

### 1. Exodus 3:14 – “What is your name?”

- God's name is derived from the verb “to be”<sup>1</sup>
- There is no **present tense** verb “to be” in Hebrew<sup>2</sup>
- Possible interpretations that can all be correct
  - “I am what I am” (אהיה אשר אהיה) (*Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh*)
  - “I am who I am.”
  - “I will be what I will be”
  - “I will cause to be what I will cause to be”
  - “I become what I become”

### 2. The Proper Name of God

- YHVH (יהוה) – believed to be derived from the verb “to be”
- A possible translation “He causes to be”<sup>3</sup>

### 3. A Name -

- In the ancient world, a Name was more than ‘how do I refer to you?’
- A name signified your essence and the nature of your being.
- To know the name of a deity was to have power over the deity.

### 4. God gives Moses a ‘non-answer:’

- Words cannot express the reality of God. To describe God in any human language is to reduce His reality. (putting God in a box).
- We must accept the limitations inherent in our being and not project our limitations on God.
- “I will be what I will be,” says:
  - Only God can define himself
  - Humanity can't define God, so don't even try.

### 5. “I will be what I will be” – Future-Oriented:

- We cannot see or predict how God will act in the future.
- How is God going to act tomorrow?

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<sup>1</sup> Sarna, Nahum M. Exodus = [Shemot] : the Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation. 1st ed. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991, pp. 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Prager, Dennis. The Rational Bible: Exodus. Washington D.C.: Regnery Faith, 2018, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Sarna (p. 17).

## 6. Egyptian Context:

- Egyptian Pantheon – a large and complex pantheon of gods that included the Pharaoh as an incarnated god.
- Each god was limited in scope:
  - Attached to a geographic location
  - Had a specific function
  - **Name** was associated with their function
- Use of their Name in an Incantation:
  - To know the name of the god was to be able to call out their power through the use of an incantation.
  - Magic was a daily occurrence in Egypt

## 7. An Exodus of the Mind:



- No progress toward a better future – stuck in cycle.
- Fatalistic – no emphasis on personal agency
- Goal of Wisdom is to gain power
- Magic to gain power distorts reality.
- Marked by Self-deception
- Marked by Suffering/injustice/violence

- God sets Israel on a path toward a better future
- God/Heaven is the ultimate reality
- Goal is to transcend toward Heaven (metaphor)
- Emphasis on personal responsibility/agency.
- Goal of Wisdom is to "see" reality more clearly
- Goal to minimize self-deception
- Move toward reduced suffering, injustice, violence
- Exodus 40 represents Israel transcending to connect Heaven (Presence of God) and Earth

## 8. "I will be what I will be" or "I will cause to be what I cause to be" = **God of an open-ended future**

- Israel begins to participate with God in creating the future
- The future is not static or predetermined.
- Your actions matter, and you participate in creating reality with God.