MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

508(c)(1)(a) Free Church • Sole Tanakh Authority
A Study for Judaism · Christianity · Islam

COMPANION TO DOCUMENT 62

El and Elohim: The Ancient Titles of Yahweh

A Covenant Deep Dive into the Divine Titles *El (Mighty One)* and Elohim in the Tanakh

Are El and Elohim True Titles of Yahweh, or Pagan Names That Must Be Rejected? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

First issued March 2026 • Revised to the Doc 250 standard September 2026

Elder Kepha Arcemont, Founder
miqdashbethel.ai • miqdashbethel@gmail.com

The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
The Hebrew text preserved by Jewish scribes opens with **Elohim** (**Genesis 1:1**) and uses it more than 2,500 times. Rabbinic tradition counts **Elohim** among the names that may not be erased, and many observant Jews say ***"Elokim"*** outside prayer. The Tanakh itself calls Moses and the judges ***elohim (mighty ones / judges)*** (**Exodus 7:1; 21:6**).	English Bibles render **Elohim** as ***"God"*** and ***El Shaddai (El Almighty)*** as ***"God Almighty."*** Some read the plural form of **Elohim** as a proof of the Trinity; a minority in the Sacred Name movement rejects El and **Elohim** as pagan. The Tanakh's own grammar — a plural title with singular verbs — answers both.	Arabic ***ilah (deity)*** and ***Allah (the Deity)*** grow from the same Semitic root as El and ***Eloah (Mighty One)***, and Arabic Bibles render **Elohim** in **Genesis 1:1** as Allah. The Qur'an stresses that the Creator is One (Q. 112:1). The Tanakh adds what the shared root cannot: the personal Name **Yahweh** (**Exodus 3:15**).

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never

as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh**'s own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh**'s covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written Tanakh to one question: are El and **Elohim** true titles of **Yahweh**, or pagan names that must be rejected? **Yahweh** (**יהוה**) and **Elohim** (**אֱלֹהִים**) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and Hebrew personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with English meaning in parentheses. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets on first citation. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Hebrew lexicons and modern scholarship are cited as tools for reading the text; rabbinic commentary, the New Testament, and the Qur'an are cited as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy	**Elohim** in creation; the compound titles of El; the Name revealed to Moses; Moses and the judges called elohim; the command not to add or take away

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, 2 Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel	El, **Elohim**, **Yahweh** joined in one confession; the plural-verb exception; forgetting the Name; the shepherds who mislead
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Daniel, 1 Chronicles	El, **Elohim**, **Yahweh** has spoken; the assembly of elohim; every word of Eloah refined; Michael and Gabriel; the singular-verb parallel

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Hebrew lexicons	Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB) H410, H430, H433; HALOT (Koehler-Baumgartner); Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT, ed. R. Laird Harris, 1980); Gesenius (trans. Tregelles)	The meaning, range, and grammar of El, Eloah, and **Elohim**
Reference works and scholars	Encyclopaedia Britannica, ***"Elohim"***; Jewish Encyclopedia (1906); Anchor Bible, Genesis, vol. 1; Mark D. Futato (NASB scholar resource); Michael S. Heiser on Psalm 82; Abarim Publications	The plural of majesty; the shared Semitic background; Genesis 1 and 2; the divine council
Rabbinic literature	Maimonides (Rambam), Guide for the Perplexed 1:2; Saadya Gaon on Genesis; Genesis Rabbah 12:15; Targum Onkelos on Exodus 21:6; Talmud Shevuot 35a	How Jewish scholarship has read **Elohim** for judges, angels, and the attribute of justice
Ancient translations	Septuagint (Greek) Genesis 1:1; Psalm 8:6 [LXX]; Psalm 81:6 [LXX = Psalm 82:6]	How the earliest translators rendered **Elohim**
New Testament and Qur'an	John 10:34–35; Hebrews 2:7; Q. 112:1–4; Q. 2:163	How the later traditions read Psalm 82, Psalm 8, and the oneness of the Creator
Sacred Name assemblies	**Yahweh**'s Restoration Ministry, ***"Is Elohim Proper or Pagan?"***; **Yahweh**'s Assembly in Yahshua, ***"Is Elohim a Pagan Title?"***; Assemblies of **Yahweh**	Assemblies that restore the Name and also affirm El and **Elohim**

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — TITLE, NAME, AND THE FIRST WORD OF THE TORAH

I-A. The Question as It Is Usually Asked

Before the personal covenant Name **Yahweh** (**יהוה**) was formally revealed to Moses at the burning bush, the Creator of all things was known by a title carried in every language of the ancient Semitic world: ***El (Mighty One)*** (**אֵל**) and its expanded plural form, **Elohim** (**אֱלֹהִים**). These are not later additions to the Hebrew scriptures, borrowed substitutes, or pagan corruptions. They are the titles through which **Yahweh** first disclosed Himself in the written covenant — and the Tanakh opens with them, deliberately, before any personal Name is given.

Most Sacred Name assemblies — those who rightly insist on using the restored Name **Yahweh** rather than the English substitutes ***"LORD"*** and ***"God"*** — have no difficulty with El and **Elohim**. The Assemblies of **Yahweh** and **Yahweh**'s Restoration Ministry, among others, use El and **Elohim** as proper Hebrew titles of **Yahweh** without controversy. That is the correct and defensible position, firmly grounded in the Hebrew text and the major lexicons.

There is, however, a minority position within the Sacred Name world — held by at least one group — that teaches El and **Elohim** are pagan titles that cannot be applied to **Yahweh**. This study does not need to name that group. The reader who is familiar with the teaching will recognize it. The goal is not to attack any assembly but to establish, from the text, what the written covenant actually says.

I-B. The Question in the Tanakh's Own Terms

The Tanakh does not ask whether El and **Elohim** are acceptable. It simply uses them — in its first verse, in the mouth of **Yahweh** Himself, and in the names of His people and His places. The question therefore becomes three narrower ones:

First: does the Tanakh apply El and **Elohim** to **Yahweh**, and does **Yahweh** apply them to Himself?

Second: does the plural form of **Elohim**, or its use for other beings, make it a pagan or polytheistic word?

Third: what does the covenant say to a teacher who removes from the text a title **Yahweh** placed there?

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The vocabulary of the divine titles is precise. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
El (Mighty One), **אֵל**	H410	The oldest Semitic word for deity; root sense of might, strength, or the one who stands in front	**Genesis 14:18–22**; **Deuteronomy 10:17**
Eloah (Mighty One), **אֱלוֹהַּ**	H433	The expanded singular form; frequent in Job and poetry	**Deuteronomy 32:15, 17**; **Proverbs 30:5**
Elohim, **אֱלֹהִים**	H430	Plural of majesty; used of **Yahweh** with singular verbs; also of judges, heavenly beings, and false gods	**Genesis 1:1**; **Exodus 7:1**; **Psalm 82:1**
El Elyon (Most High El), **אֵל עֶלְיוֹן**	H410 + H5945	The possessor of heaven and earth	**Genesis 14:18–22**
El Shaddai (El Almighty), **אֵל שַׁדַּי**	H410 + H7706	The title by which **Yahweh** appeared to the fathers	**Genesis 17:1**; **Exodus 6:3**
El Roi (El Who Sees), **אֵל רֳאִי**	H410 + H7210	Hagar's name for the One who spoke to her	**Genesis 16:13**
El Olam (Everlasting El), **אֵל עוֹלָם**	H410 + H5769	Abraham calls on the Name at Beersheba	**Genesis 21:33**
bara (created), **בָּרָא**	H1254	Masculine singular verb; its subject in the Tanakh is always **Elohim** / **Yahweh**	**Genesis 1:1, 27**
yarshi'un (they condemn), **יַרְשִׁיעֻן**	H7561	Plural verb with elohim meaning human judges	**Exodus 22:9** [Heb. 22:8]

Three lexical observations govern what follows.

First, El is among the oldest words in the entire Semitic language family. Its cognates span the ancient world: Ugaritic ***'il (god)***, used in Canaanite literature for the chief deity; Biblical Aramaic ***'elah (God)***; Syriac ***alaha (God)***; and Arabic ***ilah (deity)***, the root of ***Allah (the Deity)***. This family of words does not show that Israel borrowed El from pagans. It shows that every Semitic people inherited, from the earliest layer of language, a common word for the supreme being of power and authority.

Second, the lexicons agree on the core. BDB lists El as the basic Hebrew noun for deity and documents its use as a title of **Yahweh** in compound titles throughout the Torah and the Prophets. HALOT traces it to a proto-Semitic root most likely meaning ***"to be strong"*** or ***"to be in front"*** — the one who stands at the head and leads. TWOT cautions that proposed root meanings such as power or fear are disputed, and that whatever the root, it does not determine what the word means in Hebrew usage. That caution cuts against the pagan-title argument: a word's ancient cognates do not fix its meaning in the covenant text.

Third, neither El nor **Elohim** is a personal Name. Each is a title, and the Tanakh uses it for the true **Elohim** and, with plain markers, for false ones: ***"You shall not bow down to another el"*** (**Exodus 34:14**); ***"there was no foreign el with him"*** (**Deuteronomy 32:12**). A title is defined by the One it is given to. That is why the Tanakh can say, in one breath:

"For Yahweh your Elohim, He is Elohim of elohim and Adon of adonim, the great El, the mighty and the awesome" (**Deuteronomy 10:17**)

Finding — the word El: El is an ancient Semitic title for deity that the Tanakh applies to **Yahweh** as its primary referent, while also using it, with plain qualifiers, of false gods. Its shared Semitic background is a fact of language, not evidence of pagan origin in Israel's usage. **Corroborated.**

III. EL IN THE COMPOUND TITLES AND THE COVENANT NAMES

III-A. The Compound Titles

The Tanakh preserves several compound titles built on El, each revealing a facet of **Yahweh**'s character, and in each case the text itself ties the title to **Yahweh**:

El Elyon. Melchizedek blesses Abraham by ***El Elyon (Most High El)***, possessor of heaven and earth, and Abraham answers: ***"I have lifted up my hand to Yahweh, El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth"*** (**Genesis 14:18–22**). Abraham names **Yahweh** and El Elyon together as one.

El Shaddai. ***"Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him, I am El Shaddai; walk before Me and be blameless"*** (**Genesis 17:1**).

El Roi. Hagar ***"called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, You are El Roi"*** (**Genesis 16:13**).

El Olam. Abraham ***"called there on the name of Yahweh, El Olam"*** (**Genesis 21:33**).

In all four, the narrator or the speaker places the Name **Yahweh** beside the El title. The text does not leave room for El to be another being.

III-B. Three Titles, One Confession

אֵל אֱלֹהִים יהוה דִּבֶּר

"El, Elohim, Yahweh has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down" **(Psalm 50:1)**

In a single verse the psalmist sets El, **Elohim**, and **Yahweh** together as the subject of one singular verb, ***dibber (has spoken)***. This is not three gods. It is one Sovereign identified by three interlocking titles. The same triple confession appears a second time, spoken twice over by the tribes east of the Jordan:

"El, Elohim, Yahweh — El, Elohim, Yahweh, He knows" **(Joshua 22:22)**

III-C. El in the Covenant Names

El is embedded in the names of the covenant people, the covenant messengers, and the covenant places. The nation is named Israel, ***Yisra-El (one who strives with El)*** **(Genesis 32:28)**. The heavenly messengers who stand before **Yahweh** are Michael and Gabriel **(Daniel 8:16; 10:13, 21)**. The prophets include Daniel and Ezekiel, whose names end in El. And Jacob named the place of his vision ***Bet-El (House of El)*** **(בֵּית־אֵל)**, then built an altar there and called it ***El-Bet-El (El of the House of El)*** **(Genesis 28:19; 35:7)**. The name this Institution bears — Bethel — is itself a witness. If El were a pagan title, **Yahweh** would have written a pagan name into the identity of His people and the place where He met Jacob. The Tanakh itself refuses that reading.

Finding — El as a title of Yahweh: The Tanakh joins El to the Name **Yahweh** in Genesis 14:22, 16:13, 17:1, and 21:33, confesses El, **Elohim**, **Yahweh** as one in Psalm 50:1 and Joshua 22:22, and writes El into the names Israel and Bethel. **Corroborated.**

IV. ELOHIM — THE LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL EVIDENCE

Elohim is the plural form of ***Eloah (Mighty One)***, itself an expanded form of El. The plural ending ***-im*** does not indicate multiple beings when used of **Yahweh**. Hebrew grammarians call it an honorific plural or ***plural of majesty*** — a plural of intensity that communicates greatness and fullness rather than number. Hebrew uses the same pattern in ***shamayim (heavens)***, ***mayim (waters)***, and ***chayyim (life)*** — plural in form, single in scope.

Witness One — Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB), H430, counts **Elohim** about 2,570 times and sorts its uses into four groups: the one **Elohim** of Israel, construed with singular verbs and adjectives; rulers and judges, ***"either as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and***

power" (citing **Exodus 21:6; 22:8–9** and **Psalm 82:1, 6**); divine or heavenly beings; and the gods of the nations.

Witness Two — HALOT (Koehler-Baumgartner) builds **Elohim** on the same proto-Semitic root as El and Eloah and documents the honorific-plural function of **Elohim** when it refers to **Yahweh**, comparing it with other Hebrew plurals of fullness.

Witness Three — Encyclopaedia Britannica calls **Elohim** ***"a plural of majesty"*** that is ***"sometimes used for other deities, such as the Moabite god Chemosh, the Sidonian goddess Astarte, and also for other majestic beings such as angels, kings, judges,"*** and notes that when it refers to **Yahweh** it ***"very often is accompanied by the article ha-, to mean, in combination, 'the God.'"*** Britannica also holds that Israel adapted a form shared with its Canaanite neighbors. That is a statement about a common language, and it is exactly the point: a shared word, given its meaning by the One to whom Israel applied it.

IV-A. The Grammar: Why a Plural Form Does Not Mean Many Gods

When **Elohim** refers to **Yahweh**, the Hebrew text overwhelmingly pairs it with singular verbs and singular adjectives. The opening verse of the Tanakh uses ***bara (created)***, **בָּרָא**, a masculine singular verb:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ

"In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth" (**Genesis 1:1**)

The same singular grammar governs the confession of Israel: ***"Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our Elohim, Yahweh is one"*** (**Deuteronomy 6:4**). The grammar alone settles the question: Elohim, when used of Yahweh, is singular in meaning, whatever its plural form.

Honesty requires naming the exceptions. In **Genesis 1:26 Elohim** says ***na'aseh (let us make)***, **נַעֲשֶׂה**, yet the very next verse returns to the singular: ***"So Elohim created man in His image"*** (**Genesis 1:27**). A handful of verses pair **Elohim** with a plural verb (**Genesis 20:13; 35:7; 2 Samuel 7:23**). The Tanakh itself shows how to read these: where **2 Samuel 7:23** says **Elohim** ***"went"*** with a plural verb, the parallel in **1 Chronicles 17:21** retells the same sentence with a singular verb. The plural there follows the form of the word, not a plurality of persons.

Finding — the plural form: Elohim, used of **Yahweh**, is singular in meaning, carried by singular verbs in Genesis 1:1 and 1:27, by the confession of Deuteronomy 6:4, and by the Chronicler's singular retelling of 2 Samuel 7:23. **Corroborated.**

V. ELOHIM BEFORE YAHWEH — THE SEQUENCE OF REVELATION

This is the single most important structural fact in the discussion. The Torah — the covenant document Moses wrote (**Deuteronomy 31:9, 24**) — does not begin with the Name **Yahweh**. It begins with **Elohim**.

Elohim is the only divine title used from **Genesis 1:1** through **2:3**. The Name **Yahweh** first appears at **Genesis 2:4**, in the compound ***Yahweh Elohim***. The personal covenant Name is formally declared to Moses at the burning bush (**Exodus 3:14–15**), and **Exodus 6:2–3** makes the sequence explicit:

"I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by My name Yahweh I was not made known to them" **(Exodus 6:2–3)**

The order of revelation is **Yahweh**'s own design. The Creator was first known as El and as **Elohim**; the personal Name was reserved for the covenant relationship with Israel. **Elohim** is not a lesser title added later. It is the foundational title that precedes the personal Name.

V-A. Yahweh Elohim: Title and Name in Apposition

Old Testament scholar Mark D. Futato observes that Genesis 1 uses only **Elohim** because it tells creation from a universal perspective, while Genesis 2 uses ***Yahweh Elohim***, so that the two accounts together declare that the personal **Elohim** of Israel is the same universal **Elohim** who rules over all. The compound is not a correction of something wrong with **Elohim**. It is a declaration: the covenant **Elohim** of Israel is the Creator of all nations. The two titles are in apposition, each completing the other.

The Tanakh carries the same joining in **Yahweh**'s own proclamation of His Name, where mercy and justice are declared of one Being:

"Yahweh, Yahweh, El merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in covenant love and truth … who will by no means clear the guilty" **(Exodus 34:6–7)**

Here **Yahweh** names Himself **Yahweh** and El in the same breath. To erase El or **Elohim** from the covenant text is to erase a title **Yahweh** used when He proclaimed His own Name.

Finding — the sequence: Elohim is the first divine title in the covenant text (Genesis 1:1), is joined to the Name at Genesis 2:4, and is named by **Yahweh** Himself as the way He was known before the Name was declared (Exodus 6:2–3). **Corroborated.**

VI. THE RANGE OF ELOHIM IN THE TANAKH

A proper understanding of any Hebrew word requires examining the full range of its usage. **Elohim** is not a one-dimensional term, and its breadth shows the depth of its meaning.

First use — Elohim as Yahweh. The primary and dominant use — well over two thousand times — is as the title of **Yahweh** Himself, from the creation account through the Prophets. It carries the full weight of power, justice, and supreme authority.

Second use — Elohim as heavenly beings. ***"You have made him a little lower than elohim, and crowned him with glory and honor"*** (**Psalm 8:5** [Heb. 8:6]). The context places spiritual beings in the realm above man; the Greek translators rendered the word ***"angels"*** here. BDB lists this category as divine or superhuman beings.

Third use — elohim as the gods of the nations. ***"You shall have no other elohim before Me"*** (**Exodus 20:3**). Moses draws the line sharply: Israel ***"sacrificed to demons, not to Eloah, to elohim they had not known"*** (**Deuteronomy 32:17**). The same word names the false and the true, and the context always says which.

Fourth use — the assembly of elohim.

אֱלֹהִים נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת־אֵל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט

"Elohim stands in the assembly of El; in the midst of the elohim He judges" (**Psalm 82:1**)

In verse 6 the Most High declares: ***"I said, You are elohim, and all of you are sons of the Most High; nevertheless you shall die like men"*** (**Psalm 82:6–7**). Whether these are understood as a council of heavenly beings (the reading of much current scholarship, including Michael S. Heiser) or as human rulers who judged unjustly, the text establishes one fixed truth: within **Yahweh**'s own covenant text the title ***elohim (mighty ones)*** is given to beings other than **Yahweh**. The breadth is a feature of the word, not a flaw.

Finding — the range: Elohim names **Yahweh**, heavenly beings, the gods of the nations, and the members of the assembly **Yahweh** judges (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 8:5; Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 82:1, 6). **Corroborated.**

VII. ELOHIM APPLIED TO MEN — MOSES AND THE JUDGES

The use of **Elohim** for human beings is not an invention of later interpreters. It is in the Torah itself, in **Yahweh**'s own speech to Moses.

VII-A. Moses as Elohim to Aaron

"He shall speak for you to the people; he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be as Elohim to him" **(Exodus 4:16)**

Aaron will speak the words to the people; Moses will be the source of the authoritative word. This is not Moses raised to deity. It is Yahweh using the title Elohim for the role of delegated authority. Moses speaks for **Yahweh**; Aaron speaks for Moses.

VII-B. Yahweh Declares Moses to Be Elohim to Pharaoh

"See, I have made you Elohim to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet" **(Exodus 7:1)**

This is **Yahweh**'s own direct speech before the plagues begin. Moses stands before Pharaoh as the authoritative voice of **Yahweh**; Pharaoh meets, in Moses, one who speaks and acts under **Yahweh**'s commission. The title does not confer divinity. It marks the one commissioned to stand in **Yahweh**'s place before the greatest earthly power of the age.

VII-C. Human Judges as Elohim

In the civil laws of Exodus the word appears in legal proceedings. A servant who chooses to stay with his master is brought ***"to ha-elohim"*** — to the judges — before his ear is pierced (**Exodus 21:6**). In a dispute over property, ***"the owner of the house shall be brought to ha-elohim"*** (**Exodus 22:8** [Heb. 22:7]), and ***"the one whom elohim condemn shall pay double"*** (**Exodus 22:9** [Heb. 22:8]).

The grammar of **Exodus 22:9** is decisive. The verb is ***yarshi'un (they condemn)***, יַרְשִׁיעֻן, a plural. When **Elohim** means **Yahweh**, the Hebrew writers use singular verbs; here, with human judges, they use a plural one. This is grammatical precision, not confusion.

The pattern — delegated authority. The thread through every use of **Elohim** for men is delegated authority. The judge is commissioned to render **Yahweh**'s justice; Moses is commissioned to represent **Yahweh** before Pharaoh. In each case the title does not confer divinity — it marks the bearer as one who acts under **Yahweh**'s authority and carries His mandate.

Finding — Elohim applied to men: Yahweh Himself applies the title to Moses (Exodus 4:16; 7:1), and the Torah applies it to judges with plural verbs (Exodus 21:6; 22:8–9). **Corroborated.**

Finding — the claim that calling a man elohim makes him divine: No text grants deity to Moses or the judges; Psalm 82:7 says the elohim who judge unjustly ***"shall die like men."*** **Not in the text.**

VIII. WHY TRANSLATION MATTERS — HOW MISTRANSLATION MISLEADS THE PEOPLE

The stakes of accurate handling of the text are not academic. When a Hebrew word is distorted through ignorance, selective citation, or an agenda, people are misled. They are taught to fear a title **Yahweh** chose for Himself and to reject a word **Yahweh** used for His own servant Moses. That is the kind of error the prophet warned about:

"I have heard what the prophets have said, who prophesy falsehood in My name ... who think to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they tell each man to his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal" **(Jeremiah 23:25–27)**

Jeremiah's words concern false prophets who cause the people to forget **Yahweh**'s Name. The principle cuts in every direction: any teacher who causes the people to misunderstand, fear, or reject the covenant language of the Tanakh works against the covenant, however sincere he may be.

VIII-A. The Pattern of the Error

The error begins with a real and legitimate concern. The Name **Yahweh** has been hidden from most translations and replaced by ***"LORD"*** and ***"God."*** That concern is valid, and restoring the Name is right. The error comes at the next step: ***"If God is wrong, and LORD is wrong, then everything associated with those words must be wrong — including El and Elohim."*** That is a leap the Hebrew text does not support and the lexicons refuse. It extends a correct principle beyond its boundaries and arrives at a conclusion that contradicts the very text it claims to defend.

VIII-B. Selective Citation of Scholarly Sources

Teachers who reject El and **Elohim** often point to reference works that show El as the name of the chief Canaanite deity, or that discuss **Elohim** in sections on ancient Near Eastern religion. That is selective citation — a fragment pulled from an entry without reading the entry. Read in full, every standard Hebrew lexicon documents El and **Elohim** as the ordinary titles of **Yahweh** throughout the Tanakh. The Canaanites used El because all Semitic peoples inherited the root. That inheritance no more makes the Hebrew title pagan than the Arabic ***ilah (deity)***, from the same root, makes every Arabic speaker's word for the Creator a borrowing from Canaan.

Mainstream critical scholarship — including the Anchor Bible commentary on Genesis — treats **Elohim** as native Hebrew usage, not a late insertion. The Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest surviving Hebrew manuscripts of the Tanakh, contain **Elohim** exactly as the received text does. No manuscript tradition lacks these titles.

VIII-C. Moses Wrote Before the Conquest

The Torah says that ***"Moses wrote this Torah and gave it to the priests"*** (**Deuteronomy 31:9**), and that he finished writing it before his death (**Deuteronomy 31:24**). **Deuteronomy 34** records that he died on Mount Nebo, east of the Jordan, before Joshua led the people across. On the Tanakh's own account, then, **Elohim** stood at the head of the Torah before Israel settled among the Canaanites of the Land. **Yahweh** inspired Moses to write **Genesis 1:1** with **Elohim** as the first description of the Creator. That is the beginning and end of the question of origin.

VIII-D. What a Translation Must Not Do

The gravest form of the error is a translation that puts the translator's preferred word in place of what the Hebrew says. When a translation renders **Genesis 1:1** as ***"In the beginning Yahweh created..."*** — where every manuscript, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, reads **Elohim** — it is not restoring the Hebrew text. It is correcting it, telling **Yahweh** that His own opening was wrong. The Torah forbids exactly this:

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it" (**Deuteronomy 4:2**)

"Every word of Eloah is refined ... Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar" (**Proverbs 30:5–6**)

Note the title in that second witness: Eloah — the singular of **Elohim** — in the very verse that forbids adding to His words. A translation that inserts the Name thousands of times where the Hebrew has **Elohim**, or removes **Elohim** where the Hebrew has it, breaks this command, however sincere the translator.

VIII-E. The Responsibility of the Teacher

Ezekiel 34 is a withering rebuke of shepherds who feed themselves instead of the flock and scatter the sheep. The rebuke reaches any teacher who, without the tools of the covenant language, declares pagan a word **Yahweh** placed in the first sentence of His Torah. The people deserve teachers who will say: ***"I do not know enough Hebrew to overturn BDB, HALOT, Gesenius, and the Dead Sea Scrolls — so I will teach what the evidence says."*** That is not weakness. It is covenant faithfulness.

Deuteronomy 19:15 requires two or three witnesses for any charge. On the question of El and Elohim, the witnesses are not two or three — they are thousands of occurrences in the Tanakh itself.

VIII-F. A Word to Those Who Have Been Taught This Error

If you were taught that El or **Elohim** is a pagan title, you were not taught from the Hebrew text. You were taught an interpretation by someone who did not have the tools to read it accurately. That is not a judgment of your sincerity or your love for **Yahweh**. You can verify every point in this study yourself; the lexicons and the Hebrew text are available free online. **Genesis 1:1** begins with **Elohim**. **Exodus 7:1** records **Yahweh** calling Moses **Elohim** to Pharaoh. **Psalm 50:1** confesses El, **Elohim**, **Yahweh** as one. No credible Hebrew source calls Elohim a title of Satan.

Finding — the teaching that El and Elohim are pagan titles: Every text that uses El or **Elohim** of **Yahweh** stands against it (Sections III–VII). **Not in the text.**

IX. THE SANCTITY OF COVENANT LANGUAGE

The Tanakh is not a text that can be improved by removing titles **Yahweh** chose for Himself. The opening verse of the Torah is not an error to be corrected. The compound ***Yahweh Elohim*** in **Genesis 2:4** is not a pagan interpolation to be purged. The declaration of **Exodus 7:1** is not an embarrassment to be explained away.

Every title in the covenant text was placed there by the covenant's Author. El carries the witness of **Yahweh**'s power from before the formal revelation of His Name. **Elohim** carries the witness of His fullness and majesty, and of the delegated structure of righteous authority He established on earth. **Yahweh** carries the witness of the personal covenant Name — the Name that binds Him to His word, His people, and His promises (**Exodus 3:15**).

These titles do not compete. They build upon each other. A people who understand El know that power belongs to **Yahweh** alone. A people who understand **Elohim** know that He is the fullness of divine authority, given in delegated measure to those He commissions. A people who know **Yahweh** know His personal covenant Name, His memorial to all generations.

To call Elohim a pagan title is to call Yahweh's own self-disclosure pagan. The Tanakh does not permit that reading, the lexicons do not support it, and the text of the Torah — from its first verse — refutes it.

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES EL AND ELOHIM

The table sets the three traditions against the Tanakh's own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Practice today	**Elohim** is read aloud in Scripture and prayer; outside prayer many say ***"Elokim."*** Rabbinic law lists **Elohim** among the names a scribe may not erase (Talmud Shevuot 35a). Targum Onkelos renders ***ha-elohim*** in Exodus 21:6 as ***"the judges."***	**Elohim** is translated ***"God"*** and El Shaddai ***"God Almighty."*** The KJV renders elohim ***"judges"*** in Exodus 21:6 and ***"angels"*** in Psalm 8:5, following the Greek. In John 10:34–35 Jesus cites Psalm 82:6, ***"You are gods."***	Allah and ilah share the root of El and Eloah. Arabic Bibles use Allah for **Elohim**. The Qur'an insists on the oneness of the Creator (Q. 112:1–4; 2:163) but does not use the Name **Yahweh**.
Covenant strength	Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed 1:2) and Saadya Gaon teach that elohim names **Yahweh**, angels, and human rulers — the range of Sections VI–VII. Genesis Rabbah 12:15 reads **Yahweh Elohim** as justice and mercy in one Being.	Retains the titles in every Bible and reads the plural of **Elohim** with singular verbs as one Creator. Sacred Name assemblies restore the Name while keeping El and **Elohim**.	Strict oneness matches the Tanakh's singular grammar for **Elohim** (Deuteronomy 6:4). The shared root preserves the Semitic witness that El is the Creator's title.
Covenant departure	Replacing the Name **Yahweh** with ***"HaShem"*** and ***"Adonai,"*** and softening **Elohim** to ***"Elokim"***, adds a rule of speech the Tanakh does not give (see Doc 255).	Replacing the Name with ***"the LORD"*** nearly 7,000 times; using the plural of **Elohim** or Genesis 1:26 as proof of three persons, which the singular verb of 1:27 does not carry; and, in a minority, rejecting El and **Elohim** altogether.	Keeps the title and loses the Name: the Creator is never called **Yahweh**, though the Tanakh gives it as His memorial forever (Exodus 3:15).

ELEMENT	✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Covenant witness	The scribes who kept **Elohim** in every copy are the reason the text of Genesis 1:1 stands today.	Read from the Tanakh outward, Psalm 82 in John 10 is an argument from delegated authority — the same point as Exodus 7:1.	The Arabic witness shows El was never Canaan's private property; it is the common Semitic word for the One Creator.

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's. The March 2026 edition of this study needed the following refinements, now made in the text above.

Correction 1 — singular verbs. The March edition said every **Elohim** verse in Genesis 1 pairs it with singular forms and that the Greek translators rendered it consistently as singular. **Genesis 1:26** uses the plural ***na'aseh (let us make)***, a few verses pair **Elohim** with a plural verb, and the Greek renders elohim as ***"angels"*** in Psalm 8 and as plural ***"gods"*** in Psalm 82. The conclusion stands — singular in meaning when used of **Yahweh** — but the claim is now ***"overwhelmingly,"*** with the exceptions named (Section IV-A).

Correction 2 — El used of false gods. The Summary of Witnesses said El, in Hebrew usage, ***"always refers to Yahweh as supreme."*** The Tanakh also uses El of false gods (**Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 32:12**). The correct statement is that **Yahweh** is El's primary referent and context identifies the false (Section II).

Correction 3 — verse numbering. The heavenly-beings verse is **Psalm 8:5** in English (8:6 in Hebrew), and the plural-verb judges verse is **Exodus 22:9** in English (22:8 in Hebrew). Both are now cited by English number with the Hebrew in brackets.

Correction 4 — quotations from secondary works. Direct quotations attributed to TWOT, the Anchor Bible commentary, Mark Futato, and Maimonides are given here as summaries, because their wording could not be checked against the printed page. The March edition also put the Name ***"Yahweh"*** inside the Maimonides quotation, which he did not write. The Britannica quotation was checked and is kept.

Correction 5 — the borrowing question. The March edition said no scholarship supports a Canaanite background for **Elohim**. Some mainstream reference works, including Britannica, do hold that Israel shared the form with its neighbors. The accurate claim, made in Sections II and VIII, is that a shared Semitic word does not make the Hebrew title pagan.

Correction 6 — rabbinic sources as support. Under the standing rule, Maimonides, Saadya Gaon, and the midrash now appear only in the Comparative Texts table and the Three-Religion Audit. The points they supported are carried in the body by the Tanakh (**Exodus 21:6; 22:8–9; 34:6–7; Psalm 82**).

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON EL AND ELOHIM

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	El is a true title of **Yahweh**, joined to His Name by Abraham, Hagar, Moses, and the psalmist.	**Genesis 14:22; 16:13; 21:33**; **Deuteronomy 10:17**; **Psalm 50:1**
II	**Elohim** is the first divine title of the written covenant, and **Yahweh** Himself says He was known as El Shaddai before His Name was declared.	**Genesis 1:1; 2:4**; **Exodus 6:2–3**
III	Used of **Yahweh**, **Elohim** is singular in meaning; its plural form is a plural of majesty, not a plurality of gods.	**Genesis 1:1, 27**; **Deuteronomy 6:4**; **1 Chronicles 17:21**
IV	**Yahweh** gives the title elohim to men in delegated authority without making them divine.	**Exodus 4:16; 7:1; 21:6; 22:8–9**; **Psalm 82:6–7**
V	The Tanakh distinguishes **Yahweh**, the **Elohim** of elohim, from the elohim of the nations, and context always shows which is meant.	**Exodus 20:3**; **Deuteronomy 10:17; 32:17**; **Psalm 82:1**
VI	El is written into the identity of the covenant: Israel, Michael, Gabriel, and Bethel, the house of El.	**Genesis 28:19; 32:28; 35:7**; **Daniel 8:16; 10:13**
VII	No teacher or translator may add to or take away from the titles **Yahweh** placed in His word.	**Deuteronomy 4:2**; **Proverbs 30:5–6**; **Jeremiah 23:25–27**

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question about El and **Elohim** there is usually a person who has been told that the words in his own Bible are pagan, and who wants to know what faithfulness asks of him now. The Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: keep the Name. Restoring the Name **Yahweh** is right. It is His memorial to all generations (**Exodus 3:15**), and nothing in this study weakens that.

Second: keep the titles. El and **Elohim** are not rivals to the Name. **Yahweh** used them of Himself before He declared His Name, and beside it after (**Exodus 6:2–3; 34:6**).

Third: read the grammar, not the rumor. A plural form with a singular verb is one **Elohim** (**Genesis 1:1**; **Deuteronomy 6:4**). A shared Semitic root is a fact of language, not a charge of paganism.

Fourth: test your teachers. Ask for two or three witnesses from the text (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). A teaching that must correct **Genesis 1:1** to survive has already failed the test (**Deuteronomy 4:2**).

Fifth: confess what the psalmist confessed.

"El, Elohim, Yahweh has spoken" **(Psalm 50:1)**

The first verse of the Torah is not the problem. It is the plumb line.

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 1:1	In the beginning **Elohim** created	II; IV-A; V; VIII-D; XII
Genesis 1:26–27	"Let us make"; "**Elohim** created" (singular)	IV-A; XI; XII
Genesis 2:4	**Yahweh Elohim** — the Name first appears	V; IX; XII
Genesis 14:18–22	**Yahweh**, El Elyon	II; III-A; XII
Genesis 16:13	El Roi	III-A; XII
Genesis 17:1	I am El Shaddai	II; III-A
Genesis 20:13; 35:7	**Elohim** with a plural verb; El-Bethel	III-C; IV-A; XII

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 21:33	El Olam	III-A; XII
Genesis 28:19; 32:28	Bethel; Israel	III-C; XII
Exodus 3:14–15	The Name declared; His memorial	V; IX; XIII
Exodus 4:16	Moses as **Elohim** to Aaron	VII-A; XII
Exodus 6:2–3	Known as El Shaddai, not by the Name	V; XII; XIII
Exodus 7:1	Moses made **Elohim** to Pharaoh	VII-B; VIII-F; XII
Exodus 20:3	No other elohim before Me	VI; XII
Exodus 21:6; 22:8–9	Judges called elohim; plural verb	IV; VII-C; XI; XII
Exodus 34:6–7	**Yahweh**, El merciful and gracious	V-A; XIII
Exodus 34:14	Do not bow to another el	II; XI
Deuteronomy 4:2	Do not add or take away	VIII-D; XII; XIII
Deuteronomy 6:4	**Yahweh** our **Elohim**, **Yahweh** is one	IV-A; XII; XIII
Deuteronomy 10:17	**Elohim** of elohim, the great El	II; XII
Deuteronomy 19:15	Two or three witnesses	Opening; I-B; VIII-E; XIII
Deuteronomy 31:9, 24; 34	Moses wrote the Torah; his death	V; VIII-C
Deuteronomy 32:12, 17	No foreign el; not Eloah	II; VI; XII
Joshua 22:22	El, **Elohim**, **Yahweh**, He knows	III-B
2 Samuel 7:23	Plural verb with **Elohim**	IV-A
Jeremiah 23:25–27	Making the people forget the Name	VIII; XII
Ezekiel 34	Shepherds who scatter the flock	VIII-E
Psalm 8:5 [Heb. 8:6]	A little lower than elohim	VI; XI
Psalm 50:1	El, **Elohim**, **Yahweh** has spoken	III-B; VIII-F; XII; XIII; Closing
Psalm 82:1, 6–7	The assembly of El; “You are elohim”	VI; VII; XII

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Proverbs 30:5–6	Every word of Eloah is refined	VIII-D; XII
Daniel 8:16; 10:13, 21	Gabriel and Michael	III-C; XII
1 Chronicles 17:21	The singular-verb parallel to 2 Samuel 7:23	IV-A; XII

"El, Elohim, Yahweh has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, Elohim has shone forth."

Psalm 50:1–2 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

Companion to Document 62 • El and Elohim • September 2026

miqdashbethel.ai • miqdashbethel@gmail.com •

The Message is Sent to the World

508(c)(1)(a) Free Church • Sole Tanakh Authority • Reaching Judaism, Christianity, and Islam