

## Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (NIV)

1. It is believed by some that the Hebrew word “one” (*echad*) that is used in Deuteronomy 6:4 and other verses indicates a “compound unity.” This is just not true. Anthony Buzzard writes:

It is untrue to say that the Hebrew word *echad* (one) in Deut. 6:4 points to a compound unity. A recent defense of the Trinity argues that when “one” modifies a collective noun like “cluster” or “herd,” a plurality is implied in *echad*. The argument is fallacious. The sense of plurality is derived from the collective noun, not from the word “one.” *Echad* in Hebrew is the numeral “one.” Isa. 51:2 describes Abraham as “one” (*echad*), where there is no possible misunderstanding about the meaning of this simple word (p. 15).

There is no reference to the word “one” as to a plurality of any kind. It is used of “one” in number, “the first” in a series, “one” in the sense of “the same,” and “one” in the sense of “each” or “a certain one.” A study of its uses in the Old Testament will reveal its simple meaning and the truth it conveys. It is translated “first” in Genesis 1:5, when God made light on the “first” day. The whole earth spoke “one” language before Babel (Gen. 11:1). Hagar cast her child under “one” of the bushes (Gen. 21:15). In Pharaoh’s dream, there were seven ears of grain on “one” stalk (Gen. 41:5). In the plague on Egypt’s livestock, not “one” cow died in Israel (Ex. 9:6). Exodus 12:49 says that Israel shall have “one” law for the citizen and the foreigner. The examples are far too many to list. *Echad* is used more than 250 times in the Old Testament, and there is no hint in any Jewish commentary or lexicon that it somehow implies a “compound unity.”

The history of the Jews is well known. They were infamous in the ancient world for being downright obnoxious when it came to defending their “one God,” as civilizations down through the ages found out. Snedeker quotes Eliot:

One thing, very important, is certain, that if any such hints [that God was a plurality of persons] were conveyed, the Jews never understood them. The presumption is that they knew their own language, and it is certain they understood that the Unity of God was taught by their Scriptures in the most absolute and unqualified manner. Such was their interpretation of Moses and the Prophets at the time when Christ came. In all Palestine there probably could not have been found a single man or woman, who supposed that there was any distinction of persons, such as is now taught, in the Unity of God (p. 293).

2. Deuteronomy 6:4 is one of the strongest texts *against* the Trinity. God is “one,” not “three-in-one” or some other plurality. This has been the rallying cry of Jews down through the ages who have stood aggressively against any form of polytheism or pantheism. Jesus quoted this verse as part of the first and great commandment: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:29 and

30). It is quite inconceivable that Christ would be promoting some form of the doctrine of the Trinity while at the same time quoting Deuteronomy that God is “one” to a Jewish audience who would be sure to misunderstand him. It is much more reasonable to believe that Jesus was simply affirming that if we are to love God with all our heart we must be certain who He is—the one God of Israel.

Buzzard, pp. 12-15, 126 and 127

Hyndman, pp. 51-53

Snedeker, pp. 283-90

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