



Handout for week of 3/18/19 Lk. 13: 1-9 & Ex. 3: 1-8a, 13-15

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Ex. 3: [1](#) Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the farthest end of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of G-d, unto Horeb. [2](#) And the angel of HaShem appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. [3](#) And Moses said: 'I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.' [4](#) And when HaShem saw that he turned aside to see, G-d called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said: 'Moses, Moses.' And he said: 'Here am I.' [5](#) And He said: 'Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' [6](#) Moreover He said: 'I am the G-d of

thy father, the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, and the G-d of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon G-d. [7](#) And HaShem said: 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their pains; [8](#) and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

*[9](#) And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me; moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. [10](#) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.' [11](#) And Moses said unto G-d: 'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?' [12](#) And He said: 'Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve G-d upon this mountain.'*

[13](#) And Moses said unto G-d: 'Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them: The G-d of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me: What is His name? what shall I say unto them?' [14](#) And G-d said unto Moses: 'I AM THAT I AM'; and He said: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you.' [15](#) And G-d said moreover unto Moses: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: HaShem, the G-d of your fathers, the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, and the G-d of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.'

COMMENTARY: “Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh” means “I will be what I will be,” and “YHVH” means “He will be.” God explains that: “This shall be My name forever, / This My appellation for all eternity” (3:15). If the name YHVH had already been revealed to Moses in Exodus 3, why is it given as if for the first time in Exodus 6?

Here we have the experience of Moses at the burning bush. This kind of story is what is known as a “theophany” — a display of divine power. Typically in the Bible it is accompanied by certain signs, such as wind and fire, and often on a mountain. The story of the burning bush is all of that, but in a manner different enough to be memorable. The burning bush represents the holy and the otherworldly. Fire is often been used to indicate the presence of the divine. For instance, we have fires, as candles, in church. Fire is pure energy. Yet here the fire does not consume the bush, for it is an otherworldly fire. And as in mosques today, Moses is required to remove his sandals entering the holy space. There’s a sense of being in the presence of a transcendent presence, beyond the conventions of life as it is lived, on a daily basis. The event might be seen as the Call of Moses, but it is more than that, for it is the beginning of a new era in the history of God’s relationship with his people. From now on we are talking about a people, and not simply a family. The clan of the patriarchs are ancient history, time has passed, and now we have a people enslaved in Egypt. The rest of the Bible will be about that people, whether seen as Israel, the people of God in the Old Testament, or the New Israel of the New Testament. It is for this reason that God identifies himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, making clear that this revelation is in continuity with what has gone before. Here we have the disclosure of the personal name of God in the Hebrew Scriptures. “I Am Who I Am” says the voice, playing on the Hebrew verb, “to be.” The play on this name shows its rich mystery. It can be understood as the God who creates things “to be.” Fr. Robert Beck.