

Yahweh Actively Present and Promises Deliverance

In preparation for our homework, (Lessons 4 and 5 in our study guide) we will take a look at Exodus 6:2-8.

God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸ And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'" Ex 6:2-8 (NIV)

Already in verse 2 we come across two names for the God of Israel. First he tells Moses "I am the Lord", He is *Yahweh*, commonly translated, the Lord. This is the sacred and personal name of Israel's God. This name was considered so sacred that it was not to be spoken and the initials YHWH were used to signify his name. It is referred to as the Tetragrammaton because it was formed by the four Hebrew consonants found in the name. So sacred was God's name that he was referred to by the Levite priests and rabbis as "The Name", "The Great and Terrible Name", "The Unutterable Name" and "The Holy Name" among other titles so as not to profane the Name of the Lord. The result being the true Hebrew pronunciation has become lost. The name *Adonai*, also meaning "the Lord" and indicating God's sovereignty in relation to man's subservient position to God, became a

substitute for YHWH in biblical texts. Subsequently scholars inserted the vowels from Adonai into the Tetragrammaton to come up with YaHoWaH, pronounced ya-WEH).

Yahweh is the name most associated with God's redeeming acts and is closely connected with God's self-identification in Exodus 3:14 "*I Am Who I Am*". Yahweh, in the coming verses reveals who he is: He is *unchanging*, the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And He is the God who will be *present* and *active* in the deliverance of his people. To the Israelites the name Yahweh will become associated with deliverance, freedom, divine power and provision.

In verse three Yahweh tells Moses that he "*appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty*", or the Hebrew name *El Shaddai*. This was the name by which the descendants of Abraham knew God until he revealed the name Yahweh to Moses. *El Shaddai* means "almighty", "all powerful", and "the One for whom nothing is impossible". The name *El Shaddai* reveals the attributes of God's strength and power, the power to create the universe out of nothing. He is the one who has the power and authority to initiate the Covenant with Abraham. The name *El Shaddai*, or God Almighty, does not invite a close personal relationship between God and man. Certainly Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew God Almighty as he indicates in the establishing of the covenant with Abraham and its promises. But God also says, "*I did not make myself known to them*". He did not establish a personal relationship with them. He did not enter into their world on a personal level as we will see him do in Exodus. Yahweh is about to reveal himself to Moses and the people of Israel in a much more personal and dramatic way, and at the same time draw them into a close relationship with him. He will come to dwell, move, and act among the people of Israel.

By introducing himself as Yahweh and identifying himself also as God Almighty, he establishes the fact that the Lord, (Yahweh) and God Almighty, (*El Shaddai*) are one and the same, therefore his Covenant with the Patriarchs continues on with Moses and the Israelites. The promises he made to Abraham are still valid for Israel and Moses. Moses should be confident that Yahweh will make good on His promise to deliver the Israelites from their servitude to the Egyptians. God made a prophecy and promise to Abraham that he will now fulfill through Moses. Recall that in Gen 15:13-14 that Lord told Abraham that his descendants would be "*strangers in a country not their own and they will be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years.*" Yahweh also promised, "*I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.*"

Up to this point, all Moses (upon the Lord's instruction) has asked Pharaoh to do is allow the Israelites to leave for a three day festival to worship their God at Mt. Sinai. It is becoming clear that Yahweh is not planning to take Israel out of Egypt for only three days, or for a brief period of worshipping him in the wilderness. He is planning something much

greater – the full and *permanent* Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and he will use Pharaoh to bring it about as he states in verse 1, “*because of my mighty hand he [Pharaoh] will drive them out of his country*”. In Exodus 6:4, Yahweh states to Moses: “*I also established my covenant with [Israel] to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.*” Yahweh is ready to fulfill the prophecy to Abraham now with Moses. He is ready to respond and react to the prayers and supplications of the Israelites and to embark on the long timeline initiating the fulfillment of his promise to give the land of Canaan to Israel, starting with the Exodus and a judgment against Egypt.

Yahweh makes several promises to Moses in relation to the Covenant he initiated with Abraham that can be categorized into three overarching oaths. The first oath is an assurance of deliverance: “*I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment*” (v. 6). Yahweh promises to break the yoke of slavery. The Israelites were unfairly oppressed by Pharaoh. They had never truly been a threat to Egypt, only a perceived threat by Pharaoh. The Israelites had done nothing to deserve the brutal conditions of slavery and infanticide under which they were living in Egypt. Yahweh will use the upcoming plagues and mighty acts to force Pharaoh to release the Israelites, which is the *only* way to get Pharaoh to release the population he has enslaved. Yahweh uses these plagues and mighty acts as a judgment, or punishment, against Pharaoh and the Egyptians because they unfairly oppressed the Israelites. The outstretched arm and mighty acts will serve not only to secure the release of the Yahweh’s people, but will also very clearly punish the Egyptians for their cruel and unfair treatment of the Israelites. They will no longer be a people subjugated to the tyrannical rule of man. They will gain their personal freedom. Yahweh will deliver them from their bondage.

In the second oath, Yahweh confirms the promise of making Israel his own people. “*I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.*” As their God, He is committing himself to providing and protecting the people of Israel. He will meet their needs and will shield them from their enemies. This oath is an assurance that Israel will enjoy a special status among the nations of the world. It alludes to the coming Mosaic Covenant that will be established and ratified on Mt. Sinai with the giving of the Law. Israel, in becoming God’s chosen people, signals their acceptance of both the privileges and responsibilities that come with the yet future Mosaic Covenant. In the immediate term, God will confirm this special status with the people of Israel through the imminent sign of their miraculous deliverance. When they are able to leave Egypt, and Egypt is brought down by the judgment of plagues in punishment for enslaving the Israelites, then the Israelites will know that they are God’s special and chosen people.

The final oath is the establishment of the physical nation of Israel in the Promise Land. Verse 8 says, *“And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession.”* When the Lord says “I swore with an uplifted hand” he is recalling the oath given to Abraham in Genesis 15:12-21 at the institution of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelled in the promise land as foreigners among the Canaanite population. Abraham originally came from the Land of the Chaldeans between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the land later known as Babylonia (Genesis 11:31-32). Now the time was at hand that God would give the land of Canaan to Israel to possess. It will be taken from the Canaanites and given to the people of Israel as their inheritance and possession.¹ Of course, this wouldn’t come to pass until after the desert wanderings where God prepares and molds the Israelites into a nation ready to take possession of the land. This promise was as relevant in Moses’ day as it is today. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still the inheritors of the all the physical land of Israel, undivided, despite what world powers may say.

These three oaths contain the sacred promise of a personal relationship with a personal God and his people. Just as these promises were initially issued with Abraham, they still held true in the time of Moses because God’s word is unchanging and eternal. God’s promise of deliverance, personal relationship, and a land for his own people still holds true today. The New Covenant experienced today between the Lord and Christians contain these three promises. Through our acceptance of the terms and conditions of our salvation through Christ Jesus, we are delivered of our sins and a life of slavery to a sinful nature. We are no longer held in bondage to sin. We are freed from the bondage of sin which leads to death. We can enter into a life of freedom because our sins were nailed to the cross of Christ. The Apostle Paul goes to great lengths in Romans discussing our slavery to sin from which we are released only by Christ our Lord. Reading from *The Message* (because sometimes it is just easier to read and understand the modern paraphrase of Paul’s writings!), it says:

God sacrificed Jesus on the altar of the world to clear that world of sin. Having faith in him sets us in the clear. God decided on this course of action in full view of the public—to set the world in the clear with himself through the sacrifice of Jesus, finally taking care of the sins he had so patiently endured.²⁶ This is not only clear, but it's now—this is current history! God sets things right. He also makes it possible for us to live in his rightness. Romans 3:25-26 (MSG)

This is *our* deliverance and redemption “with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment” (Exodus 6:6). This act by God cleared the path of slavery to sin and leads us into

¹ For more on why the land is taken from the Canaanites see the Article “Four Hundred Year Delay in Receiving the Promise Land” posted on the Living In God’s Word website under “Supplemental Material”.

a relationship with Christ Jesus and our Heavenly Father. Our acceptance of Christ's sacrifice opens the way for the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, changing us bit by bit to be a reflection of Christ as we were designed to be. With the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we exchange a sinful nature for nature of the Spirit, one that is open to and accepting of the counsel of the Holy Spirit. Before Adam and Eve fell head-long into sin, they were created in God's image. All mankind was designed to bear that image. That image has become sullied and tarnished with generations of sin, but becomes wiped clean by the presence of the Holy Spirit directing us and guiding us and recreating us to be what God had originally intended us to be.

Israel's journey through the wilderness is a metaphor or parallel to the Christian's life-journey of learning to be and become a Child of God. Paul tells us in Philippians 1:6, "*[God] who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*" Our life's journey is the Holy Spirit working in us until that work is completed. Notice he says God will continue to work in us until the work is completed in its *entirety*, nothing is left undone, and it will be finished when we come face to face with Christ. All along our journey we will be accompanied by the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit. He will be our guide, our defender, our provider, and our shield. He is present among us, we will not walk alone. Through the Holy Spirit we have access to our Lord and Savior. He hears our prayers and acts upon them. Our journey is long, but it takes us right to the very throne of God. When our journey is completed we will be face to face with Christ. We will have entered into the Heavenly Kingdom of God, our promised inheritance.