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TOPIC:

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAMES OF GOD WITH REFERENCE TO
EXODUS 3:14-17**

**PROJECT WORK
(LONG ESSAY)**

BY:

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TO EXODUS 3:14-17**

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**A long essay submitted to Christian Service University College in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theology
with Administration.**

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DECLARATION

I, Samuel Owusu, do hereby declare that this thesis/dissertation/ project report is the result of my own original research, except for sections for which references have been duly made, and to the best of my knowledge, no part of it has been presented to this University College or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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DEDICATION

This work is humbly dedicated to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Also, to my lovely best friend Sandra Adjei, my parents Mr. and Mrs. Owusu, my siblings, the extended family, and friends. Moreover, to all students and ministers of Christ Jesus.

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From the bottom of my heart may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, blameless, and remove the influx of evil in this world until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Kavod Adonai... I love you all!

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In Africa, especially among the Akan in Ghana, names are not mere arbitrary and meaningless labels, rather names have indexical relationship to socio-cultural meanings and functions, places, time, people and events. It is even unethical to call people not using their proper names. What this means, is that, a name gives an identity to a person. This is underscored by the Akans' maxim, '*edin pa y sene ahunya*' meaning "good name is better than riches". This epitomises that the Akans attach much importance to names. According to Agyekum, African and Ghanaian names are quite different from that of western societies where people take their fathers' last names. While western names are predictable, African names are generally not predictable, for until the child is born and under what circumstances it is born, the name cannot be determined with accuracy.¹ All these go to prove that, names are not just a tag but strongly related to temporal, personal and social indexes.

Names in biblical times also communicated important information about persons, or some aspect of their story. Some of the revelatory names of God are: Jehovah Rohi "the Lord my Shepherd" (Ps. 23:1), Jehovah Adonai "the Lord God" (Gen. 15:2), Jehovah Tsur "the Lord my Rock" (Ps. 19:14), and Jehovah Tsidkenu "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:6). According to Ekberg, "to the Jewish people of the Old Testament a name was very important. They would not just pick a name because it

¹ Kofi Agyekum, *The Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names* (2006), 208, accessed on November 20, 2014, <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol15num2/agyekum.pdf>.

sounded nice or because it was different, but they would choose a name to convey some truth or fact about the child...or the circumstances that surrounded the birth of the child."² Some of the biblical names include: Ishmael, which means God hears (Gen 16:11); Abraham, "Father of a multitude or nations" (Gen 17:5); Sarah, "Princess" (Gen 17:15); Isaac, "He laughs" (Gen 17:19); Jacob, "He who grabs by the heel, or He cheats" (Gen 25:26); Edom, "Red" (Gen 25:31); just to name a few. Futato writes;

"The most significant person in the Bible is Jesus. His name stems from Joshua (yeho, a short form of "Yahweh" + shua', "salvation"), which means "Yahweh is salvation." That is why the angel said, "And you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). Matthew goes on to tell us that Jesus' birth fulfilled Isa 7:14: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (Matt 1:23). Immanuel (immanu, "with us" + ' I, "God") means "God is with us."'³

It can be deduced from this that names are not arbitrary and meaningless labels, rather they have indexical relationship to socio-cultural meanings and functions, places, time, people and events.

Against this background, the researcher seeks to examine how God revealed Himself to Moses, and the significance of His revealed name "I AM" or "Yahweh" to contemporary Christians.

1.2 Statement of Problem

There is a growing perception among some Christians who believe that the name(s) of "God" in the African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.) is different from the `God in the Bible.

² Keith Ekberg, *the Names of God in the Old Testament*, 1, accessed on November 22, 2014, <http://www.biblespeaks.org/Portals/0/Booklets/Booklet%20-%20God-pdf.pdf>.

³ Mark D. Futato, *Names in Narratives* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014

It is therefore expedient to ascertain whether the God of traditional religion is the same as the God of the Bible. Again, there is the need to find out whether the God who appeared to Moses is the same God who has revealed Himself to humanity throughout human history. Against this background, the research seeks to examine the name “I AM” as revealed to Moses and its significance to contemporary Christians.

1.3 Research Questions

- a. How has God revealed Himself in human history?
- b. What is the significance of His name "I AM" as revealed to Moses?
- c. How was God known in the Old Testament epoch?
- d. What are some of the revelatory names that were given to God in the Old Testament epoch?
- e. How is God been referred to in contemporary Christianity?
- f. What is the significance of the names of God in contemporary Christianity?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

In contemporary times there have been many names that have been given to God. The study therefore seeks to find out:

- a) Which of the names is biblical?
- b) How these names communicate the nature of God?
- c) Whether the names of God as revealed by the Bible have any significant impact on Christians?

- d) Whether the names of God as revealed by the Bible have any bearing on the name(s) of God in the African Traditional Religion.

1.5 Scope and Focus of the Study

The study is limited to Exodus 3:14-17. Even though there are so many revelatory names given to God in many parts of the Bible it also seeks to examine who God is by how He revealed His name to Moses on top of Mountain Sinai.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher will conduct an exegetical study of the texts on hand using the Historical Critical Method. Again, an enquiry into the original Hebrew text will be made to ascertain the original meaning of the text.

Furthermore, the study will employ the primary and secondary methods of data collection. The primary method will involve interviews with key personalities. Also, the researcher will, through participant observation, ascertain how God is addressed in some churches and among some traditional religion practitioners.

The secondary method will involve the use of publications such as books, scholarly journals, papers, magazines and other unpublished works. Also, electronic sources such as the internet, radio and television will be employed in gathering data for the study.

1.7 Literature Review

In carrying out any research, or study, it is vital to examine the views and opinions of some scholars who have carried out similar studies. This is significant in order to give a sense of direction to the study on hand.

The Names of God

According to Herbert Lockyer, there is a great deal, however, in a name, especially if it is the Name above every other name. To the Hebrews of Old, the *name* of God meant the revelation of His nature, hence the various Old Testament names are very important as showing the different conceptions of the Deity held by them in the successive stages of revelation. God jealously guarded His successive names, particularly His signature one, I, *Jehovah*.⁴ Names carry meaning and for that matter reveal the nature of personality. Thus the names of God reveal His nature and present humans with how they are to relate to Him. The significance of names for relationship cannot be underestimated.

George Knight says; the Bible declares that God is a unique, one-of-a-kind being. No idea, object, or person is comparable to Him. His various names show that He is at work in the world and in the lives of Christians.⁵ God as presented in the Bible is unique in His nature. This is so because of how He has revealed Himself according to the names by which He is called. Thus, the names of God reveal not only His nature but also His power that is demonstrated by what He does in the world.

Emmanuel Asante maintains that, with each of the Patriarchs, there was associated a special theophany in which the deity revealed himself in a highly personal way. The names of the deities were directly connected with the Patriarchs: the '*shield of Abraham*' (Genesis 15:1); '*kinsman*', '*pahad*', of Isaac (Genesis 31:42, 53); the '*mighty one*' of Jacob

⁴ Herbert Locker, *All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible* (Grand Raids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 1.

⁵ George W. Knight, *The Names of God* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 2009), 15.

(Exodus 3:6).⁶ The Patriarchs came to know God and thus entered into a relationship with Him because of the names that were attributed to God. The names thus revealed God's power and how He related to human personalities (the patriarchs).

Kwame Gyekye is of the view that, the language of the religious rite of libation immediately reveals the entities that are considered real in Akan metaphysics. A typical prayer of libation...attests to the existence of a Supreme Being (Onyame, Onyankopon)...⁷ Some Akans relate to the supreme being through the rite of libation. They do so because they can call Him by some names. Names therefore reveal who God is to the Akans and are therefore an important aspect of religion.

The Nature of God

In citing the Westminster Confession of Faith, Robert Reymond declares that,

“There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments, hating sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.”⁸

God is an infinite and spiritual Being. However, He chooses to disclose Himself at particular times to humanity. Henry Clarence Thiessen says God is a substance. He is, however, not a material substance, but a spiritual substance. Jesus said, "God is Spirit"

⁶ Emmanuel Asante, *Topics in Old Testament Studies* (Accra, Ghana: SonLife Printing Press, 2005), 88.

⁷ Kwame Gyekye, *An essay on African philosophical thought* (New York, NY: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1987), 68.

⁸ Robert L. Reymond, *A new systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nasville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 160.

(John 4:24). Thus, this statement defines God's nature as spiritual.⁹ The author is emphatic that God is not a physical being that can be touched. Rather, He is Spirit. It is only through the realms of the spirit that humanity can truly relate with Him.

The Revelation of God

According to Gerald Bray, God makes himself known to us [humanity] by revelation. He contends that if God is a personal being, then it is not surprising that we can know him only by revelation, since the same is true of every person. Other people know us only the extent that we reveal ourselves to them.¹⁰ The author maintains that God makes Himself known through revelation. Thus, unless He discloses Himself to a person, he or she cannot know who He actually is.

Michael Friedlander says, The real process of revelation, by what means and in what manner the infinite and incorporeal Being makes His Will known to man, and how the latter become conscious and convinced of the fact that a Divine communication has been made of him, remains a mystery to all but those privileged persons who have been actually addressed by the Almighty...When, however, a Divine communication is made to one privileged individual, through whom it is made known to a whole community, or to mankind, there is no other means of testing the correctness of the revelation than the trustworthiness of the privileged individual.¹¹ The manner in which God discloses Himself remains a mystery to those who have had an encounter with God. But if this is the case, then how can humanity perceive God and much more tell who He is?

⁹ Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Press, 1979) 75.

¹⁰ Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15.

¹¹ Michael Friedlander, *The Jewish Religio* (New York, NY: Pardes Press, 1946), 46-47.

According to Millard Erickson, the primary result of special revelation is knowledge of God. By this we [he] mean knowledge not only of the person of God, but also of what he has done, of his [His] creation, of the nature and situation of man [humanity], of the relationship between God and man [humanity]. It should also be noted that this real, objective, rational information communicated from God to man.¹² One comes to know God through revelation. Thus, it is only when God reveals Himself to humanity that they can know Him.

1.8 Significance of Study

This work will help one to understand that God's name is always associated with His nature and identity. In other words, His name speaks about Himself, i.e., who He is, and this also has bearing on the Christian's relationship to Him.

There are many good things one will learn from this topic which will be very helpful to the Church, Theological institutions and students, and Mission organizations.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study which examines "the significance of the names of God with reference to Exodus 3:14-17" is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction for the study and captures the background of the study, the statement of problem, aim and objectives, scope and focus of the study, research methodology, literature review, and significance of study. Chapter two will focus on the context of the study by addressing issues such as background to the book of Exodus including its authorship and date, the purpose of writing; the Hebrew text, translation of the text; as well as the exegesis of the

¹² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (UK: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1987), 191.

text. The third chapter will look at the Personality of God, the Revelation of God in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament, the Revelatory Names of God and their significance, and the God of Covenant. Chapter four is an analysis of findings and the implications of findings. Chapter five is the final work and therefore captures the summary of the study, conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGESIS ON EXODUS 3:14-17

2.0 Introduction

The discussion in the previous chapter focused on the general introduction of the work, and captured issues such as the background of the study, statement of problem, research questions, aims and objectives, scope and focus of the study, research methodology, literature review, the significance of study, and organisation of the study.

In this chapter, the study will focus on the context of the study. It will address issues such as the background to the book of Exodus including its authorship and date, the purpose of writing, and the historical context. Moreover, it will also examine the Hebrew text, and offer a translation of the text, as well as an exegesis of the text.

2.1 Background to the Book of Exodus

Exodus is the second of the five books of the Pentateuch [the five Books of Moses].¹³ The book (Exodus) is a continuation of the Genesis story. Genesis 46:8-27 similarly lists the sons of Israel who came to Egypt, along with their households, or families, giving the total number as 70. The last verses of Genesis are also concerned with Abraham's offspring and their future (Genesis 50:22-26). Exodus picks up the thread. Right away one sees that Exodus, then, concerns the descendants of Abraham.

¹³ T. Desmond Alexander, David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, (Downers Grove, USA: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 249.

The title "Exodus" is a Latin word derived from the Greek ' , EKSODOS, the name given to the book by those who translated it into Greek. The word *exodus* means "road out," or "exit," or "departure" and refers to the key event in the book, the Divine act of deliverance at the sea that enabled the people of God to escape from Egyptian oppression.¹⁴

The name was retained also by the Vulgate, the Latin version; by the Jewish author Philo, who was a contemporary of Christ; and the Syriac version.¹⁵

In the Hebrew the book is named after its first two words we'elleh shemoth ("and these are the names of..."), a phrase that gives a clear indication of close relationship with the preceding narrative of Genesis. Among the Jews, the name is often shortened to simply shemoth. The same phrase occurs in Genesis 46:8, where it likewise introduces a list of the names of those Israelites "who went to Egypt with Jacob" (Exodus 1:1). Thus Exodus was not intended to exist separately, but was thought of as a continuation of the narrative that began in Genesis.¹⁶

Exodus carries key Genesis themes forward and in turn provides the essential backdrop for what happens in the rest of the Pentateuch. Exodus may be considered the centre of the Pentateuch, especially in view of the deliverance, the giving of the law at Mount Sinai and the construction of the tabernacle. In its broadest outlines the book may be structured as follows: Israel in Egypt, Its deliverance by God and Its response (Exodus 1:1 - 15:21);

¹⁴ David Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 1, <http://www.indephtbible.org>, (accessed on March 27, 2015).

¹⁵ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 287.

¹⁶ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 1.

Israel in the Wilderness and God's Providence (Exodus 15:22 - 18:27); and Israel at Sinai (Exodus 19:1 - 40:38).

2.1.1 Authorship and Date

The study of Exodus has usually been joined with the study of the Pentateuch as a whole. The traditional understanding of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch, though still affirmed by some, has usually been set aside in favour of a more complex understanding of origins.¹⁷ Building on the concept of multiple authors (The Documentary Hypothesis), many scholars came to the consensus that the Pentateuch was composed of four main documents, many scholars contributed to the idea of four sources; however Julius Wellhausen (1844 - 1918) did more to promote the ideas of source documents.¹⁸ He further writes, the four sources used the term such as Jahwistic (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomic (D), and Priestly (P), Wellhausen dates these sources as J (840 B.C), E (700 B.C), D (621 B.C), and P (500 - 450 B.C). The impact of this hypothesis was so great that by 1890 most of the biblical scholars rejected the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch with the exception of the most conservative biblical scholars.¹⁹ In the words of David Hinson, the Torah can be called 'the book of Moses' if we [the author's assertion] mean by this that it is the book which tells about him [Moses], rather than the book written by him.²⁰

¹⁷ Alexander, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 251.

¹⁸ Isaac Badu-Danso, Lecture notes: *Old Testament General*, 2012 Edition (Kumasi, Ghana: Christian Service University College), 2.

¹⁹ Badu-Danso, Lecture notes: *Old Testament General*, 2012 Edition, 2.

²⁰ David F. Hinson, *The Books of the Old Testament* (London, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 43.

Thomas Constable writes that, Moses, who lived from about 1525 to 1405 B.C., wrote Exodus (17:14; 24:4; 34:4, 27- 29). He could have written it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit any time after the events recorded (after about 1444 B.C.). He may have written it during the year the Israelites camped at the base of Mt. Sinai. He may have done so during the 38-year period of wandering in the wilderness following the Israelites' failure to enter the land from Kadesh Barnea (cf. Num. 13-14; ca. 1443-1405 B.C.). On the other hand he may have written it on the plains of Moab just before his death (cf. 16:35).²¹

According to the Expositor's Bible Commentary, there are several internal claims in Exodus that directly ascribe authorship to Moses (Israel's victory over Amalek 7:14; the Ten Commandments 34:4, 27-29; he wrote down everything the LORD had said 24:4; the Book of the Covenant 20:22-23:33, and other Old Testament books such as Joshua 1:7, 8:31-32, I Kings 2:3, II Kings 14:6, Ezra 6:18, Nehemiah 13:1, Daniel 9:1-13, Malachi 4:4). The New Testament writers likewise support Mosaic authorship of the Book of Exodus (Mark 7:10, 12:26, Luke 2:22-23, John 5:46-47, 7:19, Acts 3:22, Rom 10:5).²²

2.1.2 Purpose of Writing

The Book of Exodus is an account of redemption from bondage, leading to consecration of the covenant and the pitching of God's royal tent in the earth--all through the ministry of a chosen mediator [Moses]. And it challenges the reader to believe that the story

²¹ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Exodus*, 2015 Edition, 1, Sonic Light: <http://www.soniclight.com/> (accessed on March 27, 2015).

²² The Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Volume 2*, 287-288.

discloses God's purpose in history--the purpose He intends to fulfill through Israel.²³ It tells a story what God did for them, and what He demanded from them.²⁴

2.1.3 Historical Context

The book of Exodus depicts a journey. It begins in Egypt. It ends in a tent.²⁵ The passage of this study took place in the wilderness. Moses had fled from Egypt after Pharaoh sought to kill him. In Exodus 3:1, it is told that he (Moses) is married and is working for his father-in-law Jethro. The story resumes when Moses, while tending his flocks, arrives at Horeb, the mountain of God, which is also known as Mount Sinai. It was here that he encountered God in the form of a flame in the midst of a bush. The passage describes this theophany, during which God entered into a dialogue with Moses. In this encounter, God revealed His name to Moses. In so doing, God responded to Moses' insecurity, while Moses, in contrast, demonstrated his uncertainty about God. However, God used him (Moses) as a vessel to lead His people out of their bondage in Egypt.

2.2 The Hebrew Text: Exodus 3:14 – 17

(Exod 3:14)



²³ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 9.

²⁴ John H. Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus* (London, Great Britain: University Press, 1997), 1.

²⁵ Scott Grant, *A Study Series in Exodus*, 15/11/1999, 1, <http://www.pbc.org/dp/grant/exodus/index.html> (accessed on March 20, 2015).

(Exod 3:15)

יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה
לְ יְהוָה

(Exod 3:16)

יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה

(Exod 3:17)

2.3 Literal Translation of the Text (Exodus 3:14-17)

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you ' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

16"Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.

17 "So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

2.4 Exegesis of the Text (Exodus 3:14-17)

From the passage it can be seen that God is concerned about the deliverance of His people (Israel) from bondage. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had promised to bring them out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. Moreover, Moses had another objection to God's call because he was worried that the people would ask him this difficult question: "what is the name of the God who has sent you?" God provided Moses the answer. The Exodus 3:14-17 pericope, however, contains many important ideas about God. Particularly, His revelatory name in verses 14 and 15. Thus to know God's "name" is to know Him and His character.

Verse 14

וַיֹּאמֶר

Prefixed vav conjunction (And, so when, now); 'amar, Qal imperfect verb 3rd person masculine singular (he) i.e. to say, speak, utter

ל

Noun common plural Masculine absolute 'elohiym "God"

'el a participle preposition "to" denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; Mosheh "Moses" proper noun, no gender, no number, no state

'ehyeh, Qal imperfect, first person common singular (ie "I am"), of the verb (haya, "to be")

'asher pronoun relative (who, which, what, that)

'ehyeh, Qal imperfect, first person common singular (ie "I am"), of the verb (hayah, "to be")

prefixed vav conjunction (And, so when, now); 'amar, Qal imperfect verb 3rd person masculine singular (he) i.e. to say, speak, utter

koh particle adverb (like this, thus or so, here or hither, now)

'amar, Qal imperfect verb 2nd person masculine singular (you) i.e. to say, speak, utter

prefixed preposition (to, for); bene noun masculine plural and in a construct state (sons of) from ben noun masculine singular (a son)

Yisra'el noun proper, no gender, no number, no state (Israel, the name of the descendants and the nation of the descendants of Jacob)

'ehyeh, Qal imperfect, first person common singular (ie "I am"), of the verb (haya, "to be")

shalach Qal perfect verb 3rd person singular (to send away, for, or out); niy suffix 1st person common singular (me)

'el particle preposition "to" denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; kem 2nd person masculine plural "you"

Translation:

Verse 14: *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

According to Parkhurst, God gave Moses a name rich in later philosophical and theological meaning. Moses had asked God, "Who am I?" God gave Moses his [His] name, "I Am Who I Am." Moses depended on God for his [His] existence, for being who he [He] was and who he [He] would become. The LORD did not depend on anyone or anything outside of himself [Himself] for who he [He] was and what he [He] could and would do.²⁶

²⁶ L.G. Parkhurst, Jr, International Bible Lessons: *Commentary on Exodus 3:7-17*, 2013, 3, <http://www.ouosu.com/IBLC/>, (accessed on April, 03, 2015).

The Divine name in Hebrew is

ehyeh asher ehyeh, literally “I Will Be

What (or ‘Whatever’) I Will Be,” a mysterious phrase that calls for explanation and when explained, still leaves God surrounded by mystery and awe. The one who comes to know this God, cannot “put God in a box,” pretending to know all about God and the Divine nature, since he or she knows the Divine name—rather, the believer must recognize God’s hidden, mysterious nature, which leaves the future open to surprise: God will be whatever He will be!

Darwell further maintains that, in fact, the text depicts this answer as the Divine name: “I Will Be What (ever) I Will Be.” ...We [he] insist that this “name” leaves the Deity surrounded by mystery, but gives the assurance to Moses that this hidden, mysterious God, YHWH, Will Be—will be with him, and will accomplish whatever He wants to accomplish through Moses.²⁷

John Dobson points out that, Moses asks a question about the name of God. Why was this important? In the Old Testament times the name a person was given often showed the sort of person he was. The name of the prophet who challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel was Elijah (Hebrew Elihahu) which means ‘My God is Yahweh’. His name revealed his character.²⁸ He further maintains that, God’s ‘name’ is important because it reveals His character. The name of God given is first of all, “I am who I am”. The Hebrew word translated “I am” is Ehyeh, for when God speaks of Himself He says, “I am”. But when men [human] speak of Him they say ‘He is’. The Hebrew word Yahweh probably means, ‘He is’ or ‘He who is’. When the Israelites spoke of God as ‘He

²⁷ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 185-190.

²⁸ Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus*, 21.

who is', they thought of Him as the God who had been with them in the past and would be with them in the future to help them.²⁹

The meaning and interpretation of Jehovah/Yahweh seems beyond doubt that the name contains the verb *hayah* "to be". The question is whether or not it is the verb "to be" in the Qal, "He is," or the Hiphil, "He causes to be". The strongest objection to this latter interpretation is that it necessitates a correction in the reading of the key text in v.14: "I am that I am," Most likely the name should be translated something like "I am who is," or "I am he who exists" as reflected by the LXX's *ego eimi ho ov*. The echo of this is found surely in the NT, Rev 1:8. More than anything perhaps, the "is-ness" of God is expressive both of his presence and his existence. Neither concept can be said to be more important than the other.³⁰

William Dumbell argues that, whether the new divine name ("Yahweh") which God himself [Himself] reveals to Moses at the burning bush is new in the absolute sense is a question which need not detain us [him] for any length of time...the general intent of the episode in Exodus 3 is to assure Moses and Israel of Yahweh's presence with her in her developing history. God would be known by his [His] future acts, by the unfolding of his [His] character by both deed and word.³¹

²⁹ Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus*, 21.

³⁰ R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Volume 1* (Chicago, USA: Moody Press, 1980), 214.

³¹ William J. Dumbell, *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament* (Leicester, England: Inver-Varsity Press, 1989), 30.

Verse 15

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וְ

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Prefixed vav conjunction (And, so when, now); 'amar, Qal imperfect verb 3rd
person masculine singular (he) i.e. to say, speak, utter

ʾowd particle adverb (iteration or continuance, again, repeatedly, still, more)

וְ

Noun common Masculine plural absolute 'elohiym "God"

'el particle preposition "to" denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a
quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; Mosheh "Moses" proper name
masculine

koh particle adverb (like this, thus or so, here or hither, now)

'amar, Qal imperfect verb 2nd person masculine singular (you) i.e. to say, speak, utter

'el particle preposition "to" denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a
quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; bene noun common masculine plural
construct (sons of) from ben noun masculine singular (a son)

Yisra'el proper noun no gender, no number, no state (Israel, the name of the descendants
and the nation of the descendants of Jacob)

Yehovah proper noun, no gender, no number, no state (Self-Existent or Eternal, Jehovah, Jewish national name of God)

אלוהי

Elohee noun common masculine plural construct (God of) from elohiym noun masculine (God).

'a·vo·tei·Chem (your fathers), pronominal suffix for 2nd person masculine plural chem (your) and av masculine plural for av (father) in the construct state

אלוהי

Elohee noun common masculine plural construct (God of) from elohiym noun masculine i.e. God

'Abraham proper noun (father of a multitude or Abraham, the later name of Abram)

אלוהי

Elohee noun common masculine plural construct (God of) from elohiym noun masculine i.e. God

Yitschaq proper noun (laughter, Isaac son of Abraham)

ו

Prefixed vav particle conjunction, vav consecutive (and, so, when); Elohee noun masculine and in a genitive case (God of) from elohiym noun masculine i.e. God

Ya`aqob proper noun (heel-catcher (i.e. supplanter), Jacob the Israelitish patriarch)

shalach Qal perfect verb 3rd person masculine singular i.e. to send away, for, or out
; niy suffix 1st person common singular i.e. me

ʾel a preposition “to” denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; kem 2nd person masculine plural “you”

zeh masculine demonstrative pronoun, this or that

shem noun masculine (an appellation, as a mark or memorial of individuality, honor, authority, character)

prefixed preposition (to, for);

ʾowlam noun common masculine singular, no state (concealed, i.e. the vanishing point, time out of mind (past or future), eternity, always)

ve prefixed conjunction (and, so, when)

zeh adjective masculine singular, no state, demonstrative pronoun, this or that

zeker noun common masculine singular construct suffix 1st person common singular (a memorial, memory, remembrance, commemoration)

particle preposition

dowr noun common masculine singular absolute (a revolution of time, i.e. an age or generation, also a dwelling)

dowr noun common masculine singular absolute (a revolution of time, i.e. an age or generation, also a dwelling)

Translation:

Verse 15: *God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you ' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.*

As a true prophet of God, God told Moses exactly what to say to the people and to Pharaoh. In addition to giving Moses His name, God wanted Moses to tell the people that He was not “a new god” that had met Moses on a mountain. Rather than being “a new god,” the LORD was the God Who had been with and had led their most important ancestors, the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.³²

Dumbell comments, God would be known by his future acts, by the unfolding of his character by both deed and word. We [he] should note also that verses 13-15 links this new revelation to the patriarchal period. Moses is to tell the Israelites that the God who has sent him is “the God of your [their] fathers.”³³

According to Gowan, Moses was given a name: “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me [Moses] to you': This is my [God] name forever, and this is my [God] title for all generations”.³⁴

This name, associated closely with the ancestral God, is given an active sense with the sending of Moses (vv14-15) for the purpose of the fulfilment of God's promises of

³² Parkhurst, Jr, International Bible Lessons: *Commentary on Exodus 3:7-17*, 3.

³³ Dumbbell, *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament*, 31.

³⁴ Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 82.

deliverance and land (vv16-17). This suggests the sense that Yahweh will be faithfully God for Israel; the people can count on God to be faithful to promises made.³⁵

Expositor's Bible Commentary argues, Elohim gave two answers (one in v.14, one in v.15) to the problem posed by Moses, and not three as some scholars allege...The second answer in v.15 builds on the basic explanation of the meaning of Yahweh's name in v.14 and links that name with previous and all future generations.³⁶

The meaning is that, this is the name to be remembered throughout coming generations. This God, YHWH, with the mysterious name that means He is the God of the future, Who will reveal Himself through His free actions in history, is the same God Who had made Himself known to the fathers, and Who has entered into covenant with the fathers, and Whose covenant with them is still in force, in spite of their earthly deaths. He is not a new, unknown God, but the same mysterious, guiding, covenanting, saving God Who has been and is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is, He is both the God of their past, and the God of their future as well.³⁷

Verse 16

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³⁵ Alexander, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 255.

³⁶ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Volume 2*, 320.

³⁷ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 192-195,197.



halak Qal imperative verb masculine singular (to walk)

ve prefixed particle conjunction (and, so, when)

'acaph verb Qal vav consecutive perfect 2nd person masculine singular (to gather for any purpose, to receive, take away, put up, restore, etc.)

'eth particle direct object marker;

zaqen adjective masculine plural construct (old)

Yisra'el proper noun no gender, no number, no state (Israel, the name of the descendants and the nation of the descendants of Jacob).

Prefixes vav conjunction (And, so when, now); 'amar, Qal perfect verb 2nd person masculine singular (you) i.e. to say, speak, utter.

el particle preposition suffix (to, into, towards); hem, 3rd person masculine plural (them)

Yehovah proper name (Self-Existent or Eternal, Jehovah, Jewish national name of God)



Elohee noun masculine plural construct (God of) from elohiym noun masculine (God).

'a·vo·tei·Chem (your fathers), pronominal suffix for 2nd masculine plural chem (your) and av masculine plural for av (father) in the construct state

ra'ah (raw-aw') verb niph'al perfect 3rd person masculine singular (to see, perceive)

'el particle preposition suffix 1st person common singular “to” denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among.

ֱלֹהִים

Elohee noun masculine plural construct (God of) from elohiym noun masculine (God).

'Abraham proper noun (father of a multitude or Abraham, the later name of Abram)

Yitschaq proper noun (laughter, Isaac son of Abraham)

Prefix vav particle conjunction (And, so when, now); Ya`aqob proper noun (heel-catcher (i.e. supplanter), Jacob the Israelitish patriarch)

le a prefixed preposition (to, for); 'amar, verb Qal infinitive construct 3rd person masculine singular (he) i.e. to say, speak, utter.

paqad verb Qal infinitive absolute 3rd person masculine singular (to visit (with friendly or hostile intent), to oversee, muster, charge, care for, miss, deposit, etc)

paqad Qal perfect verb 1st person common singular (to visit (with friendly or hostile intent), to oversee, muster, charge, care for, miss, deposit, etc)

'eth particle direct object marker; pronominal suffix for 2nd masculine plural (you).

ʿasah Qal verb Qal passive particle 3rd person masculine singular absolute (to do or make)

le prefixed preposition (to, for); pronominal suffix for 2nd masculine plural chem (you).

Mitsrayim proper noun (Egypt)

Translation:

Verse 16: *"Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.*

According to Darwell, Where the Hebrew text reads eth ziqney yisrael,

“to officials of Israel,” the Samaritan Pentateuch, the original Greek and the Syriac translation all interpolate the noun “sons of,” reading eth-ziqney

bheney yisrael, “to officials of sons of Israel.” Where the Hebrew text reads וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, yitschaq, commonly spelled Isaac, the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Syriac translation both read וְיִצְחָק, weyitschaq, i.e., “and Isaac.”³⁸ He further argues, the phrase

, yitschaq weya aqobh, “Isaac and Jacob,” is changed by the Greek translation to

³⁸ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 197-198.

read

kai theos Isaak kai theos Iakob, “and God of

Isaac and God of Jacob.” The “memorial name,” just given in verse 15, is repeated once again, making it obvious that it is not just the name YHWH, but “YHWH, God of your fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob,” that is meant.³⁹

Expositor’s Bible Commentary comments, the “elders of Israel” were the heads of various families or tribes, each having one or more to preside or rule. Moses was to deliver God’s message to this body of men and to get them to accompany him when he went to pharaoh. The message came in the name of the Lord, who was the same as the God of the patriarchs.⁴⁰

That seems perfectly straightforward, and then the instructions of what he is to say to the elders of Israel, which begin with the same introduction, may be taken as the continuation of the commission without any great difficulty.⁴¹

In the words of Parkhurst, God told His prophet Moses exactly what to do as well as say. Moses was to work with and through the established leaders of God’s people in Egypt, who were also slaves in Egypt. Many of these leaders would be Levites, as were Moses and Aaron. Moses would need many faithful leaders to help him guide and govern such a host of people as they wandered in the wilderness and as he prepared them to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. Moses would tell Pharaoh that they wanted to leave Egypt in order to worship the LORD, and they did go to worship the

³⁹ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 197-198.

⁴⁰ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Volume 2*, 322.

⁴¹ Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 82.

LORD where Moses had met the LORD on the mountain (in fulfillment of what God had promised Moses).⁴²

Verse 17

Particle conjunction (And, so when, now); 'amar, Qal verb (vav consecutive imperfect) 3rd person masculine singular (he) i.e. to say, speak, utter

`alah verb hiphil imperfect 1st person common singular (to ascend, intransitively (be high) or actively (mount), as follow)

'eth particle direct object marker; pronominal suffix for 2nd masculine plural chem (you)

particle preposition (from, out of); `only noun masculine (depression, i.e. misery)

Mitsrayim proper noun (Egypt)

'el a preposition “to” denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among;

⁴² Parkhurst, Jr, International Bible Lessons: *Commentary on Exodus 3:7-17*, 4.

'erets noun common feminine singular construct (the earth (at large, or partitively a land)

ha definite article (the)

Kna`aniy proper noun (Kenaanite or inhabitant of Kenaan, the Canaanites standing for their neighbors the Ishmaelites, who conducted mercantile caravans)

Particle conjunction (And, so when, now);

ha definite article (the);

Chittiy noun masculine (a Chittite, or descendant of Cheth)

Particle conjunction (And, so when, now);

ha definite article (the);

'Emoriy noun masculine (thus, a mountaineer, an Emorite, one of the Canaanitish tribes)

Particle conjunction (And, so when, now);

ha definite article (the);

Prizziy proper noun (inhabitant of the open country, a Perizzite, one of the Canaanitish tribes)

Particle conjunction (And, so when, now);

ha definite article (the);

Chivviy noun masculine (a villager, a Chivvite, one of the aboriginal tribes of Israel)

Particle conjunction (And, so when, now);

ha definite article (the);

Yebuwciy noun masculine (a Jebusite or inhabitant of Jebus)

'el a preposition “to” denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among;

'erets noun common feminine singular absolute (the earth (at large, or partitively a land)

zuwb (zoob) verb Qal participle feminine singular construct (to flow freely (as water), i.e. (specifically) to have a (sexual) flux, to waste away, also to overflow)

chalab noun masculine i.e. milk (as the richness of kine)

Particle conjunction (And, so when, now);

dbash (deb-ash') noun masculine (honey (from its stickiness), by analogy, syrup)

Translation:

Verse 17: *"So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey."*

According to the Expositor's Bible Commentary, It began with a repetition of words used by Joseph on his death bed: literally, "I have surely visited you" and "I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt". Joseph had prophesied the very deliverance announced by Moses (see Gen 50:24). Thus the repetition here was equivalent to saying

that the Lord would complete and fulfil what he [He] had begun to do as spoken by Joseph.⁴³

In all the promises to the ancient ancestors of Israel in Genesis, never is the land of Israel described in such glowing terms as "a land flowing with milk and honey." Sarna states (according to Darwell) that "It would seem that the 'milk and honey' motif has been deliberately avoided in the promises to the patriarchs. For these elect individuals, abiding and implicit faith in God's word was the lodestone of their lives; trial and tribulation was to be their lot. However, for an entire people suffering slavery in Egypt, emphasis on the fertility and attractiveness of the land of promise plays an important role in fortifying their morale, in raising their spirits, and in sustaining their courage in the face of adversity."⁴⁴

God recognized and acknowledged to the Israelites that He saw their misery in slavery and He had heard their cries. God would give them the land He had promised them when He spoke to them through Moses. Because of their sins, the tribes Moses listed in Genesis 3:17 needed to be removed from the land, see Genesis 15:16—"And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." The LORD would help the Israelites possess the land, and God wanted the leaders and people to know that the land was good and productive. It fed cattle and produced crops that fed honeybees and produced much honey.⁴⁵

⁴³ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Volume 2*, 322.

⁴⁴ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 200.

⁴⁵ Parkhurst, Jr, International Bible Lessons: *Commentary on Exodus 3:7-17*, 4.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the historical background to the book of Exodus, its authorship and date, purpose of writing, and the historical context. Also, the Hebrew text, the translation of the text, and the exegesis of the text on Exodus 3:14-17 were looked at. In the next chapter the researcher shall be discussing the general issues concerning God, which include: His personality, His nature, His revelatory names and His Covenant.

CHAPTER THREE

GENERAL ISSUES OF GOD

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher shall look at the Personality of God, the Revelation of God in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament, the Revelatory Names of God and their significance, and the God of Covenant.

3.1 The Personality of God

God is not an impersonal force or principle but a divine relational Being who desires to communicate and commune with His creation. To say that God is a Person is to say that He is rational and relational Being. God possesses all the characteristics of personality, that is, name, mind, will and emotion, but on an infinitely higher level than humanity. That is to say, God is not only limited to a personality level. God is Spirit, God is Life, God is Perfect, God is Unique, and God is Eternal. To talk about His immanency is to say that He is personally present in and involved with His creation, although He is not limited by His creation. According to David F. Hinson, the term immanence is used to describe God's nearness to us [human beings]. His intention to share a living active fellowship with humankind, who can become His people.⁴⁶ The personality of God does not mean that He is merely an exalted man or that He has a physical body except as seen in Christ. Thiessen explains, the Scripture writers ascribe both self-consciousness (Exd. 3:14; Isa. 42:5; 1 Cor. 2:10) and self-determination (Job 23:13; Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:9, 11; Heb. 6:17) to God. He further explains that, self-consciousness is more than consciousness. As a

⁴⁶Hinson, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 28.

self-conscious being, man relates his feelings, appetites, and thoughts to himself. Likewise, self-determination is more than determination. Man has the feeling of freedom and makes his choices from within, in view of motives and ends. So, God is a being who can say "I" and "me" and can respond when addressed as "you".⁴⁷ Furthermore, Scripture also represents God as possessing other characteristics of personality: intellect (Gen. 18:19; Exd. 3:7; Acts 15:18), sensibility (Gen. 6:6; Ps. 103:8-14; Jn. 3:16), volition (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 115:3; Jn. 6:38), speaking (Gen. 1:3), seeing (Gen. 11:5), hearing (Ps. 94:9), grieving (Gen. 6:6), repenting (Gen. 6:6), being angry (Deu. 1:37), jealous (Exd. 20:5), compassionate (Ps. 111:4), creator (Acts 14:15), upholder (Neh. 9:6), ruler (Ps. 75:7; Dan. 4:32), sustainer of all things (Ps. 104:27-30; Matt. 6:26-30), and others.

According to Gerald Bray, God is one Being, totally different in every way from anything He has created. It also emphasizes the fact that although God's nature is so different from ours, He nevertheless can, and wants, to enter into relationship with us. This is made possible by what we call 'personhood', which is a characteristic of God that He has shared with us.⁴⁸ Because God has personality, He can communicate with and relate to human and the primarily basis for God and human relationship is spiritual because God in His essential nature is Spirit as revealed by Jesus in John 4:24.

3.2 The Revelation of God in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament

The revelation of God is God's self-disclosure. In other words it is an act whereby the hidden, unknown God shows Himself to humanity. Phenomenologically, every religion finds its starting point in a revelation. One must ask these critical questions: Why God

⁴⁷Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 77.

⁴⁸ Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, 53.

needs to reveal Himself? In what forms did God revealed Himself to humanity in antiquity?

In answering the first question, God is an infinite Being but He wants to establish a relationship with, and further reveals Himself to humanity (Exd. 3:1-6, 13-14; Deu. 29:29). God desires human to seek Him and find Him (1 Ch. 28:9; Jer. 29:13) and that is why He made human being in His own Spiritual image with the ability to relate to Him through mind, will, emotions and personality as narrated in Genesis 1:26-27.

Again, in answering the second question, Michael Heiser says, since people [humanity] cannot possibly process God's nature as a disembodied, formless spirit, theophany allows God to make His presence known in a physical way that people can discern through their senses.⁴⁹ He further defines theophany as an appearance of God that people [human beings] can discern—not all appearances of God are recognized by people. The term comes from the Greek theos, “god,” and the verb phaino, “to appear” or “be revealed.”⁵⁰

There are four ways that God made Himself known in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament: theophany in nature, theophany in a human form, the Divine Name used in reference to a Person, and Yahweh as the Word.⁵¹

A. Appearances in Nature

Thunderstorm or whirlwind theophanies are common and other theophanies are more obscure, like in Gen 3:8, when Adam and Eve hear “the sound of the Lord God walking

⁴⁹ Michael S. Heiser, (*Theophany in the Old Testament* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014).

⁵⁰ Heiser, *Theophany in the Old Testament* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014.

⁵¹Heiser, *Theophany in the Old Testament* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014.

in the cool of the day.” God revealed Himself to the first man. Adam heard the voice of God; he felt the presence of the Almighty, and learnt the amount of evil man brings upon himself by disobeying the word of God.⁵² Other natural elements serve as theophanies, include a pillar fire and/or cloud, fire and smoke.

B. Appearances as a Person

The earliest theophany—aside from the possibility of Gen 3:8—is God’s appearance to Abraham. This appearance was captured in Acts 7:2–4: “Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.”⁵³ The word “appeared” indicates that the call of Abraham was a visible phenomenon. But Stephen’s reference to the theophany of Abraham is not the first time it is mentioned. When passages in Genesis are understood collectively, it is clear that God appeared to Abraham as a man—Stephen’s source is either Gen 12:1–6 or Gen 15:1–6. These appearances culminate in Gen 18, where the embodied Yahweh eats a meal in Abraham’s presence.

C. The Divine Name Used in Reference to a Person

Genesis 18:1–2 uses the divine name, Yahweh, when referring to one of the three men that appeared to Abraham. The humanity of Yahweh is apparent when He and the other two “men” eat (Gen 18:22; compare Gen 19:1; Gen 18:3–8). Abraham’s objection in God issuing destruction on Sodom further indicates he is addressing Yahweh. Yahweh appears to Isaac in Gen 26:2 and 26:23–24. His next appearance is to Isaac’s son, Jacob in Gen

⁵²Friedlander, *The Jewish Religion*, 47.

⁵³ King James Version, Acts 7:2.

28:10–13. Later, in Genesis 32, Jacob wrestles with a “man” whom Hosea later calls *elohim* (Hos 12:3–4).⁵⁴

D. Yahweh as the Word

Heiser maintains that in one of Yahweh’s appearances in human form to Abraham, He is referred to as “the word of Yahweh” (Gen 15:1). This same language is used in 1 Sam 3:1–21, where the young Samuel’s sleep is disturbed by a voice calling for him. The voice ends up being the “word of Yahweh” in human form. Samuel’s experience of the “word” is both visual and auditory. Once Eli understands what is happening, he instructs Samuel to respond; the word then comes again and stands before him—God’s Word embodied. Jeremiah’s call as a prophet goes one step further: the word, identified as Yahweh, physically touches him (Jer 1:9).⁵⁵

These theophanies make sense of why and how God chose to appear in human form.

In the New Testament these theophanies set the precedent for Jesus. This description is the point of origin for the Apostle John’s description of Jesus as “the word” and God “in flesh” (John 1:1–3, 14). The difference with Jesus, though, is that His own was incarnation that is God becoming a human and live as human.

3.3 The Revelatory Names of God and their Significance

No one can get to know God without the knowledge of Him. The names or titles given to God in Scripture reveal much about His characteristics: who He is, what He is like and what He does. When the Bible uses the phrase the “name of God” or “in the name of the

⁵⁴ Heiser, *Theophany in the Old Testament* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014.

⁵⁵ Heiser, *Theophany in the Old Testament* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014.

Lord", it refers to His total person, that is, all that He is. And God's name is excellent and majestic. The revelatory names of God have being grouped into three (3) categories: the three (3) primary Old Testament names of God, the Old Testament main 'El' compound names, and the Old Testament main Yahweh compound names.⁵⁶

A. The three (3) primary Old Testament names of God

-) Elohim (God) means "mighty or strong one"; it denotes the power and pre-eminence of God and is especially used in relation to creation and strength (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 68:1). El (singular) and Elohim (plural) are usually more like titles than names. They may also refer to false "gods" (Gen. 35:2).
-) Adonai (Lord) means "master, sovereign ruler or lord" and generally denotes the authority and position of God (Ps. 68:32; Isa. 6:8-11). Adonai is also more like a title than a name.
-) Yahweh ("LORD") means most likely the self-existent one (I Am Who I Am - Exd. 3:14) and denotes God's personal name. It is often used in relationship to God as redeemer and covenant keeper. God's personal name was so sacred to most Jews that they feared to write, say it, or misused it (Exd. 20:7; Deu. 5:11) and usually substituted by Adonai.

B. The Old Testament main 'El' compound names

-) El Shaddai means "God Almighty" and pictures God as the all powerful source of blessing and comfort (Gen. 17:1; Exd. 6:3; Ps. 68:14).

⁵⁶ Dennis J. Mock, *Biblical Doctrine Survey* (Atlanta, GA: Zondervan Publishing Press, 1989), 71-74.

- J El Elyon means "God Most High" and pictures God's strength and sovereignty (Gen. 14:18; Ps. 9:2).
- J El Roi means "God who sees" and denotes God's personal care and presence (Gen. 16:13).
- J El Olam means "Everlasting or Eternal God" and pictures God's infinite strength (Gen. 21:33; Isa. 40:28).

C. The Old Testament main Yahweh compound names

- J Yahweh Jireh means the "Lord provides" and signifies the Lord who provides for His people (Gen. 22:14)
- J Yahweh Tsebaoth means the "Lord of hosts" and pictures God as the commander in of the heavenly armies (Jos. 5:14; 1Sam. 1:3; Ps. 24:10).
- J Yahweh Rophe (or Rapha) means the "Lord who heals" and denotes the physical and spiritual healing power of God (Exd. 15:26).
- J Yahweh Shalom means the "Lord is peace" and declares the lack of tension, conflict and strife in God (Jdg. 6:24).
- J Yahweh Nissi means the "Lord is my banner" and signifies that the battle is the Lord's (Exd. 17:15).
- J Yahweh Tsidkenu means the "Lord our righteousness" and signifies God as the only source of true righteousness (Jer. 23:6).
- J Yahweh Maccaddeschcem means the "Lord our sanctifier" (or the Lord who makes you holy) and signifies that God is the one who sets people apart and makes them holy (Exd. 31:13; Lev. 20:8).

- J Yahweh Raah (or rohi) means the "Lord our Shepherd" and denotes God's loving care, protection and provision for His people (Ps. 23:1).
- J Yahweh Elohim means the LORD who is God (Gen. 2:4).
- J Yahweh Mephalti means the Lord is my Deliverer and denotes God's absolute power to rescue His people from their enemies (Ps. 70:5).
- J Yahweh Misquabbi means the Lord my Stronghold and signifies God in virtue of His righteousness and righteous judgments, was indeed a high tower to the oppressed, and the place of security for all troubled hearts (Ps. 18:2).
- J Yahweh Tsur means the Lord my Rock and denotes the stability and protection Yahweh provides (Ps. 19:14).
- J Yahweh Shammah means the Lord is there and signifies the manifest presence and power of Yahweh (Ezek. 48:35).
- J Yahweh Magen means the Lord my Shield and pictures God as the preserver and protector of His children (Ps. 3:3).
- J Yahweh Machsi means the Lord my Refuge and signifies that God is our only safety from the avenger (Ps. 91:9).
- J Yahweh Go-el means the Lord your Redeemer and pictures God as the emancipator of the captives (Is. 60:16).
- J Yahweh Hoseenu means the Lord our maker and denotes His ability to fashion something out of what already exists (Ps. 95:6).

3.4 God of Covenant

When God reveals Himself to people, as He did to Moses, it is not to give them information about Himself, but to challenge them to trust Him and to go forward in life

with Him.⁵⁷ God has plans for human beings, therefore He makes His plans known through words of promise (or covenant), and does what He promises. The Abrahamic covenant is the foundational covenant of promise in the Bible. On it rests God's plan for His chosen people Israel. God promised to bless Abraham and make him great, and also make from him a great nation and to give to his descendants, a kingdom and a land. Moreover, God promised to bless all people on earth through Abraham. So when the time was set for God to fulfil His promise, He revealed Himself to Moses. Moses was pasturing Jethro's flock and he was not expecting anything unusual to happen. Moses was not seeking for God but God was seeking for him. Therefore, God revealed Himself to Moses, and the whole course of Moses' life was changed. God spoke to Moses about what He was going to do for His people. God makes Himself known not only by words but also by doing what He has said. According to Dobson, the name that God made known to Moses, was particularly to remind Moses of the promises He had made to Abraham and had renewed to Isaac and to Jacob. Moses and the Israelites were to have new hope and courage because God was about to fulfil His promises and give them the land of Canaan.⁵⁸

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we looked at, the Personality of God, the Revelation of God in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament, the Revelatory Names of God and their significance, and finally the God of Covenant. In the next chapter the researcher shall be analyzing the findings and its implications on contemporary Christianity.

⁵⁷Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus*, 20.

⁵⁸Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus*, 20.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will look at the following: analysis of findings, the Revelation of God, the Significance of the names of God in contemporary Christianity, the name of God in the African Traditional Religion (ATR) as compare to that in the Bible. Again, the implications of findings will be dealt with. Both the interviews and the participant observations conducted by the researcher shall also be analyzed.

4.1 Analysis of Findings

From the passage (Exodus 3:14-17), it can be said that God revealed much more than just His name; He revealed the essence of who He is. He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—the God who promised, and has always been with humanity. He is also the great I AM; the One who is with human beings today and who will be with them forevermore.

It was also noticed that God's name "I AM" which was revealed by God to Moses upon his request expresses His self-existence and the unchangeableness of His nature. He is the "eternal present," because He always was and always will be. Because He is not limited to time and space. He does not change or change His mind. He is immutable.

Furthermore, it was found out that each of the revelatory names and titles of God describes a different aspect of His nature and character because names are not mere arbitrary and meaningless labels, rather, they communicate important information about

persons, or some aspect of their story. When the Bible uses the phrase the "name of God" or "in the name of the Lord", it refers to His total person, that is, all that He is. And God's name is excellent and majestic. Against this background God was known, in the Old Testament period, through His revelatory names which described His multifaceted attributes.

4.1.1 The Revelation of God

According to Gerald Bray, God makes himself known to us [humanity] by revelation.⁵⁹

From the study one can observe that theophany allows God to make His presence known in a physical way that people can discern through their senses. A theophany was defined as an appearance of God that people can discern—not all appearances of God are recognized by human beings. The term “theophany” comes from the Greek *theos*, “god,” and the verb *phaino*, “to appear” or “be revealed.” In an interview with Gabriel Owusu Asare, he said that humans get to know God (who is an infinite being) through analogy which in Latin is called "Simpliciter Diversum Secundum Quid Idem" means "simply different somehow the same" or "somethings which are different but somehow the same."⁶⁰ Therefore theophanies make sense of why and how God chooses to appear in human form in order to have fellowship with humanity. However, in the New Testament Apostle John's description of Jesus as “the word” and God “in flesh” (John 1:1–3, 14) is

⁵⁹Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, 15.

⁶⁰An interview with Gabriel Owusu Asare (Monsignor), Roman Catholic Church Retired Priest, Samaritan Villa Guest House, 8th May, 2015.

an exception in that Jesus' own was incarnation, that is God becoming a human being and live as such.⁶¹

Furthermore, Komfour Akua maintains that Onyankopon (God the creator) relates to us [humanity] through the abosom (lesser divinities). In other words, one can only know God through “abosom”.⁶² It is true that humans cannot know God except He reveals Himself to them but on how God reveals Himself as stated by Komfour Akua is biblically incorrect, even though some scholars maintain that the abosom in the African Traditional Religion⁶³ (ATR), the Akans to be precise, are what Christians refer to as angels in the Bible. Michael Heiser gave four ways that God made Himself known in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament: theophany in nature, theophany in a human form, the Divine Name used in reference to a Person, and Yahweh as the Word.⁶⁴

4.1.2 The Significance of the names of God in contemporary Christianity

In Christian theology the name of God has always had much deeper meaning and significance than being just a label or designator. God's various names show that He is at work in the world and in the lives of Christians.⁶⁵ As the Creator, God brought the world into being. Before anything existed, He was. He is all-powerful (Omnipotent), stronger than any force in the universe. He never changes, and He is present everywhere at one and the same time. God knows everything about humanity. It is impossible for humanity to hide their thoughts and actions from Him. All these truths about Him are illustrated in

⁶¹Heiser, *Theophany in the Old Testament* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014.

⁶²An interview with Komfour Akua (Traditional Priest), Tafo Ahenbronum, 6th May, 2015.

⁶³African Traditional Religion is a revealed religion that came into existence through the peoples' (indigenes) experience with God from time immemorial. It has no sacred literature and no human founder, therefore this religion has not been named after anyone.

⁶⁴Heiser, *Theophany in the Old Testament* in Faithlife Study Bible, 25-09-2014.

⁶⁵Knight, *The Names of God*, 15.

the various names or titles assigned to Him both in the Bible and in human history. According to Elijah Obeng Baffour-Agyei, God's name is supreme, and that anyone who calls on His name is (or will be) saved. He further maintains that those who rely on God's name see the reality of God.⁶⁶ All the revelatory names of God tell humans His divine sovereignty over all creation both spiritual and physical. The traditions and hymnody of Christian liturgy have for long emphasized the importance of acting in the name of God, e.g. the Sanctus⁶⁷ states: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord".⁶⁸ Against this background the revelatory names of God are of great significance in contemporary Christianity because the names or titles express His multifaceted attributes.

4.1.3 The name of God in the African Traditional Religion (ATR) as compared to that in the Bible

Africans belief in God is based on God's revelation of Himself to them. As a result every African community has a local name for God. God has always been real and never an abstract concept to Africans. The names which various African communities give to God project their best expression of Him in their religious experience. These names are descriptive in nature because they portray the character as well as the attributes of God as understood by the people. Almost all the names or titles the Akans have attributed to God are close to those revelatory names of God in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible. The following are some of those names of God in the Akans' theology:

⁶⁶ Interview with Elijah Obeng Baffour-Agyei (Rev.), Presbyterian Church at Ntiri Buoho in Suame District, 8th May, 2015.

⁶⁷ Sanctus is a Latin word which means Holy and it's also a hymn honoring and praising God.

⁶⁸ Names of God in Christianity, http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Christianity (accessed on June 3, 2015).

-)] “Onyankopon” means the Supreme Being who alone is Great
-)] “Onyame” means the Supreme Being
-)] “Amowia” means the One who makes the sun shine
-)] “Amosu” means the One who gives rain
-)] “Abommubuwafrɛ” means the One who comes to help you if you cry for him
-)] “Borebore” means the One who creates everything
-)] “Brekyirihunuade” means the One who sees it all
-)] “Nyaamanekose” means the One who comforts you if you are aggrieved
-)] “Tetekwaframua” means the One who has always been there and who will never change
-)] “Otumfoo” means the Powerful One
-)] “Opambo” means the One who mends rocks (like humans sew cloth)
-)] “Ananse Kokroko” means the Great Wise God
-)] “Gye Nyame” means without God nothing holds together or 'except God' or 'unless God'
-)] “Tete Teneneɛ Onyankropon” means the Eternal Righteous God

In Corpus Christi Catholic Church at New Tafo to be precise, I observed the following names that were attributed to God: Onyame Kokoroko (Great God), Onyame Kakraka (Great God), Onyame Kese paa (extremely Great God), Awurade Onyankopon (the Lord God), Otumfoo Onyankopon (the Sovereign God), Onyankopon Mobrohufoo (the Merciful God), Twiaduampon Onyame (Almighty God), Tetebourkorafour Onyame (the ancient rock God), and such like. According to Elijah Obeng Baffour-Agyei, God is

referred as "Onyankopon" the only one God, and "Kotonkronwi oda amansan nyinaa kon mu" the God who rules over everything and everybody.⁶⁹

Against this backdrop it can be said that most of the A.T.R names of God express His multifaceted attributes which are also near in meaning with the revelatory names of God in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. In other words the Akans use many names for God, the Supreme Being. Since the time Christianity was introduced in Ghana, they also refer to the Christian God.

4.2 Implications of Findings

In Christian theology the revelatory names of God have always had much deeper meaning and significance. In the religious sense, the names of God are not human inventions, but have divine origin and are based on divine revelation.

4.2.1 The Significance of the Names of God for Christian Belief and Practice

In Christian teachings the name of God is not simply a label, but involves divine mysteries that require respect and praise. The issue surrounding the use and interpretation of the names of God provide a theological puzzle in that God is "infinite and incomprehensible". Thus the name of God has always been revered in the Christian tradition, and has been associated with His presence. John the evangelist underscored Jesus' sayings in his gospel account "And I made known to them your name, and will make it known, in order that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I may be in them." (John 17:26). From the above statement of Jesus, one can see that the

⁶⁹ Interview with Elijah Obeng Baffour-Agyei (Rev.), Presbyterian Church at Ntiri Buoho in Suame District, 8th May, 2015.

name of God affects positively Christians' communal fellowship and thus brings unity and binds them together.

Furthermore, God revealing His name to Moses shaped Moses' theology and as a result affected positively his spiritual life, his teachings, his ethics, and ministry. Now, Moses who fled before Pharaoh can now stand before him embarking on God's mission without thinking otherwise it's all because of that revelatory name of God the great "I AM". Here, too, one can detect that the names of God have a lot to do with Christian missionary activities, i.e. the *Missio Dei*⁷⁰.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the analysis of findings, the Revelation of God, the significance of the names of God in contemporary Christianity, the name of God in the African Traditional Religion (A.T.R) as compare to that in the Bible. Moreover, the implications of findings and both the interviews and participant observations were examined. The researcher shall be looking at the summary of the study, general conclusion, and recommendations in the next chapter, which is the last chapter of the study.

⁷⁰*Missio Dei* is a Latin word means the Mission of God which signifies God as the real missionary who wants everybody to receive mercy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Summary of the Study

The study examined the significance of the names of God with reference to Exodus 3:14-17. It was seen that all the revelatory names or titles of God describe His nature and essence. Therefore, supreme importance should be attached to them because names are not arbitrary labels as some cultures have maintained. Again, the name that God revealed to Moses upon his request was God's special name and that name was to assure Moses and the Israelites that He will not change, that is the great "I AM". Also, it was noticed that theophanies are very important in that humans can get to know or experience the infinite God. Furthermore, the names of God in the African Traditional Religion (A.T.R) have being adopted into Christianity since those names, in ontological sense, do not cause any serious theological blunder. In other words those A.T.R names of God are in agreement with the revelatory names of God in the Bible.

Historical Critical Method was employed and an enquiry into the original Hebrew text was made in order to ascertain the original meaning of the text, that is, Exodus 3:14-17. Primary sources, secondary sources and participant observation were also employed in gathering data for this study and that made it possible to arrive at this final outcome of the work.

Lastly, the whole study was divided into five (5) chapters with some subdivisions where necessary. It consists of general introduction, exegesis of the text on hand, general issues

of God, interpretation and analysis of findings and lastly summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

5.2 Conclusion

The study addressed the significance of the names of God with reference to Exodus 3:14-17. And it can be concluded that God revealed much more than just His name; He revealed the essence of who He is. He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—the God who promised, and has always been with humanity. He is also the great “I AM”; the One who is with human beings today and who will be with them forevermore. All the revelatory names of God are of supreme importance in human history since they communicate His multifaceted attributes. Here, too, Christians are called to appropriate these revelatory names of God in their day to day endeavours.

It was found out that in tracing through Scriptures that, those various names of God, intimately connects with the varied needs of those with whom He was in relation. All those names and His gracious titles are unfolded to meet the necessities of His people; and when He calls Himself "I AM," it comprehends them all.

Also, it was found out that theophany allows God to make His presence known in a physical way that humanity can discern through their senses since God is Spirit. Furthermore, it was found out that the names of God as revealed in the Bible have bearing on the names of God in the African Traditional Religion.

5.3 Recommendations

It has been established that all the revelatory names of God are of supreme importance and therefore Christians are called to revere and appropriate them in their lives since those names communicate His various attributes.

Also, Christians today are been advised that they may gain great courage from God's self-revelation to Moses in the wilderness in that they can take comfort when God calls them to action, He is not sending them by themselves. Rather, He Himself will go with them and give them the ability to carry out their task. Christians can rest in the knowledge that their success does not depend on who they are, nor will it be hindered by their past or the obstacles ahead. Instead, they may know that their success is directly linked to their connection with the all-powerful, all-consuming self-existing One, the great "I AM".

The following are some of the possible avenues in which further studies can be conducted in the same area of studies or discipline:

-) Is the "I AM" as revealed to Moses by God be His Name: An exegetical analysis of Exodus 3:14
-) The Christian God and the God in African Traditional Religion
-) Jesus' absolute "I Am" sayings in the fourth gospel are directly related to Exodus 3:14.
-) The Effects of the Revelatory Names of God on Mission

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LECTURE NOTE

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How has God revealed Himself in human history?
2. How do you come to know God?
3. What is the personality of God?
4. How do you come to God's name or names and what are some of them?
 - a. Was the name given by Himself?
 - b. Was it given by you yourself?
 - c. Was it by tradition?
5. What is the significance of the name "I AM" (YAHWEH) as revealed to Moses?
6. What are the significance (or consequences) of those names in contemporary Christianity or worshippers?