

The “Holy Trinity” through the Looking-Glass of Judaism

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Introduction

Among topics most thoroughly discussed in scholarly Christian circles, the “Holy Trinity” is one of the leaders of the pack. From the times of the councils appointed by Constantine, the first Christian Caesar, in the early fourth century in the city of Nicaea (Iznik, in modern Turkey), the debate over the legitimacy of this “Holy Trinity” hasn’t been silenced even for a moment as the doctrine has been

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defined, transfigured and transformed over and over again throughout the generations. Today we have also achieved a certain maturity that allows us to open the subject for discussion, even if the discussion is conducted among us with the same militancy that characterized the darker periods of the cellars of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition. The truth is that we could say the *Shehechyanu* for the willingness to discuss the subject and give our brothers in the faith an opportunity to share from their hearts.

In order to discuss the topic, it is necessary to distinguish between three stages. The first stage is the findings provided by the Holy Scriptures. The second stage is the developments that occurred in the Christian world throughout the generations, and their connection to Jews and Judaism. The third stage is not connected at all to Christianity: it relates to the Jewish understanding of biblical texts that serve the Jewish world as well as Christianity, towards the justification of their positions. It is worthwhile reviewing some of the basic rules in the field of the discussion and research of Scripture and of ancient religions such as Christianity and Judaism:

Body of the Lecture

1. The principle woven throughout all the Scriptures, without exception, is the faith in one, single God. Any man that worships or serves more than one God is by definition a heathen and an idol worshipper.
 1. The Scriptures recognize that God has a Son (see Psalm 2, Proverbs 30:4, 2 Samuel 7).
 2. The Scriptures also recognize the existence of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10-11, Psalm 51:11).
2. The Hebrew Scriptures clearly reveal that there is one God, who has many names: God, Lord (the Tetragrammaton), Everlasting Father, God Almighty, El Shaddai, the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty One of Jacob, the Fear of Isaac, the Rock of Israel, and many others.
3. Despite the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures recognize the fact that God has a Son, and also a Spirit, this

does not challenge the faith in one single God, just as Isaiah stated so clearly: "I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form **אל** (El) and **אלהים** (Elohim) the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things" (Isaiah 45:5-7).

4. The Scriptures clearly write that God can descend to earth: "Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up" (Exodus 19:20). This is not the only place which clearly states that God descended to earth, and there is no doubt that God can appear as a man in every way, and can even walk among men.
 1. In Judaism it is no problem to call God "Father" or "my Father": "For you are our Father, for Abraham did not know us and Israel did not recognize us. You are God our Father our Redeemer, Your name is from eternity."
 2. Judaism also has no problem calling the Messiah "Y.H.W.H": "Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord (Y.H.W.H) our Righteousness."
 3. The Midrash says regarding these verses: "Rabbi Yonatan said, 'There are three entities that will be called in the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and they are- the saints, Messiah, and Jerusalem. *The saints as it is said; Messiah as it is written and this is His name by which He shall be called "The Lord our Righteousness"; Jerusalem as it is written: "All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits; and the name of the city from that day shall be: The Lord is There". 'A day will come', said Rabbi Elazar, 'and it shall be said before the saints "Holy," in the way that it is said before the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is said, that it shall be that those who remain in Zion and those who are left in Jerusalem shall be called holy.*'" (The Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 75:2).
 4. The Sages of Judaism have no problem calling the Messiah as Jeremiah the prophet called Him: "The Lord our Righteousness!" And also we should have no problem calling the Messiah "The Lord our Righteousness."
 5. The title "Son of God" is not unusual in the framework of the Law and the Prophets. The title "sons of God" in the plural, appears many times, already in the book of Genesis. The most important text in this regard is found in Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." The commentary on this verse is highly varied, but there is no doubt that when the Sages apply this verse to King Hezekiah, they are trying to avoid the logical conclusion that this verse is speaking here about the "Messiah" and not about King Hezekiah, who became corrupt in his later days. The Sages tried to find a way out by applying the verse to King Hezekiah. How could the Sages attribute such titles to Hezekiah? Such a thing is difficult to accept. There is no doubt that the prophet knew from the mouth of the Almighty that a child would be born in Israel that could be called "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father" and "Prince of Peace."

Premise No. 1

According to the Scriptures and the Sages, as Jews we have no problem preserving the unity of God and at the same time believing in a Messiah who is Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Lord our Righteousness, as well as other important titles attributed to Him. In the same way, we have no problem believing and teaching that the Messiah is in every sense flesh and blood, and in every sense God.

One can bring proofs from Kabbalistic literature, such as the *Zohar*. They can be found in a booklet called "The Secret of the Three," but there is no need to bring proofs from literature that we reject and whose value we negate for every other purpose. The Hebrew Bible and the New Covenant suffice for me, and I have no need for help from sources such as the Kabala in order to know that Yeshua is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, an inseparable part of the Father; the Father and the Son, together with the Holy Spirit, are revealed to mankind as one single, unique God.

The question is this: Why do we insist on accepting explanations to dilemmas that arise from the connection between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, from a tradition which fundamentally rejects Israel, hates Jews, and does not take into account the principal foundations of the Law and the Prophets? Why, as Jews in the Land of Israel, after 2,000 years of dispersion, can we not determine our own fate on the basis of the Holy Scriptures alone?

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Premise No. 2

How is it possible to believe in one God, as the Scriptures teach, and nonetheless believe that Yeshua is God? Here are a number of guidelines that will help us understand Yeshua as God without offending that which is sacred to the people of Israel, as revealed to our forefathers in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Covenant: The apostle is equal to the one who sends him (with regards to an apostle who has received apostolic authority from the one who sent him, in order to execute a role on behalf of his sender).

1. Every apostle does the will of his sender and not his own.
2. An apostle speaks in the first person while representing his sender. We see this with the prophets of Israel who speak in the first person, as though they themselves are God.
3. That which is clearly stated in the Scriptures has greater value than that which is not expressly written. Conclusions that require cross-study of various Scriptures and the use of commentaries cannot be given greater weight,
4. "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5:43). "Yeshua answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority'" (John 7:6-7). There are many other places which clearly teach

that Yeshua was sent by the Father and received full authority to be 100% God in the flesh and dwell amongst us, clothed in slave's garments like us (See 2 Philippians 6-9).

5. "Therefore the Lord says, The Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, 'Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries, and take vengeance on My enemies. I will turn My hand against you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away all your alloy" (Isaiah :24-25). "'Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,' says the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth' " (Jeremiah :8-9).

The doctrine of the Trinity is not expressly written in the New Covenant. It is the result of discussions held for the first time in Nicaea in 325 CE, and again in the year 333 CE. Discussions and divisions continued regarding the new doctrine of the Trinity, some even leading to death sentences. There are other traditions and doctrines that are not expressly written in the Scriptures, whose significance to the Christian tradition is great, although they are not at all mentioned in the Scriptures. The Christian holidays, for example, whose significance in the Christian tradition is very great, although there is no hint of them in the Scriptures.

Premise No. 3

The following are clearly written in the New Covenant:

1. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism; **one God and Father of all**, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4- 5).
2. "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and **one Lord, Messiah Yeshua**, through whom are all things, and through whom we live" (1 Corinthians 8:6).
3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2).

In light of the Scriptures and for the sake of the truth and our testimony to the people of Israel, we must examine the Holy Scriptures, and not accept the Christian traditions and the Christian articles of faith as binding upon the body of Messiah in the Land of Israel or in the world at large.

Conclusion

In each of these texts, and in many others, the clearest element is the unity of the God of Israel. He is one just as stated in the reading of the "Shema." In light of the Scriptures and for the sake of the truth and our testimony to the people of Israel, we must examine the Holy Scriptures, and not accept the Christian traditions and the Christian articles of faith as binding upon the body of Messiah in the Land of Israel or in the world at large.