

“What’s Your First Question?”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

What would be your first question of God? Of all the mysteries that the Creator of the universe could unfold, which would enable you best to live?

When God comes to Moses at the burning bush, Moses’ first question of God is, “Who am I to go to Pharaoh?” Moses asks not about the secrets of the world, but the structure of the self. Who is he?

God’s response is not to explain Moses’ heritage or his personality. God answers, “I will be with You.” This may be seen as a simple assurance — you can go to Pharaoh because you do not go alone. But there is a deeper message. *Who are you? You are someone who can walk with God, who need never be alone.* God’s first question is to Adam: “Where are you?” Now Moses asks of God: “Who am I?”

Each of these questions is about the purpose and trajectory of life. God wishes to ensure that Moses understands the majesty of being human. To be human is to be called. The only way to be yourself is to serve something greater than yourself. Moses grew up in Pharaoh’s palace. He may be forgiven some confusion about his identity. Now he asks, and understands. He is a Jew. He is a human being in God’s image. He is summoned to a sacred task. The work of redemption has begun.