

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOSAI

DVAR TORAH: ELIAHU'S TRUTH, YAAKOV'S TRUTH

Rashi on this week's parshah points out that the name Yaakov in the verse "I will remember my covenant with Yaakov" (Vayikra 26:42), is written with a vav (in **וַיִּזְכֹּר** – **כְּתִיב מְלֵא**). Usually the name Yaakov is written without a vav (in **יַעֲקֹב** – **כְּתִיב חֶסֶר**). In fact, there are only four other places in Tanach that Yaakov is written with an "extra" vav (all four appear in the book of Yirmiyahu). There are also only five places in Tanach where Eliahu's name is written without the final vav – **אֵלִיהוּ** instead of **אֵלִיהוּוּ**. Rashi quotes our Sages' interesting comment: Yaakov, they say, took five vavs from Eliahu as a security deposit to ensure that Eliahu will redeem Yaakov's descendants in the end of days.

What is the meaning of this puzzling comment? Why did Yaakov need to take a deposit from Eliahu? Why did he take vavs? And why was Yaakov worried that Eliahu might not redeem the people in the end of days?

The Shem Mishmuel unlocks this aggadic comment by applying a teaching from the Zohar (Part III 2a) – that the letter vav is associated with truth.

Eliahu was a man of truth. "Send your light and your truth" (Tehillim 43:3) is expounded in the Midrash: "Your light' refers to the Mashiach; 'your truth' refers to Eliahu" (Yalkut Shimoni Malachi 595). Eliahu was zealous for the truth and did not tolerate anything that veers from strict judgement. Based on this, what would Eliahu conclude about Israel's moral and spiritual level in the end of days? How, Yaakov worried, would Israel ever merit being redeemed?

Yaakov was also a man of truth – **תַּתֵּן אֱמֶת לַיַּעֲקֹב**, "Grant truth to Yaakov" (Michah 27:20) – but Yaakov's truth penetrates a deeper level than Eliahu's. Yaakov sees that Israel's core is good and their sins only external. Because of Yaakov's truth, his approach to changing Israel is also different. Instead of trying to force them through anger and zeal, they need to be showered with mercy and light. That will cause Israel's shining inside to emerge. This explains – here the Shem Mishmuel quotes one of his disciples – why Emet, truth, is one of the thirteen aspects of Divine mercy. It is a true appreciation of what we are at the core.

Therefore Yaakov took five of Eliahu's vavs from him as a deposit to make sure he redeems the Jewish people in the end of days. The final redemption requires the inner truth of Yaakov, not Eliahu's more straightforward and direct truth. Yaakov, says the Shem Mishmuel, elevated Eliahu's truth to his own deeper level, so he'll also appreciate that the Jewish people are worthy of redemption.

Even when they are on the lowest of levels their essence remains holy and pure, and all of their shortcomings – merely the result of the exile. When they are redeemed their purity will emerge and shine. "Taking Eliahu's vavs" means forcing him to view the Jewish people through the inner truth of Yaakov Avinu.

SOURCE GUIDE: HE WESTERN WALL & THE CHULDAH GATE

The Midrash tells us that the Kotel Hamaaravi and the Temple Mount's Chuldah Gate were never completely destroyed. This week's source guide (in honor of Yom Yerushalayim, this coming Sunday) explores Chuldah's prophecy to King Yoshiahu and why the gate named for her survived the Temple's destruction. It is based on a chapter of Rav Eliahu Yedid's book "שבע הנביאות – The Seven Prophetesses."

The Divine Presence Never Left the Kotel Hamaaravi

<p>1. Zohar Shemot 5b Rabbi Yehudah said: The Divine Presence never left the Western Wall of the Temple, as it is written, "Behold he is standing behind our wall" (Shir Hashirim 2:9).</p>	<p>זוהר חלק ב ה: אמר רבי יהודה, מעולם לא זזה שכינתא מכותלי דמערבא דבי מקדשא, דכתיב (שיר השירים ב:ט) הנה זה עומד אחר כתלנו.</p>
<p>2. Midrash Shir Hashirim 2:26 "Behold he is standing behind our wall" (Shir Hashirim 2:9): behind the Western Wall of the Temple. Why? This is because God swore that it would never be destroyed. The Kohen Gate and the Chuldah Gate were also never destroyed; and [they will stand] until God renews them.</p>	<p>מדרש רבה שיר השירים ב: כו "הנה זה עומד אחר כתלנו" (שיר השירים ב:ט): אחר כותל מערבי של בית המקדש. למה? שנשבע לו הקב"ה שאינו חרב לעולם. ושער הכהן ושער חולדה לא חרבו לעולם עד שיחדשם הקב"ה.</p>

The destruction of the Temple was not all-encompassing; a remnant of the Western Wall remained, as well as the Chuldah Gate. The Tosafot Yom Tov (Midot 2:2) says it is plausible that this gate was named for the prophetess Chuldah, and perhaps (based on Melachim II 22:14) this was where she prophesied. The Western Wall was where the Divine Presence remained in the Temple; hence its permanence. The Divine Presence is in the west (Bava Batra 25a). **But what was the secret of the Chuldah Gate's survival?** [This source guide does not address the "Kohen Gate."]

Chuldah the Prophetess

One prophecy of Chuldah appears in Tanach. It was directed to King Yoshiahu, one of the righteous kings who followed David and did that which was just in God's eyes (Melachim II 22:2 and Divrei Hayamim II 34:2). He embarked on an extensive campaign that targeted idolatry, idol worshippers, and idolatrous altars in the Kingdom of Yehudah. He then turned his attention to repairing and strengthening the Temple, but was shocked by the discovery of a Torah scroll opened to an ominous verse in the tochechah, the rebuke of the book of Devarim (see Yoma 52b).

<p>3. Devarim 28:36 Hashem will bring you and your king that you will appoint for yourself to a nation that you and your forefathers did not know, and you will there serve idols of wood and stone.</p>	<p>דברים כח:לו יולף ה' אתך ואת מלךך אשר תקים עליך אֵל גוי אשר לא ידעת אתה ואבותיך ועבדת שם אֱלֹהִים אַחֵרִים עַץ וָאֶבֶן.</p>
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He sent messengers to Chuldah the prophetess for an explanation, and the message was surprising:

<p>4. Melachim II 22:16-20 16. "Thus said God – I will bring evil upon this place and its inhabitants, all the words of the Book that the king of Yehudah read. 17. Since they deserted me and made burnt offerings to other gods in order to anger Me through all the works of their hands. And My anger will be ignited against this place and it will not be extinguished. 18. And to the king of Yehudah who sent you to seek out the Divine word thus you should say to him – Thus said Hashem the God of Israel the words that you heard. 19. Because your heart was softened</p>	<p>מלכים ב כב:טז-כ (טז) פה אמר ה' הנני מביא רעה אל המקום הזה ועל ישביו את כל דברי הספר אשר קרא מלך יהודה: (יז) תחת אשר עזבוני ויקטרו לאלהים אחרים למען הכעיסני בכל מעשה ידיהם ונצתה חמתי במקום הזה ולא תכבה: (יח) ואל מלך יהודה השלח אתכם לדרש את ה' פה תאמרו אליו פה אמר ה' אלקי ישראל הדררים אשר שמעת: (ט) יען רף לבךך ותפגע מפני ה' בשמעתך אשר דברתי על המקום הזה ועל ישביו להיות לשמה ולקללה ותקרא את בגדיך ותכבה לפני וגם אנכי שמעתי נאם ה': (כ) לכן הנני אספך על אבתיך</p>
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<p>and you subjugated yourself because of God when you heard what I said about this place and its inhabitants, that it is to be desolation and a curse and you tore your clothing and cried before me. And I also heard, says God. 20. Therefore I will gather you to your fathers and you will go to the grave in peace and your eyes will not see all of the bad that I will bring on this place.” And they reported this to the king.</p>	<p>וַיִּסְפַּת אֶל קְבֻרָתִיךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם וְלֹא תִרְאֶינָה עֵינֶיךָ בְּכָל הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר אָנִי מְבִיא עַל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּשִׁיבוּ אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּבָר :</p>
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Why didn't Yoshiahu's campaign to wipe out idolatry stave off the Temple's destruction? The Midrash tells us that though he was righteous, and he succeeded in eliminating public idolatry, the nation was still idolatrous; he was a righteous king whose nation did not follow suit.

“Yoshiahu did not know that his whole generation was worshipping idols. What did the scoffers of the generation do? They would make one half of an idolatrous image on one door and the other half on the other. Yoshiahu would send two sages to destroy images from their houses, and they would enter the house and not find anything ... They would leave, close the door, and the entire graven image would emerge on the back of the door” (Eichah Rabati 1:18).

Preparing for the Third Temple – Chuldah and Yoshiahu

After Chuldah's prophecy, Yoshiahu's anti-idolatry campaign became more energetic and extensive, but it fell short of the complete transformation he hoped for. Though himself an extremely righteous king (see Melachim II 23:25!), he did not succeed in transforming his still idolatrous nation.

Inspired by Chuldah's prophecy, he realized that if he cannot save the present Beit Hamikdash, he must plant seeds for the future one. He therefore hid the Aron Kodesh in a hiding place prepared by Shlomo Hamelech deep under the Temple Mount (Yoma 52b). Any destruction by a foreign power would now not affect the core of the Temple, the Aron with the Luchot (Tablets) within. The Divine Presence would never leave the Temple, thanks, in part, to Chuldah and Yoshiahu. In her merit, the Chuldah gate was one of those parts of the Temple that was never completely destroyed.

THE POSTSCRIPT OF VAYIKRA BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

The climax of the book of Vayikra is reached at the Torah's admonitions, the tochechah (Vayikra 26:3-45). Here, we are taught the brit (covenant) between Hashem and the nation: if we follow Hashem's will, there will be prosperity and peace, but if we disobey there will be war, destruction and expulsion from the Land of Israel. The Torah then summarizes: “These are the statutes, and the laws, and the teachings that Hashem gave, between Him and the Children of Israel, at Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moshe” (Vayikra 26:46). This would have been an apt closing to the book of Vayikra. And yet, the Torah adds an entire chapter of commandments before closing the book of Vayikra with a seemingly redundant verse: “These are the commandments which Hashem commanded Moshe for the Children of Israel on Mount Sinai” (Vayikra 27:34).

The twelve mitzvot in the final chapter deal with subjects that, as Abarvanel points out, could have been appropriately included in the body of the book of Vayikra, yet they are set off, almost as an afterthought. These mitzvot break down into six topics:

1. Arachin (verses 1-8) - dedicating the value of a person to the Temple.
2. Temurah (verses 9-10) - the prohibition against changing the status of an animal that has been sanctified as a sacrifice.
3. Hakdashah (verses 11-25) - consecrating objects to the maintenance of the Temple.
4. Bechor (verses 26-27) - the first born of animals cannot be consecrated, because their holiness has already been determined at birth.
5. Cherem (verses 28-29) - items declared banned must be given to Hashem and not redeemed.
6. Ma'aser Sheni/ Ma'aser Behemah (verses 30-33) - tithes of produce and of animals.

Why is this chapter of mitzvot placed after the brit and the Tochechah, as a postscript? Perhaps a solution may be found by turning to comments of the Sefer HaChinuch (Commandment #357) on the subject of cherem: "The Israelites are the people that G-d chose above all other peoples ... they are under the rule of the Holy One, blessed be He, without the mediating agency of any angel or constellation ... Therefore, if an Israelite loses his temper and utters a curse and ban on his property and lands, which are under the blessing, the Text has informed him that it is impossible for him to transfer it from the realm of the blessed to another domain [i.e., utter destruction, although this is his intention]. For whatever belongs to Israelites, the portion of Hashem, belongs to Him ... then let it return to the possession of his Master, and be consecrated." On the other hand, if the people of Israel pronounce a cherem on their enemies, not included in this blessing, those enemies are to be destroyed (see Ramban on Vayikra 27:29).

The theme that unites all the mitzvot of chapter 27, therefore, is the power of each Jew to affect a permanent change in the physical world. His declarations of dedication take on the force of reality; his consecration of sacrifices is irreversible; even his taboos are absolute. When he pronounces something holy, it is so.

This concept holds true, as well, for ma'aser behemah, which is qualitatively different from any other obligatory donations, such as terumah or the other ma'aserot. As Hirsch emphasizes, when it comes to these other donations, the percentage to be separated exists in the entity, even before the separation occurs. However, ma'aser behemah is not so much "a tenth one," but is determined solely by the counting off done by the shepherd: the tenth one shall be holy to Hashem (verse 32). This holiness, too, becomes irreversible.

The entire book of Vayikra is devoted to the pursuit of sanctity: You shall be holy, for I Hashem your G-d am holy (19:2). This process is achieved through a combination of means: self-discipline, discernment between the sacred and the profane and between different levels of sanctity. The book of Vayikra has created realms of sanctity also: holy times, holy places, and holy people. Throughout, the source of sanctity is Hashem.

The final chapter of the book of Vayikra, however, shows that, in a carefully prescribed manner, the people of Israel can also create. We have the power of declaring objects irrevocably transformed – to dedication, to destruction, or to consecration. Therefore, these 12 mitzvot serve as a crown to the entire book of Vayikra. But, they are set off from the rest of the book, showing that our great power to create, though an emulation of Hashem, is limited.

As Jews, we are endowed by Hashem with the power to transform the world. The questions remain: Does every Jew know this? And, do we know how to use this power responsibly?

This issue is dedicated in memory of
Max Frager, ז"ל

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

To dedicate a Taste of Text, please email Rabbi Freedman at
rabbi.dr.moshefreedman@gmail.com

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