

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayeishev

23 Kislev, 5783 – December 17, 2022

Compiled from the works of
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vayaishev**

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית ל"ז, ב': אֵלֶּה | תְּלִדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן שֶׁבַע עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה הָיָה רָעָה אֶת אָחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נֶעַר אֶת בְּנֵי בְלֵהָה וְאֶת בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׂי אָבִיו וַיְבִיא יוֹסֵף אֶת דְּבָרָם רָעָה אֶל אָבִיהֶם:

רש"י אלה תולדות יעקב: ... ועוד נדרש בו וישב ביקש יעקב לישב בשלוה, קפץ עליו רוגזו של יוסף. צדיקים מבקשים לישב בשלוה אומר הקב"ה לא דיין לצדיקים מה שמתוקן להם לעולם הבא, אלא שמבקשים לישב בשלוה בעולם הזה:

Bereishis 37:2: These are the generations of Yaakov. When Yosef was seventeen years old, being a shepherd, he was with his brothers with the flocks. He was a lad, and was with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Yosef brought evil tales about them to their father.

Rashi Heading – These are the generations of Yaakov: (The word "dwelt" in the previous verse) is further expounded. When Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility, the troubles of Yosef sprang upon him. The righteous seek to live in peace. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, "That which is prepared for the righteous in the world to come is not sufficient for them, but they also wish to dwell in tranquility in this world?"

Synopsis

The Torah begins this week's portion, Vayaishev, by telling us that Yaakov dwelt in Israel, his father's land. The Hebrew word for "dwelling" is also becoming settled. After overcoming all of the difficulties posed by his brother Aisov and his father-in-law Lovon, he finally returned to the land of Israel. Rashi tells us that he was expecting to live in peace. However, he was confronted by a new round of troubles rather than peace. The hardships he bore as a result of his youngest son Yosef sprang upon him, as told in detail in the Torah portion. Rashi states that the peace and serenity which is prepared for the righteous in the world to come should suffice. Tranquility in this world should not be necessary for them.

Commentaries explain that this world merely serves as the antechamber which leads to the banquet hall, which is the world to come. One concerned about happiness in this world demonstrates that he is more concerned about the entrance than the banquet hall.

The question is, Yaakov's entire being was devoted to Hashem and His service. How could he be more concerned with this physical, material world than the world to come?

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The explanation is that Yaakov *was* interested in having a tranquil life in this world. However, his interest was not motivated by the world's physicality; he was motivated by the potential to learn Torah and do Mitzvos in this world. He did not care about peace and serenity in this world as an end; rather, his genuine concern was to achieve tranquility as a means. When one is at peace, he can accomplish far more in the service of G-d than one who lacks peace of mind.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion tells us that¹ "Yaakov dwelt in the land of his father's travels, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Yaakov. When Yosef was seventeen years old, being a shepherd, he was with his brothers, with the flocks. He was a lad with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Yosef brought evil tales about them to their father." Rashi cites the words "these are the generations of Yaakov," and after commenting, adds the following². "(The explanation as to why the word "dwelt" in the previous verse is used in the past tense) is further expounded. When Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility, the troubles of Yosef sprang upon him. (How is it that) the righteous seek to dwell in tranquility? Said the Holy One, blessed be He, 'What is prepared for the righteous in the world to come is not sufficient for them, but they also wish to dwell in tranquility in this world?'"

Several commentaries explain this as follows³. The world to come is an (allegorical) banquet hall, which is in contrast to this world, which is merely the antechamber that leads to the "banquet hall." One must always feel as if he is a mere *tourist* in this world. Seeking tranquility in this world is akin to confusing the reception hall with the antechamber!

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Yaakov was one of our forefathers, all of whom are called the heavenly Chariot⁴. What is the meaning of this? Why should our holy forefathers be called the Chariot? It is because⁵ "all of

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 37:1-2.

2. Rashi is quoting the Midrash Rabbah, Bereishis Rabbah, at the end of Chapters 4, and 3. There are slight differences between the wording of the Midrash and that of Rashi.

3. See, for example, the Akeidah, Gate 30, and the commentary to the Midrash Rabbah Yefas To'ar, *ibid*.

4. Bereishis Rabbah Chapter 47, 6 and Chapter 82, 6. Yechezkel's prophetic vision of the heavenly Chariot is described at length in Yechezkel Chapter 1. A great number of mystical and Chassidic works discuss it at length.

5. Tanya Chapter 23.

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their limbs are sanctified and separated from worldly matters. They serve solely as chariots, i.e., the means of carrying out Hashem's supernal will every moment of their lives." How is it conceivable that one of so great a level could confuse the reception hall with the antechamber?

Furthermore, we are faced with another difficulty. According to the above explanation, seeking serenity in this world is certainly not a positive trait. However, as Rashi's (which he quotes from the Sage's) words stand on their own, there is nothing negative about seeking peace in this world. The only thing that causes it to be less than positive is that the righteous should be satisfied with serenity in the world to come. However, there seems to be nothing wrong with being interested in having a tranquil life in this world per se.

The Explanation

From the above questions, it is clear that Yaakov was not looking for physical comfort in this world. On the contrary, he sought spiritual peace. He was anxious to live a spiritual life in this world. Just as in the world to come⁶, "there is no eating or drinking, etc." He was told that he would have to wait for that state. In the words of our Sages⁷, "Today we must perform them (meaning Mitzvos and Torah study), and tomorrow (meaning in the world to come) we will receive their reward." Every moment must be utilized for work, with no thought of relaxation.

However, it is understood that Yaakov's Divine service was just that. He served G-d without ulterior motives and was not even seeking spiritual rewards. How can we say that he was interested in a peaceful, serene life in this world? His only interest was in fulfilling Hashem's Will!

Furthermore, we find that he did ultimately attain serenity in this world. Further on, we read that there came the point when "the troubles of Yosef" came to an end. He discovered that Yosef was alive. Not only that, but Yosef had reconciled with his brothers. Additionally, despite becoming entrenched in the life of Egypt, Yosef remained faithful to G-d and his Torah. He remained the same Tzaddik that he was when he left home many years earlier. At that point, Yaakov and his entire family moved down (not merely south, but to a place which was "down," lower spiritually) to Egypt. Yaakov spent the last seventeen years of his life there.

6. Berochos 17, a. See Rambam, Laws of Teshuvah Chapter 8, Paragraph 2.

7. This is cited in several places. See, for example, Eiruvim 22, a.

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Regarding those seventeen years, the Torah says⁸, "and Yaakov lived." That was life for our forefather Yaakov in the truest sense. In the lowest part of this world, he attained the most incredible peace, tranquility, and serenity.

We can understand from all this that Yaakov would not have served G-d to attain tranquility of any sort, whether physical or spiritual, in this world. Yet that is what happened.

We can resolve this based on what the Rambam teaches us about the days of Moshiach in his Laws of Teshuvah⁹. He writes that "all Israel, the prophets and the Sages, have yearned for the Days of Moshiach so they can rest from the oppression of the gentile kingdoms which do not allow them to occupy themselves with Torah and mitzvot properly. They will find rest and increase their knowledge to merit the world to come." He writes in the Laws of Kings¹⁰, "the Sages and the prophets did not yearn for the Days of Moshiach for ulterior motives. They did not want to control the entire world, to rule over the gentiles, to be exalted by the nations, or to eat, drink and celebrate. Rather, they desired to be free to involve themselves in Torah and wisdom without any pressures or disturbances so that they would merit the world to come, as explained in the Laws of Teshuvah."

In other words, Yaakov indeed did desire tranquility in this world. However, he wanted this only as a means, not an end, and he wanted to be able to devote himself to Torah study and Mitzvah performance totally. Peace of mind enables one to serve Hashem with his entire being in this physical world.

The problem was that he was not quite ready. As Rashi explains at the beginning of our Torah portion, "when Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility, the troubles of Yosef sprang upon him. What is prepared for the righteous in the world to come is not sufficient for them, but they also wish to dwell in tranquility in this world?" He still needed to look forward to the peace he would find in the world to come. He had not yet reached the spiritual level required to attain the revelation of the world to come while still in this world. He still needed to toil. However, after having "the troubles of Yosef sprung upon him," he was elevated to an even higher level. Therefore, in Egypt, he was indeed able to begin living. He began living the life of Yaakov. He attained the life of the world to come and hence was able to serve G-d free of any concerns.

8. Bereishis 47:28.

9. See the end of Chapter 9.

10. See Chapter 12, Paragraph 4.

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A Practical Lesson from Rashi

Hashem knows how difficult it is for us to focus. We live in a seemingly advanced world, however, one which is filled with distractions. We have it easier than previous generations, yet we are busier and more preoccupied than any of them were. We genuinely need Moshiach, not tomorrow, in an hour or even a minute. We need him now! Only then will we be able to rest from the tyranny of the darkness around us. Only then will we be able to focus on what is essential. Only then will we begin to live in the truest sense of the word.

(Adapted from the Chassidic Discourse beginning with the words Sholom Rav 5738)

I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE**

* * *

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The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"

Chaim, Aiden Oded, and Zacharya Matan שיהיו
Morris

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride
to their family and a Torah light to their community

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka** שיהיו
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IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Esther שתהי' **Sharabani**

May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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DEDICATED BY HER SON

Mr. Gershon (Geri) שי' **Bentov**

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