

The Burning Bush



SABBATH—JULY 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 3:1–6; Exodus 3:7–12; Exodus 3:13–22; Exodus 4:1–17; Exodus 4:18–31.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the Lord said, ‘I have seen the troubles my people have suffered in Egypt, and I have heard their cries when the Egyptians hurt them. I know about their pain. Now I will go down and save my people from the Egyptians. I will take [remove] them from that land and lead them to a good land where they can be free from these troubles. It [the Promised Land] is a land filled with many good things’” (Exodus 3:7, 8, ERV).



**God showed Moses
His plan for his life
at the burning bush.**

GOD'S PLAN for us will often change our whole lives. If we follow God's plan, we will learn that what He wants for us is always the best choice for our lives. But sometimes accepting God's plan isn't always easy for us to do.

Moses had a hard time at first. God showed Moses His plan for his life at the burning bush. Moses knew that he saw a miracle. The Lord had special work for Moses to do. The question was: Will Moses accept this work? For sure, this work will bring big changes to his life. At first, Moses wasn't really willing to accept the work.

You may remember times when you made big plans for your life. But God changed those plans. Yes, we can be useful to God in many ways. But when we completely follow God's plan and do what He leads us to do, we will be happy. God may ask us to do things that aren't always easy. For sure, things weren't always easy for Moses. But we must allow God to lead us, or we will go in the wrong direction.

THE BURNING BUSH (Exodus 3:1–6)

After Moses escaped to Midian, he married and had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Exodus 18:3, 4). Moses was part of Jethro's family. Jethro was Moses' father-in-law. Jethro was the priest or spiritual leader in Midian. Moses spent the next 40 years being a shepherd. He did the same work that David later did as a shepherd (2 Samuel 7:8). Moses enjoyed being outside in nature because it helped him think about God.

These quiet years in the desert helped change Moses and get him ready to be the leader of God's people. God also gave Moses special work to do. With the Holy Spirit's help, Moses wrote two of the oldest books in the Bible (read Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 251; and Francis D. Nicol, et al., editors, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 3, page 1,140). God gave Moses important information about the worldwide war between good and evil, the Fall, the Flood, and His plan to save sinners. Moses gave to us Bible truth about the living God, the God who made us and keeps us alive. Moses also helps us understand the things God is doing to solve the sin problem. Most important, Moses gave us the book of Genesis. Without this book, we can't really understand Bible history or God's plan to save us.

Read Exodus 3:1–6. In these verses, the Lord introduces Himself to Moses as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6, ERV). Why is this connection between Moses' ancestors and God important?

Moses saw that the fire burned the bush but didn't destroy it. Moses knew he saw a miracle. Something important must be happening right in front of him. As Moses moved closer, the Lord told him to take off his shoes to show respect for God. The place was holy because God was there.

The Lord told Moses that He was “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6, ERV). The Lord promised that He would give the land of Canaan to their future children. Of course, Moses knew about this promise. This promise helped Moses to understand that God had a plan to save His people and Moses was a part of it.

Moses needed 80 years before God decided that he was ready to lead His people. What does this truth teach us about our need to be patient?



Moses spent the next 40 years being a shepherd.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD (Exodus 3:7–12)

The Bible says, “On that mountain, Moses saw the angel of the LORD in a burning bush” (Exodus 3:2, ERV).

The Bible says, “On that mountain, Moses saw the angel of the LORD in a burning bush” (Exodus 3:2, ERV). Who was this “angel”? The Lord Jesus Himself! Jesus “spoke to him [Moses] from inside the bush” (Exodus 3:4, NIV).

Don’t let the name “angel of the LORD” confuse you. The word “angel” means “messenger” (from the Hebrew word “mal’akh”). Sometimes an angel in the Bible may be human. Or sometimes the angel may be from heaven (read Malachi 3:1). The Bible verse helps us to understand the correct meaning to choose for angel. Many verses in the Bible use the words “the angel of the LORD” to mean God Himself. (Read Genesis 22:11, 15–18; Genesis 31:3, 11, 13; Judges 2:1, 2; Judges 6:11–22; Zechariah 3:1, 2.) Jesus is God’s messenger. Jesus communicates the Father’s words to us.

Read Exodus 3:7–12. How did God explain to Moses why He wanted to help the Israelites, who were slaves in Egypt?

God’s people were suffering deeply. God heard them cry and wanted to help them (Exodus 2:23–25). God named Israel “my people” (Exodus 3:7, KJV). So, even before the Promise that God made to Israel at Sinai, the Israelites were His people. God will bless them and give them success in the Promised Land (if they will obey). God promised their fathers that He would do these things.

God told Moses to go to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to do a special job: “ ‘So now I am sending you to Pharaoh. Go! Lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt’ ” (Exodus 3:10, ERV). Again, as we see in this verse, God calls the Israelites “my people.”

For sure, God gave Moses a big job! Moses answered with a question: “ ‘Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?’ ” (Exodus 3:11, NIV). Moses understands what is about to happen. He understands what part he has in God’s plan. So, he wonders why God would choose him to do this important work. This question shows us early in the story who Moses is. He has no pride in his heart. He doesn’t feel that he is good enough to do what God asks him to do.

Why must our hearts be empty of all pride? How does a heart with no pride help us to do the work that God asks us to do, as His followers?

THE NAME OF THE LORD (Exodus 3:13–22)

Read Exodus 3:13–22. Why did Moses want to know God’s name? What does God’s name show us about Himself?

God tells Moses that He is “ ’ehjeheh ’asher ’ehjeheh,” which means “I will be who I will be,” or “I Am Who I Am.” In Exodus 3:12, God uses the same word “ ’ehjeheh,” in verse 14, when he says to Moses, “I will be” with you. What do these words tell us about God? God is everlasting. He gives life to everything. This same God promises to “ ’live with those [people] who are sorry for their sins and have turned from them and are not proud’ ” (Isaiah 57:15, NLV).

From the beginning, God’s people knew Him as “Yahweh.” This name often is written as “the LORD” in the English language. The Israelites may not have known the deeper meaning of this name for God. Moses also knew the name Yahweh. But he, too, didn’t know the real meaning. So, that’s why when Moses asks the Lord, “What is Your name?” he is really asking the Lord to explain its deeper meaning.

In Exodus 6:3, the Bible gives us a helpful hint about the meaning of God’s name. In this verse, God says, “ ’I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the name, God All-Powerful. But they did not know me by my name, the Lord’ ” (Exodus 6:3, ICB). God is not saying that Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the other fathers of God’s people didn’t know the name “Yahweh” (read Genesis 2:4, 9; Genesis 4:1, 26; Genesis 7:5; Genesis 15:6–8, and so on). God is saying that these men didn’t know the full meaning of His name.

God’s name, Yahweh, shows us that He is the personal God of His people. He is the God of the Promise. He is a loving, caring God who helps His people when they are in trouble. The name Yahweh also shows us that God is the Almighty God (Genesis 17:1). His miracles show His power to save. But Yahweh is a God who shows His power with His love and care for His people. Yahweh is the same God as Elohim (“mighty, strong, the God above everything.” Yahweh is the “God of all people.” He controls heaven and earth. He made everything.) At the same time, the name Yahweh shows us different parts of His relationship with humans.

What does it mean to know God’s name? God’s name is not a magic word. Our knowing His name is an announcement to other people that we believe He will save everyone who comes to Him in faith (Joel 2:32).



Yahweh made everything.

FOUR EXCUSES (Exodus 4:1–17)

Read Exodus 4:1–17. What set of signs did God give to Moses to show Pharaoh, the king of Egypt? How did these signs help convince everyone that God was with Moses?

Moses again tries to excuse himself from doing the job God asked him to do (read Exodus 3:10, 11). Moses didn't want to go to Egypt to challenge Pharaoh. Moses already failed when he tried to help the Hebrews on his own. His own people didn't believe in him or accept him as their leader. So, he came up with a third excuse: "What if the people of Israel do not believe me or listen to me? What if they say, 'The Lord did not appear to you?'" (Exodus 4:1, ICB). Moses isn't asking these questions to learn something new. Moses is trying to say "No" to the job God wants him to do.

God gives Moses two miracles to do in front of Israel's leaders, and then, later, Pharaoh. The first miracle is Moses' walking stick that turns into a snake and then back into a stick. The second miracle is that Moses' hand becomes white with leprosy. Leprosy is a terrible skin disease. Then Moses' hand is healed in an instant. Both miracles should convince the leaders that God is at work for them. But if they refuse to believe, God adds a third miracle: Moses will turn water into blood (Exodus 4:8, 9).

After God gives Moses these mighty signs, Moses makes a fourth excuse: he isn't a good talker.

Read the story in Exodus 4:10–18. How does the Lord answer Moses? What lessons can we learn from this story to help us in whatever work the Lord asks us to do?

Moses makes four excuses. These excuses show us that Moses didn't want to do what God asked. Moses uses four reasons to say no to God. These reasons are just excuses to get out of doing the work. The first three excuses are questions: (1) "Who am I?" (2) "Who are You?" (3) "What if they do not believe me?" The fourth excuse is the announcement: "I am not a good talker." God answered all Moses' excuses and gave a powerful promise to help him. But Moses didn't want to do it. Then Moses asks God to send someone else (Exodus 4:13). God tells Moses that He is already sending his brother Aaron to meet him and give him support. Finally, Moses has no more excuses and agrees to go. He asks Jethro for his blessing. Then Moses goes to Egypt.



The first miracle is Moses' walking stick that turns into a snake and then back into a stick.

THE SIGN OF GOD'S PROMISE (Exodus 4:18–31)

Read the story in Exodus 4:18–31. How do we understand this strange story? What can we learn from this lesson?

Bible students are surprised when they read this verse: “On the way to Egypt, Moses stopped at a place to spend the night. The LORD met Moses at that place and tried to kill him” (Exodus 4:24, ERV). What is going on here? Didn't God just ask Moses to work for Him? Why is God now trying to kill Moses? The story helps us to understand that the problem is about circumcision. Circumcision is the act of cutting the skin off the tip of the male sex parts. This act showed that the Israelite men accepted God's Promise. The problem was that Moses didn't circumcise or cut the skin off the tip of the sex parts of his youngest son after he was born to show that he belonged to God (Genesis 17:10, 11).

Moses was the leader of God's people. So, he needed to obey God in everything. Then he could teach other people to obey God, too. Moses' wife, Zipporah, moved quickly to save her husband's life. She circumcised her son or cut the tip off his sex parts. Zipporah touched Moses with the blood-covered skin. This blood is a symbol for Jesus' blood, His life, and His Promise.

We can learn an important lesson from this story: always do what is right.

“On the way from Midian, Moses got a terrible warning that showed him that the Lord wasn't happy with him. An angel appeared to Moses and frightened him. Moses thought the angel wanted to destroy him. God didn't explain to Moses what was happening. But Moses remembered that He didn't do something God asked. . . . Moses didn't circumcise his youngest son. Circumcision was necessary, or Moses' son couldn't get the blessings from God's Promise with Israel. If Moses didn't circumcise his son, then the people wouldn't respect God's law. Zipporah was afraid that the angel would kill her husband. So, she cut off the skin from her son's sex parts. Moses would be in terrible danger when he went to visit Pharaoh. God's angels saved Moses from death. But if Moses refused to do something God asked, then he wouldn't be safe. God's angels couldn't protect him from danger.” —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 255, 256, adapted.



An angel appeared to Moses and frightened him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Moses,” pages 251–256, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

For sure, the burning bush story changed Moses’ life. All the other experiences in his life depended on his obedient answer to God’s call for Moses to serve Him. Moses must obey God in everything. God chose Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt and to the Promised Land.

Sure, we know how the story ends. But imagine in your mind that you are Moses at the burning bush. Moses ran away from Egypt to save his life. Then 40 years later, many Hebrew people were alive who didn’t know much about Moses or who he was. Or maybe what they heard was wrong. But now God wanted him to lead this same people away from a powerful king. No wonder Moses didn’t want to do the job!

Yes, the job was very hard. Again, think what Moses would have missed if he told God a final “No.” Then Moses might have disappeared into history instead of helping Israel escape slavery in Egypt. Moses became one of the most powerful and important people in the Bible and on the earth that anyone has ever known.



Moses wrote two Bible books with the Holy Spirit’s help.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ In the quiet years in the desert, Moses did what God asked him to do: he was a good family man. He took care of sheep. He wrote two Bible books with the Holy Spirit’s help. Then God asked Moses to be the leader of His people. What does Moses’ experience teach us about our duty in life?
- ❷ We may say that we understand why Moses made many excuses. “Why should people believe me?” “Who am I? I’m not an important person.” “I’m not a good speaker.” What will change in your life if you trust God to help you do the things He asks us to do?
- ❸ Moses wrote the book of Genesis. The book of Genesis helps us to understand Bible history and God’s plan to save sinners. Why must we reject any idea that says that the book of Genesis (mostly its first 11 chapters) is make believe?

HEALING THE MIND

Mitch was a member of a gang. Mitch got into a fight with some American Indians in the state of Washington, in the United States of America. Mitch injured his head very badly in the fight. The doctors said Mitch never would work again.

Then Mitch's younger brother, Stephan, invited him to the All Nations Center Adventist Church in Wapato, Washington. Stephan worshiped God every Sabbath at the church with their mother and sister.

At first, Mitch didn't really want to go. But he went anyway. Then he went again and again. Mitch started to read the Bible. The Bible gave Mitch hope that God could heal his mind. Mitch read Romans 12:2, which says: "Do not become like [the same as] the people who belong to this world. But let God completely change the way that you think, so that you live differently. Then you will understand what God wants you to do. You will know what is good. You will know what pleases God. You will know what is completely right" (EASY). Mitch also loved reading Philippians 4:8, which says, "Now my friends, I want to say this [advice] to you. Fill your minds with thoughts about good things. Think about things that are true, clean, right and lovely. Always think about things which people know are very good" (Philippians 4:8, EASY).

Church leader Jeff Weijohn encouraged Mitch. Jeff said, "The Bible promises to heal your mind if you study it."

In his own life, Mitch started to see God keep His Bible promises. The doctors were amazed. They told Mitch he never would work again. But they were surprised to see Mitch get a job and keep it.

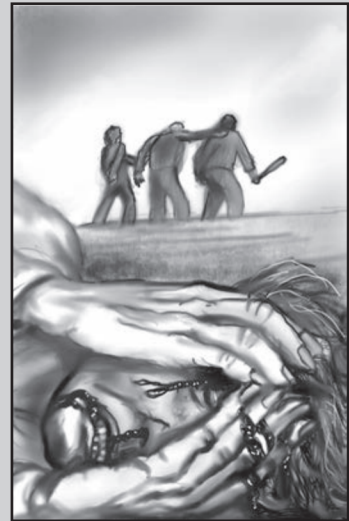
After Bible studies, Mitch gave his heart to Jesus. Then Mitch joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Soon after that, Mitch became a Bible worker. He started to teach the Bible to other people. Mitch and his wife invited homeless young people to live in their home. Anyone was welcome. But they must follow Mitch's rules. One rule was that everyone went to church on Sabbath.

The lives of the houseguests started to change.

One person told Jeff on Sabbath, "You know what? When you told us to study the Bible, we didn't want to listen to you. But now we want to study the Bible."

Jeff said that Mitch's life completely changed. Jeff added, "When Mitch accepted God into his life, people were amazed. Mitch used to be a stubborn person. His brain was injured in a fight. Now Mitch shares Bible truth with other people. Mitch touched the lives of so many young people. God works in us even when we are not perfect and made mistakes in the past."

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Mitch injured his head very badly in the fight.



**All Nations Center
Adventist Church**