

What is the Truth of Yaakov?

Rav Binyamin Krausz

Former Rosh Kollel TMZ in Perth, Australia (2008-2012)

Currently teaching in "Nativ" - the army courses of Giyur, and part of the "Tzohar" rabbis organization - Marriage and Avelut (mourning)



Parashat BeChukotai that ends the book we have been reading – VaYikra, includes the Brachot- blessings and Klalot – curses, that HaShem will bring on Am Yisra'el in accordance with their behavior. The paragraph of the curses, although harsh and depressing, ends with a more optimistic promise - and I will remember My covenant [with] Jacob, and also My covenant [with] Isaac, and also My covenant [with] Abraham I will remember. And I will remember the Land (26,42)

Rashi points out that the name of Yaakov in its Hebrew spelling - יעקב, is spelled in a different way than it is usually spelled – it is spelled with an extra letter of "ו" – יעקוב.

Rashi brings a Midrash to explain this-

[The name יעקוב is] written in full, [i.e., with a "vav,"] in five places [in Scripture], and [the name] אֱלִיָּהוּ is written defectively [without a "vav," i.e., אֱלִיָּה also] in five places [in Scripture]. Jacob took a letter ["vav"] from the name of Elijah [the Prophet] as security- that he will come and herald the redemption of his [Jacob's] children

So the Midrash connects these two personalities of Yaakov and Eliyahu, in the context of Geulah- redemption of Am Yisra'el, and Yaakov is the personality that completes and makes sure that Eliyahu – the precursor of the Geulah, fulfills his mission and brings the redemption of the Jewish people. What is this connection between these two personalities, and why is it Yaakov that has the role of completing, what might be missed out by Eliyahu?

Yaakov and Eliyahu both expound the trait of Emet - Truth. Eliyahu speaking to the Jewish people on Mount Carmel does not speak to them about their worship of idols, but rather reprimands them with the words: "Until when are you hopping between two ideas?" It is the inconsistency of the people that Eliyahu rebukes, and it is the striving for truth that he calls for.

Yaakov is also characterized with Truth – as Michah ends his book with the Passuk " You shall give the truth of Jacob" (Michah 7,20), but when we consider Yaakov's connection to Truth, we can see that it is not a simple understanding of the trait, but a complex and deep meaning of it. Yaakov is actually surrounded all his life with deceit and untruthfulness. Beginning with having to buy from Esav the Bechorah – the birthright, through getting blessed by Yitschak by making out he is Esav, being deceived into marrying Leah instead of Rachel, Lavan changing their agreements and even later on being deceived about Joseph by his own sons.

Yaakov's Truth is such that when he is confronted by deceit, he knows how to counteract it so that the outcome is the full Truth. It is not just a superficial acting of truth, that it's outcome can sometimes cause to miss what is true, but a strive to bring out the Truth in the world, sometimes by knowing how to tackle deceit, by its own methods.

The promise to redeem Am Yisra'el at the end of these curses, does not evolve from Tshuvah- repentance, but rather because of the Brit- covenant with HaShem – " and I will remember My covenant..". The inherent connection between G-d and Am Yisra'el needs to be expressed in this world through the redemption of the Jewish people, even if they have sinned and although they have not returned to HaShem-repentant – something that in a plain conception of Truth, they are not entitled to. It is only the concept of deep truth, that Yaakov reveals to us, that can clarify the necessity of the redemption of Am Yisra'el, and by this advance the redemption that Eliyahu is the bearer of.

comments: bkrausz1@gmail.com

