

# Moses at the Burning Bush, Continued

## 1. God's name

Genesis 4:1 – Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gained a male child with the help of YHVH.”

Genesis 4:26 – And to Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him Enosh. It was then that men began to invoke YHVH by name.

Genesis 15:2 And Abram said, “My Lord, YHVH...”

## 2. El Shaddai

Genesis 17:1-5 – And Abram was ninety-nine years old, and YHVH appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am **El Shaddai**. Walk in my ways and be blameless...and you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham...”

Genesis 28:1-3 – So Isaac sent for Jacob and blessed him... “May **El Shaddai** bless you, make you fertile and numerous, so that you become an assembly of peoples...”

Genesis 35:10-11 – “...you shall be called Jacob no more, but Israel shall be your name...I am **El Shaddai**...”

## 3. Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Edited by Dr. J.H. Hertz, on Exodus 6:3

...Although the patriarchs were familiar with, and freely used, the name YHVH, its import as “*the everlasting God of faithfulness and promises, even though they extend over centuries and millenia, are invariably fulfilled*” was not fully understood by them. Scripture does not state, “My name YHVH I did not make known to them (*hodati*),” but by My Name YHVH I was not known to them (*nodati*); i.e. I was not recognized by them in my attribute of faithfulness, which is the essential part of the name YHVH, signifying One who is faithful to give reality of His word; seeing that I had promised them possession of Canaan, but had not in their day fulfilled that promise (Rashi). God was now to make the full signification of that Name known to the Children of Israel by redeeming them from slavery. Thus would He manifest Himself to the children in a manner that he had not done to the fathers.

### 4a. Abarbanel (1437-1508)

He had a harelip and could not pronounce the bilabials (sounds that require putting both lips together)– b,p,m, and w...

### 4b. Gersonides (1288-1344)

This may refer to a speech impediment, or it may mean that he was not very good at putting words together. His inarticulateness was the result of his extreme concentration on divine matters.

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**5. Gerald R. McDermott, Professor of Religion, Roanoke College (author of the book, Famous Stutterers” <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2013/09/was-moses-a-stutterer>**

The nineteenth-century Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch...who was a renowned specialist in the Hebrew language, said that this meant Moses did not have control over his lips, which is exactly how stutterers feel about their lips.

A contemporary interpreter, Samuel Davidkin, says that another passage in the story provides still more evidence. Exodus 6:9 says that when Moses spoke to the Israelites they did not listen to him “because of shortness of breath and hard work.” Most interpreters have thought this referred to the overworked Jewish slaves, but it may refer to Moses himself. For a stutterer, speaking a long message (and in this case it *was* long) before a crowd can be exhausting, and often means the stutterer runs out of air repeatedly while he speaks. Davidkin thinks the crowd might have run out of patience with Moses as they watched him struggling to get words out of his mouth.

... In a recent issue of the journal *Neurological Science*, three medical researchers have suggested even more evidence. They say that the Moses story portrays three tell-tale symptoms of stuttering: fear, finding someone else to speak as a spokesman, and the pattern of negation/hesitation/avoidance... They also find that stuttering today is more prevalent among bilinguals (those who speak two languages), and that Moses probably had to master three languages: Hebrew (taught by his parents in his first years), Egyptian (learned during his thirty-plus years as a foster son of Pharaoh’s daughter in the royal household), and Midianite (learned during his forty years as a shepherd and husband to the daughter of the priest of Midian).

These are of course circumstantial lines of evidence, not direct proof. But they are suggestive and confirming that what most interpreters over the millennia have concluded is supported by patterns we see among stutterers today.

### **6. Ezekiel 3:4-6**

“Then He said to me, Mortal, go to the House of Israel and repeat My very words to them. For you are sent, not to a people of unintelligible speech and difficult language (*kivdei lashon*), but to the House of Israel. – not to the many peoples of unintelligible speech and difficult language (*kivdei lashon*), whose talk you cannot understand...”

## **Moses at the Burning Bush, Continued**

### **7a. Rashbam (1085-1158, France)**

Could one possibly think that a prophet who knew God face to face, and received the Torah directly from His hand, was a stutterer? The idea that Moses stuttered is not found anywhere in Rabbinic literature. Pay no attention to apocryphal books!

(What Moses meant was) “I am not fluent in the articulation of Egyptian. For I was a young man when I fled the country, and now I am 80 years old.” We see in Ezekiel (3:5-6) that “slow of tongue” describes one who is not fluent in the language of the realm.

### **7b. Commentary on the Torah, Richard Elliot Friedman, p. 181**

...It has been suggested that Moses’ protest here in Exodus is that he does not speak Egyptian. This is difficult to defend, given the report in **Exodus 2** that Moses has been raised in the Egyptian court. Still, the meaning of “heavy of tongue” as referring to speaking a foreign language fits our context in **Exodus 4**, I believe, because **YHVH** has told Moses to gather and speak to *the elders of Israel*. Moses’ protest may perhaps be best understood, then, as being on the grounds that he does not yet speak *Hebrew*! God’s response in fact confirms that the problem for Moses is speaking “to the people,” not to the Egyptians (4:16). And the final confirmation is that in the first meeting with the people’s elders “*Aaron spoke all the words that YHVH had spoken to Moses,*” (4:30); but in the first meeting with *Pharaoh*, both Moses and Aaron speak (5:1, 3).

### **8. Ramban (Nachmaides)1194-1270 CE**

Better, his “children” – for Numbers 26:8 tells us that “children” can refer to a single child, and at this point Moses has only one son, Gershom. Zipporah only became pregnant with Eliezer on the journey, or perhaps in Egypt if she went there. Or it could be that when He spoke to him at the mountain of God he had only Gershom, but that Zipporah was pregnant, and gave birth when he “went back to his father-in-law Jether.” But because (his mission was urgent) he did not circumcise him or name him before setting out to obey God’s command...Only after Moses went to Egypt and saw that he was safe from all who had sought to kill him did he name him Eliezer, for “the God of my father was my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh”...