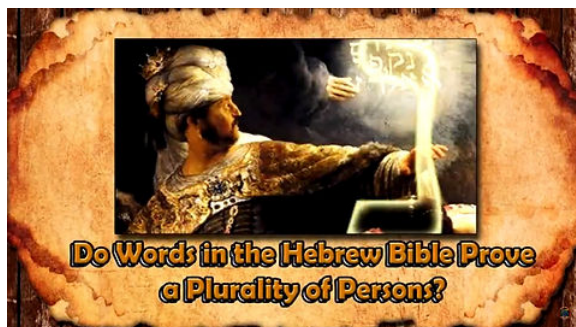# GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES
A Defense of the Apostolic Christian Faith

Do Words in the Hebrew Bible Prove a Plurality of Persons?

Trinitarian apologist Ethan Smith sent me this email dated October 5th 2016,
"Clearly it doesn't matter to you if I can find specific plural nouns/references in the Hebrew applied to God; the very ones you claim NEVER OCCUR. You're so obviously closed minded."

"Then what do you do with all the PLURAL nouns, pronouns and verbs applied to Jehovah in the Old Testament? Here's a portion from Anthony Roger's article *(http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/rogers/ot_trinity.html)*:"

"The doctrine of the Trinity is interwoven throughout the entire warp and woof of the Old Testament; it is not merely found in a discrete passage or proof-text here and there. For example, from the beginning to the end of the Old Testament, plural nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives are regularly used for God, at least in the Hebrew text. A cursory list follows:"
- The word Elohim is used thousands of times for "God"; Adonai is used hundreds of times for "Lord"; both of these words are plural nouns in Hebrew.

Oneness Response:

Plural Hebrew words with a Singular Meaning

Sir Anthony Buzzard is a Hebrew scholar who posted this link *(http://1godhumanjesus.blogspot.com/)* to show that many Hebrew words are in the plural form, but can have singular meaning.

"Here are some words that are plural in form, but can be singular (at times in meaning). This is obviously not an exhaustive list *(From http://1godhumanjesus.blogspot.com/)*:"
- Heaven (shah'mah'yim)
- Life (chaim)
- Water (mayim)
- Face (panim)
- Holy One (kedoshim)
- Teacher (morim)
- Maker (osim)
- Husband (baalim)
- Most High (elyonin, Aramaic)

"The great sea dragon Leviathan is also known as Tanninim or Tannim (plurals; **Gen 1:21**; **Isa 51:9**; **Ezek 32:2**; **Ps 74:13**; **Job 7:12**)." *(From http://1godhumanjesus.blogspot.com/)*

"Physical things like "water" or "sky/heaven" or a human "face" are said to be plural in Hebrew because they have several dimensions to them, because they are not inherently static and always moving; their expressions are constantly shifting or altering; changing facets. There are different kinds of waters *(mayim)* and sky *(shamayim)*. And your face *(panim)* can convey numerous moods, intensities or frames of mind. Life *(lives)* is also a plural *(chayim)*." *(From http://1godhumanjesus.blogspot.com/)*

"Some nouns which denote actions, when viewed as a series of activities, are also spoken of in plural terms. For example, the words "deliverance/salvation" *(yeshuah)*, "parental love" *(racham)*, or "steadfast love" *(hesed)* at times appear as yeshuot *(feminine plural)*, rachamim, and hasadim. These are attributes of the boundless works of God that are done on behalf of his people." *(From http://1godhumanjesus.blogspot.com/)*

The word "Elohim" is also used for Moses as an "Elohim unto Pharaoh" *(Exodus 7:1)* and the Philistine fish god Dagon in 1 Samuel 5:7 is called "Elohim". Are you prepared to suggest that Moses and Dagon (with one head) are actually a plurality of persons because they are called Elohim in the Bible? I could go on and on. Judges 6:31 says, "If Baal really is a god *(Elohim)*, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar". In Judges 11:24, the pagan god Chemosh is also called Elohim. If Elohim proves a plurality of persons, then why is Moses, Dagon, Baal, and Chemosh also called Elohim as single entities?

Trinitarian apologist Ethan Smith further wrote,
- A number of passages speak of the "faces" or "presences" or "persons" of God (Exodus 33:14; Deuteronomy 4:37; and Job 13:8).

Oneness Response: The same Hebrew words that express personhood for God also express personhood for individual human beings. Are we to presume that Abraham is a multi-personal being in Genesis 24:9-10 because the Hebrew text uses the plural noun "adon"? Was Potiphar a Multi-personal being in Genesis 39:2 (adon)?

Since you falsely alleged that Job 13:8 should read "persons" in the plural, I will focus on this specific verse. The Hebrew word translated as "Him" or "Person" is Panim *(pronounced - paw-neem')* which literally means "before", but the word is from panah which can mean "face" or "faces", (by

extension, person or persons) depending upon the context. All of the modern translations I checked translated Job 13:8 as "Him" for God rather than Persons. The KJV reads, "Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God?" Therefore the context Job 13 clearly proves that God is addressed as a "Him" or a single "Person".

Genesis 4:5-6 NIV, "but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face (Panim) was downcast." Most translations say "countenance" but some say "face". If "Panim" meant a plurality of faces for the One true God, then why does Genesis 4:5 speak of Cain having one "Panim" as one "face" or "countenance"?

Genesis 4:6
HEB: וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ פָנֶיךָ - Paneh
NAS: And why has your countenance fallen?
KJV: Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?
INT: Why fallen has your countenance

Mr Smith further wrote,
- God refers to Himself as "Us," "Our," and "We" (Genesis 1:26, 2:18 (LXX), 3:22, 11:7; Isaiah 6:8, and 41:21-24),2 a phenomenon that is reflected in virtually every English translation.

Oneness Response: No Trinitarian can prove that any of the above passages are speaking about God as an "US", "OUR" or "WE". In fact, the context of Genesis 3:22-24 informs us that God was addressing the angels, as verse 24 states that God then "stationed the cherubim" "to guard the way to the tree of life".

"…22Then the LORD God said, "Behold, **the man has become like one of us** *(the original Hebrew does not capitalize Us)*, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- 23therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden **He stationed the cherubim** and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.…" Genesis 3:22-24

God addressed the angels as "us" in Isaiah 6:1-7, "I saw **the Lord sitting on a** <u>throne</u>, lofty and exalted, with the train of **His robe** filling the temple. 2**Seraphim stood above Him**, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew .3And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."4And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke … 6Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."8Then I **heard** <u>the voice</u> **of the Lord**, saying, "**Whom shall I send, and who will go for US** *(the Hebrew text does not capitalize "Us" as this is just plain Trinitarian eisegesis)*?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

The context of Isaiah chapter six proves that the Most High God sat alone on a single throne and that the angels were communing with only One Divine Individual on that one throne. So who was God addressing when He said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The context of Isaiah 6:1-7 proves that there was only One God Person in view and a host of angels who were communing with Him (not "them" as you falsely suppose).

Mr Smith further wrote,
- The OT says of God, "they caused me to wander" (Genesis 20:13), "they appeared" (Genesis 35:7), "they drew nigh" (Deuteronomy 4:7), "they went" (2 Samuel 7:23), and "they judge" (Psalm 58:11).

Oneness Response: I see no justification for translating "taah" as a plural "they" in any of the above passages. Nor do I say any Hebrew words in the context of these passages to justify the word "they" being used. That is why every single respectable Hebrew translator never translated any of these passages as "they" in any of the above texts. While "taah (taw-aw) literally means "wander" according to Strong's and "to err" according to the NAS Concordance, it is the context of the particular passage that determines whether a "they" or a "He" is the cause of the "wandering" or "erring". Psalm 107:4 says, "they wandered (taah) in the wilderness," but the context proves that the Israelites were the people who wondered rather than God Himself. In contradistinction, "taah" is used for single individuals and a donkey wandering.

Genesis 21:14
HEB: וַיְשַׁלְּחֶהָ וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּתַע בְּמִדְבַּר בְּאֵר
NAS: And she departed and **wandered** about in the wilderness …

Genesis 37:15
HEB: אִישׁ וְהִנֵּה תֹעֶה בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּשְׁאָלֵהוּ
NAS: him, and behold, **he was wandering** in the field; …

Exodus 23:4
HEB: אוֹ חֲמֹרוֹ תֹּעֶה הָשֵׁב תְּשִׁיבֶנּוּ
NAS: **his donkey wandering away**, you shall surely …

Here we can clearly see that "taah (taw-aw) can be used for a single individual wandering rather than a plurality of persons. Therefore it is the context of each particular passage that determines whether a singular person or a plurality of persons is intended.

Mr Smith further wrote,
- The OT calls God our "Creators" (Ecclesiastes 12:1), "Makers" and "Husbands" (Job 35:10; Psalm 149:2; Isaiah 54:5).

Oneness Response: Creator is translated from "bara" (baw-raw') which has a wide range of meanings depending upon the context it is used in. Bara can be translated as to "choose" or to "create". The context determines whether it is translated as "maker", "create", "created", "creator", "creators", "choose", "choosers" and so forth. 2 Samuel 12:17 states that David "would not choose (bara) for food". HEB: אָבָה וְלֹא בָרָה אִתָּם לָחֶם INT: "would not choose for food". Notice that "bara" is connected with a single person (King David) who chose not to eat food while fasting for his first new-born son through Bathsheba who later died. Since "bara" is connected with a single person (King David), it is ridiculous to suggest that "bara" should be translated for a plurality of persons choosing, making, or creating.

The same is true in Ezekiel 21:19 where God tells Ezekiel,
"As for you, son of man, make (bara) two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make (bara) a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city."

Notice again that "bara" is connected with a single person (Ezekiel) making (creating) "a signpost." Could Ezekiel have been a plurality of persons because "bara" was used in Ezekiel 21:19?

The context of the above passages *(Eccl. 12:1, Job 35:10, Psalm 149:2, and Isaiah 54:5)*, are clearly addressing God as our single Creator or Maker.

It is hard to imagine how Isaiah 54:5 could be translated as "husbands" in the plural because "husband" in Hebrew is "baal" (baw-al') which is the same word used for a woman being married to one husband in Proverbs 30:23 - HEB: שְׂנוּאָה כִּי תִבָּעֵל וְשִׁפְחָה כִּי NAS: "woman when she gets a husband (baal)". KJV: "For an odious [woman] when she is married (baal)" Just as no Hebrew woman could lawfully be married to two husbands at once, so the true bride of Christ can only be married to One God who came to save us as Jesus Christ (who is the Father incarnate).

Mr Smith further wrote,
- The OT says that God is "holy" (Joshua 24:19; Proverbs 9:10, 30:33), another plural.

Oneness Response: The same Hebrew word for "holy" qadosh (kaw-doshe') is used for both God in Joshua 24:19 and for the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings 4:9.

2 Kings 4:8-9, "8Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food. 9She said **to her husband,** "Behold now, I perceive that this **is a holy** (qadosh) **man of God** passing by us continually."

Trinitarian apologist Edward Dalcour

Trinitarian apologist Dr Edward Dalcour gave a lecture at the Florida Herald Society Conference in 2016 in which he falsely alleged that God is a plurality of Makers and Husbands according to Isaiah 54:5 and Ecclesiastes 12:1. Yet even Trinitarian Hebrew scholars refute Edward Dalcour's bogus rendering of Isaiah 54:5.

Barnes Commentary on the Old and New Testament

Barnes Commentary (written by a Trinitarian Hebrew scholar) says,
"For thy Maker is thine husband - Both these words, 'maker' and 'husband', in the Hebrew are in the plural number. But the form is evidently the pluralis excellentiae *(plurality of excellency)* - a form denoting majesty and honor (see 1 Samuel 19:13; 1 Samuel 19:16; Psalm149:2; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 30:3; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Hosea 12:1). Here it refers to 'Yahweh of hosts,' necessarily in the singular, as Yahweh is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). No argument can be drawn from this phrase to prove that there is a distinction of persons in the Godhead, as the form is so often used evidently with a singular signification. That the words here properly have a singular signification was the evident understanding of the ancient interpreters. Thus Jerome Quia dominabitur tui qui fecit te - 'Because he shall rule over thee who made thee' So the Septuagint, Ὅτι κύριος ὁ ποιῶν σε, κ.τ.λ. Hoti kurios ho poiōn se, etc. 'For the Lord who made thee, the Lord of Sabaoth,' etc. So the Chaldee and the Syriac. Lowth renders it, 'For thy husband is thy Maker.' The word rendered 'husband,' from בעל baʿal, denotes properly the lord, maker, or ruler of anyone; or the owner of anything. It often, however, means, to be a husband (Deuteronomy 21:13; Deuteronomy 24:1; Isaiah 62:5; Malachi 2:11), and is evidently used in that sense here. The idea is, that Yahweh would sustain to his people the relation of a husband; that he who had made them, who had originated all their laws and institutions, and moulded them as a people (see the note at Isaiah 43:1), would now take his church under his protection and care (see the notes at Isaiah 62:5)."

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

Under Isaiah 54:5 the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary says,
"That God was Israel's "Maker" both as individuals and as the theocratic kingdom, is the pledge of assurance that He will be her Redeemer (Isa 43:1-3). Hebrew, "makers … husbands"; plural for singular, to denote excellency."

Adam Clark's Bible Commentary

Adam Clark's Commentary *(at Ecclesiastes 12:1)* says, "The evidence, therefore, that this text is supposed to give to the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, is but precarious, and on it, little stress can be laid; and no man who loves truth would wish to support it by **dubious witnesses**. **Injudicious men**, by laying stress on texts dubious in themselves, and which may be interpreted a different way, greatly injure the true faith."

What better evidence is there to present other than the evidence written by Trinitarian scholars themselves? I could not have articulated the scriptural evidence any better than the Trinitarian scholars who wrote commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures. Since the Trinitarian scholars who wrote commentaries on the Hebrew Bible would know more about the Hebrew language than Trinitarian apologists who have not extensively studied Hebrew, Trinitarian apologists who make the claim that some Hebrew words prove a plurality of persons are indeed "injudicious" and "dubious witnesses" for Trinitarian theology.

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