

'I Have Come Down': How God Is Responding as You Cry Out

One line always gets me in God's conversation with Moses: "So, I have come down" (Ex. 3:8a, NIV). Here's Moses, freaking out at a bush that won't stop burning. Why shouldn't he be? He's hearing the voice of God Almighty, for goodness' sake!

The Hebrews are locked in slavery. Moses has blown it and spent about 40 frustrating years in the desert running after sheep. I know, because when we were hippies trying to live on the land in New Mexico, it was my "job" to herd the goats. They drove me crazy, running from bush to bush. The problem, I realized many years later, was that we weren't feeding the poor creatures enough. So, when they were let loose to "go for a walk with Eitan" they took off like racehorses. It was all I could do to keep up with them. The truth was, they were herding me.

When God says to Moses "So, I have come down," it's not a throwaway line. The dialogue that unfolds is a defining one (since God reveals his ineffable name "I am that I am—יְהוָה" and lets Moses know that he's to be the Lord's special envoy to Pharaoh), but their chat also contains some humor. When God informs Moses that He is sending the desert shepherd to the most powerful ruler in the world, demanding the freedom of his abundant, free Hebrew slave labor, Moses' reaction has multiple levels.

It's like he's 1) playing dumb, or 2) is truly blown away and hanging on every word, or 3) remembers his less-than-stellar attempt to set his enslaved relatives free, and doesn't really want any part of it or 4) has sincere questions and is trying to come to grips with this totally weird situation of a voice coming out of a burning bush. And we imagine the voice being deep and booming, scary and welcoming all at the same time.

Why 'Come Down'?

"Coming down" is, of course, part of God's repertoire. He pulls it first on Adam and Eve, that lovely but spaced-out couple at the beginning of the book. They heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden during the breezy part of the day (my translation of "וַיִּשְׁמַע אָדָם וְחַוְּוָה אֶת קוֹל ה' הֹלֵךְ בַּגִּיטָּה בְּרֵעֵי הַיּוֹם"). He was there, God, the Creator. And they HEARD Him. God's presence must have been something physical for them to hear. Conclusion: He had come down.

Then there are all the incidents that people (including my friend Asher) have written about. The Almighty appeared to Abraham, and to Gideon, Ezekiel and Samson's folks. But, this action verb description: "So I have come down," is a personally involved response to the cries of the Hebrew slaves. Why has He come down? To "rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8). Talk about an attractive deal!

It's the getting involved part that drew me in. Fast forward to John's Gospel. Yeshua says "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51a). God has again "come down," this time in the flesh. And, again, it is to set the captives free (Isa. 61:1 and Luke 4:18). It's looking like this "coming down" business is a major character trait of the eternal. This is what He does, and it challenges many religious traditions. In fact, being among us is His "thing" (See James 4:8, Ex. 25:8, 33:14; Matt. 28:20).

Come down to me!

I want to dwell with Him and for Him to dwell with me. His "coming down" shows me His personal concern, readiness to sacrifice, unflinching commitment to deal with my junk and His ability to alter my ego. It was inevitable that a real-life Messiah would show up. How else could God fulfill His plan of

saving mankind and saving me? He couldn't do it long distance, like a Skype call. The only way was to "come down" and take care of business.

Like the time back in Egypt when He heard our cries, He hears them right now. "I'm crying out to you, Lord. Hear my cry. Come down. You have come down, and shown me who You are. But I also need You every day. Help me hear You walking in the garden, breaking the bread. Help me sense your nearness when I'm feeling far from you. Come on down, Lord." {eoa}

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