

Names of God, Pt 3 – El Shaddai

Names of God Series

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We have been spending our Wednesday evenings this summer studying the names of God and as we explore each name we discover the nature and the character of our great God. And our intent is not just to know more about God, but to truly know God.

Our premise has been this. God has progressively revealed himself to his people by introducing himself with and identifying himself by different names at different times. God's names were given to man by God himself during specific times of man's need so that we might know that our God is all in all.

You might recall that some weeks ago we began in the beginning.

“In the beginning God [or אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem’)] created the heaven and the earth.”¹

And we found that the first chapter of Genesis is not so much about creation as much as it is about the Creator. Thirty-two times in the first chapter of the Bible, 32 times in Genesis chapter number one God's name אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem’) is cited, is written. And we came to know אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem’) as our eternal, triune Creator.

Of course, I explained that while אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem’) is the plural masculine form of the name for God, אֵל (ale) is the simple name that can be used as a compound name. And, of course, here are some of the compound names.

אֵל (ale) is God, the simple name for God.

אֵל שָׁדַי (ale shad-dah’ - ee), God almighty.

אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן (ale el-yone’), God most high.

אֵל רֹאֵי (ale ro-ee’), God who sees.

אֵל עוֹלָם (ale o-lawm’), God everlasting.

¹ Genesis 1:1.

אל גבור (ale ghib-bore'), God who is mighty.

אל אמת (ale eh'-meth), God who is truth.

אל קדש (ale ko'-desh), God who is holy.

And there are many, many, many more. But then next we learned how that God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush where God said, "אלהים (el-o-heem') said to Moses, "I am who I am." Literally יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') this is my name forever and this is my memorial to all generations," Exodus 3:14-15.

And, you see, Moses had objected to God's call on his life. Moses objected asking, "Who am I?"

Then Moses objected saying, asking, "Who are you?" And then אלהים (el-o-heem') answered Moses by revealing himself to Moses as יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'). It is the Hebrew verb to be or to live. It declares that God is the uncreated, uncaused, self existing one. And in the face of an Egyptian culture that continually was creating new gods, אלהים (el-o-heem') revealed himself as the God who was never created, the God who simply is.

From the narrative of Moses at the burning bush in Exodus three we learned how that יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is personal. He is particular. He is present. He is purposeful. He is patient. He is powerful.

And I would encourage you when you read the narrative of Moses at the burning bush, know that the story isn't about Moses and the story is not about the burning bush. The story is about God. And read that text to discover God.

In the same way the story of David and Goliath is not about David. It is not about Goliath. It is not about how little people can big up big people. It is about God. And try to behold your God in those narratives.

Throughout the Scripture, then, we find the name יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') used also as a compound name. And I presented this list of compound names.

יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'), self existing one.

יהוה ירא (yeh-ho-vaw' yir-eh'), God our provider.

יהוה נסי (yeh-ho-vaw' nis-see'), God our banner.

יהוה שלום (yeh-ho-vaw' shaw-lome'), God our peace.

יהוה ראוי (yeh-ho-vaw' ro-ee'), God our shepherd.

יהוה צדקנו (ye-ho-vaw' tsid-kay'- noo), God our righteousness.

יהוה אלהים (yeh-ho-vaw' el-o-heem'), God, God, if you will.

And I trust that you have had the opportunity over the last few weeks to reflect on the names of God.

Many people have asked me, "Pastor Matt, how might we get a copy of what you are presenting here tonight?"

It would be too costly to prepare hard copies for everybody, but if you would like some of what you see on Wednesday evenings, if you will email me your request, I can simply put these things in an email as a PDF and reply back to you and would be happy to do that to make some of this stuff available for you. Since I prepare it, I am happy to give it out if it would be a blessing to you.

Now, as a point of transition, we have studied the name of God אלהים (el-o-heem') in Genesis one. We have studied the name of God יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') there in Exodus chapter number three.

This evening, as a point of transition from our review and a point of introduction to our study this evening, I want you to turn to Exodus chapter number six with me, Exodus chapter number six and I would invite you to follow with me in Exodus chapter six verse number one.

"Then the LORD..."² That is capital L capital O capital R capital D. That is יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') in the Hebrew.

Then the LORD [יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw')] said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." And God [אלהים (el-o-heem')] spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the [יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw')]"³

Capital L capital O capital R capital D.

"I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name [יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw')] I was not known to them."⁴

² Exodus 6:1.

³ Exodus 6:1-2.

⁴ Exodus 6:3.

The patriarchs did not know אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') or God by his name יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') because God had not yet revealed that name to them in that way. The self revelation of God as יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') was given to Moses in Exodus chapter three. God's people had earlier known him as God almighty or, if you will look there in verse number three, אֵל שַׁדְדַי (ale shad-dah'- ee), God almighty, אֵל שַׁדְדַי (ale shad-dah'- ee). And that is the name that we are going to consider this evening, the name אֵל שַׁדְדַי (ale shad-dah'- ee).

Now remember our premise in our study of the names of God. Our premise is that God revealed himself to his people by identifying himself with a specific name at a specific time of man's need so that man might know that God is their all in all.

The name אֵל שַׁדְדַי (ale shad-dah'- ee) is first revealed to us, it is first introduced to us in a specific context and we find it first in connection with Abram or Abraham.

Turn to Genesis chapter 17 verse number one.

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD...”⁵

Capital L capital O capital R capital D. This is יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw').

...appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations."⁶

Stop there. Before we go on, I want to point out how that God revealed himself to Abram in these first three verses. There are three names for God in these first few verses. The Lord, יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw'), appeared to Abraham in verse number one. Do you see it there? Capital L capital O capital R capital D. יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') appeared to Abram, but Abram did not know God as יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw'). That name had not yet been revealed, not until Moses and the burning bush in Exodus chapter three. But we have here as Moses, of course, under inspiration of the Spirit of God penned the book of Genesis, he identifies that this is the same God, this is יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') God, appears to Abram when he is 99 years old.

And how does God introduce himself to Abram? I am almighty God or אֵל שַׁדְדַי (ale shad-dah'- ee) is the next name of God there in verse one.

And then in verse three it says that אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') talked with Abram.

⁵ Genesis 17:1.

⁶ Genesis 17:2-4.

And here, of course, God made a spectacular promise to Abraham. The promise was first given in Genesis chapter 12. It was then given again in Genesis chapter 15. We know it as the Abrahamic covenant. But, alas, the years have passed and there was no great nation yet as promised in Genesis 12 verse two. There was no offspring yet as promised in Genesis 15 verse three. Abram had not yet multiplied exceedingly as promised here in chapter 17 verse two. Abraham had not yet become the father of many nations as promised here in chapter 17 verse four. In fact, there was not yet a single son born to Abram and Sarai or Abraham and Sarah. And they were getting old.

There is a lot more here to Genesis chapter 17, though, so let's look closely at it.

Verse four.

As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.⁷

I call this the people of the promise. A fundamental component of the Abrahamic covenant was the promise of descendants.

Verse seven.

“And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.”⁸

I call this the period of the promise.

In verse four through six, the people of the promise. There in verse seven, the period of the promise. And the Abrahamic covenant remains, it endures. It is an everlasting covenant. God is not yet finished with Israel yet. God has not set Israel aside forever. He will fulfill his promises to them.

Verse eight.

“Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”⁹

I call this the place of the promise, the people of the promise, the period of the promise, the place of the promise. Israel has rightful ownership to the land of Canaan as gifted to

⁷ Genesis 17:4-6.

⁸ Genesis 17:7.

⁹ Genesis 17:8.

them by God and the boundaries of the land are spelled out very clearly in Numbers 34 and there should never be—you hear me. This is a political statement. There should never be a land for peace agreement because it is Israel's land as given to them by God. Israel should never have the conversation of exchanging land for peace with her enemies. The land is hers.

And all of this here—Genesis 17:1-8—I would like to call the promise of God was repeated to Abraham. The promise of God was repeated to Abraham.

Now remember, we are setting the stage. We are preparing the context in which God reveals himself to Abraham as אֱלֹהֵי שְׂרַי (ale shad-dah'- ee) or almighty God, God almighty. And I am glad here that God elected to repeat his promises, because our impatience often causes us to question and doubt his promises.

For instance, today we are waiting for the promised return of our Lord Jesus Christ to catch us away, his Church, his bride. We know of it, of course, as the rapture. However, folks, it has been a long time in coming. It has been 2000 years. Do you really think it is going to happen? Or is the joke on us?

Peter, in writing to his readers wrote:

Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us.¹⁰

If a thousand years is as a day to the Lord, when God says, "Wait a minute," you do the math and you understand that often we are impatient and in our impatience we question and we doubt the promises of God. Here God had to repeat his promises to Abraham. God had to repeat the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham. But not only did the... was the promise of God repeated to Abraham, secondly the promise of God was received by Abraham and I would ask that you look at verse 17, Genesis 17 verse number 17.

¹⁰ 2 Peter 3:3-9.

“Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’”¹¹

I call this the laughter of faith.

Now there are different types of laughter that are possible. There is humorous laughter and that is medicine to the soul. I like to laugh. I need to laugh and a good joke causes humorous laughter.

Do you want to hear a joke? I don’t have any jokes tonight, but next week I will bring you a joke because we like to laugh together, don’t we? There is humorous laughter.

There is also hideous laughter. That is the foolish crackle of one who laughs at sin or who celebrates the misfortune of another or one who tries to cause fear, that type of laughter.

There is a mocking laughter and that is the mockery or something or someone that is scorned. And I think that is really what Sarah’s laughter was in chapter 18. She mocked or scorned. She laughed at the promises of God.

But then there is the laughter of faith. And I believe that that was what was happening here in Genesis 17:17. Abraham was laughing out of sheer joy at the incredible impossibility of it all. This is terrific. I can hardly believe it. I am so excited. And he laughs in faith.

Romans four says:

And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.¹²

Romans 4:19 and 20.

And I believe here in Genesis 17:17 Abraham was laughing in faith, in celebration, in joy that God’s promises were, in fact, after all, after all these years, going to take place.

But then there is the logic of faith. And I would ask that you look with me at verse 18.

“And Abraham said to God, ‘Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!’”¹³

¹¹ Genesis 17:17.

¹² Romans 4:19-21.

¹³ Genesis 17:18.

You see, faith reasons. And we are rational, logical, calculating people and faith reasons that if God can bless me, he can bless other people. And so Abraham plead for Ishmael to be brought into or included in the sphere of God's blessing.

But then verses 19 and following.

Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year."¹⁴

The logic of faith leads to the life of faith. And if we were to read the following verses, 23 through 27, Abraham obeyed the command of God circumcising his entire household.

And but here is where we are going this evening. What gave Abraham the confidence and the courage to trust the Lord of the impossible? Humanly, physically, biologically there was no way, no how, absolute impossibility that Abraham and Sarah could have son.

One scholar has written this.

“אלהים (el-o-heem’) is the God who creates nature so that it is and supports it so that it continues. We learn of that in Genesis one. אל שדי (ale shad-dah’- ee) is the God who compels nature to do what is contrary to itself.”

You might say, “Well, the creation of the world is impossible, that God created all that is out of nothing.”

That was the work of אלהים (el-o-heem’), the eternal, triune, Creator. But is it not also equally as difficult or impossible to control and govern nature contrary to the immutable laws? Well, that is the work of אל שדי (ale shad-dah’- ee), God almighty, אל שדי (ale shad-dah’- ee). אל שדי (ale shad-dah’- ee) is almighty God, the powerful God.

I want you to look ahead to Genesis 18 verse 14, perhaps just across the page. You might remember this context here. Sarah has now heard the covenant promise rehearsed, repeated. She laughed. But then here is the Lord's response, verse 14.

“Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Genesis 17:19-21.

¹⁵ Genesis 18:14.

You see, folks, אֱלֹהֵי שָׁרִי (ale shad-dah'- ee), God almighty can do the impossible. God revealed himself to Abraham and Sarah in an occasion in their life when they were facing the impossible. And it is as if God comes to them and says, "Abraham and Sarah, let me reveal myself to you. You know me as אֱלֹהֵיִם (el-o-heem'), the Creator of all that is. But now I introduce myself as אֱלֹהֵי שָׁרִי (ale shad-dah'- ee), the one who can take that creation and govern it in any way I please. I can do the impossible."

What a blessing for Abraham and Sarah to learn more about their God.

Now how do we respond? How do you and I respond to an almighty God, to a God almighty? How do you and I respond to the omnipotent God of the universe who can do the impossible?

First, may I suggest that we fall before him in reverence. We fall before אֱלֹהֵי שָׁרִי (ale shad-dah'- ee) in reverent worship.

I am not sure there is any other posture that is appropriate. You will recall here in Genesis 17 verse three. After אֱלֹהֵיִם (el-o-heem') revealed himself as אֱלֹהֵי שָׁרִי (ale shad-dah'- ee) to Abraham, then Abraham fell on his face and God talked with him.

Folks our אֱלֹהֵיִם (el-o-heem') is אֱלֹהֵי שָׁרִי (ale shad-dah'- ee). He is God almighty. He is omnipotent.

And our response ought to be of bowing before him in reverence.

There is a second response I think is appropriate. We must run to him as our refuge.

What you have before you there on the screen is a picture of Masada. Masada is from the Hebrew word meaning fortress or stronghold. It is the place on the western shore of the Dead Sea where Herod built his fortress. And just two years ago my wife and I were privileged to be there on the top of Masada where Herod built a fortress. It is also the place of the last Jewish stronghold where 966 Jewish zealots fled for refuge following the siege on Jerusalem in AD 70. And they committed suicide there rather than giving up to the Romans, Masada.

David wrote in Psalm 18:2, "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."¹⁶

Psalm 91:1 says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," the אֱלֹהֵי שָׁרִי (ale shad-dah'- ee). We can run to him of refuge.

¹⁶ Psalm 18:2.

Folks, our אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') is our אֵל שַׁדְּדָה (ale shad-dah'- ee). He is omnipotent. He is almighty.

A third response that I think is appropriate as we consider our אֵל שַׁדְּדָה (ale shad-dah'- ee) and that is, number three, we must trust him judgments.

The revelation of God himself to man at a specific time of man's need and we are beginning to explore that and discover that in a season of crisis in Abraham's life when he was beginning to doubt the promises of God. He needed those promises repeated to him. And then he was able to receive the promises of God because of the character and the nature of the person, the names of God.

I have no idea what is impossible in your life right now.

Point of personal testimony. We found it impossible to sell our home for the last four months, but do you know what? אֵל שַׁדְּדָה (ale shad-dah'- ee), the almighty God, the God of impossible who could certainly have reversed the mortgage, who could certainly have reversed the housing market, who could have certainly brought us a single, buyer, chose instead to bring us a Christian family who needed a home to rent indefinitely. And our omnipotent, almighty, אֵל שַׁדְּדָה (ale shad-dah'- ee) was able to handle that.

Where do you find the courage and where do you find the confidence to laugh in faith? I am so excited that God is in control. He is אֵל שַׁדְּדָה (ale shad-dah'- ee).

Father God, we do declare you to be great. We worship you as our eternal triune Creator אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem'). We worship you as the self existent one, our יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw'). And then, Lord, this evening also as our אֵל שַׁדְּדָה (ale shad-dah'- ee), our almighty God. Thank you for working the impossible in the life of Abraham and Sarah in granting them the promised son in their old age.

And, oh God, I pray that you would give us the confidence and the courage as well to trust you and to follow you and to celebrate who you are knowing that you can meet our needs even when they appear to be impossible for I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.