

Exodus 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And 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?

Analysis

And 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?

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם (אֱלֹהֵם) —Moses' second objection: credibility/authority. **What is his name?** (מַה־שֵּׁמוֹ, mah-shemo)—Ancient Near Eastern cultures believed names revealed essence/character. Israel knew **God of your fathers** (אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם), but what is His personal covenant name? Moses needs more than "the ancestral deity"—he needs the name that will authenticate his mission and reveal God's character. God's response (v. 14-15) gives the most profound self-revelation in Scripture: YHWH, the I AM.

Historical Context

Names in ancient cultures weren't arbitrary labels but revealed character and essence. Knowing someone's name meant knowing their nature and having relationship. Moses' question seeks the covenant name that will unite Israel and distinguish YHWH from Egypt's pantheon. God's answer (YHWH) becomes Israel's most sacred name, the covenant identifier used over 6,800 times in the Hebrew Bible.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Moses' request for God's name reflect the importance of knowing God's character, not just His existence?
2. What does the emphasis on God's name teach about the relationship between knowing God personally (by name) and serving Him faithfully?

Interlinear Text

וְאָמַר	וְמֹשֶׁה	אֶל	יְהוָה	וְאָנֹכִי	בָּא
and shall say	And Moses	H413	unto God	H2009	H595
H559	H4872		H430		H935
אֶל	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְאָמַר	לְהָ	יְהוָה
H413	unto the children	of Israel	and shall say	H0	unto God
	H1121	H3478	H559		H430
אֲבוֹתֶיךָ	שָׁלַח	אֵלֶיךָ	וְאָמַר	לִי	מָה
of your fathers	hath sent	H413	and shall say	H0	H4100
H1	H7971		H559		
שְׁמִי	מָה	וְאָמַר	אֵלֵהֶם:		
to me	What is his name	H4100	and shall say	H413	
H8034			H559		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 9:6 (References God): For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 7:14 (Parallel theme): Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Proverbs 30:4 (Parallel theme): Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?

Jeremiah 23:6 (References Israel): In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Exodus 3:14 (References God): And 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.

Matthew 1:21 (Parallel theme): And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Genesis 32:29 (Parallel theme): And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.