

# El and Elohim: The Ancient Titles of Yahweh

*A Lexical and Scriptural Study of the Divine Names in the Tanakh*

**Miqdash Bethel — The Sanctuary of the House of Yahweh**

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## Introduction

Before the personal covenant name **Yahweh** (יהוה) was formally revealed to Mosheh at the burning bush, the Creator of all things was known by a title carried in every language of the ancient Semitic world: **El** (אֵל) and its expanded plural form, **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים). These are not later additions to the Hebrew scriptures, borrowed substitutes, or pagan corruptions. They are the foundational titles through which Yahweh first disclosed Himself to humanity — and the Tanakh opens with them, deliberately and sovereignly, before any personal name is given.

It should be noted from the outset that most Sacred Name assemblies — those groups who rightly insist on using the restored name Yahweh rather than the generic English substitutions 'Lord' and 'God' — have no difficulty with El and Elohim. The Assemblies of Yahweh in Cisco, Texas, the Assemblies of Yahweh in Holt, Michigan, and Yahweh's Restoration Ministry in Missouri all use El and Elohim as proper Hebrew titles of Yahweh without controversy. This is the correct and defensible position, firmly grounded in the Hebrew text and the major scholarly lexicons.

There is, however, a minority position within the Sacred Name world — held by at least one group — that teaches El and Elohim are pagan titles that cannot be applied to Yahweh. This study does not need to name that group. The error will be addressed directly and the reader who is familiar with it will recognize the teaching. The goal of this study is not to attack any assembly but to establish, from the primary sources, what the covenant text of the Tanakh actually says.

This study brings the full weight of the primary Hebrew lexicons, classical Jewish scholarship, and the Tanakh itself to bear on the question. The conclusion is unambiguous: **Elohim is the title Yahweh chose for Himself from the very first verse of His own Torah. It appears over 2,570 times in the Tanakh.** Yahweh Himself applied it to Mosheh as a title of delegated authority. It is embedded in the names of the covenant people and the covenant land itself. No serious scholarship — Hebrew, Jewish, or otherwise — supports the claim that it is a pagan title.

**This study proceeds in seven sections: the root and etymology of El; the lexical evidence for Elohim from the major Hebrew authorities; Elohim as the first divine title in creation; the compound YHWH Elohim and what it declares; the range of usage in the Tanakh including application to human beings; why translation matters and how mistranslation misleads; and a closing word on the sanctity of covenant language.**

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## I. The Root: El (אֵל) — Power, Strength, and the One Who Goes Before

**The most ancient of the Hebrew divine titles is El (אֵל) — a biconsonantal root among the oldest words in the entire Semitic language family. Its cognates span the ancient world: Ugaritic 'il (used in Canaanite religious literature for the chief deity), Biblical Aramaic 'Elaha, Syriac Alaha, and Arabic 'ilah — the same root that produces the Arabic word Allah ('The Deity'). This linguistic family is not evidence that Israel borrowed El from pagans. It is evidence that all Semitic peoples preserved, from the earliest layers of human language, a root describing the supreme being of power and authority.**

### What the Hebrew Lexicons Say About El

The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB), the most widely used scholarly Hebrew lexicon in the English-speaking world, identifies El as the basic noun for God or deity in Hebrew, with its root semantic range anchored in the idea of power, strength, and might. BDB documents El's use as a proper name for Yahweh in multiple compound titles throughout the Torah and the Prophets.

The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), the most exhaustive modern scholarly lexicon, corroborates this. HALOT traces El to a proto-Semitic root most likely meaning 'to be strong' or 'to be in front' — the one who stands at the head, who leads, who exercises supreme authority. The root conveys fixedness, might, and primacy.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), edited by R. Laird Harris, Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary, states: 'Most frequently mentioned suggestions for an original meaning are power or fear, but these are widely challenged and much disputed. It may be noted that even if the origin of the word in Canaanite or proto-Semitic is from a root meaning power, this by no means indicates the connotation in Hebrew religious usage.' TWOT's conclusion is that whatever the precise proto-Semitic root, the Hebrew title El, as used in the covenant text, means the supreme one — Yahweh Himself.

### El in Compound Names for Yahweh

**The Tanakh preserves multiple compound titles built on El, each revealing a facet of Yahweh's character:**

- El Elyon (אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן) — 'Most High El': Beresheet 14:18-22, where Avraham acknowledges Yahweh as El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth.
- El Shaddai (אֵל שַׁדַּי) — 'El Almighty': Beresheet 17:1, where Yahweh identifies Himself to Avraham by this title before formally revealing the name YHWH.
- El Roi (אֵל רֹאֵי) — 'El Who Sees': Beresheet 16:13, Hagar's name for Yahweh after her encounter in the wilderness.
- El Olam (אֵל עוֹלָם) — 'Eternal El': Beresheet 21:33, Avraham calling on Yahweh at Be'er-Sheva.

- El Elohim Yahweh (אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה): Tehillim 50:1 — all three forms of the divine title placed together in one declaration, confirming they are layered descriptions of the same Being.

### El in Covenant Names

Perhaps the most compelling evidence that El is a legitimate title of Yahweh is the fact that it is embedded in the covenant names of the covenant people and the covenant land itself. The nation is named Yisra-EL (יִשְׂרָאֵל) — 'one who strives with El.' The leaders of the heavenly court carry El in their names: Micha-EL, Gabri-EL. The prophet of the exile is Dani-EL. The priest-prophet is Ezeke-EL. If El were a pagan title, Yahweh would have been embedding a pagan name into the foundational identity of His chosen people — an impossibility the Tanakh itself refuses.

## II. Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) — The Lexical Evidence

**Elohim is the plural form of Eloah (אֱלֹהַ),** which is itself an expanded form of **El**. The plural ending -im (as in cherubim, seraphim, shamayim [heavens], mayim [water], chayyim [life]) does not indicate multiple beings when used of Yahweh. It functions as what Hebrew grammarians call an honorific plural or plural of majesty — a plural of intensity that communicates greatness, fullness, and totality rather than numerical plurality.

### Witness One: Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB)

BDB, H430, documents Elohim appearing 2,570 times in the Hebrew text. It identifies the following primary categories of usage:

- **The supreme Yahweh of Yisra'el** — singular verb and adjective throughout, confirming a singular referent despite the plural form.
- **Rulers and judges**, 'either as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power' — citing Shemot 21:6, 22:7-9, Tehillim 82:1, 82:6.
- **Divine beings**, including heavenly beings and malachim.
- **Foreign deities** (always with a plural verb when referring to multiple gods, distinguishing grammatically from the singular Yahweh usage).

### Witness Two: HALOT (Koehler-Baumgartner)

HALOT, the most current and comprehensive scholarly lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, confirms that Elohim is built on the same proto-Semitic root as El and Eloah. HALOT documents the **'honorific plural' function of Elohim when referring to Yahweh** — a grammatical category well-attested in Hebrew, where the plural form of a noun expresses the fullness and superlative quality of the singular referent rather than literal numerical plurality. HALOT compares this to shamayim (heavens), mayim (waters), and chayyim (life) — all plural in form, all singular in conceptual scope.

### Witness Three: Britannica

**Encyclopaedia Britannica's article on Elohim states:** 'A plural of majesty, the term Elohim — though sometimes used for other deities, such as the Moabite god Chemosh, the Sidonian goddess Astarte, and also for other majestic beings such as angels, kings, judges, and the Messiah — is usually employed in the Old Testament for the one and only God of Israel, whose personal name was revealed to Moses as YHWH, or Yahweh. **When referring to Yahweh, Elohim very often is accompanied by the article ha-, to mean, in combination, the God.'**

Britannica further notes: 'Though Elohim is plural in form, it is understood in the singular sense. Thus, in Genesis the words, In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth, Elohim is monotheistic in connotation, though its grammatical structure seems polytheistic.'

### Witness Four: Rambam and Classical Jewish Scholarship

Rabbi Mosheh ben Maimon — the Rambam, the greatest medieval Hebrew scholar — addressed the term Elohim directly in Moreh Nevuchim (Guide for the Perplexed), Section 1.2. He wrote: 'It is already known to all who know Hebrew that the name Elohim is associated with Yahweh, and the malachim, and to human judges — those who rule nations and cities.' This was not a minority opinion. The Rambam was declaring what was universally known among those fluent in the covenant language.

Rabbi Saadya Gaon (882–942 CE), one of the greatest scholars of the Geonic period, added that 'those who are honored and respected' (nechbadim) are also called elohim. These are not peripheral views — they are the consistent testimony of Jewish scholarship spanning more than a thousand years of authoritative Hebrew learning.

### The Grammar: Why Plural Form Does Not Mean Multiple Gods

A critical grammatical fact must be understood. When Elohim refers to Yahweh, it consistently takes singular verbs and singular adjectives in the Hebrew text. The opening verse of the Tanakh — Beresheet 1:1 — uses bara (בָּרָא, 'created'), a masculine singular verb. Every one of the 31 verses in Beresheet 1 that uses Elohim pairs it with singular verbal and pronominal forms. The Septuagint translators (ca. 250 BCE), working in Greek, rendered Elohim consistently with the singular theos throughout. The grammar alone settles the question: Elohim, when used of Yahweh, is singular in meaning, whatever its plural form.

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## III. Elohim Appears Before Yahweh — The Sequence of Revelation

This is perhaps the single most important structural fact in the entire discussion about El and Elohim. The Torah — the covenant document given to Mosheh — does not begin with the name Yahweh. It begins with Elohim.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ — Beresheet 1:1 — In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.

Elohim is the title used exclusively throughout all thirty-one verses of Beresheet 1. The name Yahweh does not appear until Beresheet 2:4, where it is introduced in the compound form YHWH Elohim. The personal covenant name YHWH is not formally revealed until Shemot 3:14-15, where Yahweh speaks it to Mosheh at the burning bush. Shemot 6:2-3 makes the sequence explicit:

***'I am Yahweh. I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov as El Shaddai, but by My name Yahweh I was not known to them.'*** — Shemot 6:2-3

**The order of revelation is Yahweh's own design. The universal Creator was first known as El — the Mighty One — and as Elohim, the fullness of divine power. The personal name Yahweh was reserved for the covenant relationship with Yisra'el. Elohim is not a lesser title added later. It is the foundational title that precedes the personal name.**

### **The Theological Significance of the Sequence**

Hebrew scholar Mark D. Futato explains the design: 'In Genesis 1 only Elohim is used to refer to deity. This is no doubt because of the universal perspective of this creation story. In Genesis 2, on the other hand, deity is referred to as YHWH Elohim. These two accounts converge to affirm that YHWH — the personal God who rules over Israel — is at one and the same time the universal God who rules over all.'

**The compound YHWH Elohim is not a correction of something wrong with Elohim. It is a declaration: the personal covenant Elohim of Yisra'el IS the universal Creator of all nations. The two titles are not in competition — they are in apposition, each explaining and completing the other.**

### **The Midrash on the Two Names**

Classical Jewish midrash recognized this design centuries before modern scholarship. The midrash teaches that the world was created by Elohim — representing the attribute of justice and absolute power. But afterward He is called YHWH Elohim because He saw that without the mercy of Yahweh, creation itself could not survive. YHWH Elohim is therefore the declaration that justice and mercy, power and covenant love, belong to the same Being. To erase Elohim from this equation is to erase the architectural logic of the Torah's own opening.

### **Tehillim 50:1 — Three Titles, One Declaration**

***אֵל אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה דִּבֶּר* — *El, Elohim, Yahweh has spoken*** — Tehillim 50:1

In a single verse the Psalmist places El, Elohim, and Yahweh together as a triple declaration of the same Being's act of speaking. This is not three gods. This is one Sovereign identified by three interlocking titles — the Mighty One (El), the Fullness of Divine Power (Elohim), the Personal Covenant Name (Yahweh) — all describing the one who summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

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## IV. The Range of Elohim in the Tanakh

A proper understanding of any Hebrew word requires examining the full range of its usage across the covenant text. Elohim is not a one-dimensional term. Its breadth of application demonstrates the depth of its meaning.

### 1. Elohim as Yahweh

The primary and dominant use of Elohim in the Tanakh — over 2,500 times — is as a title for Yahweh Himself. From the creation account through the prophets, Elohim is the standard way the covenant text identifies the Creator and sovereign Ruler of all things. It carries the full weight of power, justice, and supreme authority.

### 2. Elohim as Heavenly Beings

Tehillim 8:6 uses Elohim to describe the heavenly beings above whom mankind was set: 'You have made him a little lower than the elohim.' The context indicates spiritual beings occupying the realm above humanity. BDB documents this category as 'divine ones, superhuman beings including Yahweh and malachim.'

### 3. Elohim as Foreign Deities

When other nations' gods are referenced, the Tanakh uses Elohim in the plural sense — for example, Shemot 20:3: 'You shall have no other elohim before Me.' Plural verbs consistently accompany elohim when it refers to multiple foreign deities. This grammatical distinction is itself proof that the Hebrew writers knew exactly what they were doing — they never confused the singular sovereign Yahweh-Elohim with the plural elohim of the nations.

### 4. Elohim as the Divine Council (Tehillim 82)

אֱלֹהִים נֹצֵב בְּעֵדֹת-אֵל בְּקִרְבֹּת אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט — *Elohim stands in the assembly of El; in the midst of the elohim He judges.* — Tehillim 82:1

Tehillim 82 depicts Yahweh standing in the divine assembly, pronouncing judgment on other beings called elohim. In verse 6, the Most High declares: 'I said, You are elohim, and all of you are sons of the Most High.' Whether these beings are understood as the divine council of heavenly beings (the position of most current scholarship, including Dr. Michael Heiser) or as human rulers, the text confirms one immovable truth: the title elohim is applied within Yahweh's own inspired covenant text to beings other than Yahweh Himself. The title cannot be reduced to one meaning, and that breadth is a feature, not a flaw.

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## V. Elohim Applied to Men — Mosheh and the Judges

The application of Elohim to human beings is not an invention of later interpreters. It is present in the Torah itself, in Yahweh's own direct speech to Mosheh.

### Shemot 4:16 — Mosheh as Elohim to Aharon

*He [Aharon] shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as Elohim to him. — Shemot 4:16*

Yahweh is instructing Mosheh about the partnership between him and his brother Aharon. Aharon will function as Mosheh's prophet — the one who speaks the words to the people. Mosheh will function as Elohim to Aharon — the source of authoritative word and direction. **This is not Mosheh being elevated to deity. This is Yahweh Himself using the title Elohim to describe the role of delegated authority.** Mosheh speaks for Yahweh; Aharon speaks for Mosheh. The chain of delegated authority mirrors the covenant structure of Yahweh's own relationship with Yisra'el.

### Shemot 7:1 — Yahweh Declares Mosheh to Be Elohim

*See, I have made you Elohim to Pharaoh, and Aharon your brother shall be your prophet. — Shemot 7:1*

This is Yahweh's own direct speech. The Creator of the heavens and the earth, speaking to Mosheh before the plague sequence begins, declares: 'I have made you Elohim to Pharaoh.' The function being described is representative authority — Mosheh stands before Pharaoh as the authoritative sovereign voice of Yahweh. Pharaoh encounters, in Mosheh, the one who speaks and acts with the full authority of Yahweh Himself. The title Elohim here does not confer divinity upon Mosheh. It marks him as the one commissioned to stand in Yahweh's place before the greatest earthly power of the age.

### Shemot 21:6 and 22:7-9 — Human Judges as Elohim

**In the Torah's civil code, the Covenant Code of Shemot, the term elohim appears in the context of legal proceedings before judges.** BDB explicitly identifies these passages as instances where elohim refers to 'rulers, judges, either as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power.'

The grammatical evidence in Shemot 22:9 is particularly compelling. The verse uses the plural Hiphil verb form yarishiun — 'they [plural] condemn.' Every reference to Yahweh as judge in the surrounding context uses a singular verb. The plural verb here confirms that human judges — plural persons — are the subject. The Hebrew writers used singular verbs for Yahweh and plural verbs for human judges even when using the same title elohim. This is grammatical precision, not confusion.

### The Pattern: Delegated Authority

**The consistent thread running through all applications of Elohim to human beings is delegated authority. The judge is commissioned by Yahweh to render Yahweh's justice to the people. Mosheh is commissioned to represent Yahweh before Pharaoh. In each case, Elohim does not confer divinity — it marks the bearer as one who acts under Yahweh's authority, in Yahweh's name, carrying Yahweh's mandate. This is the covenant structure of righteous governance flowing from the One Elohim through His appointed servants.**

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## **VI. Why Translation Matters: How Mistranslation Misleads the People**

The stakes of accurate translation are not academic. When a word in the Hebrew covenant text is mistranslated — or when its meaning is distorted through ignorance, selective citation, or ideological agenda — real people are misled. They are taught to fear a title that Yahweh chose for Himself. They are taught to reject a word that Yahweh used to describe His own servant Mosheh. They are separated from 3,000 years of Hebrew scholarship and anchored instead to a single teacher's misreading. This is not a small error. It is the kind of error Yirmeyahu warned about.

***The prophets prophesy lies in My name... who devise plans to cause My people to forget My Name. — Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 23:25-27***

**The verse Yirmeyahu cited is about false prophets causing the people to forget Yahweh's name. But the principle cuts in every direction: any religious leader who causes the people to misunderstand, fear, or reject the covenant language of the Tanakh is working against the covenant, regardless of how sincerely they believe their position.**

### **The Pattern of Mistranslation**

The error that leads some teachers to reject El and Elohim as pagan titles follows a recognizable pattern. It begins with a real and legitimate concern — the divine name Yahweh has been systematically hidden from most translations, replaced by 'LORD' and 'God,' titles with no direct connection to the Hebrew covenant text. The concern is valid. The restoration of Yahweh's name to its rightful place in reading and teaching is correct.

**But the error occurs when a teacher, without formal training in ancient Biblical Hebrew, takes the next step: 'If God is wrong, and LORD is wrong, then everything associated with those words must be wrong — including El and Elohim.'** This is a logical leap the Hebrew text does not support and the lexicons refuse. It is the error of extending a correct principle beyond its boundaries, producing a conclusion that contradicts the very source the teacher claims to defend.

### **Misusing Scholarly Sources**

Teachers who reject El and Elohim typically cite standard reference works to support their position. A common argument runs: certain dictionaries show that El is a Canaanite word, and

Elohim appears in sections discussing pagan religious concepts, therefore both titles are pagan in origin. This is a classic case of selective citation — pulling a fragment from a source without reading the full entry or understanding its context.

**Any reputable Hebrew dictionary, read in its entirety, documents El and Elohim as the standard titles for Yahweh throughout the Tanakh.** When reference works discuss Canaanite religion and list El as the name of the chief Canaanite deity, they are not saying the Hebrew title El is borrowed from Canaan — they are documenting the presence of a shared ancient Semitic root in both language traditions. The Canaanites used El because all Semitic peoples inherited this root from their common linguistic ancestry. That inheritance does not make the Hebrew title pagan any more than the Arabic 'ilah — which carries the same root — makes the Qur'an's references to Allah pagan.

### **The Anchor Bible Standard: Nothing New Here**

The Anchor Bible Commentary on Genesis, Volume 1, page 37, addressed the argument that Elohim was a late Canaanite borrowing inserted into the Hebrew text. The scholarly verdict is direct: 'There is of course nothing new in the use of Elohim.' Modern critical scholarship — even scholarship that approaches the Torah from a secular analytical perspective — does not support the claim that Elohim entered Hebrew from Canaanite influence after the conquest. **The Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest extant Hebrew manuscripts, contain Elohim exactly as it appears in the received text. There is no manuscript tradition lacking these titles.**

### **Mosheh Wrote Before the Conquest**

There is an additional historical argument that demolishes the borrowing theory. Mosheh wrote the first five books of the Torah before Yisra'el ever entered the land of Canaan. **Devarim 34** records that Mosheh died on Mount Nebo, east of the Yarden River, before Yehoshua led the people across. Mosheh could not have borrowed Elohim from a Canaanite influence he never encountered in the land. The word was already in the Torah before any contact with the settled Canaanite population. Yahweh Himself inspired Mosheh to write Beresheet 1:1 with Elohim as the first description of the Creator. **That is the beginning and end of the question of origin.**

### **What a Bible Translation Must Not Do**

**The gravest form of this error is a Bible translation that substitutes the translator's preferred word in place of what the Hebrew text actually says.** When a translation renders Beresheet 1:1 as 'In the beginning Yahweh created...' — when the Hebrew text reads Elohim, not Yahweh, in every manuscript tradition including the Dead Sea Scrolls — that translation is not restoring the Hebrew text. It is correcting the Hebrew text. It is telling Yahweh that His own inspired opening was wrong and that the translator has fixed it.

**Devarim 4:2** prohibits exactly this: **'You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it.'** A translation that adds the name Yahweh thousands of times in places where the Hebrew text does not have it, or removes Elohim thousands of times where the Hebrew text does have it, has violated this prohibition regardless of the sincerity of the translator's convictions.

## The Responsibility of the Teacher

The prophets, the judges, and the covenant text itself held teachers to a high standard.

**Yechezkel 34** is a withering rebuke of shepherds who feed themselves instead of the flock, who scatter the sheep, who lead them into places the covenant does not sanction. The application is not only to those who deny Yahweh outright. It extends to any teacher who, without the tools of the covenant language, without training in ancient Biblical Hebrew, without accountability to the scholarly tradition of 3,000 years of Jewish linguistic study, declares a word to be pagan that Yahweh placed in the first sentence of His Torah.

The people Yahweh entrusts to a teacher deserve accurate handling of the covenant text. They deserve teachers who will say: 'I do not know enough Hebrew to challenge BDB, HALOT, Gesenius, Rambam, and the Dead Sea Scrolls — therefore I will teach what the evidence says.' That is not weakness. That is the covenant faithfulness the text calls for. **Devarim 19:15** establishes the two-or-three-witnesses standard for any charge. **On the question of El and Elohim, the witnesses are not two or three — they are thousands of occurrences in the Tanakh itself, confirmed by every major Hebrew lexicon produced in the last four centuries of scholarship.**

## A Word to Those Who Have Been Taught This Error

**If you have been taught that El or Elohim is a pagan title, you were not taught from the Hebrew text. You were taught from an interpretation of that text by someone who did not have the tools to read it accurately.** That is not a judgment of your sincerity or your love for Yahweh. It is a statement about the tools that were used. You can verify everything in this study yourself through the sources listed in the reference section, many of which are available free online. **The Hebrew text speaks for itself. Beresheet 1:1 begins with Elohim. Shemot 7:1 records Yahweh calling Mosheh Elohim to Pharaoh. No credible Hebrew source — none — calls Elohim a title of Satan.**

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## VII. The Sanctity of Covenant Language

The Tanakh is not a text that can be improved upon by removing titles Yahweh chose for Himself. **The opening verse of the Torah is not an error to be corrected.** The compound YHWH Elohim in Beresheet 2:4 is not a pagan interpolation to be purged. The declaration of Shemot 7:1 — 'I have made you Elohim to Pharaoh' — is not an embarrassment to be explained away.

Every title in the covenant text was placed there by the covenant author. El carries the witness of Yahweh's power from before the formal revelation of His personal name. Elohim carries the witness of His fullness, His majesty, and the delegated structure of righteous authority He established on earth. Yahweh carries the witness of the personal covenant name — the name that binds Him to His word, His people, and His promises.

**These titles do not compete. They build upon each other.** A people who understand El know that power belongs to Yahweh alone. A people who understand Elohim know that He is the

fullness of divine authority, recognized in heaven and on earth, given in delegated measure to those He commissions. **A people who know Yahweh know the personal covenant name — the name above all names, the name that will not return void, the name that holds creation itself together.**

**To call Elohim a pagan title is to call Yahweh's own self-disclosure pagan.** The Tanakh does not permit that reading. The lexicons do not support it. Three thousand years of Jewish/Hebrew scholarship reject it. And the text of the Torah — from its very first word — refutes it.

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## Summary of Witnesses

The following authoritative sources all confirm the legitimacy and covenant sanctity of El and Elohim as titles of Yahweh:

- Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon (BDB), H430, H410: Documents 2,570+ uses of Elohim including its application to Yahweh (singular verb), rulers and judges, divine beings, and foreign deities.
  - Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT, Koehler-Baumgartner): Confirms the honorific plural function of Elohim; traces El to a proto-Semitic root meaning power or to be in front.
  - Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), R. Laird Harris: Notes that even if El originated in a root meaning power, this does not determine its connotation in Hebrew religious usage, where it always refers to Yahweh as supreme.
  - Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Elohim': Identifies Elohim as a plural of majesty, usually employed for the one and only God of Israel, whose personal name was revealed as YHWH.
  - Rambam (Maimonides, Moreh Nevuchim 1.2): States that it is universally known among Hebrew speakers that Elohim is associated with Yahweh, the malachim, and human judges who rule.
  - Rabbi Saadya Gaon (882-942 CE): Adds that those who are honored and respected are also called elohim — confirming the title carries delegated authority in classical Jewish tradition.
  - Mark D. Futato (NAS Hebrew Scholar): Explains that the shift from Elohim in Beresheet 1 to YHWH Elohim in Beresheet 2 declares that Yahweh, the personal God of Yisra'el, is also the universal Creator of all.
  - The Anchor Bible, Genesis, Volume 1, p. 37: States plainly there is nothing new in the use of Elohim — refuting the claim that Elohim was a late Canaanite borrowing.
  - The Tanakh Itself: Beresheet 1:1 opens with Elohim before Yahweh is named; Shemot 7:1 records Yahweh Himself calling Mosheh Elohim to Pharaoh; Tehillim 50:1 places El, Elohim, and Yahweh together in a single declaration.
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## Primary References

**Lexicons:** Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB), H430, H410. Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), Koehler-Baumgartner, Brill. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), R. Laird Harris, ed., Moody Press, 1980. Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, trans. Tregelles.

**Encyclopedias and Reference Works:** Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Elohim.' Jewish Encyclopedia (1906 ed.), jewishencyclopedia.com. Anchor Bible Commentary, Genesis, Vol. 1. Abarim Publications Biblical Dictionary, 'Elohim and El,' abarim-publications.com.

**Classical Jewish Scholarship:** Rambam (Maimonides), Moreh Nevuchim (Guide for the Perplexed), Section 1.2, trans. Rabbi Yoseph Qafahh. Rabbi Saadya Gaon (882-942 CE), Judeo-Arabic commentary on Beresheet. Classical rabbinic midrash on Beresheet 1-2 (divine attribute structure).

**Tanakh Primary Texts:** Beresheet 1:1; 2:4; 14:18-22; 16:13; 17:1; 21:33. Shemot 3:14-15; 4:16; 6:2-3; 7:1; 21:6; 22:7-9. Devarim 4:2; 19:15. Tehillim 50:1; 82:1-6. Yirmeyahu 23:25-27. Yechezkel 34.

**Sacred Name Assemblies That Affirm El and Elohim:** Yahweh's Assembly in Yahshua, 'Is Elohim a Pagan Title?' yaiy.org. Yahweh's Restoration Ministry, 'Is Elohim Proper or Pagan?' yrm.org. Assemblies of Yahweh, Cisco, Texas. Assemblies of Yahweh, Holt, Michigan.

**Hebrew Scholar Commentary:** Mark D. Futato, 'Ask a Scholar: What Does YHWH Elohim Mean?' New American Standard Bible scholarly resource, nas.org. Dr. Michael Heiser, 'The Plural Elohim of Psalm 82,' drms.com.

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### Miqdash Bethel — The Sanctuary of the House of Yahweh

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*All authority rests in the Tanakh — the Torah and the Prophets — as the sole doctrinal standard of this ministry.*