

# God

## Names Of God - "El" - Part 1

### Introduction

In Genesis one God names five things, He called the light, day and the darkness He called night (Gen. 1:4) firmament Heaven (Gen. 1:8). He called the dry land earth and the waters he called seas (Gen. 1:10) but, He gave man the privilege of naming the creatures (Gen. 2:19). How did God and man name the creatures, was it just a random description of a creature or was there any thoughtfulness in the activity. Just as we if making anew instrument would give it a name which in itself described it or its use. So God described the darkness by the name "night" and in the same way He describes His own Person and character by how He names Himself.

It is in Gen. 17:1 where God first reveals Himself as "El Shaddai" a name which comes from two Hebrew words, "El" and "Shaddai", consequently to appreciate the truths of El Shaddai we must consider each title separately.

A consideration of the names of God is very humbling as the student begins to see how very frail (Psa. 39:4), and insignificant man is (Psa. 8:4; 144:3). To enter into the overwhelming infiniteness of God as revealed in His names results in a bowing in worship inscribing the worthiness of the glorification of Divine Persons.

### EL

#### 1) The meaning of "EL"

- a) The etymology of the word "El" is lost in the mists of history, however, we do have, at least three avenues by which we can discern something of the significance of the name:
  - i) From those who study the ancient languages who have made the following suggestions:
    1. Genesis suggests that it was part of the verb to be strong, indicating the strong One. Noeldeke suggests that it is from the Arabic root "to be in front" and consequently as Governor or Leader. Together it suggests a strong leader
  - ii) The use of the Title in the scriptures. One clue is that the word "El" at times refers to idols, therefore two matters come into focus. It points to that which an individual looks to for security and worships (Josh. 9:46; Isa. 45:20; 46:6; Zech. 7:2). When it is referring of God it becomes synonymous with "Almighty" (Job 8:3, 5; 15:25); "exclusiveness" (Isa. 45:21,22; 46:9); "Saviourhood" (Isa. 45:15,21). Therefore when speaking of God as "El" He is being viewed as the One whom we look for security, we worship and due to His exclusiveness, almightiness, and ability to save we hold in reverential fear, great respect and awe.
  - iii) How the name "El" is associated with other attributes of God, for instance, He is the "great and terrible EL" (Neh. 1:5); the "Mighty El and terrible" (Deut. 7:21). Other features will be seen in the table under "EL as a root word".
- b) Interestingly there are two different words translated "jealous" when referring to God as "El". God declares Himself to be "The jealous (qanna) EL" (Ex. 20:5), and this word is only used of God! The other word is "quanno" (Nahum 1:2). While these are so closely associated they can be viewed almost as one word. The root of both words means to be inflamed and depending on context can refer to a rival sharing the affections of a loved one. It is used in this way of a man being jealous of His wife's affections (Num. 5:14); God being jealous of the honor due to him being given to an idol (Deut. 32:21; Ezek. 8:3). When Israel bowed at the idols God called it the "image of jealousy" that is, it provoked the anger of divine judgment. Jealousy is the intolerance of sharing that which belongs exclusively to oneself. It can indicate the desire to keep that which one possesses. God is never envious but He is jealous, and wants unrivaled affection and devotion from His own.

#### 2) It's first mention

- a) There is a principle for Biblical interpretation called the "law of first mention". It indicates that the first mention of a truth becomes a "key" to later interpretations and developments. The first time "El" is used is when Melchizedec meets Abraham returning from the slaughter of Chedorlomer and of the

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kings (Gen. 14:17). Upon meeting Abraham he provided Abraham with bread and wine and spoke of God as "EL most high", and adding the expression "Possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:19). In that instance it is evident that the title has to do with possessions, a fact which is very interesting because up to this point Abraham had been interested in, and acquiring goods. Even the king of Sodom offered him goods (Gen. 14:21). What was the enablement that helped Abraham see that people were more important than the acquiring and accumulating goods?

- i) It was to see El as the Possessor of Heaven and earth (Gen. 14:22), and with the confidence that the Most High El was the possessor of everything in Heaven and earth, he (Abraham) need have no fear. for God was his security, not that which he had in his bank account etc. Armed with that knowledge it was easy for him to let the king of Sodom have the goods. (Gen. 14:23-24).
- ii) It also reveals El as the One whose grace or military ability has no boundaries. Historically, Lot and his family had been taken captive by the invading armies of the four kings (Gen. 14:1), and Abram came against them with 300 men, ultimately defeating them and releasing Lot. Even though Lot was not all that he ought to be God was gracious to him through the conquest by Abraham. Thus it becomes a foreshadowing of a future day when Israel will be under the domination of the Gentiles. Even though they will be spiritually away from Him, it is when when things look their darkest the Lord will come and set them free. The One who is EL will come in vengeance defeating the arrayed armies of the Beast and kings (Rev. 19:11-21), and then Israel recognizing their Messiah as the One they crucified will be in the spirit of Isaiah and will say, "We esteemed His not" he was wounded for our transgressions , bruised for our iniquities" "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:3, 5, 6). Israel will be militarily and spiritually freed, just like Lot.
- iii) It is also with Melchizedec as being the priest of the Most High El there is the first mention of bread and wine together. The first time bread is mentioned on its own is connected with a curse, and the same for wine.(Gen. 3:19; 9:21). The first time bread and wine are mentioned together it is connected with a blessing (Gen. 14:18-19). Thereafter every time bread and wine is mentioned together it always has to do with blessing. Who gave the command for our remembrance of the Lord using bread and wine, it was El, the Lord Jesus, El manifested in flesh, therefore how serious does it become when we disobey?
- iv) One of the loveliest ways the title El is used of seeing the grace of God toward Abraham, a man who had been brought up as an idolator (Josh. 24:1). In time, according to His own purposes of grace The LORD, (Jehovah), the Lord of glory. (Acts 7: 2), told Abraham to leave Ur in Mesopotamia and began the process of changing the man from being an idolator to the "friend of God" (Jam. 2:23); "My friend" (Isa. 41:8); "Thy friend" (2 Chron. 20:7). At this juncture in Abraham spiritual journey he was learning that The Most High El was the possessor (owner) of Heaven and earth".
- v) No doubt the greatest illustration of the word "El" is when on the cross the Lord cried the words of Psalm 22 "My El, My EL, Why hast Thou forsaken me" (Psa. 22:1). It is in this context that we find this Name is the foundation for every spiritual blessing. This is the word our Lord spoke when on the cross after the three hours of darkness when He had drunk the cup God had given Him, when He had known that dreadful baptism and had offered Himself becoming the sacrifice for sins. When we enter into the wonder of that work and realizing "It was for me" we then find:
  1. El is our security for the psalmist wrote" The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Psa. 18:2).

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2. The closeness of EL is my deepest desire," O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psa. 63:1).
3. My peace comfort in the storms of life is not a vain hope but in EL, for we read " He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation (Psa. 89:26).

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia