

Exodus 2:23-4:18

Overview

The first four chapters of Exodus present a series of events in the life of Moses that anticipate the more detailed experiences of Israel in chapters 4-40 (Table 1). In Chapter 1, we considered the first two elements in the first panel, which cover nearly three hundred years. Chapter 2 introduced Moses, his life in Egypt, and his flight to Midian. Now Moses encounters God at Mount Horeb.

2:23-25, God Steps Out of the Shadows¹

Theme	First Panel, 1:1-4:18	Second Panel, 4:19-40:38
Entering Egypt	1:1-7, The eleven tribes go to Egypt and multiply	4:19-31, Moses returns to Egypt with his family
Oppression	1:8-22, Pharaoh oppresses Israel	5:1-23, Pharaoh increases the oppression
Leaders raised up	2:1-4, Moses born	6:1-27, Moses and Aaron commissioned by God
Moses in Pharaoh's Palace	2:5-10, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter	6:28-13:16, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as deliverer
Travel to Horeb	2:11-15, Moses flees from Egypt to Midian	13:17-17:7, Israel travels from Egypt to Sinai
Conflict	2:16-17, Moses overcomes the shepherds	17:8-16, Moses overcomes Amalek
Moses and Jethro	2:18-22, Moses' Midianite family	18:1-27, Moses' Midianite family
Encounter with God at Horeb	2:23-4:18, Moses called to "serve God upon this mountain," 3:12	19:1-40:38, At Horeb, Israel enters covenant with God

Up until now, God's actions on behalf of Israel have been in the background. Pharaoh tries to reduce their numbers, but they keep multiplying:

Exo 1:7 And the children of Israel **were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty**; and the land was filled with them.

Exo 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they **multiplied and grew**.

Exo 1:20 and the people **multiplied, and waxed very mighty**.

At first faithful midwives, and then clever mothers, manage to evade him. As long as they think they can cope with their service to Pharaoh by clever deception or their own resolution, God works in the shadows. Only once is he the subject of a verb:²

Ex. 1:20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

The people at large have not been mindful of him. There is no evidence that they worship him: the episode of the golden calf (Exodus 32) shows that they were more comfortable with the idols of Egypt than with the God of their fathers. Joshua also recalls their idolatry in Egypt, in his farewell address to the nation:

1 The Hebrew text marks 2:23 as a major new section with a פ (*petucha*, open, leaving the rest of the line open) at the end of 2:22, and ends it with a ס (*setumah*, closed, the text continuing after a short break). The next break is פ, before 4:18.

2 In 1:21, "God" is the antecedent of the subject in 1:21, "he made them houses." In all, the noun אֱלֹהִים *elohim* H430 appears only three times before this, 1:17, 20, 21.

Jos 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away **the gods which your fathers served** on the other side of the flood, and **in Egypt**;

But now, their attitude changes.

23 And it came to pass in process of time,—Literally, “during those many days.” These three verses cover 40 years, between Moses’ flight from Egypt and his return under God’s direction to deliver the people. When Moses arrives back in Egypt, he is 80 years old:

Exo 7:7 And **Moses was fourscore years old**, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

During this time, two things happen that are important for the sequel.

that the king of Egypt died:—First, the king that sought Moses’ life has died. Moses can now return to Egypt without immediate threat to his life.

and the children of Israel sighed—Second, the children of Israel are crying out in their suffering. They are at the end of their own resources. The Egyptian gods have failed them, and they seek the aid of the God of their fathers.

by reason of the bondage,—“Bondage” is עֲבֹדָה *abodah* H5656, another instance of the word family that peaked in ch. 1.

Ex. 1:13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to **serve** with rigour: 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard **bondage**, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of **service** in the field: all their **service**, wherein they made them **serve**, was with rigour.

Note the repetition of this phrase twice in 2:23. It causes two things to happen.

First, it leads them to cry out. Exodus does not tell us that they addressed their cry to God, though Moses, giving instruction for the offering of firstfruits after Israel enters the land, recalls,

Deut 26:7 And when we cried **unto the LORD God of our fathers**, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression ...

There’s no indication in chapter 1 that they cried out to God. They prospered in spite of the oppression. But as it continues, finally they are worn down, and cry out for help.

Second, the bondage not only causes them to cry out, but it also motivates God to listen to them

and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.—This word family describes service, in which one person acts, not in their own interest, but in subjection to someone else. As the story develops, it will become clear that God is jealous of the service of his people. He will repeatedly send Moses to Pharaoh with the message, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.” And the second commandment that he gives them at Sinai is,

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor **serve** them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, ...

When the people finally acknowledge their need of him, he steps out of the shadows to deliver them, and claim their service as their rightful master.

Note the strongly parallel structure of the next two verses (Table 2, chart). After only one verse in 1:1-2:23 with God as subject, we encounter four clauses, all with God as their subject, and marked with strong parallelism. These clauses

	God Perceives	God Responds
24	God heard	God remembered
25	God saw	God cared

Table 2: Parallelism in 2:24-25

form an AB-AB alternation between God’s perception of their need (heard, looked upon = saw) and two describing his response with verbs of cognitive action (remembered, cared).

The progression is an example of the figure of speech known as anthropopathism, “the ascription of human passions, actions, or attributes to God.”³ God is depicted as though he were a man becoming aware of something (though his work in the background shows that he in fact has been watching over them all along). Asaph uses a similar figure of speech in Psalm 78 when he describes Israel’s repeated pattern of interaction with God: divine blessing, human rebellion, divine discipline, human repentance, and finally divine restoration. After allowing them to suffer,

Psa 78:65 Then **the Lord awakened as one out of sleep**, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.

So Israel has grown self-confident in Egypt, protected by God’s work in the shadows, but not acknowledging him. Only now do they realize their need for him.

24 And God heard their groaning,—First he hears their cry, just as we might become aware of something by an unexpected sound.

and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.—This one covenant, made initially with Abraham and confirmed with his son and grandson, is ever before his mind, and motivates him to care for their descendants, as he had promised them.

The verb “remember” (זָכַר *zakar* H2142) does not suggest that God ever forgot them. It emphasizes, not the recollection of a covenant, but the application of it.⁴ To remember a covenant is to act in accordance with its requirements. For example,

Gen 9:14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: 15 And **I will remember my covenant**, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and **the waters shall no more become a flood** to destroy all flesh.

Exo 6:5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and **I have remembered my covenant**. 6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and **I will redeem you** with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: 7 And **I will take you** to me for a people, and **I will be to you a God**: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And **I will bring you in** unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

25 And God looked [רָאָה *ra-ah* H7200] upon the children of Israel,—The phrase is simply, “God saw the children of Israel.” He directs his attention to the cry that he hears.

and God had respect [יָדַע *yada* H3045] unto them.—Literally, “God knew.” The verb here is used in the sense “keep in mind, take care of.”⁵

3 Bullinger, E. W. (1898). *Figures of speech used in the Bible* (p. 871). Eyre & Spottiswoode.

4 Stuart, (2006). *Exodus* (Vol. 2, p. 103). Broadman & Holman Publishers, note 158, citing also Lev 26:42, 45; 1 Chr 16:15; Pss 105:8; 106:45; 111:5; Jer 14:21; Ezek 16:60; Luke 1:72

5 HALOT 4, 7. See D. Winton Thomas on this verse, *JTS* 49 (148) 143-144, and his study on יָדַע, *JTS* 35:139 (1934), 298-306. He cites 1 Kings, 1:11, 18; Hos. 8:4 as examples of this sense of the verb without an object.

When the Lord commissions Moses in 3:1-6, he acknowledges these four elements.⁶

The overall pattern of the first two chapters is common throughout the Scriptures, and is one of which we should be aware in our own lives. Note the basic principles:

1. God is always watching over us, but frequently from the shadows. Recall the fortunate “accidents” in the book of Ruth, or in Esther, where he is not even named.
2. He allows suffering in our lives to remind us of our own insufficiency:

Psa 94:12 **Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest**, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

Psa 119:71 **It is good for me that I have been afflicted**; that I might learn thy statutes.
3. When the suffering finally moves us to acknowledge our need, he steps out of the shadows.

3:1-3, The Setting

We have already seen, in the story of a romantic meeting at a well, an example of a literary form, a common feature of biblical literature. The rest of this section is an example of another form, very common and important: the theophany, in which God reveals himself to people.⁷

Other examples are God’s appearances to Abraham, Jacob, Hagar, Joshua, Samuel, Gideon, Manoah, and the prophetic calls of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The various theophanies in the Bible share elements from a common overall structure. Some theophanies have only some of the parts. This theophany is a particularly complete example (Table 3, chart).

A theophany generally begins (#1) with an introductory description in the third person, which this section provides.

3:1 Now Moses kept—The usual Hebrew clause order is “subject-verb,” but here it is reversed, marking a disjunction.⁸ We might translate, “As for Moses, he was keeping”⁹ After four clauses ending God’s silence by stating what he did, our attention is drawn to the man through whom he will do it.

the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian:—Like Jacob, he serves in his new family as a shepherd, preparing him for his pastoral role over the nation in their 40 years of wandering. From here on, the narrative uses Jethro’s personal name rather than his family name.

1	Introductory description in the third person	3:1–4a
2	Deity’s utterance of the name of the (mortal) addressee	3:4b
3	Response of the addressee	3:4c
4	Deity’s self declaration	3:5-6
5	Deity quells human fear	3:7-9
6	Assertion of his gracious presence	
7	The divine word addressed to the particular situation	3:10
8	Inquiry or protest by the addressee	3:11
9	Continuation of the divine word with perhaps some repetition of elements 4, 5, 6, 7, and/or 8	3:12-4:17
10	Concluding description in the third person	4:18

Table 3: *The Literary Form of a Theophany* (Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 1965, modified by Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 1995 and Stuart, *Exodus*, 2006)

6 The two verbs in v. 25 recur with similar meaning in Psa. 31:7: “I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast *considered ra-ah* my trouble; thou hast *known yada* my soul in adversities . . .”

7 Stuart aligns 3:1-4:7 into the theophany structure outlined by J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, Zondervan, 1995, based on J. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1967, 138-147 (<https://archive.org/details/selfrevelationof0000kuntz>). See note.

8 Note also the ׀ paragraph mark, a minor break.

9 היה רָעָה (with a participle). “He kept” would be רָעָה (perfect tense).

Recall that shepherding was an occupation highly distasteful to the Egyptians. Joseph instructed his brothers to introduce themselves as shepherds, so that they could live in relative isolation from the rest of Egyptian society (chart):

Gen 46:33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for **every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.**

When Moses left Egypt, his own people rejected him, perhaps because he was too “Egyptian,” and Jethro’s daughters recognized him as an Egyptian. Now he returns to Egypt as a shepherd, fitted to identify with his people as well as to lead them (Stuart).

and he led the flock to the backside of the desert,—“Desert” here does not mean barren sand dunes, as in the Sahara. The Hebrew word refers to uninhabited and unirrigated pastureland (Sarna; see note).

“Backside” is a preposition (אחר *achar* H310), usually rendered “after,” that has been interpreted in several ways.¹⁰ The most natural is to describe the goal of movement, as in “walk after, follow after”: he led the flock after pasture, in search of pasture.

and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.—This is the first time we encounter the mountain that is to be the scene of the major part of the book, from ch. 19 on. Throughout the OT, it has three names, two of which we meet here (see note).

the mountain of God—This name appears only in Exodus (4x), and then once in 1 Kings, when God takes Elijah there. Do not confuse it with the same English expression in Ezek 28:16 and Psa 68:15, where the Hebrew is different.

Horeb—This word means “dry, desolate.” It appears three times in Exodus, and then is the common name for the mountain, used in narrative in Deuteronomy (9x) and the rest of the OT. There is only one use in poetry, Ps 106:19.

Sinai—This name is concentrated in Exodus, from chapter 19 on. It appears three times in Leviticus, twice in Numbers, and from that point on only in poetry (Deut 33:2; Judg 5:5; Psa 68:8, 17) and once in Nehemiah’s prayer (9:13). The name may be a recollection of the “bush” (*senh*) in which the Lord appears to him in the next verse.

The location of Sinai is far from clear. Figure 1 shows 10 locations that have been proposed.¹¹

The traditional site of Sinai, toward the tip of the Sinai peninsula, is a long way from the region where the Midianites lived, and it seems unlikely that Moses would have led his flocks that far. Locations near the trip of the eastern branch of the Red Sea (the gulf of Eilat), such as Hashem al-Tarif or Jabal Ahmad al Baqir, seem more likely.

2 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush:—Four details in this statement invite our attention: the bush, the angel of the Lord, God’s revelation of himself through fire, and the verb “to see.”

10 KJV understands it as “behind, on the other side of,” but why he would go beyond pastureland is not clear. Some understand it “to the west of,” based on the Hebrew cardinal points with East in front, North to the left, South to the right, and west behind, which has the virtue of getting him into the Sinai peninsula. The interpretation here is due to Cassuto, based on a common usage with verbs of movement (“go after,” “follow after”), citing in particular Job 39:8. Cassuto’s reading might be more natural if *midbar* were anarthrous.

11 From <https://answersingenesis.org/archaeology/searching-for-sinai/>, which discusses the alternatives.

a bush—The Hebrew word for “bush” is סִנְיָה *sēneh* H5572, from which the name “Sinai” (סִינַי *sīnay* H5514) may be derived. Outside of three instances here (Exod 3:2, 3, 4), the only other instance is in Moses’ blessing on Joseph (chart):

Deut. 33:16 And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of **him that dwelt in the bush**: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

the angel of the LORD—This phrase appears 56 times in the OT, along with nine instances of “the angel of God”.¹² In the OT, he is identified with the Lord himself. For example, he appears thus

- to Hagar:

Gen 16:7 And **the angel of the LORD** found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, ...
 13 And she called the name of **the LORD that spake** unto her, Thou God seest me: ... (also ch. 21:17-19, “an angel of God”)

- to Jacob:

Gen 31:11 And **the angel of God** spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. 12 And he said, ... 13 **I am the God of Bethel**, ...

- to Gideon:

Jdg 6:11 And there came an **the angel of the LORD**, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, ... 14 And **the LORD looked upon him, and said**, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?¹³

So here, the angel is described as God himself in v. 4:

Exo 3:4 And when **the LORD** saw that he turned aside to see, **God** called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

This is a divine person, the one mentioned in Micah 5:2,

Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; **whose goings forth have been from of old**, from everlasting.

Micah indicates that one person, who will come in the future, has often come in the past. Figure 2 shows these two ways in which the eternal Son of God has manifested himself. He had visited



Figure 1: Proposed locations for Mount Sinai (map from biblemapper.com)

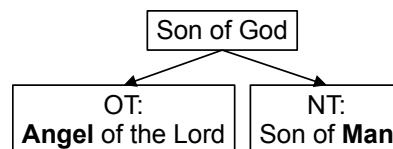


Figure 2: Two Manifestations of the Son of God

12 מלאך האלהים Gen 21:17 lacks the article, but like the definite instances, appears to refer to the deity, v. 18.
 13 In 6:20, the visitor is called “the angel of God” (definite, מלאך האלהים).

and ministered to his people as the “**angel** of the Lord” ever since the days of Abraham,¹⁴ but came in the stable at Bethlehem two thousand years ago as the Son of **Man**.

The identification of “the angel of the Lord” with the pre-incarnate Son of God may lead to confusion when we find the phrase “the angel of the Lord” in the NT, but all but one of these references should be translated “*an* angel of the Lord,” not the specific Angel mentioned in the OT. The article only appears once, in a second reference to the particular angel that appeared to Joseph, originally identified as *an* angel (see note):

Mat 1:20 ... behold, ~~the~~ **an** angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: ... 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as **the** angel of the Lord had bidden him, ...

a flame of fire—God frequently appears to people in the form of fire (chart).¹⁵

- When he entered into covenant with Abram, he appeared as “a smoking furnace and a burning lamp,” Gen 15:17.
- He led them through the wilderness as “a pillar of fire” (Exod 13:21).
- He descended on Sinai in fire (Exod 19:18).

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). One consequence of his nature as light is that he exposes our sin:

Jhn 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that **the** light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than **the** light, because their deeds were evil.

For this reason, perhaps, he is described as “a consuming fire” (Deut 4:24, quoted in Heb 12:29).

The balancing characterization of God is that he is love (1 John 4:8, 16). When we get to Exodus 34, Moses will learn this truth as well. But first, he must recognize him as fire.

appeared—The verb “to see” (הִרְאָה *ra-ah* H7200) peaks here, with Moses and God as subjects (Figure 3, chart). The other such peak is in chapters 33-34. In both cases, God is

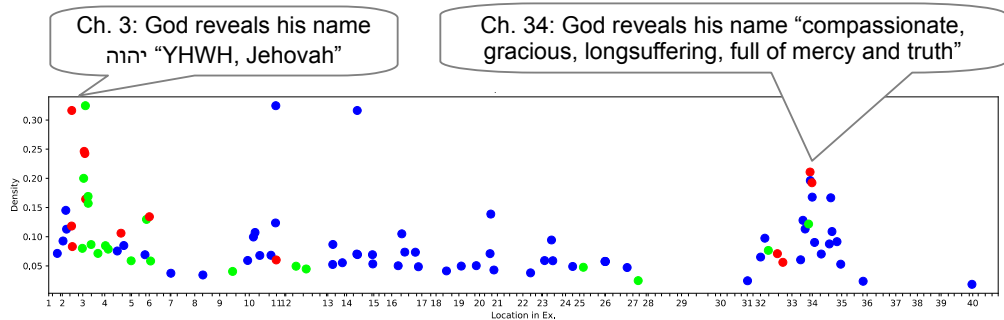


Figure 3: The verb “to see” *ra-ah* in Exodus. Red: Moses is subject. Green: God is subject. Imperatives are omitted.

revealing his name to Moses—here the name YHWH, there, the name of love and compassion.

and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.—The shrubs that grow in arid regions in the middle east are highly resinous, and catch fire easily.

14 Hengstenberg’s *Christology of the Old Testament*, v. 1, has an excellent detailed discussion of “The Angel of the Lord in the Pentateuch, and the Book of Joshua,” arguing for this identification. The Kindle edition is available free at Amazon.

15 Stuart has an excellent excursus on God’s appearance as fire.

It would not be unusual to see a bush burning, ignited by lightning, or by the residue of some other shepherd's campfire. But it would be very unusual to see it not being consumed by the fire.

3:4-10, The Commission

4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses.—Part #2 of the theophany pattern is God's address to the human, by name. In some cases, as here, God repeats his name (chart):

Gen. 22:11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, **Abraham, Abraham:**

Gen. 46:2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, **Jacob, Jacob.**

1Sam. 3:10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, **Samuel, Samuel.**

Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, **Simon, Simon,**

Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul,**

This repetition may indicate that the one addressed is especially dear to the speaker:¹⁶

2Sam. 19:4 ... the king cried with a loud voice, O my son **Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!**

Is. 29:1 Woe to **Ariel, to Ariel,** the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices.

Matt. 23:37 O **Jerusalem, Jerusalem,** ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, ...

And he said, Here am I.—The next item in the pattern (#3) is a response by the addressee.

After this, the form requires (#4) that the Lord presents himself.

5 And he said, **Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.**—First he warns Moses that he is in danger.

The ground is not holy because of its location. When the Lord appears to Joshua on the outskirts of Jericho, hundreds of miles from Horeb, he receives a similar admonition:

Jos 5:15 And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, **Loose thy shoe** from off thy foot; for **the place whereon thou standest is holy.** And Joshua did so.

It is holy because God is there, and he cannot tolerate any uncleanness.

Psa 5:4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: **neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:** thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

Hab 1:13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and **canst not look on iniquity:** ...

Satan would have us regard certain places as sacred, in and of themselves, a form of idolatry. This is the whole instinct behind building physical sanctuaries, often called "temples" or "churches." Strict Jews today refuse to walk on the temple mount for fear that they might unknowingly tread on the holy of holies. In the first century, Jewish law required the priests to

¹⁶ Stuart calls this the "repetition of endearment."

minister barefoot, following the instructions to Moses and Joshua,¹⁷ but the Torah imposes no such requirement.¹⁸ There are two occasions in the OT when the Lord brings physical judgment on someone at the sanctuary, and in both cases, the problem is not their shoes, but their disobedience. Nadab and Abihu “offer[] strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not” (Lev 10:1), and King Uzziah was smitten with leprosy when he tried to offer incense on the altar of incense because that ministry was restricted to priests, an office from which the king was excluded (2 Chr 26:16-19).

The NT does not recognize any physical location as holy. It does teach that under the new covenant, the believers gathered together constitute a spiritual temple, enjoying God’s presence:

Eph 2:22 In whom [Jesus Christ] **ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.**

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up **a spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

One passage that describes the assembled believers as a temple goes on to discuss the importance of purity (chart) in our function as this temple:

2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for **ye are the temple of the living God**; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and **touch not the unclean thing**; and I will receive you,

And recall Paul’s instructions when we thus assemble at the Lord’s table, warning of God’s judgment if we do not take care to examining first ourselves, then one another:

1Co 11:28 But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, **not discerning [διακρίνω *diakrinō* G1252] the Lord's body**. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would **judge *diakrinō*** ourselves, we should not be judged.

God’s admonition to Moses urges us to respect, not physical places, but the presence of God.

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father,—After this warning, God identifies himself.

Contrast this title with the one Moses is to present to the Israelites on his return (chart):

Exo 3:15 ... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **The LORD God of your fathers**, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.¹⁹

In vv. 15-16, “your fathers” is in apposition to “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” But God says to Moses, not “the God of thy fathers,” but “the God of thy father,” Amram.

the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.—Amram, in turn, is in the line of the promise.

This reference to his childhood parent reinforces the intimacy implied by the double name.

17 Jewish law (Talmud, Zevachim 24a; Mishne Torah, Biat Hamikdash 5:17) requires bare feet in the temple.

18 Exod 30:19-21 does require them to wash at the brazen laver, not just to enter the tabernacle, but also to “come near the altar to minister” (30:20), and there is no reference to removing shoes.

19 3:16 repeats the same title as v. 15.

And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.—It is natural for sinful people to fear the holy God when they encounter him. Thus at this point in theophanies, the deity commonly calms fear (#5) and announces his gracious presence (#6). In this case, he does this by expounding what we already know from 2:23-25 (Figure 4, chart).

7 And the LORD said,— Reidentifying a participant marks a break, in this case, the start of this exposition.

I have surely seen [ראַה] the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;— Here are three of the four verbs of God’s engagement from 2:24-25. In both 3:7 and 2:25, “know” means “care for” (Sarna).

Exodus 3
7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen ra-ah the affliction of my people which are in Egypt,
and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters;
for I know yada their sorrows;
8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians,
and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. [Gen 15:18-21]
9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

Exodus 2
23 ... the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.
24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham , with Isaac , and with Jacob .
25 And God looked ra-ah upon the children of Israel, and God had respect yada unto them.

Figure 4: 3:7-9 as Exposition of 2:23-25

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians,—In 2:23, their cries *came up* to God. So now he *comes down* to deliver (emphasizing his presence, Theophany #6).

and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.—This list of the current occupants of the land recalls the original covenant promise to Abram (2:24b), which included all but the Hivites, and adding a few others:

Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20 And the **Hittites**, and the **Perizzites**, and the Rephaims, 21 And the **Amorites**, and the **Canaanites**, and the Gergashites, and the **Jebusites**.

Similar lists will recur many times in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua. The land is such an essential part of the covenant that in 3:8 it stands for the entire covenant promise in 2:24. This central component of God’s unconditional promise to Abraham is critical to a biblical eschatology: Abraham’s descendants must one day inherit the land God has promised them.

9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.—3:7-8 have covered each of the elements of 2:23-25, one at a time. This verse is a final summary of vv. 7-8, including both the setting (2:23) and God’s action (2:24-25).

The heart of any theophany (#7) is the message that God is delivering to the recipient. In this case, the message is that he is to bring the people out of their bondage (chart).

10 Come Go now therefore,—The flow of the narrative requires us to recognize that “Come” is actually the imperative of **הלך** *halak* H3212, usually translated “go,” and is the first of three such commands in this section. The other two are at 3:16 and 4:12 (chart):

Exo 3:16 **Go**, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, ...

Exo 4:12 Now therefore **go**, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

God must repeated this command several times before Moses obeys.

and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.—Contrast v. 8, “I am come down to deliver them.” He has just promised to deliver them; now he says that Moses is going to bring them forth. This tension must not have been lost on Moses, and may motivate some of his questions in the next section.

The phrase “my people the children of Israel” echoes Pharaoh’s expression in 1:9,

Ex. 1:9 And he said unto his people, Behold, **the people of the children of Israel** are more and mightier than we:

There, they were just “a people.” Now God claims them as “my people.” (See note)

3:11-4:17, Moses’ Utterances

In theophanies (#8), the human often responds with some sort of question or even objection:²⁰

Jdg 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, **Go in this thy might**, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15 And he said unto him, **Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?** behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

Jer 1:4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I **ordained thee a prophet** unto the nations. 6 Then said I, **Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak:** for I am a child.

Similarly, Moses responds to this commission with five utterances. The first two are legitimate clarifications of his mission, but the last three are objections, finally bringing God’s rebuke.

These five utterances are tightly integrated with what we have seen in 2:23-3:10. Figure 5 (chart) highlights the main markers:

1. We have already seen how God’s purpose, summarized in 2:23-25, is amplified in 3:7-9, concluding with the command to Moses, “Go.”
2. Moses’ first four statements form a balanced chiasm, centered around a repetition of the command to go, and a restatement of God’s purpose. The first and last elements focus on

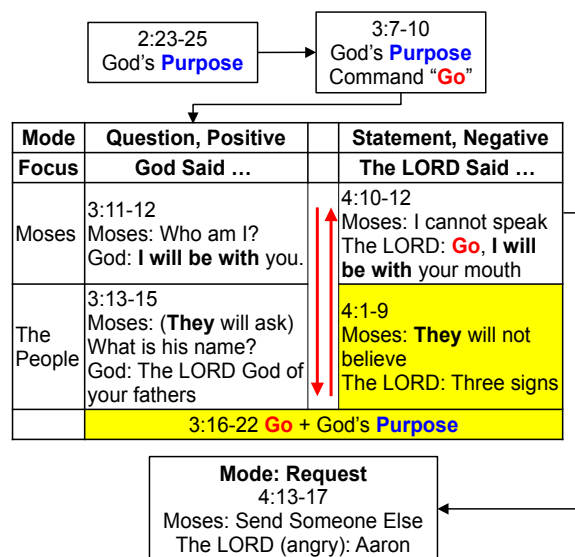


Figure 5: Flow of 2:23-4:17

²⁰ For other examples, see Gen 17:16-17; Isa 6:1; Luke 1:13-18, 31-34

Moses (Who am I? I can't speak), while the second and fourth focus on the response of the people (They will ask what is your name? They won't believe.) In the first panel and the center, the speaker is God, while in the third and fourth it is the LORD (YHWH).

3. In the first panel, Moses asks questions, and the one who responds is called God. In the second, Moses makes negative statements, and the LORD (YHWH) responds.
4. Moses' fifth utterance breaks out of this tight chiasmic structure. He moves from question and statement to request (imperative).

The repeated command, "Go," highlights Moses' sluggish response. His first two questions were reasonable, and the second "Go" in 3:16 suggests that the conversation is over. Moses persists with two statements. The Lord patiently answers, adding the third "Go" in 4:12. When Moses speaks again, declining the assignment, the Lord becomes angry and adds Aaron to the team.

3:11-12, Question about Moses: Who am I?

Moses' first question concerns his own ability to do the job.

11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?—His first question is a courteous response to an offer of a high honor. For example, when Saul invites David to marry his daughter (chart),

1Sa 18:18 And David said unto Saul, **Who am I?** and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?

And when Nathan tells him of God's promise concerning his royal line,

2Sa 7:18 Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, **Who am I, O Lord GOD?** and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?²¹

It is appropriate for Moses to question his suitability for the task, especially since the Lord has just said (3:8) that he (the Lord) is doing the delivering.

The Lord responds with one of his most common encouragements to his servants (chart):

12 And he said, Certainly יי I will be with thee;—Varieties of this expression appear about 100 times in the OT.²² Elsewhere, it is used in three kinds of contexts, all of which are relevant here. It reassures God's servants

1. when they face danger;
2. when they go on a journey;
3. when they are given a difficult task.

The first kind of context is dangerous circumstances. The first time the statement occurs, it describes God's care of Ishmael after he is cast out of Abraham's family:

Gen 21:20 And **God was with the lad;** and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

The Lord protects him in his lonely life in the wilderness,²³ cut off from human society.

21 Only these use the exact phrase as here, מי אנכי (Stuart). מי אני has the same sense in 1 Chr. 17:16 (parallel to 2 Sam 7); 29:14 (David when commissioning the temple); 2 Chr. 2:6 (Solomon in proposing to build the house)

22 H. D. Preuss, "Ich will mit dir sein," ZAW 80 (1968): 139–73. 39 times (like Gen 21) the relation is described, in 27 it is "a promise, assurance, wish, or question from people," and ~35 "a promise and assurance from God."

23 מִדְּבָר *midbar* H4057, uninhabited grazing land (see note)

Two verses later, the Philistines recognize Abraham's unique relation with God:

Gen 21:22 And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, **God is with thee** in all that thou doest:

Note the military tone in the meeting. Abraham has gained a reputation as a powerful chieftain in his campaign against the four Mesopotamian kings in Genesis 14. Abimelech senses that Abraham is under divine protection, and brings the captain of his army (“chairman of the joint chiefs”) to negotiate a treaty to avoid conflict.

In these two cases, either the narrator or a human character makes the statement. Often, God himself makes the statement as a promise. For example, when Isaac contemplates going to Egypt in a dangerous famine, God tells him to stay where he is:

Gen 26:3 Sojourn in this land, and **I will be with thee**, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;

Later in the same chapter, Isaac faces tension with the Philistines, and God promises his presence. The added exhortation “fear not” highlights the danger.

Gen. 26:24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: **fear not, for I am with thee**, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

We see the same combination in the NT, when Paul faced hostile Jewish elements in Corinth:

Act 18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, **Be not afraid**, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For **I am with thee**, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.²⁴

In addition to dangerous situations, the Lord promises to be with travelers. Journeying was often dangerous in the ancient world. When Jacob flees Esau to Haran, God promises,

Gen 28:15 And, behold, **I am with thee**, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; ...

And when it is time for him to return, he receives the same promise,

Gen 31:3 And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and **I will be with thee**.

When Jacob considers going to Egypt, God reassures him,

Gen 46:4 **I will go down with thee** into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: ...²⁵

Both of these factors apply to Moses. He fled Egypt in fear for his life, and returning might be dangerous. (We know that the Pharaoh who threatened him is dead, 2:23, but Moses doesn't know this yet.) And returning to Egypt across the wilderness is perilous. In his case, the promise also anticipates a third context where God gives this assurance: a difficult assignment. Thus, when Moses passes the leadership of the nation to Joshua, he reassures him (chart),

24 The “much people” are not to protect Paul. God has assumed that responsibility. Rather, they are those who need Paul's ministry—the unsaved who need to hear the gospel, and the young believers who need shepherding.

25 Contrast 26:3, when the same assurance urges Isaac *not* to go to Egypt in spite of local famine. Preuss p. 153.

Deu 31:7 And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for **thou must go with this people** unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and **thou shalt cause them to inherit it.** 8 And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; **he will be with thee**, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: **fear not**, neither be dismayed.

Moses is apprehensive about being asked to do God's work. God's presence means that Moses is not replacing God, but rather is his instrument. Compare Gideon, when the Lord commissions him to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Like Moses, he feels inadequate to the task, and like Moses, he receives the promise of God's presence:

Jdg 6:14 And the LORD looked upon [Gideon], and said, Go in this thy might, and **thou shalt save Israel** from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, **wherewith shall I save Israel?** behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. 16 And the LORD said unto him, **Surely I will be with thee**, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

The principle continues into the New Testament. Our Lord took courage from the knowledge that his Father was with him:

Jhn 8:29 And **he that sent me is with me**: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

Jhn 16:32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because **the Father is with me.**

When the Lord commissions his disciples in Matthew 28, he gives them a huge task, but also promises his presence:

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, **I am with you** always, even unto the end of the world.

And we have already seen how God encourages Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:9-10).

So the promise of God's presence, in Moses' case, addresses all three settings. He has reason to expect danger when he gets to Egypt. Getting there is itself a dangerous journey. And he faces a daunting task. The solution to all three lies in this precious promise: "I will be with thee." And that same promise remains with us, as we seek to serve the Lord day by day.

The promise that God is with us should provide us with encouragement and strength in the face of danger and challenge. But it has a corollary, which God expressed to Moses when he confirmed his covenant with him in Genesis 17:

Gen 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; **walk before me**, and be thou perfect.

If God is constantly with us, we are constantly in his presence, "before him," and he is watching us. While we are looking to him for support and strength, he is looking to us for obedience.

and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee:—"Token" (אֹת *ōt* H226) is the first instance of a word that Exodus uses more frequently than any other book. It will describe

the miracles that God gives Moses to persuade, first the Israelites, then Pharaoh, of God's power. Toward the end of the book (31:13, 17), it describes the Sabbath as the sign of the covenant.

The big question in this verse is: what is the token? Grammatically, the smoothest antecedent to the pronoun "this" is the arrival of the people at Sinai. But God claims to be giving Moses a sign that he has been sent to bring Israel out of Egypt, and arrival at the mountain will not happen until after Moses has succeeded in this task. Such a sign offers small encouragement to Moses: "You'll know that I am with you when the job is done and you see that I have been with you."

The Jewish commentator Rashi (ca. AD 1100) understood the burning bush to be the sign. The burning bush anticipates the later theophany in God's appearance in fire, and if the name "Sinai" is indeed an echo of the "bush" *seneh*, the dominance²⁶ of that name from Exodus 16 onward reinforces the link between the sign and the reality. We might paraphrase the verse,

Your encounter with me here, in the fiery bush, is a symbol to you of the future fiery encounter that I am preparing for you and for all Israel, when you return here, and I promise you that I will be with you to bring this all to pass.²⁷

When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.—Up to this point, the word family "serve, service, bondage" (עבד) describes Israel's service to the Egyptians. This promise is the first time in the book that it is used of serving God. Exodus emphasizes that God is jealous of the service of his people. The problem with their bondage in Egypt is not that they are slaves rather than free, but that they are serving the wrong master. Here in Exodus 3, Moses, by removing his shoes, has worshipped (served) the God who reveals himself in fire on Mount Horeb. His commission is to bring the people out of Egypt (3:10), transitioning them from serving Pharaoh to serving God.

Note the parallel with 3:1. Moses led Jethro's sheep to this mountain. Now he will return with another flock, the people of God. Shepherding sheep is hard enough. Now he's being given a more difficult flock, and his apprehension motivates his following discussion with the Lord.

3:13-15, Question for the People: What is His Name?

Moses' second question concerns how the Israelites will respond when he claims to come to them on behalf of God (chart).

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?—Why might they ask such a question? There are at least two possible motives:

1. The Egyptians served many gods, and the Israelites had participated in that worship (Jos 24:14). Maybe they have forgotten which God their fathers served.

26 After 3:1, "Horeb" appears only in 17:6 and 33:6, compared with 13 references to "Sinai," in spite of the dominance of "Horeb" in later narrative books.

27 Childs, pp. 56ff, provides a form-critical analysis of sign narratives that justifies the bush as the sign, in particular, his type A, in which the sign prefigures the fulfillment. He concludes that the bush has been "dislocated" from its original location in the history of tradition. Rashi's pre-critical recognition of the bush as the sign shows that we do not need to invoke *Traditionsgeschichte* to justify this linkage. (Rashi, however, does not invoke the typological resemblance: "just as thou hast seen the bush carrying out the mission I laid upon it and it was not consumed, so go thou too on the mission I entrust to thee and thou shalt suffer no harm." He also allows the future arrival at Sinai as an alternative sign.)

2. More likely, they are testing him. The first step with sheep is getting them to recognize the shepherd. When he returns, he will be an unknown character after 40 years, as alien to them as he was to the daughters of Jethro when he arrived in Midian. If he genuinely represents their ancestral God, he ought to know his name.

God goes on to give him two names, אֱהְיֶה *ehyeh* and יְהוָה (usually pronounced Yahweh). God’s detailed explanation suggests that Moses in fact is not familiar with this name. There is extensive debate on the meaning of these names, and of the sentence in 3:14 that uses the first, אֱהְיֶה אֱהְיֶה. Serls²⁸ offers a thorough and persuasive discussion, which I largely follow.

God responds by giving two names, one in 3:14 and one in 3:15 (Table 4). They look similar to one another, but the first is a common Hebrew word, while the second is opaque. The Hebrew meaning of the first communicates the idea that they will learn who God is over the course of time, while God states that the second is constant and eternal.

	3:14	3:15
Name	אֱהְיֶה <i>ehyeh</i> H1961	יהוה <i>yahweh</i> H3068
Meaning	Verb: I will be	Opaque
Temporal Focus	Progressive	Eternal

Table 4: The Two Names of God in 3:14,15

14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I

AM:—The first name, which the AV translates “I am,” is actually a future tense verb, “I will be,” not a proper name.²⁹ It is the same word used in 3:12 to assure Moses, “I will be with you,” and in 4:12, “I will be with your mouth.”

In itself, the statement seems rather vague: “What is your name?” “I will be who I will be.” In other words, “You’ll see who I am.” In view of the overall progression of the book, this is a profound statement. God reveals more and more of himself, culminating in his great name of mercy and justice in 34:6-7. Moses and the children of Israel will not learn who he is from a label, but over time, through walking in his promised presence.

and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM “I will be” hath sent me unto you.—Repetition of “I will be” is meant to communicate to Moses’ hearers the same expectation of future, ongoing revelation of God that he had received. “You ask me for the name of the one who has sent me. He says, ‘I will be.’ He will reveal himself to you in good time.”

This name “I will be” never appears elsewhere in the Bible as the name of God,³⁰ and in fact Moses does not report it to his countrymen. It is likely that the Lord is not answering their question here, but telling them to expect to learn who he is as he leads them out of Egypt.

But they already know a name that he now claims:

15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD [YHWH] God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you:—Compare this title with the one God gave Moses in 3:6. The significant change³¹ is the addition of the name LORD, יְהוָה (YHWH, H3068). To avoid taking

28 Austin Serls, *Making Sense of the Divine Name in Exodus*, Wheaton College, 2015 (https://www.academia.edu/23163338/Making_Sense_of_the_Divine_Name_in_Exodus_From_Etymology_to_Literary_Onomastics), Eisenbrauns, 2017.

29 See note.

30 Some argue that Hos 1:9 or Psa 50:21 use this name; see Serls p. 89 n. 58 for discussion.

31 Brother Biju Philip notes that the shift from “father” to “fathers” may be due simply to the change in audience from a single person in 3:6 (Moses) to the group here (and in 3:16).

God's name in vain, the Jews never pronounced this name, but substituted the word אֲדֹנָי *adonay*, and applying these vowels to the Hebrew consonants suggests a pronunciation like Yahweh.

Some scholars have tried to relate this form to an archaic version of the same verb “to be” that lies behind 3:14 (see note) But unlike “I will be,” this form always appears as a proper noun, never as an ordinary word that can be understood as a Hebrew expression. Like other proper names, it is semantically opaque, and its meaning must be defined by how it is used.

YHWH is a very ancient name. The narrator of Genesis 2-3 uses it repeatedly. The first character in the biblical story to use it is Eve, at the birth of her first son,

Gen. 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the **LORD**.

But it does not have any clear meaning for her or other characters in Genesis, who more often refer to the Lord as אֱלֹהִים *elohim* H430 “God” or אֵל שַׁדַּי *el shadday* H410 + H7706 “the Almighty.” In Exod 3:15, God reminds Moses of this name, known but not understood in the past, but whose connotation will become clearer over the course of Exodus.

this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.—Contrast this enduring instruction with 3:14, describing what Moses is to say to the Israelites on his return. In 3:16, the Lord repeats his instruction to use this name, not “I will be.” Not only was this name used from the very first, but it will endure for ever.

These two verses teach that God's proper name, יְהוָה, a semantically opaque *label*, is eternal, but its full *meaning* will emerge through Israel's experience. In other words, the name is a box into which we place meaning as we gain experience with the person whose name it is. The meaning of a person's name is that person's reputation, and “name” often stands for “reputation.”

Solomon realized how malleable a person's name (reputation) is

Pro 22:1 A good **name** is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

The Lord often motivates his actions to the prophets by his desire to protect his name:

Ezk 39:25 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and **will be jealous for my holy name**;

And in pleading for his mercy, his people regularly remind him of the impact his actions will have on his name (an example that we do well to emulate in our prayer lives):

Jos 7:9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and **what wilt thou do unto thy great name?**

Jer 14:21 Do not abhor us, **for thy name's sake**, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

As we go through Exodus, the word “name” שֵׁם *shem* H8034, referring to God's name, appears several times, and each time it develops the Israelite's picture of who God is (Figure 6, chart).

Here it is reintroduced to the children of Israel. The patriarchs knew it but did not fully understand it, and their descendants, during their centuries in pagan Egypt, remembered it only as one divine name among many. God now reminds them of it.

In a few chapters, he will remind them of the patriarchal promises that are attached to it:

Exo 6:6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, **I am the LORD**, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: 7

And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and **ye shall know that I am the LORD your God**, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: **I am the LORD**.

The next two references emphasize his power as a warrior, destroying his adversaries:

Exo 9:16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for **to shew in thee my power**; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

Exo 15:3 The LORD is a **man of war**: the LORD is his name.

The next cluster of references is in Ex 20, emphasizing his uniqueness.

Exo 20:7 Thou shalt not take the **name** of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his **name** in vain.

Exo 23:13 And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the **name** of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

The final cluster is in Ex 33-34, after God forgives the sin of the golden calf, where he binds his name to his character of lovingkindness and mercy as well as of demanding justice.

Exo 34:5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the **name** of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving bearing** iniquity and transgression and sin, ...

Thus, as promised in 3:14, there is progress in Israel's knowledge of who the LORD is, from the reminder of his ancient name in 3:15, to his character as a God who keeps his promises in Ex 6, to his uniqueness in Ex 20-23, and finally his mercy and justice in Ex 33-34.

3:16-22, Repeated Command and Purpose

Now the Lord uses the name he has just given Moses, in the full form of 3:15, to repeat his commission (chart).

16 Go,—This is the second time he tells Moses, “Go,” following 3:10. The sense is,

OK, Moses, I've reassured your doubts, and given you your credentials. It's time for you to get to work.

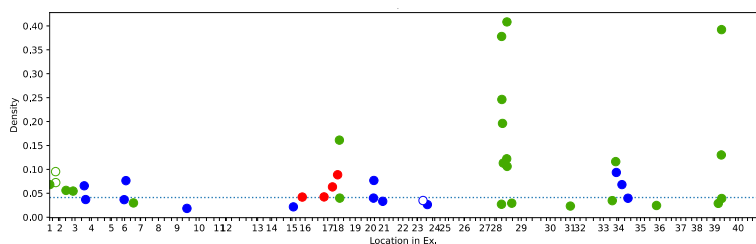


Figure 6: The noun "name" שֵׁם H8034. Blue: God (hollow: other gods). Green: people (hollow: Egyptians). Red: things or places.

and gather the elders of Israel together,—This is the first reference in the OT to a group that it mentions 34 times. Eight of these are in Exodus, more than any other book. They illustrate a principle about leadership among God’s people: A biblical leader is not a soloist. He is able to lead because of two sets of associations.

First, as we saw in 3:12, he is the instrument of God, who is with him, guiding him, encouraging him, protecting and strengthening him.

Now we learn that he is to work through the elders of his people. He is not a soloist over the people, but one of them, associated with them in his ministry.

This principle carries over into the NT. We know of no NT assembly with only a single elder. They are always mentioned in the plural.

and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you,—The Hebrew expression (פָּקַד (פָּקַדְתִּי) recalls Joseph’s prediction at the end of Genesis:

Gen. 50:24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and **God will surely visit you** אֱלֹהִים פָּקַד אֶתְכֶם, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, **God will surely visit you** וְפָקַד יְפָקַד אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

Moses himself recalls this promise in Ex 13:19.

and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: 17 And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.—Earlier, the command to go followed a declaration of God’s purpose that expounded 2:23-25. Now it is followed by a third statement of that purpose (Table 5).

3:7-8	3:16-17
Exo 3:7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; 8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians,	I have surely visited you , and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: 17 And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt ...
and to bring them up out of that land	17 And I have said, I will bring you up ...
unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey ; unto the place of the Canaanites , and the Hittites , and the Amorites , and the Perizzites , and the Hivites , and the Jebusites unto the land of the Canaanites , and the Hittites , and the Amorites , and the Perizzites , and the Hivites , and the Jebusites , unto a land flowing with milk and honey .

Table 5: Correspondence of 3:7-8 and 16-17

Next he gives a series of events that will follow, predicting the course of events and demonstrating his complete control over what will happen (chart).³² Note in particular his knowledge of what people will do—the elders (18), Pharaoh (19), the Egyptians (21). The Scriptures often confirm that God knows the hearts of people:

32 The following series of verbs are perfect consecutives, clearly construed as futures. Most likely, they continue the imperative in 3:16, ... לָךְ וְאֶסְפֹּת אֶת־זְקֵנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶמְרָתָם. This does not make them imperatives: see Waltke and O’Connell, §32.2.2.

David: 1Ch 28:9 for the LORD **searcheth all hearts**, ...

Solomon: 1Ki 8:39 for thou, even thou only, **knowest the hearts** of all the children of men;

Apostles: Act 1:24 Thou, Lord, which **knowest the hearts** of all men, ...

Peter: Act 15:8 And God, which **knoweth the hearts**, ...

18 And they shall hearken to thy voice:—God knows that the elders will receive Moses' report. Moses' next utterance shows his weakness in not believing this assurance.

and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt,—Again, he is not to act independently, but as a representative of the people.

and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us:—Recall from our study of 1:15 that “Hebrew” in the Egyptian context basically means “alien, foreigner.” Their statement informs Pharaoh that this alien people has their own God, and that his name is Jehovah, the name of which God has just reminded Moses.

“Met with us” emphasizes Moses' role as representative of the group. See also discussion of 4:1-9 below—the signs effectively make them participants in the theophany.

and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.—Some people accuse the Israelites of deceptiveness, asking for three days when they intend to leave for good. It is better to see the request is genuine, testing Pharaoh. Initially, God does not tell them to ask for complete release, but only for a weekend. Pharaoh's refusal to grant even this limited request will show his unwillingness to obey their God, and provide the just basis for God's subsequent judgment, which in turn leads to the full release (3:20b).

19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.—God knows not only that the elders will believe Moses, but also that Pharaoh will reject him.

The “mighty hand” here anticipates an armed uprising by Israel. “Even if you were able to arm yourselves and rise up, he would not free you.”³³

20 And I will stretch out my hand,—God's hand here is in contrast to any force that Israel might bring to bear by their own hand (v. 19).

and (I will) smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.—This account of what will happen includes these events, in this order (Table 6):

- v. 18, request to Pharaoh for three-day leave
- v. 19, Pharaoh will refuse
- v. 20a, the wonders
- v. 20b, the release.

This list of events says nothing about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, which is mentioned 19x in Exodus, starting in 4:21:

Exo 4:21 When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those **wonders** before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will **harden** his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

33 Cassuto. Sarna thinks it refers to God's hand, but Stuart discusses the particular negation וְלֹא , which means “not even,” not “except for,” which would be כִּי . Childs recognizes the difference, but follows LXX in emending to כִּי .

	3:18-20	4:21	ch.5-12
Request for 3-day holiday	18 let us go 3 days journey		5:1 Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.
Pharaoh refuses	19 the king ... will not let you go		5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?
Signs and wonders	20a I will smite Egypt with all my wonders	Do all those wonders before Pharaoh	7:1-12 first sign (rod to serpent)
Pharaoh's heart hardened		I will harden his heart	7:13 [God] hardened Pharaoh's heart
Israel released	20b after that he will let you go		12:31 Get you forth

Table 6: The Road to Hardening

We will talk more about this hardening when we follow Moses back to Egypt. But note that 4:21 puts the hardening *after* the wonders, while 3:19 says that Pharaoh will refuse their request for a three day leave to worship God *before* the wonders. This sequence is borne out in the subsequent narrative (Table 6). The people ask for three days, and are refused, in 5:3-4, while Pharaoh's heart is first hardened after the sign of the serpent in 7:13.

In other words, the heart that God hardens has already refused to recognize his authority, even over his own people. God's hardening does not make Pharaoh reject him. It confirms Pharaoh in his own initial rejection of God's authority. All people are born in a state of enmity with God, and naturally reject him, making them worthy of God's condemnation. Our task under the great commission is to tell them the good news that God offers salvation through his Son. The Spirit opens the eyes of some to receive the gospel, but confirms others, like Pharaoh, in the rebellion that they themselves have chosen.

21 And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians:—God knows the hearts not only of the elders of Israel and of Pharaoh, but also of the Egyptians in general.

and it shall come to pass,³⁴ that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:—3:21-22 is one of five passages in the OT that describe the riches that Israel brought out of Egypt (chart).³⁵ When God first told Abram of the coming bondage, he predicted the enrichment of Israel:

Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall **they come out with great substance.**

When Pharaoh finally releases the nation, we read of the actual transaction:

Exo 11:2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man ~~borrow~~ ask of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. 3 And **the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians.**

Exo 12:35 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they ~~borrowed~~ asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: 36 And the LORD

³⁴ Disjunctive clause, starting a new construct chain

³⁵ See Childs 175-177 for detailed discussion

gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent³⁶ unto them such things as they required. And **they spoiled the Egyptians.**

Later, the Psalmist recalls this event, in recounting God's care for his people:

Psa 105:37 He **brought them forth also with silver and gold**: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.

22 But and every woman shall borrow ask of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:—“Borrow” is the standard verb for “ask, request,” לָשׂוּ *sha-al* H7592. While it can refer to a loan, it can also mean simply to request. There is no reason to accuse the Israelites of deception here.

and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters;—Even the children will be enriched.

and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.—This verb, not “borrow,” characterizes the transaction. Israel is the victor in a battle. This military image is developed further, later in the history:

Exo 13:18 But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up **harnessed** out of the land of Egypt.

“Harnessed” חָמֻשִׁים *chamushim* H2571 means “in military array,” “lined up for war,” like an army on the march.

Exo 14:14 The LORD shall **fight** for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Exo 15:1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath **triumphed** gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. ... 3 The LORD is a **man of war**: the LORD is his name.

At this point, God has told Moses twice to go. He has also detailed how the mission will unfold, to assure Moses that the God who is with him has everything under control. But Moses still drags his feet. His next two utterances are not questions, as in 3:11-15, but statements, as though God needs to be informed about something. In addition, they are both negative—“They will not believe me,” “I am not eloquent.”³⁷ He is not just asking for clarification, but complaining that the task cannot be done, clearly a resistant attitude.

In these last three exchanges, the Lord's response is introduced with the name he has now learned, “The LORD said,” instead of “God said” as in 3:14, 15. Now that the Lord has reminded him of his name YHWH, the text describes him, not as God, but as the LORD.

4:1-9, Statement about the People: They will not believe

Like the second utterance, this one focuses on objections from the people. Unlike it, it is framed as a statement rather than a question, and is posed negatively, both features of the second panel.

4:1 And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice:—At first glance, Moses' first statement seems to contradict 3:18 (“they shall hearken to thy voice”).³⁸ But there are two qualifications (chart).

36 *Hifil* of לָשׂוּ *sha-al* H7592. See HALOT. Only here and 1 Sam 1:28. Evidence from cognates suggests it means simply to grant a request.

37 I am grateful to A. Parunak for this observation.

38 Houtmann takes 4:1 as evidence that 3:18 should be understood conditionally, “if they hear you ...”

Notice the second qualification first (chart). Here and in 3:18, the verb “hearken” is followed by a preposition, which differs between the two verses. The preposition in 3:18 is *le* (ל), while here it is *be* (ב). Scholars debate whether there is a difference in meaning. If there is, the form used here emphasizes obedience, rather than just paying attention. Moses’ response is trying to argue grammar with the Lord. “Lord, you promised they would **listen to** me. But will they **obey** me?”

Moses is picking apart a clear and simple promise of God to avoid committing himself in faith. His objection is a warning to us about the danger of picking apart God’s words to avoid their unpleasant implications. Our Lord warned the Jews about this tendency:

Mat 23:16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! 17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. 19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

God’s word is precious, and deserves full attention to its details. But focus on details can be destructive if we use it to evade God’s intention. Responsible exegesis must originate in a heart that is submitted to the Lord. Recall Ezra’s example:

Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

It is commendable that Ezra wanted to “seek the law of the LORD,” to study it in great detail. But before he could do that safely, he “prepared his heart.” Moses’ heart is not yet prepared.

Moses’ second concern (expressed first) is more credible: “they will not believe me.” “Even if they listen to me, they won’t believe it.” This is the first instance of the verb “believe” (יָאֵמַן *Hifil, he-emin* H539) in Exodus, and all but two of the eight instances are in this chapter (Figure 7).³⁹ The peak begins with Moses’ question, and continues with four instances spoken by the Lord as he patiently assures Moses that they will believe. The next two instances report the fulfillment of this promise:

Ex. 4:30 Aaron spake all the words ... and did the signs ... 31 And the people **believed**:

Ex. 14:31 And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and **believed** the LORD, and his servant Moses.

Finally, at Sinai, the Lord offers one great final sign to insure that the people will believe:

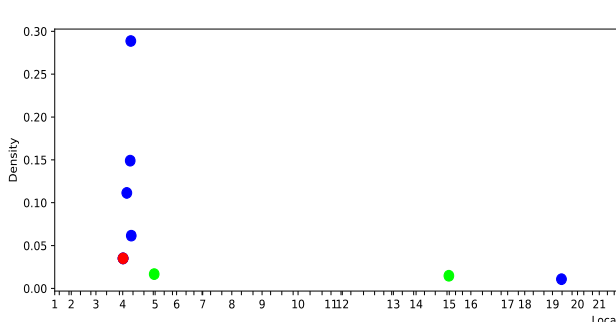


Figure 7: "Believe" in Exodus. Speaker: **Moses**, **Narrator**, **God**

³⁹ 14:31 and 19:9 describe the peoples’ belief as a result of the victory at the Red Sea and the theophany on Mount Sinai, respectively.

Ex. 19:9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and **believe** thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

These varied instances of the term offer a concise theology of belief:

1. People must believe to enjoy God’s blessings.
2. This belief is moderated by a human messenger,
3. but controlled by God, who knows and moves their hearts.

for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.—They will question his report of the theophany.

The Lord now gives him three signs, which he performs before the elders (4:30). Theophanies are regularly accompanied by supernatural signs (chart).

- In Genesis 15, Abram sees God moving as “a smoking furnace and a burning lamp” through the sacrifices.
- In Genesis 28, Jacob sees the vision of the ladder at Bethel.
- In Judges 6, the angel of the Lord first brings fire from heaven to consume Gideon’s sacrifice, and then, at Gideon’s request, provides the sign of the fleece.
- In Judges 13, the angel of the Lord ascends to heaven in the flame of a sacrifice.

Moses has already received such a sign—the bush that burns and yet is not consumed (Exod 3:2, 12). He knows that he is talking with God. But his mission requires that he persuade the Israelites as well. So God gives him signs that make them direct witnesses of the theophany. Thus they can say to Pharaoh, “The God of the Hebrews hath met with us” (3:18; 5:3).

All three signs assure Israel of God’s protection from threats that they might otherwise fear in leaving Egypt.⁴⁰

2 And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod⁴¹.—God does the signs with what Moses already has—his shepherd’s rod, his hand. There is no relic or apparatus. The power comes directly from God, not from a special object.

3 And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.—The Egyptian cobra was the symbol of the goddess Wadjet, protector of lower (northern) Egypt, and a stylized cobra (the Uraeus) was part of Pharaoh’s crown (Figure 8). Moses fears the snake not only for its poison, but for the power of Egypt, represented by Pharaoh. In addition, raised in the palace, he may have feared the gods of Egypt, as did many other Hebrews.

4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail.—The tail is the most dangerous place to hold a snake, since it can twist around to bite you.



Figure 8: Mask of Tutankhamun, showing cobra (goddess Wadjet) and falcon (god Horus)

⁴⁰ The first two (serpents, Num 21; leprosy, Miriam in Num 12:1-15, Uzziah in 2 Chr 26:16-21, Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:20-27) also represent divine judgment, but this allusion would not be accessible to the children of Israel at the time Moses returns to them. See the methodology developed by D.R. Klingler, *Validity in the Identification and Interpretation of Literary Allusions in the Hebrew Bible* (Pickwick: Eugene, OR, 2021) (DTS ThD thesis).

And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:—In spite of this danger, the instant he touches the serpent, it becomes a harmless rod.

The first sign shows that God has given Moses power over the satanic gods of Egypt and Pharaoh as their representative. Pharaoh will be powerless to oppose God’s plan.

5 That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.—This power will reassure the Hebrews that Moses has indeed met the LORD.

6 And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.—The second sign deals with a dreaded skin disease that appears frequently in the Bible. The Egyptians viewed it as a form of impurity that excluded a person from the society.⁴² Moses faces opposition, not only from Pharaoh, the bearer of the serpent crown, but also from the Egyptian people, who will treat him and his brethren as lepers.⁴³ How can Israel overcome widespread popular animosity?

7 And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. 8 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.—The second sign shows that God has given Moses control, not only over the opposition of Pharaoh, but also over the popular attitude toward the Hebrews. This control will be seen in the willingness of the Egyptians to enrich Israel on their departure.

9 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.—The third sign anticipates the first of the plagues on Egypt, in 7:14-25. There, he turned the whole river to blood, alongwith all the other water in Egypt:

Exo 7:19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. 20 ... **all the waters** that were in the river were turned to blood.

Here, he takes some of the water from the river and turns it to blood by pouring it on the ground.

The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt. Its yearly flooding covered the fields with fertile silt, and it was an abundant source of irrigation water in an otherwise arid land. This annual cycle, critical to the survival of the nation, was believed to be under the control of the god Hapi, and Pharaoh’s offerings to Hapi were a major part of his care for the welfare of the people. In addition to

41 מַטֵּה *matteh* H4294, as throughout. This word also means “tribe,” but in Exodus only when speaking of one specific tribe. The only place שֵׁבֶט *shebet* H7626 is used in the sense of “rod” in Exod is 21:20, speaking of fatally beating someone; the other three instances mean “tribe,” always plural, referring to the whole company.

42 Stephen Newman, “Moses is Cured of Leprosy.” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 44:3, 2016, pp, 166-168, http://jbnqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/443/jbq_443_newmanleprosy.pdf. Josephus (Contra Apion 1:232ff) quotes Manetho, ca. 300 BC, who describes the initial ostracism of the Jews as due to leprosy and other impurities (1:233).

43 Thus Manetho (see Newman)

fearing Pharaoh's military might (the serpent) and the popular opposition of the people (the leprosy), the Israelites may fear leaving the agricultural security of the Nile. The third sign shows that God, not Hapi or Pharaoh, controls the Nile, and they should trust in God, not in the river, to provide for them.

4:10-12, Statement about Moses: I cannot speak

Moses' fourth utterance returns from a concern with the people to the subject of his first question, his own capabilities. There, he asked, "Who am I?" Now he questions one specific ability.

10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord,—Note the capitalization. Moses does not use the divine name (Jehovah, YHWH) of which God has just reminded him, but a generic word for "Lord, master," אָדֹנָי (*adōn*, H136).

Already in Genesis, people address the Lord by his proper name. Thus Eliezer at the well of Haran,

Gen 24:12 And he said, **O LORD God** of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

and Jacob in blessing the tribes before his death,

Gen 49:18 I have waited for thy salvation, **O LORD**.

Later, Moses will thus address him, in celebrating the victory at the Red Sea:

Exo 15:6 Thy right hand, **O LORD**, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. (also vv. 11, 16, 17).

But at this point he is still fighting with the Lord, and does not offer him the respect of using the name that God has revealed to him.⁴⁴

I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.—Moses is focused on his own capabilities. He has not yet seized the truth that he is to be the messenger of God.

11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?—This claim lays the foundation for the following promise. More generally, it answers any objection we might pose to a commission that God gives us, based on our perceived inability. He who created us will make us able to do the work he has for us. Insisting on our inability is denying the most basic tenet of our faith, Gen 1:1.

Note the Lord's emphasis on his proper name. He is not just "master," but the absolute sovereign, the creator of all things.

12 Now therefore go,—This is the third time God has told him, "Go."

and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.—His words recall 3:12 "I will be with thee." As there, the question is not whether Moses is adequate, in and of himself, but whether God is able.

Moses' objection, and God's response, anticipate the call of Jeremiah:

44 Observation from A. Parunak

Jer 1:4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. 6 Then said I, **Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak:** for I am a child. ... 9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

It also anticipates the Lord's promise when he sent out the 12 during his earthly ministry,

Mat 10:18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

In the Olivet discourse, he offers the same encouragement to us, who live during the seal judgments of this present age:

Luk 21:14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

This is the confidence that we should have in our witness for him.

4:13-17, Request: Send someone else

Three times Moses has been told to go, but he is still reluctant. He began with reasonable questions, seeking legitimate clarification. He continued with statements, implying that the Lord was ignorant of some crucial fact. Now he changes to a third mode of speech, the request (imperative), telling God what to do (Figure 5).

13 And he said, O my Lord,—Again, Moses does not use the name that God has revealed to him, but simply uses a courteous expression he would use toward another person. He does not recognize that he is under command from the sovereign Lord of the universe.

send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.—Expressions of this form⁴⁵ emphasize the totality of the person or thing described. In this case, the meaning is “Send whoever you want.” But given that the Lord has three times told Moses himself to go, it is clear that Moses excludes himself from this suggestion. What he means is “Send somebody, send anybody you like ... just don't send me.”

14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses,—The comparison is often made between Moses and Jonah, who also resisted the mission God had for him, and with whom the Lord was also angry. Jonah resisted in action, and the Lord responded in punitive action, with his terrifying experience in the sea and the great fish. Here, Moses expresses his resistance verbally, and the Lord deals with it verbally.

and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother?—This is the first reference in the Bible to Aaron, a person named more frequently in Exodus than in any other book.⁴⁶ We will learn his genealogy in chapter 6, when God commissions Moses and Aaron. There, we have the genealogy of Levi, including these details (chart):

45 Known as *idem per idem*, Ogden, *JSOT* 53 (1992) 107-120.

46 116/347 times. 297 of the instances are in Exodus (4.47/1000 words), Leviticus (4.28), and Numbers (4.03).

Exo 6:16 And these are the names of the sons of **Levi** according to their generations; Gershon, and **Kohath**, and Merari: ... 18 And the sons of Kohath; **Amram**, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel: ... 20 And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him **Aaron** and **Moses**: ...

Aaron and Moses are brothers, both descended from Levi. As the order of the names in the genealogy suggests, Aaron is older than Moses. He dies at the age of 123 (Num 33:39), while Moses is still alive, and Moses later dies at the age of 120 (Deut 34:7), so Moses is at least three years younger than Aaron. Just as Moses' elder sister watched over him as an infant, so God is sending his elder brother to help him in his work as an adult.

Why does God call Aaron “the Levite”? The significance of the title lies in its etymology, invoked by Leah at Levi's birth:⁴⁷

Gen 29:34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be **joined unto me**, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called **Levi**.

Leah derived the name from the verb לָוָה *lavah* H3867, which means “to accompany,” or⁴⁸ to be joined to someone. It is invoked in this sense when God later encourages Aaron in his priestly responsibilities,

Num. 18:2 And thy brethren also of the tribe of **Levi**, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be **joined unto** thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witness.

God calls Aaron “the Levite” because he intends him to accompany and support Moses. This partnership illustrates a general principle in ministry. We are not meant to serve God in isolation. From the very start, God said concerning Adam, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18). When the Lord sent out his disciples, first the 12 (Mark 6:7), then the 70 (Luke 10:1), he sent them “two and two.” When the Holy Spirit directed the saints at Antioch to send out missionaries, it was a pair, “Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 13:2), and when they separated, Paul joined with Silas (Acts 15:40).

I know that he can speak well.—This remark is satirical, recalling Moses' excuse in 4:10 that he can't speak well. God has already promised to enable Moses to speak, and Moses' fluency in writing the five books of Torah show God's fulfillment of that promise. Here, God is gently poking fun at Moses' lack of trust in his promise.

And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee:—Just as God is calling Moses to return to Egypt, he is sending Aaron to encourage him. The actual call to Aaron comes a few verses later:

Exo 4:27 And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.—When Moses left Egypt, he had no friends. Pharaoh sought to kill him, and the Hebrews rejected him. God assures him that there is at least one Israelite who will welcome him.

15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.—Moses does not get off the

47 Thus Cassuto, and mentioned by K&D, following Baumgarten.

48 In the *nifal*, used in 11 of the verb's 12 instances

hook for speaking. He is still to be the channel for God’s revelation. God had already promised, at the start of the conversation, to be with Moses (3:12). Now he focuses that promise of his presence on the very ability that Moses had called into question.

God also promises to “be with ... his [Aaron’s] mouth,” even though God has said, “He can speak well.” What matters in accomplishing the work of God is not our natural, fleshly abilities, but the presence of God.

16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.—This pattern is repeated in a few chapters (chart):

Exo 7:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a **god** to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy **prophet**. 2 Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

In both verses, Aaron mediates the relation between Moses and someone else (the people in 4:16; Pharaoh in 7:1-2) (Figure 9). In both cases, Moses occupies the role of God. The assumption is that God does not speak directly with people, but works through a spokesman (4:16), otherwise called a prophet (7:1, from the Greek expression “to speak on behalf of someone”).

Even the pagans understood that the highest gods did not speak directly with men, but spoke through messengers:

Act 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Hebrews reminds us that this was indeed God’s policy before the incarnation, but the coming of the Lord Jesus represents a radical change to this pattern.

Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, ...

17 And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.— “This rod”⁴⁹ (chart) is apparently the rod that Moses carried as a shepherd, which he had seen change into a serpent (4:2-4). But God has commandeered it, and in a few verses it is called “the rod of God” (4:20; 17:9). Most references to a rod in the execution of the miracles describe the rod as Aaron’s (7:9), and it is not clear whether Moses and Aaron share a single rod, or whether God endows Aaron’s rod with the same miracle-working powers as Moses’ rod.

A person’s rod was an intensely personal item that could identify the owner. Tamar used Judah’s rod to identify him as the father of her children (“staff” here is the same Hebrew word):

Gen 38:18 And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy **staff** that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. ... 25 When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and **staff**.

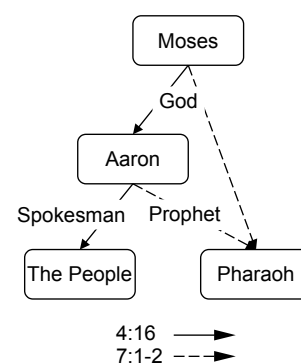


Figure 9: Moses and Aaron as a Model of Prophecy

49 See note for instances

The densest concentration of the word is in Numbers 17, where God confirms his choice of Aaron as the priestly leader by selecting among the rods of the leaders of the twelve tribes.

The sharing of the rod between the two men would emphasize their close union. In addition, in 4:20, it is called “God’s rod,” indicating his close identification with the two men. The Hebrew word (מִטָּה *matteh* H4294) can mean either “rod, staff” or “tribe” (as identified by a staff). In the sense of rod or staff, it appears 20x in Exodus, more often than any other book (see note).

4:18, Concluding Description

4:18 And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive.—As a member of Jethro’s household, Moses properly requests his permission to return to Egypt. Not to do so would be a severe breach of family etiquette (recall Jacob’s experience with Laban in Genesis 31).

Remarkably, Moses says nothing of God’s appearance and command to him. He motivates his request, not by God’s command, but by a personal desire to see whether his kinfolk in Egypt have survived the oppressive actions that Pharaoh was taking against them. Does he fear that Jethro, as a priest, might not recognize the God who has appeared to him, or might want to rule on the validity of the revelation he has received?

And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.—Jethro is sympathetic to Moses’ request. His courteous permission is, formally, the imperative of the verb “to go,” and thus echos the Lord’s command, “Go!”, from 3:10, 16; 4:12.

This concludes the last element of the summary panel, “Encounter with God at Horeb” (Table 1, chart). The narrative has now carried us from the entry of Israelites into Egypt (itself a recap of Genesis 46-47) through a description of their oppression, the introduction of Moses, his life in the palace, journey to Midian, conflict with adversaries, relations with the non-Israelite Jethro, and finally a meeting with God on Horeb. Now the second panel will recapitulate all these steps, with most of its emphasis on the last element, occupying chapters 19-40.

Notes

Parallels with Gal 4:3-5

Exod 2:23-25 describes the moment when God steps out of the shadows to intervene actively in behalf of Israel. In Galatians 4, Paul describes the coming of our Lord in terms that recall this transition:

Gal 4:3 Even so we, when we were children, were in **bondage** under the elements of the world: 4 But when **the fulness of the time** was come, God **sent forth** his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To **redeem** **ἐξαγοραζω**⁵⁰ them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of **sons**.

Paul presents our Lord as the new Moses (cf. Deut 18:18), delivering us from our bondage to sin. Consider these parallels.

Gal 4:3 we ... were in bondage; Exo 1:13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.—Like Egypt, we were in bondage, to “the elements of the world” (cf. Gal 4:9). Something in common to the Gentile galatians and the Jews—the law principle, seeking salvation by keeping a set of precepts, rather than faith in God’s grace.

Gal 4:4a the fulness of the time; Exo 2:23 And it came to pass in process of time (after many days), that the king of Egypt died:—As Israel’s deliverance was delayed for “many days” until they recognized their need, so the coming of the Messiah awaited until Israel had exhausted every effort under its own strength.

Gal 4:4b God sent forth his Son; Ex. 3:12 And God spoke to Moses, saying, I will be with thee, and this shall be the sign to thee that I shall send thee forth, when thou bringest out my people out of Egypt, then ye shall serve God in this mountain.—No one among the enslaved Israelites could deliver them. It took someone who, though descended from them, was sent from a far country. God sent forth his Son to deliver us—sharing our flesh, but sent from heaven.

Gal 4:5a to redeem ἐξαγοραζω them; Exo 6:6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem λυτροω you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:—The OT repeatedly describes the delivery of Israel from Egypt as redemption, a family of words that is the basis for describing our Lord’s work on the cross. Like slaves being purchased from the market, we were purchased with the blood of Christ.

Gal 4:5b adoption of sons; Exo 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.—The relation into which God brings us, though a relation of service, is not one of slavery, but of sonship. We share his life, and enter into all the blessings of the heavenly family.

⁵⁰ Late verb, only in Daniel (2:8).

Hebrew Words for “Desert” or “Wilderness”

Hebrew has a variety of words to describe areas remote from towns or villages, and our English terms can be misleading. The universal LXX term is ἔρημος *erēmos* G2048, which appears 375x. Hebrew equivalents are:

מִדְבָּר *midbar* **H4497**, 248/270 is the most common source, and is a technical term for “grazing land.” We should not think of it as sand dunes, like the Sahara or the Arabian.

שְׁמָמָה *shemamah, shamamah* **H8077**, 15/57, deserted, uninhabited regions. שְׁמָמָה means “to be devastated, to be appalled.” This would be appropriate for sandy wastes.

חֲרָבָה *chorbah* **H2723**, *chorabah* **H2724**, 21/50, destruction, dry land. חָרַב can be either “be dry, dried up” or “be desolate.”

Smith’s Bible Dictionary has a good summary:

Desert. Not a stretch of sand, an utterly barren waste, but a wild, uninhabited region. The words rendered, in the Authorized Version, by "desert," when used in the historical books denote definite localities.

1. Arabah. This word means that very depressed and enclosed region — the deepest and the hottest chasm in the world — the sunken valley north and south of the Dead Sea, but more particularly the former. See Arabah. Arabah, in the sense of the Jordan valley, is translated by the word "desert" only in Ezk 47:8.

2. Midbar. This word, which our translators have most frequently rendered by "desert," is accurately "the pasture ground". It is most frequently used for those tracts of waste land which lie beyond the cultivated ground in the immediate neighborhood of the towns and villages of Palestine, and which are a very familiar feature to the traveller in that country. Exo 3:1; Exo 6:3; Exo 19:2.

3. Charbah appears to have the force of dryness, and thence of desolation. It is rendered "desert" in Psa 102:6; Isa 48:21; Ezk 13:4. The term commonly employed for it, in the Authorized Version, is "waste places" or "desolation".

4. Jeshimon, with the definite article, apparently denotes the waste tracts on both sides of the Dead Sea. In all these cases, it is treated as a proper name, in the Authorized Version. Without the article, it occurs in a few passages of poetry in the following of which it is rendered; "desert:" Psa 78:40; Psa 106:14; Isa 43:19-20.

Names for Mount Sinai

Mountain of God הַר אֱלֹהִים

To be distinguished from הַר אֱלֹהִים, Eden, where the “king of Tyre” walked, Ezek 28:16; one other instance in Ps 68:15, probably Bashan or Mount Hermon (contrasted with Sinai in vv. 9, 18). The arthrous form always refers to this specific mountain: Ex. 4:27 (where Moses meets Aaron on his way back to Egypt); 18:5 (where Jethro meets him on his return to Sinai); 24:13 (one of Moses’ ascents to the mountain); 1 Kings 19:8 (Elijah’s destination, also called Horeb).

The use of arthrous אלהים is intriguing, suggesting one specific, well-known deity.

Sinai

This name is concentrated in the Pentateuch (Figure 10). The only later references are in poetry (Judg 5:5; Psa 68:9, 18) and Nehemiah's prayer (9:13). Even in Deuteronomy, it appears only once, in poetry.

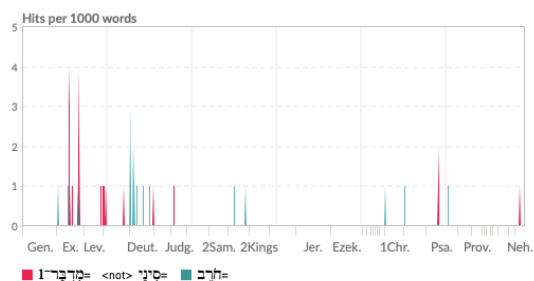


Figure 10: Instances of Horeb (turquoise) and Sinai (red) in the OT (Accordance search: sinai <not> midbar)

Horeb

The name means “desolate, dry,” describing the arid terrain. Its distribution is inverse to Sinai: only three times in Exodus, but nine times in the narrative parts of Deuteronomy, and then in later narrative and prophetic (Mal 4:4) texts. The only poetic reference is Ps 106:19, “they made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.”

Theophanies

The basic outline is due to Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, <https://archive.org/details/selfrevelationof0000kuntz>, pp. 58-59: based on Gen 26:23-25,

1. Introductory description
2. Divine self-asseveration
3. Quelling of human fear
4. Assertion of gracious divine presence
5. “Hieros logos”
6. Concluding description

He then posits a ten part structure (p. 60):

1. Intro description 3d person
2. Deity utters the name of the personal
3. Brief, expectant response of the mortal
- 4., Self-asseveration
5. Quelling human fear
6. Assertion of gracious presence
7. Hieros logos
8. Inquiry or protest
9. Continuation of hieros logos, some repetition of 4-7
10. Concluding description

“Angel of the Lord” or “angel of God” in the NT

Identification of this person in the OT with the pre-incarnate Son of God at first seems difficult because the expressions both appear in the NT. However, note the use of the article.

In Hebrew, מלאך יהוה is definite because of the proper name in construct. However, the LXX translates both ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου (Gen 16:8) and ἄγγελος κυρίου (Gen 16:7), showing an insensitivity to definiteness by construction.

In the NT the only instance of ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου is Matt 1:24, where expression is definite because it is referring to the specific angel of the Lord mentioned anarthrously in 1:20. All other instances are properly translated “an angel of the Lord,” indicating a generic angel.

3:7, 10 My People

Exod 3:7 is the first time God calls Israel “my people,” a phrase that Exodus uses more than any other book. The prophets highlight three ways that we attain to this status: ransom, covenant, and fellowship. All three are present in Exodus, and all three are particularly relevant when we gather to remember the Lord’s sacrifice for us.

By ransom:

Isa 43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for **I have redeemed thee**, I have called thee by thy name; **thou art mine**.

The Exodus from Egypt is the prototypical example in the OT of God redeeming his people:

Exo 6:6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and **I will redeem you** with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

Deu 7:8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and **redeemed you** out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Redemption is the process of releasing someone from the control of another by paying a price. Later in Isaiah 43, we read the price that God paid to redeem Israel from Egypt:

Isa 43:3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: **I gave Egypt for thy ransom**, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

The firstborn of Egypt died to redeem Israel. Tonight, we remember that God’s own Son died to bear our sin and redeem us to God.

By covenant:

Ezk 16:7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. 8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and **entered into a covenant** with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and **thou becamest mine**.

The multiplication in v. 7 refers to the increase of the children of Israel in Egypt from 70 to a multitude (600k men in Numbers). The covenant here is at Sinai.

Israel broke that covenant, as Ezekiel goes on to point out later in the chapter. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah look forward to a new covenant that God's people will not break, because they are indwelt by his Spirit:

Ezk 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Jer 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Our Lord ratified this new covenant when he poured out "my blood of the new covenant," memorialized in the cup.

By fellowship:

Mal 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that **thought upon his name.** 17 **And they shall be mine,** saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Repeatedly in Exodus and the rest of the Pentateuch, God declares he is delivering them so that they might know his name, YHWH. For example,

Exo 6:7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

The repeated refrain of Leviticus is "I am the LORD your God." The entire tabernacle liturgy, around which their feasts and fasts circled each year, had the objective of focusing their attention on his name.

Even so, when we gather, it is "in remembrance of" him, to "shew the Lord's death until he come" (1 Cor 11:24-26). For us, as for them, as we focus our attention on his name, we seal our relationship as his people.

Notes on the Names of God in 3:14, 15

I have emphasized that אהיה should be read as future, not present. The non-jussive imperfect of היה is overwhelmingly translated as future in the AV. The present tense prediction "I am X" is represented in Hebrew as a verbless clause (not as the perfect, as one commentator suggests).

The LXX does translate the verb here as present, Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν. When Jesus identifies himself as "I am" (John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19), some hear an echo of this verse, but he is more likely referring to God's self-description in Deut 32:39, frequently echoed in Isaiah (41:4; 43:10, 13; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6), אני הוא, translated ἐγώ εἰμι.

Albright and his students Cross and Freedman understand יהוה as 3ms Hiphil (causative) of הוה, which they take as an archaic form of the same verb היה that lies behind “I will be.” This form with ו rather than י appears in Aramaic and other cognates, and possibly a few times in the Hebrew Bible (*HALOT* 1:241, II הוה). But היה never appears in the Hiphil, and this position has fallen from scholarly favor.

Use of יהוה in Genesis

The word appears 165 times, but mostly used by the narrator. 55 times it is uttered by the characters, or used in a way that suggests they must know it.

Direct Utterance 38

Gen. 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

Gen. 9:26 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

Gen. 14:22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

Gen. 15:2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

Gen. 15:8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

Gen. 16:2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Gen. 16:5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

Gen. 19:14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

Gen. 24:3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

Gen. 24:7 The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

Gen. 24:12 And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Gen. 24:27 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

Gen. 24:31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

Gen. 24:35 And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

Gen. 24:40 And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

Gen. 24:42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

Gen. 24:44 And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son.

Gen. 24:48 And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

Gen. 24:50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

Gen. 24:51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

Gen. 24:56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.

Gen. 26:22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

Gen. 26:28 And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

Gen. 26:29 That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

Gen. 27:7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

Gen. 27:20 And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.

Gen. 27:27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

Gen. 28:13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

Gen. 28:16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

Gen. 28:21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

Gen. 29:32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.

Gen. 29:33 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.

Gen. 29:35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

Gen. 30:24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.

Gen. 30:27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

Gen. 30:30 For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

Gen. 31:49 And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

Gen. 32:9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

Gen. 49:18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

Object of Worship 12

Gen. 4:26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

Gen. 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Gen. 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Gen. 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

Gen. 13:4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Gen. 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Gen. 21:33 And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God.

Gen. 24:26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

Gen. 24:52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.

Gen. 25:21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Gen. 25:22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

Gen. 26:25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Revealed by the Lord 5

Gen. 15:7 And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

Gen. 16:11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

Gen. 18:14 Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Gen. 19:13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

Gen. 22:16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

שמע בקול vs. שמע לקול

שמע בקול is about 5x as common as שמע לקול, and so are the various translations (Table 1). From the perspective of the LXX, there does not appear to be a difference in meaning.

	שמע לקול	שמע בקול	Total
ἀκούω	8	58	950
ὑπακούω	2	9	58
ἐπακούω	0	5	95
εἰσακούω	5	27	228
Total	18	99	

Whose Rod?

Attribution of the miraculous rod in Exodus. 27 hits in all, some translated “tribe.” מטה is translated “rod” or “staff” 63x in the OT, most commonly (20x, 0.61/1k words) in Exodus. Next is Numbers at 13x, 0.4/1k, 10 of these in the context of the rods in Num 17.

Table 7: LXX Translations of שמע לקול and שמע בקול

Moses:

4:2 And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

4:4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

4:17 And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

9:23 And **Moses** stretched forth **his rod** toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

10:13 And **Moses** stretched forth **his rod** over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

14:16 But lift thou up **thy rod**, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

17:5 And the LORD said unto **Moses**, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and **thy rod**, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

Rod of God

4:20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the **rod of God** in his hand.

17:9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the **rod of God** in mine hand.

Aaron's Rod

7:9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto **Aaron**, Take **thy rod**, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.

7:10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and **Aaron** cast down **his rod** before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

7:12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but **Aaron's rod** swallowed up their rods.

7:15 Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the **rod** which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand.

7:17 Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the **rod** that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

7:19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto **Aaron**, Take **thy rod**, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

7:20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the **rod**, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

8:5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto **Aaron**, Stretch forth thine hand with **thy rod** over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.

8:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto **Aaron**, Stretch out **thy rod**, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

8:17 And they did so; for **Aaron** stretched out his hand with **his rod**, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

Magician's rods

7:12 For they cast down every man his **rod**, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

Tribe

31:2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

31:6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;

35:30 And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;

35:34 And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

38:22 And Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD commanded Moses.

38:23 And with him was Aholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen.