

Study Guide for The Unseen Realm

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This study guide covers material from the book *The Unseen Realm* by Dr. Michael Heiser which teaches about many specific biblical and ancient Near Eastern terms. The central themes revolve around the concept of a divine council of supernatural beings (elohim) over which the God of Israel (Yahweh) rules.

Terms

Adonai: Hebrew word meaning “lord”. When capitalized “Lord” it refers to God. When not capitalized “lord” it can refer to a man just as in English. Title of nobility.

baal: Semitic and Hebrew word meaning “owner” or “lord”. When capitalized “Baal” refers to the ancient Canaanite god of fertility and rain who was frequently referred to as “Lord of the Heavens” or just “Lord/Baal”.

Cosmic Geography: The ancient worldview of the biblical writers that perceived a spiritual and physical domain with specific “unholy ground” and territories under the jurisdiction of fallen divine beings (elohim) following the Tower of Babel dispersion.

Divine Council: God’s heavenly assembly of these lesser elohim (often referred to as “sons of God”, “holy ones”, or “host of heaven”) who serve as His entourage and to whom He delegates authority. Psalm 82 is a key passage for this concept, depicting God presiding over this council.

Deuteronomy 32 Worldview: A key framework in the book, drawn from the Song of Moses, suggesting that after the rebellion at Babel (Genesis 11), God assigned the nations to the governance of lesser divine beings, focusing His redemptive plan specifically on Abraham’s descendants (Israel).

elohim: singular and plural Hebrew word meaning “god(s)”, “mighty one(s)” referring to created supernatural beings who inhabit the spiritual realm (angels, demons, cherubim, seraphim, disembodied spirits, pagan deities). When capitalized “Elohim” refers to the supreme God (Yahweh).

Key Bible Passages

Genesis 1:26, 3:5, 6:1-4, 10-11, 15:1, 19:1-26, 22, 48:15-16

Exodus 3:1-14, 23:20-23

Numbers 13:32

Deuteronomy 32:8-9, 17

Judges 6

1 Samuel 3, 23:1-14

1 Kings 22:1-23

2 Kings 5:17-19

Job 1-2

Psalms 68, 82, 89

Isaiah 14:12-15

Ezekiel 28:11-19

Daniel 7

Matthew 16:13-23

John 1:1-14, 10:34-35

Romans 15:24, 28

1 Corinthians 2:6-13, 5:4-5, 6:3, 10:18-22

Galatians 3:19

Ephesians 6:10-12

Hebrews 1, 2

1 Peter 3:18-22

2 Peter 1:3-4, 2:4-5

Jude 5-7

Revelation 2:26-28, 3:21

Terms Continued

Image of God (imago dei): The belief that humans were created to be physical representation of God on Earth, meant to rule creation as God rules the divine council in heaven.

Monotheism/Monolatry: Heiser argues that the biblical worldview is not a modern, abstract monotheism that denies the existence of other spiritual beings, but a form of monotheism where only Yahweh is the eternal creator God and all other “gods” are created subordinate beings.

Nephilim: Hebrew word meaning giant/tyrant. This refers to the offspring between the “sons of God” and human women in Genesis 6. They are depicted as giants and powerful notorious figures in ancient lore and are connected to later giant clans mentioned during the Israelite conquest of the promised land.

Sacred Space: The concept of specific locations, like Eden, the Tabernacle, and the Temple where the natural and supernatural realms were understood to intersect and God’s presence was particularly potent.

Sons of God (bene ha’elohim): A specific designation for members of the divine council. They appear throughout the Bible, notably in Genesis 6, Job, and Deuteronomy. They are distinct from human beings.

Watcher: A term originating from Second Temple Literature (like the Book of Enoch, which influenced New Testament writers like Peter and Jude) for a class of rebellious spiritual beings who corrupted humanity.

Yahweh (YHWH, יהוה): One of the commonly used pronunciations of the personal name of the God of Israel. He is the most high of the elohim (God of gods) possessing unique attributes and authority over all other elohim.

Additional Resources

www.moreunseenrealm.com

The Unseen Realm by Dr. Michael Heiser

Concepts to Think About

Yahweh is incomparable (Ex. 15:11, Dt. 3:24, 1 Ki. 8:23) and only He deserves worship (Ps 29:1). Hallelujah!

The unseen realm is organized as a hierarchy and Yahweh is at the top by himself with all other spiritual beings organized under Him in orders and ranks. When the Bible says “there is none beside me” it means none are equal to Yahweh.

Not all inhabitants of the spiritual realm are angels. “Angel” means messenger and there are many other roles for the elohim aside from bringing messages.

In idolatry, rituals are performed to invite/invoke elohim to inhabit physical object idols made by men. This is why Paul is consistent in saying in 1 Cor. 8:4 that the idol is nothing and in 1 Cor. 10 where he says that sacrifices to idols are really sacrifices to demons.

God does not need a council but he has decided to have one.

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