Naked Bible Podcast Transcript
Episode 263
Exodus 3, Part 3
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Episode Summary

Exodus 3:13-14 are two of the most familiar verses in the Old Testament: "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?" 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.'" God reveals his name here in the first person (*ehyeh* – I AM), but most of the time the Old Testament has the divine name in the third person (*Yahweh*). Biblical names typically have meanings, so what is the meaning of this name for God?

People can go up to my website for a detailed discussion of this. I favor the second view: "I am he who causes to be all that is," arguing for a hiphil, a causative, vocalization of the verbal name phrase.
Also a youtube video I created.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 263: Exodus 3, Part 3. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Lots of threes in this episode title, Mike.

MH: Yep, three times. Am I messing this up? The third time is the charm! [laughs]

TS: Yep, this is actually the fourth, because this is our fourth episode on one chapter. Four episodes on Exodus 3 alone. I think that's a record.

MH: Yeah. We will bid it a fond farewell after this time.

TS: It's been great…

MH: We're not going to string it out any more. [laughs]

TS: That's right. But Exodus 4 next week. But Part 3 here, what are we going to be talking about?

MH: This is what everybody thinks of with chapter 3—the revelation of the divine name. What does the name mean? Some of that kind of stuff. We'll try not to get

too far into the nuts and bolts, because I've got some stuff on my website about this. But yeah, that's our focus this time.

TS: Well, looking forward to it.

MH: Well, let's jump in. I'm going to start by reading Exodus 3. For now, I'll just read the first 14 or so verses, because this is the familiar part of the story that everybody thinks of when they think of this chapter in the book.

> **Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.**
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> **⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" ¹² He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."**
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> **¹³ 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.'"**

So we'll stop there. That's the first 14 verses. I just want to make a few sidebar comments on our way to getting to the revelation of the divine name. You'll notice in verse 2, we have the Angel of the Lord appearing. The verb there in Hebrew is *ra'ah*. It is the same verb and stem (I'm not going to rabbit-trail into Hebrew stems, but they're important) that we see in some other passages. Now if you've read my book, *Unseen Realm*, you're going to be familiar with chapters 12, 13, and 14, which deal with God in human form in the Old Testament. This of course is part of it. The Word of the LORD is part of it. The Angel of the Lord is part of it. The Name theology—the Angel (we're going to get to this in Exodus 23) that has the name of God in him. That's another way of saying "the Presence of God." The glory of God is in that particular Angel, which is why he's identified with Yahweh. You should be familiar with all of that stuff. If you have not read *Unseen Realm* on these concepts, I would recommend that you do that. I can't really reproduce the book content in episodes, so you're going to have to settle for a bit of a summary here. But that's the place to go. But part of that discussion is God in human form—God appearing. So you have a verse like Genesis 12:7 that says:

Then the LORD…

Yahweh, the divine name. In your English Bibles, when "LORD" is in all small capitals, that's the divine name. The divine name is present there in the Hebrew text.

Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said…

So on and so forth. This is the call of Abram. But it's "appeared." And we find out… This is connected to the Word of the LORD. You get to Jeremiah where the Word of the LORD appears to Jeremiah. And the Word of the LORD is actually called Yahweh in Jeremiah 1: "And the Word of the LORD reaches out his hand" and touches the prophet… This is God in human form, even in some sense. In some passages, it's a corporeal encounter, where God touches somebody. You get the same verb and stem here. I'll just read a few of these:

When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD *appeared* to Abram. Genesis 17:1

Same verb and stem.

Genesis 18:1… This is when God and two angels show up at Abram's house and they have a meal. It's Yahweh in human form. The first verse of that section:

And the LORD *appeared* to him [Abram] by the oaks of Mamre as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. Genesis 18:1

5:00

Same verb.

> **The LORD *appeared* to him. Genesis 26:2**

So he's going to… The same language is used of Isaac and Jacob (other patriarchs).

> **God *appeared* to Jacob again when he came to Paddan-aram, and blessed him. Genesis 35:9**

Genesis 48… If you've read *Unseen Realm*, you're familiar with Genesis 48:15-16, where the angel and God himself are fused by the grammar. They are co-identified with each other in Jacob's prayer when he says,

> **May the God who did this, the God who did that, the angel, may he [singular verb form] bless the boys. Genesis 48:15-16**

It's a tight identification of the angel with the LORD. And that chapter begins (in verse 3) with this statement.

> **Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty *appeared* to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me." Genesis 48:3**

This is referring back to some of these episodes where God showed up as a man in the Old Testament.

1 Samuel 3… A classic instance—the story of the little boy Samuel when he hears his name called out while they're trying to go to sleep. We find out it is Yahweh appearing and standing. If it's just an invisible, disembodied voice, you don't describe something invisible as "standing." How would you know? Samuel is seeing God in human form. This is anthropomorphic language.

> **The LORD *appeared* at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. 1 Samuel 3:21**

All of these verses… And there are more of course. You can read *Unseen Realm* about this, but here, it's important to point out the language. Luke, in Acts, picks up on this, too, in Acts 7:30, in Stephen's speech there, we read:

> **Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. Acts 7:30**

So Luke, as an observant reader, is drawing attention to an appearance. Again, if you want more detail, you can read *Unseen Realm*, chapters 12, 13, and 14. You'll notice as well in the verse (Exodus 3:2), there's an interesting comment:

Moses looked, and behold the bush was burning, and it was not consumed.

So later on, we're going to read that Moses was afraid (at the end of verse 6) to look at God. It doesn't say that he was afraid to look at the fire. He was afraid to look at God. This is the language of appearance used of the angel in all those other passages plus this one. This is God in human form, in the bush, and Moses is freaked out (as I think we would all be). He's afraid to look at the bush. And you're not afraid to look at something invisible, because… it's invisible! How would you know you're even seeing it if it's invisible? You have to think about the language being used here. It's important.

You get to verse 5. This is where God tells Moses, "Don't come near. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." That is the same language repeated in Joshua 5 where you have the prince (the captain of the LORD's host) show up, and Joshua sees him. So he looks just like a man. And Joshua essentially says, "Whose side are you on? Are you friend or foe?" And then the figure answers, "I'm the captain of the LORD's host." But on the one hand, we don't have the term "angel" or "Angel of the Lord" in that passage, but we do have two things. One of them is the same language drawn from Exodus 3. The captain of the LORD's host tells Joshua, "Take your shoes off your feet, because you're standing on holy ground. It's exactly the same language. It's supposed to connect the visible human form of God in Exodus 3 with that guy in Joshua 5.

10:00

The other thing you have is you have the description in Joshua 5 that the captain of the LORD's host was standing there with drawn sword in his hand. That is a unique phrase in Hebrew. It's used only two other places in the entire Hebrew Bible. I talk about this in *Unseen Realm* as well. In both of those places, it's the Angel of the Lord (Numbers 22 and 1 Chronicles 20). So this is the Angel of the Lord. This is God in human form. It's not that difficult to see if you're comparing Scripture with Scripture. And we know that biblical writers are very fond of (and very purposeful and intentional about) repurposing parts of the Bible in what they're writing. They're trying to get you to read something in front of your face and then mentally connect with something else—essentially, to connect the dots. So that's what we're doing here. And *Unseen Realm* is filled with dot-connecting of this kind. It's a close reading of Scripture. So if you want more detail, you can refer to that.

Let's go down to verse 8. In verse 8, we have the statement:

And I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

A couple of things here. They're on a mountain, so the coming down has to refer to God coming down from the heavens (from the skies). And this is metaphor for where God would live. He doesn't live on earth. This is not his domain. It's our domain. It's a domain he created for humanity. He is transcendent. He actually "resides"… We have to use the vocabulary of embodiment (which is just the way it is, because we're embodied) to talk about a being (God) that doesn't have a body and who can be anywhere at any time and all times—at the same time.

So we have to think a little bit about the language, but the coming down is a reference to God coming from his place, which is perceived either as the heavens (the skies) or somewhere that humans don't inhabit (mountains, the oceans). This is where divine beings live—in these places that are not for human residence, that sort of thing. So he comes down.

But I think what's really interesting about the language of "I have come down" is the connection with Genesis 11 (the Babel incident). "Let us go down." It's the same Hebrew verb there. So God is coming from the heavens to act. Something's going to happen here when this language is used. It's another little technique of the writers to help readers think about what's happening in the scene they're reading, and through similar language what happened at other times when God "came down." Things happened. God is acting. He's busy. He's getting to the task at hand. So it preps the reader for being prepared that God is a God of action, and here we go. So I think that's an interesting thing to observe.

As far as the people group names (the Canaanites, the Hittites, etc.), we're going to wait until I hit about Exodus 23 to get into those names. They're important, especially as it relates to the conquest and some of those other things. So we'll wait at that point to do that.

Now there's one thing I want to draw your attention to that I think is really important because of what we've covered in the last couple weeks. We asked the question, "Had Moses ever heard of the name Yahweh? Should this be a shock? Does that mean he didn't worship the God of his fathers?" Here we have, I think, a pretty good clue as to how we might want to answer that question. We alluded to this in earlier episodes. But here we go. He says, in verse 13:

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?"

15:00 Now I would suggest to you that Moses is not looking for a password here. He's not saying, "Okay, if I go back to Egypt and go to the leadership there, and Israel, and they ask me, 'Okay, you claim to be sent by God. What's his name?'…" In other words, it's not like a password situation. I would suggest to you that Moses is asking the question because he doesn't know. He doesn't know. Otherwise, why would you ask the question? If you knew the answer to the question you're anticipating, you wouldn't need to ask the question. But since he asked the question, and catch this, the answer is verse 14:

> **¹⁴God said to Moses, "I am who I am."**

That suggests that the Israelites back in Egypt had heard that name before. You can go back to the previous episodes and talk about how that might have been. But Moses doesn't know, and that's reasonable for him to not know this name. It's equally plausible that the Israelites back in Egypt did know this name. And if you go back to the prior episodes, this comes up. It's not just me. There are scholars who aren't theologically at all invested in this. But I mentioned last time… Van der Toorn was one, where he says, "Look, if the Midianites (if the Kenites) had heard this name… these guys are itinerant. They're travelers. They're merchants. They go all over the place, including Egypt. And they're going to be trading not just with Egyptians, but you're going to have Semites down there who are in charge of Egyptian stuff—Egyptian households. They're going to either introduce this name based upon the alternate line—the non-Jacob line of Israel. Or this is a name that both lines had heard of at some point. But Moses gets turned over to Pharaoh's household when he's weaned. He's a toddler. He's two years old (or whatever), and he's raised in Pharaoh's household. It's entirely reasonable that he has never heard this. And he needs the answer. Why else would you ask the question? And since God gives him the answer that will satisfy the leadership of Israel back in Egypt, they had to have heard the name. So this is going to affect how we think about Exodus 6:3 as we continue. We'll hit that point later on. But it's just an interesting thing to observe here in the text.

Another thing… This is a little bit scatter-shot here, but there are some interesting things going on. If you look at verse 7, the Lord is the one speaking all of this.

> **⁷Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt… And I'm going to send you, Moses."**

And look at verse 12. God (Yahweh) is the speaker"

> **But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.**

Yahweh refers to God in the third person. This is akin to some of these other things. If you've read *Unseen Realm* and if you've heard me lecture on the two powers in heaven, this is another one of these passages. Now one instance of God referring to God in the third person (known as "illeism") doesn't necessarily suggest a Godhead situation. It depends on the context of the particular passage. It's kind of interesting here, because you do have a second figure in the bush. I don't know how far we can push it in this passage. But it is certainly in the history of Jewish thinking about these sorts of passages (and I talk about this in my Two Powers lectures) that some of these really drew attention and started the rabbinic thinkers down a particular road. And I would say not just rabbinic thinkers. I'm thinking of Alan Seagal's work there, *The Two Powers in Heaven*, because after the first century and into the second century, Judaism changed its theology to make the Second Power idea a heresy. And that's in part, certainly, in response to Christians and their idea of a Godhead.

But the point is that there was a Godhead kind of thing going on in the Old Testament. And at one point in Judaism, this was fine. You look at Second Temple literature (from the intertestamental period), there's eight or nine different candidates for who the second power is in the literature of that period. It was widely discussed in the Jewish commentary and was perfectly fine until the Christians came along. Then it was something that needed to be dealt with. But this is just another example of this kind of thing that would stimulate the discussion or contribute something to the discussion. Right here it is in Exodus 3—the Lord referring to God in the third person. It's just kind of interesting.

20:00   We get to verse 14, and here's where we're really going to camp for the rest of the episode. In response to Moses' question, "If they ask me 'What's his name?' what shall I say?" 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.'" This is the revelation of the divine name.

Now Carpenter in his commentary has, I think, a pretty succinct and helpful summary here of the options that scholars have come up with, as far as what this means. Because everybody wants to know "What does God mean?" Because biblical names (this is pretty common knowledge) typically have meanings. Either their constituent parts form a sentence, or something like that, or the name is correspondent to some other thing. So what does God's name mean? And this is well-traversed territory among scholars. For anybody really interested in it, it's a central passage. You really have more than just that issue. It's not just the meaning. There's also the issue of the pronunciation. How should God's name be pronounced? So you have two issues here. But Carpenter, I think, has a decent summary. And here it is. He says:

Three main suggestions have been put forth by scholars to pinpoint the meaning of God's name and its proper translation:

1. One [option] stresses the presence of Yahweh: "I am here with you, I will be with you." This is clearly a part of the context (v. 12 indicates that this narrowing of the name is possible)

God says to Moses, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you." And then that prompts Moses' question, "Well, if they ask me what your name is, what do I say?" So this idea of the name actually meaning or being focused on presence is one trajectory that has been followed in scholarship, so trying to take the context or take verse 14 and make its context verse 12 (this idea of God being with someone). So "I am that I am" meaning: "Well, God is promising to be there. He's "I am" and "I'm going to be with you." So scholars try to connect those two ideas.

2. Others have championed something like "I am he who causes to be all that is," arguing for a hiphil, a causative, vocalization of the verbal name phrase.

"I am him who causes to be." So this, Carpenter says, argues for a (sorry for the grammar speak here) *hiphil* stem. So the name comes as it's given here from *hya*. And we talked about in south Semitic that the root might mean "to blow" so you get "he blows" which is a reference to the wind on the top of the mountain— the storm/theophany kind of thing. We talked about that a week or so ago, about how if you were in Midian and you were a south-Semitic language speaker, you might be thinking of that verbal root in association with the YHW or YW name. On the west side—the west Semitic (and Hebrew is part of this)—the root would be the "to be" verb (*h-y-h*) which in older Semitic would be *h-w-h* (H-W-H versus H-Y-H). They mean exactly the same thing. And they are the exact same thing. Without getting into historical grammar, the Y and the W were interchangeable in a number of words in Semitic languages.

So if you're looking at it from the west Semitic side, you've got the "to be" verb, and so the translation in the first person is "I am"—"I am who I am." But if you go to the third person, now you have something a little bit different, which is this #2 option about causation. So if you wanted to drill down and get all the nuts and bolts details of this, I'm going to direct you to my website. Go to Google and search for "drmsh.com" and "YHWH" together. You're going to find the page on my website where I discuss all of this in excruciating detail. But when God answers Moses' question, "I am," that is the first person. First person is me. I'm number one. First person is "I" with verbs. "I run." "I pass." "I chase." That's first-person language. Second person is "you." "You run." "You chase." "You pass." And then the third person is somebody else. So it's "I," "you," and then "everybody else." So "he."

25:00   Now in Hebrew, you take a verb like the "to be" verb (*hyh*) and the way you express the third person is to stick a Y on the front (a prefix). So now you have YHWH (which is the divine name in the third person). Now how do we pronounce that? If you use the same Hebrew stem as the first person here, it would be "yih-yeh" and it means "He is" or "He will be." The problem with that is that in the Hebrew Bible, you have a short form of the divine name (just the first syllable – YH) and it's *always* with an A vowel (yah). Always. So "Yah-weh" instead of "Yih-weh" or "Yih-yeh." The Y and the W are exchangeable in older Hebrew.

So if you have an A vowel under the first syllable, there's only one way to account for that grammatically. An A class vowel followed by an I class vowel is the *hiphil*. It is the causative stem. And that's why many scholars argue, "Look, if you have a 'to be' verb and the short form has an A vowel (Yah-weh), that means 'He who causes something to be.'" It's really a statement of creation/creator—a deity with the ability to make something real that has not yet existed. "He who causes to be, who brings something into being." And this has a long history in scholarship in discussion of the name. W.F. Albright argued for this back in the '20s and later. Frank Moore Cross from Harvard (who was Albright's student) is very familiar to anybody who read *Biblical Archeology Review* in the '70s, '80s and '90s. He argued for this position. Cross' article was kind of famous: "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," *Harvard Theological Review*, Volume 55, 1962, is his full explication of this. David Noel Freedman, in *Journal of Biblical Literature* in the '60s, as well, argued for this. So these are some top-tier scholars of their era arguing for a causative understanding of the name.

The third option (we'll return to the causative in a moment) is:

> 3. Other [scholars] emphasize a more straightforward translation of the verbal
> phrase as it stands and as it is vocalized in the MT, "I will be who I will be."

So they would actually just not favor (I'm going to be a little bit blunt here)—not pay attention to—the short form (the A vowel). They would go with Yih-veh or Yih-yeh—the third person of the verbal "to be" root. And they would translate it "I will be who I will be." And the implication for those who take this position is that Yahweh will reveal who he is through the things he is about to do to deliver Israel. And you can make a good argument for that in the context.

Those are the three views that Carpenter outlines. I'm going to add a fourth view here. This is from an article that I am putting in the protected folder. It's actually something you could google and find online. There's a link to it online in various places. It's by Charles Isbell, and the title is "The Divine Name אהיה *ʾehyeh* as a Symbol of Presence in Israelite Tradition." The publication is the *Hebrew Annual Review*, Volume 2 (1978). And it's 17 pages (pages 101 to 118). I put this in the folder. What's interesting about this is Isbell's article focuses on the first-person form, that God's name (not just in this passage)… because look at what God

says here. Moses asks him, "What's your name?" And God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He doesn't say, "Now you should call me Yahweh." He doesn't use the third person. God says, "I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: I am (Eh-yeh) has sent me to you." He doesn't say, "Say to the people of Israel: Yah-veh has sent me to you." If you actually look in the passage at what God's answer is, he uses the first person instead of the third person. And so Isbell (his article is focused on this) basically asks a logical question. "Are there other passages in the Hebrew Bible where the first-person form is used as a proper name?" And there are a handful. There are a couple thousand in the third person. But there actually are a couple of instances where the first-person form is used as the name. So I want to throw Isbell in here, because this is a bit of a different trajectory that's interesting. I'm going to read you a few things by way of summary here. You can reference Isbell's work here. But trying to summarize the content for the sake of the episode here. He writes (part of this is him, part of this is me summarizing):

30:00

> It is necessary to establish from the beginning the fact that both in biblical and in post-biblical traditions, Ehyeh (אהיה *ʾehyeh,* the first person form) is used as a proper noun, essentially as an allomorph (which means alternate form) of the more common form יהוה (*yahweh*).

So Isbell is saying, "It's just a fact that you're going to have instances where the first person form is used like an alternative (proper name) to the third person form that is much more common."

> Clearly the starting point for this understanding must be Exodus 3:14, where it has long been recognized that the phrase " *ʾehyeh has sent me*" is the precise equivalent of "*yahweh has sent me"* in the following verse.

Let's go back to Exodus 3. I'm going to read it, starting in verse 13 again. Just look at what the text does.

> **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?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." [Ehyeh asher Ehyeh.] And he [God is still the speaker] said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am [Ehyeh] has sent me to you.'"**

Now here's verse 15:

> **God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The Lord [Yahweh], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.'**

Both verses have God saying to Moses, "Say this to them." And they both have "[a deity] has sent me to you." But in verse 14, it's Ehyeh, and in verse 15, it's Yahweh (or Yahyeh, or however you want to say that—the Y and the W are interchangeable). So Ehyeh, Yahweh, back to back—those two verses. First person, third person, in exactly the same formulation as God's answer to Moses. Which is really interesting, and it's very easy to not notice that. So back to Isbell. He say the third example… And in the course of his article, he has other examples. But he refers to a couple of things. One of the things… He refers to Psalm 50:21. And then his third example is one I'm going to pluck out here. I might as well take them in order. The three examples that Isbell uses are Psalm 50:21, 2 Samuel 7:6, and Hosea 1:9. He says,

> In all three of these instances, the Hebrew syntax…

If you know some Hebrew, you'll benefit from Isbell's article. If you don't, you can still get some things out of it, which is why I put it in the folder. You can google it, too.

> In all three of these instances, the Hebrew syntax [grammar] not only allows for Ehyeh to be a proper personal deity name, but pretty much requires it."

He makes a good argument. Hosea 1:9 (ESV) translates it this way:

> **And the LORD said, "Call his name 'Not my people' [MH: This is the child of Hosea and Gomer.] for you are not my people [MH: And ESV has "I am not your God."]**

But what Isbell says is, "The way you really should translate this is, 'You are not my people, and 'I am' is not your God.'" Like it's an actual proper name.

In 2 Samuel 7:6, God says to David (this is the Davidic covenant passage):

> **I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people from Egypt to this day. But I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling.**

Isbell argues that the last part of that verse should be translated, "'I am' has been moving about in a tent for my dwelling." So the point would be Ehyeh as a proper name was the one traveling in a tent and living in the tabernacle. So his argument is going to be grammatical and syntactical.

What's the last one? Psalm 50:21.

35:00
> **These things you have done, and I have been silent and you thought that I was one like yourself, but now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.**

So that's ESV. Isbell argues it should be translated something like this: "These things you have done, and I have been silent. You thought that 'I am' was like you, but now I'm going to rebuke you."

So he points out these three passages, and here's his conclusion. If you're interested in this (and I find it personally interesting); you can get the article. Here's Isbell's conclusion, and why I wanted to lump him in the name discussion. He writes:

> The self-disclosure of Yahweh plainly included the willingness to speak a personal word about himself, to put himself on the spot promissorily [MH: God's going to promise Moses some things here] and openly. It included his readiness to say, "I will be with you"; "I will become God to you"; and to say these things before his capacity to act changingly had been demonstrated in a given situation but also before the capacity of Israel to be "people" in a new situation had been demonstrated. In short, Yahweh's self-disclosure involved no less than his willingness to say to Israel, אהיה ʾehyeh [I am.]

In other words, "This is my name: I am." The Israelites were supposed to think or conclude that that can only mean one thing. God is going to be with us. He's promised to be with us, and he will be with us. In other words, Isbell is saying, this is what their response would have been to the first person, "I am." "And that's your answer: I am." So he links it to the promise language that you're going to find a little bit as we keep reading and the acts that God does in history for Israel. Isbell continues:

> For Israel, this divine willingness to say אהיה ʾehyeh [I am] implied that faith must not be withheld until after a demonstration of divine power…

Let me just stop there. When God says, "I am," God expected them to respond with faith. Well that's the answer. We wanted to know what was going on, and God says, "Here's my name. I am." They were supposed to interpret that as a promise to be with them and then respond accordingly, before God ever even got down to business—before he did anything spectacular. He wanted them to respond in faith. Of course, look at what Moses does. It's anything but a response in faith, and he's the leader. But Isbell is arguing that this is the point. Faith must not be withheld until after a demonstration of divine power—faith which could so easily be retracted at the hint of a new crisis in which God had not yet acted specifically and openly to the satisfaction of everyone. Thus, if the saying of Ehyeh ("I am") meant that God had accepted his covenant responsibility to Israel in advance of and regardless of particular untoward circumstances, it also constituted a challenge for Israel to respond covenantally as people in advance of whatever might lie in the future. For the faith of Israel to become as forward-looking as was the promise of God to be present would be to

approach the real meaning of being "people," and would make possible the desired relationship of "covenant."

That's the end of his conclusion. So I think this is a really worthwhile article. It's going to sound new because everybody's sort of fixated on "Yahweh." And I still, for the life of me, don't understand why people get hung up on this. "Oh, the right pronunciation of God's name is Yahshua or Yushua"—the alphabet soup with the two consonants, or whatever. Why do we get fixed on this? There are people out there who spend more time on this (and they're not linguistically informed) than they do on the Great Commission, or something that Jesus told us to do. I still don't understand it. But what they apparently don't get is that Ehyeh… Guess what? That's a proper name for God, too! And you'll never see that brought into the discussion, because that rattles the cage. It's a fly in the ointment for these people that are fixated on that kind of discussion that, for the most part, they don't get right anyway.

40:00

I'll be honest with you. Sometimes I can't tell where in the world they're coming from as far as the pronunciations offered. Sometimes they're clear. They have some relationship to Hebrew, like the first syllable, especially. But the exact pronunciation is not a hill to die on. You've actually got… I'll throw Isbell in here, because… That's just the first person. So you have three reasonable approaches to the third-person form and you have one that focuses on the first-person form. They're all viable. And I think, regardless of which of the three third-person forms you pick, the first-person form is there. It just is what it is (pardon the pun). So you have to accept that in your talk about God's name. You just must because that's what the text has in a few places.

Where I'm at… I'm still at #2 (the *hiphil* form of the third person). Again, people can go up to my website. Put in Google "drmsh.com" and "YHWH." You're going to find the page. I still think #2 is appealing. I have a detailed discussion up there. I favor the second view of the third-person translation, "I am he who causes to be all that is." It just makes sense to me. There is also (and we're going to have a link to this on the episode page) a video of me on YouTube going through some software (it's a screen capture video) of why the pronunciation is what it is, and it's not something else. So if you want more detail, you can drill down on those things.

So I don't really see anything… There's no conclusive argument against #2. Now people (scholars) pick at it, because they'll say things like, "The *h-y-h* or the *h-w-h* verb, we don't see that in the *hiphil* causative stem in any other of the northwest Semitic languages." Okay. Do we have to have a corresponding northwest Semitic form for every blasted word in the vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible? Do we have to have that? No. And it doesn't work in reverse either. Nobody's going to say, "Look at this form in Ugaritic. No, I reject that because I can't find that form in the Hebrew Bible. That can't be real Semitic." Nobody says that. So I think that sort of criticism is skewered. I'm not going to get into what

might be motivating such things. But that's the kind of argument you'll see against taking the third-person form as a *hiphil* causative stem form. I just don't find that persuasive. I don't really see any reason that this can't be. It makes a lot of sense. But the other options are viable, too, and I do really appreciate Isbell's contribution with the first-person form of the name.

I want to take some sidebar notes now on the divine name itself. There are just a few interesting things that I think this audience will appreciate. I want to do a little bit of drill down here just to talk about the name in maybe a slightly different way. In Sarna's Exodus commentary, he writes this:

> Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh This phrase has variously been translated, "I Am That I Am," "I Am Who I Am," and "I Will Be What I Will Be." It clearly evokes YHVH, the specific proper name of Israel's God [MH: that's the third-person form], known in English as the Tetragrammaton, that is, "the four consonants." The phrase also indicates that the earliest recorded understanding of the divine name was as a verb derived from the stem h-v-h, taken as an earlier form of h-y-h, "to be." Either it expresses the quality of absolute Being, the eternal, unchanging, dynamic presence, or it means, "He causes to be." [MH: There's the hiphil perspective.] YHVH is the third person masculine singular; ehyeh is the corresponding first person singular. This latter is used here because name-giving in the ancient world implied the wielding of power over the one named;

This is a little sidebar to the sidebar. This is why I like getting into demonic texts. An exorcist will want to know the name of the demon because it was believed that if you had the name of the demon you could exercise power over it. This sort of thinking.]

> …hence, the divine name can only proceed from God Himself.

So what Sarna is saying is the reason God uses the first person here is so that the person asking for the information couldn't use the third person and get it right. Now, I don't know. It's kind of an interesting note. *Maybe* that's in view. You're not going to find a whole lot in defense of that idea, but it's interesting, for what it's worth. Sarna then adds an interesting note. Catch this.

45:00
> In the course of the Second Temple period [MH: The Second Temple Period roughly in round numbers is 500 BC to 70 or 100 AD.] the Tetragrammaton came to be regarded as charged with metaphysical potency and therefore ceased to be pronounced. It was replaced in speech by ʾadonai, "Lord," rendered into Greek Kyrios. Often the vowels of ʾadonai would later accompany YHVH in written texts. (when vowels were added in the early medieval period). This gave rise to the mistaken form Jehovah. The original pronunciation was eventually lost; modern attempts at recovery are conjectural.

What do I want you to notice there? That people only got the notion (as far as the textual evidence and the historical evidence goes) of not pronouncing the name in the Second Temple Period. That means that earlier, we have no idea if Israelites felt free to say Yahweh or Ehyeh. They very well could have. So this notion that from the moment of the conversation on Sinai at the burning bush people would not pronounce the name of God… there's actually no way to prove that, and there's no proof for it. In the Second Temple Period, there's a lot of proof for it, because that is the point, textually, where we see these kinds of changes with the divine name happen in the texts. So it's an assumption that you couldn't pronounce the name as an Israelite prior to 500 BC. There's no way to establish that. *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* adds this:

> The form "Jehovah" results from reading the consonants of the Tetragrammaton [YHWH] with the vowels of the surrogate word Adonai.

You say, "Adonai begins with an A; Jehovah's first vowel is an E. How does that work?" It's a feature of Hebrew consonants. Adonai begins with a guttural consonant, and the vocal *shva* under a guttural is going to be the A class. Jehovah begins with a *yod*. That is not a guttural, so the vocal *shva* under that will be "eh." End of linguistic spasm there. They're the same thing. It's just there are linguistic reasons why one is "ah" or A and one is "eh" or E. Back to the selection:

> The form "Jehovah" results from reading the consonants of the Tetragrammaton [YHWH] with the vowels of the surrogate word Adonai. The dissemination of this form is usually traced to Petrus Galatinus, confessor to Pope Leo X, who in 1518 A.D. transliterated the four Hebrew letters with the Latin letters jhvh together with the vowels of Adonai, producing the artificial form "Jehovah." (This confused usage may, however, have begun as early as 1100 A.D.; note KB, 369.) [MH: There is a manuscript or two you can show to make that argument.] While the hybrid form Jehovah has met much resistance, and is universally regarded as an ungrammatical aberration, it nonetheless passed from Latin into English and other European languages and has been hallowed by usage in hymns and the ASV; it is used only a few times in KJV and not at all in RSV.

That's from Thompson's article on Yahweh in the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. Why do I bring this up? First, Jehovah is an artificial form. It is an incorrect form. Whether you want to tell that to Jehovah's Witnesses or not, that's up to you, and frankly, it isn't going to matter to them. Jehovah's Witnesses a) don't know Hebrew, and b) they're not Hebrew linguists. It's not going to phase them. So I wouldn't bother with that. It's more something that you should know. When I had seminary students who had at least a year of Hebrew, I would mark off if I ever saw a Jehovah in a paper. And I would say, "You should know better. Just stop it.

Why did you take first year Hebrew?" I mean, I wasn't this cruel. Like, "Get with the program here. Know what's going on."

50:00 So I bring it up for that reason, and also to show you how recent this is. You have a really good textual basis for saying that this is around the time of Luther. This starts maybe earlier, but it's not anywhere close to being in the biblical period. At the earliest this is 1100 AD. That would be over a millennium after Jesus. Two millennia if you go back into the Old Testament period. That's a long time. So I don't want to hear this talk about Jehovah being the "actual name of God." It's not. It has a traceable history.

Another publication that I have put in the folder as well is by Kristin De Troyer. This article is called "The Names of God, Their Pronunciation and Their Translation: A Digital Tour of Some of the Main Witnesses." You can actually find that on the internet, but I put it in the folder anyway. If you put into Google "De Troyer Names of God," you'll find it. Or you can use the protected folder. You have to be a newsletter subscriber to get to the protected folder. De Troyer writes this on pages 3 to 5. I'm just plucking out a few paragraphs here and there on pages 3 to 5:

> What does one read in old codices, such as Codex Leningrad and Codex Aleppo?

These are the two oldest complete (or mostly complete) manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible that we have. Leningradensis is the oldest complete Hebrew Bible and we… I'm trying to remember. I always have to look it up, and I didn't look it up before the podcast. It's either 1007 or 1107 AD. Because the scribe (the copyist) put the date on it. Aleppo is not complete. It's missing most of the Torah because of a fire. But that's in the 900s AD. What do those manuscripts… How do they point or vocalize the divine name? Good question.

> Most of the printed Hebrew Bibles are based on Codex Leningrad [or Leningradensis], a codex dated to 1008/1009,

There you go. Just say 1008 since we're dealing with her article here.

> …located at the library of St. Petersburg [in Russia]. This Codex is the oldest complete Hebrew bible. Most scholarly editions of the Bible are based on this Codex.

That's certainly true. There is a Hebrew Bible project in operation now that's using Aleppo as its starting point, but we'll wait for that to get completed.

> The usual form of the Name of God, however, in Codex Leningrad is יְהוָה and not יְהֹוָה.

Now this is interesting. Here's how it's pointed. It's… YHWH, reading right to left in Hebrew. It has the E vowel and the final A vowel. In other words, there is no O vowel. Let me say that again. The usual form of the name of God in Codex Leningradensis does not have the O vowel. So again, if you have people, "Well, Jehovah, that would be… Leningradensis…" No, no, no, no. And may I add, "No." It has *Yeh* and then *vah*. "Yehvah." There's no O vowel. The scribe just didn't… That wasn't the way you pronounced it. That wasn't the way you pointed it. The O vowel is missing.

> In other words, there is a holem, an o-sound, missing in the printed form of the Tetragrammaton.

The first form, (this Eh, Yeh-vah, E-A with a missing O)… Her approach (and it's not unique to her) is that this form can be read as the Aramaic noun *shema* because that has the eh-ah, which is the word for "The Name"—the divine name. So her view is that the reason why they took the four consonants in Leningradensis… Leningradensis is early 11th century, and that's going to be a copy of a copy of a copy. It has a long history. So back into the early Middle Ages, we'll say, when they wanted to add vowels to the divine name they added an E sound (it's a vocal *shva*) and then the *kamets* on the last syllable, taking the vowels not from *adonai* (*adonai* has an O vowel in there) but taking the vowels from *shema* (the name). And if you take those vowels and put them in the four consonants (two vowels plus four consonants), you get Yeh-vah. It's just kind of interesting. Maybe it's a little bit of Masoretic trivia, I don't know. But it makes sense that they would do that. "The name? Okay we'll take the vowels from "the name" and put them in the name." Makes sense. But Jehovah just does not have a traceable history back into the major manuscripts, is the point. Kristen De Troyer, continuing, writes this:

> Indeed, like many Jewish readers of the Bible today do, God is referred to in the margins of the Masoretic Bible as "ha-shema", the Jewish Aramaic word for the Name. The oldest complete copy of the Hebrew Bible does hence, not render the Tetragrammaton with "the Lord," but with "the Name!" Similarly, Codex Aleppo and the editions of the rabbinic Bible have "the Name" instead of "Adonai" [MH: that's where they take the vowels, too]. I acknowledge that there are a couple exceptions to this rule, namely a couple of places where Codex L [Leningradensis] indeed has Adonai as Qere…

Qere is a note in the margin from another scribe that says, "This is what you should read." But what's actually in the text doesn't have the O vowel. But some scribe came along and in a few places put in the margin, "Read this. Read it with the O vowel." [laughs] So you had somebody at some point wanting to do it differently in a handful of places. Nowhere near every place, but a handful of places. So De Troyer is acknowledging that. Then she moves on to another point, and asks:

Was the Name pronounced or not? There is no explanation as to why the Tetragrammaton was no longer pronounced. Moreover, all hypotheses regarding the origins of the Ketib/Qere phenomenon are speculative.

Ketib is what is read, what you find in the text, and Qere is this marginal note "here's what to read."

… all hypotheses regarding the origins of the Ketib/Qere phenomenon are speculative. In the Jewish tradition, there are plenty of statements regarding the nonpronunciation of the Name of God. In the Mishna Tractacte Sanhedrin X,1, for instance, it is clearly stated that the Name of God cannot be pronounced.

Now let me stop there. That's the Mishna. This is medieval. This is rabbinic stuff. This isn't biblical stuff. I recently posted something about "why we shouldn't be appealing to rabbis for biblical exegesis." I don't know how much clearer I can make it. The rabbinic period in history is not synonymous with the biblical period. It's later—in some cases, centuries, or even a millennium. This is Mishna. So by the time of the Mishna (early Middle Ages), there is commentary about not pronouncing the name.

Only the High Priest, more specifically on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, can utter the Name of God. All the other Jews are not supposed to pronounce the Name of God. [MH: This is the opinion that's in the Mishna.]

From a difference between the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible and its Greek (Septuagint) translation, Martin Rösel deduces that only by the time of the Greek translation of the Book of Leviticus the Tetragrammaton was no longer pronounced. [MH: The Septuagint is Second Temple Period; that's when the Septuagint was translated.] According to most scholars this was somewhere at the end of the third century BCE. The Septuagint of Leviticus reads: "And he that names the name of God, let him die the death", whereas the Hebrew text can be read as "he who uses the name of God in vain, …."

So the Septuagint gets interpretive there. It takes the Hebrew "He who uses the name of God in vain," or "lifts up the name of the Lord in vain." The Septuagint interprets that to say that you shouldn't name the name of God. And she's quoting a scholar that says "This is the earliest reference I can find to this mentality." So this is what Sarna had said: "In the Second Temple Period is when you start to see this transition toward not saying the divine name. But before that, you don't. You don't have that.

There is also the Isaiah Qumran scroll [MH: the Great Isaiah scroll] (1QIsa) that reads Adonai in 3,7 where the Masoretic text has the Tetragrammaton.

So in that text, there's a substitution. The scribe of the Isaiah scroll there did not write the Tetragrammaton, but actually put in the word "Adonai."

1:00:00

> This means that by the late second century BCE, the presumed date of the Isaiah Scroll, the Tetragrammaton might have been read as Adonai. [MH: So it's suggestive of that.]

"The Names of God" is the next major section of her essay:

> There are two important collections of data that one has to take into account when dealing with the name of God: The Elephantine Papyri and the Samaritan Papyri from the Wadi Daliyeh. They show that the following names of God were in use.

So now you're going back to the 5th century B.C. This is earlier in the Second Temple Period, but almost back to the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Let's just think of it that way. They show that the following names of God were in use:

> YHWH Yahveh YHW (or: YHH) Yaho (or Yahu) YH Ya The Elephantine papyri date to the fifth century BCE, the Wadi Daliyeh papyri stem from the fourth century BCE The Elephantine papyri contain the correspondence from the Jewish officials of the Elephantine community to the officials in Samaria and Jerusalem regarding the rebuilding of their recently destroyed temple.

So if you push it back a little bit, there are multiple forms of the divine name in those texts. This is a period before the vowels were added. The vowels were only added in the Middle Ages. But in the Second Temple Period before the vowels were added, you have things like scribes taking the divine name out or putting in *Adonai*, or you have the instance that we just read where they'll do some other kind of thing in the text to make it seem like they're trying not to write it or pronounce it. You only see that begin (the evidence for that) right around the 3rd century B.C.—right in the middle (so to speak) of the Second Temple Period. You go a century earlier and you have texts that not only have the four consonants in there, but they actually have variations. And some of the variations can only be vocalized one way (like YH = Yah), even though they don't have vowels in them. That's the textual situation as it is. So at least back then, there doesn't seem to be any predilection toward swapping the divine name out. But a century later, you start to see that. And you go a little bit beyond that, and that's when (back to Sarna)… Sarna says that it's really in this period that you start to see this notion develop that you shouldn't pronounce the divine name. But before that, you actually can't argue that. There's actually no evidence for it. So should we really be taking a Second Temple scribal custom and presuming that when scribes sat down in the Exile (or earlier) to write a biblical text or to edit a biblical text, that they were doing this kind of thing? We really can't. We don't have any evidence for it. So just take that for what it's worth. Just interesting. Let's go to

verse 18. We're going to finish the chapter here. Just a few more observations and we'll be out of chapter 3 (finally). We've had this conversation with God: "This is my name." So on and so forth. "You go to the leadership in Israel." In verse 18, we read:

> **And they will listen to your voice [MH: God says to Moses], and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'**

I just want to draw attention briefly to the elders here. It's kind of an overlooked group. There are a lot of good articles on this. See "Elder in the Old Testament" in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. G. H. Davies wrote that particular entry. He writes this:

> Elders are thus represented as a constant feature of Israel's life from the days of Moses to those of Ezra, and they were as prominent under the monarchy as before it.

Elders are mentioned over forty-one times in the Pentateuch. That's a lot more than you would think. Carpenter, in his commentary adds:

> Elders are mentioned at least twelve times in Exodus from 3:16–24:14. Moses always works with/through them, never against them.

1:05:00 But do you notice a bit of a problem here? Or at least some would say this is a problem. Back in verse 16, "Go and gather the elders of Israel together." And then verse 18, God says, "Look, they're going to listen to you. You and the elders go to the king." Blah blah blah. Some would say that's anachronistic, because we only get elders in Exodus 18 with Jethro saying, "Hey, you need some help here, Moses. You need to appoint people." But it's actually not. This verse doesn't preempt—it's not misplaced—before Exodus 18. Because in Exodus 18:21-22, you don't have the word "elders." Moses, at Jethro's advice, appoints judges (it's a different word). So we don't have an anachronistic thing. There are going to be anachronistic things in Exodus. We'll hit them when we come there. My point is that if you come along this sort of thing, it's not anachronistic. There isn't a one-to-one equation between judges and elders, even though a lot of the discussion assumes that. Sarna adds that:

> The elders of verse 16 are the elders (Heb. zekenim) who are frequently mentioned in the Exodus narratives, although little information about them is offered.

It's more than a dozen times, even in the book itself, and over 40 times just generally. So what do we have here? When Moses goes to the Israelite leadership in Egypt (in Exodus 4:31) and when he meets with Pharaoh (Exodus 5), guess what? The elders (the leadership) that's already in Egypt (this has nothing to do with the appointees under Jethro after they leave Egypt) do what God said they would do. They believe Moses. They believe him. So God had anticipated that. He had anticipated Pharaoh's resistance as well. Exodus 3:18:

> **¹⁸ And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The Lᴏʀᴅ, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lᴏʀᴅ our God.' ¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, ²² but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."**

That's the end of Exodus 3. Exodus 3, of course, anticipates chapters 4 through 6, and really most of what follows with respect to the confrontation with Pharaoh and the plagues and all of that. God is going to do something new. He has come down (and think of that "coming down" language) to act and fulfill his covenant and guarantees the outcome by virtue of his presence. And back to what Isbell said. If the whole point of using the first person is to essentially say, "I am"… In other words, God has decided to act now and to be with them, and he expects their response to be the same before God ever even rolls up his sleeves and gets down to business. To me that's not only interesting, but it's kind of a compelling point. It's a good preaching point, actually, of what the name itself might convey in that particular form.

So we're set up now pretty well to get into Exodus 4 and the confrontation with Pharaoh, as far as what God expects—what God has promised both directly and implicitly for the rest of the story.

TS: Alright, Mike. Are you sure? Or do we need a Part 4? [laughter] We got it now? It's all wrapped up?

MH: I am positive. [laughter]

TS: Alright, that sounds good.

MH: Let us flee from chapter 3. [laughter]

TS: No, it was a good one. Who would've thunk that chapter 3 could have so much behind it?

MH: Yeah, it's interesting. There's a lot of stuff hidden in the cracks.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. We look forward to chapter 4 next week, and I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.