

Chardon Christian Fellowship
Home Fellowship Lessons
Names of God
Lesson 4: Elohim
STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

In this and the next lesson we will look at *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) the name of God used in the Old Testament that is translated as “God” in your English Bible.

LESSON

At the very first, we see the Lord God of the universe refer to Himself as *Elohim*:

Gen 1:1 *In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. (NASB)*

This Hebrew word *Elohim* refers to The Supreme God and occurs over **2,300 times** in the Old Testament (*we will not work through all the verses ☺*). The root of the word *Elohim* means ‘strength’ or ‘power’, and interestingly, is a plural word in Hebrew. This mystery of its plurality is revealed in the Bible where we see God reveal Himself as The One God (The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit).

Regarding *Elohim*: “Some believe it derived from ‘*él*’ which, in turn, originates from the root word, ‘*wl*’ (which means “strong”). Others think that *Elohim* is derived from another two roots: ‘*lh*’ (which means “god”) in conjunction with ‘*elôah*’ (which means “fear”). And still others presume that both ‘*él*’ and *Elohim* come from ‘*eloah*.’” (quoted from Blue Letter Bible.org)

Regardless of the deliberations of Biblical Linguists of the origin of *Elohim*, and the significance of its plural basis, the first description of God in the book of Genesis is as *Elohim* so we must respect it as the First Description of the Almighty, and one that implies “strongest God.”

Elohim through His creation, announces and declares the fullness of His Divine abilities and personality, and through the nature of His name (*Elohim*) and a foreshadowing of the Trinity to be revealed to man.

A. Elohim as the Creator of the universe

Elohim is at the creation and is the origin of creation.

Gen 1:1 *In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. (NASB)*

We not only see God state that He (*Elohim*) was at the beginning and was the creative God, we also have Him describe this creation to Job.

Job 38:1-40:2 *¹Then the LORD (YHWH) answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ²“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³“Now gird up your loins like a man,*

and I will ask you, and you instruct Me! ⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, ⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? ⁶ “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God (Elohim) shouted for joy? (NASB)

At the end of this passage in Job where God declares His authority over all the universe, the Lord God states thusly:

Job 40:1-2 *Then the LORD (YHWH) said to Job, ² “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty (Shadday)? Let him who reproves God (Eloah) answer it.” (NASB)*

The Hebrew word for Almighty in this Job passage is *Shadday* which is a shortened version of *El-Shaddai* (Almighty God). The Hebrew word for God in verse 2 is *Eloah* which is an “emphatically singular form of *Elohim*” and should be read as the following:

THE Supreme God. In this verse that concludes God’s dissertation to Job of His power, He sums up all His creativity, supremeness, majesty and control of creation and the universe in *Eloah* and *El-Shaddai*. When we think of *Elohim* (God) or read it in Scripture, in the back of our mind we should mentally picture the unmeasurable power and unlimited creativity that controlled the creation of the universe and the God described in **Job 38-40**.

Isaiah 40:25-26

B. Elohim as the Creator of Man

God (*Elohim*) created man. He created man for His pleasure, created man from nothingness, and created man to be “Our image, according to Our likeness”.

Gen 1:26-28 ²⁶ *Then God (Elohim) said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ God (Elohim) created man in His own image, in the image of God (Elohim) He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God (Elohim) blessed them; and God (Elohim) said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (NASB)*

There are many commentaries and explanations of this account of *Elohim* creating man. Let us focus on four salient parts of the passage in **Genesis 1:26-28**:

- 1.** *Elohim* initiated the creation. It was the Supreme God, in all the fullness of His deity, Who initiated the action in “Let Us make man.”
- 2.** The name eventually given to the first man created in **Genesis 1:26**, Adam, comes from the word *adamah* which means ‘ground.’ In **Genesis 1:26**, The Creator, made the created from nothingness, that is, dirt.
- 3.** The Hebrew word for ‘image’ in **Genesis 1:26** is *tselem* which means shadow, phantom, illusion or resemblance. Analogies and examples may fail us here, but

consider holding up a beautiful stripped melon in the sunlight, and then seeing how the melon cast a shadow that resembles itself. We 'shadow' God in that we have form, we are tripartite (*Elohim* with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; man with body, soul, spirit), and we have dominion [*Elohim* over the universe; man over the earth (**Genesis 1:28**)].

4. The Hebrew word used for 'likeness' in **Genesis 1:26** is *damuth* which means likeness, resemblance, similitude, similarity in form. Back to the shadow from the stripped melon, *damuth* is seeing how the shadow resembles the melon. These two words show two perspectives of the creator and created. In *tselem* we see the melon represented in the shadow. In *damuth* we see a glimpse of the melon by examining the shadow. There is symmetry in everything *Elohim* does!

C. Elohim at His declaration of Himself as Supreme God to Man

We studied this passage when we looked at the name *YHWH*. The encounter of Moses at the burning bush is the first time we see God declare to man His Holy Name as *YHWH*. In addition, it is significant that God personalizes His relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, stating that He is the Supreme God of the patriarchs.

Exodus 3:4-6 ⁴ *When the LORD (YHWH) saw that he turned aside to look, God (Elohim) called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."* ⁵ *Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."* ⁶ *He said also, "I am the God (Elohim) of your father, the God (Elohim) of Abraham, the God (Elohim) of Isaac, and the God (Elohim) of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Elohim). (NASB)*

In this passage, the God who is Self-Sustaining, Unlimited in Abilities, All Powerful above all as *YHWH*, is also the Supreme God (*Elohim*) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is also our Creator and Creator of the universe (*YHWH*) and He is our God (*Elohim*) through the Blood of Jesus Christ, **if** we confess our sins, confess that salvation is through Jesus's Blood, and acknowledge Jesus as Lord (**Romans 10:9-13**).

D. God declares through His name Elohim that He is Omniscient and Omnipowerful

Isaiah 40:27-31 ²⁷ *Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD (YHWH), and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God (Elohim)"?* ²⁸ *Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God (Elohim), the LORD (YHWH), the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.* ²⁹ *He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.* ³⁰ *Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly,* ³¹ *Yet those who wait for the LORD (YHWH) will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.*

In this passage in Isaiah we see the prophet declaring to the Jews still in captivity the absurdity of their complaint that God does not see nor hear their cries. The prophet

states in verse 28 in Hebrew *shamah Elohim olam YHWH bara*, which is literally “*hear intently Elohim the Everlasting YHWH Creator*”. This passage is an example of emphasizing the Creative nature of The All Powerful YHWH and *Elohim*. The passage then states that *Elohim olam YHWH* never becomes weary, never becomes tired, knows all things, and is in complete dominion to give strength or power to whom He chooses. *Elohim* is in control regardless of our circumstances.

E. Elohim is a personal God Who will lead and guide us

We are told to draw near to God and He will draw near to us. *Elohim* is the Supreme God, and He wishes to commune with us.

Psalm 95:6-7

Psalm 145:18

John 14:23

James 4:8

Hebrews 10:19-22

CONCLUSIONS

Though this study of God’s names and awesome attributes, let us not lose the fact that He wishes to love us. He initiates it all. We are but to yield to Him and obey Him, like a 2 year old trusting the guidance of a father, and He will bless us. Not necessarily with material things, but with a peace that passes all understanding and He will not forsake us.

Nehemiah 9:17

John 3:16

Philippians 4:6-8

Elohim will give us the greatest blessing for our body, mind and soul, that is, peace when we draw to him. This will guard our hearts and mind. This does not come from academic understanding of God. This comes from understanding in our deepest soul who He (*Elohim*) is, and this ‘deepest love’ will compel us to be true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, good repute and excellent due to a love for *Elohim*. We don’t do these things in order to love Him or to earn His love, rather, our recognition of His unmerited love compels us to want to do these things out of love for Him.

Sources:

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