

BFF380 El Shaddai, God Almighty

**Scott Moore:** Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

**Steve:** I'm well. This morning as I mentioned in the last podcast, we are going to talk about El Shaddai. In our generation when I say those words El Shaddai, the next thing you are singing is "El Shaddai, El Shaddai..."

**Scott:** Exactly.

**Steve:** The meaning of the word, is El-God, Shaddai-Almighty, or God the Almighty. There is another song, an older hymn, which begins, "Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation." You know that one?

**Scott:** Yes.

**Steve:** When I sing that song, I am back in the seminary in Massachusetts. It was formerly a Carmelite seminary and the chapel had amazing acoustics. Singing this hymns with a couple of hundred men, was majestic and awe-inspiring. As I sing that song, I'm back there, surrounded by a bunch of brothers, shoulder to shoulder, serving Christ.

It would be interesting to poll people and ask what synonyms they think of for "Almighty"? I'm going to plant that seed and now we are going to pray.

Father, thank You for all the different insights that we receive into Your nature and into Your character as we read through the Bible. Thank You for being a person and a being that we can know and understand and yet You're God, and that we are still grasping to understand that we'll have eternity to try and comprehend more of Your nature. But I thank You that You've revealed this aspect. Help me today as we teach, have ears to hear, help us all to learn by Your Spirit and write it on our hearts these different insights to Your character. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Scott:** Amen.

**Steve:** I was out the other night meditating on the different attributes of God. I don't even know how the thought got started, but I started realizing that the more I meditate, and be intentional about who God is, the more I am impacted by His nature. In Psalm 23, He is our Shepherd. Also in Psalm 100, we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Psalm 100 also mentions God as our creator, and our king.

As I was chewing on the different words that I've learned to describe God, I realized that it's really interesting that He is shepherd. Generally we think of a little boy, in a field, with a crook, and they're careful and gentle, and if we just read the book of John, we think of the shepherd, taking care of the sheep, and pursuing the ones that have gone astray. At the same time, He's our king.

Then I was thinking about how He's not only the Lamb of God, who takes away our sins, who was sacrificed for us, He is the high priest. Now you put those two together. He's not only the one offering the sacrifice, He is the sacrifice. It's beautiful how God gives us all these insights into the different parts of His being.

Psalm 47. "Clap your hands all you people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph for Jehovah most high is terrible. He is a great King over all the earth." This would be a verse that I would think of if I was trying to define, "What does it mean to be Almighty?"

He's most high. He's a great king. He's terrible. As I've said before, I think He's like a divine Thor. He's where the buck stops. He's most high. He's the great king. He's terrible.

When I was in my Hebrew class last semester, we were reading through the Book of Ruth. It moves quickly. Ruth, her husband, and her sons flee to Moab because of a famine. While they're there, her sons get married. Husband dies. Both of her sons die. She's left with her two daughters-in-law. Then they come back to the land. It's verse 20, first chapter. When she returns, people are happy. "Hey, Naomi's back. Naomi's back."

Now I'm reading from Ruth 1. "She said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi. Call me Marah, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and Jehovah has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi when Jehovah has testified against me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?'"

I was really surprised that the word "Almighty" was used two times in those two verses. I commented on it to the professor. I said, "Why does she bring in the Almighty dealing bitterly with her and the Almighty bringing calamity upon her?"

While we were chewing on that, I had my computer open. I click on the Hebrew word, "Shaddai" because I was familiar with "Shaddai." I found a whole bunch of interesting stuff. This is what I'm going to share with you now.

We talked last time about "Shalom" or "peace." As English speakers, we think that, when they say, "Shalom," it means peace, period. That's it. What we learned was that peace means fullness. It means to be complete. It's a much fuller word. It means wholeness, not just the absence of conflict, which is how we might define peace.

"Shaddai" is used 48 times in the Bible. It's most often translated, "Almighty." The first time that it appears is in Genesis 17. When Abram was 99 years old, Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, "I am God Almighty. Walk before Me and be blameless that I may make My covenant between Me and you and may multiply you greatly." This is an Abrahamic covenant promise between he and God. God introduces Himself, "I am God Almighty."

Now, that's why the word as "Shaddai" is translated "Almighty." If you look in Bible Hub or in the "Strong's Hebrew Concordance" and you look up "Shaddai," it's number 7706. It tells you the word, the part of speech, the spelling. Then it says, "Definition – healed land." "What?"

I thought it would say, "terrific," or "all powerful," or "majestic," or something big, mighty, and powerful. It says, "healed" or "land." Wow. Then it says that the root is "shadad," which is used 57 times in the Bible, and it means to deal violently, to despoil, to devastate, to ruin.

**Scott:** That puts a different spin on that whole song.

**Steve:** It does. Now, I'm scratching my head. Then I did some more digging and I found it's another root word that's connected to "field or land." It's "sadam." It's used 333 times in the Bible. It means field, land, country, ground, soil.

I also discovered that in the Arcadian, it means mountain. So now we have field, land, mountain, wilderness. Then you try to put that together with "shadad," which means violently, devastation, ruin, despoil, and a word that's closely related because that's the verb, but the noun is "shod," which is devastation, havoc. It's used 25 times.

All right. You got that, but I'm not done. When you do a little bit more digging, another root word is "shad." Now, you're hearing all this, right? "Sadam, shada, shadad," you've got the same consonants here, but "shad" means female breast and it's used 24 times. Not only in women, but in animals. It's a female breast. It's nurturing, it means to moisten. Now, you're wondering how I'm going to pull all this together, aren't you?

**Scott:** Yes.

**Steve:** I'm not going to pull it together, I'm going to embrace them. He's Almighty and I think we're going to see that. As you read through the Scriptures, because I have a bunch of Scriptures about this, I think you have to hold in your head the fact that besides being big and strong and Almighty, He's also nurturing. He's a female breast. He's also a field or land.

To an agrarian culture, field, land, and mountain, they're the ones that store up the moisture, they're the ones that give your crops moisture so they can grow and be productive. The more you think about it, it's not as far-fetched as when you first hear about it. It's field or land, it's nurturing, it's a breast, but it's also devastating and violent. All right.

Now, let's read through a bunch of these scriptures with these thoughts in our mind. Genesis 28, this is Abraham giving his instructions to Jacob after he and Esau had their blowup. He said, "Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother."

"God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He give the blessing of Abraham to you, and to your offspring with you." Now, knowing what I have just discovered from looking at a whole bunch of Hebrew words and their roots, that makes more sense because this God who's Almighty and powerful, He can bless you and make you fruitful.

The blessings from the land multiply you. The blessings from a fertile breast, lots of children. OK. Genesis 35, "God said to him, your name is Jacob. No longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." This is after he'd wrestled with the Angel of God.

"He called his name Israel, and God said to him, 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you.'" He goes on to say, "Kings shall come from your body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you."

Then, poor Jacob, Israel ended his days almost, Joseph is a prisoner in Egypt. Joseph tricks his brothers and says, "I'm not talking to you again till you bring back Benjamin." Jacob says, "No, I've already lost Joseph." Anyway, here's what he says in Genesis 43. "Take also your brother and arise, go again to the man. May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin."

I think I'll stop right here. This is how Jacob was introduced to God by his father Abraham, that His name is God Almighty. This was his connection, and every time in Genesis when Jacob talks about God, he refers to him as God Almighty. I think that's important because this is how he knew God.

He being Hebrew had all these thoughts in his mind that we've already discussed. He's a nurturer, He's a sustainer, He's land. Because He is the source of life from your mother's breast, the source of life from the ground, He's the one that can bless you and prosper you, and He did.

I'm going to do a little parenthetical aside here, I think it's important that we all stick to what we know. For example, if God has made you know through trials and scriptures and He's revealed Himself to you as shepherd, hold unto that. Now, He may later reveal to you Himself as king, or as high priest, or as the Lamb, but it's important that each of us have our own hold on God, our own view.

That's what we bring to the Body of Christ. This is what Jacob knew and he stuck to it. Now, I'm going to jump to Exodus and this is where God is talking to Moses. By the way, Moses has just returned from the wilderness, everybody's excited except Pharaoh who says, "OK, you guys have time to be praying? No more straw." They complained to Moses.

Then Moses goes to God, "Wow, I thought that I came here to help these people and now it's worse for them than before I left." God spake unto Moses, Exodus 6:2, "I am Jehovah and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name Jehovah, I was not known to them." Isn't this special?

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were introduced to God as God Almighty, but Moses now is meeting him as Yahweh, Jeshua, Jehovah, however, you want to take those four consonants and pronounce them. "This is my name." Then He said, "I have also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings."

He reiterated His promise, "Go tell these people that are suffering now, suffering more than they ever thought they could suffer, I know them." Then He says, "Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage. I have remembered My covenant.

"Wherefore, say unto the children of Israel, I am Jehovah and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will rid you out of their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments, and I will take you to me for a people.

"I will be to you a God, and you shall know that I am Jehovah your God, who brings you out from the burdens of Egyptians. I will bring you into the land which I swear to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a heritage. I am Jehovah."

This is a powerful chunk of verses here. This is God talking to his people. When they needed to hear Him, He showed up, and He said, "I have this, and I am Jehovah."

Interestingly, I noticed that the word "Almighty" is used to describe God 28 times in Job. It's the most times that the word "Almighty" is used. I've heard commentators date Job as around the time of Abraham. I've heard some people even say he may have been Abraham's nephew.

It doesn't surprise me that Job in Job 6:4 says, "The arrows of the Almighty are in me." Job 13:3, "I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God." That kind of makes sense because this was how the people in that day viewed God, as the Almighty.

Balaam in Numbers 24, refers to God as the Almighty. Then, in Ruth, we've already read it. Let me go back to Ruth one more time now. It made sense to me now when I understood more what his name means in Hebrew when she says, "Do not call me Naomi, call me Marah, for even the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me."

Even the one who has all power and is my nurturer and my sustainer, and the one who gives me milk from my mother's breast, who gives me moisture from the ground, the One who sustains me, I actually think of the word "sustainer" more and more now

that I know more about the word – even he has dealt bitterly with me. This was a surprise to her because, of everybody, I thought at least God would stand by me. Of course He did, and He showed it to her very quickly in the life of Ruth, but what is God the Almighty doing bringing calamity upon me and dealing bitterly with me? I was counting on Him for sustenance and for nurturing. OK, interesting verse, Psalm 91:1, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty."

When I read that, I always think of little chickens running under the wings of their mother as Jesus said, "I'd like to have gathered you." What a place of protection if you're a little chicken and there's things happening, you want to go be under the shadow of the Almighty.

I also need to talk about this destruction aspect of Him because the Almighty can also be translated as we saw "destroyer," "ruin," "destruction." **Isaiah 13:4-6**, "The noise of a multitude in the mountains as of a great people, the noise of a tumult of the kingdoms of the nations gathered together. Jehovah of Hosts is mustering the host for the battle. They come from a far country from the uttermost part of heaven. Even Jehovah and the weapons of his indignation to destroy the whole land. Wail ye; for the day of Jehovah is at hand, as destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

Joel 1, "Consecrate a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of Jehovah your God, and cry out to Jehovah. Alas for the day! For the day of Jehovah is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes."

Revelation 19:15, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty."

God is both a lamb and a lion. He is peaceful and terrible. Jesus came as a lamb the first time but when he comes back, he will come with the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Three times in the Book of Revelation, God says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "Who is and Who was and Who is to come the Almighty."

That to me is why we use the word "Almighty." He is where the buck stops. He is Almighty, and He's nurturing, and He's destruction, and He's steady and stable. He's like the mountain. He's like the land. He's like the field. He is like a mother's breast. All right, I'm glad I'm not in your shoes now, but go ahead. What do you think, Scott? **Scott:** That's some deep stuff. It's tough for me as an American in the 21st century to get my head around what it was like for a Hebrew in the Old Testament because first of all as...This is a bizarre reference, but there's a line in "Pulp Fiction," where I'll edit it for cleanliness.

A lady asked this guy what his name means and he says, "I'm an American, lady, our names don't mean anything." We don't think of the meaning for our names that often. Also, if you're Abraham and God Himself was telling you "I am God the Almighty," but it's in Hebrew and it's got all its other shades of meaning.

The best I can think of is like when a little kid, his father says, "I'm your dad." It's just a word, it means nothing to the child except what he is. What dad has done in his life, and of course, dad can be terrible and loving and peaceful one, powerful one, all kind sort of things. Like the experience, I guess, is what brings the meaning to that.

But if he says, "I'm a field and I'm a nurturer," it would take a little bit for that to flesh out in your mind, but I'm guessing that's part of it.

**Steve:** Yeah, it's a great point though because what does "dad" mean? For me, that was a positive, but for some people it's a negative. We bring our stuff into play when thinking of meanings.

I'm going to read from "Abarim," A-B-A-R-I-M. If people are interested, it's the best place to look up the meaning of names, Abarim Publications.

Here's what they write. The name "Shaddai" may have originated in Akkadian, meaning mountain, but to a Hebrew audience that hears God introduce himself as El Shaddai, it must have meant my destroyer, our house spirit, -- this was from Assyrian -- the self-sufficient One, the rainmaker and source of food for babies, all at once.

**Scott:** Yeah, that's a lot.

**Steve:** It is. I think that's why you have to read the whole Bible, to get the whole picture, and you have to do a little bit of digging. When I hear the word "El Shaddai," I'm hearing the self-sufficient one, the destroyer, the source of food, the stable field, the mountain. It's a big picture of God, Who's on our team and we're on His team and He's got our back.

El Shaddai is a piece of God who has given us everything. He's given us the land. He's nurtured us. He created us. We, sadly, have done harm to each other and to the earth and kill babies and the whole thing. This is what will prompt the terrible part which is going to show up, and that's the great and terrible day of Jehovah, and is still ahead of us. It should bring some humility.

**Scott:** When Jesus showed up on the scene, He was called Prince of Peace, Lamb of God, Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God.

**Steve:** Yeah, but when he walked into the temple by himself, they got a little glimpse of the terrible part.

**Scott:** Yes, definitely.

**Steve:** Thank You, Father, for being all of these things, and more. Thank You that we, though have become Your friends because Jesus has taken away our sins. Thank You that now we can run to You and we can find nurture, and strength and help. We can

also hide under Your wings when things get tough. Thank You for being El Shaddai, the Almighty, in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Scott:** Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faiths Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at [spdemme@Gmail.com](mailto:spdemme@Gmail.com). If you have a question for me, you can reach me at [scott@unsocializedmedia.com](mailto:scott@unsocializedmedia.com). Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.