

Living Signs Of God's Power

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 26th, 2010 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Then Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

~Exodus 4:1 (NASB)

1) Themes In The First Five Books (Pentateuch) Of The Bible

- A) Early in the book of Genesis, Abram is commanded by God to go "to the land which I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Before the promises come the command!
- B) In light of Abram's obedience to the command, God delivers a three-fold promise to Abram (12:1-3).
 - i) God promises to deliver Abram (and family) to a land "which God will show them" (12:1). God promises land!
 - ii) God promises to make Abram into a great nation with a great name (12:2). God promises descendents!
 - iii) God promises to bless the whole earth through Abram (the man and, subsequently, the nation – 12:3). God promises blessing!
- C) These three elements (land, descendents, and blessing) are the central and guiding theme of the first five books of the Older Testament.

- D) The command to obey and the promises which follow are the central crux of the "Abrahamic Covenant," which God introduces in Genesis 12, and explains in greater detail in Genesis 15 & 17 – and are "fleshed out" in the Pentateuch.

2) How Exodus Fits Into The Theme Of The Pentateuch

- A) The book of Genesis (the book of beginnings) introduces Israel/Jacob as the birth of a family/nation (Genesis 35:10-11). and concludes with the amazing story of Joseph (38-50).
- B) The beginning of Exodus notes the unique divine blessing of descendents from the "original" family of Israel (the 70, Exodus 1:1-5) to a "teeming swarm" of Israelites (1:6-7).
- C) In the context of the Abrahamic Covenant, the promise of descendents is answered at the beginning of Exodus (1:12, 20), and moves on toward a new focus of blessing.
- D) The book of Exodus (book of the journey), is a story of Israel's "journeys." Israel will experience a physical journey (out of Egypt). Israel will experience a spiritual journey (from the gods of Egypt to Yahweh, Almighty God). Israel will experience a journey from slavery (in Egypt) to blessing (as God's chosen people/nation).
- E) In the context of the Abrahamic Covenant, Exodus will answer the question of blessing for Israel. Israel begins the book of Exodus as an enslaved people group under the leadership of an infanticidal Pharaoh, hardly the picture of blessing (Exodus 1:22).
- F) But then Moses is born (2:1-10) as a savior for Israel (cf. Acts 7:25). Moses' birth marks a change in how God will bless the descendents of Israel, and with them, the whole world!

3) Moses, The Greatest Man In the Old Testament

- A) Moses' miraculous birth (2:1-10) is the beginning of a new hope for Israel, but hope is quickly dashed under Moses' murderous and reckless leadership (2:11-14).
- B) Forced to flee from Egypt at nearly 40 years old, Moses journeys to the East, to the desert of Midian (2:15), marrying a daughter of Jethro, a Midian priest, and working in the family shepherding business for 40 years (2:21-3:1, cf. 7:7).
- C) While pasturing the flocks of his father-in-law, God appears to Moses in a burning bush (3:2-6) telling Moses he is being sent back to Egypt to appear before Pharaoh and to free God's people (Exodus 3:10).

4) God's Name, Redefined For A Chosen People

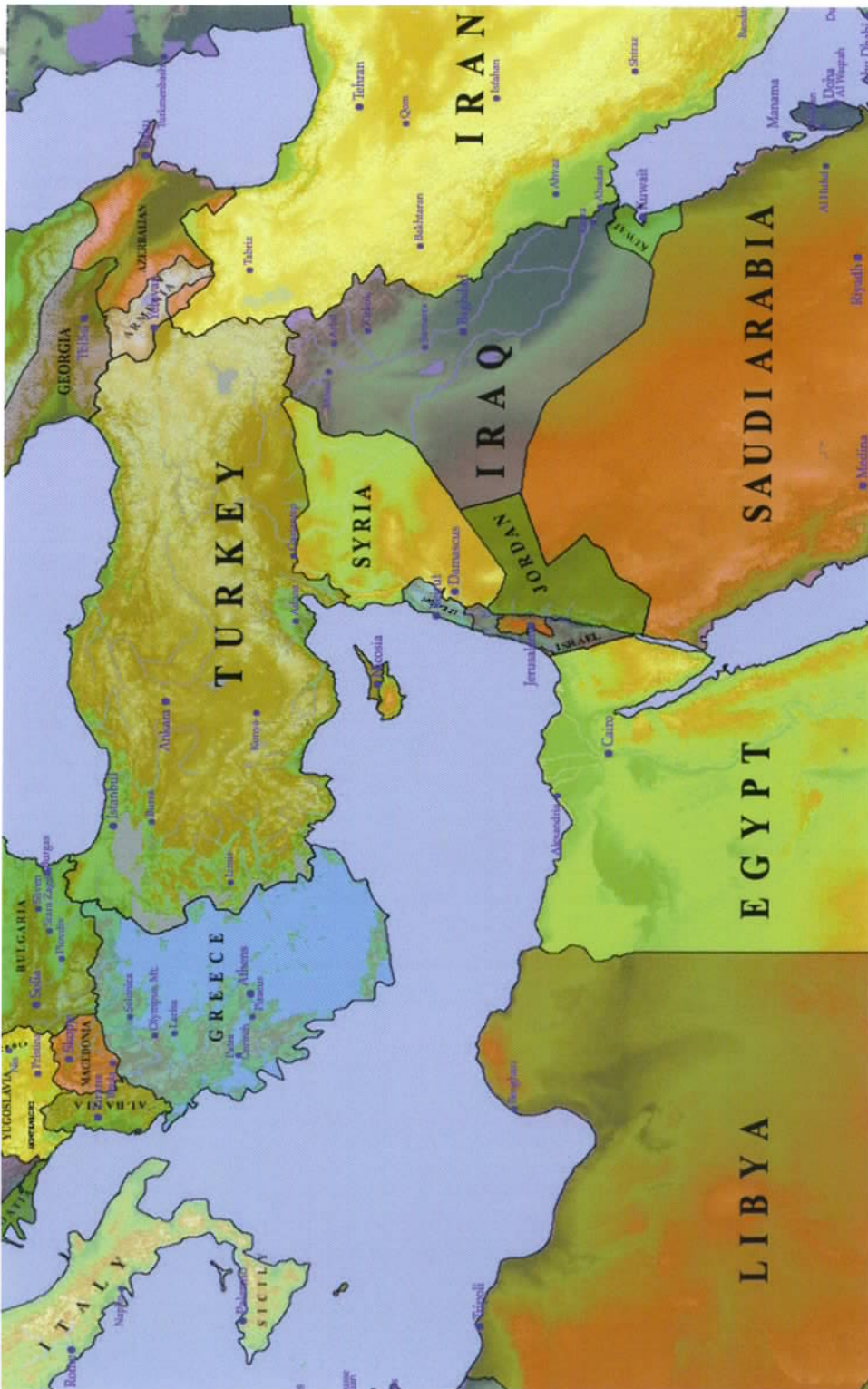
- A) Assuming the Israelites are going to be highly critical of the burning bush story, Moses reasons that the Israelites will ask for some sort of authenticating sign that he is truly from God. So Moses asks God for His calling card, His identity, His personal name (3:13).
- B) God's responds, "I AM WHO I AM," (3:14). God uses a present tense verb to describe His essential self-existence, eternal independence, and singular ultimate authority over every dependent created thing.
- C) Technically speaking, "I AM WHO I AM" is not a name at all, but is the meaning* behind God's personal name (3:15), to be remembered forever by all people. God answered Moses' question with a definition first, and His name secondly, in order to emphasize "what's in His name."

- D) God's name is "LORD," the English rendering of Yahweh (yhwh/יהוה) in our English Bibles. While this is God's personal name, it is also has significance as the designation of God's fame, His character, His reputation.
- E) Yahweh then, at its essential core has the meaning of active presence. Yahweh Is. It may have seemed at times that God was absent to the Israelites in Egypt. But God says, "Yahweh Is." In all generations and with all people, Yahweh Is, and His presence is about to become a startling reality for all of Israel, Egypt, and the world.

5) Why Is This Stuff Important?

- A) Whenever the modern reader approaches a historical narrative (like Exodus), we are also able to better understand the circumstances of our modern lives in light of what God has been doing with His people historically.
- B) In other words, sometimes our circumstances and the events (both good & bad) of our lives cause us to wonder "what is God doing?" or "where is God in the midst of this or that situation?" Exodus helps to answer this question and assure us that God's chosen people are never alone.
- C) Note that this is the essence of Moses' questions (Exodus 4:1). He is not asking about God's reality, but whether God will come through when it counts – amongst the people! God's miraculous responses (4:2-9) are both an encouragement to Moses, but also an assurance that God will come through for His chosen people!

* אֲנִי הַיְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי "I AM that I AM," replies God. The verbs are first person common qal imperfects of the verb הָיָה "to be," connoting continuing, unfinished action: "I am being that I am being," or "I am the Is-ing One," that is, "the One Who Always Is." Not conceptual being, being in the abstract, but active being, is the intent of this reply. It is a reply that suggests that it is inappropriate to refer to God as "was" or as "will be," for the reality of this active existence can be suggested only by the present: "is" or "is-ing," "Always Is," or "Am." WBC/Exodus ©1987, pg. 39, by John I. Durham.



Comparative Study Between Modern West vs. Ancient Near East (ANE) Culture & Worldview

In order to enhance the transfer of Scripture's timeless truths, it is helpful to have an understanding of the differences between the behavior, beliefs, culture, values, and worldview of the Ancient Near East (the biblical context) and the Modern West (our own context). The following chart, created by John Pilch*, provides a helpful list in identifying some of these critical differences.

Modern West	Ancient Near East
Egocentric identity	Group-centric identity
Promote independence	Promote interdependence
See the parts	See the whole
Urge uniqueness	Urge conformity
See autonomy from social solidarity	Seek integration into social reality
Primary responsibility to self and individual potential	Primary obligation to others and the development of the group
Group membership results from a renewable contract	Group membership results from one's inherited social and familiar place in society
Behavior is governed by rights and duties specified by one's personal goals	Behavior is dictated by the group's mores and sanctions of the leader's authority
Individual worth is based on individual achievements or individual possessions	Individual worth is rooted in familial status, social position, class, or caste
Status is achieved	Status is ascribed
Achieving and competing are motivational necessities and the norm	Achieving and competing are disruptive to the group
Assert one's own rights	Submit personal rights to the group
Equality is a key value	Hierarchy is the key value
Friendships are functional	Friendships involve long-term loyalties or obligational commitments
Any group is viewed only as a collection of individuals	Any group is viewed as an organismic unit, inextricably interlocked
The individual self is viewed as an entity separate from the physical world and from other persons	The individual self is viewed as organically connected with the physical world and with other persons
Any personal decision is made by the self alone, even if it is not in the group's best interests	Any personal decision is made in consultation with the group and often in obedience or deference to its will
Private autonomy	Corporate solidarity
Strong personal identity	Strong familial identity
Self-reliant achievement	Interdependent collaboration
Strong desire to be personally satisfied	Strong desire to be interpersonally satisfying or satisfactory

* Walton, John. *The NIV Application Commentary – Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001, 25-26, from John Pilch, *Introducing the Cultural Context of the Old Testament* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1991), 97.

