

Names of God 2024 Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, April 7, 2024

INTRODUCTION

NOTE 1 – Today I want to begin a multi-part series on one of my favorite topics: the Names and Titles of God (OT). We do well to explore this topic periodically as His Names and Titles offer insight into His character and nature (i.e., that we might know Him more).

Jeremiah 9:23–24 (ESV, Emphasis Mine)

23 Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he **understands** and **knows me**, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”

NOTE 2 – Let us not boast about elements that have an expiration date (e.g., wisdom, strength and riches). Rather, let us boast about and place the highest priority upon that which endures: knowing the Lord and His ways!

Q. How might we come to know the Lord and His ways?

A. One amazing way is to study the Names and Titles ascribed to Him.

Q1. Do you know there are literal dozens of Names and Titles ascribed to God?

Q2. Do you know that each brings particular insight into His d. character and nature?

NOTE 3 – We do well to consider this series of excerpts from *Every Name of God in the Bible* (by Larry Richards):

QUOTE 1 – “Names were particularly important in the biblical world. The *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words* reminds us that ‘in biblical cultures a name did more than identify; it communicated something of the essence, the character, or the reputation of the person or thing named.’ This fact helps us understand why the Bible is filled with so many and wonderful names of God. Each name reveals something about the essential nature and character of God (and no one name or title could possibly sum up who He is).”

QUOTE 2 – “Scripture’s names and titles [i.e., for God] are unveilings. Through the names and titles given, God unveils Himself, stripping off the layers of mystery, so that we might see [know] Him as He really is.”

QUOTE 3 – “While the names and titles [of God] will have little impact on those who dismiss the God of the Bible as yet another invention of the human spirit, for believers these names and titles are wonderful gifts. For we who know and love God delight to draw closer to Him. As a man or woman in love delights in letters sent by their beloved, so we should delight in every fresh insight into our Lord. And this is exactly what we have in His names and titles.”

KEY – It is my prayer that this series on the Names and Titles of the Lord will be both informative and impacting!

Q. Are you ready to begin?

LET US DELVE IN:

‘EL

FYI – ‘El is likely derived from a term meaning “strength, might or power.”

NOTE 1 – ‘El is the primary name for deity in the Semitic language family. For those who may not be aware, the phrase “Semitic language family” refers to a collection of Middle Eastern dialects and/or languages (i.e., of which Hebrew is but a part). Thus, a number of ancient cultures would have been quite familiar with ‘El.

NOTE 2 – It was a term commonly used by several different religions in the ancient Mid-East (for varying gods). The usage of ‘El in this manner is comparable to how adherents to the Christian and Muslim faith use the generic term “God” in reference to their deities—though said deities differ greatly and are not to be deemed the same!

NOTE 3 – Since the ancient Jews wanted to be clear that God was distinct from the gods of the nations, they rarely used the word ‘El alone (as a standalone term). Rather, they often made ‘El into a compound term by adding a descriptive word or phrase (e.g., ‘El ‘Emet as “the “God of Truth”; ‘El Echad as “the One God”; etc.).

QUOTE – “‘El seldom stands alone as a name for the true God. Instead, in the Bible, ‘El is almost always qualified by words or descriptions which further define the word. It is as if the writers of Scripture wanted to make sure that the God about whom they speak or write is not lost among the false gods, but kept distinct and separate.”

NOTE 4 – Throughout Scripture, these compound terms (‘El + Descriptor) form a family group of Names or Titles, being found some 250-plus times throughout the pages of the Old Testament. This morning I would like to share an array with you: **a)** ‘El ‘Olam; **b)** ‘El ‘Shaddai; **b)** ‘El ‘Elyon; and **d)** ‘El ‘Roi. Let us delve a bit deeper this morning:

‘EL ‘OLAM

Q. What does ‘El ‘Olam mean?

A. It can be translated as the “the Everlasting God.”

NOTE 1 – ‘Olam is a Hebrew term which is often translated as eternal or everlasting. ‘Olam occurs some 300 times in the OT, also being translated as forever, ever, perpetual and ancient. God is called “the Everlasting God” (i.e., ‘El ‘Olam) in four OT texts; though its principle is evident in a number of passages. Note its first appearance:

Genesis 21:22b–33 (NIV, Emphasis Mine) [A Scene from the Life of Abraham]

22 . . . Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, “God is with you in everything you do. 23 Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you.” 24 Abraham said, “I swear it.” 25 Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek’s servants had seized. 26 But Abimelek said, “I don’t know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today.” 27 So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty. 28 Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, 29 and Abimelek asked Abraham, “What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?” 30 He replied, “Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness that I dug this well.” 31 So that place was called Beersheba [lit. “well of seven” or “well of the oath”], because the two men swore an oath there. 32 After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. 33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, **the Eternal God.**

NOTE 2 – This name had particular significance herein. In calling upon “the Everlasting God” (i.e., ‘El ‘Olam), Abraham affirmed his awareness that the activities of men (e.g., treaties and oaths) were finite, vulnerable and subject to the foibles and failings of wayward humanity, yet the Lord is permanent, secure and beyond change!

NOTE 3 – This is a major theme embedded within the OT. The mortality and finite nature of man is often contrasted with the eternity of God. We are creatures who dwell within time. As the Creator, He dwells beyond!

Psalm 90:1–4

- 1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
- 2 Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- 3 You turn people back to dust,
saying, “Return to dust, you mortals.”
- 4 A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.

NOTE 4 – Thus, the Name or Title ‘El ‘Olam presents God as One who existed before the remotest time and who shall exist in perpetuity. Simply put, this descriptive phrase reminds us of the One who was, who is and shall be!

Q. How should this insight into the nature of God impact or influence us?

- A1.** It should cultivate a heightened sense of reverence or awe at His divine nature.
- A2.** It should cultivate a heightened sense of hope (i.e., as He holds tomorrow).
- A3.** It should create a sense of reliance upon the One who never wavers.

‘EL ‘SHADDAI

Q. What does ‘El ‘Shaddai mean?

A. It can be translated as God “Almighty.”

NOTE 1 – God is identified as “Almighty” some 48 times in the OT. 31 of the 48 appearances occur in Job alone! The Hebrew term ‘Shaddai functions as a standalone term 41 of the 48 times, and is connected with ‘El 7 times. The first appearance of this term is Gen. 17. Would you please turn to said chapter and let us explore its content:

Genesis 17:1–8, 15–19, 22 (Emphasis Mine)

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am **God Almighty** [El-Shaddai]; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. 2 Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 4 “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram [“exalted father”]; your name will be Abraham [“father of many”], for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” . . .

15 God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai [“my princess”]; her name will be Sarah [“mother of nations”. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

17 Abraham fell facedown; he **laughed** and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” 18 And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” 19 Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him **Isaac** [“laughter”]. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. . . .

22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

Q. What do we see herein?

A. God, as the Almighty one, makes a series of promises to Abram—promises which were impossible to man. After all, at this point Abram was 99 years old and Sarai was 89. They are just a few years past having children. In fact, Abram laughed upon hearing this promise (17), hence “Isaac”! Sarah would similarly laugh (cf. Gen. 18)! Yet with the Lord, nothing is impossible!

QUOTE – “While this term refers to God’s power, it is also connected with God’s ability to fulfill any promise that He might make. It is because God is ‘Almighty’ that we can have confidence in His power to faithfully fulfill His word!” –Larry Richards

Q. How should this Name or Title impact us?

A. It should cultivate a heightened sense of awe, faith and hope!

‘EL ‘ROI

Q. What does ‘El ‘Roi mean?

A. This term can be translated as “the God who sees” or “the God who sees me.”

NOTE 1 – Whereas the previous terms have all connected with His divine power, this term suggests an intimacy.

NOTE 2 – Let us consider an appearance of ‘El ‘Roi in the pages of Scripture (i.e., once again a scene re: Abram):

Genesis 16:1–15 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children [i.e., despite the promise of God in previous selections]. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.”

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. 3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”

6 “Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

7 The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. 8 And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered. 9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” 10 The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.” 11 The angel of the Lord also said to her:

“You are now pregnant
and you will give birth to a son.
You shall name him Ishmael, [lit. “God hears”]
for the Lord has heard of your misery.
12 He will be a wild donkey of a man;
his hand will be against everyone
and everyone’s hand against him,
and he will live in hostility
toward all his brothers.”

13 She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “**You are the God who sees me,**” for she said, “I have now seen [or “seen the back of”] the One who sees me.” 14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi [lit. “well of the Living One who sees me”]; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered. 15 So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.

Q1. Does not this Name or Title evoke a sense of divine awareness or tender-compassion?

Q2. If the Lord saw Hagar amidst her misery, can he not see us in our adversity and act in kind?

Q3. Once again, should not such a Title cultivate a sense of reverence, faith and hope in our God?

SUMMATIONS

Q. Who is God? What is His nature (i.e., as revealed in Scripture)?

- A1. The Lord has revealed Himself as 'El 'Olam or the Eternal God
- A2. The Lord God has revealed Himself as 'El 'Shaddai or "Almighty"
- A3. The Lord has revealed Himself as 'El 'Roi or as the God Who Sees

Q. To what degree will you allow such elements to impact you?

Jeremiah 9:23–24a (ESV, Emphasis Mine)

23 Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he **understands** and **knows me**."

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM; WM; CYC).

NOTE 3 – Men who desire to participate in our Iron Sharpens Iron Outing; Last Call Today (SIGN-UP).

NOTE 4 – Women's Ministry this Tuesday Evening at 6:30pm. Men's Ministry this Saturday from 9am–10am.

Numbers 6:24–26

- 24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;
- 25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
- 26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.