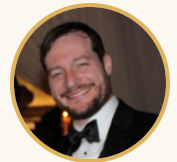




PARSHA INSIGHT

Gematria on the Parshah: Moshe's Longing for Eretz Yisrael

BY REB MOSHE HERSKOVITS



In Parshat Vaetchanan, Moshe famously prays 515 times to nullify Hashem's decree and enter Eretz Yisrael. The Tosher Rebbe asks why did Moshe want to enter Eretz Yisrael when Hashem had decreed otherwise? And why did Hashem not want him to enter?

The fact that Moshe prayed to enter Eretz Yisrael is strange, because we know that Moshe Rabbeinu was completely nullified to Hashem. The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out the difference between Rabbi Akiva and Avraham Avinu: Rabbi Akiva spent his whole life yearning to serve Hashem on the highest level, to give up his soul for Hashem. Avraham, by contrast, made no distinction between doing something small or great for Hashem. He simply

wanted to fulfill Hashem's will, whatever it was. Chazal teach that Moshe possessed an even greater level of bitul and humility than either of them. This only strengthens the question: why did he try to nullify Hashem's decree?

MOSHE'S TRUE INTENTION

The Tosher Rebbe explains that Moshe's kavanah was solely for the sake of the Jewish people. Moshe believed that if he entered Eretz Yisrael, he would reach a high enough level of holiness to bring the Messianic Era.

Moshe's reasoning was as follows: when the Jews left Mitzrayim, they were on the 49th level of impurity. They did not leave in their

own merit, but in the merit of Hashem's chesed and the merit of the Avot. Moshe believed he could bring the final redemption the same way: that if he reached the proper level of holiness, Hashem would bring the redemption in that merit.

But Hashem denied his request, because the final redemption does not come from the head of Yisrael. It comes from the feet. It comes from the nation itself.

This idea is alluded to in gematria. The gematria of רגלי העם (the feet of the nation) is 358, the same gematria as משיח (Messiah). As the Lubavitcher Rebbe said to his chassidim, "I have done everything possible to bring Mashiach; now it is up to you." Now it is up to the nation.

BECOMING THE VESSEL FOR MASHIACH

How can we, as a nation, become the vessel to bring Mashiach? Mashiach comes through transforming the legs, not just the head. This is why the period before Mashiach's arrival is called the "heels" of Mashiach.

We can learn a great deal of Torah, and it can give us tremendous wisdom. But does it penetrate our entire being? Does it reach our legs? Does it reach the way we walk through this world? Does it transform the lowest parts of ourselves? It is in the merit of transforming the legs of the nation, allowing the Torah to penetrate our daily life, our challenges, and the dark places within us, that we become the vessel to receive Mashiach.

Rashi teaches that Moshe Rabbeinu prayed 515 times to enter Eretz Yisrael, and that had he prayed just one more time, he would have brought the Geulah. Rashi notes that 515 is the gematria of ואתחנן (I entreated), and also the gematria of תפילה (prayer).

What is the gematria of 516? It is the same gematria as brachah על ביעור חמץ (the burning of chametz), and of יבנה המקדש (may the Temple be rebuilt). Through burning the chametz, the darkness within ourselves, and allowing the Torah to penetrate even our legs and heels, we merit to become a vessel for Mashiach.

For more, check out the Gematria Torah channel on YouTube!

AVODAH

The Temple Wasn't Destroyed in a Day

BY REB ADAM KLASNER



We often think Tisha B'Av is about remembering something that happened two thousand years ago.

It isn't.

It's about recognizing how destruction still happens today.

No marriage falls apart in a day.

No family breaks in a day.

No person wakes up one morning completely disconnected from themselves or from God.

Destruction is almost always the result of small moments that go unaddressed.

The conversation we avoid.

The resentment we justify.

The pain we refuse to feel.

The apology we never make.

The truth we keep pushing away.

The Beis Hamikdash wasn't only a building of stone.

It was the place where heaven and earth met.

Where God's presence was felt.

Every one of us has a Beis Hamikdash inside of us.

When we numb ourselves...

When we live behind masks...

When we choose being right over being connected...

When we run from our pain instead of bringing it to Hashem...

We begin destroying that inner sanctuary brick by brick.

Tisha B'Av is not only a day to mourn what was lost.

It is an invitation to notice what still needs rebuilding.

Because every honest conversation rebuilds a brick.

Every act of forgiveness rebuilds a brick.

Every moment of vulnerability rebuilds a brick.

Every time we stop hiding and allow Hashem into the places we've kept closed, another brick is laid.

The Temple wasn't destroyed in a day. It won't be rebuilt in a day either. But it will be rebuilt one honest moment at a time.

ON THE PARSHA

Moses Knew Before Einstein!

BY RABBI AVROHOM JACKS



When you want to fire up an army, you convince them they are unstoppable giants. You remind them that their enemies are mere ants beneath their feet.

In this week's Parsha, Moses does the exact opposite. He is addressing the people standing at the edge of the Promised Land, about to march in battle against the seven nations. Instead of giving them a pre-battle hype speech telling them how great they are, Moses tells them flat out that they are the smallest nation on earth.

For centuries, that line has accurately described the Jewish People. We have always seemed outnumbered and outmatched, less than 0.1% of all the people who have ever lived.

By all the old rules, where might and dominance are measured strictly by headcount, a group as small as the Jews should have vanished from history long ago. But the world was measuring the wrong thing, and that became undeniable the day scientists split the atom.

Fission proved that the tiniest imaginable block of matter holds an absurd amount of energy. And the way you release that force is by cracking the thing open.

Your soul runs on the very same law. Inside you is a spark of the Infinite, a piece of G-d Himself, pressed down beneath a hard shell you have been building since you were a child. That shell is the

ego, the frightened voice that has spent years convincing you to stay guarded and small. Every time you chip away at it, every time you drop the act and let yourself be a little more vulnerable, you crack that shell and a burst of your real light comes screaming out into the world.

This is why your smallness was never the problem. The apology you have been too proud to offer, the dream that felt too big for someone like you, the tzedakah you give when it actually pinches, the mitzvah you do b'simcha even when you're running on empty, these do more to crack the shell than you have let yourself believe. Each one is a fission event. Each one releases something that ripples out further than you could ever trace.

So stop waiting until you feel big enough and ready enough to finally matter. Heaven wired this world so that one small soul, willing to crack open and shine, could move what the most massive armies could not.

You are the smallest of all peoples. Moses meant it as a blessed promise. What are you going to unleash today?

MUSSAR

Put Down the Invoice

BY REB YACOV ABOUDI



I am a business owner—although, on second thought, the businesses probably own me.

Either way, I spend much of my life looking at invoices, payments, balances and overdue accounts. Perhaps it is only natural that I sometimes look at the rest of life through the same lens:

What did I give? What did I receive? Who owes me? And why have they not paid yet?

Parashat Va'etchanan begins with Moshe Rabbeinu pleading with Hashem to allow him to enter Eretz Yisrael:

וְאַתְּחַנֵּן אֵל ה' בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר

Rashi explains that וְאַתְּחַנֵּן is the language of חנם—a free gift. Although the righteous possess merits, they do not approach Hashem as though He owes them payment.

If anyone could have presented Hashem with an invoice, it was Moshe Rabbeinu. He confronted Pharaoh, led the Jewish people out of Egypt, brought down the Torah, defended them after the Golden Calf and carried them through the wilderness for forty years.

Yet Moshe did not say:

"After everything I have done, You owe me this."

He asked for a gift.

The Reishit Chochmah writes:

וְכֵן צָרִיךְ אָדָם שֶׁלֹּא יִשְׁאַל אֶלָּא מֵאוֹצֵר הָעֶלְיוֹן, שֶׁהוּא אוֹצֵר מִתְּנַת חֵן, כְּמוֹ שֶׁשֶּׁאֵל מִשָּׁה רַבֵּנוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם

"A person should ask only from the upper treasury—the treasury of a free gift—just as Moshe Rabbeinu asked." (Reishit Chochmah, Sha'ar HaAnavah 6:22)

There are two levels to this teaching.

First, asking for a free gift is the proper posture before Hashem. Our Torah, tefillah, tzedakah and chesed are real and precious, but they should not become an invoice:

"I did this, so You must give me that."

We serve Hashem because it is right, because we love Him and because that is our purpose. We may ask Him for everything, but we ask with humility rather than entitlement.

The Tomer Devorah reveals an even deeper truth. Asking for a free gift is not merely respectful—it is also the most accurate accounting.

The Ramak writes:

אִין רְגַע שֶׁלֹּא יְהִיָּה הָאָדָם נִזּוֹן וּמִתְקִים מִכֶּחַ עָלָיוֹן הַשּׁוֹפֵעַ עָלָיו

"There is not a single moment in which a person is not being nourished and sustained by the Divine power flowing upon him." (Tomer Devorah, Chapter 1, Middah of כְּמוֹךָ)

Every breath, heartbeat, thought and movement is being given to us by Hashem.

Even the mitzvot through which we acquire merit are performed using gifts He first gave us. We learn with a mind He sustains, give tzedakah from money He enabled us to earn, perform chesed with hands He strengthens and pray with breath He places within us.

Our mitzvot have immeasurable value, but they can never turn Hashem into our debtor. No matter how much credit we believe we have accumulated, the honest accounting shows that we remain eternally in deficit compared with everything Hashem has already given us.

As David HaMelech said:

כִּי מִמֶּךָ הַכֹּל וּמִיָּדְךָ נִתְּנוּ לָךְ

"Everything is from You, and from Your hand we have given to You."

We offer something to Hashem and call it our gift, yet even what we give Him was first placed into our hands by Him.

Moshe's greatness did not make him feel more entitled. It made him more aware of how much he had received. He did not come as a creditor demanding payment. He asked Hashem to open the אוֹצֵר חֵן—the treasury of free kindness.

Perhaps this is not only a posture for prayer. It is also a healthier way to deal with every person in our lives.

We often maintain invisible accounts:

"I did this for them." "I was there when they needed me." "I gave more." "They should appreciate me." "They should call, help or respond the way I expect."

The moment we decide that another person owes us, our happiness becomes dependent upon whether they pay a debt that may exist only in our own mind.

Resentment is often the interest that accumulates on an expectation that was never discussed.

Moshe teaches us to put down the invoice. This does not mean abandoning standards, boundaries or genuine obligations. Workers must be paid, commitments should be honoured and harmful behaviour must be addressed.

But not every kindness needs to become a loan. Not every sacrifice must create a debt. Not every relationship should be reduced to a

balance sheet.

We can do what is right because it is right. We can communicate our needs clearly without secretly demanding a particular response. We can appreciate what others give us rather than treating it merely as payment toward what we believe we deserve.

This may also explain why Va'etchanan is read on Shabbat Nachamu.

Moshe's request was not granted. The parashah begins with genuine disappointment—a lifelong dream that would not be fulfilled as he desired. Yet the haftarah begins:

נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי יְאֹמַר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

"Comfort, comfort My people, says your God."

Consolation does not mean pretending that nothing painful happened. Moshe still did not enter the Land, and the Beit HaMikdash was still destroyed.

Perhaps the first comfort is contained in the word נַחֲמוּ—My people.

Even after loss and destruction, Hashem still calls us His people. The relationship remains. He continues giving us life, purpose and the promise of rebuilding.

Perhaps we become capable of receiving that comfort only when we put down the invoice.

As long as we insist that life must unfold exactly as we believe we deserve, every disappointment feels like proof that we have been cheated. But when we recognize that everything begins as a gift, pain remains painful without erasing all the goodness that is still present.

Shabbat Nachamu does not ask us to stop longing for redemption. It teaches us that even before everything has been restored, Hashem is telling us:

"You are still Mine. I am still with you. The story is not over."

Perhaps the question of Va'etchanan and Shabbat Nachamu is:

Can I approach Hashem and the people in my life not with an invoice for what I believe I am owed, but with gratitude for what I have already received—and the humility to treat anything more as a gift?

May Hashem open for us the אוֹצֵר מִתְּנֵת הַנֶּסֶם, help us recognize the gifts already surrounding us and bring us from expectation and resentment to gratitude, consolation and joy.

REFLECTION

One Shabbos, Two Reasons

BY RABBI NACHUM AARON KUTNOWSKI



In Parshas Va'eschanan, Moshe repeats the Aseres HaDibros to the generation about to enter Eretz Yisrael. A careful comparison with the original telling in Parshas Yisro reveals a striking difference in the reason given for Shabbos.

In Parshas Yisro, the reason is creation: Hashem made the world in six days, rested on the seventh, and therefore blessed the Shabbos (Shmos 20:11). Here in Va'eschanan, the reason is the exodus: "remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and Hashem took you out - therefore He commanded you to observe Shabbos" (Devarim 5:15).

The same Mitzvah, anchored in two entirely different events. Are these simply two reasons offered independently, or is there a single idea running beneath both?

Rashi offers the first clue. Commenting on the words "remember that you were a slave," he writes that Hashem redeemed the Jewish people on one condition: that they become servants to Him (Rashi on Devarim 5:15). The exodus was never simply liberation for its own sake. It was a transfer - from the servitude of Pharaoh to the service of Hashem.

The Sefer Chareidim develops this further, citing the Zohar: the reason Klal Yisrael are called servants of Hashem is precisely because He took them out of Egypt. Immediately following "I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Egypt" comes the charge to serve Him - as a servant serves the master who rescued him. Redemption and sovereignty, the Zohar explains, occurred simultaneously (Sefer Chareidim 9:24).

With this, the two reasons for Shabbos are no longer in tension - they are two dimensions of the same truth. Creation established that the entire world belongs to Hashem. By resting on the seventh day, He wove a weekly testimony to that sovereignty into the fabric of time itself. The exodus established something narrower, but no less significant: that Klal Yisrael belongs to Hashem.

Shabbos thus carries both reasons together - not as memorials to two separate events, but as a single weekly declaration: Hashem rules the world and He redeemed us to be His.

Thus, each Shabbos that we rest, we recognize both of these dimensions at once.

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REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Where can I listen more carefully to Hashem's direction?

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