

YAHWEH *singular*-ELOHIM

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This is going to be a critical review of a subject debated over the centuries, and sadly misunderstood by a majority of Christianity. What is going to be presented here is evidence for which many are not aware. Because this is a critical review, all sides of the theme will be given reflection. Reflection, for some might not like what they see in the mirror. As a critical review, we will attempt to determine the validity of the evidence. Our goal here is to evaluate the criterion and hold the claimant's feet to the fire.

I found such a critical discussion on the Internet and it will serve our purpose here. It involves a Michael S. Heiser, PhD candidate, Department of Hebrew and Semitic studies, University of Wisconsin - Madison, in his endeavor to show that the bad-fig-jew, Zecharia Sitchin, doesn't understand Hebrew, let alone Sumerian script. Erik Parker is Sitchin's webmaster and answers all his electronic correspondence.

Heiser to reader: "As many visitors to Rense.com know by now, I have an academic bone to pick with Zecharia Sitchin. In the wide field of research into the anomalous, I am something of an anomaly myself: a credentialed scholar of Ancient Hebrew and Semitic Languages who takes these issues seriously (as opposed to just laughing at them). I have publicly stated I think Sitchin's theories are hopelessly flawed, and have tried to put the evidence for this claim into the public forum of the internet, as well as through radio shows like Coast to Coast AM with Art Bell, and Jeff Rense's show. Disagreement with me on the part of Sitchin followers was inevitable, and so here we are.

"In the past few days, Erik Parker, Zecharia Sitchin's webmaster, has tried to respond to my criticisms of Sitchin. Aside from finding it curious as to why Erik would do this, given that he has absolutely no knowledge of Hebrew or any other ancient language, I have to admire his pluck. He has more courage than his mentor for sure, since it has been 15 months since Art Bell asked if I would debate Sitchin on his show (I accepted the idea immediately). The call for a debate went out again this past weekend on Coast to Coast, but instead of a response from Mr. Sitchin himself, we get this, a clueless (but courageous) attempt by a devoted disciple to fight his master's battles. Oh well. In view of Mr. Parker's complete lack of understanding of the languages and issues, I don't want to criticize him harshly in my critique below. Like I said, he has guts. Nevertheless, a response is in order. Perhaps this has helped me explain my arguments more clearly for the lay audience. I have to admit, though, that trying to convince fawning Sitchin followers to look at actual data and scholarship is like trying to convince the Argentine authorities that a long-snouted mouse really hasn't mutilated

over 100 cattle there; or like convincing Philip Klass that there really are UFOs; or like telling a Cubs fan that he'll never see a World Series home game at Wrigley Field; or like telling the Russian people that the Olympics really was rigged. In short, people want to believe things, facts be damned. Below is Mr. Parker's posting ...":

Parker to Heiser: "Michael Heiser Is Incorrect With His Analysis Of Elohim & Nephilim ... Mr. Heiser claims that the word Elohim in Hebrew, meaning 'gods' is not a plural word ..."

Heiser: "Wrong already (we lasted one sentence). To quote from my own website, I ask this question: 'Does Elohim, since it is morphologically plural in Hebrew, always (or even most of the time) MEAN 'gods' (plural)?' Apparently Erick does not understand the question, and perhaps I assumed too much of a knowledge base. Elohim is certainly morphologically plural. Morphology refers to the 'shape' or construction of a word - its form. As anyone can see, I say that very clearly above. My point in the question, though, is that while Elohim is plural in form, is it plural in meaning? By itself, Elohim can be either singular or plural in meaning. Again, quoting from my own website:

"The word 'elohim' CAN mean either plural 'gods' or singular 'god' (or 'God' as a proper name). The meaning of any occurrence of Elohim must be discerned in three ways:

"A. Grammatical indications elsewhere in the text that help to determine if a singular or plural meaning is meant.

"B. Grammatical rules in Hebrew that are true in the language as a whole.

"C. Historical / Logical context.

"Please witness: there is no denial that Elohim can mean 'gods'. Mr. Parker either did not read my material, or (more probable) is so deficient in his understanding of grammar (even English grammar terms) that he hasn't gotten the point. To continue - what I am saying is that, by itself, the word Elohim is ambiguous in meaning - as are all words, to some extent - it needs to be put into a sentence (I hope I don't have to define 'sentence'). We have words like this in English, such as: 'deer', 'sheep', 'fish' - the point is you need other words to help you tell if one or more than one of these animals is meant. Sometimes these other words are verbs that help you tell. Compare the two examples:

"1) 'The sheep is lost' - the word 'is' is a singular verb (It goes with a singular subject; one wouldn't say, for example, 'I are lost' - you would use a verb that goes with the singular subject ('I am lost').

"2) 'The sheep are lost' - the word 'are' is a plural verb (again, another word next to our noun 'sheep' tells us in this case that plural sheep are meant.

"All of this is just basic grammar - and every language has grammar. Biblical Hebrew has its own ways of telling us if Elohim means ONE person or many gods. It matches the noun Elohim to singular or plural verbs, or with singular or plural pronouns (to use 'sheep' again as an example: 'Those sheep are white'). The word 'those' is what's called a demonstrative pronoun - it automatically tells us that sheep in this sentence is meant to be understood as a plural. Mr. Parker should at least get the

argument right if he is going to criticize it. On the other hand, Sitchin ignores grammar everywhere, so maybe 'like master, like disciple'."

Parker: "His [Heiser's] main proof is that it says in Hebrew 'The Elohim Said' in a singular form not a plural form. This would indicate that the word Elohim was a name and not meaning plural gods. Of course this also could mean that the scribes of the Bible kept it in a singular form to show the monotheistic viewpoint."

Heiser: "Wrong again. If you look at what I have, I point out that the Hebrew Bible contains just such evidence of plural elohim - in places like Psalm 82, Deuteronomy 32:8-9, Psalm 89:1-10; Psalm 29:1, etc. Maybe you don't get this point here, either, Erik. How can you claim the scribes edited the text to cover plural gods, when such passages are in the Bible? This makes little sense.

"Statistically, Elohim occurs roughly 2,500 times in the Hebrew Bible with singular verbs or other singular grammatical indicators. Far more than the plurals, to be sure, but there are absolute affirmations of divine plurality in the Jewish [*sic Israelitish*] Bible. If you want to argue censorship of this, it occurred in late antiquity in rabbinical writings after the rise of Christianity (which used such pluralities to argue for Trinitarianism). Professor Alan Segal's book, *Two Powers in Heaven* documents how divine plurality BECAME a heresy to the rabbis during this period. My own view is that monotheism should be defined in context of this plurality - that monotheism means Yahweh is incomparable; no other gods can compare to him (as opposed to saying, as most Christians and Jews [*sic bad-fig-jews*] do, that other gods don't exist - which is a denial of their own Bibles). Put another way, 'Yahweh is an Elohim, but no other Elohim are Yahweh - he is NOT a 'species equal'. Israelites had 4-5 criteria for determining how Yahweh was the 'true god,' but I won't launch into that here ..."

Parker: "There are many uses of the plural term of the word Elohim in the Bible."

Heiser: "Again, I haven't denied there are plural uses (see above, and the website). 'Many' is an overstatement, though - and most of what are there refer to the surrounding gods of other nations, not the God of Israel." [Heiser's website is www.SitchinIsWrong.com]

Parker: "I have listed several plural forms below and it is in fact very hard to find any singular uses of the word."

Heiser: "That's because you don't read Hebrew and don't understand Hebrew grammar. You don't understand what morphology is."

Parker: "The word Elohim is definitely plural and does indeed mean 'gods' and it actually contains two forms of the singular word for God inside of itself."

Heiser: "This 'inside itself' is something of a linguistic misstatement, but oh well."

Parker: "1. The word EL means God and it is the first part of the word Elohim."

Heiser: "Correct - El does mean 'god' as in a single deity."

Parker: "2. The word Eloah, also means God and it is the first part of the word Elohim. Eloah in Hebrew is a three letter root which most Hebrew words contain."

Heiser: "Correct again - you're on a roll, Erik. Eloah is singular for 'god' (used most often in Job), and has three radicals (consonants). Eloah is considered the base

for the plural form 'elohim' (because of the 'h'), but El is also pluralized as Elohim, which you don't seem to understand."

Parker: "Here we already have two singular forms of the word God inside the plural word Elohim. Yet, Mr. Heiser has never mentioned these singular forms inside the plural word. He still insists Elohim is singular knowing well that is [sic it] already contains two singular words for God."

Heiser: "Here's where you are beginning to show how far out of your field you are, Erik. I'm not going to reproduce the dictionary or all the Hebrew words / references to 'god'. It's a matter of space. Buy a dictionary. Your wording implies that since El and Eloah exist in the language, then Elohim can't be singular. Again, you conclude this because you have no background in Hebrew. Elohim is singular over 2500 times (and no, I'm not going to post all of them). Here are a few easy ones from the website (keep in mind Hebrew is to be read right to left):

"Example #1 - Genesis 1:1: In the verse below, the noun אלהים (elohim) should be translated as SINGULAR because the verb with which it goes (i.e., it's the subject of the verb) in the sentence is SINGULAR:

"Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth.

אלהים (The verb *bara'* is 3rd masculine singular of the Qal stem) בראשית ברא, God (elohim).

"In the beginning: God (elohim) created the heaven and the earth: ואת הארץ: ואת השמים.

"If the verb were plural, then we would be grammatically forced to translate 'in the beginning, the 'gods' created the heaven and the earth.' Grammar tells us which it is - singular or plural." Heiser next cites:

"Example #2 - Psalm 82:1 - Elohim occurs twice, once as singular, the second time as plural:

"Ps. 82:1 *A Psalm of Asaph.* GOD (elohim) stands in the divine assembly; he judges among the **gods** (also elohim).

אלהים ישפט Ps. 82:1 מזמור לאסף אלהים נצב (THIS VERB IS SINGULAR) בעדתאל בקרב.

"We know the first elohim is singular because of grammar; it is coupled with a singular verb:

"The verbal form is a masculine singular participle (in the Niphal stem) אלהים נצב. Hence, 'God' stands ... (since the participle is singular).

"The second elohim form is plural because of grammar as well; it is placed next to a preposition that REQUIRES plurality.

"אלהים בקרב - The preposition here, *beqereb*, means 'in the midst of' - you can't be in the midst of ONE person, and so a plural is required.

"Example #3 - the creation of humankind in Genesis 1:26-27. In Genesis 1:26-27, the GRAMMAR tells us Sitchin is wrong: Genesis 1:26-27 - (the words of the verse are underlined).

"(26) 'And God (אלהים; elohim) said ויאמר (*wayyomer*)'. (the verb is grammatically singular; Qal stem, 3rd masculine singular with attached preposition):

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (these are references to God’s divine council - composed of the other elohim in Psalm 82:1 and angels - if you read *The Facade*, you’ll learn about the divine council) ...”

Because this is a critical review, we will not rely solely on the word of Michael S. Heiser. What we have learned from Heiser, though, is the three rules of determining whether the term *elohim* should be singular or plural.

I will now take excerpts from *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, volume E-J, under the topic “God, Names Of”, and the subtopic “Elohim”, page 413. As you read these excerpts, take note that this source confirms that the verb can cause *elohim* to be singular rather than plural:

“**Elohim** (אלהים). This word appears frequently in the OT as a name for deity (‘God,’ ‘gods’). Being plural in form, it echoes ancient polytheism, like the name El, to which it is closely related. In a few instances the plural sense is clearly expressed, as in Jotham’s fable (Judg. 9:13) or Jethro’s declaration that Yahweh is greater than the other אלהים (Exod. 18:11; cf. Exod 12:12; 20:3; Deut. 10:17; I Sam. 4:8; II Sam. 7:23; Ps. 86:8).

“In the great majority of instances, however, ‘Elohim’ is used in a singular sense, even when, as a concession to the plural form of the word, the accompanying verb is in the plural (e.g., Gen. 1:26; 20:13; 35:7; Exod. 22:9 ...). This use is often called the ‘plural of majesty’ or *pluralis amplitudinis* – i.e., Elohim includes all gods; the fulness of deity is comprehended in him. Thus the word is equivalent to ‘deity’ or ‘Godhead’... [underlining mine]

“In the singular sense ‘Elohim’ is sometimes applied in the OT to the god of another people, as to Chemosh the god of the Ammonites (Judg. 11:24), Ashtoreth (Ishtar) goddess of Sidon (I Kings 11:5), or Baal-zebub of Ekron (II Kings 1:2). But in the majority of cases ‘Elohim’ refers to the God known and worshiped in Israel. For Israel, Yahweh is not one El among many; he is God absolutely, the Lord of history and nature, who demands the exclusive homage of his people. This comes to emphatic expression in the challenge presented by Elijah (whose name means ‘My El is Yahweh’) to the people in the time when the worship of the Phoenician [*sic Canaanite*] Baal Melkart was being advocated: ‘If Yahweh is God [אלהים], follow him; but if Baal, then follow him’ (I Kings 18:21; cf. vs. 37, 39). Elijah mocks the claim of the Baal to be God (vs. 27) and demonstrates dramatically that only Yahweh has the power that belongs to deity ...”

From this we can see that, while *elohim* is in many cases used in a plural sense, it is applied in a singular sense to both Yahweh *singular*-Elohim as well as to heathen gods where only one god is being cited. Therefore, whenever you hear or read where someone makes the claim that the term *elohim* is always plural, you can regard that person as someone who is “grossly uninformed”, to put it tactfully.

Another reference which distinguishes between the plural and singular use of *elohim* is the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 401-402, though not nearly as explicitly:

“**ELOHIM** (Heb. *’ēlōhim*) The most frequent generic name for God in the OT; possibly a plural of Eloah, itself an expansion of El, ‘god.’

“Elohim most naturally refers to a plurality of gods, e.g., those of Egypt (Exod. 12:12), Syria, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines (Judg. 10:6), and the Amorites (Josh. 24:15; Judg. 6:10). It is also used individually of Ashtaroah, Chemosh, and Milcom (1 Kgs. 11:33) and of Baalzebub (2 Kgs. 1:2, 3, 6, 16). This constitutes a plural of intensification, i.e., the most important of the gods of a particular group ... Elohim is used with singular verbs and/or adjectives for the focus of Israelite worship, Yahweh ...” [underlining mine]

A short excerpt from the *NIV Bible Dictionary*, page 309, is worth our notice: “The most frequent Hebrew word for God (over 2,500 times in the OT). ... Elohim is plural in form, but is singular in construction (used with a singular verb or adjective). ...”

Another short excerpt from *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* by Ronald F. Youngblood on page 505 says: “**Elohim**. Elohim is the plural of El, but it is usually translated in the singular ...”

From the *New Bible Dictionary*, page 420, we find: “**Elohim**. Though a plural form (*‘elōhîm*), Elohim can be treated as a singular, in which case it means the one supreme deity, and in English versions is rendered ‘God’ .”

CONCLUSION

Those holding a trinitarian view have used the plural interpretation of the term *elohim* to support their deficient hypothesis. It is difficult to acquire credible data on the true nature where *elohim* should be translated singular inasmuch as nearly all commentaries lean toward the three-god-theory. To make our Bibles come into perspective, let’s consider John 1:1-3:

“¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² The same was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

Inasmuch as every time in Scripture where the words Yahweh Elohim appear (which in every case is singular), every mention of *elohim* of Genesis chapter 1 is the same *elohim* as the Yahweh Elohim of chapter 2 and beyond. So with the criteria of John 1:1-3, the *elohim* of Genesis 1 can only be Yahweh Himself. Inasmuch as the “Word” at John 1:1-3 is none other than Yahshua Christ, Yahshua Christ can be none other than Yahweh Elohim incarnated into the flesh. At Genesis 1:26, as we have seen Heiser explain the Hebrew grammar, a *singular*-Elohim speaks to a plural entity, “Let us make man in Our image ...”, which shows that Yahweh was not alone before Adam was created, but rather was accompanied by a divine council, those called “angels” throughout the Bible, which helps to explain just how the event’s described by John at Rev. 12:7-9 may well be representative of things which happened before the creation of Adam, which Jude alludes to (Jude 6).

The fact that Yahshua Christ had 23 chromosomes from Mary shows that truly the first Adam was in the genetic image of Yahweh, or Yahshua Christ would have been a genetic misfit. Many sadly uninformed would-be adepts claim that women don’t have any seed, and that Yahweh supplied all the seed and all Mary did was carry the child (what today we would call a surrogate mother). If that is the case, Yahshua couldn’t

claim to be of the tribe of Judah, for only in Mary could He make such a claim. Inasmuch as Yahweh first married and then divorced the 12 tribes of Israel, it would be highly improper for a third party to redeem them! When does a son marry his father's wife?