

## **"Hanila" in Syriac Culture**

Language is the foremost element that forms culture. And faith has an important place among the elements that sustain culture. The combination of these two elements, their synonymy grants a multiplicity of meaning to the word.

Because the semantic wealth of every name or word is directly proportional to the intellectual expressions of the culture which developed or uses it. When viewed from this aspect, it can be said that language, which forms the most essential element of culture, is also a system of nominating and defining.

Because the speakers of a language ascribe meaning to words according to their language and behave according to these meanings. But the incorrect usage of these definitions impedes healthy communication and understanding.

It creates problems in communicating to the other party what one wants. In other words, knowing the correct meaning of words is the only way to communicate accurately both in writing and in speech. Speaking and writing in a language does not equate to knowing that language. The important thing is thinking, producing, and creating an intellectual space in that language.

### **From a cultural perspective: Hanila**

Consequently, the Syriac compound word *Hanila* was formed out of two different words in order to create an intellectually extensive space and to convey the responsibility of that space. Rooted in sentiments of love, mercy, and help, Hanila's compassion does not only win over hearts, but also has manifold benefits.

Together with the warm emotions that arise from understanding, there are also sincere sentiments which are gratifying. For example, to open our heart and soul to ourselves and our loved ones, to understand the difficult things in life, to foster sincere feelings toward those in need, toward strangers, and toward all living things are only a few of these emotions.

It is also reflected in abstaining from resentment and hate no matter what. As it has been established through scientific evaluation, "an increase in secretion of serotonin is observed in the brain of compassionate individuals. Serotonin is a hormone secreted by the body that lets

us feel more at ease, more peaceful and happier. In other words, good treatment has a positive physical and emotional impact on all involved."[\[1\]](#)

From the perspective of faith and culture, understanding the context of a concept with profound meanings like *Hanila* is dependent on the complete knowledge and interpretation of its etymological roots and stages of development.

Without knowing the conditions under which this concept was born and for what purposes it was used, without utilizing the light of philosophy, it is impossible to truly understand it. Therefore, just as it is imperative to study the word *Hanila* from an etymological perspective as a noun and word before conceptualizing it, it is also necessary to know its context and intellectual disposition in order to be able to say that this noun is Syriac.

Because names/words are the carriers of cultural meanings and context. They reflect a culture's life perspective, lifestyle, its outlook on the divine system, events, nature, and the universe. A meaning and context that does not exist in a society's world of thought has neither name nor form. In this context, linguists must be wise as well. Only a wise linguist can grasp the basic nuances of languages.

Whatever an artisan's set of tools means for him, names and words mean the same for a linguist. When there is no true mastery of a language from a literary and philosophical perspective, the linguistic elements of words, concepts, names, etc. degrade with time or degenerate into mediocrity. These words, when not used in daily speech and writing, lose their impact and become dull. Perhaps this is why the visibility of the name *Hanila* has been lost and its literary presence faded today.

### **Divine Compassion**

As I pointed out in the example above, just as an artisan **keeps the tools he most uses closer to him** while working and keeps the ones he uses less farther away, in the same way words are also subjected to function partly in the same way as the artisan uses his tools. With time, the ones closer to the artisan **and used more frequently** begin to show wear and tear, while the tools farther away begin to rust. Both are possible. However, based on my intuitions, I can say the following from years of experience:

*Hanila* has a very important and distinguished place in Syriac culture. It is like a globe of heat placed in the center of life. It has forgiving meanings. It envelops all existence. It resides on the top floor of the culture building, in its deep layers. It is a concept that makes it easier to understand the thoughts and feelings of others; and it exists or should exist with its attributes in all areas of life.

From the upper floors and the deep layers, it loudly proclaims the attitudes which can be helpful in understanding and overcoming the hardships of life within the context of causality.

In its attitudes of divine compassion, it advises responsible behavior, it teaches that others also deserve goodness and justice. Thinking of others, wishing their wellbeing, and feeling responsible for them are among its values.

**"Hanila"** is a noun phrase derived from the Syriac words **"han"** and **"il"**, both of which have different meanings.

The word *han* / ܚܢ means merciful one, affectionate one, protector, keeper, guardian.

The word *il* / ܐܠܐ is identical to the name Allah in Syriac. Allah means God and creator. In other words, this compound word (Hanila) not only contains divine compassion, but also expresses the tenderness and the protecting, preserving, and safeguarding qualities of this compassion, and describes the one who is wrapped up in these qualities and exhibits them in his emotional state and actions.[2]

The word *hanono* / ܚܢܘܢܐ has been derived from the same word root. Though this name is attributed primarily to God, it also identifies those who exhibit the emotional intensity and state of action of divine compassion.

The word *hnono* / ܚܢܘܢܐ, which means mercy and denotes an affectionate pity, guardianship, preservation is also of the same root. It also means compassion. It is used of a state of mind/action which indicates a pitying, protecting love, affection, and guardianship.

**Hanila is Wisdom**

The wider a meaning is given to a word, the richer that language is considered. Moreover, the wealth of meaning in words is accepted as an indication of the profundity of meaning that language has carried from the past as well as its antiquity.

In this context, just like *hanila*, the words *hanono* / ܚܢܘܢܘ and *hnono* / ܚܢܘܢܐ also have a very prominent place among the Syriac nouns with positive meanings.

The scope of denotation in Syriac is very broad and dynamic. Because in this language, the noun has the power to have an impact/inspire and interact. And generally, denotations are made with the expectation of creating the desired effect and interaction with respect to keeping the memory within a word alive, symbolizing, elevating, and reflecting it.[3]

Denotations, which are regarded as very important in terms of a culture's "**importance and unimportance**" standards, have distinctive qualities or effects on individuals and society. And for this reason, children are given names inspired by the Syriac meanings explained above, such as "**Hanna, Hanno, Hanuno**" for boys and "**Hanne, Hana, Hanila**" for girls.

*Hanila* is a wisdom. This word, which appeared as the result of a long and tiring effort, can be defined as a notion and lifestyle that expresses the intellectual and faith-based tendencies of Syriac culture.

It is a word shaped by the input of Syriac culture and reached our times from the depths of a history kneaded in the yeast of that input. It issues from the compassionate comprehension of active altruism, which loves humanity, the universe, the environment, nature, the earth, ecological balance, in short, all existence.

It is like a medicine that heals the broken human heart. It equips its owner with the beauties and virtues of humanity. Like a secret power, it plays a leading role in the success and happiness of sincere and consistent intent-speech-action.

If the outside world is the reflection of the things that pass through our heart, to be in possession of *Hanila*, which renders the frozen/cold world around us as clear/warm, would be a great service both for ourselves and our environment.

With an aspiration to make the world a safe place for all people and living beings, Hanila has a very different outlook on social events and relationships. It has notions that develop different attitudes beyond the "right and wrong" in the methods of dealing with problems and hardships.

### **From the Perspective of the Ego**

For this reason, every sadness experienced in life carries an important lesson. To learn the lesson, rather than focusing on the sadness, one must question why the sadness is being experienced in the first place. For as humans, our longest journey in life is the one we make from our brain/mind to our heart/spirit.

This journey is very tiring and complicated when it is made with an egotistic/carnal attitude. The quickest way of this journey is *Hanila*. While offering important contributions to humanity in the inner conflict of duality (light and darkness, good and evil, right and wrong) which leads from opposition to consonance during the self-realization process, it accepts the lessons learned from grief, and goes beyond the right or wrong and to what is "true". It functions as a glue that amplifies social empathy by showing consideration for subjective views and promoting absolute truth.

*Hanila* is a phenomenon that shapes and rules all virtues. Therefore, it is never ineffective. It always gratifies. Those who have put it on in the true sense do not defile the ground they walk on.

Life would be unbearable if not for its kindness and grace. Life's burden would become heavier. Since it does not contradict the zeitgeist, it is an antidote to marginalization. The philosophy of "**Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you**" is the fundamental teaching of *Hanila*. Cultures and traditions might be varied but this philosophy of *Hanila* is absolute and unchanging. It is always the same everywhere.

### **It Does Not Abide Cruelty and Obscenity**

If we want a virtue-centered life and a peaceful world, the great values and great meanings of *Hanila* must take precedence in our lives. *Hanila* is like a medicine injected from heart to heart and from spirit to spirit that soothes all pain. As is evident from its name, *Hanila* is of a divine essence, as regards its composition.

It nurtures freedom and individuality, not cruelty and obscenity. The world becomes a better place thanks to the people who carry *Hanila* like a jewel in their spirit. Their light is a reminder of the possibility of justice, equality, individuality, and freedom. It instills in us the possibility of eradicating evil, if we wanted.

With its stance against the disregard of human dignity and self-esteem, it protects our physical and spiritual health while both uncovering the good within us and restoring our hope in the good inside others. Its values save us from public embarrassment, whereas spite it leaves to the spiteful, resentment to the cruel, and evil to the malevolent.

The tumult of our mind and the agitation of our desires subside. In this hiatus, the inner world advances toward transformation and maturation.

Therefore, *Hanila* is an opportunity not only for the oppressed and wronged, but also for everyone else. It is a secret weapon that makes the world a privileged place for everyone. In the morality of *Hanila*, the implicit is equally important to the explicit. Those who only pay attention to what's explicitly stated appreciate only half of the story.

If we value *Hanila*, and if we wish for its active role in our lives, we must first train our minds to perceive and internalize it. We must save our inner world from the torturous voids and beguiling shadows of the ego/flesh, and we must adapt accordingly. The wishes and desires of *Hanila* would never torment or cause distress.

In its services and areas of activity, the ego fades away, disappears. Nothing is expected in return. The result is spiritual gratification, not ego trips.

The more *Hanila* is internalized and felt in the spirit, the more will it soothe the person. And that person will not yield to polarization in social life; that person does not bring distress on himself or others.

If one idles around in the miasma of dusty, moldy cellars, he will encounter recurring fears, growing darkness, and proportionally rising troubles and tolls, whereas the therapeutic air in the upper floors of *Hanila* will illuminate and relieve the heart, spirit, and mind.

The inhabitants of the upper floors are intimacy, spiritual unity, oneness, understanding, and virtue; to the exclusion of opposition, separation, polarization, pigheadedness, comparison,

boasting, pride, prejudice, conditioning, delusion, complexes, visible and invisible differences, commotion, congestion, overcrowding, and incivility.

The longer one remains in the upper floors, wandering them and breathing their clean oxygen, the quicker will the devastating effect of the abovementioned destructive attitudes be cancelled and lost.

When the effect of these life-poisoning, destructive attitudes is cancelled, suffering is thwarted. Distress is avoided. For there is nothing other than peace and stability in the domain of that oneness and unity. Peace and serenity are experienced. The positive energy spreading from the peace and serenity enveloping the inner world opens the door to healthy communication with the other people who are on lower floors.

For someone who views life from the perspective of *Hanila*, which functions as the secret power of the universe, it is impossible to discriminate between other people, men and women, to categorize life, classify, seduce, misguide, deceive, manipulate, exploit, or otherwise abuse people.

Hanila teaches us to stay true to ourselves, treat people with sincerity, and do to others as we would have them do to us, as we demand the respect we think we deserve from the world and from people. It makes us ask ourselves whether we act out of self-interest or for the greater good when we continually take this approach. It shows us how we should approach the world and people with discernment, not prejudice.

### **Reacting to Life Proactively Rather Than Reactively**

Though it is difficult to get rid of prejudices, when prejudices are approached with *Hanila's* sentiments, invisible barriers are easily overcome. Just as ignorance of the law is unacceptable as an excuse before the judge, unawareness is not an excuse for an expert on the topic of Hanila.

It is truly exciting to analyze the meaning and importance of a word like *Hanila*, which expresses much in Syriac from a philosophical standpoint. For *Hanila* is like a tree whose branches stretch to the sky, staying green and bearing fruit all year round. Since its roots are deep and sturdy, its shadow is relaxing and restful.

I wrote this in order to rest and relax in its shadow, and to offer you rest and relaxation as well. My aim was to revive and interpret an ancient word nearly lost and beginning to petrify for the sake of perpetuating and strengthening life. I wanted to contribute to the discovery of the peaceful and stable domain within a person's inner world, as well as the spirit of *Hanila*.

For when we grasp the nuances in meaning of *Hanila*, such as true identity, balance, harmony, decency, etiquette, and good morals, things that mean true freedom, we develop methods of cleansing ourselves from the rust and dirt of the ego.

We learn how to respond to life proactively, rather than reactively. Thus, we contribute to a better vision of life with the sentiment that if one person can do it, everyone can.

For all of this to transpire, our old habits/mindsets must break and fixed judgements/perception must transform. We have to notice, slow down, stop, relax, and partly do the opposite of the things we've done up to this point. However, all this must be done with the spirit and love of *Hanila*.

Both of our worlds are wealthier thanks to *Hanila*. Let's not forget, the things we see with our naked eyes are merely the manifestations of invisible beauties. They are the delicious treats of *Hanila*.

Therefore, we must take custody of these beautiful manifestations with greater awareness. We must take better nourishment from those delicious treats. We must take nourishment in order for our visible and invisible differences to lead to intimacy, not alienation; unity, not separation.

To be happy there, is this not one of our greatest needs?

Yusuf Beğtaş

#### **Sources and Footnotes:**

[1] Zülfikar Özkan. *Duygusal İletişim*, Ankara, Hayat Yayınları, 2015.

[2] *Because of conjectures and delusions, assessments in social life are made according to narrow stereotypes and perceptions. Whereas Hanila has harmonizing holistic attitudes and a spirit of unification beyond fixed opinions and stereotypes. Hanila's sincere spirit is selfless. It serves selflessly. This selflessness coming from a spirit of unification is often misevaluated due to insufficient and deficient readings tied to a lack of personal experience. Because a*



person who has that sincere/consistent spirit which others do not, has a different insight and motive. According to others, he has changed in heart, spirit, and mind. He is not easy to understand with his sincere intent. This relative situation takes time and patience.

**[3]** Various compound names have been formed in the Syriac language and culture using the word "il" in order to draw attention to Divine meanings/qualities. This situation, a manifestation of commitment to the divine system, is a different interpretation of giving meaning to the flow and the current time, of confronting problems/difficulties. I believe listing some of these names will be beneficial in clarifying the matter. Here are some of these obscure names awaiting their demise:

**Hadil (divine unity), Ahil (divine brother), Habil/Yabil/Yabila (divine gift), Gazil (divine treasure), Zenil (divine weapon), Zahril (divine beam), Tobil (divine goodness), Tebil (divine news), Kinil (divine justice), Moril/Maril (divine master), Nuril (divine light), Sabil/Sabila (divine will), Uthril (divine wealth), Suril (divine likeness), Samhil (divine ray), Damila (divine resemblance), Danielle (divine judgment), Habila (divine flower), Hubila (divine love), Ebil (divine fruit), Emil/Emila (divine mother), Yamila (divine sea), Sabril/Sabrile (divine hope), Ruhil/Rohel (divine spirit), Rabil/Rabila (divine greatness), Ramil/Ramila (divine highness), Rafil/Rafail (divine moment), Şemil/Şamila (divine name), Tadil/Tadila (divine spring) etc.**