

# **"The Call of Moses"**

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About four thousand years ago, an Eastern shepherd was one day quietly leading his flock in the desert, seeking out a good pasture for them to feed in. Of what is the man thinking as he wanders alone with his sheep?

Perhaps, of his childhood's home in the land of Egypt, from which he had been obliged to flee, forty years before,—of the loving mother who had carefully and tenderly taught him, as long as she could keep him with her, of the one true God, who made the heavens and the earth, the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It may be his thoughts are of the playmates who shared that home with him, his brother Aaron, and his sister Miriam, who watched by him so carefully when his mother put her baby in the river bed in the little art of bulrushes that she had made for his cradle.

Or perhaps he has lately heard sad news from his old home, about the hard bondage in which his people, the children of Israel, are still kept by the cruel Egyptians. For "they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar; and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field."

And the thought of this would remind him of the promise that God had made to Abraham many years before, that he would give to him and to his seed, the land of Canaan, which because of this they spoke of as "the land of promise," or "the promised land."

At that time God had told Abraham that his seed should be strangers "in a land that is not theirs; and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them, four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

But now the years of their affliction, the time of which God had spoken, were nearly ended, and yet there were no signs of the promised deliverance; no sign of God's judgments coming upon their oppressors, or of His leading them out of Egypt with great riches. Instead of this, the bondage grew more bitter, and their tasks harder. "And the Children of Israel sighed by reason of the bandage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And the Lord heard their groaning."

Yes; God had heard, and the answer was coming. He had not forgotten the children of Abraham His friend, and all that He had promised them. But the shepherd did not know how near was the answer to the cries and prayers of his people. He did not know that that was the last time he would peacefully lead his flock in the desert,

and that the Lord was about to make him shepherd over His people, to lead them like a flock through that same wilderness.

Whatever his thoughts were, they were suddenly put an end to by a great sight, which took all his attention, and made him turn aside to see. For he saw a bush in a bright and glorious flame, branches, leaves, and trunk, all burning.

Many a time you have seen a log of wood in a blaze, and what has become of it? Even as you have watched, it has disappeared, for the flames have devoured it, and there has been nothing left but a little white ash.

But the wonderful thing about this bush was that although it was burning so brightly, it was not burnt, not destroyed, consumed, by the flames. Surely here was a great wonder, and Moses drew closer to the bush to find out the cause of it.

But as he did so, a voice from the midst of the bush called his name: "Moses, Moses." Here was a greater wonder still, and with trembling Moses answered, "Here am I." And the voice said: "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. . . . I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt."

God might have spoken all this to Moses without appearing to him at all, or He might have come in any other way that He chose. But He had special lessons to teach Moses and the Children of Israel; for they had been so long in the bondage of Egypt that they had almost forgotten the true God.

And we may be quite sure that God took the very best way to teach them just what He wanted them to know. Many precious lessons were shining forth from that burning bush, but we must wait until next week to talk over some of them.