

## NOTE ON THE TERM *PAKAD*: IMPLICATIONS REGARDING SARAH'S INFERTILITY

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After Abimelech and his family are healed of their infertility (Gen. 20:18), God "remembers" Sarah (Gen. 21:1) and she conceives a child. The term used in the verse is *pakad* which, following the commentary of Nahmanides, is usually translated as "remembered." However, most commentators (Re'em, Levush ha-Orah, Maharal in *Gur Aryeh*, Abrabanel, Alshekh, Ba'al ha-Turim, Hayyim Paltiel [Paltiel of Falaise, 13<sup>th</sup>-century biblical scholar], *Pa'ane'ah Raza* [Isaac b. Judah ha-Levi], and Samson Raphael Hirsch) reject this interpretation and understand that this word refers to the healing of Sarah's infertility. How does the verb *pakad* relate to the healing of infertility? Both *Pa'ane'ah Raza* and Hayyim Paltiel specifically link *pakad* to a return of menstruation. They reference the talmudic expression *mi-pekidah li-fkida*, meaning "from one menstrual cycle to the next," as an example of this usage.

In a recent article in the *JBQ*, I suggested that *akarah...ein lah valad* in Genesis 11:30 meant that Sarah was infertile due to an "unattached follicle."<sup>1</sup> It is of interest that *pakad* has the opposite meaning of *ne'ekar* ("detached" or "unattached"). The Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon offers a number of meanings for *pakad*: "visit", "muster", "deposit", being "ordered".<sup>2</sup> Indeed, S. R. Hirsch links the verb *pakad* to *begeh* (an item of clothing) and suggests that *pakad* was a type of intervention where (like clothing) something was deposited or placed in a new position. Thus, *pakad* could refer here to a reattachment or fixation of the *valad*, the previously unattached follicle.

### NOTES

1. Joshua Backon, "A new interpretation of *akarah . . . ein lah valad* (Gen. 11:30) based on the Talmud: unattached follicle," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 40:4 (2012) pp. 265-7.
2. F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003) pp. 823-4.

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