

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (KJV)

1. The word “God” is *Elohim*, which is itself a plural form and, like most other words, has more than one definition. It is used in a plural sense of “gods” or “men with authority,” and in a singular sense for “God,” “god,” or “a man with authority, such as a judge.” The Hebrew lexicon by Brown, Driver and Briggs, considered to be one of the best available, has as its first usage for *Elohim*: “*rulers, judges*, either as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power, *divine ones*, superhuman beings including God and angels, *gods*.” ¹

Elohim is translated “gods” in many verses. Genesis 35:2 reads, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you,” and Exodus 18:11 says, “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods.” It is translated “judges” in Exodus 21:6; 22:8 and 9. It is translated “angels” (KJV) or “heavenly beings” (NIV) in Psalm 8:5. That is its plural use, and there is no evidence that anyone thought of these “gods” as having some kind of plurality of persons within themselves.

2. *Elohim* is also translated as the singular “god” or “judge,” and there is no hint of any “compound nature” when it is translated that way. An example is Exodus 22:20, which reads, “Whoever sacrifices to any *god* other than the LORD must be destroyed.” Another example is Judges 6:31: “If Baal really is a *god*, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.” In Exodus 7:1, God says that He has made Moses a “god” (*Elohim*) to Pharaoh. Again, in Judges 11:24, the pagan god Chemosh is called *Elohim*, and in 1 Samuel 5:7, the pagan god Dagon is called *Elohim*, yet Christians do not conclude that those gods were somehow composite or “uniplural,” or that the people who worshipped them thought they were.

Exactly how to translate *Elohim* in 1 Samuel 2:25 has been debated by scholars. The question is whether *Elohim* in the verse refers to a human judge or to God. The KJV says “judge.” The versions are divided between them, some translating *Elohim* as a man, others as God Himself. The fact that the scholars and translators debate about whether the word *Elohim* refers to a man or God shows vividly that the word itself does not have any inherent idea of a plurality of persons. If it did, it could not be translated as “god” when referring to a pagan god, or as “judge” when referring to a man. The evidence in Scripture does not warrant the conclusion that the Hebrew word *Elohim* inherently contains the idea of a compound nature.

3. Some teach that the word *Elohim* implies a compound unity when it refers to the true God. That would mean that the word *Elohim* somehow changes meaning when it is applied to the true God so that the true God can be a compound being. There is just no evidence of this. The first place we should go for confirmation of this is to the Jews themselves. When we study the history and the language of the Jews, we discover that they never understood *Elohim* to imply a plurality in God in any way. In fact, the Jews were staunchly opposed to people and nations who tried to introduce any hint of more than one God into their culture. **Jewish rabbis have debated the Law to the point of**

tedium, and have recorded volume after volume of notes on the Law, yet in all of their debates there is no mention of a plurality in God. This fact in and of itself ought to close the argument.

No higher authority on the Hebrew language can be found than the great Hebrew scholar, Gesenius. He wrote that the plural nature of *Elohim* was for intensification, and was related to the plural of majesty and used for amplification. Gesenius states, “That the language has entirely rejected the idea of numerical plurality in *Elohim* (whenever it denotes *one* God) is proved especially by its being almost invariably joined with a singular attribute.”²

The singular pronoun is always used with the word *Elohim*. A study of the word will show what Gesenius stated, that the singular attribute (such as “He,” not “They,” or “I,” not “We”) always follows *Elohim*. Furthermore, when the word *Elohim* is used to denote others beside the true God, it is understood as singular or plural, never as “uniplural.” To us, the evidence is clear: God is not “compound” in any sense of the word. He is the “one God” of Israel.

4. Scripture contains no reproof for those who do not believe in a “Triune God.” Those who do not believe in God are called “fools” (Ps. 14:1). Those who reject Christ are condemned (John 3:18). Scripture testifies that it is for “doctrine, reproof, and correction” (2 Tim. 3:16 - *KJV*), and there are many verses that reprove believers for all kinds of erroneous beliefs and practices. Conspicuous in its absence is any kind of reproof for not believing in the Trinity.

Buzzard, pp. 13-15, 125 and 126

Morgridge, pp. 88-96

Snedeker, pp. 359-367

Endnotes:

1. Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Pub., Massachusetts, 1906), p. 43.

2. E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910), p. 399.

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