

Exodus
March 19, 2007
Chapter 3

I. God's Invention

The last chapter ends with God "noticing" the plight of the Israelites in Egypt. God has expressed His concern to Moses. So, what will He do? Chapters 3 and 4 answer the question.

II. Curious Moses

Ex 3:1-3

3:1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. **3** So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight — why the bush does not burn up." NIV

Verse 1 Horeb is Mount Sinai or the mountain range containing Mount Sinai. The exact location is unknown. People have speculated as to its location for centuries. For example, using a triangulation method based on its distances from Midian, Egypt, and Kadesh, The History Channel in Exodus Decoded claims that the mountain is Hashem Es Tarif. Additional reasons given were:

1. A cleft that overlooks a natural amphitheater
2. Evidence of an ancient spring
3. A plateau below large enough to hold several hundred thousand people and containing enough foliage to sustain large flocks.

If you want more, do a google search on "Exodus Decoded."

Verse 2 Who is the angel of the Lord? In Hebrew, it is simply *mal'ak YHWH*.

Verse 3 Did God go over to the bush on his own free will or did he go there because God predestined him to do so?

III. Moses Finds God

Ex 3:4-6

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." **6** Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. NIV

- Verse 5 Apparently having a propensity to speak to burning bushes, Moses gives back a simple response.
- Verse 6 Why was Moses afraid? Can man look at God and live?
- Verse 6 Do you think that Moses knew God in Egypt?

IV. Failed Deliverer

Ex 3:7-10

7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey — the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." NIV

- Verse 7 The people have been crying for at least 80 years. Why was He not willing to help earlier?
- Verse 8 The promise given to Abraham about four centuries earlier (Gen 15:13-16) is about to come to pass.

What do you think that Moses is thinking?

V. Objection #1

Ex 3:11-12

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." NIV

- Verse 11 Certainly having humility before the Lord is not a bad thing. If Moses stopped here in his objection, we would not think less of him. Moses has already tried to help the Israelites, and realizes that he does not have the power to do it.
- Verse 12 God points out that this time Moses the man will have some help.

VI. Objection #2

Ex 3:13-15

13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation. NIV

- Verse 14 Earlier, Moses had asked, “who am I?” Now, he asks, “who are you?”
Quite probably, the Jews in Egypt had forgotten much about God.
- Verse 15 What does “I AM” mean? Other possible translations are:
“I cause to be because I cause to be.”
“I will be because I will be.”
Basically, however we interpret it, it means that God always has been and always will be, without creation, beginning, or end.

If we applied to ourselves, we would have to say something like:

“I am that which I have become.”

“I am that which I was born to be.”

“I am that which circumstances have made me.”

We were created and have a beginning.

- Verse 15 LORD (all caps) is YHWH in Hebrew; there are no vowels in it. Hebrew *Adonai* is translated Lord (not all caps). Jehovah comes from taking the vowel symbols and applying them to YHWH. Per New Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Yahweh might have originated as a finite causative verb from the Northwest Semitic root hwy, “to be, to come into being,” so that the divine name would mean “He causes to be, or exist,” i.e., “He creates.”

VII. “Go Tell the People”

Ex 3:16-22

16 "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers — 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. 17 And 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.' 18 "The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt 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 the LORD our God.' 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. 20 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. 21 "And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. 22 Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians." NIV

Passage This is a foreshadowing of what is to come.

Verse 22 “Living in the house” probably met that they were slaves in the house.

Verse 22 The clothing would be needed for the long desert trip.

Deut 15:13-16

3 And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; 14 you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him. 15 You shall

remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today. NKJV

VIII. Next Time

What obstacles do you put in the way of God working in you? Given that Moses has three more objections in Chapter 4, why does God not simply strike Moses dead and move on to a better candidate?

IX. Appendix: Angel of the LORD

Many of the initial references to angels are to the “Angel of the Lord.” The passages referring to the “Angel of the Lord” are:

- a. (Gen 16:7 ff)-- the angel and Hagar;
- b. (Gen 18)-- Abraham intercedes with the angel for Sodom;
- c. (Gen 22:11 ff)-- the angel interposes to prevent the sacrifice of Isaac;
- d. (Gen 24:7,40)-- Abraham sends Eliezer and promises the angel's protection;
- e. (Gen 31:11 ff)-- the angel who appears to Jacob says "I am the God of Beth-el";
- f. (Gen 32:24 ff)-- Jacob wrestles with the angel and says, "I have seen God face to face";
- g. (Gen 48:15 ff)-- Jacob speaks of God and the angel as identical;
- h. (Ex 3) (compare Acts 7:30ff)-- the angel appears to Moses in the burning bush;
- i. (Ex 13:21; 14:19) (compare Num 20:16)-- God or the angel leads Israel out of Egypt;
- j. (Ex 23:20 ff)-- the people are commanded to obey the angel;
- k. (Ex 32:34--33:17) (compare Isa 63:9)-- Moses pleads for the presence of God with His people;
- l. (Josh 5:13--6:2)-- the angel appears to Joshua;
- m. (Judg 2:1-5)-- the angel speaks to the people;
- n. (Judg 6:11 ff)-- the angel appears to Gideon.
- o. (Judg. 13)--the angel appears to Samson’s parents

It should be noted that not all of the above references use the phrase “Angel of the Lord.” However, what all of these passages have in common are that they are referenced by some as appearances of God (or specifically of Jesus) and in others as being an angel (e.g. Acts 7:30).

A study of these passages shows that while the angel and Yahweh are at times distinguished from each other, they are with equal frequency, and in the same passages, merged into each other. How is this to be explained?

- (1) This angel is simply an angel with a special commission, perhaps acting as God’s spokesman;
- (2) He may be a momentary descent of God into visibility;
- (3) He may be the Logos, a kind of temporary pre-incarnation of the second person of the Trinity.

While some may have strong opinions on some or all of the above references, the Bible is simply not clear. Therefore, if we wish to stay with the Bible and not add to it, then we must be careful not to overly interpret the references. In other words, if the Bible refers to the agent as the “Angel of the Lord,” then we should do the same!

X. Question: What does it take for you to do what God wants you to do?