Is belief in the Trinity in the Old Testament?

The understanding of God being a three-in-one unity actually has its roots in Judaism mentioned throughout the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures as some refer, along with the Holy Spirit as early as Genesis chapter 1.

Some Jews (few today) believe in a trinity.

Having a basic knowledge of the Hebrew language helps to see it through their eyes.

We begin with Hebrew word "Elohim", a **plural** noun, with the masculine plural ending "im."

in Genesis 1:1, this word appears.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

Exodus 20:3: "You shall have no other **gods** [Elohim] before me,"

Deuteronomy 13:2: "Let us go after other **gods** [Elohim]."

Elohim is the word used for the Israelites "true God, verses many false gods.

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning **God** created heaven, and earth." (In the Hebrew Bible, the grammatical subject of bara' is always God (Elohim). Humans can asah (make) or banah (build), but only God bara.) "bara" which means "he created"—singular.

Yes, the Bible teaches that God is only one God, and therefore, the general pattern is to have the plural noun followed by the singular verb when it speaks of the one true God.

However, there are places where the word for the true God is followed by a **plural verb**:

Genesis 20:13: "And when **God** [Elohim] caused me to wander [literally: "**They**" caused me to wander] from my father's house.

Genesis 35:7: "There God [Elohim] had revealed himself to him." [Literally: "**They**" appeared unto him.]

2 Samuel 7:23: "God [Elohim] went."" [Literally: "**They**" went.]

Psalm 58:11: "Surely there is a God [Elohim] who judges." [Literally: "**They**" judge.]

The name Eloah

The singular form for Elohim (Eloah) appears elsewhere.

"Deuteronomy 32:15–17 and Habakkuk 3:3).

Eloah (**singular**) is used only 250 times, while Elohim (**plural)** is used 2,500 times.

12 Reasons for Jewish Putting Faith in Jesus

When God speaks of Himself, He uses the plural pronoun. Genesis 1:26,

"Then God [Elohim] said, 'Let **us** make man in our image, after our likeness."

There was no indication God was including angels since man was created in the image of God and not of angels.
Genesis 3:22: "Then the LORD God [YHVH Elohim] said, 'Behold, the man has become like one **of us.**'"

Genesis 11:7: "Come, **let us** go down and there confuses their language."

Isaiah 6:8: "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'" (This would appear contradictory with the singular "I" and the plural "us" except as viewed as a plurality (us) in a unity (I).

Beyond Moses, other prophets and Old Testament writers spoke of God in plural.

Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now your Creator." [Literally: creators.]

Psalm 149:2: "Let Israel rejoice in their Maker." [Literally: makers.]

Joshua 24:19: "holy God" [Literally: holy Gods.]

Isaiah 54:5: "For your Maker is your husband." [Literally: makers, husbands.]

Moses and the prophets affirm God's unity, while at the same time they wrote of the concept of a **compound unity**. (plurality of God from Hebrew word **echad**)

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, **the LORD is one**!" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Genesis 1:5, the combination of evening and morning comprise one (echad) day.

Genesis 2:24, a man and a woman come together in marriage and the two "shall become one [echad] flesh."

Ezra 2:64, we are told that the whole assembly was as one (echad), though of course, it was composed of numerous people.

Ezekiel 37:17 provides a rather striking example where two sticks are combined to become one (echad).

The Hebrew word "yachid", represents the idea of an absolute unity with the emphasis being on the meaning of "only." If Moses intended to teach God's absolute oneness instead of as a compound unity, "yachid"

Deuteronomy 6:4 (the Shema) does not use "yachid" in reference to God.

Elohim and YHVH

The case for God's plurality becomes stronger when we encounter the term Elohim applied to two personalities in the same verse, such as in Psalm 45:6–7:

> "Your throne, O God (Elohim) is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God (Elohim) your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

The first Elohim is being addressed, and the second Elohim is the God of the first Elohim. And so, God's God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness.

Hosea 1:7:

> "I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."

The speaker is Elohim (the word) who says He will have mercy on the house of Judah and will save them by the instrumentality of their God (YHWH, Elohim). So, Elohim number one (YHWH) will save Israel by means of Elohim number two (YHWH, the word who later became flesh on earth, Jesus Christ, the Messiah)

Not only is Elohim applied to two personalities in the same verse, but so is the very name of God: "Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24). YHWH number one is on earth raining sulfur and fire from a second YHVH who is in heaven.

A second example is Zechariah 2:8–9:

> "For thus says the LORD of Hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he that touches you touches the apple of His eye. For surely, I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me."

Again, we have one YHVH sending another YHWH to perform a specific task.

"Come and see the mystery of the word YHVH: there are three steps, each existing by itself: nevertheless, they are One, and so united that one cannot be separated from the other. The Ancient Holy One is revealed with three heads, which are united into one, and that head is three exalted. The Ancient One is described as being three: because the other lights emanating from him are included in the three. But how can three names be one? Are they really one because we call them one? How three can be one can only be known through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

The evidence for at least a dual God in the Hebrew Scriptures is clear, but a Triune God?

Judaism's Understanding of the Holy Spirit

If the Hebrew Scriptures, the names of God are applied to at least two different personalities. How about a third personality, person of God?

First, there are numerous references to the LORD YHVH. Second, there is a personality referred to as the Angel of YHWH who is considered distinct from the other angels. In passages where He is found, He is referred to as both the **Angel of YHWH and YHWH Himself**.

Genesis 16:7, He is referred to as the Angel of YHVH, but then in 16:13, as YHVH Himself. In Genesis 22:11, He is the Angel of YHWH, but God Himself in 22:12.

Exodus 23:20–23 presents an angel who has the power to pardon sin because God's own name YHVH is in him. This can hardly be said of any ordinary angel. But the very fact that God's own name is in this angel shows his divine status.

A third major personality that comes through is the **Spirit of God**, often referred to as the **Ruach Ha-kodesh**. There are a good number of references to the Spirit of God in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Holy Spirit cannot be a mere emanation because He contains all the characteristics of personality (intellect, emotion, and will) and is considered divine.

There is clear evidence that three personalities are referred to as divine and as being God.

There is clear evidence that three personalities are referred to as divine and as being God: the LORD YHVH, the Angel of YHVH, and the Spirit of God.

The Intersection of God's Three Personalities

Isaiah 48:12–16 reveals a speaker who refers to himself as the one who is responsible for the creation of the heavens and the earth:

> "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am He; I am the first, and I am the last. My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together. Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken and called him; I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way. Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there."

And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.
It is clear that the speaker is God Himself. But then in verse 16, the speaker refers to himself using the pronouns of I and me and distinguishes himself from the LORD YHWH and from the Spirit of God. The Tri-unity is presented in the Hebrew Scriptures with striking clarity.

In Isaiah 63:7–14, there is a reflection back to the time of the Exodus, clearly demonstrating all three personalities as present and active. The LORD YHWVH is referred to in verse 7, the Angel of YHVH in verse 9, and the Spirit of God in verses 10, 11, and 14.

While God refers to Himself as the one responsible for Israel's redemption from Egypt, in this passage three personalities are given credit. Yet no contradiction is seen since all three comprise the unity of the one Godhead.

Are Judaism and the Trinity Reconcilable?

The Hebrew Scriptures show a plural Godhead. The first person is consistently called YHWH, while the second person is given the names of YHWH, the Angel of YHWH, and the Servant of YHWH. Consistently and without fail, the second person is sent by the first person. The third person is referred to as the Spirit of YHWH or the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. He, too, is sent by the first person but is continually related to the ministry of the second person.

If the concept of the Tri-unity of God is not Jewish, then neither are the Hebrew Scriptures.

If the concept of the Tri-unity in the Godhead is not Jewish according to modern rabbis, then neither are the Hebrew Scriptures. Jewish Christians cannot be accused of having slipped into paganism when they hold to the fact that Jesus is the divine Son of God. He is the same one of whom Moses wrote when he said:

> "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out. (Exodus 23:20–23)

Is the Teaching of the New Testament Consistent with the Concept of the Trinity Presented in the Hebrew Scriptures?

In keeping with the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament recognizes that there are three persons in the Godhead. The first person is the Father, the second person is the Son, and the third person is the Holy Spirit.

What happened is that God became a man (not that man became God).

The New Testament answers the question of Proverbs 30:4: "What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely, you know!" His son's name is Yeshua (Jesus). In accordance with the Hebrew Scriptures, he is sent by God to be the Messiah, but this time as a man instead of as an angel. Furthermore, he is sent for a specific purpose: to die for our sins. In essence, what happened is that God became a man (not that man became God) in order to accomplish the work of atonement.

The New Testament calls the third person of the Godhead the Holy Spirit. He is related to the work of the second person—consistent with the Hebrew Scriptures. Evidently, there is a consistent body of teaching in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament related to the Tri-unity of God. The New Testament presents a truthful and consistent picture of who God is, making it a reliable Jewish source for understanding the plurality of the Godhead.