

A PARASHA THOUGHT

The Harbinger's Fingers

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI ALTER RAUBVOGEL

“But if their stubborn heart is humbled, they will atone for their sin. I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and My covenant with Yitzchak, and My covenant with Avraham...” (Vayikra 26:41-42)

Yaakov's name here is spelled *yud, ayin, kuf, vav, veis*—“fully,” with a *vav* that's usually left out. Rashi takes note of this and quotes a *Midrash*:

In five [different verses], “Yaakov” is written “in full,” while [the name of] Eliyahu lacks [its *vav*] in five places. Yaakov took a letter from Eliyahu's name, as a guarantee that [Eliyahu] would come and proclaim the redemption of [Yaakov's] sons.

As a matter of fact, the fifth verse in which “Eliyahu” is spelled “Eliyah” is right on topic:

“Behold, I send you the prophet Eliyah, before the great and awesome day of Hashem [when *Moshiach* will come].” (Malachi 3:23)

But why did Yaakov need to take five *vavs*? Wouldn't one be enough?

Mizrachi suggests that maybe Yaakov actually made Eliyahu swear on the Five Books of the Torah.

The Maharal, in *Gur Aryeh*, doesn't like this explanation. If Yaakov had already taken the letters as collateral, why would he also make Eliyahu swear? If Eliyahu had been willing to swear, why would Yaakov insist on a security? Instead, Maharal suggests:

...When someone hands over a security, he also extends his hand [for a shake]... A hand has five fingers... and a finger looks like a *vav*. [Also, the *Mishnah* in *Oholos*] counts thirty bones in the palm of the hand, and five *vavs* [each with a *gematria* of six] add up to thirty—for Yaakov took Eliyahu's hand as a guarantee that he would come...

But still, why is it so important for Eliyahu to make an announcement before Hashem redeems His people?

Rabbi Shimon Schwab, in *Ma'ayan Beis HaSho'eiva*, answers that question with a concept made famous by the Ramban (in his commentary to *Bereishis* 46:7). There are two categories of miracles: revealed (*nissim niglim*) and hidden (*nissim nistarim*). A revealed miracle is publicized beforehand, by a prophet or another agent of Hashem; it's clear

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED
ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Q. I am puzzled by the word ערך that is used in this week's *parasha*. The word ערך I know means “value” and the ך at the end of a word usually means “yours.” However, looking at the use of the word in our *parasha*, the ך clearly cannot mean “yours.”

A. You are not alone. Rashi (27:3) himself is troubled by this word and this letter in particular. He first notes that this word does not mean monetary value since the amounts listed in the *parasha* are regardless of the person's economic value and are set purely based on age ranges and gender. Second, he notes that there is no real difference in meaning between ערך and ערכך and that he does not know the linguistic significance of the extra ך. Other *rishonim*, such as Rashbam, maintain that ערך is an accepted style similar to other adjectives like אדמימות (redness) from אודם (red) or לבנונית (whiteness) from לבן (white). 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming *parasha* (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the *parasha* by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincynollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

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CONTINUED

to all, even before it happens, that it will be a departure from the natural order. A hidden miracle, on the other hand, is open to interpretation. It can be excused away by those who want to ignore Hashem's presence in the world—or, worse, it can be hijacked by others to support their own agendas.

Yaakov Avinu wanted to make sure that no one could make a false claim to the coming of *Moshiach*, and that the actual coming of *Moshiach* would be unmistakable.

So, after its harrowing prediction of suffering after spiritual decline, the Torah assures us that the Jewish people will at some point return to Hashem. When the Redemption then comes, it will be clear to everyone that it doesn't just look supernatural. It will be the actual, miraculous Hand of Hashem—as arranged, long ago, by our forefather Yaakov. 🕊️

Mazal Tov to

Rabbi & Mrs. Marchuck on the birth of a baby boy! 🕊️

A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Dr. Susan Roberts was a pediatric emergency room doctor in Dallas, Texas. After many years, she finally realized her lifelong dream of making Aliyah and moved to Israel. She quickly found a job as a pediatric emergency room doctor, but still had a hard time acclimating to the tough sabra culture. One day as she was on shift in the emergency room, a bride in her full wedding gown walked in. Surprised, Dr. Roberts asked, "Can I help you? Is everything ok?" "Yes, today is the most special day of my life and in just a few short hours I will be walking down the aisle. It is known that a bride on her wedding day is on a very high spiritual level and has great power to bestow blessing. I came here to give all the children a blessing that they should have a full and speedy recovery." Dr Roberts was speechless. She had seen a lot in her many years on the job, but this was a first – a girl on the most special day of her life, instead of focusing on herself, was thinking about others. 🕊️

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

One of the most powerful parts of *Tefillah* is the next *bracha* in which we thank Hashem "Who has provided me with every need." Many *meforshim* (commentators) understand this *bracha* as referring to shoes. Rav Shimshon Pincus adds that it means to include all my possessions, down to my shoes. However, there is possibly an additional meaning; we are thanking Hashem, Who gave me all I need. We often spend time worrying about the future. How will I pay future bills? How will I overcome looming challenges? In this *bracha* we say to Hashem, "You have given me all that I need!" This reminds us that our job is to tackle today, taking every day as it comes, and as long as we are putting in our *hishtadlus* (effort), Hashem will give us what we need when we need it. 🕊️



ABARBANEL: FUGITIVE OF KING JOAO II OF PORTUGAL (PART III)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Recap: Abarbanel has been informed of the duke's arrest and makes the decision to flee Portugal.

A relatively short distance of 54 miles separated Arrayolos from the border of the neighboring Kingdom of Castille (Spain) to the east, where Abarbanel would be safe from his pursuers. But Abarbanel suspected that the direct route to safety was likely being watched by the king's agents. Instead, the next morning, May 31st, 1483, Abarbanel spent the day travelling southward on Portuguese soil until he reached a more southern crossing into Castile. Deep into the night, when Abarbanel felt he had travelled far enough south, he crossed the Guadiana River into the Kingdom of Castile.

Even after Abarbanel reached Castilian soil, he continued travelling eastward until he entered the town of Segura de la Orden. Segura had a sizeable Jewish community and its close proximity to the Portuguese border offered him the ability to attempt to rescue his family and some of his possessions. Through agents and friends, Abarbanel successfully established a line of communication to his family in Portugal and was informed that King Joao had seized all of his assets.

Abarbanel wrote to the king and pleaded his innocence. Although his letter didn't convince the king to return his property, it did lower the king's suspicions of Abarbanel's involvement in the Duke of Braganza's revolt and, as a result, Abarbanel's wife and three sons were allowed to leave Portugal and join him in Spain.

After being reunited with his family, Abarbanel hoped he would one day return to Portugal and regain control of his home and his assets. However, just a few weeks later Abarbanel was informed that he would never be able to return home and that he would be living the rest of his life in a foreign land.

To be continued... 🕊️

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