

SCRIPTURE READING FOR OCTOBER 10, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Exodus 2:23-25; 3:1-15; 4:10-17

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

2 ²³ After a long time the king of Egypt died. ~~the Israelites groaned under their slavery,~~ and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

3 ¹ **Moses** was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up."

⁴ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said further, "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.

⁷ Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from 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 country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Exodus – the second book of the Hebrew Bible – continues telling the story of the people of God. Abraham and Sarah had a son Isaac, who then had a son Jacob. He was renamed Israel after wrestling with God. His many children staged the death of their brother, Joseph because of their jealousy of how he was the spoiled favorite son of their father. They sold their brother to traffickers who then sold him into slavery in Egypt. Miraculously there Joseph rose to great power and was able to save his family from famine by inviting them to find shelter (and food) in Egypt. The growing family of Israel stayed for many generations in the plenty of Egypt.

They prospered and increased in population so much that the King of Egypt (the Pharaoh) fears some sort of replacement theory. He enslaves them before they might outnumber and take over Egypt. Still afraid, Pharaoh implements, a gender-based genocide intended to cull the Hebrew population and bring them under control. Yet the Pharaoh is thwarted by the faithful deviousness of the Hebrew midwives (as seems to be often the case in history) who act so that many boys will survive, Moses among them. He is found by the Pharaoh's daughter who adopts and raises him as her own. Bi-cultural in a hierarchical world of Egyptian supremacy, Moses eventually discovers his true identity. This leads him to stand and fight for his birth-people, but is rejected by both them and the Egyptian powers. He has to flee Egypt. He finds refuge in the foreign land of Midian, with Jethro. This is where our story of the ongoing freedom and formation of the people of God continues.

~~the Israelites groaned under their slavery:~~ While they thought their cries for help went unheard and unanswered, we see throughout the story that God heard them and responds.

Moses :: from the Hebrew name מֹשֶׁה (**Mosheh**), which is most likely derived from Egyptian **mes** meaning "son", but could also possibly mean "deliver" in Hebrew being related to the Hebrew verb, meaning "to pull out/draw out" [of water]. This would be related to the story of how the infant Moses was given this name by Pharaoh's daughter after she rescued him from the Nile (Exodus 2:10)

¹² He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

¹³ But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “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 my title for all generations.

4 ¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” ¹¹ Then the Lord said to him, “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.” ¹³ But he said, “O my Lord, please send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, “What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. ¹⁵ 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 what you shall do. ¹⁶ He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. ¹⁷ Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.”

HID HIS FACE:: for the ancients, seeing someone’s face – or looking into their face – was synonymous with “knowing” and “being known by” them. So it’s more than just being afraid of what there is to see. It’s being afraid of what and how there is to encounter and be encountered by.

I AM WHO I AM According to Scripture, names do matter, and they have great significance, since they stand for something or reveal something about a person’s character.

There are even several instances when God changed the names of His people effectively giving them new capacities. For instance, Abram’s name was changed to Abraham, Sarai’s was changed to Sarah, and Jacob’s was changed to Israel.

The names of God, as He has unveiled them in Scripture, should be particularly noteworthy to us because they reveal who He is, as well as aspects of His character, promises, authority and power. And because God is so great, one name is not enough to fully portray all of who He is. But we will focus on one here—His very own personal name.

In response, God told Moses ‘Ehye Asher Ehye’ (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) or simply ‘Ehye’ (אֶהְיֶה). In most English Bibles this name is translated as “**I AM WHO I AM**” or simply “I Am.” (Exodus 3:14)

As in all the names that God uses to reveal Himself, this key name of God tells us some essential information about who He is.

The Hebrew alphabet gives a clue to the meaning behind this name. The fact that it begins with Aleph (א), the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, is indicative of the future tense. Therefore this name can be translated ‘I Will Be Who I Will Be.’

This should give us confidence and encourage us since we can understand that God is not only with us right now, but He goes ahead of us into our future, which may be unknown to us but is completely known to God.

He is faithful and will be whatever we need, not only now, but also in any situation that we will face in the future. God is saying, “I will be whatever I choose to be in this circumstance: healer, deliverer, provider, protector. I will be that for you.”

In its essence, this name conveys a sense of both the timeliness and timelessness of God—the God who was, and is, and is to come (Revelation 4:8). (continued next page...)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in this text?
- The story of the Exodus is about freedom and formation. In the section that we read today we hear of how the Israelites seem to have forgotten who they really are when enticed, or enslaved by their shelter in Egypt. Moses begins to learn who he actually is as he learns the name and identity of God. Thinking of your own life how are you enticed or enslaved so that you forget who you really are (not just what you do, what you own, or where you live)?
- The very name of God transcends time and location. It's like you can't put your finger on who God is or what God will do. How does that bring you hope? How does that make you anxious?
- Do you have a particular name that you use when you talk to God? What is it? Why do you use that name in particular?
- Moses is the most famous leader of the Jewish people, yet in today's scripture he's quite a sniveling, scaredy-cat; too afraid to speak in public because of his stutter and fearful of both the power of Pharaoh and the potential rejection by his people. Why would YHWH choose him to lead the people? How does his story bring you hope, or clarity about your own life?
- What invitation do you heard the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

“God also said to Moses, ‘I am the **LORD [YHVH]**.’

In Scripture, God reveals His sacred, four letter proper name. However, most Jewish people will not speak this personal name out of reverence for His holiness and fear of transgressing the command that forbids using God's name in vain (Exodus 20:7).

Instead, the term **ADONAI** (my Lord) or **HASHEM (THE NAME)** is substituted.

This sacred name comprises the following Hebrew letters: **YUD, HEY, VAV, HEY—YHWH** (יהוה).

This name is technically known as the **TETRAGRAMMATON**, which is a combination of two Greek words meaning four letters.

Since the original Hebrew text did not use vowels, it is impossible to determine the exact pronunciation of this name, and therefore it has been the subject of much speculation and controversy. It is often transcribed in English as Yahweh or Jehovah.

Instead of using one of these English variations, many English Bible translations print the word LORD (in all caps or small caps to distinguish it from other Hebrew words that are translated Lord).

They do this out of tradition or respect for the name of God.

Many scholars believe that the Tetragrammaton is derived from the Hebrew word to be (היה) and, therefore, related to I AM, or I Will Be (אֶהְיֶה).

God's personal name is so closely associated with His very being that He wants every generation to know and remember it:

When God revealed His proper, personal name to Moses, He transformed the relationship between Himself and His people.

We can liken it somewhat to being suddenly on a first-name basis with someone after calling him or her for an extended period of time Sir or Madame.