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The "Higher Criticism" and the Variant Names for God in the Bible

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Abstract: This two-part series discusses higher criticism and the names and titles of God. The second part concludes the series.

The "Higher Criticism" and the Variant Names for God in the Bible

BY ROBERT C. WEBB

II

It is perfectly admissible to assume, however, that the name Jehovah was added to that of Elohim by some later scribe, who also introduced it in the forty-two other passages in the Book of Genesis, where, as asserted in the previous article, it does not properly belong. It is quite impossible to deny that the text of Genesis has been altered in some particulars in other passages. If it has been altered here also, we find a perfectly consistent and intelligible explanation for the act. Nor is the admission of this fact any allowance of the further claims of destructive "critics", who begin by urging this frivolous ground of "differing names of God" as the basis of their preposterous fabric of presumption.

In spite, however, of the "microscopic analyses" of "higher critics" in their efforts to "rationalize" the Bible, they failed at the very start to notice the nearly unique structure of the second and third chapters of Genesis, which should forever destroy in the mind of any thinking person all suspicion that these chapters can possibly be from a "document" different from the first chapter, on the basis of the "different name for God". The name for God, as demanded by the grammatical construction, in the second and third chapters is *Elohim*, precisely as in the first. If, therefore, we are required to advance any theory whatever in the premises, we should assert, without qualification, that the name Jehovah had been added later, as the result of such an "after-thought" as we have indicated above.

The ground of such a conclusion may be briefly explained. In the second and third chapters we shall find that the title "Lord God", or Jehovah-God, is used twenty times, eighteen times as the subject of a verb. It is a curious fact, but none the less true, that this same compound name is not used as a verbal subject half as many times again in the whole of the remainder of the Old Testament. In other words the compounding of these two words is very nearly exceptional in Hebrew literature. They occur in close juxtaposition, to be sure, in 880 different places in twenty-nine separate books of the Old Testament, but the relation is properly that of apposition, or the construction in which the two words are used as synonyms, and may be separated by a comma,

rather than of compounding, in which they may be joined by a hyphen, as written above.³ This fact of apposition of the two words is recognized by the Revisers, who indicate it in most cases.

The full force of the above-mentioned distinction may be understood when we indicate the fact that, out of the 880 occurrences of the juxtaposition of *Jehovah* and *Elohim* fully 840 cases show the word *Elohim* in the "construct state", which is to say standing in closed relation to a succeeding word, or a suffixed word, which in another language would stand in the genitive case (that is in the "of" case). Now, in the Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and other Indo-European languages, such *succeeding word* would be modified in form to indicate the genitive, or possessive, case. Thus we may say in English either "the gods of the Egyptians" or the "Egyptians' gods". In the first example the word Egyptians is governed by the particle "of", in the other, it is modified to form the possessive case. In Hebrew, however, the word "gods", in this sentence, would be the one modified, so as to give, literally, a form directly translatable as "the gods-of the Egyptians", the modification being in the object of the possession, not in the possessor. So, also, when constructed with pronouns, nouns take suffixes indicating the person and number (also the gender) of the indicated possessor or possessors. Thus, among the several constructions of *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, we have the following:

- The Lord, thy God, *Jehovah Elohe(y)-ka* (literally, "God-thy").
- The Lord, your God, *Jehovah Elohe(y)-kem* (literally, "God-your").
- The Lord, our God, *Jehovah Elohe(y)-nu* (literally, "God-our").
- The Lord, God of your fathers, *Jehovah Elohe(y) abothe(y)-kem* (literally, "God-of fathers-your").
- The Lord, God of the Hebrews, *Jehovah Elohe(y) ha (h)Ibriyim*.

These examples serve to enforce the contention that in the majority of cases *Jehovah* and *Elohim* stand in "apposition", rather than as two members of a compound name, as in Genesis II and III. We have become habituated, to be sure, to considering the expression "Lord God" as a quite logical compound, comparable to the English "King-Emperor", for example, as applied to the sovereign of Great Britain or Austria, but it is necessary that we remember that the Hebrew form thus translated means nothing of the kind, except for the nearly superstitious habit of the ancients of reading the word *Adonai*, "lord", wherever the name *Jehovah* occurs. In strict accuracy the case

³According to careful count of the passages in the Hebrew Bible containing the name *Jehovah* and the title *Elohim* in close relation, we find that such juxtapositions occur, as follows: Genesis, 26 times; Exodus, 39 times; Leviticus, 30; Numbers, 6; Deuteronomy, 308; Joshua, 56; Judges, 14; Ruth, 1; I Sam., 21; II Sam., 10; I Kings, 48; II Kings, 28; I Chron., 29; II Chron., 86; Ezra, 13; Nehemiah, 9; Psalms, 39; Isaiah, 19; Jeremiah, 59; Ezekiel, 8; Daniel, 3; Hosea, 7; Joel, 8; Amos, 4; Jonah, 3; Micah, 4; Habbakuk, 1; Haggai, 3; Zechariah, 4. Total, 886.

is precisely similar to the use of the expression "King George of England", which is properly equivalent to "George, King of England", the proper name and title being in apposition, and is in no sense grammatically equivalent to any such expression as "King-Emperor of Great Britain", in which the two titles are compounded in order to indicate the fact that this George combines in his official person the functions of both orders of sovereignty. In the same way the expression *Adonai Elohim*, which occurs a few times, may be held to indicate a compound expressing the idea that the "Lord of mankind" and the "Ruler of the Universe" are dignities combined in the One Person, the God of Israel. On the other hand, the expression *Adonai Jehovah*, which occurs over 300 times through 15 separate books of the Bible, as we shall see later, and is also translated "Lord God", is such a compound of title and proper name as would be comparable to the expression "King George", without qualifying successive words.⁴

In addition to these 840 cases of evident apposition, the double name *Jehovah Elohim* occurs in "unconstructed form" only nineteen times in the whole Bible, in addition to the twenty times already mentioned in the second and third of Genesis. Of these cases seven are properly vocatives, preceded by the interjection "O"; two are appositives after the verb "to be"; two are direct objects of verbs; five are governed by prepositions, "of", "for", "from", "against", and in three cases only is the compound the subject of a verb, as in the earlier chapters of Genesis. Surely these facts are amply sufficient to demonstrate our previous contentions regarding this compound in Genesis. For the better information of the reader, we quote from the passages in question, as follows:

II Sam. vii. 22—Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee.

II Sam. vii. 25—And now, O Lord God, * * * * do as thou hast said.

I Chron. xvii. 16—Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house?

I Chron. xvii. 17—Thou hast regarded me * * * * O Lord God.

II Chron. vi. 41—Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place.

II Chron. vi. 41—Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation.

II Chron. vi. 42—O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed.

I Kings xviii. 37—That this people may know that thou art the Lord God.

⁴The compound *Adonai Jehovah*, either as the object of direct address or as the subject of a verb, occurs, as follows: Genesis, 2; Deuteronomy, 2; Joshua, 1; Judges, 2; II Sam., 6; I Kings, 2; Psalms, 7; Isaiah, 25; Jeremiah, 14; Ezekiel, 215; Amos, 21; Obadiah, 1; Micah, 1; Zephaniah, 1; Zechariah, 1. Total, 301.

II Kings xix. 19—That all the kingdoms * * * * may know that thou are the Lord God.

Exod. ix. 30—I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God.

Psalms lxxii. 18—Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel.

I Chron. xxii. 1—This is the house of the Lord God.

I Chron. xxii. 19—Arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God.

I Chron. xxix. 1—The palace is not for man, but for the Lord God.

II Chron. xxvi. 18—Neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.

II Chron. xxxii. 16—And his servants spake yet more against the Lord God.

Psalms lxxviii. 18—That the Lord God might dwell among them.

Psalms lxxxiv. 11—For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory.

Jonah iv. 6—And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah.

Among these cases, one passage, I Kings xviii:37, is exceptional in the fact that the definite article appears before the word *Elohim*. This fact, undoubtedly, caused the Revisers of the Old Testament to render the passage, "That this people may know that thou, Lord, art God", in place of the above rendering from the King James Version. Precisely the same condition exists in I Sam. vi:20, and caused the Revisers to render it with "Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?" instead of with "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" as in the King James.

When we consider the fact that, out of the 880 cases of the occurrence in close juxtaposition of the name *Jehovah* and the title *Elohim*, only 39 cases (counting those in the second and third chapters of Genesis) show the words in true compound relation (apparently), or in the "absolute" or "unconstructed" state, as grammarians might term it, it is perfectly admissible to hold that this mere 4 per cent of the total shows a distinct irregularity—it certainly shows a very rare combination. Since, however, we are dealing with the opinions of "critics" who do not hesitate to assert that all kinds of changes have been made in the text of Scripture, we may reasonably assume that these nineteen cases outside of Genesis—this mere 2 per cent of the total—distinctly suggest changes from the regular "constructed form" found in 96 per cent of all cases in which the words in question occur in the same immediate context. In order to support such a supposition, we may cite the following selected passages, which are as closely parallel to those previously quoted, as a cursory examination of the text will permit. Thus: (1) for vocative constructions, Judges xxi. 3; I Sam. xxiii. 10, 11; II Sam. vii. 27; I Kings iii. 7; viii. 23, 26; xvii. 20, 21; II Chron. vi. 14, 16, 17; xiv. 11; Psalms vii. 1, 3; xxx. 2, 12; xxxviii. 21; lxxx. 4, 7, 19 (compare also verse 14); lxxxiv. 8; lxxxix. 8; cix. 26; (2) for appositive constructions after the verb "to be", I Kings xx. 28;

I Chron. xvii. 26; Neh. ix. 7; (3) for objects of verbs, I Sam. xxv. 32; II Sam. xiv. 11, 17; I Chron. xiii. 36; (4) with governing prepositions, I Sam. iii. 3; v. 1, 2, 8, 10, 11; xiv. 18; II Sam. vi. 12; vii. 2; xv. 25, 29; xvi. 23; II Kings x. 31; I Chron. xxii. 6, 7, 11, 12, 19; II Chron. ii. 4; iii. 3; iv. 11, 19; v. 1, 14; xxix. 5, 7; xxxii. 17; (5) as verbal subjects, I Sam. xxv. 34; II Sam. vii. 26, 27; xii. 7; II Kings ix. 6. It will be noticed that in some of these passages we have the word "God" alone, and in others, the word "Lord" alone, while others again have a construct form with both. All are, however, regular constructions, and any of them may be considered the original from which the variations in the above-quoted passages were made.

Although there may be a few cases which even an extended and painstaking investigation of the original text has failed to detect, it is safe to assert that the twenty-one cases mentioned (18 in Genesis) are virtually the only ones in which the compound *Jehovah Elohim* is used as the subject of a verb. As the reader of the English Bible will note, however, the compound "Lord God" is repeatedly used as a verbal subject, most conspicuously in the Book of Ezekiel, where it occurs over 200 times. In these cases, and 100 others, however, we find the compound *Adonai Jehovah*, "Lord Jehovah", which, as already stated, is a perfectly logical and regular compound. We also find *Adonai Elohim*, the "Lord God", true to the translation, in a few other passages. [*cf.* Ezekiel xiv. 11 and xxxiv. 31, and Daniel ix. 4, 5, 9.] The compound *Adonai Jehovah* also occurs twice in Genesis (Chap. xv. 2 and 8), and furnishes a marked contrast to the address to Deity using *Adonai* only, as in Chap. xviii. 3, 27 and 30, by Abraham, and in Chap. xx. 4, by Abimelech.

In view of the facts specified above, and also of the "discrepancy" previously mentioned as between the statement of Exodus vi. 3 and the 42 "exceptions" in the Book of Genesis, we may assert with perfect confidence: (1) that if any changes whatever in the "names" of God have been made in the text of Genesis, they consist principally in the addition of the name *Jehovah* to the titles *Elohim* and *Adonai* (as in Chaps. ii, iii, xv) or in the substitution of *Jehovah* for either one of these, or for *El Shaddai*, wherever this name is spoken either by or to human beings;⁵ (2) that the second and third chapters of Genesis positively do not contain a "different divine name", and, so far as this claim is concerned, are not from a "document" of separate

⁵In this connection it will be particularly convincing to compare the variant titles occurring in five theophanies, or appearances of God, as given in Genesis. In the first (xvii. 1) God says: "I am the Almighty God" (*El Shaddai*). In the second (xxvi. 24) He says: "I am the God (*Elohim*) of Abraham". In the third (xxviii. 13) He says: "I am the Lord God (*Jehovah Elohim*) of Abraham". In the fourth (xxxv. 11) He says: "I am God Almighty" (*El Shaddai*). In the fifth (xlvi. 3) He says: "I am God, the God of thy father" (*ha El Elohe abi-ka*, literally "the God, God-of father-of-thee"). In these cases, as in others in which different titles are used, there seems to be no consistent explanation for the variations. That they indicate separate sources, or "documents", is a supposition little less than frivolous.

origin to that in which the first chapter belongs, but use as the characteristic divine designation a compound which is altogether exceptional in Hebrew literature, and whose origin is best to be explained by the theory that the writer intended to perfectly identify Jehovah with the Creator Elohim of the first chapter; (3) that, on these grounds, we may hold that *Elohim* is the word for God in the second and third chapters, as in the first, as shown in Chap. iii. 3, 5, where it is used alone, as if the sacred and ineffable name of Jehovah should not be spoken by the mouth of the serpent "more subtile than any beast of the field". We may see, therefore, upon what a flimsy foundation is erected "scholarship's" Babel tower of the so-called "higher criticism" of the Bible.

A Problem in Eve-olution

How big was Adam's apple, Pa,
 That halted in his throat,
 To show all down the centuries,
 Beneath his billy-goat?
 How happened it that Eve could gulp
 And swallow all o' hern,
 While Adam could not get his down
 By any twist or turn?
 The reason is, my little lad,
 That Adam was a frog,
 In throttle just about the size
 Of yonder polly-wog.
 The apple was not over large,
 But froggie's throat was small—
 No wonder modern science doubts
 He got it in at all;
 While Eve was woman from the first,
 She'd swallow anything—
 Apples, gossip, opera bar,
 Whatever luck might bring.
 This Adam was a rib of hers—
 A ribbon, it should read—
 (It beats the deuce how Bible words
 Get changed as times proceed!)

There's been an Eve-olution, but
 It's all in Adam's race;
 Frog-like he rose by leaps and bounds,
 She could not keep the pace.
 So finally she fell behind,
 And, crowding to the van,
 This frog became the king of beasts,
 And called himself a man.
 Which of the twain now leads the chase?
 You say, my sight is dim;
 To me he seems a-chasin' her,
 And she a-runnin' him. FRANK OSWALD WARREN.