

## Survey of the Bible

### Notes from 1-19-20 Class

We have been surveying Genesis 2-50 and Exodus 1-20. This section is part of a continuous narrative; it is the so called saga of Israel's origins. It's part of a continuous narrative, but it has subsets. So we see that Genesis 2-11 are a set of myths (stories that disclose the world view of a people): including Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, Noah and the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. We see that the myths give way to the next subset, Genesis 12-50, which are legendary histories (histories that are supposed to be historical, to have actually happened, but which are not verifiably so): the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. We could even say a few more words about what types of legendary histories these are: Abraham was a journey narrative; Isaac we called, "meh", because there just wasn't much written about him; Jacob was a set of eponyms (stories and histories about the people for which places and things are named); Joseph is a novella. We can see that this is very complex as far as structure and genre.

What we are going to get into today is Exodus 1-20, which is more legendary history, in a narrative voice. We left off last time when Jacob/Israel had sent his sons to Egypt to beg for food, so that's where we will pick up this time.

Remember that this is a novella featuring Joseph as this Man of Charisma. The bible commends to us the man of charisma, and the mad of charisma has two traits: he comes from unpredictable and even unlikely origins, so that no race can lay claim to him, no gender can lay claim to him, no socio-economic class can lay claim to him. He comes from everywhere and anywhere. And secondly he has intrinsic traits of greatness that cause him always to rise up to the fore. That's Joseph. We're going to see him rise up to the fore three times: first when he was a servant in Egypt of the captain of Pharaoh's guards; next when he rose in the eyes of his jailer; and finally when he rose up in the eyes of Pharaoh. When he rose up under Pharaoh, he was Egyptianized, and married off to an Egyptian wife, and so that's why we find the brothers unable to recognize him when they come looking for food.

Look in Genesis 41:53, we can see that there were seven years of plenty that prevailed in the land of Egypt, and that turned over into seven years of famine. In Genesis 41:57, the world is coming to Egypt to buy grain. When Jacob/Israel learned that there was grain in Egypt he said to his sons, "Why are you sitting around looking at each other?" Now when you think about the fact that these texts are thousands of years old, and written in different languages, what is said and done is still very contemporary. Joseph's sons are sitting around doing nothing about the famine and the father asks them why they're sitting around looking at each other; he wants them to get off their butts and do something for the family. He tells them he heard there was grain in Egypt, they should get moving and go get some of it. So ten of Joseph's brothers head off to buy grain in Egypt. There's eleven brothers, but only ten head off. The youngest, Benjamin, is held back by Jacob because he feared something might happen to him. If you'll recall, Benjamin and Joseph are the only sons of Rachael, Jacob's favorite wife, and Jacob thinks Joseph is already dead, so he is extra protective of Benjamin.

If we look in Genesis 42:6, Joseph is governor over all the land in Egypt, and Joseph's brothers come and bow before him. Joseph recognized his brothers and realized they didn't recognize him, so he had a ploy and spoke very harshly to them. He accuses them of being spies, and of coming to see the nakedness of the land. He wants to interrogate them so he can learn about his father and his brother Benjamin. He continues to accuse them of being spies, and they explain that they are twelve brothers of the same man, not spies. Joseph's actual desire is to see his brother Benjamin, since he is closest to that one (they share the same parents after all), so

he tells the gang of brothers that they can't leave Egypt unless they can prove they aren't spies by producing this youngest brother, Benjamin. He put them all together in prison for three days, but then he has a change of heart, and he decides he will keep just one of the brothers (Simeon) and send the rest back to Jacob to get Benjamin and bring him to Egypt. The brothers all go back to Canaan, and look at the response they get from their father when they tell him they need to return with Benjamin. In Gen 42:36 they say to their father Jacob that the prime minister of Egypt needs to see him, and Jacob's response is that he has already been stripped of his children because Joseph is dead, and Simeon now is no more as well, and he can't believe they have the nerve to want to take Benjamin. Ruben, the oldest (the most dutiful and responsible), says "You can kill my two sons if I don't bring him back," which is a little dramatic, but he hopes it will do the trick. But Jacob still says no way are they taking Benjamin, because it would kill him if anything happened to Benjamin. So now Judah (the third son) tries his hand. He tells Jacob, "Send the boy with me, so we can all live, and if anything happens to him, I will bear the burden forever." He also notes to his father that if they hadn't delayed so much now they could have gone and been back already. Jacob still balks at the idea, but starvation is a powerful motivator, and when they begin to starve, he lets them take Benjamin and off they go.

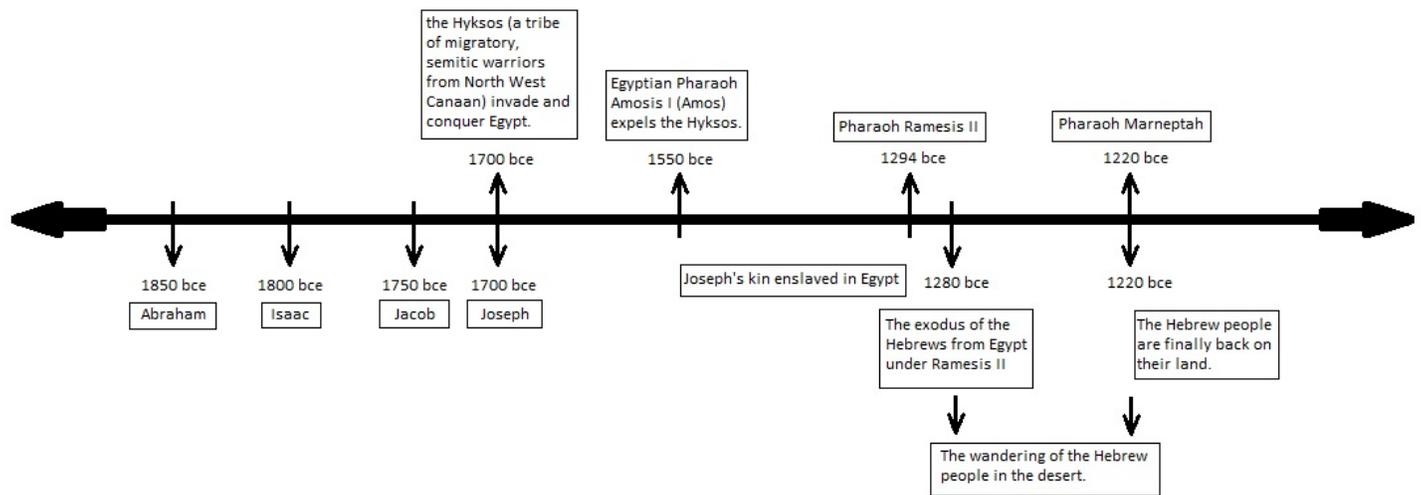
The brothers bring Benjamin back to Egypt (Gen 43:16), and when Joseph sees them, he instructs his servants to make a big lunch for them. The brothers are a little uneasy about the lunch, because Joseph was forever accusing them of being spies, and now he's singling them out to come in and dine with him, but they don't have much choice so they go into his house and eat. In verse 27 Joseph asks about the father, and sees Benjamin, and rushes out because he is about to weep and he doesn't want anyone to see it. When he gets himself together and goes back in to the lunch, there's one last thing Joseph needs to do, and that's to test his brothers and see if they're changed men, or if they're the same jerks who wanted to murder him and eventually sold him into slavery all those years ago. He tests them this way: He plants one of his silver goblets in Benjamin's sack, and plans to claim that he stole it and will have to go to prison. He does this because he wants to see what his brothers will do. He has his servants fill their sacks with food, and put the goblet in the top of the sack of the youngest, Benjamin. When the brothers had gone a short distance from the city, the guards were to overtake them and cry foul that they had stolen one of Joseph's goblets. All that takes place, and as expected the brothers are brought back to the city and Benjamin is taken into custody. Now what are they going to do? Lo and behold, they actually are changed men. Judah pleads for Benjamin's release, Judah the one who plotted the most for Joseph's death. He begs Joseph not to bring down so much grief to his father, and insists that his father will die if Benjamin is not returned to him. So Judah says instead that Joseph should take him in Benjamin's place, that he will stay in prison for his brother. At that point Joseph realizes they are changed men, and he reveals himself to them.

Now this discloses the very subtle, blink and you'll miss it, punchline in the Joseph account. Look in Gen 45, Joseph says to his brother's, "I'm Joseph! How is our father?" Naturally his brother's are all dismayed, they tried to off him after all, and they are all speechless. He bids them come closer and really look at him and see if it isn't their long-lost brother. And here comes the punchline of the whole story: In Gen 45:5 Joseph says, "And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life." So there it is, don't be distressed that you did this horrible thing, for God was at work in the whole business in order that I might preserve all your lives. The punchline is again restated at the end. The eleven brothers and their father, Jacob, and the rest of the whole family is relocated to Egypt in order that they will have both food enough to survive as well as the protection of Joseph.

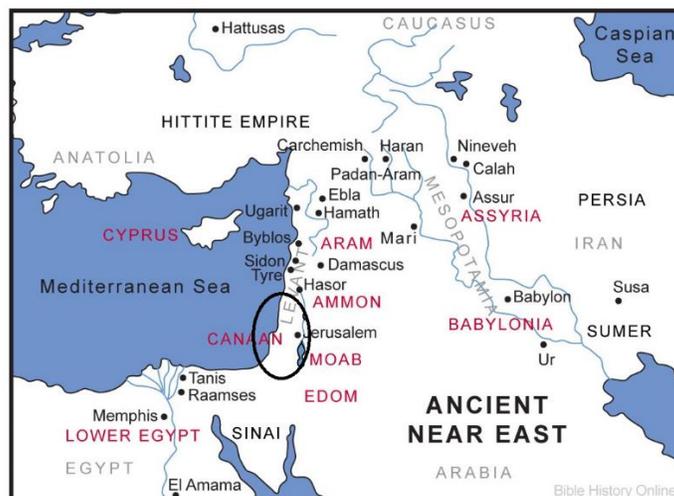
But then Jacob dies. In Exodus 1:15, the brothers all say to themselves, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us, and pays us back in full for all the wrong done to him?" They think that maybe he was holding back his wrath from them as a courtesy to their father, and now that their father is dead he'll get even. They approach Joseph and tell him a little white lie. They tell him that before he died, their father had instructed them to go to Joseph and beg him to forgive the crime they had done to him. Of course Jacob never said any such thing,

he didn't even know that they had been responsible for Joseph's enslavement, but they figured that was the best way to approach the problem. They beg him, in the name of their father, to forgive them for their crimes. They offered to be his slaves if he would just forgive them. Joseph wept as they spoke to him, and then the punchline is reiterated. Joseph says, "Do not be afraid for I am in the place of God. You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good." The punchline of Joseph then, is that God is able to wrest, even from sin, his purposes. Remember that the essential problematic for the bible is sin; it is our self-imposed alienation from God. That's the essence of sin. This punchline is stating that even amidst the thick of sin, God is able to wrest his purposes. God's will is marching on so to speak. It is on that note that these legendary histories end, and all that we have left to cover of this monstrous saga is the first 20 chapters of Exodus.

Now we are transitioning over to Exodus, and before we do I want to pause just for a second to look at some of the secular history of this era. Secular history is written completely independent of the bible. It's written on the basis of contemporaneous historical records and archaeology. Let's look at a timeline:



If we look at history that is documentable completely independently of the bible, we can get a feel for how for how compatible biblical history is over against secular history. The top of the timeline is secular history, and the bottom of the timeline is biblical history, which is history as the bible describes it. None of the items on top of the timeline, the secular history pieces, are in the bible, they are only found in extemporaneous accounts. About 1700 BCE, the Hyksos invade, conquer and occupy Egypt. The Hyksos is an Egyptian word, which means "Foreign Chiefs". These foreign chiefs were migratory, Semitic warriors from north-west Canaan. Which is to say they came from the region circled below...



What does Semitic really mean? The way we use it now is etymologically sloppy. The way we use it now, we mean it as an adjective that describes all things Jewish. But originally and precisely it refers to a pool of languages that have something in common. We have the romance languages, Spanish, French, and Italian, that all have a Latin base as their something in common (the language of Rome). The Semitic languages were similarly all a group of common languages. There are only two of them alive today: Arabic and Hebrew, but originally there were all tolled nine Semitic languages (including Assyrian, Babylonian, Sumerian, Akkadian, Eblaite, and a couple others). The terminology was first used in the 1780s by members of the Göttingen School of History, who derived the name from Shem (one of the three sons of Noah in the Book of Genesis) to designate the languages closely related to Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew. This group of migratory warriors from NW Canaan fell on Egypt and destroyed it.

Around 1550 BCE, an able Egyptian Pharaoh named Amos (sometimes referred to as Amosis I) expelled the Hyksos. He had taken refuge up the Nile (south from Memphis) in Thebes. All that information is known in secular history.

Now if we add in what we know about biblical history, we can add in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph in 1850 BCE, 1800 BCE, 1750 BCE and 1700 BCE. Now it is completely *implausible* that a Hebrew would rise to the position of Prime Minister if the pure Egyptians were ruling their own land, but it's completely *plausible* that if a group of fellow Semites were ruling the land, Joseph could have risen in the ranks. That's because if you have a generally common language, you have a somewhat common culture. So a kindred of the Hyksos, Joseph, could well have risen to a position of power under Hyksos rule, because they're both Semitic people. It is also entirely plausible that when Amos expelled the Hyksos, that this is the period when not only the Hyksos, but also Joseph's kin after him, were enslaved by the Egyptians. This is because in the bible slavery has nothing to do with race, it has only to do with war. Half the reason you defeat someone is to steal all their men for your slaves. It's entirely plausible that when Amos reconquered Egypt, all of the Semites were enslaved, both the Hyksos and the descendants of Joseph.

The best guess for the exodus of the Jews from enslavement in Egypt is 1280 BCE, and that is because in 1294 BCE a Pharaoh named Ramesis II sat on the throne in Egypt, and it's stated in the bible that the slaves in Egypt were forced to build two supply cities, Pith and Ramesis. It's also known independently from the bible that Ramesis II built Pithos and Ramesis as supply cities. So it's probably that the exodus took place shortly after Ramesis II took the throne, and then that would make the period of the wandering from about 1280 BCE until 1220 BCE. By 1220 BCE the successor of Pharaoh Ramesis II was a fellow named Pharaoh Merneptah. He created what's known as a stela, which is a big granite monument with a steeple on it, and it details what this Pharaoh did. This stela was discovered by archaeologists, and it says that he was fighting the people of Israel in the land of Canaan. So by 1220, outside of the bible, we know that the people of Israel are back on their land, not as a Nation, but they're back on their land.

What this demonstrates is the plausibility of the legendary histories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph as having actually taken place. There are plenty of voices that are hostile towards the bible, and say there is no historical root for the histories in the bible, that it's just a concoction, but in fact there probably is a historical root because biblical history sits very snugly and compatibly over against secular historical timelines. It was noted as an aside that the pyramids were built around 3000 BCE.

With that much having been said about the plausibility of the historical biblical narrative, we can now launch into the last 20 chapters of this monster saga. We're just going to survey it briefly and we're going to pause at three or four important points, and those are:

1. The giving of the divine name (and there's a lot in that, because remember that the giving of names to the Hebrew people was about ascribing an essential identity, which is why names could change over time).
2. The ten plagues, and a discussion of "miracles" in the old testament. The word 'miracle' does not appear in the old testament or the new. They're not called 'miracles', so we'll stopped at the ten plagues to talk about miracles, because there's a decided misconception about miracles in the old testament. People think the whole thing is just replete with miracles, but that's just not true. There are only a couple places in the entire old testament where actual miracles are noted in the old testament.
3. The giving of the law: the ten commandments and the 613 laws that follow it.

So it's not as though we're about to take a quick skate through exodus, but those are the places we're really going to concentrate on.

Let's go to Exodus 1. You can very clearly see that this is a new chapter, because it starts out with the names of the sons of Israel (remember that Jacob got his name changed when his essential identity changed). The bible lays out the twelve sons of Israel.

In Exodus 1:8, we read that "There arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. [assumedly that's Amos, the true Egyptian who rose up and took back Egypt from the Hyksos]. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. [Well naturally the Hyksos were there as well as this huge tribe of Jacob's family, which had now been there for a couple hundred years]. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses." [So we've jumped from 1700 BCE to 1550 BCE to 1294 BCE and Pharaoh Marneptah]. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.

Now even in our country we never let the slaves get to be more than 1/6<sup>th</sup> the population. If your slaves are 5/6ths of the population they're going to rise up and bring you down. So the Egyptians didn't want the Israelites to get to be too numerous. They became ruthless in proposing tasks for the Israelites and eventually the Pharaoh proposed to the Egyptian midwives of the Israelites that they should kill off the newborn babies if they are male, but let the females live. But the midwives feared God and did not do as the King of Egypt commanded. This is cited as the first documented act of civil disobedience; when you disobey a civil authority in obedience of a divine authority. They were letting the boys live, and so the king summoned them and asked them why they were letting the boys live. The midwives said to Pharaoh, "because the Hebrew women are not like the [wimpy] Egyptian women. They're vigorous and they give birth before we arrive."

Now a man from the house of Levi [once the house of Israel is established, everyone that comes after it is known by which son they came from. In this case it was a descendant of Levi, the third son of Leah] went and married a Levite woman. When she saw he was a fine baby she hid him for three months, but obviously you can't hide a baby forever, so made a papyrus basket for him (papyrus is just a reedy plant that grows in marshy water in Egypt), and put the child in the basket and placed him in the river. Moses' older sister (Miriam) stood off at a distance to see what would happen to him. Lo and behold Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river and found the basket among the reeds. When she opened it she saw the child, recognized that it must be one of the Hebrew's children, and took pity on him and took him for her own. Just then the sister, Miriam, popped up and said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Should I go get you one of the Hebrew women for a nurse for the baby?" Pharaoh's daughter thought that was a good idea, and so off went Miriam to get her own mother (Moses' mother) to nurse the baby. Pharaoh's daughter said to Moses' mother, "Take this baby and nurse it for me, and I'll give you wages."

So Moses goes back to his own mom to nurse (and during the biblical period babies were nursed for about three years, so his mom got to keep him and raise him for three years and got paid for it), and at the end of the three years she took him back to Pharaoh's daughter, and Pharaoh's daughter took him as her son.

That's the end of Moses' story of his birth and youth, because in the next paragraph we find Moses sort of having an identity crisis in his early adulthood. In Exodus 2:11 we read, "One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens [so now he's going to try to relate to them], and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that [which seems a little ignoble, because he clearly doesn't want to get caught], and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" The guy answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" So the whole act of trying to relate to the Hebrews sort of blew up in his face. And it was a little presumptuous, to go out in his finery and try to relate to people who have been enslaved for hundreds of years. The Hebrews can't stand the guy, they didn't appreciate his sort of pep talk. Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian."

When he gets to Midian, he sits himself down by the well (as we discussed, this is the social center of the ancient middle east). The priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they were there at the well to water his flock. For whatever reason, some of the shepherds were harassing the daughters, and Moses got up and came to their defense and watered their flock for them. They then went back to their father, Reuel, and he wanted to know how they had gotten back home so quickly.

Now let me pause here and talk about Reuel. Here, in Exodus 2:18 we are introduced to Reuel, who is going to be Moses' father-in-law. This same individual is also referred to as Jethro. Another issue that parallels this is that wherever Reuel is identified they talk about Mt. Sinai, but wherever Jethro is identified they talk about Mt. Horeb. So why in the world are these two individuals used interchangeably? It's thought that, again, there are different sources being woven together into the one story, and again the editors are most interested in maintaining the two sources rather than settling on one name. As we mentioned before, one of the most difficult fields in biblical criticism is trying to figure out what was going on in the heads of the original editors. No one knows. We can only assume that they must have wanted both sources to be present in the books; to have readers know that the saga is drawing upon more than one source. It can be a point of confusion, but it's simply a fact: Reuel and Jethro are one, and Sinai and Horeb are one.

So the daughters return to their father Reuel and explained that they returned so quickly because an Egyptian had come and helped them water the flock. The father says, "Where are your manners?", and has them bring Moses back to the house to eat and drink. Moses agreed to stay with Reuel, and Reuel gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. She bore him a son and they named him Gershom. After a while the Pharaoh of Egypt died; the one who wanted Moses dead. And under the new Pharaoh the Egyptians were even more oppressed, and groaned under their slavery and cried out to God. Now in the bible – Exodus 2:23 – "The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." This word, remembered, is how the old testament accounts for a lag in God's action; they were wallowing in slavery forever, but God remembered finally. So in the bible, when God remembers it means he's on the move again after inaction.

Chapter 3 in Exodus records three really huge events. It records the election of Moses by the burning bush; and remember, God elects everybody, but nobody signs on, not one. From the beginning all the way down to Jesus, God elects people, he chooses them, and they're all like, "Really? It can't be me, you must have something

wrong.” So the big events are the election of Moses by the bush, the commission of Moses (which is the giving of his instructions – go back to Egypt and get the slaves their freedom), and then the giving of the divine name.

So we start chapter 3 with Moses keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro (who is also Reuel). He is leading his flock in the wilderness and came to Horeb, which is identified as the mountain of God. There the angel of God appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, and the bush was blazing but was not consumed. Naturally Moses thinks he should go investigate this burning but not burnt bush, but God calls out to him and warns him not to come any closer, and to remove his sandals because he’s standing on Holy ground. Now Holy is one of the most bedeviled words in the whole old testament. What does it mean? The etymological root goes to separateness, but what it really points to is this... What is God’s essence? He’s obviously not physical like us. Is he a spirit? He’s obviously not a void, he’s got to have something, some essence, he’s got to be comprised of something. And that something is his Holiness. Whatever composes God is God’s Holiness. The reason that God’s Holiness is freaking Moses out, and the reason he has to take off his sandals, is that normally God’s Holiness is a contra-distinction to human sin, and therefore it has an obliterating effect. What is Peter saying, in one of his rare moments of insight, when he realizes who Jesus is and says, “Depart from me for I’m a sinful man”? He’s saying that he understands the Holiness of Jesus and how it can destroy human sin. A good way to imagine this is from a scene from the Movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. IF you’ll recall there’s a scene where they’ve gotten the ark, and the Nazis are opening it, and a beautiful spirit comes out. The main character, Indiana Jones, knows to not look at it. Why? Because the ark holds God’s Holiness, and he knows that God’s Holiness destroys human sin. Which is of course what the spirit proceeds to do, it melts him down to nothing. That’s the situation Moses finds himself in now, being face to face with God’s Holiness.

God reminds Moses that he is the father of his ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. and he goes on in Exodus 3:7 to say, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians.” And now we’re going to see all the monikers for the promised land” a good and broad land; a land flowing with milk and honey; etc. And this is Moses’ first response: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” So he’s clearly not exactly giddy with excitement to be chosen. God assures him that once he gets them out of Egypt, He will deliver them to a fruitful land. His next response is also a sort of equivocation, he ask the bush who he’s supposed to tell people sent him. I’m sure he’s thinking he won’t be believed. And this is where God tells him, “I am who I am.”

Now there’s a lot in this. God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” Remember in Hebrew, your names gets at your essential identity. If a name works, it works, and if it doesn’t work, they change it. For example, Becca’s first son, Nate, came out 10 pounds, red as a beet, and screaming angrily. So she could have named him ‘the strong angry man’, rightly so, because he was so angry and big. But if he would have grown up a little and become a quiet, artistic sort of poet, she would have changed his name maybe to ‘the man who left behind his anger’ or something like that. The point is that the name is supposed to get at a person’s essential identity, and is supposed to change when that identity changes. It’s a much more profound way of arriving at people’s names than what we have. So when Moses asks God his name, he’s asking God what his essential identity is. He’s saying, “tell me something of your essential identity.” ‘I am who I am’ in effect means, “No.” Moses doesn’t get to know what God’s essential identity is. And is means no in a double way, in both its form and its substance. And here’s why. In Hebrew, ‘I am what I am’ looks like this:



'eheyeh 'asher 'eheyeh

It's a No in terms of its form because of the redundancy that you hear, which you can detect even if you don't speak Hebrew. We do it today, for example when a child is nagging about something "When is dinner? When are we going to eat? When is dinner? And the parent says, "We eat when we eat." Which is a NO, a hard pass on being badgered into giving over control of a situation to a child. So when Moses asks what is God's essential identity, God's response is, "I am who I am." Hard pass on giving over control of anything to Moses.

The other No, comes in terms of the substance of the answer. the verb in that sentence, 'am', is a form of the verb 'to be'. In Hebrew there are not past present and future like we have. In the Hebrew language there are only two tenses in terms of their verb structure: the perfect and the imperfect. The perfect denotes completed action, and the imperfect denotes dynamic action. Action that's ongoing. in this sentence the verb that is used is the imperfect, or dynamic action verb. So God is saying, "I am," in a dynamic way, a still ongoing way. But Hebrew also has seven verb stems. We don't have any verb stems, so Hebrew and English are not comparable, it's not possible to directly translate sentences. For example, in English we say, "I flew to Disneyland." We would assume that the speaker didn't actually fly, on their own, on wings or whatever, but we have to assume. There's no way in English to make clear with a verb stem that I *caused myself to be flown* to Disneyland. You have to assume. But in Hebrew there is a verb stem for that. A causative verb stem. So in this sentence we have imperfect dynamic action, and it's causative. So it's a little like the sentence reading, "I causatively am who I causatively am." It's difficult to make any sense of in Hebrew, let alone to translate it into English, but it would be something like, "I caused myself to exist, therefore I am what I caused." Many brilliant minds have tried to explain what God meant by that, with little more success than we would have, but the brunt of it is that it's another No to Moses. He doesn't get to understand God or his essential identity, probably because he couldn't possibly understand it.

Why is God saying No to Moses? Remember that the bible is constantly saying that human nature is prideful. We want to heaven storm; we want to take for ourselves what belongs to God; we want to take over and kill God and be gods unto ourselves. That's just how we are. So now Moses thinks he's going to be able to get God's essential identity? To be able to define it and confine it into whatever category he wants to put it in? That is another way for Moses (and through him all of mankind) to say, "Oh I've got it; I've got God mastered." Given our nature, it's clear God isn't going to go there. So He says, "No."

Furthermore, God tells him to say to the Israelites, "Eheyeh (I am) has sent me," and also to say that "Yahweh (he who is), the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac; and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." So every time the name 'Yahweh' is invoked it is a reminder that we are not entitled to the knowledge of God's essential identity. Every time it is invoked it is a reminder of the order of the divine/human relationship.

After that mighty encounter, Moses goes back (Exodus 4:1) and says, "Suppose they don't believe me or listen to me?" More equivocation. He says, "Suppose they say the Lord never appeared to me?" And so the Lord pushes him along with a little display of his power, but Moses turns around and says (Exodus 4:10), "I'm not a good public speaker, I'm slow of speech." So this is the tone Moses is going to have going forward after those great speeches by God, just constant equivocation.

Next time we will get through Exodus, and then move on from there.