

FROM THE MIDST OF THE FIRE

God gives the Ten Commandments to Moses up on the mountain for the benefit of the entire world. But what was it like up there? How did Yahweh speak and present Himself? Under what conditions did the LORD speak to Moses? If we can understand those conditions, perhaps we can better recognize when the All Eternal One wants to speak to us. The answer is given in Deuteronomy chapter 5 right after the Ten Commandments.



"These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness..." -- Deuteronomy 5:22

Fire, a cloud, and thick darkness. This is hardly how we would expect the Creator to show up to speak to His people. Let's go back to Exodus to read the original account of what it looked like.

"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightning, and a thick cloud on the mountain. And the sound of the trumpet was very loud so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. ... Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly." -- Exodus 19:16, 18

So think about this for a minute. God actually came down in the form of a giant fireball as large as the entire mountain, and it caused everything to be burned up immediately. And because of the instant fireball, the entire mountain was one giant furnace, billowing smoke beyond imagination. The smoke was so thick you could hardly see. Picture this: The entire mountain starts to shake under your feet and you see lightning from inside the cloud in front of you. And as if that isn't enough to scare you to death, you hear a deep voice that sounds like thunder and a thousand waterfalls all rolled into one start speaking to you from what seems like everywhere around you. You drop to your knees, cover your ears, and begin to shake in fear. You said you wanted to "experience God" didn't you? Well, 3200 years ago, that's what it looked and felt like.

Yahweh starts to speak the words of the Covenant: one, two, three, never intending to stop. But the people couldn't take it anymore. They had had their fill of experiencing God. Take a look at what they said in verse 19, "[Moses,] You speak with us and we will hear. But let not God speak with us, lest we die." They went from doubting Moses even knew who God was when he first showed up to deliver them from Egypt to wanting to meet Him to never wanting to hear Him again because they feared He'd kill them.

It's easy to look back and say the Israelites were crazy for giving up such an amazing opportunity to hear the voice of God and to see a kind of theatrics that haven't been seen since. But we know the story! We know He wasn't going to kill them. He was just showing His great and mighty power, instilling a holy fear of His greatness in them! He was letting them know that He is a powerful God and those giants over across the river have nothing on Him! He wanted them to know who was really on their side! But the Israelites knew no such story. They WERE the story! They were convinced they were going to die any minute because of everything they were seeing with their natural eyes.

ARE WE SO DIFFERENT?

Are we not the same way? We say we want to hear God's voice, experience Him, learn His ways, and see His power. But the second He starts to answer our prayers, we beg for Him to stop and we run for the hills. He speaks the loudest when we are in the midst of the fire! It is only when we are in the fires of life that His voice is most clearly heard. It is in the darkness, the fire, and the billowing smoke of all your dreams being burned up that He is most near. It is during these times that He does not tell you to run from the mountain, but calls you to the TOP of the mountain! We all say that we would rather have those "mountain top" experiences with God rather than be in the valley. Are you kidding me? It's the mountain top that was on fire, billowing smoke like a furnace, and shooting lightning every which way while the valley was full of lush vegetation and had a smooth stream running through it.

In western Christianity, we equate mountain top experiences with joy, happiness, and excitement. But those feelings come from our desire to feel good. And while there's certainly nothing wrong with feeling good, from **YAHWEH's** perspective, a mountain top experience is often accompanied by fire. In the natural, fire destroys. But from God's perspective, it is much different.

QUESTION: Why is it different from His perspective? What does He see fire doing that is so different from the way we see it?

The Father uses both science and creation to teach us how the spiritual realm works. He uses physical principles to teach us spiritual ones.

QUESTION: Think about how a fire works when it's burning something. What's actually happening to the log?

It's being transformed and elevated at the same time! Only from man's perspective does a fire destroy. From God's viewpoint, a fire transforms an object from one state to another! Have you

ever noticed that there are sparks, ashes, and hot embers that float up out of a bonfire? Hot air rises and creates an "updraft," taking the burnt pieces into the heavens!

The spiritual principles that can be taken from this are quite spectacular. When we face trials, tribulations, and fires of many kinds, "consider it pure joy" because in the spiritual realm if you stay near to God in the fire, you will be automatically transformed and elevated to a higher place in Him. The fiery ordeal will create an updraft leading straight to the King of kings if we let Him have His way. This is why James tells us to consider it joy when we face trials because he understands the power of the transformation. He understands what the fiery trial does. It radically transforms. You simply cannot remain the same if you stay in it and cling to Him. The fire of the trial is sent on purpose to burn everything that is not of Him out of us! It is simply God's oven! What good is a cake if it isn't put into the oven to bake? What good is silver if it isn't refined by fire first? Yahweh is found in the fire. He dwells in it. He speaks from it. He IS the all-consuming fire. Let's look at some more scripture and further unpack this principle.

"And the Angel of YAHWEH appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed." -- Exodus 3:2

QUESTION: From Moses' perspective, the bush was burning. But was it actually burning? Did the bush get consumed like it should have? Why not? What is the Spirit trying to tell us about the fire of God?

Did Moses survive the fire of God? Yes. But he was never the same again. He was transformed. Notice that the first time he stood away from the fire as the Angel of Yahweh (pre-incarnate Yeshua) spoke from the fire. Next, he was invited **INTO** it. He was no longer an observer; he became part of the fire and part of the voice that was now all around him.

There is a powerful principle to be learned from this. But I don't think I could say it any better than how He said it through the prophet Isaiah:

"But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel. Fear not! For I have redeemed you! I have called you by your name. You are mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overthrow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall NOT be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you." -- Isaiah 43:1-2 (emphasis added)

When we truly understand the principle that there is no fiery ordeal that can ever come upon you that has the power to destroy you, you will be able to say as Job did, "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him" (Job 13:15). Why did Job trust Him? Because he understood the power of transformation and resurrection. He knows that the fire elevates the one that trusts in Him.

Think about the fire on the mountain and the fire of the burning bush. They weren't real! They **APPEARED** to be real but were, in fact, spiritual. They cannot touch you for you are not flesh and bone but are a spirit that has a soul. No matter how strong the fire, it simply cannot touch the spirit man. It can affect the mind, will, and emotions (your soul), but you CAN walk through the

fire and NOT be burned. He IS with you. Let's look at another scripture and add yet another principle.

THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego decided they were not going to bow down and worship the image created by king Nebuchadnezzar. They knew the consequences were death in the fire but they were confident and had FAITH that Yahweh would save them:

"Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind [the men] and...cast them into the...fiery furnace. ... Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men...fell bound into the burning...furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, 'Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?' They answered, 'True, O king.' He answered and said, 'But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.' Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!' Then [they] came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them." -- Daniel 3:19-27



QUESTION: Look past the story in the black text. What was His original intent here? What is he trying to tell us as it relates to the fires of our lives?

The first thing we learn is that in order to come out on the other side of the fire unsinged, it is critical to have faith that God is able to deliver you. Daniel's friends declared it with their mouths to others, killing the spirit of fear in their own hearts. They understood that even though the fire looked real with their fleshly eyes, their spiritual eyes saw the burning bush. They saw the top of Mt. Sinai. They saw God. By faith, they declared that which was not as if it already was. Instead of running away from the fiery furnace, trying to get out of the shackles that bound them to this earth, they embraced the trial and walked right into it. And what happened? They were transformed! Their shackles fell off and they were joined by the Son of the living God! Their fiery furnace in the natural was transformed into the Mountain of God! When we let this concept sink in, we will truly see every fire, every furnace, every trial, every false accusation, and every prison experience as nothing other than the fire of God, that mountain top experience that carries our promotion. It is in these experiences that we truly experience the power and love of the living Elohim (Judge).

QUESTION: What else can we pull from this story? What happened to the men that bound Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and tried to throw them into the fire? What principle is He trying to teach us? Again, look past the story to WHY He included those details. The answer is part of the Torah for today!

When there is an unjust circumstance in which a believer faces a trial or a tribulation unjustly, is treated unfairly, or is falsely accused, there is always full justice served. Those that inflict the pain WILL feel the fire of their own making, while the accused is transformed and lifted higher.

"Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon." -- Daniel 3:30

When we take the heat and see the fire for what it is (the interview before our promotion), we will, no doubt, begin to consider it pure joy to face any trial of any kind. For if you just change the letters around, the word "trial" becomes a "trail" that leads up to the fiery mountain of God!

Let's take a look at a few more scriptures and dial this thing in.

JUDGMENT

"A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about." -- Psalm 97:3

Although the flames of Yahweh can't hurt the believer who puts his trust in Him, the same flames that bring transformation and promotion also bring judgment to His enemies.

Speaking of judgment, let's talk about that for a minute. What happens if the fiery trial that surrounds a person is because of their own sin? What if you're not sure whether the person brought it upon themselves or whether it was sent by God? This is a great question, but also a dangerous one. Someone else's trial can be a major trap as we just saw in the story of Daniel's three friends. It was their trial, but the ones who judged and bound them were actually the ones who were judged.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye', and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First, remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." -- Mathew 7:1-5

We have all heard this set of scriptures. Most have interpreted it as we are not supposed to judge at all. But that's not what it says. It just says that the principles of judging must be understood first:

1. We should only judge with the measure that we would want to be used on us. After all, if we are wrong in our judgment, that's what's going to happen.
2. We are to make sure that we are not being hypocritical in our judgment by trying to remove the speck out of our neighbor's eye while there is a log in our own. For instance, if a preacher preaches a sermon on brotherly love but uses an example of a friend of his that he believes is mean, the very second he uses that example, he is not showing brotherly love and so becomes the very person that Mathew warns us against!
3. We must be in a position to judge, meaning we must know all the facts, must hear both sides, and must have been given the authority to do something with the judgment. A judgment rendered by a person not in authority is a foolish one because the one judging takes the risk of being judged by the Lord in the exact same way but carries no reward whatsoever. Who would do that? Only a fool. Now let's see how this fits back into the fiery trials and we will discover what the wise man does when faced with watching someone go through the fire.

QUESTION: Before we actually plug Mathew back into our main topic, how do you see it fitting? How is this passage on judging so relevant to watching someone going through the fire? If you are in a group, take a minute to really think about and discuss this. (HINT: Think about the two possible outcomes for the person going through the trial and how it relates to Mathew 7.)

The truth is that it does not matter whether someone is going through a fire they started from unintentional or intentional sin or whether it is a fire started by the Father for their greater good. The results are the same in both examples. Either they are going to be destroyed in the fire, or they will be transformed, elevated, and promoted through it. The person that has sinned has just as powerful an opportunity to be promoted as the one who did not.

In Romans, the bible says that we have "all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Each one of us has blown it in our lives, and blown it bad. If everyone knew all of our sins, we would all be shaking in our boots, never picking up a single rock against our brother. It's only a matter of time before we see one another go through a fiery trial (trail). Because we are not God and don't have all the facts about why a person might go through said fire, we are simply not allowed to judge. And that means that we are not allowed to judge ourselves, either. How many of us beat ourselves up over something we're going through, blaming ourselves, hating ourselves even, and

swallowing the pill of guilt, shame, and depression? We are not allowed to judge even ourselves from this perspective!

There are only three positions in the fiery furnace story. There are Daniel's three friends, the three guards, and "Yeshua" in the fire. The fourth position is king Nebuchadnezzar and that one is reserved for Satan, the accuser. So if you judge someone going through a trial, you become the three judges that are actually carrying out the orders of Satan himself, who loves to accuse the brethren and steal, kill, and destroy. Or you are actually the one going through the fiery trial. In this case, it is your opportunity for promotion, depending on your faith and how well you handle the situation. Finally, if you are on the outside looking in and you see a brother or sister that is going through the fiery furnace, you can play the role of Yeshua and decide to love them enough to get in the fire with them to make sure that they make it through without being singed. Real brotherly love is to help them and pray with them to pass the test!

In finishing this thought on how Mathew fits into our fiery topic, we can see that there is no reward for judging someone in a trial. But the risk is downright painful if we're wrong. Remember Job? He did nothing to receive the furnace he went through. But his friends took the side that there was no way he could go through a fire unless he was in sin. They accused him of this, that, and the other. They pointed to this "fact" and that one. In the end, the Father did have to deal with a bit of his pride, but he arose a transformed man that was elevated and promoted.

Take a look at Joseph's situation. Was he innocent when his brothers threw him into the well? No way! He was prideful and the Father saw it! He touted his coat of many colors and bragged about his dreams of his family bowing down to him one too many times. The Father had a great plan for him, but He would first have to get rid of that pride. If Joseph handled his "mountain top" experience from the bottom of the well and the darkness of prison with faith and humility, he would be transformed, elevated, and promoted. And praise **YAHWEH** that he did just that, giving us a great example of how to survive the Mountain of God.

It was easy for Joseph's brothers to judge him for his shortcomings, and there is no doubt that God used them to actually judge him. But if they would have known that they were actually judging the next would-be Pharaoh, they might have reserved their judgment. It's always better to stand with someone in the trial, praying for them to pass the test so that they can learn whatever lesson they are to learn and be promoted in the Kingdom.

Psalms 104:4 says *His ministers are a flame of fire*. Those that come out of the fire, refined like silver and purified like gold, are worthy to be called ministers. They carry the mountain top experience with them everywhere they go. The fire of God burns deep within them and is able to light every dark candle in their path. The fire of God is contagious, lighting hearts on fire everywhere.

Revelation 1:14 says that the *Messiah has eyes like a flame of fire*. All He sees is the presence of His Father. He sees everything through the eyes of the mountain top experience. He has been through the fire of the cross and was promoted to the right hand of the Father. All those that look into His eyes will either be refined or judged.

Matthew 3:11 says that Yeshua is going to *baptize us with the Spirit and with fire*. It is through the fire of adversity that the child of the King truly becomes anew. When the flesh is all consumed, we become elevated to our new priestly position.

Acts 2 says that the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaChodesh) came down over the top of the heads of those in the upper room like *tongues of fire*. In fact, the tongues were like little pillars of fire, hovering over the declared new temple of the Most High God. It was as if the Father was saying, "Judgment starts with the household of God. This is My fire. The trial starts here. The mountain top experience that happened once with Moses can happen with you every day. Don't worry. With every trial, My power and mighty right hand is here to deliver you if you will continue to look into My eyes and trust Me with all your heart."

Finally, in Hebrew, the word "**fire**" is spelled aleph, shin. If you take that back to its original pictograph hieroglyphic, Aleph represented "the strength of the leader" and Shin represented "the all-consuming fire or to consume." When you put it together, the word "fire" actually means, "The strength of the leader is in the all-consuming fire!"

So the next time you face a trial or know someone that is meeting face-to-face with the Almighty, get in the fire with them and encourage them that THIS IS WHERE THEIR STRENGTH BEGINS! This is where their **PROMOTION** lies! This is the moment masked in a circumstance where they can be transformed, elevated, and promoted to new heights!

Lastly, if you are going through a difficult trial right now, understand that the situation you're going through is only a test of your emergency faith system. Keep your eyes looking deeply into His and remember that the same One that allowed you to come into the fire is the same One that will call you out.

Shalom,
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