

The moment when Moses encounters the God of Abraham is a vital one in the story of Israel. Abraham is a figure of legend, a mighty figure from the past - a bit like King Arthur. He has enormous meaning, and parts of his tradition are foundation-stones of the Jewish faith. Moses is different again. He is an individual, clearly described in Exodus, with the sort of minutely-described life that is only partly legendary. We are not speaking of a prehistoric person; we are in the fourteenth century BC, and the Egyptians are recording their great history at this time.

When we look at the story of the burning bush, we find the first powerful encounter of Moses with the faith of the Fathers. He makes himself known to Moses as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob”. This triple use of the word *God* is significant; he is, as Jesus later says, the one *to whom all three of them are alive* - the God who is, therefore, outside the limitations of time (*the bush was not being burnt up*).

He announces himself as the lover of the people Israel, and the one who will judge their oppressors, the Egyptians: the redeemer, therefore. Note that there is here no mention of Creation, or of Adam and Eve, or of Noah; it is as if the story of God and Man begins with Abraham, whom he saved. God is first and foremost known not as the Creator, but as the Saviour.

This experience of being saved is the prime mode of our knowing God. For the Son of God it is different; Jesus knows God in a way that transcends our power to know, because he shares the divine life in its fulness. We are to discover the nature of God because of his deeds of salvation. That is why the dark places and dangerous passes of our lives are the most sacred: they are the places where our own being is challenged, and God shows that his faithfulness is the one great stability on which we can rest, as a child learns to trust the world and his own life by learning to trust his father and mother.

Lord, teach us your eternal loving-kindness, in which we can become what you call us to be.