

The Bible describes God as a 'composite' unity



Big picture: The Bible presents the oneness of God in a way that supports the doctrine of the Trinity by using a 'composite' unity that carries both the idea of the oneness of God who is at the same time a unity of persons.

1. Yachid is a Hebrew word for 'one' that would have been perfect to describe a unitarian God

When understanding concepts in the Bible, language is important. In earlier articles we have seen that words for God, "Elohim" and "Adonai", are both plural nouns¹ and we saw God's use of the "royal we" or first-person plural pronoun. These two aspects of language show us something fundamental about the nature of God². Alongside these examples is a word the Bible uses to describe the oneness of God.



In Hebrew there are a number of different words for "one"³ and it can be argued that if the author of the Bible wanted to make the case that God in his fundamental being is a single person, the Hebrew word yachid would be a good choice. In the Bible yachid is used to describe a single person, like an only child (see [Genesis 22:2](#) and [Judges 11:34](#)) or one who is alone (See [Psalms 35:17](#) and [Proverbs 4:3](#)). This would be a perfect word for the Bible to use when making declarative statements about God if he were not triune. Yet as Dr. Robert A. Morey points out in his book, 'the Trinity', "The authors of Scripture never applied yachid to God. They never described God as a solitary person. This is quite damaging to the Unitarian position."⁴ At the same time, Dr Michael L Brown, a Messianic scholar, goes as far as to state "there is not a single verse anywhere in the Bible that clearly or directly states that God is an absolute unity"⁵.

2. The Bible uses echad for the oneness of God, a word that describes a compound unity

Yet in the Shema ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#)) which is probably the most foundational verse declaring the oneness of God, a different Hebrew word is used. The word for 'one' in the phrase, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.", is the word echad, which in many places is used as a "compound unity", i.e. a unity made of composite parts.

There are many examples of where echad is used in this way⁶. However, one profound example is [Genesis 2:24](#). The proceeding chapter describes mankind being created in the image of God, both male and female⁷. Genesis chapter two then zooming into the creation story⁸ tells us that after Adam, it was declared that "it is not good for the man to be alone." This gives rise to the creation of Eve from v20b. In [Genesis 2:24](#) we are then told that the two were joined as a married couple and specifically become "one flesh". The word here for 'one' is echad describing two individuals united together as a single unit or a 'composite unity'. Given the context of this unity in first two chapters of the book, it is not a stretch to conclude that we are being told something of the nature of the God in whose image we are made.

The question arises why modern Jews then believe in a unitarian God if the key verse about God's oneness uses echad and not yachid? The Christian writer David L Cooper notes that one reason a modern Jewish understanding of God fits closer to the meaning of yachid not echad arises from the teachings of Moses Maimonides, an influential Jewish scholar of the 13th century⁹. In his "13 articles of faith", he specifically used the word yachid to describe the unity of God even though it is never used in scripture¹⁰. His ideas are still influential among modern Jews¹¹.

3. The Quran uses a similar compound unity in its key description of the oneness of Allah

When it comes to the Quran's presentation of the oneness of God there is a similar discrepancy between what Muslims believe about the oneness of Allah and the key verse of the Quran on the topic. In the Quran the key verse that states the oneness of Allah is [Quran 112:1](#), which translates as "Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One". The word for 'One' in this verse however is *ahad* which means literally "one of". Obviously translating the verse literally would put translator in a difficult situation as to imply Allah is one of other deities is to commit shirk, the unforgivable sin¹².

The author of the Quran could have avoided the issue either by inserting a definite article before *ahad* to make *al-ahad*, which would render the phrase "Say, he is Allah, the One", or used a different Arabic word, *wahid*, which means "absolute one" and makes up one of the 99 names of Allah¹³.

Interestingly the Quran uses *wahid* in many places to describe the doctrine on the oneness of Allah¹⁴, but wherever *ahad* is used, it means "one of". [Quran 2:96](#) says for example, "And you will surely find them the most greedy of people for life - [even] more than those who associate others with Allah. One of them (*ahaduhum*) wishes that he could be granted life a thousand years, but it would not remove him in the least from the [coming] punishment that he should be granted life. And Allah is Seeing of what they do."¹⁵

One reason the Quran included *ahad* in [Quran 112:1](#) may have been because according to the Hadith¹⁶ Mohammed would hear the Jews recite the Torah. It may have been that he wanted to adopt the Arabic equivalent of the Jewish Shahada to gain favour with the Jews of his day.

4. The way Jesus is presented in the New Testament is perfectly consistent with the Old Testament's view of the oneness of God

When it comes to the New Testament there is a consistency with the presentation of oneness of God with the Old Testament especially when considering Christ's identity.

In the first part of [John 10](#) Jesus declares himself to be the Good Shepherd. This is intended not just to describe the work he came to do but also his identity. When read the claim to be the Good Shepherd in the light [Ezekiel 34:11-16](#), we see it is clearly a claim to be God. Then in [John 10:22-24](#), when pressed to confirm his identity by the Jewish leaders, Jesus focuses on his relationship he has with the Father. But not only does Jesus continue to draw parallels from [Ezekiel 34](#) but lands in [John 10:30](#) with a statement that is intended to mirror the Shema in [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), "I and the Father are one." It is clear that this is what Jesus intended them to hear in their response to accuse him of blasphemy as seek to stone him to death.

Another example is when Paul in [1 Corinthians 8:6](#) speaks of the relationship of the Father to the Son again using the Shema as a template to show us clearly who Christ is: "yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." Paul's statement is clear designed to match the way the Shema mentions "the LORD" twice and wanting to understand clearly his reference includes the phrase, "from/through whom all things came" to show that he is presenting one God with a plurality of persons.

While our Muslim friends may argue that a non-Trinitarian God fits better with the declarations of the oneness of God in the Old Testament and the Quran, these two examples show the New Testament is actually more faithful to the idea of one God that has in his nature more than person.

References

1. ¹ See "The OT's majestic plural shows us God is a plurality"
2. ² See "The Bible starts with the Trinity"
3. ³ *ish, islah, nephesh, yachid, almoni, echad, gam, badad, chad*, see <https://answering-islam.org/Trinity/-morey7.html>
4. ⁴ The TRINITY, Morey, Dr. Robert A. Chapter 7 (see link above)
5. ⁵ Brown, Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Theological Objections [Baker Books, Grand Rapids MI, 2000], Volume Two, p. 4

6. 6 For example, Genesis 11:6 describes the people as one (echad), Genesis 34:16 and Genesis 34:22 notes that the Shechemites wanted to become "one (echad) people" with the Jews and in Genesis 41:25-26 Pharoah's two dreams are said by Joseph to be one and the same (echad).
7. 7 Genesis 1:26-27
8. 8 Rather than contradicting each other Genesis 1 presents a "wide-angle" view of the creation while chapter two presents a garden-level or zoomed-in view.
9. 9 The Eternal God Revealing Himself to Suffering Israel and to Lost Humanity, David L Cooper See: https://www.biblicalresearch.info/The_Eternal_God_Revealing_Himself_to_Suffering_Israel_and_to_Lost_Humanity.pdf page 43
10. 10 https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Shloshah-Asar_Ikkarim/Yachid/yachid.html
11. 11 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maimonides#Influence>
12. 12 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirk_\(Islam\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirk_(Islam))
13. 13 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahid>
14. 14 E.g. Quran 2.133, Quran 4.171 and Quran 6.19
15. 15 Many other examples are listed here: <https://www.answering-islam.org/Shamoun/ahad.htm>
16. 16 E.g. Bukhari 4556