

Question About Gematria and Permutation

By Pastor Ed Anderson

In Gematria, there is method of permutation in which the Hebrew letters of a single Word are rearranged to reveal additional words from the letters of the first word. This is thought to provide additional layers of understanding to the plain meaning of a word. In the normal course of study, searching and finding "root" words would be a somewhat similar concept. Do you have any information for, or against, this method of study?

Answer:

Response Regarding Permutation Methods in Gematria

You're absolutely right — in *Gematria*, one of the more esoteric but ancient methods of Hebrew study involves **permutation**: the rearranging of the Hebrew letters in a word to uncover other potential words or meanings. This is based on the belief that the **Hebrew language is divinely constructed**, and therefore, its letters contain layers of spiritual insight beyond the plain meaning (*p'shat*).

This form of permutation (known in Hebrew as **Temurah**) is used in **Kabbalistic** writings and sometimes in **Midrashic** or mystical interpretations. The idea is that **if every letter is sacred**, then rearranging those letters under spiritual direction might reveal **deeper truths**, parallels, or connections. In this way, it's conceptually similar to **root word studies**, but with a more mystical twist.

Potential Benefits of This Method (When Used Carefully):

1. **Stimulates Deeper Reflection:**
 - Permutation can help the student of Scripture meditate more deeply on the **essence of a word**, its structure, and its spiritual symbolism.
2. **Reinforces Letter-by-Letter Revelation:**
 - Since Hebrew letters carry **numerical**, **pictographic**, and **spiritual** meaning, rearranging them may highlight **other biblical concepts** using the same components.
3. **Has Ancient Roots:**
 - Certain rabbinic and mystical traditions throughout Jewish history have used **Temurah** and other forms (e.g., **Atbash** or **Albam**) for deeper Torah study.
4. **Shows Divine Patterns:**
 - Occasionally, permutations draw attention to striking relationships between words that otherwise go unnoticed — for example, how **"Mashiach" (Messiah)**

and “**Nachash**” (**Serpent**) share similar letters and numerics, yet reveal **opposing spiritual roles** — underscoring both contrast and redemptive reversal.

Cautions & Discernment:

1. **Avoid Treating It as Hidden Code Alone:**
 - Scripture was given for **clarity**, not confusion. While God’s Word has depth, it is dangerous to think the **true message** is hidden **only** in codes or mystical methods.
2. **Don’t Depart from Context or Doctrine:**
 - Any “insight” derived through permutations **must be tested against Scripture**. If it violates clear biblical theology or elevates speculation over truth, it should be rejected.
3. **Be Wary of Kabbalistic Errors:**
 - While Kabbalah shares some ancient Hebrew insights, it can veer into **occult-like or pantheistic ideas**, diminishing the personhood of God or teaching salvation through **esoteric knowledge** instead of Christ. Discernment is needed.
4. **Use It as Supplement, Not Foundation:**
 - Permutations may provide **inspiration**, but not **doctrinal foundation**. Our core beliefs must rest on the **plain reading**, the **historical context**, and the **Spirit-led understanding** of the Word of God.

A Balanced Approach:

As with studying **acrostics**, **numerics**, or **chiasms**, exploring permutations can **enhance awe** for the divine intricacy of Scripture — but it must never **replace the gospel message**, the cross, or the authority of God’s clear commands.

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.”

— Proverbs 25:2