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# The Yahwism of Moses

Jong Jin Choe

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THE YAHWISM OF MOSES

A Graduate Research Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of

Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Divinity

by

Jong Jin Choe

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## Chapter 1

### THE PROBLEM AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE

#### THE PROBLEM

##### Introduction to the Problem

The theme of the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt not only provides the framework of the opening books of the Old Testament but is also recalled and emphasized in many other passages. Furthermore, one of the most fundamental and frequently repeated statements of faith in the Old Testament is that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the one who "led Israel out of Egypt." It is noteworthy that in this affirmation God is regularly the grammatical or, at least, the logical subject, and it is equally remarkable that "Israel" as a totality always appears as the object. To the act of God, expressed in this confessional statement, Israel traced its existence and its special place among the nations. Indeed, the expression "Yahweh who brought Israel out of Egypt" occurs in widely differing contexts in the Old Testament. This expression of the theme "Guidance out of Egypt" is unmistakably related to the background of all the texts in the Old Testament, even though it is not always mentioned directly.

Therefore, the theme, Yahweh who brought Israel out of Egypt, is a primary confession (Urbekennntnis) of Israel and at the same time it is the kernel of the whole subsequent pentateuchal tradition<sup>1</sup> and the beginning and primary factor of the history of salvation<sup>2</sup> (Heilsgeschichte). So we must seek after the origin of Israelite faith in the tradition of

the Exodus because deliverance from Egypt is the central or focal point in Israelite history and faith.

In fact, this theme of the Exodus was of prime importance for both the national and the religious self-consciousness of Israel. They were bound to each other as a confederation of tribes and as a people, not simply by the ties of a common descent, but by the experience and the consequences of a common deliverance and by a covenant by which Yahweh their God had united them to himself and to each other.<sup>3</sup>

While Moses was a remarkable leader, and much attention has been focused upon him in the Exodus accounts, it is Yahweh, not Moses, who is the "hero" or central figure in the story. It was Yahweh who chose Moses and overcame his hesitancy.<sup>4</sup> Moses acted only in response to Yahweh, as in his acceptance of the divine call to lead his people (Exodus 3,4). Moses played his role, to be sure, and his contribution to Israel's history and religion should not be minimized, but Yahweh remains the central figure.

#### Statement of the Problem

Therefore, this research paper deals with the study of Yahweh as revealed to Moses (especially Exodus 3:1-15) and Israel's relationship to Yahweh through Moses.

As we know, Yahweh, whom Moses understood and introduced, is the central focus of the doctrine of God in Old Testament religion. All of the doctrines of God in later ages originated in and depended on Yahweh of Moses.

Von Rad has stated,

Unlike the revelation in Christ, the revelation of Yahweh in the Old Testament is divided up over a long series of separate acts of revelation which are very different in content.



It seems to be without a centre which determines everything and which could give to the various separate acts both an interpretation and their proper theological connexion with one another. We can only describe the Old Testament's revelation of Yahweh as a number of distinct and heterogeneous revelatory acts.<sup>5</sup>

This raises the question of whether the "coherent whole" of what the Old Testament says about God, which it is the task of an Old Testament theology to present, consists merely in the continuity of history, that is, the ongoing stream of historical sequence.

Zimmerli did not give up seeking after the central focus in the Old Testament and tried to seek after it in the contexts of the Old Testament. He saw that all complex documents were related to God under the name of Yahweh above their every difference.<sup>6</sup> According to Zimmerli, the Old Testament itself makes claims: it firmly maintains its faith in the sameness of the God it knows by the name of Yahweh, throughout all changes. It maintains that this God Yahweh takes an active interest in his people Israel. In the face of all vexation and anguish, when "the right hand of the Most High" seems to have lost its power, the devout person takes refuge in this confession and "remembers" the former works of Yahweh.<sup>7</sup> Here, in Yahweh himself, who has made himself known in his deeds of bygone days, this faith believes it can find the true and authentic continuity on which it can rely.<sup>8</sup>

From this perspective, too, it is significant to study the focal point where the faith of the Old Testament specifically confesses the God of Israel under the name of Yahweh.

Here it is necessary to ask three questions: (1) How does the faith of the Old Testament come by its knowledge of the name of its God? (2) What is the meaning of the name Yahweh revealed to Moses and how is it to be interpreted? (3) Does the name of Yahweh, which Israel calls

upon, reveal something of the nature of this God?

### Limitation of the Problem

A limited amount of selected biblical material was covered in this study. The investigation was concerned with the God related to Moses in the book of Exodus, especially Exodus 3:1-15, because it is of central importance for the understanding of God in the Mosaic period.

Because the concept of Yahweh was related to every context in the Old Testament from the Book of Genesis through Malachi, to study Yahwism is a large task. Therefore, the focus of this research was only on Moses' understanding of Yahweh in the Book of Exodus while referring to selected studies about Yahweh.

### METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The primary function of chapter two is to provide a survey of the concept of the theophany and the kinds of theophany in the Old Testament. This chapter has its focus on the Book of Exodus and is especially related to the explanation of the revelation of Yahweh to Moses.

Chapter three contains an investigation of the question; When was the tradition of the revelation of Yahweh begun? Scholars raise questions in argument of traditions in the problem of how the faith of the Old Testament acquired its knowledge of the name Yahweh. This study attempts to reach a biblical conclusion about the answer here.

Chapter four is devoted to answering the question, How did Moses acquire knowledge of the name Yahweh? That is, this chapter deals with the origins of Yahwism.

Chapter five is the discussion phase of the meaning of the name Yahweh. Scholars raise questions in the problem of the meaning of the

name. This research also tried to reach a biblical conclusion to this problem.

The primary function of Chapter six is to provide only a survey of the nature of Yahweh in the Book of Exodus. Therefore these suggestions are necessarily general and incomplete.

Chapter seven deals with Moses and monotheism because scholars raise questions about whether Moses was monotheist or not.

Chapter eight deals with Yahweh and the Exodus from Egypt because it is the event that most vividly revealed who Yahweh was. This study attempts to inquire into the relationship between Yahweh and Israel through the Exodus.

Chapter nine contains a brief summary of the study, the conclusions derived from the entire investigation and certain suggestions for further study.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Herbert J. Kraus, The People of God in the Old Testament (New York: Association Press, 1958), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>George W. Anderson, The History and Religion of Israel (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1955), p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. I, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 115.

<sup>6</sup>Walther Zimmerli, "Zum Problem der Mitte des Alten Testamentes," trans. Hee Suk Moon, Theological Thought Quarterly (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, Spring, 1976), p. 98. This article was published in Evangelische Theologie, 2, (March and April, 1975), pp. 97-118.

<sup>7</sup>Psalms, 77:11-12.

<sup>8</sup>Walther Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), p. 14.

## Chapter 2

### THE THEOPHANY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### THE SELF-REVELATION FORMULA

The theophanic appearance of the deity, who, often at a holy place, reveals himself by name in a self-revelatory formula, employs a form which has many parallels in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> God himself appears to one of the Patriarchs, announces his name in the fixed formula of self-introduction, "אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם," and renews a promise. The recipient of the theophany is not sent, as in the prophetic call, nor is he given a sign.<sup>2</sup>

And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, 'I am the God of Abraham (אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם) your father; fear not, for I am with you and will multiply your descendants for my servant Abraham's sake. (Gen. 26:24)

And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, (אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם) . . . . I have come to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land . . . . (Exodus 3:6-8)

#### THE FORM OF AN INTERMEDIARY

Secondly, there is another group of passages which have been generally designated as theophanies, but which differ considerably from the first form (Cf. Gen. 32:24-30; Judg. 13:8-18). Here the revelation is through the form of an intermediary. There is an initial encounter, the content of which varies considerably, but on the basis of which a divine promise or blessing is pronounced. Rather, the recipient inquires concerning the name of his protagonist. The context of Genesis 32 and of Judges 16 makes it clear that genuine information is sought since his

name is unknown. As has often been observed, there is a characteristic oscillation between the angel of Yahweh being an intermediary and his being a manifestation of Yahweh himself. Nevertheless, the form is quite distinct from the self-revelation formula of the first pattern.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE FORM OF THE CALL NARRATIVE

The third group of passages represents a call pattern in connection with Exodus 3:1 ff. According to Childs, the form of the call narrative has been thoroughly analyzed in recent years by Zimmerli, Habel, Kilian and most recently by Richter; the initial work of Zimmerli which Habel has developed remains the most insightful.<sup>4</sup>

Habel outlines the call of Moses as follows: (i) the divine confrontation, vv. 1-4a; (ii) the introductory word, vv. 4b-9; (iii) the commission, v. 10; (iv) the objection, v. 11; (v) the reassurance, v. 12a; (vi) the sign, v. 12b.<sup>5</sup>

The present section, Exodus 3:1-4:7 is a greatly expanded form of the basic call narrative. The call ends with the giving of the sign in v. 12 (perhaps with vv. 16 and 17a.)<sup>6</sup> That is, there is an initial appearance, usually by the angel of Yahweh, which leads to the introductory message and the commission. The focus of these passages falls on the commission with the subsequent objections, which leads to the giving of a sign.<sup>7</sup>

The call of Moses in Exodus 3, according to Edward Young, is a preparation for the meeting of Moses with God on the holy Mount Sinai and the revelation of the law.<sup>8</sup> The burning bush was a miracle performed by God himself.<sup>9</sup> The angel appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush, and God called to him from there. As the text stands, it clearly identifies the angel with God. Furthermore, the manner in

which the Lord is introduced as one who sees that Moses had turned aside suggests that the Lord and the angel are one. How is this explained?

Martin Noth apparently looks with favor on the explanation given by Von Rad, who declares that the angel is God in human form, a form in which Yahweh appears. This result, however, has been achieved by means of intensive inner revising of very old traditions. These traditions told about unique and spectacular divine appearances at definite shrines and sites. Later on men came to assume that it was an angel of Yahweh that thus appeared, and in this way they broke down the native immediate intimacy of God's relationship. They introduced this mediating figure, the Angel of the Lord, and yet at the same time preserved the directness of God's address to man and of his saving activity. Von Rad acknowledges that there are Christological "qualities" in this figure and that it is a type of "shadow" of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> According to Young, the Angel is a real Being, and he is identified with God. Inasmuch as he is sent from the Lord, he is not God the Father himself but is distinct from the Father. If we would do justice to the Scriptural data, we must insist, therefore, both on the distinguishableness of the Angel from the Father and also on the identity of essence with the Father. Christian theologians have rightly seen in this strange figure a preincarnate appearance of the One who in the days of his flesh could say, "And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness of me" (John 5:37). This one is indeed a messenger to bring to Moses the announcement of deliverance to come.<sup>11</sup>

#### THE STEREOTYPE FORM OF INSTRUCTION

Finally, there is a form reflected in a number of passages which arises from a question regarding the significance of some religious

practice (Ex. 12:26, 13:14; Deut. 6:20; Josh. 4:6,21, 22:24):

And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of bondage' (Ex. 13:14-16).

Soggin has characterized this form as a stereotype form of instruction.<sup>12</sup> The form is of interest in this discussion in so far as it employs a question which is not inquiring after new information, but rather seeks to discover the significance of a practice which is known. The form is akin to the etiological form which Hermann Gunkel isolated. However, it differs in retaining its question form as part of the tradition rather than representing an earlier level which needs reconstruction in order to recover it.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose in outlining these different forms is to see what perspective can be thrown on Exodus 3, in which Yahweh revealed himself to Moses from traditional patterns. It is not suggested that the four patterns remained independent of one another, or necessarily reflect separate settings. Still a recognition of the stereotyped elements often aids in sorting out the complex interweavings which took place in the passage in Exodus 3.<sup>14</sup>



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 65, (Cf. Gen. 17:1; 26:24; 28:13; Ex. 3:6, etc.) Child's view of the theophany is in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Only in the case of Gen. 15:2 does Abraham raise objections to the promise offered him by God.

<sup>3</sup>Childs, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 53. W. Zimmerli; 'Zur Form-und Traditions-geschichte der prophetischen Berufungsgeschichte der prophetischen Berufungserzählungen,' Ezechiel I (Neukirchen, 1955) pp. 16-21.

<sup>5</sup>Norman Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. 77, (1965), 297ff. Cf. Childs, op. cit. pp. 53-54.

<sup>6</sup>Childs, loc. cit., p. 54.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>8</sup>Edward J. Young, "The Call of Moses," The Westminster Theological Journal, 29 (1964), p. 126

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. p. 135.

<sup>10</sup>Edward J. Young, "The Call of Moses," The Westminster Theological Journal, 30 (November, 1969), 3. Cf. Martin Noth, Exodus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962). pp. 39-40.

<sup>11</sup>Young, ibid. pp. 4,5. "When the revelation was given to him, Moses would have realized that the Lord was performing in the burning bush a sign or wonder which was unique" (ibid. p. 10).

<sup>12</sup>Childs, loc. cit., p. 66. Cf. J. Alberto Soggin, "Kultatiologische Sagen und Katechese im Hexateuch," Vetus Testamentum 10 (1960), 341 ff.

<sup>13</sup>Childs, loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

### Chapter 3

#### TRADITIONS OF THE REVELATION OF YAHWEH

Exodus provides a basis for our knowledge of Hebrew religion in the time of Moses. The Book of Exodus is of central importance for the understanding of God in the Mosaic period. It preserves ancient songs and stories that have sprung directly from the actual events which they depict. Such major Israelite themes as the Exodus from Egypt, the covenant at Mount Sinai and the wilderness wanderings are also captured in traditions or in early documents that now provide a major part of the substance of Exodus.

The narrator of the Book of Exodus does not tell about casual occurrences, but rather about the initial encounter between God and Moses in the first period of Israel's history. The faith of the Old Testament knows its God by the name of Yahweh. Zimmerli shows that this pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, (יהוה) which is no longer recorded in the Masoretic vocalization, is highly probably on the basis of evidence from the Church Fathers.<sup>1</sup> According to G. W. Anderson, "Yahweh" is generally accepted as representing the correct form of the word. In the course of time reverential motives led the Jews to avoid uttering this divine name. They replaced it by the word "יהוה," "Lord." The absurd form "Jehovah" arose from a mistaken transliteration of the consonants of Yahweh and the vowels from יהוה.<sup>2</sup>

For the audience of the Old Testament, a name is more than a randomly selected label. Those who are named are vulnerable; they can be

invoked by means of their names.

Scholars raise questions in argument of traditions in the problem of how the faith of the Old Testament acquired its knowledge of the name of its God. Most scholars assert that there is a very complex document in Exodus, just as in the case of Genesis, and that a variety of oral traditions have been identified in the book, stemming from several different groups and places. These diverse materials were eventually brought together into one major written work, the Book of Exodus.<sup>3</sup> So for them there are at least two significant versions of the common traditions in Exodus that must be recognized, the Yahwist (J) and the Elohist (E). In addition to these two, the later priestly (P) source is also represented in the book.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE TRADITION OF PRIMAL HISTORY (J DOCUMENT)

The writer (or J) of the Book of Genesis uses the name "Yahweh" without hesitation even in the primal history and the Patriarchal narratives. That is, the Yahwist account disagrees completely with Moses-Yahweh tradition by using the divine name Yahweh for God throughout the J history, notably in Genesis and Exodus. In the context of J, the statement in Genesis 4:26 stands out: in the days of Enosh, who represents the third human generation, people began to call on the name of Yahweh. Since the name "Enosh", like "Adam," can simply mean "man," it is possible there was an earlier version according to which Yahweh was called upon in the generation of the very first man (Urmensch).<sup>5</sup>

To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord (יהוה).<sup>6</sup>

# MOSES-YAHWEH TRADITION (E and P DOCUMENTS)

E and P take a different approach to describe the revealing of the name of Yahweh. Each, in its own way, represents a specific view of how the name of Yahweh was revealed. E and P do not speak of Yahweh before the time of Moses because of a specific view of the history of revelation. That is, according to both, this takes place in the time of Moses, the initial period of Israel's history.

## E Document (Ex. 3:1, 4b, 6, 9-15, etc.)

The Elohist tradition assumes that God was not known to the Israelites by one personal name until he revealed himself to Moses as "Yahweh" (Ex. 3:13-15):

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 also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you'; this is my name for ever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

It was at the mountain of God that Moses learned to invoke God by name; in the earlier narratives the general term אלהים, "God," was used, which could also be applied to non-Israelite deities.

When Moses was commanded to lead his enslaved people out of Egypt he asked the name of the God under whom this was to happen; the name of Yahweh was communicated to him in a veiled way that will be considered in more detail below.<sup>7</sup>

## The Priestly Code (Ex. 3:2-4, 6:2-4 etc.)

The priestly source exhibits a process by which the name of God is revealed in three stages.<sup>8</sup>

Firstly, like E, P uses the general term  $\text{אלהים}$  ('*elohim*) at the outset when referring to the acts of God in the primordial era.

Secondly, according to Genesis 17:1, God reveals himself to Abraham, the earliest of the Patriarchs of Israel, under the name  $\text{יהוה}$ .

Thirdly, according to Exodus 6:2ff., God encountered Moses with equal spontaneity, introducing himself of his own accord by his name Yahweh, referring explicitly to Genesis 17:1:

And God said to Moses, "I am the Lord ( $\text{יהוה}$ ), I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, as God Almighty ( $\text{אלהים}$ ), but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them (Ex. 6:23).

This passage expresses most emphatically the spontaneity and novelty of the revelation of the name Yahweh. The name by which Israel may call upon its God does not simply lie ready at hand for everyone to use. Neither, as in E, is it given in response to a human question; it is the free gift of the God who sends his people their deliverer, thereby forging a bond between himself and them (Ex. 6:7).<sup>9</sup> Here God revealed his name, by himself, to Moses. That is, God encountered Moses spontaneously, revealing his brand-new name without Moses' question.

#### THE ACTUAL INTENTION OF THE AUTHOR OF THE PENTATEUCH ITSELF

As scholars have pointed out, we find in fact that the name Yahweh was used and called spontaneously with every name of God in primitive history and in the period of the Patriarchs before it was revealed to Moses in the biblical Hebrew text. Here the questions arise: which names of God were used during the Mosaic period and what is the relationship between Yahweh and other names. For the answers to these questions this study will scan the names of God in the Pentateuch.

El (ʿēl)

El was the chief god in the Canaanite pantheon. The word is a common term for "god" in the Semitic languages, and may be used in a general sense of any divine being; but it was also the personal name of the father and king of the gods who presided over the divine assembly, and to whose authority other deities had to appeal.<sup>10</sup>

The generic name of God amongst all people of Semitic tongue, except the Ethiopians, is expressed by the help of the root  $\text{El}$ , ilu, allah, etc. That root is interpreted in different ways, and time still appears remote when scholars will agree on its etymology.<sup>11</sup>

(1) Some<sup>12</sup> attach to it a root expressing force, the root underlying  $\text{El}$  and  $\text{El}$  the oak, the typically strong tree and especially the expression "  $\text{El}$  -w" -"it is in the power of my hand."<sup>13</sup>

(2) Others<sup>14</sup> think the root to be  $\text{El}$  -to be in front, to be the first; the noun  $\text{El}$  -ram, would signify the one which goes at the head of a flock, and in the temple at Jerusalem the front part of the structure bore the name of  $\text{El}$ .

(3)  $\text{El}$  might go back to the preposition  $\text{El}$  -towards, and the two spring from a root  $\text{El}$  -to reach. Paul de Lagarde<sup>15</sup> thought that El was the one towards whom one moves, and Pere Lagrange<sup>16</sup> saw there the one towards whom men's steps are directed in order to worship him.

(4) Procksch<sup>17</sup> associates El with the root  $\text{El}$  -to tie (cf. the Arabic illun-bond); according to him the meaning of El would be the one whose constraint cannot be thrown off. This last etymology is wrecked on the fact that the vowel of  $\text{El}$  (ilu) is always long.

It seems to us that the idea of power<sup>18</sup>, involving also that of pre-eminence, most adequately expresses the reality designated by El: the

mountains of El (Ps. 36:7), the cedars of El (Ps. 80:11), a mighty one of the nations (Ezek. 31:11). What is powerful is divine; one of the most elementary experiences of the divine is that of a power on which, in varying degrees, man feels himself dependent.<sup>19</sup>

In the religion of Canaan, El, king of gods, was sometimes called "the Bull-El,"<sup>20</sup> and this was no doubt an indication of his connection with animal vigor and fertility. Nominally subordinate to El, but more active and in some ways more prominent, was Baal. The word "baal" means owner, master, husband, and could be used as a common noun in quite general ways. It could also serve as the designation of any local deity. The due representation in word (the recital of the myth) and act (the dramatic symbolism of the ritual) was believed to be a potent means of maintaining the ordered harmony of nature and of the life of the community.<sup>21</sup>

A religion of this kind presented a sharp challenge to the faith which the Israelite invaders brought with them. The Mosaic religion had as its setting the life of the nomad, not that of the farmer. More important, its historical character was in marked contrast to the nature religion of Canaan. This contrast was to prove decisive.<sup>22</sup>

As we know, El appears in various compound titles in the stories about the Patriarchs; and there is no indication that the application of this name to Yahweh aroused opposition or criticism. Therefore the religion of the Patriarchs, as described in Genesis, called their God El before Yahweh revealed himself to Moses. But it is clear that the religion of the Patriarchs has a personal character<sup>23</sup> in both its individual and communal aspects which is in accord with the situation of the Patriarchs, and which marks it as different from agricultural fertility cults and also from the state cults of the great powers.

### אֱלֹהִים (elohim)

The name which, out of the 2550 occasions it is used in the Old Testament, designates sometimes the gods, sometimes one god amongst others, sometimes the divine,<sup>24</sup> and lately the sole legitimate God, expresses henceforward the totality of the divine reunited in one person. Nevertheless, this name in its plural form, which is found as a term for one deity not only among the Israelites, but also among the Phonicians (elim)<sup>25</sup> and the Babylonians (ilani), seems to provide proof that the Semites experienced the divine as a plurality of forces and not as a unity which might later be broken up.<sup>26</sup>

Some scholars think the root to be אֱל or אֱלִי. Others think its root to be אֱלִי. Therefore, if the name Elohim had a complex concept, it means He-who-is-to-be-feared, or the powerful one.<sup>27</sup> Especially its plural form means grammatically divine authority and abundant power.<sup>28</sup> Elohim sets forth God's creative and sustaining power.<sup>29</sup>

### אֱלֹהִים (elohim)

אֱלִי seems to have its root to be אֱלִי -go to and fro in perplexity or fear. Hence אֱלִי means fear and object of fear, reverence, revered one.<sup>30</sup> Eloah was used many times as the name of God in the Old Testament.<sup>31</sup>

### אֱלֹהִים (el-shaddai)

It was used as a special designation for Yahweh in the Patriarchal period (Gen. 17:1, 28:3, 35:11; Ex. 6:3). The word El Shaddai is a compound word of both אֱל and שָׁדַי, and was to become the name of God.

שָׁדַי means "sufficient" or "almighty."<sup>32</sup> Therefore it may mean "God is self-sufficient." The word was translated as "The Almighty God"



in the King James Version. Anderson also states that the original meaning of "shaddai" was perhaps "He of the mountain" but this is not wholly certain.<sup>33</sup> According to Lee Haines, the significance of the use of El Shaddai, the term which speaks of God as a bountiful giver, is immediately apparent. For the Lord has reappeared to renew his promises and covenant, to amplify the nature of the promises and to clarify the conditions expected of Abram and his descendants.<sup>34</sup>

### Other Names

יְיָֹלָם (e'lyôn) means "upper," "Highest," "Most High." It was used as the name of God<sup>35</sup> and the name of a ruler, whether monarch or angel-prince<sup>36</sup> and as both a dependent name<sup>37</sup> and an independent divine name.<sup>38</sup>

"El Most High" (יְיָֹלָם לַאֲלֹהִים) of Jerusalem has already been mentioned in the context of Genesis 14:18-20. Later the term יְיָֹלָם can appear by itself as an epithet or substitute for Yahweh. In Psalm 82:6, the gods brought to judgment on account of their unrighteousness are called "sons of the Most High." The term "Most High" could be applied to Yahweh without any difficulty.<sup>39</sup>

According to Genesis 21:33, Yahweh received the epithet אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם "El Everlasting," at Beersheba. This attribution, too, could not have made any difficulties for Yahweh.<sup>40</sup>

In Genesis 16:13, אֱלֹהֵי בְּרִיָּה is referred to as the deity of Beer-lahai-roi and is used as an epithet for Yahweh. The meaning of the name remains obscure but it may mean God of Seeing.<sup>41</sup>

The name Yahweh is used with the names of God mentioned above throughout the Old Testament.

### The Actual Intention of the Author

Here the question arises, What is the reason that the name Yahweh is used with other names of God in historical accounts, notably in Genesis and Exodus before the Mosaic period? The Moses-Yahweh tradition distinctly mentions that the name Yahweh was first revealed to Moses and God was not known to the Israelites by any one personal name until he revealed himself to Moses as Yahweh (Exodus 3:13-15). Therefore what is this seeming confusion between the Moses-Yahweh tradition and using the name Yahweh throughout the Old Testament before the Mosaic period?

The intention of the author of the Pentateuch is not an anachronistic use of the name Yahweh but to underscore the theological conviction that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is actually the Lord of all history and creation; therefore the worship of Yahweh is traced back to the remote beginnings, with the result that the Israelite story is placed in a universal perspective.

The intention of the author of the Pentateuch was also to show the continuity of Yahweh's saving history (Heilsgeschichte) from the beginning of the world. Even though the name Yahweh was apparently not revealed to the Patriarchs, the author wanted to show Yahweh as the God of the Fathers who brought and was associated with the Patriarchs.

Even though the Israelites had used other divine names to appeal to heaven (God), Yahweh was the object of their worship. So the author used the name Yahweh spontaneously of the pre-Mosaic period because Israelites believed and confessed Yahweh as creator and dominator of the whole universe, the world and human history. He knew Yahweh himself acted in the pre-Mosaic period. Therefore, the God of the Fathers came to be identified with Yahweh in the worship of the Mosaic Yahweh.<sup>42</sup>

The author of the Pentateuch saw that the theophany at Mount Sinai and to Abraham was the same Yahweh and he tried to express Yahweh's continuity in his acting throughout the Pentateuch. In Genesis 15:12-21, he described how God revealed beforehand the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to the earliest Patriarch, Abraham:

"Know of a surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions" (Gen. 15:13, 14).

In Exodus 2:24-25 he also described how God remembered his covenant with Abraham (means Genesis 15:13, 14). Here (in both Genesis 15:13, 14 and Exodus 2:24, 25) we must also remember in retrospect that the "deliverance from Egypt" was also accompanied by Yahweh's covenant with Abraham. In other words, the author completed the full identification of Yahweh with the God of the Fathers.<sup>43</sup>

But there is sufficient evidence that the name Yahweh became commonly accepted during and after the time of Moses. It is worth noting that parents began giving their children names compounded with an abbreviated form of the name Yahweh such as Joshua, which means "Yahweh is salvation" after the time of Moses, whereas in the pre-Mosaic period names of this type are lacking in the biblical traditions. This evidence suggests that the name Yahweh gained currency in the time of the Exodus.<sup>44</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Walther Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), p. 17. The passages that deliberately avoid speaking of Yahweh by name can, as a rule, be understood on the basis of specific consideration. In the Postexilic period it became customary to read "Adonai," "Lord," wherever the Tetragrammaton occurred in the text. This practice, based on reverence, became standard and has persisted in the synagogue until today. The pronunciation of YHWH had thus fallen into disuse long before the Hebrew text was provided with vowel signs. (Cf. Interpreter's Bible, Vol. I, (1951) p. 837.)

<sup>2</sup>George W. Anderson, The History and Religion of Israel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>J. Stanley Chesnut, The Old Testament Understanding of God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 44-45.

<sup>4</sup>I do not accept the Graf-Wellhausen theory and the New Documentary Hypothesis. Their assertion is introduced in trying to reach a biblical conclusion. For a detailed survey, see Jong Jin Choe, Introduction to the Old Testament (Seoul: Sung Yam Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 60-83, and Cuthbert A. Simpson, "The Growth of the Hexateuch" The Interpreters Bible, ed. George A. Buttrick et al., Vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), pp. 185-200.

<sup>5</sup>Zimmerli, op. cit. p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>Genesis 4:26.

<sup>7</sup>Zimmerli, loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Anderson, op. cit. pp. 64-65.

<sup>11</sup>Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote & Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 43.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Genesis 31:29; Deut. 12:32; Mi. 2:1; Prov. 3:27; Neh. 5:5. See F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 41-44.

<sup>14</sup>Jacob. loc. cit. This is the etymology proposed by Noeldeke, "Elohim El," Sitzungsber der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (1882), 1175 ff, and more recently by J. Starcky, "Le nom divin El" Archiv orientaln Melanges Hrozny (1949), 383.

<sup>15</sup>P. de Lagarde, Ubersicht uber die Nominalbildung (1882) 170 ff. defines El as "the goal of all human desire and all human striving," a definition unfitting for the Semites and still more for the Israelites for whom it is always God who comes to encounter man (Jacob, loc. cit. p. 44).

<sup>16</sup>Jacob, loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup>Otto Procksch, "El" Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift (1924), 20 ff.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Job 41:77; Ezek. 32:21; Isa. 9:5; Psa 29:1, 89b.

<sup>19</sup>Jacob, loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Anderson, op. cit. p. 64. The Bull-El was a byname of El.

<sup>21</sup>Anderson, op. cit. pp. 64-67. Closely associated with Baal was Anat, his sister and consort. She was a goddess of love and war. Other female deities were Asherah, the consort of El, and Astarte. Cf. W.F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), pp. 71-84.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Gen. 15:1; 28:13; 31:42, 53; 49:24.

<sup>24</sup>Elohim has the impersonal sense of "divine" in Ps. 36:2; II Chr. 20:29.

<sup>25</sup>The word elim is only very rarely found in Ugaritic with a singular verb.

<sup>26</sup>Jacob, op. cit. p. 48.

<sup>27</sup>Herman Bavinch, The Doctrine of God trans. W. Hendriksen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977). p. 99.

<sup>28</sup>Hee Bo Kim, Studies in Old Testament Theology (Seoul: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975) p. 40.

<sup>29</sup>Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) p. 40.

<sup>30</sup>F. Brown, S.R. Driver & C. Briggs, op. cit. p. 41.

<sup>31</sup>Hee Bo Kim, op. cit. p. 78. Cf. Deut. 32:17; Dan. 11:38; Hab. 1:11; I Chr. 32:15; II Chrn. 32:15; II Kings 17:31; Job 12:6; Ps. 18:32, 50:22, 139:19, 144:7; Prov. 30:5; Isa. 44:8, etc.

<sup>32</sup>Brown, op. cit. p. 994.

<sup>33</sup>Anderson, op. cit. pp. 20-21.

<sup>34</sup>Lee Haines, "The Book of Genesis," The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, ed. C. W. Carter, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 69.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; II Sam. 22:14; Ps. 9:3, 21:8, 46:5, 50:14, 73:11, 77:11, 78:17, 83:19, 87:5; Isa. 14:4.

<sup>36</sup>Brown, op. cit. p. 751.

<sup>37</sup>Cf. Gen. 14:18-22; Ps. 28:35 (with El); Ps. 7:18, 47:3 (with Yahweh); Ps. 57:3, 7:56 (with Elohim).

<sup>38</sup>Cf. supra, n. 35.

<sup>39</sup>Zimmerli, op. cit. p. 41.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Anderson, op. cit. p. 21.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Exodus 6:2-5.

<sup>44</sup>Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 57.

## Chapter 4

### THE ORIGIN OF YAHWISM

Having acknowledged that the accounts of the God of Moses in Exodus are traditional in nature, scholars have attempted to learn something of the actual origins of Yahweh religion. How does the faith of the Old Testament acquire its knowledge of Yahweh?

If it can be said, as we studied in Chapter 3, that Yahwism derived its origin from Moses, then scholars have dealt with the complex background of Moses. They think it is clear that the religion of Moses was in large measure a product of its time and place, and they must always keep that specific context in mind.<sup>1</sup>

### THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF EGYPTIAN RELIGION

It might be supposed that, since Moses was brought up in the Egyptian court, the novel element in his teaching was Egyptian in origin.<sup>2</sup>

The Egyptian heretic King, Akhenaton (Amenhotep IV. B. C. 1369-1353), is often supposed to have been the source of Mosaic Monotheism. Schofield says; "Even the claim that this man, 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,' was the founder of a moral monotheism is easily intelligible when one remembers the monotheism of Akhenaton."<sup>3</sup>

Akhenaton tried to replace Amon-Re with the Aton, the Sun's Disk to keep life. Therefore his religion is called Atonism. He enabled his people to worship the Aton as a god.<sup>4</sup> After breaking with the Amon priesthood at Thebes, the capital of New Kingdom Egypt, Amenhotep IV took

to himself the name Akhenaton and moved his capital to Akhenaton, modern Tell el-Amarna, where he encouraged new concepts of literature and art as well as a new religious emphasis. Akhenaton banned all religious activity except that which was addressed to Aton.<sup>5</sup> He renounced the traditional Egyptian polytheism and devoted himself to the worship of Aton, the Sun Disk and as a result is frequently considered a monotheist. Even Albright has lent some credence to this, saying:

A priori, we shall expect that Israelite monotheism would come into existence in an age when monotheistic tendencies were evident in other parts of the ancient world, and not at a time when no such movements can be traced. It is precisely between 1500 and 1220 B. C., i.e. in the Mosaic age, that we find the closest approach to monotheism in the Gentile world before the Persian period.<sup>6</sup>

The evolutionary presuppositions of this statement will not escape notice. Although the "monotheistic" religion of Akhenaton certainly left some impression upon the Egyptian mind, it is doubtful that a causal relationship can be established between the thought of Akhenaton and the beliefs of Moses, although a few scholars have attempted to relate the two.<sup>7</sup> His was not the spiritual monotheism which was represented by Israel's prophets, but rather a monotheism which exalted the Sun's Disk to a preeminent position. Akhenaton's reforms did not long outlive their chief exponent, and the priests of Amon were able to reassert the religious philosophy of the old regime during the lifetime of Tutankhamon, Akhenaton's son-in-law.<sup>8</sup>

Even if Moses had heard of Akhenaton's reforms, he showed no sympathy for sun worship. To Israel, all the gods of Egypt, including Aton were defeated by Yahweh in the events associated with the Exodus.<sup>9</sup> Mercer even denies that Akhenaton was a monotheist.<sup>10</sup> According to Wilson, the most important observation about Amarna religion is that there were two gods central to the faith, not one only. Akhenaton and his



family worshipped the Aton, and everyone else worshipped Akhenaton as a god. The fact that only the royal family had a trained and reasoned loyalty to the Aton and the fact that all of Pharaoh's adherents were forced to give their entire devotion to him as a god-king explains why the new religion collapsed after Akhenaton's death.<sup>11</sup> Lods says that the speculations of the priestly colleges of Thebes or Memphis concerning the unity of the divine, and the attempted reform of Amenhotep IV, spring either from pantheism or from monarchical polytheism, and hence are of an entirely different character from the moral monotheism of the Israelites.<sup>12</sup>

In all true monotheism universalism is involved; there is little evidence that Akhenaton was concerned with the world that lay beyond his empire. His religious reform is believed by some to have had political, rather than a genuinely spiritual basis. Monotheism, to be monotheism, must transcend national limitations; it must be supranational and universal.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, even though we allow that Akhenaton was a monotheist, it does not follow that Moses was influenced by his ideas. For if Moses took an important step on the road to monotheism, he took it along an entirely different road from that of Akhenaton, whose religion fell far short of the significant heights reached by Moses.<sup>14</sup>

The religious achievement of Moses was not something that grew naturally out of his environment or circumstances, and the ideas that he mediated to Israel were not derived from Egypt or from any other people. Certainly there were not ideas that were floating around in that age.<sup>15</sup> "The real source of Hebrew monotheism," says Wardle, "we should probably find in the religious experience of Moses which underlies the tradition of Exodus 3."<sup>16</sup> Here we read that Yahweh sent Moses into Egypt to a

people that did not worship God by the name Yahweh, to announce that He had chosen Israel and would redeem them from their bondage. The religion of Moses is personal and ethical monotheism by Divine revelation to Moses, not in accordance with the Atonism that is artificial nature worship.

On the other hand, the religion of Moses might have tried to banish the possible influence of Egyptian religion from its understanding of God and have been anti-Egyptian because of the historical background of the Exodus from Egypt.

#### THE THEORY OF A MIDIANITE-KENITE ORIGIN

Scholars have frequently speculated on the possible origins of the Yahweh cult, for there is some evidence to indicate that it seemed not to be original with Moses and the Hebrew people. One of the most striking facts in the Exodus narrative of early Yahweh is that Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law (Ex. 18:10), was apparently already an official in the Yahweh cult before Moses came along. Jethro could then have instructed Moses in the ways of Yahweh religion, or perhaps, had so instructed him even before the theophany of the burning bush on Mount Horeb.

This Midianite theory is also called the Kenite<sup>17</sup> theory, since Jethro was from the Kenite clan of the Midianites. It has long been a common view that Yahweh was the God of the Kenites before He became the God of Israel.<sup>18</sup>

According to this theory, Yahweh was originally the tribal god of the Kenites and was entirely unknown to the Hebrews until he was introduced to them by Moses, who first learned of him through his father-in-law, Jethro, a Kenite. Moses' call came to him in the land of Midian,

where he had married into a priestly family. It was there that the divine name was revealed to him. Following the Exodus from Egypt, Moses led his people to the vicinity of Kadesh, in the Negeb region south of Canaan proper. There they were met by Jethro, to whom Moses "did obeisance" (Exodus 18:7) and there Jethro presided at a ceremony of burnt offering and sacrifices to God, with Aaron, the prototype of Israelite priesthood, and the elders of Israel participating in the sacred meal (Exodus 18:12).

Further, there also Jethro suggested a most important innovation in the judicial organization of the people (Exodus 18:13-26). Jethro gave to Moses instructions and advice on the administration of justice. Moses had been trying to settle all the disputes and answer all the questions brought to him by the people, which had become an almost intolerable burden. Jethro counseled Moses to choose able men to serve as rulers and judges over divisions of the people by thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, with Moses handling only the weightiest problems. This system proved to be effective and the tradition clearly attributes it to Jethro, rather than to Moses.<sup>19</sup> All of these factors suggest that Jethro was acting not merely as the father-in-law of Moses, but as the priest.<sup>20</sup>

Additional support for this Midianite theory of the origins of Yahwism comes from Numbers 10:29 ff. Hobab (Jethro) was entreated by Moses to accompany the Israelites on their journey as a guide and source of blessing to them. The tradition of the seventy elders who were selected to assist Moses and to hear some of his burdens is also associated with this time<sup>21</sup> (Num. 11:16-17, 24-25).

That the Kenites were Yahweh worshippers is suggested by other passages. Cain is the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites,<sup>22</sup> and he is said to have borne the mark of Yahweh upon him (Genesis 4:15). Moreover

in the days of Jehu's revolution, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, was a devotee of Yahweh (II Kings 10:15 ff),<sup>23</sup> and we learn from the book of Chronicles, itself confessedly late, that the Rechabites were of Kenite stock.<sup>24</sup>

It is entirely possible, then that significant ideas and practices in Moses' religion were taken over from the Midianites. Sacrifice, the sacred lot, the Ark of the covenant, a rudimentary judicial system, and perhaps some laws were part of the heritage received by Israel from the land of Midian. Of greatest significance is the fact that Israel seems to have been introduced first to the God Yahweh, who was to become her national protector and benefactor, through Moses' experience with Midian.<sup>25</sup> This is the Kenite-Midianite theory.

#### THE REVELATION TO MOSES AS AN ABSOLUTE ORIGIN

The theory of a Midianite-Kenite origin of Yahweh has been rejected by a number of scholars.<sup>26</sup>

In Exodus 18:12 there is an account of a sacrificial meal arranged by Jethro: "And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law offered a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God."

This is interpreted by the exponents of the Kenite hypothesis as the rite whereby the Hebrews were initiated into the new Yahweh cult by the Kenite priest, Jethro. But according to Meek,<sup>27</sup> this is not so certain. It is true that Jethro is called the priest of Midian (Ex. 18:1; Cf. also 2:16, 3:1), but he is not explicitly represented as performing priestly function, because verse 12 says simply that "he offered a burnt offering and sacrifices for God," and the word for "God" is here the

general term  $\square' \eta \lambda \kappa$  (ʿēlōhīm) and not the specific name Yahweh. The verse does indicate, however, that Jethro arranged a sacrifice for Yahweh, in which "Aaron and all the elders of Israel," participated, and that would suggest that Jethro was joining the Hebrews in recognizing the might of Yahweh.<sup>28</sup>

Whether Reuel (Ex. 2:18; Num. 10:29) is regarded as a variant or a clan name of Jethro or as the name of his father, it would indicate that Jethro was originally a worshipper of the god El, and in Exodus 18 he recognized for the first time,<sup>29</sup> the god Yahweh; Cf. vv. 8-11. Jethro, upon being told by Moses what Yahweh had done for his people exclaims,

Blessed be Yahweh, who delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and the power of the Pharaoh, who delivered the people from under the power of the Egyptians! Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all other gods, in that his power has prevailed over them.

If Jethro had been a priest of Yahweh and the one who initiated the Hebrews into his cult, it would surely have been on that ground that Moses would have invited him to join them on their journey. On the contrary, he invited him solely on the ground that he knew the desert and its camping places, and so would prove an efficient guide (Numbers 10:29-32).<sup>30</sup>

On the one hand, according to Kaufmann's note<sup>31</sup> on the theory of a Kenite-Midianite origin, biblical (and Jewish) tradition distinguishes two sharply separate territorial realms of sanctity: one prophetic only, the other cultic and prophetic. The fixed boundary between the two is Beersheba. Northward from Beersheba extends the realm of the cult and prophecy, southward to Sinai, the realm of prophecy (revelation) only. There YHWH revealed himself to Israel and from there he appeared, but he had no cult sites in this area. This distinction begins with the Patri-

archal narratives. At the sites of later Israelite sanctuaries throughout Palestine the Patriarchs built altars and erected pillars, but no Patriarch worshipped God anywhere south of Beersheba. The narrative tells of the descent of Abraham and Jacob to Egypt, yet they did not even stop at Kadesh or Sinai, nor build altars there. Later tradition is the same. Throughout the Bible, the southern district is an area of revelation, but no Israelite ever went south to visit any ancient cult site. In general, the desert generation also is not regarded by the tradition as practicing a cult at sacred sites at all.<sup>32</sup>

This consistent dichotomy of realms which runs through all of biblical tradition indicates two things: that the sanctity of the desert had no pre-Mosaic roots in Israel, and that this sanctity is limited to the domain of revelation and prophecy. This means that the religious movement that centered about Moses had no earlier cultic roots, and that it was not connected with any local sanctity, or linked with the cult of some god or other that was worshipped in the area of Moses' work.<sup>33</sup>

The stories about Moses attest to this also. Moses performed no cultic rite at the spot where God revealed himself to him; that is, the legend knows nothing of any cultic holiness of the revelation-site. Moses asked Pharaoh to let Israel go to worship God in the desert, not at some fixed site, but at an indefinite place "three days journey from Egypt." He rejected Pharaoh's suggestion to worship in Egypt, not because Israel needed to sacrifice at a certain spot, nor even because Egypt was unholy ground, but because the fear of "sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians in their sight." None of the altars built during the Wandering were permanent cult sites.<sup>34</sup>

All this indicates that the stories about Moses incorporate no

cult-legends in the proper sense of the term: no legends that told of some ancient, local sanctity, no primarily etiological legends. For none of these stories are intended to account for a place of worship. Whatever local sanctity they knew of has its basis in revelation. None of these stories, then, is grounded in the cult of any local deity, neither of a volcano or of a bush. The absence of a cultic-etiological element in them shows that the Mosaic revelation is the source of the sanctity of the desert in Israel; this sanctity has no roots in pre-Mosaic times.<sup>35</sup>

The theory of a Midianite-Kenite origin of God is related to another making Kadesh the center of the Kenite god, and the Levites the original priests of this god at Kadesh. Has this view any real grounds?<sup>36</sup>

The biblical data on the Kenites show that a Midianite tribe, who traced their line to Moses' father-in-law, joined Israel and its God. But nothing justifies the theory that Israel learned their religion from them. Jethro was a priest "of Midian" not of YHWH. If he and the Midianites really were worshippers of YHWH, there is no reason why the biblical tradition should have obscured the fact. Biblical legends tell as much concerning Adam, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Balaam, Job and his companions, and Melchizedek. Yet the legend of Exodus 3 seems to indicate just the contrary. Moses came unwittingly with his sheep to the "mountain of God;" he did not know it was holy ground. He had to ask the name of the deity who revealed himself there to him. None of these things were told to him by Jethro. Jethro's confession of the greatness of Israel's God was no more than the biblical stories tell of several other pagans.<sup>37</sup> While other pagans are explicitly said to have offered sacrifices to Israel's God, the text of Exodus 18 does not even say that much expressly about Jethro. The Bible does not hide Moses' obligation to Jethro with regard

to judicial procedure; why should it have hidden other of his teachings to Moses if there were any? If the narrative does not explicitly refer Moses' knowledge of YHWH to Jethro, it can only be that it regards the revelation to Moses as an absolute beginning.<sup>38</sup>

So what is clear is that the deliverance from Egypt left its stamp on Israelite religion, and that the origin of Yahwism is from the biblical record itself which points to the revelation of Yahweh to Moses with the Sinai-Horeb events. Therefore we must regard the revelation to Moses as an absolute origin of Moses' Yahwism.

Since in the Old Testament, the name is not merely a convenient label, but an effective expression of the nature of the person named, the revelation of a new name of God represents a new beginning in religion. Accordingly, Exodus 3:13 f. and 6:2 f. are saying that such a new beginning was brought about in the faith of Israel through the work of Moses.<sup>39</sup>



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>J. Stanley Chesnut, The Old Testament Understanding of God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 46.
- <sup>2</sup>George W. Anderson, The History and Religion of Israel (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 46.
- <sup>3</sup>John N. Schofield, The Religious Background of the Bible (Naperville, Il.: Allenson Alec R., Inc., 1944), p. 78.
- <sup>4</sup>Cyris Hee S. Moon, The Historical Background of the Old Testament (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1973), pp. 108-111.
- <sup>5</sup>Charles F. Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 27.
- <sup>6</sup>William F. Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 163.
- <sup>7</sup>Chesnut, op. cit. p. 48.
- <sup>8</sup>Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 27.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid. p. 78.
- <sup>10</sup>S. A. B. Mercer, "The Religion of Akhenaton", Journal of the Society for Oriental Research 10 (1926), 14ff.; H.H. Rowley, From Moses to Qumran (New York: Association Press, 1963), p. 47.
- <sup>11</sup>John A. Wilson, The Burden of Egypt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 223.
- <sup>12</sup>Adolphe Lods, Israel from its Beginnings to the Middle of the Eighth Century, trans. S. H. Hooke (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1932), p. 319.
- <sup>13</sup>Theophile J. Meek, "Monotheism and the Religion of Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature 61 (1942) 36ff.
- <sup>14</sup>Rowley, op. cit. pp. 47-48.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid. Cf. Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, Trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1961) Vol. I.
- <sup>16</sup>W. L. Wardle's reference, quoted in Rowley, Ibid. p. 48.
- <sup>17</sup>In Judges 1:1b it is stated that he was a Kenite: The Kenites, who may have had association with the Midianites, appear elsewhere as zealous for Yahweh and friendly to Israel (Judges 4:11, 17ff; I Sam. 15:6).

<sup>18</sup>This theory is discussed fully in H. H. Rowley, From Moses to Qumran (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963), pp. 35-66. For a criticism of the theory see T. J. Meek, Hebrew Origins (New York: Harper & Row, Pub. 1960), pp. 94ff; also Yehezkel Kaufman, The Religion of Israel, trans. Moshe Greenburg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 242-244. Scholars who adopt this view are B. Stade, Geschichte des Volkes Israel, I, 1887, pp. 130f., and Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments, I, 1905, pp. 42f.; T.K. Cheyne, Encyclopaedia Biblica III, 1902, col. 3208; K. Budde, Religion of Israel to the Exile, 1899, pp. 17ff.; H. Gressmann, Mose und Seine Zeit, 1913, pp. 434 ff., 447 ff.; H.P. Smith, The Religion of Israel, 1914, pp. 50f.; Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, 2nd ed. pp. 147 ff.; B. D. Eerdmans, The Religion of Israel, 1947, pp. 14ff.; E.A. Leslie, Old Testament Religion, 1947, pp. 80, 83f.; L. Koehler, Old Testament Theology, English trans. by A. S. Todd, 1957, pp. 45f.; G. Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, English trans. by D. M. G. Stalker, 1962, pp. 9f., etc.

<sup>19</sup>Chesnut, op. cit. p. 47.

<sup>20</sup>Rowley, op. cit. p. 52; Cf. G. B. Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1971) p. 208.

<sup>21</sup>Chesnut, loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Judges 4:11, where the Kenites are called Cain in the Hebrew, just as the Israelites are often called Israel.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Jeremiah 35.

<sup>24</sup>I Chronicles 2:55. On the Kenites in the geneological lists of the Chronicler, Cf. H. H. Rowley, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>25</sup>Chesnut, op. cit. p. 48.

<sup>26</sup>So by Meek, op. cit. pp. 86-99.; A.R. Gordon, The Early Traditions of Genesis, 1907, pp. 106 ff; E. Konig, Geschichte der Alttestamentlichen Religion, 1912, pp. 162ff.; R. Kittel, Geschichte des Volkes Israel I, 6th ed., p. 392n; P. Volz, Mose und Seine Werk, 2nd ed., M. Buber, Moses, 1947, pp. 94ff.; F. V. Winnett, The Mosaic Tradition, 1949, p. 69; O. Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments, pp. 76f.; (Cf. H. H. Rowley, op. cit. p. 51).

<sup>27</sup>Meek, op. cit. pp. 98f. It is opposed, e.g. by A. R. Gordon, *Ibid.* pp. 108f.; W. J. Pythian-Adams, *ibid.* p. 73; F. V. Winnett, *ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>28</sup>Meek, *ibid.* pp. 94-95.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.* p. 95.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>Kaufmann, op. cit., pp. 242-244.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. pp. 242-243.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. p. 243.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>II Kings 5:15-17; Jonah 1:16; Daniel 2:47, 3:28-33; Cf.  
Exodus 9:20, 14:25.

<sup>38</sup>Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>39</sup>Anderson, op. cit. p. 32.

## Chapter 5

### THE MEANING OF THE NAME YAHWEH

The name of the God of Israel has been the subject of study and inquiry over more than two thousand years. In addition to the speculations of a great variety of sages, expositors and theologians, concern over the meaning of the divine name, concern both explicit and implicit, may be found in the Bible itself. As might be expected, however, in antiquity and the Middle Ages, and to a considerable extent down to the present day, interest in the name has, as a rule, been enhanced by the desire to discover its subjective conception rather than its objective designation, that is, to discover its religious or theological conveyance to the worshippers and protagonists of the God of Israel as manifested in the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

Only in modern times has a purely philological inquiry into the problem of the name been made among some scholars--an objective and historical inquiry concerning its presumable pronunciation, its morphologic pattern, its etymologic derivation, and its primary connotation.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, what is the meaning of the name Yahweh? Does the name Yahweh, which Israel calls upon, reveal something of the nature of this God? To answer these questions, we must distinguish two directions of inquiry. (1) Quite apart from the statements made by the Old Testament texts themselves, we can inquire whether philological investigation can give us any information about the original meaning of "Yahweh." (2) We can ask whether the Old Testament context itself says anything about the meaning of the name.



Old Testament it is found in only two places as יהוה, on the Moabite Stone and the Ostraca from Lachish;<sup>8</sup> elsewhere it appears once in an Aramaic papyrus from Elephantine of 447 B. C. as יהוה and on an inscribed pot from Megiddo as יה. Here we have a phenomenon that is unique in the Semitic world, a god name appearing in a variety of forms and never once in its full form in personal names. That raises immediately the questions of why this should be so and which of the forms is the earliest. Without going into an elaborate discussion of the problem, the true solution seems to be that יה (Yah) and יהו (Yahu) are early forms, and יהוה (Yahweh) a later and perhaps artificial form.<sup>9</sup> Driver claimed that he could interpret the form "Yah" as a shout of ecstatic excitement, which then turned into a divine name and, in association with the meaning "he-who-is" or "he-who-calls-into-being."<sup>10</sup> It seems, however, that these views have largely failed. That is, it has not resulted in any agreement on the antecedent location or nature of the God of the Israelites.<sup>11</sup>

While this search continues, there is a drift today toward the view that Yah and Yahu are forms derived from Yahweh.<sup>12</sup> Albright makes Yahweh a causative imperfect, the original form of which Yahu is the jussive form, further abbreviated to Yah in the Postexilic period.<sup>13</sup>

Once the priority of Yahweh over Yah and Yahu is granted, the possibilities are sharply limited. Three may be cited. First, in Hebrew the root יהוה has the meaning of "to be" or "to become." But this is a derived meaning. The primary meanings of this ancient Semitic root were "to fall" or "to blow." The name Yahweh should probably be understood in terms of the ancient meanings of this verb from which it is derived. Yahweh is "the falling one" or causatively, "the one who causes (lightning)

to fall;" or he is "the blower" or causatively, "the one who causes (wind) to blow." The best argument in favor of this view is a negative one: that the interpretations resting on the later Hebrew meaning of the root  $\text{הוה}$  seem too abstract, while this one is more material and dynamic.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, there is the view that Yahweh must be the causative form of the Hebrew verb  $\text{הוה}$  (hwh) as equivalent to  $\text{היה}$  (hyh), "he is" or "he becomes" or "he shows himself efficacious."<sup>15</sup> According to Albright, Yahweh is the creator of all. Only one yields any suitable sense: "He causes to be."<sup>16</sup> But Zimmerli says on the second view of  $\text{הוה}$  or  $\text{היה}$  that it is unlikely that we are dealing with a noun form having the meaning "being" (Wesen).<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, there is the view that Yahweh is not causative. Yahweh is made to mean "being," "he who is or will be,"  $\text{הוה}$   $\text{והיה}$  (LXX); "the eternal" (Moffatt).<sup>18</sup>

The origin of the form  $\text{הוה}$ , or at any rate the Hebrew explanation of it, is to be found in Exodus 3:13 ff.

#### THE ACTUAL STATEMENTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ITSELF

As to the meaning of Yahweh, etymological speculation is rather fruitless. It is the biblical definition found in Exodus 3:14 and in the surrounding context that must be determinative.<sup>19</sup> When Moses asked the name of the God who was sending him to Israel, "What is his name? What shall I say to them?" he was given, according to Exodus 3:14, the answer,  $\text{אני הוה}$  (I am that I am) . . . and so you shall say to the Israelites, '  $\text{אני הוה}$  (I am) has sent me to you.' " The key expression in verse 14 is "I am who I am" (Heb.  $\text{ehyeh asher ehyeh}$ ).

Here the Yahweh is unequivocally interpreted on the basis of the verb  $\text{הָיָה}$  hyh (=  $\text{הָיָה}$ ).<sup>20</sup> The verb  $\text{הָיָה}$ , as pointed in the Masoretic Text, is considered a Qal imperfect first person singular of the root  $\text{הָיָה}$  hyh(hwh - "to be, become").<sup>21</sup> This passage, therefore, has provided the basis for most attempts to interpret the name in a way consonant with the faith of the Old Testament. This clause is extremely important because the verb forms reveal the essential idea of the Tetragrammaton YHWH commonly translated "Jehovah" in English versions. The Hebrew word YHWH is, in fact, the third person form of the root  $\text{הָיָה}$  (hwh). If the simple Qal sense is maintained it carries the fundamental idea of the self-existence of God, and simply means "I am the One who is." This has long been the view of most conservative scholars.<sup>22</sup> This interpretation is supported by the rendering of the Septuagint which reads  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\iota\ \acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\omega}\nu$  (I am the One who is), transforming the verbal expression into a nominal participle and, following Greek example, finding an ontological concept of being in Exodus 3:14. According to Zimmerli, it was probably sensed, however, how inappropriate this concept was within the framework of Old Testament thought. Scholars have therefore gone on to ask whether  $\text{הָיָה}$  might not be better taken to mean "be efficacious (Ratschow), "be here, be present" (Uriezen), "be with someone" (Preuß).<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, there is a large group of scholars who regard the stem of the Tetragrammaton YHWH as being the Hiphil rather than the Qal. This, of course, gives to the name a causative sense and would be translated as "He who causes to be" rather than "He who is." This viewpoint is perhaps best expressed by David N. Freedman who considers the whole subject to revolve around four basic points:

- (1) That the Tetragrammaton was pronounced Yahweh;
- (2) That it is a verb derived from the root Hwy hwh, which, in



accordance with recognized linguistic laws appears in biblical Hebrew as *hyh*; (3) That it is a Hiphil imperfect third masculine singular form of the verb; and (4) That it is to be translated, "He causes to be, brings into existence; He brings to pass, He creates."<sup>24</sup>

From the standpoint of grammatical possibility alone, it is entirely possible that this form could be a Hiphil; however, on the basis of the explanation given in Exodus 3:14 along with the Septuagint reading and the New Testament interpretation using the same Greek form (Cf. Matt. 22:32; John 8:58), the simple Qal meaning "to be" is preferable. The usual objection to this approach is that such a concept of self-being or self-existence was too advanced for the "primitive theological mentality" of the Israelites during that period.<sup>25</sup>

The name Yahweh here is not meant to be understood on the basis of the isolated verb *hyh*, but rather on the basis of the figure of speech "I am who I am" (Ich bin, der ich bin). This form may be compared to the lordly statements of Exodus 33:19 *יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי יִתְחַלֵּץ*: I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy; I Samuel 23:13 *יִתְחַלֵּץ*: they will go wherever they are able to go; II Samuel 15:20 *אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ עַל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ*: I go I know not where; Ezekiel 12:25 *כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲדַבֵּר אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אֲדַבֵּר*: I, Yahweh, speak truly what I speak.<sup>26</sup> Especially S. R. Driver connects Exodus 3:14 with 33:19, where the *idem per idem* construction also occurs.<sup>27</sup>

I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name "The Lord" *יְהוָה*, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious (*אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי יִתְחַלֵּץ*), and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy (*וְהַצַּדִּיק אֲנִי יִתְחַלֵּץ*)" (Exodus 33:19).

This Exodus 33:19 is related to Exodus 3:14, not only in grammatical construction, but also with regard to the revelation of the name of



Near Eastern World.<sup>32</sup> Therefore Moses presented a new direction in Israelite understanding of God through his understanding of the meaning of the name of Yahweh. The meaning of the name Yahweh had taken shape to the Israelites by the Exodus events and his guidance in the wilderness and the covenant and commandment at Sinai, that is, through God's continuous activities in the history of Israel. Therefore, according to Anderson, we must recognize that Yahweh meant something radically different in the experience of the Hebrews who followed Moses out of Egypt. And granting that the name literally meant something that we can no longer recover with certainty, still it was filled with a new meaning in the time of the Exodus. The Israelites knew and worshipped God as the One who had heard their cry of oppression, who had graciously intervened on their behalf, who had led them toward a future full of promise. In itself, the word Yahweh can be only a name, either empty of meaning or symbolic of many meanings. But in Israel's experience, as interpreted by Moses, it had just one meaning: "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"<sup>33</sup> (Exodus 20:23). To worship Yahweh, therefore, was to remember that revealing event, to accept its demands, and to live in its promise.<sup>34</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Julian Obermann, "The Divine Name YHWH in the Light of Recent Discoveries," Journal of Biblical Literature, 68 (1949) 301ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Walther Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978) p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Cf. J. B. Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976). p. 147.

<sup>6</sup>Exodus 15:2, 17:16; II Kings 1:3; Psalm 48, 68:10, 104:35, 105:45, 106:1 for Yah. I Kings 17:1, 16, 18, 22, 24 for Yahu.

<sup>7</sup>Theophile J. Meek, Hebrew Origins (New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1960) pp. 106, 106.

<sup>8</sup>Edited by H. Torczyner, The Wellcome Archaeological Research to the Near East, I: Lachish I: The Lachish Letters (1938); E. L. Sukenik, Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, (1936) 35ff.; Palestine Exploration Quarterly (1937) 140ff.

<sup>9</sup>Meek, loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Driver reference, quoted in Zimmerli, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>11</sup>J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus" Interpreter's Bible (Nashville, N. Y.: Abingdon Press, 1952) pp. 837-838.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. p. 838.

<sup>13</sup>W. F. Albright, Journal of Biblical Literature, 43 (1924) 370ff.; 44 (1925) 158ff.; 47 (1948) 379ff.: From the Stone Age to Christianity (1940), P. 197.

<sup>14</sup>Rylaarsdam, loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup>Zimmerli, op. cit. p. 19.

<sup>16</sup>Albright, op. cit. p. 198.

<sup>17</sup>Zimmerli, loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup>Rylaarsdam, op. cit. p. 838.

<sup>19</sup>J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 147.

<sup>20</sup>Zimmerli, op. cit. p. 20.

<sup>21</sup>John J. Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 64. Cf. B. D. Napier, The Book of Exodus (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1971), p. 32.

<sup>22</sup>Davis, ibid. pp. 64-65. See discussion on this: C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), pp. 74-76.

<sup>23</sup>Zimmerli, op. cit. p. 21.

<sup>24</sup>David N. Freedman, "The Name of the God of Moses," Journal of Biblical Literature, 74 (1960) 152. The chief contemporary exponent of this view is W. F. Albright. See also Albright, "The Name Yahweh," Journal of Biblical Literature 43 (1924), 370-378; William R. Arnold, "The Divine Name in Exodus 3:14," Journal of Biblical Literature 24 (1905), 107-165; S. Mowinckel, "The Name of the God of Moses," Hebrew Union College Annual, 32 (1961), 212-223.

<sup>25</sup>Davis, op. cit. p. 65.

<sup>26</sup>Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 51. Cf. Meek, op. cit. p. 108.

<sup>27</sup>S. R. Driver, Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel (2nd. ed. Oxford, 1913), pp. 185-186. See also his commentary on The Book of Exodus in the Cambridge Bible (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 362-363, etc.

<sup>28</sup>Freedman, op. cit. pp. 153-154.

<sup>29</sup>Zimmerli, op. cit. p. 20.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Edward J. Young, "Call of Moses," The Westminster Theological Journal, 30 (1967), 20. Young says "Here the very essence of the name of God is expressed. is the Being one, He who is. God is the Being One, and therefore He is ever the same; inasmuch as He alone is eternal, forever the same."

<sup>32</sup>Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 69.

<sup>33</sup>Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1957) p. 58.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter 6

### THE CHARACTER OF YAHWEH

In the Old Testament the single concept which is overwhelmingly emphasized is the concept of God. Many terms are used to express this idea, depending on the preferences of the various biblical authors and the period of history and culture in which they lived. Such words as Yahweh, Elohim, El, El Shaddai, Yahweh Sebaoth, Eloah, Elyon and the like may be noted. This research paper is written about Moses' concept of God symbolized in the word "Yahweh."

One other question arises: Does Yahweh, which Moses introduced to the Israelites and on whom they call, reveal something of the character of this God?

In fact, the nature of the God whom Moses presumably introduced to Israel is not easy to describe. In a sense, this research paper can only suggest some of the more important ways of thinking about God in the time of Moses in this chapter. Therefore, these suggestions will be necessarily general and incomplete.

### THE LORDSHIP OF YAHWEH

Yahweh was preeminently seen as creator of the universe in the time of Moses. But in the traditions of the Mosaic period this aspect of Yahweh's character was not emphasized, a fact that seems to indicate the post-Mosaic origin of the identification of Yahweh with the deity of the ancient creation myths.<sup>1</sup> Even the later great "sermons" of Moses in Deuteronomy failed to speak of God as creator.<sup>2</sup> What was important to

the Mosaic faith was that which follows from God's creatorhood, namely, his Lordship over all things. Here God is the Supreme Ruler of men, nations, and history, especially the history of Israel.

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.  
(Exodus 19:4-6)<sup>3</sup>

The Lord proposed here, to make Israel his own possession. This did not involve the exclusion of other peoples, for the earth is Yahweh's. As Ruler, he commanded, and they were to obey. In the arena of history Yahweh manipulates whatever he will, although not in an absolute or deterministic manner, in order to bring about his desire for Israel. At the same time, Israel is free and may choose to disobey, as indeed she did repeatedly throughout her history.

The writer of Exodus holds that Yahweh created all things, selected Abraham and his descendants, and led his people out of Egypt in the time of Moses. This is, in brief, the Israelite credo concerning Yahweh. So as creator and king, Yahweh made himself and his Lordship known in the full extent of his universal dominion and revelation. That is, the story in Exodus implies that he is Lord of the forces of nature, since he inflicted the plagues on Egypt, brought the Israelites across the Red Sea, and provided for them in the wilderness. Further, he did what he willed in Egypt, and is therefore not confined in his activity to the holy mountain.

As the Lord of all cosmic forces, controlling sun, moon and storm, but not identified with any of them, his normal dwelling place is in heaven, from which he may come down, either to a lofty mountain like Sinai, to a shrine like the tabernacle or any spot which he may choose.

That is, Yahweh is not restricted to any special abode.

Here we may note that it is this aspect of God's nature, presented in the Old Testament which accounts for the strong emphasis upon God as a god of history. In a remarkable degree the Old Testament is conscious of history, although there is no fully developed and consciously matured philosophy of history within its pages. Its interest in history is simply its interest in God as a powerful, living force in the historical process and the Supreme Ruler of history, especially the history of Israel. History, as organized human experience, derives its meaning and organization for the Hebrew writers from the purpose of the living God, who controls the process according to his will and nature.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE POWER OF YAHWEH

In Exodus and elsewhere Yahweh was associated with the forces of nature but was not identified with them. The forces of nature only presented Yahweh's power and he used them as means of his revelation. Therefore, he is represented by the thunderstorm, with its wind, fire (lightning), rain and hail, and perhaps even by the earthquake.

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. (Exodus 19:16)

While God could have used such natural forces to reveal his presence, the record seems to indicate something more unusual than this.<sup>5</sup> The people were impressed, to the point of trembling, that God was truly meeting with them.

The power of Yahweh was demonstrated in the plagues which Moses wrought in Egypt and in the act of Israel's deliverance. The plagues which befell Egypt are described by various terms: wonders (Exodus 3:20,



4:21, 7:3-7, signs (Exodus 7:3), judgments (Exodus 6:6, 7:4), and three Hebrew words translated as plague or plagues, all three carrying the picture of a stroke or blow which would wound or kill (Exodus 9:14, 11:1, 12:13). They were to prove the identity of the God of Israel as Yahweh.<sup>6</sup> They manifested Yahweh as the God power. In the drama of Israel's deliverance, Yahweh and Pharaoh, as chief protagonists, prepared for the real contest of strength to come. Obsessed by fear (Exodus 5:15-21), Pharaoh discarded all reasonableness in pursuing his policy of oppression and extermination designed to keep Israel in his power. Yahweh prepared Moses with peculiar natural gifts for Israel's deliverance. Yahweh revealed his decisive power through Moses. In the account of the plagues Yahweh took the initiative and, with dramatic suspense, ever more intensely displayed his might and pressed his advantage. Yahweh made good his victory.

God's power also provided sustenance for Israel during its years in the wilderness. In the narratives of the Book of Exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea is the climactic moment, through Yahweh's power, in a series of events springing from the last plague, the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians and then the narratives emphasized in two ways the theme of God's guidance in the wilderness, a motif that recurs throughout the Old Testament. First, daily sustenance was providentially provided. Here, again we encounter the miracle of the manna and the quail.<sup>7</sup> These were signs of Yahweh's daily guidance. In the second place, divine guidance was made known in the Hebrews' fierce struggle for survival against hostile desert tribes.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the writer of Exodus 6:3 identifies Yahweh with the God of the Patriarchs who was known as "God Almighty."

Therefore Yahweh was a God who wrought mighty deeds in history. The awareness of the divine activity persisted through later developments of Israel's faith as the Exodus events were recalled.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE HOLINESS OF YAHWEH

Yahweh consistently presented himself to Israel as a holy God, upon whose person mortal man could not look and live (Exodus 33:20). The story of Moses' encounter with "the God of the Fathers" and of the mighty struggle that this strange meeting precipitated within him is one of the masterpieces of the Old Testament (Exodus 3 and 4). Moses' vision awakened the realization that he was truly standing on holy ground, for at that mountain rendezvous he was met by God. Even Moses covered his face in God's presence (Exodus 3:6).<sup>10</sup>

Yahweh is holy<sup>11</sup> (קדוש: "holy" "sacred" "separate"), in the sense of the "numinous" or awesome aspect of deity, and as such is to be feared, with the meaning both of terror and of reverence. The Old Testament used the terms "holy" and "holiness" referring first and foremost to the exalted majesty of Yahweh, to his otherness.<sup>12</sup>

The word is applied, however, also to men and things, not describing any quality in them, but indicating their relationship to deity. "Holy" said of men and things originally means merely belonging to deity, sacred.<sup>13</sup> Yahweh is "the Holy One" and places, times, things and people are holy only because of their relationship to him. Holiness is not an abstract attribute of a remote deity. The holy God is the living, active God, who makes his presence known in the life of men.<sup>14</sup>

When the pattern of the God idea emerged more distinctly in Israel, and its peculiar features became increasingly apparent, the idea

of holiness assumed greater importance, for it served to call attention to what was exclusively divine. God was holy and the source of all holiness, because God was himself and not man. The "godness" of God is high-lighted by the word "holy" when it is used in connection with him. When this term is used to describe God, any thought of a man-created God is impossible.<sup>15</sup>

The glory and transcendent majesty of God are brought out by the writer of the ancient poem celebrating the defeat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. Here God magnificently displayed his power so that the poet was moved to cry:

Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods?  
Who is like thee, majestic in holiness,  
terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

Thou didst stretch out thy right hand,  
the earth swallowed them.

Thou has led in thy steadfast love  
the people whom thou hast redeemed,  
thou hast guided them by thy strength  
to thy holy abode. (Exodus 15:11-13).

In the phrase "majestic in holiness," the poet compares Yahweh with the other gods. He is in a class apart, unapproachable: his freedom and power, rather than his ethical character determine this distinction.<sup>16</sup> Yahweh's holiness is both glorious and supremely powerful.

The "attribute" of holiness simply refers to that mystery in the Divine being which distinguishes him as God. It is possessed by creatures and objects only in a derived sense, when these are separated by God himself for a special function. Of all the Divine "attributes" holiness comes the nearest to describing God's being rather than his activity. Yet it is no static, definable "quality" like the Greek truth, beauty and goodness, for it is that indefinable mystery in God which distinguishes

him from all that he has created; and its presence in the world is the sign of his active direction of its affairs.<sup>17</sup>

As a holy God, Yahweh demanded holiness of those who worshipped him: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6).

#### THE JEALOUSY OF YAHWEH

Such a deity, though Creator and Lord, could never have been understood as completely transcendent or wholly removed from the world of human experience, even though, as we have seen, his abode was thought to be in the heavens. God came down from his abode and made himself known in personal relations with man, not in some abstract idea of Person or Power or Being. To the Israelites, he was known more for what he did than for what he was.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, verbs rather than abstract nouns, are most often used in the Old Testament in reference to God. He loves, forgives, judges, saves, redeems and so on.

Furthermore, in anthropopathic language, he is a jealous God, as the Second Commandment warns us in connection with the prohibition of image making.<sup>19</sup>

You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:5; Deut. 5:9).

In the Old Testament Yahweh's zeal (jealous God:  $\text{קִיָּן}$   $\text{לֵב}$ ) is very closely related to his holiness (Joshua 24:19). He will not tolerate reverence due to him being ascribed to another, but his zeal, as his holiness, burns like a devouring fire. Moreover, the execution of his zeal is further described in the set terminology of the ban.<sup>20</sup>

The "jealousy" of the God of Israel is mentioned as the reason for

the demand of strict exclusiveness in divine worship; God is spoken of in a human way which is not unusual in other places in the Old Testament.<sup>21</sup> According to J. Barton Payne,<sup>22</sup> God's zeal in executing both punishment and vindication is described as his  $\text{קנא}$ , his "jealousy" (Exodus 20:5). God will brook no infringement of his ethical sovereignty. Thus his  $\text{קנא}$  of punishment is illustrated by the above reference to Commandment II of the Decalogue: God will tolerate no rivalry, in this case, from idols. His  $\text{קנא}$  of vindication is first explicitly enunciated by Joel in the eighth century: "Then was Yahweh jealous for his land and had pity on his people" (Joel 2:18, Cf. Zech. 1:14).<sup>23</sup>

The God of the covenant relationship with Israel simply could not tolerate any action that would threaten the singularity of that covenant. This idea of God's concern for his peoples' loyalty is succinctly stated in Exodus 34:14.<sup>24</sup> "For you will worship no other god, for the Lord whose name is jealous, is a jealous God."

This expression should not be taken simply in the modern sense. It indicates Yahweh's active concern or zeal for his cause, and can denote negatively his intolerance of disloyalty and disobedience and positively his active concern for his people. The warning is grounded in the nature of God who is a jealous god and will not tolerate the worship of another.

#### THE JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF YAHWEH

During the Mosaic period, there occurred the initial revelation of two fundamental ethical qualities of God:<sup>25</sup>  $\text{קדוש}$  (Cf. Exodus 15:26) and  $\text{צדק}$  (Cf. Exodus 9:27).  $\text{קדוש}$ , "uprightness," is that which "stands up" in conformity to God's standards. Conceivably such  $\text{קדוש}$  might not necessarily be ethically right; but simply, what "pleased" God.

In God,  $\aleph$  is equated with justice and perfection (Deut. 32:4: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he); and, therefore, as Abraham implied without using the term  $\aleph$ , the Judge of all the earth must do right (Genesis 18:25).

$\aleph$  is similar to  $\aleph$ , as is witnessed by the identical usage of the two nouns in Deut. 9:5 (Cf. 32:4 which applies their adjectival forms to God). But the concept of  $\aleph$  exhibits an extensive development in the Old Testament.<sup>26</sup>

The root meaning of  $\aleph$  appears to be "straightness"<sup>27</sup> in a physical sense; though there is some uncertainty at this point. This physical meaning comes before the time of the Old Testament. The root of  $\aleph$  was first applied to God in the Mosaic age (Deut. 32:4). It indicates divine "straightness." That is, since there can be no standard more absolute than his own, God's  $\aleph$  means simply his acting in accordance with his own will.<sup>28</sup>

Yahweh is consistently presented as a God who is just in his ways, judging the Egyptians when they resist his will, but also judging disobedient and rebellious Israel.<sup>29</sup> From the Mosaic period onward, God's "righteousness" proceeds from abstract moral evaluation to include also the punishment of moral infraction. Thus, after experiencing God's plague of hail, Pharaoh states, "Yahweh is  $\aleph$ , and I and my people are wicked" (Exodus 9:27). So one other aspect of God's character that the Ten Commandments reveal is that of his justice and righteousness. Although the commandments are addressed by God to man, they tell us something of the nature of God also. Since Yahweh acted justly and righteously in his dealings with man, man is required to live by these virtues also. Everywhere in the Mosaic traditions Yahweh is found to be faithful, just

and righteous.

In other words, he is an ethical Deity whose standards of behavior are the highest that Israel could conceive within the framework of her time and place.<sup>30</sup> God's righteousness is revealed first of all in history, in the government of the world, and in his providential guidance of Israel, and is, therefore, especially developed by the Psalmists and prophets.

#### THE GRACIOUSNESS OF YAHWEH

In the events of the Exodus Israel knew Yahweh as a Savior God who had compassion on the afflicted slaves. The nearest the Bible comes to an abstract presentation of the nature of God, by means of his "attributes" is an old liturgical confession embedded in Exodus 34:6-7 and quoted in part in many other passages.<sup>31</sup>

Yahweh, Yahweh, a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abundant in  $\text{רַחֲמִים}$  [goodness, kindness, love - gracious loyalty to the covenanted promises]<sup>32</sup> and fidelity, keeping  $\text{רַחֲמִים}$  for thousands, forgiving iniquity and rebellion and sin, though by no means acquitting (the guilty), visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the childrens' children unto the third, even the fourth (generation).

The emphasis in this confession is upon the gracious, loyal and forgiving nature of God, an emphasis which lies at the center of the Bible kerygma. Yet this divine grace is a two-edged sword which appears in the human scene as a power working both for salvation and for judgment that salvation may be accomplished.<sup>33</sup> As Nygren has explained: "Yahweh was the God of love because He was the God of the covenant; the establishment of the covenant (testament) and the giving of the law had been the supreme expression of his love."<sup>34</sup>

A much more common and religiously valuable word for love in the Hebrew Bible is  $\text{רַחֲמִים}$ , as stated above, often translated "lovingkindness." "Condescending love" or "gracious favor" might better express what

the word means, however. It comes close to Paul's use of charis (grace) in the New Testament. The etymological origin of the word  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  established "keenness, eagerness" as the core of the meaning of the word, but in Hebrew the main factor is that it is used definitely in connection with the idea of covenant. The root means "eagerness, steadfastness" and then "mercy, loving-kindness," but all within the covenant.<sup>35</sup> According to Snaith, unless this close and inalienable connection with the idea of the covenant is realized, the true meaning of  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  can never be understood.<sup>36</sup> This applies to both uses, whether of God or of man. It applies to the Old Testament  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  of God, his covenant-love for Israel. It applies also to the New Testament development in charis and in the grace of Protestant theology.

The original use of the Hebrew  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  is to denote that attitude of loyalty and faithfulness which both parties to a covenant should observe towards each other. This includes the two essential elements of love and loyalty. Therefore,  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  is, primarily, determined faithfulness to a covenant. There are forty-three cases where the noun  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  is linked by means of the copula with another noun. Such a construction can be used only when the two nouns thus joined together are almost synonymous, or have some more than ordinary bond between them. Of these forty-three instances, twenty-three are  $\text{חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה}$  and  $\text{חֶסֶד וְאֱמוּנָה}$  (fidelity, firmness, truth),<sup>37</sup> derived from the root  $\text{אָמַן}$  (confirm, support, which in derived forms means "be trustworthy, have faith in, believe."<sup>38</sup>

#### THE GOD OF COVENANT AND LAW

Thus far in this survey of the understanding of God in Moses' time the unasked and unanswered question has been: Why did God choose



the Israelites in particular as his special people? We have seen that, even though Yahweh was believed to be identical with the God of the Fathers,<sup>39</sup> a radically new era in Hebrew religion began with the call of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt.<sup>40</sup>

According to the Exodus account, after the final blow of the tenth plague on Egypt, Pharaoh decided to let the Israelites go, and then there were their hasty departure, the deliverance at the Red Sea and the journey to the Mount of God, where the covenant was made and the law given. In the Exodus account of the experience at Sinai, the Mount of God, the central event is the making of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel. But the idea of a unilateral or suzerainty covenant between God and a particular people, unlike that of a bilateral or parity covenant between two men or two nations, presupposes God's initiative in making the agreement, that is to say, God's election of the people with whom he would covenant.<sup>41</sup> Israel was called to be "a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6) which means that Israel belonged to Yahweh. The confederacy of Israelite community had a unity derived from their common relationship to Yahweh. They owed their unity to what Yahweh had done for them. In some parts of the Old Testament this is expressed by saying that Yahweh chose Israel; they were in that sense the elect people, owing their existence not to their own achievements but to the action and purpose of Yahweh. God chose Israel; Israel did not choose God. This relationship was expressed in a covenant. The covenant idea is of fundamental importance in Old Testament religion and the entire story of the Hexateuch depends upon this fundamental belief, which became also a basic tenet of the Israelite credo. This tenet is assumed without explicit statement in Exodus, where the identification of Yahweh's acts in Moses' time with the acts of God in earlier

times is a dominant theme. But in Deuteronomy, even though the original traditions have been interpreted in the light of later history, Moses reportedly made this statement to Israel:

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt.<sup>42</sup>

Thus God's love and his faithfulness to the Abrahamic promise are the reasons behind his election of Israel.<sup>43</sup>

In the Old Testament, the word  $\text{ברית}$  designates the basis of the relationship between the God of Israel and his people.<sup>44</sup> The word "covenant" is not a completely satisfactory rendering of the Hebrew  $\text{ברית}$ , translated by the LXX as diatheke, by the Vulgate Psalter and some other passages from the Vulgate as testamentum. Etymological approaches have proposed various definitions: on the basis of Genesis 15:9ff, and Jeremiah 34:18, it has been associated with an Arabic root meaning "cut (apart)" with the Akkadian biritu, meaning "bond" (a "binding" contract); with the Akkadian birit, "between," meaning "mediation," and with the Hebrew  $\text{אכל}$  "eat," meaning "meal." Referring to Isaiah 28:15, 18 where  $\text{אכל/אכל}$  are used in parallel to  $\text{ברית}$  berit, and I Samuel 17:8, where we find the hapaxlegomenon  $\text{ברח}$  brh, "see, search out, select," Ernst Kutsch suggests a basic meaning "that which is noted, stipulation, obligation."<sup>45</sup> This sense can refer to an obligation imposed on another, an obligation accepted, or even a mutual obligation. The common idiom  $\text{ברית אכל}$  to "cut" a  $\text{ברית}$  is often associated with the ritual in which sacrificial animals are cut apart to reinforce

the obligation.<sup>46</sup> Ernst Kutsch takes  $\text{קָרַח}$  to mean "fix, determine," and  $\text{קָרַח בְּרַחֲמָיו}$  to mean "define an obligation."<sup>47</sup>

Discussion of the Old Testament theological statements about the "covenant" must not overlook the fact that it is most fully attested in the deuteronomic and deuteronomistic literature. The original framework of Deuteronomy spoke of the "covenant" in the context of the Patriarchs. Yahweh made a "sworn covenant" with Israel's forefathers (Deut. 7:9, 12b). In other words, "covenant" stands for the promise of possession of the land.<sup>48</sup> The covenant knows not only of a demand, but also of a promise (Exodus 6:7). First of all it must be noted that the establishment of a covenant through the work of Moses especially emphasized one basic element in the whole Israelite experience of God, namely the factual nature of the divine revelation.<sup>49</sup>

Earlier promises and covenants actually go back to Noah (Genesis 9:8-17) and to Abraham (Genesis 15:17-21, 17:1-14), the former being a universal contract between God and all mankind, whereas the latter is between God and Abraham's descendants. In the stories of the covenants with Noah and Abraham God promised that he would do certain things; and accordingly the emphasis is on the divine pledge. But in the story of the covenant which follows the Exodus what is made explicit is the obligation which rests on Israel once the covenant has been established.

Yahweh's care for his people, as his side of the covenant, was of course, also involved. He had already delivered them; and among the results of the deliverance were the gift of the promised land and the blessings which he gave them there, but the most important outcome of the deliverance was the relationship with Israel which was established in the covenant.

Two versions of the Mosaic covenant are found in Exodus: one when the people first arrived at the sacred mountain of Sinai (Exodus 19:1-25, 20:18-21); the other just before Moses went up on the mountain for forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:1-18). The latter may be simply a ceremony ratifying the former, but in both cases Yahweh sought to bind Israel to himself alone as their God, and the people solemnly agreed to be obedient to the Lord who had chosen them and promised to protect and bless them. In the latter account Moses also sealed the covenant with appropriate rituals of offerings and sacrifices.

The essence of this covenant between Yahweh and Israel is tersely summed up in the formula, "I will take you for my people, and I will be your God" (Exodus 6:7).<sup>50</sup> Here is their adoption into the covenant as the people of God. Furthermore, the covenant forms, as represented by the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), are strikingly parallel in structure to treaties made between Hittite kings and their vassals in the period 1450-1200 B. C. The vassals are reminded of what the king has done for them and of their obligations to him: allegiance, tribute, service, acceptance of his jurisdiction, and the like. So Israel is reminded of Yahweh's mighty acts, and summoned to respond in loyalty and obedience.

From the time of covenant-making, there came traditionally the Book of the Covenant, which was apparently the major collection of covenant laws (Exodus 20:22 to 23:19). Simply stated, the laws associated with the covenant tell us what God requires of his people.<sup>51</sup> Walther Eichrodt explains the covenant at Mt. Sinai as:

At the very beginning the will of the God of Sinai gives directions for the concrete historical situation to the tribes of Israel who had fled from Egypt. This will binds them together in the duty of regulating their common life and of establishing the goal of their wanderings in obedience to the Torah or instructions which are given from time to time through Moses the appointed mediator.<sup>52</sup>

The covenant also provides life with a goal and history with a meaning (Exodus 6:7).<sup>53</sup> This covenant relationship requires faithfulness on the part of God and the people, and the people's faithfulness is concretized in the commandments they have agreed to obey. Israel was always to look upon the law as a gracious gift from God, not as repugnant and onerous obligation.<sup>54</sup> From this it follows that the Israelite community was constituted not by ties of blood but by Yahweh's act. They belonged to each other because Yahweh had made them His own. A further consequence is that the obedience which is required of Israel is the grateful response to what Yahweh has done. Nothing could be further from the truth than the notion that Israel boxed God up in a set of commandments. The Ten Commandments appropriately begin, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). The gracious act of the Savior God is the presupposition of the commands laid on Israel. The law was God's means of providing a framework within which religious life could be properly carried on, in which the sacredness of life could be preserved, and in which a vital and lasting relationship with God could be established. Thus God's covenant and law, given through Moses, was to endure as the essential religious structure for the continuing community experience of Israel.<sup>55</sup>

According to Edmond Jacob,<sup>56</sup> all the accounts of covenant-making between Yahweh and the people show three aspects of the covenant, though the accent is sometimes differently placed: (a) the covenant is a gift that Yahweh makes to his people; (b) by the covenant, God comes into relationship and creates with his people a bond of communion; (c) the covenant creates obligations which take concrete shape in the form of law. Covenant, then, involved an interpretation of the meaning and aim of

Israel's existence. Israel, on her part, freely accepted the covenant, but in doing so solemnly placed herself under obligation to obey the Ruler and the law which he gave as the constitution of the society. The covenant, therefore, placed the law in the center of the peoples' attention.<sup>57</sup>

According to Dennis J. McCarthy,<sup>58</sup> on the other hand, there can be no doubt that covenant was connected with cult. The importance of sacrifice and the theophany, as exemplified in the Sinai narratives, for instance, show this. Moreover, it is striking that the apparent sequence of certain ceremonies reflects in large part the sequence of the elements in the treaty documents. This raised the question of the covenant feast. There was surely a ceremony which instituted covenant and repaired or renewed it when it was broken or when some major change in the circumstances of the people made them feel the need for renewal.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. Stanley Chesnut, The Old Testament Understanding of God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Cf. (1) Moses' first sermon: Deut. 1:4-4:43, The Lord's Covenant; (2) Moses' second sermon: Deut. 4:44-28:1, Specifications of the covenant, judicial justice, the sanctity of divine order and inscription of the Law.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Deut. 29:13.

<sup>4</sup>Otto J. Baab, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1969), p. 27.

<sup>5</sup>Lee Haines, "Genesis and Exodus" The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) pp. 226-227.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. p. 194.

<sup>7</sup>See Exodus 16:1-36.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Exodus 17:8-16; Isaiah 7:7-9.

<sup>9</sup>George W. Anderson, The History and Religion of Israel (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 33.

<sup>10</sup>Bernard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 32.

<sup>11</sup>A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 144-160. The terminology is as follows:  $\text{h}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{t}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{p}^{\text{h}}$ , to be holy;  $\text{p}^{\text{h}}$ ,  $\text{h}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{p}^{\text{h}}$ , to sanctify, hallow, consecrate, dedicate;  $\text{h}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{t}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{p}^{\text{h}}$ , holy, also as noun, "Holy One" (of Yahweh), saint of men, or holy ones of angels;  $\text{h}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{t}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{p}^{\text{h}}$ , holy thing, holiness, thing hallowed, sanctuary, holy arm, people, cities, etc.;  $\text{h}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{t}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{p}^{\text{h}}$   $\text{x}$  sanctuary, holy place.

<sup>12</sup>Anderson, op. cit. p. 35.

<sup>13</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>14</sup>Anderson. loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup>Baab, op. cit. p. 34.

<sup>16</sup>J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus" The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. I. ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952) p. 944. The LXX renders in holiness as "among the holy ones," i.e., "among the gods." The Hebrew says that Yahweh is feared in respect to on account of "praises," i.e., the deed for which he is praised (Cf. Ps. 78:4; Isa. 63:30).

- 17G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts (London: SCM Press, 1960) p. 85.
- 18Chesnut, op. cit. p. 50.
- 19Ibid.
- 20Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974) p. 405.
- 21Martin Noth, Exodus A commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974) p. 163.
- 22J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 158.
- 23Ibid.
- 24Chesnut, op. cit. p. 50.
- 25Payne, op. cit. p. 155.
- 26Ibid.
- 27Brown, Driver and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) p. 841.
- 28Payne, op. cit. p. 156.
- 29Charles F. Pfeiffer, Egypt and the Exodus (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, (1967), p. 80.
- 30Chesnut, op. cit. p. 50
- 31E. G. Exodus 20:5-6; Numbers 14:18; Deut. 5:9-10, 7:9-10; II Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17, 31; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Psa. 86:15, etc.
- 32Brown, Driver and Briggs, op. cit. pp. 338-339.
- 33Wright, op. cit. pp. 85-86.
- 34Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, Trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 48.
- 35Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (New York: Schocken Books, 1973) p. 98.
- 36Ibid.
- 37Genesis 24:27, 49; 47:29; Exodus 34:6; Joshua 2:14; II Sam. 2:6, 15:20; Psalm 25:10, 40:11, 57:3, 59:7, 61:7, 85:10, 86:15, 89:14, 24, 98:3, 115:1, 138:2; Prov. 3:3, 14:22, 16:6, 20:28.
- 38Snaith, op. cit. p. 100.



<sup>39</sup>See pp. 20-21 on this research paper.

<sup>40</sup>See Chapter 4.

<sup>41</sup>Chesnut, op. cit. p. 56.

<sup>42</sup>Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

<sup>43</sup>Chesnut, loc. cit.

<sup>44</sup>Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961-67) Vol. 1, pp. 36ff. He says, "The covenant union between Yahweh and Israel is an original element in all sources."

<sup>45</sup>Ernst Kutsch, "יְהוָה בְּרִיתֵנוּ Verpflichtung" In Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament (Festschrift Kurt Gall, Mohr, 1970), pp. 165-178.

<sup>46</sup>Martin Noth, "Old Testament Covenant-Making in the Light of a Text from Mari," in his collected essays, The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) pp. 108ff.

<sup>47</sup>Ernst Kutsch, loc. cit.

<sup>48</sup>Walther Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), p. 50.

<sup>49</sup>Eichrodt, op. cit. pp 37-38.

<sup>50</sup>Cf. Jeremiah 31:33.

<sup>51</sup>Chesnut, op. cit. p. 57.

<sup>52</sup>Walther Eichrodt, Man in the Old Testament, trans. K. and R. Gregor Smith, (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1956) p. 26.

<sup>53</sup>Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, op. cit. p. 38.

<sup>54</sup>Chesnut, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 211.

<sup>57</sup>G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment, (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1955), p. 58.

<sup>58</sup>Dennis J. McCarthy, Old Testament Covenant (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), pp. 57-58.

## Chapter 7

### MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

The concept of monotheism (belief in the existence of only one God) has long been a problem to historians of religion, and especially to those who have investigated this idea in the Old Testament.

Many scholars assert that there is a hint of theological monotheism in both the pre-Mosaic and Mosaic periods. And the view has long been common that monotheism began with the eighth century prophets and became explicit with Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> Some attributed the beginnings of monotheism to Elijah.<sup>2</sup> Especially Pfeiffer goes so far as to deny any real monotheism in the Old Testament before Deutero-Isaiah. He says: "We can only speak of monotheism in the Old Testament before second Isaiah by using the word in some other sense than the belief that there is only one god."<sup>3</sup> Rowley says that the beginning of monotheism has been found in the teachings of the eighth century prophets,<sup>4</sup> and I. G. Matthews says that it was the concept of the brotherhood of man which we find in the teaching of Amos which was the foundation of ethical monotheism.<sup>5</sup>

One of the views which has come into fashion in recent years maintains that monotheism goes back to the beginnings of the human race. This view was advanced as a scientific hypothesis by Andrew Lang.<sup>6</sup> It was presented by that distinguished biblical scholar, M. J. Lagrange<sup>7</sup> who held that the original Semitic religion was a monotheism in which El was worshipped, but that El was later split up into a multiplicity of gods. Edmond Jacob rejects this view.<sup>8</sup>

A much more important challenge to these views is the claim that

Moses established monotheism in Israel. This challenge is important because it claims no less a scholar than William F. Albright among its champions. He presented this view in From the Stone Age to Christianity,<sup>9</sup> after some preliminary indications of it, and several other scholars<sup>10</sup> have followed him. Actually, Albright only established Mosaic monotheism. He says:

If the term 'monotheist' means one who teaches the existence of only one God, the creator of everything, the source of justice, who is equally powerful in Egypt, in the desert, and Palestine, who has no sexuality and no mythology, who is human in form but cannot be seen by human eye and cannot be represented in any form--then the founder of Yahwism was certainly a monotheist."

If it is assumed that the form of the Ten Commandments<sup>12</sup> was a product of Moses' time, then the first of these sayings would seem to be relevant to the monotheism:

"לֹא-יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פְּנֵי"

But scholars have speculated on the possible translations of the word "עַל-פְּנֵי" for there is some evidence to indicate that it means one of monotheism and henotheism according to how to translate the word "עַל-פְּנֵי". Albright translates this first commandment as follows: "Thou shalt not prefer other gods to me."<sup>13</sup> This rendering, he asserts, agrees with the plain meaning of עַל פְּנֵי in several other passages; e. g., Genesis 16:12, 50:1; II Kings 13:14; Deuteronomy 21:16. Meek says that the word עַל פְּנֵי has a great variety of meanings: e.g., "over," "in front of," "in the presence of," "on an equality with," "alongside of," "to the disadvantage of," "in preference to," "in addition to," "in defiance of," "during the lifetime of."<sup>14</sup>

Therefore if we translate "עַל פְּנֵי" into "beside me" the First Commandment means monotheism which believes in the existence of only one God. But if we translate "עַל פְּנֵי" into "before me" the

commandment means henotheism which assumes the existence of "other gods" who may be sovereign over other peoples and that Israelites worship only Yahweh among many gods.

We can conclude that Moses' understanding of Yahweh is monotheism in the light of the history of Israelite belief. Since, in practice, if not in theory, Yahweh alone was God for Israel, we may speak of Mosaic faith as explicit monotheism. Such a term indicates, that on the practical level, Israel lived, or attempted to live believing no other gods existed. Another statement attributed to Moses is Deuteronomy 6:4, which is usually translated, "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one." The Yahwism of Moses was explicit ethical monotheism. God revealed his nature through his saving acts in history. The revelation of his will led to the pledge of the congregation.

Therefore Albright says:

Since Yahweh had no pantheon, no other deities could be associated with him anyway, but a rebellious Israelite might deliberately choose to worship another god. Jews and Christians have recited this first commandment for twenty-five centuries without supposing that there actually were other gods in existence as rivals of God.<sup>15</sup>

The concept of the oneness of God was not reached primarily through logical analysis by Hebrew thinkers; Israelite approach was pragmatically religious and experience centered. The life and social experience of the community, with its inner tensions and its relations to other groups, made up the historical ground for the achievement of monotheism. The great doctrine of modern Judaism, as of biblical Judaism, drawn from Deuteronomy, "Listen, O Israel; the Lord is our God, the Lord alone" (Deut. 6:4) was formulated undoubtedly as the result of the leadership of Moses. The work of the great prophets, and the faith of the many anonymous believers in ancient Israel also helped to shape this doctrine.

Israelite monotheism, therefore, was not derived from philosophical speculation concerning the one and the many, but from a knowledge of God's power, expressed in powerful acts. It was by the power of this one God that a people without the law were given a law, that the several tribes and extraneous clans became one nation.<sup>16</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Cf. H.H. Rowley, From Moses to Qumran (New York: Association Press, 1963), pp. 35-63. A. Lods, Israel From Its Beginnings to the Middle of the Eighth Century, Eng. trans. S.H. Hooke (1932), p. 257: "Israel only attained to monotheism in the eighth century and to a clear and conscious monotheism only in the sixth." I. G. Matthews, The Religious Pilgrimage of Israel, (1947), p. 129: He thinks the foundation of ethical monotheism was laid by Amos.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. A. Causse, Les Prophetes d' Israel et les Religions de L' Orient, (1913), p. 62. Also P. Volz, Mose, (1907), p. 76 and Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. J.A. Baker, I (1961), p. 224.

<sup>3</sup>Rowley, op. cit. p. 35; R. H. Pfeiffer, Journal of Biblical Literature, 36 (1927), p. 194; W. F. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 2nd ed., p. 299. He recognizes implicit monotheism in the teaching of the pre-exilic prophets.

<sup>4</sup>Rowley, op. cit. p. 35-36.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. I. G. Matthews, op. cit. p. 129.

<sup>6</sup>Rowley, loc. cit.; Andrew Lang, The Making of Religion, 2nd ed. (1900), pp. 173.

<sup>7</sup>Rowley, Ibid., Lagrange, Etudes sur Les Religions Semitiques, (1903), 70ff.

<sup>8</sup>Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, Eng. trans. A. W. Heathcote and P.J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), pp. 44.

<sup>9</sup>William F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), pp. 196.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. G. Ernest Wright, Theology To-day, III (1946), 185ff, and The Old Testament Against its Environment (1950), p. 29; F. James, Anglican Theological Review, 14 (1932) 130ff. also maintains that Moses was a monotheist. E. Jacob, The Theology of the Old Testament, op. cit. p. 66 says: "One cannot speak of evolution within the faith of Israel towards monotheism, for from the moment when Israel becomes conscious of being the people chosen by one God it is in practice a monotheistic people; and so one can speak with Albright to name only one of the most recent and illustrious historians, of the monotheism of Moses." John Bright, History of Israel (1960), p. 139 says: "If one intends monotheism in an ontological sense, and understands by it the explicit affirmation that only one God exists, one may question if early Israel's faith deserves the designation."

<sup>11</sup>W. F. Albright, op. cit. p. 207. For some further observations which are pertinent in this connection see his remarks, Journal of Biblical Literature, 59 (1940, pp. 91-96, 110-112.

<sup>12</sup>The forms of the Decalogue or "Ten Words" in both Exodus 20: 2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21 are expansions and elaborations of the original brief sayings. The Ten Commandments were introduced to Israel through Moses.

<sup>13</sup>Albright, op. cit. p. 331.

<sup>14</sup>Theophile J. Meek, Hebrew Origins (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 209, n. 29.

<sup>15</sup>Albright, loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Wright, op. cit. p. 39. He says "the very exaltation of God's power in Israel meant the complete devaluation of all other powers. The value of the word 'Monotheism' lies in its emphasis upon the most characteristic and unique feature of Israel: The exclusive exaltation of the one source of all power, authority, and creativity."

## Chapter 8

### YAHWEH AND THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

No single event in Israel's religious history was of more crucial significance than the Exodus from Egypt. It is the central point of reference in the entire literature of the Old Testament, especially so in the historical and prophetic books, and to a lesser extent in the Writings.<sup>1</sup> Exodus is not a history of early Israel in any strict sense. It is rather an exposition of the meaning of that history for Israel. It is an interpretation of Israel's faith. Exodus deals seriously with the fact that Israel's faith rests on a historical revelation. It assumes that the faith is rooted in and illustrated by a particular historical occurrence.<sup>2</sup> It is the event that most vividly revealed Yahweh as Israel's God acting in history. Therefore, there are embedded in Exodus memories of the actual historical circumstances and events in which, by faith, the Hebrews first saw the decisive disclosure of God and became the people of Israel.

Israel's faith was almost exclusively a response to what God did for and to them as a people. Israel came to know God because he acted as Lord of history, and the Exodus was the most meaningful act of God in Israel's long and troubled history. Yahweh is the God of Israel by reason of certain historical events associated with the name of Egypt (to which the preamble to the Decalogue adds: "the house of servitude"). This phrase points to the events recorded in the Book of Exodus, in which the people of Israel first makes its appearance.<sup>3</sup> Moses led the people



forth at the command of Yahweh. At the Red Sea they escaped miraculously from the pursuing Egyptians, whose king had refused to let them go. This event is recorded in the earliest hymn preserved in the Old Testament, the Song of Miriam, "Sing to Yahweh, for highly exalted is he; horse and rider he cast into the sea" (Exodus 15:20). What Israel experienced here was not chance good fortune such as might be recounted dispassionately. In this experience Israel recognized and confessed Yahweh, who refused to be worshipped alongside others. The glorification of this initial experience of the Exodus is confessed constantly in the entire history of Israel as a plethora of miraculous interventions on the part of Yahweh.

Von Rad says:

Wherever it occurs, the phrase 'Yahweh delivered his people from Egypt' is confessional in character. Indeed, so frequent is it in the Old Testament, meeting us not only in every age (down to Daniel 9:15), but also in the most varied contexts, that it has in fact been designated as Israel's original confession."<sup>4</sup>

In other words, again and again the description of the Exodus mentions the "signs and wonders" performed by Yahweh for his people, "with mighty hand and outstretched arm." Then the road led out into the desert, toward the land that was to be given to Israel. The Old Testament returns again and again to creed-like mentions of this event, in detailed summaries of Yahweh's history with Israel as well as in succinct formulas like the preamble to the Decalogue.<sup>5</sup> The Exodus effectively revealed Yahweh's power and will to save his people and bless them, just as he had promised. Furthermore, out of the Exodus came Israel herself, born in pain and travail and hope, as a new nation and a new religion. More than anything else, the Exodus was a beginning, a new creation, for the heirs of Abraham.<sup>6</sup>

In the text of Exodus, Yahweh is also the God who remembers

(Exodus 2:24). Specifically, he is the God who "remembered his covenant with Abraham" and with the other Patriarchs. God "remembers" is an anthropomorphism to express the changelessness of God. To Hebrew thought "to remember" is "to act." So, to say that God "remembers" is to assert that he repeats his acts of saving grace towards his people Israel again and again, and in this way fulfills his promises, and shows his own self-consistency. The Exodus and the whole movement of salvation that culminates in the Sinai covenant is a fulfillment of divine promises stemming from the covenant with Abraham (Exodus 3:15-17).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the whole biblical history of salvation is seen in terms of promise and fulfillment. This is what gives the Sinaitic covenant depth and roots in the past, since, in giving it, God is "remembering" his covenant with Abraham.

The belief that Yahweh, a little-known desert God, could accomplish such things in the face of powerful Egypt was a daring one for ancient Israel, but without such a faith in the mighty acts of God there could have been no Israel. The story of the Exodus probably contains more miracles than does any other chapter in the entire Old Testament history, as this was Israel's way of relating how God worked out his will for his people. This means simply that, through the eyes of faith, the ordinary and sometimes extraordinary events that took place in Egypt were seen as the work of God, as evidence of the manner in which he interceded on behalf of his people. Such events were then expressed in the religious language appropriate to that faith and to the world view of that time.<sup>8</sup>

To Israel God was personal, and his personality expressed itself in will. He was active in history, and not a mere spectator of its course. He controlled the forces of Nature, and could make himself

known through prophetic personality. The Old Testament sometimes calls Moses a prophet.<sup>9</sup> He was much more than a prophet. He was admitted to the counsel of God, and became the mouthpiece of God to men, as much as they; and indeed, through him there came a more fundamental revelation of the will of God than through any other. His personality was vital to the whole experience of Israel in the Exodus.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, in the story of the Exodus we seem to have the anomalous situation of Yahweh's working against his own purpose, as when he is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart against Moses' request to let his people go (Exodus 4:21, 7:1-5, etc.). In reality, this view of things is additional evidence of Israel's belief that God both knew and controlled whatever was to happen in Israel's sacred history.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, such a view is Heilsgeschichte, "sacred history" or "history of salvation." According to Von Rad, among confessional summaries of the saving history, covering by now a fairly extensive span of the divine action in history, the most important is the Credo in Deuteronomy 26:5-9:

A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppressions; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders, and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:5-9).

These words are not, of course, a prayer; there is no invocation or petition, they are out and out a confession of faith. They recapitulate the main events in the saving history from the time of Patriarchs down to the conquest, and they do this with close concentration on the objective historical facts.<sup>12</sup> Thus Israel's special idea of God as One

who acts in history<sup>13</sup> is emphasized again and again in the Exodus story and in the entire Old Testament history.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. Stanley Chesnut, The Old Testament Understanding of God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus" The Interpreter's Bible Vol. I., ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), pp. 835-836.

<sup>3</sup>Walther Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline, trans. David E. Green, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol., 1, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), pp. 175-176.

<sup>5</sup>Zimmerli, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Chesnut, op. cit. p. 53.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Exodus 2:24; Genesis 15:13-16.

<sup>8</sup>Chesnut, loc. cit. For a brief, well-balanced statement on the Old Testament miracles, see H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel (London: SCM Press LTD, (1977)), pp. 57-59.

<sup>9</sup>Numbers 12:6ff.; Deuteronomy 18:15, 34:10; Hosea 12:13.

<sup>10</sup>Rowley, op. cit. p. 57.

<sup>11</sup>Chesnut, op. cit. 53.

<sup>12</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, op. cit. pp. 121-122.

<sup>13</sup>One of the best expositions of this idea is G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts (London: SCM Press, LTD., 1952).

## Chapter 9

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A summary of the major findings of this study, the conclusions derived therefrom and suggestions for further study are recorded in this chapter.

In the Orient a name is more than an identification. A man's name is not only descriptive of its bearer, it may stand as the equivalent of his very nature and individuality. Thus to change a man's name indicates power over his person.<sup>1</sup> In reference to the divine name, God's name may stand for his general revelation (Psalm 8:1, 9). Therefore, it is significant to study the name of God. It was the problem of this study to inquire into God's name in the Mosaic period when the most important single definition of God's name was revealed. This was the Tetragrammaton YHWH, God's personal name.

Chapter two was concerned with the theophany in the Old Testament. There are four forms of the theophany in the Old Testament: the self-revelation formula, the form of an intermediary, the form of the call narrative, the stereotype form of instruction. But it is not suggested that the four patterns remained independent of one another, or reflect separate settings. A recognition of the stereotyped elements often aids in sorting out the complex interweavings which took place in the passage in Exodus 3. For this research dealt with Exodus 3 in which Yahweh revealed himself to Moses in the form of the call narrative.

Chapter three contained the problem of when the tradition of the revelation of Yahweh was begun. In fact, there seems to be an

anachronistic confusion in using the name Yahweh throughout the Old Testament. That is, the name Yahweh is used with other names of God in historical accounts, notably in Genesis and Exodus, before the Mosaic period.

But the Mosaic-Yahweh tradition mentions distinctly that the name Yahweh was first revealed to Moses, and God was not known to the Israelites by any one personal name until he revealed himself to Moses as "Yahweh"

(Exodus 3:13-15). But I concluded that the intention of the author of the Pentateuch is not an anachronistic use of the name Yahweh but to underscore the theological conviction that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is actually the Lord of all history and creation; therefore the worship of Yahweh is traced back to the remote beginnings. He tried to show the continuity of Yahweh's saving history from the beginning of the world. Even though the name Yahweh was not revealed, apparently to the Patriarchs, the author wanted to show Yahweh as the God of the Fathers.

The origin of Yahweh was dealt with in chapter four. Some scholars assert that, since Moses was reared in the Egyptian court, the novel element in his teaching was Egyptian in origin. Some scholars have speculated on the possible Midianite-Kenite origin of Yahwism because of his relationship with Jethro, his father-in-law and the priest of Midian. But the Bible says that God's revelation to Moses on Mount Horeb was the absolute origin of Moses' Yahwism (Exodus 3:13f., 6:2f.)

Chapter five was concerned with the meaning of the name Yahweh. First, I inquired into information about the original meaning of the name Yahweh through a philological investigation quite apart from the Old Testament texts themselves. I concluded this study with actual statements of the Old Testament itself, especially connecting Exodus 3:14 with 33:19 where the *idem per idem* construction also occurs. In Exodus 3:14 and

33:19 God explains his name Yahweh, proclaiming that there is not a limitation at all in his absolute sovereign freedom. This means that Yahweh refuses to put himself at the disposal of humanity or to allow humanity to catch and control him. Therefore Exodus 3:4 emphasizes the actuality of God: "I am who I am" means "I am there, wherever I will be, I am at the right time, whenever I will be, I am with them, whomever I will be with." The parallel in Exodus 33:19 would confirm this interpretation.

Chapter six was concerned with the character of Yahweh: The Lordship of Yahweh over all things, his power, his holiness, his jealousy, justice and righteousness, graciousness, and that he is the God of the covenant and law. The Lordship of Yahweh was predicated on his power and holiness. The  $\text{YHWH}$  of God is revealed in and through the covenant; it is because God has concluded a covenant that he has shown  $\text{YHWH}$ .

From the time of Moses and onward, God's qualitative distinction from man is clear (Exodus 19:12-13), even in such anthropomorphic references as concern the movement of his glory (Exodus 33:20-23). Still, his being alive is the most certain of all conceivable facts; for this is what he, and other, swear by (Numbers 14:21, 28). He is, in short, the ultimate personality: "I am he" (Deuteronomy 32:39, Cf. Isaiah 43:10). Yet he "comes down in the sight of all" (Exodus 19:11), with "face" and "back" (Exodus 33:23). The anthropopathisms continue as well: God becomes angry (Deuteronomy 4:24) or jealous (Exodus 20:5), like a jealous husband (Numbers 5:14, Proverbs 6:34). He is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24). These descriptions, too, continue in the later periods, especially in the Old Testament poetry and prophecy.

"Moses and Monotheism" was dealt with in Chapter seven. Some



scholars reject the thesis that monotheism began with Moses. But this research paper concluded that Moses, the founder of Yahwism, was certainly a monotheist through the First Commandment and Albright's assertion.

There is justification for the claim which has been made that the Mosaic faith exemplifies a practical or incipient monotheism, i.e. that the germ of monotheism is already present. The two main factors which justify this claim are that in the Exodus traditions Yahweh is undisputed master of history and nature, doing as he wills in every situation, and that he requires the undivided allegiance of his worshippers, displaying in this an intolerance which is hardly compatible with an admission of the effective existence of other gods. This practical character is evident even in the later stages of the Old Testament belief in Yahweh. It is never an abstract monotheism which is taught, but rather the fact of Yahweh's effective lordship in history and nature, and his right to undivided allegiance in national and individual life.

By the way, when did the conviction arise in Moses' heart that he was to deliver the people? The Bible gives a clear answer to that question: it declares that God appeared to Moses with his new name Yahweh and charged him with the task of deliverance.

Chapter eight dealt with "Yahweh and the Exodus from Egypt." Exodus is not a history of early Israel in any strict sense. It is rather, an exposition of the meaning of that history for Israel. It is the event that most vividly revealed Yahweh as Israel's God acting in history. The Exodus effectively revealed Yahweh's power and will to save his people and bless them, just as he had promised Abraham and the other Patriarchs.

Therefore, the Yahwism of Moses should be understood in connection with the proper noun Yahweh, the God of the Patriarchs and the

Exodus event and the covenant event. According to Jacob, there is ground for recognizing two elections in Israel's history, the first at the time of Abraham, the second at the time of the Exodus. These two elections we might qualify by terms of being and of doing. With Abraham, Yahweh declared the existence of the people, and so he threw the whole weight on the permanence of the race.<sup>2</sup> For Moses, on the other hand, what matters is the accomplishment of a work for which the existence of the people was indispensable. H. H. Rowley very rightly defines this relationship by saying that the people were elected "in Abraham" and elected "through Moses."<sup>3</sup>

A theme dominant throughout the account of the Exodus is that of Yahweh's compassion for his peoples' suffering. "I have seen the affliction of my people," God said to Moses. "I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exodus 3:7-8). God acted to deliver Israel out of her oppression, and in so doing, his living, saving, blessing nature was forever inscribed deeply into the faith of the Old Testament, that it should have been obscured by the image of an angry God of wrath and judgment is an unfortunate aspect of much popular Christian thought today. The quite proper prophetic picture of God's judgment on Israel and the nations has too often been exaggerated in the contrast between the Old Testament "God of wrath" and the New Testament "God of love." Such a radical polarity of God's nature is a profound misunderstanding of the Bible. The careful student of Scripture will see a more correct view of the biblical God as One in whom mercy and justice are equally weighty.

For instance, G. Ernest Wright says:

The events of the Exodus, the wilderness wandering and the conquest are as important for the New Testament as for the Old.

In Christ is the new exodus and the new inheritance. The major portion of the vocabulary used to express the saving work of God in Christ is drawn from the Exodus event: thus the words 'redeem' and 'redemption,' 'deliver,' 'ransom,' 'purchase,' 'bondage,' 'freedom.'<sup>4</sup>

According to G. Ernest Wright,<sup>5</sup> W. J. Phythian-Adams speaks of this parallelism between biblical events by means of the word, "homology." He indicates that the chief events of the Old Testament which furnish the pattern for the happenings in the New Testament are the redemption from Egyptian bondage, the consecration of the people by covenant, and the gift of the inheritance. For example, when St. Paul says that God delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of love, in whom we have our redemption, the remission of sins, and finally the kingdom of "David" (the "Beloved"); the pattern is then complete. This "Kingdom" in Christ is "the 'inheritance' of the saints in light."<sup>6</sup>

Because of the limitations of this research paper, it could not be carried forward into other texts in the Old and New Testaments. Definite implications of the Yahwism of Moses are found throughout the Bible. Therefore a study which would tie together Yahwism in the Old Testament with God the Father in the New Testament would be helpful.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Cf. II Kings 23:34, 24:17.

<sup>2</sup>Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. A.W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), pp. 205-206.

<sup>3</sup>Harol H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts (London: SCM Press, LTD, 1960), p. 63.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>W. J. Phythian-Adams, The Way of At-one-ment (London, 1944), p. 23.

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