



ECHAD MI YODEAH

*Prepared for publication by students of
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At the end of the Haggadah we find something very interesting. The Baal Haggadah has a *piyut* that seeks to find out the significance of numbers: “Who knows one? ... Who knows two?” The Haggadah is full of numbers: four cups of wine, “whoever doesn’t say these three things,” the ten plagues, the four questions, and many other numbers. This *piyut* teaches us that each number has an essential quality to it. Let us explore these qualities.

Who Knows One?

The number one represents something that nothing else can combine with. This can only refer to Hashem. We say in Adon Olam:

והוא אחד ואין שני להמשיל לו להחבירה.
He is One and there is no second to compare Him to or to connect Him to. The word *echad* is different from *rishon*. *Rishon* means that there is a *sheni*, a second, *echad* is singular and there is no second. Nothing can join with Hashem.

Who Knows Two?

Hashem created a world where there

is a Provider and a recipient. The two *luchot* (tablets) represent the Provider-recipient relationship. The first tablet represents *mitzvot bein adam LaMakom* (mitzvot between man and G-d) and the second represents *mitzvot bein adam lachaveiro* (interpersonal mitzvot). Who knows two? Two are the *luchot habrit*.

Who Knows Three?

The Provider-recipient relationship is also represented in the heavens and the earth (*Echad Elokeinu bashamayim uva'aretz*). *Shamayim* has the word *sham* (there) because it is distant. *Aretz* has the word *ratz* (run) because

everyone on earth is always running. How do we join the *shamayim* and the *aretz*? Who knows three? Three are the Avot. Our three forefathers were able to connect heavenly matters with worldly matters and they set the stage for us. They brought the foundation for ethical monotheism into this world.

Who Knows Four?

After we reach an understanding that there is a connection between the heavens and the earth, we need to turn that understanding into actual reality. Who knows four? Four are the Imahot. They gave birth to, nurtured and mentored our ancestors and are responsible for the growth of the Jewish people. Their contribution is so important, and this is why the number four appears so many times in the Haggadah: the four questions, four sons, four phases of redemption. This teaches us that one of the important aspects of Seder night is to actualize potential.

Who Knows Five?

Once the potential is actualized, we can come to a level of understanding. That can only be done with something tangible. What can fulfill that role? Who knows five? The five Books of the Torah. The five *Chumshei Torah* (Books of Moses) represent the written Torah. Like a painting on a wall, we can touch it and see it, but we can't fully grasp it. There are ideas that we can't completely understand.

Who Knows Six?

What can we grasp? Who knows six? The six orders of the Mishna. An object with six sides is three-dimensional, something we can hold on to. The Mishna, representing the Oral Law, is within our grasp.

Who Knows Seven?

Once we grasp the Oral Law, then we are satisfied. Who knows seven? Seven are the days of the week. Satisfaction is best represented by the number seven, as it represents Shabbat. The number seven, *sheva*, can be understood as *saveah*, to be satisfied.

Who Knows Eight?

When a person is satisfied, he then tries to connect to what is above and beyond. What represents that which is above and beyond? Who knows eight? The word for eight — *shemonah* — has the same root as *shuman* and *shemen* — fat and oil, representing the extras, the above and beyond. The *brit milah* is on the eighth day as it represents connecting to Hashem in an above and beyond way.

Who Knows Nine?

When we connect to Hashem in this way we can view ourselves as reborn. Who knows nine? Nine represents the nine months of pregnancy. Rashi (Bereishit 2:7) notes that the word ויִצַר, “and He created (man),” is written with two yuds because we are

born once in this world and we strive to be reborn in the next world.

Who Knows Ten?

When we are reborn, we reach a level of spiritual *ashirut* (wealth) represented by the Aseret HaDibrot (Ten Commandments), which encapsulate the entire corpus of Torah.

Who Knows Eleven?

When we are spiritually wealthy, the goal is to ensure that we can preserve our wealth. How can spiritual wealth be lost? When there is *machloket* — acrimony. Who knows eleven? The eleven stars represent the dispute between Yosef and his brothers.

Who Knows Twelve?

How do we avoid *machloket*? With the number twelve, representing the twelve tribes, who came together and made peace.

Who Knows Thirteen?

How did they do so? Through the number thirteen, the thirteen middot of Rachamim. The *gematria* of אהבה (love) is thirteen and so is the *gematria* of אחד (one). When we learn to love one another and unite without *machloket*, we can reconnect back to One, to be one with each other and with the Master of the world: אחד אלקינו בשמים ובארץ.



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