

Message #7**Exodus 3:13-22**

Let's remember the previous context, Moses was tending sheep and God appeared to him in a burning bush and told Moses that He was going to send him to go get Israel and lead her out of Egypt (3:10). When God told this to Moses, he responded, "Who am I" to do this job (3:11). The problem with Moses was he was self-focused rather than God-focused. So God told him that He would be with Moses and that He would give him a sign. But Moses isn't quite buying into this.

As we come to **verse 13**, Moses basically comes up with his second protest argument against doing this job. Dr. Warren Wiersbe says Moses actually uses five total arguments: 1) I am a nobody (3:11-12); 2) I don't know your name (**3:13-22**); 3) The elders won't believe me (4:1-9); 4) I am not a fluent speaker (4:10-12); 5) Somebody else can do it better (4:13-17) (*Be Delivered*, pp. 25-26).

What Moses does here is that he says to God, "Okay, suppose I go to Egypt and tell Israel that the God of their fathers has sent me to get you. They will say to me, 'What God, what is His name?' So what am I supposed to say?"

Moses is presenting this argument to Hebrews in an Egyptian culture that was very polytheistic—that believed in all kinds of "gods" and it was very pantheistic—that believed nature, like the Nile River, was a god and very syncretistic—that believed all religions had their good points. So Moses' response to God is logical in that kind of world. He wants to know what he is supposed to say to people of Israel who question him. So in this section what we see is that:

GOD REVEALS TO MOSES WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE IS GOING TO SOVEREIGNLY DO AND HOW HE IS GOING TO USE MOSES TO DO IT.

Now remember at this point it has been over 400 years since God has revealed Himself to His people, so it is a real possibility that he will be questioned. Furthermore, 40 years earlier no one followed him so he did not think that these people would just automatically say, "Okay, let's go, we will follow you."

There are two main revelatory responses God gives to Moses:

REVELATORY RESPONSE #1 – God reveals a new name to Moses to give to Israel.
3:14-15

Now there is no way that a "name" can tell you everything about a person. In fact, in our day it doesn't tell you much of anything. However, to the Hebrew mind, a name revealed much about the character of a person or the circumstances of a person. For example, "Isaac" means laughter and it describes the fact that Sarah laughed in unbelief (Gen. 18:12). It also describes the fact that she again laughed when he was born (Gen. 21:6). So Isaac is a name that tells the story.

Now when it comes to God, there is much in a name because He is revealing things about Himself in His names. The initial reason God reveals this new name to Moses is because Moses was lacking in his own faith in God. He was wondering what he was supposed to tell the Hebrews who would question him.

Now if we actually track the names of God in the book of Genesis that were used in regard to Abraham, we would expect that God would select one of those names as a basis for His response. He could have said if they ask My name, tell them “Elohim” or “Adonai” has sent you (Gen. 15:2) because Abraham knew about those two names. By the way, those two names are just as important as Jehovah, so a religious cult group like the Russellites (Jehovah’s Witness) are actually demeaning to God because they stress just one of the names.

Now if we think through potential names from the past for God, one logical name would be “El Elyon”—“**Most High God,**” which was a name Abraham knew about because Melchizedek used that name with Abram (Gen. 14:18).

Actually the most logical answer would be if they want to know My name, tell them “El Shaddai” has sent you—**Almighty God,** which was the name God specifically used in regard to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex. 6:3). He could also have used the name “El Roi”—**God who sees me** has sent you, which was the name used with Hagar. But none of these names were the names God gave to Moses to use.

We know from Exodus 6:3 that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know about this name that God gave Moses here. **The response of God to Moses’ argument is, “I AM WHO I AM.” Now this will actually become the covenantal name that God will use with Israel.**

But the first way God uses this name is in regard to Moses saying to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh” (Ex. 3:11). So the initial response God gives to Moses is this is not about who you are Moses, “I am who I am.” **In other words, this is not about you being you, this is about Me being Me and I am always who I am and I am always what I am—which is the self-existing, covenant-keeping, Sovereign God who controls everything.**

After God tells Moses this, then He says in **verse 14** if you are asked who sent you, tell Israel “I AM” has sent me to you. Now the fact is, as one Hebrew scholar observes, this statement “I AM” disregards all grammatical rules because in regard to any other thing or person, you must finish the statement “I AM . . .” But God can say “I AM” and not finish the statement because He is everything. He is over everything. He controls everything. He causes everything.

Actually the name that appears in **verse 14** is in Hebrew “ehwh” (first person imperfect). Now the emphasis of the imperfect tense in Hebrew is that it represents action that is continuous at any moment and at all times (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 313). So this name means God is always “I AM” at any time and at all times.

However, in **verse 15** we are given God's most familiar name YHWH (third person masculine singular verb Hiphil stem), which literally stresses "God is and causes to be what is." The masculine gender indicates God is masculine, not feminine. The Hiphil causative stem indicates that God is the "I AM" creator and sustainer of "all that exists" (Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, p. 121).

The name YHWH is a four letter Hebrew word, which is called by biblical scholars as the tetragrammaton because it is a noun that contains "four" (tetra) "letters" (grammaton). This name is used some 6,823 times in the O.T. as a sacred, covenantal name for God. It is translated into English and shows up in English Bibles in all capital letters "LORD." This name appears in every book of the O.T. except Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Esther.

There are three critical passages in Exodus where this name is stressed: 1) **Ex. 3:13-15**; 2) Ex. 6:2-8; 3) Ex. 34:5-7

Now most people pronounce this name by adding vowels. YHWH is sometimes pronounced "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" or as one Israeli pronounced it for me: "Yoh Vah." But actually there are no vowels.

Now as we have said, the basic meaning of this name is that God is saying, "I am the self-existing covenant God who is everything in and of Himself." I am God who creates everything, who controls everything and who causes everything. God says when you go to Egypt to get Israel, you tell them that this I AM God has sent you.

In **verse 15** God reiterates this point by telling Moses to go tell Israel this He is YHWH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that He has sent me to you. This is God's name forever and this is a memorial name specifically for Israel to all their generations. So the name Jehovah has specific covenantal connections to Israel.

So the miracle here of this new name is that all Moses has to say, when asked about God, is YHWH. First of all, the name is short and secondly, it is a new name and this would be enough to get Israel to believe.

Do we not see a N.T. parallel to believing in the name Jesus, who used this very name for Himself when He said, "before Abraham was, "I AM" (John 8:58). All you have to do is mention the name Jesus and it will prompt many to believe in Him.

REVELATORY RESPONSE #2 – God reveals to Moses very specific sovereign facts .
3:16-22

God gives Moses very specific directives here. He presents seven very specific facts:

Fact #1 - Go and gather the elders of Israel together. **3:16**

It is clear from this verse that there was a structured leadership to Israel even when she was, as Victor Hamilton said, “ghettoed in Goshen” (*Exodus*, p. 66). God specifically identifies the group to whom Moses is to approach as “elders of Israel.”

There is always a proper way to do things. With God there is always proper protocol. God wants Moses specifically to leave Midian and go to Egypt and go to the elders of Israel.

No one will ever be honored by God or used by God who usurps leadership. Moses was to gather the leaders of Israel together and inform them about what had happened. He was to tell them about how God appeared to him and he was to let them know that God had all knowledge of their suffering and He was about to help them. He was not only told what to say to the elders, he was also told that the elders would respond and listen to him.

The Hebrew words “I am indeed concerned” (paqod paqadti) mean that God had carefully seen, known, remembered, watched over, paid attention and understood exactly what had been happening to Israel and He was going to do something about it. **When God announces His awareness of the problem it means He is about to specifically attend to the problem.**

This word used here is the same word used by Joseph in Genesis 50:24 where it is translated “care,” which means to attend to and visit. One commentator says this language has judicial overtones to it; it means mercy for the Hebrews and judgment for the Egyptians (George Bush, *Exodus*, p. 52).

Fact #2 - Tell the elders that God is going to bring them out of Egypt and take them to a plush and blessed Promised Land. **3:17**

So the first thing Moses is to say to Israel is I AM has sent me. The second thing you are to say to the elders is “I am concerned and do care and I have seen what has been done.” Now the third thing you are to say is that “I am going to bring you out of this Egyptian land to a new wonderful plush promised land.”

Now one reason why God emphasizes the fact that this land is “flowing with milk and honey” is because 400 years earlier, Israel left this land because of a famine. But a lot had changed in 400 years. The land was now flourishing again and God was about to take them back.

God was going to lead Israel out of this troubled Egyptian land back to her blessed Promised Land. At the time God was going to do this, that blessed land was inhabited by a bunch of people not right with God. This is the second time God lists them. As we said, the Canaanite was in the land along the Mediterranean; the Hittite inhabited that part of the Promised Land that is Turkey; the Amorite inhabited that part of the Promised Land that is Syria; the Perizzite inhabited hill country and mountain areas; the Hivite inhabited land north of Jerusalem and the Jebusite inhabited the Jerusalem area.

By virtue of the fact that God informs Moses, who is presently living there, it is clear that it will be nothing for God to use the Hebrews to move them out of there.

Fact #3 - Moses may be assured that the elders will listen to what he has to say. **3:18a**

God makes it clear that Moses will have success with Israel's leadership. Moses would be well received by the elders. They will follow his lead. They will accept him as their leader and will believe what he has to say.

God would actually turn the minds of the leadership of Israel to accept Moses and follow his leadership. God has that kind of sovereign power over leadership. He can turn the minds of leaders any way He wants them to be turned.

Fact #4 - You and the elders are to go to the Pharaoh/King and request that he permit the Hebrews to leave for three days to sacrifice to God. **3:18b**

Now before we discuss this, observe that proper Hebrew leadership is to go to proper Egyptian leadership, and politely using the word "please," inform him that God has requested that they be permitted to leave for three days to worship God. They were not to be obnoxious, but polite.

This really is a test aimed at Pharaoh. If he would not let Israel go for three days, he certainly was not about to let them go forever.

Now this verse has been the subject of much controversy, because the fact is Moses is not just asking Pharaoh to let the nation go on some three day mini-retreat. The goal of this is to take the Hebrews out of Egypt. Once he leads Israel out of Egypt, he has no intention of taking her back.

God is specific in that He wants His people identified by the term "Hebrews" here rather than Israelites. This would be the term that the Pharaoh would best know as a reference to God's people. Moses was to say to Pharaoh that Jehovah, the God (Elohim) of the Hebrews, is making this request. In this way, Pharaoh would immediately be exposed to the reality that Moses is not the one making this request, but God is.

The request was for a three day leave into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the true God. It is probably true that after three days they were going to offer sacrifices to God. What Moses didn't tell Pharaoh is that after they did that, they weren't coming back.

This is not just a request for three days off work; but a request for a three day head start in a migration out of Egypt. We do know that the specific assignment of God to Moses is to go get My people and take them out of Egypt.

Some have said well this appears to be deceptive. The fact is sometimes silence is golden. When you are dealing with an evil, power-crazed person, it is not the best idea to tell them everything about your escape plan.

Fact #5 - You may know that I know Pharaoh King will not permit you to go unless I force him. **3:19**

God is a sovereign God and He knows the end from the beginning. He knows what political leaders really are. He knows their corruption and arrogance and He is about to bring this Pharaoh King down. God knew what Pharaoh was going to do with this three day request before Pharaoh ever heard the request. God is actually setting Pharaoh up to show Himself strong. Pharaoh would resist God totally and completely and God will crush him. His resistance of God sets the stage for God's greatness.

I believe right now we are living under a political leadership that has mocked God and His Word in every possible way—religiously, economically, morally and politically. Most of our political leaders have gone to bed with false religion and promoted religions that are anti-Jesus Christ and anti-Israel. Our political leaders have promoted immoral abominations at the highest levels. Leaders have lied to people, they have deceived people and they operate like a bunch of God-mocking crooks. They thumb their political noses at God and His precious Word.

You watch what God does. Be patient and quietly watch. God will show Himself strong to God-mocking leadership. He will bring it down. He always has and always will.

Fact #6 - You can know that I am going to strike Egypt with a series of miracles and then the Pharaoh will let you go. **3:20**

God begins by implying “I will stretch out My hand” and let's see whose hand is stronger, Pharaoh and the Egyptians, or Me. This will turn out to be no contest.

When a person resists God's Word and will, it actually potentially strengthens the glory of God because God sovereignly crushes the person who doesn't want anything to do with God.

The miracles are not simply to display God's power, these miracles are punishment miracles. God intended to strike down Egypt with a series of miraculous destructive plagues that would force the Egyptians to let God's people go. God is promising that He will pummel the Egyptians. He will punish them.

Fact #7 - You can know that Israel will not leave empty-handed. **3:21-22**

In Genesis 15:14, God told Abraham that when his people would leave Egypt, they would leave with “many possessions” or as it says in this context, with a lot of “plunder.”

God was not only going to reverse the mindset of the Egyptians to let the Hebrews go; He was going to sovereignly engineer events so the Egyptians would support and willingly give valuables and clothing to them as they left.

These Egyptians would voluntarily support their own plunder. What this means is that they would voluntarily give up their valuables to the Hebrews so that they had the spoils without having to fight a battle to get them.

In fact, God wanted the Hebrew women to specifically clothe their children with some of the donated fabrics. God cared about the women and children and He provided for them.

Now in the N.T., Jesus identifies Himself as I AM—John 4, 6, 8. If you have invited Jesus Christ into your life, the same God that delivered the Hebrews is the God who delivers you. This God cares about your hurts and your needs and when you cry out to Him, He will help.