

There are many references in the Old Testament that describe, point to or suggest the Triune Nature of God, or the Trinity, with God described as Father, Son and Holy Spirit

1) The name used for 'God'. A very common name for God in the Old Testament is *Elohim*, used 2606 times. (Only Yahweh at 6519 times is used more frequently). *Elohim* is a plural noun implying plurality (the singular is *Eloah*). Yet *Elohim* is always used with a singular verb, implying oneness. The first verse of the Bible reads: "In the beginning, God (*Elohim* i.e. plural) created (*bara* – a singular verb) the heavens and the earth." (Gen.1:1)

2) God sometimes speaks in the plural: "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis.1:27), and "Come, let us go down and confuse their language" (Genesis 11:7). "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8)

3) The *shema* is the basic statement of faith for Jews, much like the *shahada* for Muslims. The *shema* states: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Deuteronomy 6:4. Jesus quoted this verse when he was asked what is the greatest commandment in Mark 12:29.

"The Hebrew word used here for "one" is *echad*, meaning a "composite unity." It is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 where the husband and wife are commanded to become *one* flesh. Had the writer of Deuteronomy 6:4

wished to express an absolute unity, he could have used the Hebrew word, *yachid*." (Norman Geisler). *Yachid* signifies a simple numerical singularity, and it is never used of God in the Old Testament.

4) God is referred to as 'Father' or described in paternal terms about 25 times in the Old Testament i.e. Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16; [twice] 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4 Jeremiah3:19; 31:9; Malachi 1:6; 2:10) or the Father of certain individuals (2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Psalm 68:5; 89:26. At times the father imagery is present although the term "Father" is not used e.g. Exodus 4:22-23; Deuteronomy 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; Psalm103:13; Jeremiah 3:22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Malachi 3:17).

5) There are several references to "the Son" who is connected with God e.g.

- (i) 2.Samuel 7:14 – "He will be a son to me"
- (ii) Ps.2:7-9 – "You are my Son... Kiss the Son"
- (iii) Prov.30:4 – "Who ascended to heaven ...what is His Son's name?"
- (iv) Dan.7:14 → Mt.26:63,64 "Son of Man coming on clouds." → Rev.1:7

6) In the Old Testament, there are many visible appearances of God, or his 'angel' which is the same word as 'messenger' in Hebrew. These are Christophanies or pre-incarnation appearances of Christ: "If it was Jesus the Word who appeared as the angel of God or as God during the Old Testament age, then both statements are true, that no man has

ever seen God (the Father), but that men truly did see the Lord when they saw the pre-incarnate Word ... every place where God appears before people in the Old Testament, we are not looking at a theophany [appearance of God], but a christophany [appearance of Christ]. Jesus certainly existed at creation, ... He is eternal as God the Father is. No one has seen God the Father except God the Son, who has revealed Him to us, both in the Old and the New Testaments."¹

There are numerous examples including:

- (a) "the LORD God walking in the garden" (Genesis 3:8)
- (b) The angel [messenger] of the LORD who appeared to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-13)
- (c) The LORD appeared to Abraham several times. (Genesis 17:1; 18:1; 22:11-12 cf Jn.8:56 "He saw [Jesus'] day and was glad.")
- (d) Jacob struggled with God. (Hosea 12:2-5)
- (e) Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:4-6) c.f. Qur'an 20:10-17
- (f) Moses & the seventy elders (Ex.29:9-11)
- (g) The Lord's army commander(Josh.5:13ff
- (h) the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Samson's parents: (Judges 13:6-22)
- (i) Isaiah in the Temple (Isa.6:1 c.f.Jn.12:41)

7) There are references to God who cannot be seen (the Father), and to God who can be seen (the Son).

- (a) The God who cannot be seen: God said to Moses, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." (Exodus 33:20)

¹ <http://kirraantrobos.blogspot.com.au/2012/08/jesus-in-old-testament-christophanies.html>

(b) The God who can be seen: "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend." (Exodus 33:11) These are references to the pre-incarnate Christ. The Bible says: "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." (John 1:18) Jesus is "the image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15)

8) There are nearly 400 prophecies related to the coming of the Messiah that are applied to Jesus in the New Testament. [See a separate pamphlet on this topic]. One of these prophecies refers to the coming one as "Mighty God" (Isa.9:6)

9) There are 94 references to the "Spirit of God" or "Holy Spirit" in the Old Testament. These all accord with the teaching about the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. [See a separate pamphlet on this topic].

10) There are several occasions where the Three Divine Persons are described together in one passage.

(a) In Isaiah 48:12-16, the Messiah speaks and mentions two other Persons "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together. ..."Come near me and listen to

this: "From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there." And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with HIS SPIRIT.

(b) The Messiah again speaks: " THE SPIRIT of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn." (Isaiah 61:1-2)

(c) God said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"; and so he became their Saviour. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Yet they rebelled and grieved HIS HOLY SPIRIT. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them." (Isaiah 63:8-10)

Conclusion: The Bible has a consistent presentation of God as a complex unity: three Persons in one God. The first verses of Genesis (1:1-4) tell us of a God who creates the world by His Word, and whose Spirit hovers over His creation. The concept of the Trinity is continually developed throughout the rest of the biblical revelation.

TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



**Are Father, Son and
Holy Spirit found in
the Old Testament?**