Welcome to the second of our four sessions on the book of Exodus, which we've begun to see, is turning out to be a rich, absorbing and amazingly relevant text even 2,500 years after it was written. Last time, we began with Israel's slavery in Egypt and the birth and early life of Moses. Today, we'll move on to his call by God, another captivating story that invites us to reflect also on our own calling, on what it is that we may be called to, and how we today respond to that call. Next week, we'll look at the Egyptian plagues, not an easy text because of the way it portrays our God, which is why we must take a good look at it. And in our final session we'll be considering how God provides his people with food in the wilderness, a text that has crucial things to say about trust – and also rest. It challenges us to build regular times of rest into our lives, trusting that God will provide.

A (Reluctant) Man and a Mission (3:1–4:17)

Earlier on, we left the story of the Israelites with God being very concerned about them, having heard their groaning and seen their desperate situation. What would God do? As you know, the next story, the one we're going to look at this evening, makes it clear that God is going to work with and through Moses, the man who'd been so miraculously preserved by the intervention of Pharaoh's own daughter. God would work with and through Moses, apparently a rash man and – a murderer.

Now Moses Was Tending the Flock (Exod. 3:1-6)

What starts off as a normal working day – Moses, still in Midian at this point, is tending his father-in-law's flocks – takes a rather surprising turn. This time, Moses had driven his flock well into the wilderness, or even beyond it, ‘to the far side of the desert’. Commentators speculate that this might have taken him well beyond his familiar territory, to a new, strange and distant place (Durham, 1987, p. 30). And so Moses arrives at Horeb, a place described as the mountain of God. Thomas Dozeman calls it a location ‘of mystery at the edges of everyday human experience, where unexpected events occur’ (Dozeman, 2009, p. 117).

Somewhat surprisingly, Moses' father-in-law, who'd been introduced in 2:18 as Reuel, is here called Jethro. Far more importantly, however, an unexpected event does indeed occur (v. 2). None other than the angel of the LORD appears to Moses. Now what are we to make of that? And who is this angel of the LORD anyway? When Exodus is read
A (Reluctant) Man and a Mission (Exod. 3:1–4:17) (Karl Möller)

as it's intended to be read, i.e. as a sequel to Genesis, the angel of the Lord isn't an unknown figure anymore, having already made quite a few appearances. We might still be puzzled though, because it’s not always clear whether we’re dealing with an angel representing God, or whether it’s God himself. In Genesis 18, God even appeared to Abraham in the form of three men. Here, in Exodus 3, the angel apparently doesn’t just represent God; Moses is indeed facing God himself, as becomes clear in v. 4 where we’re told that ‘the Lord saw’ rather than ‘the angel of the Lord saw’.

But the actual point is this: we, the readers of the book, know that Moses is face to face with the angel of the Lord, or indeed God himself. We also know that he’s arrived at the mountain of God. Moses himself, however, doesn’t know any of these things. All he’s aware of is there’s a bush that’s on fire but doesn’t burn up. That rather strikes him as odd; and so he goes to take a look (v. 3). Now there’s actually a clue in that fire itself, a clue that the original readers of Exodus surely wouldn’t have missed. Some commentators refer to it as a theophanic fire, a theophany referring to an appearance of God, because fire is a recurring symbol of God’s presence in the Old Testament. Psalm 50:3, for instance, says: ‘Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages’. In the book of Exodus, God is also repeatedly present ‘in fire’. In 19:18, for instance, we’re told that God had descended upon Mt Sinai in fire, and during the people’s wanderings in the wilderness, God is present at night ‘in a pillar of fire’ (13:21).

As readers, we’re meant to be worried about Moses at this point. After all, he’s face to face with God without even beginning to realise it. As again Dozeman says, ‘the setting of the divine mountain with an eternal flame in a bush is the most explicit sign of the Deity possible’ in the Old Testament (2009, p. 126). And yet Moses doesn’t get it, although, to be fair to him, the mountain probably only became known as God’s mountain because of this meeting as well as the subsequent one between Israel and God. As for the fire, well, Moses was about to investigate that. However, the trouble with that was that he was about to approach God; and, of course, you can’t just do that. You’re meant to turn away from God in an act of reverence, not walk towards him. That would be nothing less than suicidal. As God says in 33:20: ‘you cannot see my face, for no-one may see me and live’.

And so, God has got to intervene. Seeing that Moses is about to approach him, he urgently calls out to warn him of the grave danger he’s in, telling him not to come any closer because the area is holy ground (vv. 4-5). Moses, it would seem, knows rather little about God, which is why God needs to introduce himself to him. And yet, it’s this murderer, a man who’d been raised at Pharaoh’s court and who, as we saw last time, can therefore be mistaken for an Egyptian, a man who has a foreign, Midianite wife and, as we now discover, knows little about the God of Israel, who is about to be chosen by God to lead his
people out of Egypt. We know the story so well that, for us, it's lost its power to raise our eyebrows, but I hope you're beginning to see that that's the effect our author was after.

There's one thing that Moses does get right though: he turns aside. In her book, An Altar in the World: Finding the Sacred Beneath Our Feet, Barbara Brown Taylor says that what made Moses Moses was precisely this willingness to turn aside (2009, p. 25). He notices something and pays proper attention. He could have walked right past and missed God altogether, but he decided that his work could wait a minute and thus, to use Taylor's words, he found this altar in the world. This is a really good way of describing what's going on here, because there are clear allusions to a sanctuary in our text.

To begin with, Moses is asked to take off his shoes, which is exactly what you would do in a sanctuary – in his culture, at least. The verb God uses to tell Moses to 'come no closer' (קרב, qarab) similarly is often used as a technical term for approaching God in worship. Even the Hebrew word for place (מקום, maqom) – 'the place where you are standing is holy ground' – can refer to a sanctuary (Dozeman, 2009, p. 126). And all of this is happening on a mountain, which in the ancient Near Eastern world was often the place where the gods were believed to live or come down to earth. Temples were therefore frequently built on mountains (Dozeman, 2009, p. 122), just like the Jerusalem temple, which stands on Mt Zion.

And yet, as Moses, to the utter amazement and most likely also the consternation of the original readers, hasn’t got a clue of what's going on, God needs to introduce himself (v. 6). He is, God says, the God of his father, who, as we saw in 2:1, was a Levite. But if he’s his father’s God, then he’s also the God of Israel’s ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That, of course, goes without saying, so why is it pointed out? The answer is that our author was keen to draw our attention once again to the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the promise that the Israelites would become a great nation with their own land. That promise is now about to be fulfilled, although it would still take a lot to get to that stage. And it's only now, at this point, that it dawns on Moses who he's having a chat with; and so he finally does what he'd been supposed to do all along: he hides his face, being afraid to look at God.

Now, Go (Exod. 3:7-12)

God then tells Moses what we already know, that he's seen the misery of his people, that he's heard their cries and that he's concerned about their suffering. As I said last time, the last phrase speaks of God's intimate knowledge of the people's suffering, which, rather than being safe and secure in his heavenly abode, unaffected by the troubles of the world, God experiences fully in his own divine being (see Fretheim, 1991, p. 60). What's new at this point is that God has now come to do something about the people's plight (vv. 7-8).
He’s come to rescue them, or to snatch (ָּכָּל, natsal) them away, as the Hebrew text literally says, and to give them their own land at last, a good land, a spacious land, a ‘land flowing with milk and honey’.

That phrase suggests abundance; and the land is flowing with milk in that there’s lots of good pasturage for sheep and goats, and with honey due to the date palms, a source of date honey (Goldingay, 2010, p. 17). Importantly, as Terence Fretheim points out, God’s act of salvation is not only about removing the Israelites from an oppressive situation; he also provides them with ‘a new place for life and blessing’ (1991, p. 58).

Some commentators are troubled by the fact that God, in v. 9, once again talks about his awareness of the Israelites’ oppression, which he’d already mentioned in v. 7. It’s even been suggested that this gives the impression of God being somewhat senile (McEvenue, 1993, pp. 226-227), but, of course, God’s concern is repeated because it provides the reason for what’s going to happen now. Having taken note of his people’s suffering, God is now going to act. Actually, no, that’s not quite right. It’s Moses who’s going to do something about it. ‘I have seen the oppression’, says God, ‘so now, you go and have a chat with Pharaoh’ (v. 10).

And, of course, Moses is thrilled by that prospect (v. 11). Well, no, that’s not quite right either. ‘Me’, he says, ‘who am I that I should go?’ But Moses’ emphatic ‘I’ is countered by God’s emphatic ‘I’: ‘I am with you’, says God. ‘Who Moses is is not the question’, says John Durham, the question is ‘who is with Moses’ (Durham, 1987, p. 33). The Jewish writer Umberto Cassuto has argued that Moses is merely expressing a sense of humility and unworthiness here (1967, p. 36), but many commentators, painting Moses in a darker light, believe that he quite simply refuses to accept his mission or, at the very least, expresses doubt regarding his ability to do what God requires. That said, however we understand Moses’ reply, it’s important for us to see that God, throughout the conversation, takes Moses’ concerns very seriously (see Fretheim, 1991, p. 58).

God then promises Moses to be with him, and he gives him a sign, so that should settle things (v. 12). Except that it’s a rather strange sign. ‘This will be the sign’, says God, ‘when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain’. So, the sign that it was indeed God who’d sent Moses is that, once they’d left Egypt, the Israelites would worship God on the very mountain where Moses and God were now having their conversation. In other words, when it’s all worked out, then, and only then, Moses will know that it had indeed been God who’d sent him.

That’s not much good as a sign, is it? And so some commentators think that God may have been pointing at the burning bush, as it were, telling Moses that the bush is the sign of God’s involvement. That’s possible, of course, but the text doesn’t mention the bush at this point. So, if we were to go with the other reading, if indeed it’s the successful outcome that’s the sign of God’s involvement, then God is in effect saying that Moses quite simply
needs to trust him and that it’s only in looking back that he’ll know for sure that God had indeed been with him. A strange sign perhaps, but not entirely out of character for the God we meet in the biblical pages.

**I Am Who I Am (Exod. 3:13-22)**

In any case, Moses isn’t impressed. ‘Suppose I go’, he says, ‘you know, just for the sake of the argument; suppose I tell the people that the God of their fathers sent me to them, that wouldn’t really be any good, would it, for they’d want to know who you are’ (v. 13). So now it’s no longer ‘who am I?’ but ‘who are you?’ Moses clearly thinks the people wouldn’t know the God of their fathers. Is he right? Had the people completely forgotten about their history, about Abraham, Isaac and Joseph, about the ancient promise and the God who’d made that promise? Or is it just Moses himself who’s clueless about these things. We’re not told, but Moses urgently needs to know God’s name. By the way, in the ancient world, somebody’s name said something about their nature or character, and so Moses’ question is as much about God’s reputation as about his identity. He needs to know whether he’s dealing with a God who can accomplish what he’s promising.

And so, God tells him. Fretheim notes how Moses’ asking leads to new insight, commenting that ‘human questioning leads to further divine revelation’ (1991, p. 62). As we all know, if you don’t ask, you don’t get, but fortunately Moses did ask, and so God revealed more about himself. ‘I am who I am’, says God in response to Moses’ question, ‘that’s what you can tell the Israelites: I am has sent me to you’ (v. 14). Well, not only is that a rather strange name; the Hebrew phrase is also ambiguous and has been understood in a variety of ways (see Hyatt, 1971, pp. 75-77), such as that:

- God’s reply to Moses’ question is intentionally evasive, because:
  - God doesn’t wish to reveal his name or nature,
  - humanity mustn’t know God’s name and thus acquire power over him,
  - God’s nature can’t be fully grasped;
- God is the eternally existent one;
- there’s no cause for God’s existence outside himself (‘I am because I am’);
- God is the master of his own destiny (‘I will be what I will be; ‘I will be that which I intend to be’);
- God is the only god who has real existence (‘I am he who is’; ‘I am the one who is’);
- God is the creator (‘I cause to be what I cause to be’; Dozeman, 2009, p. 134).

All these are possible interpretations. Having said that, we can probably dismiss the first one, that God is being evasive, because God does reveal his name in the next verse. Similarly, the question of God’s existence, the ontological question, as theologians would call it, of his pure or abstract being in itself, is actually a more modern concern that probably wouldn’t have troubled the ancient Hebrews. What’s at stake rather is what’s been called
God’s ‘active being’, i.e. the confirmation of God being present with his people by doing something for them. However absent he may have seemed to the oppressed Israelites in Egypt, God now emphasises his continuing active presence with them. God, it has been said, ‘will be faithfully God for them’ (thus Fretheim, 1991, p. 63).

But have you noticed that God gives Moses three answers? There are three versions of the divine name in vv. 14-15: ‘I am who I am’ (v. 14a), which is given only to Moses; ‘I am’ (v. 14b), which is given to the Israelites; and ‘the LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ (v. 15), which is linked to the God of their fathers. All three names derive from the Hebrew verb ‘to be’, including the name ‘Yahweh’ itself, which is used in the third case and which in English Bibles is translated as ‘LORD’. What’s obscured by that translation and is important for us to bear in mind is that ‘Yahweh’ was a personal name rather than a title. It’s also important that our author highlights how it’s God who gives his name. God, in other words, is not named by us.

So now that Moses knows who he’s dealing with, he’s instructed to tell the people about God’s appearance, his concern for their suffering and that he’s going to live up to that old promise – he is after all the God of the promise, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – to bring the people into the Promised Land (vv. 16-17). God assures Moses that the elders will listen to him, which means they’ll also believe him, and so together with the elders, he is to confront Pharaoh and ask for permission to bring sacrifices to God in the desert, for which they would have to leave Egypt (v. 18).

By the way, to Pharaoh, God is to be identified as ‘Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews’, which is how gods were usually perceived in the ancient Near East, i.e. as national deities that looked after particular peoples and territories. Interestingly, the elders in the end never accompany Moses when he confronts Pharaoh. It’s Aaron who takes their place instead, apparently because God adjusts to Moses’ continuing objections, which, as we shall see in a moment, lead to Aaron playing a part in the subsequent events that God had not initially intended (see Fretheim, 1991, p. 66).

Anyway, Moses is to be under no illusion, for God tells him straightaway that Pharaoh will not let them go unless he’s made to (v. 19). God himself will have to intervene, doing all kinds of amazing things, but as a result of that Pharaoh eventually will let them go (v. 20). In fact, the force of the Hebrew verb suggests that not only will he let the people go, Pharaoh in the end will be eager to be rid of the Israelites and their God.

But that’s not quite it. Not only will they be allowed to leave Egypt, they won’t be going ‘empty-handed’ either, as our text puts it (v. 21). This is a fascinating detail that becomes even more interesting in connection with Israel’s law. There’s a law about the release of slaves in Deuteronomy 15:12-15 that stipulates that a slave, when he’s to be released after seven years of service, is not to be sent out ‘empty-handed’. This is what the law says:

If a fellow Hebrew, a man or woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. And when you release him, do not send him away empty-
handed. Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing-floor and your winepress. Give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.

Having been slaves in Egypt for a long time, the Israelites similarly won’t leave empty-handed. What’s slightly odd about this is that the text then talks about plundering the Egyptians when they actually appear to provide the Israelites with silver, gold and clothes voluntarily. The best explanation I’ve come across is that of Fretheim, who suggests that the former victims now become victors, who leave with their ‘booty’, as it were (1991, p. 67).

Now Look, They Won’t Believe Me (Exod. 4:1-9)

And so, following God’s speech, his explanations, promises and instructions, everything is finally settled. No, not really. ‘What if?’ says Moses. What if they don’t believe me (mind you, God had said they would, but Moses evidently doesn’t think so)? What if they don’t even listen? What if they say God didn’t appear to him at all? What then? Actually, Moses doesn’t say ‘what if?’ at all. That’s the NIV’s take; other translations present Moses’ objection in stronger terms. The ESV, for instance, reads: ‘but behold, they will not believe me’. While the language is somewhat archaic, the ESV better represents the sense of the Hebrew. Moses isn’t just raising concerns; he’s flatly contradicting God (see also Durham, 1987, p. 42; and Childs, 1974, p. 49). He’s effectively saying something like, ‘now look, God, they won’t believe me’.

Of course, as we said earlier, Moses was of dubious status as a fugitive, having had to leave the country under sentence of death. Perhaps he was right to be concerned. After all, what basis did the people have for trusting him? God, for his part, certainly doesn’t reproach Moses for his response but is open to argument and being challenged by Moses. God, we might say, is willing ‘to consider seriously what [his] human partner has to say’ (Fretheim, 1991, p. 68). And so, God gives Moses some signs that are designed to strengthen Moses’ authority. The background of the first sign in vv. 2-4 is an Egyptian snake-charmer’s trick, which, however, is here reversed and improved upon.

In the trick, the snake-charmer makes the snake straight and rigid by some kind of mesmerism before breaking the spell by grasping it by the tail. Moses, by contrast, is told to turn a staff that is straight and rigid and, of course, lifeless into a snake. The purpose of the sign is to prove that Moses’ God-given power is superior to that of the Egyptian enchanters (see Cassuto, 1967, p. 46). But there may be more at stake. The staff may also represent royalty, with the snake serving as Pharaoh’s protector. If that’s the case, then the sign would also symbolise God’s power over Pharaoh (Dozeman, 2009, p. 140).

In v. 4, having been told to take the snake by its tail, we read that Moses did just that: “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail”. So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake…’. However, the Hebrew text has an interesting detail here that is not preserved
in this translation. Moses must have been horrified when told to seize the snake by its tail, as that would leave him vulnerable to its fangs. To avoid that danger, snakes are normally grasped near their head. So when told to seize (יתן, ahaz) the snake by its tail, Moses snatches (פש, hazaq) at it or grabs it cautiously. In contrast to the NIV, the Hebrew text has two different verbs here, which allows the story teller to capture Moses’ fear. As Durham notes, ‘without being directly mentioned at all, the relief of Moses when the snake becomes a staff again is made almost palpable by this clever use of verbs’ (1987, pp. 44-45; for an alternative interpretation, see Cassuto, 1967, p. 47). Sadly, English translations tend to miss this.

Before we move on to the next sign, it may be worth noting that, in v. 5, God once again refers to himself as the God of the fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Again and again, our storyteller has God make the point that he’s the God of the ancient promise and the one who’d been involved with the Israelites for some time.

The second sign in vv. 6-8 is about an instantly diseased and just as instantly healed hand. By the way, the term ‘leprosy’ in the Old Testament doesn’t refer to Hansen’s disease, the modern form of leprosy, but to a wide range of skin diseases, which, due to their potentially contagious nature, required seclusion (see Lev. 13–14). Durham (1987, p. 45) notes that anyone reading the account of this second sign would be horrified not only at the thought of the great Moses being so afflicted, but would shudder once at the thought of his infected hand and twice at the command that such a hand should be placed against the unprotected chest inside one’s garment.

But that’s what Moses is told to do, only with a surprising outcome. Leprosy appears to have been widespread in Egypt. More importantly, it was regarded as incurable, and so its removal from Moses’ hand would have truly astonished anyone who witnessed it. The real point of the sign therefore lies in its reversal, which highlights the God of Israel’s unique power to heal (see Dozeman, 2009, p. 140). ‘So’, says God, ‘if the snake trick isn’t good enough, then surely the healing miracle will convince the people’ (v. 8).

‘Failing that, here’s a third sign (v. 9): take some Nile water, pour it on the ground, and it will turn into blood’. Of course, this later turns out to be one of the signs designed to move Pharaoh to let the people go. However, when the miracle is actually performed in 7:17-24, it’s done not by Moses but by Aaron, and to their dismay, they find that the Egyptian magicians are able to do the same. The first two signs are never performed in the way they’re described in our text, although Moses much later cures Miriam’s leprosy in Numbers 12:9-15. He similarly, in Numbers 21:4-9, reverses the deadly bite of the fiery serpents with the construction of a copper snake at the end of the people’s wilderness journey.
Please Send Someone Else (Exod. 4:10-17)

So, having been given all those amazing signs, Moses is finally ready to go. No, actually, he still isn’t. First, he’d been worried about his own ability (‘who am I that I should go?’ 3:11), then he wasn’t sure about God’s identity (‘if they want to know your name, what shall I tell them?’ 3:13), then he doubted that he would be believed (‘now look, they won’t believe me’; 4:1). Now he says he simply can’t speak.

Durham once again captures the development of the conversation well, noting that ‘one almost has the impression that Moses is producing a last and best excuse, playing a trump card, pushing his argument as far as it will go’ (1987, p. 49). It’s worth us taking a good look at Moses’ words in v. 10, however, for NIV’s ‘I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant’ is a little bland. Moses’ actual words are: ‘not a man of words am I, neither yesterday nor the day before nor since you have spoken to your servant’.

The Hebrew text captures Moses’s exasperation much better than the NIV: ‘I couldn’t speak yesterday, or the day before, for that matter, and for all you’ve been saying, God, let’s face it, I’m still not any better at it’. When Moses adds that he’s ‘heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue’, to quote from the Hebrew again, he’s most likely referring to a speech impediment. That reading certainly sits well with God’s words in v. 11, which address the issue of impairments such as deafness, muteness and blindness. That said, the text gives the impression that Moses makes his point, that he isn’t very eloquent, rather eloquently.

So, God replies by asking Moses some questions (v. 11), questions that are meant to help him focus on God rather than on his own disabilities. Durham comments that Moses’ protest is not only invalid but irrelevant (1987, p. 49). God is, after all, the creator, who knows what he’s doing. ‘Now go’, says God, ‘I will help you speak and will teach you what to say’ (v. 12). These are rather curt words, indicating perhaps that God is finally beginning to get a bit fed up with his reluctant servant. But I must take issue with the NIV again, which, in its desire to turn the Hebrew into fluent English, misses an important point. For God doesn’t say ‘I will help you speak’; he literally says ‘I will be with your mouth’. This is important for two reasons. First, because it’s another play on God’s name ‘I am’, and secondly, because God sends his servant away with yet another reminder of his presence, which is a key theme throughout the book of Exodus. Another point to note is that the text presents us with a God who’s willing and able to work in and through real people with real limitations. God doesn’t sort out Moses’ speech difficulties; but what he does do is to use him regardless (Fretheim, 1991, p. 71).

How then does Moses respond (v. 13)? To be honest, the Hebrew text isn’t entirely clear at this point. Some translations, including the NIV, read ‘please send someone else’. Others suggest something like ‘send anyone you decide to send’ (e.g. NJB, KJV), which
leaves open the possibility that this might be Moses himself. Durham accordingly comments that ‘Moses replies with deferential resignation: “Sorry, Lord – pray send whom-ever you want to send”’ (1987, p. 50). A literal translation would read along the lines of ‘excuse me, my lord, please send by the hand of him whom you will send’. What this indicates is that there are some words in the Hebrew text that make it clear that Moses is addressing God respectfully and deferentially. And yet, God’s anger in v. 14 also clearly indicates that Moses’ plea that God may ‘send by the hand of him whom you will send’ is taken by God to mean ‘send anyone you like – as long as it isn’t me’.

And that’s how Moses’ brother Aaron enters the picture (vv. 14-16). ‘He’, says God, ‘certainly knows how to speak. And it just so happens that he’s on his way to meet you anyway’. Fretheim points out that God now resorts to plan B. It’s clearly not what God had had in mind, but he’s prepared to go with what’s possible (1991, p. 73). So, God now repeats his earlier promise to be with Moses’ mouth – there’s no way out for Moses – but adds that he’ll be with Aaron’s mouth also. As John Goldingay notes, ‘God is not prepared to continue the discussion but tells Moses he can have his brother as his spokesman and for goodness’ sake to get on with the job’ (2010, p. 20). As before, where the 
NIV reads, ‘I will help both of you speak’, the Hebrew literally says, ‘I will be with your mouth and with his mouth’.

But it’s also made very clear that Moses is to be the one in charge. God will speak only with Moses, who will convey God’s words to Aaron, who in turn will speak to the people. Aaron thus functions as Moses’ mouth, while Moses’ authority is to be so strong that he’ll be like God to Aaron. ‘And before you forget’, adds God, ‘take this staff so you can perform all those miracles’ (v. 17), the staff being a symbol of Moses’ authority but also an extension of God’s hand, as it were. It’s an instrument through which God is going to work.

Intriguingly, the conversation ends with Moses falling completely silent. On the one hand, that’s because he’s clearly run out of arguments, but what’s interesting is that he doesn’t consent to God’s call either. At least, our storyteller nowhere tells us that he does, and so we, the readers, must wait for the story to continue to find out how it’s going to unfold. Next time, we’ll move on to the account of the Egyptian plagues, as they’re usually known. If you wish to read ahead, then please do have a look at Exodus 7:8–11:10.

Sources

