

Names of God

Contents

These are notes extracted from the Scofield Reference Bible regarding the names of God.

Gen. 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Elohim The name here is Elohim, the first of the names of deity, a plural noun in form but singular in meaning when it refers to the true God. The emphasis in Gen. 1:26 is on the plurality in deity.

Gen. 1:26, “And God said, Let us make man in our image ...”

In Gen. 1:27, the emphasis is on the unity of the divine substance (cf. Gen. 3:22).

Gen. 1:27, “So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

The plural form of the word suggests the trinity.

El Elyon In **Gen. 14:18**, the phrase the most high God is El Elyon, meaning simply highest. El Elyon is God the highest.

The first revelation of this name, in this verse, indicates its distinctive meaning. Abram, returning from his victory over the confederated kings (**Gen. 14:1-17**) is met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, the priest of the most high God, who blesses Abram in the name of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth. This revelation produced a remarkable impression upon the patriarch. Not only did he at one give Melchizedek tithes of all the spoil of the battle, but when the king of Sodom offered of that spoil to Abram, his answer was, “I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord **Jehovah**, the most high God **El Elyon**, the possessor of heaven and earth,

that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet . . .” (**Gen. 14:22, 23**)

The Lord [Jehovah] is known to a Gentile king, Melchizedek, by the name most high God **El Elyon**. A Gentile is the priest of El Elyon, and His distinctive character as most high God is possessor of heaven and earth.

Appropriately to this Gentile knowledge of God by His name most high it is written that “the Most High divided to the nations (i.e., Gentiles) their inheritance when he separated the sons of Adam . . .” (**Deut. 32:8**). As possessor of heaven and earth it was the prerogative of the most high to distribute the earth among the nations according to whatever principle He chose. That principle is declared in Deut. 32:8. The same purpose is used of the name in Daniel, the book of Gentile prophecy (**Dan. 3:26; 4:17, 24, 25, 32, 34; 5:18, 21**).

As possessor of heaven and earth, the most high God has and exercises authority in both spheres.

The most high God exercises heavenly authority (**Dan. 4:35, 37; Isa. 14:13, 14; Matt 28:18**).

The most high God exercises earthly authority (**Deut. 32:5; 2 Sam. 22:14, 15; Psalm 9:2-5; 21:7; 47:2-4; 56:2, 3; 83:16-18; 91:9-12; Dan. 5:18**).

Adonai Gen. 15:2, “And Abram said, Lord God, What will you give me, seeing I go childless...”

The primary meaning of Adon, Adonai, is master. It is applied in the Old Testament scriptures both to deity and to man. The latter instances are distinguished in the English versions of the Bible by omitting the capital letter. As applied to man, the word is used of two relationships, those of master and

husband (**Gen. 24:9, 10, 12** master may illustrate the former (**Gen. 18:12**), lord the latter). Both of these relationships exist between Christ and the believer (**John 13:13**), master, and (**2 Cor. 11:2**), “husband.”

Two principles adhere in the relation of master and servant: (1) the master’s right to implicit obedience (**Luke 6:46; John 13:13, 14**); and (2) the servant’s right to direction in service (**Isa. 6:8-11**).

Clear distinction in the use of the divine names is illustrated in **Ex. 4:10-12**. Moses feels his weakness and incompetence, and “Moses said unto the Lord **Jehovah**, O my Lord **Adonai**, I am not eloquent...” Since service is in question, Moses appropriately addresses Jehovah as Lord. But now power is in question, and it is not the Lord **Adonai** but Jehovah [Lord] who answers (referring to creation power), “and the Lord said unto him, Who has made man’s mouth?...now, therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth.” The same distinction appears in **Josh. 7:8-11**.

Adonai Jehovah When used distinctively (e.g. **Gen. 15:2**), this compound name, while gathering into one the special meanings of each, will be found to emphasize the Adonai rather than the Jehovah character of deity, illustrated in the following passages: **Gen. 15:2, 8; Deut. 3:24; 9:26; Josh. 7:7; Judges 6:22; 16:28; 2 Sam. 7:18-20, 28, 29; 1 Kings 2:26; Psalm 69:6; 71:5; Isa. 7:7**.

El Shaddai **Gen. 17:1**, “And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and by thou perfect.”

El Shaddai is the name of God which sets Him forth primarily as the strengthener and satisfier of His people. It is to be regretted that Shaddai was translated “almighty”. The primary name itself, El or Elohim, sufficiently signifies almightiness. All sufficient” would far better express the characteristic use of the name in scripture.

Almighty God **El Shaddai** not only enriches but makes fruitful. This is nowhere better illustrated than in **Gen. 17:1-8**, where we have the first occurrence of the name. To a man ninety-nine years old, and “as good as dead . . .” (**Heb. 11:12**), He said, “I am Almighty God **El Shaddai**, ... I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will

multiply thee exceedingly.” To the same purport is the use of the name in **Gen. 28:3, 4**.

As one who bestows fruitfulness, almighty God **El Shaddai** chastens His people. For the moral connection of chastening with fruit bearing, see **John 15:2**, compare **Ruth 1:20; Heb. 12:10**. Hence, almighty is the characteristic name of God in Job. The hand of Shaddai falls upon Job, the best man of his time, not in judgment but in purifying unto greater fruitfulness (**Job.5:17-25**).

El Olam **Gen. 21:33**, “And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-Sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.”

The Hebrew Olam is used in scripture (1) of secret of hidden things (e.g., **Lev. 5:2**, hidden: **2 Kings 4:27**, hid; **Psalm 10:1**, hides); (2) of an indefinite time or age (**Lev. 25:32**, at any time; **Josh. 24:2**, in old time). Hence, the word is used to express the eternal duration of the being of God (**Psalm 90:2**, from everlasting to everlasting). It is also the Hebrew synonym of the Greek aion, age.

Jehovah **Exodus 34:6, 7**, “Then the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

The primary meaning of the name Jehovah [Lord] is the self-existent one; literally (as in **Exo. 3:14**) “He that is who He is,” therefore, “the eternal I am.”

It is significant that the first appearance of the name Jehovah in scripture follows the creation of man. It was God **Elohim** who said, “Let us make man in our image . . .” (**Gen. 1:26**); but when man, as in **Gen. 2**, is to fill the scene and become dominant over creation, it is the Lord God [Jehovah Elohim] who acts (**Gen. 2:4** ff). This clearly indicates a special relation of deity, in his Jehovah character, to man, and all scriptures emphasize this.

Jehovah is distinctly the redemption name of deity. When sin entered the world and man’s redemption became necessary, it was Jehovah Elohim who sought the sinning ones (**Gen. 3:9-13**) and clothed

them with coats of skins (**Gen. 3:21**), a beautiful type of the righteousness provided by the Lord God through sacrifice (**Rom 3:21-25**). The first distinctive revelation of himself by His name Jehovah was in connection with the redemption of the covenant people out of Egypt (**Exo. 3:13-17**).

As redeemer, emphasis is laid upon those attributes of Jehovah which the sin and salvation of man bring into exercise. These are (1) His holiness (**Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:1, 2; 20:26; Hab. 1:12, 13**); (2) His hatred and judgment of sin (**Deut. 32:35-43; Gen. 6:5,-7; Exo. 34:6, 7; Psalm 11:4-6; 66:18**); and (3) His love for and redemption of sinners, but always righteously (**Gen. 3:21; 8:20, 21; Exo. 12:12, 13; Lev. 16:2, 3; Isa. 53:5-6, 10**). Salvation by Jehovah apart from sacrifice is unknown in scripture.

Lord **Jehovah** is also the distinctive name of deity as in covenant with Israel (**Exo. 19:3; 20:1, 2; Jer. 31:31-34**).

Lord God [Jehovah Elohim] is the first of the compound names of God. Lord God is used distinctively:

1. Of the relation of deity of man
 - a. as Creator (**Gen. 2:7-15**)
 - b. as morally in authority over man (**Gen. 2:16, 17**)
 - c. as creating and governing the earthly relationships of man (**Gen. 2:18-24; 3:16-19, 22-24**), and
 - d. as redeeming man (**Gen. 3:8-15, 21**).
2. Of the relation of deity to Israel (**Gen. 24:7; 28:13; Exo. 3:15, 18; 4:5; 5:1; 7:5; Deut. 1:11, 21; 4:1; 6:3; 12:1; Josh 7:13, 19, 20; 10:40, 42; Judges 2:12; 1 Sam. 2:30; 1 Kings 1:48; 2 Kings 9:6; 10:31; 1 Chr. 22:19; 2 Chr. 1:9; Ezra 1:3; Isa. 21:17**).

In God's redemptive relation to man, various compound names of Jehovah are found which reveal Him as meeting every need of man, from his lost state to the end. These compound names are:

Jehovah-jireh - "The Lord will provide.", (**Gen. 22:13-14**) that is, the Lord will provide a sacrifice.

Jehovah-rapha - "The Lord who heals" (**Exo. 15:26**). That this refers to physical healing the context shows, but the deeper healing of soul malady is implied.

Jehovah-nissi - "The Lord is my banner." (**Exo. 17:8-15**). The name is interpreted by the context. The enemy was Amalek, a figure for the flesh and the conflict that day illustrates the conflict of **Gal. 5:17**, the war of the spirit against the flesh. Victory is wholly due to divine help.

Jehovah-shalom - "The Lord our peace," or "the Lord send peace" (**Judges 6:24**). Almost the whole ministry of Jehovah finds expression and illustration in that chapter. Jehovah hates and judges sin (**Judges 6:1-5**); Jehovah loves and saves sinners (**Judges 6:7-18**); but only through sacrifice (**Judges 6:19-21**; compare **Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20**).

Jehovah-tsidkenu - "The Lord our righteousness." (**Jer. 23:6**). This name of Jehovah occurs in a prophecy concerning the future restoration and conversion of Israel. Then Israel will hail him as Jehovah tsidkenu.

Jehovah-shammah - "The Lord is present." (**Eze. 48:35**). This name signifies Jehovah's abiding presence with his people (**Exo. 33:14, 15; 1 Chron. 16:27, 33; Psalm 16:11; 97:5; Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5**).

There are also descriptions in the Old Testament of the activities of the Lord which are in some cases similar to compound names of Jehovah, but are not properly so, such as in **Psalm 23:1; 27:1; 28:1; 61:3, 4, and 62:6, 7**.

Jehovah Sabaoth **1 Sam. 1:3**, "Now this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh . . ."

Sabaoth means simply, hosts, but with special reference to warfare or service. In use the two ideas are united; Jehovah is Lord of warrior hosts. It is the name, therefore, of the Lord in manifestation of power. "Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory." (**Psalm 24:10**), and accordingly in the Old Testament this name is revealed in the time of Israel's need it is never found in the Pentateuch, or directly in Joshua or Judges, and occurs but rarely in the Psalms. Jeremiah, the prophet of approaching national judgment, uses the name about fifty times; and in Malachi the name occurs about twenty-five times.

The meanings and uses of this name are summarized below:

1. The word hosts in the Bible is related to (a) heavenly bodies (**Gen. 2:1; Neh. 9:6; Isa. 40:26**); (b) angels (**Luke 2:13**); (c) saints (**Joshua 5:15**); and (d) sinners (**Judges 4:2; 2 Kings 5:1**). As Lord of hosts God is able to marshal all these hosts to fulfill His purposes and to help His people (**Gen. 32:1, 2; Judges 5:20; 1 Sam. 11:8-11; 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Kings 6:16, 17; Isa. 10:16; 14:24-27; Jer. 27:6-8; 43:10-13; Acts 4:27, 28**). No wonder the psalmist derives such confidence from this name (**Psalms 46:7, 11**).
2. This is the distinctive name of deity for Israel's help and comfort in the time of her division and failure (**1 Kings 18:15; 19:14; Isa. 1:9; 8:11-14; 9:13-19; 10:24-27; 31:4-5; Hag. 2:4; Mal. 3:16, 17; James 5:4**).

Summary The revelation of God by His names is invariably made in connection with some particular need of His people, and there can be no need of man who which these names do not answer as showing that man's true resource is in God. Even human failure and sin, but evoke new and fuller revelations of the divine fullness.

The Old Testament scriptures reveal the existence of a supreme being, the creator of the universe and of man, the source of all life and of all intelligence, who is to be worshipped and served by men and angels. This supreme being is one, but, in some manner not fully revealed in the Old Testament, is a unity in plurality. This is shown by the use of the plural pronoun in the interrelation of deity, as evidenced in **Gen. 1:26; 3:22, Psalm 110:1, and Isa. 6:8**. The interrelation of deity includes that of the Father and Son is directly asserted in **Psalm 2:7** (with **Heb. 1:5**); likewise the spirit is distinctly recognized in His personality, and to Him are ascribed all the divine attributes (as in **Gen. 1:2; Num. 11:25; 24:2; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 2 Sam. 23:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 106:33; 139:7; Isa. 40:7; 59:19; 63:10**).

The incarnation is intimated in the theophanies, those appearances of God in human form (as in **Gen. 18:1, 13, 17-22; 32:24-30**), and distinctly predicted in the promises connected with redemption (**Gen. 3:15**, etc.) and with the Davidic covenant (**Isa. 7:13, 14; 9:6, 7; Jer. 23:5, 6**). The revelation of deity is in the New Testament.

The revelation of God to man is one of authority and of redemption. He requires righteousness from man, but saves the unrighteous through sacrifice; and in His redemptive dealings with man all the divine persons and attributes are brought into manifestation. The Old Testament reveals the justice of God equally with His mercy, but never in opposition to His mercy. The flood, for example, was a mercy to unborn generations. From Genesis to Malachi He is revealed as the seeking God who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and who heaps up before the sinner every possible motive to persuade him to faith and obedience.

In the experience of the Old Testament men of faith, their God inspires reverence but never slavish fear; they exhaust the resources of language to express their love and adoration in view of His loving-kindness and tender mercy. This adoring love of His saints is the triumphant answer to those who pretend to find the Old Testament revelation of God cruel and repellent. It is in harmony, not contrast, with the New Testament revelation of God in Christ.

Those passages which attribute to God bodily parts and human emotions (such as **Exo. 33:11; 20:23; Deut. 29:20; 2 Chr. 16:9; Jer. 15:6**) are metaphorical and mean that in the infinite being of God exists that which answers spiritually to these things like the eyes, hands, feet, etc.; and the jealousy and anger attributed to Him are the emotions of perfect love in view of the havoc of sin.

In the Old Testament revelation there is a true sense in which, wholly apart from sin or infirmity, God is like His creature, man (**Gen. 1:27**); and the supreme and perfect revelation of God, toward which the Old Testament points, is a revelation in and through a perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's unique Son.