9b] (Not that Moses, God forbid, outsmarted God, but he did not understand what God meant, because originally, when God said, "I will be what I will be," He told this to Moses alone, and He did not mean that he should tell it to Israel. That is the meaning of "You have spoken well," for that was My original intention, that you should not tell such things to the children of Israel, only "So shall you say to the children of Israel," 'Ehyeh [I will be] has sent me.'")

Finally, "I Am" indicates there can be no qualifiers or descriptions of God. Nothing can stand outside of or beyond him. He is existence itself, and everything in existence comes from him.

The Name of Yeshua - Jesus

Joshua's name was Yehoshua, meaning "YAHWEH is salvation." The name Jesus comes from a Greek translation of the Aramaic short form of Yehoshua, (Yeshu'a)

Joshua was first called Hoshea. The change from Hoshea to Yehoshua appears in **Numbers 13:16**, by prefixing the name of Yahweh.

A Jewish tradition says that when the name Abram became Abraham (**Genesis 17:5**) and Sarai became Sarah (**Genesis 17:15**), the letter Yod was split up into two He's (2 x 5 = 10). The letter Yod complains about this to God (according to Midrash Genesis Rabbah XLVII,1). But with the name Yehoshua, Yod gets satisfaction: "Hitherto thou wast in a woman's name and the last of its letters; now I will set thee free in a man's name and at the beginning of its letters."

Jesus is an Aramaic form of Yehoshua. The Greek form, "Iesous," is described by Philo as meaning "the Lord's salvation."

Later rabbis referred to Jesus as Yeshu. They said he lost the use of the final "a" or "ayin" because he could not save himself.

Exodus 3:15 - "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 (olam)*, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

Rashi - He [God] taught him [Moses] how it was to be read, and so does David say, "O Lord, Your name is forever; O Lord, the mention of Your name is for every generation" (Ps. 135:14). — [from Pes. 50a]

Jesus said this indicated the Resurrection: **Luke 20:37** - "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Exodus 3:22 - "And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, 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."

Spoil = "empty out" according to the Targum. Fulfilled in **Exod. 12:36** But later, Moses told them to strip themselves of their Egyptian finery (**Exod. 33:6**).

Moses' staff

Exodus 4:3 - "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."

Why a serpent?

Rashi - "and it became a serpent": [This was how] He hinted to him [Moses] that he had spoken ill of Israel (by saying, "They will not believe me,") and he had adopted the art of the serpent (i.e. slander). — [from Exod. Rabbah 3:12]

The Leprous Hand

Exodus 4:6 - "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. 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."

Rashi - With this sign, too, He hinted to him that he spoke slanderously when he said, "They will not believe me." It is for this reason that He struck him with tzora'as (leprosy), just as Miriam was struck for speaking slanderously.

"and [when] he took it out of his bosom": From here, [we learn] that the Divine measure of good comes quicker than the measure of retribution, for in the first instance [verse 6] it does not say, from his bosom. — [from Shab. 97a, Exod. Rabbah 3:13]

Exodus 4:8 - "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."

Rashi - "They will believe the voice of the last sign": When you tell them, "Because of you I was stricken, because I spoke ill of you," they will believe you, for they have already learned that those who trespass against them are stricken with plagues, such as Pharaoh and Abimelech, [who were punished] because of Sarah.

Exodus 4:14 - "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."

Rashi - "wrath was kindled": Rabbi Joshua ben Korchah says: In every [instance that God's] kindling anger [is mentioned, i.e., that God's anger was sparked] in the Torah, it is stated [that there was] a consequence [i.e., it was followed by a punishment]. In this [instance, however,] no consequence is stated, and we do not find that a punishment came [to Moses] after this kindling of anger. Rabbi Jose said to him, "Here too you can see a consequence is stated: [namely in the question] 'Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite,' who was destined to be a Levite and not a priest [kohen]. I had said that the priesthood would emanate from you, henceforth it will not be so, but he [Aaron] will be a priest and you the Levite, as it is said: 'But as for Moses, the man of God-his sons were to be called in the tribe of Levi' (I Chron. 23:14)." -[from Zev. 102a]

"and when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart": Not as you think, that he will resent your attaining a high position. Because of this [Aaron's goodness and humility], Aaron merited the ornament of the breastplate, which is placed over the heart (**Exod. 28:29**). — [from Exod. Rabbah 3:17]