

El Shaddai

אל שַׁדַּי

God Almighty / The Almighty

Pronounced *el shad-dah'ee*, this is the best-known of the "El" compound names—thanks in no small measure to the song by the same name by Amy Grant¹.

The compound name is usually translated in English Bibles as "**God Almighty**", "**the Almighty**", or "**Almighty God**".

If you use the NIV...

If you use the NIV for your devotional study, you should not mistake the title "**LORD Almighty**" with this one. The NIV uses "LORD Almighty" to represent "YHWH Sabaoth" ("LORD of Hosts"), not "El Shaddai".

To avoid any confusion, remember that "El" is always represented by lowercase "God" and "YHWH" is always represented by uppercase "LORD" or "GOD". Thus, "LORD Almighty" could never represent "El Shaddai".

This is an excellent example of why it's always good to study more than one version of the Bible to ensure a more accurate and thorough understanding of the text.

Too often, we tend to emphasize the word "almighty" ("Shaddai") as being the word that denotes GOD's might and power in the name "El Shaddai". And while the word certainly means that—and more—we must not forget that the name "**El**" ("God"), in and of itself, already means "**mighty**", "**strong**", and "**prominent**".

YHWH is already "**the mighty GOD**" without the word "shaddai".

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God** (El), Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9:6 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

who show loving-commitment to thousands, and repay the crookedness of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them – the Great, the **Mighty Ėl**, יהוה (YHWH) of hosts is His Name
(Jeremiah 32:18 TS *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

So now, the question is: What does YHWH wish us to know about Himself—and perhaps about ourselves—in revealing this name/attribute to us?

Etymology

The exact origin and derivation of the word "*shaddai*" is disputed. While most tend to believe the name derives from Hebrew, many scholars and linguists argue that the name derives from the ancient Egyptian or Akkadian² languages which preceded Hebrew.

In the following discussion, we shall examine all of these possible sources.

Hebrew Roots: Shadad / Shad or Shadayim / Dai or Day

According to *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*, the following words have been used at various times in the development of the name:

- The Hebrew root word "*shadad*" ("שָׁדַד"), meaning "**powerful**" or "**destroyer**", suggests impregnable power and occurs 57 times. The name can also mean "to ravage" or "destroy". Some scholars state that, while Elohim is the GOD who creates, this root word suggests that El Shaddai is the GOD who **triumphs** over every obstacle and all opposition; He is able to **subdue** all things to Himself and can compel nature to do what is contrary to itself.

An example of such an occurrence is when GOD overcame the natural "deadness" of Sarah's and Abraham's bodies in connection with the birth of Isaac (Genesis 18:10-14, 21:1-7).

However, not everyone agrees with this interpretation. As Nathan Stone wrote in *Names of God*:

"...one scholar writes that 'Elohim is the god who creates nature so that it is and supports it so that it continues, El Shaddai the God who compels nature to do what is contrary to itself.' And so another says that as El Shaddai He reveals Himself by special deeds of power.

"It is quite likely that there is some connection between the name *Shaddai* and the root from which some modern scholars think it is derived, but in view of the circumstances under which it is often used and in view of the translation of another word almost exactly like it, we believe it has another derivation and a more significant meaning than that of special power."³

- The Hebrew word "*shad*" or "*shadayim*" ("שָׁדַי"), meaning "**breasts**", occurs 24 times as "*shaddai*" and may be interpreted as "the One who is mighty to **nourish, supply, and satisfy**". This interpretation is especially appropriate and reasonable in light of two incidents recorded in the book of Isaiah.

You will drink the milk of nations and **be nursed** at royal breasts (shad). Then you will know that I, the LORD (YHWH), am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.
(Isaiah 60:16 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

¹⁰ "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her.

¹¹ For you will **nurse** and be satisfied at her comforting breasts (shad); you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance."

¹² For this is what the LORD (YHWH) says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees.

¹³ As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."

(Isaiah 66:10-13 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)



- And finally, some believe the word derives from the Hebrew word "dai" or "day" ("דַּי"), meaning "**enough**", which, like "shad" or "shadayim", suggests **provision, sustenance**, and **blessing**. It says that El Shaddai is the **all-sufficient, all-bountiful** El, as shown in Genesis 49:24-25.

Of course, either or all of the above would naturally be intensified when combined with "El" and would refer to YHWH as the One who **mightily** nourishes and satisfies, who protects to the **uttermost**, and who **abundantly** supplies His people.

Egyptian Root: *Sha*

One theory that has found support among Christian scholars—as set forth by Philosophers F.M. Behymer and M. deJassy in various writings in *The Monist*, a quarterly peer-reviewed academic journal of philosophy—is that the root of "shaddai" originates with the Egyptian "*sha*", which denotes all **commencement of forms** and **births**.⁴

Thus, the name "El Shaddai" may relate chiefly to the physical function of nursing, thereby providing **strength, potency**, and **power** derived from such nourishment. This name also supports the concept of nourishment derived from the Hebrew "shad" or "shadayim".

This can be further supported by the theory that many of the proper names, as well as other words found in the Hebrew Bible, had their origin in the Sanskrit language, which of course preceded both the Egyptian and Hebrew languages.

Akkadian Roots: *Šadu* or *Shaddu*

Another popular theory put forth about the development of the word "shaddai" is that its roots may be found in the Akkadian word "šadu" (or "*shaddu*"), meaning "**mountain**", which suggests **great strength**. When combined with "El", then "El Shaddai" becomes "**The God of the Mountain**".

Since people in ancient days believed that the gods dwelt high up in the mountains—and for the Hebrews, their deliverance from slavery in Egypt and the Law came from YHWH on Mount Sinai—this theory certainly deserves due consideration. It says that El Shaddai, as "king of the hill", is high and lifted up, far **above all** principalities, powers, and might—the **all-powerful**, or **GOD Almighty**.

Conclusion

Knowing that many of the words known to us today in different languages have been developed from multiple common sources, I tend toward acceptance of all these as sources of the word "shaddai". Where similarities occur among ancient languages, I suggest they all derive from a common source: Whether Sanskrit, Akkadian, or Egyptian—all of which preceded Hebrew—the source of all life, including languages, is the One who gave us the name, El Shaddai Himself.

How is "Shaddai" used in Scripture?

The proper noun "Shaddai", by itself, occurs 41 times in the Old Testament, 29 times in Job alone, and is translated "Almighty" in most English Bibles. In fact, the name "Shaddai" is the one written on the Mezuzah scroll⁵.

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD (YHWH) our God (Elohim), the LORD (YHWH) is one.

⁵ Love the LORD (YHWH) your God (Elohim) with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.



- 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.
 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
 (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 *parenthetical text added*)

because of your father's God (El), who helps you,
 because of the Almighty (Shaddai), who blesses you
 with blessings of the skies above, blessings of the
 deep springs below, blessings of the breast (shad) and womb.
 (Genesis 49:25 *parenthetical text added*)

"Blessed is the one whom God (Eloah) corrects;
 so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty (Shaddai)."
 (Job 5:17 *parenthetical text added*)

The Spirit of God (El) has made me;
 he breath of the Almighty (Shaddai) gives me life.
 (Job 33:4 *parenthetical text added*)

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High (Elyon)
 will rest in the shadow of the Almighty (Shaddai)."
 (Psalm 91:1 *parenthetical text added*)

Wail, for the day of the LORD (YHWH) is near;
 it will come like destruction from the Almighty (Shaddai).
 (Isaiah 13:6 *parenthetical text added*)

See also Numbers 24:4, 16; Ruth 1:20,21; Job 5:17, 6:4, 6:14, 8:3-5, 11:7, 13:3, 15:25, 21:15,20 22:3, 22:17, 22:23-26, 23:16, 24:1, 27:2, 27:10-13, 29:5, 31:2, 31:35, 32:8, 34:10,12, 35:13, 37:23, 40:2; Psalm 68:14; Ezekiel 1:24; Joel 1:15.

How is the compound name used in Scripture?

The compound name "El Shaddai", translated "Almighty God" or "God Almighty", occurs seven times in the Old Testament.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD (YHWH) appeared to him and said,
 "I am God Almighty (El Shaddai); walk before me faithfully and be blameless.
 (Genesis 17:1 *parenthetical text added*)

May God Almighty (El Shaddai) bless you and make you fruitful
 and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.
 (Genesis 28:3 *parenthetical text added*)

And God (Elohim) said to him, "I am God Almighty (El Shaddai);
 be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations
 will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants.
 (Genesis 35:11 *parenthetical text added*)

See also Genesis 48:3; Exodus 6:3; and Ezekiel 10:5.



How does this apply to me?

Considering how seldom the name appears outside of the patriarchal period, it would be easy to dismiss its importance and relevance in our lives today. That would be truly unfortunate. Let's look again at the two names.

The name "El" refers to GOD's **power** and **might**; and "Shaddai" refers to the One who **nourishes** and **completely satisfies**. So, as El who helps and Shaddai who abundantly blesses, El Shaddai is the **all-powerful** GOD, who is **more than enough**, and who **abundantly blesses** with all manner of blessings.

In the name "El Shaddai", He says He is both mighty **and** sufficient! In my lack, He is the One who **abundantly provides** all my needs; in times of trouble, He is my **strong tower** and **shelter**; and in my weakness, He is **strong**!

Your right hand, LORD (YHWH), was majestic in power.
Your right hand, LORD (YHWH), shattered the enemy.
(Exodus 15:6 *parenthetical text added*)

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man
this is impossible, but with God **all things are possible**."
(Matthew 19:6 *emphasis added*)

And my God will meet **all** your **needs**
according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:19 *emphasis added*)

- ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my **power is made perfect in weakness**." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.
- ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then **I am strong**.
(2 Corinthians 12:9-10 *emphasis added*)

His strength can neither be increased nor diminished, and **no one** can stop Him from accomplishing all of His purposes.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who **does not change** like shifting shadows.
(James 1:17 *emphasis added*)

Our God (Elohim) is in heaven; he does **whatever pleases him**.
(Psalm 115:3 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

We can trust that El Shaddai's power is working to accomplish good outcomes for us because He sees the entire picture and knows the end from the beginning.

"I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come. I say,
'My purpose will stand, and I will **do all that I please**.'"
(Isaiah 46:10 *emphasis added*)



And we know that in all things God works for the good
of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
(Romans 8:28 NIV)

GOD desires to bless us and to provide in abundance all of our needs. The name El Shaddai is indicative of a GOD who is powerful enough to do just that. Only an **all-powerful** GOD can bless **all** of mankind with **all** manner of blessings.

As Nathan Stone wrote in *Names of God*:

"...the idea of One who is all-powerful and all-mighty is implied . . . for only an all-powerful One could be all-sufficient and all-bountiful. He is almighty because He is able to carry out His purposes and plans to their fullest and most glorious and triumphant completion. . . . So He is able to save to the uttermost. And He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think."⁶

As the One who **created** all things in heaven and on earth (John 1:3), who **eternally exists** (Nehemiah 9:5), and who **sustains** all things by His will alone (Colossians 1:17), El Shaddai is **answerable to no one!**

His **power** is **unlimited** and **unmatched!** Nothing is beyond His sight or His reach. **Nothing** is **too hard** for Him! Our minds cannot conceive all that El Shaddai can do!

Jesus Christ is El Shaddai!

Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is completely sufficient for all matters of life and godliness.

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

(2 Peter 1:3-4 NIV)

⁹ For in Him dwells all the **fullness** of the **Godhead** bodily.

¹⁰ And you are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power.

(Colossians 2:9-10 MKJV *emphasis added*)

He is completely sufficient for:

- creation (Colossians 1:16-17);
- our salvation (Hebrews 10:10-12);
- our sanctification (Ephesians 5:26-27); and
- our glorification (Romans 8:30).

Jesus Christ manifests as our more-than-sufficient, all-nurturing El Shaddai as...

- the Eternal El 'Ôlâm with no beginning and no end (Isaiah 44:6, Revelation 1:17-18);
- YHWH Shalom, our perfect peace that passes understanding (Haggai 2:9, Ephesians 2:14);



- the Captain of our Salvation (Joshua 5:15, Hebrews 2:10);
- our High Priest (Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 3:1, 4:14-15, 5:6-10);
- the Righteous Servant (Isaiah 53:11, Matthew 20:28);
- YHWH Gâ'al, our Redeemer (Isaiah 41:14, 49:26, Galatians 4:4-5, Titus 2:14);
- the Light of the world (John 9:5);
- the Bread of Life (Nehemiah 9:20-21, Psalm 42:8, John 6:48, Hebrews 10:20);
- the door/way to eternal life (Zechariah 10:12, John 10:7, 14:6);
- our Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:9);
- YHWH M'kaddesh, the Holy One (the Christ) of Israel (Isaiah 54:5, John 6:69);
- YHWH Tsid'Ke-nu, our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6, 1 Corinthians 1:30);
- YHWH Rohi, our Chief Shepherd (Psalm 23:1, John 10:11, 1 Peter 5:4);
- El Tsûr, the Rock of our Salvation (Psalm 62:2, Matthew 1:21); and
- the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13, Revelation 20:11-12).

Jesus Christ is "Hâyâh 'ăsher Hâyâh," **I AM** (Exodus 3:14, John 8:58)!

Meditation

Dawn Wilson, founder and director of *Heart Choices Today* and researcher for *Revive Our Hearts*, writes:

"In modern culture, the proclamation of God's power has gone silent in many churches. A God of love is more palpable, more easily received, than the God who is sovereign and powerful—the Mighty God who can turn the hearts of kings and direct nations to do His will.

"Habakkuk's **prayer** (3:1-16) expressed some of the reasons the prophet trembled over a 'report' about the Lord. He recounted the Lord's mighty character and works, His anger over sin, and His sovereignty over the nations. When God's prophets spoke His words with power, sometimes people and nations listened and turned to the Lord; but others resisted God. So it is today when God's people speak up about His power and might.

"If pastors preach the whole counsel of God, they will remind God's people to see Him as He is: the reigning '**Lord God Almighty**' (Rev. 11:17) who will someday exert His great power and reign forever. He is the God who **chooses** (1 Pet 2:9) us to make us a holy people and He transforms us with His power. He is to be honored with reverence and **awe** (Heb 12:28-29)—holy 'fear of the Lord.'" ⁷

In order to experience GOD's power and exceedingly abundant sufficiency, we must realize our own **insufficiency**. GOD cannot fill that which is already full. He cannot pour blessings into hands that are holding tightly to that which is inferior



to what He desires to give us—be it past hurts, anger, resentment, worry, fear, or even former blessings and victories.

If we want to experience all that YHWH has revealed through His names, we must first make ourselves empty vessels which El Shaddai can then fill and use! Then . . . and **only** then . . . is He able to **be** El Shaddai to us!

¹ *El Shaddai* written by Michael Card and John Thompson, performed by Amy Grant, ©1982, Myrrh Records.

² **Akkadian** (lišanum akkaditum) A Semitic language claimed by some Paleolinguists (those who study dead languages) to be the language from which Hebrew evolved. It was spoken in ancient Mesopotamia, particularly by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The name of the language is derived from the city of Akkad, a major center of Mesopotamian civilization.

³ Stone, Nathan, *Names of God*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1944, 2010. pp. 50-51.

⁴ (M. de Jassy, *The Monist*, January 1908; Massey, Gerald, *Book of the Beginnings*, Vol. II, p. 161)

Behymer, F. M., ON THE ORIGIN OF THE HEBREW DEITY-NAME EL SHADDAI. *The Monist* 25, no. 2 (1915): 269-75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27900533>.

⁵ **Mezuzah scroll**



Religious texts from Deuteronomy inscribed on cloth parchment, rolled up and placed into a decorative case, and attached to the doorframe of Jewish households in accordance with Jewish Law. Note: The scroll is always placed at an angle with the top toward the doorway to represent the blessing being carried into the home.

⁶ Stone, Nathan, *Names of God*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1944, 2010. p. 56.

⁷ Wilson, Dawn. *Names of God series, What Is the Meaning of the Name El Shaddai?*, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/what-is-the-meaning-of-the-name-shaddai.html>, np, 09/30/18.