

HaSheeloosh HaKadosh: The Holy Trinity

It is crucial to know who God really is. If we would have true spiritual power, if we would experience God's blessing, and if we would have eternal life, we must think of God as He is, not as we think He is. Idolatry does not consist only in bowing before statues. The essence of idolatry is having thoughts about God that are untrue and unworthy of Him.

The knowledge of the HaSheeloosh HaKadosh (the Holy Trinity) does not come from nature, but from divine revelation. Reason may lead us to believe in the oneness of God, but it takes God's self-disclosure to reveal His Tri-unity, His Three-in-Oneness. It took special revelation, God's self disclosure in His Word, to reveal that His nature is one of Plurality-in-Singleness, Trinity-in-Unity, Three-in-Oneness. Since God has revealed His unique Tri-une nature, it is essential that we think of God as He is or suffer the most dire consequences.

There are many people who reject everything that they cannot understand or explain. They toss out anything that does not make sense to them, or does not seem reasonable. Applying this principle to Almighty God (for whom nothing is impossible), they conclude that it is impossible that He can be Three and yet One. They deny the Trinity on the grounds that it doesn't make sense to them.

These people forget that their whole life is surrounded by mysteries they do not understand. They fail to consider that any real explanation of even the simplest phenomenon in nature lies in hidden obscurity, beyond their comprehension. Despite the great advancements in science over the past five hundred years we still can't answer most of the questions that the Almighty posed to Job: *Have you ever commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place? Have you walked in the recesses of the deep? Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth? Do you give the horse his might? Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, stretching his wings? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up?*

Do you know why your nose appreciates the smell of a rose but is repulsed by the odor of rotting garbage? Do you understand how your eye can see? Do you understand why electrons spinning around the nucleus of an atom don't go flying off into space? Do you understand the zoo of subatomic particles like protons, neutrons, electrons, leptons, baryons, gluons, muons, taus, neutrinos, mesons, and the various quarks that are the basic building blocks of energy and matter? We don't fully understand the workings of a simple cell in our bodies, or how a seed grows. We don't understand why a baby takes its first breath. Most of us don't know why a rainbow forms the way does, or how a beautiful sunset takes shape, or how a computer computes, or how a fax faxes. This universe, even after all our advances in science, is still an inscrutable mystery.

Since we can't understand the fall of a leaf from a tree, the hatching of a robin's egg in our front yard, the mystery of a caterpillar spinning a cocoon and emerging as a spectacular butterfly, how a spider knows to spin a complex, strong and beautiful web, how a salmon returns to the exact spot in the river where it was born three years earlier, why should we expect to fathom the greatest mystery of all, the eternal, all powerful, all knowing and all wise Three-in-One? No finite being is capable of understanding an infinite God.

The fact that the Trinity cannot be satisfactorily explained is actually a strong argument in its favor, because the Uncreated is ultimately unknowable by any created thing. One wise man observed this: *We think more loftily of God by knowing that He is incomprehensible and above our understanding than by conceiving Him according to our crude understanding. God cannot be fully known by man, unless the unknowable could be known, and the invisible seen, and the inaccessible attained, and the incomprehensible understood.* If we could understand God, then He would have to be less than God.

In fact God's divine revelation, the Bible, affirms the total inability of the human mind to come to know the mystery of the Holy Trinity. He dwells in unapproachable light whom no man has seen or can see (1 Tim. 6:16). The Lord can never be comprehended as He is in Himself. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it* wise King David admitted (Psalm 139:6). Our best efforts to grasp the mystery of the Trinity will always be futile. Only by faith, by trusting and believing God's special revelation, the Bible, can we come anywhere close to knowing Him.

The Trinity was first hinted at in the Tenach (the Hebrew Scriptures):

In the first verse of the Jewish Bible, God is revealed as a unity with a plurality.

Plural Name:

"Elohim" is the third word of the Hebrew Scriptures: *In the beginning "Elohim" - "God"* (Genesis 1:1). Elohim comes from a root that means "strength, might, or power." "Elohim" is the most common word for "God" and is used over 2300 times in the Scriptures. "Elohim" is plural and can be literally translated as "gods." Exodus 12:12 refers to *"all the elohim (gods) of Egypt."* "Eloah" is the singular form of "Elohim," but it is used much less frequently - only 250 times. This plural name that is applied to the One God is a hint of the plural/singular nature of God that is more fully revealed in the rest of the Scriptures.

Plural Verbs:

Normally the plural name "Elohim" is followed by a singular verb. But there are several fascinating instances when "Elohim" is accompanied by a plural verb. Genesis 20:13 literally says in Hebrew that *Elohim (God) they caused me to wander from my father's house...* And in Genesis 35:7 *Elohim (God) they appeared to him.* 2 Samuel 7:23 says: *What nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom Elohim they went to redeem for Himself.* Psalm 58:11 declares that *surely there is a God they judge the earth.*

Plural Pronouns:

There are times when plural pronouns are used to describe the One God. The Lord God, speaking in Genesis 1:26 says: *Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness.* (See also Genesis 3:22, 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8 for other instances of plural pronouns that refer to God).

Plural Nouns:

There are several intriguing occurrences where plural nouns refer to the one God: *The LORD... He is a holy God* [literally holy Gods] (Joshua 24:19). *Remember your Creator* [literally Creators] *in the days of your youth* (Ec. 12:1). *Let Israel rejoice in his Maker* [literally Makers] (Psalm 149:2). *For your Maker* [literally Makers] *is your husband* [literally husbands] (Isaiah 54:5).

Plural Descriptions:

In the Tenach there are mysterious plural descriptions of the Three-in-One God. King David writes: *The Lord (Adonai) says to my Lord: sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet* (Psalm 110:1). Psalm 45:6-7 records this: *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of joy more than Your fellows.* The apostle to the Messianic Jews applies this passage to Messiah, declaring that Yeshua is God, and that His Father is God (see Hebrews 1:8-9).

In Genesis 1:1-3 God (Elohim, which is a plural), the Spirit of God and the Word of God (and God said...), are all involved in the creation of the universe.

In Isaiah 48 One speaks who calls Himself the first and the last, and the One who founded the earth. He goes on to say that *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 48:12-16). The Creator who is speaking claims to have been sent by the Lord God and His Spirit!

In the Jewish Bible God is pictured sitting on His throne in Heaven, and at the same time He is present everywhere throughout the universe (*where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your Presence?* - Psalm 139:7), and at the same time the Spirit of God was dwelling in the prophets, and at the same time the Shechinah (God's Dwelling Presence, the Glory of God, the Holy Spirit) was manifested in the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 8:27)!

From time to time God manifested Himself as the enigmatic **Angel of the Lord**, a mysterious messenger being (angel means messenger) who appeared throughout our people's history. When He appeared this mysterious angel was treated as God Himself. He possessed divine prerogatives, He had divine authority, and He received divine worship. When Manoah, the father of Samson, finally realized that he was dealing with the Angel of the Lord, he said to his wife, *we shall surely die, for we have seen God* (Judges 13:21-22). In that same chapter, God is mentioned, the Angel of the Lord (who is called God), is mentioned, and the Spirit of God is mentioned. (See Genesis 16:7, 9, 11, Exodus 3:2-6, Judges 2:1-4, 6:11-22, for other appearances of this mysterious Angel of the Lord).

What about the Shema? Some have objected that the *Shema* (*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One* - Deut. 6:4) reveals that God can only be a simple unity. But there are two Hebrew words for "one" - "echad" and "yachid." "Echad," which is used to describe the oneness of God in the *Shema*, connotes a composite oneness, as in the unity of a husband and wife, which are said to be "one" flesh (Genesis 2:24). "Yachid," which is not used in the *Shema*, connotes an absolute oneness, as that of an only son (Genesis 22:2). The *Shema* teaches the unity of God, based on a oneness that allows for a composite Three-In-Oneness.

HaSheeloosh HaKadosh was clearly revealed by Messiah Yeshua:

God's singular/plural nature was hinted at, but not fully understood by the holy Jewish prophets and priests in the Tenach. It took the revelation of the Son of God to clearly and fully reveal God's Three-in-Oneness.

In many ways Messiah Yeshua claimed equality with God:

Messiah Yeshua did not hesitate to use the plural when speaking of Himself along with the Father. *We will come to Him and make Our abode with him* (John 14:23). *I and My Father are One* (John 10:30). He stated that the person who had seen Him had seen God (John 14:8-9). He told us that we are to be immersed in the name (singular) of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). When Yeshua told a group of Jewish leaders, *Before Abraham was, I Am* (John 8:58), He claimed to be the same eternal "I Am" God that appeared to Moses at the burning bush (See Exodus 3:14). He claimed to be omnipresent, which is only applicable to God. He stated that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, He is there in their midst (Matt. 18:20). He promised to be with each one of His followers to the end of time (Matt. 28:20). He claimed the attribute of omnipotence when He said that all authority in heaven and on earth has been entrusted to Him, and that He has power over all things (Matt. 28:18). Even though honor and worship is something that only God can receive, Yeshua instructed us that He was to be equally worshipped along with the Father. *All are to honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him* (John 5:23). He claimed to be the proper object of our faith, and that if we believed in Him we would live forever but if we didn't we would miss eternal life (John 3:16, 8:24).

Yeshua claimed to do mighty works that only God can do:

He claimed that He is the source of life (John 14:6), and that He gives eternal life to whom He wishes (John 5:2), when God alone is the Source and Giver of life. Even though God is the only one that prayer may be directed to, Yeshua claimed that He hears and answers prayers from all people at all times in all places. *Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If You ask Me anything in My name, I will do it* (John

14:13-14). He claimed that He sends the Holy Spirit (John 15:26), something that only God can do. He claimed that He indwells all believers (John 14:23), something that only God can do. He claimed that He will be the One who raises the dead on the Last Day (John 10:37-38, 11:25), something that only God will do. He claimed that on the Day of Judgement all human beings will appear before Him for their judgement (John 5:22, 27), something that only God will do. He claimed to have authority to forgive sins, something that only God can do (Luke 5:17-26).

Messiah Yeshua made these claims about Himself. By doing so He was the first to clearly reveal these truths about the unique unity of nature and relationship between Him and His Father. Then He proved His claims by doing signs and wonders and mighty acts of power that demonstrated that He was supernaturally sent and empowered by God. Yeshua demonstrated His power to heal. He showed His power to raise the dead. He demonstrated His power over nature. He manifested His power over Satan and all the hosts of hell. He proved that He had authority over His own life, authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. Since God would never allow a liar or a deceiver to be raised from the dead, Yeshua's resurrection from the dead was the final demonstration that everything that He said and did and claimed was done with God's blessing and approval, and that what Messiah Yeshua said was the absolute truth. That is why a leading rabbi like Nicodemus could say to Him: *Rabbi, we know that you come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him* (John 3:2). However, most of the Jewish leaders were not like good rabbi Nicodemus. Many were furious with Yeshua because they understood that He was a man who was making Himself out to be God (John 10:33). It was not Yeshua's claim to be the Messiah that led to His crucifixion; it was His claim to have equality with the Father, to be God in the flesh, that outraged the religious leaders of His day. They rejected His claim of oneness with God, which led to the most dire consequences in their own lives and the life of the entire nation of Israel that has lasted to this day.

Knowing that the Trinity was hinted at in the Tenach and made clear by Messiah Yeshua demonstrates that the Old and New Testaments are in perfect agreement, and that the New Testament is the true spiritual heir of the Old Testament.

Not only was the Three-in-Oneness of God hinted at in the Tenach (the Hebrew Scriptures), and made clear by Messiah Yeshua, but **His Jewish Apostles taught that Yeshua is God in human form, and therefore the Trinity is true:** Even though these Jewish men were trained in the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4 - *Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one*) and the first and second commandments, they state as absolute fact that Yeshua is the source of all life (something that is only true of God - see John 1:4, 5:21, 14:6). They claim that He created all things (see John 1:3). They taught that He preceded all things; that all things were created by Him and for Him; that He upholds all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col. 1:16-17, Hebrews 1:3). They claim that in the future Yeshua will first dissolve and then remake the entire universe (something that only God can do - see Heb. 1:10-12, Phil. 3:21, Rev. 21:5). They claim that like God, Messiah Yeshua is immutable - He never changes - He is the same yesterday, today and forever (see Heb. 13:8). They taught that Yeshua has the very form of God, which means He has God's essential attributes. He possesses inwardly and displays outwardly the very essence and nature of God; Messiah Yeshua is God's equal, and possesses complete equality with God (Phil. 2:6-8). They taught that Messiah Yeshua radiates God's glory and exactly represents God's nature (Heb. 1:3). They claim that the Lord God was pleased for all His fullness to dwell in Yeshua (Col. 1:19), and that in Yeshua all the fullness of God dwells in bodily form (Col. 2:9).

These Jewish apostles taught the Tri-une nature of God by the worship Messiah Yeshua receives:

It is very clear from Holy Scripture that God alone is to be worshipped. No man, woman, saint, angel, or any created being is ever to be worshipped. But these Jewish emissaries testify that since He is equal to God, Messiah Yeshua is to be worshipped by both angels and men: *Let all the angels of God worship Him* (Heb. 1:6). *Those who were with Him in the boat worshiped Him saying, You are certainly God's Son!* (Matt. 14:33). These apostles declare that

throughout eternity Messiah Yeshua will be worshipped by all created beings: *At the name of Yeshua every knee will bow of those who are in heaven, and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Phil. 2:10-11). *To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever* (Rev. 5:13).

The Tri-unity of God is seen by the titles these Jewish apostles call Him:

They called Him the Savior (a title which can only apply to God - see Is. 45:21, Acts 4:12, 2 Peter 2:20). They refer to Him as the Redeemer (which properly applies to the God of Israel - see Is. 41:14, Col. 1:14, Titus 2:13-14). Like the God of Israel, Yeshua is called the First and the Last (see Isaiah 44:6, Rev. 1:17). Like Israel's God, Yeshua is the Holy One of Israel (see Isaiah 43:14, Acts 3:14). They recognized that Yeshua is the unique Son of God, the One who bears the same divine nature as His Father (see Psalm 2:7-12, Matt. 16:16, 26:61-64).

These Jewish emissaries called Yeshua "Lord" in the Brit Chadasha (New Testament) with the same frequency and regularity that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is called "Lord" in the Tenach (Hebrew Scriptures). *Yes Lord, you know that I love you. Yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. Lord Yeshua receive my spirit. Believe in the Lord Yeshua and you shall be saved. And the Lord said "I am Yeshua." The grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah be with you. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Lord of all, the Lord of the living and the dead, the Lord of all who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.* These Jewish apostles are in complete agreement with the prophet Jeremiah who said that the Messiah's name ("name" means nature, essential characteristics) is "Adonai Tzidkaynu," "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Perhaps strongest of all, these Jewish apostles claimed that Messiah Yeshua was "God":

These Jewish men sent by the Master of the Universe claimed that Yeshua was eternally with God (*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God*), and that He is completely, totally, and fully identified as God, and that He is in fact God (*and the Word was God* - see John 1:1-2). *My Lord and my God* declared Thomas when he saw the resurrected Yeshua (John 20:28). The apostle to the Messianic Jews writes: *But of the Son He (God) says, Thy throne O God is forever and ever* (Heb 1:8). In other words, God the Father acknowledged that His Son was truly God.

The apostles looked forward to the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua (Titus 2:13). These Jewish apostles are in perfect harmony with the prophet Isaiah, who wrote that the Messiah will be the son that is born to us and "El Gibor," the "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

One modern rabbi made this observation: "Is your master God? For now I realize only God can demand of me what Yeshua is asking. (*A Rabbi Talks With Jesus*, Doubleday, 1993, pp. 53-54).

The attack on the doctrine of the Trinity in the fourth century by Arius and others was aimed at this claim to Messiah Yeshua's deity and therefore the doctrine of the Trinity. During the Arian controversy many of leaders of the Church met at Nicea and adopted a statement of faith dealing with the Three-in-One nature of God. *I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And I believe in one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, the only begotten Son of God. Born of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father. By whom all things were made.*

The Nicene Creed also declares that the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, is fully God, and equal to the Father and the Son: *And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified. For more than 1600 years this statement has stood as the final test of*

orthodoxy and genuine Biblical faith, for it condenses and expresses in theological language the teaching of both the Tenach and the New Testament, concerning Yeshua's divinity and the truth of God's Three-in-One nature.

How does the truth of the Trinity harmonize with the statement of Yeshua: *My Father is greater than I* (John 14:28)? The old theologians knew, and wrote in another creed: *He is equal to His Father as touching His Godhead; He is less than the Father as touching His manhood. Since God can never become less than Himself, it was impossible for Yeshua to surrender anything of His essential deity.* When God took upon Himself the nature of man, Yeshua did not become less than God. In the incarnation the Son of God added humanity (which was already made in God's image), but He did not diminish His essential deity. When Yeshua became a man He veiled His deity, but He did not void it.

God the Father, Messiah Yeshua, and the Spirit have a single will:

A popular belief among some Christians divides the work of God between the Three, assigning a specific part to each One. For instance, creation is attributed to the Father, redemption to the Son, and regeneration to the Holy Spirit. But God cannot divide Himself so that the Father works while the Son doesn't. The Tri-une God always works together. The smallest act is never done by One without the instant agreement of the other Two. Every act of God is done by the Trinity in perfect unity. Don't think of the Father, the Son and the Spirit conferring with one another, huddling together like some football team. Think rather of a perfect sharing of mind, a complete oneness of will, a total unity of purpose, an infinite unified wisdom, perfect mutual understanding, taking place instantaneously and eternally.

The Tri-une God works in perfect unity in all the mighty works that are done throughout the universe. The work of creation is attributed to the Father (Gen. 1:1), and to the Son (Col. 1:16), and to the Spirit (Gen. 1:2, Psalm 33:6). The Incarnation is shown to have been accomplished by the Father and the Son and the Spirit working in one accord, although only the Messiah became flesh to dwell among us (Luke 1:35). At Messiah's tevilah (baptism) the Son came up out of the water, the Spirit descended on Him, and the Father's voice spoke from heaven (Mt. 3:16-17). The resurrection of Messiah is likewise attributed to the Father (Acts 2:32), and to the Son (John 10:17-18), and to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4). One of the most beautiful descriptions of the work of atonement is found in Hebrews 9:14, where it is stated that Messiah Yeshua, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God. The salvation of each individual is shown by Simon Peter to be the work of the Holy Trinity. Peter informs us that we are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for the purpose that we may obey Messiah Yeshua (1 Pet. 1:2). Each child of God is said to be indwelt by the Three-in-One God. Messiah Yeshua promised us: *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He (the Spirit) may be with you forever... I will come to you... We (Yeshua and His Father) will come to you and make Our abode with you* (John 14:15-23).

The true Messianic Community has not hesitated to teach the Tri-unity of God. Without pretending to understand this mystery, the community of saints has given its witness to this revealed truth and repeated what the Holy Scriptures teach. Just as the presence of God was in the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day leading the people of Israel, declaring to all the world, "These are My people," so belief in the Trinity has since the days of the Apostles, shone above the true Messianic Community as she journeyed through the years. Purity and power have followed this faith. Under this banner have gone forth Jewish apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers, martyrs and songwriters, reformers and evangelists. God's approval and blessing has rested on their lives and labors. However they may have differed on minor matters, the knowledge of the Trinity bound them together. But error, heresy, apostasy and destruction have come to those who deny this Biblical truth. The mystery of the Holy Trinity. Understand it? Never! So humble your limited, finite human understanding, become like a child and simply believe what God has revealed in His Holy Scriptures about His Three-In-Oneness.

