

**“YHWH Leads His People Out of Oppression:”**  
**A Narrative-Literary Analysis of Exodus 3:1-12**  
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**Abstract**

This article attempts to analyze Exodus 3:1-12 from the lens of narrative and literary criticism and argues that more than being a story about the call of Moses, the text already brings out a theme that is crucial and fundamental in the entire Exodus narrative, that is, the liberating and salvific act of God (YHWH) as the shepherd of his people. Moses is not just a mediator but someone who personifies the immanent and active presence of God who leads the Israelites out of oppression. He is not just perceptive and sensitive to the affliction of his people. God himself is the one who leads them in the struggle for liberation. With the relentless presence of social injustice and oppression in the world of today, the relevance of this leitmotif needs no further elaboration. Nevertheless, it continues to call contemporary Christians, especially the Institutional Church, to be more committed to its vocation of shepherding God’s people, that is, to be ‘present among’ and to strive for the liberation of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised.

**Introduction**

Exodus 3:1-12 is one of the most thoroughly analyzed texts of the book of Exodus. Exegetical commentaries by well-known scholars such as Cassuto, Dozeman, and Schmidt have dealt largely with the literary form of Moses’ “call narrative” and the dominant themes of YHWH “hearing”, “seeing” and “knowing” the affliction of the Israelites in Egypt. However, not much has been said about the other literary and narrative features of the text which can further enrich the interpretation of its meaning. By employing narrative and literary analysis, this essay puts a particular emphasis on the exegetical significance of the “shepherd motif” in Exodus 3:1-12. This symbolic motif, personified by Moses and his mission of leading the Israelite people out of Egypt, points to another very important theme in the narrative, that is, aside from being aware of the oppression of his people, it is YHWH himself, the true shepherd, who will lead his people in the journey towards liberation.