

B. C. 1491.

LESSON III.—THE CALL OF MOSES; or, The Lord's Presence.

July 17.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

Every element of the providential plan for the deliverance of Israel is now complete, and the day for decisive action has at last arrived. Forty years of still deeper oppression have followed the first vain attempt of Moses to arouse his countrymen to resistance; but now their sufferings have thoroughly alienated them from Egypt, made them willing to forsake the land of bondage, and disciplined them into strength for the possession of their inheritance. Afar in the Promised Land the iniquity of the Canaanites, too, has been mounting higher with the passing centuries, and now the cup of wrath is almost full, and the sword of a just judgment is being unsheathed. For forty years Moses has been leading the quiet life of a shepherd in Midian, until his impetuous spirit has been chastened into humility and dependence upon the Almighty. Pasturing his flock in the vales of the wilderness he has gained a knowledge of the region, destined to be of inestimable service during the years of wandering. The hour has come, and the man is ready. As Moses leads his flock by the mountain, destined soon to quake and to smoke with the sound of the law, he beholds a strange sight, a bush burning, yet unconsumed. He draws near, and hears a voice from the flame, proclaiming the divine presence, and summoning him to the work of liberating his people from Egyptian bondage and leading them into their promised inheritance. The experience of forty years has so transformed him who once was ready to smite down the oppressor, that he hesitates, not from fear of man, but from a shrinking timidity and distrust of his own ability for so great a task. He is reassured by the revelation of the divine Name and character, and once more commanded to go back to the land of bondage, and, single-handed, undertake the deliverance of Israel.

Exod. 3. 1-14.

[Memory Verses, 10-12.]

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

2 And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

Acts 7. 30: And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. Jas. 10. 17: And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame.

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.

Psa. 111. 2: The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Jas. 4. 8: Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

4 And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

Explanatory and Practical.

Verse 1. Now. The date of this lesson is forty years after the close of the last. Moses is now eighty years old. **Moses kept the flock.** Though of high rank, yet he was not ashamed of a lowly employment. 1. Honest work is always noble. "Moses saw more of God while he was tending sheep in the desert, than ever he had seen in Pharaoh's palace." **Jethro.** Some have supposed this to be the same person as Reuel, in the previous chapter, (2. 18,) but the latest authorities incline to regard him as Reuel's son, who had succeeded to the rule and priesthood on the death of his father, and was therefore Moses' brother-in-law. **Father-in-law.** The original word is indefinite, meaning simply "a relation by marriage," and may be translated "brother-in-law." **Priest of Midian.** See note on ver. 15, last lesson. The priestly and princely offices were united in one person among many of the ancient races. **Back side.** The Hebrews were accustomed to regard the east or place of sunrise as "front," and the west as "behind," so that this would mean "on the western side of the wilderness," as **desert** is a name applied to any uncultivated, unsettled region, such as that around Mount Sinai. **The mountain of God.** The mountain around which, a few months after this event, the camp of Israel was pitched, and on whose summit the glory of the Lord was revealed in the proclamation of the law. **Horeb.** The name of the mountain district in the southern part of the peninsula of which Sinai was a single peak. 2. Once God revealed himself in special places, but all the earth now is holy ground since the Son of Man has sanctified it.

2, 3. **The angel of the Lord.** "A manifestation of God by the agency of a created being."—*Speaker's Com.* Moses saw the flame, but heard from it the voice of the invisible God. **A bush.** The *senecio*, or "thorn-bush," a kind of acacia, common in the Sinaitic peninsula, growing in thickets, and armed with stout, sharp thorns. **Burned . . . not consumed.** The lowly bumble was a type of Israel, in the fiery trials of Egypt, yet unconsumed, because God was in the midst of her. 3. God's Church is ever passing through the fire, yet never destroyed. When God is with his people, fires of affliction can only scale off their earthly dross and make them all the purer. **I will now turn aside.** The curiosity of Moses to see the great sight was made the means of his call to his great mission. 4. So God uses the common desires of men to open their hearts for the highest spiritual privileges. Many a man who has gone to church from curiosity has there found God.

4, 5. **The Lord saw.** The same appearance called "angel,"