

Part I

*A Question of Name*



# *Introduction to Part I*

**I**t is always surprising to see the wide gap that exists between what the Original Hebrew Scriptures state and what the various Judaeo-Christian and Muslim doctrines teach, despite the fact that these groups all claim the Holy Writ as the primary source for their views on religion. This gap is nowhere more noticeable than with the scriptural doctrine of the sacred name. Throughout the Torah and the Prophets (the Old Testament) the belief that the sacred name “יהוה (Yahweh)” was the key to scriptural understanding and salvation is well-pronounced and clearly understood. Yet one would never know this truth listening to the various religious teachers as they preach from the pulpits of their respective synagogues, churches, and mosques.

The best way to investigate the issue of the sacred name is to lay out the arguments used by the numerous Judaeo-Christian and Moslem religions, and their diverse sub-groups, and compare these interpretations with what the Scriptures and historical records actually say. We shall begin our study by addressing the most prevalent claims: the notion that the almighty has many names, that none of these names are of great importance, and that there is no scriptural requirement to use the sacred name Yahweh.



## Chapter I

# Many Names?

One of the first justifications advanced for not using the sacred name יהוה (Yahweh) is the claim that our heavenly father has many names. In having “many names,” the advocates add, it is implied that there is no “one name” adhered to as his personal name. The source for this prevalent misunderstanding has been the classifying of Yahweh’s personal name with his generic names and titles, as if there were no difference.

This misinterpretation begins with the failure to distinguish between various types of names. For example, it is immediately pointed out that Yahweh is in Scriptures called an *eloah* (plural *eloahi*, collective noun *elohim*)<sup>1</sup> and an *el*—terms with different meanings yet merged in most English translations under the single word “God.” Yahweh is also referred to as *el shaddai* (the almighty), *elion* (the most high), *adonai* (my sovereign or sovereigns), and so forth. These various appellations are held up as proof that our heavenly father has many names. Yet this reasoning fails to take into account the fact that these other names are only generic and descriptive titles, not personal names. Yahweh, on the other hand, is our heavenly father’s only personal and proper name.

### Generic Names

The first class that should be distinguished represents Yahweh’s generic names, i.e. the names of his genus or kind. *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, under the subtitle, *Generic Names for God*, lists the term *eloah* and its cognate form *elohim* (*elohim*).<sup>2</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, likewise, places these terms under “Generic names.” It adds, “Like *theos*, *Deus* and *God*, it is a generic term, including every member of the class deity.”<sup>3</sup> *Eloah* (אלה) and its variant forms *eluah* (הלוא) and the Aramaic *eloaha* (אלהא) are derived from the descriptive title *el* (אל), meaning “strength” and “power,” i.e. a “mighty one.”<sup>4</sup> Added to אל (*el*) is the suffix ה (*ah*), וה (*uah*), or אה (*aha*), forms of the verb הוה (*huh*), meaning “to breath; to be” or “to exist.”<sup>5</sup> An *eloah*, therefore, is a “mighty living being.”

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<sup>1</sup> אלהים (*elohim*) is often transliterated as “*elohim*,” אלה (*eloah*) as “*eloh*,” and אלהי (the *elohi*) as “*elohe*.”

<sup>2</sup> HBD, p. 686. NBD, p. 475, likewise states that “‘*Elohim*’ is the generic name for deity.”

<sup>3</sup> ISBE, p. 1254.

<sup>4</sup> SEC, Heb. #433, 410; NBD, pp. 474, 478; YAC, p. 411; HEL, p. 8; EBD, p. 425, “power, might.”

<sup>5</sup> SEC, Heb. #1931–1934, 1961; HEL, p. 65; OTT, 1, p. 180, “the הוה is to be understood in the sense of ‘being present,’ ‘being there,’ and therefore precisely not in the sense of absolute, but of relative and efficacious, being—I will be there (for you).”

The plural forms of *eloah* are *eloahi* (אֱלֹהִים), meaning more than one *eloah*, and *eloahim* (אֱלֹהִים), a collective noun meaning a group of *eloah* beings.<sup>6</sup> A collective noun is a word representing a plurality of things standing as one unit. It therefore uses a singular verb. We can compare these collective nouns with our English words “family” and “sheep.” For example, one would say that “the family is going to the park,” not “the family are going to the park.” Though the term family can represent a large number of people it utilizes the singular verb “is” rather than the plural “are.”

Another important observation is the fact that in Scriptures we not only find the term *eloahim* used as a collective noun when speaking specifically of Yahweh but also the term *eloahi*.<sup>7</sup> When the term *eloahi* is used in reference to Yahweh it consistently reflects the oneness or unity relationship between the two Yahwehs (the father and the son).<sup>8</sup> According to Scriptures, “Yahweh our *eloahi*, Yahweh is אֶחָד (*achad*; i.e. unified, one)”;<sup>9</sup> that is, the two *eloah* named Yahweh are unified as one Yahweh.

Meanwhile, when the term *eloahim* is used in Scriptures specifically for Yahweh it represents the father in relationship with the entire family of *eloah*-type beings. Yahweh, therefore, is the name of the father *eloah* in the *eloahim*. For example, we read in the Psalms, “None is like you in *eloahim*, Yahweh, and none are like your works” (Ps., 86:8), and, “great is Yahweh and to be praised exceedingly, he is to be respected above all *eloahim*” (Ps. 96:4). On the other hand, when referencing pagan deities the term *eloahi* remains as a simple plural while *eloahim* retains its collective noun status.

The reasons for the collective noun usage of both *eloahi* and *eloahim* with regard to Yahweh shall be fully discussed in Volume III of our study.<sup>10</sup> For now we shall simply summarize that it is embodied in the concept of oneness

<sup>6</sup> SEC, Heb., #430; HEL, p. 16; YAC, p. 424; NB, pp. 5–6; YDNB, p. 5; IDB, 2, p. 413. Also, compare below n. 14. In Vol. III of our study we will deal with the true nature of the relationship in the *eloahim*. At that time we shall examine the false doctrine professed by many religious groups that *eloahim* refers to a “plural of majesty” for a single individual deity. Yet the *eloahim* of Yahweh is not polytheism either (i.e. many deities each acting according to their own separate wills). As stated in the EJ, 7, p. 679, “It is not to be understood as a remnant of the poly-theism of Abraham’s ancestors, or hardly as a ‘plural of majesty’—if there is such a thing in Hebrew.” Rather, it has to do with a unity and oneness in the family of *eloah* beings.

<sup>7</sup> NBD, p. 478; SEC, Heb. #430; NB, pp. 5–6; EBD, p. 331. For a list of examples see SEC, pp. 397–406 (Heb. #430). To demonstrate, in Exod., 3:15, we read that אֱלֹהִים was “the אֱלֹהִים (*eloahi*) of your fathers, the *eloahi* of Abraham, the *eloahi* of Isaak, the *eloahi* of Jacob”; Lev., 19:3f, “I am אֱלֹהִים your *eloahi*”; Gen., 1:1, “In beginning אֱלֹהִים created” (*eloahim*, plural; created, singular); Gen., 3:13, “And אֱלֹהִים *eloahim* said to the woman”; etc. In translating these and other such verses the singular term “Θεός” is found in the Greek LXX version and “God” in English. These translations, though, are very inadequate and fail to inform their readers that there is in fact more than one *eloah* involved. This concept of oneness in the *eloahi* and *eloahim* will be fully discussed and explained in Vol. III. For a complete list see SEC, p. 397–406 (Heb., #430); YAC, pp. 412–418.

<sup>8</sup> See Vol. III, *The Two Yahwehs*.

<sup>9</sup> Deut., 6:4. For the meaning of אֶחָד (*achad*) as “unify” or “united, i.e. one” see SEC, Heb. #258–259. Yahushua the messiah—the *eloah* called Yahweh, the son of Yahweh, who later became a man—reinforces this unified concept when he reports, “I and the father are one” (John, 10:30).

<sup>10</sup> Vol. III, chapter entitled, *Oneness in the Eloahim*.

<sup>11</sup> That there exist two Yahwehs, one being our heavenly father and the other his son, who is an archangel (chief angel), see Vol. III, *The Two Yahwehs*.

between Yahweh the father and Yahweh the son,<sup>11</sup> as well as the family of beings called *malakim* (angels).<sup>12</sup> The term Yahweh is not only the father's personal name but is also a family name which will be inherited by his children, those of mankind who are born into the *eloahim* after they have been quickened into eternal life.<sup>13</sup>

The generic nature of *eloah* is verified by the fact that in all its forms *eloah* is used in Scriptures to designate both our heavenly father as well as pagan deities.<sup>14</sup> Such would be impossible if *eloah* was a personal name of the almighty. Further, the term *eloahim* is applied specifically to the *malakim* (angels), showing that it is a generic name for a species of beings, not just the father of those beings.<sup>15</sup>

Another proof that *eloah* is a generic name and not a personal name is the fact that the definite article ה (ha), meaning "the," is found in numerous cases as a prefix to *eloah*, *eloahi*, and *eloahim*. For instance, we often find the expression "האלהים (the *eloahim*)" in Scriptures.<sup>16</sup> In proper Hebrew one would never prefix a definite article to a personal name. We might say, "these are the men," but we would not properly say "these are the Jims." "Men" is a generic term, while "Jim" is a personal name. The personal name Yahweh must conform to this principle and it cannot go unnoticed that one never finds the expression הַיהוָה ("the Yahweh") in Scriptures.

## Titles

The next class of "names" is "descriptive and social titles." Chief among these is the Hebrew term *el* (אל) and its cognate forms *eli* (אלי) and *elim* (אלים).<sup>17</sup> *El* is oftentimes confused with the term *eloah*, a mistake which stems back to the fact that *el* is regularly glossed as Θεός (*theos*; English "god") in the ancient Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> The confusion is increased by the fact that the word "*eloah*" is derived from "*el*" and that both terms are used in reference to the supreme being.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See below n. 15.

<sup>13</sup> For example see Eph., 3:14–15, "For this cause I bow my knees to the father of our sovereign Yahushua the messiah, from whom the whole family in the heavens and on the earth is named." This issue will be discussed in detail in Part IV of our present volume, entitled *The Key to Salvation*, and in Vol. III. Also see our forthcoming text entitled *The Afterlife*.

<sup>14</sup> For examples of *eloah* used in reference to a pagan deity see Dan., 11:37ff; 2 Chron., 32:15; for examples of *eloahi* used as pagan deities (plural) see Gen., 31:30, 32, 35:2, 4; Exod., 12:12, 20:23, 23:24, 32, 22, 32:4, 8, 31, 34:15–17; Lev., 19:4; etc.; for examples of *eloahim* used in regard to pagan deities as a group or groups see Gen., 3:5; Exod., 20:3, 22:28, 32:1; Deut., 4:28; and so forth.

<sup>15</sup> SEC, Heb. #430. For an example that *eloahim* includes the angels compare Ps., 8:5, with Heb., 2:6f. In Vol. III we shall discuss in depth the ancient view that the angels were the sons of *eloahim*, also simply known as *eloahim*.

<sup>16</sup> For examples of *ha-eloahim* see Gen., 6:2; Exod., 3:6; 1 Sam., 4:4, 8, 18, 19, 21, 22, 5:1, 2; and so forth.

<sup>17</sup> HEL, p. 8; SEC, Heb. #352, 410.

<sup>18</sup> Compare the list of references in YAC, p. 411, s.v. "God," no. 2, for *el*, with the corresponding verses in the Greek Septuagint text (LXX).

<sup>19</sup> See above n. 4. For a list of examples where "*el*" is used in reference to Yahweh see YAC, p. 411, s.v. "God," no. 2; and SEC, pp. 397–406 (Heb. #410).

Close examination of this term reveals it is purely a descriptive title given to Yahweh. For example, the ancient writer Jerome (348–420 C.E.), who studied Hebrew in Palestine for several years, produced a Latin edition of the Old Testament which he had translated from the original Hebrew. In his analysis of the names applied to Yahweh, he classified the terms *ELOIM* [*eloahim*] and *ELOE* [*eloahi*] as a separate category from *EL*.<sup>20</sup>

The Hebrew word *el* (אל), the short form of the word *eil* (איל), means “strength; hence anything strong,” especially “a chief (politically).”<sup>21</sup> It is best translated as a “mighty one” or “mighty hero.”<sup>22</sup> In the abstract sense, *el* can refer to the power one holds in his hand.<sup>23</sup> More commonly it represents a powerful ruler and can equally be applied to a wicked man as well as to Yahweh. In Ezekiel, for example, the Babylonian king who conquered Egypt is referred to as “*el* of the nations.”<sup>24</sup>

The plural form *eili* (אילי) and the collective noun *elim* (אלימ) reflect the same descriptive meaning as *el*. To demonstrate, in the book of Ezekiel *eili* is applied to the rulers in the land of Jerusalem who were carried away captive by the king of Babylon.<sup>25</sup> The collective noun *elim* is used in the book of Job to describe the men of the earth who are afraid at the appearance of Yahweh.<sup>26</sup> *Elim*, meanwhile, is used in Psalms to contrast the sons of *elim* (i.e. powerful rulers) with Yahweh.<sup>27</sup>

On numerous occasions the term “*el*” is used in the Scriptures with reference to Yahweh.<sup>28</sup> For instance, in Psalm, 94:1, we read, “Yahweh, *el* of revenges.” It is often coupled with the Hebrew title *elion* (עליון), meaning “the most high,”<sup>29</sup> that is, Yahweh is the most high *el* or mighty one. In essence the term *el* and its plural forms are intended to communicate the idea of “power” and “might” as one would find in a ruler, whether that ruler be a man or an *eloah*. Indeed, at times *el* is coupled with the term *eloahi*, proving that the two terms clearly are not synonymous.<sup>30</sup> It is, therefore, improper to translate “*el*” as if it were in the class of “deity.” An excellent example of this difference

<sup>20</sup> Jerome, *Ep. 25 ad Mar.*

<sup>21</sup> See above n. 4.

<sup>22</sup> YAC, p. 411, “Mighty one”; NB, p. 5, “strong,” “the Mighty One”; ROSNB, p. xviii, “Mighty, strength or the Mighty One”; HEL, p. 8, “hero, mighty man”; GHCL, s.v. אל, “strong, mighty, a mighty one, a hero,” “mighty hero.”

<sup>23</sup> HEL, p. 8. For an example see Deut., 28:32.

<sup>24</sup> Ezek., 30:20–26; cf. 31:1–18.

<sup>25</sup> Ezek., 17:11–23.

<sup>26</sup> Job, 41:25.

<sup>27</sup> Pss., 29:1 and 89:6. The LXX translates “sons of *elim*” in these verses as “sons of *theos*,” thereby equating *elim* with *eloahim*, in the sense that the *elim* are the mighty rulers in the *eloahim*. But the LXX translation is an extrapolation. Most English translations correctly translate the Hebrew here as “sons of the mighty” or “sons of the mighty ones” (i.e., KJV; IB; HEOT; and so forth).

<sup>28</sup> See above n. 19.

<sup>29</sup> For a list of citations see YAC, pp. 480f, s.v. “HIGH, most,” no. 4, and cf. p. 411, s.v. “God,” no. 2, “Mighty one, אל *el*.”

<sup>30</sup> Gen., 33:20, “*el eloahi* Israel”; Josh., 22:22, gives, “*El* of *eloahim* is יהוה” (i.e. “Yahweh is the mighty one of the *eloahim*); in Dan., 11:36, the expression “*el* of *elim* (the mighty one of mighty ones)” is found.



between the generic term *eloahim*, the title *el*, and the personal name Yahweh is found in Psalm, 95:3, where we are told, “For a great *el* is Yahweh and a great king above all *eloahim*.”

*El* is not a personal name of our heavenly father or his son, the angel Yahweh. This fact is verified by the coupling of the definite article ה (ha) with *el* in many places throughout the Scriptures.<sup>31</sup> Yahweh is called “אל יהוה” (the *el* Yahweh),” i.e. “the mighty one Yahweh,” (Ps., 85:8). Like other descriptive and social titles, one may speak of “the mighty one,” as he does “the lord” or “the king,” but in Hebrew he would never use a definite article with a personal name. Further, the Scriptures use the term “*el*” to describe pagan deities.<sup>32</sup> Such would be impossible if *el* were a personal name for Yahweh.

There are a number of other descriptive and social titles applied to Yahweh. Among these are some which are combined with the title *el*: אל שדי (*el shaddai*), “the all powerful mighty one,”<sup>33</sup> אל עליון (*el elion*), “the most high mighty one,”<sup>34</sup> אל דעות (*el dauth*), “the mighty one of knowledge,”<sup>35</sup> אל עולם (*el olam*), “the mighty one of eternity,”<sup>36</sup> and אל ראי (*el roi*), “the mighty one of seeing.”<sup>37</sup> To this list one must add the term אדון (*adon*), and its plural form אדוני (*adonai*), meaning “sovereign(s).”<sup>38</sup> At times the plural term *adonai* was placed

<sup>31</sup> For examples see Pss., 18:31, 33, 48, 57:3, 85:8, and so forth. The theory that the word *eloahim* is a plural of *el* has long been held in suspicion. ADB, 2, p. 199, for example, points out that against this notion “is the fact that there is an insertion of *h* (Syr. plur. *shemohîn*, ‘names,’ cannot be held primary, as the word ‘name’ has fem. plur. in Heb. and western Aram.). *El*, too, has its own proper plur. ‘*elîm*. The attempt to connect the word with ‘*elah*, ‘*elon*, names of trees, may safely be neglected. Whether the term ‘*ēlôah* be connected with ‘*el*, and what its meaning is, remains uncertain.”

All of the confusion is eliminated once we realize that the title “אל (*el*)” is an independent word from the generic term “אלה (*eloah*),” though *eloah* uses *el* as one of the two roots in its formation.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Deut., 32:12; Ps., 81:9; Mal., 2:11; etc.

<sup>33</sup> For example see Gen., 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3; Exod., 6:3. *El shaddai* is often translated as the “almighty” from the fact that the LXX and NT Greek renders the term as παντοκρατορ (*pantokrator*), meaning “almighty” (GEL, p. 591) and “all ruling” (SEC, Gk. #3841). Its actual meaning is, “the mighty powerful one” or “the mighty destroyer,” *shaddai* more specifically meaning “to be burly” and implying “to ravage” (SEC, Heb. #410, 7706); “destruction, ruin” (HEL, p. 260).

<sup>34</sup> SEC, Heb. #410, 5945–6. E.g., see Gen., 14:18, 19, 20, 22. The expression אלהים עליון (*eloahim* the most high) is also found (e.g. Pss., 57:2, 78:56).

<sup>35</sup> SEC, Heb. #410, 1844. For example see 1 Sam., 2:3.

<sup>36</sup> SEC, Heb. #410, 5956–8. Also translated as the “everlasting” *el*. For an example see Gen., 21:33, אלהי עולם (*eloahi* the eternal) is also found, see Isa., 40:28.

<sup>37</sup> SEC, Heb. #410, 7210. For example see Gen., 16:13.

<sup>38</sup> *Adon* and *adonai* are not properly translated as “lord,” as is so often the case. בעל (*baal*), on the other hand, literally means, “lord,” “master; hence a husband, or (fig.) owner,” see EBD, pp. 113, 114; HEL, p. 40; SEC, Heb., #1166–1168. *Baal* should be distinguished from אדון (*adon*) in that *adon* comes from אדן (*aden*), meaning, “a basis (of a building, a column, etc.): foundation, socket,” from which is formed the root meaning, “to rule,” “sovereign, i.e. controller” (SEC, Heb. #113, 134–136). That is, an *adon* is the basis of the government and therefore the ruler upon which the government rests. A *baal*, on the other hand, is the owner or master of someone or something else. Therefore, *adon* (plural *adonai*) is best translated into English as “sovereign” while *baal* means almost precisely the same thing as our English term “lord” (master, an owner or possessor of land, houses, etc.).

next to the name Yahweh, meaning “sovereigns Yahweh.”<sup>39</sup> Here, as with the term *eloahi*, *adonai* is used as a collective noun.

Other titles can also be found associated with the name Yahweh. For example, in Scriptures we find the expressions Yahweh צבאות (*shebaot*), “Yahweh of hosts (armies),”<sup>40</sup> Yahweh אלהי צבאות (*eloahi shebaot*), “Yahweh, the *eloahi* of hosts,”<sup>41</sup> and Yahweh אלהי ישראל (*eloahi Israel*), “Yahweh, the *eloahi* of Israel.”<sup>42</sup> Other titles include קדוש ישראל (*qadesh Israel*), “the holy one of Israel,” and עתיק יומיא (*attiq yomia*), “the ancient of days.”<sup>43</sup> All of these and others like them are without question descriptive titles for Yahweh. Not one carries with it the weight of a personal name.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, at no time are any of these titles ever referred to as the personal name of our heavenly father.

### The Elohist’s View

Many theologians hold that despite this evidence the terms *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*) and *el* should still be considered as alternate personal names for Yahweh. This school of thought is labeled Elohist (a popular form of the term *eloah*). Based upon their interpretation, that the terms *el* and *eloahim* were personal names for the creator, it was hypothesized that several authors had composed the Pentateuch.<sup>45</sup> Though their contention that *el* and *eloahim* are personal names is now generally dismissed as groundless by knowledgeable scholars, many of those unfamiliar with the facts and unacquainted with the Hebrew language still attempt to interject the Elohist line of logic. Their motivation for doing so is to provide an argument against utilizing the sacred name Yahweh, holding to the false contention that they are justified in doing so because the almighty has many names.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see Ezek., 13:9, 23:49, 28:24, 29:16, verses that by context cannot mean “my lord.” Other examples referring to Yahweh which cannot mean “my lord” are Deut., 10:17; Job, 28:28, Ps., 136:3. Further, numerous other passages which translate *adonai* as “my Lord” in English are certainly in error when compared with the ancient LXX version. The more authoritative LXX often only gives Κύριε (sovereign). It is also apparent that *adonai* is not a “plural of majesty,” as some have contended, because Yahweh is often referred to simply as *adon* (i.e. Exod., 23:17, 34:23; Josh., 3:13, Pss., 97:5, 114:7). The collective noun status of *adonai* (as with *eloahi*), when used with Yahweh, is verified by the fact that it is accompanied by a singular verb. The plural term *adonai* is used with Yahweh because the two Yahwehs stand together in unity. We shall have much more to say about this issue in Vol. III.

<sup>40</sup> SEC, Heb. #3068, 6635, *shebaot* meaning “a mass of persons (or fig. things), espec. reg. organized for war (an army).” For examples see 1 Sam., 1:3, 17:45; 2 Sam., 7:27; Ps., 46:7; and so forth.

<sup>41</sup> SEC, Heb. #3068, 430, 433, 6635. For example see 2 Sam., 5:10. Ps., 59:5, has Yahweh אלהי צבאות (*eloahim* of hosts).

<sup>42</sup> SEC, Heb. #3068, 430, 433, 3478. For example see 1 Chron., 23:25. The expression “Yahweh of hosts, *eloahi* of Israel” is also found, see for example Jer., 27:21, 28:2, 14, 29:4, 8; etc.

<sup>43</sup> SEC, Heb., #6918, 6942–5, 3478; and #6268, 3118. For examples see Pss., 71:22, and 78:41, for “the holy (sacred) one of Israel” and Dan., 7:9, 13, 22, for “ancient of days.”

<sup>44</sup> For another list of definitions for these titles see EJ, 7, pp. 675–679; NBD, pp. 478–480; HBD, pp. 684–687.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the development of the documentary hypothesis about the books of Moses, which originally sprung from the interpretation that the term “*eloahim*” was a personal name for Yahweh see HS, pp. 324–339; EBD, pp. 156f, 331; SOT, pp. 81–110; NBD, pp. 958–963. Also see App. A for a brief history.

The Elohist's arguments rest upon the following points: As a premise, they contend that for centuries the Jews have used *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*) and *el* as names for our heavenly father. They fail to mention that this Jewish practice is born out of Jewish tradition, not scriptural precedent. Volume II of our investigation shall prove that the Jews deliberately raised the generic names and titles of *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*), *el*, and *adonai* (meaning "sovereigns") to the status of personal names in order to hide the use of the sacred name! Our judgment must not rest with Jewish religious interpretation and tradition but with correct usage as demonstrated within the Scriptures. Even more condemning to the Elohist's view is the fact that today most scholars freely admit that *eloah* (*eloahi*, etc.) are not personal names, but merely generic names for the beings classed as deities.<sup>46</sup>

The Elohist follows this above argument with the supposition that the books of Moses are derived from different authors. These books are then divided into parts, usually labeled as the *J* (Yahweh), *E* (Elohim), *D* (Deuteronomy), and *P* (Priestly) documents. In the "*E*" group the word *eloahim* appears but not the name Yahweh. The conclusion is that this proves that *eloahim* was the name applied to the creator by the authors of the *E* documents. To begin with, the Elohist's view that the first five books of the Old Testament were not all the product of Moses—an idea that goes against all ancient testimony—is staunchly challenged by many experts. The use of the phrase "Yahweh *eloahim*" in the books of Genesis and Exodus, for example, presents a special problem. It involves a combination of two words which are supposed to indicate separate documents.<sup>47</sup> In reality, the material simply reflects that the author's works were edited at a later time and that Moses had incorporated still earlier sources.

Neither should it be doubted that different parts of the Pentateuch (five books of Moses) were composed during different periods of the author's life, a point well-attested to by the Scriptures themselves.<sup>48</sup> The fact that while during one period, or in the copying of an even more ancient document, Moses preferred the generic term *eloahim*, while at other times he used the personal name Yahweh, does not make a case for multiple personal names. Again, we must judge according to the actual usage as demonstrated throughout the text, not by theory, innuendo, or assumption. In each specific case

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<sup>46</sup> Even Elohist writers, confess that in Scriptures the case for *el* as a personal name is very slim. In the EJ, 7, p. 675, for example, though taking the Elohist view, the commentator acknowledges:

In the Bible 'el is seldom used as the personal name of God, e.g., 'El-'Elohei-Yisrael, "El, the God of [the Patriarch] Israel" (Gen. 33:20; cf. Ps. 146:5).

Seldom is not the correct word, since Gen., 33:20, is the only example offered by the Elohist. As we shall prove (below pp. 12f), even this citation has been badly twisted out of context in order to give it an illusion of possibility. The simple fact is that there is not one instance in all of the Scriptures that justifies making *el* or *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*) a personal name for Yahweh.

<sup>47</sup> For a summary of the arguments against the documentary hypothesis and a bibliography of some of the noted authors who oppose its tenets see NBD, pp. 961–963. See App. A and B.

<sup>48</sup> See App. B.

where *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*) is used, not one instance reflects a personal name. Indeed, many, such as those passages where *ha-eloahim* (“the *eloahim*”) and *ha-el* (“the *el*”) are used,<sup>49</sup> exactly the opposite is revealed.

Another item of so-called proof given by the Elohist is the fact that there was a deity worshipped in Ugarit, Phoenicia that was known by the personal name *El*.<sup>50</sup> This point is even weaker than those cited above. The Phoenicians—who spoke a dialect of Semitic similar to that of Hebrew—were never adherents to the ideals of Scriptures. The fact that they raised the title “*el*” to the status of a personal name for their own pagan deity is totally irrelevant. *Adon* (*adonai*, *adoni*), for example, a Hebrew word meaning “sovereign,”<sup>51</sup> was also raised to the status of a personal name for a pagan deity (i.e. Adonis),<sup>52</sup> as was the term *baal* (lord).<sup>53</sup> Yet, few today would be audacious enough to claim that when *adon* (sovereign) and *baal* (lord) are used in reference to Yahweh that we are to consider them his personal names.<sup>54</sup>

When all of the Elohist’s attempts to insinuate or to falsely couple pagan and scriptural uses of words are dismissed, their entire claim that *el* or *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*) are personal names for the almighty comes down to only one biblical passage, Genesis, 33:20. In this verse is the report that Jacob set up an altar and inscribed upon it the words “אל אלהי ישראל (*el eloahi* Israel).” The Elohist—who confuses the separate terms *el* and *eloah* as if both were forms of the same name (usually translating both words into English as “God”)—in this passage makes an exception and has the statement read, “*El*, the god of Israel.”<sup>55</sup> He imagines, incorrectly, that the term *el* in this inscription stands for the personal name of the *eloahi* of Israel.

This perspective is erroneous and out of context. To begin with, *eloahi* is but a plural form of *eloah*. When used as a collective noun in reference to Yahweh, it simply refers to the two Yahwehs in unity.<sup>56</sup> *El* merely means a “mighty one” who is a ruler. If *el* and *eloahi* were both personal names for the almighty, *el* being but an abbreviated form of *eloahi*, as the Elohist further imply by translating both terms as “God,” it would be parallel to saying, “Dave the Davids of Israel,” a perplexing statement to say the least. Nevertheless, here they make an exception and leave “*el*” transliterated and have “*eloahi*” translated as “God.” Yet, this argument loses all credibility when the citation is placed back into its proper context.

Just prior to the construction of the above mentioned altar and its inscription, Jacob had been involved in a wrestling match with one of the *eloahim*. Jacob proved victorious in this contest and as a result won the right to be

<sup>49</sup> See above ns. 16 and 31.

<sup>50</sup> EJ, 7, p. 675; NBD, p. 478; EBD, p. 316.

<sup>51</sup> SEC, Heb. #113, 136; HEL, p. 5; EBD, p. 23. Also see above n. 38.

<sup>52</sup> PCMD, p. 3; EBD, p. 24, (Gk. *Adōnis*, from Heb. *’ādōn* “lord”).

<sup>53</sup> NBD, p. 115; DB, p. 70.

<sup>54</sup> For example, Hos., 2:16, states that in the future Yahweh’s people would refer to him as “my male, and shall no more call me, my *baal* (my lord).”

<sup>55</sup> EJ, 7, p. 675; NTB, Gen., 33:20; EBD, p. 321; etc.

<sup>56</sup> See Vol. III, *The Two Yahwehs*. That *eloahi* is the plural of *eloah* see above pp. 5–7.

blessed by his opponent and was renamed Israel.<sup>57</sup> Victory in hand, Jacob named the site where the match had taken place “פְּנוּאֵל (Penuel),” meaning “the face of *el*,”<sup>58</sup> for he had seen one of the *eloahim* “face to face” and yet his life had been preserved.<sup>59</sup> But when Jacob directly asked this *el* what his name was, this member of the *eloahim* REFUSED TO TELL HIM.<sup>60</sup> Accordingly, Jacob did not know the name of this member of the *eloahim* who had blessed him and had given him the name Israel. So Jacob simply referred to him as the “*el* of *eloahi* of Israel,” a sound Hebrew phrase. Since Jacob did not know the personal name of this member of the *eloahi*, it is beyond any doubt that *el* was not a personal name, only a descriptive title. The inscription was simply dedicated to the, “Mighty one of the *eloahi* of Israel.”

Another proof that the terms *el* and *eloah* (*eloahi*, *eloahim*) are not personal names but merely descriptive and generic names rests with such verses as Joshua, 22:22, which gives the definition, “אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה (*el eloahim Yahweh*).” The translation is “*el* of *eloahim* is Yahweh.” In Deuteronomy, 10:17, we read, “For אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה *eloahi*, he is the אֱלֹהֵי הַמְּלָכִים (*eloahi* of the *eloahim*), the *adonai* (sovereigns) of *adonaim* (collective noun “sovereigns”),<sup>61</sup> הַגָּדֹל הַגִּבּוֹר (ha-*el* ha-godel; the great *el*), the valiant warrior, and the fearful.” If *el*, *eloahi*, or *eloahim* stood as personal names these comments would make no sense. Yet, Yahweh was the great *el* of the family of beings generically called *eloahim*; he was also the ruling *eloahi* of that *eloahim*. Seen as generic terms for the being whose personal name was Yahweh, these statements are readily understood.

## Conclusion

The evidence agrees that the almighty was called by a variety of names other than Yahweh. Nevertheless, these other names are demonstrated to be only generic and descriptive titles. They must not be confused with a personal, proper name. It is also manifest by all of this evidence that it is impossible to adequately transmit the Hebrew thought behind the title *el* and the generic term *eloah*, or their plural and collective noun forms, by the one English term “God.” All meaning is lost in the translation. Indeed, there is an even greater objection to using the English term “God” once it is realized that this word came into English through the ancient Germanic language and is in fact the name of a pagan deity—a point that will be established in Volume II, in our section entitled *Upon Whom Are They Calling?* Neither, for similar reasons, can we rely on the translation “lord” for the term *adon* and its cognant forms *adonai* and *adonaim*. To resolve this problem, throughout our text we shall

<sup>57</sup> Gen., 32:22–28.

<sup>58</sup> SEC, Heb. #6439; DB, p. 497.

<sup>59</sup> Gen., 32:29–30.

<sup>60</sup> Gen., 32:29. Later on, in a direct reference back to the time when the *el* appeared and the wrestling match took place, Jacob was commanded to go to the region of Beth-*el* (house of *el* [the mighty one]) to live, “and to make there an altar to the *el* who appeared to you when you fled from before Esau your brother” (Gen., 35:1).

<sup>61</sup> אָדוֹן (*adon*) is singular; אֲדוֹנָי (*adonai*) is plural (a collective noun when used with Yahweh); אֲדוֹנָיִם (*adonaim*) is a collective noun, referring to all *adonai* as one group.

utilize the transliterations *el*, *eloah*, and *adon*, as well as their plural and collective noun forms, when quoting directly from the Hebrew. Below is a glossary to aid our reader in this endeavor:

- el* or *eil*..... A mighty one, powerful ruler, chief. (*ha-el* means “the *el*”).
- eli* or *eili*..... More than one *el*. (note: when the ’ [i] at the end of *eli* or *eili* by context means “my,” the translation will be “my *el*”).
- elim* or *eilim*.. A group or groups of *el*.
- eloah* (*eluah*,  
*eloaha*)..... A mighty being (a generic name). (*ha-eloah* means “the *eloah*”).
- eloahi*..... More than one *eloah*. (note: when the ’ [i] at the end of *eloahi* by context means “my,” the translation will be “my *eloah*”).
- eloahim*..... A group or groups of *eloah*. (*ha-eloahim* means “the *eloahim*”).
- adon*..... A sovereign.
- adonai*..... More than one sovereign. (note: when the ’ at the end of *adonai* by context means “my,” the translation will be “my *adon*”).
- adonaim*..... A group or groups of *adon*.

With these important yet very basic understandings and definitions in hand, we can proceed with the investigation into the sacred, personal name Yahweh.