



## MESSIAH – MAN OR GOD / GOD – THREE OR ONE OR THREE IN ONE?

Rabbi Kaplan in his book 'The Real Messiah?' which is an attack on the view that Jesus is Messiah writes: *'The Jewish concept of the Messiah is that which is clearly developed by the prophets of the Bible. He is a leader of the Jews, strong in wisdom, power and spirit. It is he who will bring complete redemption to the Jewish people, both spiritually and physically. Along with this he will bring eternal peace, love, prosperity, and moral perfection to the entire world. The Jewish Messiah is truly human in origin. He is born of ordinary human parents, and is of flesh and blood like all mortals.'*

Does the Tenach (Old Testament) rule out the idea that God can appear in human form? Is the view that God is a tri-unity possible to hold from the Tenach? If we accept what Rabbi Kaplan says, how can a person who is mortal bring eternal peace?

### **Before we look at this from the Bible some basic questions about the nature of God.**

How much can we understand about the nature of God by our own reason and mental processes?

If the answer is nothing or virtually nothing how can we find out about what God is like?

If we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, therefore reveals what God is like, do we take our view of God from this source or from traditions and teachings of men?

If we believe that God loves or that God is love, how was this love expressed before the creation? Love requires relationship. Relationship requires plurality not absolute unity.

The concept of three in one is to be found in an extraordinary number of aspects of the created world. The universe is made up of space, time and matter. Space consists of length, breadth and height / depth. Time is past, present and future. Matter is energy, motion and phenomenon. Water is ice, liquid and steam. Atoms are made up of protons, electrons and neutrons. Human beings are body, soul and spirit.

In the Hebrew Bible there are three sections – Torah, Prophets and Writings. Three patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Israel is a unity of priests, Levites and Israelites. There are three pilgrim festivals – Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

### **Some thoughts from the Torah.**

Torah supports the idea that God is a plural unity and that God can appear in human form. Therefore, it does not contradict the idea that Yeshua is the Messiah who appeared as both Son of God and Son of Man at the same time.

Very first verse of the Bible has a plural noun 'אלהים' 'elohim' as subject of a singular verb 'בָּרָא' 'bara' Genesis 1. 26 has God say 'Let us make man in our image'. Who is he speaking to? See also Genesis 11.7, Isaiah 6.8. Rabbis say this is the plural of majesty. Where is such a concept used of the Kings of Israel?

Genesis 3.8 – Adam and Eve hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the Garden. They hide themselves from the presence, literally face of the Lord. Implies some physical manifestation.

Genesis 18.1. The Lord appeared to Abraham. 'Three men' – two of whom (angels) depart and go to Sodom while the Lord remains with Abraham. Abraham offers them food which they eat.

Genesis 32.24-31 Jacob wrestles with a man who puts his hip out of joint. This man blesses him and Jacob says he has seen the face of God and lived. Who is this man?

Walking, eating, wrestling are all very physical activities. Genesis implies this is something a being identified as God did in the presence of the Patriarchs.

The Angel of the Lord is identified in places in a way which distinguishes him from an ordinary angel. Genesis 48.15-16, Exodus 23.21, Judges 13.18-22.

### **A number of Messianic Prophecies identify the coming one with God.**

Micah 5.2 (5.1) The one who is to come out of Bethlehem in Judea will have an origin which is 'from everlasting' ('מִימֵי עוֹלָם' 'mimei olam' – from the days of eternity in Hebrew).

In Isaiah 7.14 we read of the virgin who will conceive and bear a Son to be known as Immanuel – עִמָּנוּאֵל God with us. In Isaiah 9.6 we read of this one who is to born a child and yet who is the mighty God לַ גְּבוּרָה (el gibbor) and the everlasting Father אָבִי עַד (avi ad):

In Jeremiah 23.5 we read of the descendant of David who is clearly identified as the King Messiah. In the next verse we read: *'In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell safely: Now this is the name by which he will be called: יְיָ צְדִיקְנוּ THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'*

In Zechariah 14.3-4 the Lord comes to fight against the armies coming against Jerusalem in the last days and stands with his feet on the Mount of Olives.

### **The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.**

According to Genesis 1.2 The Holy Spirit was present at creation 'The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.'

Messiah to be sent and anointed by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 48.16, 61.1.

The Tenach is full of examples of people who were filled with the Holy Spirit. Joseph (Genesis 41.38), Moses and the Elders of Israel (Numbers 11.16), Joshua (Numbers 27.18), Samson (Judges 13.24-5), Saul (1 Samuel 10.6), David (1 Samuel 16.13), Daniel (Daniel 2.47).

After he sinned with Bathsheba David prayed 'Take not your Holy Spirit from me' (Psalm 51.11). In rebelling against the Lord Israel 'rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit' (Isaiah 63.10).

The Prophets spoke of a time when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on repentant Israel (Isaiah 32.15, Ezekiel 36.27, 37.14, 39.29, Joel 2.28-9, Zechariah 12.10).

All these scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as a person who can be grieved by human rejection of the Lord but who is able to come and dwell within those who call on His name for salvation.

### **The Shema leaves open the possibility that God is a plural unity.**

Maimonides' 13 Principles of Faith rule out God being a plural unity. 'I believe that the Creator, blessed be his name, is One: that there is no oneness in any form like his; that he alone was, is and ever will be our God.' But he wrote this in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in conscious rejection of claims of Jesus being Messiah. The basic prayer of Judaism is the Shema (Deuteronomy 6.4) which is taken to mean in Judaism that God is one and therefore cannot be three! According to this view God cannot become a man and dwell among us.

But Deuteronomy 6.4 uses the name of God three times (twice as 'adonai' once as 'eloheinu'). The word used for one is the word אֶחָד 'echad' which is used elsewhere of one as a plural unity. For example, Genesis 2.4 בָּשָׂר אֶחָד basar echad – one flesh. See also Judges 20.1. If the text in Deuteronomy 6.4 had used the alternative word יָחִיד 'yachid' for one we would have to admit that Judaism, Islam and even the Jehovah's Witnesses are right and that God is an indivisible unity. See Genesis 22.2 where יָחִיד 'yachid' is used.

Rabbinic Judaism itself has wrestled with texts which imply that God is a plural unity. For example in the book 'The Great Mystery' by Rabbi Zvi ha Nassi he writes of a commentary on the Shema (Deuteronomy 6.4) concerning the threefold mention of God's name (Sohar, Gen p 15, versa, Amsterdam Edition): *'Thus my teacher, Rabbi Simeon ben Yocchai, instructed me (Sohar, vol 3, p 26) that these three steps in God are three Spirits, each existing of itself, yet united in One. His words are these: 'Thus are three Spirits united in one. The Spirit which is downwards (that is, counting three) who is called the Holy Spirit; the Spirit which is the Middle Pillar, who is called the Spirit of Wisdom and of Understanding, who is also called the Spirit below. The upper Spirit is hidden and in secret. In Him are existing all the holy Spirits (the holy Spirit and the Middle Pillar) and all that is light.'* The Great Mystery page 27-8. The Zohar speaks of the 'Memra' ('Word') through whom the world was made, also known as 'The Middle Pillar' and the Angel of the Covenant, also known as 'Metatron' who reveals God to mankind.

The New Testament reveals the Messiah as one who is 'the Word made flesh'. John 1.1-14.