

# God and His Titles I

Michael Heiss—May 5, 2012

Good morning, everyone! {comment on e-mail regarding the Saga of Jacob series}

We are going to go through what I hope is a very interesting study of a word in particular called 'Elohim.' It's going to probably take us as long to go through that as it did through Jacob; I do believe that 'Elohim' is a little bit bigger than Jacob!

We're going to find some very interesting things about Elohim and how it relates to the 'Jehovah'—they are two fascinating words. Before we do that, we need to understand what Elohim did to, what I call, 'paganized polytheism.' I thought I knew what polytheism was. That is, I thought I knew it until I studied it at the University of Judaism under the religion of Israel. We were studying the contrast between the polytheistic world and the world of Israel.

It was very amusing to hear different scholars talking about how that Israel borrowed from their paganized neighbors, and on the other hand how *unique* the religion of Israel was. Well, if the religion of Israel was unique in their *one God* and they borrowed it from the pagan world that didn't have it, how do you borrow something from someone who doesn't have it in the first place? I never did get that! But we did discuss the paganized polytheistic world.

I wrote two pages as a compilation of polytheism. This is not my creation. All these words are not mine except I kind of organized them. This is a description of a polytheistic world. We are going to see what Elohim did to this polytheistic world—he obliterated it in one sentence in the Bible!

Basic to all forms of paganism is the existence of the primordial realm, which proceeds and transcends the gods. It is a realm of being prior to the gods and above them upon which gods depend and whose decrees they must obey.

So, the gods don't even control their own lives.

Deity belongs to and is derived from a primordial realm.

This realm is never described. Its origin is never given, but somehow it exists.

This realm is conceived as variously as darkness, water, spirit, earth, sky, and so forth. But always as the womb in which the seeds of all beings are contained.

Within this shadowy domain are the obsequious powers that engender the gods.

It is a fundamental hallmark of paganism that the gods are born out of pre-existent material. That is they somehow come into being by a natural process of sexual reproduction.

You recall Zeus, Jupiter, Mars, Hercules—there's an orgy of going on. There's a bevy of beautiful female gods taking on the male gods, and so on and so forth. This is the paganized world!

These gods, having sexual properties, beget a second generation, which in turn begets a third generation, and so forth. It becomes clear that in pagan thought, the gods are not the prime source of all there is.

The first to exist is the primordial realm with inherent forces. Since the gods emerge out of this primordial realm they are bound by its laws and subject to its decrees.

The gods are not even masters of their own destinies. No god is able to impose his will on any of the other gods or even a human being. According to the various mythologies, fate apportions lots to both god and men. Any deity may learn what fate has decreed his destiny to be, but he cannot alter the decision.

No god is all powerful, not even among other gods. The distinguishing mark of pagan polytheism is not merely the polarity of gods... [which I thought] ...but rather the idea of many independent powerful entities, all basically equal with one another; all rooted in the nebulous primordial realm.

So, we find good gods/evil gods essentially equal in rank and power, because both derive independently from this mysterious primordial realm. This explains the dichotomies of good and evil, holiness and impurity. The struggle between good and evil becomes an everlasting one. Hostile beings with the outcome forever out of sight.

It matters little whether the gods we study are Samarian, Egyptian, Babylonian, whatever, the ingredients are always the same! A primeval realm full of autonomous powers, male and female elements in the gods who emerge out of

this realm by a process of sexual reproduction and who engage in the struggle for dominion.

That is polytheism!

But we are going to show how that Elohim in one power-packed statement destroys this entire concept! He obliterated it! Where do we start? How many remember Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*? Delightful movie. Remember, let's 'start at the very beginning, that's a very good place to start!' Where else? *In the beginning!*

This opening sentence in our Bible is one of the most powerfully packed one that you can possibly imagine! You begin to get it in English, but when you understand it in Hebrew, it boggles your mind! Genesis 1:1: "In *the beginning* God created the heavens and the earth." We are going to take this sentence apart and take a good look at it.

"In *the beginning*..." You will notice *the* is in italic. It's not there. This is not in *the beginning*. There can be no such *in the beginning* with God, for one reason: *He has no beginning!* There is no *the beginning* with God; He's for eternity.

The same word is used in the same format in Genesis 10:10—talking about Nimrod: "And the beginning of his kingdom..." This in a construct state, not genitive, not absolute.

It means in Gen. 1 an indefinite timeframe in the past. At sometime, at some point way back when, a Being called Elohim created—He conceived, designed, brought forth and set into motion—the heavens and the earth.

"...the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1) are put in here like this because there was no Biblical term for the universe. It did not exist in Biblical Hebrews. Today if you were an astronomer or astrophysicist and you were writing this, you would probably say, 'In the beginning God created the universe.' But that's not as majestic as *the heavens and the earth*. This covers everything.

Along in the sentence is a Hebrews word of two letters that appears twice: 'ath'—pronounced *et*—it's the 'aleph' and the 'tav.' It is the beginning letter and the ending letter of the Hebrew language. Like A-Z in the English. That word 'ath' serves two purposes:

1. grammatical—direct object, action verb  
Anytime to have an action verb in the Hebrew it is followed by a direct object; you have the word 'ath'

But that word signifies something far greater in Gen. 1:1. 'ath' means:

2. the sum total, the A-Z of the universe

So, Hebrews being a compact language, we have to expand upon it. If we were putting a commentary on it, we would say: *When God [Elohim] began to create the heaven and earth He conceived, brought forth, designed and set in motion the entirety—the sum total—of the physical universe.*

- every particle of matter
- every electron
- every proton
- every neutron
- all energy forces—electrical or magnetic

All of that emerged from and is subject to the Divine authority of Elohim!

- There is no primordial realm
- There is no struggle among other gods
- There is order

*and that Supreme Being is called Elohim!*

In one sense, when Moses put this to pen—whether Moses actually wrote it or whether it was part of a 'creation hymn' that had come down from the days of Seth really isn't that important. It could be. It could be a 'creation hymn' written long before the time of Moses, and Moses—under God's guidance—put it in there as an introduction.

It doesn't matter to me; *the Bible is the record of what God wants us to know*. But the point is that the introductory sentence in the Bible destroys the paganized world in total.

Who or what is this Elohim anyway? How do we know? First of all, here's the basic, fundamental principle I did not know for years. I always thought Elohim is a Being as such, it's a name. I guess the Elohim is the God of it and Jehovah is His personal name. No! No! No! Totally wrong! It took me about 20-25 years to figure this out. Hopefully we can kind of put it in clarity form so you don't have to wait as long as I had to wait.

- '**Elohim**' is a title, a function
- '**Jehovah**' is a title, a function

It took me a long time to understand this.

When God talks about Himself, the Bible talks about God, He's not talking about a particular person as such. It's a title: Pharaoh, Caesar, Czar, King, Emperor. It doesn't give you a personal name. God is the entity, the title. It could be: 'El Shaddai'—God Almighty, our Shield, our Banner. David talked about his Shepherd, he talked about the High Tower. All those are names of God.

When the Bible talks about God, He's talking about a particular function of that God. God has many titles, wears many hats—that type of thing. Don't think of it as a particular Being, although it is.

Genesis 17:1: "And when Abram was

ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am the **Almighty God!** Walk before Me and be perfect.’”

First of all, it’s the Lord—‘Jehovah.’ ‘Jehovah’ is saying ‘I am ‘El Shaddai.’ Wait a minute! Are You El Shaddai’ or are You ‘Jehovah’? Which is?

Verse 3: “And Abram fell on his face. And God [‘Elohim’] talked with him...”

In three verses we’ve got:

- Elohim
- El Shaddai
- Jehovah

Mind you, it’s all the same Being, it’s all the same person. So, why three different descriptions? *Because He’s performing three separate functions!*

That’s how God looks at it. That’s how He had the Bible constructed. That concept takes a little bit of study, a little bit thinking to get it into your head. It took me a long time. As I’ve commented on the German saying, ‘So soon, all so late smart.’ Believe me so soon, all so late smart.

‘Elohim’ is the *Mighty One*. When the Bible talks about ‘Elohim’ it’s describing Him as the *Mighty One*, the *Judge*, the *Executor of Justice*.

Jehovah is the covenant God. When God is establishing a national covenant with Israel, when He appears personally. Sometimes He does it as Elohim, too, I know, but it’s more specifically as ‘Jehovah.’ God say, ‘I was not known to them as Jehovah; I was known to them as El Shaddai (Exo. 6). With this understanding, we find that Elohim can

- refer to human beings
- refer to pagan gods
- refer to the real God

Remember the statement throughout the Bible, ‘Blessed is that nation whose Elohim is Jehovah.’ You never find the statement *blessed is that nation whose Jehovah is Elohim*. Why not? *Because Jehovah is the personal covenant God of Israel!* Elohim can mean anything.

We’re going to take a look at that, Exodus 21. This begins part of the covenant, the judgments of God, and we will find that the first few verse talk about a slave, a servant. What if the servant at the end of six years doesn’t want to go free, wants to stay with the master. Notice what God says:

Exodus 21: “His master shall bring him to the **judges**...”—elohim. Wait a minute, these are human beings—aren’t they? *But they’re elohim!* Why are they elohim? *Because God is the Judge,*

*and anybody who acts as a judge is acting as elohim.*

You have human beings who can be called ‘elohim’ not just Divine beings. In fact, go back to Genesis where God [Jehovah] is talking to Abraham as to what He’s going to do to Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 18:25 “Far be it from You to act in this manner, to kill the righteous with the wicked. And far be it from You, that the righteous should be as the wicked. Shall not **the Judge** of all the earth do right?”

So, when a person acts as judge he is ‘elohim.’ And you can find that in Deut. 1:17 Moses is telling them to bring all the ‘tough ones to me, the tough decisions, because the judgment is God’s.’ You go to the judge because you don’t know something and you want to have judgment made, the judge acts as God, ‘Elohim.’

It’s also used to describe pagan gods—read the book of Judges, that’s all you have to do. Every other chapter says that Israel went whoring after ‘elohim.’

We are going to turn to another example. This is my favorite example, a classic example of ‘elohim’ describing a pagan god. This is a classic battle between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

1-Kings 18:26: “...called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, ‘O Baal, hear us.’ But there was no voice, nor any who answered.... [v 27]: ...Now it came to pass at noon Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Cry aloud with a great voice, for he *is* a god [‘elohim’]....”

When I first came to Ambassador College and I started reading the literature, I read that where ‘elohim’ is a uni-plural word. I cringed at that. Even though I hadn’t fully studied Hebrew, from my Hebrew background I knew that wasn’t true. It is not a uni-plural word. It is in the plural form, that is true. Like ‘mayeem’ the Hebrew word for *water*—plural—whether a tiny drop of water or an ocean of water, takes the plural form. In English we have the word ‘sheep’—one sheep or a thousand sheep. Maybe someone can tell me where it came from, I do not know. I don’t know why the word sheep can be plural and singular, but it is.

‘Elohim’ is the same thing. Elohim is not a uni-plural word. It is a word that take the plural form, and it can be used to describe individuals or groups.

So, Elijah is mocking Baal, and if you can get the gist of it: ‘...‘Cry aloud with a great voice, for he *is* a god. Either he is meditating, or he is pursuing... [going to the bathroom if you understand what that really means] ...or he is in a journey. Perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened!’” (v

27). This is sarcastic humor at its best! You don't get any better than this. The point is that 'elohim' can refer to all of these. Let's remember that.

Another interesting thing in v 21: "And Elijah came to all the people and said, 'How long will you vacillate between two different opinions? If the LORD [Jehovah] *is* God [Elohim], follow Him....'" See the play again. If 'Jehovah' the national God of Israel, the covenant God of Israel is the Mighty Elohim...' God as Jehovah protects Israel, guides Israel, works with Israel. But that same Being as Elohim is the dispenser of justice, the Great Creator.

It just depends on which function of God the Bible is trying to explain. It's interesting as to how it works that way.

Now we are going to look at an enigmatic Scripture in the Bible concerning Jehovah, Elohim and El Shaddai. We're going to find something that is indeed most interesting.

Exodus 6:1: "And **the LORD** said to Moses..." This is Jehovah. He's going to take to Him a people and go into Pharaoh and the heads of their people and so forth.

Verse 3: "And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob *as God Almighty* [El Shaddai] ...We know that He did that (Gen. 17—'I am El Shaddai') ...But I was not known to them *by My name JEHOVAH.*" What does He mean by this? Israel of old—and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—*knew Jehovah.* They knew the term. What is God telling us here?

You will recall that this is where the advent of Eleazar, servant of Abraham, is going to the east to get a wife for Isaac. Eleazar is there and says, Genesis 24:42: "O LORD [Jehovah], God [Elohim] of my master Abraham..." He knew the word Jehovah.

Notice what God says in Genesis 28. It's easy to use the English word *God*, I don't have to make any distinction. Genesis 28:13<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>: "And behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, 'I *am* the LORD [Jehovah], the God [Elohim] of Abraham your father, and the God [Elohim] of Isaac....'" So, indeed they knew the term Jehovah.

What is God trying to say by, 'My name Jehovah I was not known to them.' What He means is, the *full function* of Jehovah:

- He's going to demonstrate that He is Jehovah by redeeming Israel from slavery.
- He's going to take them out.
- He's going to establish a national covenant with them.

- He is going to be the Covenant God Jehovah.

None of them fully understood that, so He is revealing this aspect of Him now. Here is Jehovah revealing to Moses that He is going to be Jehovah. When God acts as Jehovah He is the *Covenant God*, the God Who protects His people. That will explain to us a little bit about Jehovah and about Elohim.

How many members are there in Elohim and Jehovah? Is there but one? *or* Is it more? It's interesting: the one-God movement are of the firm belief that Jesus Christ is a created being, that He did not come into existence until He was born of the virgin Mary and so forth.

Genesis 1:26, in a sense, 'knocks that into a cocked hat.' "And God [Elohim] said, 'Let Us make man in **Our** image, after **Our** likeness; and let them have dominion...' God says, "...Let Us..." What does He mean? Some say that's the royal 'we'—recall Queen Victoria in one of her presumptive statements: 'We are not amused!'—the royal 'we.' Maybe we are not amused, but at that particular time her court was not reigning as queen—*she was*. So, that doesn't work.

Or, the plural of majesty—God was speaking to the heavenly court, but the heavenly court did not create man—didn't create anybody. It was Elohim Who created it.

The New Testament gives us a glimpse into that, the Gospel of John 17:3: "For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God..." One-God people say there is only one true God, the Father, there's only one.

You've got to understand how the Bible speaks. If you assume that Jesus is saying, 'You are the only One Who is God, every has been or ever will be God,' you would come up with one conclusion. But *if* you are saying that this is comparing the one true God with all the other false gods, that does not preclude there being more than one in the God Family. It's all in how you look at it. You have to learn how to look at it.

That's what He's saying, but in v 4: "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do." *I have manifested Your name. I have given them the words. I am praying for them*—and so forth. He is saying all of this throughout this chapter: *You in Me, I in them, You in Me and They in Us.*

Verse 21: "That they all may be one, even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in **Us**... [there is the Us, the Father and Jesus Christ at the beginning, although He wasn't the Father at that point.

Jehovah says, "...Let Us..." not just Elohim. I read over this for years and never gave it a thought; just didn't think about it. This is at the Tower of Babel. Genesis 11:1: "And the whole earth was of one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they traveled from the east..." (vs 1-2)—and they were going to build this tower.

Verse 5: "And the LORD [Jehovah] came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men had built. And the LORD [Jehovah] said, 'Behold, the people *are* one and they all have one language. And this *is only the beginning of* what they will do—now nothing which they have imagined to do will be restrained from them. Come, let Us go down..." (vs 5-7). So, Jehovah is saying "...let Us go down..." and Elohim says, 'let Us.'

So, you've got two! Jehovah and Elohim are titles, rank. Who else in the heavenly court has the rank of Jehovah or Elohim? *There are only two!* We're going to find out in part two that the rank of Elohim is going to be opened to more than just the two who are now there. That is going to be a fascinating story.

Let's look at Melchisedec, because it's the story of Melchisedec in Genesis that gives us a glimpse into the One we know of as the Father. We are going to compare Heb. 7 with Gen. 14

Hebrews 6:20: "Where Jesus has entered for us *as* a forerunner, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec."

Hebrews 7:1: "For this Melchisedec, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God... [Who is this Most High God?] ...Who met Abraham *as he was* returning from *his* slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, and to Whom Abraham gave a tenth... [he gave a tenth to Melchisedec] ...part of all; on the one hand, being interpreted King of Righteousness; and on the other hand, King of Salem, which is King of Peace; without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but having been made like the Son of God, remains a Priest forever" (vs 1-3). This is talking of Jesus Christ. He was the Melchisedec.

Genesis 14:18—we have the battle between the kings and Abraham and on the way back: "And Melchisedec the King of Salem brought forth bread and wine. And He *was* the Priest of the Most High God. And He blessed him, and said, 'Blessed *be* Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed *be* the Most High God, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' And he gave Him tithes of all" (vs 18-20).

This is Jesus Christ before He was born, as Melchisedec who served as priest of the Most High God. Who else is left to function as God Most High?

*There's only one, the One Who became the Father!* You will find throughout the Old Testament certain glimpses to the fact that there is another one there.

Jesus Christ came to *reveal* the Father. They didn't know Him as the Father. They didn't have any dealings with Him. I remember reading Matt. 11:25 for the first time, and my eyes bulged out when I realized, of course, why didn't you see that before?

Matthew 11:25: "At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for it was well pleasing in Your sight *to do* this. All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, **and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal Him.**" (vs 25-27).

They, back in days of old, did not know the Father. Some of them had a glimpse that there was another Being there, but it was kind of vague. Here Jesus is personally revealing it to them.

Remember John 1:18: "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him.*" That dovetails into Matt. 11.

We will close there for today, understanding that God [Elohim], God [Jehovah] are not names of a particular Being. These are more titles to describe the function of God—never forget that. In English you will; I know that I did. I didn't know it! I didn't understand it. But you must realize that when God talks about El Shaddai, Yahweh, our Banner, our Shield, our Fortress, our High Tower—these are all functions.

'Abraham, I am your Shield.' He's not talking about being a Creator at that point. He's not functioning as a Judge. He's functioning as One Who is going to protect you. 'I will be your Shield from the enemy' because that's how He's functioning.

Always the title of God is revealing a particular function. All these years here I am reading and saying that's His name. No! No! No! That's His function! That's His title! Remember, Lord of lords, and many names that Jesus Christ has? *Yes!* He's God; He's got many names!

Next time we take a look—proof positive in my opinion—how more than one can be of Elohim. We'll see the development of the whole concept of how Elohim functions in another manner. And we'll see how 'many sons brought to glory'—many sons inheriting what Christ has—Who said that 'all things are given unto Him: all power, all authority, all the

earth belongs to the Son. And the Son says, 'You are joint heirs with Me.'

One day we are indeed going to achieve the rank of Elohim.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Genesis 1:1
- 2) Genesis 10:10
- 3) Genesis 1:1
- 4) Genesis 17:1, 3
- 5) Exodus 21:6
- 6) Genesis 18:25
- 7) 1 Kings 18:26-27, 21
- 8) Exodus 6:1, 3
- 9) Genesis 24:42
- 10) Genesis 28:13
- 11) Genesis 1:26
- 12) John 17:3-4, 21
- 13) Genesis 11:1-2, 5-7
- 14) Hebrews 6:20
- 15) Hebrews 7:1-3
- 16) Genesis 14:18-20
- 17) Matthew 11:25-27
- 18) John 1:18

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Deuteronomy 1:17
- Judges

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