

Daily Insight
into the
Fourth Reading of Vezot Habrachah
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In the fourth reading of Vezot Habrachah we will look at the following verse:

וּלְגַד אָמַר בְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵב גֹּד בְּלִבֵּיא שְׁכֵן וְטָרַף יְרוּעַ אֵף קִדְקִיד

“About Gad he said: ‘Blessed is he who enlarges Gad's domain! Gad dwells there like a lion, devouring the arm with [literally, 'even'] the head.’”

As we shall see, the legacy that the Ba'al Shem Tov's father, Rabbi Eliezer, left him before his death, “fear no one and nothing in the world, but the Almighty,” echoes this blessing that Moshe gave to the tribe of Gad. His father's legacy, which was also a blessing, like Moshe's blessing to the tribe of Gad, are what guided the Ba'al Shem Tov's life from infancy and on.

In his commentary, *Ha'amek Davar*, the Natziv explains this verse with the following words:

In the *Sifrei to parashat Vezot Habrachah* we find a saying of the sages. Moshe died in the territory of the tribe of Re'uvon on Mt. Nevo, but was buried in the gorge, in the territory of Gad, as it is written,¹ “there the plot of the lawgiver is hidden.” So, how can the same mountain be divided between two tribes? But, this is what came to pass. The place where Moshe was buried was across from the House of Pe'or. The tribe of Re'uvon did not conquer that place [even though it was part of their territory] because they feared the idolatrous practices [of Pe'or²] whose power is great to draw Jews to it, as was explained earlier³ in the name of the *Sifrei*. But, the tribe of Gad enlarged its domain [to include this part of Mt. Nevo] because they dwelt as lions, free of fear. “Devouring the arm with the head”: Gad should have feared the arm of Mo'av who dwelt on their border, and they should have been fearful of the idolatry of Pe'or, whose consciousness draws the heart of Israel. Yet, regarding this the verse says that they devoured the arm of Mo'av together with the head, the consciousness, of Pe'or. And thus, this verse describes the great confidence of the tribe of Gad.

Gad feared nothing, neither physical nor spiritual danger. A person whose entire trust is exclusively in the Almighty does not fear anything. For God is the direct reason behind everything that happens and the cause of all causes. Nothing in the world can happen without His Providence. Everything is from Him, the source and root of all worlds, the essence of good, whose essential self is benevolence.

It was specifically there, in the territory conquered by Gad that Moshe Rabbeinu desired to be buried. The bond between Moshe and Gad was like the bond of deep love



between the Ba'al Shem Tov and every simple Jew. The Ba'al Shem Tov loved the simple Jew's innocent and unadulterated faith in the Almighty more than anything in the world, and simple Jews were bound to the Ba'al Shem Tov with deep love. By virtue of the essential bond between the chassid and the Rebbe (between Gad and Moshe Rabbeinu), a chassid can conquer and vanquish even the powerful, evil arm of Mo'av and the idolatrous practice of Pe'or.

In Kabbalah, it is explained that Mo'av represents the evil counterpart of the *sefirah* of wisdom, whose positive, Divine manifestation, the wisdom of the Torah, corresponds to the soul-root of Moshe himself. That Moshe placed himself (desired to be buried) across from Pe'or in order to fight and eradicate its evil consciousness, illustrates his intense hatred for Pe'or. In Hebrew, Pe'or, פֵּעוֹר, is numerically equal to "hatred" שְׂנֵאָה.

Rashi explains that the words "devours the arm with the head," describes the gruesome manner in which the warriors of Gad would kill their enemies, slicing them with one swift diagonal cut of the sword from their side, just below their armpit, to their neck, thus severing the arm together with the head. Metaphorically, as explained by the *Natziv*, the head represents the spiritual dangers faced by a Jew, while the arm represents the physical dangers with which a Jew is faced. Slicing them off simultaneously indicates that a person who is truly confident in and bonded to the Almighty treats both spiritual and physical dangers equally, fearing neither, confident that the Almighty can do what no flesh and blood mortal can do: destroy both as one. This same idea is brought in the Song of the Sea (*Shirat Hayam*): "...Horse and driver were hurled into the sea."⁴ The horse here represents the physical enemy and the driver (the brains that control and direct the horse) represents the spiritual enemy. God hurled them both together into the sea.

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Let us now turn to a numerical analysis of this verse.

In Hebrew, the name *Gad* means *mazal*, or "fortune." When he was born, Leah said "Gad has arrived,"⁵ meaning, good fortune has arrived. Spiritually, the word *mazal* alludes to the ability of a person to draw down his (or her) essence from his soul root in order to enlighten the soul as it indwells in the body. The numerical value of Gad גַּד is 7. Gad was Jacob's 7th son. *Mazal*, in Hebrew, מִזָּל = 77 = 11 · גַּד.

The numerical value of the entire verse וְלִגְדֵי אִמֶּר בְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵב גֹּד כְּלָבִיא שָׁכַן וְטָרַף זְרוּעֵי אֵף קִדְקֹד is 2079, so we have that:

$$\text{זֶד} \cdot \text{מִזָּל} = \text{גַּד} \cdot 297 = 11 \cdot 189 = \text{מִזָּל} \cdot \text{זֶד},$$

which means "mazal" times "pure." Since the multiplication operator binds two numbers more strongly than addition, we have that this verse alludes to "pure mazal!" Also, because there are 11 words in the verse, the average value of each word is 189.

But, "pure" זֶד is equal to the ג (3) of גַּד raised to the power of ג (ג', or 3³ = 27).

This verse also contains the word אֵף = 81 = 3⁴, or ג'ג'. The word אֵף was particularly loved by the Ba'al Shem Tov. He was often heard to say it to himself, and no one, except for his closest disciples, knew his intention. Yet, often it is explained that possibly he was referring to a central verse in Isaiah, "Everything that is called by My name, I have created it, I have formed it, I have even [אֵף] made it" (Isaiah 43:7), denoting that our

lower physical realm is also connected with the higher spiritual ones (the Ba'al Shem Tov's Divine service was always to connect the spiritual realm to the physical realm, to bring blessing into the world as we experience it). But now we can propose an additional understanding of the Ba'al Shem Tov's intention. He may well have alluded to the blessing of Gad, to the "even" (*af*; in Hebrew, *af* also means "nose," the extended "arm" of the head, the essential power to connect the emotion, which finds expression through the nose, to the intellect) that connects the arm to the head (as in the *mitzvah* of *tefilin*; the sages relate that the warriors of Gad excelled in this *mitzvah*, and would never interrupt between the arm *tefilin* and the head *tefilin*). As we shall see, these last words of the blessing of Gad produce a *chazakah* (a phenomenon that repeats itself three times over) of "good" (*tov*) squared, the essential attribute of the Ba'al Shem Tov!

The middle word of the verse, **גד · ג² = כלביא**.

The initial and final letters of all the words in the verse together equal 1001 = **יראת שמים** ("fear of Heaven"), which is the quality that the tribe of Gad excelled in, as we have explained.

Indeed, "fear of Heaven" **יראת שמים = 13 · מזל** ("mazal").

The remaining letters, thus equal **גד · מזל · גד**, or twice "Gad" times "mazal."

The verse contains **ד** (4) letters **ד**. The first **ד** is in the word **וּלְגָד** and it is the **ד** (4th) letter of the verse. In the same vein, the **ג** (3rd) letter of the verse is the **ג** of **וּלְגָד**. The four letters **ד** of the verse allude to the large⁶ **ד** of **אחד** in the *Shema* (**שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד**), which the Arizal writes should be the size of **ד** (4) normal letters **ד**. Indeed, the first word of the verse **וּלְגָד** permutes to spell the word **גדול**, meaning "large!" Thus, when reciting the word "One" (**אחד**) in the *Shema*, concentrating on its final letter, we should contemplate and integrate the fearless service of the tribe of Gad, as described in this verse.

The first word of the verse **וּלְגָד** also permutes to spell the word **דלוג**, meaning "existential leap." In Chassidut, it is explained that a large (**גדול**) letter alludes to the first (of three) existential leap in the creation of the universe, which occurred between the state of the Creator unto Himself and the emanation of His Infinite light.

The **ד** (4th) and final **ד** of the verse is the final letter of the entire verse ("All follows the conclusion") and the second **ד** of the word **קדקד** ("head"). It is also the 40th letter of the verse, so the entire verse contains **ד · 10** letters.

The ordinal locations of the letters **ד** in the verse are: 4, 18, 38, and 40. The sum of the locations is therefore $4 + 18 + 38 + 40 = 100$, or $\Delta d \cdot \Delta d$ (where Δn denotes the sum of integers from 1 to n , so $\Delta d = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$). Indeed, this 100 is also related to the two letters **ק** (= 100) in **קדקד**. The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet divide into 5 phonetic groups, based on their origin in the mouth's vocal system:

- the throat: **אחהע**
- the palate: **גיכק**
- the tongue: **זשסרצ**
- the teeth: **דטלנת**

- the lips: **בומפ**

This natural division of the letters allows letters from the same phonetic group to be interchanged. Thus, ק and ג, which are both palate letters can be interchanged. Therefore the word קדקד (head) in גיכק-interchange becomes גדגד!

But, when we count the ordinal locations of the letters ד from the end of the verse, the findings are even more astounding. The locations are: 1, 3, 23, and 37. 23 and 37 are a numerical *michlol* (see the daily insight into the third reading of Vezot Habrachah). Their simplest numerical equivalency is to the two transcendental levels of the soul, called *the living one* (חיה = 23) and *the singular one* (יחידה = 37). The sum of the ordinal locations of the letters ד from the end of the verse is: $1 + 3 + 23 + 37 = 64 = ד$ (4) to the power of ג (3), or ד^ג!

There is a particularly important passage in the Talmud for understanding the relationship between pairs of letters as they are ordered in the Hebrew alphabet.⁷ Of ג and ד (which spell גד, Gad) the Talmud gives the idiom: גמול דלים, meaning “give to the poor.” What this implies is that the letters ג and ד are adjacent in the alphabet because the ג, whose name in Hebrew means to give, is instructed to give to the ד, whose name means poor. The number 64, which we saw is ד to the power of ג exhibits this relationship of the ג giving to the ד in the clearest manner, giving the ד exponential growth. In Kabbalah, the letter ד symbolizes the *sefirah* of kingdom whose two archetypal souls are King David and the Mashiach. Thus, the ג causing an exponential growth of the letter ד symbolizes the growth of the *sefirah* of kingdom, a process referred to in the verse: “Happy is he whose keeps the poor in mind.”⁸ “Keeping in mind” is like raising a number by an exponent, mathematically. This is the secret of the verse, עד דוד “הגדיל,”⁹ meaning “Until David became greater...,” which contains four letters ד.

Finally, let us consider one of the rules by which the Torah text is interpreted, which is called גורעין ומוסיפין ודורשין, literally: “Remove, add, and interpret.” Let us apply this rule to the words: וטרף זרוע אף קדקד, “devours the arm with the head,” the final four words of our verse.

If we remove the ו from the word וטרף and add it to the word זרוע we get: טרף וזרוע אף קדקד. Proceeding to interpret, we find that:

טרף = זרוע = אף קדקד = 289 = 17^2 = טוב · טוב (“good” · “good”)!

And, altogether טרף טרף אף קדקד = טרף וזרוע אף קדקד.

God willing, later this week, we will see how this numerical finding connects the tribe of Gad with the tribes of Benjamin (of whom it says: “Benjamin is a wolf who devours...”¹⁰) and the tribe of Joseph (of whom it says: “Joseph was devoured...”¹¹).

¹. “Then Moshe climbed Mt. Nevo, from the plains of Mo’av to its summit....And there died Moshe the servant of God, in the land of Mo’av, at God’s command. And He buried him [Moshe] in the gorge in the land of Mo’av, across from the House of Pe’or, and no one knows his burial place to this day” (Deuteronomy 34:1-6).

². See *Sanhedrin* 60b for a description of how the Pe’or was worshipped.

³. *Ha’amek Davar* to Deuteronomy 4:46. There the *Natziv* explains that Moshe began speaking the book of Deuteronomy while standing across from the House of Pe’or because initially that

location was forbidden for dwelling by Jews because of the attraction of the Pe'or and Moshe wanted to strengthen the protection of the Torah over that place. He was also buried there by the Almighty in order to further fend off the power of the Pe'or.

⁴. Exodus 15:1.

⁵. Genesis 30:11.

⁶. In the Torah, there are three sizes of letters, regular, large, and small. The large letters are called "*rabati*," in Aramaic. The small letters are called "*za'ira*," in Aramaic.

⁷. Shabbat 104a. This relates to the general question of the reasoning for the ordering of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; see *Ibid.* 31a regarding the teaching given by Hillel the Elder to the convert.

⁸. Psalms 41:2.

⁹. I Samuel 20:41.

¹⁰. Genesis 49:27.

¹¹. *Ibid.* 37:33.