

Exodus 6:2–8

Introduction

Everything seems to be falling to pieces. It seems to all *outward* appearances that Moses is being proved right and God is being proved wrong. After initially believing God's word delivered to them through Moses and bowing down in worship, the people of Israel have now rejected Moses and called on the LORD to look on him and judge him. Ever since Moses arrived in Egypt, rather than get any better, things have only become much, much worse. If the people were suffering before Moses came, now they are suffering all the more. Moses himself is disillusioned.

- ✓ Exodus 5:22–23 — Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.”

We saw last week that the mistake Israel has made—and Moses, too—is thinking that their promised deliverance is primarily about them, when in reality, it's about God's revelation of His own great glory in and through the salvation of his people. The order and the relationship between God's glory and our salvation is absolutely essential. It changes literally everything. So rather than give Moses the kind of answer he was looking for, God gives him the only truly satisfying answer there is – the answer that should already have been abundantly clear.

- ✓ Exodus 6:1 — But the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

There is more at stake here than just Israel's deliverance. What is at stake here is the glory of God in and through Israel's deliverance. But is this to say that Israel is just a disposable tool that God doesn't really care about? If God is zealous for His own glory in and through the salvation of His people, should we still believe that He truly *loves us*? This morning, we'll reflect on the verses in which God answers this question – in which God shows us how our salvation relates to His glory. Indeed, these are some of the most formative and foundational verses for our understanding of all the rest of Scripture.

I. Exodus 6:2 — God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am YAHWEH.”*

Immediately, we're reminded of what happened at the burning bush in chapter three.

- ✓ Exodus 3:13–15 — Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM [*ehyeh asher ehyeh*].” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM [*ehyeh*] has sent me to you.’ ” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘**YAHWEH** [He is], 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

* For a helpful “outline” of this passage, see page 7

God's *name* is God's revealing of Himself to us. So in the name *Yahweh*, we learn that God *is* – He exists unceasingly from all eternity all of Himself (*He is*). And God's unceasing self-existence can never, ever, *ever* be static. He's never "just there," like we can be "just there." That's *impossible* for God! God's unceasing self-existence *means* that He is unceasingly active, working, moving, doing. For God to exist, for God to be there, *is* for God to do. And so for all of us as God's people, His unceasing self-existence *means* by default that He is unceasingly *with*, and unceasingly *present*, and unceasingly *active* on our behalf – past, present, and future – *even* in our times of suffering.

God said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, '**YAHWEH**... has sent me to you.' This is my *name* forever." And now, as the people of Israel are filled with doubt and unbelief in light of their *increased* sufferings, and as Moses also finds himself utterly confused and disillusioned, God brings Moses back to this same, unchanging revelation of Himself: "I am Yahweh." That's only two words in the Hebrew: "*Ani* (I) *Yahweh*." That is *My name*. That is *who I am*. God obviously believes that *who* – *He* – *is* should make all the difference in our lives! – That *His name* should be the answer to all our questions, and the solution to all the otherwise unsolvable problems and riddles in this world and in our lives. But have *we* come to see this truly and fully? Well, now God goes on to spell out even more clearly than ever the true meaning and significance of *His great name*.

II. Exodus 6:3–4 — "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shadday, but by my name YAHWEH I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners."

When God revealed Himself to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He revealed Himself to them *as El Shadday*. There's still some debate about what "Shadday" actually means, but if we look at how this word is used in Genesis, I think we can get a pretty clear idea of the basic point.

- ✓ **Genesis 17:1–2, 7-8 (NASB)** — The LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "***I am El Shadday***... I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly... [and I will be] God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."

Who is El Shadday? In these verses, He is the God who makes promises. He is the God who promises that He will multiply Abraham's descendants, and be God to them, and give them the land of their sojournings for an everlasting possession.

- ✓ **Genesis 35:11–12** — God said to [Jacob], "***I am El Shadday*** ... A nation and a company of nations shall come from you... The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you."

Who is El Shadday? In these verses, too, He is the God who makes promises. He is the God who promises that a nation and a company of nations will come from Jacob, and that He will give to Jacob and his offspring the land of Canaan.

- ✓ Genesis 28:1, 3–4 — Isaac called Jacob... and said to him... May ***El Shadday*** bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you... May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!”

Who is El Shadday? Here, once again, He is the God who makes promises of blessing to His people. He is the God who has promised to make the children of Abraham fruitful and multiply, and to give them the land of their sojournings.

- ✓ Genesis 48:3–4 — Jacob said to Joseph, “***El Shadday*** appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.’”

Who is El Shadday? He is the God who makes ***promises*** – promises of blessing for His people – to make them fruitful, and give them the land, and be their God.[†] And so now we are not at all surprised to hear God say to Moses here in Exodus chapter six: “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shadday... I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.” If El Shadday means “God ***Almighty***” (as basically all translations assume) then God’s point in revealing this name to the patriarchs seems to be that He is ***powerfully able to make***, and to ***establish***, and to ***keep*** all His covenant promises of blessing.

And how did God reveal this name? Not just by telling Abraham how to spell it and sound it out! No! God revealed His name (El Shadday) by causing the patriarchs to ***experience*** personally the reality of this name in their own lives over, and over, and over again (just read the book of Genesis!).

God revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as El Shadday, the God who is powerfully able to make, and to establish, and to keep all His covenant promises of blessing. And then He goes on to say: “but by my name YAHWEH I did not make myself known to them.” Now we know that the patriarchs were fully aware that Yahweh was God’s name. They knew the spelling and the vocalization of the name “Yahweh” just as well, if not better, than they knew the name “El Shadday.” Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve knew that God’s name was Yahweh (Gen. 4:1). Lamech (Gen. 5:29), Noah (Gen. 9:26), Abraham (Gen. 14:22; etc.), Abraham’s servant Eliezer (Gen. 24:12), Sarah (16:2, 5), Isaac (Gen. 26:22), Jacob (Gen. 28:16; etc.), Leah (29:32), Rachel (Gen. 30:24), and Laban (Gen. 30:27) all knew that God’s name was Yahweh.

[†] Genesis 43:14 — May ***El Shadday*** grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. Genesis 49:25 — ...by the God of your father who will help you, by the ***Shadday*** who will *bless* you with *blessings* of heaven above, *blessings* of the deep that crouches beneath, *blessings* of the breasts and of the womb.

But once again, there's a difference between knowing how to pronounce a name, and knowing intimately *through personal experience* the **fullness** of *all* that that name reveals about God. Genesis tells the story of how the patriarchs came to know God intimately and through much personal experience as El Shaddai – the God who is powerfully able to make, and to establish, and to keep all His promises of blessing. In Exodus, though God doesn't set aside the name El Shaddai (cf. Ezek. 10:5), His plan is now to cause the people to know Him intimately, and through much personal experience, **as Yahweh**. His plan is now to make the people know Him in a *new* and *even more wonderful way as Yahweh*. In Exodus, God's plan and God's desire is that His people should come to know Him even *more* deeply, and *more* truly, and *more* fully than they ever had before. This was already very clearly hinted at in chapter three. But how will this come to pass? What will this actually *look like*, and *mean*?

III. Exodus 6:5 — “Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.”

Here's our first clue. In these next words to Moses, God moves suddenly from the arena of promise to the arena of **fulfillment**. God has “remembered” His “covenant.” But this won't just be any old fulfillment of covenant promises. This is fulfillment specifically within the context of groaning and **slavery**. “I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.” (cf. 2:24)

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had never known groaning and slavery like their descendants knew it now. For the most part, they lived full and prosperous lives as they looked forward in faith to the day when God would finally fulfill His covenant promises. So if we were to base everything on the experiences of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we might expect a very easy and natural transition into their inheritance of the land of Canaan, and their experience of the fulfillment of all God's promises. But already, long ago God had explicitly said to Abraham:

- ✓ **Genesis 15:13–15** — Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.”

Abraham is to know that when it comes to the fulfillment of the promises, it won't be just “any old” fulfillment. This will be a fulfillment specifically within a context of cruel slavery and affliction. And so it is now coming to pass. Israel has been groaning and crying out in their slavery to the Egyptians for hundreds of years—and *now*, even far more so than ever before. So what happens *now* when God enters into this world of groaning and slavery finally bringing the fulfillment of the promises that He made to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? Suddenly, the long awaited fulfillment of all God's promises becomes nothing less than the **salvation** and the **redemption** of all God's people. And so God says to Moses in verses 6-7a:

Exodus 6:6–7a — “Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am YAHWEH, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I

will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God.”

“I will... I will... I will... I will...” “I will bring you out... I will deliver you... I will redeem you... I will take you...”[‡] Here for only the second time in Scripture, God uses the word for “deliver.”[§] Here for the very first time in Scripture, God uses the word for “redeem.”^{**} And here for the very first time in Scripture, God speaks of *taking someone to Himself*.^{††} Here, for the first and only time in Scripture, all four of these descriptions of the coming exodus are gathered together into one place, and the effect is that of a crescendo building toward a finale of unbelievable, quiet, tender intimacy. To be groaning under heavy burdens; and then to have Yahweh *bring me out from under* those heavy burdens! To be crying out in the bondage of slavery; and then to have Yahweh *deliver me* from that slavery! To be oppressed by a cruel master, and then to have Yahweh *redeem me with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment*! And to think that God would bring us out from under those heavy burdens, and deliver us from that slavery, and redeem us with outstretched arm and great acts of judgment – all so that He might *take us to Himself*, so that we might be His people and He might be our God! (cf. Gen. 17:6-8)

But as awesome as all of that is, if that’s where we stop then we’ve actually missed completely the entire point. What is the point of bringing us out, and delivering us, and redeeming us, and taking us? What is God’s ultimate, final purpose, and desire, and goal in all of this? He answers:

Exodus 6:7b–8a — ““Then”^{‡‡} you shall *know* that I am **YAHWEH** your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.^{§§} I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession.”

In verse three we saw that by His name, Yahweh, God did not make Himself “*known*” to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But now, God’s people will “*know*” that He is Yahweh. The God who revealed Himself to the patriarchs as **El Shadday** – the God who is powerfully able to *make, and to establish, and to keep* all His promises of blessing – will now reveal Himself even more fully and more wonderfully as **Yahweh** – the God who *fulfills* all His promises to His people — *by becoming their Savior and their Redeemer.*

What is God’s point in bringing His people out from under those heavy burdens, and delivering them from slavery, and redeeming them with outstretched arm and great acts of judgment, and taking them to Himself? What is God’s ultimate purpose, and desire and goal? It is that He should be known, and loved, and worshipped not *just* as El Shadday, but even *more fully and more deeply and more intimately* as **Yahweh**.

[‡] These four “I will’s” mirror and explain God’s “I am” (ani).

[§] The first time is in an identical context in Exodus 3:8 (God does also use this word in Exodus 3:22, but the sense there is to plunder rather than to deliver)

^{**} This is only the second time that this word appears in Scripture (Gen. 48:16; cf. Exod. 15:13)

^{††} Lit. “I will take you to Me for a people.” (cf. Deut. 4:20)

^{‡‡} “Then” seems to be the sense of the Hebrew conjunction here (cf. NIV; NKJV; NET; NLT)

^{§§} Cf. Exod. 20:2; 29:46; Lev. 11:45; 19:36; 22:33; 25:38; 26:13; Num. 15:41; Deut. 5:6

And then as if there could still be any doubt remaining, the God who first “spoke to Moses and said to him, ‘I am Yahweh,’” and who then told Moses to “say... to the people of Israel, ‘I am Yahweh,’” now says one more time at the very end:

Exodus 6:8b — “‘I am YAHWEH.’”

Conclusion

And so we see God’s zeal, and God’s purpose, and God’s desire that *He* should be *fully known* – that *we* should *know Him* fully. What a wondrous, amazing thought. In Genesis, the patriarchs came to know God intimately and through much personal experience as El Shadday – the God who is powerfully able to make, and to establish, and to keep all His promises of blessing. But then in Exodus, and throughout the rest of the Old Testament, though God doesn’t set aside the name El Shadday (cf. Ezek. 10:5), His people come to know Him even more deeply and more fully *as Yahweh* – the God who *fulfills* all His promises to His people — *by becoming their Savior and their Redeemer*.

But in the end, God’s passion that He should be fully known—that we should know Him fully—led Him to take not *only* another name, but human flesh. For all that Israel could come to know of God *as Yahweh*, it was only through the name of “Jesus” that they would ever come to know God intimately and through personal experience in ***ALL*** of His unbounded, limitless, fathomless glory, and power, and beauty. And what does the name, *Jesus*, mean? Savior. Jesus suffered, and bled, and died... *Why?* In order that God might be fully known – that we might know God fully; because God is never more fully known in all of His attributes and all of His glory than when He is known *as our Savior*.^{***} El Shadday. Yahweh. Jesus. The Apostle John writes:

- ✓ **John 1:14, 18** — The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, *he has made him known*.

As the great “I AM” (cf. Jn. 8:58) come in the flesh to save and redeem His people, Jesus revealed God in all that He did, in all that He said. He said: “I am the bread of life,” (Jn. 6:35) “I am the light of the world,” (Jn. 8:12) “I am the door of the sheep,” (Jn. 10:7, 9) “I am the good shepherd,” (Jn. 10:11, 14) “I am the resurrection and the life,” (Jn. 11:25) “I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” (Jn. 14:26) “I am the vine, you are the branches.” (Jn. 15:5)

Have you come to know Him? Jesus said:

- ✓ **John 17:3** — And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

^{***} “A knowledge of God as YHWH will emerge from the experience of these events that would be impossible without the experience of these events.” (Hamilton) “What 3:14-15 and 6:3 demonstrate is not the newness of the divine *name*, but the centrality of the Exodus as the event by which God’s salvation, and hence his salvation name, ‘Yahweh,’ is fully known... By being delivered from Egypt, the Israelites will come to *know* God in a way that the patriarchs did not.” (Enns) Motyer puts it simply: “Not... a new or different God but... the same God *more* fully known.”

Have you come to know God through faith and trust in Jesus, and His suffering and death on the cross in the place of sinners? Will you trust in Him this morning?

And are we *seeking* to know God always more, and more, and more in the face of the one whose *name* is Jesus? We read in 2 Corinthians:

- ✓ 2 Corinthians 4:6 — God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

And we see His face *here*, on every page of Scripture.

And so in Christ *our Savior*, all the promises of God are *fulfilled*.” As the Apostle Paul says: “All the promises of God find their Yes in Him.” (2 Cor. 1:20)

Exodus 6:2-8

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I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.”

“Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.”

“Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘*I am YAHWEH,*’

‘and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,
and I will deliver you from slavery to them,
and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.
I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God.’

‘Then you shall **KNOW** that I am **YAHWEH** your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession.’

‘*I am YAHWEH.*’”