

Praying in Colour: July 2010
Week One: Many Names of God

Checking out Scripture

The famous “burning bush” story of Moses’ first experience with God has an interesting ending. God asks Moses to free the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Just a little dubious, Moses asks a legitimate question, “Suppose I go to the People of Israel and I tell them, ‘The God of your fathers sent me to you’; and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What do I tell them?” God offers a response that is veiled in mystery. Read on . . .

Exodus 3:1-15 (The Message)

Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the west end of the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, Horeb. The angel of GOD appeared to him in flames of fire blazing out of the middle of a bush. He looked. The bush was blazing away but it didn’t burn up. Moses said, “What’s going on here? I can’t believe this! Amazing! Why doesn’t the bush burn up?” GOD saw that he had stopped to look. God called to him from out of the bush, “Moses! Moses!” He said, “Yes? I’m right here!” God said, “Don’t come any closer. Remove your sandals from your feet. You’re standing on holy ground.” Then he said, “I am the God of your father: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God. GOD said, “I’ve taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I’ve heard their cries for deliverance

from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

“The Israelite cry for help has come to me, and I’ve seen for myself how cruelly they’re being treated by the Egyptians. It’s time for you to go back: I’m sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the People of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Moses answered God, “But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

“I’ll be with you,” God said. “And this will be the proof that I am the one who sent you: When you have brought my people out of Egypt, you will worship God right here at this very mountain.”

Then Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the People of Israel and I tell them, ‘The God of your fathers sent me to you’; and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What do I tell them?”

God said to Moses, “I-AM-WHO-I-AM. Tell the People of Israel, ‘I-AM sent me to you.’”

God continued with Moses: “This is what you’re to say to the Israelites: ‘GOD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob sent me to you.’ This has always been my name, and this is how I always will be known.

Reflecting Further

Intrigued? If you'd like to read other translations, check out: <http://www.biblegateway.com/>

What names do you call God?
Father or Mother?
Creator?
Spirit of Life? Other names?

In Islam, there are 99 holy names for God. How many names or images of God can you come up with?

Praying in Colour

Prayer is a way of spending time with God. Prayer can be a conversation, both speaking and listening. Often we think of prayer as words, spoken or written. But just as we learn in different ways, we can pray in different ways.

One way to pray is through images. Sybil Macbeth has come up with a prayer process called *Praying in Color* as a way to pray with fewer words. She suggests getting paper and coloured pens and doodling prayer images. "Doodling is playful, aimless drawing. When the famous artist Paul Klee painted and drew, he said he was "taking a line for a walk." Doodling is like that. Except in doodling, the "line takes us for a walk," kind of like a puppy on a leash."

Try doodling various names of God and see where the lines and images take you. Relax, be imaginative, have fun. Add names of people who want to thank for or people you are concerned about.



Celebrate where your lines take you and what emerges unexpectedly.

Shalom,
Abigail

Macbeth, Sybil, *Praying in Color: A New Path to God*. Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2007.

Macbeth, Sybil, *Praying in Color: Kid's Edition*. Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2009.

<http://www.prayingincolor.com/praying.html>