



*‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,  
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.  
Matthew 13:45*

10th January 2026/5786

Exodus 1 - 6:1

## **Exodus - ‘Shemot’: Names**

Shalom Friends,

Exodus, along with the book of Genesis, is one of my favourites in the Tanakh. Before we move into the main study, let us first establish a little timeline because the narrative moves at breakneck speed. There are a lot of questions that we can ask. Scholarly, the debate among the authors and sources of the text plays a great part in our understanding and also in the perspective of the narrative. There are a number of perspectives which we find in the text that are considered to come from a few sources, each source dealing with a different view. The sources, in a nutshell, are the Yahwist, which considers the nation under oppression, and the Priestly, which views the people in enslavement. The Elohist source is considered to be Levitical but fragmentary in its existing parts. It generally refers to YHWH in His deity (Elohim) instead of in His name form, YHWH. However, we see this form of writing throughout scripture where God is identified by different character names: YHWH, Adonai Tzva'ot, I AM; all are dependent upon how he is revealing Himself at the time.

As we study the books within the Bible, it would do us good to understand more about the authors and the sources from which the writing comes. It also helps us to understand the author's endeavours, purpose and intentions and sometimes the bias in relaying the message to us.

It is interesting that throughout the annals of scripture, Israel is not portrayed as an all-powerful, holy and conquering nation but one that coexists in partnership or covenant with YHWH, despite her faults. Scripture highlights Israel in various forms, personified in Jacob and as a corporate people. Their struggles throughout history, with enslavement, exile, wars, the judgements of YHWH and of course His blessings, tell us ultimately of the battle we have as individuals with Him and how we cannot exist independently. We were created to be a partner with YHWH and ultimately to be One with Him — as a bride. This is something that the modern Christian movement often fails to grasp in depth. YHWH is not a slave to us. He is not a genie in a bottle that is there to grant our every wish. We were designed to work with Him and in His will.

Scripture tells us that we are co-workers with Him.

**1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.**

The sources in the text, variously speak of enslavement and oppression. Sometimes the themes cross over but with a little study, we can separate the two. Looking at these two themes we recognise that enslavement and oppression are quite different. In the case of Israel's continuing transition, we see them move, more often than not, from oppression to oppression under subsequent conquering nations. In this case we see them in exile. However, in the theme of Exodus we see them transit from a nation in prosperity to one in enslavement.

This narrative is fundamentally the fulfilment of the YHVH's prophesy to Abraham.

**Genesis 15:13, NIV: "Then the LORD said to him, 'Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.'"**

However, we can consider that the enslavement and oppression under exile of YHVH's people is consistent throughout history.

As we jump into Shemot, we fly over the time period of this prophecy. Some simple calculations in the timeline will place us in context. Let's have a brief summary.

Joseph is taken into captivity at the age of 17. He is promoted into the court of Pharaoh at the age of 30. Over a period of seven years he prepares Egypt for the famine to come. At the time of famine, some seven years later, we see the journey of Joseph's family to Egypt, making Joseph about 42. However, Jacob would have probably travelled at the beginning of the famine. After 17 years Jacob dies which makes Joseph about 49 years old. Israel begins to grow and prosper as a people, blessing the economy of Egypt. Everything is going well. Egypt continues to prosper during Joseph's rule and for some time after.

Now we enter this week's parsha. We begin by reading the names of Jacob's sons.

**Ex1 Now these *are* the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; 4 Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. 5 All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt *already*). 6 And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. 7 But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.**

Though the book of Exodus is known by its Christian title, emphasising the journey of the Israelites from enslavement to deliverance, it begins with the names of the houses of Israel that will make that journey, and continues to show us the life of the family of Jacob throughout the wilderness years.

In this next passage, we come to realise that a very significant period of time has elapsed from the death of Joseph to the emergence of the new Pharaoh. Why? Because the Pharaoh did not know anything about Joseph. *I encourage you to look at the debate over the rulers of Egypt around this time.*

**V8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we; 10 come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." 11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread**

**of the children of Israel. 13 So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.**

This is the time when Israel moves from prosperity to enslavement. Oppression will come upon them as they enter the time of the four kingdoms as prophesied by Daniel. It will do us well to know that YHVH's people, as long as they remain in the world — exile — are still under oppression. Even though the Jews have a homeland, they are still not completely sovereign and free.

Despite the terrible state Israel now finds herself in, we know that YHVH is doing all this for His purpose. YHVH is about to come against the gods of Egypt, showing Himself God of gods and sovereign ruler and maker of creation.

**V10 is an intriguing passage; we see that Pharaoh wants to deal 'shrewdly' with the problem he foresees. The CJB uses the word 'Wisely'. In the Hebrew, the word for wisdom is 'Chokmah': khok-maw'; from H2449; wisdom (in a good sense):—skilful, wisdom, wisely.**

This is the same word that is used in Proverbs 1:7 The fear of *Adonai* is the beginning of knowledge, but *fools* despise *wisdom* and discipline.

Wisdom also means to have the ability, and endowment from God to be employed in a task.

**Ex28 “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office, even Aaron, with Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.2 And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty. 3 And thou shalt speak unto all who are *wisehearted*, whom I have filled with the spirit of *wisdom*, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office...”**

And again, we see it dispensed to the workers dedicated to the building of the tabernacle.

**Ex31 And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,**

**2 “See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.**

**3 And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in *wisdom* and in understanding and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship, 4 to devise skillful works: to work in gold and in silver and in brass, 5 and in cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.**

**6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are *wisehearted* I have put *wisdom*, that they may make all that I have commanded thee...”**

Moving on, despite the oppressive state of the people, it would seem that life still went on, and they found time and the energy to procreate and multiply. Now this vexed

Pharaoh, and so he had to put an end to the people's antics, and in a sense find a solution. Pharaoh had to maintain the workforce but kill their offspring. Thus, he commands the death of the male children of the Hebrews by throwing them into the Nile, ultimately as an offering.

The speed of the narrative takes us into the birth of Moses, his salvation from the ark of reeds, and his growth and status within Pharaoh's house. The miracle of his being brought up by his own mother tells us the level of control YHVH has over the situation.

To this degree, we see that YHVH positions His people once again into the affairs of the world. Remember Moses' predecessor, Joseph.

Moses' name means 'drawn from the water'. It would seem that his Egyptian name is adopted among the names of the Hebrews. Moses is hidden for three months to save him from Pharaoh's edict. We can surmise that Moses would have had to have been circumcised after the eighth day, but no mention is made of this. The Midrash Tanchuma, Noach 5, lists Moses among seven special people who were born circumcised. The others among this special group are: Adam, Seth, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, and Job. Other writings include Balaam, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, and Zerubabel among the circumcised group.

The name Moses is derived from the Egyptian 'Mose' ("is born") and is found in such names as Thutmose (The God Thoth Is Born). However, it is said that Moses, 'Moshe' in the Hebrew, was the name given to him by his parents and that the name was retained by Bithia, Pharaoh's daughter.

Among the Jewish people, Moses is also known by other names that all reflect and embody the things he was and will be. For example, Rabbi Eliezer Danzinger notes:

1. Yered (ירד), implying "descent." According to one opinion, Miriam gave him this name, for because of him she went down (*yarad*) to the Nile to see what would become of him. Alternatively, Moshe was called this name because he brought the Torah down to the Jewish people, and the Divine Presence back down to this physical world.
2. Avigdor (אבי גדור), "master of the fence." According to Me'am Loez he was called this (by his grandfather Kehat), because "since Moshe's birth, G-d has *fenced in* Pharaoh, not allowing him to continue his decree to drown Jewish infants."
3. Chever (חבר), "companion" or "connector." Either because Moshe connected the Jewish people with their heavenly Father, or because he prevented (העביר, phonetically similar to חבר) heavenly retribution for their sins. Some say that Amram, his father, gave Moshe this name, because Moshe was born after his father had once again *joined* his wife after having divorced her.
4. Avi Socho (אבי סוכו), "Father of Seers." He was given this name by his grandfather Kehat (alternatively, by the nurse who helped Moshe's mother raise him), because Moshe would grow up to be the "master" (*avi*) of the seers (*sochim*) and prophets.
5. Yekutiel (יקותיאל), from the root *kavei* (קוה), meaning "hope." His mother, Jochebed, called him this name because she had *hope* and trust in G-d that He would return Moses to her. Alternatively, because she foresaw that Moshe would be the Jewish nation's great *hope*.
6. Avi Zanoach (אבי זנוח), literally, "master of rejection." Aaron, Moshe's brother, gave him this name, saying, "My father rejected my mother, but took her back because of this child." Alternatively, because Moshe would make Israel *reject* idols.
7. Toviah (טוביה), implying "goodness."

8. The Jewish people called him “Shemayah (שמעיה) *ben* [the son of] Nethanel.” They predicted that in his days, G-d would hear (שמע) their prayers.
9. Ben Evyatar (בן אביתר), “son of pardon,” since Moshe was the Jewish son who would solicit G-d’s pardon (ויתר) for the Jewish people’s sin of the Golden Calf.
10. Levi (לוי), so named after the tribe to which Moshe belonged.

Despite all these names, throughout the Torah, he is referred to as Moshe. Moreover, G-d Himself addresses Moshe only by this name. Our sages tell us that this teaches us the importance of raising a child, especially when doing so requires special self-sacrifice. *Rabbi Eliezer Danzinger*

The giving of a name is an important part of a person’s life, and much consideration is given to it in many cultures. Often, the child’s name will hold significance in their life. It is something that has little emphasis in the western culture.

As I have said, the Hebrew word for wisdom, ‘Chokmah’ also alludes to the ability to do something. Wisdom is manifest in thought, word and in our deeds. Often, negative words can be debilitating to a young child trying to find his own abilities. Telling a young child, for instance, that they will not amount to anything and that they are failures will be detrimental to their lives. Finding someone who can rise above the harsh words is a rarity. I remember how we used to use a not-so-complimentary term ‘simple by name, simple by nature’. Sometimes we can indeed live up to the name given to us.

In Genesis 49, we read how Jacob blesses his sons. Let’s have a look at their names and their meanings.

Reuben — ‘Behold a Son, son of vision.’  
 Simeon — ‘He who hears.’  
 Levi — ‘Joined.’  
 Judah— ‘Let him be praised, Praised.’  
 Dan— ‘Judge.’  
 Issachar— ‘Man of Hire, there is recompense’  
 Zebulun— ‘Instance of Exaltation, Glorious Dwelling Place.’  
 Naphtali— ‘My Wrestlings or Crafty.’  
 Gad— ‘Fortune.’  
 Asher— ‘Happy.’  
 Joseph— ‘May He add, Increaser.’  
 Benjamin— ‘Son of the right hand, Son of the South’.

Have you ever thought about a name you would give yourself?

Jacob’s deathbed blessings upon the now older sons are somehow unrelated to the meaning of their birth names. Only Judah, Issachar, Asher, Dan and Joseph seem to live up to the names. Jacob also places a prophetic blessing upon Manasseh and Ephraim, the sons of Joseph. Please note that the sons of Joseph were not little boys when Jacob blessed them. They would have been well into their twenties.

At this time, it is important to note that Joseph is not in the tribal makeup. You might want to find out why and when he returns.

The sons make up the twelve tribes of Israel, known as the 'Shevatim'. Each tribe received a blessing in accordance with their individual purposes and nature. The words of Jacob are not mere hopes for each son, but will be prophetic in the utterance. Time will reveal how this all works out,

Finally, I want to come to a very important name that is revealed in the parsha.

The Orthodox Jewish Bible and the Complete Jewish bible introduce us to this name thus:

Ex 3:11 And Moshe said unto HaElohim, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the Bnei Yisroel out of Mitzrayim?

**12** And He said, Certainly **Eh-heh-yeh** (I will be) with thee; and this shall be haOt (the Sign) unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth HaAm out of Mitzrayim, ye shall serve HaElohim upon this Har.

**13** And Moshe said unto HaElohim, Hinei, when I come unto the Bnei Yisroel, and shall say unto them, Elohei Avoteichem hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is Shmo? what shall I say unto them?

**14 And Elohim said unto Moshe, Eh-heh-yeh ashair Ehheh- yeh (I AM WHO I AM); and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the Bnei Yisroel, EHHEH-YEH (I AM) hath sent me unto you.**

**15** And Elohim said moreover unto Moshe, Thus shalt thou say unto Bnei Yisroel: Hashem, Elohei Avoteichem, Elohei Avraham, Elohei Yitzchak, and Elohei Ya'akov, hath sent me unto you: this is Shemi l'olam, **and this is My remembrance unto all generations. OJB**

Ex13 Moshe said to God, "Look, when I appear before the people of Isra'el and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you'; and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" **14** God said to Moshe, "*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* [I am/will be what I am/will be]," and added, "Here is what to say to the people of Isra'el: '*Ehyeh* [I Am or I Will Be] has sent me to you.'" **15** God said further to Moshe, "Say this to the people of Isra'el: '*Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh [Adonai]*, the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya'akov, has sent me to you.' **This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered generation after generation. CJB**

It is difficult to understand the meaning in the English rendering "I Am". Its term seems very abstract. In the Hebrew YHVH's name or prophetic name, is far more concrete.

In essence, the name or utterance revealed to Moses, Yitro, Moses' father-in-law and high priest of Midian, and to Pharaoh, is something that they will all understand profoundly, though Pharaoh might have a harder time accepting it.

Ehyeh- Asher- Ehyeh (EAE) presents YHVH as Sovereign in which all things were, are and will be. Nothing exists without Him. All thing were made through Him, by Him and for Him. This includes all the other gods. Ehyeh- Asher -Ehyeh is 'God of gods'.

YHVH has many names of reference, referring to His deity, and sovereign position at any one time, for example:

- Yehovah. 'The Lord', 'God'

- El Shaddai. The Lord/God Almighty
- Adonai Tzva'ot. God of Hosts — the armies of heaven
- Adonai. 'Lord God', 'Master' ...
- Elohim. 'Father God / God the Creator.' ...
- Abba. 'Father'...
- El Elyon, Most High God

And names relating to His benefaction:

- Yehovah Rapha. 'The God who heals'
- Yehovah Shalom. 'God is peace'
- Yehovah Jireh. 'The Lord will provide'
- Yehovah Nissi. 'The Lord is my banner'
- Yehovah Tzidkenu. 'Lord of righteousness'
- El Roi. 'the God who sees me'.

Eyeh-Asher -Ehyer, is the memorial name of YHVH, revealed first to Moses. In essence, it means the complete, fulfilled and finished work, the glory of God's hand. In this name all things exist and will be, just as God decides in accordance with His will.

In this sense, we see that it is a state of being that transcends all cosmic and physical matter. In this unimaginable and incomprehensible existence, YHVH or Ehyer -Asher -Ehyer, can exist in any form, or anywhere. YHVH can manifest as a flame within a bush, a voice in a donkey, lightnings and storms, a Rock, the Angel of the Lord, a column of smoke, a pillar of fire, the Shekinah, and in the bodily human form of our Messiah Yeshua.

Despite the revealed name of YHVH given to us, the body of Messiah and the Jewish faith still argue about what can and what should be used or spoken. The use of the title 'Lord', for example, replaced by Adonai, can be insufficient to gain a profound understanding of His name and how it should be used.

As we continue to grow together in the faith, it is important to share the revelation we have with grace and not let knowledge and tradition divide us.

YHVH will reveal all that He is and all that will be at His appointed time.

Shalom

Grant Marshall.

Additional reading:

Isaiah 27: 6 - 28:13 , Jer 1:1-19  
Act 7:17 – 29