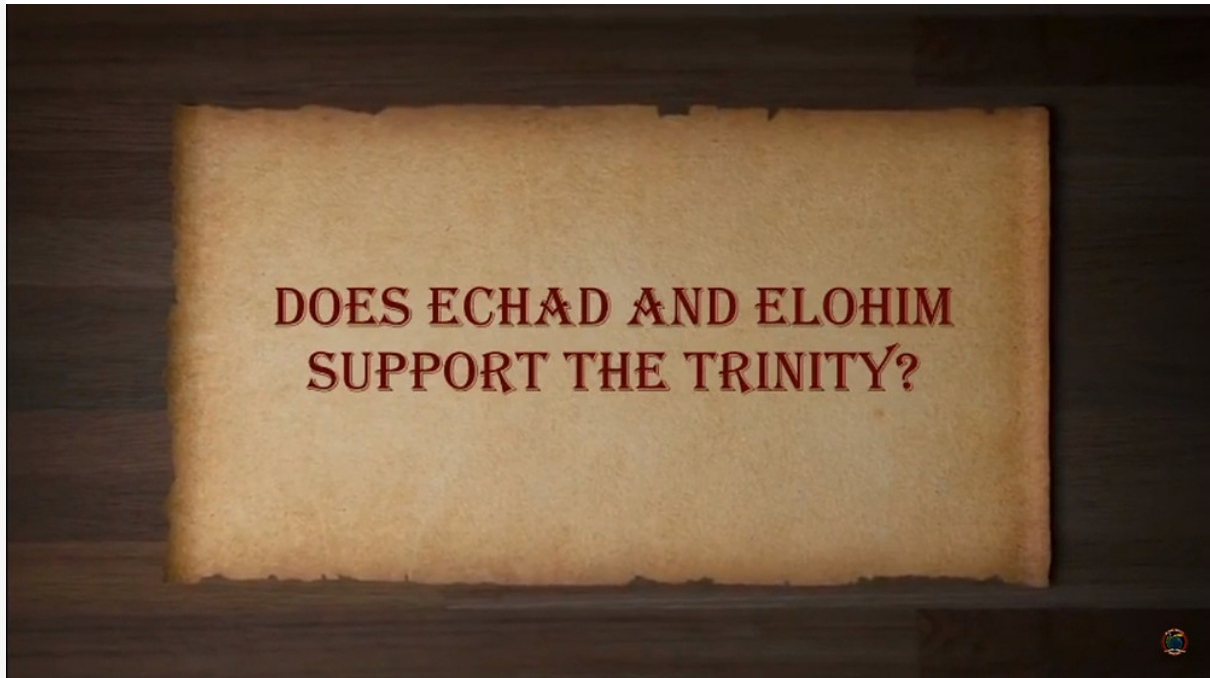




Steven Fitchie · Oct 23, 2016 · 5 min read

Does Echad and Elohim Support the Trinity?



The Hebrew word “echad,” meaning “one,” appears 977 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and almost always implies one in a strict numerical sense. However, just like the English word one can imply either a singular or a plural meaning, so the word “echad” can be understood to mean a numerical one or a unity of one. The only way to know if a numerical one or a unity of one is intended is to read whether or not the particular passage of scripture demands a singular or a plural meaning. An example of a plural meaning of the word one (echad) is found in Genesis 2:24 where the man and the woman are spoken of as “one flesh”. Just as in Genesis 2:24, all verses of scripture where a unity of one is intended is revealed by the context of the particular passage of scripture.

Trinitarian author Gregory Boyd admitted in his book entitled, “Oneness Pentecostals And The Trinity” (*Pages 47, 48*) that the Hebrew words “Elohim” and “Echad” provide weak arguments to support Trinitarian Theology.

“... It is not uncommon to find Trinitarians arguing for the doctrine of the trinity on the basis of the fact that the word for God in the Old Testament is Elohim, which is the plural of the word El ... Unfortunately, this is indeed, as most Hebrew scholars recognize, a weak argument on which to base the doctrine of the trinity. When a numerical plurality is intended, the corresponding verbs in the context will be plural. When the one true God is referred to Elohim, however, the corresponding verbs are always singular ... the term is applied to the one angelic being who wrestled with Jacob and to the one golden calf the Israelites worshipped. Hence it is easiest and best to understand the plural of Elohim when referenced to Yahweh as denoting a plurality of majesty.”

“Even weaker is the argument that the Hebrew word for one (Echad) used in the Schema (“Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD”) refers to a unified one, not an absolute one ... An examination of Old Testament usage reveals that the word echad is as capable of various meanings as is our English word one. The context must determine whether a numerical or unified singularity is intended.” (*Gregory Boyd, Oneness Pentecostals And The Trinity, Pages 47, 48*)

Whenever the words echad (One) and Elohim (God) are used to describe “God” as “One” in the Bible, they are always accompanied by singular verbs which proves that a singular God as a singular Individual is always intended. Since the Hebrew word for One (Echad) and the Hebrew word for God (Elohim) always references the One true God with singular verbs in the inspired texts of scripture, we know that the

One true God of the Bible could not be a multiplicity of Jehovah God Persons. To argue otherwise is to interpolate an unscriptural eisegesis of inspired texts rather than a literal exegesis of the word of God.

Some Trinitarians have argued that since the Hebrew word yachid always means “one” as a strict numerical one, the inspired writers would have been led to use yachid when referencing One God rather than the Hebrew word “echad”. Thus they allege that God must be a plurality of divine persons. However, Trinitarians cannot provide a single scripture to show that “yachid” is ever used for one individual pagan god anywhere in the Bible.

The scriptural evidence proves that Elohim is used for the individual God of the Bible rather than “yachid” just as singular pagan gods in the Bible are also called “elohim” rather than “yachid”. If “yachid” should have been used to describe God in a strict numerical sense of the word “one”, then why are individual pagan deities not described as “yachid” in the strict numerical sense of the word one? “Yachid” is rarely used in the Hebrew Bible because it is always used in the stricter sense of an “only” child, or for expressing the feelings of solitude, loneliness, and isolation [Genesis 22:16 “only son (yachid)”; Judges 11:34 “one and only child (yachid)”; Psalm 25:16 “I am lonely (yachid – meaning all alone) and afflicted”; 68:7; Jeremiah 6:26 “mourn as for an only son” - yachid].

If Elohim meant more than one divine god person in a divinity, then why is it that the Philistine fish god dagon was also called a single Elohim as a single Philistine god in 1 Samuel 5:7? Dagon was a false god (a false Elohim) of the Philistines as a single deity. If Elohim meant more than One God Person within a particular Deity, then God’s word should have plural contexts for both Jehovah and Dagon. Since Elohim is always accompanied by singular verbs for both Jehovah God and for individual pagan gods throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, Elohim must refer to only One Individual God rather than a plurality of three God Persons.

In Exodus 7:1 God said that He made Moses “a god (Elohim) to Pharaoh”. If Elohim means more than one God Person, then Moses and Dagon should have been more than one when being called Elohim in Exodus 7:1 and in 1 Samuel 5:7.

Oneness author Daniel Segraves wrote that Elohim always appears with singular verbs throughout the Hebrew Bible.

“Whenever ELOHIM refers to the one true God, it is always accompanied by singular verbs, although ELOHIM is plural. Whenever ELOHIM refers to more than one false god, it is accompanied by plural verbs. This is significant. Grammatically, when ELOHIM refers to the one true God only, although the word is plural. If the reason ELOHIM is used of the true God is to indicate He is more than one, plural verbs would have to be used. For example, in the first verse of the Bible, the third person masculine singular verb ‘created’ is used with ELOHIM. Since the verb is singular, it is required that He who did the creating is singular. In this case, the only option left to explain the plural form of ELOHIM is that ELOHIM refers to the fullness and intensity of the many majestic attributes of the one true God.” (*Symposium on Oneness Pentecostalism, January 11-13, 1996 www.altupc.com/altupc/articles/elohimpl.htm*)

Wherefore, the scriptural evidence proves that “echad” means “one” in the same way that our English word means one. One can mean more than one thing or person if the context of scripture shows that more than one thing or person is intended. Since Trinitarians cannot demonstrate that “echad” means more than One Divine Individual in the Godhead, it is ridiculous to speculate that One (Echad) means more than One Divine Person for God.

The same is true for the Hebrew word Elohim. Trinitarians cannot provide a single scripture where “Elohim” has ever been translated as “gods” for the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore it is ridiculous to assert that Elohim or Echad means more than One God Person in the Hebrew Bible.

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