

**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 *eloahim*)<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* (eloahim).<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* (אלוה) 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.”

<sup>1</sup> אלהים (*eloahim*) is often transliterated as “elohim,” אלה (*eloah*) as “eloh,” and אלהי (*the eloahi*) 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.” For the form אלוה see Job, 31:2, 33:26, 37:15, 22, 39:17. For the form אלהא see Dan., 2:20, 3:26, 4:2, 5:3.

<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 אַחַד (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 one-

<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. For the form אֱלֹהִים see Ps., 145:1, MTCE, pp. 69, 75, 77. For the form אֱלֹהִים see MTCE, pp. 71, 75. 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 polytheism 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; Zech., 14:9. In Deut., 10:17, we read, “Yahweh your eloahi, he is the eloahi of ha-elohaim.” That is, the two Yahweh’s in unity are the eloahi of the eloahim family of ruach (spirit) beings. For the meaning of אַחַד (achad) as “unify” or “united, i.e. one” see SEC, Heb. #258–259. Yahshua 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*.

ness 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 specie 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 ה'יהוה ("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* (אליים).<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>

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

<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).

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 **אֵל** (*el*), the short form of the word **אֵלִים** (*eil*), 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 **אֵלִים** (*eili*) and the collective noun **אֱלִים** (*elim*) 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 **עֲלִיּוֹן** (*elion*), 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 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 Yah-

<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. **אֵל**, “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, **אֵל** *el*.”

<sup>30</sup> Gen., 33:20, “*el* *eloahi* Israel”; Josh., 22:22, gives, “*El* of *eloahim* is יהוה *el*” (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.

weh. 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 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

<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. *shemohin*, ‘names,’ cannot be held primary, as the word ‘name’ has fem. plur. in Heb. and western Aram.). *El*, too, has its own proper plur. *’elim*. The attempt to connect the word with *’elah*, *’elon*, names of trees, may safely be neglected. Whether the term *’elohah* 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 παντοκράτωρ (*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.).

<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.,

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 יומין (*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.

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

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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 אלהים 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.

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 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.

<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.

<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.

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 “אלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (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 blessed by his opponent and was renamed Israel.<sup>57</sup> Victory in hand, Jacob named the site where the match had taken place “פְּנֵי אֵל (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

<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.

<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).

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, “אל אלהים יהוה (el eloahim Yahweh).” The translation is “el of eloahim is Yahweh.” In Deuteronomy, 10:17, we read, “For יהוה אלהי האלהים (eloahi of the elaoahim), the adonai (sovereigns) of adonaim (collective noun “sovereigns”),<sup>61</sup> האל הגדול (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 froms adonai and adonaim. To resolve this problem, throughout our text we shall 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 ך [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,

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<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.

- eloaha)..... A mighty being (a generic name). (ha-eloah means “the eloah”).
- eloahi..... More than one eloah. (note: when the ך [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 ך 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.