

One God—four Concepts

Is God wrathful and ready to mete out punishment to the evil and unbelieving? Or is God a more benevolent creator? Does God influence events on Earth, or merely watch human affairs unfold from afar?

Such questions have been debated by scholars and theologians for millenniums.

The result of a study conducted by Baylor University concluded that Americans view God in four different ways:

1. Authoritarian God.

A deity who is very judgmental and engaged with the world.

2. Benevolent God.

A deity who is not judgmental but still very active in human affairs.

3. Critical God.

A deity who does not interact with the world, but who still views some events on Earth with disfavor.

4. Distant God.

A deity who is removed from human affairs.

Researchers have found that 85% to 90% Americans answered, “Yes,” when asked if they believe in God. Even though most believe in God, there is diversity about how they believe in God. They do not agree on what God is like, what God wants for the world, or how God feels about politics.

The “four gods” embody these differences. For example, Americans in the East lean toward a Critical God, Southerners toward an Authoritarian God. Midwesterners believe more in a Benevolent God, while those in the West perceive a Distant God.

Women tended toward a more engaged deity—the Authoritarian or Benevolent God—while men tended toward a god less involved in the world. (The entire report can be accessed through Baylor’s web site: www.baylor.edu.)

How do you view God?

It is an important point to notice that the various names of God are used by the sacred writers as to bring out the various aspects of His character and dealings. Thus, the first chapter of Genesis sets forth Creation as an act of power; hence Elohiym is always used. The second chapter which properly begins at the fourth verse brings Elohiym into communion with man; hence He is called Jehovah. In the third chapter it may be observed that the Serpent avoids the use of the name Jehovah. In the fourth chapter the offerings of Cain and Abel are made to Jehovah and this is the case with the whole sacrificial system both under the Patriarchal and the Levitical dispensation.

Elohiym in creation

Elohiym Jehovah in communion

Jehovah in the sacrificial system

This is my perspective of the God of the Scriptures as given in titles and names.

1. He is the Elohiym—the God of Creation

“In the beginning **God** (Elohiym) created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1).

This name properly represented One only Being, who revealed Himself to man as Creator, Ruler and Lord. He is the Creator of heaven and earth, the Sustainer of all existence. He is the “Putter forth of power.” He is a being to whom all power belongs.

Genesis, chapter one, describes the creation process that ends with the creation of Man and the forming of Woman out of man. By his acts of creation in respect to mankind, he becomes their Father; one that loves and is involved in their lives.

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God (Elohiym), the LORD (Jehovah), the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to {him who} lacks might He increases power” (Isa 40:28-29).

If the scripture is true, how can God are considered a “Distant God” or “Critical God?” God was recognized as the Creator, the Father of the Adamic Race and very much committed to their welfare.

2. He is the El-Shadday, the all Sufficient One

“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty (El-Shadday); walk before me, and be blameless” (Gen 17:1).

The title really indicates the fullness and riches of God’s grace, and would remind the Hebrew reader that from God comes every good and perfect gift—that He is never weary of pouring forth His mercies on His people, and that He is more ready to give than they are to receive. The word is connected with a root that signifies a breast.

Genesis 17 is a chapter that describes a covenant made between God and man. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. A covenant implies an interrelationship between two.

If the above is true, can He be a distant God, unwilling to interfere with the affairs of his creation? Does not El-Shadday reveal God’s love for mankind and His desire to shower them with abundant blessings?

3. He is Adonay, the Lord or Master of each member of the human family, and that He consequently claims the unrestricted obedience of all.

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great. And Abram said, “O **Lord** (Adonay) GOD, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus” (Gen 15:1-2)?

Jesus, who came out of the bosom of God, revealed the compassion of God to man. He went about doing good, healing those who were sick and delivering those who were in the clutches of the devil. He was called, “Master” or the Teacher from God that instructed mankind about the importance of obeying God. The “Lord and Master” of the Old Testament is revealed in Christ Jesus.

4. He is Elyown, the Priest of the most high.

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High” (Gen 14:18).

Abraham was returning from his rescue of Lot, his nephew, and passed by Jerusalem. Surely, after the march northward, a week’s journey, the battle and the trip back to Jerusalem, Abram, 318 soldiers, and the rescued must have been extremely fatigued. Did God distance Himself from those in need? Nay! He, as high priest, met them with food and drink and refreshed them. God is concerned

about your physical condition, you're pressing needs and seek ways to renew your strength and lift you out of hopelessness.

5. He is Jehovah, the God of deliverance.

“God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty (El-Shadday), but {by} **My name, LORD**, I did not make Myself known to them” (Exod. 6:2-3).

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exod. 3:13-14).

“I AM” marks an eternal, unchanging Presence, otherwise, I AM whatever you need whenever you need it! “I AM WHO I AM” are two verbs (HAYAH, HAYAH: to be, to be) welded together in the name, JEHOVAH (Yahweh or YHWH). The Messiah, Christ Jesus, was the manifested “I AM”, the Deliverance God of the Old Testament. It is as Jehovah (3068) that God became the Savior of Israel and as Jehovah (3068) He saves the world; and this is the truth embodied in the name of Jesus (2424) which is literally Jehovah-Savior.

Jehovah-Jireh - The Lord provides (Gen. 22:14)

Jehovah-Rophe - The Lord who heals (Gen. 15:26)

Jehovah-Nissi - The Lord is my banner (Gen. 17:15)

Jehovah-McKaddesh - The Lord who sanctifies you (Lev.20:8)

Jehovah-Shalom - The Lord is your peace (Jud. 6:4)

Jehovah-Tsidkenu - The Lord is your righteousness (Jer. 23:6)

Jehovah-Shammah - The Lord is here (Ez. 48:35)

Jehovah-Rophi - The Lord is my Shepherd (Psa. 23:1)

Psalms 23 expresses all the compound names of Jehovah

1. The LORD is my shepherd [He is Jehovah-Rohi—our shepherd]; I shall not want.

[What name does that remind you of? Jehovah-Jireh—our provider!]

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters [Jehovah-Shalom—our peace!].

3 He restoreth my soul [Jehovah_Rophe—our Healer!]: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake [Jehovah-Tsidkenu—our righteousness!].

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me [Jehovah-Shammah—He is there!]; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies [Jehovah-Nissi—our Standard of Victory]: thou anointest my head with oil [Jehovah-M'Kaddesh—our Holiness; our sanctification]; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

What a wonderful, amazing God we serve! He has given us all these names, to remind us of His character and Who He is.

Jehovah-Jesus of the New Testament

John 6:48: I AM the bread of life

John 8:12: I AM the light of the world

John 10:7: I AM the door

John 10:11: I AM the good shepherd

John 11:25: I AM the resurrection

John 14:6: I AM the way
John 14:6: I AM the truth
John 14:6: I AM the life
John 15:1: I AM the true vine

It would be deeply interesting to show how each of the names of God finds its embodiment in Him who is “the Word of the Father.”

As Elohiym, Christ exercised Divine power; and also communicated supernatural powers to others.

As Shadday, Christ was all-sufficient, possessed of unsearchable riches, and always ready to pour forth His benefits on man.

As Adonay, Christ was the Lord and Master of the earth.

As Elyown Christ was exalted in moral and spiritual nature, and also, as to position, made higher than the heavens.

As Jehovah, Christ is “the same yesterday, to-day and for ever,” ready to save to the uttermost, in close communion with His people, fulfilling all the Divine promises and appointed to be “Judge of all the earth.” “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

Is God an authoritarian, austere, unfeeling and judgmental? God (Elohiym) sits on His throne with all authority and power, but ministers compassion (Elyown) to all those who approach the seat of mercy, but all the while bringing righteous discipline to his people (Adonay).

Is God a benevolent, caring and loving God? “For God so loved the world” that He gave His only Son for the salvation of the world. He is the Jehovah–Savior!

Is God critical, deity who does not interact with the world, but who still views some events on Earth with disfavor? Anyone who is acquainted with the Scriptures cannot view God as One who does not interact with the world.

Is God distant, a deity who is removed from human affairs? To believe the Creator who made man in His image and likeness and called him a “son of God” be uninvolved and distant is absurd. He is our Father and He loves, protects and disciplines His children as a Father!

Leon C Willis