

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayishlach

13 Kislev, 5785 – December 14, 2024

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vayishlach
Likkutei Sichos Volume 35, Pages 150 – 155

Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית ל"ד, א': ומצא דינה בת לאה אשר ילדה ליַעֲקֹב לראות בכנות הארץ:
רש"י ד"ה בת לאה: ולא בת יעקב, אלא על שם יציאתה נקראת בת לאה, שאף היא יצאנית היתה, שנאמר (ל', ט"ז)
ותצא לאה לקראתו (ועליה משלו המשל (יחזקאל ט"ז, מ"ד) כאמה כבתה):

Bereishis 34:1: Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov, went out to look about among the daughters of the land.

Rashi Heading - the daughter of Leah: And not the daughter of Yaakov? However, she was called Leah's daughter because of her going out. Leah, too, was in the habit of going out, as it is said, "and Leah came forth toward him¹." (And concerning her, they devise the proverb², "Like mother like daughter.")

Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, tells a tragic story about Yaakov's daughter Dinah. She went out "among the daughters of the land" and was assaulted. However, the Torah refers to her most unusually. It calls her "the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov." The Torah is always concise. Why doesn't it just call her Yaakov's daughter?

Rashi explains the reason. It is because Leah also "went out." It seems Rashi says that Dinah's problem was because she "went out." She inherited this trait from her mother, Leah. Why would the Torah speak in a derogatory manner about Leah, one of the matriarchs of the entire Jewish nation? The Torah is careful not to talk in a derogatory way, even regarding a non-kosher animal! Here, we are speaking about the wife and daughter of our forefather, Yaakov. How can the Torah talk about them in this manner?

The explanation is that Dinah's "going out" had no negative connotations. There was nothing wrong with her going out, and Rashi had already told us the cause of her assault. Instead, Hashem punished Yaakov, not Dinah. When he had his epic meeting with his brother Aisov, he

1. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 30:16.

2. Yechezkel 16:44.

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hid Dinah for fear that he would see her and want to marry her. The fact is that despite Yaakov's good intentions for hiding his daughter, G-d punished him. Dinah was able to bring Aisov to Teshuvah. Her mother, Leah, had the same ability. Their "going out" was good, bringing the world closer to Hashem.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah Portion, Vayishlach, The Torah tells us, "Dinah, the daughter of Leah whom she had borne to Yaakov, went out to look about among the daughters of the land." Rashi cites the words from this verse, "The daughter of Leah," and explains the following. She was the daughter of Leah, "and not the daughter of Yaakov. Because she was in the habit of going out, she was called the daughter of Leah. Leah was also in the habit of going out, as it says, 'and Leah went out to greet him (referring to Yaakov).'" "There are versions of Rashi that conclude with the words, "Concerning her, they use the allegory, 'like mother, like daughter.'"

This verse marks the beginning of a very tragic story that took place with Dinah. Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov, our forefather, was assaulted.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

From Rashi's explanation, it is clear that the Torah is speaking in a derogatory manner regarding Leah. Why would Rashi, according to Peshat, choose to talk about Leah in such a manner? We find in the Talmud³ that the Torah does not even speak derogatorily about a⁴ non-kosher animal. Additionally, Rashi writes that once the Torah mentions a righteous person, it speaks in his praise⁵. Rashi quotes,⁶ "The mention of a righteous is for a blessing." The fact that "the mention of a righteous is for a blessing" certainly applies to our matriarch, Leah! She was one of the only four women in history to be a matriarch of every Jew.

One might consider the Torah possibly saying something less than positive about Leah to justify Dinah's actions. However, it is difficult to say that the Torah would publicize something disparaging about a mother, especially such a mother, to explain her daughter's actions.

3. Bava Basra 123, a.

4. Parshas Noach, Bereishis 6:9.

5. Ibid.

6. Mishlei 10:7.

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There is another possibility. Perhaps Rashi is explaining why the Torah uses a description that seems to be unnecessarily long. The Torah could have said, "Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov," instead of "Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov." Rashi tells us that the Torah calls Dinah "the daughter of Leah" to show that she "inherited" this trait from her mother. The Torah always expresses itself in the most concise manner possible. However, the Torah also endeavors to state things in the nicest way possible. Perhaps Rashi found it necessary to use this explanation to explain why, in this instance, the Torah was not concise.

However, this explanation is untenable. Rashi could have explained why the Torah is so lengthy in a manner that does not cast aspersions on Leah. Rashi wrote earlier⁷ that Dinah was born due to Leah's prayers. That is certainly enough reason to refer to her as "Dinah, the daughter of Leah." Moreover, there was nothing negative about Leah's "going out" to greet Yaakov. On the contrary, Rashi explains⁸ that because of Leah's "going out," Hashem listened to her prayers!

The Explanation

The explanation is as follows. From the above questions, we understand that Rashi tells us there is nothing wrong with Leah's actions. Rashi explained earlier the reason for Dinah's assault. It had nothing to do with any of her actions. Instead, it was her father, Yaakov, who was being punished. It says⁹ that when Yaakov prepared for his fateful meeting with his brother Aisov, "he took his... eleven children." Rashi asks where Dinah is. Binyomin was not yet born, meaning that he had twelve children! Rashi explains that "he put her into a chest and locked her in so that Aisov would not set eyes on her. That is the reason that Hashem punished Yaakov Avinu. He withheld Dinah from his brother – (for if she had married him) perhaps she would have caused him to improve his ways. That is why she fell into the hands of Shechem."

However, this is extremely difficult to understand. Was Yaakov expected to place his completely righteous daughter in danger? Marrying the wicked Aisov might "perhaps" have caused him to do Teshuvah. However, she could have been devastated! Is it possible to say Hashem punished Yaakov by having his daughter, the Tzaddeikes, assaulted? His only crime was protecting her and keeping her safe!

7. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 30:21.

8. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 30:17.

9. Our Parshah, Bereishis 32:23.

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From this, we can understand the following. Dinah was great beyond our understanding, and she was capable of causing even the wicked Aisov to return to Hashem! Because we all have free choice, she was not confident she *would* return Aisov to the proper path. However, the merit of causing an evil person to return is so great that it is worth placing Dinah in that situation. Even though it was not more than a possibility – albeit a strong one, that "perhaps she would cause him to improve his ways."

If not for Aisov's free will, she would have been able to bring him around. Otherwise, Hashem would not have punished Yaakov for hiding Dinah from him. The only reason Rashi says, "*perhaps* she would cause him to improve his ways," is because of Aisov's free will.

Based on the above, we can understand that Rashi's words regarding Dinah's "going out" trait were said in her praise and carried no negative connotation. Dinah was so powerful that she would have transformed even one as wicked as Aisov. Indeed, when she "went out to look about among the daughter of the land," it was solely to bring them to the service of Hashem. There was no immodest intent on her part whatsoever. Therefore, Rashi writes that she was "the daughter of Leah and not the daughter of Yaakov." She inherited the ability to go out and positively affect everyone with whom she came in contact from her mother, not her father. Her father hid her in a box and prevented her from returning people to G-d's service, which is why Hashem punished him.

A Deeper Explanation of Rashi

The above provides a lesson for Jewish women in all generations. Generally, we say,¹⁰ "the entire glory of a princess is within," and a woman is the "mainstay of the house." That is because a woman's primary job is to build a Jewish home. However, there are circumstances under which a woman must leave the house and "go out." For heaven's sake, a woman who can influence others must modestly use this ability. In this manner, they will affect women "on the outside." They will draw their hearts to the service of Hashem.

A woman must "go out" in a manner befitting a Jewish woman, and she must do so with the utmost modesty. By carrying this out properly, even when she "goes out," it will be apparent that her true glory is within. G-d endowed women with a more remarkable ability than men to draw others near to the service of Hashem. Aside from quantity, the result of a woman's effort will have a longer-lasting and more profound effect than a man, who by nature may argue and debate,

10. Tehillim 45:14.

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etc. Since G-d granted women the ability to draw others close to Hashem, they must use it. Their obligation is not only to conduct the household chores. Instead, it also extends to drawing other women close to their Father in Heaven.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach and Shabbos Parshas Vayaishev 5746)

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

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מאריס

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