

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ש"פ ויצא תשכ"ט ד"ה אתה אחד מוגה
Published for 9-10 Kislev 5786, Birthday and Yahrzeit of the Mitteler Rebbe,
And his Festival of Liberation 29-30 November 2025¹

MORE THAN UNIQUELY ONE

THE AMIDAH FOR MINCHA, THE AFTERNOON PRAYER ON SHABBAT HAS THE PASSAGE: 'ATAH ECHAD, YOU ARE ONE, and Your Name is One, and who is like Your people Israel, One nation on the earth'. The Previous Rebbe raises a question² about this phrase. The term 'one' implies a series – one, two, three and so on. But Hashem's unity is not part of a series. Surely it would be preferable to say 'Atah Yachid', 'You are Unique'..? The same applies to Hashem's Name, and also to the Jewish people. They are also singular, unique.

This links to the discussion in Chassidic teachings about the first line of the Shema. This states 'Hear o Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One'. Again we have the same question: why doesn't this verse say 'Hashem is Unique'? But in this case an answer is given. The word One, Echad in Hebrew, expresses the idea of uniting many different parts into one entity. Like 'one thousand' means that a thousand separate parts are unified as included in that thousand. Or a person who is a combination of 248 limbs and 365 sinews, all unified together.

The three letters of the word Echad express this idea. Alef, one, is the Master of the World, Hashem. Chet, with the numerical value eight, represents the seven heavens and the earth. Daled, numerical value four, expresses the four points of the compass. The word Echad therefore means that the One G-d fills all the disparate aspects of the world, and they are abnegated before Him.

¹ Maamar Atah Echad 5729 (1968), taught by the Rebbe on Shabbat Parshat Vayetze, edited by the Rebbe and published as *Kuntres 9-10 Kislev 5750*. Printed in Dvar Malchut Vayetze 5786.

² In his discourse of 5702, beginning with the words 'You are One', taught on 9 Kislev.

This is why the text of the prayer reads ‘You are Echad, One’, rather than Yachid, ‘unique’. Because this phrase refers to the Divine radiance which relates to the infinitely varied worlds and expresses the unity of the Divine through them and within them. The term Yachid, Unique, would mean G-d completely beyond the worlds, with no relationship to them at all.

However, one can still ask why the prayer reads Echad and Yachid. For this prayer is said at Mincha time on Shabbat. In general, Shabbat is beyond the world. Even more so, at Mincha on Shabbat afternoon, which is termed ‘delight of delights’, *raavah deraavin*. So, wouldn’t it be more appropriate to say ‘You are Unique, Yachid’?

The same applies to the Jewish people. As regards their souls as they are rooted in the Essence of the Divine, they are Yachid, Unique, and are completely beyond all other aspects of humanity and world. If they are called Echad, One, they have a relationship with the rest of humanity and the worlds; indeed, their role is to elevate the world and the rest of humanity.

So we come back to the question. Despite this noble meaning of the word Echad, applied to G-d and applied to the Jewish people, on Shabbat afternoon, in the Mincha prayer, wouldn’t it be more appropriate to speak of G-d and also of the Jewish people as Yachid, unique?

To understand this we need to consider Chassidic teachings on the difference between ‘radiance’ and ‘name’. Radiance expresses the nature of the luminary from which it comes. [For example, the light from a red light bulb is red.] A name does not do this. Several people can have the same name, and yet be very different from each other.

Yet there is also something very powerful about a name, which the radiance does not have. The name of a person ‘draws their Essence’. If you address a person by their name, they turn to you ‘from their essence’. Chassidic teachings add that if someone faints, they can be revived by whispering their name in their ear. By contrast, light does not do this. The light from the candle does not bring the essence of the candle with it. It simply shines with the light emanating from the candle, not with its essence.

The word Echad, One, has the quality of Name. It is superior to the world but is part of the world. G-d is One means that G-d brings unity to all existence. The Jewish people as One mean that they bring unity to all existence and all humanity. Higher than this is Yachid, Unique. This is like the Light.

Yachid, Unique, expresses G-d as utterly beyond the worlds, and, applied to the Jewish people, means the way the Jewish people are beyond the material world and are also completely singular, beyond all other nations of the world.

But the lower level of Echad, of Name - has the power to reach the ultimate Essence. This is what we are seeking to express in the mystical Shabbat Mincha prayer. That we should reach the Essence, of G-d and of G-d's Name and of the Jewish people, so that the Essence will enable the Essence of the Divine to be revealed in the world, and that the Divine Name should radiate with Divine light, and the Essence of the Jew, as he or she is rooted in the Divine Essence, will be revealed in their physical behaviour and in their daily lives.

How does this take place? The text of the Mincha prayer reveals the path: it tells us that the Jewish people have been ready to give up their lives with self sacrifice for the Sanctification of G-d's Name³.

Through that dedication and total self transcendence, the Jewish people reveal the ultimate Essence in the Divine Name, because they are 'sanctifying the Divine name', drawing ultimate holiness into the Name, and at the same time drawing the holiness of the Essence into the details of their own lives. They are in the world as physical men and women, but also at the same time, 'alone with G-d'.

[Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care](#)

³ See the discourse 'You are One' by Rabbi Dov Ber, the Mitteler Rebbe, which, it seems, was said on the last Shabbat of his imprisonment, before Mincha (Shabbat Vayetze, 5587 [1826]).