

God E1

God or gods

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Speakers in the audio file:

Speaker 1: Jon Collins

Speaker 2: Tim Mackie

Speaker 3: Nancy

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[Start of transcription 00:00:00]

Tim: Most people when they hear the word God, don't think of the storyline of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Jon: Hey, this is Jon at The Bible project, and today on the podcast, we're beginning a conversation about God. Who is the God of the Bible? That's what we're going to talk about for the next season on this podcast. And it's going to be an incredible journey. But before we get too deep into the story of the Bible, and what it means to experience the God of the Bible, we need to stop and come to grips with the fact that—

Tim: The word 'God' in English is a terribly confusing, unclear word.

Jon: The word 'God' is a confusing word because God is not a name. 'God' is a title. It's a generic way to talk about any spiritual being.

Tim: So the problem is that when we use the capital word letter G, we're using a title to refer to a specific deity or spirit being that has a specific story and attributes, namely the Jewish and Christian God.

Jon: But Judeo Christian belief is that there's only one true Creator, God of the universe.

Tim: There is one chief Supreme God, the God of Israel revealed to Abraham, Christians believe revealed in Jesus who has no rivals, but He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and God of gods.

Jon: God of gods. That makes it sound like the Bible talks about there being more than one God. But that can't be true, right? There's only one God. That's what Christians believe. That's what monotheism means.

Tim: I'm so fascinated with...how did this happen? How did a modern definition of monotheism come to be what Christians believe when it's not, in fact, at all how the Bible talks about the identity of God?

Jon: Yeah. If you're like me, this just made you really uncomfortable. But hold on there, we're going to talk it through, and what we'll find is that all the confusion has to do with what we mean when we use the word God. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

Tim: You know, I have all this stuff in my head right now.

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- Jon: You've been working on this for the last five weeks, four weeks?
- Tim: Yeah. I'm just thinking this is like classic moment where I have all this stuff I want you to own. My goal is to get you to own all of this.
- Jon: I love that goal. We need some telepathy cord.
- Tim: I know!
- Jon: Some brain direct link.
- Tim: But instead, I have to articulate...
- Jon: You have to put it into language.
- Tim: ...every one of these ideas.
- Jon: And then I've got to listen to those words and unpack them in my own psyche.
- Tim: So that what's inside of my head can be inside of yours. And that's crazy.
- Jon: Yeah, language. Information theory is interesting that our brains aren't computers in the sense that they're very different than how computers work, but our brains process information. The theory of information processing is the same. And so like when information is in the form of, let's say, sound waves coming out of our mouth versus digital information going through a cord, versus maybe analog information on a tape, versus neurons firing in your brain, it's all the same thing, just in different formats.
- Tim: Different modes.
- Jon: Different mediums.
- Tim: Wow.
- Jon: It's crazy.
- Tim: It is.
- Jon: We're going to talk about God.

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Tim: We're setting up a conversation to begin the process for a theme video for The Bible Project that we're going to call "God."

Jon: Yeah, the theme of God, which it's not really a theme. God as a character. And we don't have any other theme videos on characters.

Tim: No, we don't. No. But the way we're going to be talking about the unfolding of God's identity, it fits the category of theme, in terms of it's a set of words, and vocabulary, and ideas that are introduced on page one, they undergo development throughout the narrative ark of the Bible. The story of Jesus is a climactic new unfolding...

Jon: Who God is.

Tim: ...identity of God that's in continuity with what came before, but also takes some significant leaps forward. And then, it all comes to closure on the last page. So it's true, it qualifies as a biblical theme.

Jon: It comes to closer.

Tim: Yes, yeah, in as much as you can never bring history to a closure. But this is an important topic. We could call this video "The Trinity."

Jon: Which a lot of people want us to do videos on the Trinity.

Tim: Which a lot of people want. And it's about that, but how we're going end up with the Trinity isn't going to be by starting with it.

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Tim: Like all our theme videos, the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. And so the identity of God, God's nature, and identity, undergoes a narrative development through the sequence of the storyline. And I think there's real value in pausing to let the story unfold God's character in its own way, in its own order. Yeah, there you go.

So it's actually going to conclude with the Three in One God: The Father, Son, and Spirit, but I think starting there won't help people grasp the significance of the Trinity.

Jon: Okay. So we're not going to assume the Trinity when we start?

Tim: We're just going to let the story tell itself.

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Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah, so we'll talk about that more as we go on. But that's the video, "God." And I thought about calling it "God's Identity," and then Jon talked me down off that one.

Jon: Me?

Tim: Yeah. "The Identity of God" or "God's Identity."

Jon: I don't remember.

Tim: Well, I just think we go for more basic vocabulary.

Jon: Oh, yeah. Just God. This video is about God.

Tim: Yeah, just God. It's what it's about, it's about God. It's about a whole bunch of really specific things about God, but it's about God. So let's just call it that.

Jon: I think that's great because it's a word we use all the time that we take much of it for granted. And from the little hints I've been getting from you is that it's a lot more interesting, and it will be a lot of unexpected things as we peel back this onion layers.

Tim: Yeah. This whole topic of God's Identity of the one God, the one true God of Israel, this concept of monotheism, the existence of other gods, how those relate to the one God, and then...Yeah. So the rabbit hole goes quite deep.

And I've been interested in it for a long time. Actually, it was through my years in local church ministry that I've kind of the conviction that this is a really important topic for followers of Jesus to process through so we can speak intelligently to our culture about this. So that's actually where I think it'll be most useful for you and I to begin talking, which is I call them "Three Problems with God Talk in the Modern West."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So this isn't about the video as such, but for me, I wanted to ask myself, like, "What am I hoping this video accomplishes or what's the problem that I think this video could help?" So three problems when the word God comes up in the English language, at least.

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And I know we have supporters all around the world, many of whom don't speak English as a first language, so forgive us that we're going to talk about the English language and the problems with the English word God. But that's our context. And so that's where we live.

Jon: I got to imagine it's pretty similar in most cultures.

Tim: I don't know. I mean, these words in different languages of deity come from really different origins, especially if it's different hemisphere or the east to the west.

Let's start with the first problem. The word "God" in English is terribly confusing unclear word in modern English.

Jon: Really? It's clear. God. Short and sweet. Dude in the sky.

Tim: Okay, all right.

Jon: What's confusing about that? I mean, my six-year-old gets it. No, seriously. He's like...

Tim: What does it mean for Paxton?

Jon: I haven't purposefully sat him down and tried to explain God to him, but through church, just other conversations, whatever, he just gets it. He's like, "God created things." It was funny, the other day, he pointed to a fork and he said, "What is that made out of?" And I said, "Well, it's made out of metal." He didn't know what a metal was and he was confused. He goes, "No, no, like, what's it made out of?" And I said, "Metal." He goes, "No, no, no. What did God make that we turned it into that fork?"

[00:10:00]

Tim: Oh.

Jon: Yeah. He wanted like the base material.

Tim: He's thinking of like—

Jon: And so I did tell him metal it's a kind of rock, I think, I don't know, and that's what God made. Actually, a sun made it...

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

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- Jon: ...but God made the sun.
- Tim: It's like exploded star, then the dust.
- Jon: So I mean, he gets it. He gets that. I don't know exactly what's in his head but it's not that confusing to him.
- Tim: That's a good example. So likely he has a personal being. You think a personal being with will and intention in his imagination when he thinks of the word 'God'? A personal being? When he says, "What did God make that we made it out of" what does that word refer to?
- Jon: I'm assuming he's thinking...
- Tim: A personal being.
- Jon: ...of a personal thing.
- Tim: Who like has power to generate a universe where there's metal?
- Jon: Yeah. I mean, I don't know. I don't remember being six, but I guess you just kind of have to look around and assume like, "Well, this house is here because someone's made it."
- Tim: That's right. Okay, yeah.
- Jon: "I saw my dad make my bed and that's why that's here. So why is the trees here? Someone must have made it."
- Tim: Yeah, that's right. But to then conclude a singular personal being is therefore responsible of that.
- Jon: He got that from the culture that we're in.
- Tim: Exactly. Right. So you're socialized into that kind of idea. Because you could grow up in a different culture where the material trees are themselves an aspect of the divine. Right? Or there are many gods, not just one. There's all kinds of gods.
- Jon: Or there's no God.
- Tim: Or there's no God. So you could use the word 'god' or 'gods' to actually refer to a lot of really different kinds of beings. So the English

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word 'God' can describe many different kinds of deities that could have, whatever, created to be responsible for the universe.

Jon: Right.

Tim: So there's part of what do I mean when I say, "It's not a very helpful word."

Jon: Got it?

Tim: Because it's ambiguous. And part of that is because the English word is a title. It's not a name. 'God' isn't any beings name. It's a title for a kind of being.

Jon: Right. Like angel or...

Tim: Spirit, human.

Jon: Or human.

Tim: It's a category.

Jon: It's a category.

Tim: In English 'God' is a category of being. But you're right, it does get filled out with typical content in the modern Western culture. You named a couple at the beginning, like the something big guy. Some big guy upstairs.

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: Or what did you say?

Jon: I don't know. Dude in the sky. I don't know.

Tim: The big guy upstairs, right?

Jon: Yeah, maybe. You just say the word 'God' in a room of 50 people, and the same thing is not going to come into everyone's mind.

Jon: 50 people on the same church, or 50 people scattered across the city.

Tim: Yeah, you're on the bus...

Jon: You're on a bus.

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Tim: ...and you say, "I believe in God." And you think you're being bold and standing, whatever, trying to represent your faith. But what that overlooks is the word 'God' enters...the sound waves, enter 50 people's ears on the bus...

Jon: And conjures up different categories.

Tim: Very, very different portraits because of their family history, their religious or non-religious experience, right? So 'God' is a title that can refer to many different kinds of beings. One thing they would have in common is that they are likely all invisible and powerful. Probably more powerful than human.

Jon: Not the Greek gods. I mean they are more powerful, but they're not invisible.

Tim: Oh, that's true. That's true. Yeah, yeah. If you were in ancient Greece, you might spot—

Jon: You might run into one.

Tim: Yeah, you might run into one. So that's the first problem about God talk is that it's a title that can refer to many different kinds of beings from many different religious traditions. It's the first thing.

The second thing is, if a singular All-powerful Creator, Ruler type of being is what comes into somebody's mind, that's fascinating, because certainly isn't where all humans have believed about deities or a deity for all of history. That idea of a personal being, who's the Creator and Ruler of everything has a history, intellectual history.

Jon: By the way, are you using deity and God interchangeably?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Okay. I just want to be clear.

Tim: I am, yeah. Because that itself it's a legacy that comes from the Jewish monotheistic tradition that's been passed on to the modern West largely through its daughter, its religious daughter, Christianity. But there's actually quite a lot of confusion about that. So that word 'monotheism'—

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Jon: There's confusion about what?

Tim: Okay. There's one God. Many people think Jewish people believe there's one God. What do Christians believe? There's one God.

Jon: Right.

Tim: What's the title given to that, believe it's a monotheistic religion. The confusion is that—

Jon: And during a time where there wasn't other monotheistic religions?

Tim: Yeah, monotheism, like really passionate monotheism is the legacy of the Jewish and Christian tradition in the history of [inaudible 00:15:43].

Jon: Everyone else is really fine and just assumes there's many gods.

Tim: Yeah. Most religions, for most of human history, have been in some form of polytheism, many different gods, or pantheism.

Jon: Everything is God.

Tim: Everything is God or some version in between. There are actually a handful of other monotheistic religions that have popped up throughout history, but nothing like the Jewish Christian tradition. It's unique. And the fact that a singular 'All-powerful, Creator, Ruler being' is what probably comes in to most Westerners minds when they hear the word God that shows you the influence of these particular religions in our history. Because that's not what most humans for most of human history have believed.

Here's what's fascinating. You can go look up at Dictionary.com, Oxford English Dictionary, if you look up the term "monotheism" it gives you a definition that doesn't actually correspond to what Jews and Christians have believed about God for most of their history. So here's the English – this is from Dictionary.com. So the English definition of monotheism: "the belief that there is only one God," that's the short definition. "The belief that there is only one God." And that seems intuitive. "Mono..."

Jon: One.

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Tim: "Theism"...

Jon: God.

Tim: One God. The implication being, therefore, there are no other beings that can be described or identified by the noun 'God' or 'gods'. Monotheism: There is only one God, which means there are no other gods.

Jon: And you asked a bus full of Christians, they would say, "Yes, that's true."

Tim: There is only one God.

Jon: Including me. This is what we learn. This is what we're taught. Right?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is that what you learned when you started following Jesus?

Tim: Oh, yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah, there's only one God.

Jon: There's only one God.

Tim: I'm going to force you to do, if you really stop and think that through, if you're a follower of Jesus, and you've read the Bible at any link, you don't actually believe that...

Jon: All right.

Tim: So anyway, we're going to talk about it. We're going to talk about it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the modern English definition of "monotheism" that there is only one being who can be described with the noun God.

Jon: One deity.

Tim: Yeah. So there you go. I'll just give you the bottom line. If you look at the belief about the God of the Bible that you could use to describe monotheism, it would not fit that description. What it fits, if you just read both Old and New Testaments is that it's a devotion and allegiance to the particular God who revealed himself to Abraham, and

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Israel, and ultimately in Jesus, and the belief that that God is the Supreme God, Creator and Ruler of all among all other gods who might claim your allegiance.

Jon: That's not what the Bible says. What's interesting is, there are verses in the Bible that make you go, "Wait, did they believe there was other gods?" And then usually you go, "Well, no, it's just that's the culture." So it's just kind of like...

Tim: Yeah. We'll talk about that.

Jon: But for me, and I guarantee almost every Christian, Protestant, Catholic, they would listen to you say that and go that is BS. Like there's not many gods in which the God of the Bible is the Supreme God. That sounds like a cult.

Tim: It sounds like the Bible.

Jon: It sounds like the Bible?

Tim: It sounds like you've been reading your Bible, not even that closely. Like just read it on its face value meaning and you walk away with what, you know, Bible nerds of different stripes call biblical monotheism or ancient Jewish monotheism. Which had room for a populated spiritual universe among which they believed there is one chief Supreme God, the God of Israel revealed to Abraham, Christians believe revealed in Jesus, who has no rivals. But He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and God of gods.

[00:20:21]

Jon: God of gods?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is that in the Bible?

Tim: It is. So there you go. That's confusing. You're making my point.

Jon: I feel like you're teaching me a different religion.

Tim: You're making my point for me that not only is the English word 'God' unclear in English, the concept of monotheism, now I'm so fascinated

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with, how did this happen? How did a modern definition of monotheism come to be what Christians believe when it's not, in fact, at all how the Bible talks about identity of God?

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So anyway, we'll talk about it.

Jon: Yeah, one step at a time.

Tim: One step at a time. That's the first two. Here's the third one. Then, once you have those two confusions—

Jon: The first one being the God is not a name, it's a title and it can be ambiguous what you're referring.

Tim: Yeah. You can refer to many different types of beings.

Jon: And in human history, if you took a human out of any time in human history, likely they thought of a very different than a monotheistic God. And the second one being the way we think about monotheism is not the way the Bible thinks about monotheism.

Tim: Correct, yeah. So you combine those two, and then try and talk to somebody in the modern West about how Jesus is God, and you have a situation ripe for total miscommunication. Not even just miscommunication. I think to say, "Jesus is God" with that kind of confusion in the air is actually irresponsible. Because to say, "Jesus is God" it means you're leading up to the other person's imagination what that says about Jesus, right?

If God is unclear, and can conjure up the big guy upstairs, who's going to let you into the pearly gates if you've been naughty or nice or something, that's what comes in many people's minds. Then to say, "Jesus is God" is a total misrepresentation of Jesus. Because they're equating Jesus with the big guy upstairs who's going to let you into the pearly gates based on whether you've been naughty or nice. Are you with me? I'm just saying, as an act of communication, you're not helping somebody at all.

Jon: Does the Bible say Jesus is God?

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Tim: It does in very Jewish categories. But it doesn't do it in the way I just did it.

Jon: People are turning off the podcast and starting to listen to something more Christian.

Tim: The Bible is making the claim that Jesus is the embodiment of the particular God whose story is told in the Old and New Testaments.

Jon: The embodiment.

Tim: The, the human incarnation - embodiment.

Jon: Why can't that be synonymous, saying, "Jesus is God and Jesus is the embodiment of God."

Tim: Because most people when they hear the word 'God', don't think of the storyline of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Jon: So if you're saying Jesus is this picture you have of a dude up in heaven, then that's confusing people. But if you just say "Jesus is God," and someone doesn't have a formed view of what God is, then—

Tim: Then hopefully, the question is, "What God? Jesus is what God?"

Jon: Or what do you mean by "Jesus is God"?

Tim: Ah, yes. In that case, you've then deal. Then you can sit down have a conversation. The point is, there's nobody comes with a clean blank slate when they hear the word 'God'. We have a preloaded set of ideas and stories about God. And then we take Jesus and fit those into that container.

What I'm saying is the way the biblical narrative works, it's precisely the opposite. The whole story, three-quarters of the Bible is giving you a very detailed portrait of the character, and nature, and purpose of the God of Israel. And then the story of Jesus comes along and says, "Jesus is the human incarnation of that particular God, the God of Israel."

And that's very different because I can't assume that...Actually, I always assume that no one has the story of the Old Testament in their heads. It's a pretty safe assumption.

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Jon: It's a long confusing story.

Tim: Totally. Which is why my notes are 32 pages long for this topic. Do you see? That's the problem.

Jon: Totally. We like to just pass out New Testaments and just say, "Read about Jesus."

Tim: And I get that. I mean, Jesus is awesome. Personally, it was hearing stories about Jesus all through my mid to late teens that began to challenge my concept of God. I had a concept of God.

Growing up in Portland you're in whatever late Western culture, and then it was actually the stories about Jesus that begin to challenge my definitions of God. And so the stories of Jesus began to remake what that word referred to in my imagination. And then, once I started to read the Bible, then it continued.

So I want to start with the word 'God; in Hebrew, because first of all, it's awesome. It works differently than our word 'God' doesn't English.

Jon: Yeah, teach me that.

Tim: So this is familiar. This is how we've done many of these theme videos. We began with our English word about Spirit or whatever covenant or holiness, and then we learn the biblical word, and then that invites us into a whole different way of thinking about things.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the English word 'God' we've already talked about it. Interesting. If you spell 'God' with a capital G - this is Oxford English Dictionary - if you spell 'God' with a capital G, you are referring to the God of the monotheistic religions, who is a singular being Creator and Ruler, source of all moral authority, supreme.

However, if you spell 'God' with a lowercase g, you could be referring to a god from any other religion in the history of human religions, which is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a super human being, or a spirit worshiped as having power over nature or human fortunes - a deity.

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So the problem is that when we use the capital word letter G, we're using a title to refer to a specific deity or spirit being that has a specific story and attributes, namely the Jewish and Christian God. Are you with me? When I spell 'God' with a capital G, the Oxford English Dictionary says I'm referring to the Jewish Christian God.

I'm using the title. I'm using an ambiguous title but I gave it a capital G, and now I'm referring to...

Jon: To the Jewish Christian.

Tim: ...to one particular God.

Jon: Yeah, that's how we use the word.

Tim: That's how we use the word 'God'. That is not at all how the word God works in Hebrew. This is the culprit of 75% the miscommunication about the word 'God'. So you probably know the word 'God' although you're looking down now, but you probably knew it beforehand.

Jon: Yeah, Elohim.

Tim: Elohim. So the first sentence of the Bible. "In the beginning, Elohim created the sky and the land." So even right here in the first sense of the Bible, in Hebrew, it's also a title and it means essentially what lowercase g does.

Jon: So it's like, "In the beginning, a god created the heavens and the earth"?

Tim: That's the question.

Jon: Because like if it's a title like human, it would be "In the beginning, human created the heavens and the earth."

Tim: Yeah. And these are both are translation debate because oftentimes the biblical authors will put the word "the" in front of the word Elohim to specify that we're talking about "the God of Israel."

Jon: Who will put the word "the"?

Tim: Biblical authors. In other words, it's very common for biblical authors to refer to God...

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Jon: Oh, put the Hebrew 'the'.

Tim: That put the Hebrew words 'the' so word 'ha'. So "Ha Elohim," "The God."

Jon: So it'd be like, "The human."

Tim: Yes, the human. "The human named Jon, walked into the room."

Jon: But if you're telling a story about me, and you were telling it to a bunch of ants about this guy, and you're telling these ants "The human, he's coming to kill us all and destroy our anthill." And you're like. "What human?" "The human."

Tim: The human. Yeah, yeah. So interestingly, that's not how Genesis 1 begins. Genesis 1 uses unspecific title to refer to the particular God whose story is going to be told here. That's Genesis 1. In Genesis 2 you get...

Jon: Wait. Genesis 1, it just says Elohim.

Tim: Just says "Elohim" all the way through. A deity.

Jon: A deity.

[00:29:58]

Tim: Then in Genesis 2, you get the phrase "Yahweh Elohim." Which tells you, "Oh, yes the Elohim that did what He did in Chapter 1, that was Yahweh Elohim. Stories are set next to each other so that you compare the main actor in each of those stories. So but you do know that it's a singular Elohim.

Jon: From Genesis 1?

Tim: From Genesis 1. All the verbs are singular. Here's a little more about this word because this is an interesting word in Hebrew, 'Elohim'. So it's a long form of the word. There are many forms of this word that appear in the Bible - The short form is the word "El." It's just the first two letters - El - over 200 times in the Hebrew Bible phrase. So it's very common. El.

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There's another singular form, Eloah. So instead of Elohim, Eloah. And those are both singular. That occurs almost 60 times. And they all in our English translations just get translated, "God".

Jon: Why are there a discrepancy between the ways that they're said?

Tim: Well, it's a fascinating history to this word. So El, is the short form, Eloah...

Jon: 'El' makes sense because it's like you got human and you got man or something.

Tim: Oh, yeah, okay.

Jon: Just shorten it.

Tim: Yeah, shorten it. Human, man. Take off the "hu."

Jon: Take of the "hu" to make it shorter, it's easier to say.

Tim: That's right. So El, Eloah...Actually literally probably the way great-grandpa Moses said it would be Eloah. El, Eloah, Elohim. It's three forms.

Jon: Just three forms. Probably just how people have gotten used to saying it...

Tim: How the word developed. What's interesting is that the...

Jon: Great- grandpa Moses. Is that what you just said?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I love it.

Tim: It's like old English, how our great-grandparents spoke English.

Jon: That picture that conjure when you say that.

Tim: "Grandpa Moses spoke Hebrew," would be different than later forms Hebrew. So you have El, Eloah, and then Elohim. And that third one, Elohim, that "im" is significant because it's the plural noun ending. It's like 's' in English.

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Jon: When you put an "im" behind a word, you're—

Tim: You're making a plural.

Jon: You're making a plural.

Tim: Yeah. Unless you specify by other indicators and context that you're using a plural noun to refer to a singular reality, which you can do in Hebrew.

Jon: We talked about that with "the skies."

Tim: Skies? Yeah, it's a great example. That's right.

Jon: Because that's a plural...

Tim: Correct.

Jon: ...that means a singular large thing.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: What's that called?

Tim: Well, that was called...I forget. The plural of complexity or something like that.

Jon: Yeah, right.

Tim: So there's something similar happening here, but it creates an ambiguity in Hebrew because the word 'Elohim' is technically plural. You can be reading a sentence in the Bible, like in the first commandment, "Have no other gods before me," and the word is, Elohim. "Have no other Elohim before me."

Jon: Which is the plural for God.

Tim: gods, yeah. Who gets humiliated in the 10 plagues of Egypt, according to Exodus Chapter 12. The Elohim of Egypt. The Gods of Egypt. So you can use the common plural noun, but then when it's referring to the God of Israel, the verbs, all the other words connected to Elohim are always in the singular. So the first sentence of the Bible, "Elohim created." And created in Hebrews is marked as a singular.

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- Jon: Because the verbs have a—
- Tim: That's right. Yeah. In English, most of our verbs are not marked as whether it's one person doing it or many.
- Jon: So what does that mean that the noun is plural but the verb is singular?
- Tim: What it means is, in this case, we're talking about one specific Elohim, not many Elohim.
- Jon: Then why didn't they use the word El or Eloah?
- Tim: Exactly.
- Jon: What do you mean exactly?
- Tim: No, I'm just saying that you put your thumb on the ambiguity in Hebrew.
- Jon: Okay.
- Tim: So we don't have this ambiguity in English, but it is there in Hebrew. It creates fascinating challenges.
- Jon: But we could duplicate the ambiguity. We could say, "In the beginning, gods, a gods..." No, I guess we can't.
- Tim: No, you can't do it. No, you can't do it because it's referring to one specific Elohim. Because it's a singular verb. So an Elohim created. You don't know which one though.
- Jon: Yeah. That's interesting.
- Tim: You read page one and you're like, "Oh, which Elohim?"
- Jon: Yeah.
- Tim: Now that wouldn't occur to a modern Westerner because God—
- Jon: But that wouldn't occur to a Jewish reader of the Bible either because they've read other portions of the Bible.

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- Tim: Yeah, that's right. But again, if we were trying to come to this with a blank slate. So here's what you walk away from this basic point then. The word Elohim doesn't refer to a specific God.
- Jon: So if we just had Genesis 1, and that's all we had, then there would be a big debate about which God do they think created heaven and earth.
- Tim: That's exactly right. In English we have this convention where if we put a capital G it means the God of the Bible, and if it's lowercase g, any other god. In Hebrew, there's just these words, El, Eloah, Elohim. Specifically, Elohim is used within the Bible itself to refer to gods other than—
- Jon: Yeah, like the gods of Egypt.
- Tim: Yes. The Elohim of Egypt. "Have no other Elohim before me," is the first commandment. So it presumes there are other Elohim that you could have before you.
- Jon: Or that you could try to have imaginary Elohim.
- Tim: But whether they're real or not, isn't the point. The point is the Israelites sure thought they're real, and so therefore they wanted to have... "Yeah, we want to worship Baal."
- Jon: Okay, they thought they were real. But I guess the question that then a modern Christian would ask is, well, just because they thought they were real doesn't mean they were real?
- Tim: Correct. I mean, that's the question that you got to talk about, and I'm going to force us not to talk about it for a while. But we're going to eventually talk about that.
- Jon: Okay.
- Tim: I'm just saying the word means deity.
- Jon: So right now, you're saying, it's totally cool to still just say there are no other gods...
- Tim: No. I am saying-
- Jon: ...at this stage in the conversation?

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Tim: At this stage in the conversation, I'd say, the basic meaning of the word "Elohim", is either referring to the singular God of Israel or all the other gods.

Jon: Yeah. Well, because culture at large believes there are other gods.

Tim: Yeah. Israel's Canaanite neighbors believe there are other gods.

Jon: Canaanite neighbors.

Tim: Yeah. And many Israelites were tempted to believe that those gods were more powerful than the God of Israel. That's the first commandment.

Jon: But what we haven't established is whether or not there are actually other gods or did they just think there were other guys?

Tim: Okay, right. That is a question that is yet to be addressed.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So here is one that'll throw you for a loop. Go down to this 1 Samuel reference here. This is a strange story. This is a story about King Saul, Israel's first king. He isn't hearing from Yahweh, the God of Israel anymore. No guidance, no words of guidance or anything, and the Philistines are breathing down his neck, big army coming his way. Samuel, who was an important prophet has died.

And so he goes to this sorceress, who's a spirit medium, and she has him conjure up the deceased Samuel, and she does it. And then in the story here, it's "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out and said, 'I see an Elohim coming up out of the ground'."

So whatever the Hebrew word Elohim means, it can refer to the One God of Israel, it can refer to the gods worshiped by other nations, it can refer to a deceased human.

Jon: That is somehow...

Tim: Conjured up by sorceress.

Jon: ...conjured up spiritually.

Tim: Yes.

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Jon: So it's very loose word.

Tim: So it's a word whose meaning is very different.

Jon: It's range of meaning is broad.

Tim: It's range of meaning is broader, and has a different set of nuances than our English word 'God'. And then no English translation does this passage get translated. I see gods coming up out of the ground or I see a god.

Jon: Right. Because our word 'God' doesn't have same broad meaning.

Tim: Yeah. It doesn't ever refer to the disembodied spirit of a deceased person. We have the word spirit to refer to that.

Jon: Right.

Tim: So that's actually our first clue as to the meaning of this word here of Elohim.

Jon: What's the clue? That's it's broad?

Tim: The fact that Elohim can refer to the disembodied presence of a deceased human means that Elohim has a certain range of meaning and connections that's different than our English word 'God'. Just like we did with spirit or holiness, you have to flush what categories we're bringing from our English vocabulary through the Bible.

[00:40:07]

Jon: Try and understand the Hebrew category first and then figure out how to translate in English.

Tim: That's right. When the Bible says, "God," what does that mean? So first of all, here's one first implication. So Yahweh, the God of Israel is an Elohim, but He's not apparently the only Elohim because there's the Elohim of Egypt, there's other Elohim that should not be put before Yahweh—

Jon: And they could all be fake.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, that's right, whether fake or real. But Samuel wasn't fake I think. He encountered something very real. That in Hebrew could be

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referred to as an Elohim. So here, I'll just let someone else do it. This is from Hebrew Bible nerd named Michael Heiser, who actually has some great books and a great podcast...

Jon: "The Naked Bible" podcasts and a great podcast.

Tim: ...that's called The Naked Bible podcast. He has a book called "The Unseen Realm" that's been one of the helpful resources that I've been looking at as I put all this together. So here's how Heiser puts it.

He says, "If we're trying to just understand how the Hebrew Bible uses the word "God," Yahweh is an Elohim but no other Elohim is Yahweh." "Elohim," Heiser concludes, "is a place of residence term. The word tells you what the proper domain is for that being. By nature, the God of Israel, the many Elohim of God's counsel, demons, angels, the departed dead like Samuel, these can all be referred to with the word Elohim.

So what do they have in common? They're part of a nonphysical domain that's related to, but also distinct from the physical embodied domain. So an Elohim is by definition and by nature a disembodied entity. So the word can refer to many different beings who inhabit that realm." So that's his conclusion, and I think that's helpful to at least say there's a common denominator between all these uses of Elohim but it's different than an English word 'God'.

Jon: Okay. So it's a big bucket word to refer to any type of disembodied being.

Tim: The Elohim of Egypt, the Elohim of...

Jon: Samuel.

Tim: ...of Babylon, the Elohim that is Samuel coming up out of the ground is disembodied, and the Elohim that his named Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Jon: So basically, the confusion we talked about at the beginning, all comes down to this discrepancy where our word 'God' is specific to a type of divine being.

Tim: Right. The all-powerful, Creator, Ruler.

Jon: Right.

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Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And we understand and most Christians understand this idea of other spiritual beings, angels, demons, but we wouldn't call those gods. But in Hebrew there's a big bucket word 'Elohim' and it can refer to Yahweh, the Supreme God as a Bible presents Him, it can refer to the gods of other cultures, it can refer to a spirit. Does it ever refer to angels or demons as Elohim?

Tim: Yes, which begs the question of, if those can be called Elohim, then, is angel and demon just another type of title for Elohim?

Jon: Another type of title, or is it like a sub-type?

Tim: A sub-type. Yeah, that's right. In essence, it just means spiritual being.

Jon: Elohim.

Tim: Elohim is a spiritual being. A nonphysical being.

Jon: Okay. So in the beginning, a spiritual being created the heavens in the earth.

Tim: Yeah. What spiritual being?

Jon: And then in Genesis 2, "Yahweh the spiritual being, created."

Tim: Yeah, which in English and Genesis 2, you turn Genesis 2 and it and it says, "The Lord God, which means—

Jon: Because Lord being Yahweh and God being Elohim.

Tim: God the Elohim. So it's a phrase. Yahweh Elohim. The Yahweh God.

Jon: So if you were to do a translation of Genesis 1, would it be "In the beginning, a spiritual being created the land and the sea or the sky and the land"?

Tim: Well, it's tricky because, for the biblical authors, they don't just think any spiritual being. They're thinking of Yahweh. But the language that they use—

Jon: So they would say, "The spiritual being"?

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Tim: Well, I think they would say, "God."

Jon: Elohim?

Tim: It's tricky because in English...

Jon: No, I'm asking not how Hebrew speaker. How would you try to say in English the best way the speaker would be thinking?

Tim: Oh, I understand.

Jon: You probably just would say, "God," because that's put—

[00:44:59]

Tim: Yeah. And perhaps using the lowercase g. In English to try and communicate what's going on is lowercase g, god. Oh, which one? Oh, keep reading. Well, and actually, there's only one Elohim, who has the power and capabilities of generating universe like ours within the convictions for the biblical authors. But you don't get that Elohim's name until page 2.

Jon: Right. So if you're Jewish person who grew up just worshiping Canaanite gods, then you knew nothing about Yahweh because it had been forgotten?

Tim: That's right.

Jon: You haven't been told.

Tim: Yeah. You're an ancient Moabite reading Genesis 1.

Jon: Yeah. You get Genesis, someone's telling it to you, and they say, "In the beginning, Elohim created," you would go, "Which Elohim?"

Tim: Yeah. And then you'd get to page two and you'd be like, "Oh, the Elohim."

Jon: So to create the same impact for an English reader, you would say, "In the beginning, a spiritual being created the land and the sky."

Tim: Yeah, totally. Yeah. I've never actually thought to put it that way.

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- Jon: And then you'd as English reader would be like, "Okay, what spiritual being?"
- Tim: Yeah. Well, you would walk away from the story going, "That's a very powerful spiritual being."
- Jon: Sure, yeah. That's a pretty...yeah. With His words, created.
- Tim: Yeah. I know my people, Moab they...because Baal is an Elohim, but I don't know any stories of Baal doing what that Elohim just did on page one of Genesis. So that's a very powerful Elohim. This is all sanctified imagination.
- Jon: Sanctified?
- Tim: Oh, it's like we're using our biblical...we're trying to biblically imagine ourselves back into the ancient world. So it's probably all kinds of things we're not thinking of.
- Jon: Oh, I'm sure we're doing it absolutely correctly.
- Tim: Yeah. So all of a sudden, phrases in the Bible begin to be able to make sense. Like at the top of the next page there, a phrase like Deuteronomy 10:17. "For Yahweh," this is Moses to Israel, "Yahweh is your Elohim. He is the Elohim of Elohim, and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, the awesome one."
- Jon: How's that normally translated?
- Tim: God of gods.
- Jon: Is it?
- Tim: Yeah. Deuteronomy 10:17. "Yahweh is your Elohim. He is the Elohim among all the other Elohim." Do you see how? Even though it's the same Hebrew word, in the first singular—
- Jon: I like just rolling with the word spiritual being. That's helpful.
- Tim: Yeah, good.
- Jon: Yahweh is your spiritual being.
- Tim: Yahweh is your spiritual being, which means all kinds of things.

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- Jon: He is the spiritual being of spiritual beings.
- Tim: Of all spiritual beings, yeah.
- Jon: Of all spiritual beings.
- Tim: Yeah. This is that classic biblical phrase. It's a Hebrew turn of phrase. You put two nouns next to each other, the first one singular, the second one plural. And what you mean, it's a way of saying this is the ultimate of that thing.
- Jon: Is that how this is? Those both are plural.
- Tim: The Elohim of Elohim. Right. But the first one singular and meaning because he's the Elohim of Elohim.
- Jon: Oh, okay.
- Tim: It's just like "the Holy of holies" or the Song of songs.
- Jon: So the most spiritual of beings.
- Tim: Ultimate Elohim...
- Jon: The ultimate spiritual being.
- Tim: ...among all Elohim. So notice here, it presumes like whether or not they are real, and we'll talk about that, it presumes that people think they have. People believe in other Elohim. Many Elohim are available to give your allegiance to.
- Jon: Well, and if we're just talking about Elohim in terms of spiritual beings, then yeah, I'm not as worried.
- Tim: See, isn't that interesting once you stop using the English word 'God'?
- Jon: Yeah.
- Tim: Yeah, there you go. I mean, it means deity.
- Jon: Elohim mean deity?
- Tim: I'm sorry. You're right. You're right because of Samuel. The Samuel, is the Samuel instance...

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Jon: If by deity you just mean spiritual being?

Tim: The disembodied spiritual being. Usually quite powerful. All right. So let's look at another example. This one's from the Book of Deuteronomy and it's from a poem where Moses is anticipating the idolatry of the Israelites when they go into the promised land. This Deuteronomy 32 verse 17. He says that they're going to sacrifice to demons - it's a Hebrew word for demons, Shedim. Demons. Which means like malevolent bad spiritual beings - demons that are not Eloah. Singular.

[00:50:07]

Tim: And then the parallel line is they're going to sacrifice to Elohim that they had not previously known. So this is a poetic parallel line. The Israelites they sacrifice to demons that are not Eloah, they are Elohim that they had not previously known. This is another good example. That sounds funky in English.

Jon: It is really confusing.

Tim: But it makes perfect sense in Hebrew.

Jon: They're not Eloah. So they're not spiritual beings?

Tim: But remember Eloah is singular.

Jon: Oh, Eloah is singular.

Tim: Eloah is singular. It just means God.

Jon: Is El always singular?

Tim: El and Eloah are the singular form.

Jon: Okay. So they're not the God?

Tim: They are not the God but they are Elohim. What are these other beings called in this poetic line?

Jon: Yeah, the demons.

Tim: They're called demons in one line, which means spiritual beings that, well, worship of them will lead to destructive human behavior.

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Destruction. And then the next line they're called Elohim that your ancestors didn't know, didn't worship.

So once again, if you look in your English translations...Actually, I think if I'm just going look it up, I'm pretty sure all our English translations in that second line use the word gods in the plural. "They sacrificed to demons that are not God, gods that they had not previously known." Oh, that's interesting. That's the NIV. The ESV translates, "They sacrifice deemed to demons that were no gods."

Jon: That were no gods.

Tim: So they take the singular Eloah and they make it a plural in English to gods that were not known. That's interesting. I wonder why they made that decision. Anyway.

Jon: That's confusing.

Tim: It is confusing. You can see why these words are confusing. To try and bring these words across in English is actually difficult.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because of—

Jon: But as soon as you use the word 'spiritual beings', it's not difficult.

Tim: Sure. Yeah, it eases the tension. Yeah, yeah.

Jon: So why don't we just do that?

Tim: I have a friend who he's a pastor and he was trying to talk about this to his church community. And so he was using the plural word 'gods' and a whole bunch of people, their heresy alert went crazy.

Jon: That's what I'm saying.

Tim: Because he was talking about other gods.

Jon: That's why I kept—

Tim: And the whole point is that the word 'gods', this word in the Bible...

Jon: Is the wrong English words.

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Tim: Is the wrong English word.

Jon: It's the wrong English word.

Tim: 'God' is a confusing, unhelpful word in the English language.

Jon: You know, you don't have to use it at all in the Bible then, right? Because you've got spiritual being, you got Yahweh or the Lord, and then you've got angels and demons. There's no reason to use the word 'God'.

Tim: Yeah. And this is a debate the Bible Translators have. When you come to a word that has meaning has developed so much that it's not a useful word anymore. The challenge is, do you just use it anyway, and try and redefine it in its biblical meaning, or do you just ditch it and find a new word? And that's fascinating to think that the English word God has actually become a hindrance to clear communication.

Jon: Yeah. I don't think you could actually lose the word God because—

Tim: No, it's too much of a fixture.

Jon: Do you believe in a spiritual being? Also, that's confusing.

Tim: Okay, here's the New Testament example that's interesting. In the New Testament, especially for these Jewish authors, they grew up reading the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, so they're using Greek but they're thinking often in Hebrew. Paul the Apostle is a good example. So the Greek word, you know...You studied some Greek college. The Greek word for God?

Jon: Theos.

[00:54:50]

Tim: Yeah, Theos. So in 1 Corinthians 8, you have new followers of Jesus who used to go down to the corner temple to whatever, Apollo or Zeus and eat meat from a sacrificial lamb offered to Zeus. And the question was, "Hey, should we still do that anymore? Can we do that?" And he says he thinks it's a bad idea to go there and eat it, but if you get that meat and bring it into your home, he says it's no big deal unless there's someone around that it's going to cause problems for you.

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So this is how he opens that paragraph in 1 Corinthians 8. He says, "Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world."

Jon: Yeah, that doesn't make any sense.

Tim: "And that there is no God but one."

Jon: What does he mean there's no such thing as an idol in the world?

Tim: Yeah, he doesn't mean idols don't exist.

Jon: Obviously, there are idols.

Tim: Yes, yeah. So that idols are idols. That idols are 'no thing' in the world.

Jon: They are 'no thing' in the world? What does that mean?

Tim: So you live in a world where there are literally hundreds of idols on the street, in the marketplaces, everywhere, in town hall, in people's homes. People do all kinds of rituals to them, they fear them, they treat them like little people, they kiss them, they bow to them. The Jewish Christian conviction is, those idols are no thing.

Jon: They have no power? They don't represent anything?

Tim: They are wood and metal.

Jon: Well, then that's a thing.

Tim: Yeah, totally.

Jon: Well, it's like coming to Portland and saying, "There no [inaudible 00:56:44] here.

Tim: That's right. The parallel is there is no such thing as idol in the world and there is no God but one. Those pieces of wood are not Elohim. Plural, or singular. That idol is not a Theos.

Jon: Got it.

Tim: It's a piece of wood. And so he's just saying, "Listen, concerning food sacrificed to idols, there's nothing spooky about that piece of wood

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carved like Zeus down in the temple. And the fact that a piece of meat was dedicated to it, whatever, it's a piece of wood."

Jon: It's not an idol, it's a piece of wood.

Tim: It's a piece of wood. It's not a god. It's not a spiritual being...

Jon: It doesn't represent—

Tim: ...it's a piece of wood. No, he doesn't say it doesn't represent because look what he goes on to say.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He says, "There's no such thing as idol in the world and there's no God, but one. For even if there are so-called gods in heaven or on earth, and indeed, there are many gods and many lords, yet for us, there is but one God." And then he goes on to define what God is. "Our God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Jon: He's sounding really schizophrenic here.

Tim: Exactly. In English, it sounds like it doesn't make any sense. But again, in biblical Elohim thought, this makes perfect sense.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So what he's saying is, "That piece of wood isn't a deity. It's a piece of wood."

Jon: It's not a spiritual being.

Tim: Yes. Now, he says, and that's how people treated these pieces of wood and metal. They treat them, they revere them, they kiss them, they weep before them, they cry out to them, and it's a rock. It's a piece of wood.

But there are so-called gods and lords in the world. We do know that. So in other words, he's acknowledging that even though people might think that the wood or the rock is a god, he's saying, it's not...

Jon: But there are.

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Tim: ...people are connecting themselves to spiritual beings that are real. And he calls them "so-called gods."

Jon: What's that in Greek? So-called?

Tim: Theos. This is a plural of Theos.

Jon: Why do we put so-called in front?

Tim: Oh, got it. Here. No, sorry. I'm certain that's his phrase, but I'm just going to double check the so-called. There are many called gods, named gods.

Jon: In English when you say so-called—

Tim: Yeah, it's kind pejorative. It's kind of like, but we know that there is no.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So it's the passive of the word speak. "There are many gods spoken of in heaven on earth, and indeed," then he goes on to a firm, "There are spiritual beings out there - many gods and many lords."

Jon: And lords, meaning?

Tim: Yeah, referring to spiritual beings.

Jon: Spiritual beings that have some sort of dominion?

Tim: Dominion, correct. And that's because he's Jewish and he knows that there are real spiritual beings that have been given dominion by God, we're not there yet, that they're under God's authority and that they're real. There are Elohim out there that are real spiritual beings.

[01:00:03]

Jon: So what he's saying is, that piece of wood that people are sacrificing meat to, don't sweat it, it's just a piece of wood. It's not a spiritual being.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: "So there's nothing weird with the meat. Don't worry about that."

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- Tim: And for us, we know and give our allegiance to one God.
- Jon: "So eat the meat."
- Tim: The point is there's nothing spooky magical about the meat.
- Jon: Because that wood statue can't do anything to the meat besides maybe like give a nice smoky flavor to it, if you burned it underneath it.
- Tim: Right. So that's the first point.
- Jon: That's the first point. And then he says—
- Tim: But then he doesn't want to be misunderstood as saying, "No, I'm not saying there's no other spiritual beings."
- Jon: So he doesn't want you to go from there and go, "Oh, okay. There's no other spiritual beings."
- Tim: Correct.
- Jon: He's saying, "No, there are spiritual beings and they have many names and they have dominion over things and we need to watch out for them."
- Tim: Yes. "And yet for us, there is one God." So notice this claim. "There is for us one God" answers two things. First of all, it's just a piece of wood. There's no reality to it. It's just a piece of wood. It's not a god. And for us, there's one God. so we know who the ultimate God is, that's just a piece of wood, there's no problem here. But then, I don't want to be misunderstood as saying...
- Jon: When you say "There's one God"...
- Tim: "There's no God but one."
- Jon: Yeah, right. What does that mean?
- Tim: We'll talk about that. It's why I put this example last before the next. The conversation about monotheism.
- Jon: There's no God but one.
- Tim: So is he saying only one spiritual being exists?

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- Jon: Well, no.
- Tim: No. Because what's the next thing he says? "Now there are many named gods and lords but for us, remember there's only one God." And then he goes on to name that one God as being the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. To which a pagan will be, "Oh, so you believe in two gods." And then he would say, "No, no, just the one God of Israel who his Father and Son and Spirit."
- Jon: Yeah. So you're going to explain what he means by "there is no God but one"?
- Tim: Correct.
- Jon: Okay. I want to know.
- Tim: What he doesn't mean is there are no other Elohim, there's no other Theos, there's no other spiritual beings. He doesn't mean that.
- Jon: Right.
- Tim: Because in the next sentence, he says there are.
- Jon: Well, couldn't he be saying there are in theory?
- Tim: Well, if he wants to say in theory, he would say that.
- Jon: Or he says "So-called."
- Tim: Yeah. But that's an English translation that is putting a pejorative spin on it. There are many gods spoken of. And then in the next sentence, "And indeed, there are many gods and many lords."
- Jon: He's pretty expressive there.
- Tim: Yeah. So he says, "There's some that are just spoken of." So we don't know they're real, maybe they're not real.
- Jon: Right.
- Tim: But you've read your Hebrew Bible.
- Jon: There are.

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- Tim: There are many gods and Lords, but for us, we give our allegiance to the one God.
- Jon: So you're saying "For us, there's one God" it means, for us, there's allegiance to one God.
- Tim: Yes. For a Jewish person to say "there is no God but one" doesn't mean that there are no other spiritual beings that could be called Theos or Elohim. What it means is my allegiance alone is to the God that I believe is the supreme Elohim over all the other Elohim. That's what he's saying here.
- Jon: Does it mean more than just we have allegiance to just this one God? Because it seems like when he says "there's no God but one" seems like he's saying more like there's only really only one God that's important.
- Tim: Yeah, I hear that. And here he's actually just borrowing a phrase from Deuteronomy and Isaiah that we'll look out a little bit later. It's often misunderstood to mean to be a claim that there are no other spiritual beings. But he goes on to say in the next sentence that there are. Are you with me?
- Jon: I'm with you.
- Tim: Just like to say he has a coherent brain.
- Jon: I'm with you.
- Tim: He can't say, "There's no other spiritual being," and then in the next sentence say, "Now, we know there's many other spiritual beings." It doesn't make any sense.
- Jon: First it sounds really schizophrenic.
- Tim: Exactly. That's right. Yeah. And that's the English problem.
- Jon: Yeah.
- Tim: There we go. Are you with me? Elohim, there's one refers to spiritual beings. The biblical faith is oriented towards one particular Elohim and the claim is that Elohim is the most powerful: the Creator, Ruler of all, and that Elohim personal name is revealed as Yahweh - God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all that.

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[01:05:16]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So in light of all that, what then does it mean to say there is one like the Shema? "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our Elohim. Yahweh is one or Yahweh alone." Or what does it mean for a Jewish monotheist in Paul's day to say, "Now we know there is no God but one"? So what did they mean when they use this one?

Jon: Thanks for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. Next week, we're going to pick right back up and continue to talk about the identity of God in the Bible. Specifically, we're going to look at the Shema, the famous Jewish prayer found in Deuteronomy.

Tim: And the famous line in the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, Yahweh is our Elohim. Yahweh is one." So does that one mean that there is only one Elohim, one God? Well, that's the question.

Jon: Next week we'll explore that question. In the meantime, check us out at thebibleproject.com. We have free resources like videos, and other podcasts, and blog posts and study notes and it's all for free. This episode was edited and produced by Dan Gummel, with music by Tae The Producer. Thanks for being a part of this with us.

Nancy: Hi. This is Nancy. I'm from Wenzhou China. [foreign language 01:06:41]. What I like best about The Bible project is that it provides a framework for me to understand what each book of the Bible is because for a lot of the Bible books, one of the first times I read it could be very overwhelming especially for books like Leviticus and those things. And so watching the Bible project really helps me to understand the theme of that book and helps me to remember.

We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We're are a crowdfunded project by people like me. Find free videos, study notes, and more apps at thebibleproject.com. Okay. [foreign language 01:07:22] bibleproject.com.

[End of transcription 01:07:50]