



IN THE LIGHT OF TANAKH THE TRINITY

is found in the *Tenach* (Old Testament), indisputable evidence that God exists in more than one personality.

The first words of the *Torah* declare: "In the beginning God (*Elohim*) created the heavens (*hashamayim*) and the earth." It must be admitted that the word for God here is in the plural form, even as is the word for heavens, and that it is the same as used in the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods (*Elohim*) before me" (Exodus 20:3). Likewise in Deuteronomy 13:2 (v. 6 in Hebrew text): "If he (a false prophet) says, 'Let us follow other gods.'" *Elohim* is invariably a plural form. Additionally, when speaking of the act of creation performed in the beginning by *Elohim* the Triune God, Moses used a verb in the singular number, *bara* (created).

It is reasoned by some that the plural *Elohim* is the "plural of majesty," used to ascribe majesty to one who is never the less a single individual, and that therefore the use of the singular verb would be entirely reasonable. But a singular verb is not invariably used with the plural *Elohim*. Readers familiar with the Hebrew text can check the plural verbs used in Genesis 20:13 and in Genesis 35:7. Plural adjectives are also used to describe this *Elohim*. For examples see Deuteronomy 4:7, *Elohim krovim* (God is near), and Joshua 24:19, *Elohim kedoshim* (a holy God).

The plurality of the name *Elohim* leads naturally to a consideration of the fact that other plural words are also used in referring to God. In Genesis 1:26 God said: "Let *us* make man in *our* image." In Genesis 3:22 God said: "The man has now become like one

of *us*." And in Genesis 11:7 God said: "Come, let *us* go down and confuse their language." To whom, and of whom is God speaking with the use of these plural pronouns?

We have seen in Genesis 1: 1 that *Elohim* (plural) created the heavens and the earth; and in the next verse we read: "And the Spirit of God (*Ruah Elohim*) was hovering over the waters." Was it speaking for himself and his Spirit that God (*Elohim*) said in verse 26: "Let *us* make man in *our* image?" Is this why Solomon said: "Remember your Creator" (plural, in the literal translation of Ecclesiastes 12:1)?

In Proverbs 30:4 the challenging question is presented to mankind: "Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his Son? Tell me if you know!" Does God have a Son?

In Psalm 2 we have a prophetic picture which should be read in its entirety. In it is described (vv. 2 and 3) the time when the nations will declare themselves against God, and against his Anointed One (*Mashiho*, from which our English word Messiah comes). God says in verse 6 that he will nevertheless establish this Messiah as his King on Zion, his holy hill.

In verse 7 *Messiah* steps forward to declare the decree by which his coronation shall be accomplished saying: "I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: "He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations (*goyim*) your inheritance.'"

Furthermore, in Psalm 2:11-12 we are solemnly instructed: "Serve the Lord with

fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son (*nashqu bar*), lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

The Hebrew for "kiss the Son" is *nashqu bar*. Even if this is translated, as some would have it, "Do homage in purity," the homage is to the Lord of verse 11 and to the Son of verse 7. The *Tenach* clearly indicates that there is a divine personality who is called the Son of God, who is worthy of homage, and if we put our trust in him, we are blessed.

In Psalm 110, the one who is in a future day to rule in Zion is addressed as a divine personality by another who is also deity. "The Lord says to my Lord," writes David the psalmist, "sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies" (Psalm 110:1-2).

Here is one who is "the Lord" speaking to David's Lord and telling him to sit at his right hand until the time comes for him to rule in the midst of some who are now his enemies. Surely the psalm is speaking of two divine personalities, one whom is yet to be Israel's King! "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9). "At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the Lord, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts" (Jeremiah 3:17).

Does the *Tenach* indicate how a divine eternal personality can be a *Son*? Is this not a great problem, since being a son suggests the idea of generation and birth? The divine solution: deity becomes a Son by way of incarna-

tion, God taking upon himself humanity. Hear the words of the prophet Isaiah: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, *Mighty God*, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7b).

"Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign (no ordinary birth, but something so unusual, remarkable, and miraculous as to constitute a *sign*: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:13-14). *Immanuel* means "God with us," deity incarnate, dwelling with men!

Who are the three divine personalities Isaiah 48:11-18 (*Yeshaiiah Hanavii* speaks about? "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. (*Only God is eternal*.) My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens (*the Creator is speaking*); ... And now the Sovereign Lord (*one divine personality*) has sent me (*the speaker is eternal and the Creator, and therefore a second divine personality*), with his Spirit (*a third divine personality*)."

"This is what the Lord says -- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. (*This divine personality, the sent one, calls himself the Redeemer, the Holy One of*

Israel; and he says that he and God's Spirit have been sent by the Sovereign Lord.) If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

Not only has Israel failed to listen to him, but mankind generally has failed to heed the Redeemer; and until men turn to him wholeheartedly, there will be no peace.

Many Jewish people express the lament that if there is a God, he seems to have forgotten the Jews; but Israel's long night of suffering is not without purpose. God permits her hardship in order that Israel may be brought to acknowledge her rejection of her God and return to him. In Micah 5:2 (verse 1 in Hebrew text) we read: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Thus we have corroboration of other predictions already considered concerning Messiah: 1) that he was to appear in human form; 2) that he was to be rejected (see Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22); 3) that he was to be born in Bethlehem (and every year the world celebrates the birth which took place there more than nineteen hundred years ago, before the dispersion of the Jewish nation); 4) this one is to be Israel's King; and 5) that he is deity, for his "origins are from of old, from ancient times."

But if three divine personalities are revealed in the *Tenach*, why does Moses speak of God as *one*? The second of the Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith says: "The Creator, blessed be His name, is a Unity, and there is no unity in any manner like unto His."

The Hebrew word Maimonides used in the Principles of Faith for unity is the word *yahid*. The word *yahid* carries the thought of absolute oneness rather than unity. True, *yahid* always means oneness in the absolute sense. But the appeal of every honest seeker after truth is not to the Thirteen Principles of Faith, but to the Holy Scriptures, the *Tenach*. The seventh of those Principles states: "I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be to him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both of those that preached and of those that followed him."

Therefore, to Moses we turn in Deuteronomy (*Humesh Devarim*) 6:4, and read: "*Shema Yisrael* (Hear, O Israel): *Adonai Eloheinu* (the Lord our God or Gods), *Adonai ehad* (the Lord a unity; not *yahid*, an absolute one, an only, but *ehad*). *Ehad* is the word that Moses also uses in Genesis 2:24, when he says: "And they (husband and wife) will become one flesh (*basar ehad*). *Ehad* is the word that God uses when he tells Ezekiel: "Join them together into one stick so that they (the two sticks for Israel and Judah) will become one (*ehad*) in your hand" (Ezekiel 37:17).

Truly, "there is no unity in any manner like unto His," for the unity which is God's transcends all other unity. So unique is his unity, that the virgin born son, Immanuel, of whom we read in a former paragraph, is by the same prophet (Isaiah) called the *Mighty God* and *verlasting Father*. So completely are the divine and timeless eternal personalities joined, that although one of them appeared in time as an incarnate Son, yet, being equally and eternally self-existent with the Father, he

is said to exist eternally as the Son. At the same time he was, is, and ever will be one with the mighty God, the everlasting Father.

Is it not also a remarkable fact that the eternal one's appearance in time nineteen hundred [plus] years ago marks the focal point of all history, so that all the world reckons time as either before or after his coming, B.C. or A.D.? Jewish people may prefer the designations B.C.E. (before the common era) and C.E. (the common era), but the dividing point between the eras is the same.

The careful and honest inquirer therefore comes to the conclusion that the *Tenach* teaches the Trinity as well as the Unity of God.

God declared unto Moses: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account" (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God (*Eloheinu*), for he will freely pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

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In Light of *Tenach*

The Trinity



HEAR, O ISRAEL:
THE LORD OUR
GOD, THE LORD IS
ONE.
Deuteronomy 6:4

by Milton B. Lindberg

Hear, o Israel (Shema Yisrael): The Lord our God (Adonai Eloheinu), the Lord is one (Adonai Ehad).

Deuteronomy (*Humesh Devarim*) 6:4

Upon the rock of this declaration rests the second of the Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith: "I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is a Unity, and that there is no unity in any manner like unto His, and that He alone is our God who was, is, and will be."

From where, then, comes the doctrine of the Trinity? A large part of the world, though professing to worship the God who is revealed in the writings of Moses and the prophets, nevertheless believes in God as a Trinity.

Although it may be granted that the Christian's New Testament teaches that the term God may be applied to God the Father, to God the Son, and to God the Holy Spirit, the Christian should cease to claim that he worships the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Moses and the prophets, the God of the *Torah*, the *Neviim*, and the *Ketuvim*, unless there