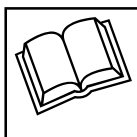


longer has special interest in Israel, or that her place has been taken by the Christian, largely Gentile, Church is unsupported by the Word of God, and in establishing this we have largely concentrated upon the New rather than Old Testament for the sake of 'Christian' predisposition. As Christadelphians we may well feel that we could do more to ensure that God's purpose

with Israel the nation, a key part of the coming Kingdom, is brought to the attention of those who think they know the Bible, as well as of those who do not.

In the next article we plan, God willing, to complete this theme by considering passages that appear to teach Israel's 'casting away', and by including some thoughts on Romans 11.

(To be continued)



Exposition

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The Exodus

A commentary on Exodus 1-15

E. Moses and Pharaoh: first encounters—Exodus 5-6 (Part 3)

Mark Vincent

The format of the commentary

The narrative has been broken down into several **major sections**, of a chapter or two each; some of these will be covered in one month, others will take longer. An **Introduction** is provided for each of these major sections, which sets out the major events and themes dealt with in those chapters.

Each major section is broken into **subsections** or **episodes** (these are typically between five and twenty verses each). For each the **AV text** is followed by a **Comment**, which draws out the major lessons and items of interest from the text. The AV text also contains **Footnotes**, in which additional 'one-off' points are made for those wanting to work through Exodus more slowly.

Introduction

At the end of Exodus 5 Moses has laid before God the apparent failure of his first encounter with Pharaoh. Why has God sent him? Why doesn't God get on and redeem His people, if that is what He so wishes to do? Moses' questions could not be clearer. Now God is about to answer.

God's reassurance to Moses

- 6:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand¹ shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive² them out of his land.
- 6:2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD:
- 6:3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty,³ but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.⁴
- 6:4 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.⁵
- 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.
- 6:6 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 rid⁶ you out of their bondage, and I will redeem⁷ you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

- 6:7 And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God:⁸ and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God,⁹ Which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
- 6:8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear¹⁰ to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage:¹¹ I am the LORD.

Comment

In verse 1 God provides an answer to Moses' questions of the previous chapter. Though Israel, and even Moses himself, may doubt God at the present time, they stand on the brink of an unprecedented display of God's power to deliver: "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh". Indeed, Pharaoh will be so thoroughly turned upside down that he will *drive* them out of his land, sending them forth with all the "strength of hand" with which he had once held them prisoners ([see note 1](#)).

God then gives a second speech (vv. 2-8), which lays out more fully His manifesto of deliverance. He associates this manifesto with His special Name YHWH, which was originally introduced back in chapter 3, and examined in the [September 2001 Testimony](#). One of the first things to notice about the speech is that it begins in exactly the same way that it ends, with the expression "I am the LORD" (6:2,8). The identical expression is used another two times within the text at verses 6,7; there can be no escaping the emphasis.

The speech divides naturally into two halves:

- Verses 2-5 deal with God's covenant with the fathers and with the children of Israel. The word 'covenant' is used in verse 4, and the speech builds to a climax with another use of that word right at the end of verse 5. God has not only *made* a covenant, He has also *remembered* it—and it is about to be fulfilled!
- Verses 6-8 lay out exactly what God is going to do in order to fulfil His promises. He will bring them out of Egypt, redeem them, take them to Himself as His people, and bring them to the land He swore to give them. This part of the speech is again framed by the declaration, "I am the LORD" (vv. 6,8). In the middle (v. 7) God states that, when He has done all these things, Israel will know that He is indeed the One He said He was, the One Who is and would be.

With these verses to guide, it is now possible to make some additional points about the Name YHWH. The most important is its close association with the idea of *covenant*. God introduces Himself as YHWH in verse 2, and in verse 3 He states that, although He is the same God Who was with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He was not known by that Name to them. Nevertheless, He made His covenant with them (v. 4), and now that He is about to fulfil that covenant, and to redeem Israel to Himself, it is appropriate for Him to reveal Himself by that special Name. The Name thus carries with it God's resolve to fulfil His covenant promises, one of which is the promise that they (and ultimately we) may be His people.

This is made clear in verses 7 and 8. Those two verses bring out the three elements of the promises to the patriarchs that were originally singled out in the introduction to this commentary ([Jan. 2001](#)), namely, growth into a great nation (v. 7, "a people"), the gift of the land (v. 8, "I will bring you into the land"), and God's promise to be with them (v. 7, "I will be to you a God"). It is entirely appropriate to speak of the 'Covenant Name' (as we often do) because of this very association of the Name with covenant fulfilment.

The passage also makes clear that there is something *new* about the Name and its link to this central point in Israel's history. The nature of this newness is often debated, and it is worth reviewing the possibilities. God states that He appeared unto Abraham and his sons as God Almighty (*El Shadday* in Hebrew), but was not known to them by His Name YHWH. The implication is that, now He is about to fulfil those covenants, He has appeared to servants as YHWH, and will be 'known' by that Name.

The question is, what is meant by being 'known' by a name? Does it mean that Abraham and the fathers were unaware of the Name YHWH, and that no one spoke this Name until God revealed it to Moses in Exodus 3 and 6? This would seem to be the most straightforward way of reading our passage. The difficulty with such a reading is that the Name YHWH is found around 140 times in the book of Genesis. These occurrences are found not just in the words of the narrator, but also in the mouths of the characters such as Abraham and Joseph. An oft-quoted passage is the statement in Genesis 4:26 that in the days of Seth/Enos "men [began] to call upon the name of the LORD [YHWH]", which

is most easily read to imply that people did use the name YHWH in those days.

So how is Exodus 6:3 to be interpreted? There seem to be two options:

- 1 At face value—before this time the Name YHWH was not used, and God’s revelation of the Name in Exodus 3 and 6 is entirely new. However, the Pentateuch was put together in its final form at a date later than this, and it was entirely natural to write or project the Name YHWH back into the narrative, even though it would not have been used in those days. One can make a loose parallel with the way in which we might speak about the childhood of the Queen of England, even though she was not queen at all when she was a child. This kind of reading strategy is fine for the narrator’s words in Genesis; it is more tricky when Abraham himself uses the Name—it requires that what Genesis records is not a verbatim documentation of what Abraham said, but an account which under God’s inspired hand conveys in the best possible way for later readers the gist or force of his words and of his relationship with God. This is a view which many would find difficulty in accepting, and which requires Genesis 4:26 to be read in a less than obvious way. In its defence, however, it provides the most straightforward way of reading Exodus 6, and is corroborated by the fact that there seem to be no personal names with the prefix ‘Yeho-’ or ‘Yo-’ and no personal names with the suffix ‘-yahu’ or ‘-yah’ (all generally understood to be contractions of YHWH) before Exodus 3, whereas they are abundant afterwards (the only exception is apparently Jochebed, Moses’ mother; this name may be derived from some other source). This latter is quite a forceful argument, for it implies that the Name YHWH was not known at all beforehand.*
- 2 The alternative is to understand Exodus 6 and the expression ‘I was not known by the Name YHWH’ in a less literal way, such that, although people were aware of the Name and used it beforehand, it was not until Exodus 3 and 6 that the true significance of the

Name was finally revealed ([see note 4](#)). The disadvantage of this view is that it tends to assume the characters in Genesis were quite happy using a Name for God that they did not really understand, and that God Himself used the Name when communicating with them, despite their ignorance. One might say that they had ‘some’ understanding of the Name before the Exodus, but that God revealed a new dimension to it at this point, and that the full power associated with the Name was not revealed until the time of the Exodus. But again, it is somewhat difficult and conjectural to distinguish between what they might have understood beforehand and what they understood from this point forwards.

Readers must come to their own conclusions. In my opinion there are sensible arguments on both sides.

Whatever the preferred explanation, the Name YHWH, ‘fully’ understood (to the extent that this is possible), only came into *prominence* as the characteristic personal Name of God in the time of Moses. Whatever its prehistory might have been, the Name is now intimately associated with God’s great covenant purpose, with His timeless existence, and with His determination to fulfil what He has promised in redeeming His people and being their God.

Excursus on the pronunciation of the Name of God

It must rank amongst the greatest ironies of human history that God should make such a point of revealing His special Name to Moses and His people in Exodus 3 and 6, and that the very pronunciation of that Name should have been lost in subsequent history because of man-made superstitions that God did not require! This is not the place to tell the story of how different vowel points were written into the text so that the Name would not be spoken accidentally, but suffice it to say that, through strategies such as this, driven by misguided human reverence and superstition, no one really knows any more exactly how the Name should be pronounced and what the original vowel points would have been.

Of course there are theories, and various pieces of evidence of a kind, but few have the philological expertise to evaluate these fairly, and it is wise not to be dogmatic on matters in which one has had no formal training and no real expertise. It may well be that ‘Yahweh’ as said by many

* Incidentally, a whole scholarly book has been written in defence of this view. R. W. L. Moberley, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament. Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

Christadelphians represents a fairly good approximation of how the Name was originally spoken; but then again, it may not. There would seem to be little profit in arguing about the pronunciation of the Name (the arguments would centre around ancient Hebrew philology and orthography rather than on the Bible, in any case), and it also seems unlikely that God would hold us to ransom for a mispronunciation of the Name when most of us are not conversant with the Hebrew language and do not attempt to pronounce any other of the Biblical names in a Hebrew or Greek way, but content ourselves with anglicised forms.

YHWH is undoubtedly one of God's names—the principal Old Testament name, in fact—and there is an argument for approximating its pronunciation on that basis, whether when we read the Old Testament, or perhaps also when we address God in prayer. To follow the AV and other versions in replacing YHWH with a title ('LORD') is inaccurate in the strictest sense (though the AV has good precedent in following the New Testament's quotations of the Old), and it could be considered disrespectful to fail to use God's Name when He has told us what it is. Everyone has a name; God is no different, and since He has revealed this Name, then we should use it. It may also be argued that making a point of pronouncing the Name when reading helps bring to mind the distinction and rich significance which it bears.

On the other hand, there are some arguments for following the AV (for instance), which uses the term 'LORD' (the block capitals generally indicating that the original is the term YHWH). First one or two general considerations. The exact pronunciation of the Name is no longer known, and there is an argument against over-complicating the reading of Scripture through many amendments. One could 'improve' translations indefinitely by substituting words, making changes, and approximating original pronunciations in ways that only a tiny fraction of the community have the linguistic expertise to carry out (where does one stop, and what complexity would result?).

Furthermore, the New Testament presents us with a new dominant designation for God, namely 'Father', and it could be claimed that this should now be the principal form of address when we refer to Him (this line of reasoning does not address the issue of reading the Old Testament, of course, only that of referring to

God and addressing Him in prayer). The argument would run along these lines (arguing from the lesser to the greater): I have a father who has a name, but I do not normally refer to him or address him by that name, but rather by the term 'father'. Although I know what his name is, I show him both more respect and more closeness by calling him 'Father' or 'Dad' than by calling him 'Chris'. This kind of practice is carried out in most (all?) languages and cultures.

The most forceful argument for those who do not wish to pronounce the Name, however, is that the New Testament writers on no occasion transliterated it, even though they were quite capable of doing so (witness the transliteration of 'sabaoth' ('of hosts') in James, and other New Testament examples of transliteration rather than translation; there is no corresponding transliteration of YHWH anywhere in the New Testament). This means that an attempt at pronunciation is neither mandatory nor held out as an example in the New Testament. The New Testament never uses the Name of God, but translates it as 'Lord' (*kurios*), even when quoting an Old Testament passage in which YHWH occurs.

The arguments for and against pronouncing the Name or accepting the AV and New Testament's substitute 'LORD' (or some such equivalent) are well-rehearsed, and I hope I have stated the case fairly for both sides. Whatever choice we make in our own conscience before God, it would be helpful to respect the decisions our other brothers and sisters have made without minimising, belittling or caricaturing them. To pronounce or not to pronounce can become a way of identifying ourselves and our territory, a way of pinning our colours to the mast and identifying ourselves as 'that sort' of brother or sister, in a way which is not helpful. An 'us-and-them' attitude, from whichever side we sit with respect to this issue, helps nobody, for it encourages division.

On one level, the fact that God should reveal His identity in a special and precious Name, and then that men should lose it because they were too frightened of saying it, beggars belief—but then, on another level, this kind of behaviour typifies humankind! The real issue is the rich meaning behind the Name, not a particular form of letters or words (except in so far as this helps us uncover and reflect on the Name), and it is to this that we now return, by revisiting the second part of God's speech in verses 6-8.

(End of excursus)

In those verses (vv. 6-8) God sets out in a series of direct, unmistakable statements the wonder of His purpose. Between His twofold 'I am YHWH' in verses 6 and 8 God uses a series of first-person verbs that describe His plan. They are indeed a manifesto to which God ties His identity:

I will bring you out (of Egypt)
 I will rid you out (of bondage)
 I will redeem you
 I will take you to Me for a people
 I will be to you a God
 I will bring you in unto the land
 I will give it you for an heritage.

What an incredible list of promises! These are the promises on which God stakes His identity as the One Who was, is, and will be. These are the goals which He has and which He will achieve for His people. It will perhaps not have escaped attention that there are precisely seven of them, framed by that expression 'I am YHWH'.

The Jews have themselves noted the crucial nature of these verses, and have tried to illustrate them in practical action. A number of Rabbinic sources state that the reason why four cups of wine are drunk at the Passover, even though no stipulations are made concerning drink in Exodus itself, is to coincide with the first four verbs of Exodus 6:6-8, as listed above: *bring out*, *rid*, *redeem* and *take*.[†] It is Jewish tradition, of course, rather than Biblical command, but it is interesting to observe as a way in which the Jews have sought to remember God's great promises made at this time.

† But there are seven verbs, not four! It must be left to the Jews to answer for their own Biblical interpretations, but one can note that there are indeed four verbs of action grouped together before a different fifth verb. The fifth verb, in contradistinction to the first four, is a verb of being or existence (the copula: 'I will be to you a God'). In this sense, then, the existence of a set of four verbs is real enough, even though it does ignore the remainder of the series.

1 v. 1 **strong hand**. There is some irony in Pharaoh's sending out the Israelites with a "strong hand", for at last he realises the *weakness* of his own position. The Hebrew term for "strong" here is one of the terms used to describe his *hard* heart during the plague accounts, and the word is also played on in 3:19 (see [Notes on that passage](#)). At last he manages to overcome

his hard and stubborn heart and respond by strengthening his hand to do the right thing instead. Pharaoh will at last realise that, in comparison with the strength of God, he is very weak. He will therefore do the logical thing by aligning his own strength with the intentions of God rather than fighting against Him and trying to run against the tide. He will send the Israelites out of the land with all the force he can muster. The strength of God's hand is also a repeated theme of Exodus 1-15 that will be examined in later studies.

2. v. 1 **drive them out**. This term is also used in 10:11, but it is in 11:1 and 12:39 that its fulfilment is recorded as Pharaoh 'thrusts' or 'drives' them from the land, eager at last for them to be gone. The root is *garash*, and a connection with the name of Moses' son Gershom was noted at 2:22.
3. v. 3 **God Almighty**. This name, *El Shadday* in Hebrew transliteration, is used a number of times in Genesis: 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch it is found here and in Numbers 24:4,16. It is by far the most abundant in Job (thirty-one times), and occurs a further eight times elsewhere. This statistical data supports what Exodus 6 says about the term being a popular designation for God in early times (see Alfred Norris's book *What is His Name?* for further detail on this aspect).

There is scholarly debate about the meaning of *shadday*, but two lines of thought appear to be the most illuminating. One is to connect the word with the idea of fruitfulness (there is a Hebrew word *shad* which means 'breast'), and this can be seen to be relevant in some passages in which *shadday* occurs. Few scholars or translators have followed this line of derivation, however. The other approach translates the word as *Almighty*. The Ancient Versions (LXX, Vulgate, etc.), along with English translations such as the AV, support this suggestion, and it may be approached through two routes. One is to connect *shadday* with the verb *shadad*, 'deal violently with', 'despoil', 'ruin'. The other, dating at least from rabbinic times, divides the word into two (*she* and *dday*), meaning 'one (who is) sufficient, self-sufficient'. Other, perhaps less likely, derivations have been suggested; one makes a connection with the verb *shadah*, 'pour forth', perhaps thinking of God as rain-giver; another compares similar Assyrian terms which mean 'high' or 'mountain'. In my view 'Almighty' makes the best

and most likely translation (whether with the root idea of self-sufficiency or that of God's potentially destructive powers); a possible connection with the idea of fruitfulness is also worth keeping in mind.

4. **v. 3 by My name JEHOVAH [YHWH] was I not known.** What does it mean to be 'known' by a name? Passages such as Isaiah 52:6 and Jeremiah 16:21 show that to know a name does not necessarily simply mean 'be aware of its existence', but can refer to a deeper knowledge, really knowing what something is all about. This is the way in which Israel will ultimately *know* God's Name (as those passages state), even though all Jews may know already what its four consonants are.

It is doubtful that the meaning of this passage can be reached purely through a study of the verb 'to know', however. Of the two options offered in the **Comment** for the interpretation of 6:3, the word 'know' does not exclude option 2, but it does not require it.

5. **v. 4 land of . . . pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.** The words 'pilgrimage' and 'strangers' are both forms of the same Hebrew root *g-w-r*, which is associated with Moses' son Gershom (2:22). This can be captured by rendering: 'the land of their *sojourning* wherein they *sojourned*'. The land in which the fathers struggled as strangers and learned about faith in God, suffering both hardships and blessings from Him, is the land they will inherit. It is exactly the same for us: a promise has been left us that we may inherit the very earth in which we have struggled, not some other-worldly land of which we have no experience.
6. **v. 6 rid you out.** The verb *natsal* occurs in this sense of 'deliver' on several occasions in Exodus 1-15: 2:19; 3:8; 5:23; here; 12:27. They make an interesting collection of references; in the first the verb is used by Jethro's daughters to describe how the 'Egyptian' (Moses) delivered them from the hands of the shepherds! Now God is about to repeat the action, albeit on a much grander scale. The verb is also used in a different conjugation (the *piel* as opposed to the *hiphil*) to refer to the way in which the Israelites would *spoil* or *plunder* the Egyptians. God would remove or pluck Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh, and the Israelites would remove or spoil the Egyptians as they left.
7. **v. 6 I will redeem you . . . with great judgments.** This is the first occurrence of the word 'redeem' in the Old Testament, but the association of redemption and judgements is not one

we might have expected. Redemption might be thought of as being a peaceful work, not one of judging. And indeed it is, in one sense; redemption is all about the creation of peace between man and God. However, that process also involves the judging or condemnation of sin and its consequences. The judgements upon Egypt and the condemnation of Pharaoh and his attitude were essential to the process of Israel's redemption. It was not enough just to bring them out; Egypt had to be judged as well. In this sense, too, our redemption by God involves the condemnation and the judging of sin. We say this when we are baptized: we reject and condemn our old way; we recognise that it is not acceptable to God in any way, and that a new beginning must be made. It is interesting that this principle should be seen worked out practically in the miraculous judgements on the Egyptians.

8. **v. 7 I will be to you a God.** Here is another echo of God's 'I will be' promise (Hebrew: *ehyeh*, see 3:12,14), although a slightly different form of the Hebrew verb 'to be' is used here (a perfect with *waw*-consecutive rather than the imperfect).
9. **v. 7 ye shall know that I am the LORD.** This phrase, so dominant in the prophecy of Ezekiel, is one which characterises God's purpose throughout the Scriptures. His purpose is to be known and to be acknowledged throughout the earth, first to Israel, and then to the nations at large. God associates Israel's knowing Him with His bringing them out of the land of Egypt—a most instructive point. We know God most particularly through the act of redemption that He has accomplished, redemption both literal and spiritual. This work defines Him, and separates Him from any other conception of God that we might otherwise have had.
10. **v. 8 I did swear.** Usually the word 'swear' carries with it the idea of 'seven', the original thought being that an oath was the equivalent of saying something seven times over. Here, however, the expression is literally, 'I lifted up My hand' (compare Genesis 14:22, although a different verb (*r-w-m* rather than *n-s*) is used for 'lift up' in that passage). The current practise of raising the hand in an oath is evidently not a modern one!
11. **v. 8 heritage.** A favourite term of Ezekiel's, who uses it seven times. Elsewhere it occurs only here and Deuteronomy 33:4, although the related verb *yarash*, 'to possess, inherit', is common.