

EXODUS 3:1-15

HINNENI

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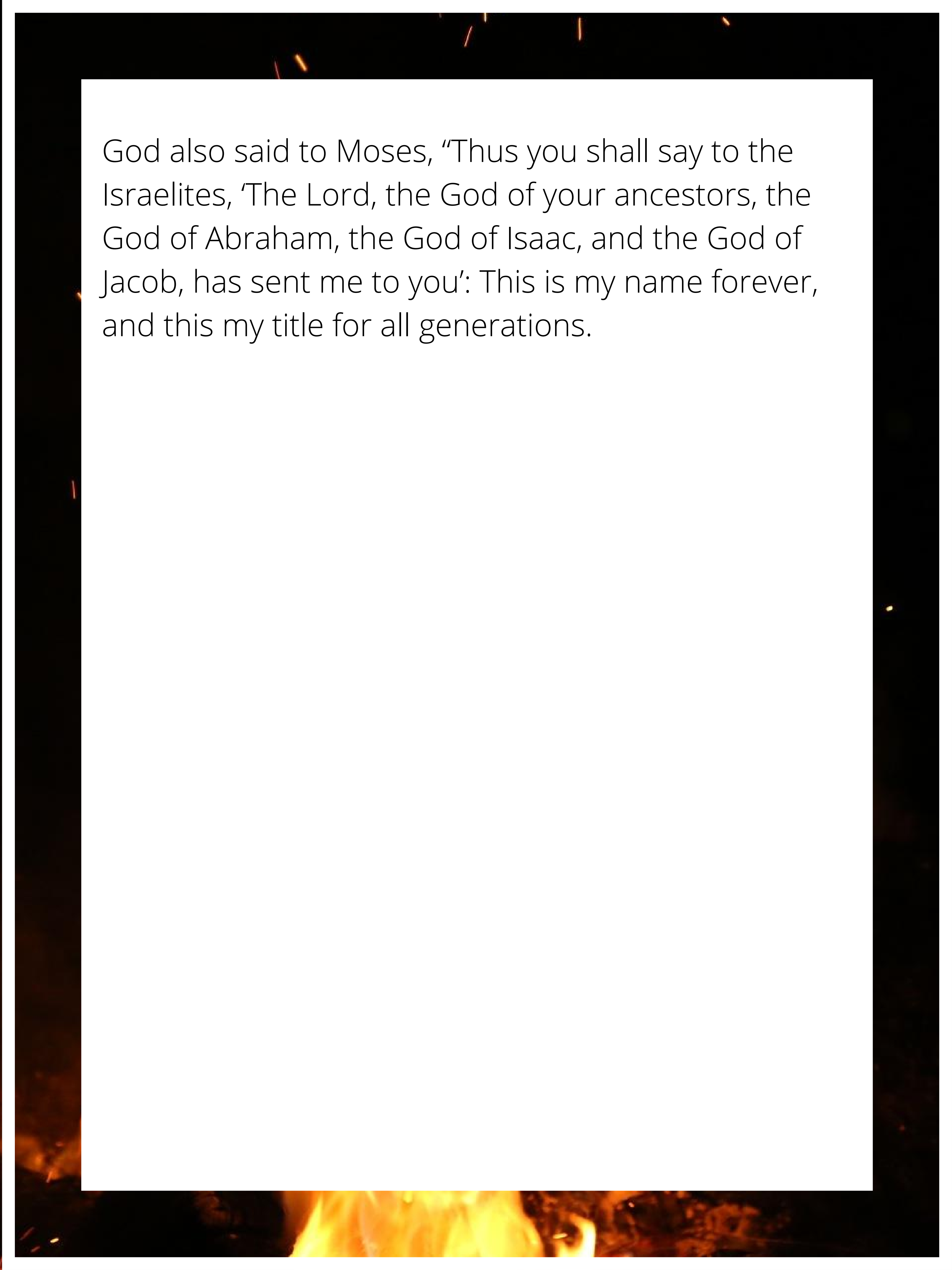
Scripture Passage

Exodus 3:1-15

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."

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?" 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.'"



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.

Sermon

Hinneni

Here I Am

Today's sermon title is "Hinneni." It is a Hebraic word and it means "Here I am." "Here I am" - That was what Moses said to God when he heard God calling his name out of the burning bush. Hinneni; Here I am. This was what Abraham also said when God called him.

"After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' (Hinneni)"

(Genesis 22:1). "Here I am!". What a wonderful response that we can make when God calls us. In this short phrase, 'Here I am', we see humility, willingness, openness, and acceptance. We see ourselves laying down everything before God and leaving ourselves totally in God's hands. Here I am - I am ready to do anything.

It Takes Courage

That was what Isaiah said. In the temple he met God and this is what he said, ***"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'"*** (Isaiah 6:8).

It requires courage to be able to say, Hinneni. When Abraham said Hinneni to God, he did it with courage, not knowing what that would entail. What he heard from God after he said "Hinneni" was too much for Abraham to bear. It wasn't easy. God said to Abraham, ***"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."*** (Genesis 22:8). That was very difficult for Abraham to carry on. So when you say "Hinneni", you say it with courage without knowing what that will entail.

That was what Moses experienced too. What God asked him to do was too much for Moses to take. This is what God said, ***"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."*** (Exodus 3:9, 10). Egypt was where Moese did not want to go. Moses was a murderer in Egypt. He had a painful past and memory in Egypt. He ran away from that place and lived comfortably and safely in Midian for forty years. He was quite used to Midian life as a shepherd. His plan was to finish his life there. So it wasn't easy for

Moses to accept God's call.

Who am I

Not like Abraham, not like Isaiah, Moses did not accept the call immediately. He resisted. His "Hinneni" changed to "Who Am I?". ***"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11).*** My friends, "Who am I" is very different from Hinneni, "Here I am." Those are two very different responses.

"Who am I?" meant "I can't do it", "I have no ability", "I am too weak", "I am too old." 8 times Moses explained and tried to justify this "Who am I?". People will not trust me, people don't know me, people will not listen to me, people will say that 'God never sent you', 'God never appeared to you', I am not eloquent, I just can't. He continuously explained and said, "Who Am I to do this?". It was all focussed on ME, me, me.

Moses's Doubt

To Moses, Egypt was a scary place. It was a dark place. Just thinking about it made Moses depressed and very dark. He had a bad experience there. In Midian, he probably said to himself, 'I would never go back there. I

I will never put my foot in that land, Egypt'.

Not only that, what God asked him to do was totally unrealistic. He couldn't see any possibility of doing what God asked him to do. 'I am 80 years old and all I have is a staff and people don't even know me. So when I go to tell them, 'I came to bring you out of Egypt' they will not listen to me. They will say, 'You are crazy'. And second of all, how can an 80 year old man fight against the professionally trained Egyptian soldiers and bring them out? Would they easily let them go because this old man said, 'I came to take them'. He just couldn't picture what he could do.

Our Hopelessness

We can completely identify with what Moses said. We also live with this question all the time. "Who am I?" Considering all the challenges we face, we feel very powerless, helpless, and even hopeless. And we ask this question, "Who am I to change anything?". Like those who were oppressed in Egypt, there are so many people being treated unjustly and who are oppressed around us. The memory of the death of George Floyd is still fresh and yet things continuously happen. When is it going to end? Weak and powerless people are

constantly abused and they are scared. We see racism and sexism everywhere around us. Some people experience racism on a daily basis. Racism and sexism are so deeply embedded in our culture, we don't even know where we can start to bring about changes. We feel totally powerless. So we ask this question, "Who am I?"

Several times I ask myself this question walking on the street. What can I do? Who am I? It is a very natural response, but this question, even though it is a natural response, locks us up in our small world and leaves us there. This question prohibits us from seeing the bigger plan of God. This question limits us. Puts a limit on us, and we don't see salvation there.

Who are You

But my friends, there was another question Moses raised. This question brought Moses out of his small world. And this is the question that made Moses become Moses. That question was "Who are you?". Who is asking me this ridiculous thing, "Who are you?". He came out of his self-centredness and started asking who that God was, asking him to do this ridiculous thing. ***"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?' (Exodus 3:13). So basically, 'Who are you?'

With this question of "Who are you?", Moses' dilemma and his life started being unraveled. He started moving into the world of mystery where the oppressed are being liberated and the oppressors are being struck down not by our power but by the mysterious power of God. This question will open up many doors of new opportunity.

The Divine I AM

As we start asking this question, we enter into God's world and get to know God. And by knowing God, we will change, and it will open a new world for us. God answered Moses, simply "I AM." "I AM who I AM". The stories of the Bible unravel this divine "I Am". That's what the Bible is. It explains what this "I AM" is. It fills it up. I am this, I am that.

Job knew God pretty well, but he didn't really know God. The God he knew was only in his thoughts. It was a conceptual God and merely a religious God. God whom he mindlessly assumed in his thoughts. The idea of God

was just handed down to him from his ancestors. He just accepted that idea of God. What was important to Job was not God Godself, but God who provided safety and prosperity for him. He was a functional God. God wasn't important, but what God did for Job was important to him. To Job, God was just a functional god who provided good things for him and safety for my children and himself. After all the sufferings came upon him, he said, ***"Truly the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest; but trouble comes."*** ***(Job 3:25, 26)***. He thought that he knew God, but he always lived with fear. He feared that all the good things in his life would be taken away. He thought that he knew God, but he didn't.

Through the process of the suffering, God's "I Am" became clearer to him. He discovered what that 'I am' was. In the last chapter of Job, he confessed, ***"Then Job answered the Lord: 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you,***

and you declare to me.” I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:1-6). He discovered who God truly was.

“Who are you?” is an important question. It is not a question you can do only with your brain. It is the question that arises from our experiences of life. It comes from the core of our existence. “Who are You?”. God will show us and reveal to us God’s divine I AM. From that point on, Moses entered into the mysterious world of the divine I AM. He started understanding what that ‘I AM’ was. I am the rock; I am the fortress, I am the shield. Jesus also showed to us this divine I AM. Jesus said, ‘I am the shepherd, I am the door, I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life’.

God is on the Side of the Oppressed

By asking this question, “Who are you?”, Moses entered into a totally new world. The “I AM” that was revealed in today’s passage was that God is always on the side of the oppressed and listens to the outcries of those who are oppressed. The moaning of the oppressed is the moaning of God. God does not see our suffering through the window. God jumps right into our

suffering. Jesus showed that to us. He jumped into the suffering of those who are oppressed and marginalized. That was the cross.

God invited Moses to jump into the suffering of his people. It was not to make Moses's life difficult but to save people from suffering and also save Moses from his fear.

Hinneni

Ultimately, Moses became God's good friend. This is what Scripture says, ***"Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend."***

(Exodus 33:11). There was no one like Moses. He had this special privilege of meeting God face to face and talking to him like a friend. Don't you envy that?

Deuteronomy says, ***"Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."*** ***(Deuteronomy 34:10)***. By asking "Who are you?", Moses was able to go back to the right beginning, Hinneni, "Here I am". And he goes to Egypt.

We start with Hinneni, and as we experience our helplessness and hopelessness, we ask "Who am I?". But through the question of "Who are you?", we

discover God and come back to the original confession,
Hinneni. That will be our last confession in this world.
Hinneni, Here I am. Accept me, empower me, and send
me.