

Lesson 23  
*Moses in the Desert*  
Text: Exodus 2 and 3

Introduction

Moses was running for his life!

Pharaoh heard about the murder Moses committed. He was angry and ready to give Moses the death penalty. Suddenly, the plan Moses had for his life changed, but God's plan was going right on schedule.

The Story

Moses ran from Pharaoh and hid in the land of Midian. There he met his wife, Zipporah. He lived with his father-in-law Jethro (or Reul as he is sometimes called) and helped tend the sheep.

It was certainly a come-down for Moses. He had been one of the highest officials in the land as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. Servants waited on him hand and foot. People did what he told them to do. Now he was just a shepherd in the desert. He had high hopes for helping his people. Now he was of no use to anyone at all.

At least, that's what Moses thought. God wasn't through with Moses, though. His work for God and for his people was just beginning. God planned that difficult time in the desert as part of Moses' training. He needed to see that God was the One to deliver the Israelites. He would only use Moses as a tool.

One day after Moses had lived in the desert for 40 years, he was watching the sheep on the backside of the desert. He looked up and saw something strange on the mountain. A bush was on fire, but it wasn't burning up. It just kept burning and burning.

“I’ll go up there and see what’s going on,” Moses said. “I want to know why that bush isn’t burned.”

As he came near, God called to him out of the bush saying, “Moses, Moses.”

Can you imagine how that must have startled Moses? There he was, all alone in the desert, and he heard his name being called from the middle of a mysterious bush.

“Here I am,” Moses replied.

“Take off your shoes, because you are standing on holy ground,” God told him. “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Moses was afraid and hid his face from God.

“I have seen the affliction of my people,” the Lord said to Moses. “I have heard their cry and I know their sorrows. I have come to set them free from the Egyptians and to deliver them into a good land of plenty. I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people out of Egypt.”

Moses no longer felt self-confident as he had before. “Who am I?” Moses asked, “that I could do such a great thing as bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

“Don’t worry about it,” the Lord told him. “I will surely be with you. I’ll do it. You don’t have to do it by yourself.:

“But, when I come to the children of Israel, who shall I say sent me?”

God said, “I AM THAT I AM. Tell them I AM has sent you. Go first to the elders of Israel and tell them that the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has appeared unto you. Tell them that I’ve seen their suffering and that I will lead them out unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

“They will listen to you and all of you will go to Pharaoh and ask him or permission to go three days journey into the wilderness to worship Me. He won’t let you go, but I will do many wonders and make him let you go. When you go, you won’t go out empty and poor, because I’ll make the Egyptians give you many presents as you leave.”

How fantastic that must have sounded to Moses! God would set them free and send them off with the riches of the Egyptians.

“But they won’t believe me,” Moses told the Lord.

“Throw down the rod you have in your hand.”

Moses obeyed. He threw down his shepherd’s staff, and suddenly, to his astonishment and horror, it changed into a snake.

“Now pick it up by the tail.”

He did, and it turned back into a snake.

“Show them that if they won’t believe you,” God said. “I will give you another sign, also. Put your hand in your robe.”

Moses did. When he pulled it out, his hand was covered with leprosy!

“Put your hand in your robe again,” God commanded. When he pulled it out, it was well again.

“If they won’t believe these signs, or won’t listen to your voice, take some water from the river and pour it on the ground. It will turn into blood.”

You would think these wonderful signs would have given Moses enough confidence to trust God to help him do what God commanded, but he was still unsure.

“But Lord, I don’t think I can do it,” Moses argued with God. “I’m not a good speaker.”

“Who made you mouth?” the Lord asked him. “I did – and I will tell you what to say. You just go and obey Me.”

“But, Lord, I don’t think I can do it.” Moses kept on arguing with God.

God began to get angry with him. “All right,” he said. “Your brother Aaron can speak well. I’ll tell you what to say and you tell Aaron. He will be your spokesman. Go back to Egypt now. You will be safe for those who sought your life are dead.”

Moses left Midian and headed back to Egypt. On the way back he met Aaron, for God had told Aaron to come and meet him.

Together they went before the elders of Israel. When the elders heard what God had said and saw the signs, they were convinced. The next step was the hardest. They had to go and talk to the mighty Pharaoh.

#### The Life Lesson

God had planned all along to use Moses to deliver His people. That’s why He had saved Moses’ life as a baby. Moses had to learn to trust God and not his own ability. Then Moses thought too much about his own weakness and not enough about God’s strength. That’s why he kept arguing with God and saying, “I can’t do it.”

God has a special plan for your life, too. I hope you will trust in Him and not in your own strength. And I hope you’ll remember that when God calls you to do something, He will give you the grace and strength to do it.

Sometimes serving God is hard. Sometimes it’s even scary. But God won’t tell you to do anything unless He plans to give you the ability to do it. All you need to do is trust Him and obey.

## Review Questions

Why was Moses hiding in the desert?

Because he had murdered an Egyptian and Pharaoh wanted to kill him.

What was the name of Moses' wife?

Zipporah

What job did Moses have in the desert?

He kept the sheep for his father-in-law.

What did Moses see in the desert that made him wonder?

He saw a bush that burned but didn't burn up.

Who spoke to God from the bush?

God

When Moses said, "Who shall I say sent me?" what did God reply?

"I AM"

What signs did God give Moses to show to the elders?

The rod turned into a snake and back again and his hand had leprosy and then returned to normal.

What argument did Moses make to God?

"I'm not a good speaker."

What did God reply to Moses?

"Who made your mouth?"

Who was to be Moses' spokesperson to do the talking for him?

His brother Aaron