

Parsha Ponders

VeZos HaBeracha | October 15, 2022 | 21 Tishrei 5783

Amazing awe allusions¹

ולכל היד החזקה ולכל המורא הגדול אשר עשה משה לעיני כל-ישראל

The entire strong hand, and the great awe that Moshe performed before the eyes of the entire Jewish people²

Just before Moshe took on the mantle of leadership of the Jewish people, Hashem showed him the famous vision of the burning bush. The Torah describes³ it as an Angel appearing to him in the flame (בלבת-האש)⁴ of the bush. This was to hint to him the two forms of awe of G-d. One comes from a sense of submission, humility, and meekness. The other comes from a sense of pride at the opportunity to serve Hashem. These two ways can be compared to water and fire, respectively. Hashem appeared to Moshe in a mere bush, to allude to meekness and submission, and in a flame, to allude to pride.

In fact, this is the intent behind a verse at the beginning of the *parsha*⁵. The Torah uses a strange word to describe itself, אשדת. We recite it as two words, אש דת, a fiery law. And yet, it's spelled as one word, which is incomprehensible. However, there happens to be a word elsewhere⁶ that's spelled similarly: אשדות הפסגה, which refers to a deep river that flows. We see then that אשדת also represents water. What this is telling us is that the Torah requires us to sometimes act like fire, as in self-worth in our awe of G-d, and to act like water, representing submissiveness.

An amazing allusion to this understanding lies in the unique word used in that verse for flame. The word לבת, has the numerical value of 432. If you take this number and divide it by two, you get the number 216. This is equivalent to the numerical value for the word יראה, awe. Meaning, the two types of awe are hinted to within the word for flame, לבת.

Our Sages tell us⁷ that any chapter of Psalms which King David found precious begins with the word אשרי and ends with the word אשרי. Well, the Torah itself can't be any less precious than any chapter in Psalms. That means there must be some allusion to אשרי at the beginning of the Torah and at the end. As well, there must be some sort of allusion to awe or fear of G-d in both places, as we are told that fear is the beginning of wisdom⁸.

Now, if we take the first word of the Torah, בראשית, and remove the letters אשרי, we're left with בת. If we take the last word of the Torah, ישראל, and remove the letters אשרי, we're left with ל. We see then that the first and last words of the Torah, besides beginning and ending with אשרי, spell לבת, our very own allusion to awe and fear of G-d. *Chazak chazak venischazek!* Chag Sameach and Good Yom Tov!

¹ Based on [Chasam Sofer Al HaTorah](#) to [Deuteronomy 34:12](#)

² [Deuteronomy](#) *loc. cit.*

³ [Exodus 3:2](#)

⁴ [Rashi ad. loc.](#) says this word is related to לב, meaning the heart of the flame. He and [Targum Onkelos ad. loc.](#) say it's the same intent as the word שלהבת

⁵ [Deuteronomy 33:2](#). See [Chasam Sofer ad. loc.](#)

⁶ [Ibid 4:49](#). Also [אדש הנחלים](#) ([Numbers 21:15](#))

⁷ [Berachos 10a](#)

⁸ [Psalms 111:10](#)