



Mathematics in the Torah

Parashat Beshalach: From being a nation to being Israel

From a nation to the Children of Israel

The first two verses of Parashat Beshalach read,¹

When Pharaoh let the people go, God [*Elokim*] did not lead them by way of the land of the Phillistines, although it was nearer; for God [*Elokim*] said, “The people may have a change of heart when they see war, and return to Egypt. So God [*Elokim*] led the people roundabout, by way of the wilderness at the Sea of Reeds. Now the Children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt.

Rabbi Yaakov Abuhatzeira,² the Baba Sali’s grandfather, notes in his Kabbalistic work, *Machsof Halavan* that in the opening of parashat Beshalach, the connotation “the people” (העם) appears three times before the Jews leaving Egypt are called, “the Children of Israel” (בני ישראל). Let us highlight this phenomenon in the original Hebrew text:

ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם ולא נחם אלהים דרך ארץ פלשתים כי קרוב הוא כי אמר אלהים פן ינחם העם בראתם מלחמה ושבו מצרימה. ויסב אלהים את העם דרך המדבר ים סוף וחמשים עליו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים.

Rabbi Abuhatzeira explains that the use of the more generic “the people” *three* times intimates that the souls of the Jewish people who were in bondage in Egypt were gilgulim (incarnations) of *three* generations: the generation of the flood, the generation of the Tower of Babylon, and the generation that was destroyed in Sodom.³ These three generations whose sins forced the Divine Presence to retract from reality were then enslaved in Egypt. Incredibly, the entire generation that emerged from Egypt is referred to as a generation of consciousness (of the Divine), all in the merit of Moses who redeemed them from the depths of impurity (the *kelipot*) and included them in the holiness of Israel, in the Children of Israel. Rabbi Abuhatzeira notes that this entire exposition is captured by the fact that 3 times the value of “the people” (העם), 115, equals the value of Moses (משה), 345!

¹. Exodus 13:17-18.

². Also known as the Abir Ya’akov (1806-1880).

³. See Arizal’s *Sha’ar hapesukim* beginning of *parashat Shemot*.

Though the *Zohar* does not mention the three earlier generations, it does treat the use of “the people” as a dysphemism: “Rabbi Yehudah said, The Torah calls them ‘the people’ because of the mixed multitudes (עַרְבוּר).”⁴ A well-known relationship is that the value of “mixed multitudes” is equal to “knowledge” (דַּעַת), the name of the *sefirah* which is associated with Moses since Moses possesses supernal consciousness (דַּעַת עֲלִיּוֹן) or knowledge of God, whereby God is seen as truly existing while reality is seen as a passing phenomenon. This relationship once again stresses the fact that Moses takes responsibility for these souls by redeeming them from the depths of defilement in which they were trapped and enlightens them with a rectified consciousness that can appreciate Godliness.

Elsewhere, the *Zohar* stresses that the soul of Moses returns in every generation to continue enlightening the consciousness of us all with true awareness of God. Now, when we add the three instances of “the people” (הָעַם) with the connotation, “Children of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל),⁵ the sum comes to 2 times “knowledge” (דַּעַת דַּעַת), alluding to the two types of consciousness referred to as mundane consciousness (דַּעַת תַּחְתּוֹן) and supernal consciousness. Moses’ task in each generation is to return and enlighten our souls, elevating them from mundane consciousness, which views reality as truly existing and God as possibly existing to the supernal consciousness of the Divine mentioned above.

Positional analysis

Let us now employ positional analysis on our verses. We note that the 3 instances of the word, “the people” (הָעַם) are in the 5th, 20th, and 28th words from the beginning of the *parashah*. The sum of these three positions is 53. The words “Children of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) are the 35th and 36th words from the beginning of the *parashah*. The sum of these two positions is 71. The sum of all five positional values is 124.

The positional values, counting from the end (the secret of “returning light,” אור חוזר) are respectively: 3, 4, 11, 19, and 34, and their sum is 71. Returning light is like the light of God reflected back from this world (particularly by a *ba'al teshuvah*) to its source in the Almighty. It is said to return to its essential source from whence it emanated in the first place (which is why a *ba'al teshuvah* can reach higher than a perfect *tzaddik*). In this case, we see that the sum of the positional values from the end (71), the returning light, equals the positional values of just the “Children of Israel” (71) from the beginning, suggesting that even the lower connotation, “the people,” when it returns, is included fully within the higher connotation, the “Children of Israel.”

The first two verses

Looking now at the first two verses as a whole. We note that apart from the two words, “Children of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), their total value is 7935, or the product of 23 and

⁴ II, 45b.

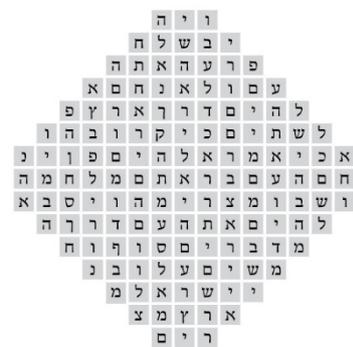
⁵ Just as 3 times “the people” equals “Moses” (הָעַם), so *Moshe Rabbeinu* (מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ), literally “Moses our master,” exactly equals “Children of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), or 603.

“Moses” (מֹשֶׁה), 345. Moses is himself a multiple of 23 ($23 \cdot 15 = 345$). 7935 is also the product of 15 times 529, where 529 is the value of “pleasure” (תַּעֲנוּג) and 23^2 . Pleasure suggests a sweetening of the parshah’s first word, “when” (וַיְהִי), which implies sorrow, since the first two letters are also a cry of anguish, “vay” (וַי).⁶

All this means that the total value of the first two verses is “Moses [times 23] and the Children of Israel [once]” (מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).

The value of Moses (מֹשֶׁה), 345 plus just “Israel” (יִשְׂרָאֵל), 541 is 886, which is the value of 3 different letter-fillings of God’s Name, *Elokim* (אֱלֹהִים), alluded to by the appearances of this Name exactly 3 times in the first two verses (note that this is the only Name of God in these two verses, suggesting once again a state of judgment passed against each of the three generations that were the origin of these souls that were now redeemed and elevated into the Children of Israel). Incredibly, the sum of *Elokim* (אֱלֹהִים), 86, and “the people” (הָעָם), 115, is 201, which means that three times “*Elokim*-the people” (אֱלֹהִים הָעָם) equals “Children of Israel” (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), 603!

The first two verses have 141 letters between them. 141 can be drawn as the figure of the 9th interface number less its four corners, which means that it is the sum of the two consecutive squares 9^2 and 8^2 minus 4. Transfiguring the letters in this shape we get:



Once verses are transfigured in this manner, new phenomena are discovered. In this case, note that the 12 letters that make up the “extremes” (ויהאחוריםנהא) plus the letter directly in the center (א) sum to 343, or 7^3 , one of the most important numbers related to redemption.

⁶. See also *Or hachayim* on this verse.