Nathan Smith
OT611 – Russell
Module 3

Grammatical Analysis of Exodus 6:3

Exodus 6:3
וָאֵרָ֗א אֶל־אַבְרָהָ֛ם אֶל־יִצְחָ֥ק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹ֖ב בְּאֵ֣ל שַׁדָּ֑י וּשְׁמִ֣י יְהוָ֔ה לֹ֥א נוֹדַ֖עְתִּי לָהֶֽם׃
NRSV I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name 'The LORD' I did not make myself known to them.
NAS and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them.
KJV And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.
NIV I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.

Observation #1:
It is interesting that the KJV translates the name of God *YHWH* as JEHOVAH, being that this was a combination of the consonants from *YHWH* coupled with the vowel points of *Adonai* mixed in. The relative consistency of substituting LORD as a placeholder for the Tetragrammaton, is telling of how the use of *Jehovah* is now seen as antiquated.

Observation #2:
It is interesting that the NAS capitalizes words like *My* and *Myself*, though there was no such distinction made in the original text. A pronoun is simply a pronoun, as seen in the NRSV and NIV. This smacks of folk theology, where every single possible pronoun which references God is to be capitalized (i.e. *He* vs. *he*, etc.)

Observation #3:
Only the KJV retains multiple instances of the word "unto," seen in the Hebrew as denoting motion of God towards the individuals: "*unto* Abraham, *unto* Isaac, *unto* Jacob." While the meaning of the sentence is the same, somehow this repetition seems to better emphasize the fact that God is constantly moving into relationship with his people.

וָאֵרָ֗א – **Verb:** Niphal/Waw-consec/1ˢᵗ Imperfect, Common, Singular – from ראה

This verb is immediately preceded by the particle conjunction ו indicating that the verb is directly related to the end of verse 6:2 – the LORD appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The verb root itself means "to see" literally or figuratively, and in this case refers to the LORD having "appeared" – translated consistently in the English versions.

אֶל־אַבְרָהָ֛ם – **Particle:** Preposition | **Noun:** Proper, Absolute

The particle preposition here is repeated three times. The first instance is for the noun, *Abraham*. The noun is proper and absolute, indicating that it is a particular person being referenced. It is interesting that when God first appeared to this man, his name was Abram, not Abraham. Chronology nit-picking aside, the meaning is clear: God appeared to Abram/Abraham, the man from whom God promised to make a great nation.

אֶל־יִצְחָ֥ק – **Particle:** Preposition | **Noun:** Proper, Absolute

This is the second instance of the particle preposition *to* or *unto*, used here in reference to *Isaac*, who continues in the aforementioned lineage of Abraham. It is interesting that while God did indeed speak directly to Isaac, his name was not changed by God.

Also of note is that Isaac and Moses each had interesting circumstances around their respective births/childhood. Isaac was born to Sarah when she had assumed she was unable to conceive, and Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter, who was possibly barren herself – as is evidenced by her calling for a Hebrew woman to nurse Moses. This woman, as seen in Exodus 2:8, is in fact Moses' biological mother. If nothing else, these are interesting parallels between women who deal with heartbreak and motherhood.

וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹ֖ב – **Particle:** Conjunction | **Particle:** Preposition | **Noun:** Proper, Absolute

Again, the particle conjunction *to* or *unto* makes an appearance, this time in reference to *Jacob*. If this verse were sheet music, one might be able to visualize three repeating notes, with an underlying chiastic structure to the baseline. Abram was renamed Abraham, Isaac was not renamed, and Jacob was renamed Israel in Genesis 32:28, after

his wrestling at the foot of the ladder leading to heaven. Here, a man is being addressed by God, continuing in the chiasm of leaders; one who retains the Egyptian name Moses.

This pattern seems interwoven with the pivotal point in God's discussion with Moses: the announcement that though the patriarchs received God's promise, they only knew him in reference to his attributes *Almighty God*, yet now Moses would know him by his true name, *YHWH*. The LORD, whom was fond of renaming his devotees, would now allow Moses to know him more intimately than any who had come before him.

בְּאֵל – **Particle:** Preposition | **Noun:** Common, Masculine, Singular, Absolute

Here, the word *god* is simply being used as if in reference to any other lesser/false pagan god. However, t is singular and absolute, referring to a specific subject.

שַׁדָּי – **Adjective:** Masculine, Singular, Absolute

This adjective modifies the noun that precedes it, and is commonly rendered as *El Shaddai*, or God Almighty. While the noun and adjective in this sentence are not grammatically set apart, by the very nature of their collective meaning, we know that the term refers to the one true God of the patriarchs, now known to Moses as *YHWH*.

וּשְׁמִי – **Particle:** Conjunction | **Noun:** Common, Masculine, Singular, Construct

This noun, translated *name* is preceded by a particle conjunction. Additionally, it has a suffix that is 1st person, common, singular. The KJV translates it most literally as *the name*, whereas the other English sources consulted render it *my name*. In either case, it is clear that the word "name" here is not what is special, but rather that which follows it.

יְהוָֹה – **Noun:** Proper, Absolute

This is the name of God, that which he has had presumably for all eternity, but only at this particular moment in time, as recorded in 6:3, is he revealing to Moses as *YHWH* or Yahweh. The pronunciation of the name is thought to have been lost, because the Israelites dared not speak it, instead omitting the vowels and using only the consonants. In an attempt to fill that gap, the word *Jehovah* was created. However, the trend in translation has shifted towards LORD or simply using the four-letter transliteration.

לֹא – **Particle:** Negative

This word is simply used to show that something is being negated, translated *not*.

נוֹדַעְתִּי – **Verb:** Niphal/Perfect/1ˢᵗ Common, Singular

This word is translated *known*, and in combination with the previous negative particle, means that God was *not known* as YHWH to Abraham, Isaac or Jacob.

לָהֶם: – **Particle:** Preposition

Most English teachers tell students not to end a sentence with a preposition. While this is not necessarily the natural ending of a sentence, in the Hebrew this verse concludes with the preposition meaning *in regard to*. Taken with the context clues, it obviously is associated with the three names of the patriarchs. This is indicated by the 3ʳᵈ person, masculine, plural suffix.