

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

by

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Exodus 3

We shall now resume the personal history of Moses, and contemplate him during that deeply-interesting period of his career which he spent in retirement - a period including, as we should say, forty of his very best years - the prime of life. This is full of meaning. The Lord had graciously, wisely, and faithfully, led His dear servant apart from the eyes and thoughts of men, in order that He might train him under His own immediate hand. Moses needed this. True, he had spent forty years in the house of Pharaoh; and, while his sojourn there was not without its influence and value, yet was it as nothing when compared with his sojourn in the desert. The former might be valuable; but the latter was indispensable.

Nothing can possibly make up for the lack of secret communion with God, or the training and discipline of His school - "**All the wisdom of the Egyptians**" would not have qualified Moses for his future path.

- he might have pursued a most brilliant course through the schools and colleges of Egypt.
- he might have come forth laden with literary honours - his intellect stored with learning, and his heart full of pride and self-sufficiency.
- He might have taken out his degree in the school of man, and yet have to learn his alphabet in the school of God.

Mere human wisdom and learning; how valuable soever in themselves, can never constitute any one a servant of God, nor equip him for any department of divine service. Such things may qualify unrenewed nature to figure before the world; but the man whom God will use must be endowed with widely different qualifications - such qualifications as can alone be found in the deep and hallowed retirement of the Lord's presence.

All God's servants have been made to know and experience the truth of these statements. Moses at Horeb, Elijah at Cherith, Ezekiel at Chebar, Paul in Arabia, and John at Patmos, are all striking examples of the immense practical importance of being alone with God. And when we look at the Divine Servant, we find that the time He spent in private was nearly ten times as long as that which He spent in public. He, though perfect in understanding and in will, spent nearly thirty years in the obscurity of a carpenter's house at Nazareth, ere He made His appearance in public.

And, even when He had entered upon His public career, how oft did He retreat from the gaze of men, to enjoy the sweet and sacred retirement of the divine presence!

Now we may feel disposed to ask, how could the urgent demand for workmen ever be met, if all need such protracted training, in secret, ere they come forth to their work? This is the Master's care - not ours. He can provide the workmen, and He can train them also. This is not man's work. God alone can provide and prepare a true minister. Nor is it a question with Him as to the length of time needful for the education of such an one. We know He could educate him in a moment, if it were His will to do so.

One thing is evident, namely, that God has had all His servants very much alone with Himself, both before and after their entrance upon their public work; nor will any one ever get on without this. The absence of secret training and discipline will, necessarily leave us barren, superficial, and theoretic. A man who ventures forth upon a public career ere he has duly weighed himself in the balances of the sanctuary, or measured himself in the presence of God, is like a ship putting out to sea without proper ballast: he will doubtless upset with the first stiff breeze.

On the contrary, there is a depth, a solidity, and a steadiness flowing from our having passed from form to form in the school of God, which are essential elements in the formation of the character of a true and effective servant of God.

Hence, therefore, when we find Moses, at the age of forty years, taken apart from all the dignity and splendor of a court, for the purpose of spending forty years in the obscurity of a desert, we are led to expect a remarkable course of service; nor are we disappointed. The man whom God educates, is educated, and none other. It lies not within the range of man to prepare an instrument for the service of God. The hand of man could never mould **“a vessel meet for the Master's use.”** The One who is to use the vessel can alone prepare it; and we have before us a singularly beautiful sample of His mode of preparation.

“Now, Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb”
(Exodus 3:1).

Here, then, we have a marvellous change of circumstances.

In Genesis 46:31, we read, **“every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians;”** and yet Moses, who was **“learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,”** is transferred from the Egyptian court to the back of a mountain to tend a flock of sheep, and to be educated for the service of God.

Assuredly, this is not **“the manner of man.”** This is not nature's line of things. Flesh and blood could not understand this. We should have thought that Moses' education was finished when he had become master of all Egypt's wisdom, and that, moreover, in immediate connection with the rare advantages which a court life affords.

We should have expected to find in one so highly favoured, not only a solid and varied education; but also such an exquisite polish as would fit him for any sphere of action to which he might be called. But then, to find such a man with such attainments, called away from such a position to mind sheep at the back of a mountain, is something entirely beyond the utmost stretch of human thought and feeling. It lays prostrate in the dust all man's pride and glory. It declares plainly that this world's appliances are of little value in the divine estimation; yea, they are as "dung and dross," not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of all those who have been taught in His school. There is a very wide difference between human and divine education. The former has for its end the refinement and exaltation of nature; the latter begins with withering it up and setting it aside.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14). Educate the "natural man" as much as you please, and you cannot make him a "spiritual man." **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit:"** (John 3:6).

If ever an educated "natural man" might look for success in the service of God, Moses might have counted upon it; he was "grown," he was "learned," he was **"mighty in word and deed,"** and yet he had to learn something at **"the backside of the desert,"** which Egypt's schools could never have taught him. Paul learnt more in Arabia than ever he had learnt at the feet of Gamaliel.

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*** Let not my reader suppose for a moment that the design of the above remarks is to detract from the value of really useful information, or the proper culture of the mental powers. By no means. If, for example, he is a parent, let him store his child's mind with useful knowledge; let him teach him everything which may, hereafter, turn to account in the Master's service: let him not burden him with ought which he would have to lay aside in running his Christian course, nor conduct him, for educational purposes through a region from which it is well-nigh impossible to come forth with an unsoiled mind. You might just as well shut him up for ten years in a coal mine, in order to qualify him for discussing the properties of light and shade, as cause him to wade through the mire of a heathen mythology, in order to fit him for the interpretation of the oracles of God, or prepare him for leading the flock of Christ.**

None can teach like God; and all who will learn of Him must be alone with Him. "In the desert God will teach thee." There it was that Moses learnt his sweetest, deepest, most influential and enduring lessons. Thither, too, must all repair who mean to be educated for the ministry.

Beloved reader, may you prove, in your own deep experience, the real meaning of **"the backside of the desert,"** that sacred spot where nature is laid in the dust, and God alone exalted.

- there it is that men and things - the world and self - present circumstances and their influence, are all valued at what they are really worth.
- there it is, and there alone, that you will find a divinely-adjusted balance in which to weigh all within and all around.

There are no false colours, no borrowed plumes, no empty pretensions there. The enemy of your soul cannot gild the sand of that place. All is reality there. The heart that has found itself in the presence of God, at “**the backside of the desert**,” has right thoughts about everything. It is raised far above the exciting influence of this world’s schemes. The din and noise! the bustle and confusion of Egypt do not fall upon the ear in that distant place.

- The crash in the monetary and commercial world is not heard there.
- The sigh of ambition is not heaved there.
- This world’s fading laurels do not tempt there.
- The thirst for gold is not felt there.
- The eye is never dimmed with lust, nor the heart swollen with pride there.
- Human applause does not elate, nor human censure depress there.

In a word, everything is set aside save the stillness and light of the divine presence. God’s voice alone is heard - His light enjoyed - His thoughts received. This is the place to which all must go to be educated for the ministry; and there all must remain, if they would succeed in the ministry.

Would that all who come forward to serve in public knew more of what it is to breathe the atmosphere of this place. We should, then, have far less vapid attempts at ministry, but far more effective Christ-honouring service.

*Let us now enquire what Moses saw and what he heard at “**the backside of the desert**.”*

We shall find him learning lessons which lay far beyond the reach of Egypt’s most gifted masters. It might appear, in the eyes of human reason, a strange loss of time for a man like Moses to spend forty years doing nothing save to keep a few sheep in the wilderness. But he was there with God, and the time that is thus spent is never lost. It is salutary for us to remember that there is something more than mere doing necessary on the part of the true servant. A man who is always doing will be apt to do too much. Such an one would need to ponder over the deeply-practical words of the perfect Servant, “**He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned**” (Isaiah 1:4). This is an indispensable part of the servant’s business.

The servant must frequently stand in his master’s presence, in order that he may know what he has to do. The “ear” and the “tongue” are intimately connected, in more ways than one; but, in a spiritual or moral point of view, if my ear be closed and my tongue loose, I shall be sure to talk a great deal of folly.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak” (James 1:19).

This seasonable admonition is based upon two facts, namely,

- that everything good comes from above, and
- that the heart is brim full of naughtiness, ready to flow over.

Hence, the need of keeping the ear open and the tongue quiet rare and admirable attainments! - attainments in which Moses made great proficiency at “**the backside of the desert**,” and which all can acquire, if only they are disposed to learn in that school.

“And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, And behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” (Exodus 3:2, 3).

This was, truly, “a great sight” - a bush burning, yet not burnt. The palace of Pharaoh could never have afforded such a sight. But it was a gracious sight as well as a great sight, for therein was strikingly exhibited the condition of God’s elect. They were in the furnace of Egypt; and the Lord reveals Himself in a burning bush. But as the bush was not consumed, so neither were they, for God was there. **“The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge”** (Psalm 46). Here is strength and security - victory and peace. God with us, God in us, and God for us. This is ample provision for every exigence.

Nothing can be more interesting or instructive than the mode in which the Lord was pleased to reveal Himself to Moses, as presented in the above quotation. He was about to furnish him with his commission to lead forth His people out of Egypt, that they might be His assembly - His dwelling-place, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan; and the place from which He speaks is a burning bush. Apt, solemn, and beautiful symbol of the Lord dwelling in the midst of His elect and redeemed congregation!

“Our God is a consuming fire,” not to consume us, but to consume all in us and about us which is contrary to His holiness, and, as such, subversive of our true and permanent happiness. **“Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever.”**

There are various instances, both in the Old and New Testaments, in which we find God displaying Himself as “a consuming fire.”

Look, for example, at the case of *Nadab and Abihu*, in Leviticus 10. This was a deeply solemn occasion. God was dwelling in the midst of His people, and He would keep them in a condition worthy of Himself. He could not do otherwise. It would neither be for His glory nor for their profit, were He to tolerate ought in them inconsistent with the purity of His presence. God’s dwelling-place must be holy.

So, also, in Joshua 7 we have another striking proof, in the case of *Achan*, that the Lord could not possibly sanction, by His presence, evil, in any shape or form, how covert soever that evil might be. He was **“a consuming fire,”** and, as such, He should act, in reference to any attempt to defile that assembly in the midst of which He dwelt. To seek to connect God’s presence with evil unjudged, is the very highest character of wickedness.

Again, in Acts 5 *Ananias and Sapphira* teach us the same solemn lesson.

God the Holy Ghost was dwelling in the midst of the Church, not merely as an influence, but as a

divine Person, in such a way as that one could lie to Him. The Church was, and is still, His dwelling place; and He must rule and judge in the midst thereof. Men may walk in company with deceit, covetousness, and hypocrisy; but God cannot. If God is going to walk with us, we must judge our ways, or we will judge them for us. (See also I Corinthians 11:29-32)

In all these cases, and many more which might be adduced, we see the force of that solemn word, **“holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever.”** The moral effect of this will ever be similar to that produced in the case of Moses, as recorded in our chapter.

“Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Verse 5). The place of God’s presence is holy, and can only be trodden with unshod feet. God, dwelling in the midst of His people, imparts a character of holiness to their assembly, which is the basis of every holy affection and every holy activity. The character of the dwelling place takes its stamp from the character of the Occupant.

The application of this to the Church, which is now the habitation of God, through the Spirit, is of the very utmost practical importance. While it is blessedly true that God, by His Spirit, inhabits each individual member of the Church, thereby imparting a character of holiness to the individual; it is equally true that He dwells in the assembly; and, hence the assembly must be holy. The center round which the members are gathered is nothing less than the Person of a living, victorious, and glorified Christ.

The energy by which they are gathered is nothing less than God the Holy Ghost; and the Lord God Almighty dwells in them and walks in them. (See Matthew 18:20; I Corinthians 6:19; I Corinthians 3:16, 17; Ephesians 2:21, 22) Such being the holy elevation belonging to God’s dwelling-place, it is evident that nothing which is unholy, either in principle or practice, must be tolerated. Each one connected therewith should feel the weight and solemnity of that word, **“the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,” “If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy”** (I Corinthians 3:17). Most weighty words these, for every member of God’s assembly - for every stone in His holy temple! May we all learn to tread the Lord’s courts, with unshod feet!

However, the visions of Horeb bear witness to the grace of the God of Israel as well as to His holiness. If God’s holiness is infinite, His grace is infinite also; and, while the manner in which He revealed Himself to Moses, declared the former, the very fact of His revealing Himself at all evidenced the latter. He came down, because He was gracious; but when come down, He should reveal Himself as holy.

“Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (Verse 6). The effect of the divine presence must ever be to make nature hide itself; and, when we stand before God, with unshod feet and covered head, i.e. in the attitude of soul which those acts so aptly and beautifully express, we are prepared to hearken to the sweet accents of grace. When man takes his suited place, God can speak, in the language of unmingled mercy.

“And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and

have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey . . . Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come up unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them” (Ver. 7-9).

Here the absolute, free, unconditional grace of the God of Abraham, and the God of Abraham’s seed, shines forth in all its native brightness, unhindered by the “ifs” and “buts,” the vows, resolutions, and conditions of man’s legal spirit. God had come down to display Himself, in sovereign grace, to do the whole work of salvation, to accomplish His promise made to Abraham, and repeated to Isaac and Jacob. He had not come down to see if, indeed, the subjects of His promise were in such a condition as to merit His salvation. It was sufficient for Him that they needed it. Their oppressed state, their sorrows, their tears, their sighs, their heavy bondage, had all come in review before Him; for, blessed be His name, He counts His people’s sighs and puts their tears into His bottle. He was not attracted by their excellencies or their virtues. It was not on the ground of aught that was good in them, either seen or foreseen, that he was about to visit them, for He knew what was in them. In one word, we have the true ground of His gracious acting set before us in the words, **“I am the God of Abraham,”** and **“I have seen the affliction of my people.”**

These words reveal a great fundamental principle in the ways of God. It is on the ground of what He is, that He ever acts. **“I AM,”** secures all for **“MY PEOPLE.”** Assuredly He was not going to leave His people amid the brick-kilns of Egypt, and under the lash of Pharaoh’s taskmasters. They were His people, and He would act toward them in a manner worthy of Himself. To be His people - to be the favoured objects of the Lord’s electing love - the subjects of His unconditional promise, settled everything.

Nothing should hinder the public display of His relationship with those for whom His eternal purpose had secured the land of Canaan. He had come down to deliver them; and the combined power of earth and hell could not hold them in captivity one hour beyond His appointed time. He might and did use Egypt as a school, and Pharaoh as a schoolmaster; but when the needed work was accomplished, both the school and the schoolmaster were set aside, and His people were brought forth with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Such, then, was the double character of the revelation made to Moses at Mount Horeb.

What he saw and what he heard combined the two elements of holiness and grace - elements which, as we know, enter into, and distinctly characterize, all the ways and all the relationships of the blessed God, and which should also mark the ways of all those who, in any wise, act for, or have fellowship with, Him. Every true servant is sent forth from the immediate presence of God, with all its holiness and all its grace; and he is called to be holy and gracious - he is called to be the reflection of the grace and holiness of the divine character; and, in order that he may be so, he should not only start from the immediate presence of God, at the first, but abide there, in spirit, habitually. This is the true secret of effectual service.

“Childlike, attend what thou wilt say

Go forth and do it, while 'tis day,
Yet never leave my sweet retreat."

The spiritual man alone can understand the meaning of the two things, "**go forth and do,**" and, "**yet never leave.**" In order to act for God outside, I should be with Him inside. I must be in the secret sanctuary of His presence, else I shall utterly fail.

Very many break down on this point. There is the greatest possible danger of getting out of the solemnity and calmness of the divine presence, amid the bustle of intercourse with men, and the excitement of active service. This is to be carefully guarded against. If we lose that hallowed tone of spirit which is expressed in "**the unshod foot,**" our service will, very speedily, become vapid and unprofitable.

If I allow my work to get between my heart and the Master, it will be little worth. We can only effectually serve Christ as we are enjoying Him. It is while the heart dwells upon His powerful attractions that the hands perform the most acceptable service to His name; nor is there any one who can minister Christ with unction, freshness, and power to others, if he be not feeding upon Christ, in the secret of his own soul. True, he may preach a sermon, deliver a lecture, utter prayers, write a book, and go through the entire routine of outward service, and yet not minister Christ. The man who will present Christ to others must be occupied with Christ for himself.

Happy is the man who ministers thus, whatever be the success or reception of his ministry. For should his ministry fail to attract attention, to command influence, or to produce apparent results, he has his sweet retreat and his unfailing portion in Christ, of which nothing can deprive him. Whereas, the man who is merely feeding upon the fruits of his ministry, who delights in the gratification which it affords, or the attention and interest which it commands, is like a mere pipe, conveying water to others, and retaining only rust itself. *This is a most deplorable condition to be in; and yet is it the actual condition of every servant who is more occupied with his work and its results, than with the Master and His glory.*

This is a matter which calls for the most rigid self-judgment. The heart is deceitful, and the enemy is crafty; and, hence there is great need to hearken to the word of exhortation, "**be sober, be vigilant.**" It is when the soul is awakened to a sense of the varied and manifold dangers which beset the servant's path, that it is, in any measure, able to understand the need there is for being much alone with God: it is there one is secure and happy. It is when we begin, continue, and end our work at the Master's feet, that our service will be of the right kind.

From all that has been said, it must be evident to any reader that every servant of Christ will find the air of "**the backside of the desert**" most salutary. Horeb is really the starting post for all whom God sends forth to act for Him. It was at Horeb that Moses learnt to put off his shoes and hide his face. Forty years before he had gone to work; but his movement was premature. It was amid the flesh-subduing solitudes of the mount of God, and forth from the burning bush, that the divine commission fell on the servant's ear, "**Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt**" (Ver. 10). Here was real authority.

There is a vast difference between God sending a man, and a man running unsent. But it is very manifest that Moses was not ripe for service when first he set about acting. If forty years of secret training were needful for him, how could he have got on without it? Impossible! He had to be divinely educated, and divinely commissioned; and so must all who go forth upon a path of service and testimony for Christ.

Oh! that these holy lessons may be deeply graven on all our hearts, that so our every work may wear upon it the stamp of the Master's authority, and the Masters approval.

However, we have something further to learn at the foot of Mount Horeb. The soul finds it seasonable to linger in this place. **"It is good to be here."**

The presence of God is ever a deeply practical place; the heart is sure to be laid open there. The light that shines in that holy place makes everything manifest; and this is what is so much needed in the midst of the hollow pretension around us, and the pride and self complacency within.

We might be disposed to think that, the very moment the divine commission was given to Moses, his reply would be, **"Here am I,"** or **"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"** But no; he had yet to be brought to this. Doubtless, he was affected by the remembrance of his former failure. If a man acts in anything without God, he is sure to be discouraged, even when God is sending him. **"And Moses said unto God, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"** (Ver. 11). This is very unlike the man who, forty years before, **"supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them."**

Such is man! - at one time too hasty; at another time too slow. Moses had learnt a great deal since the day in which he smote the Egyptian. He had grown in the knowledge of himself, and this produced diffidence and timidity. But, then, he manifestly lacked confidence in God. If I am merely looking at myself, I shall do "nothing;" but if I am looking at Christ, **"I can do all things."** Thus, when diffidence and timidity led Moses to say, **"Who am I"** God's answer was, **"Certainly I will be with thee"** (Ver. 12).. This ought to have been sufficient. If God be with me, it makes very little matter who I am, or what I am.

When God says, **"I will send thee,"** and **"I will be with thee,"** the servant is amply furnished with divine authority and divine power; and he ought, therefore, to be perfectly satisfied to go forth. But Moses puts another question; for the human heart is full of questions. **"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"**

It is marvellous to see how the human heart reasons and questions, when unhesitating obedience is that which is due to God; and still more marvellous is the grace that bears with all the reasonings and answers all the questions. Each question seems but to elicit some new feature of divine grace.

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the

children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Ver. 14).

The title which God here gives Himself is one of wondrous significance. In tracing through Scripture the various names which God takes, we find them intimately connected with the varied need of those with whom He was in relation:

- “**Jehovah-jireh**,” (*the Lord will provide*).
- “**Jehovah-nissi**,” (*the Lord my banner*).
- “**Jehovah-shalom**,” (*the Lord send peace*).
- “**Jehovah-tsdkenu**,” (*the Lord our righteousness*).

All these His gracious titles are unfolded to meet the necessities of His people; and when He calls Himself “**I AM**,” it comprehends them all.

The Lord, in taking this title, was furnishing His people with a blank check, to be filled up to any amount.

He calls Himself “**I AM**,” and faith has but to write over against that ineffably precious name whatever we want. God is the only significant figure, and human need may add the ciphers.

- If we want life, Christ says, “**I AM the life**.”
- If we want righteousness, He is “**THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**.”
- If we want peace, “**He is our peace**.”
- If we want wisdom, sanctification, and redemption, He “**is made**” all these “**unto us**.”

In a word, we may travel through the wide range of human necessity, in order to have a just conception of the amazing depth and fullness of this profound and adorable name, “**I AM**.” What a mercy to be called to walk in companionship with One who bears such a name as this!

We are in the wilderness, and there we have to meet with trial, sorrow, and difficulty; but, so long as we have the happy privilege of betaking ourselves, at all times, and under all circumstances, to One who reveals Himself in His manifold grace, in connection with our every necessity and weakness, we need not fear the wilderness: God was about to bring His people across the sandy desert, when He disclosed this precious and comprehensive name; and, although the believer now, as being endowed with the Spirit of adoption, can cry, “**Abba Father**,” yet is he not deprived of the privilege of enjoying communion with God in each and every one of those manifestations which He has been pleased to make of Himself. For example:

- the title “**God**” reveals Him as acting in the solitariness of His own being, displaying His eternal power and Godhead in the works of creation.
- “**The Lord God**” is the title which He takes in connection with man.
- then, as “**the Almighty God**,” He rises before the view of His servant Abraham, in order to assure his heart in reference to the accomplishment of His promise touching the seed.
- As “**the Lord**,” He made Himself known to Israel, in delivering them out of the land of Egypt, and bringing them into the land of Canaan.

Such were the various measures and various modes in which “**God spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets:**” (Hebrews 1:1) and the believer, under this dispensation or economy, as possessing the spirit of sonship, can say, “It was my Father who thus revealed himself - thus spoke - thus acted.”

Nothing can be more interesting or practically important in its way than to follow out those great dispensational titles of God. These titles are always used in strict moral consistency with the circumstances under which they are disclosed; but there is, in the name “**I AM**,” a height, a depth, a length, a breadth, which truly pass beyond the utmost stretch of human conception.

“When God would teach mankind His name,
He calls Himself the great “**I AM**,”
And leaves a blank - believers may
Supply those things for which they pray.”

And, be it observed, it is only in connection with His own people that He takes this name. He did not address Pharaoh in this name. When speaking to him, He calls Himself by that commanding and majestic title, “**The Lord God of the Hebrews;**” i.e., God, in connection with the very people whom he was seeking to crush. This ought to have been sufficient to show Pharaoh his awful position with respect to God. “**I AM**” would have conveyed no intelligible sound to an uncircumcised ear - no divine reality to an unbelieving heart.

When God, “**manifest in the flesh**” declared to the unbelieving Jews of His day those words, “**before Abraham was, I am**,” they took up stones to cast at Him.

It is only the true believer who can feel, in any measure, the power, or enjoy the sweetness of that ineffable name, “**I AM**.” Such an one can rejoice to hear from the lips of the blessed Lord Jesus such declarations as these:

- “**I am that bread of life,**”
- “**I am the light of the world,**”
- “**I am the good shepherd,**”
- “**I am the resurrection and the life,**”
- “**I am the way, the truth, and the life,**”
- “**I am the true vine,**”
- “**I am alpha and Omega,**”
- “**I am the bright and morning star.**”

In a word, he can take every name of divine excellence and beauty, and, having placed it after “**I AM**,” find Jesus therein, and admire, adore, and worship.

Thus, there is a sweetness, as well as a comprehensiveness, in the name “**I AM**,” which is beyond all power of expression. Each believer can find therein that which exactly suits his own spiritual need, whatever it be.

There is not a single winding in all the Christian’s wilderness journey, not a single phase of his

soul's experience, not a single point in his condition which is not divinely met by this title, for the simplest of all reasons, that whatever he wants, he has but to place it, by faith, over against "**I AM**" and find it all in Jesus. To the believer, therefore, however feeble and faltering, there is unmingled blessedness in this name.

But, although it was to the elect of God that Moses was commanded to say, "**I AM hath sent me unto you,**" yet is there deep solemnity and reality in that name, when looked at with reference to the unbeliever. If one who is yet in his sins contemplates, for a moment, this amazing title, he cannot, surely, avoid asking himself the question, "How do I stand as to this Being who calls Himself, '**I AM THAT I AM.**' If, indeed, it be true that HE Is, then what is He to me? What am I to write over against this solemn name, '**I AM**' " I shall not rob this question of its characteristic weight and power by any words of my own; but I pray that God the Holy Ghost may make it searching to the conscience of any reader who really needs to be searched thereby.

I cannot close this section without calling the attention of the Christian reader to the deeply-interesting declaration contained in the 15th verse: "**And God said, moreover, unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial to all generations.**"

This statement contains a very important truth - a truth which many professing Christians seem to forget, namely, that God's relationship with Israel is an eternal one. He is just as much Israel's God now, as when He visited them in the land of Egypt. Moreover, He is just as Positively dealing with them now as then, only in a different way.

His word is clear and emphatic: "**This is my name for ever.**" He does not say, 'This is my name for a time, so long as they continue what they ought to be.' No; "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

Let my reader ponder this. "**God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew**" (Romans 11:2). They are His people still, whether obedient or disobedient, united together, or scattered abroad; manifested to the nations, or hidden from their view. They are His people, and He is their God. Exodus 3:15 is unanswerable.

The professing church has no warrant whatever, for ignoring a relationship which God says is to endure "**for ever.**" Let us beware how we tamper with this weighty word, "**for ever.**" If we say it does not mean for ever, when applied to Israel, what proof have we that it means for ever when applied to us? God means what He says; and He will, ere long, make manifest to all the nations of the earth, that His connection with Israel is one which shall outlive all the revolutions of time.

"**The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.**" When He said, "**this is my name for ever,**" He spoke absolutely. "**I AM**" declared Himself to be Israel's God for ever; and all the Gentiles shall be made to understand and bow to this; and to know, moreover, that all God's providential dealings with them, and all their destinies, are connected, in some way or other, with that favoured and honoured, though now judged and scattered, people.

“When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance” (Deuteronomy 32:8, 9)

Has this ceased to be true? Has the Lord given up His **“portion,”** and surrendered **“the lot of His inheritance?”** Does His eye of tender love no longer rest on Israel’s scattered tribes, long lost to man’s vision are the walls of Jerusalem no longer before Him! or has her dust ceased to be precious in His sight?

To reply to these inquiries would be to quote a large portion of the Old Testament, and not a little of the New but this would not be the place to enter elaborately upon such a subject. I would only say, in closing this section, let not Christendom **“be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved”** (Romans 11:25, 26).

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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