

The Gematria (גימטרייה)

Is it a form of numerology?

By Duane D. Miller

Introduction

The question of whether the Gematria is a form of numerology is an interesting and important question in light of many portions of scriptures from the Tanach (Torah, Prophets, and Writings). For brevity I will quote only one portion of verses from the Torah found in Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

Deuteronomy 18:9-13

18:9 When you enter the land ADONAI your God is giving you, you are not to learn how to follow the abominable practices of those nations. 18:10 There must not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through fire, a diviner, a soothsayer, an enchanter, a sorcerer, 18:11 a spell-caster, a consulter of ghosts or spirits, or a necromancer. 18:12 For whoever does these things is detestable to ADONAI, and because of these abominations ADONAI your God is driving them out ahead of you. 18:13 You must be wholehearted with ADONAI your God. (CJB)

Recently I listened to an audio file where a person speaking about eschatology (study of doctrines and beliefs pertaining to the end of the world) and used the Gematria frequently in his support of the events that are taking place in Israel and around the world. Before we begin our discussion on whether the Gematria is something we should stay away from I think first we need to define a few things.

What is the Gematria?

Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines the Gematria as: “noun a Kabbalistic method of interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures by computing the numerical value of words, based on the values of their constituent letters.” The Gematria (Heb. גימטרייה, from the Greek γεωμετρία, Aramaic gematrya) is numerology of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew alphabet and is used by its proponents to derive meaning and relative relationships between people, places and things with respect to the Hebrew Bible. There are two forms of the Gematria which can be identified: (i) the “revealed” form and (ii) the “mystical” form. The word Gematria comes from the Greek isopsephy, and the Arabic Ḥisāb al-Jummal. There is also a Gematria for Latin-script languages which dates back from the Middle Ages, and possibly back to Roman times. The Gematria is a Kabbalistic system of interpreting the Hebrew Bible. Its application consists of finding the numerical value of a word or words (i.e. the 22 letters of the Hebrew aleph-bet each designated a number) and then substituting another word whose numerical value is equivalent to the one under consideration. Another method used is that of calculating the

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arithmetical value of words or phrases for interpretation of the scriptures. The purpose is to find the events of human history in the scriptures and possibly predict the occurrence of future events, specifically concerning eschatology (last day events).

What is Numerology?

Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines numerology as: “noun, the branch of knowledge concerned with the occult significance of numbers.” Numerology is a part of many systems, traditions, and beliefs in a mystical or esoteric relationship between numbers and this physical world, objects, or living things. The basic premise is the use of numbers to interpret a person’s character or to divine the future. The study of what is called “magical meanings” or numbers and of their supposed influence on human life whose calculative means one can obtain information about one’s personality, capabilities, and the future. Such calculations involved considering an individual’s full name, birthplace, and birth date (i.e. Numerological interpretation of one’s name is called “onomatomanancy”). Numerology has not been limited to the occult, some have claimed the number eleven is connectable with the eleven loyal apostles of Jesus Christ, the number twelve with the entire group of apostles, then extrapolate to the twelve divisions of the zodiac and the twelve months of the year, and the number thirteen with covens in Wicca (i.e. groups of thirteen witches). Notice the connection with the zodiac which has its ties in astrology. We find astrology in many ancient cultures (i.e. Arab, Persian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Hellenistic, Mayan, and Chinese, etc).

Another consideration we have to look at is the origins of Numerology and astrology. Modern numerology contains features of a variety of ancient cultures including Babylonia, Pythagoras and his followers (Greece, 6th century B.C.), as well as astrological philosophy from Hellenistic Alexandria, early Christian mysticism, the occultism of the early Gnostics, the Hebrew system of Kabbalah, the Indian Vedas, the Chinese “Circle of the Dead,” and the Egyptian “Book of the Master of the Secret House” (Ritual of the Dead). The origins of much of the astrological doctrine and methodology which has been developed in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East are found among the ancient Babylonians and their system of celestial omens that began to be compiled around the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. Then, these celestial omens were spread from the Babylonians and Assyrians to other areas such as India, China, and Greece where it has merged with pre-existing indigenous forms of astrology.

Discussion

Before I begin the discussion on the Gematria, I would like to first discuss how the Holy Scriptures has many layers of meanings. I know this having been raised in a Christian home, my parents taught me to know HaShem, and to believe in the authority of the Word of G-d. At my 13th birthday, I was baptized and it was really at that moment when I began to seriously consider my faith, the Holy Scriptures, and my relationship with HaShem. It was then I began to study the Word of G-d at a more intellectual level. Reading through the Bible year after year HaShem always teaches me something new which can be applied to my life. This brings up an interesting point about studying the

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scriptures and its interpretation (hermeneutics). Even though the scriptures were written thousands of years ago, and to the children of Yisrael, HaShem has actively been revealing to me the importance of His words, His will, and His Love to me in my life today. In rabbinical Judaism, it is said the Torah is a live, a living being. In my study of the scriptures I have to agree, the scriptures are alive and the living Word of G-d has much application for me today in this day and age. The scriptures are dynamic, not only are the scriptures written for the time, thousands of years ago, HaShem has placed within his living words many layers of meaning which transcend time. This means the scriptures are also a tool HaShem has used to give a prophetic message to Yisrael, of His Messiah, and finally of the last days events (eschatology, pertaining to the end of the world). So, when the anti-missionaries claim the scriptures were written for the time and do not refer to the Messiah Yeshua, remind them the scriptures are a living being as the rabbi's say, and has many layers of meaning for our life, not only for the time in which it was written, but also for prophetic message of the Messiah.

Now I hope we agree the Holy Scriptures have many layers of meaning, of the past, the present (our lives) and of the future. Coming back to the topic of the Gematria, I do not doubt the possibility that Hashem has hidden within the Hebrew Scriptures the history of mankind in the Gematria of the scriptures. The question is whether the Gematria is a form of numerology?

Is the Gematria a form of numerology?

Let's take a closer look at the differences between the Gematria and Numerology. We can do this by outlining side by side two columns the key points in the Gematria and the key points in numerology.

Table 1 Comparison of the Gematria and Numerology

Gematria	Numerology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computing the numerical values of words based on their letters. • Exchanging words or phrases with similar numerical value to find a correlation in human history. • Predict the occurrence of future events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computing the numerical value of words based on their letters. • The numbers have mystical meaning which correlation with who we are, our character, personality, and destiny (future events). • Predict what might happen in ones future (destiny).

Here I have summarized the key points of both the Gematria and Numerology. Examining the list it appears both the Gematria and Numerology are identical. Each uses the numerical values computed from words based upon their letters which have been given a particular numerical value. The numerical value is then correlated to human

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history looking at either the past, present, or future events. The ultimate goal of both is for predicting the occurrence of future events. In the talk I heard the Gematria is used to add support to the future events of the last days before the revealing of the antichrist and the rebuilding of the 3rd temple. The use of numerology is to take the calculation of the numbers of words, find out their mystical meaning, then predict ones destiny (future, fate, or fortune).

Conclusions

I believe if one desires to look at how HaShem has written the past of human history in the Holy Scriptures that it is ok to use in the Gematria. However, the danger is when one begins to look not at the past but at the future. The use of the Gematria then becomes the sin of divination. *Lev19:26 Do not eat anything with blood. Do not practice divination or fortune-telling. (CJB)* (for further study look at the following verses: *Num24:1 Josh13:22 2Ki17:17 2Ki21:6 2Ch33:6 Jer14:14*) The problem with the sin of divination is the attempt to ascertain information by interpretation of omens or an alleged supernatural spirit. The point is we need to rely upon HaShem for all of our needs and trust He will provide for our needs in the future. The bible is full of references to witchcraft and sorcerers, familiar spirits and divination, necromancy and fortune tellers. However the modern day perception of witchcraft has become one of disregard and relaxed attitudes primarily because of televisions cultural influences. (Reference to “Charmed,” “Harry Potter,” “Buffy the vampire slayer,” etc)

Examining the scriptures we realize that predicting the future is something that is also commended. The issue isn't about predicting the future; it is about “how” one predicts the future. In the Gematria, numerology, and divination, man takes numbers; magic spells or consults familiar spirits to obtain an answer by a secret craft, rite, or ritual that has been discovered by man's own means. Finding out the future biblically speaking occurs by man approaching HaShem, asking him for what will take place in the future and then waiting for His answer, relying upon G-d to provide an answer, not by any kind of special secret rite or ritualistic means.

In conclusion, I would like to look again at the scriptures I posted at the beginning of this article, *Deuteronomy 18:9-13*.

Deuteronomy 18:9-13

18:9 When you enter the land ADONAI your God is giving you, you are not to learn how to follow the abominable practices of those nations. 18:10 There must not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through fire, a diviner, a soothsayer, an enchanter, a sorcerer, 18:11 a spell-caster, a consulter of ghosts or spirits, or a necromancer. 18:12 For whoever does these things is detestable to ADONAI, and because of these abominations ADONAI your God is driving them out ahead of you. 18:13 You must be wholehearted with ADONAI your God. (CJB)

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HaShem said that we are not to learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations and then specifically mentions diviners, soothsayers, enchanters, sorcerers, spell-casters, consulter of spirits, and necromancers. I believe numerology and astrology are both an abomination before G-d. I also believe the Gematria is taking from these pagan nations and applying a mathematical technique which is not pleasing to Adonai and applying it to the Holy Scriptures. My recommendation is to stay away from the Gematria and anything that takes from the abominable practices of the godless nations. In this way, you too can be wholehearted with Adonai your G-d. (*Deuteronomy 18:13*)

Be blessed in the Messiah Yeshua!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah for ever and ever