

Conversations on
Exodus 3:1–15

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch the burning bush scene from *The Prince of Egypt* (1998; PG) (bit.ly/FOWMoses). Discuss ways the similarities and differences between the Bible story and the film version affect the meaning of the story.

WHAT is important to know?

God gives Moses a seemingly insurmountable task to accomplish, but God will not allow Moses to assume that he will engage the powers of Egypt alone. Moses assumes he needs more authoritative information, but the voice from the burning bush reminds Moses that he knows more than enough: “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations” (v. 15). (Gary W. Charles)

- ✠ Where does God encounter Moses?
- ✠ Why does God tell Moses what to do in God’s presence?
- ✠ What is Moses’ role in delivering the Israelites, and why is Moses given that role?

WHERE is God in these words?

God uses the name, *YHWH Elohim*, the Hebrew expression for Lord God, in reference to God’s relationship with Israel’s ancestors. In the context of human relationship, God graciously identifies Godself in familiar and familial terms. This three-step progression—from God’s identification of Godself as Supreme Being, then as Supreme Being who acts in human history by sending shepherds, and finally as the God in relationship with Israel—is God’s way of acknowledging and responding to Moses and to Israel, joining in the common refrain, “Here I am.” (Rebecca Blair Young)

- ✠ How does God encounter Moses? How does the encounter proceed?
- ✠ How does God identify Godself? What does that mean to Moses?
- ✠ How does God assure Moses that he can do the job?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Moses learned that it was time to let go of his life as a shepherd and embrace a new role as the deliverer of the Hebrew people. What *old* ways of being have we been asked to let go of? What *current* ways of being are we being asked to let go of? What *new* ways of being are we being asked to claim? Absent the appearance of a burning bush, how do we know when it is time to let go of the old and take hold of the new? (H. James Hopkins)

- ✠ What do these verses say about where God is likely to encounter us?
- ✠ What can these verses teach us about how to stand in God’s presence?
- ✠ In what ways is God’s assurance being communicated to you and to your congregation? How is this assurance comforting? How is it unsettling?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

The import of this name is that YHWH cannot be reduced to a characteristic any more than captured in a definition. However comfortable we may be with ambiguity as an intellectual matter, most of us, at the level of practical theology, want everything sorted out, logical, definitive, and clear. YHWH will fill out the content of the character implied in the divine name as the promised constancy and fidelity unfolds in history. In Exodus 20:2 YHWH will offer content to the name: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Geoffrey M. St. J. Hoare)

- ✠ Are there ways in which God is calling you or your congregation to step out in faith today?
- ✠ Who helps you understand who God is? How would you fill in the blank in the phrase “The LORD, the God of our ancestors, the God of [blank]”?
- ✠ What can we learn from this conversation between God and Moses about how to converse well and (when necessary) wrestle well with God and God’s call to us?

Thank God for all who are striving to be faithful to God’s call.