

# **Moses' Reluctant Obedience to God's Call**

**Exodus 3:1- 4:18**

# Introduction

- Exodus chapter 1 tells us of the miraculous multiplication of Jacob's twelve sons families, plus their enslavement and oppression by the Egyptians.
- Exodus chapter 2 tells of God's preparation of Moses from his birth until age 40.

- Exodus chapter 3:1 – 4:18 picks up the history when Moses is now 80 years old.
- He has spent the last 40 years in Midian herding sheep for his father-in-law, Jethro (also referred to as Ruel).

# Moses is still serving as a shepherd (3:1)

ESV **Exodus 3:1** Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb [Mt. Sinai], the mountain of God.

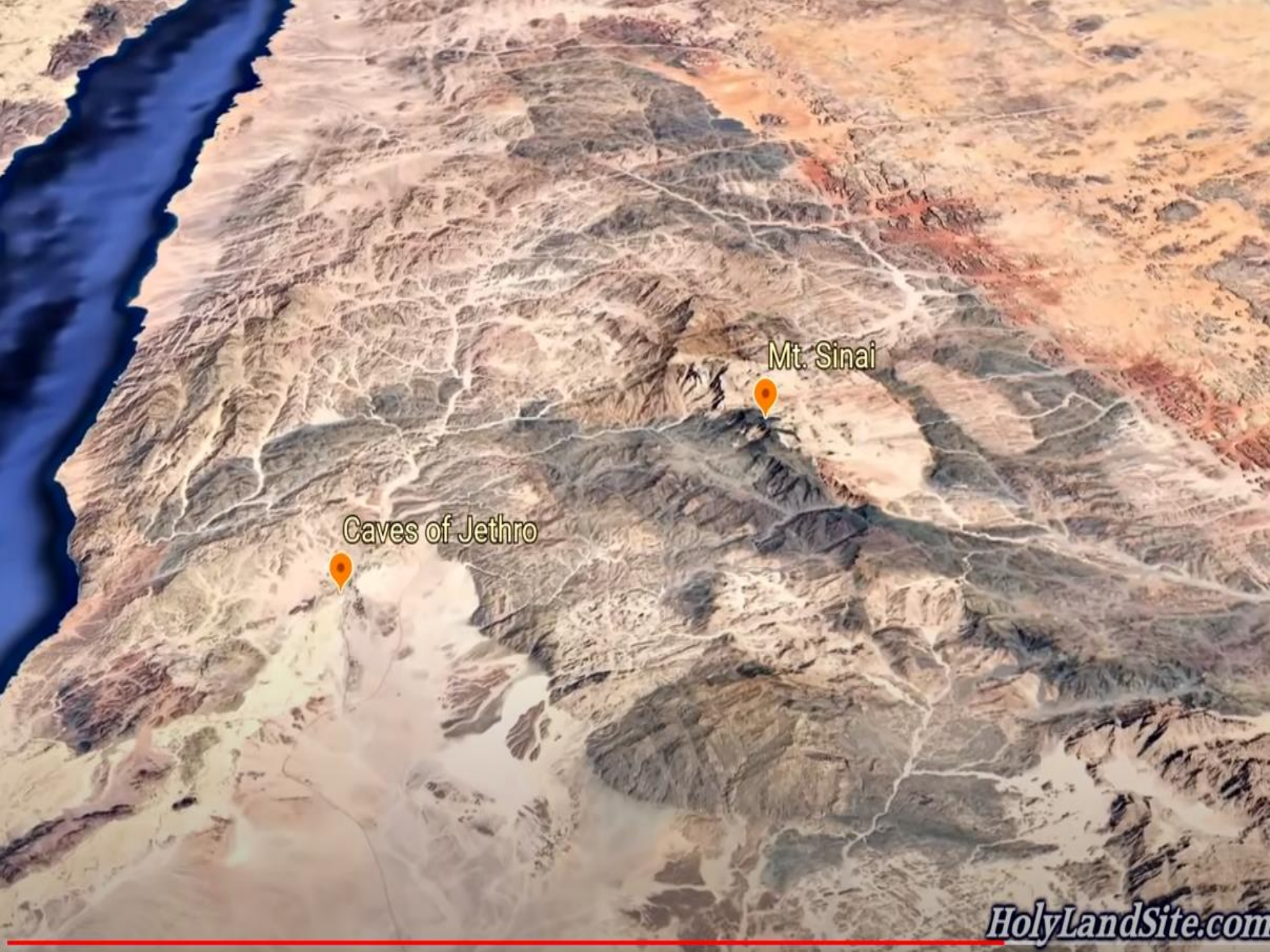
# Moses Moves to Midian





THE LAND OF MIDIAN

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Caves of Jethro

Mt. Sinai

**Mt. Sinai - >**





**Mt. Sinai**



# Moses sees a burning bush (3:2-3)

<sup>2</sup> And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

# God reveals Himself to Moses (3:4-6)

<sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

<sup>6</sup> And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

- “the angel of the LORD” appearing as a flame of fire in a bush (3:2) was God Almighty Himself (3:4, 6).

- “holy ground” – this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> mention of “holy” in a positive way in divine revelation (Gen – Exod. 3).
- In order “to be holy” – whatever it is must be connected to the SOURCE of holiness, God Himself.
- God’s presence changed “ordinary ground” to “holy ground.”

- When something is “holy,” you are to treat it differently from what is common or ordinary – Moses took off his shoes!
- When Moses was informed who was speaking to him, “the God of your father, even the God of Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, Moses hid his face for fear.

# **God was monitoring the situation in Egypt (3:7-9)**

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out

of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.



# God gives Moses a Commission to Deliver “His people” (3:10)

<sup>10</sup> Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

# **Moses tries to refuse the commission (3:11-4:18)**

- **Moses tries the “humility” excuse (3:11)**

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

- **God's response. (3:12)**

<sup>12</sup> He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

- **Moses asks how to describe God to the Israelites. (3:13)**

<sup>13</sup> Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

- **God's response (3:14)**

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

- Moses is not only conscious of his own lack of qualifications, but he is also concerned about how his lack

- Of qualifications will be perceived by the very Israelites he is being sent to deliver.
- The response: "I AM WHO I AM" most likely is a theological response than a "name" or "label" as such.
- **God is a "I-will-be-what-I-will-be" God and a "I-will-be-what-I-need-to-be-for-you" God.**

- The idea is **He will always be whatever his people need him to be in any given moment, in any given place.**
- If they need a deliverer, that's YHWH.
- If they need grace and mercy and forgiveness, that's YHWH.
- If they need purifying and empowerment, that's YHWH.

- If they need rebuke and chastisement, that's YHWH.
- If they need guidance, that's YHWH.
- **God is a “I-will-be-what-I-will-be” God and a “I-will-be-what-I-need-to-be-for-you” God.**



# **God gives Moses further instructions and promises (3:15-22)**

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: '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.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to

be remembered throughout all generations. <sup>16</sup> Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, <sup>17</sup> and I promise that I will bring you up out of

the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey." <sup>18</sup> And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey

into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' <sup>19</sup> But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. <sup>20</sup> So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. <sup>21</sup> And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty,

22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

- **Moses uses the “they won’t believe me” excuse (4:1)**

**Exodus 4:1** Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"

- **God's patient response and gift of three miraculous abilities (4:2-9)**

<sup>2</sup> [**Miracle #1**] The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup> And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. <sup>4</sup> But the LORD said to

Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"-- so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand-- <sup>5</sup> "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

<sup>6</sup> [**Miracle #2**] Again, the LORD said



to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. <sup>7</sup> Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. <sup>8</sup> "If they will not believe

you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign.

<sup>9</sup> **[Miracle #3]** If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

- **Moses uses the “I am not a good speaker” excuse (4:10)**

<sup>10</sup> But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

- **God's gracious and patient response (4:11-12)**

<sup>11</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? <sup>12</sup> Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

- **Moses refuses to trust in God and politely says “NO” (4:13)**

<sup>13</sup> But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

- **God's anger against Moses' unbelief (4:14-17)**

<sup>14</sup> Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad

in his heart. <sup>15</sup> You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. <sup>16</sup> He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. <sup>17</sup> And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

- **Moses finally submits to God's will (4:18)**

**Exodus 4:18** Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."



# Summary-Conclusion

- Moses totally missed the significance of God's self-revelation of "I am who I am." Listen to his excuses:
- "I'm a nobody" (3:11-12)
- "The elders won't believe me" (4:1-9)
- "I'm not a fluent speaker" (4:10-12)

- “Somebody else can do it better”  
(4:13-17)

When God, in His anger, gives us what we selfishly want, that gift rarely turns out to be a blessing (see Numbers 11:33; Hosea 13:11).

- Aaron, appointed to be the spokesperson for Moses, was not always a blessing or help.

- It was Aaron who helped the people to make the golden calf (Ex. 32).
- It was Aaron and his sister Miriam who were critical of Moses and his wife and brought trouble to the camp (Num. 12).
- Subsequent events proved that Moses was very capable of speaking God's words with power.

- The lesson is plain: God knows us better than we know ourselves, so we must trust Him and obey what He tells us to do.
- When we tell God our weaknesses, we are not sharing anything He doesn't already know (Jud. 6:15; 1 Sam. 9:21; Jer. 1:6).

- The will of God will never lead you where the power of God can't enable you, so walk by faith in His promises!

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