

Moses' calling



Exodus 3 and 4; Acts 7:29–35

Moses was tending the sheep on Mount Horeb when suddenly he saw flames flaring up from a bush, yet the bush itself did not burn. Moses then heard the voice of God. He was commissioned to return to Egypt and lead the people of Israel to the land of Canaan. Moses had grave misgivings as to whether he should accept God's commission because he could not speak well. God strengthened Moses through miraculous signs and told him that his brother Aaron would be his mouthpiece. God also spoke to Aaron. Aaron and Moses met again after many years on Mount Horeb from where they left for Egypt together. They summoned the elders of the people of Israel who believed in Moses' calling and were overjoyed that God had finally heard their prayers.

The children learn that God gave Moses an important commission and promised to help him.

Every day Moses wanders with his flock through lonely regions. He has grown old in the meantime and is now almost eighty. For the past forty years he has lived as a shepherd with Jethro. He often gazes in the direction of Egypt where the sorely oppressed Israelites, his parents, his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam live. Moses has heard from passing traders that Pharaoh has died. He wonders how the new king treats the people of Israel, and whether they must still work as hard as before. Lost in thought, he suddenly becomes aware that a bush in front of him has burst into flames. He is astonished to note that although the bush is engulfed in flames, it is not consumed. Moses approaches the burning bush and hears a voice calling from it: "Moses! Moses!" Moses answers: "Here I am." Then the voice says: "Do not come closer! Take off your shoes for the place on which you stand is holy! I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Moses hastily covers his face and removes his shoes. Then he again hears God's voice: "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I wish to free them and lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Go to Pharaoh and request him to let the people go!" Moses is frightened and alarmed. Go to Pharaoh? He stammers: "Lord, I am only an old

shepherd! I cannot do that. And what should I tell your people when they ask me who has sent me?" God answers him saying: "Tell them: 'I am that I am' has sent me to you, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

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Moses is still very unsure. "But what should I do if they do not believe me?" he asks. God is patient. He says to Moses: "What are you holding in your hand?" It is his shepherd's staff. On God's command, Moses throws the staff on the ground. He is horrified to see it turn into a live snake and jumps back in fear. On God's instruction, Moses takes the snake by the tail, and it turns into his shepherd's staff again. God allows Moses to experience other miracles too and finally says: "Go now, and if the people of Israel do not believe you, show them these miracles. I will be with you." Moses is still hesitant: "Lord, you know that I have speech problems, that I cannot speak properly to the people." To this God replied: "Who has made man's mouth? Did not I, the Lord, do so?" Moses just cannot decide. In his fear, he pleads: "Lord, please send someone else!" Now the Lord becomes angry. "Your brother Aaron is coming to meet you. He can speak well. Let him speak on your behalf. Now go!" God's voice falls silent. The fire dies out; the bush is undamaged. Astonished, Moses looks around. He returns home deep in thought and tells Jethro that he wants to return to Egypt.

God is merciful, gracious and patient – Moses

Together with his wife Zipporah and his two sons, he worriedly sets out for Egypt, his shepherd's staff firmly clasped in his hand.

God has also spoken to Aaron in the meantime. As the Lord has promised, the two brothers meet on Mount Horeb where they embrace joyfully. They have much to talk about, but Moses speaks mainly of his commission and his encounter with the Lord.

They finally reach Egypt after a long journey. There Moses and Aaron call all the elders of the people of Israel together. Aaron speaks on Moses' behalf and tells them of God's plan. He demonstrates to the people how the staff is changed into a snake and shows them the other miracles as well. The elders look on in astonishment. They believe that Moses has

received special gifts from God and that he is to lead them out of Egypt. The men are overjoyed that God has finally heard their prayers and wishes to help them, and for this they thank him.

Now Moses sees that the people are oppressed by the new king too. They have to build temples, palaces and cities. Innumerable bricks have to be made and carried to the building-sites. Many people collapse under these loads. The message of their imminent deliverance spreads like wildfire amongst the Israelites. Moses' name and deeds are soon on everybody's lips. When Moses walks along the streets, the children look at his shepherd's staff with great curiosity. Hope springs up in the hearts of the Israelites. Will they truly soon be free?

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Moses tended sheep on Mount Horeb. He saw a bush burning which was, however, not destroyed by the fire. God spoke to Moses from this bush and commissioned him to lead the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Moses hesitated. Upon the Lord's promise: "I will be with you," he finally returned to Egypt.

- 1 The children repeat in their own words the wonderful events experienced by Moses.
- 2 "I am that I am" is a very unusual name. What does it mean? (I am God, I have always been and shall be for ever. I am with you always. You will experience my omnipotence. Trust me.) This also applies to us.
- 3 We look at and describe the picture. Moses tells the people what God has promised him on Mount Horeb. (God will deliver his people and lead them into a beautiful land. He has made himself known to Moses through miracles. Moses will have Aaron beside him to speak for him. God will always be with them. "I am that I am.")