

Parshat Bechukotai 5776

Tochachah – Why Yaakov first? At the end of the Tochachah, Hashem tells us “*And I will remember my covenant with Yaakov, and also my covenant with Yitzchak and also my covenant with Avraham will I remember, and I will remember the land*” (26:42). Why are the Avos mentioned in the reverse order (i.e. Yaakov first)? Rashi asks this but he does not explain why they are never referred to in this way in the case of Yetzias Mitzrayim (see for example Shemot 3:6, 4:5; Vaera 6:3; and in particular Shemot 2:24 where it says “*VaYizkor Elokim es briso es Avraham es Yitzchak ve’es Yaakov*” i.e. Avraham is first – see below how *Oznayim la-Torah* addresses this specific point).

Rashi’s Answer – Support of Yaakov primary? According to Rashi, the reverse order is to teach us that Yaakov on his own possessed sufficient merit to protect his descendants. But even if this had not been so, there is Yitzchak to assist him. And if even this were not enough, there is still Avraham to give him the further support. This Rashi therefore seems to be saying that if Yaakov could not manage the whole protection on his own, he would be able to call and rely on the help of his father and grandfather to succeed.

Vayikra Rabbah – Support by each of the Avos individually. However, Vayikra Rabbah (36:5) disagrees - we do not need the merit of the Avos in combination; each on his own suffices (this is how the Midrash also reads).

Shemoneh Esrei – Due to superiority of Yaakov? In connection with the first Berachah of Shemoneh Esrei, Birchas Ha-Avos and Mogen Avraham, *Etz Yoseph* quoting the *Alshich* states that each of the Avos reached a higher level than that of the previous one. Thus Hashem did not state that He was “*Elokei Avraham*” during Avraham’s lifetime - only after he died did He say “*Anochi Elokei Avraham Avicha*”. In Yitzchak’s case, He did so during his lifetime once, but this was only after he became blind - and such a person is compared to a *mes*. But with Yaakov, He did so even during his lifetime when he was in good health on his arrival “*Sholem*” to Shechem. That is why we say/add an extra Vav – *Veilokei Yaakov* - for there is this additional feature of Yaakov’s level of achievement (plus the fact that all his children without exception were Tzaddikim Gemurim). Yaakov it may be said therefore had risen to the highest level of the Avos.

Me’am Lo’ez – Due to superiority of Yaakov? A similar reason is mentioned in Me’am Lo’ez. He states that it is obvious that Hashem will remember and

acknowledge Yaakov’s merit the most because he did not have any imperfect children. All of them were Ma’aminim.

How can one even evaluate the Patriarchs? *Pardes Yoseph* in the name of *Tsofos Brochah* queries how it is possible for us to evaluate the relative merits of the illustrious patriarchs and to decide whether this or that one was adequate to protect Yisrael? Are not the Rashi and Midrash somewhat belittling the greatness of Yaakov Avinu? He therefore mentions the view of the Me’am Lo’ez above. He also suggests, from the possuk in Behar 25:49 “*either his uncle or his cousin should redeem him*” where the Gemara in Kiddushin 21a deduces the rule ‘*Hakarav Karov Kodem*’, that the obligation of redemption falls upon the nearest relative. As Yaakov Avinu is a closer relation than the grandfather Yitzchak or the great grandfather Avraham, he is more responsible for Yisrael.

Other views - why Yaakov first? *Oznayim la-Torah* similarly suggests that Yaakov is first named because his *Zechus Avos* is that much stronger being a couple of generations closer to us (cf Shabbos 55a). With this he answers the question from Shemos 2:24 where Hashem first remembers Avraham (posed at the beginning of this piece). For that was the time of the Exodus from Mitzrayim where it was obvious that the *Zechus Avos* has not yet run out and remained in full force. But in Bechukosai it refers to the time after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

Finally, the Mekhilta (in complete contrast) in Bo says that it changes the usual order to teach us that they are all equal.

Why is Yaakov in this possuk written ‘Molei Vav’ (i.e. with a Vav)? There are 5 places where Yaakov is written molei Vav - once here in Chumash 26:42, and 4 times in Yirmiyoh 30:18, 33:26, 46:27 and 51:19. – and they all relate to the redemption of Klal Yisrael. There are 5 places where, conversely, Eliyahu is written choser Vav (i.e. without a Vav) - 4 times in Melachim II 1:3 1:4 1:8 and 1:12 and once in Malachi 3:23.

In this regard, Rashi states that Yaakov took a pledge from Eliyahu, as it were, and will return the missing letters to him when he heralds the coming of Meshiach.

Me’am Lo’ez offers an alternative explanation – he says that the Vav was chosen in preference to any other letter to allude to the fact that Meshiach will come in the 6th Millenium.