

The thirty-nine books that Christians call the Old Testament were written across a thousand years, by multiple authors, and in a diversity of social settings. Despite the differences that you would expect, they nonetheless all describe God's action in human history.

Yet the reading from Exodus demonstrates, God doesn't always act in history in the same ways. Just as God doesn't act in the same ways these day.

In her biography *Moses* Avivah Zornberg observes that

no figure looms larger in Jewish culture than Moses, and few have stories that are more enigmatic or compelling.

Moses was the chief protagonist in Israel's exodus from oppression in Egypt. Moses, who should have been put to death as he drew his first breath, being placed in a floating basket and hidden in the rushes in the hope to be rescued rather than drown; he was loved by his Hebrew mother and by Pharaoh's daughter.

Moses would grow up with an ambiguous triple identity. Moses was a Hebrew born into the house of Levi, he was raised by his adoptive mother as a prince at the center of Egyptian political power, and then as an adult he murdered an Egyptian for beating a fellow Hebrew, after which Pharaoh tried to apprehend him.

So, Moses fled to the "far side of the desert" and married *Zipporah* of Midian, the land where he had fled. After the king of Egypt died during Moses's long exile in Midian, we hear the suffering of the Hebrews with four synonyms – they groaned, cried out, screamed, and moaned. And, in a parallel fashion, God responded in a fourfold way – God heard, God remembered, God saw, God responded.

God called Moses to return to Egypt, the land of Israel's genocide, to mediate between God and his people, and between God and pharaoh. And as we hear, God appeared to Moses "in flames of fire from within a bush."

How has God appeared to you? In a bush – nature? In voice? Or silence - stillness? In a burning? Within you or around you? Or haven't you noticed, or remember? Did you turn aside?

When Moses encountered the burning bush, he was minding his own business. Literally. He was taking care of his father-in-law's sheep. Perhaps dreaming of a different future ; perhaps of friends and family in Egypt. A land and people he had left in a hurry.

On seeing the bush burning, Moses decided he had to turn aside from what he was doing. He interrupted himself to go to see. Rather than continue on his day, on his way. He could have kept his head down, getting done what he needed to get done but he made himself to turn aside.

And he saw something. Heard something. And that something was of God. A bush burning ... yet not.

It looked like a burning bush yet what was really burning?

God desire was burning.

Could it also be when we don't turn aside from we have planned, for our day, our life, we also may miss God?

We need to be able to interrupt ourselves. Our plans. Our schedule. To turn aside from who we think we are, to know who we are in the eyes of God.

It was only in interrupting himself that Moses came to know he was on holy ground.
Take off your shoes. Feel where you are. Be grounded.
Give yourself permission to be curious.

The call of Moses was fraught with ambiguities.
When God called him, Moses responded: "Here am I!"
Yet later he wondered, "Who am I?"

God assured him that "the people will listen."
But Moses worried that "they won't listen".

Moses was full of ambivalence, inhibitions, fears, and doubts.
As we might be.

No one in their right mind would think themselves worthy or capable of that call - or any call,
for that matter.
To speak the unspeakable.
To name the Unnameable.
The presumption.
The audacity.
The futility.
To know you stand on holy ground ... listening to the holy.

Moses instinctively hid his face. Nonetheless, God insisted.
When Moses doubted his deepest self, God assured him, I will be with you.
As I can assure you.
God is with us.

Such is the paradox and burden of prophecy, observed Martin Buber:
It is laid upon the stammering to bring the voice of Heaven to Earth.

And that my friends is our call. Who **we** are.
The ones to bring the voice of heaven to earth.

Wendy