

"A Complete Recovery from Heaven"

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

The traditional blessing for a sick person (said immediately following the Torah reading, either on Shabbat or weekdays) includes a well-known description of healing: "A complete recovery from Heaven" (רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם).¹ The following is a meditation on this phrase which should be reviewed both by the sick person and those praying for him. Ideally, one should be able to recall this meditation by heart while envisioning the letters of the blessing. Likewise, it should be clear from the end that loving one's fellow Jew is the most instrumental commandment that leads to health and well-being.

Elevating the Sparks

The *gematria* of the phrase "A complete recovery from Heaven" (רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם) is 1152, which is the double square of 24 ($1152 = 2 \cdot 24^2$). In Kabbalah, the number 24 is associated with the measure of judgment,² which this phrase comes to sweeten. The doubling of the square of 24 refers to a doubling of the sweetening power, just as the Torah is "doubled in strength."³

The average value of each word is therefore 288, referring to the 288 (רפח) sparks of holiness that were scattered into mundane reality as a result of the shattering of the vessels. Mundane reality dims the light of these sparks, the root cause of sickness and suffering in the world. By elevating these sparks through *teshuvah* (return, i.e., returning oneself and thereby returning them, to God), we bring healing to the world and to the afflicted, as the sages say: "Great is *teshuvah*, for it brings healing to the world."⁴

"Great is teshuvah for it brings healing to the world"

The *gematria* of the words "Great is *teshuvah*" (גְּדוּלַת תְּשׁוּבָה) is 761, which is the 20th inspirational number (the sum of 20^2 and 19^2). 761 is also the *gematria* of the last 3 words of the Pentateuch, "[Which Moshe performed] in front of the eyes of all of Israel" (לְעֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל), indicating that Moshe was the expert healer, and that his prophecy, the Torah, is the source of all healing.

ג	ל	ע	י	נ
ו	א	ב	י	ה
נ	פ	ל	א	ו
ט	ו	ר	ת	ך

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The *gematria* of the word "for it brings" (שְׂמִינִיָּהּ) is 358, the value of Mashiach (מָשִׁיחַ), and is the secret of the coming of the Mashiach ("to come" and "to bring" come from the same root in Hebrew), who comes once we do *teshuvah*.

Finally, the *gematria* of the last two words "healing to the world" (רְפוּאָה לְעוֹלָם) is 468, or the product of 18 (*chai*, alive) and 26 (*Havayah*, God's essential Name).

The *gematria* of the full saying (גְּדוּלַת תְּשׁוּבָה שְׂמִינִיָּהּ רְפוּאָה לְעוֹלָם) is 1587, or the product of 3 and 529, where 529 is the value of "pleasure" (תַּעֲנוּג). *Sefer Yetzirah* states, "There is no good higher than pleasure and no evil lower than affliction." Pleasure is thus the opposite of affliction, suffering, and disease; it is the source of life and health as is explained in Chassidut in reference to the verse, "For with You is the source of life," which is read "For with You is the source of all pleasure." The multiplying of pleasure threefold ($3 \cdot 529 = 1587$, as above) alludes to the drawing down of Divine pleasure—pleasure received from contemplating God through the Torah and its teachings—into the three aspects of the soul enclined within the physical body, the soul (*neshamah*), the spirit (*ru'ach*), and the psyche (*nefesh*). These dwell (primarily) in the brain, the heart, and the liver, respectively.

288 Sparks of Holiness

In the weekday *Amidah* (the central part of our liturgy) the blessing for health ends with the description of the Almighty as "He who heals the sick amongst His people, Israel" (רֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל). In the Arizal's writings, there is a meditation that notes that the *gematria* of the initials of these 4 words, ר ח ע י, is 288. Thus, when God acts as the healing physician, He heals by elevating the 288 scattered sparks of holiness, for which reason His medicine is easy to endure, while the medicine of a human physician is difficult to endure.

Likewise, continues the Arizal, the value of just the word "He who heals" (רֹפֵא), which simply means "doctor" or "healer" with 1 added to it (for "God is one") is 288!

100 Blessings

Returning to the phrase, "A complete recovery from Heaven," we find that the value of its final letters—מ ה ה—is 100, or 10^2 . The final letters thus refer to 100 rectified vessels created from the 100 blessings that we were taught to say by King David as a spiritual shield against disease. In fact, the *gematria* of the word "vessels" (כֵּלִים) in Hebrew is 100. The shield of blessings is described as "one hundred blessings every day" (מֵאָה בְּרָכוֹת) (בְּכָל יוֹם), whose numerical value is equal to that of the phrase "And He shall give you peace" (וַיִּשַׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם), the conclusion (or shield) of the Priestly Blessing.

The value of the phrase's initial letters—ה ש מ ה—is 545, which is the 17th inspirational number ($17^2 + 16^2$). 17 is of course the value of "good" (טוב), alluding to the beauty and healthy nature with which all creation begins, since the first thing that God created in the beginning was light, "And God saw that the light was good." The first two words of the Torah, "In the beginning [God] created" (בראשית ברא) are explained in Chassidut to read "First, good health," for in Hebrew the root "to create" also means "to be healthy." The goodness of the initial letters of this blessing thus rekindles the freshness and health inherent in all of creation.

A Figure of Health

Altogether, the phrase "A complete recovery from Heaven" has 16 letters and can therefore be written in the form of a square, like this:

א	ו	פ	ר
מ	ל	ש	ה
ה	ן	מ	ה
ם	י	מ	ש

The value of the four corner letters in this figure ם ש א ר is 541, the value of "Israel" (יִשְׂרָאֵל). The rest of the letters total 611, the value of "Torah" (תּוֹרָה). The reference here is that the Torah was given "from Heaven" and the soul of each individual Jew corresponds to one of its letters. As the *Zohar* states, "Israel and the Torah are one."

The *gematria* of the four letters forming the inner square in this figure, ן ש ל מ ן, is 420, which in Kabbalah signifies the union of "Jacob" (יַעֲקֹב) and "Rachel" (רַחֵל). Since the letters of the center square together with the corner letters form the two diagonals of the figure, we have found that the sum of the letters on the two diagonals is 961, which is the square of 31, the value of God's Name, אֵיִל (pronounced, *Kel*). *Kel* is the Name used by Moshe when he prayed that his sister Miriam be healed of her leprosy—"Please God [*Kel*], Please heal her."⁵ Moshe used this particular Name because it is the Divine conduit for the power of healing, as explained in the writings of the Arizal regarding the 13 Measures of Divine Mercy,⁶ which begin with the Name *Kel*. Just as the value of the letters on the two diagonals equals 961, or 31 (*Kel*) squared, representing the first of God's 13 Measures of Mercy, so the *gematria* of the remaining letters equals 191, the value of "for the thousands" (לְאַלְפִים), the 9th measure of Divine mercy, from which flows the Divine power of casting away sin, cleansing the ill person of his or her sins and paving the way for renewed health.⁷

Let us write the phrase in Hebrew, highlighting every third letter:

רפואה שלמה מן השמים

It turns out that sum of every third letter is also 611, the *gematria* of "Torah" (תּוֹרָה), as above. Of course, the remaining letters equal 541, or "Israel" (יִשְׂרָאֵל), as above, strengthening the importance of the reference to the connection between the soul of every Jew and the Torah in attaining health from Heaven.

Health and Loving-Kindness

The value of the entire phrase, 1152, is also the product of 72 and 16. 72 is the value of the Hebrew word for "loving-kindness" (חֶסֶד). Loving-kindness is the name of the one of the *sefirot*. To each *sefirah* there corresponds a holy Name of God. The Name that corresponds to loving-kindness is *Kel*, as above, a relationship noted in the verse, "The loving-kindness of God [*Kel*] extends all day long."⁸

Moreover, the value of the filling of the word "recovery," or "healing" (רפואה) is 720 (ריש פא וו אלף הא), which is 10 times 72.

Finally, when we fill the entire phrase, "A complete healing from Heaven" (ריש פא וו (אלף הא שין למד מם הא מם נון הא שין מם יוד מם (וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ)), we find that it equals 1972, meaning that the letters used to fill the phrase total 820. 820 is the value of the words "You shall love your fellow as yourself"⁹ (וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ), the most important act for promoting health and recovery for an individual and for the entire world.

¹. *Sidur Tehilat Hashem* (2002), p. 216.

². *Zohar* III, 136b. See *Likutei Sichot*, v. 32, pp. 151ff. and references noted there.

³. Job 11:6.

⁴ *Yoma* 86a.

⁵. Numbers 12:13.

⁶. Exodus 34:6-7.

⁷. More exactly, the 13 measures have a counterpart in the prophets, in the words of Micah (7:18-20):

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? He does not remain angry forever, for He seeks loving-kindness. He will once again have compassion on us; He will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all their iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and loving-kindness to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.

These words too are divided into 13 parts, each representing one of the 13 Measures of Divine Mercy. The ninth part, corresponding to the word "for the thousands" in Exodus 34:7 is, "and hurl all of their iniquities into the depths of the sea."

⁸. Psalms 52:3.

⁹. Leviticus 19:18.