

The Divine Council of Yahweh

The word *monotheism* was first used by Henry More (1614–1687) in the mid 1600s. Monotheism is the belief that there is only one God. But this is not the biblical definition of God. The Bible acknowledges there are many gods but affirms there is one God who is the sovereign creator of all those gods. Therefore, the biblical perspective found in the Bible is that a believer's allegiance and devotion is to the one true God, despite the existence of many gods.

The divine council of Yahweh is an assembly of divine, spiritual beings over which Yahweh, the one true God, presides. These beings participate in making decisions with Yahweh, execute these decisions in creation, and rule over creation on Yahweh's behalf. In the ancient Near East, a king's council was a testament to his authority and power. The greater the authority and power of the king, the greater staff he has. Thus, as the all-powerful, sovereign ruler over creation, Yahweh has a council to display His glory. Yahweh does not have a council because He needs one but because He is a relational God who desires for his creation to join Him in the building, expanding, and redeeming of His creation.

The Meaning of God in the Bible

The English word *god* in the Bible comes from three different Hebrew words.

The word *'elohim* is a grammatically plural noun. The *im* ending is a masculine plural ending. It can be singular or plural, determined by the word agreement of the words surrounding it.

The word *'el* is the shortened form of *'elohim*.

The word *'eloah* is always a singular noun.

The Hebrew words *'elohim*, *'el*, and *'eloah* are titles that refer to any disembodied being that is not restricted to the material realm:

- Yahweh; the one true God of the Bible (Gen. 1:1; 2:4)
- The pagan gods of the nations (Ex. 12:12; 1 Kgs. 11:33)
- Demons (Deut. 32:17)
- Spirits of the dead (1 Sam. 28:12-14)
- The sons of God (divine council) (Ps. 29:1; Job 1:6; 38:7)

Yahweh; the one true God of the Bible

“In the beginning **God** (*'elohim*) created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen. 1:1)

“This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created—when Yahweh **God** (*'elohim*) made the earth and heavens.” (Gen. 2:4)

The pagan gods of the nations

“I will pass through the land of Egypt in the same night, and I will attack all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of humans and of animals, and on all the **gods** (*'elohim*) of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am Yahweh.” (Ex. 12:12)

“I am taking the kingdom from him because they have abandoned me and worshiped the Sidonian **goddess** (*'elohim*) Astarte, the Moabite **god** (*'elohim*) Chemosh, and the

Ammonite **god** Milcom. They have not followed my instructions by doing what I approve and obeying my rules and regulations, like Solomon's father David did." (1 Kgs. 11:33)

Demons

"They sacrificed to demons, not **God ('eloah)**, to **gods ('elohim)** they had not known; to new **gods ('elohim)** who had recently come along, **gods ('elohim)** your ancestors had not known about." (Deut. 32:17)

Spirits of the dead

"The woman replied, 'Who is it that I should bring up for you?' He said, 'Bring up for me Samuel.' When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out loudly. The woman said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!' The king said to her, 'Don't be afraid! What have you seen?' The woman replied to Saul, 'I have seen one like a **god ('elohim)** coming up from the ground!' He said to her, 'What about his appearance?' She said, 'An old man is coming up! He is wrapped in a robe!' Then Saul realized it was Samuel, and he bowed his face toward the ground and kneeled down." (1 Sam. 28:12-14)

The sons of God (divine council)

"Acknowledge Yahweh, you **sons of God (bene 'elohim)**, acknowledge the Yahweh's majesty and power!" (Ps. 29:1)

"Now the day came when the **sons of God (bene 'elohim)** came to present themselves before Yahweh." (Job 1:6)

"When the morning stars sang in chorus, and all the **sons of God (bene 'elohim)** shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7)

The sons of God (*bene 'elohim*) are divine, spiritual beings that rule on Yahweh's behalf (Gen. 6:4; Deut. 32:8; Ps. 29:1; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7).

The Hebrew phrase "son(s) of *x*" means the son(s) is the same essence as *x*, so son(s)= *x*.

This is seen in the titles "son of man" (Job. 25:6; Ezk. 2:1) and "sons of the prophets" (2 Kgs. 2:3, 5; 4:38).

Therefore, in the title "sons of God," the sons are the same essence as Yahweh God. They are disembodied beings in the spiritual realm.

The Divine Council of Yahweh

These sons of God are a part of the divine council of Yahweh. They serve as His council, representatives, and host (army).

"The heavens praise your wonders, Yahweh,
your faithfulness too, in the **assembly of the holy ones**.
For who in the skies above can compare with Yahweh?
Who is like the Yahweh among the **sons of God**?
In the **council of the holy ones** God is greatly feared;
He is more awesome than all who surround Him.
Who is like you, Yahweh God of the **heavenly host**?"

You, Yahweh, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.” (Ps. 89:5-7)

“Now the day came when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before Yahweh—and an adversary also arrived among them. Yahweh said to the adversary, ‘Where have you come from? And the adversary answered Yahweh, ‘From roving about on the earth, and from walking back and forth across it.’ So, Yahweh said to the adversary, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a pure and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil.’ Then the adversary answered Yahweh, ‘Is it for nothing that Job fears God? Have you not made a hedge around him and his household and all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his livestock have increased in the land. But extend your hand and strike everything he has, and he will no doubt curse you to your face!’ So, Yahweh said to the adversary, ‘All right then, everything he has is in your power. Only do not extend your hand against the man himself!’ So, the adversary went out from the presence of Yahweh.” (Job. 1:6-12)

The Hebrew word *the satan* means “adversary” and is always translated as “adversary” except in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; and Zech. 3:1-2 with no real contextual or theological evidence for it. All other times the Hebrew word *the satan* appears it is translated as the noun “adversary” (Num. 22:22, 32; 1 Sam. 29:4; 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kgs. 5:4; 1 Kgs. 11:14, 23; 1 Chr. 21:1; Ps. 109:6) or the verb “accuser” (Ps. 38:20; Ps. 71:13; Ps. 109:4; Ps. 109:20; Ps. 109:29; Zech. 3:1).

“Micaiah said, ‘That being the case, hear the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the **heavenly host** standing on his right and on his left. Yahweh said, “Who will deceive Ahab, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?” One said this and another that. Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before Yahweh. He said, “I will deceive him.” Yahweh asked him, “How?” He replied, “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.” Yahweh said, “Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.” So now, look, Yahweh has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours, but Yahweh has decreed disaster for you.” (1 Kgs. 22:19-22)

“God presides in the **great assembly**;
He renders judgment among the **gods**:
He says ‘how long will you defend the unjust
and show partiality to the wicked?
Defend the weak and the fatherless;
uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.
Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
The **gods** know nothing, they understand nothing.
They walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
I thought, ‘you are **gods**;
you are all sons of the Most High.’
Yet you will die like mere mortals;
you will fall like every other ruler.’
Rise up, O God, judge the earth,
for all the nations are your inheritance.” (Ps. 82)

“While I was watching in my mind’s visions on my bed, a **watcher**, a **holy one** came down from heaven... ‘This announcement is by the decree of the **watchers**; this decision is by the pronouncement of the **holy ones**, so that those who are alive may understand that the Most High has authority over human kingdoms, and he bestows them on whomever He wishes. He establishes over them even the lowliest of human beings.’... ‘this is the interpretation, O king! It is the decision of the Most High that this has happened to my lord the king.’” (Dan. 4:13, 17, 24)

“While I was watching, thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His attire was white like snow; the hair of His head was like lamb’s wool. His throne was ablaze with fire and its wheels were all aflame. A river of fire was streaming forth and proceeding from his presence. Many thousands were ministering to him; many tens of thousands stood ready to serve him. The **court** convened and the books were opened.” (Dan. 7:9-10)

“With regard then to eating food sacrificed to idols, we know that ‘an idol in this world is nothing,’ and that ‘there is no God but one.’ If after all there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we live, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live.” (1 Cor. 8:4-6)

The people of the ancient Near East understood that when Yahweh said “let us” (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8), He was referring to the divine council of Yahweh not to Himself as triune.

“Then God said, “**Let us** make humankind in our image, after our likeness.” (Gen. 1:26)

“And the Yahweh God said, ‘Now that the man has become like one of **us**, knowing good and evil, he must not be allowed to stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’” (Gen. 3:22)

“Come, **let us** go down and confuse their language so they will not be able to understand each other.” (Gen. 11:7)

“I heard the voice of the sovereign master say, ‘Whom will I send? Who will go on **our** behalf?’ I answered, ‘Here I am, send me!’” (Isa. 6:8)

They had no concept of a trinity, and Yahweh would have never spoken in a way that they would need later revelation to understand what He was saying.

’Elohim as a grammatically plural noun cannot refer to God as triune any more than ’elohim means the pagan gods, demons, spirits of the dead, and the sons of God are triune.

The title “sons of God” is used of rank within the council of Yahweh, whereas the word *angel* is a job description.

The English word *angels* comes from the Hebrew word *mal’akim*, which means “messengers.”

The word *mal’akim* can be used of both supernatural messengers and human messengers.

The Greek translation of the Bible translated the Hebrew word *mal’akim* to the Greek word *ángelos*, which also means “messenger.”

This is where the English word “angel” comes from.

The Greek translation used the word *ángelos* for all references to supernatural messengers and the sons of God.

What has been commonly understood as angels is really a more complex hierarchy of beings that serve as Yahweh's council and army.

Yahweh as Unique and Incomparable

Though the Bible clearly teaches that other gods do exist, it all makes it clear that Yahweh is absolutely sovereign over these gods as totally unique and incomparable.

“All who worship idols are ashamed,
those who boast about worthless idols.
All the gods bow down before Him [Yahweh].
Zion hears and rejoices,
the towns of Judah are happy
because of your judgments, O Yahweh.
For you, O Yahweh, are the sovereign king over the whole earth;
you are elevated high above all gods.” (Ps. 97:7-9)

“Who is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like you?—majestic in holiness,
fearful in praises, working wonders?” (Ex. 15:1)

“None can compare to you among the gods, O Yahweh! Your exploits are incomparable!”
(Ps. 86:8)

“For Yahweh is a great God, a great king who is superior to all gods.” (Ps. 95:3)

“You have been taught that Yahweh alone is God—there is no other besides Him.” (Deut. 4:35)

“Today realize and carefully consider that Yahweh is God in heaven above and on earth below—there is no other!” (Deut. 4:39)

“Listen, Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one [single devotion: Song 6:7-8]! You must love Yahweh your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength.”
(Deut. 6:4-5)

“For Yahweh your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God who is unbiased and takes no bribe.” (Deut. 10:17)

“Yahweh alone was guiding him [Jacob], no foreign god was with him.” (Deut. 32:12)

Humanity as the Image of God

Humans were originally created to be a part of this divine council of Yahweh.

This is seen in the fact that Yahweh created humanity to represent Him, rule over creation on His behalf and expand the garden.

Sharing the Garden of Eden with Yahweh made them a part of His council.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth.’

God created humankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them,
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.’” (Gen. 1:26-28)

“Of what importance is the human race, that you should notice them? Of what importance is mankind, that you should pay attention to them, and make them a little less than the **heavenly beings** (*’elohim*)? You grant mankind honor and majesty; you appoint them to rule over your creation; you have placed everything under their authority.” (Ps. 8:4-6)

Yahweh Disinherits the Nations

Humanity lost access to Yahweh, the garden, and His council when they sinned (Gen. 3), and humanity continued to rebel during the flood generation and with the Tower of Babylon.

“The whole earth had a common language and a common vocabulary. When the people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ (They had brick instead of stone and tar instead of mortar.) Then they said, ‘Come, let’s build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens so that we may make a name for ourselves. Otherwise we will be scattered across the face of the entire earth.’ But Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower that the people had started building. And Yahweh said, ‘If as one people all sharing a common language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be beyond them. Come, let’s go down and confuse their language so they won’t be able to understand each other.’ So, Yahweh scattered them from there across the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why its name was called Babel—because there Yahweh confused the language of the entire world, and from there Yahweh scattered them across the face of the entire earth.” (Gen. 11:1-9)

As a result of humanity’s corporate rebellion and sinful desire to become gods, Yahweh disinherited them, meaning He would no longer be directly involved in humanity like He was in Gen. 1-11.

So, Yahweh divided humanity into seventy nations and placed a son of God over each nation as ruler.

“These are the sons of [x], according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, and by their nations.” (Gen. 11:5, 20, 31)

“These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations, and from these the nations spread over the earth after the flood.” (Gen. 11:32)

“When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided up humankind, He set the boundaries of the peoples, according to the number of the **sons of God**. For Yahweh’s allotment is His people Jacob is His special possession.” (Deut. 32:8-9)

“When you look up to the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars—the whole heavenly creation—you must not be seduced to worship and serve them, for Yahweh your God has assigned them to all the people of the world. You, however, Yahweh has selected and brought from Egypt, that iron-smelting furnace, to be his special people as you are today.” (Deut. 4:19-20)

The Sons of God Rebel

Just as the humans rebelled against Yahweh on different occasions, so did the sons of God.

The first rebellion recorded in the Bible is when the sons of God abandoned their appointed domain and decided to join with humans in rebellion against Yahweh in Gen. 6.1-6.

“When humankind began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, the **sons of God** saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful. Thus, they took wives for themselves from any they chose. So, Yahweh said, ‘My spirit will not remain in humankind indefinitely, since they are mortal. They will remain for 120 more years.’” (Gen. 6:1-3)

Yahweh punished these sons of God by imprisoning them in the abyss.

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into hell and locked them up in chains in utter darkness, to be kept until the judgment, and if he did not spare the ancient world, but did protect Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others, when God brought a flood on an ungodly world, and if he turned to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when he condemned them to destruction, having appointed them to serve as an example to future generations of the ungodly.” (2 Pet. 2:4-6)

“You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence, he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day. So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.” (Jude 6-7)

The second rebellion of the sons of God recorded in the Bible is after the Tower of Babylon when Yahweh appointed them to rule over the nations. The sons of God over these nations led the nations away from Him.

“God presides in the great assembly;
He renders judgment among the gods:
‘How long will you defend the unjust
and show partiality to the wicked?
Defend the weak and the fatherless;
uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.
Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
The gods know nothing, they understand nothing.
They walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
I thought, ‘you are gods;

you are all sons of the Most High.’
But you will die like mere mortals;
you will fall like every other ruler.’
Rise up, O God, judge the earth,
for all the nations are your inheritance.” (Ps. 82)

“They made him jealous with other gods, they enraged him with abhorrent idols. They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods they had not known; to new gods who had recently come along, gods your ancestors had not known about.” (Deut. 32:16-17)

“Then he continued, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.’” (Dan. 10:12-14)

“So, he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince....).’” (Dan. 10:20-21)

“Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.” (1 Cor. 10:19-20)

Yahweh Chooses Israel

After Yahweh disinherited the nations, He chose Abraham, a man without a nation, to become the father of Israel, His new chosen nation.

It is interesting that Israel is never mentioned in the genealogies of Gen. 10 after the Tower of Babylon.

Yahweh chose Israel to be His chosen nation that would represent Him before all the nations.

“Now Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name.’” (Gen. 12:1-3)

“You must say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says Yahweh, “Israel is my son, my firstborn.”’” (Ex. 4:22)

“Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him from the mountain, ‘Thus you will tell the house of Jacob, and declare to the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I lifted you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. And now, if you will diligently listen to me and keep my covenant, then you will be my special possession out of all the nations, for all the earth is mine, and you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words that you will speak to the Israelites.’” (Ex. 19:3-6)

The Prophet of Yahweh

In His desire to restore the image of God, Yahweh chose uniquely gifted men and women of God to join Him on His divine council.

Abraham (Gen. 18) and Moses (Ex. 19-34) were both invited into the divine council of Yahweh.

The prophet would become the only human who was a part of the divine council of Yahweh.

Therefore, the prophet was the only human who knew the will of Yahweh and could speak it to the people of Israel.

“Micaiah said, ‘That being the case, hear the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly host standing on his right and on his left. Yahweh said, “Who will deceive Ahab, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?” One said this and another that. Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before Yahweh. He said, “I will deceive him.” Yahweh asked him, “How?” He replied, “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.” Yahweh said, “Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.” So now, look, Yahweh has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours, but Yahweh has decreed disaster for you.” (1 Kgs. 22:19-22)

“In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the sovereign master seated on a high, elevated throne. The hem of His robe filled the temple. Seraphs stood over him; each one had six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and they used the remaining two to fly. They called out to one another, ‘Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh who commands armies! His majestic splendor fills the entire earth!’ The sound of their voices shook the door frames, and the temple was filled with smoke. I said, ‘Woe is me! I am destroyed, for my lips are contaminated by sin, and I live among people whose lips are contaminated by sin. My eyes have seen the king, Yahweh who commands armies.’ But then one of the seraphs flew toward me. In his hand was a hot coal he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Look, this coal has touched your lips. Your evil is removed; your sin is forgiven.’ I heard the voice of the sovereign master say, ‘Whom will I send? Who will go on our behalf?’ I answered, ‘Here I am, send me!’” (Isa. 6:1-8)

“Then there was a voice from above the platform over their heads when they stood still. Above the platform over their heads was something like a sapphire shaped like a throne. High above on the throne was a form that appeared to be a man. I saw an amber glow like a fire enclosed all around from his waist up. From his waist down I saw something that looked like fire. There was a brilliant light around it, like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds after the rain. This was the appearance of the surrounding brilliant light; it looked like the glory of Yahweh. When I saw it, I threw myself face down, and I heard a voice speaking. He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet and I will speak with you.’ As he spoke to me, a wind came into me and stood me on my feet, and I heard the one speaking to me.” (Ezek. 1:25-2:2)

The Decline of the Prophets

But eventually these prophets began to fall away from Yahweh as the nation of Israel continued to rebel against Yahweh, and they lost the right to be in Yahweh’s divine council.

They understood less of what they saw and were told.

They were not asked but rather were told what was going to happen.

Eventually they were no longer brought into the divine council of Yahweh; rather, angels were sent to them.

Yahweh eventually phased out the office of prophet in order to prepare Israel for the coming of a greater prophet.

“Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—” (Deut. 18:15)

This prophet would give all believers access to the divine council of Yahweh.

“‘Indeed, a time is coming,’ says Yahweh, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I delivered them from Egypt. For they violated that covenant, even though I was like a faithful husband to them,’ says Yahweh. ‘But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land,’ says Yahweh. ‘I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people. People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me,’ says Yahweh. ‘For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done.’” (Jer. 31:31-34)

The gospels were dedicated to presenting Jesus Christ not only as this promised prophet but also as the unique and ultimate Son of God.

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the **Son of God.**” (Mark 1:1)

“After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, in these last days He has spoken to us in a **son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He created the world. The **Son** is the radiance of his glory and the representation of His essence, and He sustains all things by His powerful word, and so when He had accomplished cleansing for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thus, He became so far better than the angels as He has inherited a name superior to theirs. (Heb. 1:1-4)