

May Women Be Ordained As Pastors?

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From "Marburg Revisited" To
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TRANSLATION BY THE EDITOR

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Or Exodus 6:3 And It's
Relationship To The Four
Documentary Hypothesis

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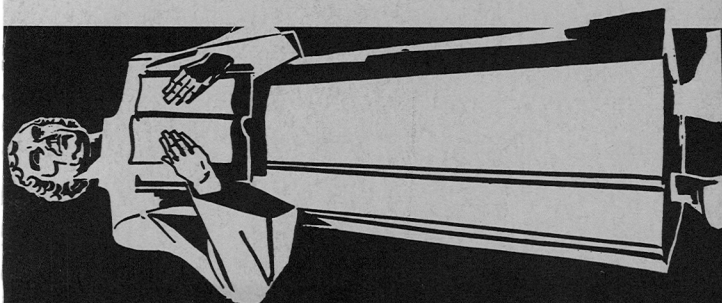
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Did the Patriarchs Know Yahweh?

Exodus 6:3 and its Relationship to the Four Documentary Hypothesis

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FEW VERSES of the Old Testament have exercised such a pivotal influence on Biblical study as have Exodus 6:2,3 which in the Revised Standard Version read as follows: "And God said to Moses, 'I am the LORD (Yahweh in the Hebrew). I appeared unto Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but my name the LORD (Yahweh) I did not make myself known to them.'" This first recorded statement of God to Moses would seem flatly to contradict the statement by Yahweh in Exodus 3:6, which reads: "And he said: 'I am the God of your fathers; the God of Abraham; the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'" The effect of this appearance according to Exodus 3:6 was: "And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God (Elohim)."

Many clues are said to exist for the distinguishment of four separate documents in the Pentateuch which at one time supposedly separately existed and later were woven into one literary document known in Hebrew as the Torah of Moses or the Pentateuch.¹ The four primary sources out of which the Pentateuch supposedly was eventually formed are usually referred to as J, E, D, and P. Four major criteria, it is claimed, have helped the critical and observant scholar to isolate and differentiate these four documents, some of which allegedly originated in the southern kingdom (J,P) and others in the northern kingdom (E and D). They are: 1) the use of different divine names prior to Exodus 6:3; 2) the existence of duplicate narratives of the same event or happening; 3) different terminology as represented by the usage of these documents; and 4) divergent theological ideologies as reflected in the documents.²

It is claimed that one of the first clues in distinguishing documents was first given by Exodus 6:3 where it is said that God was known to the Patriarchs as El Shaddai and not by the name Yahweh, although in the Book of Genesis the name Yahweh is employed freely.³ This means that many times, in fact, over 200 times the Book of Genesis is wrongly ascribing Yahweh as speaking to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when it was not Yahweh at all! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are frequently portrayed as addressing and worshipping Yahweh but again the conclusion that one must reach, if the critical interpretation of Genesis is correct, based on Exodus 6:3, that the passages involving the patriarchs with Yahweh are anachronisms. If the critical conclusions are correct, one must conclude that the first book of the Bible gives much misinformation and presents facts that are not true. This is hardly what a person would expect from a book that the Holy Spirit caused to be written and whose writers he guided.

Since the first finding of this "clue" in Exodus 6:3, students and proponents of the documentary hypothesis have continually been resorting to it as one of the main types of evidence for the fact that in Genesis one finds the data of three different documents woven into the present Book of Genesis following a scissors and paste method. Thus John Skinner, author of the Commentary on Genesis in *The International Critical Commentary* series wrote:

It is evident that the author of these statements cannot have written any passage which implies on the part of the patriarchs a knowledge of the name Yahweh, and, in particular, any passage which records a revelation of God to them under that name.⁴

In his book dealing with the divine names Skinner also wrote:

It is not only possible, but *certain* that at least two writers were concerned in the composition of Genesis. That is an inevitable inference . . . from the express statement of Exodus 6:2-3. The writer of Exodus 6:2-3 could neither have recorded previous revelations of the Deity under the name of Yahweh, nor have put the name into the mouth of any of the patriarchs. . . . Such passages cannot have come from the same source as Exodus 6:2-3. . . . We are well on our way to a documentary theory of the Pentateuch.⁵

H. H. Rowley, deceased British Old Testament scholar, used the same argument in a number of his published writings. Thus he wrote in *The Doctrine of Election*:

Obviously it cannot be true that God was not known to Abraham by the name of Yahweh (Footnote Ex. 6:3) and that He was known to him by that name (Footnote 2, Gen. 15:2,7). To this extent there is a flat contradiction that cannot be resolved by any shift.⁶

Professor McNeile in his commentary on Exodus in *The Westminster Commentary* series asserted:

A signal instance of the way in which God leads His people into a fuller understanding of His Word is afforded by the fact that it is only in the last 150 years that the attention of students has been arrested by these verses. How is it that though God here says that up to this point His name Yahweh has not been known, yet in the book of Genesis the patriarchs appear to know it well and to use it freely. The question cannot be answered except for the recognition that varying conditions have been incorporated from different sources.⁷

Critical scholarship has been willing in the light of one seeming problem passage to reject the testimony of the entire book of Genesis, the account of the first confrontation of Yahweh with Moses in Exodus 3, and the assertions of other Biblical books as

well as the statements of the New Testament that Abraham, Issac and Jacob worshipped and knew Yahweh as their God. Insisting on one pasage (Ex. 6:3) to be in disagreement with the rest of Scripture seems to be an unfair methodology to utilize. The critical methodology violates some basic rules of interpretation, namely, that the immediate context in which a passage occurs should be consulted in the interpretation of a passage and also the rule that when a problem appears in a text the broader context of the entire book should be taken into account. The contention of critical scholarship that the children of Israel did not know Yahweh before Moses had been revealed, according to Ex. 6:2, 3, contradicts the entire Biblical evidence and the many assertions of the Book of Genesis which depicts Yahweh dealing with the patriarchs. Instead of bringing Exodus 6:3 into line with the rest of the Scriptures the critics insist on making all of Scripture conform to one passage which has not been adequately grasped by critical scholars. The critical assumption regarding Exodus 6:2, 3 is not only disproved by the clear distinction in the passage itself but also the common sense implications of the critics' own hypothesis. According to them the redactor to whom they attribute the present form of Genesis and the Pentateuch as a whole, did not understand the Exodus passage as they do, and saw nothing inconsistent in it with the frequent use of the name of Yahweh by the patriarchs. Otherwise he would either have changed the statement in Exodus or the name of Yahweh in Genesis, unless perhaps he was an ignoramus and no editor at all or a prematurely born protagonist of the divisive theory, anticipating his modern colleagues by nearly three thousand years.⁸

Explanations as to the True Meaning of Exodus 6:3

Did the children of Israel know Yahweh prior to
Moses' 80th year of his life?

Did the children of Israel know the name Yahweh before the latter is supposed to have revealed His name in the eightieth year of Moses' life? The answer is: Yes. Dr. Segal, an expert in the Hebrew language, author of *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* wrote:

But the whole thesis, that according to E and P the name YHWH was unknown in the world till it was revealed to Moses, has no basis in fact. It is disproved by the name *Joshua* in E, by the name *Jochebed* in J, both names earlier than the alleged revelation of the name of YHWH to Moses, and both containing the abbreviated element of the name YHWH usual in Hebrew theophorous names. Also the patriarchal name of *Joseph* most probably contains this element. Moreover, it is incredible that those ancient Hebrew writers would have represented the patriarchs, who were undoubtedly in their estimation true worshippers of God, as ignorant of the true name of deity. There could have been no true worship of God without a knowledge of His true name, as it proved by the standing expression in the Bible for worship: "to call by the name of YHWH" (Gen. iv, 26; xii. 8).⁹

According to Exodus 6:20 Amram and Jochebed were the parents, or possibly even earlier ancestors of Moses. Assuming that Jochebed was the mother of Moses, Moses' grandmother and grandfather must have known the name of YHWH in order to give their daughter the name Jochebed, a name whose first component is Jah, a shortened form of YHWH. The same situation obtained as far as the parents of Joshua are concerned, they also must have known the YHWH, because they also gave their son a theophorous name whose first element was the shortened form of Yahweh, namely, Yah. The linguistic argument should be a strong deterrent to interpreting Exodus 6:3 as a contradiction of Exodus 3:6.

Furthermore if Exodus 6:3 records the first giving of the name YHWH it is very strange that this is not stated, because the phrase "I am YHWH" occurs more than 150 times in the Old Testament. In chapter 6 of Exodus it occurs twice again (vs. 7-8) and in 12 other passages in the Book of Exodus. It is also found dozens of times in the Pentateuch in passages assigned by the Theory to P (including the Holiness Code, Lev. 18-25). But nowhere can the Phrase "I am YHWH" mean the declaration of a new name. It is rather strange that in Exodus 6:3 P should be satisfied with just simply repeating the common stereotyped phrase without any indication whatever that this was the first revelation of the name. Since there is no such indication, it stands to reason that the phrase here in Exodus 6:3 must be given the same meaning as in other passages in the Old Testament.

According to the critical theory Yahweh was supposed not to be known to Israelites, but somehow Moses convinced the Israelites that they should believe in YHWH, a God completely unknown to them. However, this interpretation simply will not fit the true facts. Thus it is stated in Exodus 3:13, shortly after the first appearance of YHWH to Moses, (ch. 3:1-10) Moses then asked God (Elohim), "When I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you;' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' Then what shall I tell them? Verse 14 reports: "God said to Moses, 'I am that I am.' Then you will speak to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" God said further to Moses, "You tell the Israelites: Jahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever and by this I am remembered throughout all generations." Moses was to convene the elders of Israel and tell them: Jahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has appeared to him with this message, etc. If the people of his nation to whom Moses was to go did not know Yahweh, the message of Moses to the people would have made no sense for according to the critics' theory they did not know the name of YHWH. The facts, assumed in chapter 3:13-22, were that the Israelites had been worshipping Yahweh and knew him. Otherwise for Moses to say YHWH has sent me would have had no meaning for a people unacquainted with him and carry no authority for believing Moses' message of comfort that now YHWH was going to deliver them from the Egyptian bondage.

A number of scholars claim that the failure of critical students adequately to grasp the meaning of Exodus 6:3 is found in the fact that they fail to understand the meaning of what the phrase "to know (Hebrew *yadah*) YHWH" means. When the documentarians claim that "to know the name of Yahwh" means that the name was not known before Moses' time they show a very superficial knowledge of the use of this phrase occurring 26 times in the Old Testament. In writing about this matter Archer asserted:

But this involves a very superficial analysis of the Hebrew verb "to know (*yada'*)," and the implications in Hebrew of knowing a person's name. That it could not be meant in a baldly literal sense is shown by the absurdity of supposing that the entire ten plagues were necessary to convince the Egyptians (Ex. 14:4 "and the Egyptians shall know that I am Jhwh) that the name of the God of the Hebrews was named Jhwh.¹⁰

Exodus 6:7 reads, "Ye shall know that I am JHWH your God who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians," and in 14:4 the implication is stated that they shall witness God's covenant faithfulness in His delivering His people and destroying their enemies. The clear meaning of the text in these passages therefore means that the Israelites should know by personal experience that YHWH was a covenant God who keeps his promises. When the phrase "you shall know that I am YHWH," occurs it has always this meaning that people, either Israelites or their neighbors and often their enemies should know and learn by personal experience that YHWH is a God who keeps his threats as well as promises. In the light of Biblical usage therefore Archer wrote: "Hebrew usage therefore indicates clearly enough that Exodus 6:3 teaches that God, who in earlier generations revealed Himself as El Shaddai (God Almighty) by deeds of power and mercy, would now in Moses' generation reveal Himself as the covenant-keeping Jehovah by His marvelous deliverance of the whole nation of Israel." James Orr, in *The Problem of the Old Testament* has pointed out that "name" (Hebrew *shem*) denotes the revelation side of God's being.¹²

According to the critical theory, based on Exodus 6:3, the reader of Genesis and of the first five chapters of Exodus must scrupulously observe a differentiation between the name of YHWH and Elohim when interpreting these first 55 chapters of the Bible. The modern reader must do this although the Jews themselves who were much closer to the origination of their Pentateuch did not know that such a distinction was necessary.

It is noteworthy that in recent years members of the Uppsala School of Sweden have surrendered this distinction made on the basis of the divine names of YHWH and Elohim, employed to separate two different documents, which supposedly originated in two different localities. Thus Ivan Engnell has rejected this Wellhausenian reconstruction, founded on Exodus 6:3. In *Gamla Testamentet* Engnell wrote:

The different divine names have different ideological associa-

tions and therewith different import. Thus, Yahweh is readily used when it is a question of Israel's national God, indicated as such over against foreign gods, and where the history of the patriarchs is concerned, while on the other hand Elohim, "God" gives more expression to a "theological" and abstract-cosmic picture of God in larger and more giving contexts . . . So then, it is the traditionists, the *same* traditionists, who varies in the use of the divine names, not the documents . . ."¹³

Another member of the Swedish Old Testament school Sigmund Mowinckel asserted:

It is not E's view that Yahweh here is revealing a hitherto unknown name to Moses. Yahweh is not telling his name to one who does not know it. Moses asks for some control evidence that his countrymen may know, when he returns to them, that it really is the God of their fathers that has sent him . . . the whole conversation pre-supposes that the Israelites knew the name only.¹⁴

When YHWH met Moses in the Midian wilderness in the burning bush He was telling Moses that before this time he had been known to the patriarchs as "the self-existent One;" but now He was revealing a new meaning for the name, from now on Israel was to know YHWH as a personal name, in all the wondrous intimacy that the name in its fullness implied. YHWH was to be the unique covenant name of the God of Israel, it contains the pledge of all that He had promised to do for them and be to them. They were His people, and He their God. They were to know Him in personal, covenant relationship.

It is the contention of Unger that critical scholars are completely missing the purpose of the assertion of Exodus 6:3 which was not designed to distinguish the names of Elohim and Yahweh in Genesis and in the opening chapters of Exodus. Significantly the Exodus 6:3 passage does not distinguish YHWH from Elohim (occurring over 200 times in Genesis) but from El Shaddai (God Almighty) the name denoting the particular character in which God revealed Himself to the patriarchs (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35-11; 43:14; 48:3).¹⁵

The Exodus 6:3 passage does *not* concern itself *at all* with the occurrence or non-occurrence of the divine name YHWH in the pre-Mosaic era, and therefore cannot legitimately be employed to deny or affirm anything about the antiquarian usage of YHWH and Elohim, the usual conclusion drawn by critical scholarship.

Other possibilities also exist for removing what is claimed to be a patent contradiction when Exodus 3:6 is placed in opposition to Exodus 6:3.

Various solutions for what appears as a problem in Ex. 6:2, 3 have been proposed, all of which would resolve the alleged difficulty that some scholars would find in these two verses. One reasonable suggestion has been made. It is that the negative particle "lo" which

appears before the verb "know" is a transcriptional error for the emphatic particle "lu" which involves one letter, u for o.¹⁷ Then the translation of Exodus 6:2, 3 would be: "And God said to Moses, "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, and *verily*, by my name the Lord (Yahweh) I did make myself known to them."

Professor Martin claims that never in the history of exegesis have critical scholars insisted on the importance of one letter or stressed one verse, even to the exclusion of a large body of testimony to support a theory that they are loathe to surrender and admit that in the 18th century some erroneous conclusions were drawn by Witter, Astruc, Eichhorn and many others which today simply will not stand up in the light of various types of evidence. Thus he wrote:

Probably never before in the whole history of exegesis, whether classical or biblical, has so much been made to depend on a single word. There was something strangely paradoxical about this attitude to a tiny word on the part of men who were ready to believe that otherwise the text had suffered extensive admixture. In the interpretation of the text at the outset a recognized and generally accepted canon of exegesis seemed to have been neglected, namely, that a passage should be interpreted in the light, not only of the local context, but also of the remote, the mediate as well as immediate must be taken into consideration.¹⁸

When scholars became aware that Exodus 6:2, 3 was in conflict with the immediate context and with all of Genesis they should have become suspicious of the rendering of this passage and in the interest of the general assumption that a writer purports to write intelligently and logically there should at least an attempt have been made to straighten out the difficulty. But critical scholars were more concerned to depict the Bible as a human and fallible book, which was a distinct thrust of the age of rationalism to demote the divine character of the Scriptures and ascribe to it a fallible humanity.

A knowledge of the Old Testament usage of the word "name," if it had been grasped properly, could also have adequately taken care of bringing Exodus 6:2,3 into harmony with the assertions of Genesis, Exodus and many other books which stated that YHWH from the very beginning of His relationship with Abraham and his descendants was known by the name of YHWH. In Hebrew the word "name" covers not only the idea of a verbal deputy, a label for a thing, but it also denotes the attributes of the thing named. The word "shem," name also stands for "reputation," "character," "honor," "name," and "fame." Therefore Martins wrote: "Hence the reference would not be so much to nomenclature as to the nature of the reality for which the name stood. To bring out the full meaning in English one would then have to use some such phrase as "glorious name."¹⁹

There is an interpretation which would remove any semblance of contradiction with Exodus 3:6 and this was already discussed for members of the Missouri Synod clergy in a short but important

article in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* of 1933.²⁰ L. August Heerboth rendered Ex. 6:3b as follows: "I am Jehovah and have appeared unto Abraham, Unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as God Almighty. And regarding my name Jehovah was I not known to them? Also (i.e. in addition to this) have I established My covenant with them (namely to give to them the land," etc.) With this translation every possibility of a seeming contradiction with other Bible-passages disappears entirely. W. J. Martin also claims that the translation by Heerboth is a strong possibility according to the context of the first part of Exodus 6 according to the Hebrew text and the clues and usage of the text. The phrase "but by my name the Lord (Yahweh), I did not make myself known to them could be taken in Hebrew as an elliptical interrogative. Martin translated Exodus 6:3 in this light as follows: "I suffered myself to appear (Niphal) to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shaddai, for did I not let myself be known to them by my name YHWH?" In the living language it is sufficient to indicate a question by raising the voice. However, on the printed page tonal inflection cannot be indicated so it was usually, but not always, customary to place the interrogative particle "ha" at the beginning of an interrogative sentence. But there are a number of examples in the Old Testament where "ha" is omitted. A good example is Genesis 18:12. An example that parallels our case is a passage in Job 23:17, translated: "For have I not been cut off on account of the darkness," where the interrogative particle is not used and yet it is plain that a question is being asked.

The rendering of Heerboth and Martin is in harmony with Semitic usage. Martin claims that there is additional support grammatically in favor of this rendering which the context especially supplies. Thus he wrote:

There is, however, strong support forthcoming from the grammatical structure of the following sentence. This is introduced by the words 'and also'. Now in Hebrew common syntactical practice demands that where 'and also' is preceded by a negative it also introduces a negative clause and vice versa, otherwise we would be faced with a *non-sequitur*. In this instance the clause after 'and also' is positive, hence on would expect to find the preceding clause a positive one. The translation of the clause as an interrogative would thus remove all, illogicality. A perfectly good reason can be given for the use of an interrogative form here: it is a well-known method of giving a phrase an assertive character. A translation of 'and also' in this context by 'but' would be highly unsatisfactory if not altogether inadmissible on the ground that the next clause again introduced by 'and also.' This makes it extremely hard to avoid drawing the conclusion that we are here dealing with a series of positive statements, the first couched for the sake of emphasis in an interrogative form, and the two subsequent ones introduced by 'and also' to bring them into logical co-ordination.²¹

That the superstructure of the intricacy and dimensions of the Pentateuchal theory should be erected upon a two-letter particle may

seem strange to many. This is not the first time that that has happened in literary criticism. An interesting example is cited by professor J. A. Scott in his book, *The Unity of Homer* (1921). He tells of a theory put forth by Bethe in his book, *Dictung und Sage*, in which the German classical scholar had propounded quite at length the theory that the Homeric account of Athene's intervention to prevent Achilles from attacking the king were later additions to the Homeric poem. His theory was based on the assumption of the correctness of one verbal form, which later was shown he had misunderstood and mistranslated. His theory occupied almost an entire volume!

The New Testament Evidence for Exodus 3:6

In the New Testament Exodus 3:6 is quoted by Christ to support the idea that the God of Jesus Christ is not a God of the dead but of the living. In proof of this position Jesus quoted Exodus 3:6: "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," (Mk. 12:26, Mt. 22:32, Luke 20:37) a passage that is suspect and supposedly wrong. Strangely enough, Exodus 6:3 is never quoted in the New Testament.

In the Book of Acts, Stephen also stated that God (the true God, Yahweh) appeared to Moses in the burning bush and said: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob." (Acts 7:32) The passage that supposedly has the wrong interpretation is the one Christ, Stephen and also Peter (Acts 3:13) quoted as evidence that the true God from the very beginning of patriarchal history had manifested Himself to and was known by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

FOOTNOTES

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17. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
19. Martin, W. J. *OP. CIT.* p. 17.
20. L. August Heerboth, "Exodus 6:3b. Was God Known to the Patriarchs as Jehovah?" *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 4:345-349, May, 1931.
21. *op. cit.* p. 18.