

Called by Fire: Moses and the God Who Saves (Exodus 2-4)

Context: The Story So Far

- **Who:**
 - **Moses:** A Hebrew born in Egypt, raised in Pharaoh's household.
 - **Pharaoh:** The Egyptian ruler enslaving the Israelites.
 - **Israelites:** God's chosen people, oppressed in Egypt.
 - **God (Yahweh):** The covenant-keeping God who hears the cries of His people.
 - **What:**
 - The calling of Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian slavery.
 - **Where:**
 - Egypt: The place of Israel's enslavement.
 - Midian: Moses' place of refuge after fleeing Egypt.
 - Mount Horeb (Sinai): The location of God's appearance in the burning bush.
 - **When:**
 - During Israel's 400-year period of enslavement in Egypt.
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1. Moses' Early Life and Flight to Midian (Exodus 2)

- **Exodus 2:1-10:**
 - Moses is born during Pharaoh's decree to kill Hebrew boys.
 - His mother hides him; Pharaoh's daughter adopts him after finding him in a basket.
 - Moses is raised as an Egyptian prince but retains his Hebrew identity.
 - **Exodus 2:11-15:**
 - Moses kills an Egyptian overseer mistreating a Hebrew.
 - His act is rejected by his people, and Pharaoh seeks to kill him.
 - Moses flees to Midian to escape punishment.
 - **Exodus 2:16-25:**
 - Moses helps the daughters of the priest of Midian and marries Zipporah.
 - God hears the cries of the Israelites and remembers His covenant.
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2. The Call of Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-12)

- **Exodus 3:1-6:**
 - Moses encounters the burning bush while shepherding in Midian.
 - Angel of the Lord appears to Moses in the flame
 - God calls to Moses from the bush, identifying Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - Moses is instructed to remove his sandals because he is on holy ground.

- **Exodus 3:7-12:**
 - God tells Moses He has seen the suffering of His people in Egypt and is sending him to Pharaoh to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.
 - Moses questions his worthiness, but God promises to be with him.
 - A sign is given: after leading the people out, they will worship God on this mountain (Mount Horeb).
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3. Moses' Objections and God's Responses (Exodus 3:13-4:17)

- **Exodus 3:13-15:**
 - Moses asks, "What if they ask Your name?"
 - God reveals His name as "I AM WHO I AM" (Yahweh), the eternal, self-existent God.
 - **Exodus 4:1-5:**
 - Moses doubts that the people will believe him.
 - God provides signs: turning Moses' staff into a snake, making his hand leprous, and turning water into blood.
 - **Exodus 4:10-12:**
 - Moses protests that he is "slow of speech."
 - God assures Moses that He will help him speak and teach him what to say.
 - **Exodus 4:13-17:**
 - Moses asks God to send someone else.
 - God appoints Aaron, Moses' brother, to be his spokesperson, showing both God's anger and accommodation of Moses' fear.
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Key Takeaways

- **Moses as a Foreshadow of Christ:**
 - Just as Moses was chosen to deliver the Israelites from physical slavery in Egypt, Jesus is the ultimate deliverer who rescues humanity from the slavery of sin.
 - Moses' role as an intercessor between God and the people points to Jesus' role as the ultimate mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).
- **The Burning Bush and God's Presence:**
 - The burning bush that is not consumed is a symbol of God's holy and eternal presence, which points to Christ as the embodiment of God's presence with humanity (John 1:14).
 - The revelation of God's name, "I AM," is significant as Jesus later identifies Himself with this divine name in John 8:58, revealing His deity.
- **Signs and Wonders as Foreshadows:**
 - The signs given to Moses—transforming the staff, the leprous hand, and water turning to blood—prefigure the miracles of Christ, who performed signs to reveal God's power and His role as the true Deliverer.



O'Keefe, Seraphim (2020). Mural for the Burning Bush Chapel of St. John of the Ladder in Greenville, South Carolina. Orthodox Media.

In this mural by Seraphim O'Keefe for the Burning Bush Chapel of St. John of the Ladder, the Virgin Mary holds her hands in a prayer position that makes her like a chalice to receive Christ's flesh and blood. Moses' two encounters with God at Sinai, in which God revealed his name and his commands, frame the icon. This icon reflects a centuries' old tradition of associating the burning bush with Mary (e.g., Gregory of Nyssa). She, too, had the glory of God within her, but it did not consume her.

For more information, see Davis, Ellen F. (2001). *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Cowley. 45-49.

Notes: