

# WHO KNOWS ONE?

*by Rabbi Yehudah Prero*

Pesach, Passover, begins at sundown on April 10, 1998. On that night, Jewish households worldwide will begin the celebration of Pesach with the Seder. During the Seder, we perform many rituals that are unique to the Seder night, and recite prayers and songs that are found only in the Hagadah. The Hagadah is our guide for the Seder night, and it contains the entire liturgy for the Seder. The Seder concludes with a step called Nirtzah. In Nirtzah, we sing songs that deal with Pesach and praise of G-d. One of these songs is "Echad Mi Yode'ah," "Who Knows One." In this song we enumerate the significance each number has - One is for G-d, two is for the Luchos (The Tablets which had upon them the Ten Commandments), three is for our forefathers, etc.

Rabi Salomon Menachem Mani used to explain the focus of this song by means of a parable: It was during a period of war, and the Prime Minister had his troops out fighting to meet their strategic objectives. The Prime Minister's troops suffered a major blow after one battle, and the troops returned severely weakened and wounded. The Prime Minister demanded an explanation for the humiliating loss, and he summoned the Chief of the Army to explain what occurred. After the Chief arrived at office of the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister stared him in the eye and asked point blank "Why were you defeated in the battle?" The Chief responded that there were many reasons why the troops were defeated. The Prime Minister asked the Chief to elaborate. The Chief responded that the troops had run out of ammunition and gunpowder during this battle, and could not refresh the supply. The Prime Minister was taken aback. He asked "If you have a reason like this, why do you need any others!"

Rav Mani explained that every person has his or her own priorities in life. Every person has priorities in both the realms of spiritual and physical. Not always do these priorities match what our priorities should truly be, the priorities that G-d wants us to keep at the top of the list. When we come to take inventory of our priorities we have to recall those principles that must remain unwavering and solid, as they are the foundation of our faith, and without them, our service to G-d is flawed. What are these principles that we must remember and steadfastly adhere to? If we were to name one, it would be "One is G-d in the Heaven and the Earth." Are more principles needed once we have said this? Obviously, just as the answer of the Chief was all encompassing and satisfied the query, so too is this one principle. Yet, just as other factors attributed to the loss of the battle, so too are there other priorities and principles that would top a list, were we to make it. It is that list that we sing on the Seder night, as "Echad Mi Yode'a." On the Seder night, we thank G-d for redeeming us from

slavery, and allowing us to enter His service alone. On the night that we express our happiness about the close relationship we have with G-d, that we are His people, we affirm those precepts that are essential to that relationship. We do this by singing Echad Mi Yode'a.