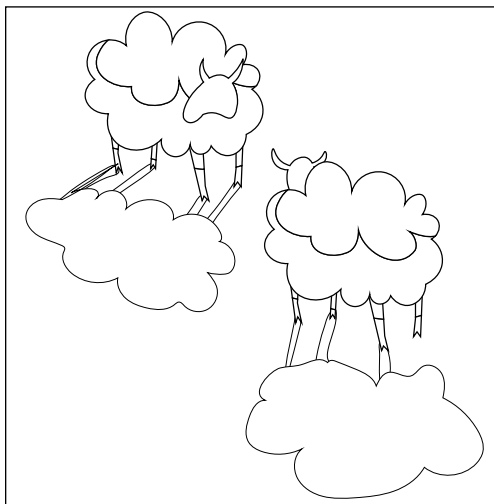
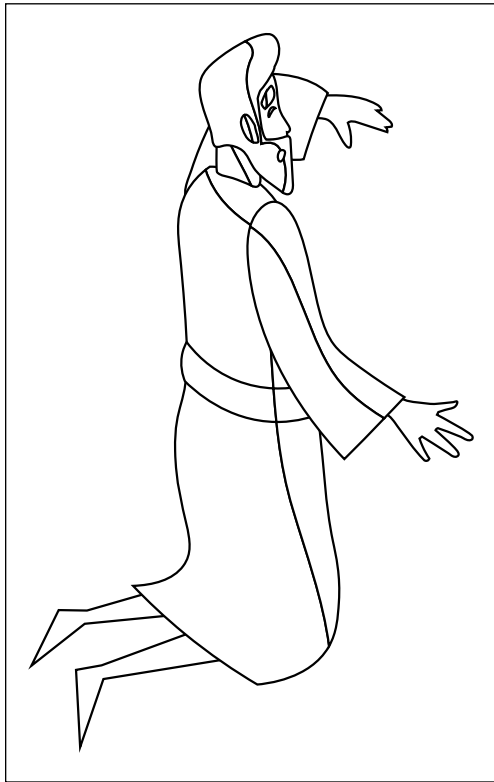


The burning bush



Colour me!



Exodus 3:1-12

When Moses – who had been adopted into the Egyptian king’s family – grew up, he decided to go back to his own people. He got married, had a family and worked as a shepherd for his father-in-law.

One day, Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and Moses decided to lead them across the desert to Sinai, the holy mountain. There an angel of the Lord appeared to him from a burning bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire, but it was not burning up. “This is strange!” he said to himself. “I’ll go over and see why the bush isn’t burning up.”

When the Lord saw Moses coming near the bush, he called him by name, and Moses answered, “Here I am.” God replied, “Don’t come any closer. Take off your sandals—the ground where you are standing is holy. I am the God who was worshipped by your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Moses was afraid to look at God, and so he hid his face. The Lord said, “I have seen how my people are suffering as slaves in Egypt, and I have heard them beg for my help because of the way they are being ill-treated. I feel sorry for them, and I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians. I will bring my people out of Egypt into a country where there is good land, rich with milk and honey. I will give them the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. My people have begged for my help, and I have seen how cruel the Egyptians are to them. Now go to the king! I am sending you to lead my people out of his country.”

But Moses said, “Who am I to go to the king and lead your people out of Egypt?” God replied, “I will be with you. And you will know that I am the one who sent you, when you worship me on this mountain after you have led my people out of Egypt.”

Commentary

After running away from life in Pharaoh's palace, Moses had lived many peaceful years as a shepherd, far from his home and his people. But perhaps deep inside him there was a longing to return, if not to his life as a prince, at least to the faith and the community of his real parents. Was it this that drew him that day to take the sheep to the holy mountain of Sinai? God had been waiting many years for this moment. Moses was at last ready to hear God's voice and God caught his attention by a bush on fire — although these were no ordinary flames. Moses' early faith was brought back to life when he heard God speaking to him.

Now, of course it was wonderful that God knew what was happening to Israel and that he had not forgotten his promises; it was also wonderful that he was going to answer their prayers and come down to rescue them, but what most surprised Moses was that this rescue plan would only take place with his cooperation. As so often, God answers prayers by using ordinary people who are willing to work with him. God chooses to work for us by working through us. It took Moses a long time to get that into his head!

Questions

- ▶ Do you think Moses ever missed his comfortable life as a prince in Egypt?
- ▶ Why do you think he decided to take his sheep up the holy mountain that day?
- ▶ Why might Moses have been so afraid to look at God?
- ▶ What does the story tell us about what God is like?



Visual aid

Find a picture of the shrub known as ‘the burning bush’—perhaps from the internet—or use any bright red or yellow flower or plant you can find in the house. Shine a light on it so that it seems to glow like the burning bush.



Activity idea

Create a scene to show what it might have looked like up on Mount Sinai. Pour some sand on to a tray and, with some small stones, a small red plant or shrub, some paper cut-outs of sheep and a figure to represent Moses. Now retell the story together, imagining it from different points of view—God’s, Moses’, or even perhaps the sheep’s.



Prayer idea

In many parts of the world, taking off outdoor shoes is usual either when people go into someone’s home or when they come together to worship God. Collect a pair of shoes for everyone in the household and then arrange them in a pattern on the ground. Then, as you pick up each pair, pray that God will come close and help the person whose shoes you are holding.

Key verse

God replied, “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:12).

New Testament story link

Matthew 17:1-9: Once, Jesus went up a mountain with three of his friends and suddenly he shone with the light of heaven. Just like Moses, the friends were afraid, but they heard God speaking. They also saw Moses!



Colour me!

