

# Unit 7.5 - Understanding Har Carmel in Context



## Eliyahu the Defender

### Hypothesis

It seems like Eliyahu is really challenging the nation of Israel. However, in reality he is the defender of Israel.

### Proofs

#### Proof 1: The Stones



1. I Melachim 18:31

וַיִּקַּח אֵלָיוֹ שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר אֲבָנִים כַּמִּסְפָּר שְׁבַטֵי בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דְבַר יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהִי שְׁמֶךָ:

Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob—to whom the word of the LORD had come: “Israel shall be your name”

What is this referring to?

2. Bereishis 28:18

וַיִּשָּׂם יַעֲקֹב בְּבֹקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם מִרְאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשָּׂם אֹתָהּ מִצְבֵּה וַיִּצַק שֶׁמֶן עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ:

Early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.

3. Bereishis 35:7

וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא לְמָקוֹם אֵל בֵּית־אֵל כִּי שָׁם נִגְלוּ אֵלָיו הָאֱלֹהִים בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אָחִיו:

There he built an altar and named the site El-bethel, for it was there that God had revealed Himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

**Proof 2: Connection to Yerushalayim**

4. I Melachim 18:36

וַיְהִי אֲבָעֵלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה וַיֵּאָשׁ אֵלָיו הַנְּבִיאַ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם יוֹדַע כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ וּבְדַבְרֶיךָ [וּבְדַבְרֶיךָ] עָשִׂיתִי אֵת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה:

When it was time to present the meal offering, the prophet Elijah came forward and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel! Let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your bidding.

**Proof 3: The Conditioning of the People**

5. I Melachim 18:37

עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי וַיְדַעוּ הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַתָּה הִסַּבְתָּ אֶת־לְבָבם אַחֲרָנִית:

Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God; for You have turned their hearts backward."

What does this mean?

6. Brachos 31b



ואמר רבי אלעזר: אליהו הטיח דברים כלפי מעלה, שנאמר: "ואתה הסבת את לבם אחרנית". אמר רבי שמואל בר רבי יצחק: מפני שחזר הקדוש ברוך הוא והודה לו לאליהו,

And on a similar note, Rabbi Elazar said that Elijah spoke impertinently toward God on High as well in his prayer at Mount Carmel, as it is stated: "Answer me, Lord, answer me, that this people will know that You are the Lord, God, and You have turned their hearts backward" (I Kings 18:37), claiming that God caused Israel to sin. On this topic, Rabbi Shmuel bar Rabbi Yitzhak said: From where do we know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, ultimately conceded to Elijah that he was correct?

דכתיב: "ואשר הרעתי".

As it is written in a future prophecy: "In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the lame, and I will gather those who are abandoned and those with whom I have dealt in wickedness" (Micah 4:6). God states that He caused Israel to act wickedly.

#### Proof 4: Basic Essence of being a Jew

7. Shir Hashirim Rabba 7:6

ראשך עליך כפרמל, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל, ראשך עליך כפרמל, הרשים שבכם חביבים עלי כאליהו שעלה להר הכפרמל, שנאמר (מלכים א יח, מב): ואליהו עלה אל ראש הכפרמל וישם פניו בין ברקו, ולמה שם פניו בין ברקיו, אלא אמר לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא אין לנו זכות הבט לברית.

#### Har Carmel and Har Sinai



## Thesis

Har Carmel evokes the similar experience to the Har Sinai experience, almost as a reset.

## Parallels

### Proof 1: Altars

8. Shmos 24:4

וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל-דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁכֵּם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הָהָר וּשְׁתֵּים עָשָׂרָה מִצְבֵּה לְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Moses then wrote down all the commands of the LORD. Early in the morning, he set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

### Proof 2: H' and Elokim

9. Shmos 20:2

אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:

I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage:

10. I Melachim 18:39

וַיֵּרָא כָּל-הָעָם וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים:

When they saw this, all the people flung themselves on their faces and cried out: "The LORD alone is God, The LORD alone is God!"

11. Shmos 20:7

וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנוֹ הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע:

Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will faithfully do!"

## Difference

12. Bamidbar Rabba 2g3:9

מה עשה אליהו, אמר להם בחרו שני פרים תאומים מאם אחת, הגדלים על מרעה אחד והטילו עליהם גורלות אחד לשם ואחד לשם הבעל. ובחרו להם הפר האחד, ופרו של אליהו מיד נמשך אחריו, והפר שעלה לשם הבעל נתקבצו כל נביאי הבעל ונביאי האשרה ולא יכלו לזוז את רגלו. עד שפתח אליהו ואמר לו לך עמכם, השיב הפר ואמר לו לעיני כל העם, אני וחברי יצאנו מבטן אחת, מפרה אחת, וגדלנו במרעה אחד, והוא עלה בחלקו של מקום ושמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מתקדש עליו, ואני עליתי בחלק הבעל להכעיס את בוראי. אמר לו אליהו פר אל תירא לך עמכם ואל ימצאו עליה, שכשם ששמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מתקדש על אותו שעמי, כך מתקדש עליך.

## Coming Closer

What is the significance of Vayigash?

13. Intro to RCA Artscroll siddur: Rabbi Saul Berman

A simple *minhag* may help answer these questions. Before we recite the *Amidah* – prayer par excellence – we take three steps forward to symbolize our awe in approaching the King of Kings. Rabbi Eleazar ben Judah (c. 1165 - c. 1230), author of the *Sefer Rokeach*, relates those three steps to the fact that – as an introduction to a petition – the word וַיִּגַּשׁ, “and he approached,” appears three times in *Tanach*. Analysis of those three Biblical narratives will uncover the most fundamental elements of Jewish prayer.

### B. On Behalf of Whom?

It is true that there was an element of self-interest in Eliyahu's prayer – that his own role of prophet be affirmed (see *Metzudat David* to *I Kings* 18:36). It is equally true that the entire Jewish people would benefit from being turned back to faith in God. However, in Eliyahu's prayer there is a new beneficiary – God Himself. Eliyahu's plea for a miracle was based in part on his awareness that God desires the worship of the Jewish people and that this was the propitious moment for God to regain that commitment.

Can one truly say that God has desires which mere mortals can satisfy, so that we can plead with Him to act in His own interest? We can't, and yet we do! It is a central paradox of prayer, but Eliyahu charted a path which we have extensively trodden since. As we shall see, our prayers are laden with petitions on behalf of God. Like all the elements of petitionary prayer, this element as well has come to form part of the essential structure of our fixed prayer.