

# Call Narrative Form

## Introduction

The call narrative is actually a specialized form of the vision report. Some scholars have distinguished two different types of call narrative, one like that of Exodus and Amos (and 1 Sam, Jer), a very personal call focusing on the prophet and his unworthiness or reluctance, and the other a more formal summons focusing on the divine council and its transcendence (Isa, Ezek).

## Structure

*The Exodus example is somewhat unusual in repeating the first two elements before moving on to the last two.*

Element	Example (Exodus 3:4-14)	
1. Initial call	<p><sup>4</sup> When the Lord saw him coming over to look at [the burning bush] more closely, God called out to him from the bush, “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup> God said, “Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. <sup>6</sup> I am the God of your father,” he continued, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p><sup>7</sup> But the Lord said, “I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. <sup>8</sup> Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> So indeed the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have truly noted that the Egyptians are oppressing them. <sup>10</sup> Come now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>
2. Unworthiness of prophet	<p>Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↗</p>	<p><sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>
3. Solemn commissioning	<p><sup>12</sup> He answered, “I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain.” <sup>13</sup> “But,” said Moses to God, “when I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ if they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?”</p>	
4. Characteristic message	<p><sup>14</sup> God replied, “I am who am.” Then he added, “This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you.”</p>	

## Content

The call narrative often serves as a sort of overture to the prophet’s themes; this can be seen particularly in the characteristic message.

## Function

Formerly considered personal and autobiographical, the call narratives are now considered to have been recited publicly on formal occasions, during which they functioned to guarantee the validity of the prophet and more importantly to legitimate the divine origin of his oracles.

## For Further Practice

Isaiah 6  
1 Samuel 3:1-18

Jeremiah 1  
1 Kings 22:19-22

Ezekiel 1–2