

Elohim...

By John Steed

It has been pointed out to me recently that those of us who have thought of this word as meaning “Mighty One” or “Mighty Ones” could in fact have been mistranslating it. This has been done usually on the assumption that Elohim is a plural form of the word El, which stems from the ancient root words ‘ayil and ‘ul which carry the meaning of strength. El is used numerous times in the Scriptures in reference to YHWH, it is also used in many personal names - such as Eliyah - and occasionally it is used in reference to idols. But this assumption is wrong. The plural form of El is Elim and this word does literally mean “Mighty Ones.”

So what does Elohim mean? Well it is quite easily established that Elohim is the plural of Eloah - this is of course the word that is Allah in Arabic. In regard to the meaning of this word Strongs says, “probably prolonged (emphat.) from 410.” 410 is El, but notice it uses the word “probably” - what this really means is that they don’t know! The more likely candidate is

Strongs #422 - “Alah { aw-law’} a primitive root; TWOT - 94; v AV - swear 4, curse 1, adjure 1; 6 GK - 457 { hl;a;

1) to swear, curse

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to swear, take an oath (before God)

1a2) to curse

1b) (Hiphil)

1b1) to put under oath, adjure

1b2) to put under a curse.”

This might sound strange at first, but if you stop and consider, it makes quite a lot of sense. What it means is that Eloah would mean “Sworn One,” or “One who is under an Oath.” Or in particular reference to YHWH -“Covenanted One.” Elohim is of course the plural of this - and the plurality may refer to the oaths, not the persons -hence “One who is under Oaths”

Now consider how **YHWH** uses the word "Elohim":

“Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YHWH, the Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Ex.3:15

YHWH had sworn oaths - made covenants - with all three individuals mentioned, so He is indeed their Sworn One!

“I am YHWH your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim (Egypt), out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other elohim before me.” Ex 20:2-3.

YHWH was in the process of making a covenant with all of Israel, in fact entering into a marriage covenant with them. He and He alone was to be their “Sworn One!”

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