

Always on Time

Exodus 3:7-9

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I. Timely v.7

a. Seen

i. Seen

1. This is the first use of the phrase, but is far from the last
2. The first of these, “I have indeed seen” (*rā`ōh rā`îti*) involves the Hebrew infinitive absolute construction, “I have carefully watched” or “I have paid very close attention to,” thus by itself indicating the intensity of God’s interest in the misery of his people.

ii. Affliction

iii. My People

1. The Heb. word is used about 165 times by the writer; 143 times the word refers to Israel, God’s people. At least sixteen times God calls Israel “my people” (see Exod 6:7)
2. the beloved people of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs (Deut 7:6–8). God is involved with them. God’s covenant and personal involvement among Israel and the nations according to the covenantal metanarrative.
3. That God called Israel “my people,” echoing but also more grandly superseding Moses’ reference to “his own people” in 2:1

b. Heed – Heard

i. Cry

1. Taskmasters - **slave-driver**

c. Aware - knows/feels/shares their (its) pain

i. Sufferings

1. The assertion “Indeed, I feel their pain” has an object this time, unlike its occurrence in 2:25. If he is moved to act because of their pain, God in some way feels their pain, as well as merely “seeing” it. In a bold anthropomorphic expression the verb again gives the result of God’s seeing and hearing

II. My Time v. 8

a. Come I will descend/have descended

i. Come –

1. The urgency of the need is matched by the power of Yahweh's expression; he has "come down," that is, from the place of his dwelling above the heavens to this place of his appearance to Moses
2. "I have come down [descended]" is characteristic of many biblical passages related to theophany and divine rescue of humans
3. So I have come down," a figurative expression, used here and used of God twice in the story about the rebellion of humankind at the tower of Babel (11:5, 7), when God "came down" to examine what was going on. There it depicted divine intervention (cf. Cassuto, 34). There he destroyed the building activities of a rebellious human race and confused their languages. He accomplishes the first goal again now in Egypt. In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:21) he had come down because of the cry (צַעֲקָה, the same word used here) coming up to him. He destroyed a city/people again because of rebellion. But this time, although he comes down to judge the Egyptians, he comes *first of all* to rescue, deliver, and birth his covenantal people (he continues to come down five more times), until he eventually descends to tent (נֶשֶׁךְ) among them (Exod 25:8; 40:34–38; cf. John 1:14,

ii. Deliver - tear down or withdraw

1. Deliver

- a. to snatch" his people forth from the grip of Egyptian power. This verb, נִצַּל, means "to tear away from, to snatch forth," often in the OT with overtones of violence in rescue.
- b. The use of the verb נִצַּל ("deliver," Exod 2:19; 3:8, 22) ties together the Midianite traditions of Exod 3–4 with those in Exod 18 (18:4, 8, 9, 19; five times).

2. Power of Egyptians

a. Power- hand

- i. Also, the use of the word "hand" (יָד) here ("power of the Egyptians"; 3:19, 20; two times) and in Exod 18:10 (three times; hand of Pharaoh/Egyptians)

brackets and ties these passages together and provides a framework and conclusion for God's deliverance of his people in Exod 4, 5–15, 16–17. The deliverance of Israel is presented in epic fashion by the author as a contest between Pharaoh's hand of oppression and Yahweh's hand of liberation. Yahweh's victory is also described as his defeat of the strong arm of Pharaoh with his own powerful outstretched arm.

1. Pharaoh's hand of oppression announced (3:8, 17, 20)
2. Yahweh's hand delivers his people (7:4–10:29, plagues; 13:3–14:15–31, exodus and destruction of Egyptians)
3. Pharaoh's hand of oppression remembered (18:10)

b. Further, this snatching forth will be from a place of restriction and deprivation to a place wide and free, a place of plenty.

b. Bring – to lead up

c. Land

- i. These lists in Exodus tie the imminent fulfillment of God's promises for Abraham's descendants to the master list in Gen 5:21, adding only the Hivites and dropping others as noted
- ii. The rhetoric of the promised fertile land, "a land gushing with milk and honey," is used, and then this land is identified by a list of six peoples. The Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Amorites were major forces in OT history. The other three peoples listed and the seventh people added by some versions are minor groups known mostly from the OT unless "Hivites" is an ethnic term for "Hurrian"
- iii. The most important point in this verse is not the mere changing of hands of some square miles of prime real estate; it is rather the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. Covenantal words, "bountiful and spacious," describe the land. The word בּוֹט, "bountiful," indicates the fitness of the land and potential productivity to fulfill God's promises to his people. This word describes the land given to humankind in the beginning (Gen 1:3, etc.). God uses both history and geography to accomplish his goals and purposes, for they are also part of his plan. "Into the place of" uses דִּיקוּ

(“place”; cf. Exod 3:5 and note), because that location is a sacred goal of Israel, the place of the covenant.

- iv. The description of the land as “flowing with milk and honey” refers to the extensive use of animals as the basis for the people’s livelihood, and to the bountiful production of various fruits and vegetables in the land. The reference to honey refers to honey supplied by bees but especially to the syrup of dates and grapes
- v. The destiny of God’s people is not merely to occupy geographical space at Sinai or in Canaan; their destiny is a place that vies with the garden of Eden itself (Num 16:13) in attractiveness (Ezek 36:25). It is the “promised” land (Gen 15:18–20), so it is part of the covenant, the theological inheritance for God’s people. The reference to the many people now inhabiting the land stresses God’s strict faithfulness to give what he promised, the land over which he had taken an oath (Exod 6:8).

III. On Time v.9

- a. Oppression
 - i. Verse 9 reiterates both 3:7 and 2:23–25, providing yet another occasion to remind the reader, and in this case Moses in the situation of his call, that God had not forgotten his people, was deeply concerned for them, and would act on their behalf.

Word Studies

Seen

Affliction - **misery, oppressed situation**¹

People - came to be applied fairly exclusively to Israel as the chosen race, but this meaning is acquired, not intrinsic.²

Heed- listen

Cry - **yell, call for help**, of the oppressed, addressed directly or indirectly to God or Yahweh³

Taskmasters- bailiff, **slave-driver**

Deliver- tear down or withdraw

Bring - Lead

3:7. *said*. LX⁴X adds “to Moses” as an explanatory plus⁵.

*their*⁶ ... *his*. ‘Am ‘people’ can be treated as both singular and plural, even within the same clause. LX⁷X levels plurals throughout (omitting the pronominal suffix on “overseers”), while Tg.

¹ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 856.

² R. A. Stewart, [“People.”](#) ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 899.

³ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1043.

⁴LXX Septuagint, Greek Pentateuch

⁵plus. a longer text

⁶... omitted or unreadable words

⁷LXX Septuagint, Greek Pentateuch

*Onqelo*⁸ has the plural suffix on all the nouns. The mixed reading of M⁹T and Sa¹⁰m is presumably original (see also next TEXTUAL NOTE).

¹¹†*this pains*. Sa¹²m and V¹³g read “his pain,” i.e., *mk'bw* for M¹⁴T *mk'byw* (on LX¹⁵X-Sy¹⁶r “*their* pain,” see previous TEXTUAL NOTE). There was a transitional stage of Hebrew orthography when it was possible to interpret *mk'bw* as either singular or plural (Andersen and Forbes 1986: 62). Since, moreover, the next word begins with *w* (identical to *y* in Herodian script), haplograph¹⁷ to create Sa¹⁸m and dittograph¹⁹ to create M²⁰T are equally possible.

⁸*Tg. Onqelos* literalistic Targum to the Torah

⁹MT Massoretic Text

¹⁰Sam Samaritan Torah

¹¹† original reading in doubt; translation follows *BHS*

¹²Sam Samaritan Torah

¹³Vg Vulgate

¹⁴MT Massoretic Text

¹⁵LXX Septuagint, Greek Pentateuch

¹⁶Syr Syriac Bible

¹⁷haplography accidental omission due to sequence of similar letters or words

¹⁸Sam Samaritan Torah

¹⁹dittography accidental double writing

²⁰MT Massoretic Text

²¹†3:8. *I will descend/have descended*. It is difficult to choose between Sa²²m ^{23*}w'rdh (future) (cf²⁴. Samaritan Tg²⁵.) and M²⁶T wā'ērēd (past). One could also emend M²⁷T to ^{28*}wə'ērēd (future). see NOTE.

to a land. Some LX²⁹X MS³⁰S insert “and lead them in.”

Canaanite ³¹... Jebusite. After “the Perizzite,” Sa³²m and LX³³X add “and the Gergashite” (cf³⁴. 3:17). For a text-critical overview of this polymorphous list, see (provisionally) O'Connell (1984), adding the scrolls published since in (see also Kennicott 1776–80: 110 *et passim*³⁵m).³⁶

Commentary Studies

²¹† original reading in doubt; translation follows *BHS*

²²Sam Samaritan Torah

^{23*} reconstructed, unattested or erroneous form

²⁴cf. compare (*confer*)

²⁵*Samaritan Tg.* translation of Torah into Samaritan Aramaic

²⁶MT Massoretic Text

²⁷MT Massoretic Text

^{28*} reconstructed, unattested or erroneous form

²⁹LXX Septuagint, Greek Pentateuch

³⁰MSS manuscript(s)

³¹... omitted or unreadable words

³²Sam Samaritan Torah

³³LXX Septuagint, Greek Pentateuch

³⁴cf. compare (*confer*)

³⁵*passim* here and there

³⁶ William H. C. Propp, [*Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 2, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 184.

7–9 The theophany thus having been described, the call is introduced, first with a review of the plight of the sons of Israel in Egypt. Yahweh states that he has watched the oppression of Israel for a long time and has heard the people’s cry of distress. The language of 2:25 is picked up by v 7; Yahweh knows the extent of Israel’s need, and the moment for his action on the matter has arrived. The urgency of the need is matched by the power of Yahweh’s expression; he has “come down,” that is, from the place of his dwelling above the heavens to this place of his appearance to Moses, and he is about “to snatch” his people forth from the grip of Egyptian power. This verb, נצל, means “to tear away from, to snatch forth,” often in the OT with overtones of violence in rescue.

Further, this snatching forth will be from a place of restriction and deprivation to a place wide and free, a place of plenty. The rhetoric of the promised fertile land, “a land gushing with milk and honey,” is used, and then this land is identified by a list of six peoples (to which list LX³⁷X and SamPen³⁸t add, after Perizzites, “Girgashites”). The Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Amorites were major forces in OT history (see Millard, *Peoples*, 29–52; Hoffner, *Peoples*, 197–228; Liverani, *Peoples*, 100–133). The other three peoples listed and the seventh people added by some versions are minor groups known mostly from the OT (Wiseman, *Peoples*, xv–xvi), unless “Hivites” is an ethnic term for “Hurrian” (Speiser, “Hurrians,” *ID*³⁹B 2:665).

In the context of Yahweh’s speech in vv 7–10, these names are probably intended as designations of a set of geographic boundaries, roughly demarcating a series of external and internal territorial limits. It is now clear that such lists are far more than the general and semiarbitrary lists they have too often been taken to be, but our knowledge of the peoples involved is too incomplete to enable us to understand all that the lists may imply (cf. Wiseman, *Peoples*, xv–xxi, and Speiser, “Man, Ethnic Divisions,” *ID*⁴⁰B 3:235–42).⁴¹

³⁷LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

³⁸SamPent *Samaritan Pentateuch, Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner*, ed. A. F. von Gall. Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Topelmann, 1918.

³⁹*IDB* Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible

⁴⁰*IDB* Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible

⁴¹ John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 32.

3:7 The writer recounts God’s awareness of the circumstances of his covenant people in 2:23–25 and his suffering and intimate involvement with them. Now the writer reports in God’s own words the same essential content with expressions taken from those verses. The repetition of important materials is a common stylistic feature of the biblical narratives.

God’s mighty wonder, a burning bush that is not consumed, is now accompanied further by his words, an explanation of what is going on. The physical phenomenon of the bush *per se* fades as its theophanic and theological significance takes center stage.

Using three words from 2:25, God’s perception of Israel’s affliction is stated emphatically in Heb., “I have indeed seen,” and he has heard (עָמַן) and knows/feels/shares (עָדַן) their (its) pain. From this intimate involvement with this people God utters what has been evident all along, and what will be explicitly stated by the writer as the theme of the book of Exodus (6:7).⁷⁴²⁵ “I see the affliction of my people.” This is the first use of the phrase, but is far from the last. It is asserted of the Hebrews while they are still in Egypt, before the exodus and before Sinai and before they enter the land. The Heb. word עָדַן is used about 165 times by the writer; 143 times the word refers to Israel, God’s people. At least sixteen times God calls Israel “my people” (see Exod 6:7).⁷⁴³⁶ Above all, Exodus is about Yahweh bringing to birth (יָצַא יְשָׁרָאֵל) and nurturing his people into his likeness, into his presence enthroned among them (25:8; 29:46; 33:15; 40:34–38).

The assertion “Indeed, I feel their pain” (כִּי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־מַכְאֲבֵיו) has an object this time, unlike its occurrence in 2:25. The verb there was left without an object; here the writer supplies at least one object of that verb—the pain of God’s people. If he is moved to act because of their pain, God in some way feels their pain, as well as merely “seeing” it. In a bold anthropomorphic expression the verb עָדַן again gives the result of God’s seeing and hearing.

“Who are in Egypt” is important, for God is the God of all the earth and all peoples (Exod 19:5), but Israel is his people in a special way, for they are the beloved people of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs (Deut 7:6–8). God is involved with them. Their history is both a horizontal history generated among the nations of humankind and a metahistory whose vertical axis is God’s covenant and personal involvement among Israel and the nations according to the covenantal metanarrative.

3:8 God recounts their condition, and this implies his involvement. He has come down (יָרַד) to deliver (נָצַל) them from Egypt and to take them up (עָלָה) from the land of Egypt—the very thing that Pharaoh had feared would happen (Exod 1:10) to his slaves. The Egyptians were not Yahweh’s special people (cf. Exod 19:5). With them he had no unique covenant. It was the strangers and aliens in Egypt, the oppressed, with whom he had established his promises.

“So I have come down,” a figurative expression, used here and used of God twice in the story about the rebellion of humankind at the tower of Babel (11:5, 7), when God “came down”

⁴²⁷⁵ There is little need to wonder what the theme of Exodus is, for it is stated explicitly in Exod 6:7 and was inherent in the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 15:13–14) and in creation itself (Gen 1:26–28).

⁴³⁷⁶ E.g., 5:1; 6:7; 7:4, 16, 26; 8:16, 17.

to examine what was going on. There it depicted divine intervention (cf. Cassuto, 34). There he destroyed the building activities of a rebellious human race and confused their languages. He accomplishes the first goal again now in Egypt. In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:21) he had come down because of the cry (הִקְוֹצָה, the same word used here) coming up to him. He destroyed a city/people again because of rebellion. But this time, although he comes down to judge the Egyptians, he comes *first of all* to rescue, deliver, and birth his covenantal people (he continues to come down five more times), until he eventually descends to tent (יִבְרָךְ) among them (Exod 25:8; 40:34–38; cf. John 1:14, Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν).

Yahweh has three goals for coming down: 1. to deliver Israel from Egypt, 2. to take them up to a new land for habitation, and 3. to make both Israel and Egypt know that Yahweh is the one true God. Moses will later appeal to these great salvific acts in order when he pleads for a disobedient Israel to be delivered from the wrath of Yahweh (Exod 32:13).

The use of the verb לָצַד (“deliver,” Exod 2:19; 3:8, 22) ties together the Midianite traditions of Exod 3–4 with those in Exod 18 (18:4, 8, 9, 19; five times). In Exod 18 Jethro reports that the deliverance is accomplished. Also, the use of the word “hand” (יָד) here (“power of the Egyptians”; cf. 3:19, 20; two times) and in Exod 18:10 (three times; hand of Pharaoh/Egyptians) brackets and ties these passages together and provides a framework and conclusion for God’s deliverance of his people in Exod 4, 5–15, 16–17. In chapters 5–6, לָצַד describes the rescue of Israel and the memorialization of the event—before it happens. After announcing and anticipating God’s deliverance of Israel from the power of Egypt, the author highlights the accomplishment emphatically through Jethro’s words in Exod 18:10, the first pagan to whom Moses recited the gospel (good news) of the exodus (vv. 7–8). Yahweh could have done even more.⁷⁴⁴⁷ Then comes the remembrance of the deed⁷⁴⁵⁸ and its celebration.

The deliverance of Israel is presented in epic fashion by the author as a contest between Pharaoh’s hand of oppression and Yahweh’s hand of liberation. Yahweh’s victory is also described as his defeat of the strong arm of Pharaoh with his own powerful outstretched arm.

- I. Pharaoh’s hand of oppression announced (3:8, 17, 20)
- II. Yahweh’s hand delivers his people (7:4–10:29, plagues; 13:3–14:15–31, exodus and destruction of Egyptians)
- III. Pharaoh’s hand of oppression remembered (18:10)

The destiny of God’s people is not merely to occupy geographical space at Sinai or in Canaan; their destiny is a place that vies with the garden of Eden itself (Num 16:13) in attractiveness (Ezek 36:25). It is the “promised” land (Gen 15:18–20), so it is part of the covenant, the theological inheritance for God’s people. The reference to the many people now

⁴⁴⁷⁷ Exod 9:15.

⁴⁵⁷⁸ Heb. root כָּרַח is used nine times (13:3, 9, 14, 16; 15:12, 20; 18:9, 10 [2x]).

inhabiting the land stresses God's strict faithfulness to give what he promised, the land over which he had taken an oath (Exod 6:8).⁷⁴⁶⁹

All of the names mentioned here bear the definite article, indicating the fact that the readers/writer were familiar with them. They had been mentioned in Genesis and now constitute the present population of the land promised to the fathers. The LXX⁴⁷ regularly adds the Gergashites to these lists. Sometimes the Heb. connective *waw* is missing, but that does not change the facts. Since God is giving exactly what he promised in his covenant, it is incumbent on the writer to demonstrate this fact with semilegal terminology and phraseology.⁸⁴⁸⁰

If the garden of Eden had abundant resources of water, this land exceeds it, gushing, metaphorically, with milk and honey. The most important point in this verse is not the mere changing of hands of some square miles of prime real estate; it is rather the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. Covenantal words, "bountiful and spacious," describe the land. The word בֹּטֵף, "bountiful," indicates the fitness of the land and potential productivity to fulfill God's promises to his people. This word describes the land given to humankind in the beginning (Gen 1:3, etc.). God uses both history and geography to accomplish his goals and purposes, for they are also part of his plan. "Into the place of" uses $\Delta\iota\tau\eta\varsigma$ ("place"; cf. Exod 3:5 and note), because that location is a sacred goal of Israel, the place of the covenant.

The description of the land as "flowing with milk and honey" refers to the extensive use of animals as the basis for the people's livelihood, and to the bountiful production of various fruits and vegetables in the land. The reference to honey refers to honey supplied by bees but especially to the syrup of dates and grapes (Wells, 174). The land of Canaan is described by extant ancient Egyptian and Ugaritic texts within Canaan as a place where oil, honey, figs, grapes, wine, milk, fruit, and cattle abound.⁸⁴⁹¹ Interestingly, however, the Israelites called Egypt a land that flows with milk and honey (Exod 16:13; Num 16:13), although they were probably asserting this with a good amount of irony given the contexts in which they were speaking.

⁴⁶⁷⁹ Propp, 746–53, gives a helpful brief synopsis of the peoples and places appearing in the exodus.

⁴⁷LXX Septuagint

⁴⁸⁸⁰ Of the six lists in Exodus, three are in the same order; a fourth differs only once. The similarity of the lists stands out more than their variety: same names, little rearrangement in Exodus. Joshua 9:12 reports that these six nations assembled to fight Israel/Joshua. So Cassuto's (35) point that the lists vary for diversification only emphasizes the difference more than the lists manifest conformity. Joshua 9:1; 12:8; Judg 3:5 contain lists of the same six names in Exod 3:8, etc. Ezra 9:1 contains a list of eight names, having dropped Hivites and added Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians in comparison to the six names normally listed in Exodus.

⁴⁹⁸¹ COS 1.38:79; I 86:271; see also P. L. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 104–6, 113–14.

The list of peoples mentioned here⁸⁵⁰² is the one found most often in the OT, while the longest such list containing ten names is in Gen 15:21. Lists containing seven names are found three times (Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11; the Girgashites are added). This list is used in Exodus five times (3:8, 17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2), and three times the lists have the same order (3:5, 17; 13:5). A sixth list in Exod 34:1 has five peoples listed (cf. Num 13:29), lacking only the Hittites.⁸⁵¹³ A short list of three names is found in Exod 23:28, featuring the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites, perhaps as representatives of them all, but we know next to nothing about the Hivites.

These lists in Exodus tie the imminent fulfillment of God's promises for Abraham's descendants to the master list in Gen 15:21, adding only the Hivites and dropping others as noted. Genesis 10:15–18 contains a list stating that all of these peoples (except the Perizzites) were sons of Canaan. Canaan himself was the son of Ham (Gen 9:22–24). The Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, and the Hittites are mentioned in nonbiblical documents and ancient Near Eastern literature.⁸⁵²⁴ The Hittites are depicted as inhabiting some areas around Hebron (Gen 23:10) and the Judaeen hills (Num 13:29; Josh 1:2–4). These peoples are not the ancestors of present-day Turks; their origin is unsure. They probably were emigrants from the ancient Hittite Empire (1800–1200 BC) or persons who formed outposts of that empire and who became permanent settlers in Canaan. It is possible that the Hittites in Canaan are a wholly other group descended from Heth, an eponymous ancestor (Gen 10:15, חֵת־הֵת). They are last referred to in Solomon's time (1 Chr 1:13). The Jebusites are closely connected to Jerusalem (Judg 19:10; 19:11; 1 Chr 11:4).

Biblical Theology Comments

God begins to reveal himself to Moses, through signs and wonders and words; in this case he shows himself as a consuming fire that does not consume even a desert bush when he engulfs it. God proceeds to reveal his character and nature further as the God who is holy and the God

⁵⁰⁸² For a discussion of what we know about these peoples see D. J. Wiseman, *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973); A. J. Hoerth, G.L. Mattingly, and E.M. Yamauchi, eds., *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994). See esp. Carpenter, "Deuteronomy," in *ZIBBC*, 1:424–427, 431–41, and related notes for more discussion and bibliography; for the peoples' religion see S. Richard, ed., *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 343–48; *NBD*, 2nd ed., 163–66; *IDB* 1:494–98; Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible* (London: Burns and Oats, 1966), 61–70; Speiser, *IDB* 2:665.

⁵¹⁸³ See note above.

⁵²⁸⁴ Heb. פְּרִזִּי, a Perizzite. Cf. פְּרָזָה ("village, hamlet"), and it is possible that we are dealing with a nonethnic term meaning "city dweller" (פְּרִזִּי), but its ten uses in the Pentateuch give a strong impression that it is an ethnic designation. The people are noted in the Amarna letters. Cf. K. N. Schoville, "Canaanites and Amorites," in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, 157–82, esp. 158–59, 166, and also Ramban, 29–30.

whose presence itself creates holy “ground,” holy space. The holiness of this God is unveiled in the unfolding narrative of Exodus and is a central theme of the unveiling of the meaning of the name of God.

In this encounter with Moses, we learn that God’s presence is awe-inspiring and that those who would approach him must recognize and respect his holiness. The author-editor asserts clearly that this God who appears to Moses declares himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of the covenant, the God of the ancestors, the God who will make the promises he gave to the fathers long ago become historical reality. Therefore, the paramount purpose for this revealing encounter with Moses is to announce that the right time for the deliverance of his people has come near—for he has indeed seen their plight, heard their cry, and experiences (יָדָע, “knows”) their anguish.

His words spoken to Abraham long ago became a part of the fabric and texture of history and, as a result, a lived experience in the lives of his people (Gen 15:13–14). His promise to deliver the descendants of Abraham from their oppressors and to give them the land that he had promised to them is realized, as Joseph had declared (Gen 50:24–26) it would be. The privileged status God gave to the inhabitants of that land is at an end, and their protection will soon be removed (cf. Gen 15:15; Num 14:9), for their sins have reached completion.

In these few verses Yahweh asserts his sovereignty over history and thus his ability to fulfill his covenant promises to the ancestors. His mighty acts will now shape the crucible of history for not only Egypt and his own people, but also the land of Canaan and its neighbors. Yahweh’s desire to multiply his people at creation, and now again in history, as a part of his covenantal promises, has reached a vital stage of development.

Application and Devotional Implications

The time had come for God to act to free his people—a truth and reality about God’s timing that is announced and realized over and over, not only in Exodus, but all through the OT and into the NT. Mark 1:15 announced that the time for the kingdom of God to come was at hand. When Israel, God’s covenantal people, were oppressed by the superpower of the NT era (Rome), God broke into history and announced the coming of his kingdom, a kingdom that would doom the Roman Empire as it then existed. The new King and the new Deliverer was at hand, who would free his people from more than political and military rulership. He would free them from their sins and spiritual oppression as well—free them from the real oppressor of all humankind. The kingdom of Satan would be assaulted and disabled, for God was now present in Christ to free his people (2 Cor 5:19), reconciling the world to himself. In addition, just as God had declared to his people in Egypt, Christ declared that he would not leave his followers or forsake them (John 14:18; Heb 13:5; cf. Deut 31:6, 8; Josh 1:5), and that he would be quick to act on behalf of his chosen ones who call on him. Indeed, Jesus employed Exod 3:6 to assert, over against the Sadducees, that the resurrection of the patriarchs should be assumed given the character,

nature, power, and purposes of God. God would rescue his people against the last enemy, death, as well.⁸⁵³⁵⁵⁴

3:7–10 What the reader has already learned from mention of the patriarchal covenant in 2:23–25 (and which was implicit in the reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in 3:6) Moses now heard spelled out explicitly: Yahweh cared about his people and planned to deliver them from Egypt to Canaan. In 2:23–25 the exodus was already adumbrated by the reference to remembering the covenant with Abraham and his descendants, the terms of which included both their slavery and their deliverance to Canaan (Gen 15:13–16).

Two great challenges to Moses' faith appear here implicitly, at either end of these verses. The first (v. 7) is a challenge shared by all believers: to trust that God has always and continues to be concerned about their suffering since in the present fallen world, God allows suffering. That the Israelites had been suffering oppression such a long time without rescue begs the question of God, "If you are willing to help now, why didn't you help earlier?" The Bible provides

⁵³⁸⁵ For a discussion of this use of Exod 3:6 by Jesus, see C. L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 77–80.

⁵⁴ Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 206–211.

clear answers in principle to such a question,³⁵⁵⁰ but individuals or groups cannot normally know why their particular suffering is so severe or has gone on as long as it has.³⁵⁶¹ The second challenge (v. 10) involves Moses' past: how could one who tried and failed to help his fellow Israelites on an individual scale forty years before (2:11–14) now, in his late years, be God's choice as deliverer of the whole nation?

Verse 7 summarizes the plight of the Israelites in their forced labor with four terms: "misery ... crying out ... slave drivers ... suffering."³⁵⁷² With three verbs God announced his compassion: "I have indeed seen ... I have heard them ... I am concerned."³⁵⁸³ The first of these, "I have indeed seen" (*rā'ōh rā'îti*) involves the Hebrew infinitive absolute construction, which connotes the sense "I have carefully watched" or "I have paid very close attention to," thus by itself indicating the intensity of God's interest in the misery of his people. Note also that God called Israel "my people," echoing but also more grandly superseding Moses' reference to "his own people" in 2:11.

Verse 8 declares God's rescue plan. The wording "I have come down [descended]" is characteristic of many biblical passages related to theophany and divine rescue of humans³⁵⁹⁴ and should not be understood as suggesting a primitive view of God within a three-tiered universe. He promised to bring them to a place ample in both size³⁶⁰⁵ and nourishment³⁶¹⁶ for

⁵⁵³⁰ E.g., Rom 5:3; 8:17; Phil 1:29; 2 Thess 1:5; 1 Pet 1:6; 3:17; 4:19.

⁵⁶³¹ Thus the model of Job, who was not allowed to be aware that his suffering greatly honored God and humiliated Satan, as the suffering of the righteous invariably does whether or not they are aware of it.

⁵⁷³² All four terms (עני, "misery"; צעקה, "crying out"; גגש, "slave driver"; מכאב, "suffering") are used here in Exodus for the first time, even though Israel's suffering has already been referred to in various ways in chaps. 1–2, suggesting that this verse is programmatic for many following references to Israel's suffering under Egyptian bondage.

⁵⁸³³ In contrast to the nouns cited above, the three verbs are all resumptive of vocabulary used in 2:24–25.

⁵⁹³⁴ E.g., Gen 11:5; Exod 19:20; 34:5; Num 11:25; 12:5; Neh 9:13; Ps 18:9; Isa 64:3; Luke 3:22; John 6:41, 51; Eph 4:9; cf. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God*, 42; Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 187.

⁶⁰³⁵ On the term "spacious land" cf. Judg 18:10; 2 Sam 18:20/Ps 18:19; 1 Chr 4:40; Neh 9:35.

⁶¹³⁶ The term "flowing with milk and honey," grammatically unusual because it involves a participle constructed to a compound noun, became nevertheless the standard term for describing the goodness of God's provision for his people in Canaan (cf. 3:17; 13:5). The expression is apt for the land of promise, where flocks thrived and where honey

them. By mentioning the six (or seven) Canaanite-Amorite groups,³⁶²⁷ God both clarified for Moses exactly which territories he planned to give his people and proleptically identified the future enemies in the war of conquest fought by Joshua.

Verse 9 reiterates both 3:7 and 2:23–25, providing yet another occasion to remind the reader, and in this case Moses in the situation of his call, that God had not forgotten his people, was deeply concerned for them, and would act on their behalf. Nevertheless, as the ensuing portions of the narrative make clear, it was not easy for Moses to hear the command of v. 10, with its demand that he *go* as God’s prophet (“I am sending you”³⁶³⁸) to Pharaoh to *bring* Israel out of Egypt. Not only was Moses to be involved in the exodus but he was to lead it, in defiance of the greatest potentate on earth, the Egyptian Pharaoh.⁶⁴

bees were abundant but where some other types of agriculture, such as vegetable cultivation (note the wistful reference in Num 11:5), were more difficult.

⁶²³⁷ On the identity of these groups, sometimes listed in the OT in a group of six or seven (and not always with the same names or order whether six or seven), all of which can be generally summarized with the term “Canaanites,” see H. A. Hoffner, “The Hittites and Hurrians”; M. Liverani, “The Amorites”; A. R. Millard, “The Canaanites”; and D. J. Wiseman, “Introduction,” in *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 29–52. Note especially that the biblical “Hittites” were not the great nation of ancient Anatolia (which would be indicated by *ḥattî* rather than *ḥittî* in the OT) but a local Palestinian group possibly related in some way to the Hurrians.

⁶³³⁸ On *sending* as a concept identifying prophets, cf., e.g., Judg 6:8; 2 Chr 24:19; Jer 7:25; 14:15; 23:21; Zech 7:12; Mal 4:5; Matt 23:37 and par; Acts 7:37.

⁶⁴ Douglas K. Stuart, [*Exodus*](#), vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 116–118.