

YHWH – THE GOD OF ISRAEL

It is a BIG DEAL that the God of the Bible is FOREVER on record as being the covenant God of Israel. He has forever in time, and for all eternity, linked Himself in a special covenant way with this people group. This is how He methodically revealed Himself back in the foundational Old Testament Scriptures, and this is what the rest of God's progressive revelation then builds on.

The meaning of I AM/YHWH as seen in Exodus 3:13-15.

Exodus 3:13–15 (NKJV)

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?”

14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”

15 Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord 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 to all generations.’ ”

1. He is the self-existent, eternal God.
2. He is in an eternal covenant relationship with Israel, signifying His character is faithful and unchanging.
3. This is His eternal NAME.
4. This is how God is to be remembered throughout time.

In the context of being in bondage in Egypt God called Moses to be the deliverer of the Hebrew people. Moses then went to Pharaoh armed with the truth of Who God was and said, “*Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let My people go...’*” (cf. Ex. 5:1). Pharaoh, in effect, said “NO” and began to oppress the Hebrews more. The Jewish people then held Moses and Aaron accountable for this mistreatment.

So, Moses then went to God in prayer and asked WHY He had not yet delivered His people. Moses failed to realize God was going to work in a protracted way to bring great glory to Himself in the process. But this was a very DOWN time for Moses and in that context, God encouraged him with a reiteration and expansion of WHO He is as YHWH.

Exodus 6:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

2 And God spoke to Moses and said to him: “I am the Lord.”

Up until this time God had not directly intervened in this situation, but He was about to. He was about to demonstrate His special covenant relationship with Israel in bringing 10 plagues upon Egypt.

The first thing God does to encourage Moses is to reiterate His promise of deliverance. The second thing He does is to reiterate His Name.

The Name LORD here is YHWH. God goes on to affirm that it is the special covenant Name associated with His special relationship with Israel.

Exodus 6:3 (NKJV)

3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them.

The fact is the Name YHWH was known by the patriarchs and is mentioned 162 times in Genesis, starting with Gen. 2:5. (cf. Gen. 4:26, 13:4, etc.). What they didn’t know was the deeper meaning and significance of the Name YHWH, which was now being revealed.

God’s Name, YHWH, literally means “*to be*”, signifying He is eternal. That is the essence of the Name YHWH, as initially understood by the patriarchs.

However, God was now revealing a deeper significance to this particular Name. He was now linking the idea of Him being eternal and unchanging with the idea of His covenant relationship with Israel. He is applying His UNCHANGING character to His relationship with Israel. God is in a forever UNCHANGING relationship with His people, Israel, which is reflected in this Name, YHWH. He is the eternal UNCHANGING God in an eternal UNCHANGING relationship with Israel.

Hence, the Name YHWH emphasizes covenant faithfulness, and they were now about to see the outworking of God’s covenant faithfulness in the Exodus.

Exodus 6:1-8 further builds on God's revelation to Moses concerning the deeper meaning of this Name in Ex. 3:14-15.

Exodus 6:4–5 (NKJV)

4 I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.

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.

Note that there is clearly a linkage of the Name LORD (YHWH) in verse 3 with COVENANT in verses 4 and 5. This is the sacred covenant Name for God and the covenant in view is the Abrahamic Covenant in which God promised a special land to Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gen. 12:1-7, 15:12-21, 17, 22:15-18).

Although previously they had known of this name YHWH – yet up to this point they hadn't seen God "deliver". Now, in an experiential way, they were about to enter into the good of what God had promised and thus see firsthand the deeper meaning of God's Name YHWH.

He then goes on to reiterate the essence of what this covenant Name means in practical reality in verses 6-8, where we find a 7-fold "**I will**" emphasis. "To remember" does not mean that God has forgotten – rather it means that God is about to take action to bring about what has been promised.

Exodus 6:6–8 (NKJV)

6 Therefore say to the children of Israel: '**I am the Lord**; **I will** bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, **I will** rescue you from their bondage, and **I will** redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

7 **I will** take you as My people, and **I will** be your God. Then you shall **know that I am the Lord your God** who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

8 And **I will** bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and **I will** give it to you as a heritage: **I am the Lord**.'

These verses drive home the significance of the Name YHWH. This Name is stressed in relation to all that God will do to bring about His covenant

promises related to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will deliver them. He will have a special relationship with them. He will bring them into the Promised Land.

So, we see that this Name YHWH is bound up with God's covenant promises to Israel. The Name YHWH brackets these 7 "I wills" and is found in the middle. You can't think of the Name YHWH without thinking about Israel. They are bound up together. When you think of the Name YHWH, think of the eternal God Who is now in eternal covenant relationship with Israel and you will have the idea (cf. 3:14-15, 6:2-8).

This is why it is so very blasphemous for people to say that God is finished with Israel and that He will not fulfill His covenant promises to them as a people. That is a shocking position; and yet, it is a position held by many today who claim to be Christians. However, it is a very serious error and one that insults the very NATURE and CHARACTER of God (cf. Ex. 34:5-7, Jer. 9:23-24).