

Chapter IV

The Eternal Name

One of the most prevalent reasons cited by the various religious groups who claim that the Scriptures give them authority to disregard the sacred name Yahweh is the conviction that it is not an eternal name, only temporary. It is then claimed that the sacred name was only first revealed in the days of Moses. This view is the foundation of the priestly school of thought and the basis for the Elohist's contentions. It holds that there exist two separate traditions in the Scriptures about the sacred name. The first, based upon a passage in Exodus, 6:2–4, indicates that the name Yahweh was never known until the time of Moses.¹ The second reflects the understanding

¹ The belief that the name Yahweh was only first known in the time of Moses can be documented only as far back as the first century C.E., with the comments of the Jewish historian and Pharisee Josephus (*Antiq.*, 2:12:4). Though not part of the doctrine of the earliest assemblies that followed the messiah, this interpretation begins to appear among the Christian sects during the second century C.E., as shown in the works of Justin Martyr (*Trypho*, 65:1, 126:2). This Jewish interpretation has been blindly followed ever since. In the EJ, 7, pp. 680f, we find a typical example of an attempt by religious scholars to justify the two opposing "traditions" created by this popular interpretation of Exod., 6:2–4:

According to the documentary hypothesis, the literary sources in the Pentateuch known as the Elohist and the Priestly Document never use the name Yahweh for God until it is revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:13; 6:2–3); but the Yahwist source uses it from Genesis 2:4 on, thus implying that it was at least as old as Abraham. If the name is really so old, then Exodus 6:2–3 must be understood as meaning that from the time of Moses on, Yahweh was to be the personal name of the God who brought the people of Israel into existence by bringing them out of Egypt and established them as a nation by His covenant with them at Sinai.

According to this logic, the name Yahweh becomes a personal name only in the days of Moses. This confused line of reasoning tries to retain the notion that before Moses' time the names *el* and *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*) were personal names. Yet in doing so they must come to the rationale that the name "Yahweh" was not a personal name prior to Moses. What, then, was it? As we demonstrate below on pp. 44–52, men and women from the time of Adam and Eve up until the days just prior to Moses called upon the name Yahweh. Therefore, would they have us believe that it was a title or a generic name? Yet no one has ever been so audacious as to argue that premise.

The fact of the matter is, as we shall show in Chap. XII entitled, *The Prohibition Against the Sacred Name*, and shall further demonstrate in Vol. II, the false notion that the sacred name Yahweh was not known until the days of Moses arose because the Jews beginning in the 2nd century B.C.E. understood Exod., 6:2–4, so that it would conform to the rabbinical interpretation that the name Yahweh was too sacred to be uttered by any common man. To do this the rabbis and scribes had to ignore the context in which the verse was placed as well as the plain words of the rest of the Scriptures. They made what should have been a rhetorical question into a statement, thereby creating the illusion that there existed two separate traditions about the original use of the sacred name. In truth there is only one scriptural doctrine on the issue, that the sacred name has existed from eternity and shall continue to exist on into eternity. Yahweh had always been, and shall always be, the personal sacred name of our heavenly father.

that the sacred name Yahweh was eternal and had been revealed to mankind from the beginning. The latter tradition is dismissed on the premise that it contradicts the former. Nevertheless, the existence of two contradictory traditions seriously jeopardize the integrity of the Scriptures. But is it true? Before we can begin an analysis of Exodus, 6:2–4, we must first examine the evidence that the sacred name is an eternal name which has been known by mankind since the days of Adam and Eve.

The Olam Shem

The theory that the sacred name יהוה is not an eternal name and unknown prior to the time of Moses suffers when we take into account numerous scriptural statements. For example, Exodus, 3:15, in direct response to the question from Moses about what to tell his brother Israelites as to the name of the eloahi who sent him, Yahweh states:

And said eloahim to Moses, “Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, יהוה, the eloahi of your fathers, the eloahi of Abraham, the eloahi of Isaak, and the eloahi of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my שם (shem, name) לעולם (*la-olam*; to forever), and this is my memorial to generation upon generation.”

According to this statement, “Yahweh” was the name of the eloahi of the patriarchs “לעולם.” The word לעולם (var. לעולם) (*la-olam*) is generally translated as “to forever.”² ל (la) means, “till, until,” “to, for” or “towards” something.³ עולם or עולם (Olam) literally means, “concealed, i.e. to the vanishing point” and “time out of mind,” or “eternity.”⁴ It also carries with it the idea of a “world” or “age.”⁵ In the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew, for example, *olam* is translated by the Greek term αἰών (*aion*), meaning, “an age; by extens. perpetuity (also past); by impl. the world,” “perpetual (also used of past time, or past and future as well):—eternal, for ever, everlasting, world (began),” and “a definite space of time, an era, epoch, age, period,” “lasting for an age.”⁶ Simply put, it represents an extremely long period of time.

The name “Yahweh,” therefore, is a name that lasts “to time out of mind” or “to eternity,” and at minimum “for an age.” Yet the sacred name is not restricted to a single limited time frame such as an age. For instance, the phrase translated as “to generation upon generation” in the above quote from Exodus, 3:15, is in Hebrew לדר דר (*la dar dar*).“ La (ל), as we have said, means, “to, for” or “towards” something.⁷ The term “dar” refers to “a revolution of

² Most English translations simply use the term “forever” (i.e., KJV). The NTB says, “for all time.” Yet the actual Hebrew literally says “to *olam*” or “to forever (eternity),” which extends it through the eternity yet to come. אולם is also rendered “אולם.” ל (la) at the beginning of אולם means “to, for” or “towards” something (HEL, p. 131; IHG, p. 83).

³ HEL, p. 131; IHG, p. 83.

⁴ SEC, Heb. #5769; GHCL, s.v.

⁵ IHG, p. 84, “age, eon, eternity”; Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 10, n. 8, “both ‘world’ and ‘eternity’.”

⁶ SEC, Gk. #165–166; GEL, p. 25.

⁷ See above n. 3.

time, i.e. an age or generation.”⁸ When used as “dar dar” it becomes “generation upon generation” or “age upon age,” indicating “forever” for the “race of man.”⁹ As used in Exodus, 3:15, it literally means that the name Yahweh will last as a memorial to all generations of mankind. This phrase is often translated into English as “unto all generations.”¹⁰

In Psalm, 90:1–4, we read that Yahweh existed “before the mountains were born” and that he “gave birth to the earth and its inhabitants; and from olam as far as olam (מְעוֹלָם עַד עוֹלָם) you are el.” This statement makes an “olam” period exist prior to the foundation of the earth. The apostle Saul (called Paul), in 1 Corinthians, 2:6, speaks of the wisdom of this αἰῶνος (i.e. age, olam) and contrasts it with the wisdom of Yahweh which existed before the αἰώνων (i.e. ages, olamim). His statement demonstrates that Yahweh’s plan, and therefore Yahweh, existed prior to this age and the ages both before and after. Meanwhile, in Psalm, 145:13, we read that Yahweh’s “government is a government of all עוֹלָמִים (olamim),” i.e. the collective noun form of olam (all ages). Therefore, Yahweh’s rule extends to all the vast periods of time called olam, including the ages which began prior to the earth’s foundation.

An example that Yahweh’s name continues into the future olam comes from the Psalms:

His (Yahweh’s) name shall be לְעוֹלָם (to olam); before the sun shall continue his name. And they bless themselves by him; all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed is אֵלֹהִים of eloahim, the eloahi of Israel, who alone does wonderful things, and blessed is his glorious name לְעוֹלָם (to olam). (Ps., 72:17–19)

Yet the sacred name also existed from the past olam. Isaiah writes:

You are אֲבִי אֲבִי, our father, our redeemer; your name is מְעוֹלָם (from olam). (Isa., 63:16)

The prophet Daniel (2:20), writing in Aramaic, connects these two thoughts when he states, “For let be towards the name of eloaha a blessing מִן עֲלָמָא וְעַד עֲלָמָא (from olama and as far as olama).”

Notice that in these important verses, unlike the previous quote where Yahweh’s name is “to olam (לְעוֹלָם),” indicating at minimum an endless span of time or age into the future, Isaiah and Daniel both claim that his name is “from olam (מְעוֹלָם),” meaning that it extends backwards through eternity or a vast period of time. Such descriptions are well-suited for a supreme being about whom it is said, “inhabits עַד (perpetuity, eternity) and his name is sacred,”¹¹ and is an el “מְעוֹלָם עַד עוֹלָם (from olam [forever] as

⁸ SEC, Heb. #1755, 1859; HEL, pp. 62, 59, “circle of years,” “age, generation.”

⁹ HEL, p. 59.

¹⁰ For example, see KJV, HEOT, and so forth. The NTB renders it, “for all ages”; IB has “from generation to generation”; AB gives, “to all generations,” as does EHOT, which adds that the original Hebrew means, “for generation [and] generation” (p. 141, n. 1).

¹¹ Isa., 57:15. For עַד see HEL, p. 187; SEC, Heb. #5703.

far as olam [forever]).”¹² It reveals that his name has always been, and will always be, Yahweh.

From Adam to Abraham

The eternal state of the name “יהוה (Yahweh)” and its existence long before Moses is further supported by the book of Genesis, which reports that the sacred name was not only known by Abraham but was used as far back as the time of Adam and Eve. The following items establish this point beyond any doubt:

In a verse containing a direct quote from Eve, the wife of Adam, the first man, we are told:

And the man knew Eve his wife. And she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have gotten a man by means of יהוה.” (Gen., 4:1)

In reference to the time when Seth, the son of Adam and Eve, lived and the sins of men forced them to seek aid from Yahweh, we read:

And to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. Then it was begun (by men) to call upon the name יהוה. (Gen., 4:26)

In the Septuagint translation of this above verse it reads, “he trusted to call on the name” of Yahweh eloahim. The following passage gives a direct quote from Lamech, the father of Noah:

And Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years and fathered a son. And he called his name Noah, saying, “This one shall comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which יהוה has cursed.” (Gen., 5:28f)

Genesis also provides a direct quote from Noah, the father of all human kind living upon the earth today:

And Noah awoke from his wine, and he came to know what his younger son had done to him. And he said, “Cursed be Kanaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.” And he said, “Blessed be יהוה, the eloahi of Shem, and may Kanaan be his slave.” (Gen., 9:24f)

¹² Ps., 90:2. מן (m) or מן (min) means “from,” “from out of” (HEL, pp. 137, 147; SEC, Heb. #4480; IHG, p. 83).

The question obviously arises, “How could men and women living in the pre-flood world be calling upon and quoted as using the sacred name אֱלֹהִים if this name was not revealed for the first time until the days of Moses?” Yet, it was not only known by Eve, the mother of all the descendants of Adam, father of all human kind, but it was used by Noah, the father of all the men and women alive today.

The evidence is also overwhelming for the post-flood period prior to Moses. For example, the sacred name was often used by Abraham (who according to the popular notion about Exodus, 6:2–4, never knew the name), an ancestor of Moses who died hundreds of years before the latter. In Genesis we read the following:

And he (Abraham) moved from there (the oak of Moreh) to a mountain from the front to Bethel and set his tent, Bethel from the sea and the Ai from the front, and he built there an altar to אֱלֹהִים and called there upon the name אֱלֹהִים . (Gen., 12:8)

And he (Abraham) went on his journeys from the Negeb and as far as Bethel, to the place of the altar which he had made there at the first, and Abram (Abraham) called there upon the name אֱלֹהִים . (Gen., 13:3f)

In this next verse Abraham is speaking with the king of Sodom:

I have lifted up my hand to אֱלֹהִים , el the most high, possessor of heavens and earth, that from a thread to a shoe-latch, and I will not take from all that is yours, and you shall not say, “I have made Abram rich.” (Gen., 14:22f)

This next passage has a direct quote from Abraham given while he was conversing with Yahweh:

And Abram (Abraham) said, “My adon, אֱלֹהִים , what will you give to me, I being childless, and the son of the inheritance of my house is Eleazar of Damascus?” (Gen., 15:2)

During this conversation Yahweh is directly quoted as telling Abraham, “I am אֱלֹהִים who brought you out of the Ur of the Kasadim (Chaldees), to give you this land to inherit it” (Gen., 15:7). Here is clear and concise evidence that Yahweh revealed his sacred name directly to Abraham. Abraham, showing that he understood the name, responded, “My adon, אֱלֹהִים , by what shall I know that I shall inherit it?” (Gen., 15:8).

At the episode between Abraham and Abimelech, king of the Palestim, over the well water at Beer-sheba, we read:

And they (Abraham and Abimelech) cut a covenant at Beer-sheba; and Abimelech rose up and Phicol the general of his army, and they returned to the land of Palestim. And he (Abraham) planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name יהוה, the el of olam (forever). And lived Abraham in the land of the Palestim many days. (Gen., 21:32-34)

At the time when Yahweh stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaak on the mountain, replacing him with a ram, Genesis reports:

And Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh-yireh (יהוה יראה) יהוה יהוה, Yahweh will see [to it]); so that it is said until this day, “In the mount of יהוה יהוה, it will be provided.” (Gen., 22:14)

How could Abraham label a place “Yahweh will see (to it)” (or “Yahweh will provide”)¹³ if he was totally unfamiliar with the name יהוה יהוה? Neither was the knowledge of the name Yahweh a secret, known only to Abraham, for important members of his household were also found using it. While directly quoting Sarai (Sarah), the wife of Abram (Abraham), Genesis states:

And Sarai said to Abram, “My injury be upon you; I gave my maid-servant into your bosom, and she saw that she had conceived, and I was despised in her eyes. Let יהוה יהוה judge between me and you.” (Gen., 16:5)

Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Sarah, was discovered by the malak (angel) called Yahweh at a fountain of water along the road to Shur. The following comment is reported after her encounter with this angel:

And she (Hagar) called the one speaking to her (by) the name יהוה יהוה. “You are an el of my seeing,” for she said, “Even here I am seen after my seeing (you).”¹⁴ (Gen., 16:13)

¹³ SEC, Heb. #3070 (3068, 7200); YAC, p. 536; NBD, p. 480.

¹⁴ Most translations of this verse leave much to be desired. The Hebrew reads:

ותקרא שם יהוה יהוה הדבר אליה אלהי אלהי אל ראי
כי אמרה הגם הלא ראיני אחרי ארי

It literally says, “And she called (the) name יהוה יהוה, the speaker to her, you (are) el (of) my seeing, for, she said, even here I (am) seen after my seeing (you).” In an attempt to avoid the fact that Hagar used the sacred name, the English translators try to make the statement mean that Hagar called Yahweh by the name, “God of seeing.” But a closer look shows that she called the one speaking to her by the name Yahweh, after which she spoke the words, “You (are) an el (of) my seeing, for even here I (am) seen after my seeing (you).” This translation is verified by the fact that “You (are) an el of my seeing” is not a name but a statement that is clearly attached with the phrase, “for even here I (am) seen after my seeing (you).” Hagar then named the fountain of water or well, “Well of the living one of my seeing (באר לחי יהוה)” (Gen., 16:14).

The following is the reported conversation between Abraham and his chief servant with regards to his obtaining a wife for Abraham's son Isaak. In the discussion both Abraham and the servant are said to have used the name Yahweh:

And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest (in) his house, who ruled (over) all that was for him, "Put, please, your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear on אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם , the eloahi of the heavens and the eloahi of the earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the girls of the Kanaani, who I dwell among; but to my country and to my kinsmen you shall go and take a wife for my son, for Isaak." And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land; truly, shall I bring back your son into the land from which you came out from?" And Abraham said to him, "Be careful for yourself lest you take my son back there. אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם , the eloahi of the heavens, who took me from the house of my father and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me, and who swore to me saying, 'to your seed will I give this land,' he shall send his malak (angel) before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. And if the woman not be willing to go after you, then you shall be clear from this my oath. Only do not take my son back there." And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master, and swore to him concerning this thing. (Gen., 24:2-9)

In this conversation, as cited above, Abraham commanded his servant to swear an oath "on אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם " not to take a wife for his son Isaak from among the Kanaani women. The act of swearing an oath was occasionally performed in those times by placing one's hand under the other's thigh, and then invoking the name of the deity by which you were swearing.¹⁵ In the last part of this story we read that the servant did in fact swear an oath. Therefore, the servant also had to use the name Yahweh, since it was by this name that Abraham requested the oath to be made.

Other verses also reveal that the servant of Abraham used the sacred name. After arriving in the city of Nahor, the city of Abraham's brother, the servant prayed, using the name אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם , that the woman promised as the wife of Isaak would appear.¹⁶ After she did appear, he gave another prayer to Yahweh, stating:

¹⁵ Besides the example in Gen., 24:2-9, we also have another in Gen., 47:28-31, where Jacob made Joseph swear not to bury him in Egypt but in the land of Kanaan. Also see DB, p. 458.

¹⁶ Gen., 24:12.

Blessed be יְהוָה, eloahi of my adon Abraham, who has not left off his kindness and his truth with my adon. I being in the road, led me יְהוָה to my adon's brother's house. (Gen., 24:27)

In the subsequent conversations with Bethuel, the son of Abraham's brother, and Bethuel's son Laban, Abraham's servant quotes both Abraham and himself. In doing so he uses the sacred name יְהוָה several times.¹⁷

The name Yahweh was also known by non-Hebrew people contemporary with both Abraham and his son Isaak. For instance, Abimelech, king of the Palestim (a people descended from the Khamitic families of Mizraim),¹⁸ and Abimelech's men are directly quoted using the name while speaking to Isaak:

And they (the Palestim) said, "We have plainly seen that יְהוָה is with you, and we have said, let there be an oath now between us and you, and let us cut a covenant with you, (so that) you will do with us (no) evil, as we did not touch you, and we sent you away in peace; you now being blessed of יְהוָה. (Gen., 26:28f)

From Isaak to Balaam

Knowledge of the sacred name Yahweh also continued after the death of Abraham down until the time of Balaam, a contemporary with Moses. For example, it was known by Isaak, the son of Abraham, and his household. Despite popular opinion, which holds that Isaak did not know the sacred name, the book of Genesis reports the following about Isaak after he had left the well which he named "Hatred," following a dispute with the shepherds of Gerar:

And he (Isaak) moved from there, and dug another well, and they did not fight for that; and he called its name "Broad Places"; and said, "For now יְהוָה has broadened for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." And he went from there to Beer-sheba. And יְהוָה appeared to him the same night, and said, "I am the eloahi of Abraham your father, do not fear, for I am with you and I will bless you and increase your seed, because of my servant Abraham." And he (Isaak) built an altar there and called on the name יְהוָה, and he pitched his tent there; and the servant of Isaak dug a well there. (Gen., 26:22ff)

Rebekah, the wife of Isaak, used the name while quoting Isaak:

¹⁷ Gen., 24:40, 42, 44, 48, 56.

¹⁸ Gen., 10:6-14; 1 Chron., 1:11f.

And Rebekah spoke to her son Jacob, saying, “See, I heard your father talking to Esau your brother, saying, ‘Bring to me game and make me delicacies that I may eat, and may bless you before אֱלֹהִים and before I die.’” (Gen., 27:6–7)

Both knowledge and use of the divine name Yahweh was continued by Jacob, the son of Isaak. Yahweh revealed his personal name to Jacob in the vision of the ladder.¹⁹ During this vision Jacob saw a ladder extended upwards into the heavens. Yahweh then told Jacob, “I am אֱלֹהִים , the eloahi of Abraham your father, the eloahi of Isaak.” When Jacob awoke from that vision, he proclaimed, “Surely אֱלֹהִים is in this place, and I did not know (it).”²⁰ After setting up a memorial stone and naming the place Bethel (“the house of el”), Jacob spoke these words:

And Jacob vowed a vow saying, “If eloahim is with me and keeps me in this road that I am traveling, and gives to me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and I return in peace to the house of my father, then אֱלֹהִים shall be for me as an eloahim, and this stone which I have placed (as) a memorial pillar shall become the house of eloahim; and all which you shall give to me, I will tithe the tenth to you.” (Gen., 28:20ff)

Several other examples proving that Jacob (who according to popular theory did not know the sacred name) used the personal name Yahweh are also found. During the blessing of Jacob by his father Isaak, who thought Jacob was his brother Esau, Jacob offered to Isaak a reason for his returning so quickly with the game:

And he (Jacob) said, “Because אֱלֹהִים your eloahi made it (the game) come to me.” (Gen., 27:20)

While blessing his twelve sons, Jacob states: “For your salvation I have waited, אֱלֹהִים .”²¹ Even the wives of Jacob knew and used the name Yahweh. For example, Leah, the wife considered only second place in Jacob’s heart, named her sons with אֱלֹהִים in mind; and this at the time when Jacob was still living with his wives in Mesopotamia:

And אֱלֹהִים saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her womb, and Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name

¹⁹ Gen., 28:12–13.

²⁰ Gen., 28:16.

²¹ Gen., 49:18

Reuben; for she said, “Surely יהוה has looked upon my affliction, for now my husband will love me.” And she conceived again and bore a son and said, “Surely יהוה has heard that I am hated, and has given this one to me also”; and she called his name Simeon. And she conceived again and bore a son; and she said, “Now (this) time my husband will be joined to me because I have borne to him three sons”; so his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son; and she said, “(This) time I praise יהוה”; so she called his name Yahudah (Judah).²² And she ceased from bearing. (Gen., 29:31–35)

Not only did members of the households of Abraham, Isaak, and Jacob know and use the sacred name but Abraham’s Hebrew relatives living in Aram Nahoraim (Mesopotamia) did so as well. For example, when Laban met Abraham’s servant he said, “Come in blessed of יהוה. Why are you standing outside?”²³ After hearing the words of Abraham’s servant, that he had come to seek a wife for his son Isaak, both “Laban and Bethuel answered and said”:

The thing has come from יהוה. We are not able to speak to you evil or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go; and let her be the wife of the son of your adon, as has spoken יהוה. (Gen., 24:50–51)

Laban, the brother of Rebekah and the father-in-law of her son Jacob, spoke these words at the heap at Galeed after Jacob fled Mesopotamia from him:

And Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today”; so he named it Galeed, and Mizpah, for he (Laban) said, “יהוה watches between you and me, for we are concealed each from his neighbor. If you will (not) afflict my daughters, and (if) you will (not) take wives in addition to my daughters, no man is with us; see, eloahim is a witness between me and you.” (Gen., 31:48–50)

²² The name יהודה (Yahu-dah, Judah) is a combination of the name יהוה (Yahu), which consist of the first three letters of the Tetragrammaton and is the name of the angel Yahweh (see Chap. IX), and the term יהוה (Yadah), meaning to “revere or worship (with extended hands)” (Strong’s, Heb. #3034, 3063). That the name Yahu formed part of Yahu-dah’s name is demonstrated not only by the passage in Gen., 29:34f, but by rabbinical writers. The Gemara Sotah (10b and 36b), for example, states that the name of Yahudah corresponds with the sacred name.

²³ Gen., 24:31.

In an earlier conversation between Jacob and his father-in-law Laban, both are found using the sacred name:

And Laban said to him (Jacob), “If I have found favor in your eyes, please (stay); I have carefully watched, and אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי has blessed me on account of you.” And he (Jacob) said to him, “You know what I have earned you, and what your livestock has become with me. For you had little before me, and it has spread into a multitude, and אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי has blessed you at my coming; and now when shall I work, I also, for my own house?” (Gen., 30:27–30)

The prophet Job, about whom the book of Job is written, is another example. Job was the great-grandson of Esau (Edom), the twin brother of Jacob Israel.²⁴ He lived long before Moses, dwelling in the land of Edom, located in the Kanaani land of Seir southeast of the Dead Sea. Though Job was descended from the Edomites, a people who held great animosity against the Israelites, he was himself a man of Yahweh. When Yahweh allowed Satan to severely afflict Job, Job would not condemn the act. Instead he worshiped Yahweh and said:

I came naked out of my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי gave and אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי has taken away. BE THE NAME OF אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי BLESSED. (Job, 1:20–21)

In responding to a statement by Zophar the Naamathi, Job remarked that one should examine the animals, birds, fish and the things of the earth, “who of these does not know that the hand of אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי has done this.”²⁵

Our final example is the prophet Balaam, who dwelt in the city of Pethor located along the Euphrates River in Aram Nahoraim.²⁶ Balaam was a contemporary of Moses but had no contact with the latter. In the fortieth year after the Israelites had been delivered out of Egypt, the kings of Midian and Moab sent for Balaam in an effort to have this famous prophet curse the Israelites. Baalim, who refused to curse the Israelites, is several times quoted as using the name אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי.²⁷ He directly tells Balak, the king of Moab, “I could not go beyond the command of אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי eloahi to do anything small or great”;²⁸ and, “All that אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי speaks, that I will do.”²⁹

Balaam, accordingly, was a prophet of Yahweh from among the nations outside of the Israelites. Interestingly, even the king of Moab (a descendant of Lot, the nephew of Abraham) used the name when he asked Balaam,

²⁴ LXX Job, 42:17.

²⁵ Job, 12:7–9.

²⁶ Num., 22:5, 23:7; LXX Num., 22:5, 23:7; Jos., *Antiq.*, 4:6:2.

²⁷ See for example Num., 22:13, 19, 23:3, 8, 12, 21, 24:6.

²⁸ Num., 22:18, 24:13.

²⁹ Num., 23:26.

“What has יהוה spoken, ³⁰ and condemned Balaam’s blessing of the Israelites, saying, “behold, יהוה has kept you from honor.”³¹ If the sacred name was meant to be known only by the Israelites how did these men from other countries become aware of its existence?

Conclusion

Yahweh revealed himself by his personal name to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaak, and Jacob. Further, the sacred name was in common usage among members of their households, by their Hebrew kinsmen living in Mesopotamia and Edom, and was even known by their Palestim neighbors, all centuries before Moses was born. Even non-Israelite contemporaries of Moses, like Baalim of Pethor and Balak of Moab, who had no theological discussions with Moses or the Israelites, knew the sacred name. Baalim even obeyed Yahweh and called upon Yahweh for prophecy some forty years after Moses had brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Therefore, he was a prophet of Yahweh from among the nations at the same time that Moses served as prophet to the Israelites. These details prove that the sacred name was not only known by mankind from his very beginnings but that knowledge of the name was not restricted to the Israelites.

³⁰ Num., 22:17.

³¹ Num., 24:1.