

THE WORDING OF עלינו לשבח

The view both by Jews and by non-Jews that עלינו לשבח was incorporated into the daily תפילות as an anti-Christian and anti-Islamic polemic caused the words contained within עלינו לשבח to be closely scrutinized and often changed. Several words and groups of words were singled out for review. They include the following:

- שהם משתחווים להבל וריק, ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע, ואנחנו כורעים ומשתחווים ומודים, לפני מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא;
- ומושב יקרו בשמים ממעל, ושכינת עזו בגבהי מרומים, הוא א-להינו אין עוד.

We are all aware that the line: שהם משתחווים להבל וריק, ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע was the victim of the censor's eraser since the Middle Ages. The inclusion of the line in early versions of the סידור confirms that the line appeared as part of עלינו לשבח since the time that עלינו לשבח was initially composed:

סדר רב עמרם גאון (הרפנס) סדר ראש השנה-שלא שם חלקנו כהם וגורלנו ככל המונם שהם משתחווים להבל וריק ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע. ואנו כורעים ומשתחווים לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא;

סידר רב סעדיה גאון- שלא שם חלקנו מהם וגורלנו ככל המונם שהם משתחווים להבל וריק ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע. ואנו משתחווים לפני מלך מלכי המלכים ברוך הוא.

That omission of the line in the version of עלינו לשבח found in the מחזור ויטרי¹ is a chronological marker denoting approximately when the censoring of the line began.

What did the Christian and Islamic censors find objectionable in the line and how did they learn about it? It is the ישו מחמט = להבל ולריק² (Jesus) and ישו=וריק: גמטריא (Jesus and Mohammed). They learned about the גמטריא from משומדים (apostates). Professor Naftali Weider in an article entitled: גמטריה אנתי-נוצרית ואנתי-איסלאמית (Regarding an Anti-Christian and Anti-Muslim Gematria) in his book: התגבשות נוסח התפלה במזרח ובמערב (The Formation of Jewish Liturgy in The East and The West) provides a reconstructed paragraph in the כלבו as one source for this גמטריא:

1. An example of a page on which עלינו לשבח appears with the censor's erasure still visible can be found on page 22 of a Machzor that follows the Roman rite published in 1540 and available for viewing at www.jnul.huji.ac.il/eng/.

2. This גמטריא is created only when adding the letter: "ל" to וריק. This version is found as follows:
פירושי סידור התפילה לרוקח [קלב] מלכויות עמוד תרנז-שהם משתחווים להבל ול'ריק היא עבודה זרה דכתיב (ישעיהו מד', יז) ושאריתו לא-ל עשה לפסלו יסגוד לו וישתחו ויתפלל אליו, וכתיב (ירמיהו י', ג') כי חוקת העמים הבל הוא כי עין מער כרתו, וכתיב (ירמיהו י', טו') הבל המה מעשה תעותעים.

ספר כלבו סימן קכב'—עלינו לשבח, עלינו בגימטריא ומעומד. להבל וריק, וריק בגימטריא [ישו]. ל³אל לא בגימטריא [מחמד], ויש אומרים להבל ו"ל"ריק שיש בהן בגימטריא [ישו ומחמט].

Professor Weider points out that the גימטריא for the words: לאל לא caused a change to the wording from אל אל לא לא יושיע to ללא יושיע⁴ to avoid a possible reference מחמט.

Criticism of that change arose because the modified wording changed words from a פסוק: ישעיהו פרק מה' פסוק כ'—הקבצו ובאו התנגשו יחדו פליטי הגוים לא ידעו הנשאים את עין פסלם ומתפללים אל אל לא לא יושיע.

These examples of גימטריא reveal that on one hand, censors were somewhat successful in erasing words that could be construed as an insult to their god. In a counter move, some Jewish communities added letters to the words of עלינו לשבח to create גימטריאות for the specific purpose of insulting the gods of the Gentiles. The bevy of changes can be viewed as a war of words.

The review of the גימטריא value of words in עלינו לשבח caused concern for reciting the words: יקרו; i.e. the word יקרו=ישו in גימטריא. This is seen in the following:

ספר המנהגים (טירנא) מנהג של יום חול—(טו). וכסא כבודו בשמים וכו' בן עיקר; הגהות המנהגים מנהג של יום חול אות (טו) ואין—ואין אומרים ומושב יקרו שהוא גימטריא יש"ו, ואינו טעם נכון: ובספר היכלות איתא יקרו (גליון).
טור אורח חיים סימן קלג'—ואומר עלינו לשבח וכשיגיע אל ככל המונם יפסיק מעט קודם שיאמר ואנו כורעים ומשתחווים כדי שלא יהא נראה כאילו חוזר למעלה. ויש אומרים וכסא כבודו בשמים ממעל, ואין לומר כן אלא ומושב יקרו, וכן הוא הנוסח בס' היכלות.

The Vilna Gaon in his book: מעשה הרב states the following:

נב'—בעלינו, הנוסח: וכסא כבודו בשמים כו'.

Other changes have crept into the wording of עלינו לשבח. The following note found in תפלת רפאל סידור כנוסח קצת קהילות ספרד reveals some of the changes:

לא יאמר "אבל"⁵ אנהנו כורעים ומשתחווים, רק יפסיק אחר תיבת לא יושיע, ויאמר ואנהנו משתחווים וכו'. יאמר ומושב יקרו ולא ישנה לומר ומושב הדרו⁶.

In that version, they also add the word: ואחר as follows: "ואחר" עוד "אחר".

3. This גימטריא is created only when changing the words: אל אל לא לא יושיע to לאל לא יושיע

4. For example:

ספר המנהגים (טירנא) הגהות המנהגים מנהג של יום חול—וכשבא "ללא יושיע" יפסיק מעט.

5. The problem trying to be avoided is connecting the word: ואנהנו to the words that precede it: לא לא יושיע.

6. Another alternative to יקרו ומושב that appeared in some סידורים.

TRANSLATION OF SOURCES

פירושי סידור התפילה לרוקה [קלב] מלכויות עמוד תרנו -The words: that they bow down to vanity and emptiness, represent idolatry as it is written (Yeshayahu 44, 17): And what is left of it he fashions into a god, his carved image; he falls down to it, and worships it, and prays to it, and it is written: (Yirmiyahu 10, 3): For the customs of the people are vanity; their god is made from a tree cut in the forest, and it is written (Yirmiyahu 10, 15) They are vanity, the work of delusion.

ספר כלבו סימן קכב' -Aleinu L'Sha'Beach. The Gematria (numerical value) of the word Aleinu equals the Gematria of the word: standing. L'Hevel Va'Rick; the Gematria of the word Va'Rick is the same as the Gematria for the word: Yeshu (Jesus). The Gematria of the words: L'Ail Lo is the same as the gematria for the word: Mohammed. Some add a Lamed to the word: Va'Rick and say La'Hevel V'La'Rick. Those words together equal in Gematria: Jesus and Mohammed.

ישעיהו פרק מה' פסוק כ' -Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you of the nations who have escaped; they have no knowledge those who carry the wood of their carved idols, and pray to a god who cannot save.

ספר המנהגים (טירנא) מנהג של יום חול -The correct words to say in Aleinu L'Sha'Beach are: V'Kisai Kivodo Ba'Shamayim-His Chair of Honor rests in the heavens.

הגהות המנהגים מנהג של יום חול אות (טו) -The Sefer Haminhagim says: It is not our practice to say the words: Oo'Moshav Yikaro because in Gematria the word Yikaro equals the word: Yeshu (Jesus). That is not a valid reason not to say those words. In the Book of Haichalos we find the word included is: Yikaro.

טור אורה חיים סימן קלג' -He recites: Aleinu L'Sha'Beach. When he finishes reciting the word: K'Chol Ha'Monam, he should stop for a moment before reciting the words: V'Anu Korim Oo'Mishtachavim so that it does not appear as if the word: V'Anachnu (we) refers to what was just said. There are those who substitute the words: V'Kisai Kivodo Ba'Shamayim Mi'Ma'Al (and His Seat of Honor is in the Heavens above). He should not make that substitution but rather should say: Oo'Moshav Yikaro. That is the wording found in the Sefer Haichalos.

מעשה הרב - נב' -In Aleinu, the proper wording is: V'Kisai Kivodo Ba'Shamayim, etc.

תפלת רפאל סידור כנוסה קצת קהילות ספרד -Do not say the word: Avol (but) before the words Anachnu Korim Oo'Mishtachavim but you should pause after the words: Lo Yoshi'Ah and then say: V'Anachnu Mishtachavim etc. You should say: Oo'Moshav Yikaro and not change the words to : Oo'Moshav Hadaro.

SUPPLEMENT

A Scholarly Look At Gematria

An excerpt from the book: *The Universal History of Numbers: From Prehistory to the Invention of the Computer*, by Georges Ifrah, David Bellos, E. F. Harding, Sophie Wood, Ian Monk; John Wiley & Sons, 2000

page 252

GNOSTICS, CABBALISTS, MAGICIANS, AND SOOTHSAYERS

Once the letters of an alphabet have numerical values, the way is open to some strange procedures. Take the values of the letters of a word or phrase and make a number from these. Then this number may furnish an interpretation of the word, or another word with the same or a related numerical value may do so. The Jewish *gematria*, the Greek *isopsephy* and the Muslim *kehisab al jumal* ("calculating the total") are examples of this kind of activity.

Especially among the Jews, these calculations enriched their sermons with every kind of interpretation, and also gave rise to speculations and divinations. They are of common occurrence in Rabbinic literature, especially the Talmud and the Midrash. But it is chiefly found in esoteric writings, where these cabbalistic procedures yielded hidden meanings for the purposes of religious dialectic.

Though not adept in the matter, we would here like to describe some examples of religious, soothsaying or literary practices which derive from such procedures.

The two Hebrew words *Yayin*, meaning "wine", and *Sod*, meaning "secret", both have the number 70 in the normal Hebrew alphabetic numerals, and for this reason some rabbis bring these words together: *Nichnas Yayin Yatsa Sod*: "the secret comes out of the wine" (Latin: *in vino veritas*, the drunken man tells all).

In *Pardes Rimonim*, Moses Cordovero gives an example which relates *gevurah* ("force") to *arieh* ("lion"),

7. This is the review of the book that Amazon.com provides: The title doesn't lie. Mathematician Georges Ifrah's masterpiece, *The Universal History of Numbers*, is a wonderfully comprehensive overview of numbers and counting spanning all the inhabited continents as far back in time as records will allow us to look. Beyond the ancient Babylonians, Sumerians, and Indians, Ifrah takes us farther south into Africa to examine an early decimal counting system and into ancient Mexico to reconstruct what we can of the Mayan calendar and numerical system. The 27 chapters are chiefly organized by culture, though there are some cross-cultural overviews of topics like letters and numbers.

The author's aim was grand: "to provide in simple and accessible terms the full and complete answer to all and any questions ... about the history of numbers and counting, from prehistory to the age of computers." This led him to wander the world for 10 years, studying and learning; this scholastic pilgrim has returned with amazing stories to tell. Toward the end of the book, Ifrah makes the book truly universal by refuting alien-intervention theories of cultural origins--surely our benefactors would have given us an efficient decimal counting system, zero and all, before helping us build pyramids and such. Such charming ideas, combined with such rigorously researched facts, make *The Universal History of Numbers* a uniquely important and fascinating volume. --Rob Lightner

which both have value 216. The lion, traditionally, is the symbol of divine majesty, of the power of Y^8 , while *gevurah* is one of the Attributes of G-d.

The Messiah is often called *Shema*, “seed”, or *Menakhem*, “consoler”, since these two words have the same value.

The letters of *Mashiyakh*, “Messiah”, and of *Nakhash*, “serpent”, give the same value and this gives rise to the conclusion that “When the Messiah comes upon earth, he shall measure himself against Satan and shall overcome him.”

We may also conclude that the world was created at the beginning of the Jewish civil year, from the fact that the two first words of the Torah (*Bereshit Bara*, “in the beginning [G-d] created”) have the same value as *Berosh Hashanah Nibra*, “it was created at the beginning of the year”:

In Genesis XXXII:4, Jacob says “I have sojourned with Laban” (in Hebrew, *Im Laban Garti*). According to the commentary by Rashi on this phrase (*Bereshit Rabbati*, 145), this means that “during his sojourn with Laban the impious, Jacob did not follow his bad example but followed the 613 commandments of the Jewish religion”; for, as he explains, *Garti* (“I have sojourned”) has the value 613.

Genesis recounts elsewhere (XIV:12–14) how, in the battle of the kings of the East in the Valley of Siddim, Lot of Sodom, the kinsman of Abraham, was captured by his enemies: “When Abraham heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan”, where he smote his adversaries with the help of “G-d Most High” (XIV:20). Then he addresses G-d in these words: “Lord G-D, what wilt You give me, seeing I go childless and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?” (Genesis XV:2).

The *barayta* of the thirty-two Haggadic rules (for the interpretation of the Torah) gives the following interpretation (rule 29): the 318 servants are none other than the person of Eliezer himself. In other words, Abraham smote his enemies with the help of Eliezer alone, his trusted servant who was to be his heir; and whose name in Hebrew means “My G-d is help”. The argument put forward for this brings together the two verses: “his trained servants, born in his own house, *three hundred and eighteen*” and “the steward of my house is this *Eliezer of Damascus*” and the fact that the numerical value of the name *Eliezer* is 318.

Another concordance which the exegetes have achieved brings *Ahavah* (“Love”) together with *Ekhad* (“One”).

As well as their numerical equivalence, it is explained that these two terms correspond to the central concept of the biblical ethic, that “G-d is Love”, since on the one hand “One” represents the One G-d of Israel and, on the other hand, “Love” is supposed to be at the very basis of the conception of the Universe (Deuteronomy: V 6–7; Leviticus XIX:18). At the same time, the sum of their values is 26, which is the number of the name *Y* itself.

The common Semitic word for “G-d” is *E-l*, but in the Old Testament this only occurs in compounds (*Israel*, *Ismael*, *Eliezer*, etc.). To refer to G-d, the Torah uses *El-obim* (which in fact is plural), and is the word which is supposed to express all the force and supernatural power of G-d. The Torah refers also to the attributes of G-d, such as *khay* (“living”), *Sha-dai* (“allpowerful”), *E-l*

8. Editor: I will use the abbreviation “Y” when ever the author refers to G-d’s name.

Ihyion (“G-d Most High”) and so on. But *Y*, is the only true Name of G-d: it is the *Divine Tetragram*. It is supposed to incorporate the eternal nature of G-d since it embraces the three Hebrew tenses of the verb “to be”.

To invoke G-d by this name is therefore to appeal to His intervention and His concern for all things. But this name may be neither written nor spoken casually, and in order not to violate what is holy and incommunicable, in common use it must be read as *A-donai* (“My Lord”).

Every kind of speculation has been founded on the numerical value of 26 which the Tetragram assumes according to the classical system of alphabetic numerals. Some adept writers have thereby been led to point out that in Genesis I:26, G-d says: “Let us make man in our image”; that 26 generations separate Adam and Moses; that 26 descendants are listed in the genealogy of Shem, and the number of persons named in this is a multiple of 26; and so on. According to them, the fact that G-d fashioned Eve from a rib taken from Adam is to be found in the numerical difference (= 26) between the name of Adam (= 45) and the name of Eve (= 19):

The usual alphabetic numerals were not the only basis adopted by the rabbis and Cabbalists for this kind of interpretation. A manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Ms. Hebr. 1822) lists more than seventy different systems of *gematria*.

One of these involves assigning to each letter the number which gives its position in the Hebrew alphabet but with reduction of numbers above 9, that is to say with the same units figure as in the usual method, but ignoring tens and hundreds. The letter **m** (*mem*), for example, which traditionally has the value 40, is given the value 4 in this system. Similarly, the letter (*shin*), whose usual value is 300, has value 3 in this system. From this, some have concluded that the name *Y* can be equated to the divine attribute *Tov* (“Good”):

Another method gives to the letters values equal to the squares of their usual values, so that *gimmel*, for example, which usually has value 3, is here assigned the value 9. According to a further system, the value 1 is assigned to the first letter, the sum (3) of the first two to the second letter, the sum (6) of the first three to the third, and so on. The letter *yod*, which is in the tenth position, therefore has a value equal to the sum of the first ten natural

numbers: $1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + 9 + 10 = 55$.

Yet another system assigns to each letter the numerical value of the word which is the name of the letter. Thus *aleph* has the value $1 + 30 + 80 = 111$.

With these starting points, one can make a concordance between two words by evaluating them numerically according to either the same numerical system, or two different numerical systems. For instance, the word *Maqom* (“place”), which is another of the names of G-d, can be equated to *Y* because in the traditional system the word *Maqom* has value 186, and *Y* also has value 186 if we use the system which gives each letter the square of its usual value:

This, it is emphasised, is confirmed by Micah I:3.

For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place [*Maqom*].

This selection of examples—which could easily be much extended—gives a good idea of the complexities of Cabbalistic calculations and investigations which the exegetes went into, not only for

the purpose of interpreting certain passages of the Torah but for all kinds of speculations.

The Greeks also used similar procedures. Certain Greek poets, such as Leonidas of Alexandria (who lived at the time of the Emperor Nero), used them to create distichs and epigrams with the special characteristic of being *isopsephs*. A distich (consisting of two lines or two verses) is an isopseph if the numerical value of the first (calculated from the sum of the values of its letters) is equal to that of the second. An epigram (a short poem which might, for example, express an amorous idea) is an isopseph if all of its distichs are isopsephs, with the same value for each.

More generally, isopsephy consists of determining the numerical value of a word or a group of letters, and relating it to another word by means of this value.

At Pergamon, isopseph inscriptions have been found which, it is believed, were composed by the father of the great physician and mathematician Galen, who, according to his son, "had mastered all there was to know about geometry and the science of numbers."

At Pompeii an inscription was found which can be read as "I love her whose number is 545", and where a certain Amerimnus praises the mistress of his thoughts whose "honourable name is 45."

In the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* (I, 33) it is written that the Egyptian god Sarapis (whose worship was initiated by Ptolemy I) revealed his name to Alexander the Great in the following words:

Take two hundred and one, then a hundred and one, four times twenty, and ten. Then place the first of these numbers in the last place, and you will know which god I am.

Taking the words of the god literally, we obtain

200 1 100 1 80 10 200

which corresponds to the Greek name SARAPIS.

In recalling the murder of Agrippina, Suetonius (*Nero*, 39) relates the name of Nero, written in Greek, to the words *Idian Metera apekteine* ("he killed his own mother"), since the two have exactly the same value according to the Greek number-system.

The Greeks apparently came rather late to the practice of speculating with the numerical values of letters. This seems to have occurred when Greek culture came into contact with Jewish culture. The famous passage in the Apocalypse of Saint John clearly shows how familiar the Jews were with these mystic calculations, long before the time of their Cabbalists and the *Gematria*. Both Jews and Greeks were remarkably gifted for arithmetical calculation and also for transcendental speculation; every form of subtlety was apt to their taste, and number-mysticism appealed to both predilections at the same time. The Pythagorean school, the most superstitious of the Greek philosophical sects, and the most infiltrated by Eastern influence, was already addicted to number-mysticism. In the last age of the ancient world, this form of mysticism experienced an astonishing expansion.

It gave rise to arithmomancy; it inspired the Sybillines, the seers and soothsayers, the pagan *Theologoi*; it troubled the Fathers of the Church, who were not always immune to its fascination.

Reproduced From www.questia.com