

4-2018

El, the Basic Hebrew Name for God

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "El, the Basic Hebrew Name for God" (2018). *The Three-in-One File*. 35.
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EL, THE BASIC HEBREW NAME FOR GOD

Found 212 times in the Old Testament—there are four compound names associated with El. These are:

- ELYON, meaning, “the strongest of the strong one.” There are two significant places where Elyon was used in the Old Testament. One came from the lips of Jerusalem’s first sovereign, and the other from history’s first sinner.

A. The First Sovereign

Following Abraham’s rescue of his foolish nephew Lot, who had been captured by an enemy, the old patriarch stops at a place called Salem. Here is the record during this stop:

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand’” (Gen. 14:18-20).

Just who was the mysterious Melchizedek? There are (at least) four theories. One, he was the first godly king of Jerusalem (assuming Salem was an ancient name for Jerusalem). Two, he was Shem, Noah’s oldest son (Gen. 5:32). Three, he was Christ Himself; and four, he was an angel from heaven. At any rate, there is no doubt in regard to the identity of the One whom Melchizedek blessed Abraham with— “the most High God”— EL ELYON HIMSELF!

This is but the first of eleven instances where Melchizedek is mentioned in the Bible. These are:

“The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’” (Psa. 110:4).

“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek . . . called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’” (Heb. 5:6, 10).

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him . . . for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest for He testifies: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’ . . . (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: ‘The LORD has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’” (Heb. 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21).

B. History’s First Sinner—Satan

In the far distant past, a powerful angel led an unsuccessful revolt against God Himself. Isaiah the prophet records for us the actual words of this wicked angel:

“For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’” (Isa. 14:13-14).

It is noteworthy that his supreme goal was to be like the Most High, Elyon Himself! The bottom line? Satan desires to be like God, not in purity, but in power!

- EL ROI, meaning, “the strong one who sees.” Just what does El Roi see?

A. He sees all things, in all places, at all times:

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars” (2 Chron. 16:9)

“The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works” (Psa. 33:13-15).

“For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths” (Prov. 5:21).

“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3).

“For His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his steps” (Job 34:21).

“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13).

B. He sees the wickedness of men:

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continual” (Gen. 6:5).

“But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built” (Gen. 11:5).

“For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes” (Jer. 16:17).

C. He sees the sorrows of His own:

“So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses’! And the LORD said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows’” (Exod. 3:4, 7).

D. He sees when men repent:

“Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it” (Jonah 3:10).

E. He sees our good works:

“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Gen. 7:11).

“That your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly . . . But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly . . . so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18).

- EL-SHADDAI, meaning, “the breasted one”; “Almighty God.” This compound name is used 48 times in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *shad* is used often to designate the bosom of a nursing mother. The first occasion is found in Gen. 17:1:

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’”

This revelation of God came to Abraham at a much needed time in his life. His sin in marrying Hagar (Gen. 16) had doubtless prevented that full and unhindered fellowship which had previously flowed between him and God. In addition, his wife Sarah was now an old woman nearly 90, humanly unable to give birth to Abraham’s long-anticipated heir.

At this point it should be mentioned that of the 48 occasions where the word is mentioned, no less than 30 times are found in the book of Job! It will be remembered that Job had been viciously attacked by Satan himself. As a result, the old patriarch had lost his wealth, his family and his personal health. But faithful El-Shaddai had eventually brought him safely through the storm.

Turning to the gospel pages in the New Testament, we read of Jesus alluding in terms of this mother-like God:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!” (Matt. 23:37). See also Psa. 17:8; 91:4.

Question: How does this concept fit into the radical feminist position on the Father? Does the modern feminist politically correct version of the Bible which refers to the Father as “divine parent” and the Son as “divine child” have any theological support?

Emphatically, none whatsoever, for in all accurate Bible versions both Father and Son are always presented as He or Him, and never as she or her. The Father is always the Father, and never the mother. Furthermore, it was Jesus, and *not* Jenny, who was born in Bethlehem! Having said all this, however, it must be acknowledged that on numerous occasions the scriptures do stress the motherly attributes of the Father! The following passages bring this out:

“For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in” (Psa. 17:10).

“Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb” (Isa. 46:3).

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (Isa. 49:15).

“In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9).

“For thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem’” (Isa. 66:12, 13).

- EL-OLAM, meaning, “the everlasting God”

Isaiah 40 is usually regarded as being one of the greatest Old Testament chapters. The prophet begins by predicting both the first and second advent of Christ. He then contrasts the awesome power of the true God with the miserable impotence of all idols. But carnal Israel had trouble accepting all this, wondering just how these wonderful events could transpire. To answer these doubts, Isaiah declares:

“Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:28-31).

Those words in Isaiah could rightly be called “God’s Dristan Ad.” Many of us can remember the T.V. commercial where a poor suffering man is standing in an elevator with his hand covering his face, and exclaiming: “I hate this time of the year! These allergies are killing me!” Suddenly a little perky individual from Madison Avenue pops up behind him and says, “Hey friend, haven’t you heard about Dristan?”

Sadly, many Christians are unaware of this divine commercial, but continue to suffer from stuffy souls, as it were, stumbling along down here in their misery when God bids them to rise up and enjoy His presence and strength, breathing the allergy free air of His grace! Another such ad which might point to those who love and are empowered by Jehovah Olam would be the Timex watch commercial – *“It takes a licking, but keeps on ticking!”*

Without a doubt, the greatest spiritual example of this ad can be readily seen in the life of the apostle Paul:

- In regard to the licking –

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed ... Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was

shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure” (2 Cor. 4:8, 9; 11:24-27).

- In regard to the ticking –

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).