

THE BURNING BUSH

Lessons: *Exodus 3*

Moses was born in the land of Egypt. His parents were Hebrew slaves. Because the Egyptians feared the rapid growth of the Hebrews, Moses had been hidden in a basket in the reeds of the Nile River to save his life.

Here he had been found by a princess of Egypt, and for forty years was raised in the Court of Egypt. Moses seemed to know that he himself was really a Hebrew and not an Egyptian, for he killed an Egyptian whom he found beating a Hebrew slave.

Fearing the anger of Pharaoh over this killing, Moses then fled to the great desert area east and southeast of Canaan, called Midian. Here he stayed with a kindly Midianite priest named Jethro, and married one of his seven daughters, Zipporah.

Moses worked for Jethro as a shepherd for forty years. So he was close to eighty years old when the miracle of the burning bush took place and totally changed his life.

Moses had led Jethro's flocks to the wild and lonely area at the southern end of the Sinai Peninsula where stand the mountains of Horeb. Here Moses saw a bush on fire but not burning up. This was so surprising that he went closer to see it, and then heard a voice calling his name from the flames.

Moses was told by the voice not to come near the bush until he had first taken his sandals off of his feet, for the voice said, "the place where you stand is holy ground" (*Exodus 3:5*).

After Moses had obeyed, the voice then told him that it was God speaking to him, and He wanted Moses to go to Egypt to lead the Children of Israel out of slavery. He told Moses His name is "**I AM WHO I AM**" (*Exodus 3:14*). And then later He defined His name further as being JEHOVAH (refer AC 6889).

We know that Moses did go to Egypt, and, after many troubles and plagues, led his people forth into the wilderness. He could not possibly imagine that two years after seeing the burning bush and speaking to God he would come back to this very area, to Mt. Sinai, and receive the Lord's Commandments.

This story of Moses' first instruction about the Lord contains some amazing representations from ancient times. Moses did not understand these representations. He knew very little about the Lord, and practically nothing about the Word, the life after death, true marriage love, and such religious subjects.

A representation is something that stands in place of something else. Representations are often used in the Word. Some love, affection, thought, or delight that exists in heaven is *re-presented* or *re-shown* through some mineral, vegetable, or animal form on earth.

In the story of the burning bush we find one of the most ancient and frequent of all representations, namely that fire represents the heat and light of the Lord's love (AC 6826). Wherever fire is used in a good way, whether in the spiritual sun that gives heat and light to the angels, or the natural sun that gives heat and light to us, or the light of the seven branched candlestick, or the fire that never went out on the altar of burnt offering, it always describes the qualities of the Lord's love.

In this story it seems strange that the fire, the Lord's love, was in the middle of a bramble bush. And yet, here is a beautiful teaching. For the New Word tells us that the bramble bush means the stories of the Word that we learn and put in our memory (AC 6832). And so what we are being taught in this story about Moses is, that even though we may not know much about the Lord, we can see and feel His love speaking through the stories of the Word. Nor is this limited to just one or two stories, but is true of all the different parts of the Word. Each part has the secret presence of the Lord's love hiding within. The name for this Divine love is "**I AM,**" because it is that which creates everything, sustains everything, gives everything life, protects everything, and instructs us as to what is true.

It is no wonder that Moses was told to put off his sandals before he approached the Lord, for the Lord's love is holy and pure, and we cannot really think of Him unless we are willing for a time to put off the pleasures, activities, and thoughts of our busy life. These are called our sensuous externals and are meant by our shoes or sandals (AC 6844).

We need to remember this when we are trying to think or pray to the Lord. We need to remember it when we are getting ready for worship in our homes, our schools, and our churches.

The Lord wants us to find His love. He wants us, like Moses, to learn of Him, and to serve Him faithfully, that He may lead each and every one of us out of the bondage of Egypt, to the life of the promised land, which is heaven. **Amen**