### God’s Majesty

God’s majesty involves the unique status He enjoys in regard to His creation. In every way, He is higher, greater and more glorious than all created things. His divine excellence distinguishes Him from all others, and nothing can truly compare with Him.

God’s majesty is especially reflected the name אֵל עֶלְיוֹן (*El elyon*). It consists of two parts: אֵל (*El*), i.е., “God,” and עֶלְיוֹן (*elyon*), a superlative adjective from the verb עָלָה (*ala*), which means, “to go up,” resulting in the translation “Most High God.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Jukes expounds further on the significance of this name.[[2]](#footnote-2) The word עֶלְיוֹן (*elyon*) refers to the very highest position (see Deut 26:19; Ps 89:27; Ezek 41:7; 42:5). Consequently, אֵל עֶלְיוֹן (*El elyon*) is the very highest God. We first encounter this designation when Abraham meets Melchizedek, who served as a priest of the Most High God (Gen 14:18). He blessed Abraham with the words, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand” (Gen 14:19-20). Abraham later echoed this phrase, “I have sworn to Yahweh God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.” In this way, both Melchizedek and Abraham acknowledged that the Most High God is the source of victory.

Curiously, another Gentile, Balaam also called Yahweh אֵל עֶלְיוֹן (*El elyon*) (Num 24:16). Moses used this name only once, when he was speaking of God’s relationship with the Gentiles (Deut 32:8). Nebuchadnezzar used it (Dan 3:26; 4:2, 34), as well as those addressing Him (Dan 4:17, 24-25, 32). We see the same in the account of Belshazzar (Dan 5:18, 21). Consequently, Jukes concludes that the name אֵל עֶלְיוֹן (*El elyon*) had a Gentile origin and was particularly used when they addressed God.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This thesis finds confirmation in the Psalter, where “Most High God” is used in relation to the Lord’s rule over Gentiles (Ps 47:2; 83:18; 87:4-5). On the other hand, some passages concern Israel alone with no reference to Gentiles (Ps 82:6-8; 57:2; 7:17; 9:2; 18:13; 21:7). In addition, in the New Testament the Greek equivalent, ὕψιστος (*hupsistos*), is used without reference to Gentiles (see Lk 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; Acts 7:48). Also interesting is that ὕψιστος (*hupsistos*) is one of the designations for God used by demons (see Mk 5:7; Acts 16:17).

We will examine several key passages, especially in the Old Testament, which accent Yahweh’s majesty. First, when Job is searching for meaning in his sufferings, his friends often refer to God in these terms, especially in His role as creator. Eliphaz the Temanite speaks of God, “Is not God {in} the height of heaven? Look also at the distant stars, how high they are!” (Job 22:12). Bildad the Shuhite echoes this thought, “Dominion and awe belong to Him who establishes peace in His heights” (Job 25:2). Elihu adds, “Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know {Him}” (Job 36:26).

Later, Elihu compares God’s majesty with thunder:

At this also my heart trembles, and leaps from its place. Listen closely to the thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that goes out from His mouth. Under the whole heaven He lets it loose, and His lightning to the ends of the earth. After it, a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, and He does not restrain the lightnings when His voice is heard. God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend (Job 37:1-5).

At the culmination of his oration, Elihu exclaims, “Out of the north comes golden {splendor;} around God is awesome majesty. The Almighty – we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power and He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness” (Job 37:22-23).

In the book of Exodus, we note that the tabernacle was constructed from gold, silver, copper, and precious stones. Only the very best materials were fitting for Yahweh’s dwelling place. In addition, the priestly garments were specially prepared “for glory and for beauty” (Ex 28:40). Solomon’s temple was also constructed from the finest materials so as to reflect God’s majesty. Later in the Torah, Yahweh is pictured as majestically riding on the clouds (Deut 33:26; сf. 2 Sam 22:10-13).

In the Old Testament historical books, we encounter more indications of God’s majesty. When celebrating their victory over Sisera, Deborah and Barak pictorially describe how the earth responds to God’s awesomeness: “Yahweh, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the field of Edom, the earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, even the clouds dripped water. The mountains quaked at the presence of Yahweh, this Sinai, at the presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel” (Judg 5:4-5).

Moreover, Hanna recognizes that no one compares with the Lord: “There is no one holy like Yahweh, indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God” (1 Sam 2:2). Asaph declares, “Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and joy are in His place” (1 Chr 16:27). David exclaims, “Yours, O Yahweh, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty” (1 Chr 29:11).

The most eloquent expressions of the Lord’s majesty, naturally, come to us from the book of Psalms. In these songs, God is often displayed as “exalted,” i.е., He is “higher” that all creation. Thus, He occupies an exalted status in relation to the things He has made. Yahweh is “God Most High” (Ps 57:2), whose throne is in heaven (Ps 103:19). He is “enthroned on high” (Ps 113:5) and “rides upon the highest heavens” (Ps 68:33). He is “exalted above the heavens” (Ps 57:5, 11; Ps 108:5). Psalm 92:8 declares, “You, O Yahweh, are on high forever.” The Lord is “exalted above all the peoples” (Ps 99:2), He is “Most High over all the earth,” and “exalted far above all gods” (Ps 97:9). He “look(s) down from His holy height”(Ps 102:19). All the inhabitants of the earth will someday acknowledge His majesty (Ps 46:10). The psalmist reflects upon it (Ps 145:5).

The prophetic books of the Old Testament also abundantly testify that God occupies an exalted position. Isaiah wrote, “Yahweh is exalted, for He dwells on high” (Isa 33:5). Yahweh Himself speaks through Isaiah, “Thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, ‘I dwell {on} a high and holy place’” (Isa 57:15; сf. Isa 63:15). In comparison with the Lord, the inhabitants of the earth are “like grasshoppers” (Isa 40:22).

The prophetic books also record visions of God’s glory granted to the prophets:

Isaiah: In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke (6:1-4).

Ezekiel: Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, {was} a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and {there was} a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so {was} the appearance of the surrounding radiance (1:26-28)

Daniel: I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took {His} seat; His vesture {was} like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne {was} ablaze with flames, its wheels {were} a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him (7:9-10).

Micah adds his testimony:

Therefore, hear the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right and on His left (2 Chr 18:18).

The exilic and post-exilic testimony to God’s majesty is the same. Nehemiah appealed to God, “I beseech You, O Yahweh God of heaven, the great and awesome God” (Neh 1:5). His name is even “exalted above all blessing and praise” (Neh 9:5). Consequently, the Lord rebuked the returning remnant because they brought “a blemished animal to the Lord,” not recognizing that “I am a great King… and My name is feared among the nations” (Mal 1:14).

We conclude our survey with a graphic vision of God’s majesty from the book of Revelation, where we get a glimpse of the heavenly court and God’s glorious presence:

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting {was} like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and {there was} a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne {were} twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones {I saw} twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. The Throne and Worship of the Creator Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And {there were} seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God (Rev 4:2-5).

1. Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (electronic ed.). – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000. – P. 748; Joyner R. Е. The One True God // Horton C. Systematic Theology. – Rev. Ed. – Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2007. – P. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jukes A. The Names of God in Holy Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1967. – P. 83-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jukes, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)