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## PODCAST START:

[intro music]

Fr. Shay: Welcome to the Reading Queerly queer theology podcast, where each week, your hosts Brian Murphy and Shay Kearns will offer a reflection on the week's lectionary readings. This week we're taking a look at the lectionary text for February 28<sup>th</sup>. We're going to look at Exodus 3:1-8. It's fairly short, so I'll go ahead and read it. This is from the Common English Bible.

Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian's priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God's mountain called Horeb. The Lord's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn't burn up. Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up.

When the Lord saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses said, "I'm here."

Then the Lord said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." He continued, "I am the God of your father, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live." [CEB]

Alright, so what do we do with this one?

February 28, 2016

What's your burning bush?

Exodus 3:1-8

2/4

Brian: [laughs] I – hm. I don't know, I like it. So, a few weeks ago we talked about Isaiah and prophetic stories in that, and I think you said something to the effect of, "Oh, I'm a little bit jealous because wouldn't it be nice to have such a clear calling?" [Shay laughs] "Even if the work is hard, at least I know that I'm doing the right thing." And I think this is another one of those moments in scripture where God is like, okay, here's the deal! There's a burning bush and God talking and telling Moses exactly what to do. And that, to me, when I was earlier on in my journey as a Christian, I felt like – these people in the Bible were so *lucky*. God *talked* to them. God walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden and God talked to Moses. I even was sort of told that the Christian Bible authors were divinely inspired, and God told them quote-unquote what to write. I was like, man, wouldn't it be so much easier if God would talk to *me*? I think, when I read these stories, it's important to remember that in all likelihood there was not actually a burning bush. God did not, in a booming voice, tell Moses what to do. I mean, who knows, I guess you believe whatever you want to believe [laughs] but my take on this is that probably didn't happen. Unless Moses was hearing voices – lots of people hear voices; that's entirely possible. But so what happened in Moses's life that caused him to know so deeply that – that he would have God say, "I clearly see my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave-masters. I know about their pain." What happened in Moses's life that made him know that this is the heart of God? And then inspired him to lead up against Pharaoh. Or, to go another step further, whether or not this actually happened ever, what was happening to the people who developed these stories about Moses and about God and about Egypt? What were their lived experiences? How were they moved to trust in this higher power? How might I come to trust in a higher power and collaborate with other people to find my own freedom? My good friend Matt Beams talks about – he was at a Passover dinner and this Rabbi was saying, "With an outstretched arm and a mighty fist, God will schlep you out of your own personal Egypt." So like, what are the ways in which I might come to know this about myself, about God, about the universe? And then how might I translate that into a powerful and compelling story that invites other people into this mystery with me? I think that's sort of where I'm living these days. There being a burning bush that talked to Moses feels like it lets me off the hook too easy. I want to be challenged to write my own Exodus story. What about you, Shay?

FS: Something that kind of jumped out at me when I was reading this is the beginning. That Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law, Midian's priest. I think that it's really important to note that this story happens after – I'm pretty sure that Moses killed a guy, right? [Brian laughs] And then was on the

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3/4

run. And then marries a woman who was not part of his community. He basically has been hiding out for a bunch of years, and has had it pretty good, right? He got out of slavery and was like, hanging out in the desert and tending a flock. So I think it's interesting that Moses needed this kind of radical burning bush sign to be like, "Uh, hey dude, the mission isn't over. Get back in there and get your people out. That's awesome that you got out and are happy and safe but like what about the rest of your community?" I wonder, too—

B: Ooh! Ooh Shay, I see where this is going!

FS: Yeah! I mean, if part of this is Moses having a realization of, "Oh, I abandoned my people!", sometimes we need that kind of giant neon sign that says, "I'm glad that you got liberation, but what about everyone else?" I think both you and I have had the experience – we've spent a lot of years doing activism work and kind of reclaiming faith from our evangelical upbringing. I think we've also done a lot of work helping other people do that same kind of work. But it's exhausting sometimes, and it can be like, alright, can I just be happy now? [Brian laughs] This is kind of a reminder to me to be like, yeah, alright, now you've got to help other people get free. That resonated with me this time.

B: I talked a little bit about being inspired by this to sort of figure out how I would write my own Exodus story that invites other people into the mystery, and I heard you drawing parallels between this passage and sort of modern-day movement work. That is all stuff that we cover in Reading Queerly. If this sort of, taking scripture and making it your own and finding connections to your life and finding ways to write yourself back into scripture is something that sounds exciting to you, we would love to go through that process with you. Reading Queerly comes as a part of Sanctuary Collective. It's only \$9 a month; it's super simple and easy to sign up for, and there's an amazing community of folks in a Slack community to love on you and support you and encourage you and be with you. It also comes with Spit & Spirit and our book club and tons of other stuff, in addition to just Reading Queerly. And we would love to have you there! You can check that out at [QueerTheology.com/sanctuarycollective](http://QueerTheology.com/sanctuarycollective), and we will see you next week!

[outro music]

B: This has been Reading Queerly, the queer lectionary podcast. I'm Brian.

FS: And I'm Shay. And you can find out more at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com).

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B: If you'd like to connect with us, send us an email at [connect@queertheology.com](mailto:connect@queertheology.com).

Fs: Thanks for listening.

**PODCAST END**

Transcript by Taylor Walker