### God’s Omnipotence (Almighty)

**1. Biblical Data**

**а. Old Testament**

Throughout its entirety, the Old Testament presents Yahweh as a God of power. From the very first pages of Scripture, His power is manifest in the creation of heaven and earth (Gen 1). We see the theme of God’s power in creation often repeated in the Old Testament (e.g. Job 38-41). The Lord not only masterfully created all things, but also wisely administers them (Ps 74:15-17; 65:6-13). All creation trembles before Him (Ps 104:32). Yahweh is able not only to create the world, but also to destroy it (Gen 7).

The Torah contains still more evidence of God’s almighty power. He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19) and tore down strong cities of Canaan (Deut 3:3-5; 9:1-3). Most remarkable, however, are His dealings with Pharaoh and the deliverance of His people from Egypt:

They did not remember His power, the day when He redeemed them from the adversary, when He performed His signs in Egypt And His marvels in the field of Zoan, and turned their rivers to blood, and their streams, they could not drink. He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them, and frogs which destroyed them. He gave also their crops to the grasshopper And the product of their labor to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hailstones and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones and their herds to bolts of lightning. He sent upon them His burning anger, fury and indignation and trouble, a band of destroying angels. He leveled a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, but gave over their life to the plague, And smote all the firstborn in Egypt, The first {issue} of their virility in the tents of Ham (Ps 78:42-51; also see Ps 77:14-20; Ps 114).

The Bible focuses attention on the Exodus since Egypt at that time was the most prominent world power. Yahweh’s crushing victory over Egypt showed His dominance over the whole world. In addition, Yahweh defeated other mighty nations of that time, including Philistia (1 Sam 5:1-4), Assyria (2 Kin 18-19), and Babylon (Jer 50-51).

The Psalmist summarizes, “You have made known Your strength among the peoples” (Ps 77:14). Isaiah adds, “For You have made a city into a heap, a fortified city into a ruin; a palace of strangers is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. Therefore a strong people will glorify You; cities of ruthless nations will revere You” (Isa 25:2-3). The Lord said to Moses, “Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of Yahweh” (Ex 34:10).

Because Yahweh is over all, none can stand before Him or successfully resist Him. He proclaims, “I act and who can reverse it?” (Isa 43:13), “Who then is he that can stand before Me?” (Job 41:10). Other verses echo this thought: “Who can stand before His indignation?” (Nah 1:6); “Who is able to straighten what He has bent? (Ecc 7:13); and, “Who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?” (Ps 76:7). Therefore, when someone attempts to oppose Him, Yahweh laughs (Ps 2:4) and strikes down those who mock Him (Isa 37:22-25; 1 Kin 20:28; 1 Sam 17:45-46).

Along with direct references to God’s might, the Old Testament writers express this truth in metaphors. Yahweh is compared to a rock (Deut 32:4; 1 Sam 2:2) and a warrior (Isa 42:13). He is “Yahweh mighty in battle” (Ps 24:8). In an anthropomorphic characterization, God’s power is associated with His right hand (Ps 89:14; Isa 52:10).

Certain names of Yahweh also reflect His greatness in power. Some feel that the basic meaning of the term אֵל (*el*), i.е., “God,” is “strength.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Benner claims that if we trace the history of this word to its hieroglyphic form, the letters represent an ox and the staff of a shepherd, which carry the implications of power and authority.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The name אֵל שַׁדַּי (*el-shaddai*) is found 48 times in the Old Testament, but its meaning is unknown. Rabbis have divided the word שַׁדַּי (*shaddai*) into two component parts: שַׁ, ”who/which” and דַּי, ”sufficient,” which would render it, “He, who is sufficient,” emphasizing His might. Modern interpreters suggest other meanings. Possibly, the word שַׁדַּי (*shaddai*) derives either from the verb שָׁדַד (*shadad*), “destroy,” with the pronominal suffix “my,” or from the word שַׁדּוּ (*shadu*), or “mountain.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

In the Bible, the designation אֵל שַׁדַּי (*el-shaddai*) is used in contexts dealing both with Yahweh’s power to bless (Gen 48:3) and with His ability to punish (Ps 68:14).[[4]](#footnote-4) In Genesis 17, it is used when Yahweh promises to do amazing things for Abraham. In the histories of Isaac and Jacob, this name is associated with the great works God does for the family of Abraham (see Gen 28:3; 43:14; 48:3). Invoking this name, Naomi complained to Yahweh about the sufferings she endured (Ruth 1:20-21). In the book of Job, we encounter this name 31 times, where it emphasizes God’s greatness and sovereignty over people.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Yahweh is mighty and needs no assistance from people. What is difficult for humans is not so for Him (Zech 8:6). He even reduced the army of Gideon to 300 men to show that He does not depend on human strength to secure victory (Judg 7:2-6). Nonetheless, He routinely employs people as instruments of His power. As David said, “He trains my hands for battle, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze” (2 Sam 22:35), and, “It lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone” (1 Chr 29:12; сf. 2 Sam 8:6, 14). With Yahweh’s support, victory is certain (Ps 16:8).

Let us examine specific Old Testament passages that testify of Yahweh’s omnipotence. He spoke to Abraham, “Is anything too difficult for Yahweh?” (Gen 18:14). Moses recognizes that Yahweh’s power exceeds all others: “What God is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours?” (Deut 3:24). Yahweh says through Moses, “There is no one who can deliver from My hand” (Deut 32:39).

In the book of Job, we read that no one can resist the Lord (Job 11:10): “He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt” (12:14). In addition: “Dominion and awe belong to Him” (25:2); “God is mighty” (36:5); “God is exalted in His power” (36:22); and “(He) does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number” (5:9). Job concludes, “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted” (42:2).

The historical books add to our understanding of Yahweh’s omnipotence. A great miracle is “a slight thing in the sight of the Yahweh” (2 Kin 3:18). Jehoshaphat says to God, “Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You” (2 Chr 20:6).

God’s power is well celebrated in Old Testament poetical books as well: “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases” (Ps 115:3); “Great is our Lord and abundant in strength” (Ps 147:5); “Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God” (Ps 62:11); “The voice of the Yahweh is powerful” (Ps 29:4); “Yahweh has clothed and girded Himself with strength” (Ps 93:1); and, “Say to God, ‘How awesome are Your works! Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You’” (Ps 66:3).

The prophets also speak of God’s might and power. In Isaiah 14:24, Yahweh announces, “Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.” The Lord is not limited by anything: “Behold, Yahweh’s hand is not so short that it cannot save” (Isa 59:1). He never grows tired: “The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired” (Isa 40:28). Nahum states that God is “great in power” (Nah 1:3). Jeremiah provides us with one of the clearest statements on Yahweh’s omnipotence: “Nothing is too difficult for You” (Jer 32:17). Later is the same chapter, we read the Divine reply, “Is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jer 32:27).

The final canonical books of the Old Testament also affirm Yahweh’s omnipotence. Daniel praises Him with the words, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings” (Dan 2:20-21), and, “He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth” (Dan 6:27). Nehemiah agrees, speaking of “our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God” (Neh 9:32).

**b. New Testament**

The New Testament confirms the witness of the Old Testament about Yahweh’s almighty power. His power is manifest in creation. Not only were “the worlds… prepared by the word of God” (Heb 11:3), but also God “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3). Speaking sarcastically, Paul considers that “the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor 1:25). God can do “far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20), and, “is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Tim 1:12). The Lord is strong in judgment (Rev 18:8). The Father is greater than all (Jn 10:29). No one can defeat Him. Jesus “opens and no one will shut, and… shuts and no one opens” (Rev 3:7).

During the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, God the Father performed great signs and wonders through Him by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). The number of Christ’s miracles cannot be counted (Jn 21:25). The most glorious miracle of God was Christ’s resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven. In this way, the Father exalted His Son from the lowest place to the highest place. Paul comments on this:

…and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. {These are} in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly {places,} far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church (Eph 1:19-22).

So then, the Lord displayed His power even over the potent enemy of death, and will fully defeat it on Resurrection Day (Jn 5:28-29). In Revelation 1:18, Jesus declares His victory over death, “I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”

In the New Testament, we encounter the name παντοκράτωρ (*pantocrator*). An etymological analysis of the term yields the parts παν (*pan*), “all,” and κράτωρ (*crator*), “power,” i.е., the “Power over all.” This word first appeared in the Septuagint as a translation of the Hebrew names אֵל שַׁדַּי (*el-shaddai*) and יהוה צָבְאוֹת (*Yahweh Tsavaoth*).[[6]](#footnote-6) With the single exception of 2 Corinthians 6:18, παντοκράτωρ (*pantocrator*) is used of God exclusively in the book of Revelation (9 times) to stress His dominion over all history and His praiseworthiness.[[7]](#footnote-7)

We can also note one instance when the word “power” served as a title for God. In Matthew 26:64, Jesus predicted that He would sit “at the right hand of Power.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Finally, the Gospels directly declare that God can do all things. In answer to the disciples’ question, “Then who can be saved?" Jesus responded, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt 19:25-26). Moreover, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary, “Nothing will be impossible with God” (Lk 1:37).

**c. Summary**

The Bible clearly claims that God can do anything. Nothing is impossible for Him. He demonstrated His power in the creation of the world. Throughout biblical history, He conquered all His enemies, and by means of the resurrection of Christ, defeated one of humanity’s greatest threats – death. No one can stand before Him or nullify what He does. He is God Almighty.

In light of this truth, it is senseless to resist the Lord. In addition, His omnipotence inspires us to trust Him. He is able to fulfill His promises and keep His Word. The prophet Joel writes, “Strong is he who carries out His word” (Joel 2:11). Knowing God is Almighty delivers us from fear of people “Yahweh is for me; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Ps 118:6). The Psalmist exclaims:

Yahweh is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread? When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; though war arise against me, in {spite of} this I shall be confident (Ps 27:1-3).

The Lord’s “power that works within us” (Eph 3:20) is so great that Paul prayed that the saints might be able to comprehend the significance of this truth by revelation from the Holy Spirit: “{I pray that} the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know… what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe” (Eph 1:18-19).

**2. Theological Considerations**

Our God is an Almighty God. He can do all things, and nothing is impossible for Him. Let us look at various definitions of Yahweh’s omnipotence suggested by theologians. Erickson states, “God is able to do all things which are proper objects of his power.”[[9]](#footnote-9) In Grudem’s words, “God’s omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Willian Roy claims, “God can do anything that is an absolute possibility (i.e. is logically possible) *and not inconsistent with any of his other attributes.*”[[11]](#footnote-11)The Nicene Creed states, “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

It is necessary to qualify the statement that the Lord can do anything, taking into consideration His other attributes and their influence on His omnipotence. In light of God’s holiness, we must affirm that He cannot sin (Jam 1:13; Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18; Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29). Furthermore, the Bible teaches that the Lord cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). At the same time, we must recognize that the inability to sin is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. A weak personality will give in to sin, while a strong one will resist it.[[13]](#footnote-13) Nash correctly observes that a holy God will certainly avoid sinning. If He gives in to sin, He is no longer almighty.[[14]](#footnote-14) Thomas Morris adds that the Lord has the essential volitional qualities to commit sin, but chooses not to. Therefore, strictly from the vantage point of His power, He can sin, but His holy nature does not allow it.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Bible scholars also discuss the relationship of the Lord’s power and logical possibilities. It is thought that since logical contradictions cannot exist in reality, God cannot do the logically impossible.[[16]](#footnote-16) For example, can God make a square circle? We must affirm the negative, since this is a logical absurdity.

A similar dilemma surrounds the question, “Can God make a rock so large that He cannot lift it?” In response to that question, we ask, “How big must this rock be, so that God cannot lift it?” It must be a rock of infinite size in order for a God of infinite power not to lift it. However, this is a logical absurdity, since a rock, by definition, is a finite object. If it is of limitless dimensions, then it is no longer a rock. In reality, there are no infinite-finite objects. Therefore, the question is an inappropriate one.[[17]](#footnote-17)

It is also thought impossible that the Lord could cause what has already happened never to have occurred. Here, we must employ specialized terms to describe God’s power. His “absolute power” refers to the fact that the Lord has absolute power to accomplish all He desires. The term “ordained power” denotes what God actually does with His power. After God has exercised His “ordained power,” He has thereby limited His “absolute power” and cannot, consequently, undo what He has already done.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Nash adds the following thoughts. If the Lord changed the past, He would create a logical contraction. One could then state both that a certain thing did occur in the past, and that it did not occur. In addition, a cause always precedes its effect. Therefore, God cannot in the present cause an effect in the past. Moreover, if God changed one event in the past, then that would affect all events subsequent to it, since they are interrelated.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Theologians often distinguish the Lord’s “immediate” (or “direct”) power from His “delegated” power. He exercises His immediate power when He does something without the aid of an intermediary. When God created the world, performs miracles, gives revelation, or regenerates believers, He alone accomplishes these events. However, He often uses intermediaries or instruments to delegate His power, as when He raised up the Medes and Persians to overthrow the Babylonian Empire.[[20]](#footnote-20)

We also need mention that the Lord is always able to do more than He has already done. In other words, His power is inexhaustible. The Bible confirms this claim: “From these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham” (Matt 3:9), and God said to Moses, “I will make of you a great nation” (Ex 32:10). He could have done these things, but did not. We also read, “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt 26:53). So then, God is not obligated to manifest His power. He does so only when it serves His purpose.[[21]](#footnote-21)

We will conclude by drawing attention to some distortions of this doctrine. Some feel that God’s power is limited. They consider this a solution to the question why God does not eliminate evil and suffering in the world – He is not able to do so. Another false claim is that all power is God’s power. The fact is that people also possess certain powers, as do demons. This power, of course, ultimately originates in God, but He allows His creatures freedom in exercising it.[[22]](#footnote-22)

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