

# THE VAV FROM ELIYAHU'S NAME

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 372, Using Shuls As A Shortcut. Good Shabbos!*

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## Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh Endorses Torah Tapes

The first pasuk [verse] of Parshas Bechukosai (Vayikra 26:3) begins with the words "If you walk according to my statutes". The Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh comments that the reason why the pasuk uses this peculiar mix of the verb "walk" with the object "my statutes" is to teach us that one must occupy himself with Torah even while walking along the road (i.e. - while one is traveling). At the risk of engaging in "self-promotion", this is an endorsement for the practice of listening to Torah Tapes while driving in one's car.

## The Vav From Eliyahu's Name Appears in Yaakov's Name in Five Places

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Towards the end of the Tochacha [Chastisement], the Torah says, "and I will remember my covenant with Yaakov, and even my covenant with Yitzchak, and even my covenant with Avraham will I remember; and the Land I will remember." [Vayikra 26:42]. This pasuk contains the rather unusual spelling of the name Yaakov with five letters (Yud-Ayin-Kuf-VAV-Ves), rather than the usual four letters (Yud-Ayin-Kuf-Ves). Rashi quotes the Medrash, which says that the "full" spelling of the name Yaakov (with a 'vav') occurs in five places in Tanach and the "missing" spelling of the name Eliyahu (without the normal vav at the end) also occurs five times. The Medrash explains that in those five places, Yaakov our Patriarch figuratively took a letter from the name of Eliyahu as a security pledge to guarantee that the prophet Eliyahu would appear and announce the imminent redemption to his children (Eliyahu will be the precursor of the Messiah).

Rav Dovid Feinstein explains why it was specifically a "vav" that Yaakov took. The last Mishnah of Tractate Eduyoth [8:7] relates a tradition in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua, that Eliyahu will not expose families that have been mixed up with invalidating lineage. He will only intervene in the cases of individuals who forcibly used their power to gain positions that they were unworthy of attaining.

Several other opinions are brought in the Mishnah regarding Eliyahu's future role. The Mishnah concludes with the view of the Sages: "Eliyahu will neither push away nor bring near - he will only come to make peace in the world as it is written 'Behold I send to you Eliya the prophet... ..and he will restore the hearts of the fathers to the hearts of the sons and the hearts of the sons to the hearts of the fathers' [Malachi 3:23-24]".

We have heard this idea hundreds of times, but apparently we do not hear it enough: If the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of baseless hatred, then the only way it will be rebuilt is if there is peace in the world. As a community and as a nation, we must find a way to come together and make peace between ourselves.

Yaakov Avinu chose the letter vav as collateral that Eliyahu would finally come and make peace amongst us. The letter vav always joins two words, two phrases, or two thoughts together. The meaning of the word vav itself is "hook". Vavim are hooks that join together disparate objects. Clearly, if there is any letter in the Hebrew alphabet that symbolizes connection and togetherness, it is the letter vav.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the Medrash. Yaakov knew prophetically that there would be disputes before the coming of Moshiach. The only way for Moshiach to eventually come will be when peace is restored to the world. Symbolically, the letter of collateral that Yaakov took from Eliyahu was the "vav ha-Chibur (of joining). We need the vav ha-Chibur that connects and hooks people together to spread amongst us.

### **The Connection Between The Laws of Eruchin and The Tochacha [Chastisement]**

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There is an interesting Baal HaTurim at the end of this week's parsha. Following the Tochacha, the Torah [Vayikra Chapter 27] begins the laws of Eruchin [Utterances of Evaluation]. These laws specify how a person might donate his own worth or the worth of someone else to the Bais HaMikdash [Temple]. There is an entire Tractate in the Talmud devoted to this topic.

The Baal HaTurim asks what the connection is between the laws of Eruchin and the Tochacha -- or with rest of the entire Book of VaYikra, for that matter. Eruchin almost seems like an afterthought to everything that has preceded it in Sefer Vayikra.

The Baal HaTurim provides an interesting answer. He says that the parsha of Eruchin contains evaluations of 50 shekel, 30 shekel, 20 shekel, 10 shekel, 5 shekel, 3 shekel, 15 shekel, and 10 shekel for various age/gender categories. The total of all distinct categories comes out to be 143 shekel. He notes that this number exactly matches the sum of the curses in the Torah - 98 in Parshas Ki Savo and 45 in Parshas Bechukosai. The Torah is, in effect, saying that the antidote for the Tochacha is the mitzvah of Eruchin, the mitzvah of Tzedaka.

Charity saves from death [Mishlei 10:2]. Eruchin is one of the highest forms of Charity. The

commentaries point out that the Book of Vayikra begins with animals sacrifices and ends with the dedication of one's own value to the Beis HaMikdash. The idea is that a person should really be dedicating his actual self to the Beis HaMikdash.

I once heard a homiletic explanation of why Eruchin follows the Tochacha from Rabbi Moshe Sherer. The idea is that if one wants to discover the value of a person, that value is best measured after the person has experienced a tochacha [misfortune]. Such experiences indicate the real substance of a person. The person who can withstand a tochacha, who can live through it and emerge as an intact believer, who still practices mitzvos -- confirm the person's value.

People of my generation and younger have not lived through the terrible things that our parents and grandparents have experienced. Thank G-d, we were not tested in this manner. We do not want to be tested in this way. Emerging intact and normal with one's full senses, after experiencing and surviving a tochacha categorizes a person as a special type of individual. We must have a certain respect for anyone who experienced and survived a tochacha such as the Holocaust. Certainly, how much more so is this the case of any Jew who survived the Holocaust and emerged still practicing mitzvos with his belief and fear of G-d intact. The valuation of such a Jew is beyond comprehension. We must have inestimable respect for such people.

When Rav Yoel Teitelbaum (the Satmar Rav) came to Eretz Yisroel, a Jew came and asked him for a Bracha before his departure. This Jew expressed the fear that after the Satmar Rav returned to America, there would be no one worthy to ask for a blessing. The Satmar Rav told him "Go to any Jew that has a number tattooed on his arm and ask him for a bracha. A Jew that has a tattoo on his arm and still puts on Tefillin can give you the best bracha. When such a person is available, you do not need the Satmar Rav to give you a bracha."

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Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.  
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