Exodus Chapter Three

Exodus 3:1-4:17 records the Lord commissioning Moses on Mount Horeb to communicate to the Israelites that He will deliver them from their bondage in Egypt. This section of the Exodus narrative transitions the story of Moses from one of obscurity in Midian to center stage on stage of history. Moses goes from tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro to confronting the greatest world ruler of his time, Amenhotep II.

Exodus 3:1-4:17 reveals as does the rest of the exodus story that the God of Israel is the sovereign ruler of history. It teaches that God is not only transcendent of His creation and creatures but also immanent meaning that He involves Himself intimately in human affairs. It teaches He is particular concerned about Israel.

This pericope can be divided into five parts: (1) Moses circumstances at the time when the Lord introduced Himself to him (3:1-3). (2) The Lord introduces Himself to Moses and commissions him to tell Israel He will deliver them (3:4-10). (3) Moses asks two questions with regards to his commission (3:11-15). (4) The Lord instructs Moses to tell the Israelite leaders that He will deliver them from Egyptian bondage (3:16-22). (5) Moses makes excuses why he cannot fulfill his commission and the Lord commissions his brother Aaron to speak for him (4:1-17).

Exodus 3:1-3

Exodus 3:1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.  2 The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.  3 So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” (NASB95)

This paragraph presents to us the circumstances of Moses at this time in the narrative. Remember he went being a man of privilege in Egypt to a man without a country in Midian. He killed an Egyptian to protect a fellow Israelite thinking that the Israelites would understand that he was to deliver them. The Israelites rejected his attempt to rule over them and his rival Thutmose III sought to kill him for this murder. Thus, he fled to Midian where he met the priest of Midian, Reuel, who was a worshipper of Yahweh. Moses marries his daughter Zipporah and has a son naming him Gershom, which means “a sojourner there.” The meaning of this name expresses Moses’ circumstances from his perspective.
He was an exile from Egypt and rejected by Israel. He was a man without a country. He was unwelcome in both nations. So even though he was settling down in Midian and was starting a family there, he did not consider Midian home. This must have been extremely difficult for Moses who had the conviction that he would be used by God to deliver Israel, yet his circumstances at this time suggested that he was a failure and was of no use for God’s purposes. His faith would be tested during the next forty years of exile in Midian. He would appear to be put on the shelf by God but this was far from the case. During the next forty years in Midian, the Lord would be forging the character of Moses, preparing for future service that would glorify Himself.

This personal sense of destiny that he was to be the deliverer of the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage drove Moses to kill the Egyptian. His years in Midian were peaceful but he was a man of action. Thus, it must have been frustrating even though he found a wife and was raising a family with her. He would not be content until he fulfilled that destiny, which surely was inspired by his miraculous deliverance from death at three months of age.

In Exodus 2:23-25 summarized Moses’ circumstances and returns the reader back to the situation of Israel in bondage in Egypt, these verses conclude the section of introduction to the story of the Exodus of Israel (1:1-2:25). This postscript prepares us for God to enter the picture and take action against Egypt on behalf of Israel.

This postscript begins by stating that the king of Egypt died who was Thutmose III. History tells us that Amenhotep II assumed the throne in Egypt. This would make possible for Moses to return to Egypt. He would no longer be a fugitive. This postscript also reveals that Israel’s situation continues to remain the same even though there has been a change on the throne. The people are described as crying out for help and groaning. The reason for their misery is said to be their slavery. The postscript ends by stating that God will now act on Israel’s behalf because of the covenant that He established with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which promised to make from the descendants of these men a great nation and also giving them the land of Canaan.

The last statement in chapter two said that “God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” which signifies that God is about to act upon the unconditional promises that He made to these men in this covenant. It denotes that God is about to act upon His commitment and contract He made with these men and by acting on His promises to these men, He demonstrates Himself to be a trustworthy covenant partner. It also expresses His compassion for Israel. It tells us that God is not detached but concerned about the suffering of men and seeks to alleviate it, which He did at the Cross when He sacrificed His Son to deliver the human race from sin and Satan.
Exodus 3:1-3 reveals that Moses was not seeking a revelation from God. He was simply going along with his daily existence and being faithful in his new job and building a family. He was not seeking to be the leader of Israel anymore. He was being trained by the Lord to wait for Him before he acts on behalf of Israel. In Egypt, he did not act in accordance with God’s Word.

So he is a lonely shepherd working in a lonely place. After forty years in exile, he undoubtedly no longer cherished any notion of personal greatness. He only knew that he had been rejected by his own people and a fugitive sought by the most powerful man in the world at that time. He was a nobody until his dying day, or so he thought. God had taught him during these forty years in exile that he was nothing unless God made him a somebody and that he could do nothing for Israel without God’s power. He now was ready to learn that with God’s power working through him he could anything. Nothing was impossible, even delivering two million slaves from bondage in the most powerful nation in the world at that time, Egypt.

Forty years had passed since Moses fled to Midian. Therefore, he is eighty years old when he receives a theophany at Mount Horeb. Therefore, he is about to embark on the final chapter of his life, at this point in the narrative, which would last for forty years and would involve him being used by the Lord to lead the nation out of Israel and to establish her as a nation.

Exodus 3:1

Exodus 3:1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (NASB95)

Exodus 3:1 states that Moses led Jethro’s flocks to the west side of the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb. Remember, as we noted in chapter two, “Jethro” was the man’s name or we would say today his “first” name whereas “Reuel” was his clan’s name or what we would call his “last” name.

Now, Moses as we know, was at this time living in Midian. The Midianites occupied portions of the central and northern Sinai peninsula in addition to their primary location which was in northwestern Arabia. Thus, they were found in Moses’ day from the Arabian gulf in the south to the plains of Moab in the north. It must be emphasized that there were no fixed boundaries as we know today for these people. The Old Testament describes them as a nomadic people. So it would foolish to think of fixing a precise location for these people.

Exodus 3:1 says that he drove his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb, which is another name for Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 19:10-11 with Deuteronomy 4:10). Moses identifies Horeb as “the mountain of God”
which reflects his view of this mountain after the events that took place there later (cf. 4:27; 18:5; 24:13).

"Horeb" (הָרֶב) (ḥō·rēḇ) is derived from a Hebrew root (חרב) (ḥā·rēḇ) that means “devastation” and probably means “a desolate place.” It was at this location where the Law was given to Moses and Israel (Malachi 4:4; Deuteronomy 4:10). It was at this place that Israel sinned by worshipping a golden calf (Exodus 33:6). The Lord spoke to Elijah in a cave at Horeb (1 Kings 19:8f).

The exact location of Horeb or Sinai is disputed by scholars. However, Deuteronomy 1:2 teaches that the mountain is an eleven day journey from Kadesh-Barnea, which tends to support a location in Sinai. Edwin Yamauchi gives four possible locations for Mount Horeb: (1) A mountain in Midian called al-Hrob; (2) Jebel el-Halal, thirty miles west of Kadesh-Barnea; (3) Sinn Bishr, thirty miles southeast of Suez; (4) one of three different peaks in Sinai. Older traditions from the fourth century place it in the Sinai Peninsula at Jebel Musa.

Stuart comment on the location of this mountain, writes, “Various theories have been advanced in favor of locating Mount Sinai somewhere in Midian, but this verse is part of the contrary evidence. Moses apparently had gone with the flock from Midianite territory (located mainly east of the east fork of the Red Sea) westward past Elat/Ezion-geber and then southwest into the Sinai wilderness—weeks away from home, taking advantage of the available high grassy slopes whose value to feeding the sheep was worth the great distance required for him to traverse. The special distance may even have been occasioned by poor grass conditions in Midian itself that year. At any rate, Moses had gone no small distance toward Egypt in his cattle drive.”

F.C. Fensham writes, “The location of this mountain is uncertain. The following mountains are regarded by various scholars as Mt Sinai: Jebel Muûsa, Ras eş-ṣafṣafeh, Jebel Serbâl and a mountain near al-Hrob. The tradition in favour of Jebel Serbâl can be traced back as far as Eusebius; the tradition in favour of Jebel Muûsa only as far as Justinian. The situation of Jebel Serbâl, e.g. the fact that there is no wilderness at its foot, makes it improbable as the mountain of the covenant. The once widely accepted view of A. Musil that the volcanic mountain near al-Hrob is to be identified with Mt Sinai is no longer popular with scholars, because it makes the reconstruction of the route of the Exodus impossible and it reads too much into Ex. 19. Modern attempts to identify Sinai with volcanic mountains E of the Gulf of Aqabah are so uncertain that not much can be derived from them. This leaves two possibilities: Jebel Muûsa and Ras eş-ṣafṣafeh. These two mountains are situated on a short ridge of granite of about 4 km stretching from NW to SE. Ras eş-ṣafṣafeh (1,993 m) is situated at the N edge and Jebel Muûsa (2,244 m) at the S

one. Tradition and most of the modern scholars accept Jebel Muûsa as Mt Sinai. There is, none the less, a strong preference among certain scholars for Ras eṣṣaṣafṣafēh as the mountain of the covenant because of the considerable plain at its foot which would have been spacious enough for the large body of Israelites (cf. Ex. 20:18: ‘they stood afar off’). However, tradition in favour of Jebel Muûsa is so ancient (about 1,500 years) and the granite formations so imposing that it is quite probably Mt Sinai. Furthermore, a few stations en route to the mountain point to the same conclusion.2

Exodus 3:2-3

Exodus 3:2 The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” (NASB95)

The fact that the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses is a “theophany,” which is a theological term used to refer to either a visible or auditory manifestation of the Son of God before His incarnation in Bethlehem (Gen. 32:29-30; Ex. 3:2; 19:18-20; Josh. 5:13-15; Dan. 3:26). At this point we have a visible appearance but it becomes an audible one in verse 4.

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“Angel” is the noun māl·āḵ (מַלְאָḵ) (mal-awk), which means, “messenger” is used in the Old Testament with reference to “elect” angels (Gen. 19:1; Ps. 91:11) and men (Deut. 2:26; Josh. 6:17) and of the “preincarnate” Christ (Gen. 22:11; Zech. 3:1).

Here in Exodus 3, we have an appearance of the preincarnate Christ. That the Son of God Himself is introducing Himself to Moses in this chapter is indicated by the fact that this “angel” refers to Himself as both Lord (Exodus 3:2, 4, 5, 7, 16, 18) and God (Exodus 3:4-6, 11-16, 18). It is not the Father but the Son since He is the member of the Trinity that visibly manifests the Trinity to mankind.

The word “incarnate” is from the Latin, in and caro, whose stem carn means, “flesh.” Therefore, the term “preincarnate” means before the Son of God became a human being permanently in Bethlehem.

There are three stages in the career of the Lord Jesus Christ: (1) “Preincarnate”: Eternity past as the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God. (2) “Incarnate”: Virgin birth through the First Advent to the resurrection. (3) “Glorified Incarnate”: Resurrection and on into eternity future.

“Lord” is the proper noun yhwh (יהוה), which is the personal name of God emphasizing the “immanency” of God meaning that He involves Himself in and concerns Himself with and intervenes in the affairs of men. In Exodus 3, we see the Lord involving Himself in and concerning Himself with and intervening in the life of Moses.

This theophany indicates that Moses was a prophet according to Numbers 12:6.

Numbers 12:6 He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream.” (NASB95)

The Lord chooses to reveal Himself to Moses through fire, which was a symbol of God’s presence as seen later when He descended upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18). In the Old Testament, fire was a symbol of the Lord’s presence and the instrument of His power, either in the way of approval or judgment.

God is compared to fire not only because of His perfect integrity but also on account of His anger towards sin.

Hebrews 12:29 for our God is a consuming fire. (NASB95)

“Bush” is the noun sēnē(h) (סְנֶה), which denotes a small thorn bush, at most a few feet in diameter. These type of bushes would quickly burn if set on fire. Moses would have been struck by the fact that this bush was burning continually without anyone around it. This obviously struck Moses as an unusual phenomenon. He wanted get close to figure out how in the world that this bush could burn continually without being consumed.

Stuart has an interesting comment as to why the Lord used a bush to manifest Himself to Moses, he writes, “But why a bush? It may only be because God’s
likely choice was between rocks and bushes—the two sorts of objects that can typically be found sticking out of the ground in that terrain—and he simply chose a bush. But it may also be that the similarity between the sounds of sēneh, “bush,” and sīnāy, “Sinai,” fit his purposes. Indeed, so close are the two words that in Deut 33:16 the expression šōkēn sēneh, “the one who resided in the bush,” sometimes has been emended to šōkēn sīnāy, “the one who dwells on Sinai” (e.g., nrs v). At any rate, it is certainly conceivable that the mention of the bush, sēneh, was designed also to become a reminder of its location, sīnāy. Because in biblical culture bushes or trees can symbolize people or groups, the use of a bush on fire to gain Moses’ attention would not have been outside of his cognition: he could have adapted quickly, as he did to the idea that an angel/the angel of the Lord/the Lord himself had manifested himself (to get Moses’ attention) within that bush. Not only so, but later, as he told and retold the story of his call, others would also be able to relate to the idea that a burning bush could in fact represent Israel’s God.3

Exodus 3:4-5

Exodus 3:4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” 5 Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” (NASB95)

The Lord’s statement “Moses, Moses!” is a figure of speech called epizeuxis or duplication, which means the repetition of the same word in the same sense. This figure is a common and powerful way of emphasizing a particular word, by thus marking it and calling attention to it. In writing, one might accomplish this by putting the word in larger letters, or by underlining it two or three times. In speaking, it is easy to mark it by expressing it with increased emphasis or vehemence.

When the figure of duplication is employed it is calling special attention to the occasion or to the person and to some solemn moment of importance in the action or of significance in the words. Examples of this figure are found in many passages and I will give you two of them.

Matthew 23:37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” (NASB95)

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Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” (NASB95)

Therefore, the Lord’s statement “Moses, Moses!” is a figure of speech called *epizeuxis*, which calls special attention to the solemn moment when the Lord commissioned Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage.

“Here I am” (*hinnēn*) simply means “Yes?” It was used by Abraham when responded to God’s call in Genesis 22:11 and by Jacob in Genesis 46:2 and expresses the responsiveness of these men to God’s Word.

Notice that before the Lord identifies Himself to Moses, He began to teach him about His holiness. The theme of God’s holy presence is a major topic in the book of Exodus. What Moses was being taught by the Lord is that he was in the Lord’s house or presence and must show proper respect.

Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines “holiness” as “the quality or state of being holy; sanctity” and they define “sanctity” as, “sacred or hallowed character.”

One of the definitions that Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary gives for the adjective “holy” is, “entitled to worship or profound religious reverence because of divine character or origin or connection with God or divinity.”

One of the definitions for the noun “character” that Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary provides that applies to the context of our passage is the following: “the aggregate of features and traits that form the apparent individual nature of some person or thing.”

If we paraphrase these definitions, we would say that the God’s holiness refers to “the aggregate (i.e. sum total) of perfect features and traits that form the divine nature of God.” Thus, God’s holiness is related to all of His divine attributes or in other words, it is simply the harmony of all His perfections or attributes.

The holiness of God is the aggregate of perfect divine attributes that form the nature of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Thus, God’s holiness is related to all of His divine attributes.

Therefore, the term “holiness” refers to the absolute perfection of the character of God, expressing His purity of character or moral perfection and excellence, thus making God totally separate from sin and sinners. He is totally separate from sin and sinners unless a way can be found to constitute them holy and that way has been provided based upon the merits of the impeccable Person and Finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

The presence of evil, sin and injustice is totally absent in the character of God, thus God does not tolerate evil or sin because it is contrary to His character, i.e. His inherent moral qualities, ethical standards and principles.
Holiness is used often to describe the Person of God.

Leviticus 22:2 “Tell Aaron and his sons to be careful with the holy gifts of the sons of Israel, which they dedicate to Me, so as not to profane My holy name; I am the LORD. (NASB95)

1 Chronicles 16:10 “Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad.” (NASB95)

Psalm 30:4 Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name. (NASB95)

Psalm 97:12 Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name. (NASB95)

The title “His Holy Name” refers to the perfect character of the Person of God. This absolute perfection of God’s character is celebrated throughout the Scriptures.

Isaiah 6:3 And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.” (NASB95)

Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.” (NASB95)

The Lord Jesus Christ revealed the holiness or character of God during His 1st Advent.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (NASB95)

Therefore, holiness pertains to the sum total of God’s invisible attributes, which compose the absolute perfection of His character. So Moses in Exodus 3:5 is being introduced to God’s holy person.

The fact that Moses is told to remove his sandals out of reverence because he is on holy ground tells him that He is in the presence of God. In the ancient world, taking off one’s shoes was done when entering the home or the presence of a person of superior rank.

Exodus 3:6

Exodus 3:6 He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The angel of the Lord’s identifies Himself as the God who established an unconditional covenant with Abraham and reconfirmed it with his son Isaac and with Isaac’s son Jacob.

“Your father” is an acknowledgment that Moses’ biological father Amram was a believer in the God of the patriarchs.
“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” indicates that Moses is a believer since He does not reveal Himself to unbelievers. This designation also indicates to the reader that God is about to fulfill His promises to these men to make of them a great nation. It also indicates that these men, though physically dead are still alive. The Lord quotes Exodus 3:6 to teach that God is the God of the living and not the dead (cf. Matthew 22:29-32; Mark 12:26-27).

This identification of Himself by the Lord to Moses also links the promises made to the patriarchs to Moses and the descendants of these men who were in bondage in Egypt, the Israelites. They will not stay in bondage in Egypt since the Lord promised Abram that He would deliver his descendants after four hundred years of bondage in Egypt (Genesis 15:12-16). He also promises to these three men to make a great nation from them. He also promised these men that their descendants will inherit the land of Canaan.

Thus, by the Lord identifying Himself as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” the reader would be aware of the fact that the Lord is about to act upon these promises at this point in the narrative. The reader would recall this designation that was used in Exodus 2:24 where it was said that God remembered His covenant with these men. Coupled the use of this designation here with Moses, the reader would know that God was about to act and fulfill His promises to the patriarchs.

Moses’ response to the theophany expresses his awareness of his sinfulness and was an acknowledgement of God’s holiness. It was an acknowledgement that he did not measure to the holiness of God and was worthy of death because of it. It expresses his awareness that he was not worthy to be in the presence of God because of his sinfulness. It also indicates that Moses was not yet on intimate terms with God as he would later be (Exodus 33:7-11; cf. Numbers 12:8; Deuteronomy 34:10).

Exodus 3:7-9

Exodus 3:7 The Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. 8 So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. 9 Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.” (NASB95)
What was implicit in the reference to the patriarchs in verse 6 is now made explicit by the Lord in verses 7-9, namely the God of these patriarchs does care about the descendants of these men and would make good on His promises to them. This paragraph makes clear that the God of the patriarchs was faithful to His promises to these men. It shows His compassion and that He is immanent meaning He involves Himself in and concerns Himself with the affairs of men. It expresses the fact that He is fully aware of the suffering of His people and will do something about it. This pericope also indicates that God is well aware of injustice and will act to bring about justice for the oppressed.

Verse 7 summarizes the situation with the Israelites in Egypt and verse 8 presents God’s plan to rescue them. Verse 9 reiterates both verse 7 and Exodus 2:23-35 emphasizing God’s concern and desire to act.

“The good and spacious land” refers to the land of Canaan and the promise of land to the patriarchs that is a part of the Abrahamic covenant. It is sometimes called the “Palestinian” covenant.

The “Palestinian” covenant is in fact an extension of the “Abrahamic” covenant, which is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. Like the “Abrahamic” covenant, the “Palestinian” covenant that the Lord established with Abram denoted the Lord’s gracious undertaking for the benefit of Abram and his descendants. Like the “Abrahamic” covenant, the “Palestinian” covenant was “unconditional” meaning that its fulfillment was totally and completely dependent upon the Lord’s faithfulness.

**Genesis 13:14** The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 16 I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” (NASB95)

The Lord’s promise of land to Abram and his descendants in Genesis 13:14-17 is an “extension” upon His promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1 and is thus related to the “Abrahamic” covenant. The “Palestinian” covenant was a confirmation and enlargement of the original “Abrahamic” covenant and amplified the land features of the “Abrahamic” covenant (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18).

The “Palestinian” covenant was confirmed to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4) and Jacob (Gen. 35:12), reiterated to Moses (Ex. 6:2-8) who described the geographical boundaries of the land in Numbers 34:1-12 and who prophesied the fulfillment of this covenant during the millennium in Deuteronomy 30:1-9.
The land grant under the “Palestinian” covenant: (1) Most of the land in Turkey (2) Most of East Africa (3) Saudi Arabia (4) Yemen (5) Oman and Red Sea (6) Syria (7) Iraq (8) Jordan.

The land grant has boundaries on the Mediterranean, on Aegean Sea, on Euphrates River and the Nile River.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 describes seven features of the “Palestinian” covenant: (1) The nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3). (2) There will be a future repentance of Israel (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3). (3) Israel’s Messiah will return (Deut. 30:3-6). (4) Israel will be restored to the land (Deut. 30:5). (5) Israel will be converted as a nation (Deut. 30:4-8; cf. Rm. 11:26-27). (6) Israel’s enemies will be judged (Deut. 30:7). (7) The nation will then receive her full blessing (Deut. 30:9).

The Lord promises that this land would be given to Abram’s descendants and this promise was fulfilled to a certain extent by Israel under Joshua (Josh. 21:43-45; cf. 13:1-7) and David and Solomon (1 Kgs. 4:20-25; Neh. 9:8).

The prophets of Israel prophesied of the “Palestinian” covenant’s literal and ultimate fulfillment during the millennial reign of Christ (Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 16:14-16; 23:3-8; 31:8, 31-37; Ezek. 11:17-21; 20:33-38; 34:11-16; 39:25-29; Hos. 1:10-11; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:6-7; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 8:4-8).

During the millennial reign of Christ, the northern boundary of Israel will extend from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River (47:15-17), incorporating much of modern Lebanon and Syria. The eastern border will extend south from the Euphrates River, incorporating the Golan Heights and portions of Syria almost up to Damascus, and continue south to where the Jordan River leaves the Sea of Galilee. The river will be the eastern border to the Dead Sea’s southern end (47:18). From there the southern border will go westward, incorporating the Negev and parts of Sinai all the way along the Brook of Egypt (the modern Wadi-el-Arish) to the point where it reaches the Mediterranean Sea (47:19), the western border (47:20). Although the land will have twelve tribal divisions, these subdivisions will differ form those in the Book of Joshua.


Ezekiel 48:8-22 describes the holy mountain, which will be south of Judah and north of Benjamin, separating the northern and the southern tribes.

The term “Canaanite” denotes those individuals descended from Canaan who lived in the land west of the Jordan River before the conquest of Joshua and whose western border was the Mediterranean Sea, especially in the lower and coastal regions (Gen. 13:12; Num. 33:51). The northern border of the land of the Canaanites went as far as Sidon, which is 120 miles north of Jerusalem and the southern border extended to Gerar, which is about 11 miles south-southeast of Gaza, which was on the coast 50 miles southeast of Jerusalem. The Canaanites who lived in the highland regions were often called “Amorite.”

At times the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, were called “Canaanites” but strictly speaking the nations who dwelt on the coasts or river lowlands were called “Canaanite” (Nm. 13:29).

The Canaanites were descendants of Noah’s son Ham. They were actually composed of seven nations (Deut. 7:1) and were idolatrous (Deut. 29:17), involved in the occult (Deut. 18:9-10) and gross immorality (Lev. 18), which archaeology confirms. They were under a divine curse (Genesis 9:24-27).

Discoveries at the ancient Ugarit, north of Tyre and Sidon, have revealed Canaanite religion promoted child sacrifice, idolatry, prostitution in the name of religion and all kinds of occultic and immoral practices. Therefore, it was an act of justice in the Lord dispossessing the Amorites, also known as the Canaanite.

The Lord does not dispossess and judge a nation immediately until He has given it grace in the sense of giving it a sufficient amount of time to repent. Once a nation has completely rejected God’s grace and every opportunity to repent and accept Christ as Savior, it will become totally and completely saturated with evil (see Lev. 18:24-28; 20:23) and then the Lord sends judgment.

The Lord used the nation of Israel under Joshua to pour out His judgment upon the Canaanites for their immoral degeneracy (Gen. 15:16; 19:5; Lev. 18; 20; Deut. 12:31). The Canaanites were defeated on the battlefield, destroyed, or integrated with other nations or enslaved to Israel (Gen. 14:1-16; 15:18-21; Ex. 3:7-10; Deut. 1-3; Josh. 10-19). Therefore, Genesis 9:24-29 sets the stage or lays the foundation for Israel’s foreign policy in the land (Deut. 20:16-18).

“Canaan” is the more ancient name of Palestine, apparently derived from Hurrian, meaning, “belonging to the land of red purple,” the dye the early Canaanites or Phoenician traders peddled far and wide. It was obtained from the murex shells found on the Mediterranean (Phoenician) coast” (Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament, page 54, AMG Publishers).

The land of Canaan was west of the Jordan River before the conquest by Joshua, which had the Mediterranean Sea as its eastern border and whose position served as the route of two major highways between Egypt and the Western coast of the Arabian Peninsula to Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (with connections to India and Europe respectively).
The natural boundaries of Canaan as expressed in the Bible extend from the Negev in the South to the northern reaches of the Lebanon Range in Syria and the land west of the range and of the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea.

In Genesis 10:19, Moses defines the borders of the Canaanites because it is this land that the Lord will dispossess for Israel and fulfill the prophecy of Noah in Genesis 9:24-25 regarding Canaan. The northern border of the land of the Canaanites went as far as Sidon, which is 120 miles north of Jerusalem and the southern border extended to Gerar, which is about 11 miles south-southeast of Gaza, which was on the coast 50 miles southeast of Jerusalem.

The “Hittites” were present in the land of Canaan during the time of Abraham according to Genesis 15:19-21 and they reached the zenith of their power sometime later and still possessed great power at the time of Solomon a thousand years later according to 2 Chronicles 1:17.

The “Amorite” means literally “the Westerner,” and thus the name Amorites is generally supposed to mean “western highlanders” (cf. Num 13:29; Deut 1:7-20; Josh 10:6), or “tall ones” (cf. Amos 2:9; see also Num 13:33; Deut 2:10). The Amorites were so prominent that their name seems sometimes to be used for Canaanites in general (e.g., Josh 24:8). In Abraham’s day the Amorites lived west of the Dead Sea, in Hazazon-tamar (Gen 14:7), “that is Engedi” (2 Chron 20:2) and about Hebron (Gen 14:13, cf. 13:18).

The “Perizzites” refers to a tribe of people who inhabited the mountainous region eventually taken over by the tribes of Ephraim and Judah (cf. Josh. 11:3; 17:5; Judg. 1:4f.) and because they were related to the Canaanites, the term “Perizzites” often refers to this entire group (cf. Gen. 13:7; 34:30).

The “Jebusite” settled in “Jebus,” which is the name of Jerusalem when this tribe held it (Josh. 15:63; Judg. 19:10) and it wasn’t until David’s reign that they were finally driven out (2 Sam. 5:6-7; cf. 1 Kings 9:20).

The “Hivites” settled in the land of Canaan and was displaced by Israel under Joshua (Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11; Deut. 7:1; Josh. 9:1).

Genesis 34:2 records that they were in the land of Shechem and according to Genesis 36:2, Esau took a Hivite for a wife and 1 Kings 9:20 records that Solomon used them as builders. Judges 3:3 records that they settled in the foothills of Lebanon.

In Exodus 3:8, the Lord describes the land of Canaan as “a land flowing with milk and honey” which describes the goodness of God’s provision for His people in Canaan (cf. 3:17; 13:5). It indicates that the Israelite flocks will thrive in the land of Canaan and is a place where honey bees were abundant.

John Hannah writes, “The phrase a land flowing with milk means that Canaan was ideal for raising goats and cows. Feeding on good pastureland the goats, sheep, and cows were full of milk. Flowing with honey means that the bees were
busy making honey. Milk and honey suggested agricultural prosperity. This is the first of numerous references in the Old Testament to the “land flowing with milk and honey” (cf. v. 17; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh. 5:6; Jer. 11:5; 32:22; Ezek. 20:6, 15).”

So in Exodus 3:8, the Lord is promising Moses that He is going to bring the Israelites to the land of Canaan where they will have plenty of land for their flocks and will prosper there. However, there are enemies they will have to overcome in order to take possession of this land. Their faith in God’s land promises will appropriate the power of God needed to take possession of the land. The same power that will deliver the Israelites from Egypt will also enable them to dispossess the great nations already in the land of Canaan.

Exodus 3:10

Exodus 3:10 “Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”

The Pharaoh at this time would be Amenhotep II. This verse records the Lord commissioning Moses to confront Pharaoh in order to bring the nation of Israel out of Egypt. Here we have the grace of God in action for the Lord is commissioning a murderer and a fugitive to confront Pharaoh and to lead His people Israel.

In this verse, we have the Lord expressing His sovereignty in that He is going to compel Pharaoh to let Israel leave his nation and Moses will be His instrument that He will use to bring this about.

The term “sovereignty” connotes a situation in which a person, from his innate dignity, exercises supreme power, with no areas of his province outside his jurisdiction. As applied to God, the term “sovereignty” indicates His complete power over all of creation, so that He exercises His will absolutely, without any necessary conditioning by a finite will or wills.

Isaiah 40:15 “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.” (NASB95)

Isaiah 40:17 “All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.” (NASB95)

The designation “the sons of Israel” emphasizes the national identity of Israel/Jacob’s sons and not their personal identity as Jacob’s sons. This designation identifies Jacob/Israel’s sons by their national designation, numbering them among the various ethnic groups inhabiting the world.

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Exodus 3:11  

**Exodus 3:11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” (NASB95)**

This verse is not revealing Moses’ lack of confidence. He is speaking to God according to the dictates of his culture. He is properly and respectfully expressing his humility upon receiving such an important assignment. His question “who am I?” is not an expression of a lack of confidence or lack of faith. He was not trying to get out of the job. Rather, his question is expressing his polite acceptance of the honor that God had given him and was not an attempt to decline the honor. This is indicated by Moses’ statement in verse 13 where he acknowledges that he was in fact going to the citizens of Israel. However, he delays only because he wants to know what name he should use to identify the Lord when speaking to the Israelites.

In 1 Samuel 18:18, David did spoke this way to King Saul when the latter offered his older daughter as a wife if he fought the Philistines. In 2 Samuel 7:18, king David spoke in this manner to God after the latter promised that a descendant of his will sit on his throne forever.

Douglas Stuart writes “The exact expression, “Who am I” (mǐʾănōḵī) occurs two other times in the Old Testament, in each instance as part of expressing polite acceptance of an honor rather than as an attempt to decline it. From the wording of his response, it is clear that Moses understood the nature of his assignment.”

Exodus 3:12  

**Exodus 3:12 And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.” (NASB95)**

The Lord promises help and guidance in this verse. When the Lord promises that He will be with Moses, He means that He will guide and direct Moses. This verse also records a fulfillment sign. This means that the Lord is telling Moses that when he and Israel worship Him on the very same mountain which they were conversing on, that this event will confirm that God had sent him. This sign was fulfilled three months later according to Exodus 19:1. So the Lord is promising Moses that proof of His being with him will follow after an interval of time rather than immediately. The Lord does this to encourage faith in Moses. It would require faith on the part of Moses in the sense that he would have to take God at His Word in order to arrive at Mount Horeb with Israel to worship Him.

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“Worship” is the verb ʿāḇāḏ (עבד), which does not mean “to worship” but rather it means “to serve” as an expression of worship. Here it means that God would deliver Israel from Egypt in order to serve Him as an expression of worship. In the same way, that God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage in order to serve Him as an expression of worship, so the Christian has been delivered by God through His Son and the Spirit from the bondage of sin and Satan in order to serve God as an expression of worship. So in effect, God is saying to Moses that instead of serving Pharaoh, Israel will be serving Him. The former brought misery whereas the latter would bring joy.

Exodus 3:13

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” (NASB95)

“Behold” is the interjection hin·nē(h) (הִנֵּה), which the ESV, NET, and NRSV render “if” even though this usage of the word is only found in a few instances in the Old Testament. NIV translates the word “suppose.” The NKJV renders the word “indeed” and the KJV translates it “behold.”

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” (ESV)

Exodus 3:13 Moses said to God, “If I go to the Israelites and tell them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ – what should I say to them?” (NET)

Exodus 3:13 But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” (NRSV)

Exodus 3:13 Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” (NIV84)

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” (NKJV)

Therefore, this is a major problem because if hin·nē(h) means “if” or “suppose” then this would indicate that Moses has yet to accept God’s commissioning him to go Israel and Pharaoh as His representative. Again, this use of the word does not appear often however the meaning “behold, indeed” or “now” is the word’s
primary usage. Here if we render the word with its normal sense then this would indicate that Moses has accepted this commission.

Carl Philip Weber commenting on the use of this word in Biblical Hebrew writes “hinneh is sometimes used as a predicate of existence according to T. O. Lambdin: "It differs from yeš in that it emphasizes the immediacy, the here-and-now-ness, of the situation (Introduction to Biblical Hebrew, Scribner’s Sons, 1971, p. 168). hinneh may he used to point out things (pillar and heap, Gen 31:51; covenant, Gen 17:4), but more often it is used to point out people, “behold my maid” (Gen 30:3). Often pronouns are attached as suffixes, especially the first person singular: “See me standing” (i.e, “behold I stood,” Gen 41:17), or for emphasis the pronoun is repeated, “And I, behold I am bringing” (Gen 6:17), and often the idiom, “Behold me!” (i.e., “here I am,” I Sam 3:4f.). Then too, according to Lambdin, “Most hinneh clauses occur in direct speech … and serve to introduce a fact upon which a following statement or command is based” (ibid., p. 169). Thus, “Behold your handmaid is in your charge; do to her” is equivalent to “since your handmaid is” (Gen 16:6). With the first person suffix followed by a particle it is used often in the prophets as a statement of what God will do, “Behold, I am going to proclaim liberty … to the sword” (Jer 34:17). Especially with the participle it may point out what is just on the verge of happening (Ex 4:23, 7:17 etc.). In a few instances hinneh is used to emphasize one specific possibility and may be translated “if,” “and if … the disease is checked” (Lev 13:5, RSV). An important fact or action may follow introductory words: “As for Ishmael … , behold I have blessed him” (Gen 17:20), “In my dream and behold I stood” (Gen 41:17). The pronoun may be omitted if understood, “Behold, between Kadesh and Bered,” i.e, “it,” referring to a well, was thus located (Gen 16:14).”

The interjection hin-ne(h) means “now” since it used in direct speech and is introducing a fact upon which a following statement or command is based. In other words, the word is introducing Moses’ acceptance of God’s command. This is indicated by the fact that if Moses was not willing or was hesitating, he would not have asked the Lord what name he should use to identify Him to the Israelites. Or he would say to God what he said in Exodus 4:13 that there must be someone better qualified than him. His question in Exodus 3:13 is an implicit acceptance of the task assigned to him by the Lord. Why would he ask this question if he was not convinced he could do what God commanded him to do?

Moses’ question indicates that God’s identification of Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was sufficient for him. He does not ask for himself what name God wants him to use when addressing the Israelites but rather he asks this question in anticipation of the Israelites challenging his assertion that the God of

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Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had sent him. He asks this question because the designation “the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” is not a name but simply describes the relationship of God to these three men. Also, he asks the Lord what name he wants him to use when addressing the Israelites because He identified Himself to Abraham and Jacob as *El Shaddai*, “God Almighty” (Genesis 17:1; 35:11). He was also known as *Yahweh* to Noah (Genesis 9:26), Abraham (Genesis 12:8) and Isaac (Genesis 26:25). He was known as *El Elyon*, “God Most High” (Genesis 14:18–22). Lastly, God was called by Jacob *El Bethel*, “God of Bethel” (Genesis 31:13).

Moses would have known these various designations through oral tradition passed down by the Israelites from generation to generation. Therefore, Moses’ question in Exodus 3:13 is simply an attempt by him to have God choose for Himself what name He would like to be identified with when dealing with the Israelites.

Some argue that his question was the result of the fact that many Israelites were polytheists. However, remember, the Israelites had no contact with the Egyptians because of the latter’s racial bigotry toward the former. The Lord moved the Israelites out of Canaan and away from exposure to the Canaanites who were polytheists. So it is hard to see the Israelites becoming polytheists in Egypt when they were basically segregated from the Egyptians and the rest of the world. If anything the Israelites would have clung to the oral traditions regarding the patriarchs and rejected the gods of Egypt since they were oppressed by Egypt.

This use of the interjection *hin·nē(h)* in Exodus 3:13 would make the qal participle form of the verb *bō(ʾ)* (**בֹּוא**), which the NASB95 renders “I am going” a temporal participle meaning “when I go.” Therefore, in Exodus 3:13 Moses is not saying “if” or “suppose” I go but rather “now when I go” indicating that Moses is not shrinking from the task given to him by the Lord but rather he has accepted the task. It indicates that he was quite willing to do what God asked him.

Now, as we will note in Exodus 4:1-12, we will see Moses speaking with typical Near Eastern humility when speaking to God but in Exodus 4:13, he comes right out and says to God that there must be someone better qualified to speak to Pharaoh and the Israelites. Then God gets mad at him.

**Exodus 3:14**

*Exodus 3:14* God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

“I AM WHO I AM” translates the Hebrew expression ʾěh·yě(h) ʾāšēr ʾěh·yě(h) (**יהוהאֲשֶׁר יהוה**). “I AM” is the first person qal imperfect form of the verb hā·yā(h) (**הָיָּה**).
(הָיָה), which means “to exist (in an absolute sense).” “WHO” is the relative particle ʾǎšěr (אֲשֶׁר).

The qal imperfects of the verb hā·yā(h) (הָיָה) connotes a continuing, unfinished action. These imperfects are iterative meaning that they describe an action as one that is done continually. Here it refers to infinite actions since we are speaking in the context of God’s existence. Therefore, the imperfects indicate that God exists continually or without end.

The idea with this expression “I am existing that I am existing” or in other words “the one who always exists, the eternal one.” This is indicated by God’s statement in verse 15 where He states to Moses that this name ʾèh·yè(h) ʾàšër ʾèh·yè(h) (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) is ʿô·lām (עֶלְם), which means “forever, eternity.” The Septuagint uses the articular present active participle form of the verb eimi, which means “the one who continually exists.” Thus, the idea with this Hebrew expression is “the Eternal One.”

The NET Bible has the following comment on this expression, “The verb form used here is הָיָה (ʾehyeh), the Qal imperfect, first person common singular, of the verb הָיָה (haya, “to be”). It forms an excellent paronomasia with the name. So when God used the verb to express his name, he used this form saying, “I am.” When his people refer to him as Yahweh, which is the third person masculine singular form of the same verb, they say “he is.” Some commentators argue for a future tense translation, “I will be who I will be,” because the verb has an active quality about it, and the Israelites lived in the light of the promises for the future. They argue that “I am” would be of little help to the Israelites in bondage. But a translation of “I will be” does not effectively do much more except restrict it to the future. The idea of the verb would certainly indicate that God is not bound by time, and while he is present (“I am”) he will always be present, even in the future, and so “I am” would embrace that as well (see also Ruth 2:13; Ps 50:21; Hos 1:9). The Greek translation of the OT used a participle to capture the idea, and several times in the Gospels Jesus used the powerful “I am” with this significance (e.g., John 8:58). The point is that Yahweh is sovereignly independent of all creation and that his presence guarantees the fulfillment of the covenant (cf. Isa 41:4; 42:6, 8; 43:10–11; 44:6; 45:5–7). Others argue for a causative Hiphil translation of “I will cause to be,” but nowhere in the Bible does this verb appear in Hiphil or Piel. A good summary of the views can be found in G. H. Parke-Taylor, Yahweh, the Divine Name in the Bible. See among the many articles: B. Beitzel, “Exodus 3:14 and the Divine Name: A Case of Biblical Paronomasia,” TJ 1 (1980): 5-20; C. D. Isbell, “The Divine Name ehyeh as a Symbol of Presence in Israelite Tradition,” HAR 2 (1978): 101-18; J. G. Janzen, “What’s in a Name? Yahweh in Exodus 3 and the Wider Biblical Context,” Int 33 (1979): 227-39; J. R. Lundbom, “God’s Use of the Idem per Idem to Terminate Debate,” HTR 71 (1978): 193-201; A. R.

Therefore, we see here in verse 14 that God has made Moses his ambassador to Pharaoh and the Israelites. He would not be speaking on his own authority but based upon the authority given to him by God.

Exodus 3:15

Exodus 3:15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.” (NASB95)

In verse 15, we have God reiterating to Moses what has been revealed to him by the divine name with respect to the patriarchs. He does this because want the Israelites in Egypt to come to the conclusion that Moses was coming to them on behalf of a God who did great things for their ancestors and if so, then He could be counted to do great things for them.

“Lord” is the proper noun yhwh (יהוה), which is the personal name of God emphasizing the “immanency” of God meaning that He involves Himself in and concerns Himself with and intervenes in the affairs of men whereas Elohim, “God” emphasizes the transcendent character of God. It is the personal covenant name of God emphasizing that the Lord was involving Himself in and concerning Himself with and intervening in the life of the Israelites and fulfilling His covenant promises He made to the patriarchs. It indicates that God was faithful to His covenant promises to the patriarchs.

Because the ancient Hebrews wrote only consonants, not vowels, the pronunciation of words and names was passed down by the parents to the children. Throughout Old Testament times people used the name Yahweh freely.

When the rabbis began to add their traditions about 300 B.C. they noted that the Third Commandment forbids misusing the name of Yahweh (Ex. 20:7). Therefore, they decided it was too holy to pronounce so they quit pronouncing the name.

Whenever they came to the name (YHWH), sometimes called the Sacred Tetragrammaton) in Scripture, they read ‘adhon, “Lord.” In time, everyone forgot how to pronounce the name. In the sixth and seventh centuries after Christ, Jewish scholars of tradition (Masoretes) added vowel marks to the Hebrew Bibles to help them remember the traditional pronunciation.

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Wherever they came to *YHWH*, they put vowel marks to remind them to read ‘*adhon*’, “*Lord*” unless the verse had ‘*adhon YHWH*. Then they put vowel marks to remind them to read ‘*elohim*, “*God*.”

Later, some European scholars wrote *JHVH* instead of *YHWH*. Then about 1220 A.D. some of them took the vowels for “*Lord*” (modified by Hebrew grammatical rules) and put them with *JHVH* to come up with *Jehovah*, which is not a real name, for it has the consonants of a proper name and the vowels of a title.

*Exodus 3:16-17*

Exodus 3:16 “Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.”’” (NASB95)

God instructs Moses to communicate to the leaders of Israel that He intends to act on behalf of the nation of Israel. He wants Moses to communicate to the Israelite leaders that He is indeed concerned about the nation of Israel.

Again, God emphasizes His relationship to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob telling Moses to communicate this when speaking to the Israelite leaders so that they can draw encouragement. If God fulfilled His promises to their ancestors, He certainly could be counted on to fulfill His promise to them of delivering them from the bondage of Egypt.

God also wants Moses to emphasize His relationship to the patriarchs because His promise to the Israelites to deliver them from Egypt and bring them to the land of Canaan is a fulfillment of the promise He made to the patriarchs.

Verses 16-17 repeats much of the language that is found in verses 7-9, much of it is verbatim. This repetition is a narrative method called “command-fulfillment style” in which the narrator tells what was commanded and then using much of the same language tells either how it was to be fulfilled or how it actually was fulfilled.

*Exodus 3:18*

Exodus 3:18 “They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days’
journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.”” (NASB95)

In His omniscience, God assures Moses of success at convincing the leaders of Israel that he was sent by God. He also assures Moses of success in getting these leaders to accompany him in confronting Pharaoh with God’s demands. God instructs Moses to identify the Israelites as Hebrews when confronting Pharaoh in order that Pharaoh might understand.

God also instructs Moses to request that Pharaoh let Israel go a three days’ journey into the wilderness to worship the Lord God. In the Near East, this would be tantamount to making a request to permanently leave Egypt. It is a polite way of saying let us leave Egypt altogether and we will never return. People in many Eastern societies prefer to use gentle and restrained ways of making requests instead of coming right out and saying what they want.

Exodus 3:19-20

Exodus 3:19 “But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. 20 So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.” (NASB95)

In His omniscience, God knows that Pharaoh will refuse to let the Israelites leave Egypt except under compulsion. Pharaoh fears that if Israel departs that she will join forces with Egypt’s enemies in order to wage war against his nation. By continuing to enslave the Israelites, Pharaoh would prevent them from joining forces with Egypt’s enemies and waging war against Egypt.

If they were in bondage to Egypt, the Israelites could not wage war with other nations against Egypt. Pharaoh’s stubbornness will lead to the destruction of the nation by God.

These two verses summarize what God will do to Egypt with the ten plagues. As ruler of the most powerful nation on earth at the time, Pharaoh would not be intimidated by any human being. Thus, he will remain stubborn.

Exodus 3:21-22

Exodus 3:21 “I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. 22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians.”
Not only does God promise to deliver the Israelites from Egypt but He also promises that the Israelites will plunder the Egyptians without the use of military force but as a result of the exertion of God’s power manifested by the ten plagues. God is going to wage a war against Egypt in order to force Pharaoh to release the Israelites. The Israelite will not fight but watch the Lord fight for them. The promises contained in verses 21 and 22 were fulfilled as recorded in Exodus 12:30-36.