

Parshas Bechukosai (Reprinted) – Michael Bass

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Towards the end of the Tochacha we find the following crumb of comfort: "Then I will remember My covenant with Yaakov and My covenant with Yitzchok and My Covenant with Avraham I will remember." (Vayikra 26 v42)

Rashi asks the obvious question why are the names of the Avos mentioned in reverse order? He answers it to say that Yaakov, the youngest of the Avos, is worthy that through his merits his children should be redeemed but if he is not sufficient the merits of Yitzchok are with him and if that is not sufficient, then Avraham is with him.

According to the Tosefes Bracha however this answer raises two difficulties.

First how can we measure the merits of the Avos to say that one is worthy and another is not?
And secondly, how can we say that Yaakov has the least merit of all?

He suggests a more fitting reason for the change of order. The answer lies in the message of hope that is conveyed in this posuk. Hashem promises to redeem us from Golus after the punishments of the Tochacha and in several places in Tenach, we find that Hashem links Yaakov's name with the concept of Geulah (redemption) e.g "For Hashem has redeemed Yaakov and delivered him from a mightier power". (Jer 31 v 10) (familiar from our Maariv prayers). But what is the reason for Yaakov's special link with our redemption more than Yitzchok or Avraham?

The answer to this can be found in Parshas Behar dealing with the obligation to redeem a fellow Jew who has sold himself to a non Jew "His brother shall redeem him or his uncle or his cousin or any of this family". (Vayikra 25 v 49)

The Gemara in Kiddushin explains that the closest relative has the first obligation. Yaakov is the closest of the Avos to the Bnai Yisroel. He can be considered the father with Yitzchok and Avraham the grandfather and great grandfather. Therefore the obligation to redeem us falls firstly upon him and only afterwards on Yitzchok and Avraham, hence the change in order.

This also explains the Midrash brought by Rashi on the same posuk as to why in some places Yaakov's name is written with a "Vav" and the name of Eliyahu, without a vav. It was Yaakov's greater obligation to his children's redemption that caused him to take this letter as a pledge rather than Yitzchok or Avraham.

May it be that through our merits of the Avos we see our redemption bimhayra b'yomeinu