

Daily Insight
into
First Reading of Vezot Habrachah
from Harav Yitzhcak Ginsburgh

We will focus our meditation on the first verse of *Vezot Habrachah*: "This is the blessing that Moses the man of God blessed the Children of Israel with before his death."¹ Every Jew has within him (and her) a spark of Moshe Rabbeinu, our teacher.² This spark enlightens all 248 limbs and 365 sinews, also the number of prescriptive and prohibitive commandments in the Torah. Altogether, there are $248 + 365 = 613$ commandments, which is also the numerical value of "*Moshe Rabbeinu*" (משה רבינו).

Indeed, this Divine enlightenment that illuminates the entire existence of every Jew is what Moshe blessed the Children of Israel with. Divine enlightenment means that a Jew's entire being is filled with the light of "*Havayah*, the God of Israel," which in Hebrew (יהוה אלהי ישראל) also equals 613! This numerical equivalence sheds light on the opening verse of this past Shabbat's *haftarah* (reading from the Prophets): "Return Israel unto *Havayah*, Your God."³ The Magid of Mezritch, the Ba'al Shem Tov's successor, explained that this verse means that our return, our *teshuvah*, should bring us to a state in which "*Havayah*" (יהוה), the Almighty's essential Name that transcends nature, will become "Your God" (אלהיך), which is the holy Name representing God's imminent manifestation within nature. In other words, it is Moshe Rabbeinu's spark permeating our entire being that makes it possible for us to integrate our supernatural into our nature.

The verse we are meditating on ends with: "before his death." From these words we learn that in order to connect and be inspired by Moshe's blessing of Divine enlightenment, one has to always feel as if one is "just before death." On these words, *Rashi* writes: "Just before his death, for if not now, when!?"⁴ *Rashi's* commentary focuses our sense of urgency with life. Every moment contains a golden opportunity, a blessing contained within it that will never again return. Moshe seized the moment to bless us one more time; likewise, we should seize every moment to bless others and to be blessed. Should the moment pass, its potential blessing will be gone forever. The same type of urgency should be felt in relation to connecting to the content of Moshe's blessing, the power to return to God, to do *teshuvah*. Of *teshuvah*, the sages say: "Return one day before you die."⁵ The "one day" here is not only meant to give us a sense of urgency, for who knows when his or her last day is!? Rather "one day" alludes to the "One," to "the Singular One," to "the Unique One." By clearly picturing the Oneness of



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the Almighty, an individual can succeed in doing *teshuvah*, in returning in this manner, every single (moment of every single) day.

The numerical value of the phrase, "before you die" (לפני מיתתך) is 1040, which is also the numerical value of the product of "one" (אחד = 13) times "forever" (ועד = 80). "One" represents the higher unification of the *Shema*, "Hear O' Israel, *Havayah* is our God, *Havayah* is One." "Forever" represents what in the Zohar is known as the lower unification in the phrase: "Blessed is the Name of the glory of His kingdom, forever."

In one of the most famous passages in the Bible, King Solomon writes: "a time to give birth and a time to die." From this verse we learn that before one dies, one gives birth. The best time to enlighten one's being is therefore a moment in which we feel that we are giving birth to something new.

So, this is Moshe's blessing. The initials of the words: "Moshe the man of God," in Hebrew (משה איש האלהים) spell the word "one-hundred" (מאה) alluding to the one-hundred blessings that every Jew should recite every day. The one-hundred daily blessings were instituted by King David (following a plague that struck the Jewish people during his reign). Indeed, the complementary nature of Moshe and King David is best illustrated in the Mashiach, whose body will be King David's and whose soul will be Moshe's. When we add 100 and 613 (the numerical value of Moshe Rabbeinu and the number of commandments) we get 713, which is the numerical value of the word "*teshuvah*" (תשובה), in Hebrew. In addition, 713, the numerical value of *teshuvah* is also the sum of the Hebrew words for "lights" (אורות, 613) and "vessels" (כלים, 100).

Most beautifully, meditating on this verse we find that just as its content alludes to *teshuvah*, so the numerical value of all the final letters in the verse is two times 713, the value of *teshuvah*. These two references to *teshuvah* in this verse allude to the two types of *teshuvah* known as *teshuvah* out of fear (also known as lower *teshuvah*) and *teshuvah* out of love (also referred to as higher *teshuvah*).⁶

The sages interpret the words "before his death" as describing Moshe's valor in facing the angel of death. Moshe was not in any way afraid of the angel of death. Instead he secured him and proceeded to bless the Jewish people. Moshe's ability to deter death from claiming his life before giving full expression to all of his love for his people was a product of his uncompromising stance of self-nullification, which in Chassidut is associated with the *sefirah* of wisdom (*chochmah*). Wisdom in Hebrew is spelled חכמה and permutes to spell the two words כח מה, which mean the power (כח, 28) of self-nullification (מה, 45; the word מה literally means "what?" implying "what am I?" and thus symbolizing nullification; 28 and 45 are the "golden section" of 73, *chochmah*, the 22nd prime number, the wisdom of the holy tongue by which God created the world, as explained elsewhere).

Indeed, counting carefully we find that this verse contains exactly 45 (the numerical value of מה, "what?") letters. Moreover, in just the 7 words: "This is the blessing that [Moshe] blessed... Israel, before his death," there are 28 letters. The structure of 7 words and 28 letters is the same as that of the very first verse of the Torah: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," which begins with the letter *bet* (ב). As

explained in the *Zohar*, the *bet* of בראשית ("In the beginning") stands for "blessing," ברכה, which also begins with a *bet*.

From all of the above we learn that a person possessing total self-nullification (in order to carry out the Almighty's will to bless His children) and always experiencing his return to God, *teshuvah*, "one day before death," is the one who is worthy of being called "the man of God," as was Moshe. Indeed, "the man of God" (איש האלהים) equals "the son of Amram" (בן עמרם), one of Moshe Rabbeinu's connotations. This is the first time in the Bible that a prophet is called "the man of God." Indeed, every sincere prophet who truly loves and cares for the Jewish people (even in moments of rebuking them), who takes advantage of every opportunity to bless them, is worthy of being described as "the man of God."

In Kabbalistic terminology, the unification between total self-nullification and *teshuvah* found in this verse is the secret of "the two spouses that never separate." From the *sefirah* of might (*gevurah*) of the *partzuf* of *Atik*, which is encloded within the concealed brain (*chochmah*) of the *partzuf* of *Arich* comes the power to stand firm and with commitment. This is the underlying power of nullification (power, in Hebrew, is spelled כח, an acronym for the initial letters of the two *sefirot*, crown (כתר) and wisdom (חכמה), thus alluding to the origin of power within the wisdom of the crown). Beautifully, when we combine nullification (בטול) with *teshuvah* (תשובה), we get 760, which is equal to the numerical sum of the names of the first three *sefirot*: crown (כתר), wisdom (חכמה), and understanding (בינה), which together are known as the "holy of holies" of every *partzuf* and every world, and are the source of blessing for the Jewish people.

¹. Deuteronomy 33:1.

². See *Tanya*, ch. 42

³. Hosea 14:2.

⁴. "If not now, when!?" is a famous saying of Hillel the Elder. See *Mishnah Avot* 1:14.

⁵. *Avot* 2:10.

⁶. See in length in the *Tanya*, Epistle on *Teshuvah*.