Research on: I AM THAT I AM

Ex. 3:1, 7, 10-12, 13-15

“To Moses was given a fuller revelation of the nature of God

than had heretofore been known. God had declared Himself to Abraham

as “the Almighty,” but to Moses he declared Himself as Jehovah, as the

“I AM THAT I AM,” the Self-Existent One—“The living God.” To

strengthen Moses’ confidence and to provide Israel with convincing

testimony of Moses’ commission, he was given two visible signs of divine

power—the turning of his rod into a serpent and the healing of the leprous hand” (Shotwell, 107).

“The years of Moses’s life are remarkably divided into three forties; the first forty he spent as a prince in Pharaoh’s court, the second a shepherd in Midian, the third a king in Jeshurun. He had now finished his second forty when he received his commission to bring Israel out of Egypt. Sometimes it is long before God calls his servants out to that work which of old he designed them for. Moses was born to be Israel’s deliverer, and yet not a word is said of him till he is eighty years of age” (Benson Commentary, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/exodus/3-1.htm)>.

1Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb.

“The names Horeb and Sinai seem to be synonymous, though it has been suggested that Horeb is the name given to the entire mountain range, while Sinai denotes the particular mountain where the Law was given” (Dummelow 51).

“One day Moses drives the flock ‘beyond’ (some try to translate it, ‘to the west of’; others, ‘far side of’) his usual grazing area in order to seek pasture for them” (*EBC* 1.363).

7¶ And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

“Israel is no longer a family, but a people and a nation – one so internally linked to Yahweh that he calls them ‘ammi, “my people” (*EBC* 1.366).

10Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

“The call of Moses comes to a double conclusion with the phrase, ‘And/so now’. Verse 10 is the bottom line to the whole incident of the burning bush; it is the formal commissioning of Moses as God’s emissary to lead Israel out of Egypt” (*EBC* 1.365).

13And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them?

“ The name of God is His revealed character. . . The word Jehovah is the result of a combination of the consonants of the original name (the consonants alone are written in ancient Hebrew). The name denotes the absolute self-existence of God. He alone truly exists” (Dummelow 51).

“Verse 13 is presented in the larger context of a series of objections on the part of Moses in the face of his call. It is important to note at the outset that the question of the name of God does not proceed directly from Moses as if he had said: ‘What then is your name?’ The request is couched as a question from the people. Even then Moses does not directly request the name. Rather he inquires how to answer the people when they ask for a name. There is still another observation to make regarding the nature of the question. It is not posed as a hypothetical question, but in a *hinneh* clause: ‘Agreed, I come to the people. Now when I say that the God of your fathers sent me, and they then say, “What’s his name?” what shall I reply?’ The response of the people to Moses’ proclamation is not regarded as a remote reaction, but as the natural one which he is sure to expect. The question suggests that the verification of Moses’ commission is integrally tied to the revelation of the divine name” (Childs 66).

“Moses must know the name of the one who authorizes such a dangerous mission. The mission is dangerous not only for Moses, but also for the Israelites, who are asked to engage in massive civil disobedience against Pharaoh. Such a risk will require unambiguous warrant” (*NIBC* 1.714).

14And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

**Excellent recommended article:**

**”I Am”, John L. Carter, Christian Science Journal, June 1921.**

“Gradually their God became the I AM THAT I AM, the Self-created, always existing

Being. And finally, as revealed to and by the great Literary Prophets,

He became the One and Only God of the whole universe. The author of Genesis One was obviously aware of this great truth: the ALL-power must be the Only Power” (Tathem 8, Old Testament Made Easy).

“The significance of the fact that the appellation "I AM"

belongs to God and not to man is worthy of careful consideration.

We are led by both reason and revelation to see that

since there is but one God there can be but one "I AM," and

that one not mortal but immortal, not imperfect but perfect,

not human but divine. The truth then is the truth now.

Man as the reflection of God cannot, therefore, think or

correctly speak of himself as having existence independent

of God, but rather as the expressed image and likeness of “I Am.”

“Because "I AM" is Spirit, God, the being

which is "holiness, harmony, immortality" man is

clearly seen to be its individual likeness in multitudinous

forms. There are then in reality no common men, no illiterates,

no degraded ones, no sick, no sinners, no dead; but all

true individualities are the perfect expressions of the one

ever perfect "I AM."

(“I Am” Julia Warner Michael, CSS, May 22, 1915)

*“He that*IS*, and*WAS, *and*IS TO COME. It explains his name Jehovah, and signifies, 1st, That he is *self- existent:*he has his being of himself, and has no dependence on any other. And being *self-existent,*he cannot but be *self-sufficient,*and therefore *all-sufficient,*and the inexhaustible fountain of being and blessedness. That he is *eternal*and *unchangeable:*the *same yesterday, to-day, and forever.”*

*(Benson Commentary, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/exodus/3-14.htm).*

“When used of God, ‘name’ in the OT has a revelatory content. The name of God means primarily his revealed nature and character. . . As expressing essential nature, it implies the most complete divine self-disclosure, while the identification of name and person safeguards the unity of God. . .To know the name of God is to know God himself as he is revealed” (*IDB* 3.502).

15And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this *is* my name for ever, and this *is* my memorial unto all generations.

“In the formulation of v. 15, the name *Yahweh* is uttered as a summary of the longer ancestral formulation. The name *Yahweh* ostensibly derives from some form of the verb *to be* (*haya*) so that God is the power for life, the power of being, the power of newness” (*NIBC* 1.714).

Sue Harper Mims, in an article from the *Christian Science Sentinel*, October 7, 1905, writes:

“Recognition of the voice of Truth, and obedience to it, open the door to spiritual illumination, hence there was poured into Moses’ receptive consciousness the glorious revelation of God as the ‘I am that I am,’ – the one individual supreme Mind, or infinite Being, the one intelligence that guided Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the ‘strong Deliverer’ from the bondage of Egypt.”

God as I AM must have relevance to the Hebrew’s trek from bondage. One cannot strike a match to the term I AM and reduce it to ashes.

**Sources:**

Childs, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus*. Louisville: The Westminster Press, 1976.

*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis – Leviticus*. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

*The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. Ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

Mims, Sue Harper. “The Burning Bush.” *Christian Science Sentinel* 8*,* no. 6 (October 7, 1905): 33.

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Abbreviation Key:

*NIBC = The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*