

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayechi

18 Teves, 5781 – January 2, 2021

Compiled from the works of
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

A Project of
Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
Copyright 2021 ©

**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vayechi**

Likkutei Sichos Volume 10, Pages 167 – 172

Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית מ"ט, א': ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האסף ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים: **ב':** הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם:

רש"י ד"ה ואגידה לכם: בקש לגלות את הקץ ונסתלקה שכינה ממנו והתחיל אומר דברים אחרים:

Bereishis 49:1: Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days. **2:** Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisroel, your father.

Rashi Heading - and I will tell you: He attempted to reveal the End, but the Shechinah withdrew from him. He, therefore, began saying other things.

Synopsis

In this week's portion, Vayechi, we are told of the passing of Yaakov. Before his passing, he told his children to gather together, for him to tell them what will happen at the End of days. He then proceeded to say that they should gather and listen to his words. After this, he blesses his children and tells them prophetically various things that would occur to their descendants, the Tribes of Israel, in the future.

Rashi cites the words of the first verse, "and I will tell you," and explains that "he attempted to reveal the time of the Messianic revelation, but Hashem's presence withdrew from him. He, therefore, began saying other things." Why doesn't Rashi explain that it refers to their father's prophetic words immediately regarding their tribes? Why must he say that "the end of days" literally means the End, the End of days as we know them?

The explanation is that there are three Hebrew words for verbally relating something to someone else. One is "*Dibbur* - דיבור – speaking." Another is "*Amirah* - אמירה - saying." The third is "*Haggadah* - הגדה - telling." Despite the apparent similarity between these three words, they are not precisely synonymous. The first, *Dibbur*, speaking, refers to saying something merely with one's mouth. It is quite possible that he does not believe in or agree with what he is saying. The second, *Amirah*, meaning saying, is communicating what he believes superficially, but not with all of his heart. *Haggadah*, telling, is called by the holy Zohar "words of wisdom." It refers to words that come from the depths of one's heart.

Here, Yaakov prophetically told his children, "האסף ואגידה לכם – gather, and I will tell you," using the word "*Haggadah*," meaning that he wished to impart to them the innermost secret of the Torah. This secret is the

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

time of the Messianic Redemption. At that time, the innermost, most concealed part of the soul will connect with Hashem's innermost part through the innermost part of the Torah.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vayechi, the Torah tells of our forefather Yaakov's passing. Before his passing, the Torah tells us that¹ "Yaakov called for his sons and said, 'Gather, and I will tell you what will happen to you at the End of days. Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisroel, your father.'" Rashi comments on the words "and I will tell you," that "He attempted to reveal the End, but the Shechinah withdrew from him. Therefore, he began saying other things." Immediately after that, he prophetically describes to his children things that will occur to their descendants, the tribes of Israel, in the future. He also blesses them.

Rashi is explaining Peshat. According to the simple explanation of the verse, what reason is there to say that he wanted to tell them the time of the Messianic Redemption? Perhaps all that he wanted to say was that which he *did* tell them, the future of the 12 tribes which descended from them?

Some supercommentaries² say that Rashi's proof is from the expression "the end of days." This expression is used throughout the Tanach to reference the end of this world as we know it, i.e. the ultimate Redemption^{3 4}.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

This explanation seems to have several difficulties. First of all, while it is true that the expression "the end of days" often refers to the ultimate Redemption, we do find instances where this is not true. For example, Bilaam said,⁵ "... I will advise you what this nation will do to your people at the end of days." Rashi explains that this refers to the time of King David⁶. Secondly, even if this does refer to the End, why must Rashi say that Yaakov intended to reveal its time?

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 49:1-2.

2. See the commentaries of both the Gur Aryeh, written by the Maharal of Prague and the Sifsei Chachomim to this verse.

3. See, for example, Parshas Vo'eschanan, Devorim 4:30, Yeshaya 2:2 and Yirmiyahu 22:20.

4. One might think that "the end of days" is a reference to the end of the Egyptian exile in which they found themselves. The Maharal tells us that this explanation is untenable. It was known that the Egyptian exile would last for 210 years. At this point the Jewish people, Yaakov's children had been in Egypt for seventeen years. Hence there were 193 years remaining. An average life span at the time was over 100 years; the Torah would not refer to 193 years as "the end of days."

5. Parshas Balak, Bamidbar 24:14.

6. *ibid.* 24:17.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Regarding the exact time of the ultimate Redemption, Hashem says, as so to speak, that⁷ "I have kept My intentions in My Heart, and not revealed them to My Mouth." In other words, this means to say that Hashem has not revealed the time of the End. Perhaps Yaakov wanted to tell his children events that would occur at that time, i.e., the time of the ultimate Redemption. We see from Rashi further on in the Parshah that he did reveal several future events. Finally, we need to understand why Rashi feels compelled to explain it in this manner, according to Peshat, the simple explanation.

The Explanation

The explanation is as follows. In the first verse which we cited⁸, the Torah says that "Yaakov called for his sons and said, 'Gather, and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days.'" In other words, he asked his children to gather together. In the second verse, he once again told them, "Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisroel, your father." We see that he gathered them twice, once in verse one and a second time in verse two. Yet, he did not say a thing between the two verses. He only began speaking to them after the second time that he gathered them together. Each "gathering" was to tell them something. What he told them must have been related to the second time that he got them together. Why doesn't the Torah tell us what he told them the first time he gathered them? It must be that he intended to tell them something, but something prevented him from doing so. Therefore, Rashi says that Yaakov tried to reveal the End to his children. However, he couldn't because the Shechinah withdrew from him. That was why Yaakov gathered them again and began talking about other things.

We know that Yaakov wanted to say something but could not do so. The question is why Rashi says that it was the *time* of the End that he wished to reveal? Perhaps he wanted to announce events that would occur at that time.

The Hebrew language is unlike any other. It is called the "Holy Tongue⁹." It contains no actual synonyms; instead, each word has a different shade of meaning. Three Hebrew words convey verbally relating something to someone else. One is "*Dibbur* - דיבור – speaking." Another is "*Amirah* - אמירה - saying." The third is "*Haggadah*

7. See Yalkut Shimoni Section 507. See also Sanhedrin 99, a and Koheles Rabbah Chapter 12, 10.

8. Our Parshah, Bereishis 49:1.

9. This is an addition made by the translator, and not a part of the original talk of the Rebbe. The Ramban writes (Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 30:13) that "As I see it, the reason for the Rabbis calling the language of the Torah the Holy Tongue is that the words of the Torah and of the prophecies and all sacred utterances were all spoken in that language; it is the language that the Holy One, blessed be He, speaks with His prophets and with His people, saying, "I am ...," "You shall not have ..." and the remaining commandments and prophecies. It is the language by which He is called in His sacred names... and in which He created His universe, gave names to heaven and earth and all therein ..."

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

- הגדה - telling." The distinction between these three words is explained both in the holy Zohar¹⁰ and in Chassidic philosophy¹¹. The first, *Dibbur* or speaking, refers to saying something merely with one's mouth. It is quite possible that he does not believe in or agree with what he is saying.

Amirah or saying, is saying that he believes superficially but does not honestly believe with all of his heart. We can see an example of this from a law stated by the Rambam¹². There are times that a Jewish person will say something contrary to the Torah. Likewise, he may refrain from saying something which the Torah obligates him to say. The reason is because, as our Sages say¹³, "the eyes see and (as a result of this) the heart desires." His "evil inclination" is coercing him to speak or remain silent, contrary to G-d's command. However, in his innermost heart, he desires to fulfill Hashem's order. *Haggadah*, or telling, is called by the holy Zohar "words of wisdom," i.e., words that come from the depths of one's heart.

The same is true regarding the Holy One blessed be He, as so to speak. When the Torah uses the word *Haggadah*, it conveys that He is drawing down His deepest, innermost secrets. Therefore, the Sages tell us¹⁴ regarding *Aggadah*¹⁵, "Would you like to recognize Hashem? Learn *Aggadah*! You will thereby recognize the Holy One, blessed be He." *Aggadah*, the innermost part of the Torah, reveals the innermost aspect of Hashem.

Here, Yaakov told his children, "וְאָנֹכִי אֶגְדֶּה לָכֶם – gather, and I will tell you." He used the word "*Haggadah*," which indicates that he wished to impart the most hidden, most profound secret. That is, namely, the time of the ultimate Redemption. At that time, the innermost, most concealed part of the soul will connect with Hashem's innermost part through the innermost part of the Torah.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

From this, we can learn an essential lesson in our service of Hashem. The generations following the giving of the Torah have declined. There are those who (mistakenly) think that as a result of this, our "orphaned generation" cannot possibly receive the revelations of the future Redemption. How can we if earlier generations, which were more significant than ours, did not merit this revelation?

10. See Zohar Section 1, Page 236, b.

11. See the Chassidic discourse of the Rebbe Maharash beginning with the words *Nachamu* from 5626 (1866), and that beginning with the words *Mahaichan Zachu* from the year 5627 (1867).

12. See his Laws of Divorce at the end of Chapter 2.

13. See Rashi's commentary to Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:39.

14. See the Sifri to Parshas Aikev, Devorim 11:22.

15. *Aggadah* refers to the stories of the Talmud. This word is derived from the word *Haggadah*, meaning "telling."

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

We can learn the answer to this from our Rashi. The Sages tell us that¹⁶ "the actions of the Patriarchs provide a message to their children." However, they provide us with much more than a message. The deeds performed by Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov provide us with the ability to perform the same actions which they did. Because Yaakov "attempted to reveal the End," he gave this power to all of his children at all times. Even a generation from which "the Shechinah withdrew," an era such as ours with incomparable concealment of G-d's presence and total (spiritual) darkness, can reveal the End. In the mere blink of an eye, we are capable of bringing the complete Redemption.

The very fact that some claim that our generation does not deserve etc. is the most significant sign that now is the time for the revelation of Moshiach. The Sages tell us that¹⁷ "Moshiach will come when we are distracted." The most significant distraction is that we are in a generation where some say logically, Moshiach cannot come. It is the sign that the Redemption is so close.

The meaning of the above saying of the Sages is not, G-d forbid that we need to be distracted from the coming of Moshiach. On the contrary, it is a fundamental principle of our faith that we must await his coming every day. Instead, the meaning is that even though the arrival of Moshiach does not logically appear imminent, nonetheless, we fervently wait for his coming every moment of every day.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 5725)

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

To dedicate a week, a month, or a year of

For the Rashi of the Week, [click here](#).

You can find us on the web at www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org.

You can find our blog [here](#).

16. See the Ramban's commentary to Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 12:10.

17. See Talmud Sanhedrin 97, a.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

* * *

IN HONOR OF

The Soldiers of Tzivos Hashem **Chaim** and **Aiden Oded** שיחיו Morris

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem M.** and **Chaya Mushka** שיחיו Morris

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther** שתחי' Sharabani

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON

Mr. **Geri** שי' Bentov

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

*** * ***

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב