

Elohim



God Revealed In His Names (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry. Our theme for this week is both rich and rewarding: God Revealed in His Names, what we can know about God from the various names given Him in Scripture.

But first, let me say thank you to those of you who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So, please take time to write, even if it's only a brief note. Now, to return to our theme for this week, names of God.

All through the Bible names have great significance, much greater than they usually do in our contemporary culture. Almost all the names in the Bible have a specific meaning and a specific appropriateness to the person named.

A clear example of this is found in the names of the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Two of them had their names changed by God, that's Abraham, his name was changed from Abram to Abraham. Abram means "exalted father" and Abraham means "father of a multitude." Jacob had his name changed from Jacob to Israel. Jacob is usually interpreted "supplanter" and Israel means either "a prince with God" or "one who wrestles with God." And, in each case, the change of name was a crisis in the life of the person, having a decisive effect on the person's ongoing destiny and the development of their character. In other words, name is connected with character and destiny.

You might ask, Well, why didn't Isaac have his name changed? The reason is really interesting, because God chose Isaac's name before he was born. So, the name being chosen by God did not need to be changed. But this brings out, I think, that names in the Bible are important. They're indicative of the character, the nature of the person named.

Now if this is true of the names given to men, it must be even more true of the names given to God. It's these that I am going to speak about today and throughout this week. The Names of God. The primary name for God in the Hebrew of the Old Testament is Elohim. We would probably spell that in

English E-L-O-H-I-M. This name occurs in the first verse of the Bible, significantly enough, Genesis 1:1.

> "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth." (NAS)

Thereafter, the same name Elohim, occurs about 2500 times in the Bible, in the Old Testament. One obvious conclusion is the Bible is a God-centered book. That's the reason for its continuing appeal to the human race.

One very important fact about Elohim is that it's a plural form. The ending im in Hebrew is the normal plural ending. Just like we put "s" on the end of a noun in English to make it plural, so in Hebrew they put im on the end of masculine nouns to make them plural.

Interestingly, there is a singular form of that word, the singular form is Eloah. So the singular is Eloah and the plural is Elohim. And this singular form Eloah occurs more than 50 times in the Bible, mainly in the book of Job. The book of Job is quite possibly the oldest book in the Bible and so that indicates that Eloah is an old form which gradually more or less went out of use.

Now, again, another fascinating fact about Elohim is that though it's a plural form it's usually followed by a singular verb. For instance, the verse that we quoted earlier, Genesis 1:1.

> "In the beginning God [plural] created..."

The verb "created" is in the singular form. You have to understand that in the Hebrew language verbs have both a singular and a plural form which we are not perhaps used to in English (though it's found in many other languages).

So, normally the verb that follows Elohim (God) is singular. However, there's some very interesting cases where it's followed by a plural verb. One of the most interesting is in Genesis 20:13, where Abraham is speaking, and he says:

> "...God [Elohim] caused me to wander from my father's house..."

where the verbal phrase "caused me to wander" is plural. There's no question that Abraham is talking about the true God who appeared to him and he says, "God caused me to wander [plural] from my father's house."

It's significant that Abraham was talking at that moment to a Gentile king. It occurs to me that perhaps he may have adapted his language a little bit to that of the thinking of the king. So, there's this kind of interesting balance between the singular and the plural that starts right away as soon as the name of God is mentioned in the Bible. And I'm going to be dealing with that in more detail in my talk tomorrow. So, just bear that in mind.

But we will say a little bit more now about the form Elohim today. Eloah/Elohim, that's singular and plural is derived from an earlier word El. The basic meaning of the word El is power. It's used, for instance, with that meaning in Genesis 31:29 where Laban is speaking to Jacob. They've had a kind of disagreement to say the least. Laban is saying to Jacob:

> "It is in my power to do you harm..."

More literally, he said, "It's in the power of my hand to do you harm." The word power there is El, the same word that's used for God. So, the basic connotation or association of those words, El, Eloah, Elohim, all stemming from the one root form El, their basic meaning is the "powerful one." The plural Elohim suggests the totality of all this God. This is expressed in a verse in the New Testament in Romans 1:20 where Paul says this:

> "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (NIV)

Paul is saying there are certain aspects of God which are manifested in creation. And he calls them his "invisible qualities." Then he defines them as "his eternal power and divine nature." That's really what Elohim stands for, God's eternal power and divine nature. It's interesting that in that passage in Romans 1:20 the Jerusalem Bible uses the phrase, "power and deity." Perhaps, in a way, the most comprehensive way to translate Elohim is "deity," because we have to take into account its plural form. It really sort of sums up all this God, the totality of all that is God.

This word Elohim is also applied in the Bible to persons other than the one true God. But, it's always for some specific reason. Persons or created things who in some measure manifest those attributes that are associated with God as Elohim, particularly in power, majesty and authority. For instance, in Psalm 8:3 the psalmist says:

> "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." (KJV)

This is usually interpreted as a prophetic preview of the incarnation of Jesus as a man. But it says, "Thou has made him a little lower than the angels…" Another translation says "heavenly beings" and another translation says "God," so there's a good deal of flexibility, but it's generally agreed that the meaning there is angels. So, the word Elohim is applied to angels.

It's also applied to human judges. In Exodus 22:9 the law of Moses says this:

> "For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor." (NAS)

The word "judges" there in Hebrew is Elohim. So, the name Elohim is conferred on human judges because they represent God's justice.

And then it's supplied to rulers in Psalm 82:1:

> "God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of rulers." (NAS)

Again, the word is Elohim.

And in Exodus 12:12 it's applied to Satanic principalities and powers. God says:

> "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments, I am the Lord."

In this case, these gods are the enemies of the true God and His people, undoubtedly Satan's principalities and powers, Satan's rulers in his satanic kingdom, but they're called gods.

So we see that the word Elohim is applied to angels, human judges, human rulers and satanic angels. Because, in some way or other they manifest those things associated with God, which are power, majesty, righteousness and justice, eternity, heavenly being, summed up, I believe, in one word "deity."

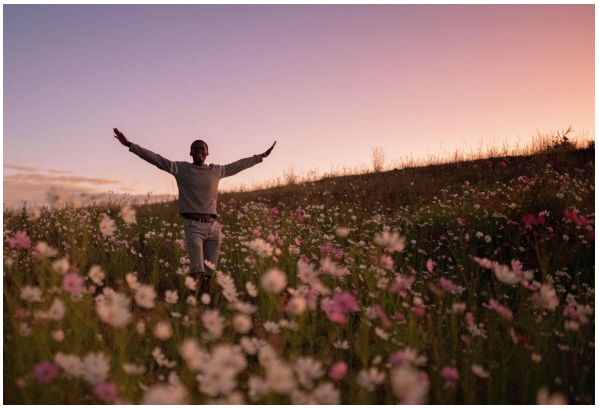
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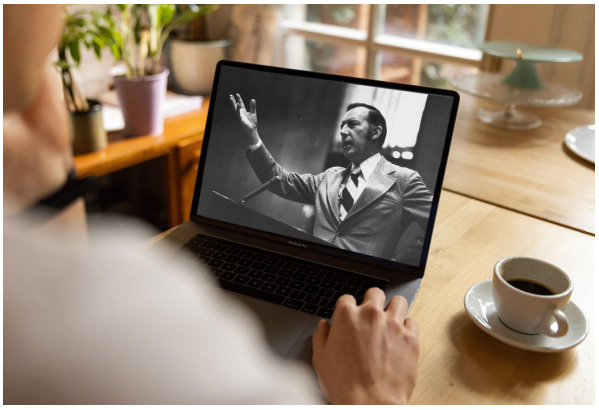
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