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Exodus 1-3



Exodus - Steve Gregg

In Exodus 1-3, the Israelites were enslaved by the Pharaoh of the Hyksos dynasty in Egypt. The Pharaoh subjected them to hard labor and ordered the killing of male Hebrew babies. However, the Hebrew midwives and Moses' mother disobeyed and saved the male children. In a theophany, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and commissioned him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Despite Moses' doubts and Pharaoh's resistance, God promised to strike Egypt with plagues and make the Israelites leave with favor and possessions from the Egyptians.

Transcript

Exodus 1-1, Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt. Each man in his household came with Jacob, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons, for Joseph was in Egypt already.

And Joseph died, all his brothers and all that generation. But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty, and the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph.

And he said to his people, Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply. And it happened in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.

Therefore, they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens, and they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Ramses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew, and they were in dread of the children of Israel. Now I've mentioned in our introduction that many scholars believe that the pharaohs that were ruling in Egypt in the time of Joseph were of the Hyksos dynasty, that would be spelled H-Y-K-S-O-S, Hyksos, and or Hyksos.

And these, if it is so, these were Semitic people who had invaded Egypt and conquered many parts of it. Not the entire land of Egypt, but most of Egypt was controlled by the

Hyksos for, I think it was 150 years or more. And if Joseph happened to be taken into Egypt at that time, and in the providence of God, that would be a good time for God to make it happen.

Then these pharaohs would have been not native Egyptians. They would have been more ethnically related to people like Joseph and to Jacob, because they'd be Semitic people rather than Hamitic peoples. The Egyptians came from Ham, and Jacob certainly came from Shem.

And so that could explain possibly why the pharaoh was so quick to elevate Joseph and to do favors for him and for Jacob and so forth, because of the possibility of them being remotely related by ancestry going back to Shem. Now, as I pointed out, that the 18th dynasty of pharaohs were Egyptians who overthrew the Hyksos. By the way, interestingly enough, they said that the Hyksos were the ones who invented the two-horse chariot and also the compound bow, so that these weapons of war made Egypt more powerful than all the other nations around it.

It's like the high-tech, like having the atom bomb would be in World War II. It was the newest technology in warfare. And so Egypt was able to become strong that way.

But it's actually, they say, from the use of these very weapons that the Hyksos introduced, that the Egyptians were able to rise up and use those weapons against them and drive them out. And once they did so, the Egyptians wanted to make sure that this would never happen again. They didn't want foreigners ever to invade from Asia again.

And so they went and they conquered regions far north and east of Egypt so that they would build a buffer between them and others. But as I said in the introduction, the Israelites were Asiatics. They were Semites.

They were from the Middle East. They were not Africans like the Egyptians. And they were growing very rapidly up in the northeastern border area, in the Nile River Delta, which was the direction that such invasions came from.

And so it's not too strange that the Egyptians, having just been freed from foreign invaders, might look at the Israelites there and say, you know, these people could be a danger to us if any foreign invaders came again and these Israelites joined with them. So we need to take away their spirit. We need to take away their independence.

We need to keep them under close supervision and put them to work. You know, the devil finds work for idle hand. And these people, if they're idle, may rise up in rebellion against us, along with other enemies of ours.

So they put them under hard labor to build cities for them. Now, the Israelites were not the only people that were building cities for the Egyptians in these days, though they might have been the only ones who were slaves. I don't know.

The Egyptians had hired laborers as well. But the Israelites became slaves and it didn't help. It didn't it didn't make their numbers decrease, which is what Pharaoh wanted to do.

He didn't want to see them multiply so much. And it says in verse 12 that the more they were afflicted, the more they afflicted, the more they multiplied. Verse 13.

So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor, which is thought to be a secondary stage of attack on them. That just making them slaves in the first place was the first attempt to diminish their numbers. And that didn't work.

So they made them serve with rigor. That means they they made them work harder. They whipped them more.

They disciplined them more. They oppressed them more. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar and brick and in all manner of service in the field.

All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor. Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives. And this is a third step he's taken because their population is still growing.

First step was to make slaves of them. The second was to increase the rigors of their work. And the third stage is to try to get the midwives to kill the baby boy Hebrews at birth.

The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives of whom the name of one was Shifra and the name of the other was Pua. And he said, when you do the duties of midwife for the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you should kill him. But if it is a daughter, then she shall live.

But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. So the king of Egypt called for midwives and said to them, why have you done this thing and save the male children alive? And the midwives said to Pharaoh, because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them. Therefore, God dealt well with the midwives.

And the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was because the midwives feared God that he provided households for them. Now, these midwives, it's kind of interesting insertion here because their names are given.

Shifra and Pua. And these names are actually known from Egyptian records. Not of these two women, but the name Shifra and the name Pua are found actually numerous times in Egyptian records from ancient times.

So they are authentic Egyptian names. What's interesting is that their names are given at all because the Pharaoh's name is not given. Even Pharaoh's daughter is not.

Her name is not given. You know, some people who are ranked very highly in the world's eyes are. They're not even identified by name for us in the record.

But these probably slave women who are midwives, because they fear God. They are memorialized by name, probably because, as it says in verse 21, the God made households for them as they made the matrons of some large family where they were honored as the sort of the mothers of large families and probably clans that were named after them, which would be why their names be remembered. Now, what the Pharaoh wanted them to do.

These were the two midwives that were assigned to help the Hebrew woman give birth is that when a baby would be born. The idea was, as soon as they could see that it was a male, they should probably strangle the baby in a secretive way so that they could just claim it was stillborn. Obviously, if the midwives made it known that they were killing the babies on purpose, their ability to do so would be limited because, first of all, people wouldn't call them for the midwife when the babies were being born.

This was just going to kill it. So they were supposed to do it rather secretly, just as they caught the baby. As soon as they saw it was a boy, they were supposed to maybe in a subtle sort of way, just snuff it, strangle it or something and say, oh, look, poor thing, born dead.

And they didn't do that. And the excuse they gave Pharaoh was that the babies are born too soon. We get there too late.

It's too late to claim stillbirth because the women deliver their babies without a midwife before the midwives even get there. Now, some people think that the midwives lied to Pharaoh. And sometimes this story is given as an example by people who are saying there are times when it's important to not tell the truth for the sake of some higher good.

There's a whole lot of Christians who who have debated that particular question of whether you must always tell the truth or whether sometimes you should lie to save lives, for example. And those who are in favor of occasionally lying to save lives have suggested that the midwives lied here. But if they lied, they lied to save their own lives, not other people's lives, because their lie wouldn't save the lives of babies.

It would just prevent them from being punished because they were called on the carpet for not doing what Pharaoh said to do. They can be punished for not obeying. But they they gave an answer, which could be a true answer.

The Bible does not say they lied. It does say that they didn't obey the Pharaoh because they feared God, but they may have told the truth when they said, you know, these

midwives, these Hebrew women there. They're not like the pampered Egyptian women.

The Egyptian women are served by a slave labor force, and they're just getting, you know, soft and fat and weak. And therefore, they have more trouble bearing their children. And with these Hebrew women, they work hard.

They're hard working women, and therefore, they're in good shape and they bear their children faster. I know my wife had very short labors, hard labors, but short. And part of it was due to the fact that when she was pregnant, she'd walk six or eight miles a day and try to stay in shape.

And I don't know if that's why labors were short, but that, I think, had a lot to do with it. Because when you when you're active, when a woman is active and in shape, then her babies, I think, are generally speaking, born more easily. Not always.

There can be complications with anyone. But I think this is a possible, not a lie on their part. They may be embellishing it.

They may be acting like this was the case all the time, when it's only the case some of the time. But it was probably true that in general, the Hebrew women, because they were harder working women and better physical condition, probably, gave birth more quickly. And so the midwives got away with that.

It didn't save the babies. Ultimately, it just postponed the more severe treatment. That came next.

And that was verse 22. So Pharaoh commanded all his people saying, Every son who is born, you shall cast into the river and every daughter you shall save alive. Now, the reason for saving the daughters alive is that no one would expect that women would fight in war in those days.

So if he's afraid of the military strength of the Israelites, he'd like to gradually reduce the number of men in the population. But the women would not be a threat. And they could even be servants or even wives or concubines.

The Egyptians, so they didn't want to kill off the baby girls, just the men. And so when the midwives, that didn't work, that didn't kill off the babies, he said, apparently to the general population, just every son who's born, you shall cast in the river. And it's not clear whether he said that to the Jewish people or to his own people, like commanding the Hebrews, you throw your own children into the river.

It's possible that was true. He may have just made it a law. You need to expose your male children and kill them.

This would be not unheard of in other societies. The Romans used to expose the female

babies because they wanted more males and they didn't want the females. And they would expose the babies, leave them out in the market square to die.

And this was something that could easily in a pagan land be made mandatory. China, you know, has a one one baby per family policy. And if you get pregnant with a second child, the law is you have to have it aborted.

I don't know what happens if you secretly go ahead and have the birth, but I wouldn't be surprised at least some families, if they have little girls and want little boys, they that they killed them at birth. The idea of respecting the life of a child is very much a biblical idea in the pagan world does not necessarily hold to it. Children are simply part of the family's wealth.

And if you don't want a lot of little girls because they can't bring in a lot of wealth in those societies, they wanted boys to kill little girls. It was not uncommon. So for Pharaoh to give the Hebrews a lot, you kill your little boys would have been considered to be, you know, something a pharaoh might do.

He's been overt about it now. That meant, of course, that Moses, who was born at this time, was in danger of being thrown in the river. His brother, Aaron, was three years older.

He didn't have to be thrown in the river. Apparently, that's because he was born before the pharaoh gave this edict. Aaron was probably born at the time when the midwives were neglecting their duty to kill the babies.

And so he got he fell through the cracks there and got to be about three years old before the pharaoh began saying newborn males have to be thrown in the river. Moses, however, was born at that time under that decree. And therefore, when he was born, his mother had the obligation of throwing the river.

So she did. She just put him in a watertight basket so that he wouldn't drown in the river. She put him in the river, though, just like the command of the king was.

It says in Chapter two, a man of the house of Levi went and took as a wife, a daughter of Levi. So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.

Now, he wasn't her first born. She had two others. The story itself tells about an older daughter, an older sister of Moses.

And then, of course, later on, we read about Aaron, who is three years older. Also, Miriam, the sister, must have been at least six or seven years older, not more than that. So Moses was at least the third child of this family, though it's spoken of as if he's the first born, only because the focus is on him, because she kept him hidden for three

months.

But after three months, the baby's lungs are developing and he cries loudly and she couldn't hide him anymore after that. So she took an arc of bulrushes for him. That'd be papyrus and almost certainly dogged it with asphalt and pitch or tar and put the child in the river.

And laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off to know what would be done to him. Now, the placement of this basket may have been strategic because we find that the pharaoh's daughter came out to bathe there.

And it's very probable that Moses' mother, Jacobit, as we find her name later on, that she knew that they may have lived nearby. They may have seen the princess out there, you know, bathing on occasion and thought, let's put this out where she can find it. She's a girl.

She'll have a heart, you know, and maybe this is the best hope we can have. We don't know if this is entirely, strictly providential or if it was planned out by the mother. But obviously, placing Moses in that place was what led to his being not only kept alive, but put into a place where he'd have an exalted position in the country.

He was a beautiful baby, and therefore she was no doubt sure if the pharaoh's daughter would see him, that she'd be fond of him and want to keep him. I mean, that is, if Jacobit knew that this was the regular place that she came to bathe, then it probably was. And if she probably didn't know that.

Verse five, then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river. Now, no one knows who was the pharaoh at this time, nor who the daughter was. There are traditional names for her given by Josephus, but he didn't know any more than anyone else did.

We don't even know that she was an important daughter of Pharaoh. The pharaoh had wives and concubines. She could have been just a lesser daughter of a concubine for all anyone knows.

We don't have any reason to believe that she was like the chief princess. But she was at least related to Pharaoh, and therefore, if she wanted to adopt a baby that would that would give that baby immunity from the general edict against Hebrew children. So she came down to bathe at the river and her maidens walked along the riverside.

And when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him and said, this is one of the Hebrews children.

Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, shall I go and call a nurse for you from those

Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you? Well, this is a presumptuous like, of course, you're going to keep the child. You know, Pharaoh's daughter hadn't necessarily expressed any interest in doing so, but let's just put that suggestion in her mind. Well, you got to keep the child, of course.

So do you need someone to wet nurse it for you? Because, I mean, obviously, you're not going to do that yourself. And it's possible that the Pharaoh's daughter even saw through this plot that went ahead with it anyway. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, go.

So the maiden went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages. So the woman took the child and nursed him and the child grew and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son.

So she called his name Moses, saying, because I drew him out of the water. Now, the name Moses, scholars are not agreed necessarily on the etymology of the name. She says, because I drew him out of the water and many feel, therefore, that it is coming from the Hebrew word Moshe, which literally means to be drawn out.

Moshe. There are many Jews today named Moses, although they would pronounce it Moshe, which is to draw out. However, there is an Egyptian language, a word Moshe, which is actually part of the names of some of the Pharaohs, like Thutmosa and some others, Amosha.

These are the names of some of the pharaohs. The word Moshe in Egyptian means child or son. And so there are scholars who believe that she being Egyptian would have given an Egyptian name and and therefore that she gave it based on the idea of the Egyptian word for son, saying that she's taken him to be her son.

Although she does have drawn him out of the water, which suggests a connection possibly to the Hebrew word, how much the Egyptian princess would know of the Hebrew language. I don't know. But if she happened to live in the region which was populated by the Hebrew slave, she may have picked it up growing up and she may have made a play on words based on the Hebrew language.

It's hard to say. Now, it came to pass in those days, verse 11, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way.

And when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hit him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting. And he said to the one who did the wrong.

Why are you striking your companion? Then he said, who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? So Moses feared and said,

surely this thing is known. When Pharaoh heard of the matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian.

And he sat down by a well. Now, this story of Moses killing the Egyptian is somewhat embellished for us. A little bit in the book of Acts, chapter seven, I say embellished.

I don't mean to say falsely embellished. It's just more detail is given on it when Stephen is preaching before the Sanhedrin. And it says in verse 20, Acts, chapter seven, verse 20.

At this time, Moses was born and was well pleasing to God. And he was brought up in his father's house for three months. But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.

And it says, And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds. Now, this statement by Stephen is not something that we're told in Exodus. We don't read anything about Moses education or has been mighty in words and deeds.

However, Stephen might have been just deducing that since he was raised in the Pharaoh's family, that he'd receive the best education available. And that would be a fair inference. I think that probably a safe guess to make.

Now, as far as Moses being mighty in words and deeds, that certainly isn't how Moses viewed himself when he was at the burning bush. He said he was slow of speech and he was nobody to stand before Pharaoh. But according to Josephus, and we don't know what sources he had other than the book of Exodus, but Josephus said that in his adult life, Moses led the southern armies of Egypt.

And he may have been a military man, an adopted son, one of the concubines, grandsons, perhaps would usually be raised to be in some kind of a either military or civic job in Egypt. And therefore, it may be that Moses was in the military. We see him having leadership qualities when he leads the nation of Israel out.

And even when he stands against the shepherds in Midian, he seems to be a tough enough guy that he intimidates the other shepherds when they're bothering the shepherd girls. But anyway, we don't know where Stephen got his information about Moses being mighty in word and deed. If he was, in fact, mighty in word, that is, if he was a powerful orator in Egypt, which is possible, then it was forty years later that he said he was slow of speech and maybe after forty years of hanging out with sheep instead of people, he hadn't done a lot of talking and he also lost a lot of confidence.

And so he may have indeed become slow of speech over the years. But here in Acts chapter seven, in verse twenty three, it says, But when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel, and seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed and struck down the Egyptian.

Now, Stephen tells us this happened when Moses was forty years old.

Exodus doesn't tell us that. Exodus just says in chapter two, verse eleven, Now it came to pass in those days when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. So it's only from Stephen's account that we know that Moses was forty years old at this time.

And it does say that he went out to visit his brethren. Apparently, Moses knew he was a Hebrew. How did he know this? Well, he was brought up in his earliest years by his mother.

Even after he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, she nursed him until he was weaned. When he was weaned, he went to live with with her in the palace. But he lived with his own mother for the first, probably at least three years.

The weaning of a child in Egypt would be probably at least three years. Sometimes people say as much as five. But certainly, he'd be old enough for his mother to sort of indoctrinate him with the fact that he's a Hebrew.

You're a Hebrew, like us slaves here, but you're going to be in the Pharaoh's house. And she may have even seen, she may have had the foresight to see that her son was going to be in a position someday to maybe to help his people. She might have even put it in his head, even as a little toddler or a little preschooler, as we would say.

You know, someday you're going to grow up and you're going to help your people because we're all slaves here and you're going to be in a position where you can do something in the government. In any case, whether it was his mother that put in his head or God, we don't know. But he apparently knew he was a Hebrew, not an Egyptian, and he knew those were his people and he was concerned about them.

So he went to look on their burdens. He wanted to assess how they were being treated. And he obviously sided with them against the Egyptian overlords and struck down that Egyptian.

This is when he was 40 years old. It's possible that he hadn't even gone out to see them before that. He went out there to see what was going on with the Hebrews.

He may have been pretty much confined to Egyptian society away from the work camps until he was about 40. But Stephen then tells us something else important that we wouldn't know just from Exodus. In Acts 7, when he says that he struck the Egyptian down, it says in verse 25, for he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand.

But they did not understand. Now, notice Stephen says something that we would not have known just reading Exodus, because we read him helping this Hebrew. And this

could have been just an act of outrage at an injustice in general.

It could have been an act of loyalty to his brother Hebrew against the Egyptian. But there's nothing in access that tells us that Moses saw this as something of the beast. The beginning of fulfilling a role that he had to deliver his people from bondage.

Stephen said he thought that they would know that he was sent by God to deliver them. He apparently knew that at this time. And although if he thought that he could deliver them by killing one Egyptian taskmaster, he wasn't thinking very clearly.

I think he just acted on the spur of the moment. He assumed that the Hebrews, if they did know that he had done this, would be favorable toward him because they could say, oh, now we've got an advocate in the government. We've got someone who could be our deliverer here ultimately.

But they didn't understand that. And when he later the next day confronted two Hebrews who were fighting each other, the one who was in the wrong said, you're going to kill me like you did the Egyptian yesterday. Now, Moses had looked both ways before killing the Egyptians to see that no one was watching.

But someone was. We don't know who, but he was seen. And of course, the Hebrews hearing that some Egyptian official had come down and protected one of them from an Egyptian taskmaster, even killing the taskmaster.

That would circulate through the camp. I mean, it would be well known. Eventually, it would get beyond the camp.

I mean, it'd be something they'd all be talking about. And eventually, Pharaoh heard about it. Through the grapevine and thought that was Moses that had done it.

And so he sought to kill Moses. So Moses fled and he came to me and he sat down by a well verse 16. Now, the priest and million had seven daughters and they came and drew water and they filled the trough to water their father's flock.

Then the shepherds came and drove them away. But Moses set up, stood up and helped them and watered their flocks. Now, the shepherds might have been young boys.

It was not uncommon for people in their families to have their young boys tend the sheep and their young girls go out and gather the water. But gathering water was something that was quite a chore. And it's possible these shepherds waited for these girls to draw the water and then took it from them and drove them away from the wells.

But they weren't counting on this man, this Egyptian, as they saw him standing up for the girls instead of for the boys. And so Moses drove the shepherds away and helped the girls draw their water. But then he let them go home.

And it says when they came to rule their father, he said, How is it that you've come so soon today? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds. And he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock. So rule said to his daughters, And where is he? Why is it that you left the man? Call him that he may eat bread.

Then Moses was content to live with the man. And he gave Zipporah, his daughter to Moses. And she bore him a son and called his name Gershom.

For he said, I've been a stranger in a foreign land. Gershom means a sojourner or a stranger, excuse me, a stranger there means literally now. It happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died.

So that Pharaoh that had sought to kill Moses was now dead. But things didn't get better. The new pharaoh apparently just decided to continue to press his advantage over the Israelites and keep them working hard.

Then the children of Israel groaned because of their bondage and they cried out and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel and God acknowledged them.

All right, so Moses is now married to a Midianite. The Midianites were related to the Jews somewhat. If you go back far enough to Abraham, because Midian was one of the sons of Abraham by Keturah, his concubine.

So just like Ishmael was a son of Abraham, half brother of Isaac, so was Midian. Midian was a half brother of Isaac and the Jews had come through Isaac and the Midianites through Midian. So they had some common roots.

However, throughout the history of the Midianites and the Israelites, generally speaking, the Midianites were very hostile toward them. It was the Midianites at a later date that conquered the land of Israel after the Israelites were there and put them under some severe oppression. It was Gideon who rose up with 300 men and drove 30,000 Midianites out of the land.

But the Midianites were generally speaking hostile toward Israel. And therefore, it's not likely that a later generation, if they were writing this book as fiction, would have made Midian the place where Moses found friendship and marriage and a shelter because later generations of Jews would not be very favorable to the Midianites. But this is a true story and therefore it tells it as it is.

Moses lives among the people of Midian, which are again their territory was in what is now Saudi Arabia. Chapter three. We've got the bad pharaoh dead, but the new pharaoh is not good either.

And the oppression of the Israelites continues. So they're crying out to God and he hears them and he decides to do something for them. And so chapter three tells us of God actually moving to do something for them.

And Moses is going to be the man he's going to move upon. Now, Moses kept the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law. Now, notice the man's name was given as Ruel earlier.

Here he's called Jethro. Elsewhere in scripture, he's also called Raguel. The man apparently had multiple names, which was not that uncommon in biblical times.

People have multiple names. So he kept the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the back of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. Now, calling it the mountain of God either means that it was already considered to be a sacred mountain by the by the Arabs in whatever religion they were practicing at the time, or, as I think most scholars would think, it's called the mountain of God proleptically.

That means it wasn't really the mountain of God at the time, but in later Israeli memory, it was the mountain of God. It was the mountain where God gave the Ten Commandments. And so from the time that Moses is writing, which is after the fact, he refers to it as the mountain of God.

It's called a proleptic reference to it. We don't have any reason to believe it was necessarily already a sacred mountain of the pagans. And the angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.

So he looked and behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight. Why the bush does not burn.

Now, we're told that this burning in the bush, this fire in the bush was the angel of Yahweh who appeared there in that form. And then we're told that Yahweh saw that Moses turned aside to look and God called him from the midst of the bush. And from then on, the conversation is between Moses and God.

Here, the angel of Yahweh is identified with God and in several other stories in the Old Testament to the angel. We read of the angel of Yahweh. And then it's then from then on, the conversation, the angel's conversation said to be God's conversation.

This is true also when God appeared to Hagar. It was the angel of Yahweh that appeared to Hagar. But as the conversation went on, it was the Lord said to her and she said, the Lord said and so forth.

So the term the angel of Yahweh is a term that is used interchangeably with Yahweh himself. Many Christians believe that the angel of Yahweh is a pre-incarnate appearance

of Christ would call it Christophany or, of course, a theophany, an appearance of God. In any case, it is a theophany, it is God appearing, whether it's the second person of the Godhead, as Christians often would say or not, we can't really know because the Bible doesn't say, but it's quite possible.

In any case, the conversation between the angel of the Lord and Moses is really between God and Moses. So Yahweh saw that he turned to look and God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here I am.

And he said, Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet for the place where you're standing is holy ground. For he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

And Moses hit his face, for he was afraid to look upon God now. Now, I did not mention what the symbolism of the burning bush might be. We're not told.

The New Testament doesn't tell us and the Old Testament doesn't tell us. Why did God appear in this form of a bush that's burning but not consumed? And I suppose one theory that might make some sense would be that the bush represents Israel and the fire in the bush could represent the sufferings they're going through. They're in the furnace of affliction.

But whereas you would expect such affliction to destroy them, it does not. Actually, they multiply. They actually increase in numbers as they're in affliction.

And so that the burning does not consume them. And it's possible that that was sort of the implied message of the burning bush. It's burning, but it's not burning up.

It's not being consumed. It's not being destroyed. And that might be an emblem of Israel, although many feel like it's an emblem of God himself.

Of course, there's a consuming fire. However, it's not consuming here. Nothing is being consumed.

So you can kind of take your pick on various theories on why the burning bush was the thing that God used. Verse seven, And the Lord said, I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt. I've heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and bring them up from that land to a good large land to land flowing with milk and honey to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now, he began by telling Moses in verse six that he was the God of Abram, Isaac and Jacob and expected Moses to know who those guys were. And he expects our readers to know, too.

So, I mean, it presupposes the stories in Genesis. And it apparently would indicate that Moses, even though he's raised an Egyptian, knew something of who his ancestors were. Now, we don't know how much influence his mother, Jacob, may have had on him after his weaned and went to live in Pharaoh's house.

It's possible that Pharaoh's daughter allowed his mother to visit him, even in his childhood. She might have told him some of this history about Abram, Isaac and Jacob. It's hard to say, but apparently Moses knew who those people were.

And he certainly knew about the oppression of Egyptians over the Israelites because he had seen that and even tried to intervene before. How much he may have known about the promised land, we don't know. But his mother may have told him about that as well.

Remember, he left his mother's home when he was like probably three years old. So there'd be limits to how much she could have told him by then. But if she had continuing communication with him, which is not impossible to imagine, Pharaoh's daughter seemed to be playing along with the thing pretty, pretty readily, seemed to be favorable.

And she may have let Jacob have ongoing educational opportunities with Moses. Then he may have even known about the land, the promised land that they had been away from for two centuries, at least. Now, it is referred to as a land flowing with milk and honey.

And what that means, of course, is that it's got a lot of pasture land, a lot of flowering plants, because milk comes from cows and honey from bees. And it's basically saying that these products, these agricultural products are abundant in the land because it's a very green and flowering and prosperous land. And he names the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

Here there's like six different groups mentioned. In other lists, there are more or less. When God talks about the promised land, he gives a smattering of the names of the tribes and nations that are there that had been dispossessed.

I believe there are seven altogether that are said to have been driven out ahead of them once the thing was done. But the Hittites and the Canaanites and the Amorites, these terms are sometimes used almost interchangeably. The Perizzites are mentioned in a few other lists, but they're not known who they are.

The Perizzites and the Hittites, Hivites, excuse me, are not known from any secular sources. The Jebusites were the people who lived in Jerusalem. That was their capital until David conquered it many years later.

Now, therefore, behold, the city of the cry of the children of Israel has come to me. And I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppressed them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

But Moses said to God, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? So he said, I will certainly be with you and this should be a sign to you that I have sent you when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain. Now, this mountain was pretty far from Egypt. The idea of bringing all those slaves out of Egypt all the way to that mountain would be a sign that God had done a miracle.

And so he says, that's the sign. The day is going to come when you and all the children of Israel will be right here at this mountain where I'm with you right now and worshipping me. And that's a guarantee.

Now, Moses still wasn't buying it, but look at how Moses' response is. Forty years earlier, because he was now 80, as it turns out, 40 years earlier, he had seen himself as the future deliverer of his people from Egypt, Stephen says in his sermon. He said that's why Moses slew that Egyptian.

He saw himself as being in that role as the deliverer of his people. But now he certainly doesn't. Even when God himself appears and speaks audibly to him, he still is not buying it.

If he was in his earlier years, as Stephen said, mighty in word and deed, Moses doesn't think of himself that way now. He's not confident. He doesn't see himself as a leader.

I mean, his statement is, who am I? Now, we live in a time where there's a lot of emphasis on self-esteem and how people need to have more self-esteem. But Moses had plenty of self-esteem when he was 40 years old. He saw himself as the man for the job.

He saw himself as the one in the right position, with the right skills, with the right bloodline. He's the man who's going to deliver the people. But now, at 80 years old, he doesn't see himself that way anymore.

He's been a shepherd. Now, remember, every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians. He was raised an Egyptian.

It says in Genesis that every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians. And so, as one raised in Pharaoh's court, in the elite echelons of Egyptian society, he has now spent 40 years doing what Egyptians think is abominable, which is taking care of sheep. He's not been mighty in word.

He probably hasn't had anyone to talk to but the sheep and his wife. And I don't know how much time he spent at home when he's out on the hillsides with the sheep all the time. So, he was really a guy who had lost all of his self-confidence.

And perhaps that's why he had to spend the 40 years that way. God wanted to work with a man who didn't have any self-confidence. As much as it is a value in our secular world

to have self-confidence and self-esteem and so forth, God, I think, couldn't work with Moses until he got rid of that.

He got rid of his self-confidence and his self-esteem. Same thing when he wrestled with Jacob all night. Jacob was a man who had a lot of wits and strength, natural talents to make himself, you know, bargain in situations and negotiate good deals for himself.

And he took pretty good care of himself. And then God wrestled with him and crippled him. And at that point, he became Israel.

Many times, God needs to break a man who's strong before he can use him. It has to break him of his self-confidence. Paul said that he'd been given a thorn in his flesh to prevent him from being exalted above measure.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul said, so that I might not be exalted above measure, God gave me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me. Three times I asked God to take this away. And he said, my strength is made perfect in your weakness.

When you're weak, I'm strong. And so God wants people to be brought to the end of themselves. And Moses apparently took about as long to be brought to that point as it took him to get to the point of self-confidence that he was at at age 40.

And so he had to kind of backtrack in his ego back to the mentality of just a humble shepherd. And by this time, when God said, OK, you're the man, Moses said, I don't think I'm the man. Who am I that I can stand before Pharaoh? In other words, why would Pharaoh listen to me? I smell like sheep.

I don't hold a position in Egypt anymore. I gave that up 40 years ago. The Pharaoh that I was the grandson of is dead.

I don't hold any stature in Egypt. I don't talk well. I don't smell good.

I'm an old man. Why should I? Who am I that Pharaoh would listen to me? And God said, well, that's really the wrong question. I will be with you.

And that's really what Christians need to be thinking about. Not who am I not building up our self-esteem and and trying to convince ourselves that we have what it takes to do what ever is that God wants us to do. It's not about us.

It's about who's with you, not who you are. He said, I will certainly be with you. And this shall be the sign.

You're going to come here with the children of Israel. You're going to worship at this mountain. Verse 13.

Then Moses continued to object. He said. To God.

Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you and they say to me, what is his name? What should I say to them? And God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, Thus, you shall say to the children of Israel. I am has sent me to you.

Now, Moses. First question was, who am I? And God didn't say who Moses was. He said, I will be with you.

Then most of all, who are you? What's your name? I don't think I know you. And the children of Israel are going to ask me your name. So who are you? You're going to be with me.

But what God are you anyway? And God says, I am that I am. Now, this is a mysterious answer. The in the Hebrew, it this statement, I am that I am gives rise to the name Yahweh.

The name Yahweh is really what we call the Tetragrammaton, the Tetragrammaton. There's four Hebrew consonants, which if you add the right vowels, you get Yahweh as the vocalization or Yehovah or Jehovah, depending on how you pronounce the J-Y or the V-W sound. But the point is, it's a word that the consonants are related to the Hebrew word to be.

And translators have had a different, have had different ways of translating it. A lot of translators think that it should have said, I will be what I will be rather than I am that I am. But it's hard to say because it's really, it's really a difficult thing to translate.

But what God apparently is saying is this, I am self-existent. I am whatever I am. There's nothing you can compare me with.

There's nothing like me. And I am just whatever I am. I'm the only one who is that way.

You see, I am what I've been made. God made me to be what I am. Or I am what my society or my parents have conditioned me to be.

But God is just what he is innately. He's self-existent. And why he chose that name to reveal himself, I don't know.

Because it's obviously a descriptive name, but it is, it's treated like a proper name. And so he says in verse 15, Moreover, God said to Moses, Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, Yahweh, which means I am Elohim, Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever.

This is my memorial to all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob

appeared to me saying, I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt. And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites to a land full of milk and honey.

Then they will heed your voice and you should come. And the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, Yahweh Elohim of the Hebrews has met with us. And now please let us go three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

But I'm sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go. No, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst.

And after that, he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. And it shall be when you go that you should not go empty handed.

But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold and clothing. And you should put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you should plunder the Egyptians.

Now, several times here, God refers to himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Jesus makes a point of this when he's in a confrontation with the Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in life after death.

They didn't believe in spiritual soul survival after death or in the resurrection. Either one and when Jesus actually approached him to try to stump him on a question about the resurrection. And once he gave them an answer that was adequate, more than adequate, he then turned on them and said, But have you not read when God met with Moses that he said, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

He's referring to this interview right here. Then she said, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. What do you mean by that? Well, at the time of this interview, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had died long ago.

They were long dead. And yet God was saying he's still their God. He's still the God of men who have been dead for centuries.

Now, what Jesus is saying is that these men apparently have a future. They apparently live on. God isn't the God of dead people.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were ostensibly dead at this time. But if God was their God, they must be living. They're not dead after all, not completely, not in every sense.

And so Jesus used this fact as a proof of the ongoing life after death of these men. Now,

the Lord tells Moses to take the elders of Israel and to go up here before Pharaoh and to make requests to go three days journey into the wilderness to worship God. This has bothered some people, because obviously the intention was not to go three days, but to go permanently.

And some feel like God is leading Moses to be deceptive toward Pharaoh. And that, you know, as if you think we're going to go away for three days, but it will be back. So just give us leave.

On the other hand, they say some scholars say, well, three days journey would have been enough for them to get out of the main jurisdiction of Egypt and to get a head start against the Egyptians enough to get away permanently. And that that was to be understood that he's not saying let us go away for three days and we'll be back, but rather give us a three day leave, a three day head start and we'll be out of here and we'll be gone. We won't be back.

It's not entirely clear how it was understood by Pharaoh. But I mean, if he gave them three days, that would put them pretty far ahead of the Egyptians. After all, I think the Egyptians started pursuing them the day after they left, if I'm not mistaken, and still took the time to catch up with them and almost didn't, because they caught up with them only as they're about ready to cross the Red Sea.

So three days journey would perhaps be understood to be enough time for us to get out of your range so that we could be free to be gone from here permanently. Now, God says he's going to strike Egypt with all kinds of wonders. He means his plagues, which we will read about in the later chapters.

But he says in verse 21, I'm going to give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, not Pharaoh, but the Egyptian people in general. And it shall be when you go, you will not go empty handed. This would be a concern.

They were slaves. They didn't own any property. What's the point of bringing them all out in the desert with no possessions, no extra clothes, no money, no food? And he says, well, no, you're not going to leave empty handed.

You're going to leave with a whole bunch of stuff. Because I want all the women of Israel to ask their neighbors to give them silver and gold and stuff like that. And they will.

And then you'll take those with you. Now, the silver and gold that was given to them, at least some of it was used later to build the tabernacle and the furniture of the tabernacle, which needed a lot of silver and gold. The idea here would be that the Egyptians would be glad to get rid of Israel by the time God had done with them.

By the time the plagues had run their course, the Egyptian people had long since wished that Pharaoh would let them go. But Pharaoh's heart was hard. Even Pharaoh's advisors

were advising him to let the people go after several of the plagues.

But his heart was hardened. So the people of Egypt suffered prolonged agony because of the hardness of their rulers heart. And by the time Israel left, I mean, the people knew it was because of Israel.

They were glad to see them go and get these, let these people go so we don't get tormented by their God anymore. And so the people are quite glad to give Israel whatever they wanted. Just leave take it, take it and go.

Do us a favor. And so the Israelites actually left quite wealthy with things that were given to them. And many of them, I think, later were dedicated to God and used in the tabernacle for its furnishings.

Well, at that point, we need to stop. And we're right still in the middle of the interview between Moses and God. There's going to be a couple of more objections Moses is going to raise, but God's not going to let him off the hook.

So he's going to have to end up going. I'll just let you know in case you haven't read ahead. Moses ends up going.

But right now he's still resisting. And we'll see how he continues to resist next time.