

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 3

In this chapter we are informed how that the Lord appeared to Moses in a bush on fire, but not consumed, (~~<BIB>~~Exodus 3:1-6), declared unto him that he had seen and observed the afflictions of the children of Israel, and was determined to deliver them, (~~<BIB>~~Exodus 3:7-9), that he gave him a call to be the deliverer of them, answered his objections to it, and instructed him what he should say, both to the elders of Israel and to Pharaoh, (~~<BIB>~~Exodus 3:10-18), and assured him, that though at first Pharaoh would refuse to let them go, yet after many miracles wrought, he would be willing to dismiss them, when they should depart with great substance, (~~<BIB>~~Exodus 3:19-22).

**Ver. 1.** *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian*, etc.] Who was either the same with Reuel or Raguel, spoken of in the preceding chapter; or, as others think, a son of his, the father being now dead; seeing it was now forty years since Moses came into Midian, (~~<BIB>~~Acts 7:30). Demetrius <sup>f101</sup>, an Heathen writer, expressly says that Jothor a son of Raguel, and Zipporah or Sepphora, as he calls her, was his daughter, whom Moses married: now this was the business Moses was chiefly concerned in during his stay in Midian; keeping the sheep of his father-in-law, in which great personages have have employed, and who have afterwards been called to the kingly office, as David; and this was an emblem of his feeding and ruling the people of Israel, and in it he was an eminent type of Christ, the great shepherd and bishop of souls: no doubt there were other things besides this in which Moses exercised himself in this course of time, and improved himself in the knowledge of things, natural, civil, and religious, and which the more qualified him for the important work he was designed for: it is thought that in this interval he wrote the book of Genesis, and also the book of Job:

*and he led the flock to the backside of the desert*; of Sinai or Arabia, on the back part of which, it seems, were goodly pastures; and hither he led his flock to feed, which was about three days' journey from Egypt,

(<sup><1183></sup>Exodus 5:3) or rather into the desert <sup>f102</sup>, for Horeb or Sinai was not behind the desert, but in it:

*and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb*; so called either because of the appearance of God at this time, after related, or because of his giving the law and making the covenant with the people of Israel there; and it should be observed that that transaction was past when Moses wrote this book. Hither he led the sheep, they delighting in mountains, hence sometimes mountainous places are called *οιοπολλα*, <sup>f103</sup>, because sheep delight to feed upon them <sup>f104</sup>.

**Ver. 2.** *And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him*, etc.] Not a created angel, but the Angel of God's presence and covenant, the eternal Word and Son of God; since he is afterwards expressly called Jehovah, and calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which a created angel would never do: the appearance was,

*in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush*; not in a tall, lofty, spreading oak or cedar, but in a low thorny bramble bush, which it might have been thought would have been consumed in an instant of time:

*and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush [was] not consumed*; this was not imaginary, but a real thing; there was

such a bush, and Jehovah appeared in it in this manner, and though it was all on fire yet was not consumed, but remained entire after it: reference is frequently had to it as a matter of fact, (<sup><1136></sup>Deuteronomy 33:16) (<sup><1126></sup>Mark 12:26 <sup><413></sup>Acts 7:30,35). Artapanus <sup>f105</sup>, an Heathen writer, had got some hint of it; his account is this, that while Moses was praying to God, and entreating the afflictions of his people might cease, he was propitious to him, and on a sudden fire broke out of the earth and burned, when there was no matter nor anything of a woody sort in the place: nor need this account Moses gives be thought incredible, when so many things similar to it are affirmed by Heathen writers, who speak of a whole forest in flames without fire, and of a spear that burned for two hours, and yet nothing of it consumed; and of a servant's coat all on fire, and yet after it was extinguished no trace or mark of the flames were to be seen on it; and several other things of the like kind are related by Huetius <sup>f106</sup> out of various authors: as to the mystical signification of this bush, some make it to be a type of Christ, and of his manifestation in the flesh; of the union of the two natures in him, and of their distinction of the glory of the one, and

of the meanness of the other; of his sustaining the wrath of God, and remaining fearless and unhurt by it; and of his delivering and preserving his people from it: the Jews commonly interpret it of the people of Israel, in the furnace of affliction in Egypt, and yet not consumed; nay, the more they were afflicted the more they grew; and it may be a symbol of the church and people of God, in all ages, under affliction and distress: they are like to a thorn bush both for their small quantity, being few, and for their quality, in themselves weak and strengthless, mean and low; have about them the thorns of corruptions and temptations, and who are often in the fire of afflictions and persecutions, yet are not consumed; which is owing to the person, presence, power, and grace of Christ being among them; ((see Gill on “~~4073~~Acts 7:30”)).

**Ver. 3.** *And Moses said, I will now turn aside*, etc.] From the place where he was, and the flock he was feeding, and get nearer to the bush, which seems to have been on one side of him and not directly before him:

*and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt*; inquire into, and find out, if he could, the reason of this strange and amazing sight; how it could be that a bush should be on fire and yet not burnt up, which might have been expected would have been destroyed at once; for what is a thorn or bramble bush to devouring flames of fire, as these appeared to be?

**Ver. 4.** *And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see*, etc.] Who is before called the Angel of the Lord, here Jehovah, the omniscient and omnipresent Being, who observing Moses turning aside and going onward to gratify his curiosity, by examining more narrowly this strange phenomenon:

*God called unto him out of the midst of the bush*; with an articulate voice, being the eternal Word:

*and said, Moses, Moses*; for the Lord knows his people distinctly, and can call them by name; and the repetition of his name not only shows familiarity and a strong vehement affection for him, but haste to stop him, that he might proceed no further; and this was done in order to stir him up to hearken to what would be said to him:

*and he said, here am I*; ready to hear what shall be said, and to obey whatever is commanded.

**Ver. 5.** *And he said, draw not nigh hither*, etc.] Keep a proper distance:

*put off thy shoes from off thy feet*; dust and dirt cleaving to shoes, and these being ordered to be put off from the feet, the instrument of walking, show that those that draw nigh to God, and are worshippers of him, ought to be of pure and holy lives and conversations:

*for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground*; not that there was any inherent holiness in this spot of ground more than in any other, which ground is not capable of; but a relative holiness on account of the presence of God here at this time, and was not permanent, only while a pure and holy God was there: hence, in after times, the temple being the place of the divine residence, the priests there performed their services barefooted, nor might a common person enter into the temple with his shoes on <sup>f107</sup>; and to this day the Jews go to their synagogues barefooted on the day of atonement <sup>f108</sup>, to which Juvenal <sup>f109</sup> seems to have respect; and from hence came the Nudipedalia among the Heathens, and that known symbol of Pythagoras <sup>f110</sup>, “sacrifice and worship with naked feet”: in this manner the priests of Diana sacrificed to her among the Cretians and other people <sup>f111</sup>; and so the priests of Hercules did the same <sup>f112</sup>; the Brahmans among the Indians never go into their temples without plucking off their shoes <sup>f113</sup>; so the Ethiopian Christians, imitating Jews and Gentiles, never go into their places of public worship but with naked feet <sup>f114</sup>, and the same superstition the Turks and Mahometans observe <sup>f115</sup>.

**Ver. 6.** *Moreover he said, I am the God of thy fathers*, etc.] Of every one of his fathers next mentioned:

*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*; with whom the covenant respecting the land of Canaan, and the promise of the blessed seed the Messiah, was made: this again shows that the Angel of the Lord that now appeared was God himself, Jehovah the Son of God. Our Lord makes use of this text to prove the resurrection of the dead against the Sadducees, God being not the God of the dead, but of the living; (<sup><41193></sup>Mark 12:26,27)

*and Moses hid his face*; wrapped it in his mantle or cloak, as Elijah did, (<sup><41193></sup>1 Kings 19:13), because of the glory of the divine Majesty now present, and conscious of his own sinfulness and unworthiness:

*for he was afraid to look upon God*; even upon this outward appearance and representation of him in a flame of fire; otherwise the essence of God is not to be looked upon and seen at all, God is invisible; but even this

external token and symbol of him was terrible to behold; the thought that God was there filled him with fear, considering the greatness and awfulness of his majesty, and what a poor, weak, and sinful creature he was.

**Ver. 7.** *And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt,* etc.] Or, “in seeing I have seen”, which not only denotes the certainty of it, as we express it; but the clear, distinct, and full sight he had of it, with sympathy towards them, an affectionate concern for them, and a fixed, settled, determination in his mind to deliver them; he had long took notice of, and had thoroughly observed their affliction, and was afflicted with them in it, and was bent upon their deliverance out of it:

*and have heard their cry, by reason of their taskmasters;* who were set over them to see that they did their work, and to lay heavy burdens on them, and afflict them by all manner of ways and methods they could devise; and who abused and beat them for not doing what was not to be done, which made them cry out because of their barbarous usage of them, and cry unto God for help and deliverance:

*for I know their sorrows;* the pains of body they were put unto, and the inward grief and trouble of their minds on account of them.

**Ver. 8.** *And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians,* etc.] Which must be understood consistent with the omnipresence of God, who is everywhere, and strictly speaking cannot be said to remove from place to place, or to descend; but such a way of speaking is used, when he gives some eminent display of his power or goodness, as here in a wonderful manner he appeared in a burning bush, and manifested himself in a way of grace and kindness to his people, signifying that he would shortly save them: so Christ in our nature came down from heaven to earth, to save his spiritual Israel out of the hands of all their enemies:

*and to bring them out of that land;* the land of Egypt, where they were in bondage, and greatly oppressed:

*unto a good land, and a large;* the land of Canaan, which was not only a good land, but a large one in comparison of Goshen, where the Israelites were pent up and straitened for room through their great increase; and though it was but a small country in itself, and when compared with some others, being but one hundred and sixty miles from Dan to Beersheba, and but forty six from Joppa to Bethlehem, and but sixty from Joppa to Jordan,

yet, for so small a country, it had a great deal of good land in it; for Hecataeus<sup>f116</sup> an Heathen writer, says it had in it three hundred myriads of acres of the best and most fruitful land:

*unto a land flowing with milk and honey*; which is not to be restrained merely to the abundance of cattle fed here, and the plenty of milk they produced, or the number of bees that swarmed here, and the quantity of honey they made; for the land abounded with other good things, and excellent fruits, as corn, and wine, and oil, and with figs, pomegranates, palm trees, etc. but this is a proverbial and hyperbolical expression, setting forth the great affluence of all sorts of good things in it, for the necessity and delight of human life:

*unto the place of the Canaanites*; who are mentioned first, as being the general name for the inhabitants of the land, as Aben Ezra suggests, though they are often spoken of as a distinct nation or tribe from the rest, and a principal one, denominated from Canaan the son of Ham:

*and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites*: the Hittites and Amorites had their names from Heth and Emor, sons of Canaan; the Perizzites, Aben Ezra says, are the same with Sidon, who was the firstborn of Canaan: and the Hivites and Jebusites were the descendants also of sons of Canaan, (<sup>0159</sup>Genesis 15:19-21), the Girgashites are not here mentioned, either because they were a lesser people than the rest, as Aben Ezra thinks; or their land was not a land flowing with milk and honey, as Abendana observes; or they were gone out of the land before Israel went into it, according to other Jewish writers, or immediately yielded to Joshua, without fighting against him.

**Ver. 9.** *Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me*, etc.] (see <sup>0123</sup>Exodus 2:23):

*and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them*; which is repeated to observe the great notice he took of it; and the reason of his descent and appearance in this wonderful manner, as well as of the urgent necessity of Moses's going to deliver the people from their oppression.

**Ver. 10.** *Come now therefore*, etc.]. Leave thy flock, thy family, and the land of Midian:

*and I will send thee unto Pharaoh:* this Pharaoh, according to Eusebius, was Cenchres, the successor of Achoris; but according to Bishop Usher <sup>f117</sup>, his name was Amenophis, who immediately succeeded Ramesses Miamun, under whom Moses was born. Clemens of Alexandria <sup>f118</sup> relates from Apion, and he, from Ptolemy Mendesius, that it was in the times of Amosis that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt; but Tacitus <sup>f119</sup> says, the name of this king was Bocchoris, who obliged them to go out, being advised by an oracle to do so; and so says Lysimachus <sup>f120</sup>:

*that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt;* and conduct them through the wilderness to the land of Canaan, and so be their deliverer, guide, and governor under God, who now gave him a commission to act for him.

**Ver. 11.** *And Moses said unto God, who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh,* etc.] A private person, an exile in a foreign country, a poor shepherd, unknown to Pharaoh, and had no interest in him; and he a great king, and possessed of numerous forces to defend his country, and prevent the Israelites' departure out of it: time was when he was known to a Pharaoh, dwelt in his court, and made a figure there, and had great interest and authority there, being the adopted son of the king's daughter; but now it was otherwise with him:

*and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt:* who though a people numerous, yet unarmed, and held in great bondage; and he might remember how he had been repulsed and rejected by some of them forty years ago, which might be discouraging to him.

**Ver. 12.** *And he said, certainly I will be with thee,* etc.] To encourage and strengthen him; to protect, defend, and preserve him, and to succeed and prosper him; to give him credit and respect with the people of Israel, and influence over Pharaoh to prevail upon him at length to let Israel go:

*and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee;* not the promise now made, nor the vision he had seen, but what follows:

*when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain:* Mount Horeb or Sinai, as they did at the time of the giving of the law on it, when an altar was built upon a hill, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, (<sup><0204></sup>Exodus 24:4,5) and this was a sign, "a posteriori", confirming the divine mission of Moses; and besides the promise of this, on which Moses might depend, being made by the

Lord, assured him of success, that he should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, since he and they would serve the Lord together at this mountain, and from whence he might conclude he had a mission and commission from God. Of a like kind is the sign or token given of the deliverance of Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib, (<sup>2373</sup>Isaiah 37:30).

**Ver. 13.** *And Moses said unto God*, etc.] Having received full satisfaction to his objection, taken from his own unfitness for such a service, and willing to have his way quite clear unto him, and his commission appear firm and valid to his people, he proceeds to observe another difficulty that might possibly arise:

*when I come unto the children of Israel:* out of Midian into Egypt;

*and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you;* with a message to them to receive him as his ambassador and their deliverer:

*and they shall say unto me, what is his name?* a question it was probable they would ask, not through ignorance, since in their distress they had called upon the name of the Lord, and cried unto him for help and deliverance; but either to try Moses, and what knowledge he had of God: or there being many names by which he had made himself known; and especially was wont to make use of a new name or title when he made a new appearance, or any eminent discovery of himself, they might be desirous of knowing what was the present name he took:

*what shall I say unto them?* what name shall I make mention of?

**Ver. 14.** *And God said unto Moses, I am that I am*, etc.] This signifies the real being of God, his self-existence, and that he is the Being of beings; as also it denotes his eternity and immutability, and his constancy and faithfulness in fulfilling his promises, for it includes all time, past, present, and to come; and the sense is, not only I am what I am at present, but I am what I have been, and I am what I shall be, and shall be what I am. The Platonists and Pythagoreans seem to have borrowed their  $\tau\omicron\ \omicron\upsilon$  from hence, which expresses with them the eternal and invariable Being; and so the Septuagint version here is  $\omicron\ \omicron\upsilon$ : it is said<sup>f121</sup>, that the temple of Minerva at Sais, a city of Egypt, had this inscription on it,

“I am all that exists, is, and shall be.”

And on the temple of Apollo at Delphos was written  $\epsilon\iota$ , the contraction of  $\epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ , “I am”<sup>f122</sup>. Our Lord seems to refer to this name, (~~4088~~John 8:58), and indeed is the person that now appeared; and the words may be rendered, “I shall be what I shall be”<sup>f123</sup> the incarnate God, God manifest in the flesh:

*thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you;* or as the Targum of Jonathan has it,

“I am he that is, and that shall be.”

This is the name Ehjeh, or Jehovah, Moses is empowered to make use of, and to declare, as the name of the Great God by whom he was sent; and which might serve both to encourage him, and strengthen the faith of the Israelites, that they should be delivered by him.

**Ver. 15.** *And God said moreover unto Moses,* etc.] As a further explanation of the above name, and of the design and use of it:

*thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel:* for their further instruction in the said name, and for the confirmation of the mission of Moses, and the success of it:

*the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you;* he who is Jehovah, and the covenant God of the ancestors of the people of Israel, and of them, so he is called, (~~2086~~Ecclesiastes 3:6)

*this [is] my name for ever:* meaning either “Ehjeh, I am”, in the preceding verse, or, which is the same, Jehovah in this, and so both of them, and including also the name of the God of Abraham, etc. which he was always to be known by:

*and this is my memorial unto all generations;* the name by which he should be made mention of both by himself and others, and by which he would be called to remembrance by his people, and what he had promised unto them, and done for them.

**Ver. 16.** *Go and gather the elders of Israel together,* etc.] Not all the ancient men among them, nor the “judges” of the people of Israel; for it does not appear there were such among them in Egypt, until they came into the land of Canaan, but the heads of tribes or families:

*and say unto them, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me;* in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush at Horeb:

*saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt;* inspected into their state and circumstances, took notice of their afflictions and oppressions, and determined to deliver them out of them, as follows.

**Ver. 17.** *And I have said,* etc.] Within himself, resolved in his own mind, and had declared it to Moses:

*I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt:* with which they were afflicted in Egypt, and by the Egyptians; this he both purposed and promised to bring them out of: unto the land of the Canaanites, etc. then in the possession of the Canaanites, and others after named; ((see Gill on “<sup><0308></sup>Exodus 3:8”)).

**Ver. 18.** *And they shall hearken to thy voice,* etc.] The elders of Israel, who would give credit to his commission, attend to what he said, and obey his orders, and follow the directions that he should give them, and not slight and reject him, as some had done before:

*and thou shall come, thou, and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt:* the elders of Israel in a body, and Moses at the head of them; though we do not read of their approaching to Pharaoh, and addressing him in such a manner, only of Moses and Aaron applying to him:

*and you shall say unto him, the Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us;* with one of them, who had reported to the rest what he had said; the children of Israel are here called Hebrews, because that seems to be a name the Egyptians most commonly called them, and by which they were best known to them, (see <sup><0304></sup>Genesis 39:14,17 43:32 <sup><0019></sup>Exodus 1:19 2:6,11,13)

*and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness;* the wilderness of Sinai and Arabia, and to Mount Horeb in it; which from the borders of Egypt was three days’ journey going the direct road, but the Israelites going somewhat about, and stopping by the way, did not get to it until the third month of their going out of Egypt, (<sup><0200></sup>Exodus 19:1):

*that we may sacrifice to the Lord God*; in the place where he had appeared to a principal man among them, and where they would be in no danger of being insulted and molested by the Egyptians. Some think the reason of this request they were directed to make, to sacrifice out of the land of Egypt, was, because what they sacrificed the Egyptians worshipped as gods, and therefore would be enraged at such sacrifices; but for this there is no sufficient foundation; ((see Gill on “~~046~~ Genesis 46:34”)), rather the design was under this pretence to get quite away from them, they being no subjects of the king of Egypt, nor had he a right to detain them; nor were they obliged to acquaint him with the whole of their intentions, and especially as they were directed of God himself to say this, and no more, and which being so reasonable, made Pharaoh’s refusal the more inexcusable.

**Ver. 19.** *And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go*, etc.] Or “but”<sup>f124</sup> “I am sure”, etc. though so reasonable a request was made him, yet it would not be granted; this is observed to them, that they might not be discouraged when he should refuse to dismiss them, which the omniscient God knew beforehand, and acquaints them with it, that, when it came to pass, they might be induced to believe that the mission of Moses was of God, rather than the contrary:

*no, not by a mighty hand*; the mighty power of God displayed once and again, even in nine plagues inflicted on him, until the tenth and last came upon him; or “unless by a mighty hand”<sup>f125</sup>, even the almighty hand of God; prayers, entreaties, persuasions, and arguments, will signify nothing, unless the mighty power of God is exerted upon him.

**Ver. 20.** *And I will stretch out my hand*, etc.] Or “therefore”<sup>f126</sup> he would stretch out his mighty hand, exert his almighty power; and for this purpose was Pharaoh raised up, and his heart hardened, that God might show his power in him, and on him:

*and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof*: with those wondrous plagues, the amazing effects of his almighty power, which were wrought by him in the midst of Egypt, by which their land, their rivers, their persons, and their cattle, were smitten:

*and after that he will let you go*; this is said for their encouragement, that their faith and patience might hold out, who otherwise seeing him so obstinate and inflexible, might be ready to despair of ever succeeding.

**Ver. 21.** *And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians,* etc.] That is, give the Israelites favour in their sight, a little before their departure, who should be ready to do anything for them, or bestow anything upon them; or however lend them what they would desire, being glad to be at peace with them, or get rid of them, for whose sakes they would perceive all those sore calamities came upon them, they were distressed with:

*and it shall come to pass, that when ye go, ye shall not go empty;* destitute of what was necessary for them, but even with great substance, as was foretold by Abraham they should, and which prophecy was now about to be fulfilled, (<sup>f154</sup>Genesis 15:14).

**Ver. 22.** *But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house,* etc.] Or “shall ask”<sup>f127</sup>, desire them to give or lend, what follows; and by this it appears, that the Israelites by reason of their great increase were spread about, and mixed with the Egyptians; and hence it was that there was such a mixed multitude that went up with them out of Egypt, who either were in connection with them in civil things, or were proselyted by them:

*jewels of silver, and jewels of gold;* that is, jewels set in silver and in gold; or “vessels of silver, and vessels of gold”<sup>f128</sup>, plate of both sorts, cups, dishes, etc:

*and raiment;* rich and goodly apparel, which they might borrow to appear in at their feast and sacrifices in the wilderness, whither they asked leave to go to:

*and ye shall put [them] upon your sons, and upon your daughters;* and so deck and ornament them with them at the time of their departure:

*and ye shall spoil the Egyptians;* and very justly, for the hard service they put them to; for which all this was but their wages due unto them, and which they would stand in need of in their travels to Canaan’s land, and for the erection of the tabernacle, and providing things appertaining to it in the wilderness.