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Gematria on the Parshah: Lighting the Neshamah's Fire

By: Reb Moshe Herskovits



In the beginning of Parshat Behaalotcha, Aharon is commanded to light the Menorah. The Menorah must be formed from one solid gold block. Why is Aharon specifically commanded to light the Menorah, and not Moshe? Why does it have to be formed from one gold block?

The Menorah Represents the Jewish People

The Baal Shem Tov says the Menorah represents the Jewish people. Each Jew has seven different emotional attributes. Although each Jew has all seven, there is a dominant one for each person, which shapes their personality. There are Chesed Jews that love kindness, Gevurah Jews that stand up against evil, Tiferet Jews that dedicate their life to Torah, and so forth.

The Alter Rebbe says there are times in life when the fire each Jewish neshamah has for Hashem is being washed away. The Alter Rebbe calls this mayim rabim (abundant waters). Mayim Rabim are the desires and worries of this world that weaken our connection to Hashem.

Aharon's job is to light the fire within every Jewish soul. Amazingly, the gematria of שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (fire) is 301, the same as מְנוֹרָה (menorah) and חֵזֶק (want), the burning passion every Jew carries to draw close to Hashem and fulfill their divine purpose.

Why Does Aharon Light the Menorah?

Why does Aharon specifically light the Menorah? The Alter Rebbe says Aharon, as the Kohen Gadol, represents the highest level of Ahavat Yisrael. Because Aharon loves each Jewish person even more than they love themselves, he is able to awaken the fire of the neshamah.

Rebbe Nachman explains that the reason we don't serve Hashem with all our strength is because the yetzer hara convinces us that we don't matter.

Aharon the Kohen Gadol knows the true reality. He knows that Hashem would have created the world for the sake of any individual Jew. Aharon reflects the love Hashem has for every Jew, and this awakens the neshamah.

The Menorah Must Be One Gold Piece

The Alter Rebbe explains that this is the meaning behind why the Menorah must be made from one gold piece. He explains that Hashem constantly creates the world with or memalei and or hasovev, two types of Divine light.

The light of or memalei divides according to the vessel, meaning each creation receives a different measure of light. A Jew receives different light than a tree.

Or Hasovev is the all encompassing light, the light of unity. It teaches us that everything that exists is completely essential to Hashem's plan in the world. The gematria of בְּבוֹסֶה רֹאֵה (or hasovev) is 282, the same as the phrase from the Amidah: דְּסִיחָב מִיֵּיחַ לְכִלְכֵּם (He sustains the living with kindness). Aharon realizes that every single Jew, no matter their spiritual level, is created with the deepest love from Hashem.

The Alter Rebbe says the Menorah represents this light of unity. It represents that every Jew is a manifestation of Hashem's light, and that each one equally has the power to perfect the entire world.

A Story of Ahavat Yisrael

Rav Zusha lived this idea in a powerful way. The Chozeh MiLublin was once speaking with Rav Zusha about how to bring Jews back to Hashem. The Chozeh said, "The reason Jews sin is because they don't realize the damage they cause." Rav Zusha responded, "A Jew sins because they don't have the strength to overcome. What is the solution? I shine the enormous love Hashem has for them into their hearts, until they repent."

Challenge

This week, let us keep in mind that Hashem sustains us and every person we interact with through the deepest love, and let us shine that love toward each other.

The People You Changed May Never Tell You

By: Reb Adam Klasner



There is a moment in this week's parsha that is almost painful to read. Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest leader the Jewish people ever had, reaches a breaking point.

The Jewish people begin crying. They want meat. They miss Egypt. They remember the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. And Moshe collapses.

He turns to Hashem and says, "Why have You done this to me? Why did You place the burden of this entire people on me? Did I give birth to them? Did I nurse them? Where am I supposed to get meat for all of them?" And then he says something shocking.

"If this is how You are going to deal with me, then please kill me." This is Moshe Rabbeinu.

The man who stood before Pharaoh. The man who split the sea. The man who brought down the Torah. The man who defended the Jewish people after the golden calf. He had dealt with complaints before. He had dealt with fear before. He had dealt with rebellion before.

So what broke him here? It was not the meat.

It was the feeling that after everything, nothing had changed. After Yetziyas Mitzrayim. After Kriyas Yam Suf. After Har Sinai. After the Mishkan. After seeing Hashem with a clarity no nation had ever seen before.

They were still talking about garlic. They were still crying about food. Moshe was not just overwhelmed by their complaint. He was devastated by what it seemed to mean. Maybe my whole mission failed. Maybe I took them out of Egypt, but I did not take Egypt out of them. Maybe I gave them Torah, but they still see life through the eyes of slavery, smallness, craving, and survival.

Anyone who has ever tried to lead, teach, parent, build, guide, or love deeply knows this feeling.

You pour yourself into people.

You give your heart. You show up. You sacrifice. You teach. You care. You believe in someone before they believe in themselves. And then one day you look around and wonder, did any of it matter?

Did anything actually get through? Did I make a difference?

Hashem's response to Moshe is powerful. He tells him to gather seventy elders. Hashem takes from the spirit of Moshe and places it upon them, and for one moment, they begin to prophesy.

For one moment, Moshe sees his own spirit reflected back to him. He sees that his life was not wasted.

He sees that his words did enter people. He sees that there are others who carry his vision.

Not everyone was only thinking about meat. Not everyone was stuck in Egypt. Not everyone was small. There were seventy people who had absorbed something from him.

Sometimes that is all a person needs. Not applause.

Not ego. Not honor.

Just to know that the love was not wasted. That the teaching landed somewhere.

That the sacrifice mattered. That someone changed because you cared.

And this is something we often forget. There are people who changed our lives who have no idea they changed our lives.

A teacher who believed in us. A parent who stayed steady.

A friend who said the right words at the right time. A mentor who saw something in us that we could not see in ourselves.

Most of the time, we never tell them. Not because we are ungrateful.

Because saying thank you deeply is vulnerable. A real thank you is not just good manners.

A real thank you means, "You mattered to me. You reached me. I am not the same because of you." That is not always easy to say.

But people need to hear it. Even Moshe Rabbeinu needed to see that his work mattered.

There is a story told about a wounded Israeli soldier who lost both of his legs after stepping on a mine in the Golan Heights. He fell into a deep depression. He felt broken, bitter, unseen, and forgotten. Years later, he came with a group of wounded soldiers to meet the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Rebbe spoke to them and said they should not be called disabled veterans. They should be called exceptional veterans. Then the Rebbe walked over to each soldier personally.

When he came to this man, he held his hands, looked him straight in the eyes, and said slowly, "Thank you. Thank you." The soldier later said



that those words changed his life.

Nobody could give him back his legs. But someone finally looked at him and saw him.

Someone finally thanked him with his whole heart. And that gave him back his dignity.

That gave him back his strength. That gave him fuel to live again.

We do not always know what our words do. We do not always know what one thank you can awaken.

We do not always know who is walking around wondering if their life mattered, if their giving mattered, if their sacrifice was seen. This week's parsha reminds us that no word of love is wasted.

No act of care is wasted. No sacrifice is wasted.

No moment of real presence is wasted. Even when you do not see the impact, something is entering someone.

Something is being planted. Something is growing underground.

And maybe this week, the work is simple. Think of someone who changed your life.

Someone who carried you. Someone who believed in you.

Someone whose words still live inside you. And tell them.

Not casually. Not with a quick text that says, "Thanks for everything."

Tell them what they did. Tell them how it changed you.

Tell them that their love was not wasted. Because sometimes one honest thank you can give a person the strength to keep going.

Running in the Wrong Direction

By: Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski



In Parshas Beha'aloscha, the two following verses appear surrounded by inverted Nuns:

"Arise Hashem! And Your enemies will scatter and Your foes will flee from before You! Return Hashem, among the myriads of thousands of Israel!" (Bamidbar 10:35-36).

Rashi explains that these signs were placed here not because this is the passage's proper location, but to separate between one sin and another (Rashi on Bamidbar 10:35). Two failures bracket these verses, and understanding them together reveals something striking.

The sin that follows is explicit: the nation complaining, yearning for meat, journeying without joy or gratitude (Bamidbar 11:1). But the sin that precedes is far subtler - and easy to miss entirely.

The Torah states: "And they traveled from the mountain of Hashem a path of three days" (Bamidbar 10:33). The Sifsei Chachamim notices that this mountain is called Har Hashem here, yet everywhere else in the Torah it is called Har Elokim. Why the change? The Midrash supplies the answer: they left like a child fleeing from school. The name 'Hashem' is used to highlight who and what they were turning away from (Sifsei Chachamim on Bamidbar 10:35; Talmud Yerushalmi Taanis 4:5).

The image is familiar: the students have not been harmed, the teacher has not been cruel, the les-

sons have been okay, but they run the moment the door opens.

That is what Bnei Yisrael did at Har Sinai. They had just experienced the most extraordinary revelation in human history. And the moment they could leave, they bolted. They were not motivated by fear, but in relief. The Midrash captures this as follows: like children freed from the schoolhouse.

The Shulchan Aruch encodes the corrective practice to this into Halacha: it is a Mitzvah to run toward shul and toward every Mitzvah, and it is forbidden to run when leaving (O"C 90:12). Abaye traces this to the verse: "Let us eagerly strive to know Hashem" (Brachos 6b). The Ein Eliyahu suggests the prohibition against running out finds its very source here, how Bnei Yisrael fled Har Sinai (Ein Eliyahu on Shabbos 116a).

The same instinct lives on within us still. And this is why on the night of Shavuot the custom is to stay awake learning until dawn - a Tikkun for the laxity with which Bnei Yisrael arose to receive the Torah. We cannot undo the running, but we can choose to tarry at the Bais Medrash door just a little bit longer before we leave.

The Staying Is Everything!

By: Rabbi Avrohom Jacks



There are two kinds of fire. The fire of straw and the fire of coal. Straw is pure drama. It catches instantly, blazes blindingly bright, and then quickly vanishes into cold ash. It may be impressive for the short time it lasts, but it rapidly extinguishes. Coal, on the other hand, doesn't light quickly. It resists the spark. It takes longer to catch. But once it does ignite, it holds its heat. And its glowing warmth will outlast the winter night.

Most of the inspiration in our lives is the fire of straw. It's a dazzling speech, a flash of transformative clarity. But then the inspiring person walks away, the brilliant moment fades, and life resumes its monotonous grind.

When Aaron is instructed to light the Menorah, the sacred golden candelabrum, he is told to hold the flame to the wick until the fire burns steadily on its own. He is commanded to stay close until the flame finds its footing.

Here is what this means for you. Whether you are a parent standing over a child or a mentor sitting with a student, you are called to stay close long enough that they no longer need you to stay. The greatest achievement of a teacher is when the student's fire burns on its own. So often, the missing ingredient required to transform the spark of straw into the fire of coal is the hand that refuses to leave.

There are people in your life whose flame is fragile right now. They've had their moment of inspiration, and now they are in that critical space, that delicate threshold between who they were and who they are becoming. This is when they need someone who stays. This is when they need the hand of Aaron. You have no idea how much your consistent belief in someone will help their flame find its own strength.

And here is the truth that should stop you cold. G-d Himself holds the flame over your life. Every trial that feels unbearable, every season of waiting that feels endless, is G-d staying close, tending the fire, refusing to walk away until your light is capable of completely standing on its own.

We are held close so that we can learn to stay close for others. In a world consumed by fleeting sparks, you are being built to outlast the longest winter night.

Beha'alotecha When Trust Feels Like Insecurity

By: Reb Yacov Aboudi



In Parashat Beha'alotecha, the Torah says, "וַיִּהְיֶה הָעָם כְּמִתְאַנְנִים רַע בְּאַוִּי ה'." the people were like complainers (Bamidbar 11:1). Strangely, the pasuk does not say what they complained about.

Rashi explains that "מִתְאַנְנִים" is a language of "עלילה" looking for a pretext (Rashi, Bamidbar 11:1). In other words, the complaint began before the issue. First there was inner dissatisfaction; only afterward did they find something to blame.

Then the complaint became specific: "מִי יַאֲכִלֵנוּ?" "Who will feed us meat?" (Bamidbar 11:4). They looked back at Egypt and said, "זָכְרֵנוּ אֶת הָאֵל הַיָּם..." "We remember the fish..." (Bamidbar 11:5). But Egypt was slavery. Their desire rewrote their memory.

That is the danger of complaint. It does not only describe reality; it distorts reality. It can make slavery look pleasant and make a miracle feel empty.

This is exactly what happened with the mann. They said, "אֵין כֵּל בְּלִיתֵי אֵל הַמָּן עֵינֵינוּ." "There is nothing except this mann before our eyes" (Bamidbar 11:6). The mann was bread from Heaven, but to them it felt like deprivation.

Why? Because the mann came "דְּבַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ" one day at a time, "לִמְנוּחַ אֲנִסְנוּ" as a test (Shemot 16:4). Chazal explain that the mann fell daily so Bnei Yisrael would turn their hearts to Hashem each day (Yoma 76a). Hashem gave them what they needed, but not the illusion that they controlled tomorrow.

That was the real test. They were not hungry. They were dependent. And sometimes dependence feels like insecurity.

The Zera Shimshon adds a beautiful contrast later in the parsha. When Miriam needs a refuah, Moshe davens, "אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ" (Bamidbar 12:13). The pasuk first says "וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה'." Moshe cried out. The Zera Shimshon explains that צַעֲקָה is the inner cry of the heart before it becomes spoken tefillah (Zera Shimshon, Beha'alotecha).

This is the repair to complaint.

The people felt vulnerable, and it became complaint. Moshe felt pain, and it became tefillah.

The same inner pressure can go in two directions. If it turns outward, it becomes resentment. If it turns upward, it becomes prayer.

That is the message of Beha'alotecha: Hashem may give us exactly what we need, but one day at a time. The avodah is not to experience that as abandonment, but as relationship.

They did not complain because Hashem stopped providing. They complained because Hashem was providing in a way that demanded daily trust.

The avodah is to notice the moment before complaint begins that quiet place where the heart feels exposed and to lift it upward before it turns bitter.

When I do not have control over tomorrow, do I experience that as insecurity, or as an invitation to trust Hashem one day at a time?

That is the inner work of Beha'alotecha: to catch the feeling before it becomes complaint, to turn vulnerability into tefillah, and to recognize that today's mann is also Hashem's way of teaching me that tomorrow is in His hands.

