

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF I AM

\*The revelation of the Divine Name "I AM" was an immensely significant moment in the history of Judaism. To understand why, one needs to look closely at the Jewish attitude towards names and the naming of objects. According to the Jews of the Biblical period, to have no name meant to have no existence in reality, for when one's name is taken away from one, one ceases, quite literally, to exist. The giving of a name, therefore is not merely an act of identification; it actually brings into existence the object named and summarizes verbally its inherent properties. For example in Genesis, God gives reality to His creation by naming its components: He names the day "day", the night, "night", and so on. (Gen. 1: 3-10).

The intimate relationship between a name and a person can be clearly seen in many Biblical stories, for the names in the Old Testament are not given out accidentally: the name of each character reveals and signifies the essence, the chief personality trait or the most memorable action done by the person so named. God Himself sometimes changed the person's name so that the new name accurately reflected the changed situation, i.e. Jacob tricking his blind father into giving him a blessing that rightfully belonged to his brother. (Gen. 27: 6) The word Jacob literally means "a cheat". Later after fighting with the angel and dislocating a hip he forced the angel to give him a blessing. (Gen. 32: 28). The blessing was a change of name and consequently a change of character and essence. No longer would he be known as Jacob but was transformed into Israel, meaning "God strove" or "one who strove with God".

Set against this background one can now easily imagine the significance of God revealing for the first time what His real name was. He had been asked before but prior to Moses asking His name, He had declined to give an answer. In the eyes of the Jews, by declaring Himself to be "I AM" God was not merely given Himself a convenient designation or title, He was revealing to humanity for the first time His real nature, His real essence, and His real identity.

\*(excerpted from: [www.davidgodman.org](http://www.davidgodman.org))

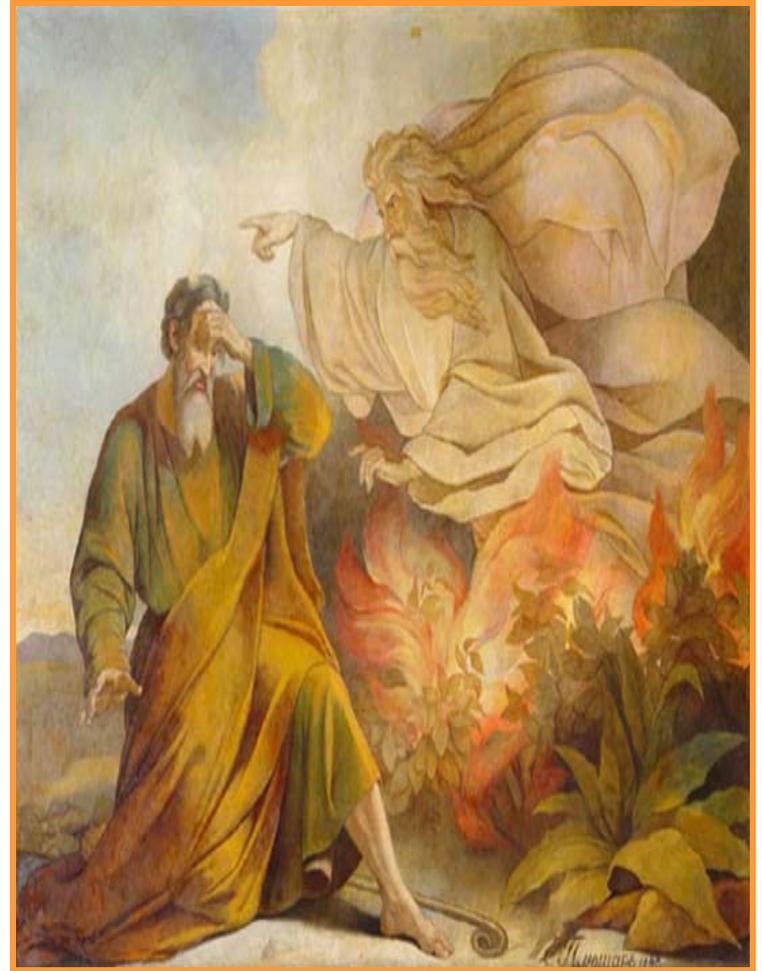
### ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH INTERPRETATION

\*\*The Roman Catholic Church's interpretation has been summarized in the catechism of the Catholic Church. The interpretation is found in numbers 203-213, as defined by St. Jerome. Some of the salient points are the following: (203): God revealed Himself to this people Israel by making His name known to them. A name expresses a person's essence in identity and the meaning of this person's life. God has a name; He is not an anonymous force. To disclose one's name is to make oneself known to others; in a way it is to hand oneself over by becoming accessible capable of being known more intimately and addressed personally. (206): In revealing His mysterious name, YHWH ("I AM HE WHO IS", "I AM WHO AM" or "I AM WHO I AM"), God says who He is and by what name He is to be called. This Divine Name is mysterious just as God is a mystery. (207): God Who reveals His name as "I AM", reveals Himself as the God who is always there, present to His people in order to save them. (210): After Israel's sin when the people turned away from God to worship the golden calf, God hears Moses' prayer of intercession and agrees to walk in the midst of an unfaithful people. (211): The divine name, "I AM", expresses God's faithfulness: despite the faithlessness of men's sin and the punishment it deserves. (212):...In God "there is no variation or shadow due to change."... (213): The revelation of the ineffable name "I AM WHO AM" contains then the truth that God alone IS. \*\*\*(excerpted from: [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org))

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## The Burning Bush



**... "And God said unto Moses,  
I AM THAT I AM:  
and He said, Thus shalt thou say  
unto the children of Israel  
I AM  
hath sent me unto you".**

(Exodus 3:14)

## SCRIPTURAL READINGS OF I AM

And Moses said to God: Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And He said to him: I will be with thee: and this shall have for a sign, that I have sent thee: When thou shalt have brought my people out of Egypt, thou shalt offer sacrifice to God upon this mountain. Moses said to God: Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel, and say to them: the God of your fathers has sent me to you. If they should say to me: What is his name? what shall I say to them? God said to Moses: **I AM WHO AM**. He said: Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He who is, hath sent me to you. And God said again to Moses: Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. (Exodus 3:11-15)

And it came to pass about eight days after these words, that He took Peter, James and John, and went up into a mountain to pray. And whilst He prayed, the shape of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and glittering. And behold two men were talking with Him. And they were Moses and Elias. Appearing in majesty. And they spoke of His deceased that He should accomplish in Jerusalem. (Lk. 9: 28-31)

Judas therefore having received a band of soldiers and servants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered Him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: **I AM** he. And Judas also who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon therefore as he said to them: **I AM** he: they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again therefore he asked them: Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that **I AM** he. If therefore you seek me, let these go their way. (John 18: 3-8)

(Ed. Note: In the preceding passages from John we glimpse Jesus' authority over creation when those who came to arrest Jesus fell. We again witness Jesus' obedience to His Father's Will and to His own humiliation by allowing Himself to be arrested in order to complete the plan of salvation which He had undertaken under obedience to His Father's Will so that He could be made perfect).

## THE DEFINITION OF I AM

\*An understanding of Jewish culture, practices, idioms, and faith is beneficial in understanding the true meaning of the scriptures. First, we must remember that God did not give us the Bible in English. The original language of the Tanakh, the Old Testament Bible, was given to us in Hebrew. If we want to know exactly what God was saying to us we need to study His word as it was given to us: in Hebrew. Secondly the practice of titling the books of the Tanakh (Old Testament Bible) was done by using the first word, or words, of that book's text. For example, the second book of the Old Testament Bible is referred to as Exodus. In the Tanakh that same book is called "Shemot", which means Names. The Tanakh has three sections: Torah (The Law), Nevi'im (the Prophets), and Ketuvim (writings). God's Word, in its entirety, is a love letter to mankind-an incorruptible covenant between God and mankind-a promise to us. It is critical that our conclusions are based upon scripture **ONLY**.

It is commonly known that the Hebrew people, for fear of having the name of God dishonored, substituted the all-upper-case word "LORD" ("Adonai" O Antiphon said on Dec. 18th), for "YHWH". Lord is a consonant-only version of the actual name of God, which is known as the Tetragrammaton. The Tetragrammaton came into being as yet another safeguard intended to prevent blaspheming God's holy name.

The words "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh" in the original Hebrew text roughly defines into English as "I AM THAT I AM". The word "Ehyeh" is a first-person-singular-present and future form of the Hebrew word "Hayah". This means that the meaning of "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh" actually goes beyond merely "I AM THAT I AM", but declares a sense of eternity, much like in Revelation 4:8, where the scripture refers to God as the one who "was, is, and is to come." "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh" also is translated as "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE" and "I AM WHO AM" and I AM THAT I AM". The actual name of God gives himself in Shemot 3:15, "YHWH" is also associated with the root verb "Hayah", or "To Be."

Because the Hebrew scribes feared that God's name, YHWH, would be blasphemed or dishonored, they replaced every instance of it in most of their manuscripts with "Adonai", or "LORD", usually rendered in all upper-case letters. It is unfortunate that translators of the Old Testament copied the scriptures with the word "LORD" substituting for God's real name, and that ignorance has led us to believe today that this is how the original text was rendered. The Jewish culture was always aware of the fact that wherever the word "Lord" occurred in the Tanakh meant YHWH. This knowledge is not very widely publicized in modern Christian culture.

\*(excerpted from: [www.ahavatyesu.com](http://www.ahavatyesu.com))

