

metre in height every year for the last 30 years”.

It is interesting to consider that the Dead Sea probably came into existence in its present format because of God’s judgements on Sodom and Gomorrah, and is now promoted as a health resort. It is even more of a paradox when we read Scripture and see the transformation that will be effected in the Kingdom. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of the sea being healed because of the waters that issue forth from the temple. He speaks of multitudes, not of health tourists, but of fish, and of fishermen from En-gedi to En-eglaim (47:8-11). What was once a place of judgement will become a blessing. Such will be the beauty of the Kingdom.

Source: *News Israel*, Jul. 2010.

## Israelis are being converted

SADLY, they are not being converted in a religious sense but in relation to the fuel their cars run on. More than 15,000

cars and trucks have recently been converted to operate on the less expensive, low emission, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), according to reports in the press and on television. Israel has, of course, discovered vast gas resources in its territorial waters in the Mediterranean, which it believes will supply more than it needs for the next twenty-five to thirty-five years.

Such is the quantity thought to be available that Israel will almost certainly turn from being a consumer of gas to a supplier to other countries. Two years ago there were only fifteen LPG gas stations, compared with the fifty that exist now, and more are planned. The average cost is 2.80 shekels per litre, compared with 6.14 shekels per litre for 95-octane petrol. There is some concern that if there is a move to convert a large percentage of motor vehicles then the demand will ultimately push up the price. This would affect households because most people already use LPG for cooking at home.

We can be sure that the entrepreneurial and resourceful skills of the Israelis will seek to take advantage of the gas finds in every conceivable way to benefit commercial and domestic activities. It is interesting to note that a proposed Russian Gas Pipeline that was intended to run into Turkey, then round to Lebanon and into Israel, has now been amended by the Russians. They are saying that, in the light of the Israeli gas finds, it will go only as far as Turkey.

The powerful Russian energy company Gazprom has approached Israel to see if they can be involved in the extraction of gas from the Mediterranean, but Israel has turned their offer down. Perhaps we see here the beginning of the situation that leads to the question by the merchants of Tarshish, “Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company . . . to take a great spoil?” when the northern invader comes down (Ezek. 38:13).

Source: [IsraelNews.com](http://IsraelNews.com), Jun. 2010.

## Principles, preaching and problems

# Yahweh Elohim

Geoff Henstock

*God has chosen to reveal His Name to His people. His Name is no mere identity tag, for He is the unique, uncreate God. Rather, His Name reveals His character and purpose. It is displayed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Name into which believers of the gospel have been called.*

IN EXODUS 2 we read of the circumstances of the birth of Moses and his upbringing in the court of Pharaoh. Moses was sympathetic to the plight of his people; in Exodus 2:11,12 he seized an opportunity to strike a blow on their behalf: “it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and

looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand”.

It seems that forty-year-old Moses thought he could deliver his people through the strength of his own arm. He was to learn that God had other plans. Even his own people questioned his authority to act in such a way, as we see when he challenged two fellow-Israelites the next day: “when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the

wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known" (vv. 13,14). His actions were known not just to this Israelite but also to Pharaoh (v. 15). This abortive effort at deliverance led to Moses fleeing to Midian, where he spent a further forty years waiting for God's time to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage.

### At the bush

Exodus 3 records Moses' great encounter with God in the burning bush. In verse 6 the Deity identified himself as the God of the patriarchs: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God".

These words would have reminded Moses of the prophecy to Abraham in Genesis 15 about Israel going into Egypt for an extended period of time, after which they would be delivered by God. The time for deliverance had arrived. In verse 8 God speaks of His intention to bring Israel out of Egypt into the land promised to the patriarchs. In verse 10 Moses was told he would be God's agent in this deliverance.

Forty years before, Moses had been brash enough to think that he could deliver the people through his own strength. The years since then had tempered his boldness, and he now doubted his fitness for the task: "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? And He said, Certainly I will be with thee" (vv. 11,12).

Moses knew his limitations. This task would pitch him against not only the most powerful man in the world at that time but also his fellow Israelites, who would present almost as great a challenge. God promised that He would provide the power through which this would be achieved.

A shallow person might imagine that such a promise should be sufficient for any man. A few moments' contemplation, however, will confirm the awesome magnitude of the task at hand. We ought not to be surprised that Moses felt diffident about the great work to which he was called. Who amongst us has not shirked Divinely directed duty of much lesser difficulty and significance?

### God's Name revealed

In verse 13, recalling perhaps the challenge to his authority forty years before, Moses asked

God to confirm the authority by which he was to act. The request for God to reveal a name was not just to provide a personal title Moses could invoke. It was a request that his authority to act 'in that name' should be confirmed. The response of God in verses 14 and 15 has been described as "The outstanding theophany of the Old Testament Scriptures"<sup>1</sup>: "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you . . . 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".

God told Moses, "I am that I am" (AV) or "I will be who I will be" (RV)—although for the God Who inhabits eternity these alternatives amount to the same thing.<sup>2</sup> This is an expression of God's reality and purpose. He will be manifested in various ways in accordance with His purpose. These words are spoken in the first person—spoken by God about Himself. In verse 15 the grammar changes to the third person—to words used to refer to another person. Here is revealed to us the Memorial Name, the Name God says memorialises His purpose for all generations.

Moses is told that the God of the patriarchs is Yahweh Elohim. Yahweh means 'He will be'; elohim means 'mighty ones'. Thus the Name speaks of God's intention to be manifested in a multitude of mighty ones, men and women associated with the faith of the fathers. The mention of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, however, connects this revelation not merely with the promises made to those men. We know from the Lord's quotation of this passage when in dispute with the Sadducees (Mt. 22:32) that it also confirms the fact of the resurrection. God will raise from the dead those faithful servants who have embraced the promises. They will then constitute part of the elohim—the mighty ones—through whom the Creator will manifest Himself.

### Let My people go

In Exodus 4 Moses remains uncertain of his ability to perform the work to which he had been called. In some respects this is exactly as it should be. It is not by our own power but by the power of

1. Brother C. C. Walker, *Theophany*, The Christadelphian, 1967, p. 45.
2. See also Brother Alfred Nicholls, *The Name that is Above Every Name*, p. 38.

Almighty God that we can achieve anything in his sight. Paul told the Philippians, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”, but the very next words he used were, “For it is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (2:12,13). Moses was to learn that in God our “strength is made perfect in weakness”. Any confidence we have can be based only on the assurance that God is with us. God provided such assurance to Moses through miracles in Exodus 4, and He also provided Aaron as a spokesman.

Exodus 4 closes with the Israelites accepting Moses’ authority and eagerly anticipating their deliverance. It is in that context that Exodus 5 opens with a remarkably bold Moses and Aaron confronting Pharaoh with an unambiguous demand and receiving an equally unambiguous response: “Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (vv. 1,2).

Moses’ demand so enraged Pharaoh that he increased the oppression of the Israelites. It has ever been thus. The appeal of Moses, “Let My people go”, has been the implicit message of all preachers of the gospel, in particular of our Lord Jesus Christ. When this message was spoken by Moses it was rejected by Pharaoh; when it was spoken by the prophets it was rejected by most of the people of Judah and Israel, particularly the rulers; when our Lord preached the same deliverance his message was rejected by most people, particularly by the Jewish and Roman rulers. We should not be surprised, then, that men continue to reject this message. This does not mean we should stop proclaiming it. “Let My people go”—let them flee bondage to sin and death and let them worship Almighty God—must remain our daily proclamation regardless of the fact that few hearken and that some react with hostility.

The Israelites who had endorsed the work of Moses at the end of Exodus 4 quickly turned on him when their burden was increased as a consequence: “they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: and they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us” (5:20,21).

## **Dissatisfied**

This would become something of a pattern for Moses in his relations with Israel. When they were delivered from Egypt it was not long before they murmured about their circumstances. Ten times they murmured in the first two years alone. God provided manna for their sustenance, yet they loathed this “light bread” (Num. 21:5); they longed for “the fish, which [they] did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick” (11:5).

Our Lord experienced similarly fickle Israelites. A huge crowd greeted Jesus enthusiastically on the Sunday prior to Passover, crying out, “Hosanna to the son of David”. This was a clear acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah. Just three days later the same crowd was moved to cry out, “Crucify him, crucify him”, and called for the release of a murderer rather than Jesus.

The sad truth is that dissatisfaction is endemic in the household of God. All of God’s dealings with mankind as revealed in the Bible confirm that, even though men and women like us may embrace the faith of the patriarchs, they can quickly lose their perspective. They can forget that life in God’s service is all about the glorification of God, not the satisfaction of personal needs and desires; that it is about the community of the faithful and not the individual. God is calling out “a people for His name”. That is what James told the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15 (v. 14), and the name to which he referred is the Name revealed in Exodus. God’s Name is what matters: Yahweh Elohim. God’s purpose involves the manifestation of God in a multitude He calls out of bondage. When we lose sight of that fact we can imagine that life in the Truth is about the expression or manifestation of ourselves—our skills, our desires, our preferences—whereas it really is about the subjugation of our will to the will of God.

## **Time for prayer**

Moses was devastated, and he took the only course of action available to him: “Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast Thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all” (Ex. 5:22,23). We should not view this as an attempt to blame God. Rather, it was a plea to the only One Who could assist at this time. Such prayers are a feature of the life of Moses:

open, heartfelt communication with his God in recognition of His power and mercy.

In this regard Moses was like our Lord, who also resorted to prayer regularly, prayers where he engaged in open and direct communication with his Father. Most notably, we have a glimpse of this in Gethsemane immediately prior to his arrest; the letter to the Hebrews says that he “was heard in that he feared” (5:7). Moses was also heard in that he feared:

“Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what *I will* do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, *I am the LORD*: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name *JEHOVAH* was I not known to them. And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered My covenant. 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: 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. 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*” (Ex. 6:1-8).

The name of God is prominent in these verses. The patriarchs had known the Deity as “God Almighty”. There had, of course, been no change in God. This is not a change but a development in the revelation of God. As Israel had now grown into a large nation, and was about to become, in the words of Exodus 19:6, “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation”, this was an appropriate time to reveal God’s intention to be manifested in a redeemed and immortalised multitude.

### **God the Saviour**

This was God’s promise to Israel, and it remains His promise to spiritual Israel. Moses sought to deliver his people with his own arm, but that was

not in accordance with God’s plan. In Exodus 6:6 it is God’s “stretched out arm” that would deliver the Israelites, the same “stretched out arm” that has been extended to Gentiles through Christ.

In Isaiah this image of the stretched-out arm is further developed. We do well to visualise this image: an arm stretched out such as you might expect to see if someone in a boat were trying to pluck a drowning man from the ocean: “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (59:1,2).

The God of Israel is a just God and a Saviour. He wants to save perishing men and women. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save—in other words, His hand is stretched out with a view to grasping those who need saving. The shortening of the hand describes the withdrawal of the fingers into a tight fist. If you were seeking to save a drowning man you would not do that; you would extend your fingers as far as possible in an attempt to grab hold of his hand before he sinks below the waves.

But Isaiah 59:2 says there is a stumblingblock. God wants the world to be reconciled to Him, but there is an impediment. Sin separates us from God. There is no solution to that problem within the power of man. Isaiah 59 goes on to describe the terrible truth about sin in the lives of men and women, and reaches a climax in verses 15 and 16: “the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment. And He saw that *there was no man*, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained him”.

God intervened to overcome the problem man could not solve. As in Exodus 6, God’s arm would bring deliverance—not the arm of Moses or of anyone else. It is through “the man of [God’s] right hand” (Ps. 80:17), the Lord Jesus Christ, that salvation is achieved. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). Like the Exodus, Christ’s birth was another key milestone in the manifestation, or revelation, of God and His plan.

### **God’s character shown in His Name**

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt and our deliverance from bondage to sin and death through Christ are entirely consistent with the character of God. A name is more than a title. It speaks of the bearer’s personality, reputation, authority and

character. In Exodus 34, where we are provided with further information about the memorial Name that Moses revealed to Israel, we find that it is all about God's character:

"the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (vv. 5-7).

Overlapping terms are crammed into these verses. Mercy, grace, longsuffering, goodness, truth, forgiveness—these are the hallmarks of the God of Israel. These characteristics were manifested in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. And these same characteristics were embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jno. 1:14). God was manifested in Christ; together they constituted an initial stage of Yahweh Elohim: the manifestation of God in a multitude of mighty ones, men and women made strong by God.

### **The Name manifested in Jesus**

Like Moses, the Lord Jesus Christ was raised up to deliver us from bondage; not the bondage of slavery in Egypt but the bondage to sin and death in spiritual Egypt. We have embraced that deliverance, albeit we have this treasure in earthen vessels for the time being. We do not always live up to our high calling, but we have forgiveness available through the work of Christ.

On the night before he was crucified the Lord uttered the prayer recorded in John 17. It is rich in allusions to God's purpose to be manifested in a people who would be the fulfilment of the intent revealed in the memorial Name of Yahweh Elohim. In verses 4 and 5 we see that the work of Christ is all about the glorification of God: "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was".

In verse 6 the Lord Jesus Christ made the point that he had manifested God's Name to the

disciples; they had been called out as a people for the Name: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word".

In verse 10 we see that, just as the Lord Jesus glorified God, so it is the responsibility of the saints to glorify the Lord, and, through him, Almighty God: "And all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them". The unity that existed between Jesus and God as constituents of the one Name must also be experienced by the saints, even in the absence of their master: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (v. 11).

Later in the prayer the Lord makes direct reference to those who have responded to the message of the apostles:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me" (vv. 20-23).

This is a remarkable feature of the prayer. Although spoken in front of the disciples, it embodies a message for later generations. There is a strong emphasis on unity in this prayer—the unity that exists between God and His Son, and the unity that should exist within the body of Christ, the ecclesia. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Those who believe in that Son can have eternal life and become one with God and with Jesus Christ His Son. They can become one with God, part of Yahweh Elohim: the manifestation of God in a multitude of mighty ones. That unity applied not just in that time and place. It transcends distance and time. We are united with believers who share our hope wherever they meet and in all ages. Our unity is not restricted by time or space.

### **The unity of believers**

We know we do not always live up to this high ideal of unity. Like Israel of old, we can murmur and despise the blessings of God. This is a

consequence of our nature, although we must never regard that as a valid excuse when we fall short of the ideal. It is a testimony to the perversity of our nature that as a community we have even managed to create divisions over the subject of the memorial Name, a subject which speaks of the unity after which we must strive.

Let us be conscious of the Name in which we have been called. Let us be inspired by the unity we share with our Lord and our God and with our

fellow believers, and let us look forward in eager anticipation to that day when the full significance of the memorial Name is revealed in us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (Jno. 17:25,26).