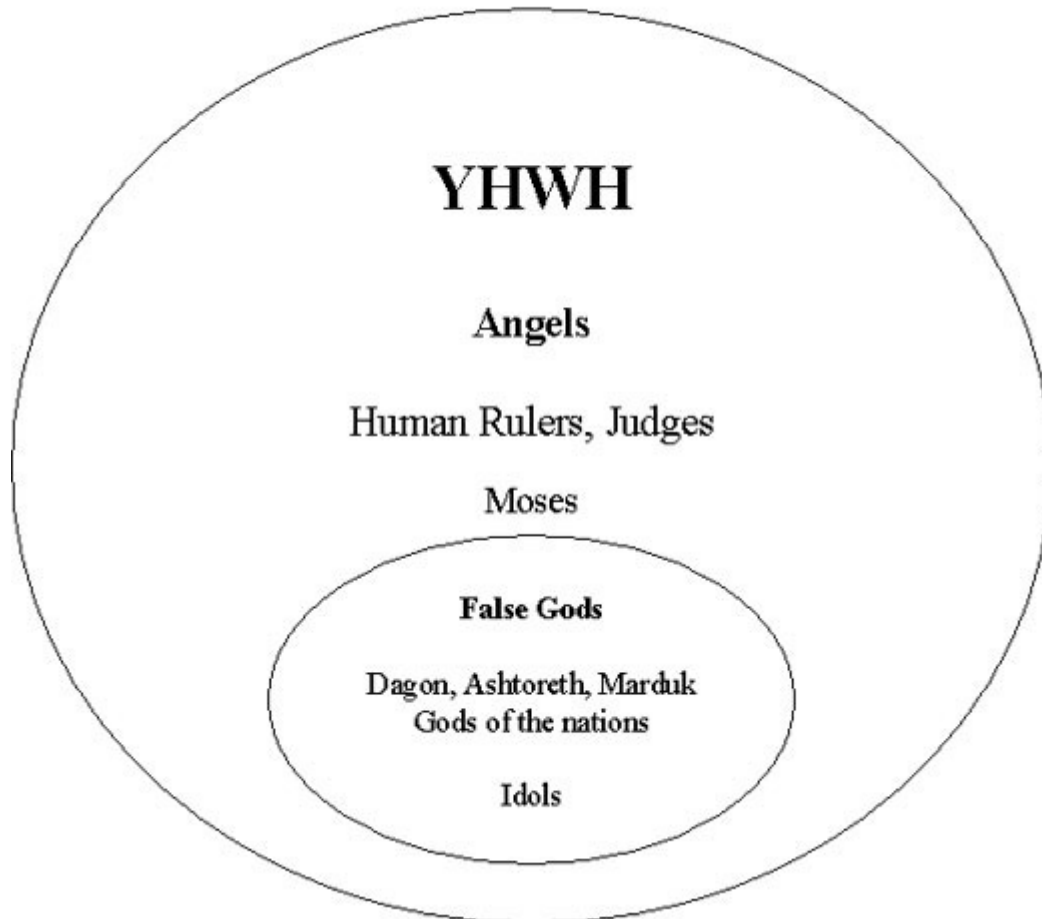


# Old Testament Monotheism: The Usage and Meaning of Elohim

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## Gods in the Hebrew Scriptures.



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### The One God, YHWH

(Genesis 14:22) At this A'bram said to the king of Sod'om: "I do lift up my hand [in an oath] to **YHWH** the Most High **God**, Producer of heaven and earth,

(Exodus 20:2) "I am **YHWH** your **God**, who have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves.

(Jeremiah 10:10) But **YHWH** is in truth **God**. He is the living **God** and the King to time indefinite.

(1 Kings 18:39) When all the people saw it, they immediately fell upon their faces and said: "**YHWH** is the [true] **God!** **YHWH** is the [true] **God!**"

And over 2,000 additional references of Elohim to the one God.

When applying to YHWH, 'Elo-him' is used as a plural of majesty, dignity, or excellence. (Ge 1:1) Regarding this, Aaron Ember wrote:

"That the language of the O[ld] T[estament] has entirely given up the idea of plurality in . . . ['Elo-him'] (as applied to the God of Israel) is especially shown by the fact that it is almost invariably construed with a singular verbal predicate, and takes a singular adjectival attribute. . . . ['Elo-him'] must rather be explained as an intensive plural, denoting greatness and majesty, being equal to The Great God."- *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. XXI, 1905, p. 208.

Elohim appears 35 times by itself in the account of creation, and every time the verb describing what he said and did is in the singular number. (Ge 1:1-2:4)

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## Angels as Gods

(Ps 8:5) You also proceeded to make him a little less than **godlike ones** [Heb: elohim], And with glory and splendor you then crowned him.

Brenton's LXX: Psalm 8:5 Thou madest him a little less than **angels**, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour;

The author of Hebrews confirmed this was a correct translation when he quoted it. (Heb 2:7,9) You made him a little lower than **angels**; with glory and honor you crowned him, and appointed him over the works of your hands. 9 but we behold Jesus, who has been made a little lower than **angels**, crowned with glory and honor for having suffered death, that he by God's undeserved kindness might taste death for every [man].

(De 32:43) Be glad, you nations, with his people, For he will avenge the blood of his servants, And he will pay back vengeance to his adversaries And will indeed make atonement for the ground of his people."

New Revised Standard: Deuteronomy 32:43 Praise, O heavens, his people, worship him, all you **gods!** For he will avenge the blood of his children, and take vengeance on his adversaries; he will repay those who hate him, and cleanse the land for his people.

Brenton's LXX: Deuteronomy 32:43 Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and let all the **angels of God** worship him; rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him; for he will avenge the blood of his sons, and he will render vengeance, and recompense justice to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him; and the Lord shall purge the land of his people.

Once again, the author of Hebrews confirmed this understanding when he quoted it at Hebrews 1:6: (Heb 1:6) But when he again brings his Firstborn into the inhabited earth, he says: "And let all **God's angels** do obeisance to him."

(Ps 97:7) Let all those serving any carved image be ashamed, Those who are making their boast in valueless gods. Bow down to him, all you **gods**.

Brenton's LXX: Psalm 96:7 Let all that worship graven images be ashamed, who boast of their idols; worship him, all ye his angels.

(Ps 138:1) I shall laud you with all my heart. In front of other **gods** I shall make melody to you.

Brenton's LXX: Psalm 137:1 I will give thee thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; and I will sing psalms to thee before the **angels**; for thou hast heard all the words of my mouth.

(De 10:17) For YHWH your God is the **God of gods** and the Lord of lords, the God great, mighty and fear-inspiring, who treats none with partiality nor accepts a bribe,

(Ps 136:2) Give thanks to the **God of the gods**: For his loving-kindness is to time indefinite;

Origen quoted Psalm 136:2 and gave the following commentary. Note the understanding of "gods:" God on the one hand is Very God (Autotheos, God of himself); and so the Savior says in His prayer to the Father, "That they may know Thee the only true God;" but that all beyond the Very God is *made God by participation in His divinity*, and is not to be called simply God (or, god, without the article), but rather God (or, God, with the article). *And thus the first-born of all creation, who is the first to be with God, and to attract to Himself divinity is a being of more exalted rank than **the other gods beside Him**, of whom God is the God, as it is written, "**The God of gods, the Lord [YHWH]**, hath spoken and called the earth."* [Ps. 136:2] It was by the offices of the first-born that they became gods, for they drew from God in generous measure that they should be made gods, and He communicated it to them according to his own bounty. *The true God, then, is "The God," and those who are formed after him are gods, images, as it were, of Him the prototype.*" -Origen, Commentary on John, Ante Nicene Fathers 10, Book 2, p. 323.

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### **Angels in the Class of Gods**

(Ge 6:2,4) then the **sons of the [true] God** began to notice the daughters of men, that they were good-looking; and they went taking wives for themselves, namely, all whom they chose. 4 The Neph'i·lim proved to be in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the **sons of the [true] God** continued to have relations with the daughters of men and they bore sons to them, they were the mighty ones who were of old, the men of fame.

(Job 1:6) Now it came to be the day when the **sons of the [true] God** entered to take their station before YHWH, and even Satan proceeded to enter right among them.

New Revised Standard: Job 1:6 One day the **heavenly beings** came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

Brenton's LXX: Job 1:6 And it came to pass on a day, that behold, the **angels of God** came to stand before the Lord, and the devil came with them.

(Job 2:1) Afterward it came to be the day when the **sons of the [true] God** entered to take their station before YHWH, and Satan also proceeded to enter right among them to take his station before YHWH.

New Revised Standard: Job 2:1 One day the **heavenly beings** came to present

themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.

Marvin Hope, Job (1965): Job 2:1 The day arrived when the **gods** come and present themselves before Yahweh.

Brenton's LXX: Job 2:1 And it came to pass on a certain day, that the **angels of God** came to stand before the Lord, and the devil came among them to stand before the Lord.

(Job 38:7) When the morning stars joyfully cried out together, And all the **sons of God** began shouting in applause?

New Revised Standard: Job 38:7 when the morning stars sang together and all the **heavenly beings** shouted for joy?

Brenton's LXX: Job 38:7 When the stars were made, all my **angels** praised me with a loud voice.

Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros, by Koehler and Baumgartner (1958), page 134, says: "(individual) divine beings, gods." And page 51 says: "the (single) gods," and it cites Genesis 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7.

Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, by H. W. F. Gesenius, trans. A. E. Crowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 418, sec. 128, V, says: "There is another use of ben [son] or beney [sons of] to denote membership in a guild or society (or of a tribe, and any definite class). Thus beney ha-elohim [sons of (the) God] Gn 6:2, 3, Jb 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 ... properly means not sons of god(s), but beings of the class of elohim [God]."

The Sons of (the) Gods(s), by Gerald Cooke, AW 76 (1964), 36, concludes: "the 'sons of (the) God(s)' are to be understood without question as lesser divine beings."

BDB Hebrew Lexicon, page 43, says: (the) sons of God, or sons of gods = angels Jb 1(6) 2(1) 38(7) Gn 6(2,4)

Support from the New Testament

Jude 6,7: And the angels that did not keep their original position but forsook their own proper dwelling place he has reserved with eternal bonds under dense darkness for the judgment of the great day. 7 So too Sod'om and Go·mor'rah and the cities about them, after they in the same manner as the foregoing ones had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for unnatural use, are placed before [us] as a [warning] example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.

2 Peter 2:4,5: Certainly if God did not hold back from punishing the angels that sinned, but, by throwing them into Tar'ta·rus, delivered them to pits of dense darkness to be reserved for judgment; 5 and he did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people;

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**Rulers, Judges**

(Ex 21:6) then his master must bring him near to **the [true] God** and must bring him up against the door or the doorpost; and his master must pierce his ear through with an awl, and he must be his slave to time indefinite

(Ex 22:7,8) "In case a man should give his fellow money or articles to keep, and it gets stolen from the man's house, if the thief should be found, he is to make double compensation. 8 If the thief should not be found, then the owner of the house must be brought near to **the [true] God** to see whether he did not put his hand upon the goods of his fellow.

(Ps 82:1,6) God is stationing himself in the assembly of the Divine One; In the middle of the gods he judges: 6 "I myself have said, 'You **are gods**, And all of you are sons of the Most High.

Jesus quoted in John 10:34,35: Jesus answered them: "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said: "**You are gods**"?' 35 If he called 'gods' those against whom the word of God came, and yet the Scripture cannot be nullified,

*BDB Hebrew Lexicon, page 43, says: rulers, judges, either as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power.*

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### **Humans as Gods**

(Ex 4:16) And he must speak for you to the people; and it must occur that he will serve as a mouth to you, and you will serve as **God** to him.

(Ex 7:1) Consequently YHWH said to Moses: "See, I have made you **God** to Phar'aoh, and Aaron your own brother will become your prophet.

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### **False Gods**

(1Sa 5:7) And the men of Ash'dod came to see that it was so, and they said: "Do not let the ark of the God of Israel dwell with us, because his hand has been hard against us and against **Da'gon our god**."

(1Ki 11:5) And Sol'o-mon began going after **Ash'to-reth the goddess** of the Si-do'ni-ans and after Mil'com the disgusting thing of the Am'mon-ites.

(Da 1:2) In time YHWH gave into his hand Je-hoi'a-kim the king of Judah and a part of the utensils of the house of the [true] God, so that he brought them to the land of Shi'nar to the house of his god; and the utensils he brought to the treasure-house of **his god** [Marduk].

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### **YHWH and Others Collectively Called Gods**

(Ps 86:8) There is none like you among the **gods**, O YHWH, Neither are there any works like yours.

(Ex 18:11) Now I do know that YHWH is greater than all the [other] **gods** by reason of this affair in which they acted presumptuously against them."

(Ex 22:20) "One who sacrifices to **any gods** but YHWH alone is to be devoted to destruction.

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### **Other Gods Referenced at Times Without Divinity**

(Isa 44:6) "This is what YHWH has said, the King of Israel and the Repurchaser of him, YHWH of armies, 'I am the first and I am the last, and besides me there is **no God**.

(Isa 45:5,14,21) I am YHWH, and there is no one else. With the exception of me there is **no God**. I shall closely gird you, although you have not known me, 14 This is what YHWH has said: "The unpaid laborers of Egypt and the merchants of E·thi·o'pi·a and the Sa·be'ans, tall men, will themselves come over even to you, and yours they will become. Behind you they will walk; in fetters they will come over, and to you they will bow down. To you they will pray, [saying,] 'Indeed God is in union with you, and there is no one else; there is **no [other] God**.'" 21 Make your report and your presentation. Yes, let them consult together in unity. Who has caused this to be heard from a long time ago? [Who] has reported it from that very time? Is it not I, YHWH, besides whom there is **no other God**; a righteous God and a Savior, there being none excepting me?

(Isa 46:9) Remember the first things of a long time ago, that I am the Divine One and there is **no other God**, nor anyone like me;

(2Ch 13:9) Have you not driven out YHWH's priests, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and do you not keep making priests for yourselves like the peoples of the lands? As for anyone that came and filled his hand with power by means of a young bull and seven rams, he became a priest of what are **no gods**.

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### **Other Gods**

(Exodus 20:3) You must not have any **other gods** against my face.

(Joshua 24:2) And Joshua went on to say to all the people: "This is what YHWH the God of Israel has said, 'It was on the other side of the River that YOUR forefathers dwelt a long time ago, Te'rah the father of Abraham and the father of Na'hor, and they used to serve **other gods**.

(Deuteronomy 31:18) As for me, I shall absolutely conceal my face in that day because of all the badness that they have done, because they have turned to **other gods**.

See also: Exo 23:13; Josh 24:16; Deut 31:20; Judg 2:12,17,19; 10:13; 1Sam 8:5; 26:19; 1Kings 9:6,7; 11:4,10; 14:9; 2Kings 5:17; 17:35,37,38; 22:17; 2Chr 7:19,22; 28:25; 34:25; Jer 1:16; Hos 3:1

Source : <http://jehovah.to/exe/hebrew/elohim.htm>

*Jehovah's Witnesses United > Exegesis > Hebrew*