

ECHAD - THE HEBREW WORD FOR ONE

By Allon Maxwell

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is ONE LORD:
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.
(Deuteronomy 6:4)*

*Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is,
Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is ONE Lord:
And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:
this is the first commandment.
(Mark 12:29)*

The Hebrew word ECHAD is the direct equivalent for our English cardinal number ONE.

Jews who live in Israel and speak Hebrew in daily life, will tell you that in everyday use, it means simply the cardinal number ONE. In the Hebrew OT, it appears 952 times and is translated as ONE 687 times.

According to Strong's Bible Concordance it can also mean, less commonly:

*first 36, another 35, other 30, any 18, once 13, eleven + 06240 13,
every 10, certain 9, an 7, some 7, misc. 87;*

COMPOUND UNITY?

In more recent times, some Trinitarians have confused the issue by claiming that ECHAD actually means something they call "COMPOUND UNITY".

They use this invented term, of dubious origin, to liken GOD to a bunch of grapes! A bunch of grapes, they say, may be comprised of many grapes while actually being a **single** bunch. And from there they make their ridiculous false claim that in Deut 6:4, ECHAD means the trinity!

This "Compound Unity theory", is a bit like trying to compare apples with oranges! And it doesn't fit at all with the Trinitarian creeds. A bunch can be separated into individual grapes, (substances) and once separated, cannot ever be put back together! Anyone familiar with the Athanasian and Nicene creeds knows that amongst traditional Trinitarians, this comparison would be regarded as quite unacceptable! The God of the Trinitarian creeds is ONE INDIVISIBLE SUBSTANCE ("ESSENCE" in the older versions of the Athanasian Creed) which cannot be separated into individual components!

It is interesting to note that this alleged meaning is not acknowledged by reputable scholars, including our English Bible Translators. Nor is it supported in any of the several Concordances, Lexicons, and Hebrew Grammars, I have been able to consult.

Here are a couple of quotes which put it plainly. The first is from Uri Marcus, a Jew who lives in Jerusalem and speaks Hebrew in daily life.

"Capitalizing off this law of physics, trinitarians have rolled out one of their greatest hoaxes aimed at intimidating non-Hebrew speakers into yielding before their absurd "tri-unity" presumption. Their fantasy claims that the Hebrew word 'אֶחָד: Echad - ONE" somehow describes a "compound" or "composite" unity, which conveniently turns one, into more than one, reasoning that everything in the material universe is either composed of pieces of a greater whole (the composite), or that the whole comprises of more than one part until we get down to the basic, indivisible (and as yet undiscovered) primary part. What backfires however, is their comprehension of the simple adjective "ONE" which functions exactly the same in all languages, including Hebrew. It is a universal truth: "ONE" (1) has never and will never refer to a number greater than itself. Each thing or person is still defined as ONE thing or person, with ONE body, for which singular pronouns are always employed when referring or talking to or about it, him or her. When referring to G-d, there is no exception."

Quoted from "The End of a Messianic Lie" by Uri Marcus pages 85-6, footnote 29

The second is from Anthony Buzzard, a retired teacher of Hebrew at Atlanta Bible College.

The Hebrew Word for One Means One

Faced with a traditional creed which contradicts the strict unitary monotheism of Jesus and of the Bible, some believers in Jesus as Messiah, even, remarkably, Messianic Jews, have felt compelled to find a way to justify their departure from Jesus' creedal monotheism. This has led to one of the most bizarre exercises in the distortion of simple words known, I suppose, to the history of ideas. It needs to be exposed as a bold venture in twisting the straightforward terminology by which the God of the Bible declares that He is one single Person.

The assault on common sense, simple language facts, and biblical authority we are speaking of has to do with the Hebrew word *echad*, which is the cardinal number "one." In counting in Hebrew one says *echad*, *sh'nayim*, *shalosh*: "one, two, three..."

Extraordinary verbal acrobatics have been performed with the word *echad* by some Trinitarians, in an effort to convince the public that the number one does not mean one. It is a tactic of desperation.

It takes in only those who are not alert to the meaning of simple words.

The obstruction of the straightforward meaning of the Hebrew *echad* (one) must rank amongst the most amazing pieces of bogus propaganda found in theological writing.

Quoted from "Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian", by Anthony Buzzard, Pages 307-308.

ECHAD AS AN ORDINAL NUMBER?

As we saw above, on a few occasions the OT word ECHAD is translated as the ordinal number, "*first*". (36 times out of a total of 952 occurrences)

Trinitarians sometimes incorrectly claim that this means that ECHAD in Deut 6:4, should be translated as an ordinal number! The English translators, they say, have got it wrong. The LORD, they say, is not ONE, but (only) FIRST! And that since there is a "FIRST" LORD, there must also be others! And consequently, they say, Deuteronomy 6:4 actually supports the Trinity!

The Hebrew lexicons tell us that Hebrew does have a word which is a dedicated ordinal number for "first". (reashon – ראשון)

However, Jews don't always use that ordinal when they want to say things like "first day". Instead they use the cardinal and say "ONE (ECHAD) day"!

This is NOT because ECHAD is a true ordinal number in its own right! It is a special use of the cardinal number which illustrates one of the many ways in which Hebrew thinking patterns are VERY different to English! When a Jew says ECHAD YOM, the literal meaning is "day ONE" (cardinal) – NOT "FIRST day". e.g. Genesis 1:5.

A literal word for word translation of the Hebrew in Genesis 1:5 would be:

"and-he-is-becoming evening and-he-is-becoming morning day one"

From the Online Hebrew English Interlinear Bible

<http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/OTpdf/gen1.pdf>

Of course if it is simply transposed, this would make little sense to English speakers. A proper translation has to take into account the obvious "Tower of Babel" differences in thinking patterns between Hebrew and English. To do this our English translators have changed the Hebrew cardinal to an English ordinal, and rendered it as:

"The evening and the morning were the first day".

For additional confirmation, see Gesenius:

"In other places, as Gen. 1:5; 2:11, אֶחָד (ECHAD) does not lose the common idea of a cardinal".

Gesenius Online <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=H0259&t=KJV>

There is no justification whatsoever for these misinformed Trinitarian claims that the original cardinal word, ONE, (ECHAD) can be arbitrarily reassigned as an ordinal, (FIRST) anywhere or everywhere it appears, just to suit their theological bias.

ECHAD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Of course the Hebrew word ECHAD does not appear in the Greek NT.

Instead, when Deut 6:4 is quoted by Jesus in the GREEK NT (Mark 12:29) the word ECHAD is translated by the Greek *EIS* (Strong's 1520)

EIS (Strong's 1520) means the **cardinal number ONE**. From the Greek Lexicon in my computer Bible program:

1520 **εἷς** heis hice

(including the neuter [etc.] hen); TDNT-2:434,214; numeral

AV-one 229, a 9, other 6, some 6, not tr 4, misc 18; 272

1) one

Appendix 1

From the Greek Lexicon in "The Online Bible" Computer Program

0259 אֶחָד *'echad ekh-awd'*

a numeral from [0258](#); adj; {See TWOT on 61}

AV-one 687, first 36, another 35, other 30, any 18, once 13, eleven + [06240](#) 13, every 10, certain 9, an 7, some 7, misc. 87; 952

- 1) one (number)
- 1a) one (number)
- 1b) each, every
- 1c) a certain
- 1d) an (indefinite article)
- 1e) only, once, once for all
- 1f) one ... another, the one ... the other, one after another, one by one
- 1g) first
- 1h) eleven (in combination), eleventh (ordinal)

0258 אַחַד *'achad aw-khad'*

perhaps a primitive root; v; {See TWOT on 605}

AV-go thee one way or other 1; 1

- 1) (Hithpael) to go one way or another, to be sharp

Appendix 2

Online Lexicon Results

Strong's H259 - *'echad*

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H0259&t=KJV>

אֶחָד

Transliteration
'echad

Pronunciation
ekh·äd' ([Key](#))

Part of Speech
adjective
TWOT Reference

Root Word (Etymology)
A numeral from [אֶחָד \(H258\)](#)

[61](#)

Outline of Biblical Usage

- 1)** one (number)
- a)** one (number)
- b)** each, every
- c)** a certain
- d)** an (indefinite article)
- e)** only, once, once for all
- f)** one...another, the one...the other, one after another, one by one
- g)** first
- h)** eleven (in combination), eleventh (ordinal)

Authorized Version (KJV) Translation Count — Total: 952

AV — [one](#) 687, [first](#) 36, [another](#) 35, [other](#) 30, [any](#) 18, [once](#) 13, eleven + [06240](#) 13, [every](#) 10, [certain](#) 9, [an](#) 7, [some](#) 7, misc. 87

Appendix 3

Echad – From Gesenius Online

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H0259&t=KJV>

אֶחָד const. אֶחָד [“and so before מן Lev. 13:2; before עֲשֶׂה Gen. 32:23; and elsewhere, Gen. 48:22; 2 Sam. 17:22; Zec. 11:7”]; f. אֶחָד (for אֶחָד); in pause אֶחָד; a numeral having the power of an adj.

ONE. Arab. أَحَد (not أَحَد, as in Winer); f. أَحَدِي, Æth. አሐዱ: *ahadu* (not አሐዱ: *ahad*, as in Winer also), Ch. and Syr. אַחַד, ܐܚܕ. The same radical letters are found in the Pehlevi *advek*, one, and without the third radical Daleth, Sansc. *eka*, and Pehlevi *jek*.

One has often the force of—(1) i. q. *the same*, Gen. 40:5; Job 31:15.

(2) *first*, but only so used in counting the days of the months, Ezr. 10:16, 17, בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ “on the first day of the month.” בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ “on the first day of the month,” Gen. 8:5, 13; comp. μία τῶν σαββάτων, Act. 20:7. In counting years, the expression is אֶחָד שָׁנָה, just as in Germ. das Jahr Eins, Zwen, etc., for das erste Jahr, etc., Dan. 9:1, 2; Ezr. 1:1. In other places, as Gen. 1:5; 2:11, אֶחָד does not lose the common idea of a cardinal, and the numbers follow one another as in Lat. *unus*, *alter*, *tertius* (Suet. Octav. 101).

(3) *some one*, אֶחָד הָעָם “some one of the people;” אֶחָד אֵין, אֵין “no one.” Hence very often—

(4) it acts the part of an indefinite article, especially in the later Hebrew, 1 Ki. 20:13, נָבִיא אֶחָד “a certain prophet,” προφήτης τις; Dan. 8:3, אֵיל אֶחָד “a ram,” ein Widder; 1 Ki. 19:4. So also when אֶחָד precedes, e.g. אֶחָד קָדוֹשׁ “a certain holy one,” i. e. angel, τις ἄγγελος, Dan. 8:13. Sometimes also in the older books, Ex. 29:3; 1 Sa. 1:1; and followed by a genitive אֶחָד הַבְּרוֹת “one of the cisterns,” i. e. some cistern, Gen. 37:20; comp. Job 2:10.

(5) *one only* of its kind, Job 23:13; Eze. 7:5; Cant. 6:9 (Arab. وَاحِدٌ only one, incomparable; وَحِيدٌ id. A. Schultens on Job loc. cit. and 9:5).

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Appendix 3 Continued
Echad – From Gesenius Online

(6) When repeated אָחַד—אָחַד it is *one...another*, Ex. 17:12; 18:3. It even occurs three times repeated, 1 Sa. 10:3; 13:17, 18. Also distributively of individuals, Nu. 13:2, אִישׁ אָחַד אִישׁ אָחַד “ye shall send one man to a tribe;” Nu. 34:18.

(7) בְּאַחַד *as one man*, i.e. together. Ezr. 2:64, בְּאַחַד בְּאַחַד כָּל־הַקְּהָל “the whole congregation together;” Ezr. 3:9; 6:20; Ecc. 11:6, שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּאַחַד “both alike,” alle beyde. Also i. q. “together, unitedly,” Isa. 65:25; in the same sense is said בְּאִישׁ אָחַד Jud. 20:8; 1 Sa. 11:7; Ch. בְּחֶדָּא.

(8) f. אַחַת ellipt. for אַחַת פַּעַם *one time, once*, 2 Ki. 6:10; Ps. 62:12.

(9) בְּאַחַת — (a) i. q. אַחַת No. 8, Num. 10:4. — (b) *suddenly* (mit einem Male), Pro. 28:18. — (c) i. q. אָחַד altogether, Jer. 10:8.

(10) אָחַד לְאַחַד *one after another, one by one*, Isa. 27:12, and Ecc. 7:27, אַחַת לְאַחֶרֶת “one after another.”

Note. In the passage which has been unnecessarily discussed, Isa. 66:17, we should retain the common signification. It should thus be rendered, “who sanctify and purify themselves . . . אַחַר אַחַר after one,” i.e. following one; the hierophant who presides over the rest in sacred rites. Comp. my Comm. on the passage.

Pl. אֲחָדִים. — (1) *the same*, Gen. 11:1; comp. Lat. *uni*, as *unis moribus vivere* (Cic. pro Flacco 26; Terent. Eun. ii. 3, 75).

(2) *joined in one, united*; Eze. 37:17, וְהָיוּ לְאַחָדִים “and they shall be (the two sticks) joined in one.”

(3) *some, a few*, Germ. *einige, einzelne*, Gen. 27:44; 29:20. Deriv. the verb אָחַד, also pr. n. אַחֶד.

אֶחָד ⁹⁰² **adj.num. one** (Ph. אַחַד, Sab. *id.*, cf. DHM^{ZMG} 1876, 707, Ar. أَحَدٌ, Eth. አሐድ; Aram. אַחַד, **א**; on As. *edu, ahadu*, cf. D1^W No. 139)—abs. **א** Gn 1⁵ + cstr. אֶחָד Gn 21¹⁵ +; so even bef. prep. 1 S 9³ al. v. Dr; f. abs. אֶחָת Gn 2²¹ +; אֶחָת Gn 11¹ +; cstr. אֶחָת Dt 13¹³ +; pl. m. אֶחָדִים Gn 11¹ + 4 t.; אֶחָד Ez 33³⁰ del. Co cf. **ט**;—**1.** *one* Gn 1⁹ 27^{38,45} Ex 12⁴⁹ Jos 23¹⁰ 1 S 1²⁴ 2 S 12³ +, Zc 14⁹ Mal 2¹⁰ Jb 31¹⁵ +, so also (emph.) 2 S 17³ for MT אֶחָד **ט** We Dr; *one or two* אֶחָד לֵאמֹר לְיוֹם אֶחָד לְשָׁנִים Ezr 10¹³; as subst. sq. מֶן Gn 2²¹ Lv 4^{2,13} Is 34¹⁶ +; אֶחָד Gn 19⁹ 42^{13,32} 2 K 6^{3,5} +; *one and the same* Gn 40⁵ Jb 31¹⁵; pl. אֶחָדִים אֶחָדִים +Gn 11¹ cf. Ez 37¹⁷ (abs.), but v. Co; = *few, a few* אֶחָדִים +Gn 27⁴⁴ 29²⁰ Dn 11²⁰; אֶחָדִים *as one man, together* Ju 20⁸ 1 S 11⁷; also אֶחָדִים late = Aram. אֶחָדִים +Ezr 2⁶⁴ (= Ne 7⁶⁶) 3⁹ 6²⁰ Ec 11⁶; v. esp. Is 65²⁵ (|| earlier יְהוָה 11^{6,7}). **2.** = *each, every* Ex 36³⁰ Nu 7^{3,35} 28²¹ 1 K 4⁷ 2 K 15²⁰ +; also repeated, distrib. sense Nu 7¹¹ 13² 17²¹ Jos 3¹² 4^{2,4}. **3.** = *a certain* 1 S 1¹ 2 S 18¹⁰ 2 K 4¹ Est 3⁸ + cf. 2 S 17⁹ v. Dr 1 S 1¹; hence **4.** = *indef. art.* 1 S 6⁷ 24¹⁵ 26²⁰ (but del. **ט** We Dr) 1 K 19^{4,5} +. **5.** *only* 1 K 4¹⁹; & (fem.) *once* 2 K 6¹⁰ ψ 62¹³ 89³⁶ (*once for all*); אֶחָד לְשָׁלוֹשׁ שָׁנִים 2 Ch 9²¹ אֶחָד בְּשָׁנָה Lv 16³⁴ cf. Jb 40⁵ אֶחָת, אֶחָת Jos 6^{3,11} cf. v¹⁴, אֶחָת Nu 10⁴ Jb 33¹⁴; *at once* אֶחָת Pr 28¹⁸ cf. אֶחָת נִקְמָה-נִקְמָה Ju 16²³. **6.** *one . . . another, the one . . . the other* אֶחָד . . . אֶחָד Ex 17¹² 18^{3,4} Am 4⁷ 2 S 12¹ Je 24² 2 Ch 3¹⁷ Ne 4¹¹ +; 2 S 14⁶ rd. אֶחָד אֶחָדִים for אֶחָד אֶחָדִים **ט** We Dr; *one after another, one by one*, אֶחָד אֶחָד Is 27¹² cf. Ec 7²⁷. **7.** as ordinal, *first* (mostly P & late) Gn 1⁵ (P) 2¹¹ (J) Ex 39¹⁰ (P); Ez 10¹⁴ esp. of first day of month Ex 40² (P) Ezr 3⁶ 10^{16,17} Ne 8² Hg 1¹; *first year*, אֶחָת שָׁנָה 2 Ch 36²² Ezr 1¹ Dn 1²¹ 9^{1,2} 11¹ abs. Jb 42¹⁴; cf. *first* (day, יום om.) Gn 8^{5,13} לְחָדָשׁ; so Ex 40¹⁷ Lv 23²⁴ Nu 1^{1,18} 29¹ 33³⁸ (all P) Dt 1³ 2 Ch 29¹⁷ Ezr 7^{9,9} Ez 26¹ 29¹⁷ 31¹ 32¹ 45¹⁸. **8.** in combin., **a.** אֶחָד עָשָׂר *eleven* (cf. עָשָׂר, עָשָׂרִי) Gn 32²³ 37⁹ (JE) Dt 1²; so אֶחָת-עָשָׂרָה Jos 15⁵¹ (P) 2 K 23³⁶ 24¹⁸ 2 Ch 36^{5,11} Je 52¹ (precedes noun, exc. Jos 15⁵¹); as ordinal, *eleventh* אֶחָת עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה Ez 30²⁰ 31¹ cf. 1 K 6³⁸ 2 K 9²⁹; **b.** with other numerals, as cardinal אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וְחֲמִשָּׁה מֵאוֹת Nu 1⁴¹ cf. 2^{16,28} 3^{34,39} (all P; אֶחָד precedes other numeral); but אֶחָת שָׁנָה וְאַרְבָּעִים (אֶחָד following) 1 K 14²¹ 15¹⁰ 2 K 14²³ 2 Ch 12¹³ cf. 2 K 22¹ = 2 Ch 34¹; 2 K 24¹⁸ = Je 52¹ = 2 Ch 36¹¹; Jos 12²⁴ (D) Is 30¹⁷ Ezr 2²⁶ = Ne 7³⁰ cf. v³⁷; Dn 10¹³; as ordinal אֶחָת שָׁנָה אֶחָת שָׁנָה Gn 8¹³ (P) Ex 12¹⁸ (P), 1 Ch 24¹⁷ 25²⁸ 2 Ch 16¹³ (אֶחָד preceding); but 1 K 16²³ Hg 2¹ (אֶחָד following).

אֶחָד irr. constr. אֶחָד; אֶחָת and in pause אֶחָת fem. (§ 45).—I. *one*.—II. *first*, only in the enumerating of time, where the cardinal stands for the ordinal, בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ *on the first (day) of the month*; שְׁנַת אֶחָת *the first year*.—III. *some one, any one*; אֶחָד אֶחָד *one of the people*, אֶחָד מֵאֶחָיו *one of his brethren*, אֶחָד, לֹא *no one*. Hence—IV. as the indef. art., אֶחָד אֵיל *a ram*, נְבִיא אֶחָד *a prophet*, a certain prophet.—V. אֶחָד-אֶחָד *one-another*; אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד *one man from each tribe*.—VI. בְּאֶחָד, אֶחָת *as one, together, at once*.—VII. fem. אֶחָת, אֶחָת *one time, once*; (a) בְּאֶחָת *at once*.—Pl. אֶחָדִים *the same*; (b) *joined into one*; (c) *a few*.

אֶחָד Hithpa. *to unite oneself*, Eze. 21. 21.

אֶחָד (union) pr. name masc., called also אֶחָד, comp. 1 Ch. 8. 6, with Ge. 46. 21.

אֶחָד (apocopated for אֶחָד) *one*. Eze. 18. 10.

אֶחָד Eze. 33. 30, by Chaldaism for אֶחָד *one*.

אֶחָד Ch. emph. אֶחָד, אֶחָד.—I. *one*.—II. *first*.—

III. *seven times more*.—IV. אֶחָד *at the same time, together*.

Appendix 6

ECHAD – From Biblical Hebrew Step by Step, Vol 1, Pages 155-156, second edition.

By Menahem Mansour

The number *one*, אֶחָד (m.) and אַחַת (f.), is treated as an adjective, and hence it always follows the noun and agrees with it.

one man	אִישׁ אֶחָד	one woman	אִשָּׁה אַחַת
one book	סֵפֶר אֶחָד	one blessing	בְּרָכָה אַחַת

The number *one*, אֶחָד (m.) or אַחַת (f.), may also stand for the indefinite article *a* or *an*:

a man or one man	אִישׁ אֶחָד
a woman or one woman	אִשָּׁה אַחַת
an apple or one apple	תַּפּוּחַ אֶחָד

אֶחָד *one* (m.) has a plural form אֶחָדִים *a few, not many*; for instance, אֶחָדִים אֶחָדִים *few books*, אֶחָדִים אֶחָדִים *few words* or *few things*.

