Divine Plurality

This publication is a reprint and revision of two articles on *Plural God-Language in the Hebrew Bible*. Both are primarily focused on the word "Elohim (אֱלֹהִים);" the first, on its plurality; the second, on its gender and corporeality.

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Plural God-Language in the Hebrew Bible

An Examination of the basis for the doctrine of Divine Plurality in Branch Davidian Theology
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Plural Nouns with Singular Verbs, Pronouns, and Modifiers

Introduction:

One of the most, if not *the* most, controversial teachings of the Branch is its position on divine plurality. Much can and will be said on this subject in later publications, but for now, we'll be addressing just one aspect. First though, let us briefly define what we're talking about.

The vast majority of purported Bible believers hold to "the doctrine or belief that there is only one God."[1] While the three monotheistic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) differ in their understandings of Deity, they all agree, with slight variations, on this one point. Conversely, Branch Davidians, for reasons too multitudinous to delineate in this paper, embrace the idea of multiple Gods. What's more, is that they give credence to the Bible as the source of this belief.

Within the framework of monotheism, there are a number of theological constructs which allow for some form of divine plurality. Most noted among these is trinitarianism, but also to be included are binitarianism and emanationism,[2] among others. All these, though admitting to various forms of plurality, are still

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1 *Oxford American Dictionary; def.* Monotheism
2 An example of emanationism is the contemporary Kabbalistic view of Ein Sof (אין סוף) and the ten Sephirot (ספירות). The idea is that Ein Sof is the one undefinable, incomprehensible God; and the ten Sephirot are divine emanations which proceed from Ein Sof into the world, allowing its inhabitants to relate to the divine.

confined within the limitations of monotheism. We say "limit-ations" because the adherent to monotheism is compelled to view the various persons, or aspects, within their plurality as still constituting only one being. Branch theology, on the other hand, takes liberty in recognizing the divine persons as separate beings, and thus separate and distinct Gods.

One of the most frequently pointed to evidences in support of this *distinct* plurality is the Hebrew word Elohim (אֱלֹהִים). This word, commonly translated "God," is indeed plural.[3] Though the plurality of the word is acknowledged by all, the more educated of monotheists, in response to the word's use as evidence for distinct plurality, will offer this sort of reply: "Well my friend, if only you knew Hebrew, you would know that while the word Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) is grammatically plural, it is really only a 'plurality of majesty'[4] and thus, when in reference to the God of Israel, is to be understood only as a singular."

In justification of this reasoning, the monotheist may point to a number of passages in which the word Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) occurs with its correspondent verbs, pronouns, and modifiers all being singular. A common example of this is found in Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.	בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ: [5]

The word here translated "created" is bara (בָּרָא); and in this form, it literally means *he~created*. This dissonance of a plural noun with a singular verb is known as subject-verb

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3   Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) is based off the root word El (אל), meaning God (singular masculine), with the plural masculine ending "im" (ים). The letter "hey" (ה) is added to El (אל) to form the word Elah/Eloah (אלה/א לוה), which is the feminine form of El (אל). In summation, Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) is both masculine and feminine as well as plural.

4   *Plurality of Majesty* is the use of plural pronouns in reference to a single individual holding high office; for example: *the royal "we."*

5   Throughout this article we will be using blue font to identify the subject and yellow high-lighting for verbs etc.

disagreement; and it is our aim in the remainder of this article to examine how this works in the Hebrew language as well as what the theological implications are as a result of the findings of this study.

Other Occurrences of Plural Nouns with Singular Verbs, Pronouns, and Modifiers

In order to better understand how singular verbs, pronouns, and modifiers affect plural nouns we will need to look at some more occurrences of this sort of linguistic disagreement in the Hebrew Bible. Let us keep in mind that we are examining the truth-value of the monotheist claim that a singular correspondent to a plural noun makes that noun act as though it were singular.

Genesis 1:14

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלָּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וְשָׁנִים:

In this instance, the word translated "let there be" is y'hi (יהי) and literally means *he~will~become* or *he~will~exist*;[6] the *he* being in reference to the lights. To translate the phrase ultra-literally in English syntax, it would read, "And Gods, he said, 'lights, he will exist;'" the first *he* in reference to "Gods," and the second *he* in reference to "lights."

Question: Is the word "lights" in this passage to be understood as being plural only insofar as its grammatical word

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6 The author of this passage could have used the Hebrew word y'hiu (יהיו), meaning *they~will~become*.

form, or is it to be understood as being a real plural,[7] regardless of the correspondent singular pronoun? The immediate context will give us the answer:

Genesis 1:14-16
And God said, Let there be *lights* in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:
And let them be for *lights* in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.
And God made *two great lights*; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made *the stars also*.

The passage is quite clear that the lights being referred to are the sun, moon, and stars. Evidently then, the singular pronoun *he* did not indicate that the plural noun (lights) was to act as a singular. Nor was there any intimation of a *plurality of majesty*, but rather, the text leaves no room to doubt that there is more than one distinct light in reference. So we can see that the monotheistic assumption that a singular correspondent to a plural noun makes that noun act as though it were singular is inconsistent with this passage, and as we shall see, with many others. Moreover, would it not be equally fair to assume that a

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7 The phrase "real plural" in this article is in reference to nouns that describe more than one distinct item. This is in contrast to the phrases "grammatical plural" and "true plural." A "grammatical plural" is a word that is plural by its grammatical word form. A "true plural" is a word which itself, along with its correspondent verbs, pronouns, and modifiers, is plural.

plural noun with singular correspondents makes those correspondents act as if they were plurals?

If one holds that the "Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)" of Gen. 1:1,14 refers to only one God because of the singular pronouns, must not that one also hold that the "lights" of Gen. 1:14 refers only to one light because of its singular pronoun? Similarly, if one admits that the singular pronoun in reference to the lights does not suggest only one light, then that one must also admit that the singular pronouns in reference to Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) do not suggest only one God.

Now we shall consider a number of other examples of plural nouns with singular verbs, pronouns, and modifiers. These examples follow the same format as the first with the addition of a literal English translation of the most relevant part of the passage below each example:

Genesis 35:11

And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

וַיֹּאמֶר֩ לֹ֨ו אֱלֹהִ֜ים אֲנִ֨י אֵ֤ל שַׁדַּי֙ פְּרֵ֣ה וּרְבֵ֔ה גֹּ֛וי וּקְהַ֥ל גֹּויִם֖ יִהְיֶ֣ה מִמֶּ֑ךָּ וּמְלָכִ֖ים מֵחֲלָצֶ֥יךָ יֵצֵֽאוּ׃

"a nation and a company of nations, he~will~exist of you"[8]

Exodus 10:24

And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.

וַיִּקְרָ֨א פַרְעֹ֜ה אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֗ה וַיֹּ֙אמֶר֙ לְכוּ֙ עִבְד֣וּ אֶת־יְהוָ֔ה רַ֛ק צֹאנְכֶ֥ם וּבְקַרְכֶ֖ם יֻצָּ֑ג גַּֽם־טַפְּכֶ֖ם יֵלֵ֥ךְ עִמָּכֶֽם׃

"your children, he~will~walk with you"

8   Scholars recognize that the *he* in this example is syntactically in reference to the nations. See *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* §145.

Exodus 14:10

And when Pharaoh drew nigh,
the children of Israel lifted up
their eyes, and, behold, the
Egyptians marched after them;
and they were sore afraid: and
the children of Israel cried out
unto the LORD.

וּפַרְעֹ֖ה הִקְרִ֑יב וַיִּשְׂא֨וּ בְנֵֽי־
יִשְׂרָאֵ֜ל אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶ֗ם וְהִנֵּ֥ה
מִצְרַ֣יִם ׀ נֹסֵ֣עַ אַחֲרֵיהֶ֔ם וַיִּֽירְא֖וּ
מְאֹ֔ד וַיִּצְעֲק֥וּ בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל אֶל־
יְהוָֽה׃

"Egyptians, he~marched"

Exodus 20:18

And all the people saw the
thunderings, and the lightnings,
and the noise of the trumpet,
and the mountain smoking: and
when the people saw it, they
removed, and stood afar off.

וְכָל־הָעָם֩ רֹאִ֨ים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹ֜ת
וְאֶת־הַלַּפִּידִ֗ם וְאֵת֙ ק֣וֹל הַשֹּׁפָ֔ר
וְאֶת־הָהָ֖ר עָשֵׁ֑ן וַיַּ֤רְא הָעָם֙ וַיָּנֻ֔עוּ
וַיַּֽעַמְד֖וּ מֵֽרָחֹֽק׃

"the people, he~will~see"

Deuteronomy 1:39

Moreover your little ones, which
ye said should be a prey, and
your children, which in that day
had no knowledge between
good and evil, they shall go in
thither, and unto them will I
give it, and they shall possess it.

וְטַפְּכֶ֞ם אֲשֶׁ֣ר אֲמַרְתֶּ֗ם לָבַ֣ז יִהְיֶ֔ה
וּבְנֵיכֶ֗ם אֲשֶׁ֨ר לֹא־יָדְע֤וּ הַיּוֹם֙ ט֣וֹב
וָרָ֔ע הֵ֚מָּה יָבֹ֣אוּ שָׁ֔מָּה וְלָהֶ֣ם
אֶתְּנֶ֔נָּה וְהֵ֖ם יִירָשֽׁוּהָ׃

"your little ones, *of* whom you said, 'he~will~become a prey'"

Joshua 24:16

And the people answered and
said, far beit that we should
forsake the LORD, to serve other
gods;

וַיַּ֤עַן הָעָם֙ וַיֹּ֔אמֶר חָלִ֖ילָה לָּ֑נוּ
מֵעֲזֹ֖ב אֶת־יְהוָ֑ה לַעֲבֹ֖ד אֱלֹהִ֥ים
אֲחֵרִֽים׃

"and the people, he~answered and he~said"

Joshua 24:21
And the people said unto
Joshua, Nay; but we will serve
the LORD.

וַיֹּ֤אמֶר הָעָם֙ אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁ֔עַ לֹ֕א כִּ֥י
אֶת־יְהוָ֖ה נַעֲבֹֽד׃

Job 12:7
But ask now the beasts, and
they shall teach thee; And the
fowls of the air, and they shall
tell thee:

וְֽאוּלָ֗ם שְׁאַל־נָ֣א בְהֵמ֣וֹת וְתֹרֶ֑ךָּ
וְע֥וֹף הַ֝שָּׁמַ֗יִם וְיַגֶּד־לָֽךְ׃

      "the fowls of the heavens, and~he~will~tell you"

1 Samuel 13:19
Now there was no smith found
throughout all the land of
Israel: for the Philistines said,
Lest the Hebrews make *them*
swords or spears:

וְחָרָשׁ֙ לֹ֣א יִמָּצֵ֔א בְּכֹ֖ל
אֶ֣רֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל כִּֽי־אָמַ֣ר פְּלִשְׁתִּ֔ים פֶּ֚ן
יַעֲשׂ֣וּ הָעִבְרִ֔ים חֶ֖רֶב א֥וֹ חֲנִֽית׃

      "for *the* Philistines, he~said"

1 Samuel 14:32
And the people flew upon the
spoil, and took sheep, and oxen,
and calves, and slew *them* on the
ground: and the people did eat
them with the blood.

וַיַּ֤עַשׂ הָעָם֙ אֶל־שָׁלָ֔ל
וַיִּקְח֨וּ צֹ֤אן וּבָקָר֙ וּבְנֵ֣י בָקָ֔ר
וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ־אָ֑רְצָה וַיֹּ֥אכַל הָעָ֖ם עַל־
הַדָּֽם׃

      "and the people, he~is~doing to loot"

2 Samuel 7:23
And what one nation in the
earth *is* like thy people... which
thou redeemedst to thee from
Egypt, *from* the nations and
their gods?

וּמִ֤י כְעַמְּךָ֙ ... אֲשֶׁ֨ר פָּדִ֤יתָ
לְּךָ֙ מִמִּצְרַ֔יִם גּוֹיִ֖ם וֵאלֹהָֽיו׃

      "nations and his gods"

2 Samuel 21:4
And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house;

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ הַגִּבְעֹנִים אֵין־**לִי** כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב עִם־שָׁאוּל וְעִם־בֵּיתוֹ

"and the Gibeonites, they~are~saying to him, 'there is none of Saul's silver and gold to~me'"

1 Kings 9:9
And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil.

וְאָמְרוּ עַל אֲשֶׁר עָזְבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיא אֶת־אֲבֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיַּחֲזִקוּ בֵּאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים **וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ** לָהֶם וַיַּעַבְדֻם עַל־כֵּן הֵבִיא יְהוָה עֲלֵיהֶם אֵת כָּל־הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת׃

"because they... and~he~is~worshiping"

1 Kings 22:48
Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.

יְהוֹשָׁפָט עָשָׂה אֳנִיּוֹת תַּרְשִׁישׁ לָלֶכֶת אוֹפִירָה לַזָּהָב וְלֹא הָלָךְ כִּי־**נִשְׁבְּרָה** אֳנִיּוֹת בְּעֶצְיוֹן גָּבֶר׃

"the ships, she~is~broken"

2 Kings 24:10
At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

בָּעֵת הַהִיא **עָלָה** עַבְדֵי נְבֻכַדְנֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל יְרוּשָׁלָם וַתָּבֹא הָעִיר בַּמָּצוֹר׃

"the servants... he~came~up"

Isaiah 2:18
And the idols, he shall pass away completely.

וְהָאֱלִילִים כָּלִיל יַחֲלֹף׃

"and the idols, he~shall~pass~away completely"

Jeremiah 2:15
The young lions roared upon him, *and* yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are ravished without inhabitant.

עָלָיו יִשְׁאֲגוּ כְפִרִים נָתְנוּ
קוֹלָם וַיָּשִׁיתוּ אַרְצוֹ לְשַׁמָּה עָרָיו
נִצְּתָה מִבְּלִי יֹשֵׁב׃

"his cities, she~is~ravished"

Jeremiah 50:6
My people hath been lost sheep: Their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains:

צֹאן אֹבְדוֹת הָיָה עַמִּי רֹעֵיהֶם
הִתְעוּם הָרִים שׁוֹבְבִים מֵהַר
אֶל־גִּבְעָה הָלָכוּ שָׁכְחוּ רִבְצָם׃

"my people, he[9]~became lost"

      What is notable about each of these passages is the fact that regardless of the singular verbs, pronouns, and modifiers, the meaning of the text is that there is more than one distinct item in reference, as evidenced by the plural nouns. One might ask, "Why then use singular verbs, pronouns, and modifiers at all?" One consistent motif strung throughout all these examples which may go a ways in answering this question is the idea of a collective unit. That is, in each example, the individual items, whether persons, ships, lights, or some other, were either acting

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9   It is apparent from a number of these examples that the singular masculine *he* is used to designate groups of multiple individuals, not all of whom are male. In Hebrew, the grammatical gender corresponds to social gender as follows:

        Grammatical Feminine = Specifically Feminine
        Grammatical Masculine = Not Specifically Feminine

For more on how gender works in the Hebrew Language, see the works of David E.S. Stein (http://davidesstein.name/)

or being acted upon as a unit. Another example which amplifies this point is found in Deuteronomy 28. In that passage, Moses refers to the children of Israel in the 2nd person masculine singular over two hundred times; and yet, there is no doubt that each being was distinct from the others and that they were not all male.[10]

It should now be evident that the word "Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)," in instances where it is connected with singular correspondents, is still a real plural. Another important facet of plural God-language which must be taken into consideration is the occurrences of true plurals in reference to Deity.

True Plurals - Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)

There are a number of instances throughout the Hebrew Bible in which the word Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) occurs as a true plural. These occurrences could be placed into the two following categories: (1) occurrences of the word with no correspondent verbs, pronouns, or modifiers;[11] and (2) occurrences of the word with plural correspondent verbs, pronouns, and modifiers.

One example of the first category is the phrase commonly translated "man of God." Throughout the Masoretic Text[12] this takes a couple of forms; אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים (man of *the* Gods) which occurs 64 times,[13] and אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים (man of Gods)

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10 See Deuteronomy 28:68. That verse, while still referring to Israel in 2nd person masculine singular, specifies the audience to be both male and female, and thus distinct beings.

11 Items in category (1) must be true plurals since the noun itself is the only determining factor.

12 The Masoretic Text (MT) is the standard family of manuscripts which compose the Hebrew Bible.

13 Dt 33:1; Jos 14:6; Jdg 13:6, 8; 1 Sa 9:10; 1 Ki 12:22; 13:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 21, 26, 29, 31; 17:18; 20:28; 2 Ki 1:9, 11, 12, 13; 4:16, 21, 22, 25, 27, 40; 5:8, 14, 15, 20; 6:6, 9, 10, 15; 7:2, 17, 18, 19; 8:2, 4, 7, 8, 11; 13:19; 23:16, 17; Ezr 3:2; Ne 12:24, 36; 1 Ch 23:14; 2 Ch 8:14; 11:2; 25:9; 30:16; Ps 90:1; Je 35:4

which occurs 6 times.[14] In all seventy occurrences, there are no correspondent verbs, pronouns, and/or modifiers for the word "ha Elohim (הָאֱלֹהִים)," or for the word "Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)."

Here are some examples of "Elohim" as a true plural with plural correspondents (2nd category):

Genesis 1:26
And God said, Let us make man in our image...

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ

"And Gods said, We~will~make"

Genesis 3:22
And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us...

וַיֹּאמֶר׀ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד מִמֶּנּוּ

"Gods said, behold, the man is become as of us"

Genesis 20:13
And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר הִתְעוּ אֹתִי אֱלֹהִים מִבֵּית אָבִי וָאֹמַר לָהּ זֶה חַסְדֵּךְ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשִׂי עִמָּדִי אֶל כָּל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָבוֹא שָׁמָּה אִמְרִי־לִי אָחִי הוּא׃

"Gods, They~caused~ me ~to~stray"[15]

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14 1 Sa 2:27; 9:6; 1 Ki 13:1; 17:24; 2 Ki 1:10; 4:9

15 The format of "words~ word ~words" is to illustrate that the word in the middle is a separate word from the word on either side of it. In this example the Hebrew word (הִתְעוּ) means "they~caused~to~stray" and the word (אֹתִי) means "me." It is written in this format to keep with English syntax.

Genesis 35:7
And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

וַיִּ֤בֶן שָׁם֙ מִזְבֵּ֔חַ וַיִּקְרָא֙ לַמָּק֔וֹם אֵ֖ל בֵּֽית־אֵ֑ל כִּ֣י שָׁ֗ם נִגְל֤וּ אֵלָיו֙ הָֽאֱלֹהִ֔ים בְּבָרְח֖וֹ מִפְּנֵ֥י אָחִֽיו׃

"the Gods, They~appeared to him"

Deuteronomy 5:26
For who *is there of* all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived?

כִּ֣י מִ֣י כָל־בָּשָׂ֡ר אֲשֶׁ֣ר שָׁמַ֣ע קוֹל֩ אֱלֹהִ֨ים חַיִּ֜ים מְדַבֵּ֗ר מִתּֽוֹךְ־הָאֵ֛שׁ כָּמֹ֖נוּ וַיֶּֽחִי׃

"*the*[16] Gods, *the* living~Ones"

Joshua 24:19
And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

וַיֹּ֨אמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁ֜עַ אֶל־הָעָ֗ם לֹ֤א תֽוּכְלוּ֙ לַעֲבֹ֣ד אֶת־יְהוָ֔ה כִּֽי־אֱלֹהִ֥ים קְדֹשִׁ֖ים ה֑וּא אֵֽל־קַנּ֣וֹא ה֔וּא לֹֽא־יִשָּׂ֥א לְפִשְׁעֲכֶ֖ם וּלְחַטֹּאותֵיכֶֽם׃

"*the* Gods, *the* Holy~Ones"

1 Samuel 17:26
...for who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

כִּ֣י מִ֗י הַפְּלִשְׁתִּ֤י הֶֽעָרֵל֙ הַזֶּ֔ה כִּ֣י חֵרֵ֔ף מַעַרְכ֖וֹת אֱלֹהִ֥ים חַיִּֽים׃

"*the* Gods, *the* living~Ones"

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16 In the the literal translation below each example, italics denotes words supplied for syntactical purposes.

1 Samuel 17:36

Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

גַּם אֶת־הָאֲרִי גַּם־הַדּוֹב הִכָּה
עַבְדֶּךָ וְֽהָיָה הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הֶעָרֵל
הַזֶּה כְּאַחַד מֵהֶם כִּי חֵרֵף
מַעַרְכֹת אֱלֹהִים <mark>חַיִּים</mark>:

"*the* Gods, *the* living~Ones"

2 Samuel 7:23

And what one nation in the earth *is* like thy people, *even* like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you[17] great things and terrible...

וּמִי כְעַמְּךָ כְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי
אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר <mark>הָלְכֽוּ־אֱלֹהִים</mark>
<mark>לִפְדּֽוֹת</mark>־לוֹ לְעָם וְלָשׂוּם לוֹ שֵׁם
וְלַעֲשׂוֹת לָכֶם הַגְּדוּלָּה וְנֹרָאוֹת

"whom Gods, They~went to They~redeem"

Psalm 58:11

So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous: Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

וְיֹאמַר אָדָם אַךְ־פְּרִי
לַצַּדִּיק אַךְ יֵשׁ־<mark>אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפְטִים</mark>
בָּאָרֶץ:

"Gods, Ones~judging in the earth"

Jeremiah 10:10

But the LORD *is* the true God, He *is* the living God, and an everlasting king: At his wrath the earth shall tremble, And the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

וַֽיהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱמֶת
הֽוּא־אֱלֹהִים <mark>חַיִּים</mark> וּמֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם
מִקִּצְפּוֹ תִּרְעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ וְלֹֽא־יָכִלוּ
גוֹיִם זַעְמֽוֹ:

"*the* Gods, *the* living~Ones"

17 Plural "you."

13   DP May 30, 2013

Jeremiah 23:36
And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God.

וּמַשָּׂא יְהוָה לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ־עֹוד כִּי הַמַּשָּׂא יִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ דְּבָרֹו וַהֲפַכְתֶּם אֶת־דִּבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים יְהוָה צְבָאֹות אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃

"*the* Gods, *the* living~Ones"

Other True Plurals for Deity

Considering the examples thus far, even the strictest monotheist should be able to see that the word "Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)," rather than acting as a singular, is descriptive of multiple distinct beings; and that, regardless of whether or not its correspondents are singular, plural, or absent.

In broadening our view of divine plurality, especially in the present context, it will doubtless be of value to review some more examples of true plurals. This time, the passages listed are not centered on any one particular divine title.

Genesis 11:6-7
And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.
Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָֹה הֵן עַם אֶחָד וְשָׂפָה אַחַת לְכֻלָּם וְזֶה הַחִלָּם לַעֲשֹׂות וְעַתָּה לֹא־יִבָּצֵר מֵהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יָזְמוּ לַעֲשֹׂות׃ הָבָה נֵרְדָה וְנָבְלָה שָׁם שְׂפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׂפַת רֵעֵהוּ׃

"Yahweh said, ... We~shall~descend"

Exodus 33:14

And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

וַיֹּאמַ֑ר פָּנַ֥י יֵלֵ֖כוּ וַהֲנִחֹ֥תִי לָֽךְ׃

"my~faces, They~will~go"

Exodus 33:15

And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

וַיֹּ֖אמֶר אֵלָ֑יו אִם־אֵ֤ין פָּנֶ֙יךָ֙ הֹלְכִ֔ים אַֽל־תַּעֲלֵ֖נוּ מִזֶּֽה׃

"your~faces, the Ones~ not ~going"

Job 35:10

But none saith, Where *is* God my maker, Who giveth songs in the night;

וְלֹֽא־אָמַ֗ר אַיֵּ֣ה אֱל֣וֹהַ עֹשָׂ֑י נֹתֵ֖ן זְמִר֣וֹת בַּלָּֽיְלָה׃

"God,[18] Ones~making~of~me/my Makers"

Psalm 149:2

Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

יִשְׂמַ֣ח יִשְׂרָאֵ֣ל בְּעֹשָׂ֑יו בְּנֵֽי־צִ֝יּ֗וֹן יָגִ֥ילוּ בְמַלְכָּֽם׃

"Israel, he~shall~rejoice in~Ones~making~of~him/his Makers"

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

וּזְכֹר֙ אֶת־בּ֣וֹרְאֶ֔יךָ בִּימֵ֖י בְּחוּרֹתֶ֑יךָ עַ֣ד אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹא־יָבֹ֙אוּ֙ יְמֵ֣י הָֽרָעָ֔ה וְהִגִּ֣יעוּ שָׁנִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֣ר תֹּאמַ֔ר אֵֽין־לִ֥י בָהֶ֖ם חֵֽפֶץ׃

"remember your Creators"

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18 As explained in footnote 3, Eloah (אֱל֣וֹהַ) is the feminine form of El (אל).
A feminine variation of the same word (Eloah/אֱלֹהֵי) is correctly translated "goddess" in 1 Kings 11:5.

Isaiah 6:8
Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

וָאֶשְׁמַ֞ע אֶת־ק֤וֹל יְהוָה֙ [19] אֹמֵ֔ר אֶת־מִ֥י אֶשְׁלַ֖ח וּמִ֣י יֵֽלֶךְ־לָ֑נוּ וָאֹמַ֖ר הִנְנִ֥י שְׁלָחֵֽנִי׃

"Yahweh, saying... who will go for~us"

Isaiah 54:5
For thy Maker *is* thine husband; The LORD of hosts *is* his name; And thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

כִּ֤י בֹעֲלַ֙יִךְ֙ עֹשַׂ֔יִךְ יְהוָ֥ה צְבָא֖וֹת שְׁמ֑וֹ וְגֹֽאֲלֵךְ֙ קְד֣וֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל אֱלֹהֵ֥י כָל־הָאָ֖רֶץ יִקָּרֵֽא׃

"for *the* Ones~making~you, *the* Ones~possessing~you / your Makers, your Possessors"

Conclusion:

So, what have we found? In short, we have learned that the prevalent theology of monotheism has informed our understanding of the text more than the text itself has informed our theology. If we only allow the text to say what it says, and allow ourselves to admit to what it says, we are left with the twofold realization that (1) the monotheistic position is untenable; and (2) distinct divine plurality, though unpopular, is simply the truth.

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19 This is one of the 134 instances the Massorah lists where the name "Yahweh" was changed to "adonai." The Massorah is the set textual notes made by the creators of the Masoretic text (the Masoretes).

Plural God-Language in the Hebrew Bible

An Examination of the basis for the doctrine of Divine Plurality in
Branch Davidian Theology
by Trent R. Wilde
***
Implications Regarding Gender and Corporeality

Introduction:

It has been previously demonstrated[1] in this series of articles[2] that the Hebrew word *Elohim* (אלהים) is indicative, not of one being, but rather of multiple beings. Herein we will examine further implications of this fact, particularly in relation to gender and corporeality.[3]

Gender Implications

The word *God*, as commonly found in English translations of the Hebrew Bible, comes from the Hebrew word *El* (אל) and its various morphological[4] forms. The following table gives the basic forms of the word as well as their relevant properties accompanied by examples.

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1   See article published as *Divine Plurality May 30, 2013*; titled: *Plural God-Language in the Hebrew Bible - ... - Plural Nouns with Singular Verbs, Pronouns, and Modifiers* - http://www.scribd.com/doc/146156910/Plural-God-Language-in-the-Hebrew-Bible-by-Trent-R-Wilde

2   Series on *Divine Plurality*, titled: *Divine Plurality* (DP).

3   *Webster's Dictionary* defines *corporeal* as "consisting of material substance; material; physical; tangible."

4   *Webster's Dictionary* defines *morphology* as "the branch of linguistics that deals with the internal structure and forms of words: with syntax, it forms a basic division of grammar."

Hebrew Forms	Translit-eration[5]	Gender	Number	Examples
אל	El	masc.	sing.	Gen. 31:13; Deut. 32:4
אלים	Elim	masc.	plur.	Ex. 15:11; Ps. 29:1
אלה/אלוה	Elah/Eloah	fem.	sing.	Deut. 32:15, 17; Job 5:17
אלוהות	Elohot	fem.	plur.	4Q287 f2:8
אלהים	Elohim	fem. masc.	plur.	Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:4

In furthering our understanding of the individual meanings of these forms, it behooves us to consider the particulars of each and thus gain a comprehensive perception of their relations one to another, as well as the theological significance of the variations. To start, we shall define the parent root:

El (אל):

אֵל n.m. (also, in n.pr. אֱל, אֱלִי) god, but with various subordinate applications to express idea of might; hardly ever in prose exc. with defining word (adj. or gen.)[6]

אֵל m. - (1) prop. Part. of the verb אול, איל No. 2, *strong, mighty, a mighty one, a hero*[7]

El (אל) is the masculine singular root, simply meaning: mighty one, lofty one, (G)god, etc. and particularly signifies a single male god. Now to understand the suffixes:

Elim (אלים):

Masculine plural nouns are usually marked by the י ם *ending.*[8]

By adding the *im* (ים) ending to *El* (אל), the word becomes indicative of multiple male gods rather than just one (see examples).

Elah/Eloah (אלה/אלוה):[9]

The most common feminine ending is the ה ending.[10]

If, rather than adding *im* (ים), one adds the feminine ending *hey* (ה), the resultant word points to a single female god, or goddess. Here is an example of an accurate translation of this form:

1 Kings 11:5
For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the <mark>goddess</mark> of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

וַיֵּ֣לֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹ֔ה אַחֲרֵ֖י
עַשְׁתֹּ֣רֶת אֱלֹהֵ֣י[11] צִדֹנִ֑ים וְאַחֲרֵ֖י
מִלְכֹּ֖ם שִׁקֻּ֥ץ עַמֹּנִֽים׃

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8 *Beginning Biblical Hebrew p 19; Masculine Plural Nouns*
9 The difference in the two spellings here is most likely due to the fact that the letter *waw* (ו), which was anciently used as a vowel, was later replaced by the *cholem* (ֹ) of the Masoretic pointing system.
10 *Beginning Biblical Hebrew p 18; Feminine Singular Nouns*
11 The additional letter *yod* (י) is here used as a possessive suffix, translated "of" in this passage.

*Elohot (*אלוהות*):*

Feminine plural nouns are usually marked by the ות *ending.*[12]

To arrive at this form, the feminine plural suffix *ot* (ות) is added to the base *Eloah* (אלוה). This word literally translates as *goddesses*. Though this form is not found in the Hebrew Bible, it does occur in one of the Qumran[13] scrolls:

4Q287 f2:8
...*the* name of your glorious goddesses...   ...את שם כבוד <mark>אלוהותך</mark>...

*Elohim (*אלהים*):*

Occurring over two thousand times, this is by far the most common form of the word in the Hebrew Bible. Notwithstanding its commonality, the grammatical form is somewhat irregular. The word is formed from the feminine singular base *Elah/Eloah* (אלה/אלוה) with the masculine plural ending *im* (ים). The word, then, is both plural in number as well as in gender (feminine masculine plural), and is indicative of multiple gods, male and female; that is, at least one male and one female.

In objection to this, one might propound the idea that *Elohim* (אלהים) must be male because of the second-person masculine singular "he" that commonly accompanies it. An example of this is

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12 *Beginning Biblical Hebrew p 20; Feminine Plural Nouns*

13 Qumran is a region on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Between 1947-1956 a large number of scrolls were found in the caves of Qumran; these are commonly referred to as *The Dead Sea Scrolls*.

Genesis 1:1
IN the beginning God created the
heavens and the earth.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

"Gods (*Elohim*), He-created"

We have already seen that the singularity of the pronoun does not alter the plurality of the subject.[14] With this in mind we know that multiple Gods are in view. But now the pertinent question is, "Does the masculinity of the pronoun 'he' amend the feminine-masculine nature of the subject to being only masculine, thus making the multiple beings all male?" To begin our deduction of the correct answer to this question, we will examine the usage of the second-person masculine singular address in the Hebrew Bible with its relation to social gender as our focus.

Second-Person Masculine Singular:

Our first example of this usage is found in Deuteronomy 28. Within this passage, Moses refers to the children of Israel in the second-person masculine singular over two-hundred times. The last verse is of particular interest.

Deuteronomy 28:68
And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy *you*.

וֶהֱשִׁיבְךָ יְהוָה מִצְרַיִם בָּאֳנִיּוֹת
בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי לְךָ לֹא־תֹסִיף
עוֹד לִרְאֹתָהּ וְהִתְמַכַּרְתֶּם שָׁם
לְאֹיְבֶיךָ לַעֲבָדִים וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת וְאֵין
קֹנֶה׃

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14 See *Divine Plurality May 30, 2013*

As pointed out by David E. S. Stein,[15] this passage leaves no question that both men and women are here addressed by the second-person masculine singular pronouns.[16] It can be seen with clarity that the masculine gender of the pronouns in this passage does not nullify the real social gender of those referred to by the nouns translated as "bondmen" and "bondwomen."

Our next five examples also demonstrate that 2 masc. sing.[17] language is used in biblical Hebrew, at times, to denote multiple persons of both genders.

Exodus 20:10

But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:

וְיוֹם֙ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י שַׁבָּ֖ת ׀ לַיהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֑יךָ לֹֽא־תַעֲשֶׂ֣ה כָל־מְלָאכָ֡ה אַתָּ֣ה ׀ וּבִנְךָֽ־וּבִתֶּ֣ךָ עַבְדְּךָ֩ וַאֲמָֽתְךָ֨ וּבְהֶמְתֶּ֜ךָ וְגֵרְךָ֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר בִּשְׁעָרֶֽיךָ׃

Leviticus 10:14

And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for *they be* thy due, and thy sons' due, *which* are given out of the sacrifices of

וְאֵת֩ חֲזֵ֨ה הַתְּנוּפָ֜ה וְאֵ֣ת ׀ שׁ֣וֹק הַתְּרוּמָ֗ה תֹּֽאכְלוּ֙ בְּמָק֣וֹם טָה֔וֹר אַתָּ֕ה וּבָנֶ֥יךָ וּבְנֹתֶ֖יךָ אִתָּ֑ךְ כִּֽי־חָקְךָ֤ וְחָק־בָּנֶ֙יךָ֙ נִתְּנ֔וּ מִזִּבְחֵ֖י שַׁלְמֵ֥י בְּנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃

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15 "David E. S. Stein has served as general editor and revising translator for *The Torah: A Modern Commentary, Revised Edition* (2005), revising editor and translator for *Pathways Through the Bible* (JPS, 2002), project manager for *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (2001), and managing editor for the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* (1999)." - http://www.jewishpub.org/author.php?id=78

Further information concerning gender in the Hebrew language can be found at his personal website: http://davidesstein.name/

16 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 8*

17 We will be using the following abbreviations: 1-3 = grammatical person; masc./fem. = gender; sing./plur. = number.

peace offerings of the children of Israel.

Numbers 18:11
And this *is* thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it.

וְזֶה־לְּךָ֣ תְּרוּמַ֣ת מַתָּנָ֡ם
לְכָל־תְּנוּפֹת֩ בְּנֵ֨י יִשְׂרָאֵ֜ל לְךָ֣
נְתַתִּ֣ים וּלְבָנֶ֥יךָ וְלִבְנֹתֶ֛יךָ אִתְּךָ֖
לְחָק־עוֹלָ֑ם כָּל־טָה֥וֹר בְּבֵיתְךָ֖
יֹאכַ֥ל אֹתֽוֹ׃

Deuteronomy 5:14
But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

וְי֙וֹם֙ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י שַׁבָּ֣ת
לַיהוָ֖ה אֱלֹהֶ֑יךָ לֹ֣א תַעֲשֶׂ֣ה כָל־
מְלָאכָ֡ה אַתָּ֣ה וּבִנְךָ֣־וּבִתֶּ֡ךָ
וְעַבְדְּךָ֣־וַאֲמָתֶ֣ךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ֣ וַחֲמֹרְךָ֣
וְכָל־בְּהֶמְתֶּ֔ךָ וְגֵרְךָ֣ אֲשֶׁ֣ר
בִּשְׁעָרֶ֔יךָ לְמַ֗עַן יָנ֛וּחַ עַבְדְּךָ֥
וַאֲמָתְךָ֖ כָּמֽוֹךָ׃

Deuteronomy 12:18
But thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

כִּ֡י אִם־לִפְנֵי֩ יְהוָ֨ה אֱלֹהֶ֜יךָ
תֹּאכְלֶ֗נּוּ בַּמָּקוֹם֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר יִבְחַ֜ר
יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֘יךָ֘ בּוֹ֒ אַתָּ֣ה וּבִנְךָ֣
וּבִתֶּ֗ךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ֣ וַאֲמָתֶ֔ךָ וְהַלֵּוִ֖י
אֲשֶׁ֣ר בִּשְׁעָרֶ֑יךָ וְשָׂמַחְתָּ֗ לִפְנֵי֙
יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ בְּכֹ֖ל מִשְׁלַ֥ח יָדֶֽךָ׃

Concerning the above examples, Stein states:

> The other five cases [in addition to Deut. 28:68] (Exod 20:10; Lev 10:14; Num 18:11; Deut 5:14; 12:18) involve a listing of household members in which one must account for the wife's conspicuous absence. Ironically, in those constructions and situations, it is by the very lack of explicit address to women that one can demonstrate that they are present in the mind of the speaker who employs 2 masc. language.[18]

To move beyond the 2 masc. sing., we refer to the introductory paragraph of the article just quoted (*The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew*):

> The investigation focuses on what the biblical text seems to expect of its readers with regard to construing the social-gender import of three linguistic usages: second-person masculine singular address; third-person masculine singular references; and "male" nouns (i.e., those with specifically female counterparts),[19] including אִישׁ, אָב, אָח, and בֵּן. *It finds that women may be in view given any of these types of language*.[20]

Third-Person Masculine Singular:

Since the lessons derived from this usage are the same as that derived from the usage of the second-person address, we

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18 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 8 footnote 4* (emphasis in original)

19 In a video presentation (see fn. 23) at 1:07-1:19 Stein also includes masculine nouns with no feminine counterparts.

20 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 7* (emphasis added)

shall give only one example.[21]

Exodus 35:5
Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever *is* of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass,

קְח֨וּ מֵֽאִתְּכֶ֤ם תְּרוּמָה֙ לַֽיהֹוָ֔ה כֹּ֚ל
נְדִ֣יב לִבּ֔וֹ יְבִיאֶ֔הָ אֵ֖ת תְּרוּמַ֣ת
יְהֹוָ֑ה זָהָ֥ב וָכֶ֖סֶף וּנְחֹֽשֶׁת:

Exodus 35:22
And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, *and* brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered *offered* an offering of gold unto the LORD.

וַיָּבֹ֥אוּ הָֽאֲנָשִׁ֖ים עַל־
הַנָּשִׁ֑ים כֹּ֣ל ׀ נְדִ֣יב לֵ֗ב הֵ֠בִ֠יאוּ חָ֣ח
וָנֶ֜זֶם וְטַבַּ֤עַת וְכוּמָז֙ כָּל־כְּלִ֣י זָהָ֔ב
וְכָל־אִ֕ישׁ אֲשֶׁ֥ר הֵנִ֛יף תְּנוּפַ֥ת זָהָ֖ב
לַיהֹוָֽה:

By comparing these two passages, we can see that the thing which was commanded, though spoken as if to a single male, was understood as applying to multiple persons of both genders. In summation of the lesson so far, we have learned that masculine singular language, whether second-person or third-person,[22] is sometimes used in biblical Hebrew to refer to multiple persons of both genders.

The misapprehension that grammatical gender has a 1:1 correlation with social gender in biblical Hebrew, is what causes most of the confusion on the issue. The chart below accurately conveys the relation between grammatical gender and social gender in Hebrew.

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21 This example and others are given in *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 11-12*

22 This same principle also applies to first-person masculine singular language as seen in 2 Samuel 21:4 where the Gibeonites say, "I (1 masc. sing.) will have no silver or gold.." It would be incoherent to assume that the Gibeonites mentioned were all male.

Grammatical Gender	Social Gender
Feminine	Specifically Womanly
Masculine	Not Specifically Womanly

[23]

This chart is proven true by the heretofore sited examples and will be all the more established by that which follows. The above displayed relation of grammatical gender to social gender extends beyond 1-3 masc. sing. language and into common nouns, but before endeavoring to elucidate upon that, here are Stein's distilled rules for 2-3 masc. sing. language for the grammar of social gender:

1. Readers can assume that 2 masc. address rules out solely female social gender, yet we cannot assume that it specifies solely male social gender. (*Women may be in view.*)

2. Readers can assume that 3 masc. language rules out solely female social gender, yet we cannot assume that it specifies solely male social gender. (*Women may be in view.*)[24]

(Critical to notice is the fact that "women may be in view.")

Common Masculine Nouns:

On the previous page we quoted from the introductory paragraph of Stein's article (*The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew*) in which he listed four common Hebrew words

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23 Similar chart found in video presentation *Improving an English Dictionary's Characterization of the Gender Representation of Personal Nouns in Biblical Hebrew* (9 Nov. 2011 draft for preview purposes; to be presented on 20 Nov. 11 to the SBL Biblical Lexicography Section) *by David E. S. Stein*. Video presentation can been seen at http://media.shinywhitebox.com/david-e-s-stein/stein-sbl-lexicography-paper-2011c0

24 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 22* (emphasis in original)

as examples of grammatically masculine nouns with gender-inclusive meaning. Here are the nouns and their commonly accepted English equivalents:

ish	אִישׁ	Man
av	אָב	Father
ach	אָח	Brother
ben	בֵּן	Son

The following tables[25] list the different usages of these words and demonstrate that, in their most common contexts, they are not conveying male-exclusive social gender.

Deixis (pointing)	Referential function	Social gender per grammar (denotation)	Social gender per context (connotation)	Examples: אִישׁ	
Definite	Class	Unspecified	Male	Num 30:11	וְאִם־בֵּית אִישָׁהּ נָדָרָה
			Inclusive	Lev 14:11	וְהֶעֱמִיד הַכֹּהֵן ... אֵת הָאִישׁ הַמִּטַּהֵר
				Deut 27:15	אָרוּר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה פֶסֶל וּמַסֵּכָה
Indefinite	Generic	Unspecified	Male	Gen 24:16	בְּתוּלָה וְאִישׁ לֹא יְדָעָהּ
			Inclusive	Gen 11:7	לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׂפַת רֵעֵהוּ
				Gen 39:11	וְאֵין אִישׁ מֵאַנְשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בַּבָּיִת
				Exod 21:12	מַכֵּה אִישׁ וָמֵת מוֹת יוּמָת
				Exod 21:20	וְכִי־יַכֶּה אִישׁ ... אֶת־אַמָתוֹ בַּשֵּׁבֶט
				Lev 27:2	אִישׁ כִּי יַפְלִא נֶדֶר בְּעֶרְכְּךָ נְפָשֹׁת

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25 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 14-19, 26.* Here are the tables in the order here given and the specific pages upon which they occur in Stein's article:

Table	Word	Page
1	אִישׁ	19
2	אָב	26
3	בֵּן	26
4	אָח	18

Deixis (pointing)	Referential function	Social gender per grammar (denotation)	Social gender per context (connotation)	Examples: בֵּן	
Definite	Class	Unspecified	Male	Exod 1:22	כָּל־הַבֵּן הַיִּלּוֹד ... תַּשְׁלִיכֻהוּ
			Inclusive	Ezek 18:4	כְּנֶפֶשׁ הָאָב וּכְנֶפֶשׁ הַבֵּן לִי־הֵנָּה
Indefinite	Generic	Unspecified	Male	Exod 21:31	אוֹ־בֵן יִגָּח אוֹ־בַת יִגָּח
			Inclusive	Deut 25:5	וּמֵת אַחַד מֵהֶם וּבֵן אֵין־לוֹ

Deixis (pointing)	Referential function	Social gender per grammar (denotation)	Social gender per context (connotation)	Examples: אָב	
Definite	Class	Unspecified	Male	Gen 32:10	וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אַבְרָהָם
			Inclusive	Ezek 18:4	כְּנֶפֶשׁ הָאָב וּכְנֶפֶשׁ הַבֵּן לִי־הֵנָּה
Indefinite	Generic	Unspecified	Male	Esth 2:7	כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וָאֵם
			Inclusive	Ezek 18:20	וְאָב לֹא יִשָּׂא בַּעֲוֹן הַבֵּן

Deixis (pointing)	Referential function	Social gender per grammar (denotation)	Social gender per context (connotation)	Examples: אָח	
Definite	Particular or Unique	Not female	Male	Gen 4:2	וַתֹּסֶף לָלֶדֶת אֶת־אָחִיו אֶת־הָבֶל
	Class	Unspecified	Male	Gen 13:11	וַיִּפָּרְדוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו
			Inclusive	Jer 34:14	תְּשַׁלְּחוּ אִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו הָעִבְרִי
				Gen 9:5	מִיַּד אִישׁ אָחִיו אֶדְרֹשׁ אֶת־נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם
				Deut 15:12	כִּי־יִמָּכֵר לְךָ אָחִיךָ הָעִבְרִי אוֹ הָעִבְרִיָּה
Indefinite	Specific	Not female	Male	Gen 24:29	וּלְרִבְקָה אָח וּשְׁמוֹ לָבָן
	Generic	Unspecified	Male	Gen 29:15	וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לְיַעֲקֹב הֲכִי־אָחִי אַתָּה
			Inclusive	Jer 9:3	וְעַל־כָּל־אָח אַל־תִּבְטָחוּ

To expound upon the intricacies of these tables would lend to a more verbose explanation than is suitable for this article.[26] We will though, briefly analyze a few extractable lessons from the example words of tables 1 and 2. Our purpose will be to derive lessons proficient to inform our understanding of the

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26 For a more thorough examination of the tables see Stein's article and his other works on gender inclusive translation. (see fn. 15 for links)

principles of the Hebrew language in order to ascertain how those principles apply to the overall subject at hand.

Ish (אִישׁ):

The frst table has already furnished us with the necessary information to understand that *ish* (אִישׁ) is often gender-inclusive. Therefore, we shall focus our attention upon instances where *ish* (אִישׁ) is used to refer to "whomever it may concern" within a particular categorization or class.

> Whenever masculine wording or a "male" noun points to a class, its reference is to be construed as socially gender-inclusive by default. In those cases, readers can determine the referent's social gender only from *non-grammatical* clues in co-text and context.[27]

An instance of this is found in

Genesis 2:24

Therefore shall a <mark>man</mark> leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.	עַל־כֵּן֙ יַֽעֲזָב־<mark>אִ֔ישׁ</mark> אֶת־אָבִ֖יו וְאֶת־אִמּ֑וֹ וְדָבַ֣ק בְּאִשְׁתּ֔וֹ וְהָי֖וּ לְבָשָׂ֥ר אֶחָֽד׃

Here, *ish* (אִישׁ) is used to point to an unspecified person or persons to whom these conditions might apply. By this alone, one must conclude that the gender of the referent is left in ambiguity. However, additional information, in this case the word for wife (אִשְׁתּוֹ), supplies by co-text the epistemic lack resulting from the unspecificity of the grammar. In this case, the co-text makes it apparent that the subject *ish* (אִישׁ) is socially male.

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27 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 23* (emphasis in original)

Av (אָב):

The word *av* (אָב), though grammatically masculine,[28] has been shown to be inclusive of feminine social gender in its singular form, unless male exclusiveness is demanded by context. In its plural form, *av* (אָב), like *Elohim* (אלהים), becomes both masculine and feminine. This comes about by adding the feminine plural ending *ot* (ות) to the parent root, forming the word *avot* (אבות). It is widely recognized that the social gender of those designated by *avot* (אבות) is both masculine and feminine.[29] One scripture example will suffice to prove the case.

Numbers 20:15

How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers:	וַיֵּרְדוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ מִצְרַיְמָה וַנֵּשֶׁב בְּמִצְרַיִם יָמִים רַבִּים וַיָּרֵעוּ לָנוּ מִצְרַיִם וְלַאֲבֹתֵינוּ:

It is without question that those who went into Egypt and were oppressed by the Egyptians were of both sexes, and a number of translations[30] recognize this fact by using the word "ancestors" rather than "fathers."

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28 *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; def.* אָב
29 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 7, 23*
30 See NIV, NLT, ISV, NET, GWT, CJB

Recapitulation and Application:

In summarizing his article on "the grammar of social gender," Stein enumerated three implications of the findings of his article on translation and exegesis.[31] We shall only quote the first point.

> *Literal English translation is often more "male" than the Hebrew original.* For those Biblical Hebrew grammatical constructions that leave the social gender unspecified (regardless of the connotation), if I represent 3 masc. sing. inflections via the English pronouns "he/his/him/himself," or if I translate or gloss the nouns אִישׁ, אָב, אָח, and בֶּן with male terms (such as "man," "father," "brother," and "son"), then I am *over-representing* the "maleness" of the Hebrew wording. (This is because those English words convey a maleness that the constructions in question have suppressed in the Hebrew words.) Unless I as translator or glossator avoid—or at least disclose—the male-amplifying impact of such a rendition, the Bible will come across in English as being more androcentric (male-oriented) than the ancient Israelites themselves actually perceived it.[32]

To put it in layman's terms, 1-3 masc. sing. language, as well as common masculine nouns, are inclusive of the female social gender unless masculine exclusiveness is specified.

The object of setting forth the information in the preceding pages has been to, again, inform our understanding of the principles of the Hebrew language in order to ascertain how

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31 *Webster's Dictionary* defines *exegesis* as the exposition, critical analysis, or interpretation of a word, literary passage, etc., especially of the Bible."

32 *The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew by David E.S. Stein p 23* (emphasis in original)

those principles apply to the overall subject at hand. As previously stated, our purpose has been to find out whether or not the masculinity of the language so often in reference to *Elohim* (אלהים) amends the meaning of that word from being feminine and masculine to being masculine only. To this point, Stein remarks:

> In sum, the use of masculine Hebrew wording does not necessarily mean that a particular referent was believed to be male. The Torah's use of masculine God-language means only that God was not thought of as a *solely* female being.[33]

To itemize what we have learned thus far, we shall restate the relation of grammatical gender to social gender in Hebrew, then list the core linguistic principles we have acquired side by side with their application to the word *Elohim* (אלהים).

Relation of grammatical gender to social gender:

1. grammatical feminine corresponds to specifically womanly social gender

2. grammatical masculine corresponds to not-specifically womanly social gender

Recapitulation	Application
1. 1-3 masc. sing. language is gender-inclusive by default.	1. 1-3 masc. sing. references to *Elohim* (אלהים) are impotent to alter the fem. masc. gender of the word to being masc. only.

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33 *On Beyond Gender: Representation of God by David E. S. Stein p 3* (emphasis added)

2. Common masc. nouns are gender-inclusive by default.	2. Common masc. nouns in reference to *Elohim* (אלהים) are impotent to alter the fem. masc. gender of the word to being masc. only.
3. Language which is gender-inclusive by default must have its social gender informed by co-text and/or context.	3. The word *Elohim* (אלהים) must inform the social gender of correspondent masc. language rather than vice versa.
4. Plural nouns comprised of both masculine and femin-ine components convey both masculine and feminine social gender.	4. The word *Elohim* (אלהים) conveys both masculine and feminine social gender.

Evidently, it is the plurality of the word Elohim (אלהים) which allows for its duality of gender; which, as we have seen, does convey real social gender. This real social gender must necessarily include both male(s) and female(s)[34] since that is the distinctive nature of this form of the word.

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34 It is beyond the range of this article to present all the data regarding the female aspects of the godhead. Though, it is worth mentioning some of the categories which these evidences may fall into with a couple examples of each:
 1. Plain scripture evidence – Rom. 1:20; Gen. 1:26-27
 2. Hebrew grammar – *Elohim, Eloah, Ruah, Chokmah*
 3. Types and anti-types – *Sarah* (Gal. 4:22-31), *Mary*
 4. The sacrificial system – *The red heifer* (Num. 19), *ewe lambs*
 5. History – See *The Hebrew Goddess by Raphael Patai*
 6. Prophecy – Rev. 12:1; Ps. 45;

Corporeal Implications

The differentiation of the various forms of the word *El* (אל), the distinct plurality of the form *Elohim* (אלהים), and the real social gender which *Elohim* (אלהים) conveys, may all be viewed as unintelligible in the light of immateriality. This same thought can be arrived at, and with a broader understanding, when considering the following questions and assessing their answers by means of simple logic.

If God is immaterial and thus incorporeal:[35]

What is the purpose of describing *Elohim* (אלהים) as multiple distinct beings?
By what means would *Elohim* (אלהים) be distinct?
Why differentiate between male and female among *Elohim* (אלהים)?

The two thoughts, one of *Elohim* (אלהים) being a single immaterial God, and the other of *Elohim* (אלהים) being multiple distinct beings of both social genders, are clearly incompatible. In attempt to do away with the evidences in support of distinct multi-gendered plurality, one might simply assert immateriality. This, however, would be nought but begging the question,[36] which, in reality, does nothing to either disprove material plurality or to prove immaterial monotheism. In fact, such an assertion, without bearing its own evidence and addressing the evidences in favour of distinct plurality, would only serve to render superfluous the meaning of the text as well as the structure of the language.

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35 *Webster's Dictionary* defines *incorporeality* as "without a body... not consisting of matter; not having a material body or substance; immaterial."

36 Latin: *petitio* principii "assuming the initial point." This is a form of logical fallacy which assumes its conclusion as its premise, either in part or in whole.

Instead of starting with one or the other preferred conclusion, one must examine the evidence from the ground up in order to determine the logical and theological outcome. Let us start with the implications of the already acquired information.

The two paramount conclusions to which all of the evidence thus far has pointed are (1) the word *Elohim* (אלהים) is indicative of multiple distinct beings, and (2) those distinct beings have real social gender of both sexes. The implications of the first conclusion are quickly seen when considering that what defines distinct being cannot be immaterial, for immaterial *beings* would not possess any properties whereby to distinguish them. The implications of the second are yet more obvious; namely, the social gender of an individual is determined by the physical reproductive system ontologically inherent in each member of the sex. As is commonly understood, an immaterial being would have no such system whereby to determine gender.[37]

In light of all these facts, what evidence does the immaterialist have to offer in support of an incorporeal God? The one text which, in the mind of the immaterialist, clearly states their theology is

John 4:24 – God is a Spirit:

Though this article's attention is primarily focused on the

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37 That the members of the godhead were conceived of by the Jews of antiquity to have such reproductive systems is revealed in the *Shiᶜur Qomah* texts. *Shiᶜur Qomah,* meaning "*[The] Measurement of [The Divine] Body,*" is a collection of ancient Hebrew texts which describe in meticulous detail the dimensions of the various body parts of the members of the godhead. Here are a couple examples of such systems being attributed to the godhead in the *Shiᶜur Qomah* corpus:
    "The name of His genitals is Asam Gig Vahu" - *Sefer Hashiᶜur* 30
    "The name of His genitals is Afasesaghudariah" - *Siddur Rabbah* 66
For more examples in *Shiᶜur Qomah* see *Siddur Rabbah* 102, *Merkavah Rabbah* 70, and *Sefer Haqqomah* 63. For biblical examples see *Ezekiel* 1:27; 8:2.

Hebrew Bible, due to the fact that the majority of those who profess faith in it also profess faith in the New Testament, we must address this single pivotal text.

John 4:24

God *is* a <mark>Spirit</mark>: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.	<mark>πνεῦμα</mark> ὁ θεός, καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν.

Presently, the normative view of this verse, and in particular the phrase "God is a Spirit," is that it teaches that God is an ontologically immaterial (non-physical) being.[38] In coming to a clearer understanding of this most controversial text, we must first comprehend what the words themselves convey, then proceed to examine the verse's immediate context as well as related passages. The first phrase of the text, *pneuma ho theos* (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός), is often translated "God is *a* spirit." However, the indefinite article (*a*) is missing from the Greek and therefore the text literally translates as "God *is* spirit." Wesley Williams[39] expounds on this particular as follows:

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38 See *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics p 20, 284; Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible p 1018; Foundations of Pentecostal Theology p 54, 123; Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume p 1937; The New Bible Dictionary, Third Edition p 418; Systematic Theology p 65;*

39 "A native of Detroit, Michigan, Dr. Muhammad [Wesley Williams] received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in Islamic Studies in 2008. He has taught at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and the University of Toledo, and has presented or lectured at the University of Mainz, Germany, the University of Chicago, Duke University, Emory University, Morehouse College, Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University. Dr. Muhammad has several publications and his dissertation, entitled "Tajalli wa-Ru'ya: A Study of Anthropomorphic Theophany and Visio Dei in the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'an and Early Sunni Islam," argued that the Islamic sources (Qur'an, Hadith, Sunni textual tradition for the 9th-12th centuries) give evidence of a tradition of transcendent anthropomorphism and visual theophany not unlike that found more clearly articulated in the Hebrew Bible." -

John 4:24, which has Isa. 31:3[40] as its background, is no exception. The Greek reads: πνεῦμα ὁ θεός (*pneuma ho theos*; Latin *spiritus est deus*). This is best translated 'God is spirit' rather than "God is *a* Spirit.' The absence of the indefinte article here is grammatically small but theologically significant as it indicates that John 4:24 is not attempting an ontological description of God, i.e. God is *a* spirit as opposed, for instance, to *a* man. This is confirmed by 1 John 1:5, 'God is Light' (not *a* light) and 1 John 4:8, 'God is Love,' where the same constructions are used. God is spiritual, but not *a* spirit.[41]

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40 Since Isa. 31:3 needs some explanation, we here quote from Wesley's article: "Isa. 31:3 contrasts mortal flesh and divine spirituality: 'The Egyptians are human (*’āḏām*) and not divine (*’ĕl*); and their horses are flesh (*bāśār*), and not spirit (*rûᵃḥ*).' Here the two contrasting sets, human (*’āḏām*) vs. divine (*’ĕl*) and flesh (*bāśār*) vs. spirit (*rûᵃḥ*) are parallel and therefore *’āḏām* (human) is synonymous with *bāśār* (flesh) and *’ĕl* (divine) with *rûᵃḥ* (spirit). These terms are used adjectivally to contrast the corruptible, mortal sphere with the eternal, powerful, and creative divine sphere. *But they do not describe God as a spirit*:

'The Spirit is not identical with God but is the agency of his historical activity in the world...*(T)he doctrine of the (exclusive) spirituality of God has no place in the (Old Testament)*. The apparent exception is Isa. 31:3...Even here, however, the issue is not the spirituality of God in opposition to anything material, but that of his vitality as opposed to the creaturely weakness upon which an alliance with Egypt rests (cf. vs. 1). Yahweh is not pure spirit, for his Spirit, like his Word, is the agency of his activity.' - Anderson, 'God, OT view of,' *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. 3:422f." - *Is the God of Biblical Tradition a Formless Spirit? by Wesley Williams p 1* (emphasis added; footnotes of original note included)

41 *Is the God of Biblical Tradition a Formless Spirit? by Wesley Williams p 2*

To this, Raymond E. Brown,[42] commenting on John 4:24, agrees:

> 24. *God is Spirit*. This is not an essential definition of God, but a description of God's dealings with men; it means that God is Spirit toward men because He gives the Spirit [xiv. 16] which begets them anew. There are two other such descriptions in John's writings, 'God is light' (I John i 5), and 'God is love' (I John iv 8). These too refer to the God who acts; God gives the world His Son, the *light* of the world (iii 19, viii 12, ix 5) as a sign of His *love* (iii 16).[43]

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42 "(born May 22, 1928, New York, N.Y.—died Aug. 8, 1998, Redwood City, Calif.), American theologian who, was a highly regarded Roman Catholic biblical scholar. His rigorous examination of the Gospels resulted in the publication of such works as the two-volume *The Gospel According to John* (1966, 1970), *The Birth of the Messiah* (1977), and *The Death of the Messiah* (1994) as well as more than 35 other books. Brown's centrist stance sometimes angered conservative Catholics, especially in 1971, when he questioned whether Mary's virginal conception of Jesus could ever be proven historically. After receiving both a B.A. (1948) and M.A. (1949) from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., Brown entered (1951) the Society of St. Sulpice for seminary teaching and was ordained (1953) in the St. Augustine, Fla., diocese. In Baltimore, Md., he earned doctorates in sacred theology (1955) from St. Mary's Seminary and in Semitic languages (1958) from Johns Hopkins University. While a fellow at the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, Brown worked on a Dead Sea Scrolls concordance, and in 1963 he was an adviser to Bishop Joseph Hurley at the Second Vatican Council. Brown taught at St. Mary's Seminary from 1959 until 1971, then spent the majority of his teaching career at Union Theological Seminary in New York City until his retirement in 1990. He was the first Roman Catholic professor given tenure at the historically Protestant institution and built a reputation as an erudite and spellbinding lecturer." - http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/81611/Raymond-Edward-Brown

43 *The Gospel according to John (i-xii)*, Anchor Bible 29 (New York: Doubleday--Anchor Bible, 1966), 172.

It being established that the text says "God *is* spirit" rather than "God is *a* spirit," it is now incumbent upon us to see what the word "spirit," in Greek *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), actually means. First, let us consider the meaning of the term in the Greek world outside of the New Testament:

> Derived from *πνέϝω, the verbal noun πνεῦμα means the *elemental natural* and *vital force* which, *matter* and process in one, acts as a stream of air in the blowing of the wind and the inhaling and exhaling of breath...
>
> 1. Wind... πνεῦμα is used in the macrocosm *physically* for the breath of wind in its movement as a blowing force and also acc. to its distinctive invisibly rarefied *materiality* as an *element*...
>
> 3. *Life.* Breath may be discerned only in movement, and it is also a sign, condition and *agent of life*, which seems to be esp. tied up with breathing. Hence it is natural that *via* the sense "*breath of life*" (πνεῦμα βίου, Aesch. Pers., 507) *πνεῦμα itself should take on the direct sense of "life"* or "living creature,"...
>
> 5. Transferred Meaning: Spirit. In the *metaphorical* speech of poetry in particular, *concrete natural processes* such as the blowing of the wind or breathing express corresponding experiences of mental or spiritual reality...
>
> By way of analogy the lit. and transf. usage constantly interfuses, so that even in the most developed spiritual sense one can better understand the fig. use of πνεῦμα the more closely one takes into account *the concrete reference*...
>
> In the transf. employment of πνεῦμα for mental and spiritual realities profane Gk. firmly maintains the basic etym. idea of a powerful, *material*, moving breath with its many functions in man and the cosmos.[44]

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44 *Vol. 6: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament p 334-337* (emphasis added)

As can be gathered from the afore-quoted statements, the word *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) in its usage in the ancient Greek world, denotes that which is physical, material, natural, etc. and carries with it a particular sense of *life*, or *life-giving*. It is rather consequential that we keep this societal context in view while considering the use of the word as found in the New Testament:

> The constitutive factor of πνεῦμα in the Greek world *is always its subtle and powerful corporeality*. Because of its *material* character *it is never spiritual in the strict sense*, as in the NT. It is never wholly outside the realm of sense. Whether in terms of Aristotelian noeticism, modern idealism *or the NT understanding*, *it is never set in antithesis to matter* as the supernatural, wonder-working spiritual gift or manifestation of a transcendent personal God...
>
> If along the lines of scientific and philosophical development πνεῦμα as a *physical* or physiological term thus remains essentially *materialistic and vitalistic*, in its poetic, mythico-religious development, in which again, especially in manticism, *it is never wholly freed from matter*, it is an exceptional phenomenon imparted only in special circumstances to the elect, and it thus bears a very definite enthusiastic and ecstatic character.[45]

Thus we see that in the New Testament, as in the ancient Greek world overall, the term *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) "*is never set in antithesis to matter.*" This will become all the more pronounced as we consider the New Testament usage in the light of an even more dominating influence than the surrounding Greek world, namely, the Old Testament along with the Hebrew language and culture.

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45 *Vol. 6: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament p 357-358* (emphasis added)

Corporeality of Spirits:

To restate our aim and methodology before continuing on, we are endeavoring to ascertain the meaning of the word *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), particularly in connection with the phrase *pneuma ho theos* (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός), translated "God is spirit," in John 4:24. Our *modus operandi* in meeting this aim is to analyze the word's usage in a wide range of contexts and use the acquired information to determine (1) the truth value of the claim that *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) identifies a thing which is immaterial, and (2) what the word actually signifies.

Let us start with the angelology of the New Testament and its Old Testament influence:

Hebrews 1:7

And of the angels he saith, καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους
Who maketh his angels spirits, λέγει· ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους
and his ministers a flame of fire. αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς
λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα,

Hebrews 1:13-14

But to which of the *angels* said πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων
he at any time, Sit on my right εἴρηκέν ποτε· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν
hand, until I make thine μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς
enemies thy footstool? Are they σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν
not all ministering *spirits*, sent σου; οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶν
forth to minister for them who λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς
shall be heirs of salvation? διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ
τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν
σωτηρίαν;

In the above verses, angels are clearly identified as "spirits."

Matthew 4:5-6

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his <mark>angels</mark> charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Τότε παραλαμβάνει αὐτὸν ὁ διάβολος εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν καὶ ἔστησεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, βάλε σεαυτὸν κάτω· γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι *τοῖς <mark>ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ</mark> ἐντελεῖται περὶ σοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ χειρῶν ἀροῦσίν σε, μήποτε προσκόψῃς πρὸς λίθον τὸν πόδα σου.*

In this text, angels are said to have hands with which they are able to lift bodies. Clearly then, it is presupposed by the Matthian author that these angels are corporeal. This idea of the corporeality of angels did not originate with the New Testament however. Consider the following scriptures from the Old Testament:

Genesis 18:1-4, 8

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, *three men* stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree...

And he took butter, and milk,
and the calf which he had
dressed, and set *it* before them;
and he stood by them under the
tree, and *they did eat*.

In this passage you see three men come to Abraham, one
of which is called Yahweh (Gen. 18:13), and the other two are
identified as angels (Gen. 19:1). Since they ate material food,
they must have material bodies. Note too that this text is not
alone in advancing the idea that angels eat.

Psalm 78:24-25
And had rained down *manna*
upon them to eat, And had
given them of the corn of
heaven. Man did eat *angels' food*:
He sent them meat to the full.

2 Esdras 1:19
I pitied your groanings and gave
you manna for
food; you ate the *bread of angels*.

In addition to angelic depiction, the Old Testament is
consistent in describing all other "spirits" as corporeal. Take
Eliphaz's account:

Job 4:15-17
Then a spirit passed before my
face; The hair of my flesh stood
up: It stood still, but I could not
discern the form thereof: An
image *was* before mine eyes,

וְרוּחַ [46] עַל־פָּנַי יַחֲלֹף
תְּסַמֵּר שַׂעֲרַת בְּשָׂרִי׃
יַעֲמֹד וְלֹא־אַכִּיר מַרְאֵהוּ
תְּמוּנָה לְנֶגֶד עֵינָי דְּמָמָה
וָקוֹל אֶשְׁמָע׃

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46 רוּחַ is the Hebrew equivalent of πνεῦμα (See *Vol. 6: Theological Dictionary of
the New Testament p 359*)

There was silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*, Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?

הַאֱנוֹשׁ מֵאֱלוֹהַ יִצְדָּק אִם
מֵעֹשֵׂהוּ יִטְהַר־גָּבֶר׃

This narrative is particularly significant in view of the antiquity of the work. In fact, the *Book of Job* is held by many to be the oldest book of "canonical scripture."[47] To broaden our view, we will now quote from what R.H. Charles called, "...the last noble utterance of Judaism before it plunged into the dark and oppressive years that followed the destruction of Jerusalem."[48]

2 Baruch 6:3-4
And lo! suddenly a strong *spirit* raised me, and bore me aloft over the wall of Jerusalem. And I beheld, and lo! four *angels* standing at the four corners of the city, each of them holding a torch of fire in his *hands*.

We can see that from the earliest form of Hebrew religion to the latest Judaism of antiquity, the corporeality of spirits was clearly assumed. Our next example should suffice to focus our attention back to the overall subject. The text is from Ezekiel chapters one and eight, wherein is found a description of a traveling throne, upon which rode One with a human appearance. The below image, due to its similarity to Ezekiel's description in chapter one, should aid the reader in gaining a visual understand of what he saw.

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47 *Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the Old Testament p 102*
48 *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament Vol. 2, p 470 (Introduction to 2 Baruch)*
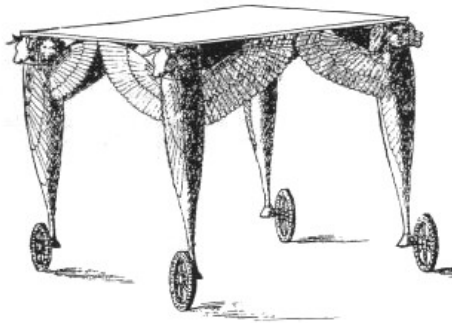
Abb. 107

Ezekiel 1:26-28
And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness *as the appearance of a human* above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. *This was the appearance of the likeness of*

Ezekiel 8:2-4
Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And *he put forth the form of an hand*, and *took me* by a lock of mine head; and *the spirit* lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where *was* the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel *was* there, according to the vision

49 *Visions of Yahweh and Seal Art: A New Interpretation of the Majestic Portrayals in Isa 6, Ez 1 and 10, and Zech 4 by Othmar Keel.* See also http://www.sitchiniswrong.com/ezekielnotes.htm

the glory of the LORD. And when I   that I saw in the plain.
saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I
heard a voice of one that spake.

      First among our observations is the fact that both passages, among others in Ezekiel, refer to one and the same thing, namely, the chariot-throne[50] and its rider. Next we notice that the rider, the one who sat on the throne, is distinctly corporeal (Eze. 8:3). The question is, "Who is this one with a human appearance that sat on the throne?" Within the text, this one is identified with (1) the Spirit,[51] and is thus a corporeal spirit, (2) the glory,[52] alluding to the *Shekinah*,[53] (3) *Shaddai*,[54] marking this one as a divine feminine figure,[55] and (4) Yahweh.[56]

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50 Compare Ezekiel 1:26 and 10:1 with Sirach 49:8

51 Eze. 1:12, 20; 2:2; 3:12, 14, 25; 8:3; 11:1, 5

52 Eze. 1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22, 23

53 "Shekhina (*sh'khinah*) is a Hebrew abstract noun derived from the Biblical verb *shakhan* discussed above and means literally "the act of dwelling." - *The Hebrew Goddess by Raphael Patai p 99* "Shekhina is a frequently used Talmudic term denoting the visible and audible manifestation of God's presence on earth... the Shekhina concept stood for an independent, feminine divine entity." - *The Hebrew Goddess by Raphael Patai p 96* "A careful perusal of the passages referring to the manifestation of God in the sanctuary shows that the nouns 'cloud' and 'glory' are used interchangeably, and that the 'cloud' was undoubtedly regarded as the visible form taken by the 'glory' of Yahweh when He wished to indicate His presence in His earthly abode, the sanctuary." - *The Hebrew Goddess by Raphael Patai p 97*
A comparative analysis of Ex. 25:1, 8, 21-22; 40:34-38; Num. 7:89; and 2 Ki. 19:15 will disclose the fact that the *Shekinah* is 'the glory,' the one that dwelt between the cherubim. The picture of a fiery cloud with cherubim in Ezekiel's vision is clearly an allusion back to the *Shekinah* in the earlier period of Israelite history. See also *The Mother of the LORD Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple by Margaret Barker p 234*

54 Eze. 1:24; 10:5. *Shaddai* (שדי) is commonly translated "Almighty" in these verses.

55 See *The Mother of the LORD Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple by Margaret Barker p 126-139*

56 That it was the Spirit who sat upon this chariot-throne is Yahweh can be seen by reading the passages following the ones already quoted, namely

The identity of this chariot-throne rider, being what it is, is quite significant. Not only have we seen that this entity is a corporeal spirit, but that that corporeal spirit is Yahweh. This, as well as Genesis 18[57] and other scriptures which tell of the corporeality of the Israelite Gods,[58] leaves no question that any influence the Old Testament could have had on the New Testament in regards to immateriality or materiality is clearly in favor of the latter, and that, both in relation to "spirit(s)" in general, and in relation to Deity.

Since the two primary cultural influences upon the New Testament, and thus the Johannine author and gospel, are both materialist in their views of "spirit," one must confess that there is no justification for the immaterialist interpretation of *pneuma ho theos* (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός) of John 4:24.

> The God of biblical tradition is spiritual, but he is not a formless spirit. The very concept of 'formless spirit' is completely foreign to the Semitic and biblical *Weltanschauung* (world view). 'Hebraic antiquity always imagined Yahweh (God) as human-

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Eze. 2; 8:5-6. In Eze. 8:6b Yahweh says, "...that *I* should go far off from *my* sanctuary...." Clearly then, this Yahweh is the One who dwelt in the sanctuary. In the Psalms we are told:

"*Yahweh* reigns; let the people tremble: *he sits between the cherubim*; let the earth be moved." - Ps. 99:1

See also 1 Sam. 4:4; Ex. 25:21-22; Num. 7:89-8:1

That the *Shekinah* is also distinct from Yahweh is seen from this utterance spoken *to* Yahweh while She, the *Shekinah*, was dwelling between the cherubim on the mercy seat in the wilderness: "Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven..." - Deut. 26:15

In this, it is established that there was a Yahweh on earth between the cherubim while at the same time, there was a Yahweh in heaven. (See also *The Hebrew Goddess by Raphael Patai p 105-107.*)

For more on the idea of multiple Yahwehs see *Two Powers in Heaven by Alan F. Segal* and *BL Aug. 27, 2013 Four Yahwehs by Trent R. Wilde*

57 See p 26-27

58 Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8; 28:12-13; 32:30; Ex. 24:10; 33:11, 18, 20-23; Num. 14:14; Deut. 5:4; 1 Sam. 3:10; 1 Ki. 22:19-21; Jer. 1:9; Dan. 7:9;

like. The notion of the deity as a fully spiritual being, without body, would have been totally incomprehensible to the ancient Hebrew.' Herman Gunkel, the great biblical scholar of the last century, rightly pointed out further: 'The notion of God's incorporeality... was first attained by the Greek philosophers.' R. Renehan has demonstrated that the very notion of 'immateriality' is the brainchild of Plato.[59·60] This is not because the ancient Hebrews and pre-Hellenic Near East were incapable of thinking abstractly about God. On the contrary, they thought holistically, integrating the spiritual, material, and ethical into a unified whole. This is true of their view of man as well as God.[61]

God is Spiritual – The Truth of John 4:24

It has now been demonstrated that (1) the normative view of John 4:24 is fallacious, and that (2) both spirits (*pneumata*) as well as Gods (*Elohim*) are material (corporeal) according to both Old and New Testaments, as well as in the minds of the ancient Hebrews. All that said, we still have the phrase "God is Spirit" in John 4:24. Just what does this phrase mean? To commence this area of discussion, we'll start by quoting linguists

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59 See *On the Greek Origins of the Concepts Incorporeality and Immateriality by R. Renehan*

60 Even Plato, the "father of immateriality," used the term *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) only in a material context; and this, doubtless, due to the already established use of the word. To this, *Vol. 6: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament p 343* says, "Plato still uses the older term ἐπίπνοια for divine inspiration; πνεῦμα is for him a word used only in natural science."

61 *Is the God of Biblical Tradition a Formless Spirit? p. 1 by Wesley Williams*

Barclay M. Newman[62] and Eugene A. Nida[63] on the translation and meaning of the text in question:

> Perhaps the most difficult expression in verses 23 and 24 is the clause <u>God is Spirit</u>. It is relatively easy to speak about the "spirit of God" or "his Spirit," but to say that <u>God is Spirit</u> may cause difficulty, for to use "spirit" essentially as a designation of quality and character *is unusual*.[64]

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62 *Translating the Bible p 20* refers to Newman as the "Senior Translation Officer of the American Bible Society and long-time associate of Nida... Newman has been involved in projects with and organized by Nida since at least the early 1970s, such as *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), as well as co-authoring a number of books such as United Bible Societies Handbooks to various biblical books."

63 "Born on November 11, 1914, in Oklahoma City, OK, Eugene Nida and his family moved to Long Beach, California when he was 5 years old. He began studying Latin in high school and was already looking forward to being able to translate Scripture as a missionary. By the time he received his Bachelor's degree in 1936 from the University of California at Los Angeles, he was well on his way. Having earned his degree in Greek, summa cum laude, he enrolled in the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and discovered the works of such linguists as Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield. Nida then pursued a Master's degree in Greek New Testament at the University of Southern California. In 1941 he began a PhD in Linguistics at the University of Michigan and completed it in two years. His dissertation, *A Synopsis of English Syntax*, was at that time, the only full-scale analysis of a major language according to the "immediate constituent" theory...

Although his initial hiring at the American Bible Society was experimental, Nida was made Associate Secretary for Versions from 1944-46, and from then until he retired in 1984, he was Executive Secretary for Translations. His contribution to Bible translation did not only include theoretical ones. He spearheaded efforts to create better source texts for the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Bible. He launched journals for practical discussions of translation and cultural problems. And together with Johannes Louw he produced a now standard reference work, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*." - http://www.nidainstitute.org/eugene-nida

64 *Translators Handbook to the Gospel of John p 122*

That God's Spirit is a *life-giving Spirit* is a concept frequently met in the Old Testament (Gen. 2:7; 6:3,17; 7:15; Job 34:14-15; Ps. 104:29-30; Ezekiel 37:5-6,9)[65] *as in the New Testament*. And in particular *it is an emphasis found in John's Gospel*; for example, it is the Spirit which brings about the new birth (3:5,8), and in 7:38,39 the Spirit is the source of *life-giving* water...

Among the major language translations only the GN[66] has seriously attempted a dynamic equivalent restructuring of 4:23-24. In the GN the restructuring has been accomplished by placing the two verses together: '23/24 But a time will come, and it has already begun, when the Spirit who reveals God's truth, will enable men to worship the Father in every place. God is Spirit, and *those who would worship him must be born anew by the Spirit of Truth*. By such men the Father will be worshiped." The translators of the GN have taken the Greek phrase 'spirit and truth' with the meaning 'God's Spirit who

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65 *Vol. 6: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament p 360-361 says: The Principle which Gives Life to the Body*, → 368, 23 ff.

רוּחַ חַיִּים is also said of the beast, Gn. 6:17; 7:15. A sign of the רוּחַ indwelling and giving life to the body is נְשָׁמָה *the breath of life*, בְּאַפָּיו (cf. Gn. 7:22, and רוּחַ אַפֵּנוּ as a term for the king in Lam. 4:20, also Job 27:3); רוּחַ par. נְשָׁמָה Is. 42:5; idols have no life, Hab. 2:19. The entry of אֱלֹהֵי הָרוּחוֹת gives *life*: וְנָתַתִּי בָכֶם רוּחַ וִחְיִיתֶם Ez. 37:5 f.; if God (לְכָל־בָּשָׂר Nu. 16:22; 27:16) takes away רוּחַ (אסף) Ps. 104:29) or it returns to God (שוב Qoh. 12:7) they die; the spirit of *life* or *life-force* is sustained (שמר) Job 10:12, revives (חיה). Gn. 45:27; (1) שוב S. 30:12; Ju. 15:19, vanishes (יצא) Ps. 146:4, fades away (כלה) Ps. 143:7, languishes par. (נְשָׁמָה) עטף Is. 57:16; dies out (רוּחִי חֻבָּלָה) Job 17:1; loss of vital force וְלֹא־הָיָה שֶׁבֶר בְּרוּחַ Prv. 15:4; it became powerless (through astonishment) בָּה עוֹד רוּחַ 1 K. 10:5. Then "life" Ps. 31:5; par. נֶפֶשׁ Job 12:10; Mal. 2:15 f. (on נִשְׁמָר בְּרוּחַ "to take care one does not lose one's life" cf. נִשְׁמָר בְּנַפְשׁ Jer. 17:21; נִשְׁמָר לְנַפְשׁ Dt. 4:15; Jos. 23:11); חַיֵּי רוּחִי (though text uncertain) Is. 38:16.

66 *Good News Translation/Bible*

reveals God's truth'; and at the same time they have made explicit the *life-giving power of God's Spirit*, *which is an important emphasis in this Gospel*. Moreover, they have made explicit the implied contrast between worshiping God at a given locality (whether the Jewish temple or the Samaritan temple) and the gift of worshiping God in any place by including the information 'will enable men to worship the Father in every place.'

The translators of the GN must be commended for the step forward that they have taken in the translation of this verse. However, there remains one serious problem, and that is the part that reads 'God is Spirit.' Recently the present author was in Indonesian New Guinea for a translators' institute and had occasion to get responses to this statement. It is obvious that for many peoples with animistic backgrounds the translation will be understood to mean either 'an animistic spirit' or 'a spirit of a departed ancestor.' One might argue that it is only natural for these primitive people to misunderstand the words, and that their understanding will have to be guided by missionaries. *But a more serious problem exists, and that is the implication conveyed to the intelligent English reader*. At the same translators' institute several of the non-biblical staff (men with Ph.D.'s or near Ph.D.'s in linguistics and/or anthropology) were asked how they understood the words as native speakers of the language, and in each instance they indicated that the words meant to them that God was 'spirit' as opposed to matter. Doubtless this reflects the understanding of the majority of English readers who have occasion to read these words, *but this is evidently not the way that the Johannine author intended for them to be taken*. Barrett is certainly correct in pointing

out that for John *the emphasis is on the 'creative and life-giving power of God's Spirit'*; and that he is not combating 'unspiritual' views about God.

If the above observations and judgments are correct, then some serious thought needs to be given to clarifying the meaning of this verse for English and other readers. The recently completed Common Malay New Testament attempted to come to grips with this problem, and so translated 4:23-24 in the following way: '23 The time is coming, and is already here, when God's Spirit will enable men to worship God as he really is. These are the worshipers the Father wants to worship him. 24 *God is the source of life*, and men can only worship him as he really is *when his Spirit enables them to do so by giving them new life*.' This exegesis follows essentially that of the GN, except that the translator has attempted to make explicit his understanding of 'God is Spirit'; while he has left implicit the contrast between worshiping God at any place and worshiping him at a specified sanctuary.[67]

Spirit in the Old Testament is regularly not an order of being over against matter, but life-giving, creative activity, and it is in this sense that John commonly uses the word pneuma (see especially 3:5-8; 6:63; 7:38f; 14:17-19). It is natural to suppose that it is so used here, and that John is not so much combating 'unspiritual' views of God as asserting his creative and *life-giving* power. On any other interpretation it is difficult to understand the combination in this passage of the two sets of ideas – true and false water, true and false worship. They are bound together by the facts that the living water Christ gives is the Spirit (7:38f), and that God who is worshiped is himself Spirit .... en pneumati [in

67 *Translators Handbook to the Gospel of John p 652-656*

spirit] draws attention to the supernatural life that Christians enjoy, and <u>en alētheia</u> [in truth] to the single basis of this supernatural life in Christ through whom God's will is faithfully fulfilled.[68]

In the context of the Johannine gospel then, there is no question that the phrase "God is Spirit" is aimed at getting across the idea that God is Life-Giving. Though, some may look at the more immediate context and say that it still carries with it the idea of an immaterial God. This they do with particular focus on verse 21:

John 4:21
Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

It is said that Christ, in these words, in connection with the phrase "God is Spirit" of John 4:24, is teaching that the Father no longer demanded worship in a particular place due to His immateriality. But if this is so, why did He ever demand worship in a particular place?[69,70] To be consistent, would not one have to reason that if God's non-located worship equated to His being immaterial, then His located worship would equate to His being material?

Now the all-important question to ask is, "If it was not Christ's purpose to reveal the Father as an immaterial God, what

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68 *Translators Handbook to the Gospel of John p 660*

69 Deut. 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23-25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 23:16; 26:2; 31:11; 1 Ki. 8:44, 48; 11:13, 32, 36; 14:21; 2 Ki. 21:7; 23:27; 2 Ch. 6:6, 34, 38; 12:13; 33:7; Neh. 1:9; Ps. 132:13; Zech. 1:17; 2:12; 3:2

70 Connected with this is the *Ancient Near East* presupposition that gods dwell in a particular place or places. See Gen. 11:5; 18:21; 1 Ki. 19:11-12; Ps. 14:2; 102:19

was His purpose?" We have already seen the answer to this in part by examining the tenor of the phrase *pneuma ho theos* (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός), meaning "God is Spirit/Life-Giving."[71] The vitality of the lesson will become all the more lucid upon a review of the immediate context of the passage.

The Immediate Context – John 4:24

The fourth chapter of John begins with Jesus departing from Judaea and travelling to Samaria. On his way there, at the city called Sychar, he stopped at Jacob's well. While resting, a Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus asked her to give him some to drink. Due to differences between the Samaritans and the Jews at the time, there was a large division between the two nations. The woman was suprised that Jesus, a Jew, would ask her for water, so she asked him:

John 4:9-14
Then saith the woman of
Samaria unto him, How is it that
thou, being a Jew, askest drink of
me, which am a woman of
Samaria? for the Jews have no
dealings with the Samaritans.
Jesus answered and said unto her,
If thou knewest the gift of God,
and who it is that saith to thee,
Give me to drink; thou wouldest
have asked of him, and he would
have given thee *living water*.

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71 In addition to the information already provided demonstrating that Spirit = Life-Giving/Full of Life, one can study the following passages: Gen. 2:7; 6:3, 17; 7:15; Job 12:10; 27:3; 33:4; 34:14-15; Ps. 104:29-30; Ecc. 3:19-21; Isa. 42:5; Eze. 37:5-6, 9; Tob. 3:6; 1 En. 15:4, 6; Lk. 8:55; Jn. 3:5, 8; 6:63; 7:38-39; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6; Jas. 2:26; Rev. 11:11

The woman saith unto him, Sir,
thou hast nothing to draw with,
and the well is deep: from whence
then hast thou that *living water*?
Art thou greater than our father
Jacob, which gave us the well, and
drank thereof himself, and his
children, and his cattle? Jesus
answered and said unto her,
Whosoever drinketh of this water
shall thirst again: But whosoever
drinketh of the water that I shall
give him shall never thirst; but the
water that I shall give him shall be
in him a well of water springing
up into *everlasting life*.

After hearing his words, the woman wanted the water Christ spoke of. He told her to go call her husband, but she replied saying, "I have no husband." Evidently, Christ was already aware of the facts concerning her past five husbands and her then current partner. After making his knowledge of her past aware to her, she perceived that he was a prophet. It is worth noting that the woman did not seem to care for continuing on the topic of her past relationships. Instead she shifted to a theological controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews, namely, whether to worship at Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem. Then,

John 4:21-24
Jesus saith unto her, Woman,
believe me, the hour cometh,
when ye shall neither in this
mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem,
worship the Father. Ye worship
ye know not what: we know

what we worship: for salvation is
of the Jews.[72] But the hour
cometh, and now is, when the
true worshippers shall worship
the Father in spirit and in truth:
for the Father seeketh such to
worship him. God *is* Spirit: and
they that worship him must
worship *him* in spirit and in
truth.

Earlier in the dialog between Jesus and the woman, he had taken their topic of conversation (water) and carried it beyond the immediate context of literal water into the higher thought of 'living water.' Plainly, this is where Jesus originally intended to guide her thoughts. The conversation, though, had been reduced to the merely theoretical. Christ answered her question[73] then brought her back to the original thought he was trying to communicate.

To be more specific, Christ was purposing to let her know her need of 'life' and instruct her as to where she could obtain such life. His method of letting her know who he was was to reveal to her his own knowledge of her personal affairs. As it would be with most, she did not desire to stay on that topic for long. Therefore, she grabbed onto the thought that "surely a prophet will know the answer to our theological controversies." In this, Christ was able to point out to her the degenerate state of her own religious system, and how it had been turned into a dead formalism. He then directed her attention to the fact that God is full of life, and indeed life-giving, and that those whom He seeks to worship Him must also be full of life and life-giving.[74]

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72 See fn. 69

73 Jn. 4:22

74 Contrast the meaning of "and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" under the normative view of John 4:24 with the view

This subject matter, that of 'life,' is the subject to which Christ continually drew people's minds, as recorded by the Johannine author,[75] and as preached by Paul.[76] Since it has been demonstrated that this grand subject is the subject in John 4:24 it is conspicuously not immateriality.

Conclusion:

Herein we have discussed two primary subjects, namely, gender and corporeality. Both these have been discussed in relation to the word *Elohim* (אלהים) and particularly in light of the distinct plurality of the word. We have endeavored to outline the implications of the plural aspect of the word upon the gender and corporeality of the beings identified as *Elohim* (אלהים).

Concerning gender we found that (1) the Hebrew word *El* (אל) has five basic forms, (2) these forms each convey distinct singularities or pluralities of "mighty ones/gods" both in relation to number and gender, (3) 1-3 masc. language and common masc. nouns cannot amend the feminine-masculine nature of *Elohim* (אלהים) to being masc. only, (4) the word *Elohim* (אלהים) must inform the gender of the correspondent masc. language, not vice-versa, and (5) the word *Elohim* (אלהים) does indeed convey real social genders of both sexes.

With respect to corporeality we learned that (1) the Greek word *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) and its Hebrew equivalent *ruach* (רוח) were anciently used to speak of that which is material rather than that which is immaterial, (2) both Old and New Testaments identify "spirits" as being corporeal, (3) the same Testaments

here presented. The normative view would interpret as follows: "God is immaterial: and they that worship him must worship him immaterially(?) and in truth." The view here presented would interpret the same as: "God is full of life and life-giving, and they that worship him must worship him full of life and life-giving, and in truth."

75 See Jn. 3:1-17, 36; 5:24-29, 39-40; 6:26-69; 7:38-39; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 14:6; 17:2-3; 20:31; 1 Jn. 1:1-2; 3:14-15; 5:11-21

76 See Rom. 5:17-21; 6; 8:2, 6, 10; Gal. 2:20; 3:21; 6:8; Eph. 2:1-6; Col. 3:4; 2 Tim. 1:10

identify the Gods of Israel as corporeal, (4) the phrase *pneuma ho theos* (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός) is identifying God as the Life-Giver rather than an immaterial "spirit," and (5) the context of John 4:24 reveals that Christ was not portraying His Father as an immaterial God, but rather, again, pointing to Him as the Life-Giver.

In summation, we have found in our study of *Elohim* (אלהים) that the word conclusively informs us of three things. First, the word is indicative of multiple distinct beings; second, those distinct beings have real social gender, some male, some female; and third, those beings are corporeal, not immaterial.

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