

“What’s in a Name? (Part 2) – Exodus 3:13-14

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Meet me in Exodus 3...

[Promotion Sunday: G.R.O.U.P.S.]

We’ve been considering this scene where God reveals Himself to Moses and reveals the divine name to him. These verses, though short and easy to glide through, have rich implications for our understanding of God and for how God has chosen to relate to His people. For this reason, we’ve been taking our time to chew on this text for a while. Last week we considered three questions aimed at helping us know our God. Let’s recap:

What Does *The Fact* That God Reveals His Name Say About God?

It teaches us that God is personal and invites us into relationship...

What Does The Fact That God Reveals His Name *To Moses* Say About God?

It teaches us that God is no respecter of persons...

What Does The Fact That Moses Is *Dependent On God’s Revelation* Say About God?

It teaches us that God is self-revealing and self-defining...

Today we will consider a fourth question. But before we get to that, let’s read the text again. For now we will look at just two verses. Follow along as I read, starting in verse 13. This is God’s Word...

“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.’” (Exodus 3:13-14)

With these verses in mind, here is the fourth and final question, which will occupy our attention this morning...

What Does *God’s Name Itself* Say About God?

Now before we get into the meaning of God’s name, let’s consider some of the linguistics of the name. In the English text we just read, God’s name is translated “I AM.” The reason for this is simple—the name is related to the Hebrew verb “to be.” In Hebrew the name is simply four consonants, read right to left:

יהוה

If we were to render it with English consonants, read left to right, it would look like this:

YHWH

In modern literature these consonants are sometimes called the tetragrammaton, which just means “the four letters.” Of course, there are no vowels because ancient Hebrew had no written vowels (though they were always pronounced). When a written vowel system was created much later, in the early Middle Ages (in order to aid in teaching the language), the scribes didn’t know what vowels to insert because unlike every other Hebrew verb the name of God was not pronounced by the Jews for centuries. Why? Because there was

a concern among the Jews that God's name would be misused, taken in vain. Therefore, to prevent such blasphemy, whenever they were reading the Scriptures and they came to the name they would say a different Hebrew noun, the word *adonai* (which we translate "Lord," with a capital "L" when the word is used in reference to God). That's true to this day by the way. When I studied Hebrew at Ouachita, Wheaton, and Trinity, we would do the same thing when reading the Hebrew Bible. When we came to the name, we would simply read *adonai* in its place. So that's a tradition that spans from centuries before the time of Jesus' first coming to the present day.

Yet, while we can certainly understand and appreciate why the Jews started doing this as a means of honoring God and not profaning His name, there is a sad consequence to it all. Centuries of not pronouncing the name led to forgetting how the name was pronounced. That's sad to me because of a point I made last week. What does the fact that God reveals His name say about God? It reminds us that He is personal and relational. He wants us to know Him even as we are fully known by Him. He invites us into personal relationship. He gives Moses (and by extension God's people) His name precisely because He wanted them to relate to Him in this personal way. He wanted them to know His name, to call Him by name. Yet over time, the exact pronunciation has been lost. That's sad to me.

While it's somewhat speculative, the reigning theory is that the name was pronounced "Yahweh" (for reasons I won't get into today). It's as good a theory as any and is the one I adopt. When written it looks like this:

Yahweh

But it's not uncommon to see it written in Christian literature with just the four consonants (YHWH) or simply as "I AM." In the major English translations, however, there is diversity. Only one major translation that I am aware of actually writes out "Yahweh" and that is the Holman Christian Standard Bible, but it doesn't do so consistently. In other words, it doesn't read "Yahweh" every time the name is used. There is logic to when they use "Yahweh" in translation, but it kind of annoys me. I wish they would just do it consistently or not do it at all. The name occurs a little less than seven thousand times in the Old Testament and the first edition of the HCSB rendered seventy-five of those as "Yahweh" in their first edition. The 2009 revision increased that number to 476, but it's still just a fraction.¹ All the other occurrences of the Hebrew word are translated in the same way that most other English translations do:

The LORD

For example, look at Exodus 3:15. After the name is given in verse 14 and translated "I AM," it begins in the next verse to render it as "The LORD" in all capital letters (though notice the last three are slightly smaller). Whenever you see that all-cap "LORD" in an English translation that's alerting you to the fact that God's personal name is being used in the Hebrew. This is actually very helpful for the reader. For example, say you're reading in Psalm 38 and you come to verse 15. Read it in light of what we have just explained:

"But for you, O LORD, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer." (Psalm 38:15)

In English the word "Lord" is used twice, but the first occurrence is all caps and the second has only the capital "L." So what does that tell you? It tells you that God's personal name is used in the first instance, but not the second. In this case, the second Lord is actually the word *adonai*, which in this context means, "Master." It's the difference between a personal name and a title. And it can be interesting to notice where the personal name is used and to read it with that personal and relational nuance.

One final caveat is worth mentioning. If you read from the King James Version, there are (I believe) seven instances when God's name is rendered in English as "Jehovah."² The rest of the time the name is translated

“LORD” (all caps). So that raises a new question: “How does ‘Jehovah’ factor into all of this?” I’m glad you asked. Recall the name of God is just four consonant without vowels. Remember also the Jewish tradition of not reading the name, but pronouncing instead another word, *adonai*, whenever God’s name was used. So when the vowels were added to the Hebrew text, not knowing what vowels to use, the scribes chose to just plug in the vowels from *adonai* into the four consonants of God’s name. That leaves us with something like Yehowah, which gets Anglicized overtime to “Jehovah” in the Medieval period.

So Jehovah is not a real word. It’s a hybrid of words based on a misunderstanding of Hebrew vowels. It’s a misnomer.³ There’s nothing wrong with the term “Jehovah” and you will find it in a lot of old Christian literature and many old hymns. That doesn’t bother me at all. I do, however, take issue with how the word is used by the Jehovah Witnesses (but we will get to that later). And I would take issue with some of the KJV-only crowd who like to claim that other English translations are taking God’s name out of the text just because they don’t use the term “Jehovah.” Nope. Not even close to true. But ignorance of history can lead to such claims unfortunately.

Now then what does the name—YHWH, Yahweh, I AM—mean? What is God trying to say with this self-given name? And what does He means when He says, “*I AM WHO I AM*”? I agree with Tim Chester on this one.

“This is a statement that is deliberately designed to burst our definitions. We normally say, ‘I am *something*’. I am a father. I am a teacher. I am lonely. I am tall. But this statement circles back on itself. God is not defined by something outside of himself.”⁴

So, just like we explored last week, God is self-defining. He says, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” We don’t get to put Him in a box and define Him in the ways we are comfortable with. He simple *is*.⁵ He is Being. And the way this is worded in the Hebrew is difficult to translate given the tense. It could also read, “I will be who I will be” or “I will be who I am” or “I have always been who I have always been,” etc. Past, present, or future connotations are possible.⁶ That ambiguity is intentional. It allows for a great number of implications. Like what? Let me give you a few examples that most scholar think are implied to one degree or another.

God Is Eternal

He is Being. There never was a time when He was not. There never will be a time when He ceases to be. He’s the great I AM. He has no beginning or end. He simply is. Always and forever existing. The eternal God.

God Is Self-Existent

In other words, God doesn’t depend on anyone or anything for His existence. He’s independent. He’s autonomous. He’s unconstrained. He is self-sufficient and the only being who can truly say that. I believe this was the point of the burning bush by the way. The burning bush is an object lesson.⁷ In verse 3 of this chapter we are told that Moses “*looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.*” That’s not just a cool trick. That’s communicating something about Yahweh. These flames are not like other flames. Other flames need a source of fuel. They exist only as long as there is some source of combustible fuel. But not these flames. These flames don’t consume the bush because they don’t need the bush for fuel. They need no fuel whatsoever. These flames are uncreated. They don’t need the bush to exist. They are self-sustaining and their heat and light derive only from within themselves and from no external source.⁸ Its being and power is not contingent on anything else.⁹ That is God. Self-existent. Not dependent on anything outside of Himself. The uncreated Lord. The great I AM. In theological terms this is called the aseity of God (from the Latin words for “from” and “self”). It means God exists in and of Himself.¹⁰ And it’s why we depend on Him, while He depends on no one.

God Is Unchanging

Sometimes this is referred to as the immutability of God, which just means He never changes. He says, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” He will be who He will be. He is not in the process of becoming something that He currently is not. His Being has always been, but He has never been in the process of becoming something different than He eternally has been. This is an incredibly encouraging thought because it reminds us that God will always be faithful. This is the reason God connects in this context His personal name with His covenant made to Israel’s fathers.

Look again at verse 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.’*” In connecting His name with the patriarchs, God is sending a message to the Israelites. He’s saying, “I AM the God of your fathers. You know what I did for them. You know my grace to them. You have heard how I was faithful to them. Nothing has changed. I AM.” He’s still the same God. He still keeps His word. And Israel is going to learn that everything that happens to them in the Exodus story is because God is faithful to His word, unchanging in His nature, and therefore a God who keeps His covenant.

Think about how that could have resonated with you, if you were an Israelite in bondage in Egypt. Moses comes and says, “I AM, the God of our father Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has sent me to you and He is going to deliver you from slavery.” Where do your thoughts go? If your parents had passed on the faith, then you would naturally consider the God of your ancestors that Moses is calling to mind. You would rehearse the story. The most striking feature of the story is the covenant that God made with Abraham. What did that promise entail? Several things in fact.

God promised to give Abraham many descendants. God has been fulfilling that promise over the centuries. In fact, the whole reason you are a slave in Egypt is because God has been fulfilling that promises on overdrive. There are so many Israelites that the Egyptian pharaoh fears an uprising and took several measures to control your population growth, including the present bondage you find yourself in. All of the sudden your perspective on even your suffering can change, when you realize that your God is the God of Abraham and that He doesn’t change and will keep His covenant. Even your most dire circumstances confirm that your God is covenant-keeping God.

But God also promised that He would give land to Abraham’s descendants. Maybe you think, “Some covenant-keeping God this is. We don’t have land. We are slaves in the land of another.” But God’s messenger keeps talking to you. He says (look at verse 16 and 17),

“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.’”

What good news. He’s going to set you free and give you a land. But don’t miss why. He’s doing that because He is unchanging. He made a promise to Abraham and the unchanging God always keeps His Word. He is faithful. He is indeed the great I AM.

Of course, He also promised Abraham that through his descendants all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. How is that going to play out? Well not in their lifetimes as it turns out. Each aspect of the God’s covenant unfolds at a different stage of history. The blessing for the nation comes through the work of a particular descendant of Abraham by the name of Jesus, who happens to be God’s Son, God in the flesh. The very first verse of the New Testament introduces Jesus as “the son of Abraham” as a way of drawing attention to the fact that Jesus is the one through whom God’s promises to Abraham would be fulfilled.

Jesus is the offspring *par excellence* whom Abraham was promised. He brings blessing to the nations because He came and laid down his life for sinners like us. His death on the cross was a substitution for sinners in which the punishment that we deserve because of our rebellion against God was poured out on Jesus on the cross. He rose from the dead and conquered death for us. And He offers to all who would believe in Him...turn to Him...trust in Him...He offers to save them. He offers forgiveness of sin and relationship with God and eternal life with Him forever. He offers that as a free gift to all who would turn from their sins and trust Christ. Have you done that? That offer is extended not just to the Jews, not just to Israel, not just to the physical descendants of Abraham, but to the nations. To us. To you. And if you have received that saving gift from Jesus, then you're a part of the story that stretched down through history and out to the nations. You are called by Jesus Himself to make disciple of the nations. We have to get out there and tell people about what Jesus has done for us and can do for them!

So how does Jesus fulfill the Abrahamic covenant, that Abraham's offspring would bless all nations? By entering human history in the incarnation and by dying in the place of sinners so that people from all nations might be saved and brought into the people of God! That is our story, church. And that is our story because the great I AM is unchanging and a covenant-keeping God.

But don't miss this. When you read the New Testament you find again and again that the New Testament writers make the connection between Jesus and Yahweh. They take Scripture that is referring to Yahweh and they apply it to Jesus as a way of showing that the great I AM and Jesus are One. Jesus is divine. Take Matthew for an example again. In chapter 3, Matthew is describing how God used John the Baptist to prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus. The writer goes out of his way to show that these preparations that John was making for Jesus were in fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture. So Matthew 3 begins like this...

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight."'"

Matthew here is quoting from Isaiah 40:3. When Isaiah says "Lord," he uses the name Yahweh. Prepare the way for Yahweh. Make straight God's path. But what is Matthew doing? He's taking an Old Testament text that refers to Yahweh and applies it to Jesus. Part of his reason for doing that is to show, in a very Jewish way, that Jesus and Yahweh are One. Jesus is God in the flesh.

There are so many examples of the New Testament pointing to the divinity of Christ by quoting Old Testament Scripture about Yahweh and applying it to Jesus. The reason I chose this one as an illustration is because it reminded me of a conversation I had with some Jehovah's Witnesses one time. I had been building a relationship with these guys. One of them was a leader at one of the local JW congregations. We were sitting there at my kitchen table going through Scriptures. I knew that Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the same Jesus that Christians do. They deny most of the major teachings of Christianity, including the Trinity, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, and the deity of the Lord Jesus. They deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus and His visible second coming. They deny the existence of hell and of a heavenly home for all believers. They believe that Jesus was created. That he was an archangel names Michael, who became the messiah at his baptism. He is not coequal with the Father. And several other things that grossly misunderstand the New Testament teaching about Christ.

So I was visiting with the guys in my home and was burdened to help them see that New Testament consistently points to the deity of Christ. I happened to be preaching through Matthew 3 at that point at church I pastored, so I raised Matthew's uses of Isaiah 40:3 with them. But here's how they dismissed it. They turned to that text in their JW translation (i.e., New World Translation) and read Matthew 3:3 again. In their translation it said, "Prepare the way for Jehovah! Make his roads straight!" Then they proceeded to tell

me that the text says “Jehovah” and Jehovah and Jesus are not the same and therefore Matthew could not be referring to Jesus. “Why not?”, I asked. “Because it says Jehovah.”

So we looked at the context. I asked them, “doesn’t it seem like Matthew is trying to say that John was preparing the way for Jesus?” They agreed. So we circled back to the way Matthew was handling the citation from Isaiah, which refers to God but is being used by Matthew in reference to Christ. But they couldn’t accept it. Why? Because their translation said “Jehovah” and someone told them that Jehovah and Jesus are distinct. That’s exactly the outcome the translators of the New World Translation were hoping for because they wrote that “translation.” It’s not a translation. It’s a tool to reinforce their theological convictions (which happen to be heresy) and filter out anything that conflicts with them. The problem is they are filtering out God’s actual Word. It’s obscuring the beautiful point that Matthew was making in trying to draw attention to the divinity of Christ.

And listen, it wasn’t just writers after Jesus who were taking up the name of God and applying it to Jesus to demonstrate His divinity. Jesus Himself does. Again, we don’t have a lot of time to explore this, but go read the Gospel of John sometime. Several times Jesus makes these “I AM” statements using the exact language we find in the Exodus 3:14 (LXX). That’s not by accident. He’s taking the name upon Himself. The Greek that stands behind the “I AM” statements in John is emphatic. And while it may seem like an obscure way to claim divinity, it was quite clear to Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries.

Let me show you just one example as we close. Turn to John 8. In John 8 we have an exchange between Jesus and some of the religious leaders. It’s been pretty heated, but it’s about to get a whole lot worse. Let pick the conversation up in verse 48.

“The Jews answered him, ‘Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?’⁴⁹ Jesus answered, ‘I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.⁵⁰ Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.’⁵² The Jews said to him, ‘Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?’⁵⁴ Jesus answered, ‘If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’⁵⁵ But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.’⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’” (Matthew 8:48-57)

Now listen to Jesus’ response in verse 58...

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’” (8:58)

Translation. “You know why I can talk about Abraham, because I AM.” If there is any doubt about what Jesus meant, it is all erased in the next verse when you see the Jews’ reaction to this statement.

“So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” (8:59)

Why are they trying to kill Him? Because they believe He has just committed blasphemy. He has just taken up the divine name and applied it to Himself. He’s claiming that He is the self-existent and all-powerful God. The punishment is death. Jesus knew full well what He was claiming. The people heard it loud and clear. But instead of falling down in worship, they sought to end His life. How tragic. But what’s being claimed is unmistakable. Jesus is the great I AM. As Paul says, “*There is but one Lord, Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

And friends this is good news for us. When God reveals His name to Moses in Exodus 3 He was addressing Moses' sense of inadequacy. God called Moses to go back to Egypt. Moses doesn't think He can be successful at what God is calling him to do, so he asks, "Who am I?" (3:11). God's response, you remember, was "I will be with you" (3:12). In other words, what matters most is not who Moses is but who God is because God is always with His people when He sends them out. So Moses asks, "Who are you?" (3:13). And God answers, "I AM" (3:14). The eternal, self-existent, unchanging, covenant-keeping God is going to be with Moses, so Moses need not fear to obey the calling placed upon his life. God will get the job done. God will bring in the harvest. God's power will come through.

As Christians, we have been given the same assurance. This is what we will consider next week. God never calls us to anything that He doesn't provide the means of fulfilling. If He wants to get it done through us, He will provide what we need. Where God guides, He provides. His commission is always accompanied with provisions. In Him we have everything we need to produce the fruit of His will in our life. That's what we are going to look at in great detail next week. Very practical stuff.

Interestingly, Jesus offered us the same assurance in one of the "I AM" statements found in John 15. He said,

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5)

What is that? That's the great I AM encouraging His people who feel incapable of producing the fruit of their calling by saying "I will be with you. Abide in me. Apart from me you can't get it done. But I will be with those who abide in me."

God hasn't changed. He strengthens His people today the same way He strengthened Moses in that encounter. God hasn't changed. In Christ Jesus, God has come down to deliver us, just like He told Moses He would in Exodus 3:8. The same God is at work. The same God is delivering. The same personal God is revealing Himself. And this is such good news. When we look at Jesus we are seeing the great I AM! And that should pick us up, just as it would for Moses eventually. This is why John Newton wrote in one of his lesser-known hymns:

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary, rest.

Dear name, the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding place,
My never failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace!

It reminds me of Proverbs 18:10—"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe." What trouble are you facing? What "who am I?" moment are you facing? Just like Moses you can find refuge in God's name. Run to the name of Jesus and you can find refuge.¹¹ ...Let's pray...

¹ One of the editors, E. Ray Clendenen, explained the logic in this way: “We use it as the rendering of YHWH (which the Hebrew Bible editors first rendered as Adonai, ‘Lord’) whenever God’s ‘name’ is being given (either explicitly, using the word ‘name,’ or implicitly), when He is being identified (‘I am Yahweh’), when He is being contrasted to other gods such as Baal, in certain repeated phrases such as ‘Yahweh the God of your fathers,’ or when YHWH has been rendered by Yahweh in the immediate context. . . . our objective is to introduce to the contemporary church what is the most likely pronunciation of the divine name YHWH in the Hebrew Bible. We did not render the majority of occurrences of YHWH as Yahweh because our goal is not only to be accurate but to use an English style that is most familiar to people. Since most Christians today probably do not commonly speak of ‘Yahweh,’ but rather of ‘the Lord,’ we felt it would be insensitive to use Yahweh for YHWH in every case and would make the Bible seem too uncomfortable for most people.” E. Ray Clendenen, as quoted in A. Roy King, *New Translation of Holman Bible Increases Use of Yahweh in Its Text*, 23 Nov. 2010, which could be found as of August 20, 2016, at the following web address: <https://aroyking.wordpress.com/2010/11/23/new-translation-of-holman-bible-increases-use-of-yahweh-in-its-text/>.

² Genesis 22:14; Exodus 6:3; 17:15; Judges 6:24; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4.

³ John D. Currid, *Exodus – Volume 1* (EPSC; Darlington, England: Evangelical Press Books, 2000, repr. 2014), 82, 385 n. 23.

⁴ Tim Chester, *Exodus for You* (Denmark: The Good Book Company, 2016), 35.

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, drawing on Peter Enns, writes: “‘I AM WHO I AM’ is the kind of statement that raises more questions than it answers. In fact, Peter Enns thinks that it ‘can be understood as a near refusal to dignify Moses’ question with an answer: ‘I AM WHO I AM; they know very well who I am. What a question!’” Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory* (Preaching the Word; Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 96; Cf. Peter Enns, *Exodus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 103.

⁶ As Chester explains, “the Hebrew verb used here indicates an action with no particular instance in view. It’s literally ‘I be who I be’. It can refer to habitual action in the past (‘His mother *used to make* for him a little robe’, 1 Samuel 2:19, ESV). It can refer to action which is generally true in the present (‘The heart of man *plans* his way, but [Yahweh] *establishes* his step’, Proverbs 16:9, ESV). It can refer to future actions (‘I *will lay waste* mountains and hills,’ Isaiah 42:15). All these verbs have the same form as the verb ‘I am’ in Exodus 3:14. And so this leaves God’s statement there intentionally ambiguous. It could be translated:

- ‘I have always been who I have always been.’ The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob (v. 6) will act in a way which is consistent with his track record.
- ‘I am who I am.’ God is self-defining rather than shaped by others or by his relationship with others.
- ‘I will be who I will be.’ God will determine the future and/or God will be what matters in the future.

We cannot assume a word in a given context means all that a word can mean. (There are not man contexts, for example, in which the word ‘fast’ can mean both ‘not eating food’ and ‘quick’ at the same time). But here, there are good reasons for thinking all these three senses are in view. The context includes the idea that the God of the patriarchs (in the past) is going to liberate his people (in the present) to give them the promised land (in the future).” (Chester, 35-36). Similarly, Currid explains: “YHWH appears in the imperfect and, thus, it is sometimes translated in the future: ‘I will be who I will be.’ The imperfect in Hebrew actually can appear in any tense, past, present, or future. It is rather to be understood as uncompleted action. And that fits our story. God is ever-being and ever-acting.” (Currid, 385 n. 24).

⁷ Alexander Maclaren wrote: “The fire that burns and does not burn out, which has no tendency to destruction in its very energy, and is not consumed by its own activity, is surely a symbol of the One Being, whose being derives its law and its source from itself, who only can say—am that I am—the law of his nature, the foundation of his being, the only conditions of his existence being, as it were, enclosed within the limits of his own nature. You and I have to say, ‘I am that which I have become,’ or ‘I am that which I was born,’ or ‘I am that which circumstances have made me.’ He said, ‘I am that I am.’ All other creatures are links; this is the staple from which they all hang. All other being is derived, and therefore limited and changeful; this being is un-derived, absolute, self-dependent, and therefore unalterable forevermore. Because we live, we die. In living, the process is going on of which death is the end. But God lives forevermore, a flame that does not burn out; therefore his resources are inexhaustible, his power unwearied. He needs no rest for recuperation of wasted energy. His gifts diminish not the store which he has to bestow. He gives and is none the poorer. He works and is never weary. He operates unspent; he loves and he loves forever. And through the ages, the fire burns on, unconsumed and undecayed.” Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, 11 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952–1959), 1:23, 24 (also cited in Ryken, 98).

⁸ David Strain, “I AM Who I AM- Part 2,” preached on October 12, 2014, and, as of August 21, 2016, found at: <http://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/i-am-who-i-am--3>.

⁹ Tim Keller, “The God with a Name,” preached on November 10, 2010, to Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, New York (Accessed through Logos Bible Software).

¹⁰ In *Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer wrote, “Almighty God, just because He is almighty, needs no support. The picture of a nervous, ingratiating God fawning over men to win their favor is not a pleasant one; yet if we look at the popular conception of God, that is precisely what we see. Twentieth Century Christianity has put God on charity. So lofty is our opinion of ourselves that we find it quite easy, not to say enjoyable, to believe that we are necessary to God. But the truth is that God is not greater for our being, nor would He be less if we did not exist. That we do exist is altogether of God's free determination, not by our desert nor by divine necessity.” A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1961), 34.

¹¹ Chester, 43.