

Gematria of 2021 שנת ביכא

With 2,000 represented by ב' and 21 by כא, the word that is formed would be ביכא *bakha*, as in עמק הבכא *emek ha'bakha* in the third verse of *Lekha Dodi*,

מקדש מלך עיר מלוכה. קומי צאי מתוך ההפכה.
רב לך שבת בעמק הבכא. והוא יחמול עליך חמלה:

(*rav lakh shevet be'emek ha'bakha* – “too long you have dwelled in the valley of weeping”), where the “valley of weeping” refers to our Exile. Mendele Mokher Sefarim's (SJ Abramowitch) novel, “*Be'emek Ha'bakha*”, similarly describes a place of sorrow, suffering and poverty.

Bakha – “weeping”, by extension from the Hebrew word for crying בכי - would appear to herald an unhappy note for this new year; however, the very first meaning given this word in Avraham Even-Shoshan's *Ha'milon Hehadash*, Hebrew-Hebrew dictionary, is also the name of a tree, mentioned in Samuel II 5:23, which is believed to be the *Populus Euphratica*, Desert or Euphrates Poplar, a kind of willow (but not the weeping willow).

This is the same tree and valley mentioned in Psalms 84:7 –

עוברי בעמק הבכא מעין ישיתוה

ovrey be'emek ha'bakha ma'ayan yeshituhu - "(those) who pass through the valley of bakha (trees) make it (put) a well". The preceding verses identify these travelers, who transform a desert valley into a well, as the *yoshvei veitekha* "the dwellers in Thy (the Eternal's) house" and also “the man (person) whose strength is in Thee (the Eternal)” *adam oz lo vakh*.

If we understand the physical *emek ha'bakha* described here in verse 7 to be also the same “valley of weeping” referenced in *lekha dodi*, their suffering in this valley has the potential to bring redemption, for the text promises that those who traverse this dread valley will erect there a well *ma'ayan yeshituhu*. The verse continues: *gam berakhot ya'e'te more*, usually translated as “the rain will also fill the pools”. The plural of “pools” is *bereykhot*, but the word used here is *berakhot* – “blessings”. *more* מורה is translated here as “rain”, but is more commonly the word for “teacher”, while *ya'e'te* יעטה properly means “will envelop/clothe/wrap”. An alternative interpretation, therefore, is that “the teaching מורה will cloak (them) with blessings ברכות”.

Which, after all, gives a message of hope for 2021, that, after having passed through the Vale of Sorrow, we make of this year a well of opportunity and fill the pools of our hearts and souls with the blessed and abundant rain of eternal teachings.