

Was OT YHWH really SATAN? – Part 6

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As I wrote in my last letter:

“But since I know how disturbing SPECIFIC ISSUES can be—stopping one from being honest with the scriptures—I thought it might be best just to show that some of these issues you friend mentions are truly non-issues. The text itself explains and illuminates them, if the reader is honest and thorough enough to consult them.

The Bereans were more ‘noble’ than the Thessalonians since they ‘searched the scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true’.

So, with this challenge to your young friend—to be open to what the word of God actually says IN CONTEXT and in ITS ENTIRITY—I want to just do that with some of his comments below.

So I intend to try to honor that need, continuing on in this letter--

Spinning verses is DEFINITELY a problem—we ALL do this, especially when it impedes our progress in pleasurable sin (sigh/smile)—but that possibility is not warrant enough to avoid facing the complexities and difficulties and unknowns of the message of God to us.

Some spinning is very obvious—we will see some other cases as we get further into the questions of:

- The revelation of the name of Yahweh
- God dwelling in darkness not light
- Oath taking
- Lying spirits
- Satan as ruler
- Angel of YHWH
- Curses
- Etc.

[On the lying spirits, I have already written a ton on the subject of God, truth, deception, withholding information, etc. on my website. I don’t want to repeat ALL of that here, but I might try to summarize (?) and add any new thoughts to the mix...

But you have to start with the admission and acceptance of this prayer of thanksgiving from the Lord Jesus to the Father:

"At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “**I praise You, O Father**, Lord of heaven and earth, **that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent** and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was **well-pleasing in Your sight.**"

If you can accept with open-hearts this passage where Jesus thanks the Father for HIDING TRUTH(!) in Luke 10.21, and still believe that Jesus and the Father are truly good, then you should be able to understand that the issue of TRUTH-telling occurs in the moral context of the hearer—specifically do that WANT the truth or do they REFUSE TO LOVE TRUTH (and, implicitly, pray to receive lies that they WANT TO HEAR and BELIEVE)!

I have extensive discussions of those passages and that issue:

<http://www.christianthinktank.com/godlies.html>

and further discussion to a pushback to that at:

<http://www.christianthinktank.com/deceptionx.html>

You may decide that my honest grappling with the difficulties and my intense effort to understand those texts as ‘spin jobs of a theologian’, but you should at least READ them to see if maybe Father points out any PARTS OF THOSE that are true.

Okay on to the issues you consider critical to the moral integrity of the OT YHWH....

.....

And God spoke to Moses and said to him

I am Yahweh. And I showed to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El-Shaddai, and by my name, 'Yahweh', **I did not make myself known to them.**

How can this be? Abraham hears/says Yahweh in Genesis 15:2,15:7,15:8,18:14,22:14, and his servants/relatives do in ch 24. Why does God say he didn't reveal his name "Yahweh", when he obviously glaringly did so in Genesis, many, many times?

Isaac and Jacob use "Yahweh" less frequently, only in:

Gen 27:20, 27 (the context here is when Jacob deceives Isaac for the blessing, saying) " And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the **LORD** (Yahweh) thy God brought it to me."

This is a great case where you have to pay CLOSE ATTENTION to the texts themselves—which provide us with ‘clues’ as to what is actually being SAID in and through the text.

Here’s a precise translation of that verse (Ex 6.2-3):

“God (Elohim) spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD (YHWH). I appeared (ero – from r’h, a strongly visual word – see, spy, inspect; in Niphal form, ‘to make to see’ i.e. ‘appear’) to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but (by) my name The Lord (YHWH), I did not make myself known (*lo’ nodati’* – Niphal, of *yd’*, a mostly cognitive word -- *know, understand, realize*; the Niphal sense is “*to make oneself known, to reveal, to be seen, to become known, be discovered, to come to understand*”) to them.”

Let's notice a couple of things about this verse:

One: Notice what it does NOT SAY (which people seem to think it DOES):

- It does NOT say "I **MADE MYSELF KNOWN** to A/I/J as EL SHADDAI, but as YHWH I did NOT make myself **known**"
- It does NOT say "I **appeared** to A/I/J as El Shaddai, but as YHWH I did not **APPEAR**".
- It does NOT say "I appeared to A/I/J by **my NAME** El Shaddai, but as **my NAME** YHWH I did make myself known".

So, the two parts of the verse are noticeably **different**, and NOT stated as 'equal contrasts'.

1. Part 1: mention of appearing, no mention of knowing, no mention of the word 'name' (or 'fame' or 'reputation'—see below)
2. Part 2: no mention of appearing, mention of knowing, mention of the word 'name'.

In other words, the difference between the two words (appear, make known) should tip us off that this is not simply a denial of the pre-Mosaic Hebrews knowing the name "YHWH". Something else is afoot...

But look carefully at the text again. The contrast is between 'appearing as SOMETHING' and 'making Himself known AS SOMETHING'.

Let's first check something—the actual 'appearing' incidents.

In the actual 'appearances' of God to the patriarchs, how did God identify Himself? Did He ever lead with a direct statement of identification of "I am YHWH", for example—specifically in the visual 'appearances'?

Here are the **appearances** to the patriarchs (with or without direct discourse):

Genesis 12:7 (Abraham)	Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.	[No self-identification stated]
Genesis 15.1-7 (Abraham)	After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision : "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."... And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."	This doesn't use the 'appearance' word, but it does have The LORD identifying Himself as YHWH. It must have been a physical something, because the passage immediately follows with the covenant ceremony with the fire pot/flaming torch. It has the prophecy of the Egyptian captivity and sufferings.

Genesis 17:1 (Abraham)	When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,	YHWH self-identified Himself as EL Shaddai (God Almighty)
Genesis 18:1 (Abraham)	And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.	[No self-identification stated]
Genesis 26:2 (Isaac)	And the Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ... for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,	[No self-identification stated]
Genesis 26:24 (Isaac)	And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."	No YHWH, but only "ELOHIM" (God)
Genesis 35:1 (Jacob)	God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."	In Jacob's dream in 28.12ff, the Lord identified himself as "I am the YHWH, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac." In this case it was a dream-appearance and not a physical one like the others.
Genesis 35:9 (Jacob)	God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. 11 And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you."	God self-identified Himself as EL Shaddai here at Luz, perhaps influencing Jacob's retelling of it in 48.3 (as EL SHADDAI and not YHWH).
Gen 45.2-3 (Jacob)	And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." 3 Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation	This does not use the 'appearance' word, but it does use a 'vision' word (instead of a 'dream' word). In this self-identification, God uses "EL" and "ELOHIM" words.
Genesis 48:3 (Jacob)	And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,	Jacob identified the God of the appearance at Luz as EL SHADDAI. But the appearance at Luz (28.13) was in a dream in which YHWH said "I am YHWH". Jacob uses the EL SHADDAI name instead of YHWH.

The other relevant reference to El Shaddai is on the lips of Isaac as he sends Jacob to Laban:

“Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, “You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. **God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you** that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!” (Gen 28.1ff)

So, by paying attention to the words USED in the text to Moses, we can see that THAT part of the verse is totally correct, even though the name YHWH was certainly used alongside the other. But in Genesis YHWH is not predominant at all. In fact, it looks like there is a progressive revelation going on here, from EL to EL+functions to finally YHWH, the god of the Israelite covenant.

Here is some of the fascinating data:

“... **two** divine names, ’ēl (usually rendered “God”) and **yhwh** (“the LORD”). These, taken together with the name ’ădōnāy (lit., “my lord[s]”), form what may be considered the basic OT designations for the Deity. These are, as well, simple names, as contrasted with a group of derived and compound names...”

“The name **EL** (see also ELOAH, ELOHIM) is one of the oldest designations for deity in the ancient world. It forms the basic component for the general term for God in Babylonia and Arabia, as well as with the Israelites. That the conceptions sometimes attached to this term in the world of antiquity were unworthy of the God of the Bible is clear, but this does not diminish the significance of the occurrence of the term in the racial stocks of the ANE. It is a very old term, and many feel that it is reasonable to infer that the term has been retained from a primeval revelation”

“The name **El** seems to suggest power and authority. In this connection, John P. Lange says: “Power, greatness, vastness, height, according as they are represented by the conceptions of the day, carried to the fullest extent allowed by the knowledge of the day; this is the ideal of El and Elohim, as seen in the etymological congruity of the epithets joined to those in Genesis” (A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures [1865–80], 1:109n.) Its original meaning may have been: (a) to be strong; (b) to have extended sphere of control; or (c) to possess binding force. “It is worth noting that whichever of these meanings we adopt stresses the distance between God and man. In this they are in basic conformity with the basic characteristic of the Semitic concept of God, namely, that **what is of primary importance is not the feeling of kinship with the deity, but fear and trembling in the face of his overwhelming majesty.**”

“The name El as applied to God is general and includes **the primary significance of power or ability** (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; Josh. 3:10; 2 Sam. 22:31–32; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Isa. 9:6; Ezek. 10:5). Many feel justified in concluding that its employment and wide currency **witnesses to a primeval monotheism, from which polytheism represented a lapse.**”

“If El was a general term for the divinity in the thought of the peoples of the Bible Lands and ANE, the name Yahweh was a specifically Hebrew name for God. ... The basic meaning of Yahweh seems to be “he which is” or “he who is truly present.” It is difficult to ascertain how widely this name was used during the patriarchal era, though the Bible seems to indicate that it was current in ABRAHAM’s day. It was given new emphasis and significance to MOSES (Exod. 3:15–16; 6:3, 6) beyond what was understood by Abraham as he built his altar between BETHEL and AI (Gen. 12:8). Yahweh was revealed as an intensely personal name.

“In addition to the three names that are frequently regarded to be basic in Hebrew usage, there are several compound or otherwise grammatically qualified forms. Belonging to this group, for lack of other special classification, would be two names that are apparently related to El, namely ’ēlōah and the plural form ’ēlōhîm . The former of these is used chiefly in the book of JOB, being found some forty times there. The name Elohim (often called “the plural of intensity”) is used over 2000 times in the OT to refer to Israel’s God. It is frequently used with the definite article, bearing the significance of the one true God. Some have suggested that, by the use of this plural form, the Hebrews went beyond the usual Semitic name El as a fitting designation for their Deity, whom they regarded as being above and beyond all other gods.

“Among the compound names for God in the OT, **’ēl šadday represents a clear progression in the self-disclosure of God to the Hebrews of the patriarchal period** (Gen. 17:1 et al.; NIV, “God Almighty”; the term šadday is used by itself in Num. 24:4 et al.). As EL SHADDAI, the Deity is viewed not only as the creator and sustainer of the universe, but also as the initiator and keeper of covenants.

“It is significant that this name for the Deity became current in the patriarchal period, in which God’s providences toward the Hebrew people were manifested most intimately and also uniquely to the race of Abraham. In this period, the name El Shaddai was an important verbal aid in the pedagogy of the Hebrews. It may be said that in a sense this name formed a bridge in the Hebrew mind between the epoch in which Elohim was the chief designation for the Deity and the period of the reemphasis on the intensely personal and redemptive name, Yahweh. The name El can also be combined with **’ōlām** H6409 (Gen. 21:33; NIV, “the Eternal God”), suggesting the permanence of the Deity, his exaltation above the changes and contingencies of time. He is conceived to be above the flux of natural phenomena. More significant is its combination with **’elyôn** H6610 (Gen. 14:18; Ps. 78:35; NIV, “God Most High”), denoting the highest and therefore supreme.

“From the foregoing, it seems clear that in **OT usage the names describe functions or activities of God,** although intrinsic and even metaphysical implications are not wholly absent. More significant still, **they represent stages in a progressive self-disclosure of the Deity, a revelation that utilized situations (esp. crucial ones) as vehicles.** The entire revelatory process was safeguarded by the third commandment, which prescribed not only a certain economy in the use of divine names, but a scrupulous adherence to norms of truth in connection with their employment. [ZEB]

What the data shows is that the **range of names for God narrows to almost a single name YHWH** at the Exodus, leading some to believe that this was pedagogy by God:

“If it be correctly understood that the name [YHWH] was known as early as the birth of ENOSH (Gen. 4:26) and that Abraham had a knowledge of it, **then it follows that the revelation to Moses represented a deepening and more personalized usage of the name.** ... That is, it became the token of a special and crucial self-revelation of God to a special people—a disclosure that tied together the mighty acts involved in the exodus and Israel’s self-consciousness as a nation. These acts in turn prepared the way for the intimate involvement of Israel with Yahweh at Sinai. Thus the name Yahweh was tied in inseparably with Israel’s national awareness and was inescapably involved in Israel’s unique COVENANT relation with the Deity --- **It is significant that the use of this name for God was unique with the Israelites.** The other Semitic peoples do not seem to have known it or at least did not use it in reference to the Deity except as contacts with the Hebrew people brought it to their attention. It was the special property of the covenant people.” [ZEB]

“However, taken together with the statement in 6:3, the implication is that the name YHVH only came into prominence as the characteristic personal name of the God of Israel in the time of Moses. This tradition accords with the facts that **the various divine names found in Genesis are no longer used**, except occasionally in poetic texts; that of **all the personal names listed hitherto, none is constructed of the prefixed yeho-/yo- or the suffixed -yahu/-yah contractions of YHVH**; that the first name of this type is yokheved (Jochebed), that of Moses’ mother. Ibn Ezra points out that Moses, in his direct speech, invariably uses the name YHVH, not ’elohim, “God.” Without doubt, the revelation of the divine name YHVH to Moses registers a new stage in the history of Israelite monotheism. [JPS, Torah]

Two: Another clue in the verse (which sort of can only be seen in the Hebrew) is the form of the ‘know’ verb:

(“I did not make myself known”) is Niphal, **not** the Hiphil form *hôḏa’î* (“I did not let them know my name”) [EBC1]

The ‘know’ word is COMPLETELY DIFFERENT when used about God and about God’s name in the OT.

For example, Isaiah 52.5-6:

“Therefore **people shall know my name**: therefore **they shall know in that day that I am** he that doth speak; behold it is I.”

And Jeremiah 16.21:

“Therefore, behold, I will make them know; this once I will make them know my power and my might, and **they shall know that my name is the LORD.**”

Both of these verses are HUNDREDS of years after Moses, so ‘know’ cannot mean ‘learn something for the first time’.

Three: To see the meaning of 'name', let's look at the background and context.

Exodus 3.13, where YHWH starts with Moses, and gives him the information needed to secure the Israelite leaders' support:

Then Moses said to God, **"If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"**
14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.**
16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, '**The LORD**, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, 17 and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'" 18 And they will listen to your voice, (Ex 3.13ff)

Just about EVERY person reading this and commenting on it, makes the OBVIOUS observation **that if this was the FIRST time the name YHWH was used**, it wouldn't serve as a very good identification to the Israelites. IE. **"Who sent you? YHWH did. WHO or WHAT is 'a YHWH'?"**

"God's response to Moses' query **cannot be the disclosure of a hitherto unknown name**, for that would be unintelligible to the people and would not resolve Moses' dilemma. (JPS, Torah Commentary)

But each commentator goes on to explain WHY this question 'looks different' to us, given the odd answer. And it is this DIFFERENCE which is the clue as to the meaning in 6.3 (the 'did not make known' passage):

They all point out that our English word 'name' is not very close to the Hebrew word 'shem':

"Moses's second objection (3:13–22) seems to focus on the inadequacy of his knowledge. He did not know enough about this God who was offering deliverance to make a convincing presentation to the people. **The differences between the English word "name" and its equivalent in Hebrew (shem; 3:13ff) immediately create an interpretive problem.** We think of a name as a "label" and tend to restrict the meaning of the word to that narrow connotation. **But in many ways "label" is the least significant of the connotations of the Hebrew word.** Much more in focus are concepts like **reputation and character, like the English "he has a good name in this community," which has very little to do with a label.** As God's answer (3:14–22) shows, the matter of a label is only secondary here. It is involved, but only as a marker for **the kind of God he is** and one's knowledge of him. That is the issue. "So the God of our ancestors has sent you here with this amazing story. Do you really know him? Who is he really? Are you on intimate terms with him?"—these were questions Moses would face. Consider the humorous story in the New Testament of people attempting to cast out demons on second-hand authority.

The demons respond that they know Paul and they know Jesus, but they have no idea who these fellows are and promptly beat them up (Acts 19:13–16). There is no authority like the authority of personal acquaintance. [CBC]

“In Moses’ second objection **he felt the Israelites would challenge his assertion that God had sent him** to deliver them. God told Moses to tell them, I am who I am (‘ehyeh ’āšer ’ehyeh, 3:14; cf. “I will be,” ’ehyeh, v. 12) **and I AM** (‘ehyeh) has sent me to you (v. 14). This One said He would be with His people in their time of trouble and need. **’Ehyeh is probably a wordplay on Yahweh** (LORD) in verse 15. Thus, the name Yahweh, related to the verb “to be,” probably speaks of God’s self-existence, but it means more than that. It usually speaks of His relationship to His people. For example, as Lord, He redeemed them (6:6), was faithful to them (34:5–7), and made a covenant with them (Gen. 15:18). The word also (Ex. 3:15) points to a second reply to Moses’ second objection (the first reply is in v. 14). The always-present God had demonstrated His character in the past to the fathers (patriarchs; cf. vv. 6, 16; 4:5) and that **willingness to look over His people tenderly is an abiding attribute**. He is to be **remembered by that name forever**. Perhaps Moses knew of God as the distant Sovereign but not as the immanent God who cares for and loves His chosen ones. Both of Moses’ objections (3:11, 13) were answered with lessons on the nature and character of God (vv. 12, 14–15). [BKC]

“Moses’ first question following the confrontation of theophany and call was “Who am I?” (v 11). When God by-passed this question with the more important information that he intended to be present with Moses (v 12), Moses turned then to his second question, “Who are you?” The continuity of this sequence is plain not only in its logic, but also in its reference to the God of the fathers and in the terse summary of the call. Moses says, in effect, “If I address the sons of Israel in your name, since my lack of status is well known to them, they will understandably want to know about you.” **So they will ask, מַה שְׁמוֹ, literally, “What is his name?” This question has little to do, however, with identity, just as Moses’ parallel question in v 11 can have little to do with identity.** [WBC]

At the same time, all of the commentators know (and are not embarrassed by—smile) the historical fact that YHWH’s name (label) WAS known before this event (even reaching back before the Flood, Gen 4.26).

“When Moses had been thus emboldened by the assurance of divine assistance to undertake the mission, he inquired what he was to say, in case the people asked him for the name of the God of their fathers. The supposition that the people might ask the name of their fathers’ God is not to be attributed to the fact, that as the Egyptians had separate names for their numerous deities, the Israelites also would want to know the name of their own God. For, apart from the circumstance that the name by which God had revealed Himself to the fathers cannot have vanished entirely from the memory of the people, and more especially of Moses, the **mere knowledge of the name would not have been of much use to them.** The question, “What is His name?” **presupposed that the name expressed the nature and operations of God, and that God would manifest in deeds the nature expressed in His name.** God therefore told him His name, or, to speak more correctly, **He explained the name יהוה, by which He had made Himself known to Abraham at the making of the covenant** (Gen. 15:7), in this way, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, “I am that I am,” and designated Himself by this name as the absolute God of the fathers, acting with unfettered liberty and self-dependence (cf. pp. 46–47). This name precluded any comparison between the God of the Israelites and the deities of the Egyptians and other

nations, and furnished Moses and his people with strong consolation in their affliction, and a powerful support to their confidence in the realization of His purposes of salvation as made known to the fathers. To establish them in this confidence, God added still further: “This is My name for ever, and My memorial unto all generations;” that is to say, God would even manifest Himself in the nature expressed by the name Jehovah, and by this He would have all generations both know and revere Him. שׁוֹמֵר, the name, expresses the objective manifestation of the divine nature; זִכָּרוֹן, memorial, the subjective recognition of that nature on the part of men. [KD]

“The terrible situation of the Israelites in Egypt, described in such pained terms over and over again in the first three chapters of Exodus, provides a dramatic setting for an important statement about the God of the fathers, who is now to become the God of Israel.

The God of the fathers, in various times and places and under various conditions, **had proved himself to the fathers.** But Egypt and the bondage there present a new situation. Egypt is a world power. **The Israelites in slavery are in no way the peers of their oppressors, as the fathers had been the peers of their neighbors** and even their enemies. Indeed, the plight of the Israelites in Egypt is entirely unparalleled in the history of the fathers, who had to contend with local groups, local rulers, and local gods. The Egyptians possessed, or were possessed by, an extensive pantheon of gods exerting a cooperative lordship over every aspect of life and granting international influence to Egyptian power. Indeed, the Pharaoh himself, the king whom Moses was to confront and whom Israel was to defy, claimed divine descent.

“It is against such a setting, so carefully provided in the repeated references to the agonized suffering of the Israelites, that the question Moses raises has to be interpreted. The question also must be interpreted **in the light of the larger significance of the Hebrew word שֵׁם “name.”** This word, according to BDB (1028), is a “designation of God, specific, of Yahweh ...; = **his reputation, fame ...;** especially as embodying the (revealed) character of Yahweh.”

What Moses asks, then, has to do with whether God can accomplish what he is promising. **What is there in his reputation** (see Num 6:27; Deut 12:5, 11; 16:2–6; Pss 8:1, 74:7; Amos 5:8, 9:5–6; Jer 33:2) **that lends credibility to the claim in his call?** How, suddenly, can he be expected to deal with a host of powerful Egyptian deities against whom, across so many years, he has apparently won no victory for his people? The Israelites in Egypt, oppressed savagely across many years and crying out with no letup to their God, have every reason to want to know, “What can He do? “14 Only an understanding of the meaning of the question of v 13 in its setting makes the much-discussed answer to it clear. **The answer Moses receives is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a name.** It is an assertion of authority, a confession of an essential reality, and thus an entirely appropriate response to the question Moses poses. [WBC]

“Moses did not anticipate being asked, “By what name is this deity called?” Rather, he feared that if he announced that the God of their fathers, the patriarchs, had sent him to them, they would bluntly ask him, “What is his name?” **The point of their question was not the same as “Who is this God?”** That question would have been answered: “He is called Yahweh.” But as Buber has argued (pp. 48–55), the Hebrew māh (“**What?**”) seeks the significance, character, quality, and interpretation of the name. Therefore, as it is implied, the name of Yahweh (= LORD) **was already known to Moses and Israel** (Genesis gives abundant evidence to support the presence of the name Yahweh already in patriarchal times); what they needed to know was “What does that **name mean or signify in circumstances such as we are in?**” [EBC1]

So, there is no dispute about YHWH’s name being known and used by the patriarchs before now.

Four: And then--when we get to 6:2f, the meaning of 'name' (SHEM) becomes central:

God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I **appeared** to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [El Shaddai], but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known [yeda] to them. I also established my covenant with them **to give them** the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of **the people of Israel** whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, **'I am the LORD**, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and **you shall know that I am the LORD your God**, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. **I am the LORD.**"

Notice the difference between God's relationships with the fathers versus that with Israel. He is not yet the God of **Israel** (by covenant), and the previous covenant is with the **fathers**, to give THEM the land. God is explicit that His appearances to the patriarchs was as the God of power and provision (El Shaddai)—which what was most needed in their lives back then.

When commentators explore this, the **centrality of the word 'name'** is the lens through which they understand His words here:

"Were this statement to mean that a previously unknown divine Name—YHVH—is now to be revealed for the first time, the effect of the "I am" formula would be vitiated. The credibility of a promise is undermined, not enhanced, if it is issued by one whose name is unfamiliar. Furthermore, the phrase "I am YHVH" appears scores of times in the Bible and is widespread in corresponding form in Northwest Semitic royal inscriptions, such as "I am Mesha," "I am Shalmaneser," "I am Esarhaddon." **It cannot, therefore, reflect the introduction of a new name. On the contrary, precisely because the bearer of the name is well known, and its mention evokes such emotions as awe, reverence, honor, and fear**, its use as the source and sanction of a law or edict reinforces its authority and encourages compliance. In the present context the invocation of a hitherto unknown divine name would hardly serve to counteract the widespread demoralization—which is, after all, the very function of God's declaration.

In light of these considerations, the meaning of this verse needs to be reexamined. **In the ancient Near Eastern world names in general, and the name of a god in particular, possessed a dynamic quality and were expressive of character, or attributes, and potency**. The names of gods were immediately identified with their nature, status, and function, so that to say, "I did not make myself known to them by My name YHVH," is to **state that the patriarchs did not experience the essential power associated with the name YHVH**. The promises made to them belonged to the distant future. **The present reiteration of those promises exclusively in the name of YHVH means that their fulfillment is imminent.** ...

Support for the understanding that “**knowing the name of YHVH**” means **witnessing or being made to experience the display of divine might is found in several biblical passages**. (Ex 7.5; 14.4,18; I Kgs 20:13,28; Ezek 6.7, 7.4, 12.15). The two most illuminating are Isaiah 52:6 and Jeremiah 16:21. The first reads: “**Assuredly, My people shall learn [Heb. yeda’] My name, / Assuredly [they shall learn] on that day / That I, the One who promised, / Am now at hand.**” The second passage states: “**Assuredly, I will teach them [Heb. modi’am], / Once and for all I will teach them [Heb. ’odi’em] / My power and My might. / And they shall learn [Heb. ve-yade’u] that My name is LORD [YHVH].**” [JPS, Torah]

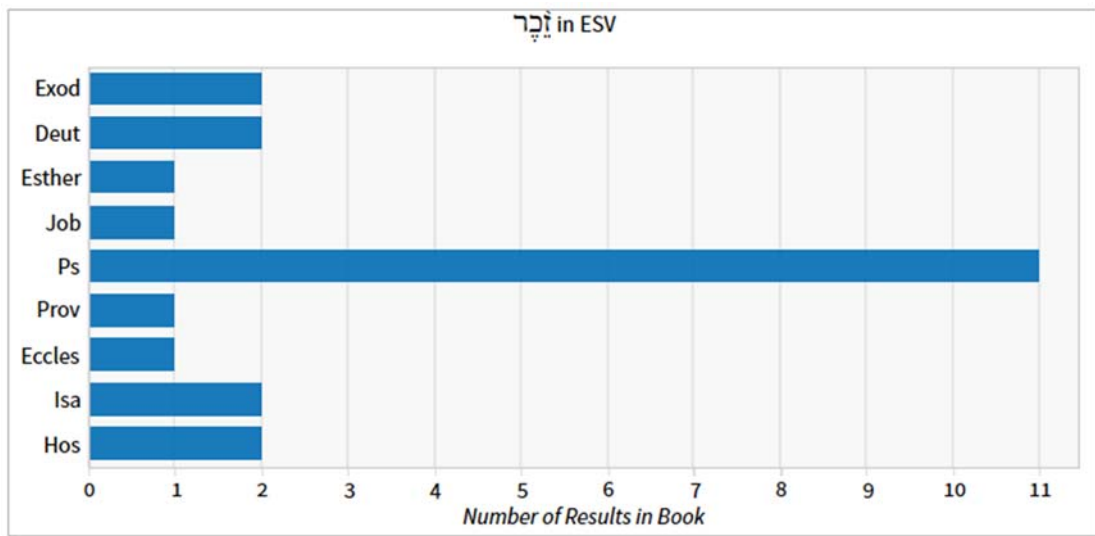
Five: The last thing to note is that in the 3.13-17 passage, it was YHWH himself who did the ‘narrowing down’.

15 God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.**”

The ‘remembering’ word is more about community praise and worship, focusing on YHWH as deliverer of Israel from bondage.

“The name is to be a “memorial” (zēker; GK 2352); that is, it was to be for the act of uttering the mighty deeds of God throughout all generations. (There are twenty-eight instances of this concept in the OT; see Cassuto, 39.) Strictly speaking the noun used here (though the NIV translates it as a verb to fit an English idiom—“to be remembered”) is not a simple “recollection” or “remembrance.” Brevard S. Childs (Memory and Tradition in Israel [London: SCM, 1962], 70–73) demonstrates that the parallelism of Psalm 6:5 (“No one remembers you [zikrekā] when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?”) shows that the problem with the dead is not their inability to remember Yahweh **but their inability to share in the praise of Yahweh (cf. Ps 135:13; Hos 12:5).** So here in v. 15 the joy of Israel’s worship will be to share in the praise of the essence, power, and significance of “I am he who is, was, and will be [present]” when I say I will be there. [EBC2]

And it is easy to see how this shows up in the Hebrew bible: the vast majority of uses of this word are in the Psalms:



And the language root is about the ‘mentioning’ of His name in community or religious settings

זִכָּר: זָכַר; Sec. ζεχρ; MHb., Arb. *dikr*; Akk. *zikru/siqru* utterance, mention, name, vow: cs. id.: זָכַרְתִּי, זָכַרְתֶּם. —1. **mention** (of a name): of Amalek Ex 17:14 Dt 25:19, Israel 32:26, the vine Hos 14s (text ?), affliction cj. Lam 3:19, the dead ones Is 26:14 Qoh 9:5, overthrown cities Ps 97, the evildoers 34:17 109:15, the righteous 112:6, the pious Pr 10:7, the impious Jb 18:17, Purim Est 9:28, cj. לְזָכֵר בָּהֶם Jr 17:2 (Diringer 204f); עָשָׂה י' ל' God causes (his wonderful works) to be remembered Ps 111:4; —2. **the mention and invocation of God in liturgies**, Arb. *dikr*, Ex 3:15 Is 26:8 Hos 12:6 Ps 6:6 (the dead do not know it) 30:5 and 97:12 (יְזַכְּרוּ) 102:13 135:13 145:7 (rd. רַב־טוֹבָהּ). †

“Like the Akk. *zikru*, the term is also used in human contexts as a parallel and synonym of “**name**” or “**fame**” (Prov 10:7; Hos 14:7 [8]). When used of God, this latter meaning also applies (Exod 3:15; Ps 30:5; 97:12; 102:12 [13]; NRSV “name”; 135:13; Isa 26:8; Hos 12:5 [6]). This usage is developed from a **basic meaning of invocation or proclamation** and corresponds to the hi. of the vb. In Ps 6:5 [6] the parallelism indicates that the meaning is **not remembrance but praise** (Childs, 71; Schottroff, 294–95). In Esth 9:28 recounting the message of Purim seems to be in view (Childs, 72). To “celebrate” God’s goodness in Ps 145:7 is to engage in proclaiming it in worship. Similarly, in Ps 111:4 the זָכָר that God established for his wonders denotes proclamation of the Exodus (Childs, 22; Schottroff, 193). [NIDOTTE]

At last we come back to the verse and put all this together.

The emphasis (and ‘oddity’) of the name word (*shem*) triggers a realization of what is being said here.

When we look at the Hebrew lexicons for **how ‘shem’ is used in connection with YHWH**, one meaning stands out:

“In many cases יהוה שֵׁם (shem yhwh) **means not only the name but the full being and power** of Yahweh (see KBL 984a). This becomes evident in the following instances of שֵׁם.

1. יהוה שֵׁם (“the name of YHWH”) as an interchangeable expression for Yahweh
2. שֵׁם (“the Name”) as an independent entity (an expression for the might and splendour of Yahweh)
3. בְּקִרְבוֹ שְׁמִי “my name is in him”, in particular in מְלָאָךְ, the messenger of Yahweh Ex 23:21, which is an expression for the presence of Yahweh in the person of his messenger [HAL]

9005 I. שֵׁם (šēm): n.masc.; ≡ Str 8034; TWOT 2405—1. LN 33.126–33.133 name, i.e., the proper designation of a person, place, or thing (Ge 2:11); 2. LN 28.28–28.56 **renown, fame, known, reputation**, i.e., information that one knows about another, implied to give high status to the one of renown (1Ch 12:31)” [DBL Hebrew]

“שֵׁם can also signify the **nature or attributes of the person named. This is especially true with regard to God.** In **Exod 34:5–7 the Lord’s proclamation of “the name of the LORD”** is followed by a listing of divine attributes. Later, הַשֵּׁם was taken to represent the holy name and all it represented. Accordingly, earlier usage of the expression בְּיָהוָה בְּשֵׁם וַיְקַרְא could very well signify making proclamation of the Lord by name—**proclaiming what the Lord is like** (Gen 4:26 and 12:8 [which Luther translated “preached”]). The “name of the LORD (יְהוָה)” is metonymical for the nature of the Lord.” [NIDOTTE]

And it is that last text that floods this issue with light!

The reference to Exodus 34.5-7 invites us to look there, where YHWH proclaimed HIS own name:

The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, **and proclaimed the name of the LORD.** 6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a **God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

In this passage, YHWH unpacks ‘his name’. His character, His fame, and His reputation are stated there in those verses.

But that list of characteristics was **never revealed until the giving of the Law after the Exodus** (in Exodus 20, but in a different order).

These phrases occur elsewhere in the OT, but never before the Exodus:

“The confession that follows the double calling of Yahweh’s name is clearly reflected in eight OT passages, three of them in the Psalms (86:15; 103:8; 145:8) and one each in Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Nah 1:3; Neh 9:17; and Jonah 4:2. Possible allusions to it can be discovered at additional places in the OT, Exod 20:5 among them.” [TWOT]

So, what we end up with is some paraphrase:

“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”

Can be seen in this re-phrasing:

“I appeared to A/I/J as a God of power, protection, and covenant; but I am only showing the massive goodness, power, and grace—forgiveness and justice—faithfulness and love—now to their descendants in the Law Covenant and in the way we interact in the Wilderness. The details of my goodness were PRESENT to the fathers, but I never made an explicit and full declaration of my intensity to them, as I have now to you and their descendants through the liberation of my people Israel and the wording of our covenant.”

To me this is beautiful and something I had no idea was the case – until diving into the Word here, listening to pointers from other (given to them by God too), and looking at the text humbly and with openness to whatever God was trying to get through my thick skull!

I feel blessed tonight to have learned this—and I have to thank you/your young friend to ‘inciting me’ to draw up close to God’s word to understand this.

I hope this is a blessing to you/you2 too—

Now, I go to other one of the issues (probably, “darkness as God’s dwelling versus inapproachable light”—which is much easier since ‘unapproachable light’ means that God is going to HAVE TO CLOAK HIS incandescence in SOMETHING DARK so we can approach Him without perishing!)

But I hope you can see from just the few issues we have looked at here, that YHWH's scripture is not as complicated and contradictory as you may have been led to believe. Just by paying attention to the TEXT ITSELF have we found clues and pointers as to how to dig around in the word and to listen to others (not blind acceptance) when they point is to other passages in the Word which help us.

Okay, it's bedtime here—wish I could keep going, but the work week will take its toll ...
sigh/smile

Warmly,
glenn