Part 3
REVELATION AT THE THORNY BUSH

M. Basilea Schlink

Readings: Exodus 1-3; Luke 20:37; Acts 7:22, 30-35; Hebrews 11:23-27

Once again Moses is leading the herds to the spring at the foot of Mount Sinai. There before him he sees a thorn bush on fire, ablaze with the glory of God. At that moment God graciously chooses to reveal Himself to Moses. God is able to reveal Himself because Moses has become a humble and broken man.

For 40 years we may assume that God was silent towards Moses. But now the moment of grace, the moment of revelation, has come. God speaks personally to Moses. He calls Moses by his name. It is God's way of saying, *I know you. I know who you are. You are that Hebrew baby boy drawn out of the water and wonderfully saved from death. And why were you saved from death? Why were you raised in Pharaoh's court? Why were you disciplined 40 years in the desert?* God now reveals the plan behind Moses' tangled fate, which seemed so meaningless. God has a tremendous task for Moses. And why here at the foot of Mount Sinai? How often Moses would have camped here with his herds, conscious of his humiliation and depressed by the meaningless of it all and the absence of God. Mount Sinai epitomised humiliation for Moses. But now this place of greatest humiliation is transformed into the place of supreme grace and divine favour.

God calls it a holy place. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5 NIV) Moses obeys God's instruction. He shows that he can humble himself before the great and holy God. He removes his sandals as proof that he will face God, for without sandals it is impossible to run away on the stony ground ridden with thorns. At this place Moses hides his face. He's trembling in awe at the reality of God's presence. Moses makes a discovery. *God is real. God is here. God has seen me all this time.* God calls Moses by his name, announcing Himself as the God of his fathers. He acknowledges the outcast Moses as a member of His people Israel.

God picks up where He left off 40 years earlier. He refers to the people's fate, which had haunted Moses all those years. Their misery, their cry for relief from the slave-driver's whip. God calls the people Moses loves *My people.* What is dear to Moses is dear to God. Here at the burning thorn bush God reveals Himself as the all-knowing God, who has a loving fatherly heart.

For 40 years Moses is not permitted to help his people. It's his own fault. Moses will have buried all hope of ever being able to help them. Now Moses hears from God's lips a startling declaration. God has decided to save His people from slavery. What an amazing revelation at the burning bush at the foot of Mount Sinai!



Nor is that all. In His love God promises to bring His people into a spacious land where milk and honey flow and where the Canaanites and other peoples live. And Moses is to lead them. What? Moses? How can Moses save them? He's not in a position to. He can't go back to his people in Egypt, can he? Besides, didn't he ruin everything by his conduct in Egypt? And yet God designates Moses, calling him by his name. Moses is commissioned to save his people. He is sent to those who want nothing to do with him because of what he did.

What did the desert of Sinai see up till then? A broken man, a failure, powerless to help his people. Look again. Now what does the desert see? A man commissioned by God for an amazing task. Now what does the desert hear? Awesome words from the one true God, who declares, "I will..." The God who can do all things declares to a broken man trained by divine discipline, "I am sending you." He equips Moses with His strength, which enables even the helpless. Moses is no longer capable of doing anything in his own strength, but now he can do all things by faith in Him who guarantees to fulfil His promise.

Dethronement and meaninglessness culminate in a glorious revelation of the exalted God. God appoints Moses as His co-worker, granting a divine mandate and commissioning him as a deliverer for his people. Moses, aware of his inability, protests at first. But finally he gives God his Yes.

Those who humbly submit to God's hand of discipline will see the fulfilment of God's promise to make them His co-workers in His kingdom.

Translated from the original German, "Gottesoffenbarung am feurigen Busch",
Sinai Heute - by M.Basilea Schlink

God gave a command to Moses, a divine calling - a vocation. Despite Moses doubting himself, God's command stood. What Moses' journey tells us is that God gives His children purpose. That purpose may be something we feel unqualified to do, but God has a plan. God's plan for Moses was not unpremeditated . God gave him a task that He intended for him all along. Whatever Moses did not have, God would supply him. The same is true for us today. Sometimes we will be called to do things we do not feel excited about or capable of fulfilling. What we should do is humble ourselves before God, and ask Him how best to go about fulfilling our vocation.

Is God calling out to you by name to serve Him? Moses shows us that God can reach us wherever we are. He calls whoever He chooses. God can perform the simplistic and the extraordinary, on His own and through His people.

We should feel encouraged to know that God will support us in whatever He has called us to accomplish. Just as He calls us by name, He gives each of us a vocation. We simply have to respond by saying "Here I am, Lord."

The Evangelical Sisters of Mary

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