



לשם יחוד קדשא בריך הוא ושכינתה, בדחילו ורחימו ליחד שם

**For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed is He,
and His Presence, in fear and love to unify the Name . . .**

Quoted from *The Complete Artscroll Siddur*¹ this prayer is stated as a “declaration of intent” every morning in the Orthodox Jewish community, before putting on the *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *tefillin* (phylacteries) in order to begin morning prayers—the *shacharit* service. To an observant Jewish man it would be unthinkable—practically sin—to begin a day without first making this proclamation to “unify the Name.”

The commentaries on this “unification” are many and varied. As with many teachings within the Jewish community, there is not always consensus among the sages. Quite the opposite in fact, one can find diverse opinions about many subjects while nonetheless maintaining a harmonious community (a laudable behavior many congregations and individuals would do well to emulate).

Yet most commentators will agree that this prayer has its origins in *kabbalism*. Kabbalism is what might be referred to as “deep mysticism” within the Jewish tradition. A Hasidic friend in of mine in Brooklyn warns me to, “stay away from that stuff. It drives people crazy!” Kabbalah’s roots are questionable and largely based upon what you *chose* to believe: did it begin in the second century as claimed, or is it an elaborate hoax perpetrated in the 13th century? Regretfully, we do not have the time or space to explore that subject.

Rather, this prayer to “unify the Name” which is only one of many similar prayers, points to an enigma within Hebraic literature and later Christian apologetics: a single godhead comprised of more than one expressions.

The Church calls it the “Trinity,” a contraction of the words “tri” for three, and “unity.” While this word—Trinity—never appears in the Scripture, either the Older or Newer Testaments, it is a word that seems to express a biblical mystery the Jewish people had to grapple with long before the Messiah was manifest or any institution like “the church” came into being. It was Hebraic thought.

Elohim • אלהים

We find our first glimpse of this composite unity in the creation account: “In the beginning God” (*Berisheet*/Genesis 1:1). This is the first revelation to man of who God is—*Elohim* (אלהים). It is a proper noun mysteriously written and spoken in the masculine plural form. In fact, it isn’t until the creation of man that God reveals Himself as *yud-hay-vav-hay* (יהוה), popularly pronounced Jehovah or Yahweh. Throughout the *Tanakh*

(Hebrew Scriptures) His Name is interchangeable along with many other names: *El Shaddai*, *El Elyon*, *Emmanuel*, and so on (God Almighty, God Most High, God With Us).

The puzzle pops up in Bereshit 1:26 which reads, “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” “God” here is once again *Elohim*, speaking further in the plural. Most commentaries take this to mean that God was speaking in the majestic sense of “we,” or He was speaking to the angelic court (even though they had no part in man’s creation). One Jewish commentary reads:

Christian theology generally takes the phrase to indicate the triune nature of God.²

It would not be fair to read into this statement, but it is curious that the Jewish commentary does not use the word “Trinity,” but an even more accurate term, “triune.”

***Echad* • אחד**

This mystery shows up again in the holiest or prayers among the Jewish people and of the greatest repute with *Yeshua*—the *Shema*. From *Devarim*/Deuteronomy 6:4 we read:

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

This is repeated many times throughout every workday in Jewish life, and on every Sabbath and High Holy Day celebration. The remarkable word within this verse however is what has been translated as “one.” In Hebrew, the word is *echad* (אחד). There are two Hebrew words for “one.” The first is *yachid*, and it literally means a singular “one.” The second is in our verse, *echad*, and it represents a compound unity.

“The Lord our God, the Lord is One” (stressing the unity of God) or “The Lord our God is one Lord” (that is, neither divisible nor to be coupled with other deities, like Zeus with Jupiter).³

This “oneness” is mirrored in the relationship between husband and wife. When the two become “one” flesh in Genesis 2:24, the vocabulary used is *echad*. It appears again and again in the Hebrew Scriptures and whether referring to two people or the entire assembly of Israel, *echad* is used.

This “oneness” in relation to God’s nature emerges throughout Jewish literature as both fact and spiritual mystery.

Extra-biblical Hebraic theology

One the most notable appearances is in Maimonides’ *Thirteen Principles of Faith*.

I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is One only and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, is, and will be (Mishna, Sanhedrin 10).

The *Zohar*, a multi-volume commentary potentially reflecting second-century thought, contains quite a bit of information on the mystery three-in-one.

How can three be One?
 Are they verily One, because we call them One?
 How can three be One, can only be known through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.
 (vol. 2, p. 43, versa, p. 22)

And again in the *Zohar* we read:

The Ancient Holy One is revealed with three Heads, which are united in One, and that Head is thrice exalted. The Ancient Holy One is described as being Three; it is because the other Lights emanating from Him are included in the Three. Yet the Ancient One is described as being two (Daniel 7:13). The Ancient One includes these two. He is the Crown of all that is exalted; the Chief of the chief, so exalted, that He cannot be known to perfection. Thus the other lights are two complete ones, yet is the Ancient Holy One described and complete as one, and He is one, positively one; thus are the other lights united and glorified in one; because they are one. (vol. 3, p. 288, Amsterdam Edition)

In Hebraic literature like the *Zohar*, or commentaries by *Onkelos* (contemporaries of Yeshua's apostles), one will encounter the term *Metatron* (מטטרון). The *Metatron* is called "the middle pillar," because the sages hardly knew what else to do with "him." The first pillar is identified as the "Father, God Almighty." The third pillar is clearly identified as the Holy Spirit. But this middle pillar of the godhead caused the sages no small measure of consternation. He appears to be distinct from the Father and from the Spirit, yet manifests many of Their characteristics—while at the same time, revealing unique characteristics all His own. The *Zohar* even goes so far as to call the Metatron the "first begotten of God"

This servant is *Metatron*, the eldest of His [God's] house, who is the first-begotten of all creatures of God, who is the ruler of all He has; because God has committed to Him the government over all His hosts. (*Zohar*, Genesis, p. 126).

In 135 of the common era, Rabbi Akiva lead an uprising known as the *Bar Kochba* revolt. While his armies were defeated, and the Holy Land so decimated by the Roman Empire that it was no longer called "Israel," Rabbi Akiva's works are still required study in the Hebrew Yeshivas of today. Here are some of the titles he ascribed to this middle pillar, the *Metatron*:

Metatron is the Angel, the Prince of God's countenance; the Angel, the Prince of the Torah; the Angel, the Prince of might; the Angel, the Prince of Glory; the Angel, the Prince of the temple; the Angel, the Prince of Kings; the Angel, the Prince of lords; the Angel, the Prince of the high, exalted, mighty Princes in the heavens and on the earth (p. 11, col. 3).

This leaves little doubt in the mind of a Messianic believer that the theoretical, theological *Metatron* is *Yeshua HaMoshiach*—Jesus the Messiah—the Middle Pillar of the triune godhead.

It is beyond the scope of this document to detail all the evidence within the myriad of Hebrew literature and theology of a composite, unified, godhead. Hopefully, however, this gives enough solid background to realize that the Christian Trinity is not Christian in origin. It was not invented by post-Jewish, Gentile scholars of the early Church, but was borrowed and brought to a fuller understanding through the *B'rit Chadeshah* (New Testament).

So what happened?

The logical question therefore, is “What happened? Why is this not better known in Jewish circles?”

Because the majority of the Jewish community does not acknowledge *Yeshua* (Jesus) as the Middle Pillar, the *Metatron*, the Promised One, or the Messiah of Israel. They may have a good outline of “a” godhead, but they lack the whole picture. Being ignorant of one aspect, they remain ignorant of the whole. It would be like having the pieces of a puzzle poured out in front of you, and missing a key piece to bring it all together. You could make all variety of conjectures, but you still would not *know*.

Who holds that missing piece? You do. If you believe that *Yeshua* is the Promised One, who died and rose again removing the curse of everlasting death, then you hold the missing piece. There are Jewish people in your community, within your circle of friends who have no idea they have a puzzle in front of them, let alone that they are missing a crucial piece. You can be a blessing to them and share your piece of the puzzle, or you can keep your toys all to yourself. The choice is yours, but I pray that you would have the heart of Paul.

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for [their] salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:1-3).

May the Lord's peace be upon you.



BIBLIOGRAPHY:

The Great Mystery: How Can Three Be One?, by Rabbi Tziv Nassi, ©1990, Messianic Literature Outreach, PO Box 37062, Cincinnati, OH 45222

¹ *The Artscroll Mesorah Series*, ©1992, p. 5

² *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, NY, ©1981, p. 19

³ *ibid.* p. 1366