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Gematria on the Parshah: Moshe's Ahavat Yisrael

By: Moshe Herskovits



In Parshah Shemot, we are introduced to the greatest human being who ever lived, Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe was the only human being Hashem spoke to "face to face." Amazingly, the gematria of פנים אל פנים is the same as אלהי משה. What qualities did Hashem love about Moshe that merited this unique relationship? How can we emulate those qualities in our own lives?

Moshe's Empathy

Moshe's journey towards greatness began with a single choice. Though he grew up in Pharaoh's house, surrounded by luxury, he rejected that life. One choice would shape his destiny.

The Torah tells us that Moshe went out to see the suffering of Yisrael. He saw a slave being brutally beaten by an Egyptian taskmaster. Rabbi Meir Shapira says Moshe looked around, shocked and disgusted. He thought to himself, "How could not a single Egyptian be deeply pained by the suffering around them?"

The pasuk contains a very special gematria: "Now it came to pass in those days that Moses grew up and went out to his brothers and looked at their burdens" (2:11). The gematria of ויהי בימים ההם ויגדל משה ויצא אל אחיו וירא בסבלותם 1495 equals the combined numerical value of the Hebrew alphabet from Aleph to Tav.

Chazal say that certain mitzvot equal the fulfillment of the entire Torah. Moshe's act of seeing and responding to suffering embodies the essence of Torah and the purpose of a Jew.

Story of the Rashash

Generations later, this same character trait is beautifully illustrated in the life of the Rashash. On his way to the yeshiva to study the deepest secrets of Torah, he encountered a poor woman holding a small child in the pouring rain. Though pressed for time, his heart was moved. He removed his coat and shoes, gave them to her, and escorted her to his home. There, he and his wife provided them with food, warm clothing, and support.

When the woman later discovered who he was and apologized for troubling such a great tzaddik, the Rashash reassured her. In that moment, he understood what Moshe had taught generations earlier: that the truest Torah begins when we step out of comfort and allow another person's suffering to enter our hearts.

Moshe's Unconditional Ahavat Yisrael

The Tikunei HaZohar highlights the greatness of Moshe by comparing him to Eliyahu and Yonah. Eliyahu's love for Hashem was so deep, it got in his way of his empathy towards Yisrael. Yonah's love for Yisrael was so deep he refused Hashem's mission. Moshe's love was perfect; he unconditionally loved Hashem and Yisrael.

Moshe's love for Yisrael is deeper than a mother's love for her children. Perhaps no human being ever loved Yisrael like Moshe. This love, reflecting Hashem's own, may be one reason He spoke to Moshe face to face.

Strategies to Increase Ahavat Yisrael

How can we begin to have the smallest amount of Ahavat Yisrael like Moshe?

The Sassover Rebbe says true love is to know the suffering and needs of others and to act. We have to spend some time reflecting on the people in our lives and how we can help them. Take 5 minutes this week to think or write about the needs of people in the community, and even those who live under our own roof. What do they truly need? What action can we take to truly help them?

A second approach is to reflect on Hashem's love for every Jew. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz was the famous Rosh Yeshiva of Mir. He was once asked how he had such deep love for his students. Rav Chaim answered: "I think about how much their mothers love them, and try to show them the same love."

The gematria of אב + אם, (father + mother) is 46, the same as כה' (Like YKVK Hashem). When we look at every person with the eyes of a loving parent, we can get a small glimpse of Hashem's love for that person.

Rav David Moshe Chortkov exemplified this love in a profound way. His care for every Jew was so deep that he would often be heard whispering in

his sleep: "Helliger Tatte! Helliger Rachamim of The Whole World! Please have mercy on Am Yisrael." Just as a parent's love for a child is constant and ever-present, so too must we connect to that love of the tzaddik. By doing so, we can reflect, in our own way, Hashem's infinite love for every Jew. Take 10 minutes this week to focus very simply on the infinite love Hashem has for every person you interact with.

The Yid HaKodesh of Peshischa teaches: How do we know if we are following the path Hashem wants for us? If our love for Yisrael is increasing each day, exemplifying Moshe's quality which Hashem loved.

We should remember: Moshe became Moshe Rabbeinu not because he saw Hashem face to face, but because he first learned to see another Jew's pain.

Stretch First, Understand Later

By: Adam Klasner



There are moments in life when the heart knows exactly what is right, but the mind immediately pushes back. This is too big. You cannot fix this. You do not have the tools, the clarity, or the safety to act. So we pause. We calculate. We wait. And very often, nothing changes.

The story of Moshe's rescue is usually told as a miracle story. Pharaoh's daughter goes down to the river, sees a basket, and according to the Midrash, stretches out her arm far beyond its natural reach. Most people read this as a supernatural detail added for drama. But the deeper reading changes everything.

Her arm did not stretch because she was powerful. It stretched because she acted before knowing how it would work.

Batya saw something that demanded a response. A helpless child. A moral crisis. A moment where silence would have been easier and safer. Rationally, her choice made no sense. She was the daughter of Pharaoh. Taking in a Jewish baby was dangerous, irrational, and potentially self-destructive. Every logical voice would have told her to walk away. And yet she stretched out her arm.

That stretch is not about anatomy. It is about agency.



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The Midrash is teaching a core truth about how real change happens. A human being's reach is always limited. Emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, we can only extend ourselves so far. If the outcome needs to be guaranteed before we act, we will almost never act. But when a person stretches anyway, when they show up fully to a moment that demands integrity, something else joins them. Not control. Not certainty. Something larger.

This pattern repeats immediately in Moshe's life. Raised in the palace, he sees an Egyptian beating a Jew. The strategic move would have been to stay quiet. Build power. Play the long game. But Moshe does what his stepmother modeled. He stretches first. He acts before knowing the outcome. And it costs him everything. He loses his position, his safety, his future as he imagined it. Until that very loss becomes the beginning of redemption.

This is the uncomfortable truth most of us avoid. Growth does not begin when fear disappears. Growth begins when we move while fear is still present. Waiting to feel ready is often just waiting to stay the same.

We all face moments like this. In relationships. In leadership. In speaking up. In choosing healing over comfort. The question is never whether your arm is long enough. It never is. The question is whether you are willing to stretch it anyway.

Because when you do, you are no longer acting alone. And outcomes you could never engineer begin to unfold in ways you could not have planned.

Stretch first. Understanding comes later.

Shaping Our Own Persecution

By: Rabbi Nachum Aaron Kutnowski



In Parshas Shemos, the Torah describes an important moment in the early life of Moshe, prior to his emergence as the leader of Klal Yisrael. After striking down an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Jewish slave, Moshe goes out the following day and encounters two Jews engaged in a dispute, on the verge of escalating to violence. When Moshe rebukes the aggressor – “Why are you striking your fellow?” – he is met with defiance and accusation. The man challenges Moshe's authority and reveals knowledge of the Egyptian's death the day before. Moshe immediately realizes that the matter has become known and soon afterward flees Egypt (Shemos 2:13-15). Rashi offers a Midrashic interpretation on the words, “the matter has become known.” Moshe had long been troubled by why the Jewish people were singled out from among the seventy

nations of the world to endure such crushing enslavement. At this moment, Moshe now understood (Rashi to Shemos 2:14; Shemos Rabbah 1:30).

At first glance, this explanation seems incomplete. Moshe certainly knew that the Jewish people in Egypt were not spiritually perfect. So what does this explanation truly clarify?

The Ksav Sofer explains that not all sins generate the same type of punishment. When a person sins against G-d, the consequences often come directly from Heaven – through illness or personal hardship. But when a person sins against another person, the retribution is left to unfold through other people. Suffering inflicted by man against another can be far more severe than suffering imposed directly by G-d, which is always Divinely calibrated (Ksav Sofer to Shemos 2:14).

Moshe already knew that the Jewish people had sinned Bein Adam laMakom. What puzzled him was why those sins resulted in such harsh subjugation. The answer became clear when he saw Jews harming and informing on one another. When there is no peace among Jews, the protective barrier surrounding the nation collapses, allowing external forces to do as they please.

This Midah KeNeged Midah reverberates throughout Jewish history. The Gemara teaches that the Second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of Sinas Chinam – baseless hatred (Maseches Yuma 9b). The same internal breakdown that enabled Egyptian oppression later led to the destruction of Jewish sovereignty and exile.

Parshas Shemos reminds us that Jewish unity is not merely an ethical ideal, but a physical necessity for the Jewish nation. When we strengthen our commitment to Bein Adam Lachaveiro, we fortify our people – and take a meaningful step toward the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash.

Good Shabbos.

Batya's reach

The Torah introduces Batya almost quietly: “וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל הַיָּאֵר.”

(Shemot 2:5)

She is the daughter of Pharaoh – raised in power, surrounded by cruelty, protected by comfort. And yet the Torah emphasizes that she goes down. Chazal explain that this descent was not physical, but internal. Rashi writes:

“לְרַחֵץ — מְגֻלָּי בֵּית אָבִיהָ.”

(Rashi to Shemot 2:5)

Batya is not rebelling loudly. She is separating quietly. She does not yet know who she will become – only who she can no longer be. Then she sees the basket. A helpless child. A forbidden child. A dangerous choice. The Torah says simply: “וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת אֶמְתָּהּ.”

Chazal explain:

“אֶמְתָּהּ — זֵדָה.”

(Sotah 12b)

The Zera Shimshon teaches that Batya merited this miracle not because she was commanded, but because she acted before she had clarity or safety:

“שֶׁהָקָדִימָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב אֶף שֶׁלֹּא הָיְתָה מְצוּהָ עָלֶיהָ — וְעַל כֵּן נַעֲשֶׂה לָּהּ נֶס.”

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Shemot)

The Zohar describes what was happening beyond what the eye could see:

“אֶתְעִירוֹתָ דְּלִתְמָא — אֶתְעִירוֹתָ דְּלִעִילָא.”

(Zohar I, 86b)

The Bat Ayin explains how this response unfolds: “כִּשְׂאֵדָם מְרַחֵב דַּעְתּוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת מַעֲשֶׂה קָדְשָׁה לְמַעַלְה מִכְּבוֹד — מְרַחֵבֵין לוֹ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם.”

(Bat Ayin, Parashat Shemot)

The Arizal teaches a core principle of creation: “אֵין הָאוֹר נִגְלָה אֶלָּא לְפִי הַכֹּלִי.”

(Arizal, Etz Chaim, Heichal א"ק)

And the Ben Ish Chai explains redemption itself:

“שֶׁאֵין הַגָּאֻלָּה בְּאֵה עַל־יְדֵי הַדַּעַת, אֶלָּא עַל־יְדֵי הָאֱמוּנָה.”

(Ben Ish Chai, Ben Yehoyada, Sanhedrin 98a)

Batya did not understand. She trusted. And because she reached first, Hashem reached back. That is why Chazal say Hashem renamed her:

“לֹא בְּנָה קָרָאתָ — אֵתָה בְּנִי קָרָאתָ.”

(Vayikra Rabbah 1:3)

She saved one child – and became a daughter of Hashem.

Takeaway

“You do not become holy by waiting to feel ready. You become holy by moving while you are afraid.” Sometimes the most important moment in a person's life is the moment they reach – even when they do not yet know why. And sometimes, that single reach changes everything.

