

THE BURNING BUSH

Genesis 3: 1-15

It was hot. It was dry. Only a few wispy clouds were in the sky this morning.

Moses trudged along with the sheep. He saw one of the ewes nibbling on a bush.

"Hey! Don't you know better? That will make you sick again.' He gave her a bump on the rump with his tall walking staff and urged her to move on. He knew all the ways to keep a flock safe. He had been learning for 20 years - ever since he ran away from the Pharaoh's palace in Egypt.

He was taking care of part of his father-in-law Jethro's flock. It was late in the season and the rains hadn't come yet. There was nowhere with enough water and plants to feed the whole flock. Jethro's men each took some of the sheep and went in different directions.

Moses thought, "I know where there is a stream in the wet season. I'll take the sheep up there and see if there is water under the gravel, and if there is still a bit of grass left."

He walked up the broad, dry creek bed on the side of the sacred mountain. He pushed aside a rock at the steep end of the dry streambed. He dug the gravel and made a hole about a foot deep. Water began to seep in.

"Good! That ought to be enough for you," he said to the sheep. "And there is a bit of shrubbery and grass for you here."

While the animals ate and drank, Moses thought he would explore up a little further. There might be more grazing for them up there. He pushed his staff into the gravel, grabbed a rock and climbed up the slope.

As he lifted his head, he saw a bush on fire! "Oh, no! A fire will burn what little grass is left. I have to put it out."

He rushed over toward the bush and then . . . "Wait a minute - that bush isn't burning up. No embers or blackened twigs falling - no smoke. What is this?"

As he approached the amazing sight, he heard a voice from out of the bush -- "Moses, Moses!"

Moses was startled and stopped abruptly. "Here I am."

The Voice said, "Do not come near here. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Moses quickly reached down, untied his sandals and kicked them off.

The Voice spoke again. “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Moses pulled his robe up over his face because he was afraid to look at God’s presence.

Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the pain of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cry because of their masters. I know their sorrow. I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up to a land that is good and large, to a land flowing with milk and honey. So now, go to Pharaoh and bring my people out of Egypt.”

Moses was stunned. “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, or that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

God reassured him, “I will be with you. When you bring the people out of Egypt, you will worship me on this mountain.”

Moses balked again, “If I go to the Israelites 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?”

God said firmly to Moses, “I AM that I AM. You must say this to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you. 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.’”

God talked to Moses for a long time, telling him what he had to do and how to do it. He listened to the words God spoke. After a while, he took the sheep down the mountain and began the work the Lord gave him. Eventually, after many amazing events and a dangerous journey, Moses led his people back to the mountain to worship, just as God commanded.