

The Binary Nature of G-d in the Hebrew Scripture

On Faith, by Brent Emery

Last month, I addressed the topic of how many G-ds one could find within the pages of Hebrew scripture. We looked at the Hebrew word "echad," which is usually translated "one," and found that it could refer to a series of things or people that function "as one." Thus, within the confession of the "Shema,' (Deuteronomy 6:4ff), the oneness of G-d can also refer to a multiplicity within that oneness. While G-d is One, he can also manifest Himself in multiple forms. To put it another way, His oneness does not prohibit diversity in His appearances. Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, G-d presents Himself to us in binary (two) terms like Father and Son. The Father and Son are one, but only the Son can make appearances on this earth.

Look, for instance, at Proverbs 30:4, which reads,

"Who has ascended into Heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His son's name, if you know?"

Notice the binary nature of G-d in this verse, as we have a Father and a Son. It is my contention that this binary nature of G-d is found many places in the Hebrew scripture, and I want to explore some of those places with you.

As you might imagine, the first place where the binary nature of G-d manifests itself is in the book of Genesis. In fact, the binary nature of G-d can be found in the opening chapter of Genesis, which opens with the words "in the beginning" based on the Hebrew word "reshit," and a preposition

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attached to its front. While the word "reshit" can refer to time, I would like to offer another interpretation that also finds merit within the pages of the Hebrew scripture. In Genesis 49:3, we read,

"Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning (reshit) of my strength."

Thus, the word "reshit" can also be used as a synonym for "firstborn." With this idea in mind, let me read Genesis 1:1 like this:

"As the firstborn, He created Elohim the Heavens and the Earth."

With this translation, I am suggesting to you that there was a plurality within G-d right from the start of creation.

Continuing on in Genesis, we come to Chapter 16, where the "Angel of the Lord" finds HaGer (the foreigner) after she has been cast out from Abram's home. While not much is said in this text with regard to the identity of this "Angel," other texts within the Hebrew scripture give us a fuller picture of His identity. In Genesis 22:15, the "Angel of the Lord" confronts Abraham and speaks as G-d, reiterating the promises G-d had made earlier to Abraham. In a later column, I want to show that this Angel/Messenger of the Lord is none other than the Living G-d in human form sent from the Father to minister His will. I want to demonstrate that, within the pages of Hebrew scripture, this is no ordinary angel but is part of the binary manifestation of G-d's presence.

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One last text in Genesis that we should examine is Genesis 48:15-16. Coming to the end of his life, Jacob blesses Joseph with the words,

"G-d, before whom my Fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the G-d who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel."

Here, in these two verses, we once again confront the binary nature of G-d, whom Jacob can refer to as "Elohim" and then refer to as "the Angel" - all in one breath. Our focus on the binary nature of G-d is leading us to an understanding of Yeshua the Messiah as the Son of G-d, who came to this earth and constantly referred to "His Father."

If you would like to hear more on this topic, I invite you to join us at 1 p.m. Aug. 31 for two lectures from Dr. Micheal Heiser. The seminar will be held at Immanuel Celebration Church in Tacoma. For more information, visit www.beit-tefillahgh.org. Heiser has been researching the Near Eastern background to the binary nature of G-d, and his insights from the Hebrew scripture are incredible. In the coming months, we will focus more on the binary nature of G-d from other places within the Hebrew scripture and explore this one called the "Angel of the Lord."

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