

## 00-07-16a

Let's begin our worship this morning with a word of prayer. Father, we thank You for the privilege of gathering together this Sunday morning to worship, to be nourished and instructed through Your Word and the ministry of Your Spirit. We pray that as we live our lives from day to day, the things that we have learned and the things that we see in Your Word this morning will sustain us and strengthen us, will guide us, shape the nature of our thinking to influence the setting of our priorities and the fulfillment of our responsibilities and our opportunities before You each and every day.

We know that we have been bought with a price, we are not our own, and our task in the largest sense is to reflect Your glory and Your image in our activities, in our thinking and in our speech. We pray for those that have the rule over us, those whom in this country we elect, that You will guide our choices. We are not far from an election coming up this fall where we have once again the opportunity as free Americans to influence the construction or the composition of our government.

We pray that You will give us wisdom and insight as we evaluate those who are seeking office and those who currently hold office. We pray that You will continue to rest Your hand upon the leadership of our country so that we can not only enjoy personal freedom to worship and to grow and exercise our opportunities as believers, but also that we may be a light to those in other lands, that we will have freedom and opportunity to preach the Gospel through missionaries and also through the example that we as believers can set by our daily lives. We pray that You will be with those who are not assembled with us, both those who are often here and those who worship with us from a distance.

We pray that You will bless them even as they are a blessing to us. We pray that each one of us will be able to function in terms of using our spiritual gift that You have given us to be a blessing, to be a part of the building up that is the privilege of each one of us that assembles in a local church, each one of us that participates in fellowship with believers of like mind. We ask Your blessing now on us as we worship together, as we study Your Word, as we come to the closing sessions in our study of the first and great book of the Old Testament, Genesis.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. This psalm takes the form of a prayer from the heart of David to God.

He says in Psalm 143.1, Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications. In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous.

For the enemy has persecuted my soul. He has crushed my life to the ground. He has made me dwell in darkness, like those who have been long dead.

Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me. My heart within me is distressed. I remember the days of old.

I meditate on all Your works. I muse on the works of Your hands. I spread out my hands to You.

My soul longs for You like a thirsty land. Selah. Answer me speedily, O Lord, my spirit fails.

Do not hide Your face from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your loving kindness in the morning, for in You do I trust. Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You.

Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies. In You I take shelter. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God.

Your spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness. Revive me, O Lord, for Your name's sake, for Your righteousness' sake.

Bring my soul out of trouble. In Your mercy, cut off my enemies and destroy all those who afflict my soul, for I am Your servant. Often when we come to the Psalms of David, we find that he seems to be in a situation where he is hemmed about with enemies.

He's suffering attacks on every side, and it sounds pretty violent and pretty severe, like these are actual physical enemies or political enemies, or those who are engaging in intrigue and seeking to topple him from the throne or to take his life from him. He seems to be in danger of physical death in many cases when he prays these prayers to God. When we come to these Psalms, we find an application in our own daily existence, not so much from the threat of physical death, but the fact that we too are hemmed about on every side with enemies.

Paul talks about the fact that our warfare is not with flesh and blood. And in the same way that we have many physical analogies in the Old Testament and in God's dealing with Israel that have spiritual application for us, this is also true in the Psalms of David. And so a lot of times we say, well, this Psalm doesn't seem so much to apply to me because he's in some sort of physical danger.

But just remember that the physical danger, the wars of the Lord, the battles that Israel engaged in, the persecution that David endured at the hands of Saul and others are applicable to us as reflections of what goes on in the spiritual realm. So what is the reaction of David when he finds himself in distress, when he finds himself under duress from those around him, from those who are outside? He turns to the Lord. He says, hear my prayer, O Lord.

Give ear to my supplications. And in your righteousness and your faithfulness, answer

me. So what is David doing at the very outset? He remembers the faithfulness and the righteousness of God.

It is not David's righteousness that gives him claim to God's ear. It is God's own righteousness. Notice what he says in verse 2. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for in your sight no one living is righteous.

David doesn't say at this point, hear my prayer because I am righteous. In many cases, the reason we have to go to the Lord in prayer is that we have not been righteous. And he says, listen to me on the basis of your faithfulness and your righteousness, not my own.

Because obviously we all fail, and none of us qualify in and of ourselves for God's attention. So notice the mindset that is behind this prayer. When David goes to the Lord, he is not going with confidence based on his own merit.

He's going with confidence based on the faithfulness and the righteousness of God. It is righteous on God's part to hear the prayer of his servant, to hear the prayer of his child. In verse 3, David gives the nature of the problem that has caused him to pray.

The enemy has persecuted my soul. He has crushed my life to the ground. He has made me dwell in darkness like those who have long been dead.

I think I reversed those words when I read this and said been long dead, but the sense is the same. To be crushed, to be in the dark, to be neutralized, unable to function in the normal way like those who have been long dead. And my spirit is overwhelmed and my heart is distressed.

It doesn't take physical persecution for us to find ourselves in this situation. We can be overwhelmed. We can be stressed or distressed in our daily existence.

There are lots of circumstances that we encounter that trouble us in which we have uncertainty. We have disquietude of soul. We may feel threatened.

We may feel fearful. And what is the nature of this prayer? David begins by acknowledging the way he feels in his soul. Sometimes we feel like when we go before God in prayer, we need to be keeping a stiff upper lip and we don't always acknowledge the fear, the uncertainty, the disquietude that we have in our soul.

We just go to God and say, Oh Lord, please fix this situation. And we talk about circumstances and we talk about people. We don't talk about ourselves because the first place for a problem to be fixed is in our own soul.

It's not, Oh Lord, please remove the enemies. Oh Lord, please take away this pressure. Please change the circumstances.

Heal this person or solve this problem or take away this affliction. The first thing to do is acknowledge the results in our soul. We find ourselves crushed.

We find ourselves persecuted. We find ourselves in the dark. We find ourselves overwhelmed and distressed.

Having acknowledged that this is the result in his own soul, then David begins to avail himself of what God has provided by way of resources. I have mixed feelings about using the word resources because it is so abused. I was listening to the radio this morning and once again here was someone, actually it was television last night, where someone gave a sermon about marriage advice and so forth.

And then he said, I've got some resources for you that will help you in your marriage. For a gift of so much, we'll send you this. But it's a shame.

It's like a lot of other words in English that have been appropriated by groups or have been caused to mean other things than what they originally meant. There are resources. We can be resourceful.

We can take advantage of what God has provided. And David, first of all, states the situation. This is where I am in my soul as a result of my enemies.

This is the result. But what am I going to do? Verse 5, I remember the days of old. I meditate on all your works.

Does David meditate on the enemies? Does he meditate on his distress and his fear? Does he meditate on different solutions that might be possible? What can he do to the enemies? He meditates on God. He thinks about the Lord God. I remember the days of old.

How do we remember the days of old? We have the Scriptures. We have the record of thousands of years of God's dealing with mankind from Adam all the way down through New Testament days. We have some 4,000 years of God's dealing with man recorded in the pages of Scripture.

What a fruitful place to find the record of the days of old. I meditate on all your works. We also have not only the record of what God has done with men, but also His witness in creation, His power, His plan, His design, His complete sovereignty and control over all things.

Paul mentions this in Romans 1. What may be known of God, His power and His Godhead are visible in the things that He has made. And when we look about us and remember that we have a relationship with the Creator and the sovereign controller of the universe, that we are in a select and special and blessed group because of that, it should calm us. It should give us something to balance the darkness and the fear.

I remember the days of old. I meditate on all your works. I amuse on the works of your hands.

I spread out My hands to you. You have a contrast here between the hands of God and His works and the empty and supplicating hands of David. He says, I raise My hands to you.

My own hands are empty. I don't have the ability to solve My problems. I spread out My hands to you.

Of course, it's an odd thing. Our symbolic mode of prayer is to place our hands together. Not so much anymore, but back in the 60s when I was a child, you had the praying hands was a very popular plaque and symbol on bookmarks and all kinds of Christian paraphernalia.

You had the hands placed together flat palm against palm in prayer. But the supplicant mode of prayer in the Bible is to spread out your hands and to show their emptiness. There's no weapon.

There's no content in the hands that's going to solve the problem. You spread out your hands and say, Lord, I am at the end of My resources. I have nothing.

My soul longs for You like a thirsty land. David is acknowledging, even as he looks at the power of God and the works of God's hands, that he himself is powerless. He needs to be filled.

He needs to have something poured into him that is lacking. My soul longs for You like a thirsty land. And then, Selah.

And as best we can tell, no one has really figured out Selah in the Psalms, but it seems to be when these were sung that this was a musical rest. I think it may also have been in music sometimes we have a large colon that's placed at the end of a musical bar that says go back and repeat. And this may have been a symbol to go back and read the same thing again or sing the same thing again.

But regardless of whether it is a rest or a place where the singer stops singing and the musicians play, or whether it's a sign to go back and repeat what you've just covered, all of that implies meditation and reflection on what has just been communicated. And so having read this and gone back and reviewed it, that's what Selah means. Pause here and reflect.

Go back and read again what you have just seen. Then in verse 7, he says, Answer me speedily, O Lord. My spirit fails.

I don't know how long I can last if You don't provide me an answer. Do not hide Your face

from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit. David is asking for a manifestation of God's presence, an answer, the sight of His face.

He says if I don't... What he implies here is if God does not show His face, if God does not reveal His presence, an answer in some fashion, David won't last. He says my strength is at an end. I need Your presence.

I need Your answer. I need Your face. Cause me to hear Your loving kindness in the morning.

Have you ever awakened on a spring or summer morning, especially out in the country? I've had this experience several different places recently, and even here in Dallas. When you wake up early in the morning, what's the first thing you hear? It's the racket. It's the birds.

You hear... That's the first thing I hear. Even before you open your eyes, when you come to consciousness, you hear the birds. Even in the city, sometimes even in a very dense city like Boston where we were recently.

When you wake up in the morning, you hear the birds. And David, of course, having been out in the country so much of his life, being in an agricultural environment as a shepherd, and later as a fugitive, and even as a king, what is the first thing he's going to hear in the morning? He's going to hear the birds. And it puts us in mind of so many biblical allusions to God's care for the birds.

The sparrow that falls is known to God. God provides for them just like He provides for the lilies of the field. They sing in the morning.

Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning. And we should awaken with thoughts of God, with His mercy and His grace. His mercies are renewed every morning.

Great is His faithfulness. And this is one of the reasons why I think it's a great time of day to meditate, to ponder Scripture, to have devotions, to engage in prayer. David says in another place, Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud and He shall hear my voice.

Psalms 55, 17. Evening and morning and at noon. Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, for in You do I trust.

Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You. I don't know what the solution is. I need Your answer.

I need to see Your face. I need to hear Your voice. I trust You.

I lift up my soul to You, David says. And these are all words of faith. What is David's faith based on? I remember the days of old.

I meditate on Your works. I muse on the works of Your hands. David has confidence in placing himself in God's hands because he knows what God has done.

He knows God's character. This has been taught by others. I think of Bob Thieme who talked about faith rest and who talked about the way that you work yourself out of a crisis.

He talked about the fact that you can remember particular things about God. He calls them rationales. The plan of God rationale.

The character of God rationale. But if you put that in simple language, what are the things that you can think of when you're in distress? Your first instinct is to operate in fear, to operate out of the fight or flight instinct. But if we turn our eyes to the Lord, if we think about His character, if we think about His plan and purpose, if we meditate on what He has done in the past when other people were in dire straits, whether it's Joseph in the pit, Joseph being sold into slavery, David being hunted down by Saul, Daniel in the lion's den, the three friends of Daniel, Azariah, Mishael, and Hananiah.

I always like to use their Hebrew names instead of their pagan names. But you think of individual after individual after individual, the disciples, the apostles in times of distress. God is never unaware.

And to cycle those things through our soul, to focus our attention on those things, to remember that God is an eternal God. He has an eternal plan. We are His eternal children.

We are united with Christ. We share His sonship, His election, His priesthood, His coming rule in the Millennial Kingdom. We have the opportunity to bear eternal fruit by having peace and patience and long-suffering.

That's the reason we're here. How can you grow if you don't have pressure? Everybody understands that you don't strengthen yourself unless you push against resistance, whether it's moral, mental, physical, spiritual. We have to have something to push against.

It's in the fabric of the universe that we are strengthened in adversity. So when adversity comes, it shouldn't cause panic. It should cause a strengthening of those things that are a part of life with God.

I lift up my soul to You. Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies. In You I take shelter.

Rock of ages cleft for me. Our verse in Psalm 91, abiding in the shadow of the Almighty, being sheltered under His wings. And what is the purpose of all these things? What is our goal as we endure affliction, as we go through times of trial? Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God.

Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness. Even when we are in the darkness, even when we're oppressed and distressed, we dwell spiritually in a land of uprightness.

And that's where we want to walk. That's where we want to be led. We are citizens of a heavenly kingdom.

And rather than living too much in this world with its visible obstacles and visible pressures, those times of trial are an opportunity to dwell in the land of uprightness and learn to do God's will. He is our God. His Spirit is good.

Nothing that overtakes us, nothing that we experience is going to be for evil. Even the discipline that we get from God is designed to correct, to turn us and to lead us into the place of blessing and fruitfulness. It's not punitive.

It's not designed to punish and to satisfy some divine desire for vengeance. Even the bad things that come from God or that are allowed by God are designed for our benefit. All we have to do is think about the model of a parent and a child.

A good parent is never going to initiate something toward their children that is just designed to punish for its own sake, to satisfy some desire for vengeance. Then he continues in verse 11, Revive me, O Lord, for Your name's sake. He doesn't say revive me for my sake.

We've talked about this before, praying in Jesus' name. What are we asking for? We're asking that God's purposes be accomplished, that God's righteousness be vindicated. Revive me, O Lord, for Your name's sake, for Your righteousness' sake.

Bring my soul out of trouble. Accomplish Your purposes, Your plan by delivering me. In Your mercy, cut off my enemies.

He doesn't say in Your power. He doesn't say in Your vengeance or in Your spite, cut off my enemies. This would indicate a vindictive attitude on David's part, that he wants them to be punished for what they are doing.

He says, in Your mercy, cut off my enemies. It isn't a vengeful, hateful attitude toward the enemies that is going to cause them to be cut off. The enemies are cut off for the sake of the righteous.

God's mercy to the righteous will cut off the enemies and destroy those who afflict His soul. Why? I am Your servant. What qualifies us to say to God, I am Your servant? To have a willing heart, to be willing to turn at reproof, to be willing to have the attitude that David reflects in this psalm.

Not depending on our own righteousness, not coming to God thinking that we deserve

anything based on our own merit, but it's because of God's faithfulness. It's because of God's righteousness, as he pointed out in the first verse. So this is a wonderful place to turn, a wonderful set of principles to reflect on, when we find ourselves in time of trial.

Let's turn back now to Genesis chapter 48, where we are continuing the story of Joseph. We are rapidly approaching the end of this book, and there are some summary studies we're going to do here in the next few weeks, where we will, in particular, condense and organize our observations about the great amount of truth about Christ, Christology, that we find in the story of Joseph in particular. But what we're looking at in chapter 48, and we began a detailed study last time, is the blessing of Joseph's sons by Jacob.

It came to pass in verse 48, after these things. After what things? It is the bringing of Jacob's family into Goshen, the resolution of the remaining five years of the famine, where we saw the principles of charity expressed in the way that Joseph enslaves the people. It seems sort of a harsh thing to do, and yet it is, in fact, a very eloquent and detailed reflection of the biblical principles of charity, and everyone benefits.

Then we had Jacob living in the land of Egypt 17 years after coming down. The time that Jacob spent with his son Joseph before the enslavement was 17 years. The time that Jacob spends with his son Joseph after he comes to Egypt is 17 years.

And he asks him to promise and to swear very emphatically to not bury him in Egypt, but take him back and bury him in the land of his fathers. So Joseph swears, and Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed. Then in chapter 48, it came to pass after these things, Joseph was told, Indeed, your father is sick.

And he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. We noted that Joseph is not co-located with his father and brothers in the land of Goshen. He continues to carry out his responsibilities in the capital city.

I'll have a little more to say about that next time, about where this is actually located. There's some fascinating archaeological evidence that I'll bring to your attention next time about where these things are taking place and what remnants of that have survived down to the present time. But Joseph has to be told.

There is a courier or someone sends a message. So he took his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob was told, Look, your son Joseph is coming to you.

So Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. Then Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me and said to me, Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make you a multitude of people and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession. Jacob invokes at the beginning of this meeting.

This is a formal meeting. This is not just a family visit. This is a formal occasion.

It is similar to Isaac's calling of Esau for the blessing. And so the first thing he does is he invokes the name of God. The very first thing he says is, God Almighty appeared to me.

And we think about this for a moment because it is easy in terms of the famine, in terms of location, in terms of all of the details of life that surround the brothers who are out tending their own flocks and the flocks of Pharaoh. They've been in the land now some 17 years. This is a family visit.

Here are Jacob's grandsons. He's old and feeble. You might think, well, Father, how are you feeling? Oh, boy, my liver's been paining me.

I can't see too well anymore. I can't even get up and get around. I've got the arthritis or the gout or something.

I can't move. And you'd have a long discussion of all of Jacob's ailments. Well, what have you been doing for that? Oh, well, there was an Egyptian guy.

There's none of that. There's no talk of details. This is all about spiritual heritage.

And this is one of the reasons why Jacob is a patriarch. He is not caught up in the details of his own life. He doesn't say, well, how's your education going there, Manasseh? How's your apprenticeship going there, Ephraim? What have you all been doing in school? What sports are you playing? Are you dating and all of this? There's no attention to any of those things.

And it appears as though Jacob may not have seen his son Joseph and his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh in some time when this is made because this condition where he's on the bed has persisted for quite some time. So when Jacob is told, your son Joseph is coming to you, he strengthens himself, sits up on the bed, the first thing he says to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me. This is the important issue.

This is where the emphasis is. I am fascinated by this phrase or this term used of God, God Almighty. Do you know the Hebrew behind this? It is El Shaddai.

I was going to look in our red hymnal to see if that song... You've heard that song, El Shaddai. It was popular a few years ago. I've never had a copy of it, but I think the chorus says El Shaddai, El Shaddai, El Elyon, Ha Adonai.

These are all Old Testament terms for God. And El Elyon is the most high. Elyon means the lifted up one.

Ha Adonai. Adonai is Lord even in Aramaic and is used in the New Testament when Jesus is on the cross. Well, not when He's on the cross.

But He says Eloy or Ely, El meaning God, and E, the suffix, meaning My God. But El, as a name of God, is the very generic term. It is equivalent to our word God.

And that's why it's translated My God, My God. Here you have a combination term. El Shaddai.

So this is El for God, and then Shaddai is something about Him. El Elyon is God Most High. El Shaddai, we want to find out exactly what Shaddai means.

So I have here our brown driver Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew Aramaic Lexicon, which is still, after a hundred years, the most complete and authoritative Hebrew lexicon. There have been some newer ones come out that try to take advantage of scholarship, but you still can't beat BDB for the Hebrew language. And when we look it up on page 994, we find that the root Shaddai, the verb, everything in Hebrew is based on the verbal roots.

There are three consonants forming a verbal root. Nouns come from that, and modified verbs come from that. The root Shaddai, S-H-A-D-A-H, has, as best they can tell from cognates and so forth, the idea of pouring out or moistening.

This is what it means in Arabic, the old Arabic. It means to moisten. There is a related noun in Arabic, which means breast.

In Aramaic, the plural, Tadayā, is breasts. So the noun, which is more common, we don't actually have Biblical examples of that verb at all, which is why they have to go to Arabic and some of the other cognate languages, Arabic and Aramaic. But the noun is found quite often in the Bible, and this is Shadd, S-H-A-D.

And this is the noun for the female breast. So often people who want to get a literal translation of Shaddai have said, well, this is the many-breasted one. And they will immediately point to cultures in the ancient Near East which had many-breasted gods.

If you've read archeology magazines or seen any of the things that they dig up a lot of times in the Canaanite cultures and the surrounding cultures in the ancient Near East, you find little statuettes of goddesses that have rows and rows of breasts. They don't just have two breasts. They have breasts all over the place.

And it's a real bizarre-looking thing. And so secular scholars, when they go to the Hebrew Scriptures and see God being called El Shaddai, they say, see, the Hebrew God actually evolved out of the pagan Canaanite religions where they had the many-breasted goddess. And so they attributed this same thing to their god and called him the many-breasted one, El Shaddai.

Well, needless to say, we need to step back and take a closer look. It is true that Shadd means breast. And Shaddai would seem to indicate that there's many breasts.

However, the assumption behind the idea that the Hebrew God was just another version of the many-breasted idols that the Canaanites had is to remember they're seeing the Hebrew religion as a derivation. You have the word for many breasts floating around,

and then you have the Hebrew God coming into existence as a culturally evolved thing. And so they're going to take the word for breast and then apply it to God.

Well, we know better. God existed before we did. God as the provider, God as the one who pours forth blessing in the Shaddai fashion would have preceded.

In other words, the one who pours forth and the idea of pouring forth would be the source of the word Shadd, or breast. We know the function of a breast in nurturing and nourishing a baby. And there is nourishment that is poured forth.

That moisture, that milk is what sustains and keeps alive. It is the source of life for a human child, a human baby. And so it's natural to see the idea of pouring forth coming from that idea and in a separate way also applying to God as the one who pours forth.

And what's particularly interesting about this is that God can pour forth a number of different things. He can pour forth blessing. He can also, like the rain that falls on the just and the unjust, but God can also pour forth the rain that floods the earth in judgment.

God can pour forth blessing. God can pour forth the wine of His wrath and the cup of His wrath. God can pour forth the rain that blesses.

God can pour forth the rain that judges. He is the one who pours forth. So we don't need to see in this some latent derivation of a name for God coming from the word for breast.

Rather, the idea of pouring forth has derived from it both the word for breast and a name for God. And the name for God is very ancient. Where is the first place in the Bible that this term shows up as a name for God? Well, first of all, and you'll be somewhat surprised I think to see how early this is, but let me also say that the derivation from Shaddai is not certain.

It's not the only possibility in terms of where Shaddai comes from. But let me say this. The other thing about the noun Shadd as a name for breast, you know that in many languages, including Hebrew, especially Hebrew, nouns have a gender.

They're masculine and feminine. So what do you think the gender is for Shaddai? Is it masculine or feminine? Well, you would think feminine because it's a female body part. Actually, it's masculine.

And this tells us that it comes from an earlier form. If Shaddai had been invented to talk about the female breast, you would think, well, certainly that's going to be a feminine. It's a feminine attribute.

It's a feminine body part. It's going to be a feminine noun. Shadd is a masculine noun.

And when you make the plural of it, it's Shaddaiim because masculine nouns have the "-

im ending. And you find this used, for example, the dual, meaning a pair, which is what you would expect in this context, is found at Hosea 9.14. Shaddaiim. And it's found in construct form in Ezekiel 23.21. It's obviously one of the places people remember this word being used.

It's over in the Song of Solomon or Canticles. Your breasts are like ivory towers. There's all this romantic language over there.

So in 1.13 and 8.10 and 4.5 of the Song of Solomon, you find this being used. But it's a masculine noun. And this suggests to us what I mentioned earlier, that this noun was derived from a concept that was already in existence as a masculine concept and a masculine noun.

God, of course, is a masculine God. He presents Himself throughout the Scriptures from beginning to end as the Father, not the Mother. There's nothing more upsetting to my whole frame of mind than to hear people talking about Father, Mother, God, and people trying to insert femininity into the Godhead.

And it is just... Well, I don't even want to think about it. But God is God the Father. He is the one who pours forth.

And this word for breast is derived from that concept, not the other way around. So if you ever see a picture of a little mini-breasted idol, I could show you one in biblical archaeology. I could show you many in biblical archaeology review.

Well, don't start getting weird about El Shaddai, the mini-breasted one. It's just not a proper way of viewing him. There are people that say, well, the idea behind it is that he is the bountiful God, the God who blesses with bounty.

But that actually jumps back to the original concept of Shaddai, to pour forth. And that is legitimate. But you don't need to associate breasts with God in any sense.

Only as an illustration of something that pours forth, that which is life-giving, that which is life-preserving, that which is nourishing and beneficial. But God is fond of wordplay. There's no getting around it.

From beginning to end in the Bible, you see wordplays and you see words that sound like other words that have a related concept with them. There is also a root verb in Hebrew, Shaddad, S-H-A-D-D-A-D. And this has just the opposite meaning from Shaddah, which means to pour forth in a beneficial way or to pour forth in some way.

And it comes to be associated with Shad, which is in every case a beneficial thing. You seldom find anybody that's against breasts. Everybody's for them.

They're a good thing. But Shaddad is a verb that means to deal violently with, to despoil,

to devastate, to ruin. And the fact that when you, in Hebrew, put these nouns that are derived from them in a construct or in a combination state, it looks very similar.

Shaddah and Shaddad, their derivative forms can look very similar. And so you have opposite ends of the spectrum reflected in this. And there have been some who think that the derivation of Shaddai may actually be from Shaddad.

And this is why you have in your English Bible the translation God Almighty. Where does the idea of Almighty come from if Shaddah is the root? Well, the English translators for many of our modern Bibles think that Shaddai did not come from Shaddah, which means to pour forth, but from Shaddad. And from the idea of dealing violently and devastating and ruin, something very powerful is at work, like a storm.

The cognates of Shaddad in Arabic are to obstruct, to arrest, to make firm. In Assyrian, Shaddadu is to draw or drag something very powerful that can pull something in a particular direction. So the idea of power, very violent power, is wrapped up in that word.

And so when they see Shaddai coming from Shaddad, it comes over as Almighty. And that's what we have there. So should this be translated God Almighty or God All-Benevolent? I think that both of these ideas are suggested.

The reason that this name is somewhat indeterminate in terms of its origin is that it can suggest both. And when we go back to our Scripture reading this morning in the Psalms, we go to God, we remember His mighty works, we also remember His mercy and His faithfulness when we find ourselves in distress. Both of those ideas come into our mind when we go to God in prayer and appeal to Him for strength, for guidance, and for deliverance.

Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. We'll come back and resume our study of this very great name for God after the break.