

ADDITIONAL NAMES OF GOD

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Genesis 17:1.

Most of the Old Testament names of God are made up of two words -- El (which is the shortened form of Elohim) and another word, which reveals some specific attribute or grace of God, or some facet of His character. In these composite titles the first part has the full wealth of meaning which we discovered that Elohim possessed and the second part has an additional unfolding of His Person, or will, or provision for His people.

I. El Shaddai -- "God Almighty"

One of the most tender of these composite names is El Shaddai, which the Authorized Version translates "God Almighty." However, that translation does not adequately convey the profound implications of this wondrous title or reveal the love of God toward His creatures which it contains. The Almightyness of God is expressed in the first part of the name, for Elohim means "the Mighty One." A very important additional thought is expressed in the second part of the name.

Shaddai is derived from the word Shad, which means a woman's breast. It signifies one who nourishes and satisfies. El Shaddai means "God the breasted One," or "The God Who is Enough," or "God the All-Sufficient One." Doubtless you have seen a person trying to care for a restless and fretful child. Finally, the mother would say, "Give me that child." Immediately after she took and hugged him to her breast he got quiet. He got quiet because he was where he was. The mother's breast rests the child, supplies the child, nourishes the child, strengthens the child and satisfies the child. Likewise, the God Who is All-Sufficient wants to rest His children, pour Himself into their lives, nourish them, strengthen them and satisfy them. He can satisfy us here as well as He can satisfy us in heaven. He meets our every need.

The name El Shaddai appears first in connection with Abraham. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty (El Shaddai); walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly" (Genesis 17:1-2). The occasion was a confirmation of a promise already made to Abram to make a great nation (Genesis 12:2), to make his seed innumerable (Genesis 13:6). Then we are told that Abram believed Jehovah, Who reckoned it to him for righteousness. But the years had passed, and Abram was still without a child. He and his wife Sarai were getting quite old, so his faith began to dim a little. Then it lapsed for a while, and they adopted that fleshly and unfortunate expedient which brought Ishmael and Mohammedanism into the world, but did not bring the fulfillment of the promise. The years continued to go by and Abraham was ninety-nine years old, and the promise, by human reckoning, was apparently impossible of fulfillment. But is anything too hard for Jehovah? Nothing is impossible with Him. It is precisely at this point and in this connection that the promise of a seed is confirmed, and the name of Abram changed to Abraham with the revelation of God as El Shaddai, or the One Who pours out sustenance and blessing, or the All-Sufficient One. He is able to do far more than we can ever ask.

This name taught Abraham his own insufficiency, the futility of relying upon his own efforts and the folly of impatiently running ahead of God. Multitudes of Christians have been guilty of just this, often to their personal loss, sorrow and regret.

The only time this title of God is used in the New Testament is in connection with our utter dependence upon Him. God calls us to a life of separation and bids us depend upon Him rather than upon worldly organizations. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:17-18). Instead of leaning upon the arm of flesh for support, El Shaddai is bidding us lean upon Him for our daily sustenance. He will never fail to make good His Word and to uphold His people. Paul must have been thinking of this aspect of his heavenly Father when he wrote the Philippian saints and said, "But my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (4:19). The same thought must have been surging through his mind when he wrote the Corinthians, "Our sufficiency is of God" (II Corinthians 3:5). To drive home this truth to our hearts, God reveals Himself to all His people as El Shaddai as He did to Abraham, saying in substance, "I am the nourisher and the One Who is able to meet your every need. This being the case depend upon Me and know that My grace is sufficient."

El Shaddai speaks to us of the inexhaustible stores of His bounty, of the riches and fulness of His grace in self-sacrificing love pouring itself out for others. It tells us that from God comes every good and perfect gift, and that He never wearies of pouring His mercies and blessings upon His people. But we must not forget that His strength is made perfect in our weakness; His sufficiency is manifested most clearly in our insufficiency; and His fulness is demonstrated best in our emptiness, that as we are being filled we may in turn share that which we receive with those who are needy.

II. El Elyon -- The Most High God.

When God uses this name of Himself He is teaching us the truth that He is the most high God. It emphasizes the supremacy and sovereignty of God. "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High (El Elyon) over all the earth" (Psalm 83:18). In Psalm 91:1 we read, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High (El Elyon) shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (El Shaddai)." The thought of the absolute authority and power of God, expressed in the name El Elyon, might cause to fear and tremble before Him, but the Most High is also El Shaddai, the Fount of all grace and mercy. He is able to do all that He wishes and wills. Our good intentions are often frustrated by our limitation of power and skill, but nobody can withstand or thwart the purpose of the Most High.

This name of God was first introduced by Melchizedek in Genesis 14:19, "And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth." After Abram's conquest of the five kings, Melchizedek blessed him in the name of the Most High God, "possessor of heaven and earth." That phrase throws a flood of light upon the name. It shows that He is not so high and aloof as to be unconcerned with people and events on earth. Instead, He rules in all the affairs of men. He is constantly working out His purposes. He knows the way that we take, and through His over-ruling providence "all things work together for good to them that love God."

III. El Roi -- "Thou God Seest Me."

One of the most tender of the divine names was first expressed by a woman. Hagar said, "Thou God seest me" (Genesis 16:13). This name El Roi was born out of her extremity of need. Sarai, having suggested to Abram that he should have a son by Hagar, her Egyptian hand-maid, then turned against the girl and "dealt

hardly with her," so that she "fled from her face." Alone in the wilderness, and probably panic-stricken with fear, she was found by "the angel of the Lord," and was given comfort and counsel.

"Thou God seest me." What an unspeakable relief that realization must have brought to the terror-stricken mind and over-wrought nerves of the fugitive, as she sat and thought of her plight! God saw her and came to her rescue. With God to see is to act.

There is a profound wealth of comfort, as well as of arresting challenge, in the thought of the all-seeing eye of God. Nothing is hidden from Him.

Under the inspiration of the discovery of the divine presence with her, Hagar exclaimed, "El-roi!" which is translated, "Thou God seest me." Hagar found, as each of us must find, that He is "The God Of The Seeing Eye." The living God, Who saw her, had compassion on her, followed her with His watchful eye when she left the home of her mistress, when she wandered in the wilderness weeping and when she sat down fatigued at the side of the fountain, comforted her and instructed her. Just think how merciful God is!

God sees you as distinctly as if you were the only person in all the world. Nothing about you or your circumstances is hidden from Him. Others may not see you; some may even forget you; but God's eyes are always on you. God does not lose sight of you in any group relationship, but He sees you personally. His eyes are piercing. He can see you through the thickest walls. He looks into the deepest and darkest dungeons. Nothing is ever shut out of His sight. He even sees what is in the heart. He sees you continuously--in the darkest shades of night, in the brightness of the day, in the night of sorrow and in the day of trouble. Whether at night or during the day, waking or sleeping, alone or in company, there is not a moment when He does not see us. He sees what we are and what we do. Nothing escapes His observation. Everything lies open to Him. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." He sees us individually, completely and constantly. Wherever we are, we are in His presence; whatever we do, He sees us. He reads all our thoughts, knows all our emotions, purposes and aims. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3).

To Hagar it was evident that God not only finds us, however isolated we may be, but that He reads our secret souls unerringly. She felt that she was understood. Here was one Who, though unseen Himself, saw her with a penetration that went straight to the depths of her being. He saw that with her it was a case of being "more sinned against than sinning." He saw the humiliation that burned in her spirit, the fear that clutched at her heart. He saw it all. That is the kind of God He is.

That each one of us is the subject of God's personal observation, love and care is a most comforting, encouraging and challenging fact. His eyes not only look within us, but they watch over us. Living under the eyes of God does not mean, as some suppose, that we shall always escape the bitterness of life. What it means, ultimately, is simply this: that my surrendered life is in the good hands of God, and in His keeping I am secure whether in life or in death. In His keeping I am safe whether in prosperity or in penury.

Remember, God sees ahead. When you arrive, where He already is, look for His hidden source of supplies. You will prove in your life what Mary Slessor of Africa said she proved in hers, "I should never have been able to do anything but for this, He always went in front."