

**BACKGROUND:**

The book of Genesis ends with Abraham and Sarah's descendants in Egypt, following Joseph to live there during a time of famine. The book of Exodus opens many generations later. As the Israelites grew in number, they became a threat to the Egyptian Empire. The Pharaohs of Egypt enslaved them to keep them from power and put them to work.

During this oppression, a boy named Moses was born to an Israelite mother. Since all male babies were to be killed, she hid him for three months before putting him in a basket in the river. The daughter of the Pharaoh found him and raised him in the royal palace. Moses seemed destined for power until an incident occurred when he killed an Egyptian overseer abusing an Israelite slave. Moses fled to the hills for safety.

While tending to the sheep in his new life, God appeared.

SCRIPTURE:

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. 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. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' 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.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' 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.

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, 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. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' 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.'

- How do the people in the story hear God's call to them?
- How open are they to God's call?
- What might this passage say to our community of faith?