

## MY OPENING STATEMENT

Trinitarian Christians state that there is one God who exists as three co-equal, co-eternal, co-substantial persons (citing both the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds). *Such language and concept is foreign to the Torah.* Nothing in the five Books of Moses states that any Israelite (or pre-Israelite worshiper of the true God) believed the God they served was a Trinity.

The Torah of Moses never associates the number three (*shalosh*) with God, and Torah isn't bashful when it comes to both positives and negatives. Something as abhorrent as bestiality is condemned four times. Murder and theft are spoken against dozens of times. As obvious as these are, you still have explicit texts. Shouldn't Torah be explicit about God? Well... it actually is. Torah presents God as one sentient being, one divine person, a single individual.

God is described as a single person so many times in Torah, where singular, personal pronouns are used of Him and by Him. **His, I, Me, My** - not *Their, Them, Us, and We*. For example, Genesis 2:2 says that "God completed HIS work that HE had done, and HE rested on the seventh day from all HIS work that HE had done." No one reading that without being told or taught a Trinity would ever think that referred to multiple persons within God.

We also have cases in Genesis where Patriarchs talked with God, and there's no indication these men believed they were speaking to multiple persons in heaven. In Genesis 15 Yahweh says to Abram, "Do not be afraid Abram, I am your shield." Abram replies, "Lord Yahweh, what can YOU give ME?" Abram refers to himself as ME, because Abram is one, single individual, and Yahweh refers to himself as I because Yahweh is one, single individual.

In Deuteronomy 4:35 Moses tells the Israelites that "Yahweh is God; there is no other besides Him." In verse 39 Moses continues by saying "Yahweh is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other."

The cultural context here is the removal of the Hebrews from the land of Egypt where many gods were worshipped. There were over 1,000 gods in the Egyptian pantheon with around 9 primary. Ancient cultures often believed there was a god for (let's say) fire, but a different god for water. Multiple elements meant multiple gods or powers (to them). The one, true God (through Moses) is explaining to Israel that He *encapsulates all elements and all powers*. He's it. Reading a triune god into this text actually dismantles its original, cultural intent.

In Deuteronomy 6:4 Yahweh demands the sole devotion of the Israelites with the words "Yahweh eloheinu, Yahweh echad." The word *echad* is the cardinal number one in the Hebrew language. When little Hebrew children learn to count (even today) they begin with "echad," similar to the children of English speaking parents learning to begin with "one." This same book uses the word echad when speaking of one man from each tribe of Israel (Deut. 1:23), and of how one witness is not enough to convict a man to death (Deut. 17:6). One man isn't two

or three men, and one witness certainly isn't multiple witnesses. Neither is one Yahweh actually more than one Yahweh. If one really means three what does three mean... a dozen?

The NRSV and JPS Tanach Commentary series translate *echad* as "alone" (Deut. 6:4) Israel was to worship Yahweh alone, distinguishing Him from the many gods of the surrounding nations. It would be so odd for an Israelite to "repeat these words [over and over] to their children" (Deut. 6:7), "Yahweh is one; Yahweh alone; there is one Yahweh," only to later find out that Yahweh was really three persons the whole time.

Additionally, Deuteronomy 6:4 in the Septuagint uses the masculine, singular *heis* to describe Yahweh. This is properly carried over into English as "the LORD is one person." The neuter form *hen* (carrying with it the idea of unity or united) is not used.

Imagine with me for a second that Deuteronomy 6:4 instead read, "Yahweh is three" or "Yahweh is two." Now imagine someone coming up to you today and saying, "Yeah, but Yahweh is really just one even though the text says He's three (or two)." You wouldn't stand for that, and neither should you stand for someone trying to make one mean more than one.

We also have Jewish testimony from Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus that shows the ancient Hebrews did not view the God in their Torah as multi-personal. Philo makes statements like "the Father of them all is one, the Creator of the Universe" (Dec. 64) and "God is alone - not a combination - God is not a compound being, nor one which is made up of many parts, but one which has no mixture" (Alleg. Int. II.1-2). Josephus writes, "God is but one" (Ant. 4.201) and "when the Israelites saw this, they fell down upon the ground, and worshiped one God, and called him the great and the only true God." (Ant. 8.343) Neither of these men ever associate the number three with their God. There isn't a hint of the Trinity in their writings; they never speak of ancient, faithful Hebrews as Trinitarians.

There are multiple scholars and historians that realize reading the doctrine of the Trinity into the Hebrew Bible is anachronistic. Trinitarian pastor, author, and professor Millard Erickson writes that the Trinity "... is not clear or explicitly taught anywhere in Scripture."<sup>1</sup> Edmund J. Fortman (professor of theology) states, "The OT tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication of a Triune God."<sup>2</sup> Dale Martin (NT scholar) writes, "The doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible if read in its historical context."<sup>3</sup> The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics states, "There is in the OT no indication of distinction in the Godhead; it is an anachronism to find... the doctrine of... the Trinity in its pages."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity, p.11-12, 109

<sup>2</sup> The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity, p.XV, 8, 9

<sup>3</sup> New Testament History and Literature, p.4

<sup>4</sup> ERE (James Hastings) Volume 6, p.254

My friend, Rabbi Eduardo is committing an anachronism by reading the later post-apostolic doctrine of the Trinity into the Hebrew Bible, in the same way Orthodox Jews read the later developed Oral Torah (Rabbinic Law) back into the Hebrew Bible. The Trinitarian glasses and the Oral Torah glasses need to be taken off when reading the written Torah. It's sometimes difficult and uncomfortable to challenge one's paradigm, but that is the only way you will get to the truth of what the Hebrew Scriptures actually teach.

This debate is about whether the Trinity can be found taught in the Torah. This debate is not about verses that speak of a distinct manifestation of the one God in a messenger. It's not about how God *can* be seen in one way, yet *not* be seen in another way. It's not about showing a text that speaks of God's creative spirit. None of those things demand a Trinity.

So in conclusion... God is first presented in the Torah in Genesis 1:1 - He is the focal point. He is not bashful about making Himself known, but nothing He says ever associates the number three with Him, even though it would not have been hard for Him to do so. God as a Trinity shouldn't be something that just comes along "between the testaments" or in the "New Testament." This is something that should be spelled out in the foundation of Scripture, in Torah. Sure, God is complex, I don't deny that, but His complexity does not veer from or forsake what He's revealed in His written word; that He is ONE or ALONE.

You must challenge yourself this evening, asking "Did I begin my study of God with Torah or did I decide what I believed about God and read that back-into Torah?" It's always healthy to re-evaluate what you believe and why you believe it, and don't let anyone scare you into not studying this subject with fresh eyes and an open heart. Thank you for listening.

## MY REBUTTALS

### Genesis 1:1 - Elohim Plural?

**Summary:** The Kohlengber/Mounce Hebrew lexicon reads for *elohim*: "God (plural of majesty: plural in form but singular in meaning, with a focus on great power); gods (true grammatical plural); any person characterized by greatness or power: mighty one, great one, judge." So if singular, "God" is meant - if plural "gods" are meant. The same way I just used "is" for the singular God and "are" for the plural "gods" is how you tell in Hebrew whether the use is singular or plural - and the verbs in Hebrew are singular in Genesis 1 for God the Creator, but plural in Genesis 3:5 "ye shall be as gods (KJV; LEB; BBE; Webster) knowing good and evil." The NISBE vol. 2, p.505 states, "The use of the plural form with the singular meaning is not unique to Israel. Similar forms occur in pre-Israelite, Babylonian, and Canaanite texts in which a worshiper wishes to exalt a particular god above others. This form has been called the 'plural of majesty' or the 'intensive plural' because it implies that all the fulness of deity is concentrated in the one god." All the strengths or powers can be found in the one Yahweh, even when powers seem to oppose each other (like water and fire, or mercy and wrath).

**More:** Moses and a King of Israel are called *elohim* (Exodus 7:1; Psalm 45:6) yet both stand as one, single person. Smith's Bible Dictionary states, (p.220) "The plural form of *Elohim* has given rise to much discussion. The fanciful idea that it referred to a trinity of persons in the Godhead hardly finds now a supporter among scholars. It is either what grammarians call the plural of majesty, or it denotes the fullness of divine strength, the sum of the powers displayed by God." In Biblical Hebrew, a noun that is plural in form is not necessarily plural in meaning. For instance, the Hebrew words *chayim* ("life") and *panim* ("face," "presence," "countenance") are plural in form, but almost always singular in meaning. Another word, *adon*, "lord," "master," is often plural in form. In its plural form it is sometimes used of a single person - Abraham (Gen. 24:9-10), Joseph (Gen. 42:30, 33), the king of Egypt (Gen. 40:1) and an anonymous "fierce king" under whose rule the Egyptians were prophesied to come (Isa. 19:4, NRSV). There are instances of other plural Hebrew words employed in the Hebrew Bible with singular meaning. Also, the Septuagint (Greek version of the Hebrew Bible) always translates the Hebrew word for God in the singular (*theos*).

### Genesis 1:2 - The Spirit of God

**Summary:** Is Genesis 1:2's "Spirit of God" a distinct person from 1:1's "God"? Note that the NRSV translates it as a "wind from God," (similar to the strong east wind from YHWH, Ex. 14:21). *Ruach* is spirit, breath, wind (all synonyms). Targum Onkelos reads, "The breath/wind of *Elohim* blew above the surface of the water." Reading a third person of God here is eisegesis, a historical anachronism. What we see in Genesis is God creating through His speech, "God said, let there be" - cf. Psalm 33:6, 9 "By the word of YHWH the heavens were made and all the host by the breath of His mouth. He spake; He commanded." Also see Psalm 104:29-30 where YHWH takes away the breath of a person or animal and they die, but when He sends forth His breath/spirit (breath; Gen. 2:7) they are created.

**More:** If one posits the Jewish Midrash (Genesis Rabbah) that this is the "Spirit of Messiah" it should be understood in the sense that the same Spirit that rests upon the promised Messiah (in Isaiah 61:1) is the Spirit that hovered over the waters of Genesis 1:2. If it's argued that the Spirit of God *moving* or *hovering* over the face of the waters shows person... yes, it's the person of the Father, God, YHWH, in His operational power and presence. There is zero need to read a second or third person of God into this text. **Targum Neofiti:** "And a merciful Spirit from God blew across the water." **Targum Johnathan:** "and the Spirit of mercies from before the Lord breathed upon the face of the waters." **Targum Jerusalem:** "and the Spirit of mercies from before the Lord breathed upon the face of the waters." **Targum Onkelos:** "The breath/wind of [from before] *Elohim* hovered [blew] above the surface of the water."

### Gen. 1:26 - Let US Make Man

**Summary:** In Genesis 1 singular pronouns are used of God throughout with the sole exception being in verse 26. There are 7 "God said(s)" prior to verse 26 yet never a plural pronoun until the creation of mankind. Why? It is likely that YHWH is including his heavenly, angelic court in the creation of man; not in the sense that they are co-creators, but because man will be comprised of

something as He and His heavenly host - not merely the earth but also the breath/wind of God (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 104:4, “and making the *winds* His messengers”). Take note that when God does the actual creating, singular pronouns are used (Gen. 1:27). In the same early Genesis context we see God speak of “Us” again (Gen. 3:22) in relation of driving fallen man out of the Garden of Eden. We then see cherubim (a class of angels) stationed to guard the way to the tree of life. A main point is: there is absolutely nothing in the text insinuating a 3-in-1 God. As the NET fn states, “Many Christian theologians interpret it as an early hint of plurality within the Godhead, but this view imposes later trinitarian concepts on the ancient text.”

**More:** The NET fn further comments, “In its ancient Israelite context the plural is most naturally understood as referring to God and his heavenly court (see 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Isa 6:1-8). (The most well-known members of this court are God’s messengers, or angels. In Gen 3:5 the serpent may refer to this group as “gods/divine beings.” See the note on the word “evil” in 3:5.) If this is the case, God invites the heavenly court to participate at the creation of humankind (perhaps in the role of offering praise, see Job 38:7), but he himself is the one who does the actual creative work (v. 27). Of course, this view does assume that the members of the heavenly court possess the divine “image” in some way. Since the image is closely associated with rulership, perhaps they share the divine image in that they, together with God and under his royal authority, are the executive authority over the world.”

JPS Torah (Nahum Sarna) writes, “**Let us Make** The extraordinary use of the first person plural evokes the image of a heavenly court in which God is surrounded by His angelic host. Such a celestial scene is depicted in several biblical passages. This is the Israelite version of the polytheistic assemblies of the pantheon - monotheized and depaganized. It is noteworthy that this plural form of divine address is employed in Genesis on two other occasions, both involving the fate of humanity: in 3:22, in connection with the expulsion from Eden; and in 11:7, in reference to the dispersal of the human race after the building of the Tower of Babel.”

Aramaic Targum Jonathan, “And the Lord said to the angels who ministered before Him, who had been created in the second day of the creation of the world, Let us make man in Our image, in Our likeness.”

### Gen. 15:1 - Word of the Lord

**Summary:** Genesis 15:1 is not a second person of Yahweh, no more than Exodus 8:13’s “the word of Moshe” is a second person from Moshe. The LXX of Genesis 15:1 says, “the word of the Lord came to Abram,” and then the parallel in verse 4 says, “And immediately there was a voice of the Lord to him.” We shouldn’t overlook that Genesis 15:1 is a vision; visions are not real-time events but like a dream (while awake) that happens in the mind of a person (ref. Numbers 12:6-8 where a vision or dream is contrasted with God speaking directly). So Yahweh appears to Abram in some form in this vision and speaks to him. The NET is accurate here in saying “the LORD’s message came to Abram in a vision.” This is simply God communicating, it is never viewed in Torah as a second or third person of God.

**More:** Genesis 15:1 is God speaking to Abram, and God’s speech can be equated with Him because it comes from Him (no need for multiple persons in God here). 1 Samuel 3:1 (HCSB)

“In those days the word of the LORD was rare and prophetic visions were not widespread.” This isn’t the second person of a Trinity being rare, but rather prophetic visions are parallel with the word of Yahweh - Yahweh’s communication with men was a rare occurrence. Also see 1 Samuel 4:1 (KJV) where “the word of Samuel came to all Israel.” The HCSB rightly understands this as “Samuel’s words came to all Israel.” The “word of (someone)” doesn’t imply a second person of that someone/being/person. Jeremiah 1:4 (HCSB) “the word of Yahweh came to me” and then Yahweh speaks something to Jeremiah. Then verse 7, “Yahweh said to me.” The word of Yahweh comes to Jeremiah several times in this chapter, and it’s not a person that comes, leaves, and comes back. It’s Yahweh speaking to him multiple times with multiple facets of a message. Compare Jeremiah 7:1 (11:1) “This is the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh.” Then 14:1 “The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought;” the word/message from Yahweh was about a drought. On the concept of visions not being real time events see Acts 12:6-9; in verse 9 we see something real to Peter is contrasted with him thinking he was having a vision. Numbers 15:31 shows that breaking the “word of Yahweh” is equal to violating “His commandment.”

### Genesis 18 - YHWH Appeared to Abraham

**Summary:** It is possible that YHWH appeared to Abraham himself in the image of a man as a theophany. This would not be physically seeing YHWH in all His fullness or glory (his face, Ex. 33:20), but a distinct manifestation of Him. It is also possible that YHWH’s appearance to Abraham was by means of angelic visitation. This is how Josephus (“three angels” Ant. 1.11.2), Philo (On Abraham, 107-115), and Targums Jonathan and Jerusalem render it. Genesis 19:1 shows definitively that two of the men were angels/messengers, so it’s no leap to believe that the third man was an angel as well, maybe an archangel. Him being called Adonai and YHWH carries the understanding that he works directly on YHWH’s behalf (cp. Gen. 19:13 “we are about to destroy this place” with vs. 14 “YHWH is about to destroy this city,” and vs. 29 “God destroyed the cities”; also see Isaiah 7:3-10 where Isaiah is speaking a message to King Ahaz [vss. 3-9] but then it is said that “again YHWH spoke” [vs. 10]). Either interpretation is exegetically probable, but there is not a hint of a Trinitarian god anywhere in the text.

**More:** Targum Jonathan: “Three angels in the resemblance of men were standing before him; (angels) who had been sent from the necessity of three things;--because it is not possible for a ministering angel to be sent for more than one purpose at a time;--one, then, had come to make known to him that Sarah should bear a man-child; one had come to deliver Lot; and one to overthrow Sodom and Amarah.” The Jewish Study Bible (Oxford) writes, “The relationship of the LORD to the men is unclear. Perhaps, as in some Canaanite literature, we are to imagine a deity accompanied by his two attendants (cf. 22:3).” Nahum Sarna writes (on Gen. 18:1), “This is the only example of this formula being used without some verbal declaration immediately following. Here, it seems to be a general statement followed by a detailed description of theophany or divine self-revelation, mediated in this instance through angelic messengers.”

### Genesis 19:24 - Two YHWH's?

**Summary:** The doubling of the Divine Name in Genesis 19:24 emphasizes that the fire was a divine act rather than a regular act of designed nature. A multiplication of the same word generally places stress upon that person, place, or thing (a double dream, Gen. 41:32; a double witness, Deut. 19:15). The New International Commentary of the OT, "The two-fold use of the Tetragrammaton reinforces the fact that the disaster that struck Sodom and its environs was not a freak of nature, it rather was sent deliberately by Yahweh Himself." Nahum Sarna writes, "The repetition, like the phrase "out of heaven," (parallel with "rained" 19:24a) dramatizes the conviction that what occurred was not a meaningless accident of nature but a purposeful event, the expression of God's direct intervention in human affairs in order to redress the balance of justice."

**More:** Christian commentator Ellicott writes, "More correctly Calvin takes it as an emphatic reiteration of its being Jehovah's act." Calvin writes, "The repetition is emphatical, because the Lord did not then cause it to rain, in the ordinary course of nature; but, as if with a stretched out hand, he openly fulminated in a manner to which he was not accustomed, for the purpose of making it sufficiently plain, that this rain of fire and brimstone was produced by no natural causes." (Side Note: I don't see two YHWH's here anymore more than I see two Solomons in 1 Kings 8:1, or two Rehoboams in 1 Kings 12:21.)

### Ex. 33:20 - God is Seen, but Not Seen

**Summary:** In Exodus 33:20 YHWH says no man can see HIS FACE and live. In the same text (vss. 21-23) YHWH tells Moshe, "you will see my back, but my face shall not be seen." This has to be YHWH (Most High) because *on the one hand* there is a portion of Him Moshe cannot see, but *on the other hand* there is still a portion of Him Moshe did see. Seeing the face of someone is seeing them in their fulness. Do you really see someone without seeing their face? (Think about it. No... but still yes.) Anytime the Mighty One of Israel was seen by someone in Torah/Tanach they saw *\*part\** of Him (some type of manifestation of Him), not His fullness.

**More:** It's interesting that the Targum Jonathan [sepharia.org] states on Exodus 33:23 "And I will make the host of angels who stand and minister before Me to pass by, and thou shalt see the handborder of the tephilla of My glorious Shekinah; but the face of the glory of My Shekinah thou canst not be able to see." The angelic host are seen to sometimes act in YHWH's stead. The IVP Bible Background Commentary writes on 33:11, "Speaking face to face is an idiom suggesting an honest and open relationship. It does not contradict 33:20-23. Numbers 12:8 uses a different expression with the same meaning, 'mouth to mouth.'" So the "face-to-face" speaking between YHWH and Moshe (in Ex. 33:11) means "directly, clearly, unambiguously, not in a dream or vision." 33:11 is careful not to say that Moshe SAW the face of YHWH, but that their *\*communication\** was face-to-face, like friends. It's an expression meant to relay the closeness between YHWH and this particular prophet (Moshe). Targum Onkelos reads "And the Lord spake with Mosheh word with word, as a man speaketh with his companion." Targum Johnathan reads, "and the Word of the Lord spake with Mosheh." This is further seen in Deuteronomy 5:4 where Moshe says that YHWH spoke to the Israelites on Mount Sinai "face to face," yet Deuteronomy 4:11-15

makes it clear that when YHWH spoke to them, the Israelites heard His words but didn't see a form. Evidently, on Mount Sinai, YHWH allowed direct revelation to come from Him to all the people, at least for a moment (see Exodus 20:18-21).

### Deut. 6:4 - Echad/One

**Summary:** The Hebrew word *echad* is used to speak of one wife (Gen. 4:19), one lamb (Lev. 14:10), and one rod (Num. 17:3). In Deuteronomy 17:6 the NRSV translates echad as “only one” witness, referring to a single witness not being enough to put a person to death. Any attempt to use Genesis 1:5's “one day” or Exodus 24:3's “one voice” to show that echad carries the meaning of a “compound unity” falls short; it's still “one day” or “one voice” not “two days” or “two voices.” What if we did the same with other numbers? Is it correct to say that in the phrase “two people” that the word two carries the meaning of eight because there are 4 arms and 4 legs (equaling 8) on the two people? If you try to say that Genesis 1:5 is speaking of two parts (evening and morning) making up one day (like a unity) then that would mean the Father is *part* of God and the Son is *part* of God and the Holy Spirit is *part* of God - that's partialism and considered heretical by orthodox Trinitarians.

**More:** *Yachid* on the other hand generally refers to a special child. In Genesis 22:2 we read “your only son, Isaac,” but there is no word for son there in Hebrew, it's just yachid. Yachid is also used to express the emotion of feeling alone (Ps. 25:16) or being alone (Ps. 68:6), and sometimes how precious or valuable a thing is (Ps. 22:21; 35:17). The word is never used as a general term for one. Isaac is called Abraham's yachid even though Isaac wasn't his only son (Ishmael was born earlier). If God were ever described using yachid it wouldn't really tell us how many gods or persons there are, but rather what kind of God He is - unique/special. Echad is the more appropriate word to describe God's singularity.

Rabbi Eduardo acknowledges that echad is used of a simple one in an “absolute singular way.” He goes over one text briefly (Genesis 10:25) in a video of his about two brothers, one (echad) named Peleg. What's interesting here is I've had another Messianic Rabbi tell me before that “one of his ribs” in Genesis 2:21 still speaks to the multiple cells and blood vessels in the rib so as to make echad a “compound unity.” It's fascinating the lengths people will go to to make “one” mean “more than one.” Echad is not speaking of the cells and blood vessels in the one rib, and echad in Genesis 10:25 isn't speaking of the eyes, ears, legs, arms, hairs, etc. on Peleg. One rib means one rib and one brother (Peleg) means one person.

What I see in the word echad is: it functions exactly as our English word one. It can refer to a single person, place, or thing but it can also be used to speak of unity, togetherness, and sameness. The meaning of the word echad doesn't change in the handful of unity passages, it just modifies a collective noun. One family doesn't mean two families, but it can mean a dad, mom, twins, etc. Family is the plural word, not one. In John 10:30 we have Yeshua saying, “I and the Father are one,” (with the Greek word ‘hen’ btw, neuter). There we have two persons mentioned



clearly as coming together or being together in unity (cp. Jn. 17:22; 1 Cor. 3:8). The Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 doesn't speak this way. It is YHWH proclaiming to be one or alone.

I think the key to the Shema is Mark 12:28-32. This is a good example of later revelation *blossoming* previous revelation. We should expect previous revelation to be forthright and understandable about God. When Moshe served God he knew the God he was serving; he wasn't kept in the dark about God's person. This doesn't take away from the immediate meaning of the Shema being a command to obey rather than a declaration of YHWH's person (JPS Tanach, Nahum Sarna, "YHWH is our God, YHWH alone;" also NRSV and Rotherham), but the Jewish scribe in responding to Yeshua's quotation of the Shema says (LSV), "Well, Teacher, in truth You have spoken that there is one God, and there is none other but He." There is no indication that this scribe believed in multiple persons of God, and there is no indication that the scribe believed the teacher he was talking to was really somehow YHWH. It should be obvious that this second Temple period Jewish scribe was not a Trinitarian, yet he worshiped and served YHWH and had a friendly conversation about God with Yeshua. Mark 12:28-32 is thus an inspired commentary on Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

### Angel of the Lord, Jesus Pre-Incarnate?

**Summary:** YHWH sent an angel/messenger/agent in whom He placed a great amount of authority (Ex. 23:20-23). This angel acted on behalf of YHWH, was invested with His very name (carrying authority), and was given power to dole out commands and punish sin (he's never said to have the authority to forgive sin). Duane Garrett's commentary takes this view; he points out the parallel between Exodus 23:23 and Exodus 33:3 (where the Canaanite nations are mentioned along with the angel), and focuses on how in 33:2-3 YHWH says, "I will send an angel" but then says, "But I will not go with you." He ends with "It may be that we are uncomfortable with the idea that God would work through an angel, and not always be directing things, as it were, in person. But we should not ignore the fairly straightforward implication of the text." The Eerdman's Dictionary of Early Judaism writes (p.328) "While the most likely explanation of this usage is that a mediator was required between YHWH and humanity, it is possible to account for it by recognizing that the identity of the sender has been granted to the messenger in order to establish the divine authority of the message."

**More:** An illustration - though on a much smaller scale - my father-in-law owns a septic tank company with His name on the truck. He gives me the power to go out and do jobs without ever calling him and asking for his permission. I arrive to the job in his name. I have the power to set prices, interact with customers, make decisions, etc. I'm a different person than he, yet my conduct either shines light or brings darkness upon His name.

Trinitarians will often (1) show a text that says "the LORD" did a thing, (2) another text that says, "the angel of the LORD" did that same thing, and then (3) claim the angel of the LORD must somehow be the LORD (but be distinct at the same time; Jesus, they claim). The understanding however, seeing Jesus is nowhere mentioned in any of these texts, is that when the LORD/YHWH does something in, through, or by one of His messengers it is still YHWH who is

doing it. Compare Exodus 7:17 where YHWH says He will strike the Nile river with the staff in His hand, and Exodus 7:19-20 where Aaron strikes the Nile with the staff in his hand. Is Aaron then YHWH? No one makes that connection, because they realize Aaron is acting on YHWH's behalf (LXX [NETS; Ex. 7:20] "and Aaron lifted it up and with his rod struck the water.") Sometimes, YHWH invests a great amount of authority and power in one of his heavenly messengers, so much so that to deny the angel is to deny YHWH (cp. Believing in both YHWH and Moses, Ex. 14:31; fearing both YHWH and Samuel, 1 Sam. 12:18).

It's interesting that in Deuteronomy 29 Moses begins speaking of the covenant YHWH made with Israel. In verse 2, "Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, 'You have seen with your own eyes everything YHWH did in Egypt... (4) yet to this day YHWH has not given you a mind to understand.'" Then in verse 5 Moses continues, "I led you 40 years in the wilderness." He could be speaking of himself leading them here, but as he continues to speak he slips into speaking for YHWH in verses 5-6: "Your clothes and the sandals on your feet did not wear out; you did not eat bread or drink wine or beer - so that you might know that I am YHWH your Elohim." Catch that. Moses says, "I am YHWH," but it's only because he is speaking as the agent or messenger of YHWH, relaying YHWH's words to the people while all the while still referring to himself as separate from YHWH in the same context.

The NET footnote on Genesis 16:7: "Heb 'the messenger of the Lord.'" Some identify the angel of the Lord as the preincarnate Christ because in some texts the angel is identified with the Lord himself. However, it is more likely that the angel merely represents the Lord; he can speak for the Lord because he is sent with the Lord's full authority. In some cases the angel is clearly distinct from the Lord (see Judg 6:11-23). It is not certain if the same angel is always in view. Though the proper name following the noun "angel" makes the construction definite, this may simply indicate that a definite angel sent from the Lord is referred to in any given context. It need not be the same angel on every occasion. Note the analogous expression "the servant of the Lord," which refers to various individuals in the OT (see BDB 714 s.v. עֶבֶד).

The NET footnote on Genesis 48:16: "Jacob closely associates God with an angelic protective presence. This does not mean that Jacob viewed his God as a mere angel, but it does suggest that he was aware of an angelic presence sent by God to protect him. Here he so closely associates the two that they become virtually indistinguishable. In this culture messengers typically carried the authority of the one who sent them and could even be addressed as such. Perhaps Jacob thought that the divine blessing would be mediated through this angelic messenger."

The IVP Bible Background Commentary, page 49, under Genesis 16:7-10 says, "The word translated 'angel' simply means 'messenger' in Hebrew and can be used for either human or supernatural messengers. Since these messengers represent God, they do not speak for themselves, but only for God. It is therefore not unusual for them to use the first person, 'I.' Messengers were granted the authority to speak for the one they represented and were treated as if they were the one they represented." On Hagar's naming in vs. 13 IVP writes, "Hagar affirms a supernatural identity for the messenger and may well believe that the messenger was indeed a deity, but the fact that she expresses incredulity about the likelihood of having seen a deity does not mean that she actually has seen one (additionally the text is very difficult to translate and may not even suggest this much)."

Jewish commentators Umberto Cassuto and Nahum Sarna take the position that sometimes “the angel of the Lord” is a Hebrew idiom for the help and guidance of the Lord, a theophany or manifestation of the one God in another form or mode. This is a possibility in certain texts about the angel of the Lord, and doesn’t do damage to the actual, written Hebrew text that NEVER speaks of multiple persons within the one God.

Cassuto gives us an interesting commentary on Exodus 23:20-23. He thinks that by comparing Genesis 24:7, 27, 40, 48, and 56 that “the angel of the LORD” stands for the help and guidance of the LORD. He also compares Numbers 20:16 with Exodus 14:19. This is a fine interpretation that doesn’t try and read more into the text than it says, and maintains the force of it being YHWH who decidedly leads the Israelites. Either way, through an angel or directly, it’s still ultimately YHWH. (YHWH himself could have reached down and grabbed the Israelites out of Egypt, but He instead sent a human messenger, Moses, to stand in His place upon the earth among humans.) Cassuto writes, “The initial words, Behold I send an angel before you, do not imply a being distinct from God. In ancient thought-processes the line of demarcation between the sender and the sent is liable easy to be blurred; in the final analysis the angel of God is simply God’s action.”

Sarna says that Jewish commentators are divided on whether a heavenly or human messenger is intended (Ex. 23:20; some believe Moses is in view). But he ends with “The phrase may simply be an idiom expressing the activity of Divine Providence, as in Genesis 24:7.” On the popular Genesis 48:16 text, Sarna writes, “The capitalization reflects the fact that the parallelistic structure of verses 15-16 strongly suggests that ‘angel’ is here an epithet of God. No one in the Bible ever invokes an angel in prayer, nor in Jacob’s several encounters with angels is there any mention of one who delivers him from harm... When the patriarch feels himself to be in mortal danger, he prays directly to God, as in 32:10-13, and it is he who again and again is Jacob’s guardian and protector (28:15, 20; 31:3; 35:3).”

### Dr. Benjamin Sommer

**Summary:** If you read Dr. Sommer carefully (as well as listen to his lectures and interviews), he doesn’t believe there is a *theological* problem with the doctrine of the Trinity based upon his study of ancient, Israelite culture. He does believe it is a wrong idea, but not a wrong idea in *principle*. He never says this is what he believes the Torah teaches (as a whole) or what Jews should believe. Even when it comes to His view of “God’s bodies,” he maintains that this is only taught in the J and E sources, while left out of the P and D sources (based on the Documentary Hypothesis for the Pentateuch). It is interesting that Dr. Sommer has also stated that the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation is theologically equivalent to the ancient ceremony where the presence of a deity literally comes into an object; he believes this is what Jacob was doing in Genesis 28.

### Two Powers in Heaven

**Summary:** The “Two Powers in Heaven Heresy” (as it was described by normative Judaism in the 2nd to 5th centuries A.D.) did not teach the Doctrine of the Trinity. You can even maintain

such a teaching in believing the first power is Ultimate or Almighty while the second power is subordinate. This is actually what Dr. Daniel Boyarin argues in his book “The Jewish Gospels” - that the *second power* is always *second place* in heaven (a vice-roy) - never equal in nature. The famous Daniel 7:9-14 passage has the Ancient of Days *giving* power and a kingdom to a Son of Man (later identified the persecuted saints, Dan. 7:18, 22, 27) - they are not co-equal. For the Trinity though, three are necessary, as well as the concept and difference between person (distinction) and substance (sameness).

**More:** Some posit the Jewish philosopher Philo (late B.C. early A.D.) as early evidence of an ancient belief in Judaism of at least two persons of God. On the contrary Philo mentions the two powers as two ways in which the one God of Israel rules as both (creative) “God” and (kingly) “Lord” (On the Life of Moses, II.99; Noah’s Work as a Planter, I.85-87). He mentions these two powers in a list of seven total powers belonging to YHWH (QA on Exodus, II.68). He also speaks of “two Gods” as the (1) one true God only, and (2) a representative god standing in His place (On Dreams, I.227-229). Philo does speak of God’s word as a “second deity” (QA on Genesis, II.62), but not as a second person of God beside YHWH (as in later Trinitarian thought). He views the “word” as one of the supreme powers belonging to God; he writes “but he who is superior to the word holds his rank in a better and most singular pre-eminence.” The *word* is thus an emanation coming forth from the one, true God.

### My Questions to Rabbi Eduardo

[1] Does Genesis 1:1’s use of Elohim (for God) imply a plurality of persons within the one God?

[a] How do we know if Elohim should be translated God or gods?

[b] So how many persons are in Genesis 1:1?

[2] When God uses the plural pronouns “us” and “our” in Genesis 1:26, who is He speaking to?

[a] Does you see Genesis 3:22’s “us” parallel with the 1:26 “us”?

[b] Is the cheruvim of Genesis 3:24 part of the “us” in 3:22?

[3] Is there anywhere in Torah that the number 3 is associated with God?

[4] Is there anywhere in Torah where God is defined as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

[a] Why isn’t the Torah plain on the Trinity like it is on so many other points of doctrine?

[5] Do you believe Moshe was a conscious Trinitarian?

[a] When Abraham offered sacrifice to Yahweh, did he really believe he was offering sacrifice to a Triune God? When (in Genesis 22) he named a mountain “Yahweh Yireh,” was he thinking of naming the mountain after three persons?

[6] Is the Father part of God or all of God? (If all) why then do you use verses (for echad) that show parts of things equaling 1 of something else (like Genesis 2:24’s one flesh)?

[a] [If he says “analogous not ontological”] = What do you mean by analogous? (Webster’s definition: “Similar or comparable to something else either in general or in some specific detail.”)

[b] How is two or more things grouping up to form one whole analogous to the doctrine of the Trinity where the three persons are NOT three parts of God?

[7] The words yachid and echad are both used in Genesis 22:2, yachid for Isaac and echad for a mountain. How many mountains does one (echad) mountain refer to?

[a] Does yachid in reference to Isaac mean he was Abraham’s only son?

[b] Do you not see here how yachid refers to uniqueness, special, or precious? (JPS Tanach Commentary Series, Gen. 22:2 “Take your son, your avored one, Isaac, whom you love.”)

[8] In Exodus 33 when YHWH says to Moses, “You cannot see my face, for man may not see me and live.” Who is YHWH referring to here?

[a] - If it’s the FATHER, do you understand how this text teaches some part of the Father can be seen, but His fullness cannot?

[b] If it’s the SON, I thought you said the Son could be seen all through the OT?

[c] Is the Son fully God? If God cannot be seen, they how can the Son be seen, being fully God?

[9] In the Shema, do you take the word one to refer to God’s one, single being or nature?

[a] If yes, then you agree that one really means one, or can there be two or more beings?

[b] If we cannot talk about God being a simple one because He’s more complex, then why can we talk about God being three-in-one? Is that where His complexity stops?

[10] Must a person believe in the doctrine of the Trinity to have eternal salvation?

[a] IF YES - Why does a person have to believe something for salvation that is not explicitly taught in the foundational instruction manual in Scripture?

### CLOSING STATEMENT

I'd like to thank Marlon for asking me if I'd be willing to debate this topic, and for hosting this on his channel. He's doing a good work here at allowing varying viewpoints of Scripture to be presented and discussed. I'd also like to thank Messianic Rabbi Eduardo for being a cordial debater and just a nice guy. His scholarship coupled with being "down-to-earth" is appreciated. This year I've listened to so many hours of his talks, and I've learned some things from him. I've also been able to better understand the position he takes on God and Jesus.

I do not believe anyone on any level of intellect would just read the Torah, in Hebrew or in English, and come away believing the God of the Hebrews (the God of Israel) consisted of three persons. This is why countless Jews today view God as one and/or only. From the Hebrew we get the Shema as "Yahweh is one, there is one Yahweh, or Yahweh alone." From the Greek we get it as "The Lord is one person." Why in the world would we try to eisegetically read the number three into that?

Now sure, a second power in heaven was recognized by Jews as well, but that second power was never confused with the one God. There was always a recognition that HaShem stood in first place, yet he had vice-regents who were sent by Him and given a great amount of authority to carry out His acts in heaven and earth. That's not the doctrine of the Trinity my dear brothers and sisters.

The Torah (Pentateuch) does not teach (much less proclaim) the doctrine of the Trinity (whether implicitly or explicitly). There is no text in Torah that says God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (one being, three distinct persons). This is not just my assessment but is the position taken by the majority of the scholars of the Hebrew Bible. Those taking the Trinitarian viewpoint for the Torah are committing a gross anachronism.

Not too long ago I had the privilege of listening to a debate Eduardo did with a David Costello on the "Oral Torah," concerning whether or not it was binding upon Messianic believers. Towards the end of that debate Eduardo said (and I quote): "I believe that my friend is delusional that Yeshua was operating in an anachronistic understanding of Rabbinic Law." Anachronism is an act of attributing a custom, event, or object to a period in which it does not belong. It would be like reading that God called the prophet Isaiah, and thinking he picked up an iPhone to do it. Well... Eduardo is doing the exact same thing with the doctrine of the Trinity - he is beginning with a later, post-apostolic Christian view of God and then combing through the Torah desperately looking for places he can read the Trinity into.

I would like to encourage our viewers this evening to step back, take a deep breath, and read the Torah with fresh eyes and child-like faith. As you read, pull your thoughts and ideas about the

text directly from the text. You might purchase a Jewish translation of the OT to do this, and after reading, purchase some Jewish commentary and/or scholarly-critical commentary on the Torah.

I'd like to also point you to the Unitarian Christian Alliance, a place where you can view scholarly talks and papers on the absolute oneness of God. This organization is now holding yearly conferences where you can participate in workshops and hear up-to-date scholarship on the Biblical Unitarian view of pertinent texts in Scripture. I think if you spend a few months digging into the various arguments you will see our position is astute both Scripturally and historically.

As I close tonight, I want to offer you my notes for this debate. This will include my opening statement, as well as a summary of the Unitarian understanding of various texts in Torah that have been used to surmise a Trinity. You can find them on the home page of my website - [ministersnewcovenant.org](http://ministersnewcovenant.org) - with the title "Notes on 'Trinity in Torah' Debate."

I appreciate you all for taking the time to be here for this debate. Go back and listen to it again when you have time, maybe even listen multiple times. The more you hear the arguments and the back-and-forth, the more you will understand each argument and be able to cipher which is the better viewpoint. May Almighty Yahweh be with you and bless you as you study His word.

### Some Texts Outside the Torah

**Isaiah 42:8** - This is such a popular verse that is always quoted by itself apart from the entire context of Isaiah 42 and its surrounding context. The contrast is how YHWH gives glory to His servant (1-7) but not to the false gods of the nations (8). The "another" is paralleled with idols or graven images in the same verse. YHWH shared some of His glory with Moses when Moses' face shone from seeing YHWH's back (Ex. 34:29-35). It's hard to read this account and not think of Yeshua's face shining on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-3). In these instances, the receiver of *some portion* of YHWH's glory is humble and directs the glory (honor) back to the One they received it from.

**Psalms 56:4** - Eduardo speaks of the Psalmist praising "God's word," as though there is something separate that is being praised (from God somehow). He says there's a "tension in the text" that we need to be okay with, and "why doesn't the Psalmist just say 'I praise God'?" I don't think it's difficult to just see this as *praising the instructions or sayings that YHWH gives*, similar to how the Psalmist lifts up his hands to YHWH's commandments (Psalm 119:48). David also says in another place, "YHWH's Spirit spoke by me. His word was on my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2); that's not a person on David's tongue, that is YHWH using David to speak His words. It was this word of YHWH that became a human being in the person of Yeshua. While the word was spoken by YHWH, once it takes on flesh it becomes a separate person (yes) closely connected to YHWH, but yet separated from YHWH. (Illustration: a blueprint in an architect's mind that he speaks about, but one day it comes to fruition in a beautiful house.)

***Nehemiah 9:20*** - “You gave your good Spirit to instruct them.” Is this a distinct person from YHWH? Is that anywhere in the text? Remember, *ruach* can also be breath or wind, and here again this is YHWH instructing through his breath (mouth), producing wind. Nothing is wrong with translating this as Spirit, but there’s nothing suggesting a distinct person or “third person in the Trinity” here.

***Psalms 143:10*** - “Let your good Spirit lead me” - again, nothing about a distinct person from YHWH (vs. 9), it’s just YHWH leading them by His power, influence, etc. YHWH’s presence equals His Spirit per Psalm 51:11, “cast me not away from Your presence... and take not Your Holy Spirit from me;” Psalm 139:7 “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” NOTE: Is the spirit of Elijah a separate person from Elijah? (2 Kings 2:15)

***Isaiah 48:12-16*** - Check out Albert Barnes’ full notes where even John Calvin [a Trinitarian Reformer] said that the passage [specifically verse 16] was a reference to the prophet Isaiah speaking of being sent by the “Lord GOD” [Adonai YHWH] with His Spirit or power backing him. All through the writings of the holy prophets we see them say something like “Thus saith YHWH,” and then go on to speak for YHWH in the first person. Their speaking this way never erases the line between Sender and sent-one, and never blurs the fact that the prophet is NOT YHWH. The prophet was a man commissioned and sent by YHWH to bring YHWH’s message, and thus he (or she) acted in the place of YHWH upon the earth.

- **Calvin** “This verse interpreters explain in different ways. Many refer it to Christ, but the prophet designs no such thing. Cavendoe autem sunt nobis violentoe et coactoe interpretations - (such forced and violent interpretations are to be avoided).”
- **Barnes**’ “The scope of the passage demands, as it seems to me, that it should be referred to the prophet himself. His object is, to state that he had not come at his own instance, or without being commissioned. He had been sent by God, and was attended by the Spirit of inspiration. He foretold events which the Spirit of God alone could make known to mankind.”
- **Benson** “God, by his Spirit, or God, even the Spirit, namely, the Holy Ghost, to whom the sending and inspiring of God’s prophets is ascribed, 2Pe 1:21; hath sent me — Namely, the prophet, who yet was a type of Christ, and so this may have a respect to him also.”

***The Ten Sefirot*** - On more than one occasion I’ve heard Eduardo speak about the Ten Sefirot in Kabbalistic Judaism, as though this Jewish ideology lends credence to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. I am pretty certain I have not studied this Jewish ideology as well as Eduardo, but from what I gather from reading and listening to Jewish sources, the Ten Sefirot are emanations from or attributes of the one God of Israel. The more I read and listen, the more it sounds like what is commonly called modalism in theological talks about God. The ten are listed (English) as wisdom, understanding, knowledge, kindness, strength, beauty, victory, splendor, foundation, and kingship. Do those sound like the Trinity’s three distinct, conscious persons? Some Jewish statements I’ve come across on this matter are, “The Sefirot may be compared to the two hands of a king. Sometimes the king operates with his right hand and sometimes with his left. Ultimately, it is the king himself who is acting through the medium of his hands,” and “The *Sefirot* are ten modes or attributes



through which God manifests Himself. The *Sefirot* are not God, but they are the medium through which specific qualities and attributes can be ascribed to Him.” (see [chabad.org](http://chabad.org)) In some Jewish thought the first three of the Sefirot (wisdom, understanding, and knowledge) are actually viewed as mothers, being the source and root of the other seven, like a mother is the source of her offspring. I personally think bringing up the Sefirot in a conversation about the Christian doctrine of the Trinity just shows how much of a stretch some people are willing to go to in order to hold on to established dogma rather than written Scripture.