

The Exodus story is a battle between gods, the presumed gods of the Egyptians and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What's more, it's a contest of names - the name of the God of Israel as opposed to that of Pharaoh and his Egyptian gods. The god that would win the battle is the one who had power and authority behind his name.

Moses was well aware of the Egyptian gods. He was raised in the home Pharaoh, a man who was considered by his people to himself be a "god". In addition, Moses was probably exposed to the other Egyptian gods including "Ra", the god of the sun, "Hapi", the god of the Nile river, and "Sekhmet", the goddess of fire¹.

Because Moses' Hebrew mother and sister also played a role in his upbringing, it's likely that he was also aware of the God of the Hebrews, and even though it's unclear whether or not they knew the name of their God, the Hebrews did believe that He would someday fulfill His promise to Abraham and deliver them from slavery in Egypt².

In the Hebrew culture, names have meaning. We see this from the very beginning. Adam was formed from the dust of the ground, and thus his name "adam" (אָדָם – St. 120) means "red" as in "red dirt".

Likewise, Eve, the mother of all living,³ is named "chavah" (חַוְוָה – St. 2332) which is related to the word "chayah" (חַיָּה – St. 2421) which means "to live". Later in his life, Abram's (אַבְרָם – St. 87) name was changed from one meaning "exalted father" to "Abraham" (אַבְרָהָם – St. 85), a name that means "father of a multitude"⁴, a name that more clearly fits his role in life. Having been exposed to the Hebrew culture, Moses knew that they placed a great deal of importance in names - after all, after being pulled from the Nile river, his own name meant "drawn out".

One day Moses saw a bush burning while tending sheep along the side of a mountain. He noticed that it never seemed to burn up, so he decided to check it out, and as he came closer, a voice came from it saying –

^{NKJ} **Exodus 3:4-5** . . . "Moses, Moses! . . . Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground."

What do you think may have been running through Moses' mind at that moment? Here's a ball of fire speaking to him and telling him he's on holy ground. Being well versed in the mythical gods of the Egyptians, he may have assumed this was "Sekhmet", the goddess of fire. But before Moses had time to think much further, the voice said to him -

^{NKJ} **Exodus 3:6** "(Moses) . . . I *am* the God of your father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Moses now knew that this was not an Egyptian god, but rather a Hebrew god . . . maybe the Hebrew god of fire. God continued to speak, revealing his plan to Moses, but never revealing His name. So Moses,

¹ http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Egyptian_gods_and_goddesses

² Ex. 15:13-14

³ Gen. 3:20

⁴ Gen. 17:5

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only knowing the single-task Egyptian - gods that could only “appear” as the sun, the moon, as frogs, or as fire – couldn’t help but ask God; “What is YOUR name?”, and God’s reply was simply “Ehyah Ashar Ehyah”, a phrase that in Hebrew means “I will be what I will be”.⁵

Unlike the mythical gods of the Egyptians who only had one “appearance” and one role, the God of Abraham appeared in whatever form it took to get the job done, be it a non-consuming fire on the top of a mountain, a rock from which water gushed out, a cloud that provided a covering from the sun, or as food from heaven. That God later revealed His name to be “YHVH” and instructed Moses saying –

^{NKJ} **Exodus 3:16-17** "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'The LORD God (YHVH Elohe') of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and *seen* what is done to you in Egypt; ¹⁷ and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt . . ."

YHVH sent Moses to the elders of Israel and told him to proclaim - in the name of YHVH - that freedom would soon be theirs . . . and to show them that Moses was indeed sent by Him, He confirmed it with signs and wonders.

Moses then approached Pharaoh, demanding in the YHVH's name that he let Israel go, but Pharaoh's response was simply –

^{NKJ} **Exodus 5:2** . . . "Who *is* the LORD (YHVH), that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD (YHVH), nor will I let Israel go."

So YHVH set out to show Pharaoh who He is, and for the next few months poured out plagues on Egypt designed to show Pharaoh the difference between Himself and the “gods” of the Egyptians. From that point on, Moses invoked the name “YHVH”, both in his dealings with Pharaoh and the children of Israel. It was in YHVH's name and by YHVH's authority that Moses confronted Pharaoh saying -

^{NKJ} **Exodus 5:1** "Thus says the LORD God (YHVH Elohe') of Israel . . ."

. . . and when that first encounter didn't turn out as expected, he pleaded with God saying –

^{NKJ} **Exodus 5:22-23** . . . "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why *is* it You have sent me? ²³ "For since I came to Pharaoh to speak **in Your name**, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all."

But as the story goes, Pharaoh and the “gods” of the Egyptians were brought to nothing by Moses invoking the name “YHVH”, and as the Israelites emerged from the Red Sea, scripture points out that –

^{ESV} **Exodus 14:31** . . . they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

As time went on, countless miracles were performed in the name of YHVH to preserve Israel as a people and as a nation. Not only was Moses successful in performing an impossible task by invoking YHVH's name, so did many other leaders of Israel down through the ages. In this study, we'll look into the concept

⁵ אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה – “ehyah” is the 1st person masculine imperfect form of the Hebrew word “hayah” (הָיָה - St. 1961). It's a common term in the Tnakh and in this form is almost always translated “to be” or “will be” (Ex. 4:15; Deut 31:23; Joshua 1:5; Judges 6:16; Ruth 2:13 and others). “asher” (Strong's 834) is a relative pronoun that means “which”, “who”, “what”

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of invoking the name of YHVH by praying in His name, as well as that of His Son, Messiah Yeshua. We'll see that:

- invoking the name of God is not a New Testament concept
- invoking His name carries responsibilities
- YHVH sends his servants "in His name"

Then we'll answer the question –

- Are we to pray "in His name"?
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What does it mean when we say "invoke the name of God"? According to Google.com, to invoke means to "cite or appeal to (someone or something) as an authority for an action or in support of an argument."⁶ After the burning bush, it was Moses' practice to cite YHVH's name in practically everything he did, for it was YHVH who gave Moses instructions, and Moses simply passed them on to the Israelites. For instance, in the case of the manna, scripture says:

^{NKJ} **Exodus 16:23** Then he (Moses) said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' "

In this case, Moses spoke on the authority of YHVH, not his own. In other words, he spoke in the name of YHVH.

Speaking on behalf of – or in the name of another was not new to the Hebrews, but was part of their culture from the beginning. A good example is that of Eleazar being sent to find a wife for Isaac.⁷ Abraham was getting old, and even though his son Isaac was 40 years old⁸, he sent Eleazar, his trusted servant, to find a wife for his son. When he had determined that Rebecca was the woman God had chosen, he went to her father's house to ask her father for her hand, but before doing so, he relayed to them that he was making the request on behalf of his master, the one who had sent him. He began by saying –

^{NKJ} **Genesis 24:34** . . . "I *am* Abraham's servant . . ."

Eleazar made it clear that he was acting on Abraham's behalf, that it was Abraham who had sent him, and that what he was asking would be pleasing to Abraham. It's as if he – Eleazar – were an extension of Abraham himself. He was in fact, speaking "in the name of" Abraham.

Doing something in YHVH's name is quite common in the Tnakh, for instance, the children of Israel were to take oaths in His name –

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 10:20** "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.

The priests were to minister in His name –

⁶ https://www.google.com/search?q=invoke&oq=invoke&aqs=chrome.0.69i59j69i60.1367j0j4&sourceid=chrome&es_sm=122&ie=UTF-8

⁷ Genesis 24

⁸ Genesis 25:20

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^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 18:5** "For the LORD your God has chosen him (Aaron) out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons forever.

They were also to bless in His name –

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 21:5** "Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD . . ."

David killed Goliath in YHVH's name –

^{NKJ} **1 Samuel 17:45** Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

It was also the practice of the prophets to prophesy "in the name" of YHVH –

^{KJV} **Ezra 5:1** Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them.

In each of these cases, the name that was being invoked represented the power and authority by which each action was taken. For instance, the prophets were "sent" to either warn or to bring good news. They were speaking the words of YHVH, and thus He was the authority behind their words.

The practice of speaking "in the name of" another person continued on into the first century, especially in the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee – the home turf of the Pharisees. In the Galilee there were a number of rabbinic "schools" where young men would follow this or that rabbi⁹ and learn from him the Torah. These "students of the rabbi" were called "talmidim" or in English - "disciples". They would strive to be just like their rabbi, following after his walk with the hope and intent of becoming rabbis themselves. Since teaching is one of the best ways to learn, a rabbi would occasionally send his talmidim to local and sometimes remote synagogues to further their training by teaching others.

In the frequent Biblical discussions with their contemporaries, rabbis would often speak "in the name of" their rabbi in order to bring power and authority to their argument. So would his talmidim when they were sent out, except they would speak "in the name of" their teacher, their rabbi. This practice continues even today in rabbinical Judaism, and there are many examples of such found in the Talmud. One example is a discussion between two rabbis as to whether or not one's Sukkot sukkah has to be one built specifically for the festival or whether it can be one you use for other things. In that passage one rabbi is explaining his understanding based on another rabbi's interpretation of a particular verse in Leviticus 23. Breaking into the thought it says -

" . . . they need that verse for the same deduction as that of Rabbi Sheshet, who having said in the name of Rabbi Akiba, "Whence do we know that the wood of the sukkah is forbidden to be used for secular purposes . . . ?"¹⁰

Apparently, Rabbi Akiba thought that wood for the Sukkot sukkah could not be used for secular purposes, and since he was a notable rabbi, his opinion gave authority to that of Rabbi Sheshet.

⁹ The term "rabbi" (St. 4461) is a title given to the teachers

¹⁰ Sukkah 9a as quoted in "The Sukkot/Simhat Torah Anthology"; Philip Goodman, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1988, pg.27

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This first century rabbinical practice was not their own invention, but rather derived from the scripture. Eliazar (it's assumed) learned about YHVH from the example of his master – Abraham. Thus when Abraham was old, he could be trusted with everything Abraham had. The same is true of Joshua, who as one of Moses students¹¹, was trusted with the leadership of Israel. There was also the “sons of the prophets” spoken of in 2 Kings 2 as well as other places in the books of the kings of Israel.

From these examples we see that doing certain things in the name of YHVH, or in the name of another person, is not uncommon in the scripture.

Never-the-less, there are restrictions put on what a person can do “in the name” of YHVH. For instance, the prophets could only prophesy what they had been given . . . they could not add to His words.

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 18:20** 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

It appears that what YHVH is saying is that if a person is given a message from YHVH, he cannot add to the message, but only speak what was given. It could also be saying that if YHVH did not give you the message, you had better not put His name on it.

The KJV does this verse a disservice because the way it's translated does not tell the whole story. There are two words in this verse as well as verse 22 that give a little more insight into the meaning.

In this passage, the Hebrew word for “presumes” is “zuwd” (זוּד – St. 2102) and it means “to boil up, act proudly or arrogantly”. Going on to verse 22, it says much the same thing but with a different instruction.

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 18:22** "when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

Here, the word “presumptuously” comes from the same verbal root as “presumes” in verse 20, but there's another important word we need to investigate. It's the word “afraid”. The KJV seems to indicate that if a person's prophecy does not come to pass, we should not be afraid of him, which would conversely indicate that if it does come to pass, we should be afraid of him. Is this the thought YHVH is wanting to convey? Let's see . . .

In verse 22, the word “afraid” comes from the Hebrew word “guwr” (גוּר – St. 1481). “Guwr” is the root word from which we get the word “ger” (גֵּר – St. 1616) which is most often translated “stranger”. “Guwr” means to “sojourn”, “abide”, “dwell with”, “remain with”, “and assemble”.

So what we have here is an instruction to not remain or assemble with a person who prophecies with pride, but proves to be a false prophet. How do we know if he's a false prophet? We know so if that person claims that YHVH told him to prophecy, but the prophecy does not come to pass.

Such were the false prophets in the time of Jeremiah who claimed that destruction would not overtake Judah and they would not enter into captivity –

¹¹ NKJ **Numbers 11:28**

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^{NKJ} **Jeremiah 14:14** And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.

So we see that if one is going to do anything, especially prophecy, in the name of YHVH, he must only say what he was told to say, and must only do what he was sent to do.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this study, Moses was sent by God to deliver Israel. Moses is also considered to be Israel's greatest prophet. The Torah reveals that there would be another prophet, sent by YHVH, who would perform much the same task as did Moses. When contrasting the leaders of Israel to those of Canaan, Moses said -

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 18:15-19** ¹⁵ " The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear . . . ¹⁷ "And the LORD said to me: . . . ¹⁸ 'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. ¹⁹ 'And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him.

Yeshua is that prophet¹², and just as Moses was sent by YHVH to deliver the Hebrews, and just as Abraham sent Eleazar to find a wife for his son, Yeshua was sent to bring salvation to Israel. His name defines His task.

^{ESV} **Matthew 1:21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Yeshua), for he will save his people from their sins."

"Yeshua", the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word "Yehoshuwa" (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) – St. 3091) means "Yah is Salvation". At his first coming, Yeshua was sent with a message and a task, to open the way of salvation to His people which would in turn, pave the way for the restoration of the Kingdom of God.

Early in his ministry as the crowds thronged around him – asking him to stay . . .

^{ESV} **Luke 4:43** . . . he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

Because He was sent, He must speak the words, and do the will of the One who sent Him -

^{NKJ} **John 6:38** "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

^{ESV} **John 8:26** I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."

Yeshua was a first century rabbi, and like other rabbis, He had a group of talmidim (disciples) who followed Him. But unlike the rabbis of His day, Yeshua did not speak the words of other rabbis, but instead spoke the words God gave him¹³. He did not have to refer to the authority of another rabbi; His authority came from God. Thus Yeshua's words were genuine and true -

¹² Mark 6:15; John 1:45; John 6:14; John 7:14; John 7:40

¹³ John 3:34

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^{NKJ} **Mark 1:21-22** ²¹ Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. ²² And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

But even though He did not depend on the authority of another rabbi, Yeshua did not claim that His words were his own. He instead claimed to speak on behalf of His father.

^{NKJ} **John 14:10** "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

And to back up His claim that the words came from the Father, He – like Moses – followed those words with signs –

^{NKJ} **John 2:23** Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.

So Yeshua fulfills the role of the “prophet like unto Moses”. He performed the task that was given to Him, and He spoke the words of YHVH.

Being that Yeshua is The Prophet, and He spoke on the authority of YHVH, upon who’s authority would His talmidim – his disciples – speak, and what would be given to them to confirm that they spoke on that authority. The obvious answer is that they would have to speak on Yeshua’s authority, which would then be followed by signs. They would speak “in the name of” ‘Rabbi’ Yeshua.

Yeshua was sent by YHVH and was given the words to speak as well as signs to confirm that He was speaking on behalf of YHVH. Yeshua in turn, taught His disciples and prepared them to be “sent out” as well. They were initially sent out soon after He had called them –

^{NKJ} **Matthew 10:1** And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power *over* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease . . . ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Yeshua was simply following the pattern for sending out servants that was established in Moses and followed by the rabbis –

- equip them with the words they are supposed to say
- have them back up those words with authority given to them by a stronger or higher power
- confirm their words with signs

In the New Testament, there are a number of references to people doing something in Yeshua’s name, but there are only eight instances where Yeshua actually instructed someone to say, do, or ask something “in His name”, and in each of these case Yeshua directed His statements exclusively to His disciples. As we understand the culture of the Bible and that of the first century, we can see why – His disciples – the talmidim – were being prepared to be sent out, and he wanted them to understand the task ahead of them and what they were to do.

These eight instances are:

- Matt. 18:5; Luke 9:48 – receive those who humble themselves like children
- Matt. 18:20 – gather together to make judgments in His name
- Matt. 28:19 – make disciples, baptize, and teach

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- Mark 9:39 – not resist others who are working miracles “in his name”
- Mark 16:17-18 - cast out demons, speak in tongues, take up serpents, be free from the effects of poison, lay hands on the sick so that they recover
- Luke 24:47 – preach repentance
- John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23; – ask for works (signs) to be done in order to “bear fruit”
- John 16:26 – ask that Yeshua reveal the Father to them

Within these 8 occasions (some of which may have been the same occasion) there are 14 things the disciples of Yeshua were called to do. Most of them were things they could ask for in order to prove they were acting on behalf of the Messiah. Because these words were directed only to His disciple, it seems that the authority to ask anything “in his name” is limited to His disciples as well; it does not appear that he shared that authority with the masses.

So what does that mean for us? Are we to make statements “in His name”, ask prayers “in His name”, and pray for the sick “in his name”? Have we been given authority to do anything “in His name”? Speaking in the name of a higher power is a serious thing, and according to the Torah, can result in death if you’re not authorized to do so. Let’s go back to the Deuteronomy passage -

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 18:20** 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

The answer is really quite simple – if we’re one of His disciples, and if we ask according to his will, we have the authority to ask in His name.

After his resurrection, Yeshua told His disciples that just as He had made disciples of them, they were to make disciples themselves -

^{NKJ} **Matthew 28:18-20** ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

This passage tells us a number of things, but specifically that the all the new disciples were to be 1) disciples of Yeshua, and 2) that they were to observe everything Yeshua taught, and 3) since YHVH has given authority over all things to Him, when we speak in Yeshua’s name, we’re speaking with the authority of YHVH Himself..

A person is a disciple when he is a follower and student of a teacher. In rabbinic thought, he is one who strives to emulate his teacher – do everything just as his teacher would. Thus Yeshua said that –

^{NKJ} **John 8:31** . . . "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

We know that by the time Pentecost came around, there were already about 120 disciples¹⁴, and many more were added as time went on. This would indicate that the door to discipleship was and still is open, and if we’re willing to truly follow the Master, we are His disciples.

¹⁴ Acts 1:15

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Once we know we are His disciples, all we have to do is know that we're asking according to His will.

^{NKJ} **1 John 5:14** Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Once we are confident we're His disciple and we're asking according to His will, we can follow the example of the Apostle James who said –

^{KJV} **James 5:14** Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

The scripture is replete with examples of God's people working miracles in His name. From Moses who challenged Pharaoh in the name of the God of Abraham, to David, who slew a giant in the name of the God of Israel, and to Messiah Yeshua who brought salvation to Israel in the name of His Father, the great men of God invoked the name of YHVH as the authority behind their words. Can we, as disciples of Messiah Yeshua do the same? Yes we can!

^{ESV} **Hebrews 4:16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Shalom Alecheim