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Gematria on the Parshah: Moshe's Greatest Act

By: Reb Moshe Herskovits



In Parshat Ki Tisa, Am Yisrael falls into the sin of the Golden Calf. At the end of the Torah, in Vezot HaBrachah, Rashi reveals something shocking: Moshe's greatest act was not the miracles he performed, it was his response to the Golden Calf. What was Moshe's response and how can it be considered his greatest act?

The last words of the Torah praise Moshe for the "great awesome deeds which he performed in the eyes of all Israel" (Devarim 34:12).

Rashi explains this refers to one specific act. Not the Ten Plagues, not Kriyat Yam Suf, or even Matan Torah. It was the breaking of the Luchot after the Golden Calf. When Moshe shattered the Tablets before the nation, Hashem responded with a "yashar koach." Gematria beautifully supports Rashi's insight. The phrase **עֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל** (eyes of all of Israel) equals 731 the exact value of **כִּי תִשָּׂא**, the parshah of the breaking of the Luchot.

The Greatness of Breaking the Luchot

Shemot Rabbah (43:1) explains that the Luchot were like a ketubah between Hashem and Am Yisrael. The Golden Calf was akin to adultery, and by destroying the ketubah, Moshe spared the nation from the full judgment of betrayal.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that Moshe understood that to Hashem, Am Yisrael is more precious than the Torah. The Torah was given to bring life to Israel, not to destroy them. By breaking the Luchot, Moshe proclaimed this truth.

Hashem Erase Me From Your Book

Rebbe Nachman teaches that certain levels of Torah can only emerge through sin. Without the Golden Calf we would not appreciate the depth of Hashem's compassion, nor Moshe's.

After the Golden Calf, Hashem tested Moshe, saying He would erase Am Yisrael and start a new nation through him. Rashi explains Moshe understood this was a test: Hashem's love for Am Yisrael is unconditional, and He wanted Moshe to reach this level of love.

Moshe responds: "If You do not forgive this

people, erase me (**מחני נא**) from the book which You have written. If I have found favor in Your eyes (**מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ**), You will forgive this people and show me Your glory."

The Arizal teaches that Moshe was a reincarnation of both Hevel and Noach. Hevel was righteous but did not influence Kayin; Noach did not save his generation. By saying mecheni, Moshe rectified both failures. The gematria of **מחני** (erase me) is 108, which is the same as **מי נח** (the waters of Noach) how Yeshayahu calls the flood, and **הבל בן חווה** (Abel the son of Eve). At this moment, Moshe completed their unfinished mission.

The Baal Shem Tov explains that when Moshe said **מחני**, he was willing to sacrifice himself for Israel. He was ready not only for his body to cease to exist, but even for his soul to cease to exist, if Hashem did not forgive Israel. Through this act of absolute love, he aligned himself with Divine mercy. As a result, he merited the revelation of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the highest divine revelation ever granted to man. Thus, the Golden Calf, a moment of darkness, became the gateway to the greatest revelation of love.

This is how we find true chein in Hashem's eyes: by cultivating unconditional love for Am Yisrael. The gematria of **לעניי כל ישראל** (in the eyes of all of Israel) is 761, the same as **מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ** (if I have found favor in your eyes). This teaches us that Moshe found favor in Hashem's eyes through his greatest act: breaking the tablets, defending Am Yisrael, and declaring his unconditional love for them.

Unconditional Love in Action

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that darkness provides a greater opportunity for light. When we are challenged, we should rejoice, for it is an opportunity. Rav Shlomo Ibn Gabirol says that only when you show love to those who do not deserve it have you truly reached Ahavat Yisrael. Just as Moshe demonstrated unconditional love for Am Yisrael even when they sinned, when others hurt us or behave wrongly, we have the opportunity to fully love them too.

Noam Elimelech shares that in a dream, he was shown what true Ahavat Yisrael is in heaven. He was told that true love for a Jew is when you love the most righteous Jew and the most wicked Jew the same. Although Hashem loves the righteous, on a certain level each Jew is like His most pre-

cious diamond. Moshe's greatness was his ability to see every Jew this way, even in the moment of the Golden Calf.

Challenge

This week, think of one Jew you struggle to get along with. Take 5 minutes to focus on their good qualities and try to cultivate feelings of love and appreciation for them.

Don't Take the Good for Granted

By: Reb Adam Klasner



There is a line in this week's parsha that feels off.

After the Golden Calf. After Moshe pleads. After forgiveness is granted.

Hashem says: On the day I make an accounting, I will remember this sin.

Rashi explains that every future reckoning will carry something of the Golden Calf.

It sounds harsh. What happened to teshuva? If repentance is real, why hold onto the past?

The Berditchever offers a deeper way to understand it.

There are two ways to look at a person. From the outside, you see behavior. From the inside, you see struggle.

When the Jewish people stood at Sinai and said Naaseh V'nishma, it could look inevitable. This is who they are. This is their destiny. Of course they accepted the Torah.

Then forty days later they build a Golden Calf.

And suddenly you realize something important.

These are not robots. These are people with fear, instability, wounds from Egypt, and the capacity to fall.

Which means Sinai was not automatic.

It was chosen.

If they were capable of a Golden Calf, then their loyalty at Sinai was not just momentum. It was will. It was courage. It came from inside them.

So when Hashem says, "I will remember the Calf," it is not about punishment. It is about

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perspective.

When I see your greatness, I remember that it was not easy.

When I see your commitment, I remember that you had other options.
When I see your faith, I remember your vulnerability.

And that makes your goodness real.

We often do the opposite with ourselves. We take our good for granted and obsess over our failures. We treat our mistakes as proof of who we are, and our growth as nothing special.

But your struggle is what gives weight to your choices.

If you are capable of drifting, then the fact that you show up matters.

If you are capable of numbing out, then the fact that you stay present matters.

If you are capable of reacting, then the fact that you pause matters.

The fall does not define you.

The choice does.

Failures Are Rocket Fuel!

By: Rabbi Avrohom Jacks



A soul that remains comfortable never discovers its true strength. But a soul that hits rock bottom and decides to climb back up develops unstoppable momentum.

In this week's Torah portion, we find the ultimate spiritual disaster. The Jews experienced the miraculous exodus from Egypt, they witnessed the splitting of the sea, and they heard the Divine voice at Sinai. These same people then crashed to the absolute bottom. They built and worshiped a Golden Calf.

The Talmud in Avodah Zarah tells us an earth-shattering secret about this crisis. The Talmud explains that at their exalted spiritual level, the people were actually completely incapable of transgression. G-d had to strategically design this devastating fall. Why? To forge a permanent path of return. By fracturing their flawless heights, the Creator forced humanity to discover the explosive power of true repentance.

Examine the heavy baggage you might be carrying right now. Is guilt draining your energy? Is shame paralyzing your potential? Do you tell yourself your missteps have somehow disqualified you from greatness? If so, it is time to flip the script entirely. The exact things you regret most are your greatest sources of rocket fuel. G-d allowed you to fall because He knew the force of your rebound would break through barriers

you could never shatter otherwise.

You have a divine responsibility to stop wallowing in yesterday's disappointments. Every ounce of energy spent agonizing over past failures is a waste of your limitless potential. You can and should extract the intense spiritual power hidden inside your setbacks. Realize that you are deeply loved by G-d exactly as you are. He believes in your capacity to rise higher than you ever imagined. So, forgive yourself. Transform the profound pain of your history into the explosive power of your destiny. Embrace the fall as the absolute catalyst for your highest ascent. When you finally hit rock bottom, then you are ready to claim your true, unstoppable strength.

When Breaking Leads to Bonding

By: Reb Yacov Aboudi



Parashat Ki Tisa confronts us with one of the most painful scenes in the Torah. Moshe descends from Sinai and shatters the Luchot:

“וַיִּשְׁבֹּר אֹתָם תַּחַת הָהָר.”

“He shattered them beneath the mountain.” (Shemot 32:19)

The first Tablets were entirely Divine, flawless and untouched by human struggle. And yet they did not endure. After forgiveness, Hashem commands Moshe:

“פָּסַל לָךְ שְׁנֵי לַחֹת אֲבִנִּים.”

“Carve for yourself two tablets of stone.” (Shemot 34:1)

This time Moshe must carve them. Human hands prepare what will carry Divine words. The Midrash (Tanchuma, Ki Tisa 31) teaches that the second Luchot were more beloved because they were given after forgiveness.

The Maharal (Tiferet Yisrael 44-46) explains that the first Luchot were entirely from Heaven. What is purely Divine cannot coexist with human fracture. The second Luchot represent partnership. When covenant includes humility, effort, and return it becomes enduring.

Chazal teach:

“לַחֹת וְשִׁבְרֵי לַחֹת מְנַחוּת בְּאֵרוֹן.”

“The Tablets and the broken Tablets were both placed in the Ark.” (Berachot 8b)

The broken pieces were not discarded.

They remained in the holiest place.

That is the Torah's vision of relationship.

The first Luchot represent a bond that has never been tested. The second represent a bond that has been wounded and rebuilt. The Zohar says:

“אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה זָכוּ שְׂכִינָתָא שְׂרִיא בִּינְהוּ.”

“When husband and wife merit, the Shechi-

nah rests between them.” (Zohar III, 7b)

Marriage is covenant. Covenant is not sustained by perfection. It is sustained by repair.

Rabbi Moshe Cordovero writes in Tomer Devorah that we must emulate Hashem's attribute of “נושא עוון,” bearing hurt while continuing to sustain the other. True greatness is remaining present even when wounded.

In marriage this is not abstract. There are moments of real pain, misunderstanding, and hurt. The instinct is often to retreat, to protect ourselves, or to lash out in return. But covenant asks something higher. It means resisting the instinct to withdraw. It means choosing to stay engaged when pride wants to close the door. It means answering hurt not with distance, but with steadiness and love. When pain is met with presence instead of defensiveness, something unexpected can happen. The very moment that could have created distance becomes the place where closeness is rebuilt. Covenant is larger than the moment of pain.

The Ramban (Shemot 34:9) explains that after the sin the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy became the foundation of ongoing relationship. Mercy is not emergency forgiveness. It is the architecture of covenant.

And then comes Purim.

The Gemara teaches that although the Torah was accepted at Sinai in overwhelming revelation, “כפה עליהם הר כניגית,” it was later “הדר קבלוה בימי אחשוורוש,” reaccepted willingly in the days of Achashverosh (Shabbat 88a).

Sinai was thunder and clarity.

Purim was hiddenness.

Hashem's Name does not appear once in the Megillah. No open miracle. No voice from Heaven. And yet in concealment the Jewish people chose the covenant again. Purim is the second Luchot of history. The first covenant was born in revelation. The second was forged in hiddenness. The crack at Sinai came when presence felt absent.

Purim is faith when presence feels hidden. There is a Japanese art form called kintsugi where a broken vessel is repaired with gold. The cracks are not hidden. They are illuminated. The fracture becomes part of the beauty. The second Luchot were not a return to perfection. They were a covenant strengthened by mercy. Even the broken pieces were placed in the Ark because repair that carries memory can be more sacred than untouched wholeness. Perfection is fragile. Covenant forged through humility endures.

Ki Tisa and Purim together teach us that breaking is not the end of relationship. If we are willing to carve again in our marriage, in our faith, in our closest bonds, the connection can become deeper than it was before.

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