**Elohim**

 Names in the Bible are important, they were often used as an indication of a person's identification or his unique character. So it is with the names of God. When our Lord Jesus prayed for His disciples, He prayed that they might know the name of God. Jn 17:6 - "*I have manifested your name*" Jn 17:26 - "*I have declared to them your name*".

 In these sermons we want deep our relationship with God by using His names in our prayer, and get to know his rich characters of His nature that can help us to trust Him and call on His names in our specific time of need.

 **And today** we’re going to look at His very first name that appears in the very first verse of the Bible “***In the beginning Elohim- God- created the heavens and the earth***”.

 Our Lord Jesus cried out to ***Elohim*** in his agonized prayer from the cross “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabchthani? Which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Why our Lord used this name in His deepest agony? Why we too in our deepest agony we should used the name of *Elohim* in our prayers?

**Three major facts about God’s name Elohim;**

1. **Elohim is the Mighty Maker of the universe and the Supreme Creator of all life, who created everything from nothing. He is the able to give us beauty for ashes.**

 The name Elohim emphasizes God’s power and strength which is evident in creating, from nothing, the heavens, the earth and all that is in them. “In the beginning Elohim- God- created the heavens and the earth”. “***He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast*” Ps 33:9.** Heb. 11:3 “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible”.

 **It is no accident that the first thing God wanted us to know about Himself is that He is the Mighty Creator of everything.** The Bible declares that only fool who say “There is no God”.

 William Paley (1743-1805) said “***You can’t have a watch without a watchmaker. You can’t have a design without a designer. You can’t have a panting without a painter. .. We would never infer in the case of a mechanism such as a watch that its design was due to natural processes such as the wind and rain; rather, the existence of a watch points to the probability of a watchmaker. Living things are similar to mechanisms, exhibiting the same sort of orderly complexity, and we must therefore infer by analogy that their design is also the result of intelligent activity***” (*The Bible and Science made easy*, p 6).

 The whole revelation of Scripture is rooted in this fact: God is the Eternal who created the universe and everything in it. The Psalmist says: “***Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker***” (Ps 95:6). “***My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth***” (Ps 121:2). Solomon says: “***Remember your Creator in the days of your youth***” (Ecc 12:1). Apostle Paul says: “***The God who made the world and everything in it, is the Lord of heaven and earth***” (Acts 17:24). Revelation 4:11 says; “***You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.***” Job 26:7 says "***He stretches out the heaven over empty space, and hangs the earth on nothing***"

 **The early church viewed the doctrine of Creation as the beginning point of theology** **and a bedrock biblical belief.** Its importance is summed it up at the very beginning of the Apostle’s Creed: “***I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth***…”

 **When we pray to Elohim, we remember that He is the One who is creatively powerful, completely sovereign, and gloriously great. Your *help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth***” (Ps 121:2). **Your life is meant to show the greatness and glory and the very presence of your Elohim, the Mighty Creator.**

 Elohim **is the one who restore the beauty of his creation out of the wasteland.** Genesis 1:1 says “In the beginning Elohim created the heaven and the earth”. But verse 2 says “*The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep”.* **The question is what made God’s creation to be void and wasteland?** Because the Bible says in Isaiah 45:18that **“*God; who formed and made the earth,******Who has established it, did not create it in vain or wasteland, but formed it to be inhabited***”.

 Something had happened to God’s beautiful creation and ruined it. **Some believe that Satan ruined the earth, when God throw him out from heaven. But God restored the beauty of the earth again.** The Bible says: “Elohim created light, and made everything on earth that look good, and then created Adam and Eve to fill the earth and at last Elohim saw that everything is very good.

 Yes Elohim still the same, Yesterday, Today and forever” He can restore the beauty of His image in us again. What Satan did to us through our sins, Elohim is for us, He came “***To console those who mourn in Zion. To give them beauty for ashes. The oil of joy for mourning. The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. That they may be called trees of righteousness. The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified*” (Isaiah 61:1-3)**

 Trust in the name of Elohim because “The name of the Lord *is* a strong tower; - a fortified place- The righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10.)

1. **Elohim is the Covenant God.**

 "Elohim" is the plural form eloh אלה, which means "to make an oath"; as the Apostle says, “***When Elohim made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and in your seed all the nation of the earth will be blessed. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation***” (Heb. 6:13-16,)

 Elohim entered into a covenant with His people. He made the covenant to redeemed us and restore the beauty of His image in us again. He is mighty God who is able to fulfil what He has promised.

 He said: “***Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength***” (Isaiah 40:28-29).

 When we pray remember that Elohim is the God who keeps his promises, “***I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you***” (Gen 28:15). Elohim ***is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it?  Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it***? (Numbers 23:19)

1. **Elohim is the One Triune God** **who Has Value and purpose for Man**

 The word Elohim is a plural word, yet the verb that follows is always in the singular. God in Genesis 1:1 begins to tell us of His plurality in one -- TRINITY .It means that God is Father, Son and Spirit, and they are working as one.

 Notice God's plurality of oneness. (Genesis 1:26) “***And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that crepes upon the earth”***.

 In (Gen 1:27) “***God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them***” We are not just some person in the midst of a great big world who has no significance. You and I have value and God has a vision for us in that value.

 **Every Person Has a Purpose**. Simply put, every person is made in the image of God and therefore has dignity, value, and purpose. Amazingly, Psalm 139 paints a vivid picture thousands of years before technology: “***For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well***”.

 Our Lord Jesus said in Matt. 12:12 "***Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep!*** So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day." We are so valuable, because Elohim the mighty creator sent His Son to die on a cross for us. He said “***For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope***” (Jer 29:11).

 Friends you and I are valuable to God. The fact that He is mighty our Creator, the One who keeps covenant is the foundation of our hope in everything.

 Friends when you feel that you are in the middle of an impossible situation, when it seems that trouble is coming at you from all sides. Look above to sky, scenes the wonder of God’s creation, pray to Elohim, your mighty Creator, draw strength from his marvellous name. He is the One who gives meaning to your days and beauty to your life. Remember His promise “Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ (Isaiah 41: 10).

Under this name we see the Mighty God, working on a dark and ruined creature, till by His Word all is set in order and made "very good." This is the name which we need to know before all others. The first revealed in Holy Scripture; for it shows us One, who, when all is lost, in darkness and confusion, brings back, first His light and life, and then His image, into the creature, and so makes all things new and very good.He has promised “I make everything New”.

Say Yes Amen Come Lord Jesus. Blessed be His name.

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**GOD OR ELOHIM**

HAVING thus seen that in Holy Scripture God is spoken of under different names, each given with a purpose, to set forth some distinct virtue or characteristic of His nature, we may now turn to the first name under which He is revealed. This is "God,"—in Hebrew, "Elohim" (Heb. אלהים). This is the name, and the only name, by which God is set before us in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. Here we find it repeated in almost every verse. Under this name we see God, according to His own will, working on a dark and ruined creature, till by His Word all is set in order and made "very good." This is the name which we need to know before all others. This, therefore, is the first revealed in Holy Scripture; for it shews us One, who, when all is lost, in darkness and confusion, brings back, first His light and life, and then His image, into the creature, and so makes all things new and very good.

Now there are certain peculiarities connected with this name, which must be considered, if we would understand even in measure all that is divinely taught under it.

This name then, (in Hebrew, "Elohim" or "Alehim,") is a plural noun, which, though first and primarily used in Holy Scripture to describe the One true God, our Creator and Redeemer, is used also in a lower sense in reference to the "gods many and lords many" (1 Cor. 8:5), whom the ancient heathen feared and worshipped. Let us first look at the primary use of this name, in which we learn its highest significance. We shall then better understand how it could be applied to the gods of the heathen, or to the idols which represented them.

First then this name, though a plural noun, when used of the one true God is constantly joined with verbs and adjectives in the singular. (Note: For singular *verbs* with Elohim, see Gen. 1:1, 3, &c., and in countless places. For singular *adjectives* see 2 Kings 19:4, 16; Psalm 7:9; 57:2, &c. See Gesenius, *Thesaurus*, under אלהים, p. 96.) We are thus prepared, even from the beginning, for the mystery of a plurality in God, who, though He says, "There is no God beside me" (Deut. 32:39), and "I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:5, 22), says also, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26); and again, "The man is become like one of us" (Gen. 3:22); and again at Babel, "Go to, let us go down and confound their language" (Gen. 11:7); and again, in the vision granted to the prophet Isaiah, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" (Isa. 6:8). And this same mystery, though hidden from an English reader, comes out again and again in many other texts of Holy Scripture. For "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," is literally, "Remember thy Creators" (Eccl. 12:1). Again, "None saith, Where is God my Maker?" is in the Hebrew, "God my Makers" (Job 35:10). So again, "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him," is, in the Hebrew, "in his Makers" (Psalm 149:2). And so again in the Proverbs, "The knowledge of the Holy Ones is understanding" (Prov. 9:10). So again where the Prophet says, "Thy Maker is thy husband," both words are plural in the Hebrew (Isa. 54:5). Many other passages of Scripture have precisely the same peculiarity. (Note: For example, "Holy Ones" in Job 5:1, and in Hos. 11:12; and "Thy Redeemers" in Isa. 44:24, &c.) Therefore in heaven "Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8), while on earth, taught by the Spirit of our Lord, we say, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. 13:14). The plural form of the first name of God, that is "Elohim," shadows forth the same mystery; while the verb, and even the adjective, joined with it in the singular, as when we read, "the living" (2 Kings 19:4, 16; Heb. אלהים הי), or "the righteous" (Psalm 7:9; Heb. אלהים צדיק), or "the Most High God" (Psalm 57:2; Heb. אלהים עליון), (Note: See Gesenius, *Thesaurus*, p. 96, under אלהים.) shew that this "Elohim," though plural, is but One God. (Note: In a very few places this name, "Elohim," is joined with plural adjectives, (see Gen. 20:13; 35:7;) and verbs, (Deut. 4:7; 5:26; Josh. 24:19; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; 2 Sam. 7:23; Psalm 58:12; Jer. 10:10; 23:36.) But in all these cases, except the first two, where perhaps angels are referred to, the name "Jehovah" is connected with "Elohim;" and the plural adjective or verb may be used to teach us, that in the One "Jehovah" there is the plurality of the "Elohim.")

Further, this name, like every other name in the Hebrew, has a distinct meaning, full of significance. For the word "Elohim" (Heb. אלהים) is formed from the Hebrew word, "Alah," (Heb. אלה) "to swear," and describes One who stands in a covenant-relationship, which is ratified by an oath. Parkhurst, in his well-known Lexicon, thus explains the name:—"Elohim:" "A name usually given in the Hebrew Scriptures to the ever-blessed Trinity, by which they represent themselves as under the obligation of an oath. ... This oath, (referred to in Psalm 110:4, 'The Lord sware and will not repent,') was prior to creation. Accordingly 'Jehovah' is at the beginning of the creation called 'Elohim,' in Gen. 1:1, which implies that the Divine Persons had sworn when they created; and it is evident, from Gen. 3:4, 5, that both the Serpent and the Woman knew 'Jehovah' by this name, 'Elohim,' before the Fall." (Note: Parkhurst adds here, "From this name (Elohim) of the true God, the Greeks had their Ζεὺς ὅρκιος. Hence, also, the corrupt tradition of Jupiter's oath, which overruled even Fate itself" (*Heb. Lex.* in loc.). As to the view of some, that the word "Elohim" is derived directly from El, (אל) which signifies "strong" or "mighty," it may perhaps suffice to say that the plural of El is Elim, not Elohim. God surely may be and is called both "El," (Gen. 14:20, and in many other places,) and "Elim," (as in Psalm 29:1; and elsewhere,) that is "The Mighty;" but the letter H in "Elohim" points to the true etymology of the name, as from אלה, "to swear"; though, indeed, אלה is also probably connected with אל; for, as the Apostle says, (Heb. 6:16,) "Men verily swear by the greater;" and the original idea of an oath may have been this affirmation by the "Strong" or "Mighty One." In the case of God, as the same Apostle writes, "Because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself." (Heb. 6:13.)) Here a wondrous deep opens to our view, as to the nature and being of God. Blessed be His name, that He has Himself, both by His Son and by His Spirit, given us some glimpses into the height and the depth here set before us, which flesh and blood never could have fathomed.

For this covenant-relationship, which the name "Elohim" expresses, is first a relationship in God. He is One, but in Him also, as His name declares, there is plurality; and in this plurality He has certain relationships, both in and with Himself, which, because He is God, can never be dissolved or broken. Thus, as Parkhurst says, this name contains the mystery of the Trinity. For the perfect revelation of this great mystery man had indeed to wait until it was declared by the Only-begotten of the Father, and even then only after His resurrection from the dead, to those whom He had called to be His disciples. But from the beginning the name "Elohim" contained and shadowed it forth, and the visions and words of the prophets gave still clearer intimations of it.

Into this mystery, however, I do not here enter, further than to say, with St. Augustine, that, if God is love, then in God there must be a Lover, a Beloved, and the Spirit of love, for there can be no love without a lover and a beloved. (Note: "Ubi amor, ibi trinitas." See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, lib. viii. cap. 10; lib. ix. cap. 2; and lib. xv. cap. 3.) And if God be eternal, then there must be an eternal Lover, and an eternal Beloved, and an eternal Spirit of Love, which unites the eternal Lover to the eternal Beloved, in a bond of Love which is eternal and indissoluble. The relationship in God, in and with Himself, is one in which there can be no breach. From the beginning God is "Elohim," in covenant-union with Himself for evermore.

But the truth here, as to the covenant-relationship involved in the name "Elohim," goes still further. For the Beloved is the Son, "the Word," "by whom all things were made," and "in whom all things consist." "All things were created by Him and for Him." (John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17.) God therefore, or "Elohim," in covenant with the Beloved Son, must be in covenant with all that is created by Him, and which only consists, or is held together, in Him. For, as St. Paul says, He is "the God who cannot lie, who promised eternal life before the world began" (Titus 1:2),—words which again refer to the covenant in Christ before the Fall:—"the Faithful Creator," as St. Peter adds, to whom we may "commit the keeping of our souls" (1 Pet. 4:19); for "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). And in virtue of this covenant-relationship, because He is "Elohim," though His creatures fail and fall, "He will never leave us, nor forsake us."

It may be asked, whether, when this name was first revealed, those who received it could have understood all that was thus implicitly contained in and taught by it. Probably they did not. When God first speaks, men rarely, if ever, fully understand Him. It is only by degrees, and just in proportion as His servants and disciples treasure up His words and seek to obey Him, that those words, often very slowly, open to them. All our first apprehensions of Him and of His truth are imperfect, and mixed with fallacies arising from the senses. Nevertheless His words, even when little understood, convey true blessing to those who receive them, though the depths of Divine wisdom which they contain are more or less hidden. Who at first takes in all that Nature is saying to us? Who, when he first receives the Gospel or the Sacraments of the Gospel, understands all that they convey and witness to him? And so with the names of God. Though even yet little understood, from the beginning they have been telling what God's fulness is, and through His grace telling it in such ways and in such measures as fallen men were able to receive and profit by. Just in proportion as they walked with Him, His names and words would open to them, while, if they forsook Him, the selfsame words would first be dark and then perverted to misrepresent Him. For the Word of God, if not obeyed, ever becomes a curse and snare, even confirming men in their worst errors and delusions.

It was so with this first and wondrous name, "Elohim." The truth it taught was soon abused and turned into a lie, as man departed more and more from God, and in His place "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." For the truth, that in "Elohim," who says, "There is no God beside me," there is plurality, was soon perverted into many gods; the manifold and diverse powers in nature, which had been formed to shew forth God's fulness, being worshipped as so many distinct and differing deities; and then His covenant-relation to His creatures was made the ground of the doctrine, that each nation or people had its tutelary gods, who stood in special relationship to those who acknowledged and served them. Thus each country had its own gods, some the "gods of the hills," some those "of the valleys" (Judges 10:6; 1 Kings 11:33; 20:23, 28), each of which was worshipped as more or less intimately related to different lands or peoples. For, looking at nature, fallen man saw power or force on every hand: power in the sun, which seemed to make the earth bring forth and bud: power in the earth to support and nourish all creatures: power in the sea, and in the air; in cold and lightning, and storm. Each of these seemed stronger than man: some served him at times, but could also cross and wound and slay him. So man, having let go the faith that God is Love, bowed to the powers which were around him, and looked to them and worshipped them as gods. Is there no such worship even now? Alas, the world always does this. For a worshipper by his very constitution man must be. And if he cannot trust a God of Love and Truth, the true "Elohim," he will surely look for help to some of the forces, seen or unseen, which compass him on every hand. (Note: Parkhurst, in his note on the secondary sense of the word, "Elohim," as applied to the gods or powers which the heathen worshipped, says, "The ancient heathen called, not only the whole heaven, but any one of its three conditions, (namely fire, light, and air or spirit,) 'Elohim.' They meant not to deny the joint action of the material trinity, but to give it the glory of each particular attribute. See Hutchinson's *Trinity of the Gentiles*, p. 246; and also his *Moses sine Principio,* p. 116.")

But to return to the name, "Elohim," as used in Holy Scripture of the One true God. The whole first chapter of Genesis shews us One, who, because He is "Elohim," in virtue of His own nature and covenant-relation to His creature, can never leave it, fallen as it is, till all again is very good. In that opening chapter, which is indeed the foundation and sum of all further revelation, we are told of a creation, by "Elohim," of the heavens and the earth; and then that creation, or part of it at least, is shewn as fallen, "without form and void," with "darkness upon the face of the deep." But does "Elohim" forsake it because it has become dark and void and formless? No. When nothing else moves, "the Spirit of God moves," (literally, "broods,") "over the face of the waters," and then "Elohim" speaks, and by His Word, step by step, the wondrous change is wrought, till the day of rest is reached, when "all is very good."

For the fallen creature begins nothing, continues nothing, perfects nothing. Each stage of the restoration is the direct result of the unsought word and work of "Elohim." At every step again and again we read, "God said," and "God made" (Gen. 1:3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 16, &c.). Throughout, all is of God, whose name and nature in itself contains the pledge that He cannot rest till His fallen creature is restored and re-created. No wonder then that the early Church dwelt so much and often on the work of the Six Days, (Note: Almost all the Great Fathers have left us their *Hexemerons.*) seeing in them a covenant-God, whose new creation from first to last is wholly His workmanship. And what a work it is! First "Elohim" by His word brings "light." Then a "heaven" is formed in the yet restless creature, to divide the waters from the waters. Then a rising "earth" is seen emerging from the waters. Then come "fruits;" then "lights;" then "living creatures," first from the waters, then from the earth; till at last the "man" is created in the image of God to have dominion over all. Nothing hinders His work or changes His purpose. Again and again, even after He begins His work, the awful darkness rises for awhile, and in each returning "evening" seems to swallow up the light; but again and again the covenant-God, "Elohim," binds the darkness every "morning," and even incorporates it into "days" of ever-progressing blessing, for it is written, "The evening and the morning made the day," until the seventh day comes, when we read of no "evening." Blessed be God, not a few by grace know all these stages in their own experience. They know, that, until the Word has spoken, there is no light in them by which to see their ruin. What barren restless waters does the light at first reveal. But the very discovery of the barrenness is progress. Till this is seen, no heaven is formed. Till the heaven is formed, the earth can yield no fruits or increase. Till the fruits appear, there are no lights in heaven, to rule the day and to rule the night, nor living creatures either from the waters or the earth. Every stage is a preparation for something yet more perfect. It is only as we know our need that we really know God. And by His work in us He makes us know what it is to have a covenant-God, whose fulness meets our every want, and whose very name and nature is the pledge of our deliverance.

And mark especially that "Elohim" works, not only *on*, but *with*, the creature. This indeed is grace, most wondrous and abounding. For it is all of grace that "Elohim" should restore and save His fallen creature. It is still greater grace that in the restoration He makes that creature a fellow-worker with Himself. Yet so it is. For He says, "Let the waters bring forth," and "Let the earth bring forth" (Gen. 1:11, 20, 24). In other words He calls the fallen creature to travail and labour with Him. His love indeed is the cause of all, and His Word the agent in effecting all; but in accomplishing His purpose He works, not apart from, but with, the creature. Herein is the root of the truth which lies in the doctrine of Evolution. For it is not that Nature, unaided or apart from God, can re-create or change herself, or by herself evolve ever-advancing forms of life, all leading up to man in God's image; but rather, that, even in her lowest fall, God accepts the captive powers of the fallen creature, as a matrix from which, through successive births, all quickened by His Word, He may, according to her advancing state, bring forth advancing forms of life, each shewing some nearer resemblance to His image. And the fact that this earth, when God began to work upon it, was itself the ruin of a prior creation, (Note: In Isaiah 45:18, God distinctly says that He did not create the earth "without form;" in Hebrew, "tohu," תהו. The formlessness was the result of some fall.)—the debris, if I mistake not, of the once bright spiritual kingdom of Satan and his angels, destroyed and self-consumed by him,—may explain what seems so perplexing, namely that there should be in all nature, what some have called "a concausation of evil." (Note: John Stuart Mill constantly repeats this thought, that in nature, not only do we see the presence both of good and evil, but further, that the evil is *working with the good*, in the composition of things as they now are; which to him appears a proof that nature cannot be the work of a perfectly good and powerful God. See his *Essay on Nature*, almost *passim*; and the second part of the *Essay on Theism*, entitled *Attributes*, pp. 184, 185, 186.) God certainly adopted the darkness of each returning "evening," and incorporated it into "days" of ever growing order, until the seventh day comes without an evening. Had not the "earth" and "waters" also germs in them of their fallen and corrupted nature, and do not these manifest themselves, even when they are commanded by Elohim to bring forth new life? Certainly in our regeneration we see how the old man shews himself, and is even stimulated by the Word, which brings new and strange forms of life out of the fallen creature. Such a working shews what "Elohim" is, who in His faithfulness and grace bears with imperfect forms of life, the dumb "fish" and "creeping thing," until He Himself "creates" (Gen. 1:27) the man in His own image, when "all is very good." It has ever been so: Moses before Christ; the flesh or letter before the Spirit; yet both of God, and shewing forth His grace, who works not only on, but with, the creature.

Such is the light which the opening chapter of the book of Genesis throws on the special meaning of the first name of God, "Elohim." Fully to illustrate its import would require an examination of every passage, where this name occurs in Holy Scripture. But to attempt this here would be impossible. (Note: The name "Elohim" occurs about two thousand two hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament.) Nor is it necessary. Any careful reader, once in possession of the key which the Hebrew name carries in itself, can test how the idea conveyed by it is always that of "One in covenant." A selection of texts would only give a part of the evidence. But I may cite a few to shew how distinctly this name, "Elohim," refers to and implies One who stands in a covenant-relationship.

Take the following as examples. First, God's words to Noah:—"And Elohim said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, ... but with thee will I establish my covenant" (Gen. 6:13, 18). "And I, behold I, establish my covenant with you, and with your seed, and with every living creature that is with you. And this is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you. I do set my bow in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 9:9-17). So in His words to Abram, "Elohim's" name pledges the same relationship:—"I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be thou perfect; and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in all generations, to be a God to thee, and to thy seed, and I will be their Elohim," that is, I will be with them in covenant-relationship (Gen. 17:1-8). Therefore again and again we read that "Elohim remembered:"—"Elohim remembered Noah" (Gen. 8:1); and again, "When God destroyed the cities of the plain, Elohim remembered Abram, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" (Gen. 19:29); and again, "Elohim remembered Rachel" (Gen. 30:22; also Exod. 2:24). There is the same reference to a covenant in God's words to Isaac (Gen. 26:24), and to Jacob (Gen. 28:13, 14); and Joseph's dying words witness to the same:—"I die, but Elohim will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, into the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Gen. 50:24). Moses no less refers to it (Exod. 6:2, 3, 4, 7, 8; Deut 7:9). David's joy too in the Lord, his God, is, that "He will ever be mindful of His covenant" (Psalm 111:5). Therefore in His deepest trials he "encourages himself in God," saying, "O my soul, hope thou in God, who is the health of my countenance and my God" (Psalm 42:5, 11). His "last words" dwell on the same theme: "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:1, 3, 5); for "Jehovah Elohim" had said, "My mercy will I keep for him for ever, and my covenant shall stand fast with him" (Psalm 89:8, 28). It is the same with all the saints. The fact that God is "Elohim," that is the "One who keepeth covenant" (1 Kings 8:23), is the foundation of His creature's hope in every extremity. "God is our refuge and strength" (Psalm 46:1). "He is my God, and my father's God" (Exod. 15:2). And "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Gen. 28:13-15; Heb. 13:5). For "He is God of gods, and Lord of lords: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and the widow" (Deut. 10:17-18). "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God, in His holy habitation" (Psalm 68:5). The faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4:19) cannot fail His creatures. They may be, and are, unworthy, but He is "Elohim" for evermore. Therefore He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for there is no Elohim besides me. I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear" (Isa. 45:22, 23).

And this is the truth, which, above all others, the Gospel opens, in the life and ways of Him who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3), who has come to reveal to us a Father's love, which cannot fail because we are "His offspring" (Acts 17:28). We may need another view of God, as the One who "loves righteousness and hates iniquity," and who therefore must judge all evil (Heb. 10:30), till it is destroyed, and "mortality is swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:4). And this, as we shall see, is the special lesson of the second name of God, "Jehovah." But, before and beneath and beyond all this, God yet is "Elohim," that is, God, in covenant. His creatures may not know it. Even His Church may very dimly see it. But God has said, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that is gone out of my lips" (Psalm 89:34). Well may Paul argue, "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." Seen as "Jehovah," God may give law; and "the law worketh wrath; for where there is no law, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). But "the covenant which was confirmed before of God in, or to (Gr. εἰς Χριστόν), Christ, the law which was four hundred years after cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Gal. 3:15-18). The law was needed in its place, to shew the creature what it is, and to slay in man the fallen life of independence. But "the ministration of death and condemnation" is "to be done away," while "the ministration of righteousness and life remaineth" (2 Cor. 3:7-11). So the Apostle says again, even of those who slew and rejected Christ, "God is able to graff them in again. ... For this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. ... And God hath concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; ... for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things" (Rom. 11:23-36).

This is what the name "God," or "Elohim," brings out so fully, in itself forestalling not a little of that which we now call the Gospel: this is what the ever-blessed God would teach us, when He assures us that He will be "our God" (Isa. 40:1; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; Ezek. 34:31; 36:28, &c.). "For this is the covenant, ... I will put my laws into their minds, and in their heart will I write them; and I will be unto them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10). In a word, God promises for both, saying not only, "I will," but "They shall," that is, pledging His word both for Himself and for His creatures. Our Lord's own teaching only repeats the selfsame truth, in those blessed words, even yet so little understood, to Pharisees and Scribes, who objected that He "received sinners" (Luke 15:1, 2, &c.). "What man of you," He says, fallen and wretched as you are, would be content to lose even a sheep, which had strayed and wandered from him? Or what woman would be content to lose a piece of silver? Would they not seek their lost until they found it? Is God's love for His creature less than a man's is for a sheep? Is not the lost creature really God's loss? Can He rest, when it is lost, until He find it? And when it is found, is it not His joy even more than the recovered creature's? For it is not the joy of the recovered sheep, nor of the silver, nor of the once lost son, that our Lord declares in these Parables, but the joy of the Shepherd, and of the Woman, and of the Father, each of whom exclaims, "Rejoice with me, for I have found that which I had lost." The name "Elohim" says all this, and more also. It says that "God has sworn" (Heb. 6:13). It declares that "God, willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, (His will and His word,) in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:17, 18). This is our refuge:—"God is not a man, that He should lie, or the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numb. 23:19, 21). Herein is the creature's hope. God is and shall be God for ever. A "great voice from heaven" has said, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3, 4).

Such is the first name of God which Holy Scripture gives us. What has here been said in illustration of it, though it affords the key to the view of God which this name reveals for the comfort of His creatures, necessarily fails, (for it is only a part of the wondrous record of "Elohim,") to express the overflowing riches of that unforsaking love, of which this name, wherever it occurs in Scripture, is the ceaseless witness. Blessed be God for such a revelation. Shall we not pray for opened eyes, to understand all that is treasured up for us and for all creatures in "Elohim"? Shall we not bless Him who has said, "I will be to you a God"? Shall not every heart reply, "My Elohim, in Him will I trust"? (Psalm 91:2).