

The Triunity (Trinity) of God in The Old Testament

Jews say that the Shema (pronounced Shmah), "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord"¹ contradicts the Christian doctrine that Jesus is God. In addition, there are a number of other verses that proclaim that God is one. However, the triunity of God is taught throughout the Old Testament, including the Shema! How can a statement of oneness imply plurality? The word translated "one" from the Hebrew is *echad*, which demonstrates compound unity of oneness. Specific examples of how *echad* demonstrates compound unity are found below:

- For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one [echad] flesh. (*Genesis 2:24*)
- Now the whole earth used the same [echad] language and the same [echad] words. (*Genesis 11:1*)
- And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one [echad] people, and they all have the same [echad] language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. (*Genesis 11:6*)
- Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We'll settle among you and become one [echad] people with you. (*Genesis 34:16*)
- Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one [echad] voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" (*Exodus 24:3*)
- Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single [echad] cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two men, with some of the pomegranates and the figs. (*Numbers 13:23*)
- The whole [echad] assembly numbered 42,360, (*Ezra 2:64*)
- They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness [echad] of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. (*Jeremiah 32:38-39*)

These are a few of the many examples of how *echad* is used to show the unity of oneness. How would the Hebrew be different if God had wanted to express absolute oneness? There is another Hebrew word, *yachid*, that is used to express the idea of absolute oneness. Examples of it are shown below:

- And He said, "Take now your son, your only [yachid] son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." (*Genesis 22:2*)
- And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only [yachid] son, from Me." (*Genesis 22:12*)
- and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only [yachid] son, (*Genesis 22:16*)
- When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. Now she was his one and only [yachid] child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter. (*Judges 11:34*)
- Deliver my soul from the sword, My only [yachid] life from the power of the dog. (*Psalms 22:20*)
- Turn to me and be gracious to me, For I am lonely [yachid] and afflicted. (*Psalms 25:16*)
- Lord, how long wilt Thou look on? Rescue my soul from their ravages, My only [yachid] life from the lions. (*Psalms 35:17*)
- God makes a home for the lonely [yachid]; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, only the rebellious dwell in a parched land. (*Psalms 68:6*)
- When I was a son to my father, Tender and the only [yachid] son in the sight of my mother, (*Proverbs 4:3*)
- O daughter of my people, put on sackcloth And roll in ashes; Mourn as for an only [yachid] son, A lamentation most bitter. For suddenly the destroyer Will come upon us. (*Jeremiah 6:26*)
- "Then I shall turn your festivals into mourning And all your songs into lamentation; And I will bring sackcloth on everyone's loins And baldness

on every head. And I will make it like a time of mourning for an only [yachid] son, And the end of it will be like a bitter day. (*Amos 8:10*)

- "And I [YHVH]² will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only [yachid] son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. (*Zechariah 12:10*)

Of course, the last verse is a famous messianic prophecy proclaiming how the Messiah would be killed. If the Shema had intended to express absolute oneness, it would have used the Hebrew word *yachid* instead of *echad*. However, the word *yachid* is *never* used in reference to God (Elohim)!

The Hebrew word translated "God" is the word *El* or *Elohim*. *Elohim* is the plural form of *El*. The plural form is used 2607 of the 2845 times the word "God" is used in the Old Testament. Not only is the word for God usually used in the plural form, but several verses refer to God as "Us":

- Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (*Genesis 1:26*)
- Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- (*Genesis 3:22*)
- "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (*Genesis 11:7*)
- Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (*Isaiah 6:8*)

An example of how the Hebrew word *Elohim* is used in the plural is that it is translated "gods" (referring to idols) 235 times in the Old Testament. It is exactly the same word that is translated "God," referring to the Almighty. An example is given below:

"I am the LORD your God [Elohim], who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. "You shall have no other gods [Elohim] before Me. (*Exodus 20:2-3*)

Not only is the plurality of God found in the Old Testament, but the members of the triunity are also defined. Several Old Testament verses tell us that God is our Father:

- "Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you. (*Deuteronomy 32:6*)
- "He will cry to Me, 'Thou art my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' (*Psalms 89:26*)
- For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (*Isaiah 9:6*)
- For Thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us, And Israel does not recognize us. Thou, O LORD, art our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Thy name. (*Isaiah 63:16*)
- But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father, We are the clay, and Thou our potter; And all of us are the work of Thy hand. (*Isaiah 64:8*)
- "Have you not just now called to Me, 'My Father, Thou art the friend of my youth?' (*Jeremiah 3:4*)
- "Then I said, 'How I would set you among My sons, And give you a pleasant land, The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!' And I said, 'You shall call Me, My Father, And not turn away from following Me.' (*Jeremiah 3:19*)

The Son is also found in the Old Testament:

- "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee. (*Psalms 2:7*)

- Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! (*Psalms 2:12*)
- Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His Son's name? Surely you know! (*Proverbs 30:4*)
- "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. (*Daniel 7:13-14*)

The third member of the triunity of God, The Holy Spirit, is also found extensively in the Old Testament:

Genesis 1:2	1 Samuel 11:6	Psalms 106:33	Ezekiel 3:24
Genesis 6:3	1 Samuel 16:13	Psalms 139:7	Ezekiel 8:3
Exodus 31:3	1 Samuel 16:14	Psalms 143:10	Ezekiel 11:1
Exodus 35:31	1 Samuel 19:20	Isaiah 11:2	Ezekiel 11:5
Numbers 11:17	1 Samuel 19:23	Isaiah 30:1	Ezekiel 11:24
Numbers 11:25	2 Samuel 23:2	Isaiah 32:15	Ezekiel 36:27
Numbers 11:26	1 Kings 18:12	Isaiah 34:16	Ezekiel 37:1
Numbers 11:29	1 Kings 22:24	Isaiah 40:13	Ezekiel 37:14

Numbers 24:2	2 Kings 2:16	Isaiah 42:1	Ezekiel 39:29
Numbers 27:18	1 Chronicles 12:18	Isaiah 44:3	Ezekiel 43:5
Judges 3:10	2 Chronicles 15:1	Isaiah 48:16	Joel 2:28
Judges 6:34	2 Chronicles 18:23	Isaiah 59:21	Joel 2:29
Judges 11:29	2 Chronicles 20:14	Isaiah 61:1	Micah 2:7
Judges 13:25	2 Chronicles 24:20	Isaiah 63:10	Micah 3:8
Judges 14:6	Nehemiah 9:20	Isaiah 63:11	Haggai 2:5
Judges 14:19	Nehemiah 9:30	Isaiah 63:14	Zechariah 4:6
Judges 15:14	Job 33:4	Ezekiel 2:2	Zechariah 7:12
1 Samuel 10:6	Psalms 51:11	Ezekiel 3:12	Zechariah 12:10
1 Samuel 10:10	Psalms 104:30	Ezekiel 3:14	Malachi 2:15

Finally, there are a number of verses in the Old Testament in which the triunity of God is directly expressed:

- Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His Son's name? Surely you know! (*Proverbs 30:4*)
- Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (*Isaiah 11:1-2*)

- "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. (*Isaiah 42:1*)
- "Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit." (*Isaiah 48:16*)
- The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners; (*Isaiah 61:1*)
- In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them; And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. (*Isaiah 63:9-10*)

Some of the verses above include all members of the triunity (Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 48:16, and Isaiah 61:1). Therefore, the Old Testament does reveal the Christian concept of the Godhead, with God being one God, consisting of three persons. How can God simultaneously exist as both singular and plural? It is a logical impossibility if God were restricted to the three dimensions of space and one dimension of time of our physical universe. However, the attributes of God, given by the Bible, provide a reasonable explanation of how this paradox can be resolved.