

“Take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.” I was an Egyptian. My family was Egyptian. We had been in Egypt for 400 years. Egypt was all we knew at this point. We **thought** like Egyptians. We **talked** like Egyptians. We **lived** like Egyptians. I had been personally raised within the very house of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. His daughter had taken me in after I had been put out into the Nile River to die. Pharaoh had recently become jealous of how large our family had become and he feared we might turn on him—even though we had been his good slaves for 400 years. So he ordered our midwives to kill any baby boys the moment they were born. But the midwives disobeyed. So Pharaoh gave a command to all Egypt that anytime they saw a baby boy from our family they were to rip the child out of our hands and throw him into the Nile River to drown.

It was sad and tragic how this had all turned out. When our family moved to Egypt we thought we would live like **kings**. Our relative Joseph was the right hand man of Pharaoh and the most powerful man in the land. But during the great famine that brought us to Egypt we had given all our **money**, all our **animals**, all our **land**, and all our **bodies** to Pharaoh. **Joseph** had demanded that—he had devised the very system that oppressed us. Our own forefather had helped enslave us. And we also had chosen it **willingly**. We thought it was the only way to live through and survive the famine. So for 400 years we had been beholden and enslaved to Pharaoh—working the **land** for him, raising **animals** for him, and working on **building** projects for him. But things had recently gotten way worse as Pharaoh was now attempting genocide, wanting to wipe our family off the face of the earth, once and for all.

Being raised in Pharaoh's house, I had seen the mistreatment of our family from the very beginning—and I **hated** it. Once I saw a slave-master beating one of our people and I couldn't take it anymore. I intervened and killed the slave-master and buried his body. I thought I could **help** our family. So I returned the next day and tried to get those in our family to work together and stop fighting with each other. But they wouldn't listen to me and said, **“What are you going to do? Kill us like you did that slave-master?!”** Then I realized I had not successfully covered up my killing. Shortly after that, my grandfather Pharaoh found out and he wanted me dead. So I fled from Egypt at the age of 40 and ran away into the land of Midian. There in Midian I found a wife and became a shepherd. And the decades passed.

But when I was 80 years old and tending my sheep out in the wilderness, I saw something crazy. On a mountain, I saw a bush on fire—but the fire wasn't destroying the bush. So I went up the mountain to investigate this strange mystery. And then it happened. A voice from the bush spoke to me, **“Moses, Moses!”** I was in shock. The voice said, **“Take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.”** The voice said to me, **“I am the Creator, the God of your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have come to rescue them from Egypt and bring them into a new land.”** I was terrified. And what he said next was the most terrifying of all, **“I am sending you to Pharaoh so you can bring my people out of Egypt.”**

My whole world was turned upside down. I was finally feeling **settled** in life. I had a wife and children, a job I loved, and I was ready to go into the sunset with a nice, easy, and **comfortable** life. But this, **now?! I was 80 years old!** Leave everything behind and upend my whole world to go and try to do the impossible?! Pharaoh would **never** let the people go. He was too strong, too powerful. I had tried to help the people 40 years earlier, when I was young and strong, and it had been pointless. So I **fought** this calling from the Creator, I resisted it. I didn't want this. Not here. Not now. **Maybe** when I was younger, but this ship had already sailed. I told the Creator that there had to be a **better person** for the job. He wasn't happy. He reluctantly sent my brother Aaron with me. But the Creator told me I needed to **trust** him, for he is the one who gives all men their mouths and abilities.

The Creator told me that he was going to bring the people of Israel **back** to himself, for they were his firstborn **son**. And in the process he was going to **kill** the firstborn son of Egypt. Then while I was journeying back to Egypt, the angel of the Lord began seeking to kill **me**. Thankfully, my wife quickly circumcised our sons, which was the mark of being a child of Israel since the time of our forefather Abraham. The bloody foreskin was thrown at my feet and the angel of death turned away from me. I realized what was happening. I was a member of Israel, called to be the Creator's child, but I had become **Egyptian**. I had been raised as an Egyptian—I was a son of Egypt, a son of Pharaoh's. The son of Pharaoh **within me** needed to **die**. The Creator was going to strike down the son of Egypt within me, so that I could be reborn as **his son**. And what he was doing to me, he was going to do for **all the people**. The whole people of Israel needed to **die** as sons of Egypt, children of Pharaoh and become children of the Creator, children of Israel once again.

“Take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.” I had been clothed in the ways of Egypt. The Creator had made me to be his child, but that was obscured and hidden behind the foreskin and shoes of Egypt. The foreskin of Egypt needed to be cut away. The shoes of Egypt needed to be taken off and thrown away. I needed to die and be reborn. That is what circumcision had signified for Abraham. The whole people of Israel needed the same. We had lost our way as the Creator's children. We had been clothed in Egypt. We needed to die and be reborn.

“Take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.” Each one of us has been made by the Creator's loving hands, knit together by him in our mother's womb. He has made us to be his **children**. But born into Civilization we have been clothed in the **filth** of other identities. Throughout our lives, in arrogance and fear, we have willingly given ourselves over to the enslaving identities of Civilization. We have put on spiritual shoes, thinking they will protect us, but all they have done is cover over the truth of what the Creator has made us to be. These identities and spiritual shoes may feel **comfortable** to you and may make you feel **safe**, but they are only enslaving you, pulling you away from your Creator and his love for you. And so the Creator comes to you in Jesus and says, **“Take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.”**

You need to take off the spiritual shoes you have been given by others and the ones you have chosen for yourself. You need to take off the shoes of being American, the shoes of being a Democrat, the shoes of being a Republican, the shoes of being conservative, the shoes of being liberal. **“You are standing on holy ground”** and you defile it when you put on the filthy shoes, clothing, and coverings of worldly kingdoms and politics. You need to **die** and be **reborn** in Christ Jesus, **today** and **everyday**. The American within you needs to be hunted down and killed, so you might live in the **Kingdom of Heaven**. The Democrat or Republican within you needs to be hunted down and killed, so you might **follow Jesus** alone as Lord. The conservative or liberal within you needs to be hunted down and killed, so you might **be holy** as the Lord is holy. Be clothed in the Creator and the identity **he** has given you. You are the Creator's beloved child. You have been saved in Christ Jesus. You are a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. The world desperately needs your witness. **“So take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground.” Amen.**