

Is G-d One or Three?

The Orthodox Jew has always maintained that G-d is one and that no other gods exist. Christians believe the same only that G-d is three-in-one. Who is right? What does the Bible say or imply? The answer may be found encrypted in basic physics.

A major disagreement Jews hold toward Christianity is their adherence to the concept of the trinity. To the orthodox Jew, Christians are nothing more than idol worshipping gentiles—being thereby polytheistic and not monotheistic. I, for one, am glad that scripture does not try to hide G-d, but reveals His being in as true a form as the written word or the limits of our terrestrial thinking would allow. To understand where the truth resides, let us look to the pages of the Tonach and see which concept holds most plausibility.

G-d is One

The Jews are correct in their adamant adherence to the monotheistic view. There is only one G-d and Creator, one all powerful deity and inspiration of the holy scriptures. This is indisputable, yet there are a couple areas that may give the diligent student pause.

Hints in the Shema

The Hebrew *Shema* prayer found in Deuteronomy states clearly that Jehovah is one.

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד
ECHAD YHVH ELOHENU YHVH YISRAEL, SHEMA

(read right to left)

If you carefully trace each word of the Shema you will see that the title of G-d is not the singular *El* but the plural (and personal) *Elohenu*.¹ Yet, He also states that He is one. How can this be reconciled? The rabbis will tell you that the title *Elohim* denotes G-d's all-powerful nature as well as His multiple personalities². Is this a possible explanation, or is it just a way around a grammar stumbling block? There is a better reason for the plural word form. The key is found in the final word—*echad*.

¹ Elohenu is the plural word Elohim with the addition of “nu”, translated as “our”.

² As seen in multiple names of G-d including Jehovah-Rapha, Jehovah-Jireh, etc.

The word *echad* does indeed translate as “one”, not as a number but as the concept of unity. To see this more clearly, let us look at how *echad* is used elsewhere.

We can find *echad* used in regard to the unity of a husband and his wife.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one (*echad*) flesh. - Genesis 2:24

The two becoming one is a compound unity. They do not morph together into some compromised humanoid. They are a single unit with two parts. The same is described of G-d in the Shema. If G-d truly meant to be seen as one, He would have used the Hebrew *yachid* which equates to the number one. It is translated as “only” or more closely “one and only one”.

The second century Kabbalic writing of the Zohar comments with, “...this daily prayer [concerns] the Unity, which is taught in the Scriptures. We read “Jehovah” then “our God” and again “Jehovah”, which together make one Unity. But how can three Names be one? How three can be one can only be known through the Holy Spirit, and, in fact, with closed eyes.”

Rabbi Menachem, in his Commentary on the Pentateuch, also explained, “The Inherent-Ones are so united together, one in the other without end, they being the exalted G-d. He mentions the three names mystically to indicate the three exalted original Ones.”

How Many Creators?

Sometimes this plural noun for G-d appears in a passage with a singular noun, as in the first verse of the Bible.

In the beginning, G-d (*Elohim*-plural) created (*bara*-singular) the heavens and the earth.

So how many created the heavens and the earth? The noun describes a plurality, yet the verb suggests a singular source. In the second century, Rabbi Eliezar Hakkalir explained, “When G-d created the world, He created it through Three Sephiroth,³ namely, through Sepher, Sapher and Vesaphur...[these] are synonymous to Ja, Jehovah, and Elohim meaning to say, that the world was created by these three names.”⁴

3 The Kabbalic illustration of the Tree of Life is composed of Four Worlds containing 10 Sephiroth (Divine attributes), Three Pillars and 22 Paths of wisdom that link the 10 Sephiroth.

4 Rabbi Eliezar Hakkalir, The Book of Creation

Misguided Worship?

Abraham bowed down in worship to a man with two companions and referred to Him as his Lord⁵. Joshua was told to remove his shoes when confronted with a man who identified Himself as the “Captain of the Lord’s Host”⁶. Jacob demanded of a man (or angel) to bless him. He called the place Peniel because he *looked into the face of G-d and lived*.⁷

The question is, were these three patriarchs misguided in their worship? Can G-d indeed appear as a man or is His holiness too great to make such a thing possible? Is the idea of G-d coming down as a man impossible for Him or that offensive to even contemplate? The old question remains, “Where does a bear sleep in the woods?” Answer? “Anywhere he wants”. If G-d is unable to come down in the form of man, He is *not* all-powerful. If G-d *is* all-powerful and could accomplish such a feat, then the concept of G-d coming to earth as a man as Messiah is indeed possible.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, *The mighty G-d, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* - Isaiah 9:6

G-d is Light

One concept that both Jews and Christians can agree on is that G-d is light, and in Him is no darkness. His light is unapproachable, even Moses view only His “after-glow”.⁸

...the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your G-d your glory.
- Isaiah 60:19

When the Jews look at this light, they proclaim that G-d is a solitary white light. The Christian looks at this same light and agree, G-d is indeed a solitary white light, but hold up three fingers and add the following caveat, “technically, He is made up of three colors.” This then offends the Jewish concept of what they see before them.

For those who do not understand the physics of light, look at a computer monitor with an empty file up on your word processor. You see a white page. Did you know that white light does not exist as a singular source? White light is actually an equal intensity of three primary colors. Take a magnifying glass to your computer monitor, look closer and you will see a cluster of red, green and blue phosphors, these are the primary colors. Their close proximity to one another creates the illusion of white. This cluster would be translated into Hebrew as *echad*, or a compound unity.

⁵ Genesis 18

⁶ Joshua 5

⁷ Genesis 32

⁸ Exodus 33:23

G-d in Three Forms

In basic physics class you learn that there are three basic forms of matter, solid, liquid and gas. If we were to take a beaker of water and freeze it, what would it become? The beginning student would reply, “Ice”. The professor would correct the student saying, “No, it does not *become* anything, it is *still* water, just in a different form.” When the same beaker is heated and the water evaporates, what does it become? The enlightened student then replies, “It doesn’t become anything, it is *still* water, but in a different form—in this case, a gas”.

The Redeemer of Israel spoke through Isaiah saying,

"Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord G-D and His SPIRIT have sent ME." - Isaiah 48:16

G-d, being G-d, can take different forms, but he never becomes anything else but G-d. The scriptures proclaim this concept as we could see with Abraham, Joshua and Jacob. But when Christians hold to the idea that Yeshua is G-d in the form of flesh, the Jew is offended, for how can G-d die? The answer is simple, G-d did not die, only the form. A hammer, used to smash the block of ice, would not change the molecular structure of the frozen water, only the form has been disrupted.

Ancient Wisdom

It may surprise many students that the concept of the trinity has its roots in ancient Jewish writings. Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai explained the plurality of G-d by saying, “The Ancient Holy One is revealed with three Heads, which are united as One, and that Head is thrice exalted...”⁹

When commenting on Psalm 62:11, Rabbi Simeon explained, “...the exalted Shechinah comprehends the Three highest Sephiroth;¹⁰ of Him (G-d) it is said, ‘G-d hath spoken once; twice I heard this.’ Once and twice means the Three exalted Sephiroth, of whom it is said: Once, once, and once; that is, Three united in One. This is the mystery.”¹¹

9 Zohar, vol. 2, Amsterdam Edition. 288

10 The Kabbalic illustration of the Tree of Life is composed of Four Worlds containing 10 Sephiroth (Divine attributes), Three Pillars and 22 Paths of wisdom that link the 10 Sephiroth.

11 Propositions of Zohar, cap. 38, Amsterdam Edition. 113

First or Second Coming

When asked regarding the identification of Messiah, the Jews will give a tongue-in-cheek answer, “When he comes, we will ask him, ‘Is this your first or second coming?’” Though this is a typical humorous sidestep to an important question, it actually will occur as they quip. According to the prophet Zechariah, in the last days, the Jews will be surrounded by their enemies in Bozrah to be slaughtered. The Messiah will come and vanquish them and will reveal Himself to them.

And one shall say to Him, “What are these wounds in Your hands?” Then He shall answer, “Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.” – Zechariah 13:6

Their response will not be so jovial, for Zechariah also prophesies of that day...

...and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. – Zechariah 12:10

Conclusion

I am the sort who prefers to hear the truth no matter whether it offends me or not. I feel this way toward doctors and I also feel this way toward Bible teachers. Some people want a happy religion that fills their list of needs. I prefer that which prepares me for eternity, that which cleans the infection out of an open wound.

Rejecting the concept of the trinity has caused the Jewish people to reject Yeshua as Messiah because he was a man who proclaimed Himself to be G-d. If G-d is indeed all-powerful and could, if He willed to do so, come down as a man, and if such a nature would allow Himself to suffer and die (yet still be G-d in form and substance), then one must answer by new belief and not tradition-based rejection.

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see G-d – Job 19:26