

The last time I wrote to you, 5783 was approaching rapidly. On account of that, I focused on the letter *gimmel* (3 in Hebrew numerals) and lifted up a fun Talmudic teaching that provided an etiological explanation for the character's form. As it so happens, I want to hone in on just one single letter here again. This time the star of the show is the letter *vav*.

This is what a *vav* looks like: 

Regardless of style, the *vav* will just about always look something like this. Don't let its simple form fool you, for it's both unique amongst its peers and quite powerful (when it's properly supported).

It's the *vav*'s form that makes it a unique Hebrew letter.

The letters that comprise the Hebrew alphabet can be sorted into three groups based on their bases: solid foundation, two supports, one support.*

Solid Foundation

ש	צ	פ	ע	ס	נ	ם	כ	ט	ב
<i>shin/sin</i>	<i>tzadi</i>	<i>pay/fay</i>	<i>ayin</i>	<i>samech</i>	<i>nun</i>	<i>final mem</i>	<i>kaf/chaf</i>	<i>tet</i>	<i>bet/vet</i>

Two Supports

ת	מ	ח	ה	ג	א
<i>tav</i>	<i>mem</i>	<i>chet</i>	<i>hay</i>	<i>gimel</i>	<i>alef</i>

One Support

ר	ץ	ף	ן	ל	ק	ך	ז	ו	ד
<i>raysh</i>	<i>final tzadi</i>	<i>final fay</i>	<i>final nun</i>	<i>lamed</i>	<i>quf</i>	<i>final chaf</i>	<i>zayin</i>	<i>vav</i>	<i>dalet</i>

The *vav* is not the only letter to only have one leg to stand on, but it is the only letter that is written with only one support that has no other mechanism to stabilize itself.

The *dalet*, *zayin*, and *raysh* are reminiscent of a gymnast (to varying degrees) that sticks their arms out away from their body on a balance beam.

The *lamed* and *quf* both conjure images of pink flamingos in their signature pose.

The final forms of the *chaf*, *nun*, and *tzadi* all have stems that go down below the line. These letters remind me of fence posts. Before they're driven into the ground, they can't even support their own weight, but a few solid strikes can change everything.

The *vav* has none of these mechanisms. As such, it is entirely reliant on its neighbors to remain upright. Without their support, the softest breeze might just blow our *vav* over.

Yet still, this *vav* is capable of great things and may very well be the fulcrum of understanding when it comes to deciphering the meaning of our sacred texts. Come to Torah Study to see for yourself!

*There is one exception: the letter *yud* cannot be sorted into any of these three groups because it hangs in the air, floating above the line. We'll talk about *yud* in December ahead of Chanukkah!