

A dramatic landscape photograph of a sunset or sunrise over the ocean. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, with a bright light source breaking through near the horizon, creating a golden glow. A single lightning bolt is visible in the upper left portion of the sky. The water in the foreground is dark and textured with small waves.

THE IMMEASURABLE GREATNESS OF
GOD'S MAJESTY & POWER



Introduction

The triune God about whom we have been speaking over these past three weeks is not nameless. Even in secular history, many have taken it upon themselves to call God names, “sometimes blasphemous, sometimes ridiculous, always somewhat derogatory.” Biblical theology, however, insists that God has revealed His names to us that we might know who He truly is in His essence and attributes.

Carl F.H. Henry maintains that “the Bible not only records the authorized names of God, but it frequently speaks in the singular of *the Name of God*.” Louis Berkhof observes that “the *Name* represents the whole manifestation of God in His relation to His people...so that it becomes synonymous with God.” In other words, God’s names are succinct expressions of His revealed character.



Introduction

It should be noted that God's Name is always identified with His divine nature. As we discussed before, "what we mean by the essence or nature of God is a living personal unity of properties and activities. Divine essence and attributes are integral to each other...God's being is not the bearer of the divine attributes; rather, God's essence and attributes are identical" (Henry).

In Psalm 48:10, we see that the divine Name is identified with the divine nature: "As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth." As Henry contends, then, "the Name is often used for God's entire reality." The name of God stands realistically for God Himself.



Introduction

The word “name” in Scripture is considerably different from our usage. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), a name is “a word or phrase constituting the individual designation by which a particular person or thing is known, referred to, or addressed.” Sometimes a name has little or no meaning; others express character or history (e.g., Waterloo, Abraham Lincoln, or Victoria Falls).

Hence, “a change in either character or history frequently gives rise to a change of name” (Vos). This applies to God’s names and explains why certain divine names belong to certain stages of revelation. Each of God’s names may express only one divine attribute. These are the names He has given to Himself; they are not given to Him by man.

Example: God's Name Is *Immanuel*

- “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name **Immanuel**” (Is. 7:14).
- “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name **Immanuel**” (Mt. 1:23).
- “The name *Immanuel*, although it might be used to signify God's providential presence merely, has a latitude and pregnancy of meaning which can scarcely be fortuitous (accidental), and which, combined with all the rest, makes the conclusion almost unavoidable, that it was here intended to express a **personal as well as a providential presence**” (Joseph Alexander).

Another of God's Names is...

אֵל שֵׁדַי

El Shaddai

God Almighty

Theos Pantokrator

What Does *El Shaddai* Mean?

- ***El Shaddai***. The first word is *El*, the common name used in the Old Testament for God. The second word, *Shaddai*, is an adjective which qualifies the noun “God.” In Latin, His name is *Deus Omnipotens*.
- The order of the words in Hebrew indicates that the translation should be: “God, the Mighty One.” The same would be true of the Hebrew rendering for *a good woman*: “a woman, a good one.”
- The adjective (*shaddai*) follows the noun it qualifies and agrees with it in number and gender.
- German Hebrew scholar Wilhelm Gesenius (1786-1842) concurs that the adjective serves as an *attribute* of a substantive, stands *after* the substantive (noun), and agrees with it in *gender* and *number*.

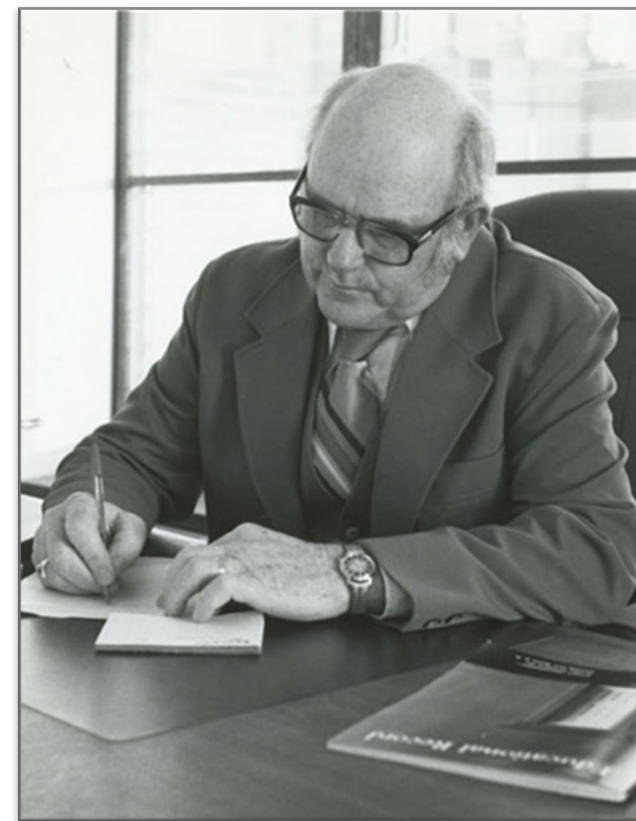


What Does *El Shaddai* Mean?

- *El Shaddai* is the characteristic divine name during the period of the patriarchs, beginning with Abram.
- The word is derived from the word *shadad* meaning “to be strong, to overpower.” Consequently, God’s name would be translated: God, the Strong One; God, the Overpowerer; or God, the Almighty.
- According to theologian Geerhardus Vos, this meaning of *shadad* “best explains the appearance of the name in patriarchal history. God is there called *El-Shaddai* because through the supernaturalism of His procedure He, as it were, overpowers nature in the service of His grace, and compels her to further His designs....*El Shaddai* may be said to express how God uses nature for supernature.”

The Concept of *El Shaddai*

“The strong and foremost deity referred to himself as ‘*el-šaddaî*’ (*El Shaddai*, Gen. 17:1). The generally accepted connotation of *šaddaî* is that of a combination of the concepts all-powerful and elevated, or exalted and majestic. These concepts – strong, power, foremost, exalted, and majestic – can be expressed in combination by the term ‘sovereign.’”



Gerhard van Groningen, PhD

1921-2014

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Further Clarification of the name *El Shaddai*

1. The name *El Shaddai* is not regarded as identical with *Elohim*, “that is to say, with God as Creator and Preserver of the world” (Keil). *Elohim* is a general name expressing majesty and authority (ISBE).
2. O.T. scholar, Keil, observes that *El Shaddai* “describes Jehovah, the covenant God, as possessing the power to realize His promises, even when the order of nature presented no prospect of their fulfillment, and the powers of nature were insufficient to secure it.”
3. What does Keil mean? Remember that God promised Abram: “Your very own son shall be your heir” (Gen. 15:4) and that his offspring would be as the stars (vs. 5).

Further Clarification of the name El Shaddai

4. You know the story well. Sarah, Abram's wife, told him, "The Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her" (Gen. 16:2). Abram slept with Hagar, and she bore a son named Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when he was born.
5. The covenant had been made with Abram for at least 14 years, "and yet Abram remained without any visible signs of its accomplishment, and was merely pointed in faith to the inviolable (cannot be broken or violated) character of the promise of God" (Keil).
6. When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared before him again (Gen. 17:1).

Further Clarification of the name El Shaddai

7. It had now been 24 years since his migration from Ur of the Chaldeans (he was 75) and 13 years after the birth of Ishmael.
8. Do you see a principle here? God took this long to prepare Abram for the execution or fulfillment of His covenant with him. God always keeps the promises He makes, but He keeps them according to His own perfect plan and timetable. Have you given up on God's promises because you thought that He abandoned you? That he would never answer your prayers? That He couldn't be trusted?
9. Be encouraged by the following story from the life of George Muller, one of the greatest prayer warriors of the 19th century:



Muller's Story of Persevering Prayer

“In November, 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land or on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted...” Mueller prayed for 36 years for the conversion of these individuals, and they remained unconverted.



Muller's Story of Persevering Prayer

“But I hope in God,” he said; “I pray on, and look yet for the answer. They are not converted yet, *but they will be.*”

“Those prayers? you ask. In 1897, those two men, sons of a friend of Mr. Muller's youth, were not converted, after he had entreated God in their behalf for 52 years daily. But after his death on March 10, 1898, God brought them into the fold! Such was this man's triumphant faith, whatever the difficulty. If God answered his prayer immediately, he thanked him. If not, he kept on importuning the Lord until the response came.”

- from *George Muller: Man of Faith & Miracles* by Basil Miller

Further Clarification of the name El Shaddai

10. Back to our story of Abram...Ishmael had been born, but Abram still did not have his promised heir.
11. The name which God now gives to Abram, for the very first time in human history, is ***El Shaddai***. He is now ready to fulfill His pledge or covenant with Abram, who “contemplated his body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb” (Rom. 4:19).
12. Do you recall what Vos said: “**Through the supernaturalism of His procedure He, as it were, overpowers nature in the service of His grace.**” This is what *El Shaddai* means!



“When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am **God Almighty (El Shaddai)**; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly’” (Gen. 17:1).

Rembrandt van Rijn

The Sacrifice of Isaac, 1635

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

El Shaddai After Abraham

- **Isaac to Jacob:** “**God Almighty** bless you (Jacob) and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!” (Gen. 28:3-4).
- **Jacob:** “And God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.’ So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, ‘**I am God Almighty:** be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you’” (Gen. 35:10-12).

El Shaddai Speaks to Moses

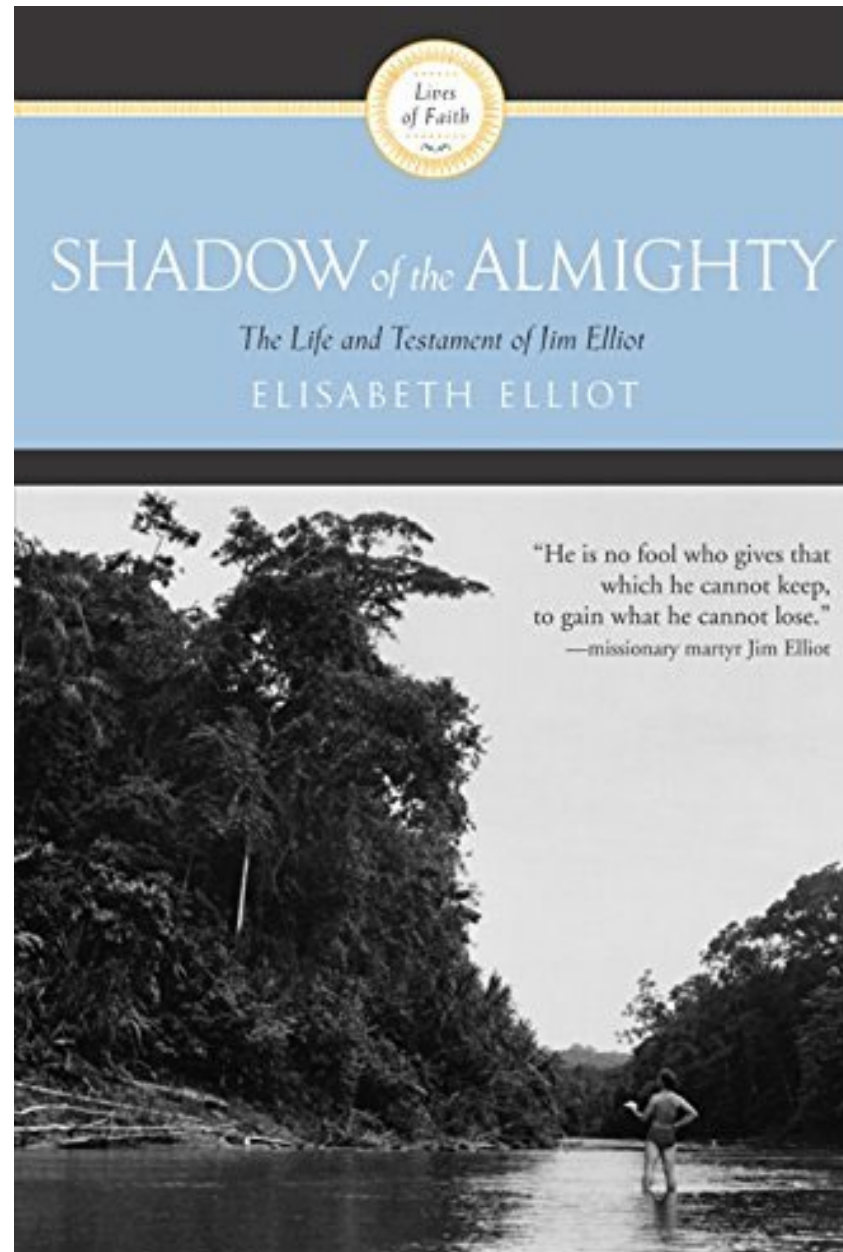
“But the Lord said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.’ God spoke to Moses and said to him, ‘I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as **God Almighty**, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them’” (Ex. 6:1-3).



Additional References to *El Shaddai*

- The name *El Shaddai* occurs 48 times in the Old Testament.
- “Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the **Almighty**?” (Job 11:7).
- “But I (Job) would speak to the **Almighty**, and I desire to argue my case with God” (Job 13:3).
- “God has made my heart faint; the **Almighty** has terrified me; yet I am not silenced because of the darkness, nor because thick darkness covers my face” (Job 23:16-17).
- “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the **Almighty** gives me life” (Job 33:4).

The Shadow of the Almighty



“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the **Almighty**. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’”

- Psalm 90:1-2

The Song: *El Shaddai*



- Written by Michael Card and John Thompson in 1981.
- Approximately half the lyrics of the chorus are in the Hebrew language.
- Amy Grant's rendition was recorded in 1982 on her album *Age to Age*, which won Song of the Year at the 1983 GMA Dove Awards.
- This version was recorded in 2005 with her husband, Vince Gill (vocals and guitar solo).

El Shaddai: אֵל שַׁדַּי



El Shaddai, El Shaddai,
(God Almighty, God Almighty)
El-Elyon na Adonai,
(God Most High, O Lord)
Age to age You're still the same,
By the power of the Name.
El Shaddai, El Shaddai,
Erkamka na Adonai,
(I love You, O Lord)
I will praise and lift You high,
El Shaddai.

Through Your love and through the ram,
You saved the son of Abraham;
Through the power of Your hand,
You turned the sea into dry land.
To the outcast on her knees,
You were the God who really sees,
And by Your might,
You set Your children free.

El Shaddai: אֵל שַׁדַּי

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El Shaddai.

Through the years You've made it clear,
That the time of Christ was near,
Though the people couldn't see
What Messiah ought to be.
Your most awesome work was done
Through the frailty of Your Son.
I will praise and lift You high,
El Shaddai.

[Click here for the Michael Card Video of El Shaddai](#)



This is the God we are invited to seek with all of our hearts.