

Midweek Study

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OUR GREAT GOD

THE NAMES OF GOD

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El Shaddai – The All-Sufficient One

*"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, **"I am Almighty God [El Shaddai]**; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." (Genesis 17:1-2)*

*God later explained to Moses, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as **God Almighty**" (Exodus 6:3).*

Together as *El Shaddai*, the name appears seven times in the Old Testament, yet God is also referenced solely as *Shaddai* another 41 times.

"What is the meaning of the name El Shaddai? What new facet of the character of God does it reveal? The name is generally translated as "God Almighty" or "Almighty God." The word *almighty* points to the omnipotence of God; namely, that He is all powerful and able to do anything and everything at any given time. Yet, is that all that this name intends to convey? It is possible that El Shaddai simply underscores the emphasis of El, conveying the idea of majesty or omnipotence and focusing on the absolute power of God. Yet I think it is likely that *Shaddai* might have a slightly different connotation in this context. Shaddai may be derived from the Hebrew word *shad*, which can be translated as "breast." In this case, the term Shaddai could signify the one who nourishes or supplies. Thus when it is linked with El, it would mean, "the one mighty to nourish" or "the one mighty to supply." This interpretation would thus suggest that God is the One able to pour out His blessings in full abundance.^a

1. Nothing is Impossible with El Shaddai

Until the time of Moses, when another divine name was revealed, the patriarchs considered El Shaddai the covenant name of God. When we pray to El Shaddai, we invoke the name of the one for whom nothing is impossible.^b

^a Ken Hemphill, *The Names of God*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 55.

^b Ann Spangler, *Praying the Names of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).

God revealed Himself as El Shaddai - the Almighty One who could bring fruit to an empty womb. He is the living God who could supply in abundance every need. He is the God of comfort who tenderly meets the needs of His people. What was Abram and Sarai's problem? They couldn't produce life. She was barren; they had no children. So how could God's promise, which was entirely contingent upon Sarai having a baby, be fulfilled when she had no capacity for new life? Abram and Sarai knew that they couldn't fulfill the covenant on their own. Perhaps this sounds familiar to you. Have you ever fully felt your own inability to produce what you believe God has promised in your life? Do you wonder how even God could work it out when you have so little to offer?^c

2. El Shaddai means He is our Source

*"May **God Almighty** bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples;" (Genesis 28:3 – see also Genesis 35:11)*

See Isaiah 66:10-13 and Genesis 49:24-25 – The word "breast" is "shad" in Hebrew.

3. Our Job is to Stay Close to El Shaddai

"Walk before Me" (Genesis 17:1)

*"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the **Almighty**." (Ps. 91:1)*

Jesus put it this way: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). To abide with someone is to hang out with him. It's the secret to an abundant life. Jesus tells us, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (verse 7). Just as a baby can't demand to be fed in a crib all alone, but will receive the nourishing life he or she needs only when abiding close to his or her mom, we receive all we need from God—the manifestation of His promises in us—when we are close to Him. When we follow Him and trust that He is able, we discover He truly is.^d

4. Jesus Supplies All Our Needs

- Christ is the well of water that ultimately satisfies and quenches the thirst forever. [see John 4]
- Christ is the bread that ultimately feeds His people and satisfies hunger [see John 6:35]

Questions to Consider:

- *Do you know God intimately as El Shaddai?*
- *Have you come to the point in your personal relationship with God that He is more than enough?*
- *Is He sufficient to meet all your needs?*
- *Can El Shaddai be trusted to fulfill the promises of His Word?*
- *What in your life looks impossible?*
- *Have you surrendered it fully to the Lord?*
- *Are you willing to wait upon Him to fulfill His promises?*

^c Tony Evans, *The Power of God's Names* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2014), under "El Shaddai".

^d *ibid.*