

MOSES MEETS GOD

Exodus chapter 3

An ancient **Jahwist** story about commissioning Moses to deliver the Children of Israel from Egyptian slavery has been expanded to incorporate **Elohist** material so as to explain how the children of Israel came to know the name of God, YHWH.

¹ Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law **Jethro**, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to **Horeb**, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.”

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

⁵ Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ He said further, “I am the God of your 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 at God.

⁷ Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the **Canaanites**, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ The cry of the Israelites* has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

* This word is more concretely translated (as in the 1611 King James Version of the Bible) as “Children of Israel.”

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹² He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

¹³ But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD,* the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations.

* The word LORD, when spelled with small capital letters, stands for the divine name (YHWH), which is here connected with the verb *hayah*, ‘to be.’

¹⁶ “Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘**The LORD, the God of your ancestors**, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: “I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’”

¹⁸ “They will listen to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’”

¹⁹ “I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go. ²¹ I will bring this people into such favor with the Egyptians that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed; ²² each woman shall ask her neighbor and any woman living in the neighbor’s house for jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; and so you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

