

12.03 Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 2:23–25; 3:1–22; 4:1–9)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- “Life of Moses” Series 1 Flash-a-Cards from A Beka Book and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) *Herein Is Love Commentary Series; Exodus, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Reuel/Jethro/Hobab*: different names for Moses’ father-in-law
- *Horeb*: a mountain in Arabia (Galatians 5:24) called the mountain of God; this is the same as Mount Sinai [see map below]
- *land flowing with milk and honey*: a very prosperous and bountiful land
- *Israelites/sons of Israel/children of Israel*: the descendants of Jacob/Israel (this term is not attributed to them until Exodus 36, but for easy identification we will use it in the early chapters of Exodus)
- *LORD*: (note small capital letters) Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God; sometimes called Yaweh or I Am
- *immutable*: unchangeable
- *leprous*: having a terrible disease called leprosy

Scripture: (NASB)

Exodus 2:23 Now it came about in *the course of* those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. 24 So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice *of them*.

3:1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” 5 Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6 He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 The LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. 8 So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. 9 Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

10 Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring

the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”

13 Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” 15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, 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 is My memorial-name to all generations. 16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.’” 18 They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. 20 So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. 21 I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. 22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians.”

4:1 Then Moses said, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’” 2 The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he said, “A staff.” 3 Then He said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 But the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand and grasp *it* by its tail”—so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— 5 “that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

6 The LORD furthermore said to him, “Now put your hand into your bosom.” So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. 7 Then He said, “Put your hand into your bosom again.” So he put his hand into his bosom again, and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like *the rest of his flesh*. 8 “If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign. 9 But if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.”

Introduction/Review:

When Moses was forty years old, he had to get out of Egypt because people, including Pharaoh, knew he had murdered an Egyptian. Fleeing to Midian [locate], Moses worked for Reuel/Jethro,* who gave Moses his daughter to marry. He stayed there forty years. How old would he have been at the time of today’s story? [40+40=80 years old.]

Back in Egypt, the Israelites cried out to God because of the hard labor they were experiencing as slaves. Their situation was so bad that it was described as being in an “iron furnace” (1 Kings 8:51).

Story:

Burning bush

In the land of Midian, Moses was a shepherd, taking care of his father-in-law’s flock. He moved them from pasture to pasture. One day he was in a wilderness, pasturing the sheep on the western side of Midian at the mountain of God called Horeb [locate on the map below], when he saw something incredible. It was a bush burning with fire but the leaves were still green. They were not wrinkling and crinkling; the bush was not

burning up. “I’ve got to get closer to see this marvelous sight!” thought Moses.

He soon learned this indeed was a marvelous place, for Someone called to him from the middle of the bush, “Moses, Moses!”

Moses actually answered, “Here I am.”

Holy ground

“Do not come near here,” warned the voice. “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

Moses removed his sandals. What was going on? How was this holy ground? Who was speaking to him?

It was God who was talking! He continued speaking, identifying Himself: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (first mention of this statement).

Oh, talking with God was scary! Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God’s manifestation in the bush.

Caring God

The LORD said, “I have surely seen the trouble My people in Egypt are enduring. I am paying attention to their cries because their taskmasters are so hard on them. I know My people are suffering. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians. I will not only deliver them but will also bring them to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Now, you, Moses, I will send *you* to Pharaoh so that *you* may bring My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

Unwilling servant

✓“Me?” thought Moses. “I don’t want such an awesome responsibility. Forty years ago I thought I might deliver my people, but now, uh-uh!”

Moses stopped God’s speech and asked, “Who am *I* that *I* should go to Pharaoh and that *I* should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” ✓I tried forty years ago, but as a shepherd, speaking to no one but sheep all these years, I have changed my mind about rescuing God’s people.

Nevertheless, when God answered, it was as if He said, ✓“Don’t worry about it. Certainly I will be with you. In fact, here is a sign that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”

This was a marvelous prophecy, but Moses thought ✓he needed some reassurance now, not later. [Show the “Objections” and “Answers” charts found below.] He asked God, “When I go to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”

Ever-present God

God answered Moses, “I Am Who I Am.” What was the name God said He was? [I am Who I Am.] Some Bible translations show this sentence all in capital letters. Perhaps this is because it is so important: it declares what God is like. This description, “I Am Who I Am,” sounds strange to us, but its meaning is interesting. [Refer to the “I Am” chart below.] God is self-existent—He doesn’t depend on anyone or anything other than Himself to exist. He never had a beginning and will never have an end; He is now—eternal—“I Am” all of the time. He is immutable—unchangeable. He is faithful—He keeps His promises. It was as if God was saying, ✓“I am not only what I am at present, but I am what I have been, and I am what I shall be, and I shall be what I am” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/exodus-3-14.html>).

God said to Moses, “You shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” This is the name

Jehovah—God who keeps His promises.

“Now,” said God, “this is what I want you to tell the sons of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’” Notice, this is the second time God has identified Himself with the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Let’s see if He does it again.

God continued speaking to Moses: “This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.” What name is God talking about? [I Am; Jehovah.]

Exact instructions

Then God told Moses exactly what to do. He said, “Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. So I will bring you out of Egypt and take to you to a land flowing with milk and honey.’” There’s that “milk and honey” again. The new land must be wonderful! And did you hear? God mentioned the fathers again.

God continued, “The Israelites will pay attention to what you say. You will take elders of Israel to the king of Egypt, and you will say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, wants us to go a three-days’ journey into the wilderness. Please let us go sacrifice to the LORD our God.’”

Oh, that sounds easy enough, doesn’t it? Moses, all you have to do is just ask the pharaoh to leave Egypt.

Not so fast. God was not done with His speech. He said, “I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go. So I will strike Egypt with My miracles, and after that he will let you go. When you leave, you will not go empty-handed. They will give you silver and gold and clothing—so much that the Egyptians will be left with very little.

Three signs

Now, God had already stated that the Israelites would pay attention to Moses, but ✓maybe Moses had forgotten that fact, for he objected by asking, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’”

God answered by giving two signs to prove His Word was true. He asked, “What is that in your hand?”

Moses replied, “A staff.”

God said, “Throw it on the ground.”

When Moses obeyed and threw his staff on the ground, it became a snake. ✓“Get me out of here!” I would have shrieked. Moses did try to get away.

But the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand and grab it by its tail.”

[Teacher, reach with reluctance.] Moses reached out ✓hesitantly and caught the snake by the tail. Wonder of wonders, it became a staff in his hand again.

The LORD said to him, “This sign is so that the Israelites may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” (There is the fourth mention of the faithful fathers.)

“Here’s another sign, Moses,” said God. “Put your hand into your robe.”

So he put his hand into his robe. [Teacher, do so.] When he took it out, his hand was leprous like snow. [Teacher, look at your hand, alarmed.]

Then God said, “Put your hand into your robe again.”

Moses put his hand into his robe again [do so.], and when he took it out, it was restored like his good hand.

“Moses,” said God, “if they will not believe you with the first sign, they may believe after seeing the last

sign. But if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile River [locate on the map below] and pour it on the dry ground; the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.” That’s three miraculous signs! Surely, Moses would believe God would perform all He promised through him. Or would he?

*Moses’ father-in-law is given the name Jethro in Exodus 3:1; 4:18; 18:1–2, 5–6, 12. He is called Reuel as well in Exodus 2:18 and Numbers 10:29. “Jethro had seven different names which reflect his virtues. He was called Jether (Ex. 4:18) because he was responsible for the ‘addition’ of a passage to the Pentateuch; Jethro (Ex. 3:1), because he ‘overflowed’ with good deeds; Hobab (Num. 10:29), the ‘beloved’ son of God; Reuel (Ex. 2:18), the ‘friend of God’; Heber (Judg. 4:11), the ‘associate’ of God; Putiel (Ex. 6:25), because he had renounced idolatry . . . ; and Keni (Judg. 1:16) in that he was ‘zealous’ for God and ‘acquired’ the Torah (<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jethro-2>).

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

The “Angel of the LORD” in the Old Testament is Jesus. In Exodus 3 God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush as the “angel of the LORD.” Every other reference to this same Person in this passage (Exodus 3 and 4) refers to Him either as God or the LORD.

Jesus called Himself the “I Am” (John 8:48, 58), thus equating Himself with the “I Am” of Exodus 3 and 4.

- It is not for us to argue with God. We need to learn to trust His wisdom and the wisdom of those whom He has placed over us.
- We should be willing to serve God wherever He leads us.

Activities:

- Play dough: sandals; staff; bush; fire; snake
- Snack: Red, orange, and/or yellow sweet peppers cut in strips and placed in small containers around a broccoli floret, making them appear to be flames and a bush. Supply “buffalo” dip or another tangy dip. Also, provide hot Cheetos® since wholesome veggies are not always appreciated by students.
- Play act the scene at the burning bush. Say, “Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground.” Students will take off their shoes, fall to their knees, and bow.
- Sing “The Burning Bush” (tune: “Mulberry Bush”) (Source unknown)

Up on Mount Horeb Moses went, Moses went, Moses went.
Up on Mount Horeb Moses went to see a burning bush.

It burned and burned but didn’t burn up, didn’t burn up, didn’t burn up.
It burned and burned but didn’t burn up; It was so strange a sight.

God spoke to Moses from the bush, from the bush, from the bush.
God spoke to Moses from the bush and said, “My helper you’ll be.”

- Sing stanzas 1–3 of “Moses Gets out of Egypt,” found in Lesson 12.01b or on the Songs page at teachingthebibleto kids.org, where an audio and visuals are available.
- Review the name *I Am*, showing the spelling, *LORD*, and telling students that when they see this spelling with small capital letters in the Old Testament, it is the word for *I Am*, or *Jehovah*, the covenant-keeping God. Have a short sword drill with this word to include Exodus 6:2; Deuteronomy 1:11; Psalm 4:3.



- Have a sword drill to find some other names of God in the Bible:

John 6:35—the Bread of Life

Genesis 17:1—the Almighty God

Isaiah 9:6—Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God; the Prince of Peace

1 Timothy 6:15—the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings; the Lord of lords

Revelation 19:11—Faithful and True

- Review questions: (Game: Each student who answers a question correctly gets to take off a shoe. Obviously, no student may have more than two correct answers.)
 1. What did Moses do in Midian after he fled from Egypt? [Cared for his father-in-law’s flock.]
 2. Moses’ father-in-law had more than one name. Tell what one of his names was? [Reuel, Jethro, or Hobab.]
 3. In today’s story, at what mountain was Moses? [Mount Horeb, also known as the mountain of God or Sinai.]
 4. What incredible sight did Moses see? [A burning bush that did not burn up.]
 5. When Moses approached the burning bush, what did God say? [“Do not come near; remove your sandals, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”]
 6. Five times in today’s story God said He was the God of whom? [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.]
 7. What did God say Moses would do for God’s people? [Bring them out of Egypt.]
 8. To what kind of land would God lead His people? [A land flowing with milk and honey.]
 9. Moses argued with God. Describe one of his arguments and God’s answer. [“Who am I that I should lead out the people?”/ “I will be with you”; “What is the name of God that I shall tell the people?”/ “I Am That I Am” or “Jehovah”; “What if they don’t believe me?”/ “I will give signs.”]
 10. Describe one of the signs God said He would do. [Make Moses’ staff a snake; make Moses’ hand leprous; turn Nile River water into blood.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Exodus 2:24— God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Handwork:

- Make a 3-D “burning” bush. For each student cut out 2 bushes from green construction paper (see pattern below). Cut out pointed scraps of orange and/or red paper and glue to random parts of the bush. Fold the bushes in half vertically. Tape the two bushes together at their “mountain” folds. Open folds for a 3-D bush.



Reuel/Jethro/Hobab

Horeb

land flowing with milk and honey

Israelites

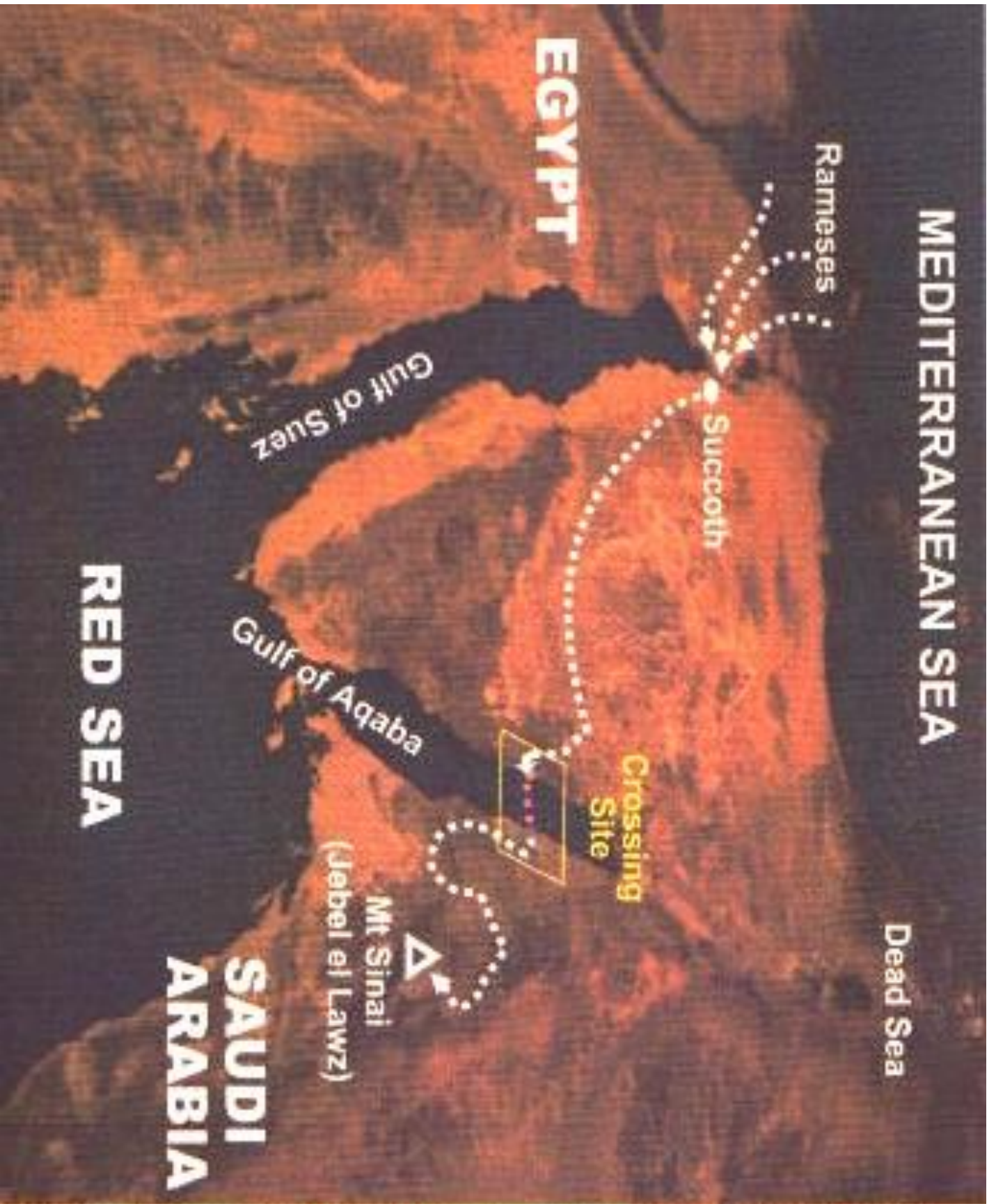
sons of Israel

children of Israel

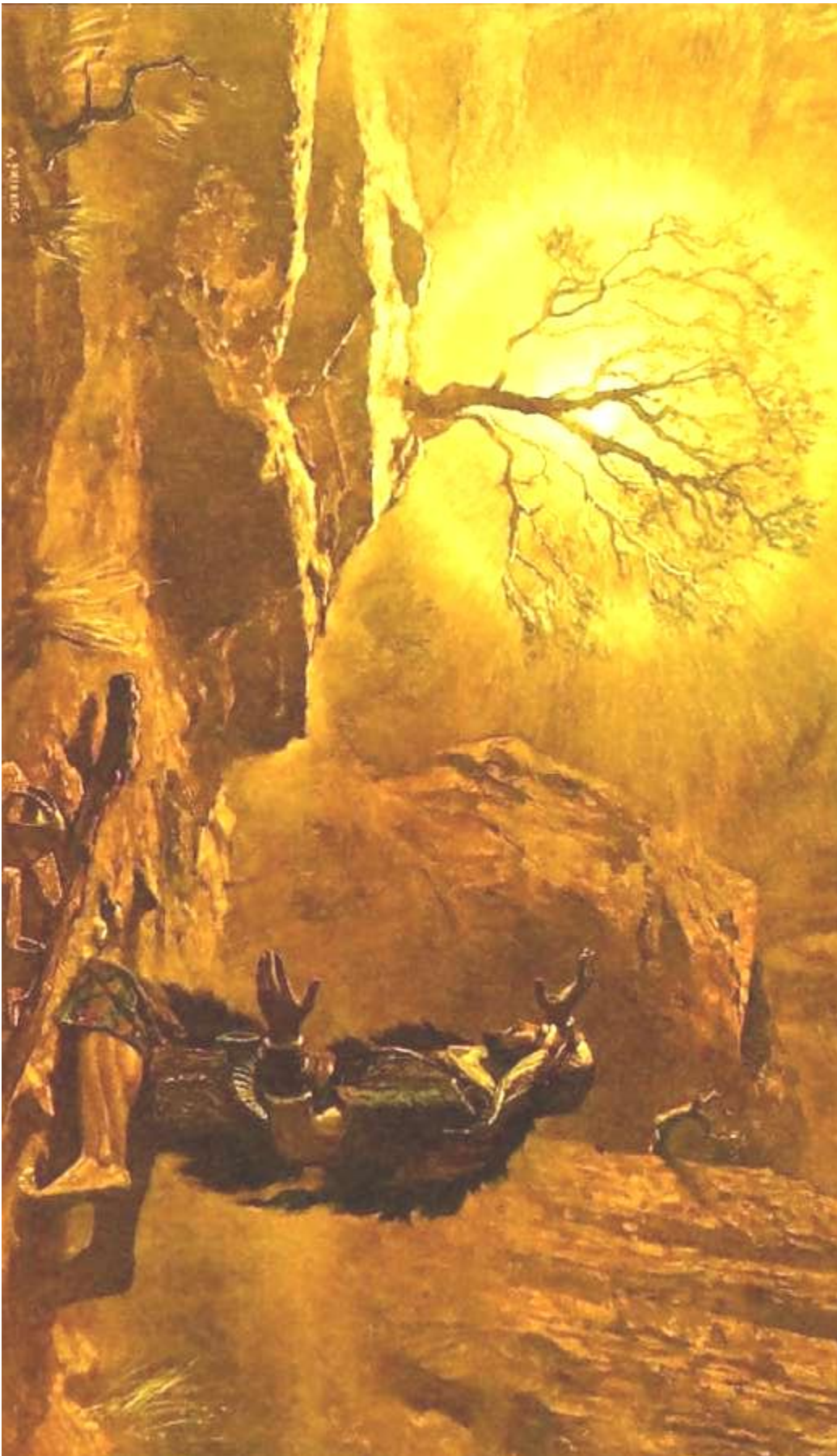
LORD

immutable

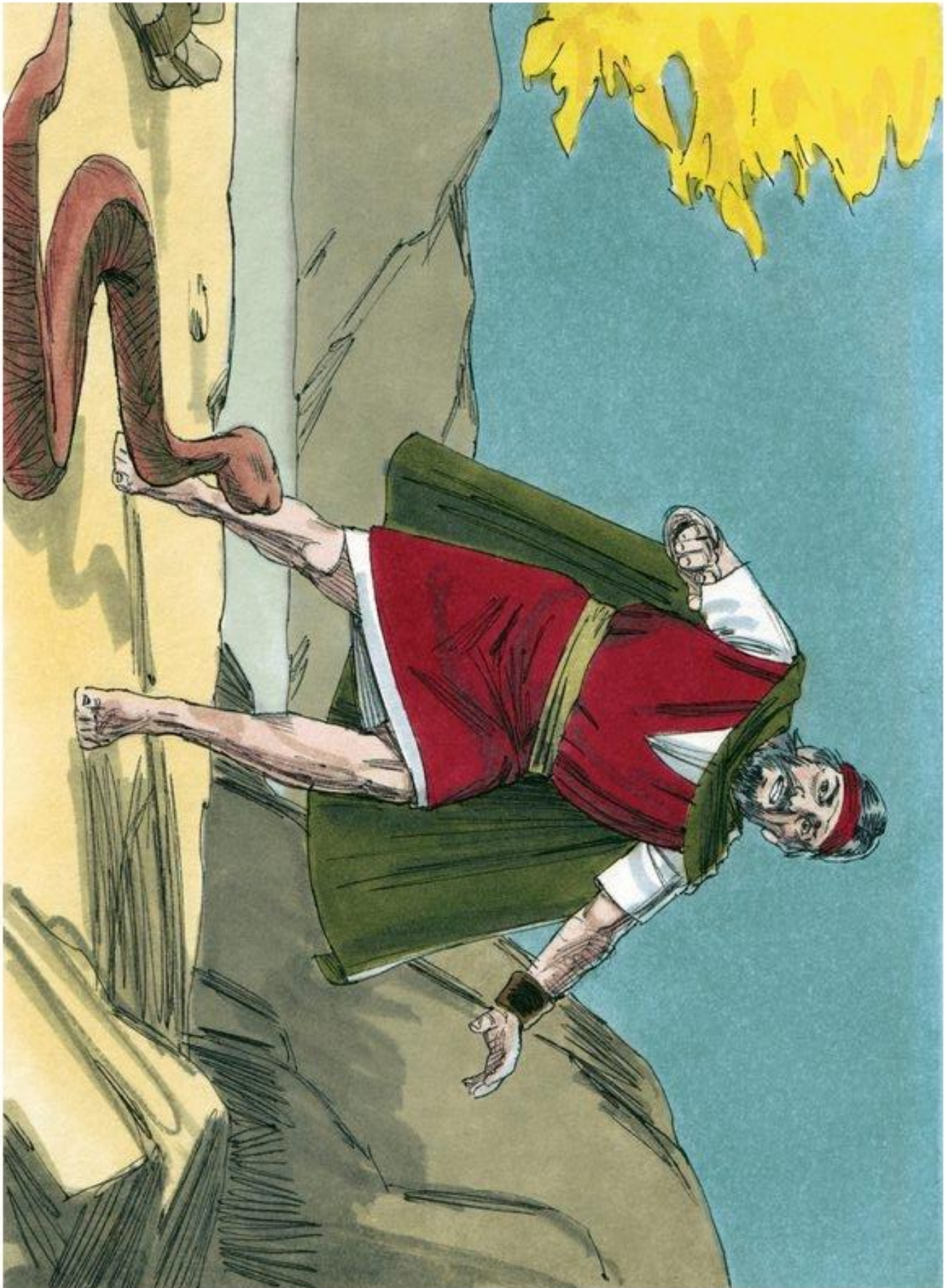
leprous



<https://sites.google.com/site/returnefrayim/the-chosen-seed/the-church-s-wrong-location-of-the-exodus-route/nasa-evidence-in-the-desert-sand>



<https://bibledevotiontranslations.wordpress.com/2016/02/09/ex-3-4-my-name/exodus-3-the-burning-bush/>





I AM WHO I AM
—JEHOVAH

Self-existent

Eternal

Immutable

Faithful

“Not only I am what I am at present,
but I am what I have been, and I am
what I shall be, and shall be what I
am.”

Moses' Objections

1. “Who am I that I should lead out the people?”
2. “What is the name of God that I shall tell the people?”
3. “What if they don't believe me?”

God's Answers

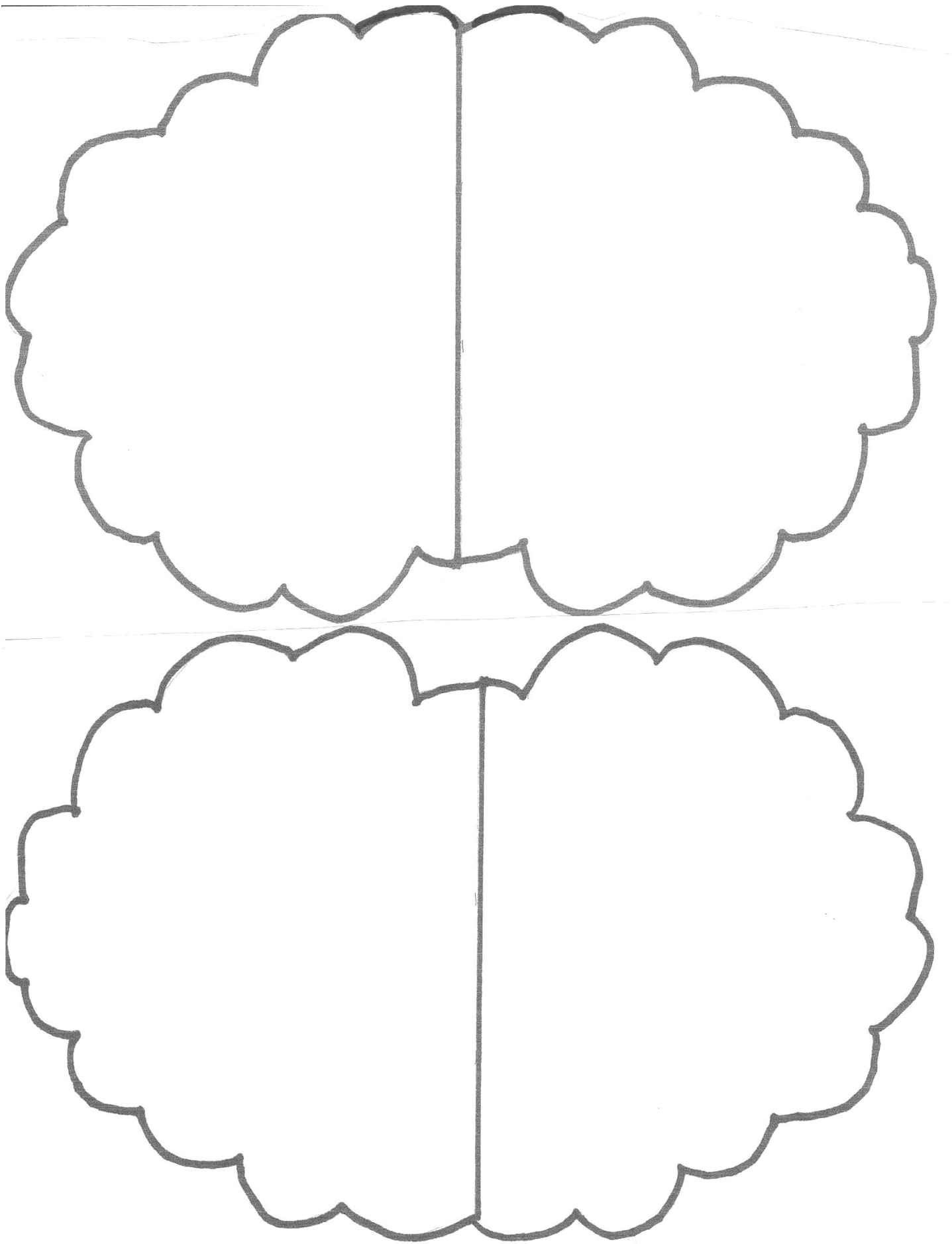
1. "I will be with you."
2. "I Am That I Am
(Jehovah) has sent
you."
3. "I will give signs."

I Am

LORD

Jehovah

Yaweh



(The bottom of each bush is the straight line. Two bushes should be separated at the straight line.)