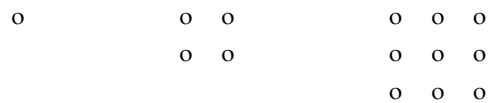


Love and Fear: A Study in Intermediate Level Gematria

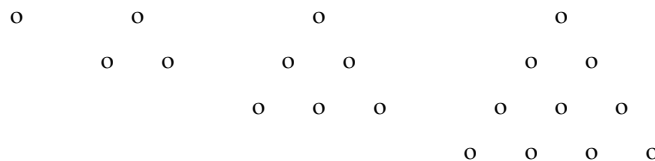
from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

Figurative Numbers

One of the most important and basic concepts in gematria is that of figurative numbers. Every integer number has one or more distinctive geometric shapes which allow us to give it visual form. For example the series of square numbers, $1^2 = 1$, $2^2 = 4$, $3^2 = 9$, ... can be drawn as squares (1 point, 4 points, 9 points, etc. arranged in a square), as follows:



The same is true for the series of triangular numbers: 1, 3, 6, 10, ... where each number in the series is a sum of integers. 1 is the trivial sum of 1, 3 is the sum of 1 and 2; 6 is the sum of 1, 2, and 3; 10 is the sum of 1, 2, 3, and 4; and so on. The triangular numbers are visualized in the following way:



Obviously there are many other regular figures that can be used to visually depict integer numbers. Every regular figure has its mystical significance in Kabbalah, but the discussion of that is beyond our scope here. Using geometric figures to depict integer numbers also creates a system of correspondences between numbers that are not normally immediately apparent. For instance, all triangular numbers (1, 3, 6, 10, ...) are congruent to one another. The Kabbalistic mindset and method of analysis is based on drawing correspondences between things. Using figurate numbers we are able to find relationships between words and verses based on their geometric representation. This article, which discusses the relationship between the two most important passages in the entire Torah, is based on exactly such an analysis using figurate numbers.



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Drawing Verses

The two most important passages in the Torah are the Ten Commandments and the *Shema*, the essential statement of Jewish belief in the absolute Oneness of God.

"I am God, your God...." and "you shall not recognize the gods of others in My presence" (the first two of the Ten Commandments) were heard directly from the "Mouth of Might."¹ The Ten Commandments appear twice in the Torah: the first time in the portion of *Yitro*² and then again in the portion of *Va'etchanan*.³ The first two verses in each of the Ten Commandment versions are exactly the same, letter by letter. (The first difference in the two renditions appears only in the third verse.) In these first two verses: "I am God...." and "you shall not recognize..." there are exactly 64 or 8² letters:

אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים. לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל־פְּנֵי.

Interestingly, the same phenomenon can be found in the portion of the *Shema*, which appears in the Torah in the continuation of *Va'etchanan*,⁴ with the "Divine Presence speaking through Moses' mouth"⁵). In the first two verses: "Hear O Israel... And you shall love God, your God..." there are also 64 or 8² letters:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד. וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֵת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לֵבְךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל־מְאֹדֶךָ.

Since each pair of verses has 64 letters, we can graphically organize each as an 8 by 8 square matrix, as follows:

ל	א	ר	ש	י	ע	מ	ש
י	ה	ל	א	ה	ו	ה	י
ח	א	ה	ו	ה	י	ו	נ
ת	א	ת	ב	ה	א	ו	ד
י	ה	ל	א	ה	ו	ה	י
ך	ב	ב	ל	ל	כ	ב	ך
ך	ש	פ	נ	ל	כ	ב	ו
ך	ד	א	מ	ל	כ	ב	ו

ה	ו	ה	י	י	כ	נ	א
ר	ש	א	ך	י	ה	ל	א
מ	ך	י	ת	א	צ	ו	ה
ם	י	ר	צ	מ	ץ	ר	א
י	ד	ב	ע	ת	י	ב	מ
ל	ה	י	ה	י	א	ל	ם
ח	א	ם	י	ה	ל	א	ך
י	נ	פ	ל	ע	ם	י	ר

Geometric Analysis

First, note that in each square, the first line contains the 8 letters of the first two words of the portion. The average numerical value of the two first rows is 529 or 23².

More importantly, we find that the letters in the four corners of the square of the first two commandments are: יָרָאָה, which means "fear." The sages say that these two commandments were spoken from the "Mouth of Might," a unique connotation for the Almighty. Might in Hebrew (גְּבוּרָה = 216) is numerically equivalent to "fear" (יָרָאָה = 216). In relation to the giving of the Torah the sages also say that: "Just as there [when Torah was given on Sinai] it was given with terror, fear, trembling and quaking, similarly here [in accepting the Torah anew every day] with terror, fear, trembling and quaking."⁶

In contrast, in the innermost square of the matrix of the first two verses of the *Shema* we find the letters אַהֲבָה, which means "love." The *Shema* was spoken by Moshe in first person. It is made up of Moshe's own words and expresses Moshe's character as "a lover of Israel."⁷ Indeed, the spiritual site for the rending of *Shema* is described in Kabbalah as the supernal "Chamber of Love."

Wise Fear

Regarding the effect of giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, the Torah writes: "so that His fear shall be upon your faces."⁸ The Sages comment that the particular countenance of fear that the Torah is talking about is humility (בוֹשָׁה).⁹ In Kabbalah it is explained that this fear—the fear of shame—is one of the many permutations of the first word of the Torah, *berisheet* (בְּרֵאשִׁית becomes: יִרְאֵ בְשֵׁת), alluding to the verse: "The beginning of all wisdom is the fear of God."¹⁰

In Chassidut it is explained that fear of God that translates as humility (perhaps more precisely translated as "bashfulness") is a product of the self-nullification of one's existence that flows from a person's *sefirah* of wisdom. The *sefirah* of wisdom represents a person's knowledge and involvement in the Torah, for "the Torah comes out of wisdom,"¹¹ and it is a person's wisdom that illuminates his face. The face is considered the place where an individual's inner nature is revealed, as it states: "A man's wisdom lights up his face."¹²

In Hebrew, the word for "face" (פְּנִימִים) is related to the word for "corner" (פְּנִינָה). Of the priest that place sacrifices on the altar it is said that "He ascended the ramp, and turned to the surrounding ledge."¹³ It is explained in Chassidut that the ability to truly turn, that is to change course, from one direction to another is achieved through the power of the corner, which serves as a visual metaphor for the nothingness—i.e., the self-nullification in the soul, whose source is in wisdom, as stated above. This is the reason that in the first two commandments, whose purpose it was to bring "fear to our faces," the word "fear" (יִרְאֵה) is recorded in the square's four corners.

The Revelation of Love

The earliest revelation of love occurs in the heart. Thus it states, "And you shall love God your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your resources."¹⁴ The love in one's heart ("with all your heart") then spreads through all the inner limbs and powers of the person's soul ("with all your soul"). Finally it extends to include even those powers that surround a person from without ("with all your resources"). The heart is indeed the innermost point and therefore we note that in the first two verses of the *Shema* the word (love) is recorded in the geometric heart of the square.

A Shared Heart of Love

The 8 letters that form the geometric heart of both squares spell the words "the power of love" (עֲצֻמַת אֱהָבָה), making love the shared heart, or root, of both the might inherent in the Ten Commandments and the love inherent in the *Shema*. The numerical value of this phrase "the power of love," עֲצֻמַת אֱהָבָה, is 613, the total number of commandments in the Torah. This observation demands further explication.

The 613 commandments are divided into 248 positive demands and 365 prohibitive commandments. In addition, "(the feeling of) love of the Almighty is the source of all the 248 positive commandments, and the fear of the Almighty is the source of the 365 prohibitive commandments."¹⁵ As the commandment to fear God—"God, your God, you shall fear"¹⁶—is in itself a positive commandment, meaning that as just stated, it must be motivated by love, we may conclude that love is ultimately the source of all the commandments: both positive and prohibitive.

A related observation is that the numerical sum of the 16 letters in the last line of each of the two matrices, רִים עֵל פְּנֵי יוֹבֵב לְמֵאדָּךְ is also 613, alluding to the fact that all 613 commandments are represented in these two seminal passages of the Torah.

Let us look at both sets of four corners, which we called the face of each square. The eight letters in the corners are: יְרֵאָה שְׁלוֹךְ, whose sum is 572 = 13 · 44, or "love" (אֱהָבָה = 13) · 44,¹⁷ again alluding to the fact that the root of the entire Torah is indeed love.

Our final observation is that love permeates the totality of these four verses, for the sum of all 128 letters is 5953. The midpoint of 5953 is 2977, which is equal to 13 · 229. 13 is the numerical value of "love" and 229 is sum of the numerical values of "fear" and "love." So what we have is "love" multiplied by "fear" and "love": 2977 = אֱהָבָה · יְרֵאָה! אֱהָבָה!

1. *Makot* 24a.

2. Exodus 20:2-14.

3. Deuteronomy 5:6-18.

4. Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

5. *Zohar* III, 232.

6. *Berachot* 22a.

7. *Menachot* 65a.

8. Exodus 20:17.

9. *Nedarim* 20a.

10. Psalms 111:10.

11. *Zohar* II, 62a, 85a, and 121a.

12. Ecclesiastes 8:1.

13. *Mishna Zevachim* 5:3.

14. Deuteronomy 6:5.

¹⁵. *Tanya*, chapter 4.

¹⁶. Deuteronomy 6:13.

¹⁷. 44 is the numerical value of one of the alternate "letter fillings" of God's essential Name *Havayah*. For more, see *What You Need to Know About Kabbalah*, pp. 141-3.