

Confiscated Until Redemption

PARSHA INSIGHTS - B'CHUKOSAI (5757)

ELIYAHU HANA VI - Or is it Eliya, Without the Vav?

After enumerating the dreadful disasters and curses that would come upon *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] for not adhering to the *mitzvos* [commandments], the Torah appeases us with compassionate words. “And I will remember My covenant with Yaacov, and also My covenant with Yitzchok, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember...” (*Perek Chof Vav, Pasuk Mem Bais* [chapter 26, verse 42]).

A word in our *pasuk* is spelled in an unusual fashion. Why is there an extra *vav* in the word “יעקוב” “Yaacov”? *Rashi* immediately remarks that the peculiar version of this name occurs not only here, but a total of five times in *Tanach*. But where did יעקב Yaacov get five extra *vav*'s? This is understandable when we discover that the name of אליהו Eliyahu the *Navi* [Elijah the prophet] is spelled *chasair* [missing its *vav*], five times in *Tanach*. Incidentally, one of these is found near the end of the *Haftorah* for *Shabbos Hagadol* (*Malachi* 3:23). You probably noticed that the person who read the *maftir* [extra reading as an honor], if he was knowledgeable, read the name Eliyahu as “אליה” “Eliya” - without the *vav* at the end. This was no mistake - it is supposed to be read this way five times in *Tanach*, as our *Rashi* explains. What is the *pshat* [plain meaning]? **Yaacov is holding onto five letter *vav*'s which really belong to Eliyahu Hanavi.** In the words of *Rashi*, “Yaacov took a letter from the name of Eliyahu as collateral, as a guarantee, that he (Eliyahu) will come and announce the redemption of his children.”

Volumes can be written about this concept that Eliyahu *Hanavi* is the “*mevasair*” [the bringer of good tidings], the one who will tell the news of our ultimate salvation. For our purposes, however, we will explore only one aspect of this. Why did Yaacov take a *vav* FIVE times from Eliyahu's name, and why the letter *VAV*?

Rav Eliyahu Mizrachi comments that perhaps five letters had to be taken as a security, because it was as if Eliyahu *Hanavi* **swore** to Yaacov ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF THE TORAH that he will definitely come and inform us of *Moshiach*'s [Messiah's] arrival. However, the *Maharal* is not satisfied with this *pshat*. Since Yaacov actually took a letter from Eliyahu's name, and this is collateral, what need is there for an oath? And if in fact he did take an oath, there is no longer a need for any security!

As a result, the *Maharal* approaches it differently. One who makes an agreement with his friend and leaves collateral also does something else. He offers him his hand, and the two of them shake on the deal. There are five fingers in the hand, and that is why Yaacov took five letters *vav* and left Eliyahu's name as Eliya in five places. It is as if Eliyahu gave his handshake to Yaacov, thereby leaving five fingers with him. But why the letter *vav*? Simple! A finger is shaped just like the letter *vav*. The *Maharal* adds that since Eliyahu was only created for the purpose of bringing about our final redemption, and he hasn't yet done this, a letter of his name is seized in the meantime. In other words, this collateral signifies that Eliyahu's **name** - his mission and purpose - is not yet complete, since he hasn't announced the *geulah* [redemption] to Yaacov's descendants. Thus, Yaacov confiscated part of his name.

The *Sifsai Chachamim* also has some insight into the five pieces of security. The *Yalkut Shimoni* states that before *Moshiach* comes, Eliyahu will arrive and reveal himself to various groups of Jews. First, select *tzadikim* [righteous people] will be privileged to greet him. Next, certain cities and communities will welcome him. After this, Eliyahu will appear on the mountains of *Eretz Yisroel* [the Land of Israel]. This latter phase of his arrival will consist of three parts. As detailed in the *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Yeshaya* [Isaiah] 52:7, three days before *Moshiach* comes, Eliyahu *Hanavi* will come and stand on the mountains of Israel. He will make proclamations of salvation for these three days. Consequently, there are really FIVE stages of Eliyahu's announcement of redemption:

1. Select *tzadikim*;
2. Specific communities; then,
3. }
4. } Three days of public proclamations on the mountains.
5. }

That is why Yaacov took five of Eliyahu's *vav*'s, so Yaacov's name is spelled with the extra *vav* five times - to insure that he will make five appearances and declarations of salvation.

The *Maharal* cited above explains that a *vav* was taken because of its similarity to a finger; Yaacov *Avinu* [Jacob our forefather] and Eliyahu “shook hands” on the deal. Here is another reason for the choice of a *vav*. The *Sifsai Chachamim* brings that the *vav*, whose *gematria* [numerical value] is six, hints to the sixth millennium - the sixth set of thousand years of the world’s existence, by which time *Moshiach* will certainly have come. Another very practical reason for the *vav* being taken from Eliyahu’s name, instead of another letter, is that if any other letter would be taken and added to Yaacov’s name, it would change the pronunciation of the name “Yaacov”! Thus, *vav* was the only letter that could be taken from the name “Eliyahu” for a security.

What relevance does Eliyahu *Hanavi* have to our lives? Although we could discuss this at length, we’ll only mention a couple of items. When we thank Hashem for bread meals by reciting *Birkas Hamazon* [Grace after Meals], in the sections beginning with “*Horachamon*”, we request that Hashem send us Eliyahu *Hanavi*, “*zachur latov*” (he is remembered for good). Why do we attach this phrase, “*zachur latov*”, to **his** name in particular? The *Iyun Tefilla* remarks that *Chazal* [our Sages] use this to refer to people who are very distinguished in community service. Eliyahu accomplished feats of spiritual heroism in the midst of *Klal Yisroel* [the Jewish people]. Besides what is stated explicitly in *Sefer Melachim* [Book of Kings], there is an opinion that Eliyahu is actually Pinchas Ben Elazar Ben Aharon Hakohen, who executed Kozbi and Zimri in the incident of Sheetim (see the end of *Parshas Balak* and beginning of *Pinchas*, plus *Rashi Bava Metzia* 114B). Because of his contributions to the community of *Klal Yisroel* [all Jewish people], Eliyahu deserves the words “*zachur latov*”. Besides all this, he will proclaim the advent of the Messianic days, as explained above.

Let us end with an inspiring *Midrash Rabba*, found in *Behar, Parsha Lamid Dalid* [34] letter *Ches* [8]. “In the past, a person would do a *mitzvah*, and the prophet would write it down. [*Maharzav* explains: When the *nevi'im* [prophets] wrote down the *Tanach*, they included in these writings the deeds of *tzadikim*...] But now, when a person does a *mitzvah*, who records it? Eliyahu and the *Melech Hamoshiach* [King Messiah] do, and Hashem Himself signs on what they have written.” Yes, Eliyahu *Hanavi* has a lot to do with our lives - he is one of the “secretaries” who records our deeds! This reminds us to perform *mitzvos* with enthusiasm and a positive attitude, since the **manner** in which we do *mitzvos* is recorded as well.

In conclusion, there is a guarantee that Eliyahu will come and announce *Moshiach’s* arrival, if he wants to retrieve the *vav* from his name. Yaacov, father of the Jewish people, is holding five of these letters until Eliyahu brings news of the redemption of his children. Eliyahu is real in our lives - in the past, present, and future of *Klal Yisroel*.

May we take all this to heart as we pray for renewed strength at our completion of *Sefer Vayikra* [the Book of Leviticus]. *Chazak, chazak, v'nischazaik* [Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened]!

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

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