

Fascinating INSIGHTS

י' אדר א' תשפ"ב
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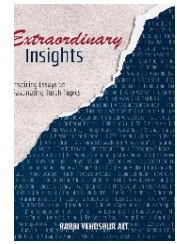
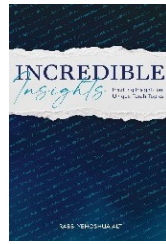
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Lacking Luck

One meaning in the word מזל is to be in the right place at the right time and say the right thing. This is hinted to in the word מזל, as it is an acronym for זמן, לשון, מקום ("place, time, speech"). Many successes are because one was in the right place at the right time and had the fortitude to say the right things.

A שלימזל, *shlimazel* ("an unlucky person"), is a person who just doesn't have מזל. This is portrayed in that word as it is a contraction of שלא מזל.

Warren Buffett, whose net worth is over 100 billion dollars, says that he was born lucky. "I was born in 1930. I had two sisters that have every bit the intelligence that I had, have every bit the drive, but they didn't have the same opportunities. If I had been a female, my life would have been entirely different. When I was growing up, women could be teachers, secretaries or nurses, and

that was about it. You don't know whether you are going to be born black or white,¹ male or female, infirm or able-bodied or whether you will be born in the United States or Afghanistan (In 1930, when he was born, the odds were over 30 to 1 against being born in the United States). Another big difference was that I was wired in a certain way that enables me to be good at valuing businesses."

On another occasion, Buffett said, "I was born at the right time. If I had been born thousands of years ago, I would be some animal's lunch because I can't run very fast or climb trees. Let's imagine, that a magic genie takes me back in time to the moment before my birth. The genie points to a clear box with billions of white plastic balls with black numbers stamped on them, and he proposes a deal, 'You may take the life you currently have, or you may draw from life's lottery box, and take a chance on a ball that leads to a different life.' What a risk. In my new life, I would certainly want to be born in America, but there's only about a 4% chance of drawing a red, white and blue ball. I would want above-average intelligence, and a family that

¹ When he was born, during the Great Depression, much of America was still segregated, and African-Americans had an unemployment rate two to three times that of whites.

supports my education, but only 8% of those lives will come with master's degrees. And I certainly would rather not have to try to work my way out of poverty, but one out of eight balls would mean I would not have access to clean drinking water, and half the balls would mean living on less than \$2.50 per day. I am going to keep the life I have, Genie, thanks anyway. 'What if I let you draw more than one ball? Will you now play the ovarian lottery?' This would only be a worthwhile proposition if the genie would let me draw about 5,000 balls from the lottery pool! Only then would I be likely to improve my situation, or, in other words, only one in 5,000 people in this world are born with a better chance at life than I was born with." Buffett points out that the US has richly rewarded him for valuing businesses, but that wouldn't be the case in every country. "It is not the greatest talent in the world but it happens to be something that pays off a lot in this system." In conclusion: "I won the lottery by being born white, smart, able-bodied, male and in America."

[An Outsider's View](#)

The number 10 symbolizes Kedusha as we see with the עשרת הדברות and a minyan which is comprised of 10 people. 11, on the other hand, represents the forces of impurity.² This is because the number 11, which follows 10, begins a new grouping, one that conceptually lies "on the outside" of 10.

This is mirrored in this number as it is the first number that is not designated with a new distinct Hebrew name. It is called אחד עשר, which literally means 10 (עשר) plus 1 (אחד).³

Another hint is found in the letters that together have a numerical value of 11—the letters י (10) and א (1). If we add up the sum of these two when they are spelled out fully—אלף-יוד, we come to a total of 131. This is an identical sum to סמאל, the name of the Satan.

The following are some of the many examples that bring out this concept.

Listen to the *short Fascinating Insights* podcast at <https://jewishpodcasts.fm/fascinating-insights>, where it can also be downloaded! Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of three books including the recently released *Extraordinary Insights*, in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

1) In listing Esav's descendants, the Torah enumerates 11 Edomite chieftains.⁴

2) It was an 11-day journey from Chorev to Kadesh Barnea via Esav's homeland of Mount Seir.⁵

3) Esav is symbolized by the goats in the following Talmudic passage. Why do the goats go ahead of the sheep? It follows the order established by the creation of the world, where first it was dark and then light.⁶ The word עז, goat hints to this as it has a gematria of 77, which is 11 times 7 (the 7 days of creation, which the gemara that we just quoted mentions, impacted by the eleven of impurity).

4) The descendants of Esav use the solar calendar which is 365 days, while the Jewish calendar mainly follows the lunar calendar of 354 days. The difference between these two is 11 days (in a non-leap-year).

5) In the Mishkan, there were 11 curtains of goat hair—יריעת עזים.⁷ Additionally, עזים symbolizes the Sitra Achara.

6) The קטרת, incense contained 11 ingredients,⁸ of which 10 were sweet-smelling spices. The 11th spice was the foul-smelling one, the הלבנה, which symbolizes the Satan.

7) The eleventh month is Av, the month both Batei Mikdash were destroyed among other troubles we endured.

8) When entering Eretz Yisrael the Jews encamped at Har Grizim and Har Eival where they recounted the blessings and curses that would fall upon them based upon their compliance with or rejection of the Torah. In the category of curses, there are 11 that the Torah mentions.⁹ This denotes their exclusion from the ideal blessed state where they are one with Hashem.

9) We come to the number 11 when we combine Haman with his 10 sons.¹⁰

² This is because in the sefiros ("emanations"), דעת and כתר are united. There is therefore 10 which are the following: חסד, גבורה, חסד, גבורה, חסד, גבורה, חסד, גבורה, חסד, גבורה. In contrast, on the impure side (Sitra Achara) דעת and כתר are divided, leaving us with the number 11.

³ Maharal in *Derech Chaim*, 3:13.

⁴ Breishis 36:40-43.

⁵ Devarim 1:2.

⁶ Shabbos 77b.

⁷ Shemos 26:7.

⁸ See Shemos 30:34, Rashi.

⁹ Devarim 27:15-25.

¹⁰ Esther 9:7-9.