

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 אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָּא אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהִי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַמְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם (וְאַמְרָדְלִי מַה-שְׁמָוֹתָה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים—Moses' second objection: credibility/authority. **What is his name?** (מה-שם, mah-shemo)—Ancient Near Eastern cultures believed names revealed essence/character. Israel knew **God of your fathers** (אֱלֹהִי), 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

בָּא אָנֹכִ יְהֹוָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־רַב־עַמּוֹ
and shall say And Moses H413 unto God H2009 H595 Behold when I come
H559 H4872 H430 H935

אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־רַב־עַמּוֹ לְקֹדֶשׁ אֱלֹהִים
unto the children of Israel and shall say H0 unto God
H413 H1121 H3478 H559 H430 H0 H4100

מִה לְאֶת־רַב־עַמּוֹ אֶלְيָךְ מִשְׁלָמָה בְּנֵי אֲבֹתֶיךָ מִ
of your fathers hath sent H413 and shall say H0 H4100
H1 H7971 H559

אֶל־קֹדֶשׁ אֶת־רַב־עַמּוֹ שְׁמָה
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.