The Book of Genesis

With Rashi’s commentary, Targum Onkelos, Haftaros and commentary anthologized from Classic Rabbinic Texts and the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Compiled and Adapted by
Rabbi Chaim Miller
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Foreword

What can a Torah commentator living in our times possibly add to two thousand years of Rabbinic scholarship? He might attempt to interpret the Torah as it relates to modern times. He may reorganize the thoughts of his predecessors, rendering them more accessible to his own generation. Or, he might attempt to innovate gems of profundity, lifting the Torah student to new horizons of inspiration.

In his commentaries to the Torah, the Lubavitcher Rebbe demonstrates all of these qualities. His words have highlighted the relevance of ancient teachings to a generation which faced the uneasy task of acclimatizing to postwar life in the western world. His voice was heard by Torah scholars, Chasidim and non-Chasidim, women, children, and even non-Jews. He skillfully articulated Talmud, Midrash, Halacha, and Chasidic teachings, bringing depth and warmth to a vast variety of Torah subjects. His vast body of over one hundred published works demonstrates expertise in virtually every field of specialized Torah study, including Bible, Talmud, Midrash, Jewish Philosophy, Mussar, Kabalah and Chasidic teachings. His most famous work, bearing the deceptively unsophisticated title of Likutei Sichos ("Selected Sermons"), cites literally thousands of different sources in exhaustive footnotes throughout its thirty nine volumes.

However, one particular area of the Rebbe's Torah writings which stands out, perhaps more than all others, as being truly original are his talks on Rashi's commentary to the Torah – colloquially referred to as "Rashi Sichos." It is on these studies that the current work has been predominantly based.

The “Rashi Sicha”

Rashi—an acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105)—authored what is considered to be the most fundamental of Rabbinic commentaries on the Bible and Talmud. His commentary on the Torah was the first Hebrew book to be printed (in Rome c. 1470), and is appended to all standard editions of the Chumash.

Rashi’s commentary is considered to be basic to the understanding of the text of Chumash, and has been the subject of numerous volumes of “supercommentary,” which attempt to explain the precise reasoning behind each of Rashi’s comments. Most prominent of the supercommentators include Rabbi Yehudah Loewe, (the “Maharal” of Prague, 1512-1609), Rabbi R’ Eliyahu Mizrachi (1450-1525) and R’ David ben Shmuel HaLevi (1586-1667, author of Taz, a major commentary on the Shulchan Aruch). These are a mere few
of over one hundred published works of supercommentary on Rashi’s commentary to the Torah.

In 1964, shortly after the passing of his mother, the Rebbe began to devote a portion of his regular public talks to developing an innovative approach to the study of Rashi’s commentary to the Torah. This continued on a regular basis until 1988, by which time over 800 such talks had been delivered, recorded and published.

The Rebbe argued that Rashi’s commentary was written to be understood by a small child who is studying scripture for the first time. This assertion is based on Rashi’s own words, that “I only come to explain the simple meaning of scripture” (Rashi to Bereishis 3:8). Thus, any explanation of Rashi’s words which would require a knowledge of Talmud or Midrash is immediately rejected, for the child who is beginning a study of scripture has not yet learned these texts. In fact, a solution based on a later verse, or a later comment of Rashi is also unacceptable, for we can presume that Rashi expected his reader to know no more than what he has already learned.

Thus, while the classic supercommentators interpreted Rashi through the lens of Talmudic and Midrashic literature, the Rebbe contended that this was not Rashi’s true intention. Rather, each line of Rashi’s monumental commentary is to be understood with two basic tools: a.) Simple logic, basic enough for a five-year-old to appreciate. b.) A knowledge of the verses and Rashi’s comments up to this point.

But somehow, the simple answers are the hardest to find. One intellectual feat which is difficult for the scholar is simplicity, and the greater the scholar the harder he finds it to embrace the simple logic of a child.

The Rebbe, however, despite having achieved mastery in so many areas of Torah study (and academic excellence), never lost the ability to relate to ordinary people. It was once said of the Rebbe that, “His mind is that of a great genius, and yet he believes with the simple faith of a small child.” This too is reflected in the Rebbe’s talks, for after challenging the greatest commentators on their “own ground” of Talmudic agility, he then proceeds to offer an answer that even a small child could have thought of, if he would have applied his mind with sufficient effort.

Being simple and “obvious” in nature, the Rebbe’s solutions are extremely convincing. This quality is enhanced by his technique of analyzing the precise phraseology of Rashi meticulously, explaining the necessity for each sentence, word, and often, letter.

Obviously, a thorough analysis of the method and system of the Rashi Sichos is far beyond the scope of this short introduction, and much has already been written on the subject.  

The current work is a humble attempt to generate further interest in the study of these fascinating talks among a broader audience. Since each Parsha of the Torah has been the subject of approximately sixteen such talks, they collectively cover a vast range of major issues in each of the 53 Parshiyos of the Torah. Thus, when placed alongside each other, they form a formidable body of Torah commentary.

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Understandably, the entire project has been carried out with considerable trepidation. To provide the reader with the full text of the Chumash in Hebrew and English, together with the fundamental texts of Rashi and Onkelos, leaves little room in which to compact the Sichos. Add to that the fact that the Rebbe's Sichos do not lend themselves to simplification or translation. Each Sicha is truly a work of art – where countless details and ideas coexist harmoniously – and, like any work of art, as soon as a few details are compromised the entire structure is weakened. In order to be explained in English, many ideas need to be amplified and clarified, leaving no space for many other beautiful and inspiring comments found within the Sicha.

In all of his edited talks, the Rebbe cross-referenced his own ideas to those of the classic commentators, indicating clearly that he did not wish his own ideas to be perceived in isolation of the Rabbinic scholarship which preceded. Therefore, in order to remain loyal to his directive it has proved crucial to include a digest of “classic commentaries” to the Torah, on each issue which is addressed within the Sichos. However, in this edition the “classic commentaries” and the Sichos have been kept distinct (but cross-referenced) for the sake of clarity. This also means that the Chumash together with the “classic commentaries” can be appreciated separately, as a complete work in itself.

Finally, numerous ideas from the Rebbe's vast body of Chasidic teachings and practical directives have been included on the page (in shaded boxes), under the headings “Sparks of Chasidus” (Chasidic insights) and “The Last Word” (Practical directives). The main body of the text (entitled “Toras Menachem”) is based predominantly on the Rebbe's Rashi Sichos which, as argued above, is the most fundamental contribution of the Rebbe to the study of Chumash.

Despite the fact that this volume proudly bears the Rebbe's name, its contents were not checked by him personally, though every effort has been made to be loyal to the original source. At the end of each explanation a reference has been provided for the reader to research the topic further. Our words here are intended as no more that a “taste” in order to tempt the reader to open up the Sicha itself, or ask his teacher to study it with him. While we have taken every precaution to be loyal to the original ideas, it is inevitable that the adaptation here will not retain the impact and character of the original. Thus, we urge the reader not to judge the Rebbe's sichos from what is presented here. This is merely an extremely diluted sample which is intended to encourage further study of a fascinating and enlightening original text.

**Further Notes on Translation and Adaptation**

In addition to the Hebrew texts of Chumash, Rashi and Onkelos, the English texts are divided into seven sections: a.) English translation of the Chumash. b.) “Classic Questions” c.) Summary of the mitzvos found in each Parsha according to the Sefer haChinuch. d.) Commentaries of the Rebbe, divided into four parts: i.) Toras Menachem (explanations at the simple level of Torah interpretation), ii.) Sparks of Chasidus, iii.) The Last Word (practical insights), iv.) Explanations of the name of each Parsha.
**English Translation of Chumash**

In his “Bible Unauthorized,”² Moose³ highlights the pitfalls of translating the Chumash into English:

> “Even the most perfect literal translation would not truly represent the Bible. It was not composed in such a way as to permit a literal translation.

> The original text of the Bible, particularly of the Pentateuch, is in reality no more than a shorthand text, but so cleverly composed that it makes sense even in its shorthand form, while its full meaning is discernable only by making use of the keys incorporated in it through a code of many signs, elaborated for that purpose...

> A literal translation is thus out of the question if one is to understand the true meaning of the Bible. The correct way to understand the Bible is to give each verse in its shorthand text, and then give the traditional commentary...”

To address the above problem, numerous comments have been included within the current translation. All the comments are based on Rashi’s commentary to the Torah, which is the foremost of all rabbinic commentaries.

Until recent years, an English translation of Chumash according to Rashi’s commentary was not available. The translations which did remain loyal to classic rabbinic interpretation adopted a “pluralistic” approach, following whichever commentator provided the most straightforward or aesthetically satisfying interpretation to each verse.

Recently, a number of translations have emerged that are loyal to Rashi, including those of Goldberg⁴, Moore⁵, Herczeg⁶ and Scherman⁷. However, all these works have chosen to draw only from Rashi’s shorter and less elaborate comments. Presumably this is based on a presumption that Rashi’s commentary is a mixture of literal interpretation together with longer, midrashic insights and parables, the latter of which could be omitted in a plain translation.

A cornerstone of the Rebbe’s analysis is that all of Rashi’s words are essential to a basic understanding of the text. Therefore, if Rashi on occasion makes a seemingly elaborate comment, or cites a midrashic teaching, this in no way represents a temporary deviation from his remit to “explain the simple meaning of scripture.” Rather, each comment, however elaborate it may be, is required in order to understand the literal meaning of scripture.⁸

Therefore, in the current translation—which is entirely new—we have attempted to incorporate many more of Rashi’s comments than in previous works. Ideas from Rashi have

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2. *In the Beginning—The Bible Unauthorized* by A. H. Moose (pp. 23-24, 28). First published in 1942. Revised edition by David Sternlight Ph.D., published by Thirty Seven Books, 2001. This work was promoted by the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe (see his *Igros Kodesh* vol. 7, p. 399).
8. See *Klalei Rashi* chap. 1.
been placed in brackets to distinguish them from the words of scripture.

Obviously it has not been possible to include all of Rashi’s comments in a translation, but it is hoped that the numerous additional comments which have been added will give the reader a greater appreciation of the Chumash as it has been learned classically for hundreds of years.

The translation itself has been written in a contemporary style, attempting to make the words of Torah relevant to the modern reader. Nevertheless, every attempt has been made to remain loyal to scripture. Unlike Kaplan⁹, we have not omitted awkward words or abandoned translation for idiom. However, we have also rejected the opposite extreme exemplified by Scherman⁷, where the precise sequence of words within each verse is preserved, and loyalty to original Hebrew grammar has led to abnormal English usage.

In addition, the text has been punctuated and paragraphed at the discretion of the translator, following the precedent of Kaplan and Scherman. Headings have been inserted within the English translation, to focus the attention of the reader, in a similar fashion to Kaplan. Practical mitzvos have been “bulleted” to highlight their significance.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

Due to limitations of space and for the sake of clarity the following guidelines were followed:

a.) The issues discussed are limited to those which are analyzed in the Sichos adapted within “Toras Menachem.”

b.) The commentators quoted are usually those cited in the original Sichos.

c.) The commentators’ words are paraphrased, rather than translated (with the exception of Rashi’s words, which are usually translated).

d.) The commentators are depicted as “debating” a particular “Classic Question.” However, in most cases this “debate” is somewhat artificial, since each commentator will invariably be discussing a range of issues in the original text from which the comment cited here will be a tiny portion.

e.) Sometimes, the ideas are arranged so that one commentator appears to “pick up” where the previous comment finished, which may not be the case in the original.

f.) Each commentator is depicted as answering a particular “Classic Question,” though, in the original, he may not have been addressing this question directly.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

Only a small fraction of the Rebbe’s published teachings were actually penned by the Rebbe himself. The vast majority of his works are transcripts of public talks which were transcribed by Chasidim (hanachos¹⁰). A significant number of these talks were

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¹⁰. These have been collected and published in two major works: *Sichos Kodesh* (50 volumes), containing public talks from the years 5710-5741 (1950-1981), published in 1985-7, and *Hisvaduyos*, containing public talks from the years 5742-5752 (1982-1992), published by Va’ad Hanachos Belahak (43 volumes).
reconstructed by a team of scholars, with numerous cross-references to classic rabbinic texts, and edited extensively by the Rebbe for publication (Likutei Sichos\textsuperscript{11} and Sefer Hasichos\textsuperscript{12}).

The Sicha has a distinct style, described succinctly by Solomon\textsuperscript{13}:

“The genre of edited Sicha usually comprised inaugural questions and explorations of themes, tentative hypotheses, subsequent redefinition and restatement of the Sicha’s central concern, and a critical elucidation of the subject matter under analysis, thus facilitating the resolution of initial dilemmas.”

The introductory sections of a Sicha (the “inaugural questions and explorations of themes”) are often extremely complicated. The Rebbe may ask as many as ten or fifteen sequential questions, each accompanied by numerous proofs and logical substantiation. Often, these questions focus on hairsplitting details (described by Sacks\textsuperscript{14} as “microscopic tensions”) within the phraseology of source texts. In the light of such an intellectually demanding introduction, some effort is required to appreciate the “tentative hypotheses” which follow.

To reduce the level of complexity, most English adaptations have focussed on delivering only the “critical elucidation” which lies at the heart of a Sicha. This however, diminishes the impact of the ideas substantially, as the solution is no longer seen to resolve a host of “initial dilemmas.” Thus, Solomon\textsuperscript{15} criticizes such adaptations as being “skeletal.”

In this edition, we have attempted to preserve, to a considerable extent, the “explorations of themes” and analysis which occurs at the beginning of a Sicha. In order to simplify matters, sources which are cited in the Sicha have been recorded separately in the section entitled “Classic Questions.” This enables the reader to first familiarize himself with the rabbinic debate which is to be discussed in the Sicha, enabling the Sicha to be adapted in a more succinct form.

Nevertheless, numerous questions, hypotheses and their solutions have been omitted for the sake of brevity and clarity. Thus, the reader should bear in mind that the English adaptation contains but a few ideas which have been extracted from a Sicha which, hopefully, form a self-contained argument in themselves. Obviously, the adaptations differ in style tremendously from the original Sichos and, besides the omissions, the sequence of arguments has often been edited to be compatible with the format of this work.

Nevertheless, all the ideas contained in this work are to be found in the Rebbe’s published works. The editor has taken extreme care not to add arguments of his own. On a few rare occasions a brief note or cross-reference has been added, delineated clearly by square brackets.

A final note of importance: In addition to drawing from Likutei Sichos, we have also

\textsuperscript{11} Published by Va’ad LeHafetzas Sichos between 1962 and 2001 (39 volumes).
\textsuperscript{12} Containing talks from 5747-5752, published by Va’ad LeHafetzas Sichos in 12 volumes.
\textsuperscript{13} Educational Teachings of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson by Aryeh Solomon (Jason Aronson 2000), page 25.
\textsuperscript{14} Torah Studies by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and British Commonwealth. Published by Lubavitch Foundation UK (1986).
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. p. 324.
referred considerably to *hanachos*, transcripts of the Rebbe’s talks which he did not edit (see note 10 above).

Although these *hanachos* were not edited by the Rebbe, they remain the only extant source of many of his teachings on *Rashi*, and we have relied on them considerably. This decision was largely based on the Rebbe’s own words to a volume of *hanachos* of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn) which he published in 1946:

“Those who transcribed the sichos were veteran chasidim to whom every word and utterance of their Rebbe was holy to them. There is no doubt that they made every possible effort to preserve the wording of their teacher, not to add to or detract from it. While it is possible that, due to the length of the Sicha etc., they erred in transcribing some words...generally speaking, the content is certainly accurate.”

**Sparks of Chasidus**

There is a tradition that, in addition to explaining Chumash at the literal level, *Rashi’s* commentary to the Torah contains allusions to mystical concepts. Thus, virtually every one of the Rebbe’s “*Rashi Sichos*” climaxes in a mystical interpretation based on the teachings of Kabalah and Chasidus. Under the heading of “Sparks of Chasidus” many of these ideas have been included, though they are considerably adapted to be suitable for a reader who has no grounding in Kabalah or Chasidus. Many insights have also been culled from other talks and chasidic discourses of the Rebbe.

**The Last Word**

A further hallmark of the Rebbe’s teachings is a strong emphasis on the practical application of Torah concepts in everyday contemporary life. The Rebbe stated repeatedly that the Hebrew word “Torah” is etymologically connected to the word “Hora’ah,” meaning instruction. According to the Rebbe, no discussion—however sublime it may be—should remain totally academic.

In this vein, we have included many practical insights that are to be found in the Sichos. Once again, limitations of space have forced these ideas to be selected and condensed.

**The Name of the Parsha**

On a regular basis, the Rebbe would refer to the significance of the name of each Parsha, and explain how the name reflects the content of the entire Parsha. Ideas sampled from these sichos have been included at the beginning of each Parsha.

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19. See *Likutei Sichos* vol. 5, p. 57.
**List of Mitzvos**

As an additional aid, a summary of all the mitzvos to be found in each Parsha has been included at the end of each Parsha. The reader should note however that the precise division of these mitzvos is an issue of contention among the commentators. We have followed the system of Sefer Hachinuch, since his codification follows the sequence of the weekly parsha.

**Haftaros**

The text of the Haftaros has been translated according to the interpretation of Metzudos, a pair of commentaries (Metzudas Tziyon and Metzudas David) by Rabbi Yechiel Hillel Altschuler (eighteenth century), which stresses the plain meaning of the text. In a similar vein to our translation to Chumash, numerous small annotations have been included (in brackets) within the translation, to assist the reader in appreciating the text according to its classic, rabbinic interpretation.

At present, we have only included the text of the Haftaros according to Chabad custom. We have also made no reference to the vast body of rabbinic commentary on the Haftaros (with the exception of Metzudos), nor have we attempted to incorporate any of the Rebbe’s teachings on the Haftaros.

**Notes on Transliteration**

We have followed the transliteration system of Dr. Binyamin Kaplan (Tulane University in New Orleans, L.A.), which has been employed recently in a number of Lubavitch publications:

1. Words with a final hei are spelled with a final “h.”
2. “Ei” (the vowel-sound in “weight”) is used for tzeirei.
3. “Ai” is used for the vowel sound in the word “tide.”
4. An apostrophe is used between consecutive vowel sounds, as in “mo’eid.”
5. An “e” is used for a vocalized sheva, e.g. “bemeizid,” not “b’meizid.”
6. “A” is used for kamatz.
7. “O” is used for cholam.
8. “I” is used for chirik.
9. “F” is preferred to “ph.”
10. Doubling of consonants is avoided.
11. “S” is used for saf.
12. “Ch” is used for chaf and ches.

Where it was felt appropriate, various exceptions have been made to the above rules.
VOWELS AND CANTILLATION MARKS

In this edition, the vowels and cantillation marks in the Hebrew text of the Chumash have been edited to be consistent with accurate source-texts. We have followed three sources: 1) Chumash “Torah Temimah”; 2) The well-known “Koren” Tanach; 3) Tanach according to the Aleppo Codex and other manuscripts, edited by Mordechai Breuer (published by Mosad Harav Kook).

When these texts differ, we have followed the majority, unless there was another source (Minchas Shai or similar) that supported the minority version. When Chumash Torah Temimah is contradicted by the other texts and the difference is significant, we indicate one version inside the Chumash, and the other by a footnote.

The above applies for all variations in vowels or cantillation marks, with the exception of meseg (a vertical line under a letter, usually used to denote a secondary accent). Regarding meseg, the following guidelines have been adopted:

1.) A regular “light” meseg, occurring in any open syllable not immediately followed by the primary accent or by another meseg, is printed in every applicable case, and also on the last available syllable, even if there is an available syllable on the previous word (as in 1, unlike 3).

2.) A meseg before hei or ches in words with the roots h-y-h and ch-y-h is likewise printed in every case (as in 1), even in nouns containing these roots (as in 3).

3.) A meseg before two identical letters, the first vocalized with a sheva, is also universally used (as in 1), except for words where the masoretes considered the sheva to be silent (as evidenced by 3).

4.) A meseg in a closed unaccented syllable containing a tenuah gedolah (large vowel) is also always used (following 1), except where using it would require removing a regular light meseg immediately preceding it (found in 3).

5.) A meseg in a closed syllable (known as “keveidah,” heavy) is used based on its occurrence in 3 (unlike 1).

6.) A meseg in an open syllable following the accent is used only if there is more than one source.

7.) A meseg is used on the word “vaihi” if it is accented with a pashta, or hyphenated to the next word.

8.) A meseg before a guttural at the end of a word – follows 3.

9.) Meseg together with sheva – follows 3.

HEBREW TEXT OF RASHI’S COMMENTARY

The Hebrew text of Rashi’s commentary to the Torah has been prepared according to the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s directives, printed in Chumash Shai Lamora, Jerusalem 5763:
a.) The publisher should not deviate from the common text of Rashi’s commentary which is to be found in Chumashim that have been widely used in recent generations. Textual variants should be included only in footnotes.

b.) The fact that Rashi does not usually cite sources for his comments was intentional. Therefore, no references (other than those made by Rashi himself) should be included in the body of the text.

c.) While Rashi did not include punctuation marks etc., their inclusion by the publisher may, perhaps, be justified.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the following people:

Mr. Shmuel Dubosky, for his sustained and dedicated efforts in the editing and critical evaluation of this work; Rabbi Moshe Levin for checking the accuracy of the commentaries and editing the text; Rabbi Mendel Sufrin for checking the accuracy of the English translation of the Chumash. Rabbi Hillel Blesofsky and Mrs. Y. Homnick for checking and proofreading; Rabbi Shmuel Rabin, for editing the vowels and cantillation marks of the Hebrew text.

Rabbi Mordechai Sufrin, Rabbi Shalom Osdoba, Rabbi Heschel Greenberg, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Greenberg, Rabbi Uri Kaploun, Rabbi Daniel Levy for their assistance.

My wife, Chani, for her constant encouragement and emergency proofreading.

My parents and parents-in-law for supporting all my endeavors.

Those who were formative in my education and development are too many to list here, although I would like to make a special mention of my mashpia, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok ("Fitzy") Lipskier, of blessed memory, whose inspiration I live with on a daily basis.

The patron of this edition is Rabbi Meyer Gutnick, who has graciously accepted upon himself the labor and expense of publishing and distributing this work. May this merit be a source of eternal blessing for him and his family.

May we soon merit the true and complete redemption, when all the Jewish people will be free to observe God’s commands and study His Torah.

Rabbi Chaim Miller

20 Menachem Av 5764
Cantillation Marks / תעידי הקיימא

פשיסך עונח ורקע מעון סגולה מענה | מענה רכנית
מזרף פשיסך עונח כשמו וקור�名ו מרובה מאהנה
מענה מאריך|Mמענה מאריך במוך תליהא קפונה
ה遴יהא בורלו יפה מאללא עצלא גרש ברשים
דרטת בריר | יניה ססיק | מודפסים: שלשה
קרני פרעה מרובה כפולה | בחבר ביו:
Blessings on Reading the Torah

The person who is called to the Torah takes hold of the handles of the Sefer Torah with his tallis¹, unrolls the Sefer Torah and, with his tallis (or the belt of the Torah) touches the beginning and end² of the reading. The scroll is then closed, he turns slightly to the right and says:

ברוך אתה לברכתך

The congregation responds:

ברוך אתה לברכתך

The person called to the Torah continues:

ברוך אתה לברכתך

After the reading is complete, the person called to the Torah touches the end and the beginning³ of the reading with his tallis (or belt of the Sefer Torah) and kisses it. He then closes the scroll, turns slightly to the right and says:

ברוך אתה לברכתך

After the reading is complete, the person called to the Torah stays at the bimah until the next reading is concluded (or, if it is the last reading, until the Torah is raised).

¹. Sefer Haminhagim. According to the Rebbe’s personal custom, the handles are held directly, without the tallis in between.
². Sefer Haminhagim. According to the Rebbe’s personal custom, the tallis is used to touch the beginning, the end and then the beginning of the reading again.
³. Sefer Haminhagim. According to the Rebbe’s personal custom, the tallis is used to touch the end, the beginning and then the end of the reading again.
In the early years of his leadership, the Alter Rebbe declared publicly:

“We have to live with the times!”

Through his brother, the Maharil, the senior chasidim discovered that the Rebbe meant that one should live with the Parsha of the week, and the particular Parsha of the day. One should not only study the weekly Parsha, but live with it.

(Hayom Yom, Cheshvan 2)
Why does the Torah begin with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, beis (ב), and not the first letter, alef (א)?

The Jerusalem Talmud suggests that alef would be an inappropriate beginning, since it is the first letter of the word arirah, meaning “cursing.” Beis, on the other hand, begins the word bracha, meaning “blessing” (Chagigah 2:1).

But surely there are many positive words in Hebrew that begin with an alef, and many negative words that begin with a beis? Why should beis be identified with “blessing” in particular?

The fact that the Torah begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, beis, indicates that reading the text is actually the second phase of Torah study. Before a person even looks at the first verse of the Torah, he needs to prepare himself for the experience that he is about to undergo.

Basically, Torah study is somewhat of a paradox. On the one hand, it is a mitzvah that connects a person to God and—as with any mitzvah—the person needs to be aware of this fact to achieve a full “connection.” On the other hand, if a person actually thinks about God while he is studying Torah, he will not be able to concentrate on the subject at hand.

The solution to this problem is through preparation. Before even opening the book, a person should take a few moments to reflect that he is about to study God’s wisdom that has been “condensed” into a humanly intelligible form. He is about to bind his mind into a total union with God.

Of course, when he actually studies the Torah, he will not be able to meditate on this fact, since he will be concentrating on the text. Therefore, it is crucial that a person has the correct intentions before he begins.

And that is why the Torah begins with a beis, to hint to its reader that study is only the second phase of this mitzvah.

Through studying Torah with the appropriate preparations blessings will come into a person’s life. Thus, the Jerusalem Talmud taught that the beis at the beginning of the Torah stands for bracha—blessing.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 1ff; ibid. p. 326)
**Why does the Torah begin with the creation of the world?** (v. 1)

**Rashi:** Rabbi Yitzchak said: Surely, the Torah should have begun from the words, “This month shall be for you...” (Shemos 12:2), the first commandment which the Jewish people were given. Why does it begin with “In the beginning?”

The reason is [conveyed by the verse]: “He declared to His people the power of His works in order to give them the inheritance of the nations” (Psalms 111:6), i.e., if the nations of the world will say to the Jewish people, “You are robbers, for you seized the land of the seven nations”?

**Nachalas Yaakov:** Rashi was not suggesting that the section from Bereishis until “This month shall be for you...,” should not be written at all. Rather, his question was: Why did the Torah begin with discursive narrative rather than with its primary content, the mitzvos. The account of creation, together with all the stories that follow it could have been included at the end of the Chumash, or in a separate book.

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**What is Troubling Rashi?** (v. 1)

**Sifsei Chachamim** writes that Rashi was troubled by the inclusion of stories in the Torah, which is primarily a code of mitzvos.

However, it is difficult to accept that this was the only point troubling Rashi, since there are many other stories written throughout the Torah whose necessity he does not challenge. Therefore, the inclusion of a story does not appear to be a “problem” which requires explanation.

One could argue [as Nachalas Yaakov does] that Rashi was not troubled by the actual inclusion of these stories, but rather, he was concerned why the Torah should begin with narrative, rather than with its primary content, the mitzvos. The account of creation and other stories should have been included at a later point in the Chumash.

But if this indeed is Rashi’s question, then what is his answer? According to Rashi, the account of creation was written here, at the beginning of the Torah, to answer a potential challenge from non-Jewish nations that the Land of Israel was unlawfully possessed. Our response to the nations—that the land was given to us by its Creator—would be equally valid wherever it was recorded in the Torah; the fact that it was recorded at the beginning is not crucial to the argument. So, if Rashi was merely questioning the position in which the account of creation was included [as Nachalas Yaakov argues], then he does not appear to have provided us with a solution.

**Further Questions on Rashi**

a.) Rashi suggests that the Torah should have begun from the words, “This month shall be for you” (Shemos 12:2), because it is the first mitzvah. However, in the book of Bereishis there are no fewer than three mitzvos recorded: the mitzvah of having children (1:28), the mitzvah of circumcision (17:10), and the prohibition against eating the sciatic nerve (32:33). How could Rashi suggest that the Torah should have only begun with Shemos chapter 12, omitting the above mitzvos?

b.) According to the seven Noachide laws which are binding on non-Jews, robbery is prohibited. Yet, we do not find that any nation was punished for conquering another because it was an act of robbery. On what basis could the nations challenge the Jewish people that “You are robbers, for you seized the land of the seven nations?”
Creation: The First Day—Light & Darkness

In the beginning of God’s creation of the heavens* and the earth (and their contents), 1 when the earth was astoundingly desolate, darkness was on the surface of the deep (waters that covered the land), and the (throne of) God’s glory hovered over the water (at the command of God’s) breath,

• Why was the world created? (v.1)

Rashi: The word Bereishis is crying out for a Midrashic interpretation: Bereishis means “two beginnings” (משה יב), suggesting that God created the world for the sake of the Torah which is called, “the beginning of His way” (Prov. 8:22), and for the sake of the Jewish people who are called, “the first of His grain” (Jer. 2:3).

Maskil LeDavid: Since the verse employs the singular (“in the beginning”) from where did Rashi conclude that there are two beginnings, the Torah and the Jewish people?

However, Rashi is referring to the Jewish people as they are learning and observing the Torah, i.e. as they form two parts of one greater whole.

The Explanation

The Torah contains the collected teachings given to the Jewish people. Since the Jewish people first assumed their current national character through the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah, Rashi was troubled, “Surely, the Torah should have begun from the words, ‘This month shall be for you...’; i.e. the first commandment which the Jewish people were given.” The stories before the period of the Exodus did not occur to members of the Jewish nation, so why are they recorded in the Torah which is called, “the first of His grain” (Jer. 2:3).

Even the mitzvos which are recorded in the book of Bereishis were not given to the Jewish people, but rather to Avraham and his family etc. Thus, our obligation to circumcise and to refrain from eating the sciatic nerve comes from Sinai, and not from God’s words to Avraham etc.*

The Last Word

According to Rashi (v. 1) the book of Bereishis was written to provide a response to the non-Jewish nations about our claim to the Land of Israel. However, it appears far-fetched to suggest that the entire book of Bereishis, and all the passages up to chapter 12 of Shemos, were written merely to answer a question that might be posed by non-Jews!

In truth, there is an extremely powerful message in these words for Jewish people, a lesson so profound that Rashi deemed it appropriate to form the “introduction” to his commentary. Namely, despite the fact that the Jewish people are but a tiny minority, the Torah gives us the strength not to be intimidated by the nations of the world. At the very outset of Torah study, the Jew learns that he will be able to defend himself from the criticism of non-Jews, and observe the mitzvos proudly, with the full awareness that God created the world for this very purpose (see Rashi to v.1 at top of page).

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Bereishis 5741)

Sparks of Chasidus

• “In the beginning... the earth was astoundingly desolate.” God’s plan is that a home should be made for Him in the lowest realms (Midrash Tanchuma, Naso 16). Therefore, the world began with utter desolation—the lowest of all existence—into which light, Torah and the Jewish people were then added.

• “The (throne of) God’s glory hovered over the water (at the command of God’s) breath.” Our sages said that this “breath” refers to the “spirit of Mashiach” (Bereishis Rabah 2:4, 8:1). From this we see that the concept of Mashiach is even more primal than that of light, for the “spirit of Mashiach” (v. 2) preceded the creation of light (v. 3).

• “The (throne of) God’s glory hovered.” Kabalah teaches that the purpose of creation is to elevate 288 Godly sparks which are trapped in the physical world. This number is hinted to by the word נְחָשׁ (hovered”) which contains the letters נחש, equaling 288.

(Based on Sefes Haschis 5751, p. 63; ibid. p. 804; ibid 5752, p. 459)

* See Sichas Shabbos Nitzavim 5745, ch. 25. ** Although the Torah does not repeat the prohibition of eating the sciatic nerve after the Jewish people assumed a national identity, it nevertheless comes from Sinai. Thus, if the book of Bereishis was omitted—as Rashi suggests—details of these mitzvos would have been included at some later point.
Why did God separate the light from the darkness? (v. 4)

Rashi: Here too, we need the words of the Midrash: He saw that it was not proper for the wicked to use it, so He separated it for the righteous in the future.

According to its literal meaning, the explanation of the verse is as follows: He saw that it was good, and it was not fitting that it (the light) and darkness should function in a jumble, so He assigned for one its boundary by day, and for the other one its boundary by night.

This could cause the non-Jewish nations to complain, “You are robbers!” For by conquering the Land of Israel, the Jewish people “robbed” all the nations of the world from ever identifying themselves as robbers!” For by conquering the Land of Israel, the Jewish people should inherit the land. The permanent acquisition of the land by the Jewish people is thus required to explain how this occurred in actuality, i.e. how Avraham’s descendants went down into Egypt and were enslaved. Then we read finally, at the beginning of the book of Shemos, how the exile ended and the Jewish people left Egypt to receive the Torah and conquer the Land of Israel.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, pp. 1ff; Sichos Shabbos Bereishis 5726)

Light & Darkness (v. 4)

Bartenura writes that Rashi cites the Midrash in his commentary to verse 4, in order to explain why the Torah states, “God separated the light from the darkness,” a detail which seems to have already occurred in verses 2 and 3.

However, Bartenura fails to explain why Rashi chose to cite the Midrashic interpretation before he explains the verse at the literal level. Surely Rashi should have written the straightforward explanation first, before citing the more esoteric words of the Midrash?

Rashi’s Problem

Rashi was troubled why the verse states, “God said, ‘Let there be light!’—and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated…” The term “the light” appears to be superfluous here, as the verse could have stated more simply, “God saw that it was good.”

This led Rashi to the conclusion that, here in verse 4, God must have perceived some additional “good” quality within the light which was not yet apparent in verse 3. Therefore, in addition to telling us that “there was light” (v. 3), the Torah adds here that “God saw that the light was good” (v. 4), suggesting that within the light an especially good quality was to be found.
3 God said, “Let there be light!”—and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good, and God separated the (times of) light from the (times of) darkness (in the following manner:)

5 God called out to the light (and assigned it to the) day, and He called out to the darkness (and assigned it to) the night.*

It became evening and it became morning—one day.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

1. **Why does the verse write, “one day” and not “the first day”? (v. 5)**

**RASHI:** To fit in with the context of the chapter, the verse should have stated, “the first day,” as is written regarding the other days: “second,” “third,” “fourth.” Why did Scripture write “one”?

Because God was alone in His world, since the angels were not created until the second day. This is explained in Bereishis Rabah (3:8).

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In other words, the light contained two qualities: a.) Its natural property of illumination; b.) A deeper aspect of “goodness.” Rashi explains that God separated out the latter from the former, to be reserved for the righteous in the future.

We have thus answered Bartenura’s question (why the Torah needs to repeat the separation of the light in verse 4), for the separation here refers to a separation within the light itself; and clearly, this information is not conveyed by verses 2 and 3.

Furthermore, we have also explained why the Midrashic interpretation is so crucial at the literal level (such that Rashi cites it first), since only the Midrashic interpretation explains how an actual “separation” took place within a single entity. According to the plain meaning however—that God separated the times of light from the times of darkness (see Rashi)—the verse is speaking more of an “allocation” or “redistribution,” rather than a genuine “separation.”

**WHY WAS GOD ALONE ON THE FIRST DAY?**

Based on the above, we can explain a difficulty with Rashi’s comment to verse 5. The verse states, “It became evening and it became morning, one day.” Rashi questions why the Torah employs the expression “one day” rather than saying “the first day,” and he answers that this alludes to the Midrashic teaching that God was totally “alone in His world” on that day.

This begs the question: Since God had already created light on the first day, then surely He was not alone, since He was accompanied by His first creation: the light. Why does Rashi write that God was “alone in His world.”

The answer to this problem is to be found in the nature of light:

It was explained above that the light which was created on the first day

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* See Sichas Shabbos Bereishis 5743, ch. 36.
grant man free choice. For if the inner purpose of every object was plainly creation, how every entity that exists is, in essence, totally one with God.

b.) An inner, deeper “good” that was separated out.

had two properties: a.) Its superficial quality of physical illumination, and b.) An inner, deeper “good” that was separated out.

Therefore Rashi writes that, despite the existence of light on the first day, “God was alone in the world,” for, the inner light revealed how God is truly at one with His creations to the extent that there is “nothing but God.” I.e. despite the fact that creation had started on the first day, God was still “alone in His world,” since the inner light revealed how everything that existed was totally one with Him.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 1ff)
1:6 God said, “Let the firmament (materialize) between the waters, and let it separate between (the upper) waters and (the lower) waters.”

7 God made the firmament (fixed in its position). He separated between the waters that were below the firmament and the waters that were above the firmament (by suspending the upper waters in mid-air), and it remained that way. 8 God called the firmament “sky.”

It became evening and it became morning—a second day.

1:9 God said, “Let the water that is below the skies gather into one location, and let the dry land appear!”—and that is what happened.

10 God called the dry land “earth,” and He called the gathering of the waters “seas.” God saw that (the work of the second and third days) was good.

11 God said, “Let the earth be covered with vegetation, plants that reproduce by seed and trees (with edible bark that tastes like) fruit, which produce fruit of their own species containing their own seed, over the earth!”—and that is what happened. 12 The earth germinated vegetation, plants that reproduce by seed of their own species and fruit-producing trees, in which its seeds of its own species are found.

God saw that it was good.

13 It became evening and it became morning—a third day.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why did God call the firmament “skies” (v. 8)

Rashi: The Hebrew word for “skies,” שמים, is a combination of different words: נהג (“bear water”), נאם (“there is water”), נאם (“fire and water”). He mixed them together and made the skies from them (See “The Last Word” below).

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The Last Word

The Four Elements

During the first three days of Creation, God distinguished the four elements: earth (v. 9-10), water (v. 6-7), air (alluded to by the word מים in v. 2) and fire (see Rashi to v. 8). In the following letter, this concept is reconciled with the view of Science that there are over 100 elements:

“Modern chemistry does not recognize over one hundred basic elements but a considerably fewer number if matter is to be reduced to its basic components or particles. For the so-called elements themselves are made up of atoms, which are the smallest particles into which an element can be divided and yet retain its properties and characteristics, but the atoms themselves are further made up of smaller particles, such as electrons, protons, neutrons.

“Thus the answer to your question lies in the proper definition of the terms under discussion. For as indicated above, the so-called element is not the basic particle matter. Even the term ‘atom’ which originally meant something invisible, is an archaism now employed only for convenience, as it no longer corresponds to its original meaning. Similarly when we speak of an individual as being an element of society this does not mean that the individual himself is not composite.

“This should be born in mind when we consider the term Yesodoth in the Zohar, Midrash Rabba, Kabbalah, etc. and of course, in the Tanya and other Chabad sources. This does not mean something which under normal circumstances is indivisible or unchangeable, [everything that exists in the world.] I might also mention that there is another school of thought that conceives these four Yesodoth, not in their physical aspects, but rather qualitatively, this is to say, ‘fire’ in the sense of the properties of heat and dryness; ‘water’, in the sense of coolness and humidity.”

(Excerpt from a letter written by the Rebbe)
When were the luminaries created? (v. 14)

RASHI: They were created on the first day, and on the fourth day, He commanded them to be suspended in the sky.

Similarly, all the creations of the skies and the earth were created on the first day, and each one was fixed in its proper place on the day that was decreed upon it. Verse 1 is thus to be read, “In the beginning of God’s creation of the skies and the earth and their contents.”

GOD’S METHOD OF CREATING THE WORLD (v. 14)

Rashi explains (v. 14) that everything was created on the first day, and merely “fixed” on subsequent days. From this it follows that God’s utterances were only made on the subsequent days where it was necessary to change various details of the creation. Those details which did not need to be changed were thus not “mentioned” by God in His utterances. This explains why, for example, God did not say, “Let there be fire,” since the nature of fire did not change after creation. This is in contrast to “earth” which was mentioned (on the second day and third days) since its nature changed when it began to emerge from the water and sprout vegetation.

One might ask: since the above concept is crucial to our understanding of the creation story, why did Rashi not mention it at the beginning of his commentary when he describes the events of the first day?

The reason why Rashi only mentions this concept here for the first time is because there has been no indication in scripture up to this point that the entire creation was already in existence on the first day. God said, “Let there be light... Let the earth be covered, etc.” suggesting that these entities were appearing for the first time. Only when Rashi encountered the phrase, “The luminaries shall be positioned in the firmament” (v. 14), which suggests the positioning of previously existing luminaries, did Rashi come to the conclusion that “all the creations of the skies and the earth were created on the first day, and each one was fixed in its proper place on the day that was decreed upon it.”
The Fourth Day—Sun, Moon & Stars

1:14 God said, “The luminaries shall be positioned in the firmament of the skies to separate between the day and the night! They will serve as omens (of bad events, when there is an eclipse, and will determine the time of the Jewish) festivals, (and the sun and moon will define) the days and years! They will (also) act as luminaries in the firmament of the skies to shed light upon the earth!” —and that is what happened.

15 God made two large luminaries (but since they clashed, He reduced one in size. Thus,) the large luminary was to rule over the day and the small luminary was to rule over the night, and (He made) the stars (in order to appease the moon). 17 God placed them in the firmament of the skies to shed light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate between the light and between the darkness.

18 God saw that it was good.

19 It became evening and it became morning—a fourth day.

The Fifth Day—Small Creatures, Fish & Birds

20 God said, “Let the waters produce swarms of (small) living creatures, and let birds fly over the earth, across the firmament of the skies!”

Toras Menachem

The Last Word

Orbit of the Celestial Bodies

You touch upon the question of whether the sun revolves around the earth or vice versa, in view of the fact that you heard from a college student that "the truth is that the earth revolves around the sun."

It greatly surprises me that, according to your letter, the student declared that science has resolved that the earth revolves around the sun. The surprising thing is that a person making such a declaration would be about one half a century behind the times insofar as the position of modern science is concerned. For it is approximately one half a century ago that the theory of Relativity was expounded, which was accepted by all scientists as the basis for all the branches of science. One of the basic elements of this theory is that when two bodies in space are in motion relative to one another (actually the theory was initiated on the basis of the movements of stars, planets, the earth, etc.), science declares with "absolute certainty" that from the scientific point of view, both possibilities are equally valid, namely that the earth revolves around the sun, or the sun revolves around the earth.

An essential point in the above conclusion is that it is not based on a lack of more definitive knowledge, but this is the inevitable conclusion based upon the present position of science, namely that in principle it is impossible that it could be scientifically proven which of the two, the sun or the earth, revolves around the other.

Needless to say, any particular scientist, like any individual, is entitled to his own opinion as to which alternative he prefers, or that he simply is inclined to believe in one rather than in the other. However, this is only an expression of a personal preference which any individual human being is entitled to. But it would not be true to say that science has resolved the question in favor of one school of thought against the other. To be sure, there were scientists who made such declarations over one half century ago, as mentioned above, and this provides at least some explanation why the textbooks in the elementary schools have still retained that outdated position. However, it is surprising that a college student, who has already passed through high school and has entered college, and should therefore have some knowledge of the theory of Relativity, should attribute to science such an unscientific and obsolete statement.

To sum up the above, it is clear that where one says that it is possible to be a scientist and accept the idea that the sun revolves around the earth, and another one says that science rejects this idea (I emphasize the word science, as distinct from scientist, as a human being—no more, as mentioned above)—the first one has both his feet firmly on a modern scientific foundation, while the second one appears to have remained in the world and time of Copernicus.

(Excerpted from a letter written by the Rebbe on 23rd of Elul, 5723 [1962].)
What is the unique quality of the fifth day? (v. 20-23)

**TALMUD:** Anybody born on the fifth day of the week will have a tendency to be kind, because fish and birds were created on this day and fish and birds do not need to work hard for their sustenance, but are fed purely by the kindness of God (Shabbos 156a and Rashi ibid.).
21 God created the large sea fish, all the creeping living creatures that the waters produced in swarms, according to their species, and all the winged birds according to their species.

   God saw that it was good.

22 God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply upon the earth!”

23 It became evening and it became morning—a fifth day.

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THE SIXTH DAY—ANIMALS & MAN

1:24 God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their (various) species, cattle, creeping things and wild animals of the earth according to their (various) species”—and that is what happened.

25 God made the wild animals of the earth according to their (various) species, the cattle according to their (various) species, and all the creeping things of the ground according to their (various) species.

   God saw that it was good.

26 God (consulted the Heavenly Court and) said, “Let us make man (Adam) in our mold, (intellectually endowed) like us, and (if he is worthy) let him rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the skies, over the cattle, over all the earth and over all the creeping things that creep on the earth!”

27 God created man (by hand) in (the) mold (which was made for) him. The mold (which He used) to create him (resembled the image of) God. (On that day) He created (both) male and female.

28 God blessed them. God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth! (Let the man be responsible for) taking control of it! Rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the skies and over all the wild animals that move upon the earth!”

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THE LAST WORD

“BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY” (V. 28)

The first mitzvah in the Torah is to be fruitful and multiply (v. 28). To rear a child, to initiate him or her into the Jewish faith, to educate children in Torah and mitzvos—this is true nachas (satisfaction). Being childless, no matter how much freedom it allows, is no comparison.

One who fears that he will not be able to cope financially unless he uses birth control is assuming that he succeeds through his own efforts alone. True, Torah requires that man work to provide for his family, but it is a primary tenet of Judaism that all success comes from God, that His blessings give sustenance and not one’s own efforts alone. It is God who provides for all of His creatures; another mouth will not overburden Him.

Our Sages also explain that Mashiach will not come until all the souls have descended into this world (Yevamos 62a). Through having children the time of his coming is hastened. May it be speedily in our days.

(Sichas Shabbos Parshas Naso 5740, Rosh Chodesh Shevat 5741)
What were Adam and Chava allowed to eat? (v. 29-30)

**RASHI**: The Torah states that vegetable matter should be food, “for you, for all the wild animals etc.” (v. 29-30). I.e. [the Torah] equated cattle and the animals to man regarding the food that they were permitted to eat. He did not allow Adam and his wife to kill a creature and to eat its flesh. They were only permitted to eat the vegetation, as were the animals.

Later, He permitted the sons of Noach to eat flesh, as it is written (9:3): “Every creeping thing that is alive, etc.” Like the green herbs, which I permitted to the first man, I have given you everything.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **GUR ARYEH**: When Rashi writes that, “The Torah equated cattle and the animals to man,” he means that just like animals were only allowed to eat vegetation, likewise man was only permitted to eat vegetable matter.

- **LEVUSH HA’OHRAH**: The argument of Gur Aryeh is untenable. How can he write that “animals were only allowed to eat vegetation,” when many animals do indeed kill other animals for food?

- **MIZRACHI**: Rather, Rashi’s comparison is: Just as animals were not permitted to kill humans, so too, humans were not permitted to kill animals.

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part of their personality. Thus, there remains an advantage to the general kind nature shared by all Jews, for it is a tangible character trait which expresses itself openly.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 10ff.)

**The Diet of Man and the Animals (v. 29-30)**

*Rashi* writes, “The Torah equated cattle and the animals to man regarding the food that they were permitted to eat,” that they were only allowed to eat vegetation, and not meat.

The following points, however, remain to be clarified:

a.) *Rashi’s* commentary to the Torah was written to explain the simple meaning of scripture, i.e. information which is crucial for a basic understanding of the verses. What question is *Rashi* answering?

b.) The Torah states explicitly, that “I have hereby given you every plant...and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit! They shall be food for you” (v. 29-30). From the fact that God makes no mention of meat, it is obvious that man was required to be a vegetarian. Why does Rashi feel it necessary to prove this by comparing man to animals?

c.) What exactly is meant by the comparison, “The Torah equated cattle and the animals to man regarding the food that they were permitted to eat”?

d.) *Rashi* writes that, “He did not allow Adam and his wife to kill a creature and to eat its flesh,” which suggests that they were allowed to eat meat from an animal that died by itself, or was killed by another animal. What led *Rashi* to this conclusion?

**The Explanation**

On reading verses 29 and 30, *Rashi* was troubled by two questions:

a.) Of what relevance is the diet of Adam and Chava to the account of the creation of the world?

b.) Why did God inform Adam and Chava about the diet of the animals?

Due to the force of these questions, *Rashi* came to the conclusion that the Torah could not merely be teaching us some details of dietary laws that pertain to man and animals (as the commentators suggest—see “Classic Questions”). Rather, the Torah clarifies here the importance and priority of man above the other creations:
God said, “I have hereby given you every plant that reproduces by seed that is upon the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit! They shall be food for you, for all the wild animals of the earth, for all the birds of the skies, and for everything which moves upon the earth that is alive! The food (for humans and animals) shall be plant vegetation (only)!”—and that is what happened.

God saw everything that He had made, and—look!—it was very good.

It became evening and it became morning—the sixth day.

The Seventh Day—God Rests from Work

The skies, the earth and all their numerous components were completed.

On the seventh day, God completed His work that He had made. On the seventh day, He rested from all His work that He had done.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

When did God finish working? (v. 2)

Rashi: Rabbi Shimon said: A man of flesh and blood, who cannot judge his times and his moments, must add some time from the week to Shabbos. God, who can judge His times and His moments, entered a hairsbreadth into Shabbos, and it appeared as if He completed the work on that day.

Rashi’s First Interpretation

Another explanation: What was the world lacking? Rest. When Shabbos came, rest came. The work was completed and finished.

Chizkuni: The verse states that God only finished working on Shabbos, which seems to suggest that some of the work was carried out on Shabbos itself. However, in truth, it only appeared that God finished the work on Shabbos. For on Friday it was not yet clear whether God had finished working, or whether He was going to do more work the following day. Only on Shabbos did it become apparent that God had finished working.

Ibn Ezra: Thus, the verse should not be translated, “On the seventh day, God finished his work,” but rather, “By the seventh day, God finished his work.”

Sforno: God actually finished work at the beginning of the seventh day, but He only worked for an infinitesimally small moment, as our Sages expressed with the term “with a hairsbreadth.”

Rashi did God work on Shabbos? (v. 2)

Rashi’s comment to verse 2 appears to contradict itself. First he writes that God’s work activities “entered a hairsbreadth into Shabbos,” which suggests that, for a miniscule amount of time, God was actually working on Shabbos [c.f. Sforno]. But then, Rashi states that it only “appeared as if He completed the work on that day” [c.f. Chizkuni].

Both of these interpretations are difficult to accept since:

a.) How could God possibly work on Shabbos, even for a fraction of the day, when work is prohibited the entire day?

b.) If God only appeared to work on Shabbos, then why does the Torah state that “on the seventh day, God completed His work,” when in truth He completed it on the sixth day?

Rashi’s First Interpretation

The Torah appears to be extremely ambiguous about the precise point when the creation was completed. First we read that on the sixth day, “God saw everything that He had made...The skies, the earth and all their multitudes were completed” (1:31-2:1). But then, the Torah continues that it was only “on the seventh day” that “God completed His work that He had made” (v. 2).

So, when did God actually finish, on the sixth day or the seventh?

To answer this question, Rashi cites the teaching of Rabbi Shimon, that God can perform acts with such extreme precision that he is able to “enter a hairsbreadth into Shabbos,” continuing to do work without actually transgressing Shabbos. This explains why the Torah states, “on the seventh day, God completed His work that He had made,” (despite the fact that “the skies, the earth and all their multitudes were completed,” on...
the sixth day), because God did in fact carry out a small amount of work on the seventh day. Nevertheless, it was such a miniscule amount of work that it did not constitute a desecration of Shabbos.

To illustrate this point Rashi described it as a “hairsbreadth” of work, since a single hair is virtually imperceptible on its own, and only becomes noticeable when combined with other hairs. Similarly, the work that God did on Shabbos was so miniscule it was totally imperceptible.

Nevertheless, Rashi writes that it still “appeared as if He completed the work on that day”—despite the fact that only a minuscule amount of work was done on the seventh day—since, technically speaking, the work was finished then.

**Rashi’s Second Interpretation**

In the final analysis however, the above explanation is not completely satisfying since:

a.) The verse, “on the seventh day, God completed His work that He had made” is rendered somewhat non-literally, to read, “in the first few moments of the seventh day, God completed his work, etc.”

b.) The above statement still contradicts the declaration in verses 1:31 and 2:1 that, “God saw everything that He had made...The skies, the earth and all their multitudes were completed,” already on the sixth day.

Therefore, Rashi brought a second explanation: “What was the world lacking? Rest. When Shabbos came, rest came. The work was completed and finished.” I.e. the creation of the world was indeed complete on the sixth day, and the only additional “creation” that was added on the seventh day was “rest.”

However, this interpretation is rather difficult to accept since, at the literal level, “rest” is not a type of creation or work, but rather, the absence of work. It is thus inconsistent with the verse which states, “On the seventh day, God completed His work that He had made,” for it turns out that God did not do any real work on the seventh day.

Since this interpretation is less plausible than the first, Rashi cited it last.

**WHAT WORK DID GOD DO?**

Returning to the first interpretation of Rashi, we are left with the question: What work did God do for that momentary instant of time during the first Shabbos of creation? And why was it not considered to be a transgression of Shabbos?

On the sixth day God created only man and the animals. In chapter 3, verse 8, Rashi writes that Adam and Chava sinned during the tenth hour of the day, from which it is obvious that they must have been created before this time. Thus, in the remaining period of the day God would have been completing His other work of that day: creating the animals (which He had begun before the creation of man), “establishing their form and stature” (Rashi to 1:25). Therefore, we can presume that the “hairsbreadth” of work during Shabbos signified the completion of the animal kingdom.

Since the work done on Shabbos was merely the completion of acts carried out during the week, it was not considered to be a desecration of Shabbos.

One might ask: One of the forbidden types of work on Shabbos is makeh bepatish, completing the formation of an object with a final blow of the hammer. From this we see that even the completion of work is forbidden on Shabbos, so how could God complete His formation of the animals on Shabbos?

It could be argued that a person is only liable for makeh bepatish when
3 God blessed the seventh day (that a double portion of manna should descend in its honor) and He sanctified it (that no manna should descend on Shabbos itself), because on that (day) God rested from all His work that He had created, (for the remaining work which was left) to be done (on Shabbos, He carried out on Friday instead, by doubling His workload).

4 These (above mentioned details) are the chronology of the skies and the earth when they were created, on the (first) day when God, Almighty God, made earth and skies (and the subsequent days when He materialized the creations).

 DETAILS OF THE CREATION OF MAN & WOMAN

(The Torah now adds further details concerning the creation of man and woman, mentioned above, 1:27)

3 (The vegetation had only germinated within the ground, but) none of the trees of the field were yet (sprouting) on the (surface of the) earth, nor had any vegetation of the field yet grown, because God, Almighty God, had not brought rain upon the earth (since) there was no man to (appreciate the rain and) work the soil.

6 (God caused) a mist to ascend from the earth (moistening the clouds in order to) soak the entire

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why had God not sent rain? (v. 5)

Rashi: He had not caused it to rain, because there was no man to work the soil, and no one recognized the benefit of rain. But when man came and recognized that it is a necessity for the world, he prayed for it. Then rain came down, and the trees and the herbs sprouted (See “Sparks of Chasidus”).

TORAS MENACHEM

The Last Word

Why did God deem it necessary to continue working all the way up to Shabbos, and even to extend His work by a hairsbreadth into Shabbos? What was gained by this feat of precision?

God was teaching a lesson to mankind about the preciousness of time. So long as a person has the opportunity to carry out his Divinely ordained mission in this world, he should utilize every moment in order to realize its fullest potential, pushing every allocation of time to its utmost limits.

Alternatively: a person might bemoan the fact that we are living in such a spiritually desensitized generation. Gone are the days of the prophets and Talmudic sages, when the Jewish people served God with the utmost fervor! What could our lowly generation possibly achieve beyond the accomplishments of our ancestors?

The answer to this question can be derived from God’s conduct when creating the world. Just like we see that every moment was precious to God, to the extent that he continued working to the very last opportunity—likewise the final work of the very last generations is of paramount importance. (Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 24ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

“(God caused) A Mist to Ascend…” (v. 6)

When a person prays to God, it is not merely that God “listens” to his prayers from above and responds accordingly. Rather, the process of prayer itself refines the person spiritually, rendering him a suitable receptacle for additional Divine blessings. The receipt of a blessing is thus the direct outcome of sincere, focused prayer.

This process is mirrored in the physical world by the method in which rain is formed: Rain is not a new entity that is formed in heaven, but rather, the same “mist” that ascends from the ground, forms clouds and eventually condenses into rain which showers back down onto the earth.

In this light, we can appreciate the inner intention of Rashi’s comment (v. 5) that the first rain shower only occurred in response to Adam’s prayer. (Sefer Hama’amorim Melukat vol. 4, pp. 254-5)
How was man formed? (v. 7)

RASHI: God gathered soil from the entire earth from all four directions, so that wherever man would die, the earth would accept him for burial.

Another explanation: God took soil from the place of which it is said, “You shall make Me an altar of earth” (Shemos 20:21), to symbolize that it [the earth of the altar] should be an atonement for our case however, God only performed a miniscule portion of the act on Shabbos.

Why didn’t God create man in the Garden of Eden? (v. 8)

CHIZKUNI: Because then man would have thought that the entire world was as beautiful as the Garden of Eden. Therefore, God first created man outside the Garden, to see how unpleasant the world really was, and then He placed him in the haven of the Garden.

When did God create the Garden of Eden? (v. 8)

TALMUD: Seven things were [intended to be] created before the creation of the world: Torah, Teshuва, the Garden of Eden.

TORAS MENACHEM

It does appear therefore that God “transgressed” a rabbinic law by carrying out part of a creative act on Shabbos.

However, in the final analysis, God did not transgress Shabbos at all. For the rabbinic prohibition of performing half a creative act on Shabbos only applies when each half is a significant proportion of the total act. In our case however, God only performed a miniscule portion of the act on Shabbos (a hairsbreadth), and was thus totally “exempt.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 24ff.)
surface of the ground (so that man should be created from moist earth). 7 God, Almighty God, formed man out of soil from (the four corners of) the Earth. He blew into his nostrils a living soul, and man became a living, (thinking and speaking) being.

8 God, Almighty God, planted a garden in Eden to the east, and placed there the man which He had formed. 9 (In the garden,) God, Almighty God, made every tree that is pleasant to look at and good to eat grow out from the ground. The Tree of Life (grew) in the middle of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil (also grew in the garden).

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it separated and became the source of four riverheads. 11 The name of one is Pishon (the Nile), which surrounds the entire land of Chavilah, where there is gold. 12 The gold of that land is good. Crystal and onyx (are found) there. 13 The name of the second river is Gichon, which surrounds the entire land of Kush. 14 The name of the third river is

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- Why did the four rivers receive their names? (v. 10-14)

  **RASHI:** Pishon is the Nile, the river of Egypt. Because its waters are blessed, and they rise and water the land, it is called Pishon, as in the verse, “and their riders shall increase (נ,”) (Habakkuk 1:8). Another explanation: It is called Pishon because it causes flax ( khiển) to grow, as is stated in reference to Egypt, “And those who work at flax shall be ashamed” (Isaiah 19:9).

  Gichon flowed and roared, and its roaring was very great, as in the verse: “If an ox gores (ַ)” (Shemos 21:28), for he gores and roars while going along.

  Chidekel received its name because its waters are sharp ( pracy ) and light (ה ¶).

  Pras received its name because its waters are fruitful (טגי) and increase abundantly, and make people healthy. It is the most important of all the rivers because it is mentioned in conjunction with the Land of Israel.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

**a.** Why does Rashi not explain why Adam was created outside the Garden of Eden, only to be brought there later? [c.f. Chizkuni, Radak]

**b.** In his second interpretation regarding how man was formed, Rashi writes that man was created on the site of the Altar. This is a fifteen-day journey by foot to the Euphrates River (see Mishnah, Ta'anis 1:3), which is in the proximity of the Garden of Eden (see v. 14). Why does Rashi not make any mention of Adam’s miraculous transportation to the Garden of Eden, where he covered a journey of fifteen days within one day?

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How did God bring man to the Garden of Eden? (v. 15)

Rashi: God enticed him with pleasant words and persuaded him to enter.

Gur Aryeh: Why would man need to be convinced to enter such a wonderful place as the Garden of Eden? Because man did not know how great the Garden of Eden was and he needed to be informed by God. Thus, the “pleasant words” with which God convinced man to enter were merely a description of the garden.

Why was it “not good” for man to be alone? (v. 18)

Rashi: Because people might say, “There are two dominions! God alone rules over the upper worlds and He has no partner, and man is the sole ruler of the lower worlds, and he has no partner.”

Why was woman created “opposite” man? (v. 18)

Rashi: If he is worthy, she will be a helpmate. If he is not worthy, she will be against him, to fight him.

Man’s Entry into the Garden of Eden (v. 15)

Rashi writes that God persuaded Adam to enter the Garden of Eden with, “pleasant words.” But why did he need to be persuaded to enter the garden, which was the most desirable of all places in the world? [See Gur Aryeh].

The answer to this question is to be found at the end of the verse, “God...settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it,” i.e. he was placed there to carry out a Divine mission. Adam was sensitive to the awesome responsibility that carrying out God’s command entailed, so he was reluctant to enter. Consequently, it was necessary for God to persuade him with “pleasant words,” describing the pleasant quality of Divine service.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Bereishis 5745)

The Need for Man’s Partner (v. 18)

Even a child who is studying Chumash for the first time understands that his father depends on the assistance and moral support of his mother. Consequently, when he reads verse 15, “It is not good that man is alone,” the matter is self-understood.

What forced Rashi to conclude that the Torah is speaking here of an ideological fear that “people might say, ‘There are two dominions,’ when he could have written more simply that man needs the physical and emotional support of a partner?

The Explanation

If the Torah was informing us here that woman was created to provide support for man, the verse would have stated, “It is not good for man to be alone” (לא יאגו מב שיאו לבריה). In fact, however, the Torah
Chidekel, which flows to the east of Ashur (Assyria), and the fourth river is Pras (Euphrates).

15 God, Almighty God, (persuaded) the man (to enter the Garden), and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it.

16 God, Almighty God, commanded man, saying, “You may eat freely from every tree of the Garden, but you must not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. For on the day that you will eat from it you will certainly die.”

17 God, Almighty God, said, “It is not good that man is alone. I will make him a helpmate opposite him.”

18 God, Almighty God, formed from the earth every beast of the field and every bird of the skies, and He brought (each species straight-away as it was formed) to man to see what he would call it. Whatever the man called each living thing, (remained) its name (forever).

### Classic Questions

- **How did Adam know the names of the animals? (v. 19-20)**
  - **Mincha Beulah**: A Hebrew name indicates an entity’s essential qualities. In his great wisdom, Adam was able to discern the correct name for each species upon observing its nature.
  - **Shaloh**: Adam’s wisdom here was that merely through seeing the physical animal he was able to determine its spiritual source.

- **Did Adam name the fish too? (v. 19)**
  - **Midrash**: Yes. Even though the Torah makes no mention of the fact, Adam actually named the fish (Midrash Chaser Veyatir).
  - **Chizkuni**: No. If God had brought the fish out of the sea to Adam, they would have died.

### Toras Menachem

Our Sages taught that the verse “God, Almighty God, commanded man, saying, “You may eat freely from every tree of the Garden” (v. 16), alludes to the seven universal laws that God gave to all mankind:

- “God”—belief in God
- “Almighty God”—not to worship idols
- “commanded”—establishing courts of law
- “man”—not to murder
- “saying”—not to indulge in forbidden relations (see Jeremiah 3:1)
- “you may eat freely”—not to eat a limb from a living animal
- “from every tree of the garden”—not to steal. (Sanhedrin 56b)

According to Jewish Law we are obliged to promote the observance of these laws among the nations of the world (Rambam, Laws of Kings 8:10-11). Unfortunately, in previous generations this was not possible, as any act which could be perceived as proselytizing would have threatened the security of the Jewish community. However nowadays, thanks to God’s blessings, we live in a free society which enables us to fulfill this holy obligation.

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### The Last Word

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(See Likutei Sichos, vol. 26, pp. 132ff.)

### God’s Solution

However, even after the creation of woman this problem seems to remain since, in the final analysis, man was created alone, and remained that way for a period of time before he was joined by woman. Couldn’t that give the impression that man is some type of god?

This problem is solved by Rashi’s second comment that, “If he is worthy, she will be a helpmate. If he is not worthy, she will be against him, to fight him.” I.e. man will always be dependent on the support of woman to the extent that (if he is not worthy) they will fight with each other. Since he will constantly feel dependent on another, and he will be aware of the potential conflict that could arise with his partner at any moment, it will surely be fixed in man’s mind that he is not a self-sufficient being.

(See Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 20)

### Naming of the Animals (v. 19-20)

The naming of the animals by Adam could be understood in one of two ways:

- **a.)** It was for the benefit of man, enabling him to distinguish one species from another.
- **b.)** It was for the benefit of the creatures being named. (This is because a Hebrew name indicates an entity’s spiritual source (see Shaloh), so by calling each species by its correct name Adam illuminated the animal’s spiritual source within its physical body).

It could be argued that this, in fact, is the basis of the dispute between the **Midrash** and **Chizkuni** as to whether Adam named the fish:

**Chizkuni** understood that the naming was for the benefit of man. Thus, there was no need to name the fish which are not observable by man, as they inhabit the sea and die as soon as they leave the water.

**The Midrash** understood that the naming was for the benefit of the creatures being named. Consequently, the **Midrash** came to the conclusion that Adam would have named the fish too, as it was for their benefit to do so.
An Alternative Argument

Alternatively, it could be argued that both the Midrash and Chizkuni agreed that Adam named the animals for their own benefit. Rather, they differed over the more subtle implications of the naming process:

The story of Adam naming the animals is recorded at a significant juncture in the Chumash. Up to this point we have read solely about the creation of the world; and from here onwards we begin to read about the efforts—and transient failings—of man, to carry out God’s will in the world, in order to “cultivate it and to guard it.” The question therefore arises: At which side of the “junction” does the account of Adam’s naming of the species fall? Does this naming represent the completion of the creative process, where each living entity was finally assigned its own name? Or are we reading here of the first act of Divine service by man? Let us discuss each of these two avenues:

a.) Naming as an act of creation

The creation process witnessed the differentiation of primordial matter into different materials and creatures, i.e. a transition from unity (Godliness) to multiplicity (creation). The act of naming was the final stage of bringing multiplicity to the world, as each general category of animals became distinguished into specific species. Since multiplicity conceals God’s presence—for in truth there is nothing but the one God—the process of naming the species endowed them with a greater sensation of individuality and separateness from God.

In this respect, there is a distinction between aquatic life and land animals. Fish die as soon as they leave their natural habitat of water, which is a graphic expression of their fragility and dependency. Land animals, by contrast, can survive for long periods of time in a variety of environments. Thus, land animals demonstrate multiplicity to a greater extent than fish, since they are more self-sufficient and independent.
20 Man named all the cattle and the birds of the skies and all the beasts of the field (and saw that each had a male and female counterpart). Man, however, did not find any helpmate opposite him (so he complained to God).

21 God, Almighty God, caused a deep sleep to fall upon man, and he slept. He took (a piece from) one of his sides, and He sealed the flesh in its place. 22 God, Almighty God, built the side that He had taken from man into a woman, and He brought her to man. 23 Man said, “(After searching amongst all the animals and failing,) this time (I have found the) bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh. This shall be called ‘ishah’ (woman) because she was taken from ‘ish’ (man).” 24 Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (through their children).

THE SIN OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

2:25 They were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed (since they had no evil inclination, but their nakedness aroused the interest of the serpent).

3 1 The serpent was cunning, more than all the beasts of the field that God, Almighty God, had made. It said to the woman, “Did God perhaps say, ‘You shall not eat of any of the trees of the garden’?”

2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat from the fruit of the trees of the garden, but from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat of it, and you shall not touch it, lest you die.’”

TORAS MENACHEM

Fish, by contrast, show the underlying unity of creation to a greater degree, for as soon as they are separated from their “source,” they die. This is a physical expression of the spiritual reality that no entity is independent of God.

According to the above approach—that the naming of the animals was for the sake of increasing multiplicity—there was no need to name the fish, since multiplicity is not particularly pronounced in aquatic life. Thus Chizkuni, who adopted the approach that the fish were not named by Adam, alluded to the above reasoning with the words, “If God would have brought the fish out of the sea to Adam they would have died.”

b.) Naming as an act of Divine service.

According to the second approach above, that man’s naming of the animals was the first act of Divine service, it follows that the naming must have accomplished the purpose of all Divine service—to make the world more subservient to God. This was achieved through the naming, which connected the spiritual source of each creature with its existence on the physical plane.

This concurs with the view of the Midrash that the fish were named too, since all creatures would benefit from such a spiritual revelation

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 1ff)

Sparks of Chasidus

THE SIN OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE (2:25-3:24)

God did not want man to become aware of the concept of evil, because man is unable to remain totally aloof from things that he comes to understand. Man’s nature is to inquire, to empathize and to interact. When he encounters a new phenomenon, he wonders how it might affect his life. He begins to measure the idea according to the established norms of his conscious existence, and he allows his emotions to explore the new entity to see if he has discovered a new “love” or a new “hate.” In short, when a person encounters something utterly new, he investigates it with the totality of his personality. From that point on, the concept leaves an indelible mark on his life.

So, God was aware that if man was to come to “know evil,” the results would be disastrous, for in the process of his exploratory investigations, man would inevitably become attached to it.

(continued on page 23)
When did the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge occur? (v. 8)

**Rashi:** The verse states that they heard God's voice in the "direction of the day." This refers to the direction in which the sun sets, which is the west. For towards evening the sun is in the west, and they sinned in the tenth hour [of daylight].

**Talmud:** The day on which Adam was created consisted of twelve hours. During the first hour his dust was gathered; the second hour that they are brought in the Talmud itself, for the Talmud does not confine itself exclusively to literal interpretations. In fact, the large body of Talmudic and Midrashic commentary to the Torah is predominantly allegorical and non-literal. Thus, even when Rashi uses a Talmudic phrase, he does so in the context of his own literalist commentary, which was not necessarily the intention of the Talmud.
4 The serpent said to the woman, “You will surely not die. 5 God (told you not to eat it, because He) knows that on the day that you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God (with the ability to create worlds and) knowing good and evil.”

6 The woman (believed the serpent) that the tree was good food (that would make a person like God), that it was desirable to the eyes (for it would open them up), and that the tree was desirable to make one wise (knowing good and evil). She took of its fruit, and she ate (it), and she also gave (some to the cattle and wild animals, and fearing that she would die and that her husband would remarry, she gave some) to her husband (who was) with her, and he ate (it).

7 The “eyes” (of the intellects) of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked (of mitzvos, having ignored the only command they had been given). They sewed together fig leaves (from the tree) and made themselves loincloths.

8 They heard the sound of God, Almighty God, walking in the garden in the direction (which the sun sets every) day. The man and his wife hid from God, Almighty God, among the trees of the garden.

9 God, Almighty God, called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” (to engage him in conversation).

10 (Man) said, “I heard Your sound in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked, so I hid.”

11 (God) said, “Who told you that you are naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?”

12 The man said, “The woman whom You gave (to be) with me gave me from the tree, and I ate.”

In our case, Rashi writes that man sinned “in the tenth hour,” which at first glance would seem to refer to the Talmudic teaching that he sinned in the tenth hour of the sixth day of creation (see Talmud). However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation to which Rashi always confines himself, it could not possibly be argued that man sinned on the sixth day, for a number of reasons:

a.) At the end of the sixth day, the Torah states, “God saw everything that He had made, and look! It was very good” (1:31). Now, if the sixth day had been witness to man’s sin which brought i.) death, ii.) the labor of childbirth and iii.) the toils of earning a living to the world (see v. 16-19, below), God would surely not have said, “It was very good”?

b.) It is reasonable to presume that Adam and Chava were of sufficiently strong moral caliber not to have stumbled in sin as soon as they were created, and the serpent would surely have taken some time to persuade Chava to eat from the tree. So at the literal level, it is extremely unlikely that all the events described here in chapter three occurred in the space of a few hours.

c.) Furthermore, the story is recorded after the story of creation has been completed, and Rashi gives no indication that it occurred beforehand, on the sixth day.

Thus, when man sinned and became attached to evil, two major problems arose:

a.) If man were now to live forever, he would cause evil to be perpetuated eternally. For since he had now incorporated evil into his system, eternal life would provide an “eternal host” for man’s newly found parasite. Therefore, God decreed that man must die, and prevented him from eating from the Tree of Life which would return him to his previous, immortal status.

b.) A further, more serious problem was how to correct the event which had occurred. The boundaries between good and evil had become blurred and man found himself attracted to two mutually exclusive forces. His sin had generated cosmic repercussions in the upper realms, causing good and evil to coalesce, resulting in a corrupted spirituality which had penetrated the entire universe, right down to the physical world.

The solution: “God, Almighty God, sent him out of the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the earth from which he had been taken” (v. 23).

Man had mixed good and evil throughout the spiritual and physical worlds, so he was sent out to correct the damage that he had caused. Since evil had penetrated the actual earth, man was given the task of refining the entire world. By performing the appropriate action with each “piece” of physicality, he would set free the kernel of good within it, allowing it to return to its holy source. To correct the world which he had profaned, man was required to “pick up the pieces”—literally—by separating with his own hands the good and evil which he had caused to be mixed together.

(Based on Torah Ohr Sc ff; Toras Chaim Bereishis 30a ff)
˙יְהָאָהּ יִתְנְאַהּ הַשֵּׁלָם הֲשׁוֹאָהּ: יֵהָאָהּ יִתְנְאַהּ הֲשׁוֹאָהּ

אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר חֲדָשָׁהּ לְשֵׁלָם הֲשׁוֹאָהּ. הֲשׁוֹאָהּ יִתְנְאַהּ הַשֵּׁלָם.

יֵהָאָהּ יִתְנְאַהּ הָעֲבוֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ כָּלָּהּ. הֲשׁוֹאָהּ יִתְנְאַהּ הָעֲבוֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ כָּלָּהּ.

יֵהָאָהּ יִתְנְאַהּ הָעֲבוֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ כָּלָּהּ.

יֵהָאָהּ יִתְנְאַהּ הָעֲבוֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ עִלְּעָבֹדָהּ כָּלָּהּ.
13 God, Almighty God, said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent misled me, and I ate.”

14 God, Almighty God, said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you are (now) cursed more than all the cattle and more than all the wild animals of the field! You (will have your legs cut off so that you) shall walk on your belly, and you shall eat soil all the days of your life! I shall place hatred between you and between the woman (you desired), and between your descendants and between her descendants. (Man) will crush you (on the) head, and you will bite his heel.”

15 To the woman He said, “I will greatly increase your anguish (of rearing children) and your (labor pains of) pregnancy. You will give birth to children in pain. You will desire (to be with) your husband but he will rule over you (to be with you when he desires).”

16 To man He said, “Since you listened to your wife’s voice, and you ate from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘Do not eat from it,’ the ground will be cursed because of you (producing loathsome insects), and you will toil to eat from it all the days of your life. (When you sow seeds, artichokes and cardoons, which have) thorns and thistles, will grow (with) your (crops) and you will eat the(se artichokes, cardoons and other) herbs of the field (that take a long time to prepare, due to lack of an alternative). Only with the sweat of your face (after much toil) will you eat bread, until you go back to the earth from where you were taken. For you are (from the) soil, and to soil you will return.”

(The narrative now returns to the subject of giving names, mentioned above 2:19-20)

20 The man named his wife Chava, because she was the mother of all life.

21 God, Almighty God, made for Adam and for his wife skin-tight garments (alternatively: garments of animal skins), and He clothed them.
CLASiC qUeSTiONS

Who said, “I have acquired a man (as a partner) with God”? (v. 1)

Tikunei Zohar: This was said by Adam (99b).

Vilna Ga’on: There must a printing mistake in the Tikunei Zohar, as it is clearly implicit from the Torah that Chava said these words.

What kind of offering did Kayin Bring? (v. 3)

Rashi: He brought from the poorest crops. The Midrash says that it was flax seed. (An alternative explanation: from whatever fruit came to hand neither good nor choice).

Mizrahi: One is forced to conclude that he brought the poorest of his crops, otherwise it is difficult to understand why God rejected the offering.

Sisese Chachamim: Rashi brings the Midrash that Kayin’s offering was flax-seed because he is troubled why the verse says “fruit of the land” rather than the more simple expression, “he brought an offering from the land.”

The term “fruit” of the earth implies that it was a fruit similar to the land. The only species which could be termed both “fruit” and “of the land” is flax, because: a.) The Talmud teaches that any species demonstrating his lack of interest in worldly matters. Hevel’s produce? He also felt the need to compete with Kayin, so he brought a sheep, which produces wool that is an alternative to flax.

Gur Aryeh: If Kayin was attempting to express gratitude to God by bringing an offering, why would he intentionally choose his poorest produce? Kayin recognized that his power rested with the Ayin Hara (evil eye), and so he brought a poor offering in an attempt to strengthen this evil power. But God, who is good, turned to Hevel’s offering.

Why did Hevel not endeavor to bring a better species, such as an ox? He also felt the need to compete with Kayin, so he brought a sheep, which produces wool that is an alternative to flax.

Bachye: Hevel brought the most inferior type of cattle, demonstrating his lack of interest in worldly matters.
**KAYIN AND HEVEL**

4 The man knew his wife Chava (before the sin), and she conceived and bore Kayin (together with a twin girl. When he was born) she said, “I have acquired (‘KaNisi’) a man (as a partner) with God.”  

She gave birth again to his brother Hevel (together with two twin girls).

Hevel was a shepherd of flocks (because he did not want to work with the land, which was cursed), and Kayin was a worker of the land.

3 It was at the end of (a number of) days, that Kayin brought some of the (worst) fruit of the land as an offering to God.  

Hevel also offered from the firstborn of his flocks, from their fattest ones.

God turned to Hevel and to his offering (and it was consumed by a fire from heaven),  

but to Kayin and to his offering He did not turn. Kayin became very angry, and his face was dejected.

6 God said to Kayin, “Why are you angry, and why is your face dejected?”  

Surely, if you improve yourself you will be forgiven? If you do not improve yourself, however, then (your) sin is crouching (in wait) at the entrance (of your grave. The evil inclination) is longing (to entice you), but you can rule over it (if you want).”

8 Kayin (started an argument) with Hevel his brother (to find a pretext to kill him). Then, when they were in the field, Kayin assaulted Hevel his brother and killed him.

9 God said to Kayin, “Where is Hevel your brother?”  

He said, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s guardian?”

10 (God) said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood (and the blood of his would-be

**WHO NAMED KAYIN (V. 1)**

The Vilna Ga’on argues that it was Chava who said, “I have acquired a man with God,” upon Kayin’s birth (and our text of the Tikunei Zohar which states that Adam said these words is incorrect).

However, this assertion is problematic, since the entire section in the

**Springs of Chasidus**

Clearly, both Kayin and Hevel wished to thank God and make a statement of His absolute unity with their offerings (v. 3-4), but it seems that they differed in their understanding of the term “unity.” Kayin understood that God’s unity is totally beyond the multiplicity found in the world. Thus, he picked the best of all species (flax), indicative of God’s greatness; but he paid no attention to the quality of the species, bringing the worst produce that he could find (Rashi to v. 3). He presumed that giving credence to the possibility of better and worse produce is not an appropriate offering to God, Who is totally beyond any distinction between “better” and “worse.”

However, his presumption was mistaken, as the ultimate expression of God’s unity is to show how He is One, within the multiplicity of the world. I.e. that every detail of creation, while it may be divided into better and worse, can nevertheless be elevated to God. Thus, Hevel was correct in understanding that the multiplicity of the world must be given credence, and so he was careful to offer the best of his chosen species.

(Tikunei Zohar speaks of Adam (and not Chava). It would thus appear that the text itself (which attributes the statement to Adam) is correct.

Nevertheless, we are left with the problem that according to Hebrew grammar the verse tells us that Chava said, “I have acquired a man (as a partner) with God,” when Kayin was born.

This could be resolved by a statement of Da’as Zekeinim, “from my teacher of blessed memory, I heard that their custom was that the man named the first child and the woman the second” (comm. to Bereishis 38:5). Thus, in our case, the Torah relates that Chava suggested the name Kayin, on the basis that “I have acquired (kanisi) a man with God,” and the Tikunei Zohar informs us of Adam’s approval, which finalized the name.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1248)

**KAYIN’S OFFERING (V. 3)**

Sifsei Chachamim writes that Rashi was troubled by the rather elaborate expression, “fruit of the land.”

However, it appears unlikely that the term “fruit of the land” would trouble Rashi, as it is a commonplace expression of the Torah, e.g., “You shall take of the first of all the fruit of the land” (Devarim 26:2), and similarly, “I have brought the first fruits of the land” (ibid. 10). Thus, Rashi would not be bothered why the Torah used this expression.

**RASHI’S THREE COMMENTS**

According to the first interpretation of Rashi that Kayin brought the worst fruits, it is difficult to understand why the Torah made no mention whatsoever of such an important detail.

Furthermore (as Gur Aryeh asks), Kayin surely brought the offering to show gratitude to God, so why would he bring from the worst produce? And, having offered the worst of his produce why would he have been so surprised when it was rejected by God, to the extent that, “Kayin became
When the Torah describes how a river went out from Eden and divided brought the very best: "firstborn" and "the fattest ones." Rashi very angry, and his face was dejected" (v. 5)? Surely, there must have been although regarded. So from this comment of (flax) grow.” The student of Rashi has learned already of the significance of flax. Obviously, if a river is named after a product, it must be highly obviously the best types of produce. Clearly, he understood that the most important element of the offering was the species, and in that respect he picked the best. Only, within that species itself, he brought the worst available. Hevel, on the other hand, did not endeavor to bring the best species (he only brought sheep, not oxen), but within that species he brought the very best: “firstborn” and “the fattest ones.” However, it still remains somewhat of a question why Kayin did not bring the best flax, if indeed he was trying to bring only the very best? Thus (in many editions of Rashi) a further interpretation is brought, that Kayin merely brought whatever came to hand, neither the best nor the worst. According to this understanding, there is no question at all why Kayin would have been upset that God rejected his offering. However, it remains problematic why God indeed rejected the offering. Thus Rashi places this interpretation last, as it is the most troublesome.

(Toras Menachem)

(For a discussion of other interpretations, see Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 20-26)

(Rashi comments (in his second interpretation), “because it made pishtan (flax) grow.”

We can learn from all the above the extent to which hiddur (enhancement of a) mitzvah is important. Despite the fact that Kayin brought an offering from a highly-regarded species, nevertheless, since he did not take care to bring the best flax available (a hiddur within a hiddur) his actions were considered sinful.

(The Last Word)
descendants) is crying out to Me from the earth! 11 Now, you are (going to be) even more cursed than the ground, which opened its mouth to take your brother’s blood from your hand! 12 (Therefore) when you work the soil, it will no longer give its strength to you! You will be a wanderer over the earth."

13 Kayin said to God, “Is my sin too great to bear (for You, God, who carries the burden of the upper and lower worlds)? 14 You have already driven me today off the face of the earth! (Is it possible) to hide from Your Face? I will be a wanderer in the land, and then whoever finds me will kill me!”

15 God said to him, “In that case, whoever kills Kayin (will be punished. Hevel will only be) avenged after seven generations (when Lemech will kill Kayin).” God placed (His holy Name as) a mark (inscribed) on Kayin’s forehead so that he should not be killed by anyone who would find him.

16 Kayin left God’s presence (humbly), and he dwelt in the land of the wanderers, to the east of Eden (where his father had been expelled after his sin).

(The seven generations—mentioned in verse 15—occurred as follows:)

17 Kayin knew his wife. She conceived and gave birth to Chanoch. (Kayin) was building a city, and he named the city like in son’s name, Chanoch. 18 Irad was born to Chanoch, Irad fathered Mechuya’el, Mechuya’el fathered Mesusha’el, and Mesusha’el fathered Lemech.

KAYIN—THE FIRST BA’AL TESHUVAH

Kayin was the first person to do teshuvah (return; repentance). Thus, God set him as an example for all future Ba’alei Teshuvah (penitents) (Bereishis Rabah 22:12-13; Midrash Tehillim 100).

Kayin’s teshuvah consisted of three practical phases:

a.) Confession. Kayin declared to God, “My sin is too great to bear” (v.13). The Torah then states that, “Kayin left God’s presence” (v. 16), on which the Midrash comments that Kayin was rejoicing that his confession had been accepted by God (Bereishis Rabah ibid.).

b.) Exile. Rambam writes that one of the routes of teshuvah is for a person to send himself into exile, for this generates a spirit of humility within a person (Hilchos Teshuvah, 2:4). Thus we find that Kayin, “dwelt in the land of the wanderers” (v. 16).

c.) Rebound into Positive Action. There is a tremendous temptation for the Ba’al Teshuvah to remain low-spirited for the rest of his days. The mere thought of his past deeds, which cannot be erased from his mind, is sufficient to give him feelings of inferiority. Obviously, in the midst of such a mood he will find it difficult to be active within the world, being plagued by the eternal question, “Who am I to carry out a holy activity like this?”

Consequently, the challenge of the Ba’al Teshuvah is that when his teshuvah is complete, he must propel himself “outwards” into the world. He must free himself from his feelings of inferiority, and start to contribute constructively to the world in the most expansive manner possible.

Thus, we find that after doing teshuvah, Kayin propelled himself back into the world: a.) He fathered a son. b.) He built a city—an ambitious project aimed at repairing the world that he had damaged. And, furthermore, c.) “He named the city after his son’s name, Chanoch” (v. 17). I.e. Not only did he free himself from feelings of inferiority, he actually went to the opposite extreme and publicized his achievements boldly to the entire world.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, pp. 7-9)
How did people come to worship idols? (v. 26)

Rambam: In the days of Enosh, people made a serious mistake, and the counsel of the wise people degenerated into foolishness....Their mistaken reasoning was that since God created the skies and spheres as part of nature, and placed them on high, giving them dignity, and since they (the skies and spheres) are servants who serve Him, it would be appropriate to laud, glorify and honor them. [They argued that] it is the will of the Almighty for man to make great and to dignify such-and-such a star which had the Almighty had commanded them to serve such-and-such a star, to bring sacrifices to it, to offer libations to it and to build a temple and claimed that it was the form of such-and-such a star which had and children and ignoramuses—will be able to bow down to it. Each of them would be appropriate to laud, glorify and honor them. [They argued]

After some time, prophets of falsehood arose, and said that the Almighty had commanded them to serve such-and-such a star, to bring sacrifices to it, to offer libations to it and to build a temple containing its form, in order that all people—including women, children and ignoramuses—will be able to bow down to it. Each of these prophets made known a form which he had invented himself, and claimed that it was the form of such-and-such a star which had

that it is the will of the Almighty for man to make great and to dignify those who make God great and honor Him, in the same way that a king wants to honor the servants who serve him—such is the honor of a king....This is the fundamental basis of idolatry....However, they did not deny the existence of God by saying that only such-and-such a star exists...

 RESOURCE: Rambam

Note: The document contains Hebrew text, and the English translation is provided for clarification.
bore Yaval. He was the father of nomadic cattle rearing. 21 His brother’s name was Yuval. He was the father of those who play harp and flute (for idol worship). 22 Tzilah also gave birth, to Tuval-Kayin, who would sharpen all crafting tools for copper and iron (making weapons). Tuval-Kayin’s sister was Na’amah.

23 Lemech (accidentally killed Kayin and Tuval-Kayin, and his wives separated from him. He) said to his wives, “Adah and Tzilah, listen to my voice (and accept me back)! Wives of Lemech, incline your ears to my words! (Did) I slay a man by wounding (him intentionally), or a child by hitting (him intentionally)? 24 If Kayin (who killed intentionally) was avenged after seven generations, then Lemech (who killed unintentionally) shall be (avenged after) seventy-seven (generations)!"

25 Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son. She named him Sheis, (saying), “For God has given (‘shas’) me another seed, instead of Hevel, for Kayin killed him.” 26 Sheis also fathered a son, and he named him Enosh.

Then, (God’s Name) became profaned, by (people) calling (humans and idols) by the Name of God.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

The Beginnings of Idol Worship (v. 26)

Rambam describes the evolution of idolatry throughout the ages. But although very interesting to read, this passage would appear to belong better in a history book. Rambam’s Mishneh Torah is a strictly halachic text (as Rambam himself writes in his introduction to the work) so we can presume that all the information conveyed here has a strong halachic connotation, which is crucial to an understanding of the prohibition of worshipping idols.

In addition, there are a number of difficulties with Rambam’s description:

Rambam omits here the fact that Adam HaRishon, the first man, was commanded by God that neither he nor his descendants should worship idols (See above, p. 19, “The Last Word” to 2:16). How could he omit such a crucial point?

Furthermore, why does Rambam call idolatry a “mistake” (“In the days of Enosh, people made a serious mistake...Their mistaken reasoning was...”)? Surely, this idol worship was much more than a mere “mistake”? It was a grave sin, a rebellion against God and an act of total heresy!

The Explanation

Rambam is teaching us here that idol worship, albeit a very practical prohibition, is based on a philosophical misjudgment, a “mistake.” Therefore, in order that a person should not come to actually worship an idol, it is insufficient for him to practice mere restraint. Rather, he must understand the false concepts on which idolatry is based.

Thus, he describes at length what the mistake actually was, why it is unfounded and how one mistake led to another. Only through understanding this mistake can a person have a firm basis that will protect him from the temptation to worship idols.

Consequently, it would have made no sense to mention that Adam HaRishon was commanded not to worship idols, for the whole purpose of this passage of Rambam is to teach us that first and foremost a person must come to the logical conclusion that God did not hand over any free choice to heavenly spheres, and that they are merely like “an axe in the hand of a lumberjack.”

(Toros Menachem)

Sparks of Chasidus

Chasidic teachings explain that not only is there no deity or power other than God, but in fact, there is no true existence at all besides God. The fact that we see a physical world is only due to our inability to see the Godly energy which enlivens it. In truth however, we are totally absorbed within the absolute oneness of God. (See Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Achdus Havayah ch. 3)
THE OFFSPRING OF ADAM

This is the account of Adam’s offspring:

On the day that God created man (he fathered children). He created him with a resemblance to God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them. He named them man (Adam) on the day they were created.

3 Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and he fathered (a son) resembling him and with his form, and he named him Sheis. 4 After he had fathered Sheis, Adam lived for eight hundred years and he fathered sons and daughters. 5 Adam lived a total of nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

6 Sheis lived one hundred and five years, and then he fathered Enosh. 7 After he had fathered Enosh, Sheis lived eight hundred and seven years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 8 Sheis lived a total of nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

9 Enosh lived ninety years, and then he fathered Keinan. 10 After he had fathered Keinan, Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 11 Enosh lived a total of nine hundred and five years, and he died.

12 Keinan lived seventy years, and then he fathered Mahalaleil. 13 After he had fathered Mahalaleil, Keinan lived eight hundred and forty years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 14 Keinan lived a total of nine hundred and ten years, and he died.

15 Mahalaleil lived sixty-five years, and then he fathered Yared. 16 After he had fathered Yared, Mahalaleil lived eight hundred and thirty years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 17 Mahalaleil lived a total of eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

18 Yared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and then he fathered Chanoch. 19 After he had fathered Chanoch, Yared lived eight hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 20 Yared lived a total of nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

21 Chanoch lived sixty-five years, and he fathered Mesushalach. 22 After he had fathered Mesushalach, Chanoch followed God for three hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 23 Chanoch lived a total of three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 Chanoch followed God (but he could easily be misled, so

TORAS MENACHEM

The “Generations of man” are all descended from Adam’s son Sheis, whereas the descendants of Kayin died out (Rashi 4:24). Sheis thus represents man’s quality of building and propagating the world (tikun). Kayin on the other hand, is indicative of man’s tendency to struggle within himself, toiling with his own darker side in a search for personal perfection (tohu). Sheis was world-orientated; Kayin was self-orientated.

Which is the correct approach?

Presumably, Sheis was correct, since we see that the descendants of Sheis prevailed whereas those of Kayin did not (See Rashi to v. 24).

However, the outward, world-orientated approach of Sheis was not entirely correct. For even a person whose goals are to cultivate the world around him still needs to strive for personal perfection in his own life. His worldliness needs to be tempered with inwardness; his productivity coupled with piety.

So, even Sheis—the pioneer of all civilization—had a descendent, Chanoch, who was a total isolationist. In fact Chanoch was so detached from the world that he would have become corrupted with the slightest exposure to humanity, so God acted mercifully and took him away before his time (See Rashi to v. 24). And yet he was a descendent of Sheis, the founder of humanity!

But this, precisely, is the point. The quality of Sheis within us—the outwardness and the ambition—should harbor within it the quality of Chanoch—inwardness and piety. We should study Torah expansively, aiming to acquire vast amounts of knowledge, but at least occasionally we should study Torah without any ulterior motive at all. We should observe the mitzvos to make ourselves better people, but sometimes we should do a mitzvah simply because it is God’s will. In that way, we ensure that the Sheis within us gives birth to the occasional Chanoch.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 7ff.)
25 Mesushalach lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and he fathered Lemech. 26 After he had fathered Lemech, Mesushalach lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 27 Mesushalach lived a total of nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.

28 Lemech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and he fathered a son (from whom the whole world was built). 29 He named him Noach, saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands from the ground, which God has cursed” (because he was to invent agricultural tools). 30 After he had fathered Noach, Lemech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and he fathered sons and daughters. 31 Lemech lived a total of seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

32 (After) Noach was five hundred years old, Noach fathered Shem, Cham, and Yafes.

**Moral Corruption of Man**

Then, when man began to multiply upon the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of nobility (violated) the daughters of (common) people when they were beautifying themselves (for their weddings). They took for themselves wives from whomever they chose (even married women, men and animals).

3 God said, “My Spirit will not remain in conflict over (whether to destroy) man for a long time! Furthermore, he is (only) flesh (and yet he does not humble himself before Me! I will give him) one hundred and twenty years to live (and if he does not repent, I will destroy him with a flood)!"

4 There were giants on the earth in the days of (Enosh and Kayin), and also afterwards (when they witnessed a flood that destroyed a third of the world), when the sons of the nobles (who were giants) would (violate) the daughters of (common) people, and they would bear (giant) children for them. They were the greatest (rebels of all) men who ever existed, men who were (mentioned above) by name(s which hinted to their later destruction).

5 God saw that man’s wickedness on earth was increasing, and every thought which came from his heart throughout the day was purely evil. 6 God was consoled (by the fact) that He had made man upon the earth (and not in heaven, where he would have caused the angels to rebel. God decided) in His heart (to cause man).

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**Classic Questions**

- **What did God say he would do to man?** (v. 7)

  **Rashi:** God said, “Man is from the earth. I will bring water upon him and wash him away... for I have been reckoning what to do about the fact that I created him.”

  **Onkelos:** God regretted that He had made man and planned to destroy him.
God’s Decree Against Mankind (v. 7)

Onkelos renders a straightforward translation of verse 7: “God said, “I will obliterate (וְהָרַג יְהֹוָה) man from the face of the earth... because I regret (וְאָסָרָה) the fact that I created him.”

Rashi, however, appears to offer a non-literal translation, “I will wash away man from the face of the earth... because I have been reckoning what to do about the fact that I created him.”

Why did Rashi not render הָרַג as “I will obliterate,” as it is usually translated, and אָסָרָה as “I regret”?

The Explanation

If one translates verse 7 literally (like Onkelos), that God planned to obliterate mankind, one will immediately be struck that reality testifies otherwise. Since we are still here to read the story, and there is no evidence that God retracted His plan, it is inconceivable that He actually intended to destroy mankind. Furthermore, in the very next verse we read that, “Noach found favor in the eyes of God,” which introduces us to the following account of how Noach and his family were saved by God. Obviously then, God did not decide to “obliterate” mankind.

Therefore, Rashi came to the conclusion that in our verse אָסָרָה could not be understood in its usual translation (obliterate), but rather, it is to be rendered, “I will wash away.” I.e. God decreed that He would bring a flood upon mankind, but this did not preclude the possibility of individuals being saved in the ark.

Similarly, Rashi rejected the interpretation that God regretted creating man, as we see that He did indeed allow man’s existence to continue through Noach and his family. Therefore, Rashi was forced to adopt a slightly unusual translation, “I have been reckoning what to do about the fact that I created him.”

Did God Change His Mind?

One problem with this explanation is that it appears to contradict an earlier comment of Rashi. On verse 6, Rashi writes (in his second interpretation), “God’s thoughts of mercy were transformed to judgment,” from which it appears that God indeed regretted creating man. How does this correlate with Rashi’s stance, as explained above, that God could not possibly have regretted making man since we see that man continues to exist?
7 God said, “I will wash away man, whom I created, from upon the face of the earth, man as well as cattle, creeping things and birds of the skies, for I have reckoned (what to do) about (the fact that) I made them.”

8 But Noach found favor in the eyes of God.

The solution to this problem lies in the distinction between Divine “thought,” and Divine “speech.” In verse 6, “God’s thoughts of mercy were transformed to judgment,” i.e. He did indeed regret making man, but only in thought. However, in verse 7, “God said, ‘I will wash away man etc.’” From this we see that God was indeed harboring some regret to Himself (in “thought”) about creating man, but when He finally issued His decree in “speech,” the harshness of the plan was softened to exclude those who would be saved in the Ark, from which mankind could be reconstructed.

This begs the question: what finally caused God to soften his decree? This point is answered by the end of the verse itself, “because I have been reckoning what to do about the fact that I created him.” I.e. the fact that man was created by God Himself (“I created him”), eventually led God to have mercy on His own handiwork.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 27ff.)

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(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 31ff.)

From God’s reaction to the corruption of mankind, we can learn two powerful lessons in everyday life:

a.) God thought about destroying mankind, but He only issued His decree verbally after He had softened His anger. This teaches us how important it is to speak positively about other people. If God himself refrained from committing negative thoughts to speech, then all the more so should we be careful not to speak badly about others.

Our Sages taught that Lashon Hara (gossip) harms 1.) The gossiper, 2.) The listener and 3.) The one about whom the gossip is spoken (see Arachin 15b). Now it is easy to understand why the gossiper and listener suffer, since they participated in the sin. But why should the subject of the gossip suffer? After all, he was not even present at the time!

The answer lies in the fact that speech is a revelation of something that was previously hidden (in thought). Therefore, by speaking badly about another person it actually causes that person’s bad traits to be more pronounced in the world, which could lead him to be the subject of a heavenly decree of punishment. Thus, it is bad speech that can harm another (and not thoughts, that remain hidden), which teaches us how careful a person should be with the words he utters about another.

b.) God “reckoned” what to do with man, but He did not come to any firm resolution, even in thought. This teaches us that even when we see a person do something bad, we should not come to any firm conclusion about the merit of his actions, even in thought (and certainly not in speech). For if God, who is all-knowing and never makes mistakes, still took time to “ponder” and “reckon” His harsh thoughts about man, then we, who are capable of easily misjudging another, should certainly not condemn another even in thought. Rather, we should always endeavor to “judge every person favorably” (Avos 1:5).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 31ff.)
Parshas Bereishis contains 1 positive mitzvah.

1. To be fruitful and multiply [1:28]
Our Parsha begins, “These are the offspring of Noach, Noach was....”

The Midrash asks: “Why is Noach’s name written twice, when once would have sufficed?”

“Because,” answers the Midrash, “Noach (נָוֶךְ) can be translated as ‘serenity’ (טֵחַנְיָה). Noach brought serenity for himself, and serenity for the world; serenity for his ancestors (who could rest in peace in their graves) and serenity for his children; serenity in the upper worlds (since the heavenly prosecutions against mankind stopped) and serenity in the lower worlds; serenity in this world and serenity in the next world” (Bereishis Rabah 30:5 and Rashi ibid.).

This serenity was achieved by the floodwaters, referred to by the Torah as “the waters of Noach” (Isaiah 54:9). Chasidic thought explains that, before the flood, physical matter was brittle and insensitive to anything spiritual. In such an atmosphere corruption flourished, as people felt little accountability for their actions.

Chasidus teaches that the waters of the flood were like a mikvah (ritual bath). A person who immerses in a mikveh might notice that his thoughts are slightly purer that day, or that his conscience agitates him a little more. So too, the global mikveh which occurred in Noach’s generation had a purifying effect on the physical world, bringing soul and body to a heightened level of communication.

After the flood, the world and its inhabitants now had a conscience and a greater appreciation of God. And this ensured that the world would have a genuine “serenity”—a continued existence. For, even if people became corrupt, their newfound spiritual sensitivity would ensure that they would have the motivation to repent. Thus, it would always be worthwhile for God to continue sustaining His world.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Noach 5751)
WHEN SHOULD A RIGHTEOUS MAN BE PRaised? (v. 9)

A number of commentators [including Gur Aryeh] ask why the Torah does not praise Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov when they are mentioned, based on Rashi’s principle that a righteous man should be praised when he is mentioned.

The solution to this problem appears to be obvious:

From Parshas Lech Lecha to the end of Parshas Vayechi, the Torah describes at length the lives of the Patriarchs and the good deeds that they performed. Consequently, there is no need to praise Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov when they are mentioned since the Book of Bereishis itself is a lengthy account of their virtues and good deeds.

Noach, on the other hand, is not praised at length in the Torah. Therefore, when he is mentioned here, it is appropriate to praise him, based on Rashi’s principle that a righteous man should be praised when he is mentioned.

One might still ask: surely Noach is praised at least throughout the whole of Parshas Noach, as we read how he followed God’s instruction to build the ark?

However, this could not be classified as praise, for two reasons:

1) Praise is given for acts of an exceptional quality, beyond what might be expected. The building of the ark, however, was a direct command from God. The fact that Noach followed this command is thus not an “exceptional” feat of righteousness, but rather, simple obedience.

2) Noach built the ark to save his own life. The story of how Noach went to great lengths to follow God’s command is thus hardly a tremendous “praise” of his acts of kindness. Rather, it is a simple obedience.

LEVUSh Ha’oHRah

The basic solution to this problem was already proposed by Levush Ha’ohrah himself. Namely, that there is a significant contextual distinction between Adam and Noach, and yet he is praised.

Rashi states that there is still broadly historical and not specifically biographical.

Rashi’s point here is that a righteous man should be praised when he is mentioned in the context of wicked men. Therefore, in our case, where Noach is being mentioned in comparison to his wicked generation, the Torah praises him. Similarly, when Avraham is mentioned in the context of the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Torah praises him (see below, 18:18 and Rashi ibid.). In other cases however, no praise is necessary.

Amorah, the Torah praises him (see below, 18:18 and Rashi ibid.). In other cases however, no praise is necessary.

LEVUSh Ha’oHRah: Gur Aryeh’s solution is untenable. For, at the end of Parshas Bereishis, Noach is mentioned in the context of the ten wicked generations between Adam and Noach, and yet he is not praised.

Rather, in truth, Noach was not praised in Parshas Bereishis because the subject of discussion there is not Noach’s life in particular, but the general history preceding Noach’s life, up to and including his generation. Thus, in Parshas Bereishis the Torah does not make an issue of Noach’s fine qualities, because the context there is still broadly historical and not specifically biographical.

In our Parsha however, where Noach is mentioned in his own right, the Torah praises him, based on the principle cited by Rashi that, “The mention of a righteous man is for a blessing.”

TOrAS MeNaCHEM

RASHI: Since the Torah mentions him, it tells his praise, as the verse states: “The mention of a righteous man is for a blessing” (Prov. 10:7).

Another explanation: To teach you that the main “offspring” of the Patriarchs are mentioned consistently in the Book of Bereishis itself. However, this could not be classified as praise, for two reasons:

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QUESion of LEVUSh Ha’oHRah

We are still left with the problem raised by Levush Ha’ohrah, that Noach should have been praised the first time that he was mentioned, in Parshas Bereishis.

One could, perhaps, argue that Noach is indeed praised when he is mentioned in Parshas Bereishis with the words “Noach found favor in the eyes of God.”

However, such a notion is difficult to accept. For Rashi only teaches us this principle (to praise a righteous man when he is mentioned) for the first time at the beginning of our Parsha, and not at the end of Parshas Bereishis. If the words “Noach found favor in the eyes of God” (at the end of Parshas Bereishis) were indeed praise, then Rashi would have stated the principle in his commentary to that verse.

THE EXPLANATION

The basic solution to this problem was already proposed by Levush Ha’ohrah himself. Namely, that there is a significant contextual distinction between Adam and Noach.
**The Offspring of Noach**

6:9  **These are the offspring of Noach.**

Noach was a righteous man. He was perfectly righteous in (relation to) his generation. Noach walked (only) with (the support of) God.

Noach fathered three sons: Sheim, Cham, and Yafes.

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**Classic Questions**

- **What does it mean that “Noach was perfectly righteous in (relation to) his generation”?** (v. 9)

  **Rashi:** Some of our Sages interpret this favorably, i.e., that if he had lived in a generation of righteous people then he would have been even more righteous.

  Others interpret it derogatorily, i.e., in comparison with his generation he was righteous, but if he had been in Avraham’s generation he would not have been considered especially righteous at all.

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**Toras Menachem**

After recording the life and times of Adam, the first man, and his children, Parshas Bereishis continues with a brief genealogy of ten generations of his family (ch. 5), and then concludes with an account of the moral corruption which inspired God to “wash man away” (6:1-8).

At first glance, one might imagine that both the genealogy and the concluding passage represent a “second installment” of world history, subsequent to the chronicles of Adam’s life. To counteract this notion, the Torah states at the very outset: “This is the account of Adam’s offspring” (5:1), as if to say, “The following is part of Adam’s biography. We will now discuss his posthumous influence on the world.”

Viewed in this light we can appreciate that the purpose of this entire passage is to explain that as a result of Adam ten generations later “man’s wickedness was increasing” to such an extent that God was moved “to wash away man” (6:5,7). The conclusion of Parshas Bereishis is thus the conclusion of Adam’s biography: One of the unfortunate elements of Adam’s legacy to mankind was sin, and, we are told, this was so influential that ten generations later this negative influence had escalated to intolerable proportions.

With this in mind we can appreciate that when Noach appears in Parshas Bereishis, he is mentioned solely to complete our picture of Adam’s life and posthumous influence. First, Noach is cited as a part of the genealogical chain, which, as stated above, comes to highlight the extent of Adam’s influence over subsequent generations. And second, amid the general message of Adam’s negative contribution to mankind, Noach is cited as an “exception to the rule,” and the source of humanity’s ultimate salvation.

But, all along, the context is Adam’s life and influence. Noach appears only as a part of Adam’s story. Therefore, here is not the time to praise Noach, or to highlight his righteousness. That belongs in Noach’s “biography” which, of course, begins at the opening of Parshas Noach.

**Rashi’s Two Interpretations**

Rashi was troubled by the question: why does the Torah state, “These are the offspring of Noach,” and then digress to inform us that “Noach...”

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**The Last Word**

The Mishnah teaches us, to “Judge every person favorably” (Avos 1:6). So why did “some of our sages” interpret Noach’s standing “derogatively” when they could have interpreted the matter favorably (see Rashi to v. 9)? And why did Rabbi Yitzchak (cited in the Zohar) conclude that Noach was sinful in not praying for his generation, when he could have judged Noach favorably, like Rabbi Yehudah?

The principle of judging people favorably is an admirable trait that should always be followed, except when it could have a misleading result. In our case, if all the sages had judged Noach favorably, to be totally pious, then people might have concluded that all of Noach’s acts were indeed acceptable for a righteous man. When we read that Noach did not pray for his generation to be saved (see Zohar) and that he did not really believe that the flood was going to come (see Rashi to 7:7), one might think that such behavior is acceptable even for the most righteous of people. Therefore, “some of our Sages” felt the obligation to proclaim that Noach did not in fact represent the epitome of piety, so we should not learn from all of his ways. Rather, we should not be satisfied with saving ourselves, but accept responsibility for the people around us, both physically and spiritually.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 25, p. 19ff.)
Why was the ark chosen as a method of salvation? (v. 14)

Rashi: God has many ways at His disposal with which to bring relief and salvation. Why then, did He burden Noach with constructing an ark? In order that the people of the generation of the Flood should see him busy with the construction for 120 years and ask him, “Why do you need this?” He would say to them, “God is going to bring a flood upon the world,” and perhaps they would repent.

Maskil leDavid: Rashi was troubled by the seemingly illogical sequence of verses here. First the Torah states, “The end of all flesh has come before Me... I am going to destroy them from the earth” (v. 13), but we are not told how. Then Noach is told to build an ark (v. 14-16), and only afterwards in verse 17 are we told for the first time about the flood, “I am ready to bring a flood of water upon the earth.” Surely, God should have told Noach about the flood before instructing him to build the ark?

To explain this peculiarity, Rashi writes that the ark was not merely a method of salvation from the flood—for God could have saved Noach in a variety of ways—but an attempt to inspire the generation to repentance.

Why did Noach build the ark for so long? (v. 14)

Rashi: Rashi writes that Noach took 120 years to build the ark (v. 14), which begs the question: why did he take so long? Surely a righteous man etc., before telling us who the offspring of Noach were (namely, “Shem, Cham, and Yales”)?

To answer this problem Rashi explains, “Since the Torah mentions him, it tells his praise,” i.e. the Torah digresses temporarily to mention the righteousness of Noach before telling us who his offspring are, based on the principle that a righteous man should always be praised.

However, this explanation is problematic, since it is difficult to accept that the Torah would make such an awkward digression in the middle of a sentence.

Therefore, Rashi continues with a second explanation that our verse teaches us: “the main ‘offspring’ of the righteous are their good deeds.” This solves the problem of digression, for it allows verse nine to be read as a self-contained idea: “These are the good deeds of Noach, he was a righteous man etc.”

A problem with this second interpretation is that we are forced to render the word “offspring” non-literally, i.e. not as physical but spiritual offspring. Since this is somewhat of a deviation from the literal meaning of the words, Rashi placed this interpretation second.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 36ff.)

Why did Noach build the ark for so long?
God had commanded him” (v. 22). Thus, while Noach may have been guilty of some spiritual shortcomings, he did not err at all in the construction of the ark. If he took 120 years, this must have been God’s intention, since “he did everything that God had commanded him.”

Another possible solution could be argued, based on a verse in Parshas Bereishis. When we begin to read about man’s corruption, God says, “My Spirit will not remain in conflict over (whether to destroy) man for a long time! ...(I will give him) one hundred and twenty years to live (and if he does not repent, I will destroy him with a flood)” (6:3).

If we presume that Noach was aware of this fact, we can understand why he saw no urgency in building the ark. His first priority would have been to arouse the generation to repent (which would preclude the need for an ark in any case). Then, when this proved unsuccessful and the 120-year deadline was approaching, he would have completed the construction of the ark.

However, this solution too is flawed, because:

a.) When God told Noach, “You should make an ark of gopher wood...” He did not give any indication that the mitzvah may be delayed at Noach’s discretion. Therefore, he must have presumed that God wanted it done immediately.

b.) The above logic would explain why Noach would have delayed building the ark until the end of 120 years. But it does not explain Rashi’s statement that Noach was “busy with the construction for 120 years.”

The Explanation

Every mitzvah involves two elements: a.) The materials with which the mitzvah is performed. b.) The actions performed by the person with those materials to fulfill the mitzvah.

The precise legal obligation of any given mitzvah could rest on either of these two aspects: a.) That the materials should be modified to achieve the appropriate result. b.) That the actions of the person himself are the focus of the requirement.

[For example, in the case of the mitzvah of tefillin: Is the requirement to put on tefillin (i.e. the action)? Or is it that tefillin should be worn (i.e. the result)? In the former case, the donning of the tefillin (the action) would constitute the actual mitzvah; whereas in the latter case the mitzvah would only commence after the tefillin had been put on (the result).—Ed.]

In our case, we could pose the question: was God commanding Noach to achieve a result, a fully built ark. Or was action the requirement, that Noach should busy himself with building the ark?

Rashi concluded that the latter was the case. This is evident from the fact that God told Noach to build the ark before He told him that there would be a flood (See Maskil LeDavid), which suggests that there was a purpose in building the ark besides salvation from the flood. Rashi understood this purpose to be the effect of Noach’s actions in building the ark, which would inspire the generation to repentance.

And this explains why Noach took so long to build the ark. For if the mitzvah would have been to produce the result, a built ark, then Noach could have delegated the work to somebody else. The only obligation resting on Noach would have been to get an ark built, regardless of the method.

But since the mitzvah here was not the result (a built ark), but the action of building an ark, Noach could not delegate the mitzvah to another—for the actual requirement was that Noach himself should be busy with building the ark. For one man to build such a large structure, inevitably took 120 years. In fact, if one contemplates the fact that the ark was 300x50x30 cubits, with three storeys, it is quite remarkable that Noach built it singlehandedly so quickly!

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15. p. 34ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

We learned above (Zohar to v. 9), that the generation of the flood was destroyed because Noach did not pray for their salvation, since he knew that his own personal safety was assured. This seems to contradict Rashi’s statement here that Noach spent no less than 120 years rebuking the people to repent!

Chasidic teachings explain that Noach lacked the quality of mesiras nefesh (self-sacrifice) in his dedication to God’s command to rebuke his generation. Thus, Noach only rebuked the generation because he was commanded to do so. His main priority was to discharge the obligation which God had given him, and it did not bother him too much whether the generation would repent. So, his rebuke was lacking sincerity, and thus it was unsuccessful.

In contrast, Moshe demonstrated mesiras nefesh when his generation was at risk of being eliminated, pleading to God, “If You forgive their sin (then well and good), but if not, please erase me from Your book (the Torah), which You have written” (Shemos 32:32).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 40-41)
What was the “light” that Noach made for the ark? (v. 16)

Rashi: According to one opinion it was a window. According to another opinion, it was a precious stone which shone, providing them with light.

Mizrachi: According to Rashi (comment to 8:22, below) the heavenly bodies did not shine throughout the period of the flood, and the difference between day and night was not recognizable. So what point was there in having a window in the ark if there was no light in any case? (8:22)

Sifsei Chachamim: One could answer Mizrachi’s question as follows. When Rashi writes, “the difference between day and night was not recognizable” he does not mean that there was no light at all. Rather there was a small amount of light, which made having a window worthwhile, but the boundary between day and night became blurred.

Nachalas Ya’akov: Alternatively, one could argue that the cessation of natural light only occurred according to the opinion that Noach took a precious stone into the ark. According to the opinion that he made a window, there was day and night during the flood.

Chizkuni: The word הנבר could also be rendered as “oil” (a derivative of the word הנבר), i.e. that Noach illuminated the ark with oil lamps.

How was the Ark Illuminated? (v. 16)

Mizrachi questions the point of placing a window in the ark if there was no light during the flood in any case.

Sifsei Chachamim answers that there was some light, but that the distinction between night and day became blurred. However, this solution is difficult to accept because it is not clearly indicated in Rashi’s words. Rashi writes: “The verse implies that [day and night] ceased all the days of the flood and that the heavenly bodies did not function” (8:22). So, how can one accept Sifsei Chachamim’s argument that the heavenly bodies functioned partially when Rashi writes unambiguously that “the heavenly bodies did not function”?

Nachalas Ya’akov answers that the cessation of the heavenly bodies corresponds to the opinion that Noach took a precious stone into the ark. According to the opinion that he made a window, there was day and night during the flood. However, this too is difficult to accept, since Rashi’s statement that the heavenly bodies stopped functioning is based on an explicit verse, where God promises—after the flood—that “so long as the earth exists... day and night will not cease” (8:22). I.e. scripture itself testifies that day and night did cease during the flood. So at the literal level of Torah interpretation, to which Rashi confines himself, there can be no dispute about this matter.
16 “You should make a light for the ark. You should finish it (slanting) a cubit (high) at the top. You should place the entrance of the ark at its side. You shall make it with a bottom, second and third storeys.

17 “I am ready to (consent to man’s destruction and) bring a flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh beneath the skies in which there is the spirit of life. All that is upon the earth will perish.

18 “I will set up My covenant with you, and you will come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife and your sons’ wives with you. 19 From every living (demon), and from all flesh, you should bring two of each (species) into the ark to keep alive with you; they shall be male and female. 20 From the birds (which had only bred with) their own species, from the animals (which had only bred with) their own species, and from every creeping thing on the ground (which had only bred with) their own species, two of each will come to you (of their own accord) to be kept alive.

21 “As for you, take for yourself from every edible food and bring it in with you. It will be for you and for them to eat.”

**Toras Menachem**

Thus, we are left with Mizrachi’s question: What was the point of making a window if it was dark in any case?

**How Would One Source of Light Suffice?**

A further problem with Rashi’s comment here is that it appears to make no practical sense. We are speaking here of a substantial structure 300 cubits (approx. 450 ft.) long and three storeys high, divided into numerous separate compartments (see Rashi to 6:14, above). How could one window, or one precious stone possibly provide sufficient light?

Admittedly, Rashi was forced to write that there was only one window (or stone) since the verse uses the singular “light” (ல). But surely Rashi could have opted for the interpretation of Chizkuni, that means oil, which still allows for the possibility that many oil lamps were used?

**The Explanation**

In verses 14-16, where God instructs Noach how to make the ark, not every detail is included. For example, later we find that “Noach removed the covering of the ark” (8:13), and yet God never told Noach explicitly to make a covering. Obviously, God left it to Noach to figure out for himself those details which were a self-understood necessity.

Similarly, in the case of light: God did not have to tell Noach to bring a source of light into the ark, for light is a basic necessity whose need is self-understood.

Thus, on reading our verse, Rashi was troubled: Why was Noach told to “make a light for the ark.” Surely that is an obvious point which was self-understood?

Rashi concluded that Noach would certainly have brought candles and oil lamps into the ark in any case without being instructed to do so explicitly by God. Our verse therefore, must be speaking of a further source of light, besides the basic source of light which Noach and his family used for living purposes.

The most simple explanation is that Noach made a window. For, without an explicit command from God it was unlikely that Noach would have made a window (or windows) on his own accord, since: a.) He had to carry candles in any case for use at night, so he might as well have used them in the day too. b.) A window might have compromised the safety of the ark.

However, God told him to make a window to provide extra light. Therefore, even though during the forty days of rain there was no light, (since the heavenly bodies stopped functioning) the window was still of value as it provided light during the following period when the waters were subsiding. And since Noach had another light source, he was able to use that during the forty days when no light came through the window.

Nevertheless, Rashi was not completely satisfied with this explanation since: a.) The light would only have reached a small portion of the ark. b.) During the forty days when there was no natural light, the window was useless. This appears to be incompatible with the verse which states, “You should make a light for the ark,” since it turns out that most of the ark did not benefit from this light in any case, and the part that did benefit only did so after the rains had ceased.

Therefore Rashi offered a second interpretation, that the supplementary light source was a precious stone, for this: a.) could have been moved around the whole of the ark, and, b.) could have been used the entire period of the ark’s occupation, even during the forty days of darkness.

However, in the final analysis, this solution is the inferior of the two, since the verse states, “You should make a light for the ark,” and one does not “make” a precious stone. Rather, the correct expression would have been, “You should bring a precious stone into the ark.” So, while this interpretation is logically more acceptable, it is less scripturally compatible, so Rashi recorded it last.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 19ff.)
Why did the flood last forty days? (v. 4)
Rashi: This corresponds to the time that is required for a fetus to form, because the people sinned by burdening the One Who formed them by fashioning illegitimate children.

How heavy was the rain? (v. 12)
Rashi: Verse 12 states, “There was rain on the earth for forty days
and nights” [suggesting that there was only comparatively weak “rain”], and yet below in verse 17 the Torah states: “The flood was on the earth for forty days” [indicating a much stronger downfall].

However [the resolution of this matter is that] when God brought the rains down, He brought them down with mercy, so that if the people would repent, they would be rains of blessing. When they failed to repent, the rains became a flood.
22 Noach made (the ark). He did everything that God had commanded him.

7 Noach Enters the Ark

God said to Noach, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen you as a righteous man before Me in this generation. 2 From all the (species of) animals that are pure (in Jewish law) you should take for yourself seven pairs of male and female, and from the (species of) animals that are not pure (in Jewish law), two (animals), a male and female. 3 Also, from the birds of the skies (that are pure, take) seven pairs, male and female, to keep (their) seed alive on the face of the earth. 4 For, in another seven days, I will make it rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wash away from off the face of the earth all existence that I have made.”

5 Noach obeyed (coming into the ark), according to all that God had commanded him.

6 Noach was six hundred years old when the flood water came upon the earth.

7 Noach, his sons, his wife and his sons’ wives with him, (eventually) went into the ark (when they were forced to) because of the floodwaters. 8 From the pure animals and from the animals that are not pure, from the birds, and from all that creeps upon the earth, 9 two by two they came to Noach into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noach. 10 And then, after seven days, the floodwaters were on the earth.

The Flood Destroys Human & Animal Life

7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noach’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day, all the wellsprings of the great depths burst forth, and the apertures of the skies opened up. 12 There was rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights.

Sparks of Chasidus

“The Wellsprings of the Great Depths Burst Forth…” (7:11)

In the Zohar (v. 17a), the following prediction is recorded:

“In the six hundredth year of the sixth millennium [i.e. the year 5500 (1740)], there will be an opening of the supernal gates of wisdom and the lower wellsprings of wisdom, preparing the world for the seventh millennium [i.e. the final redemption], like a person who begins to prepare himself for Shabbos on Friday, when the sun heads downwards. This is indicated by the verse, “In the six hundredth year of Noach’s life...all the wellsprings of the great depths burst forth, and the apertures of the skies opened up” (v. 11).

By the year 1840, two major schools of thought had caused revolutions in their respective spheres of influence. In the Jewish world, the Chasidic movement had popularized the teachings of mysticism and Kabalah. In the secular world the Industrial Revolution had reached its peak. These two developments were the, “opening of the supernal gates of wisdom and the lower wellsprings of wisdom,” to which the Zohar refers.

The Zohar states that these two developments were both a preparation for the final redemption with Mashiach. This begs the question: One can appreciate why the dissemination of mystical thought was a preparation for redemption, since with the coming of Mashiach, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God” (Isaiah 11:9), of which Kabalistic teachings are a foretaste. But why is the development of scientific and technological wisdom a prelude to Mashiach?

One of the prophecies regarding the time of redemption is that “all flesh will see together that God is speaking” (ibid. 40:5), i.e. that God’s presence will be discernable to the physical senses. Scientific developments over the past 150 years have brought to our senses phenomena that were previously deemed to be supernatural. For example, through television, radio and the telephone, man is able to see and hear from one end of the world to the other instantaneously. So now, the concept that there is “an Eye that sees, and an Ear that hears, and all your deeds are recorded in a book” (Avos 2:1), is no longer something left for the imagination alone to appreciate, for now our physical senses can begin to appreciate this phenomenon too.

This was the Zohar’s intention in connecting the scientific revolution with the coming of Mashiach. Modern technology has brought unimaginable phenomena to our senses which help us to envision the time when “all flesh will see together that God is speaking.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 42ff.)
Forty Days (v. 4, 12, 17)

Rashi notes the contradiction that verse 12 describes "rain" falling on the earth, whereas verse 17 refers to a more intense "flood," denoting utter chaos (c.f. Rashi to 6:17).

Rashi answers that God initially brought down "merciful rain" which was less intense, but because the people failed to repent the rain turned into a flood. However, even after reading Rashi's solution, we still seem to be left with a contradiction between the verses. Verse 12 states, “There was rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights,” and verse 17 states, “The flood was on the earth for forty days.” Now, even if we bear in mind Rashi’s comment that, at some point, the mild "rain" was transformed into a "flood," we are still left with the problem that neither the "rain" nor the "flood" occurred for a full forty days. Rather, collectively they totalled forty days. So how can verses 12 and 17 state that both the "rain" and the "flood" lasted for forty days each?
13 **On that very day (in full view of the wicked generation), Noach came into the ark, with Sheim, Cham and Yafes—Noach’s sons—together with Noach’s wife and his sons’ three wives.** 14 They (came) with every wild animal (which had only bred with) its own species, every domesticated animal (which had only bred with) its own species, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth (which had only bred with) its own species, every bird (which had only bred with) its own species, and every winged creature (i.e. grasshoppers). 15 From all flesh in which there is the spirit of life, they came to Noach, to the ark, two by two. 16 From all flesh they came, male and female, as God had commanded him. God closed off (the ark with bears and lions for protection) in front of him.

17 **The flood was on the earth for forty days.** The waters increased, they lifted the ark, and it rose off the earth. 18 The waters surged, and they increased very much upon the earth, and the ark moved upon the waters. 19 The waters became extremely powerful upon the earth, and all the tall mountains that were under the skies were covered up. 20 The mountains were totally covered by fifteen cubits of water above. 21 All flesh that moved upon the earth perished, among the birds, the domesticated animals, the wild animals, all creeping creatures that creep upon the earth and all mankind. 22 Everything from that which was on the dry land that had the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils died. 23 He washed away all existence that was on the face of the earth, from man to animal to creeping thing and to the birds of the skies, and they were washed out from the earth. Only Noach and those with him in the ark survived. 24 The waters surged on the earth for one hundred and fifty days.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

One possible solution is that, when the waters left the skies they were in the mild form of rain, but at some point during their descent, they turned to floodwaters. Thus, both the “rain” and the “flood” lasted forty days, albeit at different altitudes.

However, this interpretation is incompatible with verse 12 which states, “There was rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights.” This proves that the mild rain did descend all the way down to earth.

So we are left with our original question: How could the rain and the flood each last for forty days?

**The Explanation**

We can solve this problem by first posing another question:

Presumably, one day’s flood would be sufficient to wipe out the whole of mankind (especially according to the Talmudic teaching that the waters were boiling hot—see Zevachim 113b). So, when the Torah informs us that the flood was for forty days, does that mean that God punished the generation forty times over? Or, was it a single punishment?

In his comment to verse 4, above, Rashi appears to answer this question. He writes that the forty days of the flood correspond to the first forty days in which a fetus develops. During this initial period, the fetus does not develop specific organs and limbs, but rather, it grows as a single, undifferentiated entity. Each day of development does not add any new details to the fetus.

So, in effect, Rashi is teaching us that the forty days constituted one single entity, one punishment. If so, we can presume that God released the water from the skies as a single unit which contained sufficient water for all forty days.

With the above in mind, we can explain our earlier contradiction between verses 12 and 17:

First, verse 12 states, “There was rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights,” meaning to say, “God released enough rain to fall on the earth for forty days and nights,” and the rain started to fall. Then, when the people failed to repent, verse 17 informs us that some time during the first day God transformed that single unit of water into a “flood” which in actuality, “was on the earth for forty days.”

I.e. verse 12 speaks of “Plan A” where God released a single unit of water to provide rain for forty days. Verse 17 describes “Plan B,” where soon after it began to fall, the water was quickly transformed into a flood. But, in each case, the Torah uses the expression “forty days,” since it is referring to the same unit of water that was sufficient to last forty days.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 23ff)*

**Sparks of Chasidus**

The flood came to purify the earth... because the earth had become filled with robbery and corruption to the extreme and required purification. It was for this reason that the floodwaters came for forty days, like a mikveh (ritual bath) which must contain a minimum of forty se’ah of rainwater if it is to purify the ritually unclean (Torah Ohr 8c).

Thus, for the generation of the flood, the waters were a punishment, but for the world itself, the waters were a blessing, since the world became cleansed through them.

This sheds light on the Torah’s statement that the waters were both mild “rain” (of blessing) (v. 12), and at the same time torrential floodwaters (v. 17), for even though the floods destroyed all the inhabitants of the world, they still had the positive effect of cleansing and purifying physicality itself.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, pp. 26-27)*
Why did the flood subside? (v. 1)

**Rashi**: This verse uses the Divine Name Elokim—which represents God’s attribute of justice—even though the verse is speaking about an act of Divine mercy, because the attribute of justice was converted to mercy through the prayers of the righteous [i.e. Noach].

Conversely, wicked people transform God’s attribute of mercy [indicated by the Tetragrammaton, Havayeh] to the attribute of justice, as the verse states: “God saw that man’s wickedness on earth was increasing...God [Havayeh] said, ‘I will wash away man, whom I created...’” (Bereishis 6:5-7). I.e. even though the verse speaks of destruction (justice) the Tetragrammaton is used here, indicating God’s attribute of mercy, since it was transformed to justice through man’s wickedness.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

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Justice -V- Mercy (v. 1)

In Hebrew, two different names are used to indicate God’s actions through two different “attributes.” The Torah uses the name Elokim when God acts in a manner of strict justice. The Tetragrammaton (Havayeh) indicates that God is acting mercifully.

Our verse is thus somewhat of an anomaly. On the one hand, we are speaking here of an act of Divine mercy where “God remembered [the prayers of] Noach and (the decent behavior of) all the wild animals and all the domesticated animals that were with him in the ark.” And yet, on the other hand, the verse employs the Divine Name Elokim which indicates Divine justice? Rashi answers, “the attribute of justice was converted to mercy through the prayers of the righteous.”

Rashi then continues to cite another similar case in Parshas Bereishis: “God saw that man’s wickedness on earth was increasing...God [Havayeh] said, ‘I will wash away man, whom I created...’” (Bereishis 6:5-7). I.e. even though the verse speaks of destruction (justice) the Tetragrammaton is used here, indicating God’s attribute of mercy, since it was transformed to justice through man’s wickedness.

However, one detail requires clarification here. The first instance of this phenomenon—the use of a seemingly inappropriate Divine Name—was the verse in Parshas Bereishis. If so, why did Rashi not explain this concept straightforwardly? Why did he wait until the second inappropriate use of a Divine Name, here in Parshas Noach, before informing the reader of an explanation?
God remembered (the prayers of) Noach and (the decent behavior of) all the wild animals and all the domesticated animals that were with him in the ark. God caused a spirit (of consolation and relief) to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The wellsprings of the depths and the apertures of the skies were closed, and the rain from the skies was held back. The waters continued progressively to recede off the earth and, at the end of one hundred and fifty days, the waters diminished.

The (base of the) ark (which was still submerged) came to rest on the Ararat mountains in the seventh month (Sivan), on the seventeenth day of the month.

The waters constantly diminished until the tenth month. In the tenth (month), on the first of the month, the mountain peaks appeared.

**The Flood Subsides**

**The Explanation**

At the very beginning of the Torah, when describing the creation of the world, the Torah employs the Divine Name Elokim, indicating justice rather than mercy. Rashi explains:

“In the beginning it was God’s intention to create the world with the Divine attribute of justice, but He realized that the world would not be able to endure. So, He gave precedence to the attribute of mercy, and allied it with the attribute of justice.”

Presumably, the “precedence to the attribute of mercy,” to which Rashi refers, means that the attribute of justice does not have the right to finalize any decisions on its own. Rather, it must have the consent of the attribute of mercy, which is always given precedence.

When reaching the verse, “God saw that man’s wickedness on earth was increasing...” God [Havayeh] said, “I will wash away man, whom I created...” [Bereishis 6:5-7], the reader will initially be struck by the question: Why does this verse use the name Havayeh (mercy) when it speaks of destruction (justice)? However, when the reader recalls Rashi’s comment at the very beginning of the Torah, this question will fade away. For the reader is already aware that every decision of the attribute of justice must have the consent of the attribute of mercy, which is always given “precedence.” Therefore in this case the reader will understand that even though the verse speaks of destruction, the name Havayeh (mercy) was used to indicate that God’s plan of destruction received the consent of the attribute of mercy. Therefore, Rashi felt no need to make a comment to this verse at all, relying on his earlier comment at the beginning of the Torah.

On reaching our verse that “God [Elokim] remembered (the prayers of) Noach etc.,” the reader will immediately be struck by the question: Why does the Torah use the name Elokim (justice) here, where God is performing an act of mercy?

In this case, Rashi’s comment at the beginning of the Torah will not help us. For Rashi’s words there only explain why an act of justice requires the consent of the attribute of mercy (since the latter is given precedence). In our verse however, we are witnessing the opposite: that the attribute of justice (Elokim) appears to be giving its consent to an act of mercy! The reader will thus be troubled: if the attribute of mercy always takes precedence, why does it need the consent of the attribute of justice?

To answer this question Rashi explains, “The attribute of justice was converted to mercy through the prayers of the righteous.” I.e. the reason why the Torah uses the name Elokim (justice) here for an act of mercy is to teach us that God’s attribute of justice had been utterly transformed by the prayers of Noach to the extent that it too wanted to perform acts of mercy.

At this point, we have to reconsider our previous understanding of the verse in Parshas Bereishis. Previously, we had presumed that in the verse, “God [Havayeh] said, ‘I will wash away man, whom I created...’”, the Torah had employed the name Havayeh (mercy) for an act of justice to teach us that the attribute of mercy had consented to this act. One problem with this interpretation is that, from a simple reading of the verse, it appears that the attribute of mercy is actually performing the action and not merely consenting to it (“God [Havayeh] said, ‘I will wash away...’”).

Thus, after learning here, in Parshas Noach, that one attribute can actually be transformed to be like the other (and not merely consent), we can re-evaluate our understanding of the earlier verse. Presumably, in Parshas Bereishis too, the attribute of mercy actually became transformed to act in a manner of justice. This explains more satisfactorily why, “God [Havayeh] said, ‘I will wash away man, whom I created...’” Therefore, after explaining the interpretation of our verse in Parshas Noach, Rashi retracts his steps to the verse in Parshas Bereishis, since one sheds light on the other.

According to the above explanation we can understand why: a.) Rashi makes no comment to the verse in Parshas Bereishis—since at that point it is self-understood, and, b.) Why Rashi explains both verses here in Parshas Noach, since the explanation of our verse invites a re-evaluation of our earlier understanding.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 30ff.)

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Why was it necessary to transform God’s attribute of justice to be merciful (See Rashi)? Would it not have been sufficient for His attribute of justice merely to be suppressed and subdued?

God, however, wanted to make a covenant with Noach that the world would never be destroyed by a flood again (see below, 9:11). For this to be effective, there needed to be an absolute certainty that the attribute of justice would never arise again and attempt to wipe out the world. Therefore, it was crucial that the attribute of justice be permanently transformed to mercy, and not just temporarily subdued.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, pp. 33-34)
Where did the dove get an olive leaf? (v. 11)

**Midrash:** Rabbi Levi said, “The dove got its leaf from the Mount of Olives, since the floodwaters did not fall in the Land of Israel.”

Rabbi Biryei said, “The gates of the Garden of Eden were opened for the dove, and it brought the leaf from there” (Bereishis Rabah 33:6).

**Ramban:** Clearly the Rabbis of the Midrash understood that wherever the floodwaters fell, they destroyed all plant life. According to Rabbi Levi’s opinion—that the floodwaters did not fall in the land of Israel—we can presume that the land was nevertheless flooded by water that overflowed from the surrounding areas. Nevertheless, since the waters did not actually fall there, the effects of the water would not have been so devastating, allowing some vegetation to remain, which explains why the dove was able to get an olive leaf from there.

According to Rabbi Biryei’s opinion—that the leaf was taken from the Garden of Eden, which was unaffected by the flood—it is difficult to understand how this proved to Noach that the floods had subsided. For, since the Garden was unaffected by the flood in any case, finding vegetation from there was hardly a reflection of the state of affairs in the rest of the world.

Perhaps it could be argued, therefore, that the doors of the Garden were only opened after all the waters had subsided. Consequently, the fact that the dove was able to enter the garden was proof that the floods had subsided.

All of the above, however, is according to the Midrashic interpretation that the flood destroyed all plant life. At the literal level, it would seem that the trees were not destroyed by the flood, because being that the whole world was filled with water in any case, there were no currents of water sufficiently strong to uproot a tree.

**Abarbanel:** Many olive branches would have been floating on the surface of the flood water. As soon as the mountain tops appeared, some of these branches would have become stuck in the earth and sprouted roots. Within 40-50 days they would have sprouted leaves too, and it is from here that the dove found an olive leaf.

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**Toras Menachem**

**The Olive Leaf (v. 11)**

Ramban writes that, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, we can presume that the flood did not uproot trees.
Then, after forty (more) days, Noach opened the window of the ark that he had made. He sent out the raven, but it (refused to go on its mission and just) circled (the ark) until the waters dried up off the earth.

(Seven days later,) he sent out the dove from (being) with him, to see whether the waters had gone down from the earth’s surface. But the dove could not find a resting place for the sole of its foot because there was water upon the entire surface of the earth, so it returned to him, to the ark. He stretched out his hand and took it, and brought it to him, to the ark.

He waited again another seven days, and he sent out the dove from the ark again. The dove returned to him in the evening, and—look!—it had a torn olive leaf in its mouth. So Noach knew that the water had gone down from the surface of the earth.

TWO SOLUTIONS OF THE MIDRASH

The Midrash offers two solutions to this problem. However, both interpretations of the Midrash are difficult to accept at the literal level, for the following reasons:

Rabbi Levi said, “The dove got its leaf from the Mount of Olives, since the floodwaters did not fall in the Land of Israel.”

This is problematic because:

a.) If the floodwaters did not fall directly on the Land of Israel then how would an olive leaf from there prove to Noach that the waters had subsided outside the land of Israel, where the waters did fall?

Although we can presume that the waters spilled over into the land of Israel from the surrounding lands (as Ramban writes), nevertheless, the effects of the flood would have been far less devastating there than in the rest of the world where the waters fell directly, from which it follows that the recovery would also have been quicker. So what proof was an olive leaf from the land of Israel to Noach?

b.) Above, we read that Noach’s ark found its resting place on the Ararat mountains, which was the first piece of dry land to appear after the flood (v. 4). But if rain did not fall at all in the Land of Israel, then surely it would have dried up first, before the Ararat mountains (even if it was flooded by the surrounding areas)? Why then did the ark not settle in the Land of Israel first, and not on the Ararat mountains?

From this, we can conclude that, at the literal level, the floodwaters did fall in the land of Israel.

Rabbi Biryei said, “The gates of the Garden of Eden were opened for the dove, and it brought the leaf from there”

At the literal level, it would be acceptable to argue that the floodwaters did not fall in the Garden of Eden since the flood was a punishment for corrupt behavior (see above 6:5, ibid. 11), and this did not apply to the Garden whose inhabitants had been evicted.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Biryei’s interpretation is problematic at the literal level because:

a.) Rashi writes that the animals also ate from the Tree of Knowledge (Rashi to 3:6), from which we can presume that they too were banished from the Garden of Eden. The Torah states explicitly, “To the east (side) of the Garden of Eden He stationed angels (of destruction) and the flame of the revolving sword, to guard the way...” (Bereishis 3:4), preventing those who were banished from re-entering. If so, how would the dove have gained entrance to the Garden?

b.) In any case, if the floodwaters did not fall in the Garden of Eden then how would an olive leaf from there prove to Noach that the waters outside the garden had subsided?

Ramban answers that the gates of the Garden opened after the flood. Thus, the finding of an olive leaf would have indicated to Noach indirectly that the flood had ended, for it proved that the gates had opened, which in turn indicated that the flood had ended.

However, the Torah suggests that the finding of the olive leaf indicated to Noach directly that the flood had ended: “It had a torn olive leaf in its mouth. So Noach knew that the water had gone down....”

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Two further matters require an explanation here:

1.) Surely the dove could have found an olive leaf from the mountain-top where the ark was already resting? How did the dove prove to Noach that, “the water had gone down from the surface of the earth?” (v. 11)?

2.) Why did the Torah inform us that the leaf was from an olive tree, in particular?

[Abarbanel’s solution that entire trees grew in this period is difficult to accept, since the time period is too short for an entire tree to root and sprout leaves. Furthermore, Abarbanel fails to explain why the Torah refers to an olive leaf in particular.]

THE EXPLANATION

It is a plainly observable fact that the olive tree is an extremely hardy variety which is more resistant to extreme conditions than other plants. In fact, our Sages testify in numerous places to the strength of the olive tree (see sources cited in Tzafnas Paneach to our verse).

Therefore, at the literal level one could argue that while other trees were uprooted by the flood, many olive trees remained. However, the foliage would obviously have been destroyed after being soaked in water for several months.

Consequently, the olive leaf brought back by the dove must have been a fresh leaf which had sprouted after the waters had subsided. This informed Noach that the waters had subsided from the earth, for even if the dove had taken a leaf from an olive tree on a mountain, it was still a sign that considerable time had passed since the mountain had become exposed, since the leaf would have taken time to sprout.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 30ff)
Why did God have to tell Noach to leave the ark? (v. 16)

**Midrash:** Since he only entered the ark according to God’s instruction, he waited for God’s command to leave (Tanchuma 8).

**Tiferes Yehonason:** Noach did not want to leave the ark, since the world was in a desolate condition and was polluted with the disintegrated remains of human and animal life. Furthermore, since all buildings had been destroyed, Noach reasoned that it would be preferable to stay in the ark than live in a tent. However, God told Noach to leave the ark, since He was angry with him for not praying for the generation to be saved (see Classic Questions, p. 41).
12 He made himself wait again for another seven days, and he sent out the dove, and it did not return to him any more.

13 It was in the six hundredth and first year, in the first (month), on the first of the month, that the waters dried up from the surface of the earth (leaving a hard crust). Noach removed the covering of the ark. He gazed, and—look!—the surface of the ground had dried up.

14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was (properly) dry.

God spoke to Noach, saying: 16 “Go out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons’ wives with you. 17 Bring out with you every living thing, all flesh that is with you, from the birds, animals and from all the creeping things that creep on the earth. They shall swarm upon the earth, and they shall be fruitful and multiply upon the earth.”

18 So Noach went out, his sons, his wife and his sons’ wives with him. 19 Every wild animal, every creeping thing, all birds, and everything that moves upon the earth went out from the ark, (vowing to mate only) with their own species.

20 Noach built an altar to God. He took from all the pure animals and from all the pure birds and brought up burnt offerings on the altar. 21 God smelled the pleasant aroma, and God said to Himself, “I will no longer curse the earth because of man, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his (first) stirrings (in the womb). I will never again kill all living things as I have done. 22 So long as the earth exists there will not cease (six seasons of) seedtime, harvest, cold, heat, summer and winter, and day and night.”

Leaving the Ark (v. 16)

The explanation of the Midrash is difficult to accept at the literal level, since: a.) It is not cited by Rashi. b.) Rashi writes earlier that “Noach, too, was of those who had little faith, believing and not believing that the flood would come, and he did not enter the ark until the waters forced him to do so” (7:7). I.e., he did not enter the ark because of God’s instruction, but rather, because he was forced to do so. Thus, it is unlikely that he would only have left on God’s instruction.

This, however, leaves us with the question: why did God have to tell Noach to leave the ark?

The Explanation

To answer this question let us first address another important issue at the literal level of Torah interpretation which does not appear to be addressed by Rashi.

Consider for a moment that the ark contained every species of animal known to man, including many ferocious beasts. How is it possible for so many creatures to co-exist in such a small space for an entire year, without total mayhem breaking loose? Admittedly, the ark was divided into a number of compartments (see above 6:14), but: a.) This confinement would automatically of their own accord. b.) They did not kill each other on the way. c.) The ark miraculously rejected those animals that were unfit.

From this information alone, Rashi left the reader to conclude that the entire organization of animals within the ark continued in the same miraculous fashion in which it had begun, which explains why the animals did not attack each other.

Thus, in effect, Noach and his family enjoyed in the ark a taste of the Messianic era when animals will coexist in peace (see Isaiah 11:6-9).

And this explains why Noach was reluctant to leave the ark, for he was exposed to a sublime level of supernatural behavior which resembled the Messianic era.

Nevertheless, God told Noach to “leave the ark,” since his mission in life was not to isolate himself in an atmosphere of holiness, but rather, to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth!” (9:2).

(Toras Menachem)

The Last Word

A person might be tempted to lock himself away in an “ark” of personal spirituality. The Torah, however, teaches a Jew that he must “go out of the ark...” and take responsibility for the world around him.

(Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 34ff.)
9 God blessed Noach and his sons, and He said to them: “(May you) be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth! Fear and dread of you will be upon all the animals of the earth, all the birds of the skies, everything that creeps upon the ground and all the fish of the sea. They have been given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be yours to eat. Like the green vegetation (which was all that man could eat before) I have (now) given you everything. But, you shall not eat flesh (detached from an animal) or its blood, while it is still alive.

“But I will demand (an account) for your blood (if you take) your own lives (through suicide).”

“I will demand (the same) from every animal (that takes a human life).”

“From a man (who intentionally kills another man, or) a man (who kills another man whom he loves like) his brother (unintentionally), I will demand the man’s life.”

“Whoever spills human blood (killing a person, and is witnessed) by men, shall have his own blood spilled, for in the image of God (the Creator) made man.”

“As for you, (I am commanding you to) be fruitful and multiply! Populate the earth and become numerous on it!”

9:8 God (saw that Noach was afraid to have children, so He) said to Noach and to his sons (who were) with him, “Look! I am setting up My covenant with you and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you, among the birds, the domesticated animals, all the wild animals of the earth that (walk) with you, all those (loathsome insects and reptiles) who came out of the ark, all the living creatures of the earth. I will confirm My covenant with you that never again will any flesh be wiped out by the floodwaters, and there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

God said: “This is the sign of the (confirmation of the) covenant, which I am placing between Me and you, and every living soul that is with you, for all generations. I have placed my rainbow in the cloud, and it will be a sign of a covenant between Myself and the earth. Then, when I (will consider) causing clouds (of darkness and destruction) to come upon the earth, the rainbow will appear in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you, and every living creature

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- When does God show a rainbow? (v. 14)

Rashi: When it arises in His mind to bring darkness and destruction to the world.

Bachye: The rainbow does not appear on every cloudy day or on any occasion that it rains, but only when the generation deserves destruction, to indicate that God is guarding his promise.

The Rainbow (v. 14)

Rashi writes that a rainbow appears in the world when God is thinking of re-enacting the destruction of the flood.

But this assertion appears to be totally outrageous: How could one possibly accept that every time a rainbow appears God is actually thinking of destroying the entire world, and if it were not for the covenant which He made with Noach, He would actually do so?

Is the reader to conclude that, since he sees a rainbow in the sky on a regular basis, his generation is as depraved as the generation of the flood, where “all flesh” became corrupt?
Based on the above, we can explain a difficulty with Rashi’s comment to v. 12, above: “There were generations that did not require the sign [the rainbow] because they were completely righteous, such as the generations of Chizkiyah, king of Yehudah, and that of R’ Shimon bar Yochai.”

The source of Rashi’s comment is from the Midrash: “There were two generations [where the rainbow did not appear]: the generation of Chizkiyah and the generation of the Great Assembly. Rabbi Chizkiyah said that the two generations were those of the Great Assembly and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai” (Bereishis Rabah 35:2).

Why did Rashi conclude that there were many “generations that did not
among all flesh, and the water will no longer become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 The rainbow will be in the cloud, and I will look at it to remember the everlasting covenant between God’s attribute of judgment) and every living creature among all flesh, which is on the earth.”

17 (Showing him a rainbow,) God said to Noach: “This is the sign of the covenant that I have set up, between Myself and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Noach is Assaulted by Cham

9:18

The sons of Noach who came out of the ark were Sheim, Cham, and Yafes. Cham was the father of Cana’an. 19 These three were the sons of Noach. From them, the entire earth was populated.

20 Noach, a master of the soil, degraded himself by planting a vineyard (first of all). 21 He drank of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself in his tent. 22 (Cana’an told his father what had happened and) Cham, the father of Cana’an, looked at his father’s nakedness (and assaulted him). He publicly related (the incident) to his two brothers.

23 Sheim and Yafes took a garment and placed it on both of their shoulders. They walked backwards, and covered their father’s nakedness. (Even when they had to turn themselves round to cover him) their faces were turned backwards, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness.

require the sign because they were completely righteous, such as...” whereas the Midrash—Rashi’s source—was of the opinion that there were only two such generations?

The Midrash understood that when a rainbow did not appear throughout an entire generation, it must be because an exceptionally pious man was living at the time, and in his merit the rainbow did not appear. Therefore, the Midrash states that, in history, there were only two righteous men of such caliber (though it is disputed who they were.)

However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, Rashi was forced to reject this interpretation. Since, as explained above, even if one part of the world is wicked, God may be tempted to destroy it, leading Him to show a rainbow as a sign that He is observing the covenant made with Noach. It follows therefore, that for a rainbow not to appear at all, the entire generation must be righteous (to preclude the possibility of a single “pocket” of wicked people). Therefore, Rashi concluded that the presence of two exceptionally righteous people alone would not prevent a rainbow from appearing.

(Spark of Chasidus to 7:12,17.)

The Post-Flood Era

Chasidic thought teaches that before the flood, God sustained the world despite its low spiritual standing, due to His attribute of kindness. There was a limit, however, to how long God was willing to sustain a world without merit—hence the flood.

The waters of the flood were not merely a punishment. They purified the world, making physicality in general more refined and spiritually attuned. (see above, Sparks of Chasidus to 7:12,17.)

Consequently, in the post-flood era, people were more predisposed to repentance. This ensured that God would always sustain the world—not despite of, but—because of its spiritual standing. For, even if man would become corrupt, people would inevitably repent, ensuring that the world itself would have sufficient merits for its continued existence.

With this in mind, we can explain the following details:

● The inner reason why Noach’s generation failed to repent was because, before the flood, the world was spiritually insensitive.

● Meat is an extremely coarse food that can lead a person to excessive physicality. Thus, it was only permitted to the spiritually-attuned post-flood generation (see v. 3, above).

● Before the flood, people had extremely long lifespans because the world was sustained by God’s kindness which was bestowed disproportionately to people’s merits.

● Before the flood, physicality was more coarse. This was true in a literal sense, to the extent that the clouds were too thick to refract light, so a rainbow never appeared. After the flood, physicality became more refined, so the clouds began to refract light. Thus, the rainbow was not only a “sign” of God’s promise not to destroy the world, it was also a physical consequence of the refinement of the world that ensured its permanent existence.

(Based on Sefer Hasichos 5751 p. 75ff.;Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p.51ff.)
How old was Noach when he died? (v. 29)

**TZROR HAMOR:** This is because life in the ark was extremely taxing for Noach, as he had to feed and maintain so many animals almost singlehandedly. Since he had little of a “life” in that year, the Torah omits it in the summary of the “years of his life” (7:11).
Noach woke up from his wine, and he realized what his youngest son had done to him.  
He said, “Cursed be Canaan! He shall be a slave among slaves to his brethren!”

He said, “Blessed be God, the God of Sheim, and may Canaan be a (subjugated) slave to them!

May God make Yaffes spread out, may He dwell in the tents of Sheim, and may Canaan be a slave to them (even after Sheim is exiled)!”

Noach lived three hundred and fifty years after the Flood.  
Noach lived a total of nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

**THE DESCENDANTS OF NOACH**

These are the offspring of the sons of Noach: Sheim, Cham, and Yaffes.

Sons were born to them after the Flood.

The sons of Yaffes were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Yavan, Tuval, Meshech and Tiras.

The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Rifes and Togarmah.

The sons of Yavan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kitim, and Dodanim.  
They were dispersed into the islands of the nations in their (various) lands, each one with its own language, according to their local and national identity.

The sons of Cham were Kush, Mitzrayim, Poot and Canaan.

The sons of Kush were Seva, Chavilah, Savtah, Ramah and Sautecha.

The sons of Ramah were Sheva and Dedan.

Cush fathered Nimrod. He started to be a rebel (against God) in the land.

He was a powerful trapper (of people’s minds, turning them) against God. Therefore it is said (about rebellious people, that they are), “Like Nimrod, a powerful trapper against God.”

The beginning of his kingdom was Bavel, Erech, Akad and Kalneih, in the land of Shinar.

Ashur left that land (due to Nimrod), and he built Niniveh, Rechovos-Ir, Kalach, and Resen, between Ninveih—which is the great city—and Kalach.

Mitzrayim fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehavim, Naftuchim, Pasrusim, Kasluchim—from whom the Philistines were descended—and Kafterim.

**HOW LONG DID NOACH LIVE? (v. 29)**

We read above: “Noach was six hundred years old when the flood water came upon the earth” (7:6). “It was in the six hundredth and first year, in the first (month), on the first of the month, that the waters dried up” (8:13). I.e. at the end of the flood Noach was 601 years old.

Then, we learn that “Noach lived three hundred and fifty years after the Flood” (9:28), which makes a total of 951 years. How then can the Torah state in the following verse that “Noach lived a total of nine hundred and fifty years, and he died”?

The Midrash answers that the year of the flood is not included in the total of Noach’s years, since it was a year of hardship (as Tzror Hamor explains). However, Rashi in his commentary to the Torah does not cite this Midrash, and it would be unfair to presume that the reader is left to come to this conclusion himself. Rather, there must be a simple explanation for the matter at the literal level—an explanation that is so obvious that Rashi saw no need to write it down.

**THE EXPLANATION**

Presumably, at the literal level, if the Torah states that a person was, for example, 40 years old when a particular event occurred, it does not mean to say that he was 40 years old on that very day. Rather, 40 years was the closest whole number of years to his actual age. He could have been anything between 39½ and 40½ years.

Thus, when the Torah stated, “Noach was six hundred years old when the flood water came upon the earth,” he was actually a little over 599½ (but less than 600). The flood then lasted a year, bringing him to 600½ (but less that 601). The Torah then states, “Noach lived three hundred and fifty years after the Flood,” but again, he would actually have lived between 349½ and 350 years more, so that his total lifespan was 950 years plus a few months, but less than 950½ years. Therefore, the Torah states, “Noach lived a total of 950 years.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 25ff)
Cana’an fathered Tzidon—his firstborn—and Cheis, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Chivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Tzemarites and the Chamasites. From them, the families of the Cana’anites were dispersed. The border of the Cana’anites was from Tzidon as you come to Gerar, as far as Aza reaching Sodom, Amorah, Admah and Tzevoiyim, until Lasha.

The (above) are the descendants of Cham according to their families, and their languages, by their lands and their nations.

Children were also born to Sheim, the father of all those who lived on the other side (of the river), the brother of Yafes, the eldest.

The sons of Sheim were Eilam, Ashur, Arpachshad, Lud and Aram.

The sons of Aram were Utz, Chul, Geser and Mash.

Arpachshad fathered Shalach, and Shelach fathered Eiver.

Eiver fathered two sons: one was named Peleg, because in his days the earth was split (by languages), and the name of his brother was Yaktan.

Yaktan fathered Almodad, Shalef, Chatzarmaues, Yarach, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Oval, Avima’eil, Sheva, Ofir, Chavilah and Yovav. All these were the sons of Yaktan. Their place of settlement extended from Meisha, towards Sefar, the mountain of the east.

The (above) are the sons of Sheim according to their families, and their languages, by their lands and their nations.

The (above) are the families of the sons of Noach, according to their generations, by their nations. From them the nations were dispersed on the earth after the Flood.

NATIONS UNITE TO BUILD A GIANT TOWER

The whole earth spoke one language (Hebrew), and had a united cause (against God). Then, when they migrated from the east (to find a new, larger home big enough for them all) they (only) found a valley in the land of Shinar, and they settled there.

Each (nation) said to the other, “Prepare yourselves! Let us mold bricks and fire them!” (since they had no stones in the valley). So the bricks were like stones for them, and they used clay for plastering.

Sparks of Chasidus

The Generation of Dispersion

Why was the “Generation of Dispersion,” who built the Tower of Bavel, so afraid of becoming “scattered upon the face of the entire earth” (v. 4)? What would be the problem with inhabiting the world with people?

The people of that generation wanted to draw down God’s blessings without following God’s will. They understood that Divine energy will always flow into a place of peace and harmony, so they figured that by keeping together, in one giant community where harmony prevails, they would bring down sufficient Divine energy to grant them physical blessings of prosperity. Therefore, their primary fear was that of being scattered, for the destruction of their community would stop the flow of “easy” blessings from above.

The key to their unity was the language that they spoke—Hebrew. Being the language of the Torah and the language with which God created the world, the “holy tongue” provided them with a powerful tool to unify themselves.

So, to thwart their plan, God took away the power that was unifying them—“Let us descend and confuse their language, so that they will not understand each other’s language” (v. 7).

(Based on Toras Chaim, Bereishis 63c ff.)
They said, “Prepare yourselves! Let us build ourselves a city with a tower whose top is in the skies! Let us make ourselves a name, so we do not become scattered upon the face of the entire earth.”

God descended to see the city and the tower that the descendants of Adam had built.

God said, “(Despite the fact) that they are one people, and they all have one language, this is what they have begun to do! Shouldn’t they be stopped from everything they have planned to do? Prepare yourselves! Let us descend and confuse their language, so that they will not understand each other’s language.”

God dispersed them from there upon the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building the city.

Therefore, He named it Bavel, for there God confused (“Balal”) the language of the entire earth, and from there God dispersed them upon the face of the entire earth.

**Descendants of Sheim**

11:10 These are the offspring of Sheim:

Sheim was one hundred years old, and he fathered Arpachshad, two years after the Flood.

After he had fathered Arpachshad, Sheim lived five hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and then he fathered Shalach.

After he had fathered Shalach, Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Shelah lived thirty years, and then he fathered Eiver.

After he had fathered Eiver, Shelach lived four hundred and three years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Eiver lived thirty-four years, and then he fathered Peleg.

After he had fathered Peleg, Eiver lived two hundred and seventy years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Peleg lived thirty years, and then he fathered Re’u.

After he had fathered Re’u, Peleg lived two hundred and nine years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Re’u lived thirty-two years, and then he fathered Serug.

After he had fathered Serug, Re’u lived two hundred and seven years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Serug lived thirty years, and then he fathered Nachor.

After he had fathered Nachor, Serug lived two hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Nachor lived twenty-nine years, and then he fathered Terach.

After he had fathered Terach, Nachor lived one hundred and nineteen years, and he fathered sons and daughters.

Terach lived seventy years, and he fathered Avram, Nachor, and Charan.
הולדת ארצה-ברית אולטרה נơוורר אולטרה הורה הקời את לילית.

הנה הזרוב על הספינה התייצבה בים צהוב של החורף.

מעריה קולות שונות.: נזירים, חללי קרן, צבעוניים גלויים.

כפי שנאמר: "כניק את א벗, תהי נברא והзван נברא!" יש חומרים שנע铫ר,

אני מ לנו, מחילים את תוך פעמים, עם גם בשטוף, עם גם בברך

וככון זה,זכור, זכר ישב והוזמן כלום, 커 הזרוב פלדה, ולא פלדה, ולא

שיב שם, שמע תוריד כותר מצויה, הי המים פעמים

הتلك, היל גלויים, עלי מהובע מ_SPEAK_ אף מהובע, אף מהובע, אף מהובע

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These are the offspring of Terach:

Terach fathered Avram, Nachor, and Haran.

Haran fathered Lot. Haran died during the lifetime of his father Terach, in the land of his birth, Ur Kasdim.

Avram and Nachor took themselves wives. The name of Avram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nachor’s wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, who was the father of Milcah and Yiskah (=Sarai).

Sarai was barren, she had no child.

Terach took Avram his son, Lot—the son of Haran, his grandson—and Sarai—his daughter-in-law, the wife of Avram his son—and they (Terach and Avram) went out with them (Lot and Sarai) from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Cana’an. They reached as far as Charan and settled there.

Terach lived a total of two hundred and five years. Terach died in Charan.

THE HAFTARAH FOR NOACH IS ON PAGE 371. THE HAFTARAH FOR ROSH CHODESH IS ON PAGE 396.

Maftir: Rosh Chodesh—p. 403.
MONTH 2, DAY 10: Noach is commanded to fill the ark with animals [7:4].

MONTH 3, DAY 28: After 40 days and 40 nights, the rains finally stop [7:12].

MONTH 11, DAY 1: Mountain-tops become visible [8:5].

MONTH 12, DAY 10: Noach sends out a raven which returns [8:6-7].

MONTH 12, DAY 24: Noach sends out a dove. It returns with an olive branch [8:10-11].

MONTH 1, DAY 1: Third dove sent, and does not return. Ark is opened up. [8:12-13].

MONTH 2, DAY 17: The rains begin and quickly turn into floods [7:10-11].

MONTH 9, DAY 1: Waters begin to subside [8:3]

MONTH 9, DAY 17: The ark rests on Mount Ararat [8:4].

MONTH 12, DAY 24: Noach sends out a dove. It returns with an olive branch [8:10-11].

MONTH 2, DAY 27: Noach, his family and the animals leave the Ark [8:14-19].
The Rebbe Rashab, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber of Lubavitch, once said:

“Bereishis is a joyous Parsha, even though its end is not too pleasant. Noach is all about the flood, though it has a joyous ending with the birth of Avraham our father. Lech Lecha however is a truly joyous week. Every day of the week we live with Avraham our father, who was the first person to dedicate his life to spreading Godliness in the world. And Avraham’s trait of self-sacrifice has since been inherited by all Jews.”

This begs the question: If Bereishis had ended a few verses earlier, it would have been an entirely joyous sedra, since its “not too pleasant” parts would have been included in the more somber Parshas Noach. Similarly, Parshas Noach could have ended before the birth of Avraham, keeping its content more uniform. Why is the Torah arranged so that the first two parshiyos contain contradictory themes, and only Parshas Lech Lecha is the first “truly joyous week”?

Bereishis describes the work of God; Noach, the efforts of man; and Lech Lecha, the cooperation of man (Avraham) and God.

Therefore, Bereishis ends with the birth of Noach, and that “Noach found favor in the eyes of God,” since neither of these events required any effort from Noach; they were both the work of God.

Noach ends with the birth of Avraham and his efforts to come close to God. But since God had not yet communicated with Avraham, these details were included in Parshas Noach, which speaks of man’s efforts.

Only in Parshas Lech Lecha do we begin to read of the convergence between God and His creations. For only when God spoke to Avraham for the first time, at the beginning of our Parsha, did the era of human-Divine cooperation begin. This communication to Avraham was the precursor of Sinaitic revelation, which would witness the development of this “cooperation” into a coherent system of 613 mitzvos.

God told Avraham to “Go away (Lech Lecha)” from all his prior value systems—“from your land, your birthplace etc.” This new era of cooperation required a totally fresh approach: the willingness to progress beyond that which man can achieve through his own efforts (the theme of Parshas Noach), so that he can become a “partner” with God in enacting the Divine plan of creation.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 83ff.)
When did God tell Avraham to “Go away... from your land... to the land which I will show you”? (v. 1)

**Ibn Ezra:** At the end of Parshas Noach, we read, “Terach took Avram his son, Lot...and Sarai...and they went out... from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Cana’an” (11:31). Obviously, God’s command here in Parshas Lech Lecha to “Go... to the land which I will show you,” must have occurred prior to their departure, recorded earlier in Parshas Noach. This does not pose a difficulty because the Torah was not written in chronological order (11:31).

**Ramban:** Terach left Ur Kasdim with his family, not due to a command from God, but rather to flee from danger. Terach was terrified of King Nimrod, who had killed his son Haran and attempted to kill Avraham also.

Our verse here in Parshas Lech Lecha is thus the first time that Avraham was commanded to go to the land of Cana’an. (11:28).

**Rashi:** God told Avraham to, “Go away... from your land,” but surely he had already gone out of there with his father and come as far as Charan (see 11:31)? Rather, God was saying to him, “Distance yourself even more from there and leave your father’s house.”

**God said, “Go...to the land which I will show you.” Why did He not tell him where to go? (v. 1)**

**Rashi:** God did not reveal the land to him immediately, in order to make it dear in Avraham’s eyes and to give him reward for every statement [about the land].

**Ohr Ha-Chayim:** God did tell him where to go, but the Torah does not relate this detail, since it is self-understood.

**Arbanel:** God didn’t want others to follow Avraham, so He didn’t inform him of his destination.

**Ba’al Haturim:** The word נפש (“I will show you”) has the same numerical value as the word עברים (“in clouds”). This hints to the fact that Avraham was guided by clouds to the appropriate land.
Avram's 3rd Test: Leaving his Home

God said to Avram, “Go (further) away—for your (own benefit)—from your land, your birthplace and your father’s house, to the land which I will show you. 2 (There), I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you (with money). I will make your name great (by adding a letter to it), and you will (have the power of) blessing (other people). 3 I will bless those who bless you. I will curse (any person) that curses you. All the families of the earth will bless (their children to be like) you.”

Avram left, as God had told him, and Lot went with him.

Avram was seventy-five years old when he left Charan.

Avram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother’s son, all the possessions which they had acquired, and the people they had (converted) in Charan, and they departed, heading for the land of Cana’an. They arrived at the land of Cana’an.

TORAS MENACHEM

Lech Lecha is, “they arrived at the land of Cana’an.” Why are we told again here, “they departed, heading for the land of Cana’an” (v.5)?

c.) God told Avraham, and not Terach, to, “go away from your land” (v. 1). Why then did Terach go out, “from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Cana’an”? (11:31)

d.) Finally, why does Rashi—who aims to explain every problem at the literal level—fail to address the above points?

The Explanation: Two Distinct Journeys

On the verse, “Haran died during the lifetime of his father Terach” (11:28), Rashi writes:

“The Midrash teaches us that he died on account of his father. For Terach complained to Nimrod that Avraham had crushed his idols, so Nimrod cast Avraham into a fiery furnace. Haran sat and thought, ‘Whose side are you on?’ Haran said to them, ‘I am on Avraham’s side!’ They cast him into the fiery furnace and he was burned.”

Having described these events in detail, Rashi considered it unnecessary to explain why “Terach took Avram his son... and they went out... from Ur Kasdim to go to the land of Cana’an,” since he was quite obviously fleeing from Nimrod. How could Terach possibly remain in a country whose king had killed one of his sons, and almost tried to kill the other? [c.f. Ramban].

The reason why Terach headed for Cana’an in particular is also self-understood, since Terach was a descendant of Sheim (see above 11:10-26), and Rashi writes that the land of Cana’an “fell into Sheim’s share when Noach apportioned the land to his sons” (Rashi to 12:6).

Sparks of Chasidus

Avraham’s 1st & 2nd Tests

The Mishnah states that Avraham was tried by ten tests (Avos 5:3). First, Nimrod sought to kill him because of his belief in the One God, which forced Avraham into hiding for 13 years. Secondly, on refusing to bow down to an idol, Avraham was thrown into the fire by Nimrod, only to be saved by a miracle.

Why is there no mention of these two tests in the written Torah? Surely, they were truly remarkable acts of courage!

A person’s connection to God can be based on either rationalization or revelation. If a person’s worship is essentially rational, it is bound by human limitations. A person who serves God based on Divine revelation enjoys an unlimited form of worship, since the parameters are determined by God, who is unlimited. For this reason, Judaism is based on the latter approach.

Consequently, Avraham’s first two tests were omitted from the written Torah—the most fundamental text of Judaism—since they preceded God’s first revelation to Avraham, the system on which Judaism is primarily based.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 47ff.)

The Last Word

The practical message within the opening of our Parsha is:

בל עליך—Usually translated as “Go for yourself,” it could also be rendered as “go to yourself.” Reveal your true identity as a Jew—you are a child of Avraham. To do this:

From your land—Go away from your worldliness, from your physical desires.

From your birthplace—Do not do mitzvos by rote, as a habitual routine which you were brought up to follow.

From your father’s house—In Chasidic thought, wisdom is referred to as “father.” In this verse, the “father” refers to the wisdom of the Evil Inclination. The Torah tells us: Go away from your “father”! Don’t be a “wise guy” when it comes to mitzvos. Don’t rationalize them away.

And through all of the above, we come:

לך לך לארץ—which, usually translated as “to the land which I will show you.” God will lead us to, and reveal to us true spirituality, God’s supernal “land.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 659)
Why did Avraham build two altars? (v. 7, 8)

Rashi: The first Altar in Shechem was to thank God for the good news about his descendants and the Land of Israel. Avraham built the second Altar in Beis Ail because he prophesied that his descendants were destined to stumble there because of the sin of Achan, so he prayed for them there (See Sparks of Chasidus).

Toras Menachem

Nevertheless, the Torah relates that Terach and his family never arrived at their destination, but rather, when, “they reached as far as Charan,” they changed their plans and, “settled there,” instead (11:31).

Since their original plan to go to Cana’an had been abandoned, it follows that Avraham’s trip to Cana’an in our Parsha was a totally new event. Therefore, the Torah writes again that, “Avram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother’s son, all the possessions and... they departed” (v. 5).

And, since their last trip to Cana’an was aborted, the Torah informs us that this time, they completed their journey and, “they arrived at the land of Cana’an.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

How did Avraham know where to go?

One further problem is that God told Avraham to go, “to the land which I will show you,” without specifying any particular place. How did Avraham know to go to Cana’an?

Ohr haChayim answers that God did tell Avraham where to go, but the Torah fails to relate this fact. However: a.) At the literal level of Torah interpretation we cannot presume that events occurred unless they are recorded explicitly.

b.) Rashi makes no mention of this point. We therefore require a solution that is either i.) So obvious that Rashi did not need to mention it or, ii.) A solution indicated by an earlier comment of Rashi.

The answer to this problem can be found in the above explanation that Terach headed for Cana’an because it, “fell in Sheim’s share when Noach apportioned the land to his sons,” and Avraham’s father, Terach was a descendant of Sheim. Thus, in the absence of any specific directions from God—other than to “go (further) away... from your father’s house”—Avraham continued the family migration towards Cana’an, which had previously stopped in Charan.

On reaching Cana’an, Avraham did not stop traveling, since he received no sign that this was his final destination. Thus, we read that, “Avram travelled through the land” (v. 6).

However, on reaching Shechem, God appeared to Avraham, and He...
Avraham traveled through the land, as far as the area of Shechem, (which is in) the plain of Moreh. At that time, the Cana'anites were in (the process of conquering) the land (from the descendants of Sheim). God appeared to Avram, and He said, “I will give this land to your descendants!” (Avram) built an altar there to God, Who had appeared to him.

He moved (his tent) from there to the mountain which is to the east of Beis Ail, where he pitched his (wife's tent first and then his own) tent. Beis Ail was to the west and Ai was to the east. He built an altar there to God, and he (prayed) in the Name of God.

Avram traveled (periodically), always traveling southward (towards Jerusalem).

4th & 5th Tests: Famine in Cana'an & Capture of Sarai

There was a famine in the land (of Cana'an). Avram went down to Egypt to settle there temporarily, because the famine was severe in the land (of Cana'an). Then, when he approached Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, “(Until now, I had not noticed but) now I realize that you are an attractive woman. When the Egyptians will see you, they will say, 'It's his wife!' They will kill me and keep you alive!

Classic Questions

1 How did Avraham pitch his tent? (v. 8)

Rashi: According to the masoretic text, the term “his tent” is written נִני, which can be read נִנֶּה, “her tent.” I.e. first he pitched his wife's tent and afterwards his own.

Sifsei Chachamim: How does Rashi know that Avraham erected his tent before his own. Perhaps he put up his own tent first?

Rashi’s words are based on the Talmud’s statement that “a person should give more honor to his wife than to himself” (Yevamos 62b).

Toras Menachem

Sparks of Chasidus

Avraham's Three Altars

The Torah relates that Avraham built three altars, mentioned in verses 7 and 8, and later in 13:18. Rashi explains the reasons for Avraham’s first two altars (see “Classic Questions” to v. 7-8). Why does he not explain the reason for Avraham’s third altar?

The Talmud attributes three qualities to the Altar in the Holy Temple: i.) “It feeds,” i.e. the world is sustained by the blessings which sacrifices bring about. ii.) “It wipes away evil decrees” and “atones” iii.) “It endears the Jewish people to their Father [in heaven].” (Kesubos 10b and Rashi ibid.)

Perhaps it could be argued that Avraham’s three altars pioneered these three qualities which the Altar in the Temple would later possess:

i.) Avraham’s first altar was to thank God for blessing him, like the Altar in the Temple which “feeds” the world with blessings.

ii.) His second altar was to pray for his descendants who stumbled in sin, like the Altar in the Temple which wipes away evil decrees.

iii.) For Avraham’s third altar Rashi writes nothing, since the third aspect of the Altar is that sacrifices are brought for no reason other than to endear the Jewish people to their Father in heaven, which is the purpose of every altar.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, pp. 36ff.)

Problems with Sifsei Chachamim (v. 8)

Sifsei Chachamim writes that Avraham erected Sarah’s tent before his own based on the Talmudic principle that “a person should give more honor to his wife than to himself” (Yevamos 62b).

This however is difficult to accept, because Rashi’s commentary was written for a readership that includes a first-time student of Chumash. Clearly such a child would not yet have studied Tractate Yevamos, so how is it to understand Rashi’s words here?

The Explanation

While Rashi did not expect his readership to have studied the entire Talmud, he did presume that even a child who is learning Chumash for the first time would have grown up in an observant Jewish home. For example, even before the child studies the Ten Commandments, Rashi expects him to be aware of the mitzvah of Shabbos, and the prohibition of stealing, since by growing up in an observant home the child would have naturally become familiar with these principles.

Likewise, Rashi presumed that even a small child would have observed in his own home the extent to which his father honors his mother. It will thus come as no surprise to him that Avraham pitched Sarah’s tent before his own.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5748)
How could Avraham say that Sarah was his sister to save his own life, placing her at risk of being captured? (v. 13)

**Ramban:** Avraham unintentionally committed a great sin by bringing his righteous wife into a compromising situation in an attempt to save his own life. He should have trusted in God that He would save him from hunger. As a result of his departure from the land of Canaan to Egypt as a result of the famine was also a sin, since he would save them. In fact, Avraham’s departure from the land of Israel, entering Egypt, they left the jurisdiction of Jewish Law and were bound only by Noachide law. According to Noachide Law, a man can divorce his wife simply by disassociating with her. Therefore, Avraham disassociated from his wife by saying, “Please say that you are my sister,” which was effectively a divorce. In this way, if Sarah were taken, her association with Avraham would be decreed on his descendants.

**Abraham:** Avraham was willing to sacrifice his life to save Sarah from being abducted. However he realized that if he had been identified as Sarah’s husband they would have killed him and abducted her in any case. Therefore, allowing himself to be killed for her sake would have been totally futile.

Avraham’s actions here could be compared to Aharon’s sanctioning of the golden calf, for Aharon knew that if he had objected to the calf the Jewish people would have killed him and subjected him to death. Avraham did not tell the Egyptians that Sarah was available for marriage. He simply saw no benefit in revealing to them that he was her husband.

**Bere’im Mayim Chayim:** Avraham did not tell the Egyptians that Sarah was available for marriage. He simply saw no benefit in revealing to them that he was her husband.

**Gur Aryeh:** Avraham did not expect that Sarah would be abducted at all. He thought that the aristocrats of Egypt would offer him gifts in an attempt to win his favor, and so Avraham would give Sarah to them. He was sure that they would not be thugs that would take her by force. He did not expect the king himself to abduct her.

**Zohar:** Rabbi Elazar said, “The verse, ‘Please say that you are my sister,’ is problematic. Would Avraham, who feared God and was loved by God, say that about his wife for his own benefit?”

He answered: “Even though Avraham feared God, he did not rely on his own merit. He did not ask God (to save her) in his own merit, but rather, in hers. He knew that it was through her merit that he would accumulate wealth from the other nations, since a person acquires money in the merit of his wife... Avraham went to Egypt to obtain food from the other nations in her merit. He relied on her merit that he would not be hurt and she would not be touched, and because of this he was not afraid to say, ‘she is my sister’” (III 52b).

How did Avraham expect the Egyptians to “favor him” by saying that Sarah was his sister? (v. 13)

**Radaq:** He hoped that they would favor him and not kill him.

**Rashi:** He thought that they would favor him by giving him gifts.
13 “Please say that you are my sister, so that they will favor me because of you, and my life will be spared thanks to you.”

14 And so it happened, that when Avram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the lady was very attractive. 15 Pharaoh’s ministers saw her, and they praised her (among themselves that she was fit for) Pharaoh.

The lady was taken to the house of Pharaoh. 16 He (bestowed gifts) on Avram because of her. So, (Avram) had flocks, cattle, donkeys, menservants, maidservants, she-donkeys and camels.

17 God afflicted Pharaoh and his household with a severe disease because Sarai, Avram’s wife (told an angel to do so).

18 Pharaoh summoned Avram, and he said, “What have you done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ (causing) me to take her as a wife for myself? Look! here is your wife. Take (her) and go!”

20 Pharaoh gave men orders (to protect Avram). They escorted him and his wife and all their possessions.

WHY DID AVRAHAM WORRY ABOUT GIFTS? (v. 13)

Rashi writes that when Avraham said, “Please say that you are my sister, so that they will favor me because of you,” he was hoping “that they would favor him by giving him gifts” (v. 13).

This statement seems, at first glance, to be quite bizarre. We are reading here of an extremely tense moment for Avraham and Sarah when they are forced to postpone God’s request to remain in the Land of Israel and make a detour into a corrupt and murderous Egypt. So severe is the situation that Avraham deems it appropriate to put his wife at risk of being abducted, by claiming that she is his sister (as the commentators discuss at length—see ‘Classic Questions’). And yet, in the midst of this life-threatening quandary, Rashi informs us that Avraham was worrying about receiving gifts! How could he be concerned with such comparative trivialities as receiving gifts from the Egyptians, when his life and that of his wife were in grave danger?

In fact, the Zohar seems to place a similar stress as Rashi, explaining that “through her merit he would accumulate wealth from the other nations, since a person acquires money in the merit of his wife.” But surely, financial gain was not the main issue of concern here?

THE EXPLANATION

According to Ramban, when Avraham left the land of Cana’an—where God had explicitly told him to go—due to famine, he committed “a sin, since he should have trusted in God to save him from hunger.”

Rashi however makes it clear that, in his opinion, Avraham’s journey to Egypt was with Divine consent. Rashi writes that the “famine in the land” (v. 10), was, “in that land alone, to test him, whether he would question the words of God, Who commanded him to go to the land of Cana’an, and now He was forcing him to leave it.”

Thus, according to Rashi, Avraham’s trust in God remained perfect, and it would have been incorrect for him to remain in Cana’an at a time of famine, and simply rely on God to provide food.

At first glance, a person’s efforts to save himself in a time of personal disaster could be perceived as a lack of trust in God. For, if the person genuinely believed that God would save him, then why would he do anything at all to be saved?

In truth, however, the Torah requires a person to pursue acts of self-preservation. These acts do not in any way detract from the person’s trust in God, since he believes with complete faith that his salvation will come from God. It is only that, for whatever reason, God in His wisdom has commanded man to make a natural “channel” through which the Divine blessing of salvation will come. A failure to create this physical channel, if it is available to the person, would be a transgression of the command “not to rely on a miracle” (Shabbos 32a). The result would be that either: a.) The person’s salvation may not come, and he will be answerable for taking his life in vain, or, b.) If God does save him through a miracle, his merits are diminished (ibid), and he is considered to be a “nuisance to God” (see Sha’ar haGemul).

(If, however, there are no means of natural self-preservation available to the person, he should not despair, for this is a clear sign that God has “exempted” him from making a “physical channel.”)

Thus, in our case, Avraham was correct to leave Cana’an and pursue a “physical channel” by which he might obtain food, to save his family’s life.

Furthermore, God had promised Avraham, “I will bless you” (12:2), on which Rashi comments “with money.” Thus, we can presume that Avraham was constantly vigilant of a possible “physical channel” through which God’s blessing of wealth might occur.

Sparks of Chasidus

Chasidic thought explains that Avraham and Sarah’s descent into Egypt was a precursor of the Egyptian exile:

- Avraham’s escape from Egypt as a wealthy man opened the spiritual channels of redemption that enabled his children to leave Egypt laden with gold and silver
- Similarly, Sarah’s extreme caution against becoming defiled by Pharaoh later empowered her descendants, the Jewish women in Egypt, with the strength to remain faithful to their families.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 61.)
Consequently, when he was forced to go to Egypt he perceived it, not as the retraction of God’s promise to make him wealthy, but rather, the possible fulfillment of God’s blessing. For perhaps, Avraham’s attempt to protect his life by presenting Sarah as his sister would actually bring him wealth.

In fact, this is precisely what occurred. The Torah states that, “He [bestowed gifts] on Avram (because of) her. So, he had flocks, cattle, donkeys, menservants, maidservants, she-donkeys and camels” (v. 16).

And, as the Zohar states, Avraham did not place Sarah at any unnecessary risk at all, since he was aware of her great merits which would surely stand her in good stead. To the contrary, it was her merit which ensured Avraham’s survival, and her merit proved to be the means by which Avraham received God’s blessing of wealth, since “a person acquires money in the merit of his wife.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, pp. 38-39; vol. 15, pp. 486-7)

The Last Word

Itachon—trust in God—is not an effortless emotion, which leads a person to sit back and wait presumptuously for God’s blessings. To the contrary, a person who truly trusts in God knows that, in order to merit God’s blessings, he must actively arouse feelings of total dependency on God—a realization that his salvation can only come from the Almighty, and not from “luck,” “statistics” or any other imaginary source of good fortune.

This message was encapsulated in the Chasidic aphorism, “Think good, and it will be good.” I.e. through actively arousing feelings of total dependency on God—“think good”—a person elevates himself to be a suitable receptacle for God’s blessings—“it will be good.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 36, p. 4ff.)
Aram went up from Egypt to the south (of the Land of Israel)—both he, his wife and all their possessions, together with Lot. Avram was heavily laden with cattle, silver, and gold. He journeyed (retracing the same route and the same lodgings), from the south (i.e. Egypt), passing Beis Ail, until reaching the place where his tent had been previously, between Beis Ail and Ai, at the site of the altar which he had made there to start with. Avram (prayed) there in the name of God.

Lot, who went with Avram, also had flocks and cattle and tents. The (pasture of the) land was insufficient for them to live together, for they possessed many (cattle that needed to graze), so they failed to live together. A quarrel erupted between the herdsmen of Avram’s cattle (who rebuked) the herdsmen of Lot’s cattle (for grazing on other people’s property). Lot’s herdsmen argued that Lot would inherit the whole land one day in any case, but in truth, it was theft because) the Canaanites and the Perizites were inhabiting the land at that time.

Avram said to Lot, “Please don’t let there be a quarrel between me and you, between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are relatives. Don’t you have the whole land in front of you (to choose from)? Please part from me. If you go left, I will go (not too far) to the right (to support you), and if you go right, I will go (not too far) to the left (to support you).”

Lot surveyed (the land), and he saw that the entire plain of the Jordan until Tzo’ar, which was well irrigated—before God destroyed Sodom and Amorah—(with trees) like the garden of God, and (fertile) like the land of Egypt.

So, Lot chose for himself the entire plain of the Jordan.

Lot was a wicked man. His corrupt attitude led Avraham to plead, “Please don’t let there be a quarrel between me and you, between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are relatives.” Lot’s commitment to Avraham was so strong that he was willing to risk his life to fight a war against the four kings to save Lot (see chapter 14, below), and it was this that finally convinced Lot of the greatness of Avraham and the truth of his teachings.

Thus, we find that even though Lot remained wicked and dwelled in Sodom, he was nevertheless inspired by Avraham’s self-sacrifice, to the extent that he too risked his own life in order to welcome guests (see chapter 19, below).

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5750)
Who was Amrafel (אמראפל)? (v. 1)

RASHI: Amrafel was actually Nimrod, who said (אברהם) to Avram: fall (גבהא) into the fiery furnace (אברר). Talmud: This was a dispute between Rav and Shmuel. Rav said that his real name was Nimrod, but he was also called Amrafel because he said (אמר) [the command that caused] Avram to fall (גבהא) into the fiery furnace. Shmuel said his real name was Amrafel, but he was also called Nimrod (אני) because he caused the whole world to rebel (רשא) against God (בראשית 53a).

MAHARSHA: In Parshas Noach, the Torah states, “Cush fathered Nimrod. He started to be a rebel in the land” (10:8). I.e. he was the first person to fight wars.

Since the war between the four kings and the five kings is the first war that is recorded in the Torah (and the first which occurred in the world), it is logical to presume that the Torah is now filling in more information about what was stated earlier. Therefore, the two names Nimrod and Amrafel must be referring to the same person, one being his real name and one an acquired name (ibid.).
Lot traveled from the east (westward), and they parted from one another.

Avram dwelt in the land of Cana'an. Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and he pitched tent(s for) his (shepherds and cattle) as far as Sodom.

The people of Sodom were (intentionally) perverted and corrupt to God, to the extreme.

**God Promises Land to Avram**

God said to Avram, after Lot had parted from him, “Please raise your eyes and, from the place where you are positioned, look northward, southward, eastward and westward. I will give all the land that you see to you and to your descendants for eternity. I will make your descendants like the soil of the earth. (Just as) a man is (not) able to count the soil (particles) of the earth, so too your descendants will (not) be (able to be) counted. Get up and walk through the land, across its length and its breadth, for I am going to give it to you.”

Avram pitched his tent (with Sarai, since he had now been promised children), and he settled in the plain of Mamre, which is in Chevron. He built an altar to God there.

**War Between Five Kings & Four Kings**

It happened in the days of Amrafel King of Shinar, Aryoch King of Elasar, Kedarla’omer King of Ailam, and Tidal King of Goyim, that they waged war with Bera King of Sodom, Birsha King of Amorah, Shinau King of Admah, Shemavler King of Tzevoyim, and the King of Bela, which is (now) Tzo’ar. These (five latter kings) had joined (Kedarla’omer) in the valley of Sidim, which is (now) the Dead Sea. For twelve years they served Kedarla’omer, and for thirteen years they rebelled.

In the fourteenth year (of their rebellion), Kedarla’omer came, with the (three) kings who were his allies, and they struck the Refa’im in Ashteros-Karnayim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Aimim in Shavei-Kiryasayim, and the Chorites at their mountain of Se’ir, until the plain of Paran, which is alongside the desert. They returned and came to Ein Mishpat, which is (now) Kadeish, and they smote the entire

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**The Dispute of Rav and Shmuel (v. 1)**

The dispute of Rav and Shmuel is a reflection of their different approaches to Torah study. Rav preferred the straightforward study of Mishnah, where ideas are self-explanatory and can be taken at face-value (see Bava Basra 145b). Shmuel, on the other hand, favored the complex analytical approach of pilpul, where arguments are refuted, honed and fine-tuned through focused application of the mind (see Chagigah 10a).

Similarly, Rav tended to interpret a verse at face value, translating the words of scripture literally; whereas Shmuel would analyze each statement of the Torah more logically, adapting the interpretation to ensure contextual consistency.

With this in mind, we can explain their differing opinions on our verse: When Rav read the verse in Parshas Noach, “Kush fathered Nimrod. He started to be a rebel in the land” (10:8), he took the Torah’s words at face value, i.e. that Nimrod was the actual name of Kush’s son. On reading our verse, Rav discovered that Nimrod could also be referred to as Amrafel, so he explained how the name Amrafel was the Torah’s alternative-descriptive name: “he was also called Amrafel because he said to Avraham: fall into the fiery furnace.”

Shmuel, however, rejected this “face value” approach and analyzed the verses according to their context. Thus, when the Torah stated in Parshas Noach, “Kush fathered Nimrod. He started to be a rebel in the land,” Shmuel was struck by the following problem:

The preceding section of Parshas Noach lists, at length, the descendants of Noach. When listing all the other names, the Torah tells us nothing about the personalities involved. Only when we read about Nimrod does the Torah interject and say, “He started to be a rebel (against God) in the
Like Nimrod, a powerful trapper against God.

land. He was a powerful trapper (of people’s minds, turning them) against God. Therefore it is said (about rebellious people, that they are), 

“Like Nimrod, a powerful trapper against God”’ (ibid. 9-10). This sudden change of pattern troubled Shmuel. Why did the Torah only tell us about Nimrod’s personality?

Shmuel came to a logical solution to this problem: In contrast to all the names that preceded his, Nimrod was not in fact this person’s actual name, but rather, a name which the Torah used to describe his personality. This explains why, after telling us that his “name” was Nimrod, the Torah digressed to tell us why he acquired this name: “because he caused the whole world to rebel (יִרְשָׁב) against God.”

Therefore, on reading our verse in Parshas Lech Lecha, Shmuel understood that Amrafel must have been Nimrod’s real name, since we had only discovered his “acquired” name in Parshas Noach.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, pp. 4-5)
area (which was later to be inhabited by) the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Chatzetzon Tamar.

8 The King of Sodom, the King of Amorah, the King of Admah, the King of Tzevoyim, and the King of Bela, which is (now) Tzo’ar, came forth, and they fought a battle in the valley of Sidim, with Kedarla’omer King of Ailam, Tidal King of Goyim, Amrafel King of Shinar, and Aryoch King of Elasar, four kings against the five (and yet, the minority prevailed).

9 The valley of Sidim had many clay mines. The kings of Sodom and Amorah fled and fell into them. The survivors fled to a mountain.

10 The (four kings) took all the possessions of Sodom and Amorah, and all their food, and they left. (Since) he was residing in Sodom, they took Lot, the son of Avram’s brother, and his possessions, and they left.

6TH TEST: AVRAM FIGHTS TO RESCUE LOT

A runaway came and informed Avram, the Hebrew. He was living in the plains of Mamre the Amorite—the brother of Eshkol and the brother of Aner, who had all made a covenant with Avram.

14 When Avram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he armed three hundred and eighteen trained men who were born in his household, and he pursued them as far as Dan. He and his servants divided themselves (to pursue the enemy) through the night, and smote them, and pursued them as far as Chovah (i.e. Dan), which is to the left of Damascus. He brought back all the possessions, etc.” (v. 14-16). Why does the reader need to know all these details?

Rashi came to the conclusion that the Torah stated these specific details to stress an additional dimension to the magnitude of Avraham’s miraculous victory.

In what respect was the miracle so great?

Rashi explains that the 318 men allude to a teaching which is not specifically recorded in the Torah, but was handed down by our Sages, that Eliezer alone secured the victory.

If Rashi confined himself to explain scripture only at the literal level (Rashi to Bereishis 3:8) his comment here to verse 14 is difficult to understand. Are we to accept that, at the literal level, the soldiers were, in fact, “only one”—namely Eliezer—since the numerical value of his name equals 318? Surely this is a totally non-literal interpretation?

Admittedly, Rashi does write, “Our sages said that it was Eliezer alone,” indicating that this interpretation is not a purely literal one, but rather, a teaching of the sages. However, there must be some difficulty with the verse at the literal level which forced Rashi to cite this explanation.

Furthermore: a.) Avraham’s victory against four powerful kings (who had already defeated five kings) with an army of only 318 men is an outstanding miracle in itself. What forced Rashi to add a further miracle, that the entire defeat was brought about by Eliezer alone?

b.) The Torah states explicitly, “He and his servants (plural) divided themselves (to pursue the enemy) through the night” (v. 15). So, how can Rashi write that “it was Eliezer alone”?

THE EXPLANATION

Rashi was troubled why the Torah describes Avraham’s war in such extensive detail, “He armed three hundred and eighteen trained men...he

pursued them as far as Dan. He and his servants divided themselves (to pursue the enemy) through the night, and smote them, and pursued them as far as Chovah (i.e. Dan), which is to the left of Damascus. He brought back all the possessions, etc.” (v. 14-16). Why does the reader need to know all these details?

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Of course, this does not mean that the 318 men were not present at all, since the Torah states explicitly that, “He and his servants divided themselves” (v. 15), and not merely “Eliezer alone.” Rather, Rashi wishes to teach us that Eliezer was primarily responsible for the victory. I.e. not that he led the army—for we can be sure that Avraham took this role—but rather that Eliezer (together with Avraham) secured the victory. (See also commentary to 15:2)

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5748)
Yitzchak introduced the concept of afternoon prayers.

prayers (separate introduced the concept of morning prayers. Yitzchak was the first to because Malkitzedek was a priest.

ma’aser from everything (he owned)” (v. 20) , he did not actually perform the mitzvah of giving ma’aser as we know it. This is because a person is only obligated to separate ma’aser from his agricultural produce. Avraham gave ma’aser, “from everything,” not only from his agricultural produce.

Since Avraham’s ma’aser did not follow the same laws that would be observed by future generations, Rambam writes, “Yitzchak was the first to separate ma’aser,” as he separated tithes only from his (agricultural) crops. This is indicated explicitly by the verse, “Yitzchak sowed in the land, and in that year he reaped a hundred-fold” (Bereishis 26:12), on which our sages stated explicitly, “he estimated them for the purposes of giving ma’aser” (Bereishis Rabah 64:6; cited in Rashi ibid.). Consequently, Rambam writes, “Yitzchak was the first to give ma’aser.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

* What did Avram give Malkitzedek? (v. 20)

RASHI: Avram gave him ma’aser (tithes) from all his possessions, because Malkitzedek was a priest.

RAMBAM: Avraham was commanded regarding circumcision and he introduced the concept of morning prayers. Yitzchak was the first to separate ma’aser, and he also introduced the concept of afternoon prayers (Hilkos Melachim 9:1).

RA’AVAD: This is incorrect. It should read, “Avraham introduced the idea of morning prayers and was the first to separate ma’aser, and Yitzchak introduced the concept of afternoon prayers.”

RADVZ: Evidently, Rambam held that when Avraham “gave him ma’aser from everything (he owned)” (v. 20), he did not actually
that Avraham did indeed perform the mitzvah of ma’aser. Rashi stresses that, “Avram gave him ma’aser from all his possessions,” thus rejecting Rambam’s view (as explained by Ra’avad) that Avraham’s offering could not be considered as ma’aser because it was not limited to agricultural produce alone.

However, after reading Ra’avad’s defense of Rambam, we are left with a question: How are we to understand the opinion of Ra’avad (and Rashi) that Avraham did perform the mitzvah of ma’aser?

Two points could be argued:

a.) Even though halachah only requires that ma’aser be separated from crops, nevertheless, this particular detail was introduced after the giving of the Torah. We find this with a number of other mitzvos too, where additional details were added at the giving of the Torah to mitzvos which our Patriarchs previously observed. E.g. before the giving of the Torah, Yibum (a levirate marriage between a childless widow and her deceased husband’s brother) could be performed by a brother, father or any close relative (Rambam, Yevamos 36b), whereas today it can only be performed by a brother. Similarly, when Avraham was given the mitzvah of circumcision, certain details that we observe today as crucial procedures were omitted (see Yevamos 71b).

Thus, it turns out that Avraham did give ma’aser when he separated a tenth from “everything,” because the clause that ma’aser is required only from crops was not yet introduced.

b.) A further argument in support of Ra’avad (that Avraham did separate ma’aser) is that Avraham’s ma’aser was comparable to ma’aser kesafim (the obligation to donate a tenth of one’s income to charity), which is an offshoot of the mitzvah of ma’aser (See Sifri cited in Tosfos s.v. Aser, Toras 9a). This, of course, must be given from “all one’s possessions.”

(R Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, pp. 120-121)
Why does the Torah use an Aramaic word, בקשות (vision), rather than a Hebrew word? (v. 1)

ZOHAR: Rabbi Yossi said: There are many Aramaic words in the Torah...This language is not understood by the supernal angels, and they did not recognize it when God spoke to Avraham.

Since Avraham was not circumcised...therefore God spoke in Aramaic, which is incomprehensible to the angels....

God revealed Himself to Avraham in this concealed manner, so that the holy angels would not look upon him and have an excuse to make an accusation to God for appearing before an uncircumcised man....When did God openly reveal Himself to Avraham before the supernal angels? At the time when He gave Avraham the sign of the holy covenant (Zohar I 98b—see Sparks of Chasidus).

Why would Eliezer inherit Avraham? (v. 2)

RASHI: My entire household is sustained by his orders...but if I had a son, then he would be appointed over my possessions.

MIDRASH: In fact, Lot would have inherited Avraham. He is the one the Torah refers to as “the steward of my household.” The verse continues to mention Eliezer, since he helped Avraham fight for the rescue of Lot in Damascus (Bereishis Rabah 44:9).
GOD PROMISES AVRAM CHILDREN

AFTER the words (of Avram, who verbalized his worries about losing his future reward), the word of God came to Avram in a vision, saying, “Don’t be afraid, Avram! I am your shield (to protect you from being punished for the people you killed in battle). Your reward is extremely great!”

Avram said, “God, Almighty God, what could You possibly give me? For, I am childless, and the steward of my household is (not my own son but) Eliezer of Damascus.”

Avram said, “Look! You have given me no children (so there is no point in rewarding me), as a member of my household will inherit me!”

Then, the word of God came to him, saying, “He will not be your heir. Rather, you will be inherited by someone who comes out from within you.”

He took him outside (his tent), and He said, “Please look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” He said to him, “That is how (numerous) your descendants will be.”

He believed in God (without asking for a sign), and (God) considered this an act of righteousness.

7TH TEST: VISION OF EXILE AT THE COVENANT OF THE PARTS

He said to him, “I am God, who brought you out from Ur-Kasdim, to give you this land as an inheritance.”

He (Avram) said, “God, Almighty God, (give me a sign) through which I can know that I will inherit it.”

WHY WOULD ELIEZER INHERIT AVRAHAM (V. 2)

Avraham said, “I am childless, and the steward of my household is (not my own son but) Eliezer of Damascus... a member of my household will inherit me!”

This begs the question: Eliezer may well have been a loyal servant of Avraham, but why should he inherit Avraham merely because he worked for him? [c.f. Midrash]

However, it was explained above (see commentaries to 14:14) that Avraham’s war against the four kings was won entirely through the assistance of Eliezer. This was true to the extent that, while Avraham had a staff of 318 men, Rashi writes that the war was won by “Eliezer alone.”

From this it is self-understood why Eliezer, more than any other person, would have been Avraham’s heir.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5748)

YOUR REWARD IS EXTREMELY GREAT” (V. 2)

A tzadik (righteous individual) does not seek the reward for a mitzvah because he desires physical benefits, or even spiritual delights. Just as he is devoid of a personal agenda in the observance of the mitzvos, likewise, the tzadik has no personal interest in the reward. He simply does “the truth because it is true” (See Rambam).

Nevertheless, the tzadik still desires the reward, not for his own sake, but rather, because the physical or spiritual reward of a tzadik is proof to others of the greatness of Torah and mitzvos. The reward thus sanctifies God’s name further, and encourages the observance of Torah, which is desirable to the tzadik.

Thus, Avraham was concerned, “Perhaps I have received reward for all my righteous deeds” (Rashi to v. 1), not because he desired the reward personally, but rather, because he knew the impact that his rewards would have in convincing others to observe the mitzvos.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 45f)
9 He said to him, “Take for Me three heifers, three goats, three rams, a turtle-dove and a young bird.”

10 (Avram) took all these (animals) for (God), and he cut (each one) in the middle (into two parts). He placed each part opposite the other, but he did not divide the birds (which represented the Jewish people). 11 Birds of prey descended upon the (pieces of the) carcasses, but Avram drove them away.

12 Then, when the sun was ready to set, a deep sleep fell upon Avram, and—look!—a great, frightening darkness was falling upon him (alluding to the exiles of the Jewish people).

13 He said to Avram, “You should know that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs. They will enslave them and oppress them, for four hundred years! 14 I will also pronounce judgment on the nation they will serve (with ten plagues), and afterwards they will leave with substantial wealth.”

15 “(Before any of this happens,) you will come to your forefathers in peace, and you will be buried in a good old age. 16 (After three generations of exile in Egypt), the fourth generation will return here (to this land), for the Amorites (who currently inhabit the land) will not be completely sinful (deserving eviction) until then.”

17 Then, when the sun had set and it became dark, and—look!—a smoking furnace with a fiery torch passed between these parts.

18 On that day, God struck a covenant with Avram, saying, “I have given this land to your descendants, in the past tense? (v. 18)

RASHI: God's word is considered as if it has already happened.

MIDRASH: God's speech has the power of action, as the verse states, “I have given this land.” It does not state, “I will give this land,” but rather, “I have given this land” (Bereishis Rabah 44:22).

JERUSALEM TALMUD: Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachman said, “It does not say here, ‘I will give,’ but rather, ‘I have given,’” suggesting that “I have already given it” (Chalah 2:1).

TALMUD: The Land of Israel already belonged to the Jewish people before they entered it. It is an inheritance from our Patriarchs (Bava Basra 119a).

OHR HA CHAYIM: Earlier, God told Avraham, “Get up and walk through the land, across its length and its breadth, for I am going to give it to you” (13:17). Through this procedure, Avraham made a legal acquisition (chazakah) of the Land of Israel. Consequently, God now told him, “I have given this land to your descendants,” in the past tense, because Avraham had already acquired the land legally.

OUR RIGHTS TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL (V. 18)

A number of stages can be discerned in the acquisition of the Land of Israel by the Jewish people:

a.) Divine intent at the outset of creation.

The permanent acquisition of the Land of Israel by the Jewish people is God’s Will. From the moment He created the world He already intended that the Jewish people inherit the Land. The permanent acquisition of the Land by the Jewish people is thus Divinely Willed, as Rashi makes clear at the beginning of his commentary to the Torah, “The whole earth belongs to God. He created it and granted it to whomever was deemed fit in His eyes,” (i.e. the Jewish people). Temporarily however He allowed non-Jewish nations to occupy it. (See, at length, “Toras Menachem” to beginning of Bereishis.)

b.) God’s promise to Avraham.

When Avraham reached the Land of Israel for the first time, God told him, “I will give this land to your descendants!” (above, 12:7). Later, when Lot parted company from Avraham, God reiterated this promise, “I will give all the land that you see to you and to your descendants for eternity” (13:15).

c.) Avraham walks across the length and breadth of the Land (13:17).

According to some opinions (including Ohr haChayim) Avraham actually made a legal acquisition of the Land at this point.

d.) The Covenant of the Parts.

At the Covenant of the Parts, God made a binding agreement for eternity concerning the Jewish ownership of the Land of Israel (v. 18-21).

“THEY WILL LEAVE WITH SUBSTANTIAL WEALTH” (V. 14)

The above verse indicates that amassing wealth was one of the purposes of Egyptian exile. For this to be achieved, it was necessary for Yosef to become the ruler of Egypt and gather wealth from all the other lands.

According to Chasidic teachings, “sparks of holiness” are trapped within the physical world and are released when a Jew takes the object and uses it to perform a mitzvah. Therefore, one of the inner purposes of exile is for the Jew to utilize physical objects in the service of God.

Thus, someone who truly desires to cleave to God needs to involve himself in the physical performance of mitzvos, for this is also the only way he can fulfill his soul’s mission.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 3, p. 823ff.)
However, the precise significance of this covenant is different at the scriptural level, than its meaning at the halachic level:

According to the literal interpretation of scripture, Avraham did not acquire ownership of the Land of Israel at the Covenant of the Parts. The Torah merely employs the past tense ("I have given this land to your descendants") although the land had actually not been given yet, because, "God’s word, is considered as if it has already happened" (Rashi). At the scriptural level, God made a binding promise to give Avraham's descendants the Land of Israel.

At the halachic level, however, the Talmud and Jerusalem Talmud (and Midrash) indicate that Avraham actually owned the Land of Israel, which he was given at the Covenant of the Parts.

Rashi, however, rejected this view for the following reason:

Rashi’s opinion is that the acquisition of the Land of Israel by the Jewish people transformed the Land permanently to be an essentially Jewish one, precluding any nation from identifying it as their own at a future time (see, at length, "Toras Menachem" to beginning of Bereishis). This could not occur before the giving of the Torah since, at that time, physical objects were not affected by the observance of a mitzvah. Consequently, the physical acquisition of the Land by Avraham would not have transformed it into an essentially Jewish Land. So, God delayed the actual possession of the Land until later, and He merely committed Himself to give it at the Covenant of the Parts.

Despite the above dispute, one area which the scriptural and halachic viewpoints do agree upon, concerns the holiness of the Land at this point:

Even according to the halachic view that Avraham actually acquired the Land of Israel, he did not acquire a holy land.

The proof of this point is that, despite the fact that the Patriarchs kept the entire Torah (see Rashi to Toldos 26.5), we still find that they would leave the Land of Israel without a halachically valid reason, in seeming defiance of the prohibition against leaving the Holy Land for the Diaspora. For example, while Avraham’s visit to Egypt due to famine (above 12:10) would have been permissible in Jewish law, his departure from the Land of Israel after the Covenant of the Parts did not appear to have a valid reason, since it was not a time of famine (see Da’as Zekeinim to 12:4). Similarly, Ya’akov left the Land of Israel to see Yosef, even though Ya’akov was already being provided with food in the Land of Israel itself. So too, we do not find that Ya’akov and his sons returned to the Land of Israel immediately after the famine ended.

Obviously, the Patriarchs would not have transgressed Jewish law. So, we can only conclude that the prohibition of leaving the Land of Israel simply did not apply, because the Land was not yet holy.

(Yitzchak did not leave the Land of Israel, but this was due to a special prohibition given to him; see Toldos 26:2-3 and Rashi ibid.).

e.) The Conquests of Yehoshua and Ezra

The Land of Israel finally acquired its sanctity when it was conquered by Yehoshua. This sanctity, however, did not persist, as Rambam explains, because the first conquest by Yehoshua "was merely the result of a war. Consequently, when the Land was later taken from them [the Jewish people,] the effects of the initial conquest were annulled, and the Biblical
from the river of Egypt until the great river, the Euphrates river, \(^{19}\) the (land of the) Kenites, the Kenizites, the Kadmonites, \(^{20}\) the Chittites, the Perizites, the Refa’im, \(^{21}\) the Amorites, the Cana’anites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

**Sarai Gives her Handmaid to Avraham**

Sarai, Avram’s wife, had not borne him children.

She had an Egyptian handmaid named Hagar. \(^2\) Sarai said to Avram, “Now look, God has kept me from bearing children. Please come to my handmaid. Perhaps, through her, I will become established.”

Avram listened to Sarai’s (prophetic) voice. \(^3\) At the end of ten years of Avram’s dwelling in the land of Cana’an, Avram’s wife Sarai persuaded Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, (to consent) and she gave her to Avram her husband for a wife.

\(^4\) He came to Hagar, and she conceived (immediately). When (Hagar) noticed that she was pregnant, her mistress (who had failed to become pregnant) became unimportant in her eyes. (Sarai cast the “evil eye” on her, causing her to miscarry).

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**Classic Questions**

- **Did the Jewish people ever occupy all ten lands? (v. 19)**
  - **Rashi:** Ten nations are listed here, but [God] gave them only seven nations. The three lands of Edom, Mo’av, and Amon—those of the Kenites, Kenizites, and Kadmonites—are destined to be our heritage in the future.

- **Who was Hagar? (v. 1)**
  - **Rashi:** She was Pharaoh’s daughter. For when Pharaoh saw the miracles that were wrought for Sarah, he said, “It is better that my daughter should be a handmaid in this household, than a lady in another household.”

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**Toras Menachem**

precepts of ma’aser (tithes) and shevi’is (sabbatical year) no longer applied, for it was no longer “the Land of Israel.” When Ezra consecrated the Land however, he did not do so with war, but with legal acquisition (chazakah)... and thus it remains sanctified to this day. Even though the Land was taken from them, the obligations of shevi’is and ma’aser still apply” (Hilchos Beis Habechira 6:16).

The distinction between these two conquests could be explained as follows. If one examines the exact wording of the various verses which speak of the first and second occupations of the Land, a key distinction emerges. God stipulated that the first conquest of the Land of Israel should be by military conquest: “You shall pass armed before your brothers, all the mighty men of valor” (Yehoshua 1:14). In contrast, the prophecies which speak of the occupation of the Land of Israel in the time of Ezra depict a more organic process of settling and living in the Land (see Yirmiyahu 29:10; Daniel 9:2).

Presumably, the Land of Israel became sanctified by the exact mechanism specified by God in the Torah. Thus, in the first conquest where the Divine command was to conquer the Land, it was the conquest that conferred it with sanctity. When the effects of the conquest were reverted, and the Land was lost, the mechanism of “holiness via conquest” could no longer function. Thus, the obligation in ma’aser and shevi’is ceased.

In contrast, God’s request with the second occupation, in the times of Ezra, was that it should be an organic one, by a process of acquisition. Consequently, a later military conquest by non-Jewish nations would not interfere with the sanctity of the Land, because the mechanism by which the sanctity was conferred was by forging a bond with the Land through settling in it.

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**The Last Word**

Hagar left a position of importance in Pharaoh’s house to become a maid to Sarah so that she could join Avraham’s household (see Rashi). Certainly, she would have raised Yishma’el in the same spirit of self-sacrifice. This explains why Avraham was content with Yishma’el, pleading to God, “If only Yishma’el will live (in fear of) You, (that would be sufficient)” (17:18).

Nevertheless, Yishma’el’s education was based on a rational commitment to God, whereas Yitzchak was educated to serve God in a manner that transcends rational considerations. Therefore, Avraham’s true joy came from Yitzchak.

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(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 19ff.)
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ונוא
Sarai said to Avram, “May (the punishment) for wronging me (by praying only for yourself) be upon you! I gave my handmaid into your bosom, and when she saw that she had become pregnant, I became unimportant in her eyes (and you were silent). Let God judge between me and you!”

Avram said to Sarai, “Here is your handmaid. Treat her as you see fit!”

Sarai mistreated her, and she ran away from her.

An angel of God found her by a water fountain in the desert, by the fountain on the road to Shur.

He said, “Hagar, maid of Sarai, where are you coming from? And where are you going to?”

She said, “I am running away from Sarai, my mistress.”

(Another) angel of God said to her, “Return to your mistress, and allow yourself to be subjugated under her hands.”

(Another) angel of God said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants, so that they will not be (able to be) counted due to (their) great number.”

(Another) angel of God said to her, “Look!—(when you return) you will conceive and bear a son. You shall name him Yishma’el, for God has heard (‘shama’) your affliction. He will be an outdoor man (who loves hunting. He will be a bandit) whose hand will be upon everyone. Everyone (will hate him and put their) hands upon him (to attack him). He will live among his (numerous) descendants.”

She called in the name of God, who had spoken to her, “You are the God of vision (who has seen my humiliation)!”

Because she said, “I may have seen (angels in Avram’s house), but would I have expected (them) here too?” therefore the well was called “the well at which the living (angel) appeared.” It is found between Kadeish and Bared.

Hagar bore a son to Avram. Avram (prophetically) named his son, whom Hagar had borne, Yishma’el. Avram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Yishma’el to Avram.

**Avram’s Name is Changed to Avraham**

When Avram was ninety-nine years old, God appeared to Avram, and said to him, “I am the Almighty God! Come close to Me in worship and be perfect. I will place My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you very greatly.”

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

How was Avraham to “be perfect”? (v. 1)

Rashi: According to the Midrash, God was telling Avraham, “Walk before Me with the mitzvah of circumcision, and through this you will be perfect, for as long as the foreskin is upon you, I consider you imperfect.”

Mishnah: Circumcision is greater than all the other mitzvos, for with all the mitzvos that Avraham our father did, he was not called “perfect” until he circumcised himself, as the verse states, “Walk before me and be perfect” (Nedarim 31b).

Talmud: Rebbi said, “Circumcision is great, for there was no one who occupied himself with mitzvos so much as Avraham our father, and yet he was only called ‘perfect’ because of his circumcision—as the verse states, “Walk before Me and be perfect... I will place My covenant between Me and you” (ibid 32a).

Ibn Ezra: Circumcision was a test of perfection to see if Avraham would accept the mitzvah unquestioningly.

**Perfection** through Circumcision (v. 1-2)

At first glance, the Mishnah and Talmud appear to be making identical statements. On closer examination however, there is a subtle but significant difference between them:

The Mishnah states, “With all the mitzvos that Avraham our father did, he was not called ‘perfect’ until he circumcised himself.” This suggests that circumcision was the climax of a life of Divine service for Avraham, an act which completed and sealed his “portfolio” of good deeds.

The Talmud, on the other hand, stresses, “He was only called ‘perfect’ because of his circumcision,” suggesting that the act of circumcision alone brought Avraham perfection, regardless of his prior acts of kindness.
In other words, the Mishnah sees circumcision as the pinnacle of Avraham’s Divine service, whereas according to the Talmud, Avraham reached perfection through circumcision alone. But what, exactly, are these two sources arguing about?

**Two Types of Perfection**

The concept of “perfection” can suggest two, quite distinct qualities:

a.) The lack of imperfection, i.e. the absence of negative qualities.

b.) Choiceness and wholeness, i.e. the presence of positive qualities.

With the mitzvah of circumcision, this would correspond to:

a.) The absence of the foreskin.

b.) The advantages of being circumcised.

The Mishnah chose to stress the former quality of circumcision: “With all the mitzvos that Avraham our father did, he was not called ‘perfect’ until he circumcised himself.” I.e. so long as Avraham remained uncircumcised, he harbored a negative quality which impinged upon the perfection which he had achieved throughout his entire life. The removal of this impediment thus rendered him perfect.

Rashi also stresses this aspect of circumcision, even more explicitly, writing that, “as long as the foreskin is upon you, I consider you imperfect.”

The Talmud, on the other hand, chose to stress the additional choiceness and wholeness which circumcision conferred on Avraham, i.e. the positive effects of circumcision. These unique qualities were bestowed upon him as a result of circumcision alone: “He was only called ‘perfect’ because of his circumcision.”

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(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 3, pp. 759-60)
A Third Type of Perfection

Ibn Ezra’s comment to our verse indicates a third dimension to the concept of “perfection.” He writes, “Circumcision was a test of perfection to see if Avraham would accept the mitzvah unquestioningly.” I.e. in addition to the removal of negative qualities and the acquisition of positive qualities mentioned above, perfection can also suggest the untarnished simplicity of pure, unquestioning faith.

The two aspects of perfection described above both arise because the personality achieves a higher degree of sophistication—be it through the removal of the bad traits, or the acquisition of good traits. This third type of perfection however, is not a function of any particular quality that a person possesses but, to the contrary, it arises from his ability to disregard his own personal greatness for the sake of a higher cause.

This third type of perfection expresses itself in the act of circumcision itself. For a father to allow this painful act to be performed on his child, he must disregard his own personal feelings, and reveal within himself the true and unfailing commitment to God which lies within every Jew.

(Classic Questions)

If Avraham observed the mitzvos before they were given, why didn’t he circumcise himself before God’s command? (v. 11)

Riva: Since the act of circumcision can only be performed once, Avraham waited for the command, based on the principle that, “One who is commanded and fulfills is greater than one who is not commanded and fulfills.”

(Covenant of Circumcision)

God said to Avraham, “As for Me, this is My covenant with you: you shall become the father of a multitude of nations. Your name shall no longer be called Avram, but your name shall be Avraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make you into the nations (of Israel and Edom), and kings will emerge from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and between you and between your descendants after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant, to be to you for a God and to your descendants after you. I will give you, and your descendants after you, the Land in which you live, the entire Land of Cana’an, as an everlasting possession. I will be God to the (inhabitants of the land).”

Why Did Avraham not Circumcise Himself Before Being Told to Do So? (v. 11)

Riva’s explanation is based on a Talmudic passage in tractate Kidushin (31a):

Rabbi Chanina said, “One who is commanded to observe a precept and fulfills the command is greater than one who is not commanded to do so and fulfills it regardless.”

Rabbi Yosef [who was blind] said, “Originally, I thought that if anyone would come and tell me that the law favors Rabbi Yehudah, who ruled that a blind person is exempt from mitzvos, I would make a celebratory feast for the Rabbis, since [it turns out that] I was not commanded to observe them and I fulfilled them in any case. Now, I heard the words of Rabbi Chanina that “one who is commanded to observe a precept and fulfills the command is greater than one who is not commanded to do so and fulfills it regardless.” I have decided that, to the contrary, I will make a feast if somebody tells me that the law does not favor Rabbi Yehudah.”

Rabbi Yosef’s change of stance indicates that this issue, whether a command is greater than voluntary observance, is by no means simple. Even Rabbi Yosef had presumed that voluntary observance was greater, until Rabbi Chanina taught him otherwise.

Certainly, a child who is studying Chumash for the first time is unaware

The Last Word

The covenant of circumcision has a threefold implication:

a.) It is one of the 613 mitzvos, like any other.

b.) It represents the general connection (covenant) between a Jew and God via the 613 mitzvos.

c.) It represents the intrinsic connection (covenant) that a Jew has with God by virtue of being Jewish.

It is this third aspect (“c”) that began with Avraham our father, for he was the first Jew from whom all other Jews are descended, and he struck a covenant with God. The other two aspects (“a” and “b”) represent a further development of that initial covenant via the giving of the Torah.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 57ff.)
of this debate, and one could not possibly expect a child to come to the correct conclusion when the matter was not even clear to the Sages of the Talmud!

This leaves us with the question, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, why Avraham did not circumcise himself before he was commanded to do so.

The Explanation

After the flood, God told Noach, “I will demand (an account) for your blood and for your souls” (9:5), on which Rashi comments that “your blood” refers to, “one who sheds his own blood.”

At first glance, this appears to be a prohibition against suicide, as Rashi continues, commenting on the words “and your souls,” that this refers to, “one who strangles himself, even though no blood issued from him.”

However, if the verse was merely prohibiting suicide, the Torah could simply have written, “I will demand (an account) for your souls,” and it would have been self-understood that spilling one’s own blood in an act of suicide was prohibited. Why did the Torah include the additional words, “I will demand (an account) for your blood and for your souls”? Rashi explains that this refers to, “one who sheds his own blood,” i.e. a separate prohibition of spilling one’s own blood, regardless of whether this occurred in an act of suicide. It is thus prohibited under Noachide law for a person to make himself bleed, even with a small cut.

Halachically, Avraham was obligated by the laws which God gave to Noach, which were binding on all mankind. Avraham’s decision to observe the mitzvos of the Torah before they were given was, technically speaking, a hiddur (an enhancement of his obligatory observance of the Noachide laws).

Under Noachide law, Avraham was prohibited from circumcising himself before he was commanded to do so, as this would involve spilling his own blood. And since, for Avraham, circumcision was only a hiddur (enhancement) prior to God’s command, he would not have been permitted to transgress an outright prohibition of spilling blood, in order to achieve a non-obligatory enhancement to his Divine Service.

Two Problems

The above explanation however presents us with two problems:

a.) Ya’akov’s sons told the people of Shechem that, for Dinah to marry Shechem, all the people of Shechem would need to circumcise themselves (below 34:14-17).

But, if spilling blood was prohibited under Noachide law, how could Ya’akov’s sons have demanded circumcision?
• 11 “You should circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it will be the sign of a covenant between Me and you.”

• 12 At the age of eight days, every male shall be circumcised to you, throughout your generations, one that is born in the house (to a slavewoman), or one that is purchased with money (after he is born) from any foreigner, who is not of your seed. 13 Those born in your house and those purchased with your money shall be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant.

• 14 “(As for) an uncircumcised male who does not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, (when he reaches the age of liability,) that soul will be cut off from its people (so that he remains childless, and dies before his time). He has broken My covenant.”

**Sarai’s Name is Changed—She is Promised a Child**

17:15

God said to Avraham, “As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her by the name Sarai, for Sarah is now her name. 16 I will bless her (so that she can produce milk), and I will also give you a son from her. I will bless her, and she will become (a mother of) nations. Kings of nations will come from her.”

Avraham fell on his face and rejoiced. He said to himself, “Could (anyone be so fortunate as me) that a child be born to a person who is a hundred years old? Could (anyone be so fortunate as) Sarah, a princess to all mankind?”

Classic Questions

Why was Sarai’s name changed to Sarah? (v. 15)

**Rashi:** Sarai (םֶרֶא, suffixed by the letter Yud) means “my princess,” suggesting that she is a princess for me (i.e. for Avraham), but not for others. Now, Sarah (םֶרֶא) shall be her name. The absence of any suffix indicates that she will be a princess to all mankind.

Sparks of Chasidus

Sarah’s name signified that she became “a princess to all mankind” (Rashi, v. 15), whereas Avraham did not become a prince but rather, “the father of a multitude of nations” (v. 5).

This indicates that Sarah remained aloof from the nations to a greater extent than Avraham, since a princess remains aloof from her nation, whereas a father interacts with his children.

Because Avraham was more connected to the nations, it was more difficult for him to perceive the exclusive quality of Yitzchak, his Jewish son, over Yishma’el, a non-Jew. Thus, when he is informed here of Yitzchak’s birth, Avraham exclaimed, “If only Yishma’el will live (in fear of) You, (that would be sufficient!” (v. 18).

Sarah, however, was a “princess,” totally aloof from the nations of the world. Consequently, it was she who perceived the superior quality of Yitzchak and convinced Avraham to send Yishma’el away (see 21:9ff).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 147ff.)

Admittedly, the request for circumcision was a ploy, for Ya’akov’s sons planned to eliminate the people of Shechem while they were weakened from circumcision (see commentaries to 34:30). But, surely, if spilling blood was prohibited by Noachide law, wouldn’t the people of Shechem have become suspicious when they were asked to be circumcised? Wouldn’t they have wondered: “Why are Ya’akov’s sons asking us to transgress Noachide law?”

b.) In Parshas Miketz, Rashi writes that Yosef refused to give grain to the Egyptian people unless they circumcised themselves (Rashi to 41:55). How are we to understand Yosef’s request if spilling blood was prohibited for a non-Jew?

Both these questions can be answered with God’s command to Avraham here in Parshas Lech Lacha. God told Avraham that, in addition to circumcising “you and your descendants after you” (v. 9), he should also circumcise “those born in your house and those purchased with your money” (v. 13), i.e. those people who were under Avraham’s direct control.

Therefore Yosef, who was the dictator of the entire land of Egypt, was required to instruct his citizens to circumcise themselves, since they were all under his control. They thus required circumcision as the extended household of Yosef.

And similarly, the people of Shechem were led to believe that they were becoming part of the extended household of Ya’akov: “We will be one people” (34:16). Therefore they would be required to circumcise themselves, based on God’s command to Avraham here in Parshas Lech Lacha.
שמא תלת: ואמור אבראהים אל אבראהים כי ליתך נשואות לח יברעם אבראהים אבראהים שבראשך לצאתך וליהלך וליהלך
ולפני: ואמור אלהים אלך שבראשך ילדה וליהלך
וליהלך.
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who, at ninety years old, (will have the merit) of giving birth?"

18 Avraham said to God, "If only Yishma'el will live (in fear of) You, (that would be sufficient)!"

19 God said, "Indeed, your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will name him Yitzchak. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20 Regarding Yishma'el, I have heard you. Look!—I have blessed him, I will make him fruitful, and extremely numerous. He will father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But I will establish My covenant with Yitzchak, whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year."

22 He finished speaking with him, and God ascended from Avraham.

8TH TEST: AVRAHAM CIRCUMCISES HIMSELF AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

Avraham took Yishma'el his son, all those born in his house and all those purchased with his money,—every male of the people of Avraham’s household, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins on that very day, like God had told him.

Avraham was ninety-nine years old, when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised.

Yishma'el his son was thirteen years old, when he had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised.

On that very day, Avraham was circumcised, and (so was) Yishma’el his son. All the people of his household, those born in his house and those bought with money from foreigners, were circumcised with him.

THE HAFTARAH FOR LECH LECHA IS ON PAGE 373.

2 — **Charan.** In the year 2000 Avraham escapes Nimrod’s fiery furnace and the family flees to Charan [11:31, Seder Hadoros].

3 — **The Land of Cana’an.** In the year 2023, God reveals Himself to Avraham and tells him to go to “the land which I will show you.” Avraham travels to the land of Cana’an, leaving Terach and Nachor in Charan. On reaching Shechem he builds an altar and offers sacrifices to God. He moves progressively southwards towards Jerusalem [12:1-9].

4 — **Egypt.** That year, when famine strikes, Avraham moves temporarily to Egypt [12:10ff].

5 — **Return to the Land of Cana’an.** After the famine ends, he retraces his steps through the land of Cana’an, returning to the site where his tent was pitched in Beis Ail [13:1-3].
At first glance, Parshas Vayeira is a direct continuation of Parshas Lech Lecha. In Parshas Lech Lecha we read of Avraham’s journeys, disputes, wars and family life. And here, in Parshas Vayeira the story continues, as we read a further installment in the life and times of the first Jew.

The Torah, however, is not a history book. It is intended to be a source of valuable teachings and inspiration to guide us along the path towards our Creator. So we could not possibly be reading here two “installments” of Avraham’s story. Each Parsha is a self-contained entity in itself, complete with its own unique message, conveyed by its name.

So, what is the lesson of Vayeira, and how is it distinct from Lech Lecha?

The basic distinction between these two Parshiyos is that Parshas Vayeira describes Avraham’s life and efforts after being circumcised.

Circumcision is referred to not only as a mitzvah—a particular method of connecting to God—but, more importantly, as a covenant. I.e. it encapsulates the message of Judaism in general.

There is a basic principle of Judaism that spirituality should not be relegated to the abstract higher spheres of existence. Instead, the Torah’s principles need to become tangible and apparent in man’s flesh and blood.

Chasidic thought shuns the approach of abandoning physicality in a search for spirituality. On the contrary, our goal is to make the physical world receptive and sensitive to the Divine. And this occurs most vividly and effectively in the covenant of circumcision, where the spirituality associated with a mitzvah becomes permanently embossed in man’s flesh.

And that is why this Parsha is called Vayeira—“God appeared to him”—because everything that we read in the following pages describes a new era in Avraham’s life, where his physical body had become a receptacle for Divinity, through the covenant of circumcision.

The lesson for us: As descendants of Avraham, God’s presence is very apparent in our lives. For this reason we find that even children are naturally drawn to kissing a mezuzah, or saying a blessing, etc.

So when we read in the Torah how God appears to Avraham, we should be aware that God also appears to us. The only real difference is that Avraham was given the ability to see this with his eyes.

But, as descendants of Avraham, we should not be satisfied with God’s invisible presence. We should cry out and ask: Why is it that God showed Himself to Avraham, and He does not show Himself to us?

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 49ff; Sichas Parshas Vayeira 5752)
circumcision before visiting him because the third day in particular is a fact, day is more dangerous than the second. According to the other opinions, would only be valid according to those opinions which hold that the third day and not the second, since the third day after circumcision was busy circumcising Yishma'el and all the members of his house, the Divine revelation was a cure for the sickness caused by his circumcision, as the verse states, "In the light of the King's countenance there is life" (Proverbs 16:15).

Even though God is a "relative," so to speak, of every Jew, nevertheless a visit from God is a highly public affair. Therefore, in this respect, God could not be considered a "relative" and therefore He waited before visiting Avraham.

MIDRASH: Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said, "He felt pain, in order that God could double his reward." Rabbi Levi said, "Avraham didn't circumcise himself. He simply looked and found himself circumcised." Rabbi Bircha said, "On that occasion, Rabbi Abba bar Kahana cursed Rabbi Levi, saying, 'You are a liar and a cheater!'" (Bereishis Rabah 47:9).

TORAS MENACHEM

Why did God wait Three days?

Mizrachi argues that God waited until the third day after Avraham's circumcision to visit him because, on the first day Avraham was busy circumcising Yishma'el and all the members of his household, so God did not visit him. God then chose to visit him on the third day and not the second, since the third day after circumcision is particularly dangerous, whereas the second day is not.

Ohr haChayim rules that "friends and relatives are allowed to visit a sick person immediately, whereas others must wait three days" (Yoreh De'ah 335:1). The reason for this is because the immediate presence of anyone but a friend or relative would publicly "declare" the person as being sick, which is not good for his mazal (fortune).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why did God reveal Himself to Avraham? (v. 1)

Rashi: To visit the sick. Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: It was the third day from Avraham's circumcision, and [God] came to inquire about his welfare.

Mizrachi: Why did God wait until the third day after Avraham's circumcision to visit him? Because, on the first day Avraham was busy circumcising Yishma'el and all the members of his household, so God did not visit him. God then chose to visit him on the third day and not the second, since the third day after circumcision is particularly dangerous, whereas the second day is not.

Ohr haChayim: The Shulchan Aruch rules that "friends and relatives are allowed to visit a sick person immediately, whereas others must wait three days" (Yoreh De'ah 335:1). The reason for this is because the immediate presence of anyone but a friend or relative would publicly "declare" the person as being sick, which is not good for his mazal (fortune).
Three Angels Visit Avraham

God appeared to (Avraham) in the plains of Mamre (three days after his circumcision), while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent (where he had been looking for passersby to welcome), in the heat of the day.

He looked around and saw—look!—three (angels, in the form of) men were standing in front of him. He (realized that they did not wish to trouble him) so he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent, and he prostrated himself on the ground.

He said, “My lords! If I have found favor in your eyes, please do not go away from your servant!”

Sparks of Chasidus

The Kabalah speaks of “50 gates of spiritual understanding,” 49 of which can be achieved by a person as a result of his own initiative. The final 50th gate is then granted by God from above.

When Avraham had circumcised himself, he had reached the greatest degree of spiritual perfection that he could possibly achieve as a human being—the 49th gate—and he became “sick” yearning for the fiftieth gate. This is alluded to by the fact that אֱ-הוֹ מ (the Hebrew term for ‘sick person’) has the numerical value (gematria) of 49. Then, “God appeared to him,” revealing to him the 50th gate of spiritual understanding, which cured his spiritual sickness.

And, being that his physical sickness was a reflection of his spiritual dissatisfaction, the Divine revelation healed him physically too.

(Tased on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeira 5750)

The Last Word

When the Rebbe Rashab was four or five years old and he learned that “God appeared to (Avraham),” he burst into tears and complained to his grandfather (the Tzemach Tzedek): “Why doesn’t God reveal Himself to me?”

The Tzemach Tzedek replied, “When a Jew decides to circumsice himself at the age of 99, he deserves that God should reveal Himself to him.”

The fact that the previous Rebbe (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch) told this story in public and publicized it, proves that it contains a practical lesson in the education of all children, not just exceptional individuals, such as the Rebbe Rashab.

Namely, that while in the past children could only be drawn towards physical prizes and rewards—as the Rambam writes that children should be tempted to observe Torah and mitzvos with prizes of nuts etc. (Perush Hamishnayos, Sanhedrin, beg. perek Chelek); nowadays however, times have changed and even small children can be taught to have a desire for spiritual things, for Divine revelation, to the extent that its absence reduces them to tears.

(Tased on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 66)

TORAS MENACHEM

which Rashi comments, “God took the sun out of its sheath so as not to trouble him with guests.” From this we see that nobody was present in any case when “God appeared to Avraham,” and that it was indeed a private affair.

We are thus left with the question: why did God wait until the third day before visiting Avraham?

The Explanation

We can solve the above problem by first posing a further question:

The act of circumcision was the first—and only—mitzvah that Avraham performed with his body. With it he entered, together with all his future descendants, into a holy covenant with God. It represented an unprecedented leap in his own Divine service, towards which he had been heading his entire life.

So, why did he feel pain at all? Surely, Avraham should have been so overwhelmed with joy at receiving the mitzvah of circumcision that he should not have felt any pain?

In fact, we find in Jewish Law that although it is generally prohibited to fast on Shabbos (since it is a time when a person may not cause himself suffering), nevertheless a person who experienced a bad dream is permitted to fast on Shabbos to annul the dream. This is because its annulment through fasting actually causes him pleasure, and not suffering, because he is so disturbed by the dream (See Shulchan Aruch Admor Hazakein, Orach Chaim 288:3).

Now, if this spiritual alleviation of physical distress is possible even by an ordinary person—since the Code of Jewish Law speaks to the average person—then all the more so would we expect Avraham to feel only joy at his circumcision, and not pain?

Furthermore, when Rabbi Levi (in the Midrash) expressed such a view, that Avraham felt no pain, he was personally insulted by his colleague Rabbi Abba bar Kahana, who called him a “liar and a cheater.” Surely Rabbi Abba bar Kahana could have made a more dignified response? What was the need for such harsh language?

The solution to all the above problems lies in the fact that the sensation of pain is actually a fundamental part of the mitzvah of circumcision. The verse states, “My covenant should be in your flesh” (above, 17:13), which suggests that the flesh itself should feel the effects of the mitzvah. So, a failure to feel pain would mean that God’s covenant had not properly penetrated the “flesh” of man.

Consequently, if Avraham would not have felt pain while, and as a result of, circumcising himself then he would not have been observing the mitzvah properly. Therefore, despite his great joy and spiritual elation, Avraham forced himself to be aware of the natural pain which his body was experiencing, so that God’s covenant should penetrate the physical body.
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

How could Avraham serve milk and meat together? (v. 8)

Da'as Zekeinim: Rashi writes that Avraham served them, “bit by bit as each item was prepared” (v. 8). Thus, he did not serve them meat and milk together, which is forbidden, but rather milk and then afterwards meat (“cream and milk and the calves”), which is permissible.

Toras Menachem

This is why Rabbi Abba bar Kahana reacted so vociferously to Rabbi Levi’s claim that Avraham felt no pain. For, without a physical feeling in the “flesh,” the covenant of circumcision loses its significance. Therefore, Rabbi Abba bar Kahana felt the need to negate such a notion as sharply as possible.

Based on the above, we can now explain Rashi’s words that God waited until the third day before visiting Avraham:

Ramban writes that when “God appeared to (Avraham),” he was instantly healed by the Divine revelation.

Therefore, if God had revealed Himself to Avraham earlier he would have been immediately healed, and he would not have felt the pain, which was associated with the mitzvah, to a sufficient degree. Therefore, only after Avraham had experienced the pain of circumcision in his physical flesh for a prolonged period, did God reveal himself to Avraham, causing a miraculous recovery.

(Milk & Meat (v. 8)

In addition to the argument [of Da’as Zekeinim], that the cream and calves were served separately, thus circumventing the prohibition of eating milk and meat, one could also argue that he offered each of the angels either milk or meat. Thus, “three calves’ tongues with mustard”...
4 “Please, let some water be brought (by my staff) so you can bathe your feet and recline under the tree. I will get some bread for you to satisfy your hearts. Afterwards, you may continue on. (I ask this of you) because you have (honored me by) visiting your servant.”

They said, “Do what you have suggested.”

5 Avraham rushed to Sarah’s tent, and he said, “Quickly, get three se’ah of sifted flour, knead them and make loaves!”

6 Avraham ran to the cattle, took (three) tender and good calves, and he gave (them) to the young lad (Yishma’el), and he hurried to prepare (three cooked tongues with mustard).

7 He took cream, milk and the calves that he had prepared, and placed them in front of (the angels).

He stood over them, under the tree, as they (pretended) to eat.

8 They said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?”

He said, “Here, in the tent.”

9 (One angel) said (on behalf of God), “I will be returning to you at this time next year, and then, the Sages said in tractate Bava Metzia: The ministering angels knew where Sarah was [but they still asked where she was] to make it known that she was modest, in order to endear her to her husband.

Rabbi Yosef bar Chanina said: “[They asked where she was] in order to send her the cup of blessing [i.e., the cup of wine upon which the Grace after Meals is recited].”

Sforno: The angels asked, “Where is Sarah, your wife,” since the purpose of their mission was to inform Sarah that she was going to give birth to a child.

Abarbabanel: The angels were concerned that Sarah was unwell, since she did not join them for the meal.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**Why are there dots on the word יָהָ (v. 9)**

_Rashi_: In the word יָהָ (“to him”), there are dots over the letters alef, yud and vav. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar taught: “Wherever a word has more undotted letters than dotted letters, one should give a special interpretation to the undotted letters.” But here, the dotted letters are more numerous than the undotted letters, so the dotted letters [ִ֭�] require a special interpretation.

The word יָהָ means “where is” (masculine), so the dotted letters here suggest that the angels also asked, “Where is Avraham?” to Sarah. This teaches us that a person should always enquire from his host about his hostess, and from his hostess about his host.

**The Last Word**

_“They (pretended) to eat…” (v. 8)_

The Torah states that the angels ate the food which Avraham served them (v. 8), on which Rashi comments, “They pretended to eat.”

It appears, therefore, that Avraham did not perform a mitzvah by feeding his guests, for ultimately they were angels who did not need to eat. Thus, a.) Avraham interrupted his audience with the Divine Presence unnecessarily, and, b.) How can we learn the principle, “Welcoming guests is greater than welcoming the Divine Presence” (Shabbos 127a), from an incident where there were no real guests present? Generally speaking, with acts of kindness, the primary focus is on the results of the mitzvah, i.e., the benefits given to the guests—food, drink etc.

The unique quality of the mitzvah of welcoming guests is that the primary focus is not on the benefits received by the guests, but rather, on the good will demonstrated by the host. In this light, it turns out that Avraham did fulfill the mitzvah of welcoming guests, in the most exemplary manner.

_Torash Menachem_ were prepared (Rashi, v. 7), to give each of the guests the option of eating meat. This was done in order to fulfill the mitzvah of welcoming guests in the best possible fashion. No guest, however, was served milk and meat.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 6, p. 150)

**The Angels’ Enquiry (v. 9)**

_Rashi_: Rashi’s lengthy comment here prompts a number of questions:

a.) Dots appear on top of a word in many places in the Chumash, and Rashi does not always explain their significance. Why did he choose to do so here?

b.) Why did Rashi reject the simple explanation [of Sforno] that the angels asked where Sarah was because they came to inform her of the good news that she was about to bear a child?

c.) If Sarah was very modest, as Rashi writes, then why did she accept wine from strange men instead of from her husband?

_The Explanation_

On verse 2 above, where the Torah states that three angels came to visit Avraham and Sarah, Rashi comments, “One to bring the news (of Yitzchak’s birth) to Sarah, one to overturn Sodom, and one to heal Avraham, since one angel does not perform two errands.”

On reading our verse, that, “they (plural) said to him, ‘Where is Sarah your wife.’” Rashi could not accept the interpretation [of Sforno] that they were all asking about Sarah’s whereabouts in order to inform her of good news, since he had written earlier that only one angel was appointed to any single task.
Therefore Rashi concluded that they were merely inquiring about her welfare based on the teaching of our Sages that, “a person should always inquire from his host about his guest, and from his hostess about his host.”

This however begs the question: the Torah records that the angels inquired from Avraham about Sarah’s welfare, but where do we find that they enquired from Sarah about Avraham’s welfare?

Rashi answers that this inquiry is alluded to by the dots on top of the word. I.e. Rashi does not always explain the significance of dots, since at the literal level of Torah interpretation they are not always significant. Since, however, in our case they do solve a basic question at the literal level, Rashi explained their meaning.

A problem with the above solution is that it is slightly inconsistent with the precise wording of the verse. If the angels were merely inquiring about the welfare of Sarah, then why did they ask, “How is your wife?” Surely, it would have been more appropriate to say, “How is Sarah, your wife?”

Due to this problem, Rashi felt it was necessary to bring an alternative solution. So, he wrote, “The ministering angels knew where Sarah was [but they still asked where she was] to make it known that she was modest, in order to endeavour her to her husband.” This explains why the angels asked, “Where is your wife,” since their intent was to highlight her modest absence from the meal.

But, while this interpretation explains the angels’ question, it fails to explain why the Torah relates the specific content of Avraham’s answer, since it was irrelevant to the angels where Sarah was located.

Therefore, Rashi brought a third interpretation: “Rabbi Yosef bar Chanina said: [They asked where she was] in order to send her the cup of blessing.” This explains the need for the angels’ question and Avraham’s answer, since they needed to know where Sarah was to bring her the cup of blessing.

**The Cup of Blessing**

One might think at first glance that it would have been preferable for Avraham to send his own cup of blessing. However, the Torah states explicitly: “He stood over them, under the tree, as they (pretended) to eat” (v. 8). From this we see that Avraham did not eat at all, since he was serving his guests the entire time, so he would not have participated in the Grace after Meals. It was thus not disrespectful for the angels to send her from their cup, as this was the only way that Sarah could participate in this mitzvah.

Nevertheless, the astute reader might still be troubled that this action had a subtle overtone of immodesty. After all, they were strange men so it would appear somewhat inappropriate for Sarah to drink from their cup, even if it was the only chance to perform this mitzvah.

Rashi, however, deemed this to be a more subtle problem, which would only bother the more discerning reader. Therefore, he hinted to the solution in an indirect manner by citing the author of the above teaching. At the literal level of Torah interpretation, it is of no relevance to know the author of a particular Talmudic or Midrashic teaching, so Rashi usually omits these details from his commentary. On those occasions where he does mention the author of a teaching, it is obviously of some particular significance. Namely, that a subtle question which may be bothering the more discerning reader can be answered when one considers the author of the teaching at hand.

In our case, Rashi cites, “Rabbi Yosef bar Chanina said: [They asked where she was] in order to send her the cup of blessing.”

Rabbi Yosef bar Chanina is famous for the teaching, “A woman recognizes the nature of her guests more than a man” (Brachos 10b). In our case, this means that Sarah would have recognized, more so than Avraham, that her guests were really angels. It was thus not immodest of her to accept their cup of blessing, since she was aware of their true identity.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 110ff)*
your wife Sarah will have a son.”

Sarah heard from the entrance of the tent, which was right behind (the angel).

11 Avraham and Sara were old, (but still) immersed into daily life. Sarah had stopped having a woman’s cycle. 12 (Looking at) her bodily organs, Sarah laughed, saying, “After I have withered, will I (now) have smooth skin? And my husband is old!”

13 God said to Avraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Is it really true that I will give birth, even though I am old’? 14 Is anything hidden from God? I will return to you at the time (which we have just) fixed, this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

Sarah denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh,” because she was afraid.

He said, “No! You did laugh.”

C L A S S I C Q U E S T I O N S

● What does it mean that Avraham and Sarah were not exceptionally old. (lit. “coming into days”) (v. 11)

Ibn Ezra: That they were exceptionally old.

Ramban: When a person gets very old, exceeding the lifespan of most people in the generation, he is called “coming into days.” This is because his continued life is precarious, as if he were traveling on a daily basis from one city to another, “coming” into each day of his life.

Zohar: The days were whole, and not lacking. Not a day passed when they did not observe a mitzvah (v. 12).

● What was the difference between Avraham and Sarah’s reaction to the news that they would have a child? (v. 12)

Rashi: According to Onkelos, Sarah laughed, but Avraham rejoiced (above 17:17). Avraham believed and rejoiced, but Sarah did not believe and ridiculed, and for this reason God was angry with Sarah [see v. 13], but was not angry with Avraham [Rashi to 17:17; see “Sparks.”]

“Coming into Days” (v. 11)

At the literal level, the phrase “coming into days” could not mean “exceptionally old” as Ibn Ezra and Ramban suggest, since:

a.) Avraham and Sarah were not exceptionally old at the time, relative to the life expectancy of that generation.

b.) In the Haftarah to Parshas Chaye Sarah we read, “David was old, coming into days” (beg. Kings I), and at that time he was only seventy years old, i.e. not exceptionally old.

Rather, if one takes the words at face value, “coming into days,” just as one would say, for example, “coming into a house,” the term is describing the way Avraham and Sarah lived each and every day of their lives: They “came into” it. I.e. they did not let the day pass them by uneventfully, but rather, they immersed themselves totally into their days. Thus, we have translated above, “immersed into daily life.”

In fact, the Zohar, while being primarily a kabbalistic text, offers the interpretation which is the closest of all to the literal meaning of the verse. The Zohar, however, is speaking of spiritual perfection whereas, at the literal level, the verse is describing the intensity of Avraham and Sarah’s physical lives.

(Barakd on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, pp. 90ff.)

Sarah’s Laughter (v. 12-15)

Rashi writes (v. 12) that Sarah was in disbelief when she heard that she would give birth to a child. Avraham, on the other hand, rejoiced at the news (See above 17:17).

Perhaps their different reactions could be explained as follows:

Rashi writes above, in his commentary to 17:17, “Although the first generations had children at the age of five hundred, in Avraham’s time the average lifespan became shorter and people became weaker. This is evident from the ten generations from Noach to Avraham, who used to father children at the age of sixty or seventy.”

When Avraham was told that he would father another son he was 100 years old (17:17), which is clearly above the ceiling of 60 or 70.

However, in a later comment, Rashi states that, “When he (Avraham) was one hundred years old, he was like a person who is seventy years old” (25:7). Rashi does not specify here what Avraham’s hundredth year had in common with his seventieth. Presumably, this is because he relies on his earlier statement that, in those days, a person would lose the ability to have children after 70. Since, “when he was one hundred years old, he was like a person who is seventy years old,” it follows that Avraham had not lost his ability to have children at 100. Therefore, when he heard the good news, he did not laugh in disbelief, but rather, he rejoiced.

Sarah on the other hand, “had stopped having a woman’s cycle” (v. 11), indicating that she had passed the natural child-bearing age of that era. Therefore, she found it difficult to believe that she would have children.

Sparks of Chasidus

The Patriarchs and Matriarchs were all perfect tzadikim (righteous people) who never sinned. They were a “vehicle of expression” for the Divine Will their entire lives (Tanya ch. 23).

Therefore, when the Torah describes Sarah’s “sin” here—of laughing in disbelief at the news that she would bear a child—this does not mean to say that she sinned in the literal sense of the word. Rather: a.) She performed an act that, outwardly, appeared to be a sin. And, b.) The act was not a transgression (cheit) but rather, a shortcoming (chesaron), i.e. a failure to act in the best possible manner.

Most people struggle with their evil inclination, to choose good over evil. A tzadik, however, struggles between a choice of two good actions, one greater than the other. Thus, if they fail, and choose the lesser good, it still remains a positive act.

(Barakd on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, pp. 64, 100)
What was the “outcry of Sodom”? (v. 20-21)

RASHI: Literally it means the outcry of the land. Our Sages, however, interpreted it to refer to the cry of a certain girl, whom they killed by a horrible method because she gave food to a poor man, as is described in [Tractate Sanhedrin, Chapter] “Cheilek.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

TALMUD: There was a certain girl who would bring bread out to the poor when nobody was looking, hiding it in her pitcher when she went to draw water. When the matter was discovered, they smeared her with honey and placed her on top of the city wall. Bees came and devoured her. Bees came and devoured her (Sanhedrin 109b and Rashi ibid.).

RADAK: The people of Sodom violated all 7 Noachide laws (13:13).

Furthermore, she was unaware that Avraham was capable of having children, since he was well above seventy, and she did not know that he had retained his strength. Therefore, in addition to her disbelief at her own inability to have children, she said, “And my husband is old!” (v. 12).

Thus in the final analysis we see that at the literal level of Torah interpretation to which Rashi adheres, the birth of Yitzchak was miraculous for Sarah, but natural for Avraham.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, pp. 80-81)
The (angels) got up from there, and gazed (disparagingly) upon Sodom. Avraham went with them to escort them.

17 God said, “(How) could I conceal from Avraham what I am doing (to Sodom, in the very land I promised to give to him)?” 18 (Since Avraham was mentioned by God, He blessed him:) “Avraham will become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the world will be blessed through him. 19 For I have known (and cherished) him because he instructs his sons and his household after him to keep the way of God, acting with charity and justice. (He instructs them to do so) in order that God will bring upon Avraham everything He had said (He would do for) him.”

20 (Keeping to His word,) God said (to Avraham), “Since the outcry of Sodom and Amorah has become great, and since their sin has become very grave, 21 I will descend now and see: if they have actually caused the outcry which has reached Me, then (there will be) destruction! If not, I will know (how to punish them).”

22 The (angels) turned from there (where Avraham had escorted them to) and went to Sodom. (God) was still present before (Avraham).

23 Avraham approached (God) and said, “Will You also destroy the

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

18:16 T

How did Avraham “approach” God? (v. 23)

Rashi: We find the expression “approaching” used in the context of war: “Yoav approached, etc.” (Samuel II 10:13), “approaching” in the context of placating: “Yehudah approached him” (below 44:18), and “approaching” in the context of prayer: “Eliyahu the prophet approached” (Kings I 18:36). Avraham entered himself into all of these: to speak harshly, to appease, and to pray.

Avraham’s “Approach” (v. 23)

Rashi writes that Avraham approached God, “to speak harshly, to appease, and to pray.” Presumably, this refers to the three verses below:

i.) Speaking harshly. “Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (v. 23). ii.) Appeasement. “To do such a thing as this...would desecrate (people’s perception of) You” (v. 25). iii.) Prayer. “I want to speak with God! I (would be) dust and ashes (if it were not for You)” (v. 27).

Be'er Yitzchak: Rashi was troubled by the question: Surely God is everywhere, so why did the Torah state that Avraham approached God? Rashi explains that “approaching” is not to be understood in the literal sense, but rather, as “preparing,” i.e. that Avraham prepared himself for an intense interaction with God.

Rabbag: Avraham went as close to God as possible so that his prayers should be heard as clearly as possible.

TORAS MENACHEM

The Outcry of Sodom (v. 20-21)

Even though the people of Sodom transgressed all of the seven mitzvos given to Noach (as Radak writes) nevertheless, their primary sin, for which destruction was decreed upon them, was their failure to be charitable. Scripture states this explicitly: “This was the sin of Sodom... they did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49), in contrast to Avraham, who “instructs his sons and his household after him... acting with charity and justice” (v. 19).

This however begs the question: Why is giving charity not listed as one of the seven Noachide laws (see p. 19)?

A number of possible solutions could be suggested:

a.) The Noachide laws are a codification of prohibitions, and not positive mitzvos. Therefore charity, a positive act, was not included (Chidushei HaRan to Sanhedrin 56b).

b.) The obligation to give charity is included within the obligation to “establish courts of law,” which in a broader sense means to maintain all forms of social welfare (c.f. Ramban to 34:13).

c.) Rambam, however, writes explicitly that charity is not a mitzvah that is binding on non-Jews (Hilchos Melachim 10:10). Therefore, according to Rambam it would appear that Sodom was punished, not because they failed to give charity, but rather because they opposed the giving of charity (as in the case of the girl who was murdered for feeding the poor—see Rashi and Talmud above). I.e. since people, who were put on the earth to promote civilization, actively oppose social welfare, they deny themselves the right of existence.

Thus, according to all opinions, it is necessary to promote the observance of charity among the nations of the world. And, in the current world climate where peaceful civilization is a priority among world leaders, it is easier to promote charity among non-Jews than ever before.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 155ff, Sefer Hasichos 5752, p. 372)
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righteous with the wicked? 24 Perhaps there are fifty righteous men in the midst of the city. Will You still destroy it, and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people who are in it? 25 To do such a thing as this, to put to death the righteous with the wicked, equating the innocent and the guilty, would desecrate (people’s perception of) You (in this world and it would desecrate You in the next world). Would the Judge of the entire earth not perform (true) justice?”

26 God said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous men within the city, I will forgive the entire (region of five cities) for their sake.”

27 Avraham responded and said, “I wish to speak with God! I (would be) dust and ashes (if it were not for You)! 28 What if the fifty righteous men will be missing five? Will You destroy the entire city because of the five?”

He said, “I will not destroy it if I find there forty-five.”

29 (Avraham) continued to speak to Him. He said, “What if forty will be found there?”

He said, “I will not do it for the sake of the forty.”

30 (Avraham) said, “Please don’t let God’s anger be kindled, and let me speak: What if thirty will be found there?”

He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

31 (Avraham) said, “Please! I want to speak to God! What if twenty will be found there?”

He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

32 (Avraham) said, “Please don’t let God’s anger be kindled, and let me speak once more: what if ten will be found there?”

He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

33 When He had finished speaking to Avraham, God (the Judge) departed. Avraham (the advocate) returned home. (But the prosecution remained.)

Why though did Rashi see the need to explain the meaning of the word “he approached” (ועָדַד) in the first place? Surely we are speaking here of a common word, whose meaning is self-understood, as we see from the fact that in many other places Rashi does not explain the meaning of the word.

The Explanation
Verse 22 states that after the angels departed, “(God) was still present before (Avraham).” Rashi was thus troubled why the Torah continues, “Avraham approached (God)...” If he was already in God’s presence, why did he have to approach Him?

This question led Rashi to conclude that we are not speaking here of a physical relocation from place to place, since Avraham was already located at a site where God’s presence was revealed.

Rather, the Torah’s intention here with the word “approach,” is the mental preparation required for an impassioned plea. Therefore, Rashi writes, “Avraham entered himself into all of these,” i.e. he put himself into a frame of mind which would give him the courage and stamina to plead with, and even criticize God for His planned destruction of Sodom.

But where do we find that the word ועָדַד (“and he approached”) is used in such a metaphorical sense?

To answer this question Rashi found it necessary to cite three verses which illustrate how “approaching” can also be understood as a form of mental preparation. To stress this point, Rashi begins with the words, “We find the expression “approaching” used in the context of etc.,” i.e. while “approaching” is usually understood in the literal sense we do find other explanations.

(Since Avraham excelled in the attribute of kindness, it is somewhat surprising to find that he “spoke harshly” with God, arguing aggressively for the salvation of Sodom (Rashi v.23).)

This teaches us that, when faced with the task of saving another’s life, a person may be required to overcome his natural disposition and personality, and take radical action. Thus Avraham, whose nature was to be only kind and polite, managed to gather the courage (“he entered himself”) to act in a manner of harshness and severity, in an attempt to save lives.

This also applies to the spiritual life of our fellow Jew. If one sees another Jew “drowning” spiritually, due to a lack of Jewish education, one should make every effort to help him—even if this entails an act which is out of character with one’s personality.

(Tora menachem [Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 55ff])

The Last Word

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Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, pp. 58-59)
Avraham...The angel Rafa'el first healed Avraham, and then he went 

Three angels came to visit Avraham, one to bring the news 

Which angels came to Sodom? Which one came to save 

Three angels came to visit Avraham, one to bring the news 

C L A S S I C Q U E S T I O N S

**Which angels came to Sodom? Which one came to save Lot? (v. 1)**

RASHI: Three angels came to visit Avraham, one to bring the news (of Yitzchak’s birth), one to overturn Sodom, and one to heal Avraham...The angel Rafa’el first healed Avraham, and then he went on to save Lot (18:2).

TALMUD: The angel Gabriel came to destroy Sodom, and Micha’el came to save Lot (Bava Metzia 96b).

**What did the angels discuss with Lot? (v. 4)**

RASHI: Before they went to bed, the angels discussed the people of the city with Lot. They were asking Lot about their character and their deeds and he told them that the majority were evil. While they were still speaking about them, “The people of Sodom [surrounded the house].”

MIDRASH: Micha’el announced the good news and left. Gabriel was sent to destroy Sodom, and Rafa’el to save Lot (Bereishis Rabah 50:2).
Angels Come to Destroy Sodom and Save Lot

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening (one to destroy, and one to save Lot. That day,) Lot was (appointed to be the chief judge) at the gate of Sodom. Lot (always looked for guests, so he) saw them. He went up to greet them, and prostrated himself, face to the ground. He said, “Look now my lords, please (go inconspicuously) to your servant’s house. Stay overnight, wash your feet, and you can get up early and go on your way.” They said, “No. We will stay overnight in the street.”

They said, “Get out of the way!” (In response to his protection of the visitors,) they said, “(You are) one (single person) who has come to find information about the people, we can understand why the angels only came to Sodom, because Sodom was the largest metropolis amongst the cities of the plain (Rashi to 18:26). Therefore it was the most likely place to find 50 righteous people. When the angels failed to find any righteous people in Sodom among its vast population (Rashi to v. 4 above), it was obvious that the other small cities would not have any either.

According to the second approach (“b”), that the angels actually came to inspire the people to repent, we can explain why they only came to Sodom based on an earlier comment of Rashi:

After the war with Avraham, only the King of Sodom was saved, as Rashi writes, “A miracle was wrought for the king of Sodom that he escaped from there, because some of the nations did not believe [in miracles so they did not believe] that Avraham had been saved from Ur Kasdim, from the fiery furnace. But since this one king escaped from being stuck in the clay, they believed in Avraham retroactively” (14:10).

Clearly, the miraculous salvation of one king was sufficient for this purpose, and God would not have saved any of the other wicked kings.

Lot’s Salvation (v. 1)
The Talmud maintains that Lot was a tzadik (righteous man). Therefore, he was saved by the angel Micha’el who helps the souls of the righteous (Chagigah 12b, Tosafos to Menachos 110a).

The Midrash, on the other hand, maintains that Lot was a rasha (wicked person). Therefore, he was saved by Rafa’el who is the angel that heals the sick, because helping a wicked person to repent is a form of spiritual healing.

Since Rashi understood that Lot was a rasha (see Rashi to 13:14), therefore he accepted the view of the Midrash that Rafa’el came to rescue him.

(Based on Likutot Sichos vol. 30, p. 283)

The Angels’ Mission (v. 4)
One further detail that needs to be explained about the angels’ visit is why they went only to Sodom, and not to the other cities upon which God decreed destruction. Rashi states explicitly that God planned to destroy five cities in the plain (18:17, 24) (though He eventually destroyed only four cities, because Lot pleaded for the city of Tzo’ar to be saved [19:18-25]). Why did the angel which came to destroy all the cities visit only Sodom, and not the other cities that God had condemned?

The answer to this question can be found in Rashi’s comment to v. 4. Rashi writes that the angels inquired of Lot about the “character and deeds” of the people of Sodom, and this could have been for one of two reasons: a.) To ascertain that they were indeed deserving of punishment, or b.) in order to cause them to repent.

According to the first approach (“a”), that the angels came merely to find information about the people, we can understand why the angels only came to Sodom, because Sodom was the largest metropolis amongst the cities of the plain (Rashi to 18:26). Therefore it was the most likely place...
(from foreign parts) to live here, and now (you are) rebuking us! Now, we’ll treat you worse than them!”

They pushed hard on the man, on Lot, and they came forward to break the door.

10 The (angels) stretched their hands out, brought Lot to them in the house, and they shut the door.

11 They struck the men who were at the entrance of the house with (a plague of) blindness—young and old alike—who toiled in vain to find the entrance.

12 The (angels) said to Lot, “Who else do you have here? A son-in-law? Your own sons? Your daughters? Get anyone you have in the city out of the area! 13 For we are going to destroy this place, since the (people’s) outcry is great before God. God has sent us to destroy it.”

14 So Lot went and spoke to his (two) sons-in-law (and) the fiancés of his daughters. He said, “Get moving and get out of here! God is destroying the city!”—but he seemed like a comedian in the eyes of his sons-in-law.

19:9-20

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19:15

As the dawn was breaking, the angels hurried Lot, saying, “Get up and take your wife, and your two daughters who (are willing to come), so that you won’t be wiped out because of the city’s sins!”

16 (In trying to save his money) he was delayed. Out of God’s pity for him, (the angels) took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, and they took him out, placing him outside the city.

17 Then, when they took them outside, (one of the angels) said, “(Don’t worry about your money,) flee for your life! Don’t look behind you (as you don’t deserve to see their punishment)! Don’t stand in the entire plain (of Jordan). Flee to (Avraham, who is in) the mountain, so that you won’t be wiped out.”

18 Lot said to them, “Please, My God, don’t (tell me to flee to the mountain)! Right now, Your servant has found favor in Your eyes, and Your kindness that You did in saving my life was great. But I cannot flee to the mountain, in case (I will be considered) evil (in comparison to Avraham) and I will die. Now here, there is a city which I can flee to which (is recently inhabited) and (its sins are) small. Please let me flee there and live! (After all), doesn’t it have (only a) few (sins)?”

Lot is Saved—Sodom & Amorah are Destroyed

Now, a logical plan for the angels would have been to seek out the king of a city, since if they had been able to influence the king with a warning of potential destruction, then he in turn could have had a major impact on the people. Therefore, the angels headed for Sodom, since it was the only one of the five cities that had a king.

This however begs the question: why does the Torah not relate that they went to visit the king? The answer to this question becomes obvious when reading Rashi’s comment to verse 4. The Torah states, “The people of Sodom surrounded the house, both young and old, the entire population from every end,” on which Rashi comments that they came, “from one end of the city to the other, for not one of them protested, because there was not even one righteous man among them.” On witnessing this, the angels would have been convinced that there was no point in visiting the king at all, as there was no chance of saving this nation.

(Toras Menachem)

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeira & Chayei Sarah 5743)
Why were only Sodom and Amorah punished with fiery sulfur and not the other cities too? (v. 24-25)

**TZAFNAS PANE’ACH:** The Jerusalem Talmud (Sanhedrin 10:8) states that Sodom and Amorah had the status of an Ir Hanidachas (a city containing a majority of idol worshippers) which, in Jewish Law, must be burned. Therefore, God destroyed these cities with fire. However, there is a law that three or more cities in close proximity cannot all be declared an Ir Hanidachas (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 1:5). This explains why Sodom and Amorah alone were destroyed with fire.

**TZOR HAMOR:** Since the residents of Sodom were extremely arrogant, “lifting themselves up” in their own estimation, they were destroyed by fire which ascends upwards.

**MINCHA BELULAH:** Since the land of Israel is holy, the abominations of Sodom had to be obliterated completely, with fire.

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**Fiery Sulfur (v. 24)**

**TZAFNAS PANE’ACH** questions why only Sodom and Amorah received the “turnover of fire,” whereas the other two cities were merely “turned over” (v. 24-25). Basing his answer on the Jerusalem Talmud, he states that the cities had a status of an Ir haNidachas (a city containing a majority of idol worshippers) which, in Jewish Law, must be burned. But since three or more cities in close proximity cannot all be declared an Ir haNidachas, only Sodom and Amorah were destroyed with fire.

At the literal level of Torah interpretation, this solution is difficult to accept since: a.) The primary sin of Sodom and Amorah for which they were destroyed was not idol worship, but the violent opposition towards charitable behavior (see above, “The Last Word.” to 18:20).

b.) The law of Ir haNidachas was only introduced after the giving of the Torah and is not applicable to non-Jews.

We are thus left with the question why the punishment of Sodom and Amorah differed from that of the cities of Admah and Tzo’ar?

At first glance, one might argue simply that the corruption of Sodom and Amorah vastly exceeded that of the other two cities, meriting a more severe punishment where the inhabitants were burned alive.

However, this solution is untenable, since we find that Lot begged God for the city of Tzo’ar to be saved, on the basis that “its sins are few, and therefore, You should leave it alone” (Rashi to v. 20). From this we can infer that the other four cities were all very corrupt.

Why then did they suffer different punishments?
21 (One of the angels) said to him (on God’s behalf), “Look! I am giving you a special dispensation that (not only will you be saved) but I will not overturn the city that you have mentioned. 22 Hurry and flee there, for I will not be able to do anything until you arrive there.”

The city was therefore named Tz’oar (meaning, “small”).

23 As the sun rose over the earth, Lot came to Tz’oar.

24 God (and His court) caused it to rain down upon Sodom and Amorah (first rain and then fiery) sulfur. It came from God, from the sky. 25 (God) turned over (the bedrock on which) these (four) cities (were situated) and the entire plain, with all the inhabitants of the cities, and the earth’s vegetation.

26 (Lot’s) wife looked (backwards) from behind where (Lot stood), and she became a pillar of salt (as a punishment for withholding salt from guests).

The Explanation

At the end of Parshas Noach, Rashi writes:

“Which sins were worse, those of the generation of the Flood or those of the Generation of the Dispersion (from the Tower of Bavel)? The former did not antagonize God intentionally, whereas the latter did antagonize God intentionally, waging war against Him. Nevertheless, the former were drowned, while the latter did not perish from the world!

“This is because the generation of the Flood were robbers and there was strife between them, and therefore they were destroyed. But the (Generation of the Dispersion) behaved with love and friendship among themselves...”

“From this you can learn that discord is hateful, and that peace is great.”

From these words of Rashi we can gain a general insight into the reasoning behind God’s punishments. Clearly, discord between man and his fellow merits a more severe punishment than rebellion against God. Presumably, this is because it opposes the very notion of society, which is man’s mission on earth. Thus, when man turns against his fellow, the very earth—which was created to support civilization—becomes corrupt. Consequently, God’s punishment is required, not only to destroy man, but to cleanse the earth which he has corrupted.

In our case therefore, we can presume that Sodom and Amorah were destroyed (burned) down to the very earth, since their sins were predominantly humanitarian crimes. Seeing that the other two cities suffered a lesser punishment, it follows—based on the above Rashi—that their sins did not corrupt the earth itself, but rather, they were between man and God.

“Corruption at the Top”

Support for the above explanation can be found in an earlier comment of Rashi, in Parshas Lech Lecha:

When the Torah lists the five kings who ruled over the five cities mentioned here in our Parsha (the four that were destroyed, and Tzo’ar), Rashi informs us of the significance of each of the kings’ names:

- Bera (בֵּרָה), the king of Sodom, had a twofold evil (יַעַר) evil to Heaven and evil to people.
- Birsha (בֵּרְשָׁה) the king of Amorah, was elevated [twofold] in wickedness (יַעַר).
- Shinav (שִּנְאָו) the king of Admah, hated (שָׁנַה) his Father (יָאָב) in Heaven.
- Shemaiair (שֵּםְאָיוּר) the king of Tzevoiyim, made (יָצָה) wings (יָאָב) to fly and rebel against God.

We see here explicitly in Rashi’s words that the kings of Sodom and Amorah were not only sinful directly to God, but they were also corrupt in their dealings with their fellow man—a conduct which we can presume spread from the monarchy downwards to the people (continuing even after the kings were executed). Therefore, these cities were destroyed right down to the earth, with fiery sulfur.

The kings of Admah and Tzevoiyim, on the other hand, sinned primarily to God, and not to man. Thus these cities were not destroyed by fiery sulfur, since the harmony among the inhabitants of the city ensured them a milder punishment.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 70ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

The Midrash states, “I have found David, my servant (i.e. Mashiach)” (Psalms 89:21). Where did I find him? In Sodom.” Similarly, the prophet Ezekiel writes that, in the Messianic Era the city of Sodom will be re-inhabited, “When I shall bring back their exiles, the exiles of Sodom and her daughters...” (16:53). In fact, Shaloh writes that Avraham made such a tremendous effort to save the city of Sodom because he was aware of its future significance (Shaloh 289a).

What is the connection between Sodom and Mashiach?

Before the world was created, God created another spiritual world, a world that collapsed. It collapsed because the components of that spiritual world—the world of Tohu—were highly charged free-radicals that would not interact.

In principle, that intensity was good, for it was a powerhouse of spirituality. In practice however, it failed.

Nevertheless, in the future redemption, the intensity of Tohu will once again be revealed, and this time, it will not collapse. This is because man’s good deeds throughout history will act as receptacles to “bind” with the intense free-radicals of Tohu.

Sodom was a physical manifestation of the failed world of Tohu. The city was destroyed because its citizens were free-radicals who refused to pay attention to anybody else but themselves. Therefore, in the Messianic era, Sodom will be inhabited once again, for then the world will be a stable environment for the highly charged free-radicals of Tohu.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 74)
Why is there a dot on the word 'בּאִדַּלךְוּ' (v. 33)?

**Rashi:** The word בּאִדַּלךְוּ “her getting up,” mentioned in conjunction with the older sister, is dotted over the [second] letter “vav.” This denotes that, really, when she got up he was aware of the fact, but nevertheless, it did not deter him from drinking on the second night.

**Talmud:** The dot teaches that he was aware of her getting up, but how does that help? Surely, it was already too late? However, the following night Lot should have learned his lesson and not have drunk wine again (Nazir 23a).

**Be’er Mayim Chaim:** If a person is writing a document and he is thinking of erasing a word but he is not yet quite sure, he may place a small mark next to it in order to remind himself that the word is questionable. So too, when a dot appears in the Torah it indicates that the word is only partially there, not in full force (18:9).

**Divrei David:** The dot signifies that the word should be uprooted completely, as if it were not written at all. Thus, even though the verse states that Lot did not know about his daughters’ getting up, the dot indicates the very opposite, that he did know (18:9).
Avraham got up early in the morning (and returned) to the place where he had stood before God (in prayer). He gazed at the site of Sodom and Amorah, and over the entire area of the plain, and he saw that—look!—(a pillar of) smoke from the earth had risen like the smoke from a lime-kiln.

When God had destroyed the cities of the plain, God had remembered (how Lot kept secret that Sarah was not) Avraham’s sister. Thus, when He overturned the cities in which Lot had lived, He sent Lot from the midst of the destruction.

Lot Has Children from His Daughters

Lot left Tz’oar, and he settled in the mountain with his two daughters, since he was afraid to live in Tz’oar (as it was so close to Sodom). He lived in a cave, (just) he and his two daughters.

(The daughters thought that the whole world had been obliterated, like it had been with the flood, so) the older one said to the younger one, “Our father is old (and who knows how much longer he will be able to father children? There is no man on earth to marry us in the usual fashion. Come, let’s give our father wine to drink, and let’s lie with him. We’ll produce offspring through our father.”

They gave their father wine to drink on that night, and the older one came and lay with her father, and he wasn’t aware of her lying down or of her getting up.

Then, on the next day, the older one said to the younger one, “Look! Last night I lay with my father. Let’s give him wine to drink tonight too, and you’ll come and lie with him, and we’ll produce offspring through our father.”

So they gave their father to drink on that night also, and the younger one got up and lay with him, and he wasn’t aware of her lying down or of her getting up.

Lot’s two daughters conceived from their father. The older one bore a son, and she named him Mo’av (lit. “from the father”). He is the father of (the people of) Mo’av (which continues) to this day.

The younger one also bore a son, and she named him Ben-ami (lit. “son of my people”). He is the father of the people of Amon (which continues) to this day.

The Meaning of a Dot (v. 33)

A dot on top of a word in the Torah could have one of two meanings:

a.) That the meaning of the word is weakened [c.f. Be’er Mayim Chaim].

b.) That the word should be totally uprooted [c.f. Divrei David].

At the literal level of Torah interpretation, the latter explanation—that the word is uprooted—is unacceptable. For then, one would have the simple, logical question: Why was the word written in the first place? Therefore, at the literal level, a dot comes to weaken the implication of a word.

This poses a problem in our case. Rashi writes, “When she got up he was aware of the fact,” despite the fact that the Torah states explicitly that “he wasn’t aware of her lying down or of her getting up” (v. 33). Surely this means that the dot is uprooting the simple meaning, and not just weakening the word?

To answer this problem, let us first ask another question. If, as Rashi writes, Lot did discover that his oldest daughter had lain with him, then surely the younger daughter would have been afraid to play the same trick of plying him with wine the following evening, as Lot would surely see through her ploy? Clearly, the daughters were not aware that Lot had discovered what had happened, which is why the younger daughter tried again the following night.

According to the Zohar, the dot on the word הָעֲלָה (v. 33), alludes to the fact that God was secretly assisting this event, because Mashiach was to materialize from it (since Rus, King David’s great-grandmother, was a convert from the Moabites). The latter event, between Lot and his younger daughter (v. 35), is written without the letter vav, to indicate that the union did not produce such great offspring. Rabbi Shimon said, “When the verse states that Lot, ‘wasn’t aware,’ it means he wasn’t aware that Mashiach was destined to come from this union” (Zohar I 110b).

Why should the beginnings of Mashiach occur in such an undignified manner? Ramak explains that when a very lofty soul is about to descend into the world, the forces of kelipah (evil) oppose the soul’s descent vehemently. Sometimes however, kelipah will consent to the soul’s descent if it occurs amid a particularly sinful act. Thus we find that from this undesirable act the ancestor of Mashiach was born.
Avraham traveled away from the area (since he was unable to find guests after the destruction of Sodom) to the land of the Negev, and he settled between Kadeish and Shur, living in Gerar.

Avimelech, the king of Gerar, sent for and took Sarah.

God came to Avimelech in a dream at night. He said to him, “Look! You are going to die because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a married woman!”

Avimelech had not come near to her, so he said, ‘God! Would you kill even a righteous nation? Didn’t he say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she also said, ‘He is my brother,’ (and so did her staff) too. I have done this with the innocence of my heart and with the purity of my hands (for I haven’t touched her!’”

God said to him in the dream, “I know that you did this with the innocence of your heart, (but you do not have “pure hands.”) I have prevented you from sinning against Me, and that is why I did not give you (the strength) to touch her. 7 Now, return the man’s wife (and do not worry that he will hate you), because he is a prophet (and he will know you did not touch her). He will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return (her), know that you will surely die, both you and all that is yours.”

Avimelech got up early in the morning, and he summoned all his servants, and he spoke about all these occurrences into their ears. The men were very frightened.

Avimelech summoned Avraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? What have I sinned against you, that you have brought upon me and upon my kingdom a great sin? You have caused me (to get a disease) which never happens (where every bodily orifice becomes blocked)!”

“What led you to do this thing?” Avimelech said to Avraham.

Avraham said, “(It was) because I said, ‘Surely, there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she really is my sister—my father’s (grand)daughter (which is like a daughter), but not my mother’s daughter—and she became my wife. Then, when God caused me

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- What does it mean that Avimelech related his dream “into the ears” of his servants? (v. 8)

**Onkelos:** It means that he related the dream in front of them, not literally “into their ears.”

- Why did his servants become “very frightened”? (v. 8)

**Midrash:** They knew that Sodom had been completely obliterated, so they feared that the angels which had destroyed Sodom were now coming to wreak destruction upon them (Bereishis Rabah ch. 52).

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**TORAH MENACHEM**

When the Torah states that Avimelech related his dream “into the ears” of his servants, it does not mean that he literally spoke into their ears, but rather, that he spoke in front of them [as Onkelos writes]. The point which the Torah wishes to stress here is that Avimelech himself related the news of his dream, which was an extremely unusual occurrence, since he would usually communicate with his servants via messengers. Thus, the fact that the King himself “summoned all his servants, and he spoke about all these occurrences into their ears,” caused them to become “very frightened” (v. 8).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 214)
Why does the story of Yitzchak’s birth follow the incident with Avimelech? (v. 1)

Rashi: This section was placed immediately following the preceding section to teach you that if a person prays for his friend, when he himself needs that very thing he is praying for, he is answered first. Thus, “Avraham prayed (for Avimelech) etc.” (v. 17), and in the next section, “God remembered Sarah” (21:1), indicating that she became pregnant before Avimelech was healed.

Eitz Yosef: When a person prays for another and sweetens a Divine Judgment, the flow of blessing descends downwards into the soul of the one who prayed, and from there the blessing spreads to other souls. Therefore if the person who prayed is in need of the very same blessing as the one he is praying for, he will inevitably receive the blessing first, as his soul is the channel through which the blessing enters the world (comment to Bava Kama 92a).
to wander from my father’s house (among wicked people), I said to her, ‘Do me a favor! Whatever place we come to, say about me, ‘He is my brother.’”

14 Avimelech took flocks, cattle, servants and maids, and he gave (them) to Avraham (to appease him that he should pray for him), and he restored his wife Sarah to him.

15 Avimelech said, “Here is my land before you! You may settle wherever you like.”

16 To Sarah he said, “Look! I have given a thousand pieces of silver to (Avraham, who you said was) your brother. (If anyone suspects you of being abused by me and then discarded, the money) will be a veil (to divert the suspicion from) you and all those who are with you. You can prove (your innocence) to everybody.”

17 Avraham prayed to God. God healed Avimelech, his wife and his handmaids, and they were relieved. 18 For God had shut every (orifice) of Avimelech’s household, because of Sarah, Avraham’s wife.

**The Birth of Yitzchak**

21 God remembered (His promise of pregnancy) to Sarah as He had said (when the angels visited Avraham). God made Sarah (pregnant) as He had told (Avraham, at the covenant of the parts).

2 Sarah conceived and bore a son to Avraham in his old age, at the time of which God had told him (through the angels). 3 Avraham named his son who had been born to him—whom Sarah had borne to him—Yitzchak. 4 Avraham circumcised his son Yitzchak when he was eight days old, as God had

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**Avraham’s Prayer (20:17, 21:1)**

Rashi’s comment to verse 1 leaves us with two, very pertinent questions:

a.) Rashi questions why “this section was placed immediately following the preceding section.” But surely this is not an issue at all, since the entire Parsha up to this point has followed chronological order. Why shouldn’t this section follow, since that is how it actually occurred?

b.) God has already promised Avraham that he would have a child (at the “Covenant of the Parts”). So how can Rashi suggest that Sarah only became pregnant in the merit of Avraham’s prayer for Avimelech, if they had been promised a child in any case?

The explanation: a.) The Torah was not written in chronological order. Rashi was troubled as to why the account of Yitzchak’s birth was written here, rather than immediately after God promises Avraham and Sarah a child at the beginning of the Parsha. Surely, it would have been more appropriate to record all the related details together? This question led Rashi to understand that the position of the account of Yitzchak’s birth here must be to teach us a lesson.

b.) God promised Avraham a child already at the “Covenant of the Parts,” an event which preceded Yitzchak’s birth by thirty years (Rashi to Bo 12:40). Nevertheless, when Avraham prayed for Avimelech, Sarah became pregnant immediately. From this we see the power of praying for another, which was able to bring to fruition a promise which had been lying dormant for almost thirty years!

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeira 5743)

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

“AVRAHAM CIRCUMCISED HIS SON...” (v. 4)

Circumcision enters a person into a covenant with God, a feat which can only be initiated by God, not by man. Therefore, Yitzchak’s circumcision, which occurred eight days after his birth (v. 4), was superior to that of Yishma’el’s (at 13 years) or even Avraham’s (at 99 years). For in the latter cases it could appear that circumcision was a just reward for the years of Divine service which preceded the .

circumcision

In truth, however, circumcision is a Divine gift that a person could never justly “earn.” This fact is stressed most by Yitzchak’s circumcision at eight days, which was clearly not “earned” at all by his prior good deeds.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 86ff.)

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**The Last Word**

A person might pray for his friend before praying for himself for one of two reasons:

a.) Because his friend’s problem genuinely bothers him more than his own problems. Or, b.) Because he wants the reward of being answered first (see Rashi to v. 1).

Generally, with acts of kindness, the result for the recipient is more important than the donor’s motive. So even if a person prays for another because he wants the reward (of being answered first) he will still be rewarded, for after all he performed an act of kindness in praying for another.

Nevertheless, it goes without saying that the first approach above—the person with pure motives—is vastly superior.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeira 5743)
Rashi: The Midrash says that many barren women were remembered with her; many sick people were healed on that very day; many prayers were answered with hers, and there was much joy in the world.

Divrei David: When people heard of the great miracle that had occurred to Sarah, their bitachon (trust in God) became strengthened, and in that merit they became healed.

Classical Questions

Why were people happy about Sarah giving birth? (v. 6)

Rashi: The Midrash says that many barren women were remembered with her; many sick people were healed on that very day; many prayers were answered with hers, and there was much joy in the world.

Talmud: When people heard of the great miracle that had occurred to Sarah, their bitachon (trust in God) became strengthened, and in that merit they became healed.

Why did Sarah nurse “children” in the plural? (v. 7)

Rashi: On the day of the feast (see v. 8), the princesses brought their children with them, and she nursed them, for they were saying, “Sarah did not give birth! She brought an abandoned child from the market!”

Talmud: The nations were being cynical, saying, “All that happened is that an elderly couple brought an abandoned child from the market, saying it is their son!”

Sarah’s Miracle (v. 6-7)

Rashi describes how Sarah miraculously nursed the babies of numerous princesses, to prove that she had not, “brought an abandoned child from the market.” This, however, poses a number of problems:

1.) Surely, if Sarah had only nursed Yitzchak it would have been sufficient proof to the assembled crowd that she had indeed given birth. Therefore, God performed for them a visible miracle, for the nature of a cynic is to deny and ridicule even the most sound of arguments. Therefore, God performed for them a visible proof, transforming the features of Yitzchak as the Talmud states, and accompanying Yitzchak’s birth would have proved Sarah’s piety to the majority of those present. Thus the further proof of Yitzchak’s features changing was, generally speaking, not required.

2.) Why did Sarah nurse “children” in the plural? Why were people happy about Sarah giving birth? (v. 6)

Rashi: The Midrash says that many barren women were remembered with her; many sick people were healed on that very day; many prayers were answered with hers, and there was much joy in the world.

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Talmud: The nations were being cynical, saying, “All that happened is that an elderly couple brought an abandoned child from the market, saying it is their son!”

Miracles as a Proof of Sarah’s Piety

If Sarah had only nursed Yitzchak it would have been apparent that she was capable of having children, but there would be no proof that Avraham was the father.

However, when she merited a stunning open miracle from God, nursing countless babies before everybody’s eyes, people would have realized that Sarah was an extremely pious woman who would only have conceived a child from her husband. Similarly, the healing of the sick that accompanied Yitzchak’s birth would have proved Sarah’s piety to the majority of those present. Thus the further proof of Yitzchak’s features changing was, generally speaking, not required.

(Nevertheless, the “cynics” of the generation were still not satisfied with this logical proof, for the nature of a cynic is to deny and ridicule even the most sound of arguments. Therefore, God performed for them a visible proof, transforming the features of Yitzchak—as the Talmud states, and Rashi cites in Parshas Toldos).

How Many Miracles?

One could argue that Rashi and the Talmud differed over the question of how many miracles occurred here:

From a straightforward reading of the Talmud, it appears that two miracles occurred here: 1.) Sarah gave birth at an advanced age. 2.) She produced an enormous volume of milk. The Talmud stresses that this
commanded him. 5 Avraham was a hundred years old, when his son Yitzchak was born to him.

6 Sarah said, “God has made me happy! Whoever hears (about this) will be happy for me.”

7 She said, “How (awesome is God) who said to Avraham that Sarah would nurse children, for I have borne a son in his old age!”

8 The child grew and was weaned (at twenty-four months). On the day that Yitzchak was weaned, Avraham made a feast (inviting all the) great (people of the generation).

TORAS MENACHEM

second point was an additional miracle, “A miracle occurred to Sarah and she produced milk endlessly.”

Rashi however makes no mention that Sarah’s large quantity of milk was an additional miracle. Thus, Rashi’s view is that we are speaking here of one general miracle. I.e. the birth of Yitzchak, Sarah’s exceptional quantity of milk and the healing of the sick were all one miraculous occurrence, with one single purpose.

Rashi does not have to inform us what the purpose of this miracle was, as it is self-evident from some of his earlier comments:

In Parshas Lech Lecha, we learned how God told Avraham that Sarah’s name would change before she would give birth: “Sarah will not give birth, but Sarah will give birth. I will give you another name, and your destiny will change” (Rashi to 15:5). Later, when God actually changed her name, Rashi explains: “Sarah means ‘my princess,’ suggesting that she is for Me, but not for others. Sarah, ("princess") shall be her name, suggesting that she will be a princess over all (nations)” (Rashi to 17:15). From this we see that Yitzchak’s birth was accompanied by Sarah’s appointment as “princess over all nations,” i.e. a leader over gentile nations.

Therefore, the general miracle of Yitzchak’s birth was associated with miraculous occurrences for non-Jews: “Many barren women were an additional miracle. Thus, Rashi’s miracle occurred to Sarah and she produced milk endlessly.”

Avraham’s Miracles

This however begs the question: Avraham’s name was also changed before Yitzchak’s birth to indicate that he was to be a person who influences non-Jews: “Your name shall no longer be called Avram, but your name shall be Avraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (17:5). If so, why do we not find that Avraham merited miracles in connection with Yitzchak’s birth, to indicate his role as a person who influences non-Jews?

However, it could be argued that Avraham did indeed merit such miracles. In Parshas Chaye Avraham, the Torah relates, “Avraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.” As a result of this union Avraham had six more sons, who went on to father various non-Jewish nations. At this time Avraham was already 140 years old, so the event was clearly miraculous.

It could be argued that this event was a delayed miracle which occurred as a result of Yitzchak’s birth, as it caused Avraham to be “the father of a multitude of nations,” literally.

The obvious problem with this solution is it seems rather farfetched to suggest that Avraham’s miracle should have been delayed for forty years.

However, the reason for this is actually quite straightforward: Avraham could not have had these children through Sarah, since the point here was that he should father non-Jewish nations. Also, it would certainly have disturbed Sarah greatly if she had had more children, only to find that they abandoned the path of Judaism. God spared her this pain, and allowed Avraham to father these children from another woman.

Furthermore, according to Rashi (25:1) the mother of these children, Keturah, was actually Hagar, whom Sarah suffered from intensely and had expelled from Avraham’s house (above v. 10). To spare Sarah the distress of seeing Avraham reunite with Hagar and have children, God delayed Avraham’s miracle until after Sarah had passed away, forty years later.

Nevertheless, since Avraham’s six additional sons were, in fact, part of the general miraculous occurrence of Yitzchak’s birth, the Torah does not stress that an additional miracle occurred to Avraham (enabling him to have children at the age of 140). For, the miracle was already specified explicitly in the Torah, in connection with Yitzchak’s birth.

(Based on Sichos of Shabbos Parshas Chaye Avraham & Toldos 5745)

Sparks of Chasidus

Yitzchak’s Birth: A Prototype of Jewish Influence on the Nations

Influencing the nations of the world to serve the One God is a fundamental aspect of Judaism. Both the active and passive effects of Jewish influence are evident at every stage:

a.) Yitzchak was the first person to be born a Jew, so his birth was associated with a positive influence on non-Jews. Sarah had a passive effect—miracles simply surrounded her. Avraham took a more active role, by fathering non-Jewish nations.

b.) Rambam writes that even in our times it is incumbent on all Jewish people to coerce non-Jews to observe the seven Noachide laws (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 8:10). Obviously, this requires an active effort to educate the nations, highlighting the importance of their mitzvos. However, it can be proven from the words of Rambam that this is followed by a second, passive phase, where non-Jews come to a heightened perception of the Noachide code themselves, without direct input from the Jewish people.

c.) The Messianic era begins with Mashiach’s active efforts to perfect the world, including his work with non-Jews, “He will fix the entire world” (Ibid. 11:4). However, at some point this will catalyze into the heightened redemption, where non-Jews will study God’s wisdom of their own accord, without the direct input of Mashiach—as Rambam states, “The entire world will only be busy with knowing God” (Ibid. 12:5) without the need for Mashiach’s direct intervention.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 96f.)
What was Yishma’el’s bad behavior? (v. 9-10)

**Rashi:** The word פָּרֶס (lit. “having fun”) is an expression of idolatry, as the verse states [in reference to the Golden Call] “they became depraved” (Shemos 32:6). Alternatively, it is an expression of adultery, as the verse states [in connection with Potifar’s wife], “to deprave me” (below 39:17). Alternatively, it is an expression of murder, as the verse states, “Let the boys get up now and kill (הָשַׁם) before us, etc.” (Sam. II 2:14).

From Sarah’s response, “The son of this handmaid (is not worthy) to share an inheritance with (anyone who is) my son” (v. 10), we see that [Yishma’el] used to argue with Yitzchak about their inheritance. He would say, “I am the firstborn, so I should take a double portion!” They would go out to the field, and Yishma’el would take his bow and shoot arrows at Yitzchak, “like one who wears himself shooting firebrands, etc. and says: I’m only joking!” (Prov. 26:18f.).

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**Classic Questions**

"The son of this handmaid (is not worthy) to share an inheritance with (anyone who is) my son” (v. 10), we see that [Yishma’el] used to argue with Yitzchak about their inheritance. He would say, “I am the firstborn, so I should take a double portion!” They would go out to the field, and Yishma’el would take his bow and shoot arrows at Yitzchak, “like one who wears himself shooting firebrands, etc. and says: I’m only joking!” (Prov. 26:18f.).
Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian—whom she had borne to Avraham—become depraved (worshipping idols).

Sarah said to Avraham, “Get rid of this handmaid and her son! The son of this handmaid (is not worthy) to share an inheritance with (anyone who is) my son, (or) with (anyone as righteous as) Yitzchak.”

His son’s (idol worship) disturbed Avraham greatly. God said to Avraham, “Don’t be disturbed about the boy and about your handmaid. Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her (prophetic) voice, because your (true) descendants will be through Yitzchak. I will also make the son of the handmaid into a nation, because he is your (physical) descendant.”

Avraham got up early in the morning, and he took bread and a leather pouch of water, and he gave them to Hagar. He placed them on her shoulder with the boy, and he sent her away.

She went (back to idolatry) and wandered in the desert of Be’er Sheva.

(Yishma’el became ill and drank a lot of water.) When the water was depleted from the leather pouch, she cast the child under one of the bushes. She went and sat down some distance away—approximately two bow-shots—as she said, “I don’t want to see the boy die.” She sat from afar, and she cried loudly and wept.

God heard the boy’s cry. An angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What’s the matter, Hagar? Don’t be afraid, because God has heard the boy’s cry (and judged him) according to his current circumstances (and not according to what he is destined to do). Get up and pick up the boy.
Avraham’s own son, so it was more difficult for him to perceive how Yitzchak alone was his true heir. In fact, before Yitzchak was born, Avraham had made it clear to God that he would be happy for Yishma’el to be his sole heir, saying, ‘If only Yishma’el will live (in fear of) You, (that would be sufficient)!’ (17:18). Consequently, the thought of expelling Yishma’el “disturbed Avraham greatly” (v. 11). Sarah, on the other hand, was not the mother of Yishma’el, so it was easier for her to perceive his true status as an outsider who was unfit to inherit Avraham.
and grasp hold of him, because I will make him into a great nation.”

19 God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the pouch with water and gave the boy to drink.

20 God was with the boy. He grew up and he lived in the desert, and he became an archer. 21 He settled in the desert of Paran, and his mother found him a wife from the land of Egypt (where she came from originally).

**Avimelech Makes A Covenant with Avraham**

21:22

Around that time, Avimelech—and Pichol, his army general—said to Avraham, “(Judging by your miraculous salvation from Sodom, victory in war and fatherhood at old age,) God is with you in all that you do. 23 Now, swear to me here by God, that you will not deceive me, or my son, or my grandson. In the same way I have been kind to you (offering you the pick of my whole land), do the same to me, and to the land where you have lived.”

24 Avraham said, “I will swear.”

25 Avraham argued with Avimelech about the well of water that the servants of Avimelech had seized.

26 Avimelech said, “I don’t know who did this thing. You never told me about it, and I never heard about it until today.”

27 Avraham took flocks and cattle, and gave them to Avimelech, and they both formed a covenant.

28 Avraham placed seven female lambs by themselves. 29 Avimelech said to Avraham, “What are these seven female lambs, which you have placed by themselves?”

30 He said, “You are going to take these seven female lambs from my hand, as a proof that I dug this well.”

31 The place was therefore named Be’er Sheva (“well of the oath”), because the two of them took an oath. 32 They formed a covenant in Be’er Sheva.

Avimelech and Pichol, his army general, got up and they returned to the land of the Philistines.

Yishma’el’s Teshuvah

Based on the above, we can resolve a problem relating to Yishma’el’s teshuva (repentance):

When Avraham passed away, the Torah relates, “Yitzchak and Yishma’el buried him” (25:9). Rashi notes that Yitzchak’s name precedes that of Yishma’el, and comments, “From here we learn that Yishma’el did teshuva and allowed Yitzchak to go before him.”

The Talmud (Bava Basra 166a) and Midrash (Bereishis Rabah 59:7) however, both state explicitly that Yishma’el did teshuva during Avraham’s lifetime. This begs the question: why does the Torah inform us of Yishma’el’s teshuva only after Avraham already passed away?

Based on our earlier explanation, the answer to this question becomes clear. Since Yishma’el’s primary sin (which caused all of his later wicked behavior) was the failure to recognize that he was not Avraham’s true heir, it follows that his teshuva only became apparent when the prospect of inheritance became a reality, after Avraham passed away.

When Yishma’el allowed Yitzchak to go before him, he indicated his concession to the fact that it was Yitzchak who was the true heir, obligated in the burial of his father, and that he, Yishma’el, was a mere handmaid’s son.

**The Last Word**

Quoting the verse, “as a proof that I dug this well” (v. 30), the Zohar (III 284b) refers, rather strangely, to “Yitzchak’s well.” Why is the well dug by Avraham accredited to Yitzchak?

Avraham embodied the attribute of love of God, whereas Yitzchak represented the fear of God. In general, a Jew should endeavor to be in Avraham’s positive mode of loving God, continuing always in joyful Divine worship. However, if a Jew possesses only love of God, and no fear, then his Divine service will not prevail, for inevitably his love of God will degenerate into a love for other things... Fear of God is required to preserve a person’s love of God.

The well which Avraham dug did not prevail. It was filled in by the Philistines, until Yitzchak redug it. So, the Zohar refers to them both as Yitzchak’s well, since it was Yitzchak’s fear that perpetuated Avraham’s love.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 15, p. 118ff.)
proclaim the Name of God which caused these two events to be included in the Torah, quite an unremarkable event which does not merit inclusion in the Torah? If so, why are we told, "He planted a tree"? Surely this is not a particularly noteworthy event.

The Explanation

Rashi was troubled by the following question:

Avraham’s home, Be’er Sheva, was not a barren desert but a normal, inhabited area. If so, why are we told, “He planted a tree”? Surely this is quite an unremarkable event which does not merit inclusion in the Torah?

Furthermore, the very same verse continues, that he caused people “to proclaim the Name of God, the God of the world.” This begs the question: what is the connection between planting a tree and causing people to proclaim the Name of God which caused these two events to be included in the same verse?

RASHI:

This was disputed between Rav and Shmuel. One said that it was an orchard from which fruits were offered for guests during their meal. The other said that it was an inn for lodging, in which there were all sorts of fruits. The reason why the verse states that he “planted” an inn, is like: we find the expression of “planting” used in conjunction with the construction of tents, as the verse states, “And he will plant ([v. 33]) his palatial tents” (Dan. 11:45).

What was the שְׁמוֹךְ which Avraham planted? (v. 33)

RASHI: This was disputed between Rav and Shmuel. One said that it was an orchard from which fruits were offered for guests during their meal. The other said that it was an inn for lodging, in which there were all sorts of fruits. The reason why the verse states that he “planted” an inn, is like: we find the expression of “planting” used in conjunction with the construction of tents, as the verse states, “And he will plant ([v. 33]) his palatial tents” (Dan. 11:45).

Aishel, people came to believe in God. For the full service of accommodation offered by an inn would make the central supporting bar of the Tabernacle.

BACHAVE: Since he had a well, Avraham wanted to plant an orchard which could be nurtured from the well-water. Avraham’s main intention was to benefit guests with the fruit, as the verse continues, “He (encouraged all guests) there to proclaim the Name of God, the God of the world.”

Due to these problems, Rashi wrote that we are speaking here of an orchard, which explains: a.) Why the event was significant enough to be recorded in the Torah, and, b.) Its connection with Avraham’s work of welcoming guests and encouraging them to believe in God—namely, serving them food.

One problem with this explanation is that the connection between the beginning and end of the verse is weak. An orchard would have been a relatively minor enhancement to Avraham’s work of welcoming, feeding and accommodating guests. It would merely have provided some fruit for their dessert.

Therefore, Rashi offered the second interpretation (of Shmuel) which explains the verse as a whole more satisfactorily. If we understand Aishel to mean an “inn,” it makes more sense why the Torah continues to tell us immediately that, as a direct result of the Aishel, people came to believe in God. For the full service of accommodation offered by an inn would have certainly left a greater impact on the visitors.

However, a problem with this latter interpretation is that it deviates more from the literal translation of the word Aishel which literally means “tree,” so Rashi recorded it last.

And since each interpretation is slightly problematic, Rashi chose to cite both Rav’s more scripturally precise solution, as well as Shmuel’s more contextually appropriate answer.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeira 5747)
(Avraham) planted an orchard (alternatively: established an inn) in Be’er Sheva, and he (encouraged all guests) there to proclaim the Name of God, the God of the world, (after they finished eating).

Avraham dwelt in the land of the Philistines for (twenty-six years) several days (more than the twenty-five years he lived in Chevron).

Avraham’s Tenth Test: The Akeida

What happened was, after the words (of the Satan, who accused Avraham of not offering a sacrifice to God at his celebratory feast), God tested Avraham.

He said to him, “Avraham!”

Classic Questions

How did Avraham “proclaim the Name of God”? (v. 33)

Rashi: By means of that Aishel, God was called “God of the whole world.” After the guests would eat and drink, [Avraham] would say to them, “Bless the One of Whose food you have eaten! Do you think that you’ve eaten my food? It belongs to the One Who spoke and the world came into being!”

Avraham’s Coercion (v.33)

The explanation of Yefay To’ar is difficult to accept since:

a.) If the guests were not sincere when they thanked God, what was gained?

b.) It is unlikely that Avraham welcomed guests and encouraged them to recognize God merely to fulfill his duty, not caring whether the guests were genuinely affected or not.

c.) The Midrash states elsewhere, that Avraham’s work led God to say, “I consider him to be a partner with Me in creation... since he made My creations recognize Me” (Bereishis Rabah 43:7). From this we see clearly that Avraham did succeed in making his guests come to a true recognition of God.

But how could it be said that they recognized God if they merely paid lip service to avoid paying a hefty fee?

The explanation can be found in the following incident from the Talmud:

Once Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon was riding...and he met a very ugly man. The man said to him, “Greetings Rabbi!”

Rabbi Elazar did not return the greeting. Instead, he said to him, “Empty one, you are truly ugly! Are all your fellow citizens as ugly as you are?”

The man replied, “I don’t know. Go and tell the Craftsman Who made me: ‘How ugly is the vessel which You have made!’”

When Rabbi Elazar realized that he had done wrong, he dismounted the donkey, prostrated himself before the man, and said to him, “I submit myself to you, forgive me!”

The man replied, “I will not forgive you until you go to the Craftsman Who made me and say to Him: ‘How ugly is the vessel You have made!”

Rabbi Elazar walked behind the man until he reached his native city. His fellow citizens came out to meet R’ Elazar greeting him with the words, “Greetings to our teacher and mentor!”

The man asked them, “Whom are you addressing?”

They replied, “The man who is walking behind you.”

Midrash: If the people refused to thank God for the meal, then Avraham asked them for a large sum of money. Thus, rather than pay the exorbitant price, the guests would agree to thank God (49:4).

Yefay To’ar: Even though the guests may have thanked God insincerely since they were pressured to do so, nevertheless Avraham fulfilled his duty to make others aware of God. If the guests were insincere, it was their sin and not Avraham’s.

The Explanation

Rabbi Elazar saw that the man was not merely ugly in the physical sense but, most importantly, his physical ugliness was a reflection of a spiritual repugnance, i.e. the man was an atheist.

Some atheists are easier to bring to a recognition of God than others. This man was an “exceptionally ugly” one, an extremely egotistical and haughty person.

Rabbi Elazar understood that the only hope for this man was to be rude to him. Perhaps by being extremely offensive—telling the man to his face that he was physically repulsive—it might break down his rough exterior and bring out the potential which the man had to believe in God.

Rabbi Elazar’s plan worked. The man responded, “Go and tell the Craftsman Who made me: ‘How ugly is the vessel which You have made!”’ Rabbi Elazar’s sharp words had wounded the man’s pride, making him realize that there was something higher than himself.

The only problem was, Rabbi Elazar’s plan worked too quickly, which indicated that he had overestimated the man’s resistance to belief in God, and had thus been unnecessarily harsh with his words. Therefore, he begged for forgiveness.
What was the uniqueness of Avraham’s tenth test? (v. 2)

RASHI: “Please take” (נִתְנֶה) is a request. God said to him, “I beg of you! Pass this test for Me, so that people will not say that the first [nine] tests were totally insignificant.”

RAN: God only requested that Avraham offer up his son; He did not command him to do so. Therefore, if Avraham would have ignored God, he would not have been punished at all. This makes the test of the Akeida unique (Drashos HaRan ch. 6).

IKARIM: In future generations, all those that gave up their lives to sanctify God’s Name were obligated to do so by the force of Jewish Law. Avraham, however, had no halachic obligation to sacrifice Yitzchak, since the event occurred before the giving of the Torah at Sinai (3:36).

RADAK: What was the point of God’s testing of Avraham, if God already knew that Avraham would pass the test?

It was certainly not a demonstration of Avraham’s faith to others, since not even the two lads who accompanied Avraham were present at the time.

Rather, the purpose of the test was to inspire the later generations of Jewish people who would follow in Avraham’s footsteps.

Finally, the man forgave him, on the condition that he would not do the same again “too often.” I.e. After disavowing his atheism and becoming a believer, the man appreciated that sometimes it is necessary to speak harshly to an atheist, to wound his pride. But one must be extremely careful not to use this painful approach unless it is absolutely necessary, i.e. one should not do it “too often.”

In the final analysis we see that, with those who are particularly resistant to recognizing God, a little pressure can break down their resistance. This explains why Avraham would challenge and threaten those particularly “ugly” people who, after benefiting from Avraham’s warm hospitality and lavish food, refused to praise God. In this way Avraham revealed the potential within even the most atheistic guests to believe in God, to the extent that he became “a partner with Me in creation... since he made My creations recognize Me”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 122ff.)

The Tenth Test (v.2)

Ran and Ikarim write that the Akeida, Avraham’s tenth test, was unique because God presented the challenge to Avraham, not as an obligation, but as an option.

However, this is difficult to accept, because:

a.) If God visits a person personally, and asks him to do something, it could hardly be considered as optional (!) If the Creator of the universe says, “Please” do something, it clearly has to be done.
(Avraham) said, “I’m here (for You)!”

2 He said, “Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak, and go away to the land of Moriah (Jerusalem) and bring him up there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains, where I will tell you.”

3 Avraham got up early in the morning (to perform God’s command), and he saddled his donkey (personally). He took his two young men (Yishma’el and Eliezer) with him (so at least one of them would be with him all the time) and Yitzchak his son. He cut wood for a burnt offering, departed, and went to the place of which God had told him.

4 On the third day, Avraham looked around and he saw from afar (one particular mountain with a cloud on it).

5 Avraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, while I and the boy will go (a little)

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b.) Even if one would accept that Avraham was not actually obligated to sacrifice his son, it would still not render the test of the Akeida unique, since there were many Jewish people in history who sacrificed their lives for Judaism even though they were not obligated to do so. In Jewish law, a person is only required to sacrifice his life if he is being coerced to a.) murder, b.) worship idols, c.) commit an act of forbidden relations (See Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah, ch. 5). Nevertheless, we find that many Jews gave up their lives rather than transgress commandments other than these, an act of self-sacrifice which goes beyond the requirements of Jewish Law. So, even if Avraham was not obligated to sacrifice his son, this would not render the Akeida unique.

A further problem concerns Rashi’s statement that Avraham was given this final test, “so that people will not say that the first [nine] tests were totally insignificant”:

Consider that, prior to this date, Avraham had passed a series of extremely challenging tests, including an act of remarkable self-sacrifice where he allowed himself to be thrown into a fiery furnace, rather than bow down once in idol worship (Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer ch. 26). So, even if Avraham were not given the test of the Akeida, how could it possibly be said, “The first [nine] tests were totally insignificant”? Surely such acts of outstanding courage and trust in God are eternally valid in their own right?

THE EXPLANATION

When a person observes a mitzvah, there is always the possibility that he is partly (or wholly) guilty of having an ulterior motive. Perhaps he wishes to appear pious and righteous; or maybe he is motivated by the prospect of earning a reward rather than the desire to carry out God’s Will.

Even if a person has a totally pure motive—that he wishes to sanctify the world through the observance of a mitzvah—though noble, it is still a motive. Not that this is a problem per se, but there is always the possibility that this “holy motive” veils a kernel of insubordination which the person is harboring, unwittingly or unwittingly. Perhaps, subconsciously, that person’s true agenda is not Divine service at all, to perform mitzvos for God, but it is simply that the idea of making the world holy is pleasing to him.

The only way of proving that such a person is observing God’s Will out of pure and unquestioning submission to a higher authority, is if he were asked to perform an act which would compromise his “career” of charity and sanctity. Only then would it become apparent whether the person’s observance of God’s commands had been calculated in terms of personal gain.

Thus, the Akeida was the ultimate test, since Avraham, who had devoted his life to promote awareness of the One God in the world, was asked to execute the only person who could continue this cause after him. This test would prove whether Avraham had promoted the awareness of God in the world for God’s sake, or for his own.

Avraham’s earlier tests did not fully clarify this point, since it could be argued that even allowing himself to be burned in the fiery furnace at Ur Kasdim was ultimately an act which would have furthered his life’s mission. Avraham knew that giving up his life in public would have made a tremendous impression on all those present, and would possibly be recorded as an act of true martyrdom for all time. While it appeared to be an act of total self-sacrifice, one could not rule out the possibility that Avraham desired to be a martyr, and he entered the furnace because it suited him to do so, at least partially.

Only at the Akeida where Avraham was asked to perform an act which was a.) contrary to everything that he desired, and b.) in total privacy, could it be proven without doubt that all Avraham’s earlier trials were done out of an unquestioning submission to God’s Will.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 73ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

Our Sages taught, “All beginnings are difficult” (Mechila to Shemos 19:5). Chasidic thought explains that for a person to perform a new type of act which he has never done before, a “channel” needs to be opened, allowing the reserves of spiritual potential in his soul to spread through his body.

In a more general sense this applies on a global scale. A person who commits a spiritually unprecedented act in the world becomes a pioneer, who actually makes it possible for others to follow in his footsteps. He opens a new “channel,” breaking down barriers not only for himself, but for his descendants and followers.

Thus, the Akeida was not merely an inspiring historical event from which we can learn. It actually made an indelible mark on the Jewish personality, enabling Avraham’s outstanding subordination to God to be duplicated by any Jewish person who avails himself, or herself, of the challenge.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 74ff.)
Avraham replied, "If so, I have come here in vain. I will inflict a wound on him and extract a little blood."
Avraham took the wood for the burnt offering, and he placed it upon his son Yitzchak. He took into his hand the fire and the knife, and they both went together.

7 Yitzchak spoke to Avraham his father, saying, “My father!”

He said, “I’m here (for you), my son.”

(Yitzchak) said, “Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

8 Avraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son,” and they both went together.

9 They came to the place which God had told him about. Avraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and he tied (the hands and feet of) Yitzchak his son (behind him) and placed him on the altar upon the wood.

10 Avraham stretched out his hand and took the knife, to slaughter his son.

11 An angel of God called to him from heaven and said, “Avraham! Avraham!”

He said, “I’m here!”

12 (The angel) said, “Do not stretch out your hand to (slaughter) the boy, or do the slightest thing to him, for now I know (some evidence to answer the Satan) that you are a God-fearing man and that you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me.”

13 Avraham looked around to see and—look!—there was a ram. (Avraham saw it) after (the angel spoke to him, noticing that) it was caught in a tree by its horns. Avraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

**Classic Questions**

**Sforno:** Avraham had resolved in his heart that he was going to slaughter his son. Since a righteous man “speaks the truth in his heart” (Psalms 15:2), Avraham thought it was necessary to offer a substitute sacrifice, to fulfill in some way the resolution of his heart.

**Abarbanel:** Avraham did not want his trip to be pointless, so he searched for an animal to sacrifice. Since he had resolved to sacrifice his son, he offered the ram as a replacement instead of his son, in order to discharge his obligation.

**Rashi’s “Alternative” Sacrifice (v.13)**

At first glance, Avraham offered a ram instead of Yitzchak as a substitute (see Sforno and Abarbanel). However, it is extremely unlikely that Rashi would have accepted this explanation, in light of his comment to v. 12:

“Avraham said to God, ‘I will explain my complaint before You. Beforehand, You said to me, “Your (true) descendants will be through Yitzchak” (above verse 2). Now, You are saying to me, “Do not stretch out your hand to (slaughter) the boy!”’” (v. 12)

“God said to him, “I shall not profane My covenant, nor shall I alter the utterance of My lips” (Psalms 89:35). From when I said to you, “[Please] take [your son...],’ I did not alter the utterance of My lips! I never said to you, ‘Slaughter him,’ but rather [I said], ‘Bring him up.’ You have brought him up. Now, take him down.”’

From Rashi’s words here, we see clearly that God did not “change His mind” at the last moment, and spare Yitzchak’s life. Rather, He never intended that Yitzchak be slaughtered in the first place. Therefore, it was totally unnecessary to look for a replacement sacrifice for Yitzchak, as the entire premise that God had required a sacrifice at all was mistaken.

We are thus left with the question: Why did Avraham offer a sacrifice, “instead of his son” (v. 13)? And why did he pray, “May it be God’s will that this should be deemed as if it were being done to my son,” over every single act?

One might argue that his “chance” sighting of a trapped ram suggested to Avraham that the animal had been prepared by God for a sacrifice— as Rashbam writes. However:

a.) This only explains why Avraham sacrificed the ram at all. It does not answer why the Torah states that the ram was offered instead of Yitzchak, if there was no obligation to slaughter him in the first place.

b.) The Torah states, “Avraham looked around to see—and look!—there was a ram” (םלעה הבשボードכט), i.e. that he actively looked for an animal to sacrifice. So, it was not the “chance encounter” of finding the trapped ram that inspired Avraham to sacrifice on the spur of the moment. Rather, he decided on his own to do so.

The question thus remains: Why was the ram a substitute for Yitzchak, if Yitzchak was never intended to be sacrificed in the first place?

**The Angel of God’s Second Calling**

In order to answer this problem, let us pose a further question which Rashi surprisingly appears to neglect. After Avraham offered the ram, the Torah relates, “An angel of God called to Avraham a second time from heaven. He said, “I Myself have sworn,” says God, ‘that because you
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What did the angel of God add when he called to Avraham the second time? (v. 15-18)

TZROR HAMOR: Avraham was convinced that he had made a mistake. He was sure that the angel who said, “Do not stretch out your hand to (slaughter) the boy” (v. 12), had come to trick him, and that God really did want him to slaughter Yitzchak. Therefore, it was necessary for God to call out to Avraham a second time to confirm that he had acted correctly.

RAMBAN: In this second calling, God promised that He would, “multiply your descendants (and your son’s) like the stars of the heavens and like the sand that is on the seashore, and your descendants will inherit the cities of their enemies” (v. 15). But surely He had already promised this to Avraham before (above 15:5)?

In fact however, God had merely promised that He would multiply Avraham’s descendants, but the promise could have been retracted if Avraham’s descendants would have sinned. Here however, God swore (v. 15), that he would keep his promise, regardless of whether the Jewish people sinned or not.

This constitutes the Divine assurance of the redemption which is destined to come in the future.

KI YAKAR: In the second calling to Avraham, God added an additional, double blessing in reward for two acts carried out by Avraham after God’s first calling:

a.) “Because you have done this thing”—this refers to the sacrifice of the ram (v. 13).

b.) God then added, “and you did not withhold your son, your only one.” This refers to the “virtual” sacrificing of Yitzchak which occurred when offering the ram—as Rashi writes (v. 13), that, “over every sacrificial act that he performed, he prayed, “May it be God’s Will that this should be deemed as if it were being done to my son.”

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have done this thing and you did not withhold your son, your only one, I will bless you (and your son), and I will multiply your descendants (and your son’s) like the stars of the heavens...” (v. 15-17).

While various commentators (see Tzror Hamor, Ramban and KI Yakar) ask the question why the angel of God called to Avraham a second time, Rashi strangely appears to neglect this point.

It could be argued however that Rashi held in accordance with the view of Ramban, that the angel’s second calling was to cement God’s earlier blessing with the commitment of an oath. Thus, the reason why Rashi did not write any comment here, is because—

a.) The Torah states explicitly, “I Myself have sworn,” says God,” indicating that an oath is being sworn, so no further comment is required.

b.) Rashi did not need to explain why God’s oath was stated only after Avraham’s sacrifice of the ram, because he presumed that the reader will remember the Torah’s earlier account of a Divine oath in Parshas Noach:

“Noach built an altar to God. He took from all the pure animals and from all the pure birds and brought up burnt offerings on the altar. God smelled the pleasant aroma, and God said to Himself, ‘I will no longer curse the earth because of man... I will never again kill all living things as I have done” (8:20-21).

Rashi comments, “He repeated the words to denote an oath.” This implies that a Divine oath occurs as a direct result of man offering a sacrifice, since God swore the oath only when He “smelled the pleasant aroma.”
Avraham named that place ‘Adonoy Yireh’ (“God will select”). To this day it is the mountain (associated with) God’s revelation.

An angel of God called to Avraham a second time from heaven. He said, “I Myself have sworn,” says God, ‘that because you have done this thing and you did not withhold your son, your only one, I will bless you (and your son), and I will multiply your descendants (and your son’s) like the stars of the heavens and like the sand that is on the seashore, and your descendants will inherit the cities of their enemies. All the nations of the world will be blessed through your children, because you listened to My voice.”

Avraham returned to his young men, and they got up and went together to Be’er Sheva. Avraham stayed in Be’er Sheva (for a while before returning to Chevron, where he had already lived for twelve years after leaving Be’er Sheva).

Thus, in our case, Rashi presumed that the reader would understand that God’s oath to Avraham came as a direct result of his sacrifice. It was therefore unnecessary for Rashi to explain why God’s oath came in a second statement, after Avraham’s sacrifice, and not before.

The Role of Yitzchak

Based on the above, we can also answer our earlier question why Avraham offered the ram “instead” of Yitzchak, praying, “This should be deemed as if it were being done to my son,” at every single stage of the sacrificial procedure:

Noach’s sacrifices to God after the flood were directly connected to the Flood in two respects:

a.) They were carried out immediately after he left the ark—“Noach went out...Noach built an altar to God” (v. 18, 20).

b.) He took animals which had been taken into the ark specifically for this purpose, so that he could sacrifice them when he left (see Rashi to 7:2, 8:20).

Thus, in order for Avraham to succeed in bringing about an oath from God (as Noach had done), it was insufficient for him merely to offer a general sacrifice which had no particular connection to the Akeida. Rather, Avraham needed to forge a direct connection between the Akeida and his offering of a ram that followed.

To achieve this goal, Avraham decided to offer the ram, imagining throughout the entire process that he was actually sacrificing Yitzchak. Therefore, Rashi explained, “Over every sacrificial act that he performed, he prayed, ‘May it be God’s will that this be deemed as if it were being done to my son....’”

In other words, when the Torah states that Avraham offered the ram, “instead of his son,” it does not mean that he removed the obligation resting on his son and used a ram instead (for, as explained above, there was no obligation to offer a sacrifice here). Rather, despite the fact that there was no obligation to slaughter his son, Avraham nevertheless made an offering (like Noach) in order that God “smell the pleasant aroma” of his sacrifice and swear an eternal oath. For this purpose, an ordinary sacrifice would not suffice, since it would have no direct connection with the Akeida. So, instead of sacrificing his son, Avraham did the second best, and imagined that the ram was actually Yitzchak.

In order to impress upon the reader how Yitzchak was really the intended subject of Avraham’s sacrifice, Rashi describes Avraham’s prayers at length: “May it be God’s will that this should be deemed as if it were being done to my son...as if my son were skinned...as if his blood were sprinkled...as if my son were burnt and reduced to ashes” (c.f. Kli Yakar).

What was the Need for a Sacrifice?

One point however still requires clarification:

Surely the Akeida—an historic act of courage and unprecedented devotion—was a sufficiently impressive act to inspire God to swear an oath to Avraham? Why was an additional sacrifice required? Are we to understand that the sacrifice of a mere ram was superior to the Akeida itself?

This problem can be solved by examining an earlier comment of Rashi: When God told Avraham not to slaughter Yitzchak, Rashi writes, Avraham wished to “inflict a wound on him and extract a little blood” (Rashi to v. 12). Avraham’s suggestion was rejected by the angel, who said “Don’t do the slightest thing to him” (v. 12).

What was the reason for this peculiar desire of Avraham? If he was not obligated to slaughter Yitzchak, then why cause him any pain at all?

The reason is that Avraham appreciated the superiority of actual self-sacrifice over potential self-sacrifice. A person who gives up his life for God in actuality, commits a far greater sanctification of God’s Name than a person who was prepared to give up his life for God, but was saved at the last minute. For, at the actual moment when the person loses his life, he dedicates himself to God in the strongest way possible.

Thus, while Avraham would certainly have been delighted that Yitzchak’s life was saved, he was nevertheless disappointed that he did not have the opportunity to dedicate himself to God with the absolute commitment which would have occurred at the moment of slaughter. So, he sought for some compensatory act that would simulate the actual slaughter of Yitzchak, at which moment Avraham would arouse—to the best of his ability—the feeling of slaughtering his son in actuality.

In other words, since Yitzchak’s life was saved, it turned out that Avraham only performed an act of potential self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, since there are different levels of potential self-sacrifice, Avraham wished...
to achieve the highest degree possible by imagining that he was slaughtering Yitzchak in actuality, while inflicting a tiny wound.

When this idea was rejected by the angel, Avraham opted for “plan ‘B’” and slaughtered a ram instead, imagining to the best of his ability that it was actually his own son.

Thus, in the final analysis, Avraham’s slaughter of the ram aroused in him a greater feeling of self-sacrifice than the Akeida itself.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 76ff.)*
The Birth of Rivkah

Then, after the words (of Avraham, who expressed his view that Yitzchak should marry and have children,) Avraham was told (by God about the birth of Rivkah): “Milkah, has given birth to sons from Nachor your brother and she too (has eight boys in the family, like Ya’akov will have from his main wives:) 21 Uz the first born, Buz his brother, Kemu’el the father of Aram, 22 Kesed, Chazo, Pildash, Yidlaf, and Besu’el. 23 Besu’el fathered Rivkah.” Milkah bore these eight to Nachor, Avraham’s brother.

24 His concubine, whose name was Re’umah, had also given birth to (four boys, just as Ya’akov had from his concubines): Tevach, Gacham, Tachash and Ma’achah.

The Haftarah for Vayeira is on page 375.

Sparks of Chasidus

The general theme of Parshas Vayeira is revelation of Godliness in the world. The Parsha begins with God appearing to Avraham, and climaxes with the Akeida where Avraham demonstrated the utmost commitment to God that is possible here in the physical world.

This theme is also alluded to at the end of the Parsha, which finishes with the word “Ma’acha” (מַחָּא). In Hebrew this is an acronym for Melech al kol Ha’aretz (King of the whole world), indicating that the ultimate purpose of Divine revelation and self-sacrifice is to reveal how every detail in this world is one with God.

This also explains a peculiar detail, that on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, when the Akeida is read from the Torah, we also read the section concerning Rivka’s birth, which seems at first glance to have no connection with Rosh Hashanah.

However, since the theme of Rosh Hashanah is to “coronate” God as “king of the world”—as we mention many times in the prayers of that day—it was deemed appropriate to conclude with the word “Ma’acha,” alluding to that very same theme: Melech al kol Ha’aretz.

(Based on Seler Hasichos 5749, p. 53)
The Name of the Parsha

Chayei Sarah means “the life of Sarah”—an inappropriate name, it would appear, for a Parsha which chronicles events following the passing of Sarah. How does this name reflect the theme of the Parsha?

Our Sages teach that Sarah passed away when she heard that her son had almost been slaughtered at the Akeida (see Rashi to 23:2). Why is it that Sarah could not withstand the notion of the Akeida, whereas Avraham was able to cope with it?

This point reflects the difference in disposition between Avraham and Sarah. Avraham was willing to slaughter his son, and he carried out the process with joy, since he knew that he was following God’s Will. He was content with a spirituality which requires a person to negate the world, and escape from normal existence.

Sarah, on the other hand, could not cope with this idea, since her focus was to serve God within the world. As far as Sarah was concerned, Yitzchak’s soul needed to stay in his body so that he could make the world a better, holier place.

Thus, Sarah’s purpose in life was most aptly expressed by the events in this Parsha, when two fundamental elements of the Jewish nation became established in the world for the first time:

a.) The Jewish People. Yitzchak—the first person born a Jew—marries Rivkah, who matches his ethical and spiritual caliber; a woman who is an appropriate replacement for Sarah as a mother in Israel.

b.) The Jewish Land. In our Parsha we read how Avraham purchases the first plot in the Land of Israel which was now openly and indisputably under Jewish ownership. This was the first expression in the world of the Jewish right to the Land of Israel.

So, even though our Parsha describes events after Sarah’s passing, it is nevertheless called “the life of Sarah,” for in it we read how Sarah’s true purpose in life begins to be fulfilled: the beginnings of the Jewish nation and their Land, here in the physical world.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah 5748)
Why is the word “years” repeated three times? (v. 1)

Rashi: The reason that the word “years” is written after every number (“one hundred years, twenty years and seven years”) is to inform you that every number has its own message:

When [Sarah] was one hundred years old, she was like a twenty-year-old regarding sin: Just as a person of twenty has not sinned—for one is not liable for punishment [by the Heavenly court below the age of twenty]—likewise, when she was one hundred years old, she was without sin.

Classic Questions

Sarah’s Perfection (v. 1)

Why did the Midrash bring two interpretations of Sarah’s perfection? What, exactly, is the distinction between them? And why did Rashi favor the first interpretation?

The perfection of Sarah’s entire lifetime could be understood in two different ways:

a.) Perfection in every detail, i.e. each day of her life was perfect.

b.) Her life as a whole was perfect, i.e. an overall perfection.

A practical difference between these two approaches is illustrated by the case of a ba’al teshuva (a person who becomes observant after a period of non-observance). Clearly, the ba’al teshuva does not possess the perfection of type “a” above, where every detail in his life is perfect, for there was a period when he was not observant. But he could claim to have perfection of type “b” (overall perfection) since his teshuva atones for the past, and we look at his former life in the context of his present teshuva.

Thus, perfection of type “a” is greater than type “b,” since a person possessing perfection of type “a” has perfect days literally. Type “b” perfection—the ba’al teshuva—takes a more holistic approach, which perceives retrospectively the positive quality even within imperfect days.

The Advantage of Approach “B”

Nevertheless, it could be argued that approach “b” has a distinct advantage of its own, even for a tzaddik (totally pious individual):

A true tzaddik is not a stagnant character, whose piety and knowledge remains stable throughout his entire life. Rather, the tzaddik is constantly growing so that at the end of his life he has vastly superseded the achievements of his youth. In fact, a truly perfect tzaddik grows exponentially on a daily basis.

For such a tzaddik, the perfection of type “b” above (overall perfection) is superior, for by taking a holistic approach we perceive his entire life’s work in the light of the higher spiritual standing that he achieved in his last days. We thus look at the tzaddik’s first achievements and realize how they were merely stepping-stones to the climax of perfection reached at the end of his life.

In other words, just like we re-evaluate the earlier life of a ba’al teshuva in light of his latter years, similarly a tzaddik’s latter years of spiritual perfection actually elevate his earlier years of lesser spiritual standing.

Midrash: The verse states, “God knows the days of the perfect ones, and their inheritance shall be forever” (Psalms 37:18)—just as their days are perfect, their years are perfect too. At twenty, she (Sarah) was as beautiful as at seven. At one hundred, she was as free from sin as at twenty. An alternative explanation: “God knows the days of the perfect ones”—this refers to Sarah who was perfect in her actions. Rabbi Yochanan said, “like a perfect calf.”

Sparks of Chasidus

The Zohar teaches that Sarah represents the body, whereas Avraham represents the soul (Zohar 1:122b). Even after death, the soul still remains related to the body, thus: “Avraham—the soul—came to eulogize Sarah—the body—and to weep for her.”

Chasidic teachings emphasize the importance of the body as a tool in the service of God. Since the ultimate purpose of creation is to sanctify the physical world, the body has a distinct advantage over the soul, in that it is the means by which God’s Will is enacted. Therefore, God told Avraham (the soul), “Whatever Sarah—the body—tells you, listen to her voice” (21:12), indicating that there is an inherent superiority to the body over the soul.

Although the soul is incomparably more refined than the body, nevertheless, in the times of Mashiach we are promised that the superiority of the body will be revealed such that “the soul will be animated by the body.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 31ff.)
Sarah Passes Away

Sarah’s lifetime was (a total of) one hundred years, twenty years and seven years. The years of Sarah’s life (were all equally good).

Sarah died in Kiryas-Arba, which is Chevron, in the land of Cana’an. Avraham came (from Be’er Sheva, immediately after the Akeida, the shock of which had caused her death) to eulogize Sarah and to weep over her.

Classic Questions

- What caused Sarah’s death? (v. 2)
  
  Rashi: The account of Sarah’s passing was recorded after the binding of Yitzchak, because through hearing the news of the Akeida, that her son was prepared for slaughter and was almost slaughtered, her soul flew out of her, and she died.

  Biuray Maharay: A person reported to Sarah that her son had been prepared for slaughter, and planned on telling her straight-away that he was saved at the last minute. However, before he had the chance to tell her the good news, “her soul flew away.”

  Nachalas Yaakov: Why does Rashi tell us here, in verse 2, that “the account of Sarah’s passing was recorded after the binding of Yitzchak”? Surely, this matter should have been explained at the beginning of “the account of Sarah’s passing,” and not in the second verse?

  However, Rashi was troubled why the verse states, “Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep over her.” Why did the Torah state that Avraham had to “come” from somewhere? Rashi concluded that scripture was hinting to the Midrashic teaching that Avraham was coming from the Akeida, which caused Sarah’s passing.

Toras Menachem

Obviously, the tzaddik did not sin like the ba’al teshuva, but the principle of re-adjusting our view of his comparatively inferior past in light of later progress remains the same.

Since both types of perfection have a distinct advantage over each other, even for a tzaddik, the Midrash deemed it appropriate to attribute both to Sarah. First we read that, “just as their days are perfect, so are their years perfect. At twenty, she (Sarah) was as beautiful as at seven etc.,” i.e. the perfection of each individual day and year in its own right (type “a”). Then, the Midrash describes type “b”: “God knows the days of the perfect ones”—this refers to Sarah, who was perfect in her actions. Rabbi Yochanan said, ‘like a perfect calf.’” i.e. her actions as a whole were perfect.

Did Sarah Die Before her Time? (v. 2)

A further distinction between the two interpretations of the Midrash concerns the question whether Sarah passed away prematurely, before her allotted time in this world (see Ohr haChayim):

According to the first interpretation of the Midrash, that every day of Sarah’s life was perfect, it follows that she might have passed away before her time. For, the fact that each day was perfect does not necessarily mean that she lived out her total number of allotted days in the world. All we know is that the days which she did merit to live were indeed perfect.

According to the second interpretation of the Midrash, that Sarah’s life as a whole was perfect, we are forced to conclude that she did live out her allotted number of days in full. For, if she passed away before her time she would surely not have had the opportunity to carry out her mission in this world to perfection.

Since Rashi cites only the first interpretation of the Midrash, we can presume that, at the literal level of Torah study to which Rashi limits himself, Sarah did indeed pass away before her time.

Weeping for Sarah (v. 2)

A further problem with verse 2 is why Avraham came “to eulogize Sarah and to weep over her.” The Talmud states, “weeping is carried out for three days and eulogies for seven days” (Mo’ed Katan 27b), so why does the Torah mention eulogy before weeping? [see Rivo & Kli Yakar]

If Sarah passed away after her fully allotted time in this world, then there would have been even less weeping (compared to the scenario of a premature passing). This would explain why the Torah mentions the eulogy first, for the long and impressive eulogy which Sarah deserved would have vastly overshadowed the weeping which, in this case, was relatively minimal. Thus the Torah mentions weeping as a secondary detail (and the word נפלתי—“to weep over her” was written with a small letter kaf to indicate that only a small amount of weeping took place [see Ba’al Haturim]).

However, according to the view that Sarah passed away before her allotted time, we can presume that there would have been a great deal of weeping before the eulogy. If so, why is the weeping mentioned last?

And, since Rashi adopts this latter view, that Sarah passed away before her time (as explained above), where is Rashi’s solution to this problem?
Why did Avraham describe himself as an “immigrant and a resident among you”? (v. 4)

Rashi: He was saying, “I am an immigrant from another land, and I have settled among you.”

According to the Midrash, he was saying, “If you wish [to sell me a burial site] then I am [like] an immigrant [and will purchase it from you for a good price]. But, if not, I will be a resident and will take it by rights, since God said to me, ‘I will give this land to your descendants.’”

Bartenura: If God said, “I will give this land to your descendants,” how was this a proof that it belonged to Avraham himself?

The Explanation

In verse 2, Rashi writes, “The account of Sarah’s passing was recorded after the binding of Yitzchak because through hearing the news of the Akeida, that her son was prepared for slaughter and was almost slaughtered, her soul flew out of her, and she died.” [Nachalas Ya’akov to v. 2] asks: why did Rashi write, “The account of Sarah’s passing was recorded after the binding of Yitzchak,” here in verse 2? Surely this matter should have been dealt with at the beginning of the Parsha?

However, Rashi was not attempting to explain the order in which the Torah recorded the events. The events are recorded in the same order in which they occurred, so their sequence did not trouble Rashi at all.

What did trouble Rashi was our earlier question: Why Sarah’s eulogy is mentioned in the verse before weeping (”to eulogize Sarah and to weep over her”). Rashi answers this question by explaining that Sarah’s passing reflected a subtle weakness on her part, which caused the mourning to be toned down. When she heard that her son was prepared for slaughter and then saved at the last minute, she would have rejoiced in utter delight. Unfortunately, she was not capable of containing this joy, and “her soul flew out of her, and she died.” True service of God, however, requires a person to channel moments of joy into further activity, and not to allow oneself to be carried away by them.

So, since Sarah’s passing reflected a weakness on her part, it would have caused the weeping to be reduced, allowing the eulogy to take priority. Therefore, the sequence in the verse reflects this priority, stating that Avraham came “to eulogize Sarah and to weep over her.”

(Clarified based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah 5726)

Presumably, we are to conclude that Avraham was actually given the land by God and that his descendants inherited it.

Nachalas Ya’akov: In fact, God had given the land not only to Avraham’s descendants but to Avraham himself, with the words, “I will give all the land that you see to you” (13:15).

Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer: The people of Cheis said to Avraham, “We know that in the future God is going to give all these lands to you and your descendants. Strike a covenant with us that the Jewish people will only inherit the city of the Jebusites with the consent of the Jebusite people” [who were descendants of Cheis]. Avraham struck the covenant with them and purchased the Cave of Machpeilah.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Immigrant or Resident? (v. 4)

Rashi’s comment here to verse 4 presents us with a number of problems:

a) Avraham could have demanded the cave of Machpeilah “by rights,” then why did he go to such great lengths to purchase it?

b) The people of Cheis referred to Avraham as a “prince of God” [v. 6], due to his reputation for kindness and righteousness. If he had demanded the cave by force, he would have lost this reputation and made a chilul Hashem (desecration of God’s name). Why did Avraham consider this a worthwhile option?

c) Why did Avraham prove his rights to the land from the verse, “I will give this land to your descendants”? Surely, a better proof would have been from the verse, “I will give all the land that you see to you” (13:15). [See Bartenura and Nachalas Ya’akov].

d) We explained above, in Parshas Lech Lecha (Toras Menachem to 15:18), that according to Rashi, Avraham did not make any legal acquisition of the Land of Israel at all, and it was merely promised by God to his descendants. So, on what basis would Avraham take the cave of Machpeilah “by rights”?

Besides these difficulties with Rashi’s words, the incident related in Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer (that Avraham entered into an agreement over the land of the Jebusites) is extremely difficult to understand:

If God had already promised Avraham, “I will give this land to your descendants,” how could Avraham make a covenant promising part of the land to the Jebusites in total defiance of God’s promise?

(Torah@www)
Avraham Purchases the Cave of Machpeilah

23:3

Avraham got up from in front of his deceased (wife).

He spoke to the people of Cheis, saying, 4 “I am an immigrant and a resident among you. Let me have some land for a burial ground with you, so that I may bury my dead from in front of me.”

The people of Cheis answered Avraham, saying to him, 6 “Listen to us, sir! You are a prince of God in our midst. You may bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. Not one of us will hold back his burial place from you to bury your dead.”

Avraham got up and prostrated himself to the people of the land, the people of Cheis.

He said to them, “If you wish me to bury my dead from in front of me, listen to me and ask Efron

The Explanation

Ownership of land can occur on two different levels.

a.) National ownership, where a sovereign or government possesses the rights to an entire country or empire.

b.) Private ownership, where an individual possesses land for himself.

Obviously, these two types of ownership can coexist. An individual may own a piece of land privately, but at the same time, its general right of ownership belongs to the government, which may imposes taxes on the owner. Ultimately, the government possesses the right to evict the owner from his land if certain circumstances prevail (Bava Kamma 100b).

Despite this overlap between these two forms of ownership, they are otherwise independent. The national ownership of a land by one group of people, or one family, does not preclude the possibility of other people owning property within it, so long as they pay the appropriate taxes and observe the laws of the land.

Likewise, if a group loses national ownership of a land, this does not preclude the possibility that they may continue to own some of the land privately (under another regime).

In history, this is precisely what occurred to the Jewish ownership of the Land of Israel. At times, we have enjoyed the national ownership of the land; but even when the national ownership was lost, some parts of the land often remained under private Jewish ownership (see Jer. 32, 44; Bava Bava 28b).

Based on the above, we can now understand the distinction between the two statements said by God to Avraham, “I will give this land to your descendants” (12:7, and similarly 15:18), and “I will give all the land that you see to you” (13:15):

When God promised the Land of Israel to Avraham’s descendants, He was promising the entire land (“this land”), i.e. national ownership.

However, what God promised to Avraham (“to you”) was sufficient land to accommodate his descendants, who would be as numerous as “the soil of the earth” (ibid. 16). I.e. the promise here is on a personal level, that each one of Avraham’s descendants would privately possess a piece of the land.

With the above in mind, we can now explain Avraham’s argument to the people of Cheis, as articulated by Rashi:

Avraham presumed, quite rightly, that the time had not yet come for the national ownership of the Land of Israel by the Jewish people, which had only been promised to “his descendants.” Obviously, this did not preclude his private acquisition of a part of the land, so he endeavored to purchase the cave and field of Machpeilah from its current owners at the time, the people of Cheis. Therefore, he said, “If you wish (to sell me a burial site) then I am an immigrant (and will purchase it from you).”

Avraham was also prepared for the possibility that the people of Cheis would refuse to sell him the land. But Avraham deemed it an unacceptable alternative to bury Sarah anywhere else but the Cave of Machpeilah, since he knew that Adam and Chavah were buried there, and that Sarah, the mother of the Jewish people, belonged next to Adam and Chavah who were formed by God’s hand.

Therefore, if the people of Cheis refused to sell the cave, it would be sufficient proof to Avraham that the time had now come for national acquisition of the Land of Israel against the will of its inhabitants. Thus, Avraham quoted to the people of Cheis God’s promise of the Land of Israel as a whole to the Jewish people. “If not, I will be a resident and will take it by rights, since God said to me, ‘I will give this land to your descendants.’”

According to the above explanation, we can now understand why Avraham was willing to make a covenant with the people of Cheis, “that the Jewish people will only inherit the city of the Jebusites with the consent of the Jebusite people.” Avraham was only offering the Jebusites private ownership of some land within the Land of Israel, which would still belong to the Jewish people on a national level. Thus, if the Jebusites refused to comply with “the law of the land” they could be evicted.

And, in fact, this is what actually happened. When the Jebusites obstructed the construction of the Temple, King David evicted them by force (Sam. II 5:6-10). For, at that point, the private ownership of land by the Jebusites became incompatible with the national ownership of the Land of Israel by the Jewish people, and such a concession was never made by Avraham to the people of Cheis.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 82ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

While Adam and Chavah were the parents of all mankind, they later became connected specifically with the Jewish people. Therefore, they were buried together with the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Jewish people.

This association occurred in the merit of Sarah: Sarah was capable of discerning the uniqueness of the Jewish people more than Avraham, for it was she who taught Avraham about Yitzchak’s superiority over Yishma’e’l. Therefore, it was through Sarah’s burial that Adam and Chavah were “discerned” to be ancestors of the Jewish people in particular.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 147-148)
What does Machpeilah mean? (v. 9)

**Rashi**: A house with an upper story over it.

Another interpretation: it was doubled for couples (Rashi to v. 9).

Four couples were buried there, man and wife: Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivkah, Yaakov and Leah (Rashi to v. 2, above).

**Ramban**: Verse 17 below states, “The field of Efron which was in Machpeilah,” suggesting that it was the area and not the cave which was called Machpeilah. Rashi is incorrect in attempting to explain why the cave was called Machpeilah.

The Midrash states that the cave was called Machpeilah (lit. “double”) because God doubled the height of Adam and buried him there. For this reason the area had become known as Machpeilah, but the local people did not know this. Efron sold the place at normal market value, as he was not aware that Adam was buried there.

What does it mean that “Efron sat”? (v. 10)

**Rashi**: On that very day they had appointed him as an officer over them. Because someone of Avraham’s stature needed him, he rose to an exalted position.

How was the field “established”? (v. 17)

**Rashi**: In Hebrew, פלך literally means “it arose.” It experienced an elevation, for it left the possession of a common person and entered into the possession of a king. The literal meaning of the verse is: the field and the cave which was within it, and all the trees...were established as Avraham’s possession.

**Paneach Raza**: Avraham bought a cubit of land for each of the 600,000 Jews who left Egypt.
the son of Tzochar ⁹ to give me his Cave of Machpeilah, which is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me for its full price as land for a burial plot in your midst.”

⁹ (Due to Avraham’s importance) Efron sat (in a high position) among the people of Cheis.

Efron the Chittite responded to Avraham in (front of) an audience of the people of Cheis—who had all (stopped work and) come to the gate of the city (in honor of Sarah)—saying, ¹¹ “No, sir, (I will not accept your money). Listen to me! I have given you the field, and I have given you the cave which is in it. I have given it to you, in the presence of my people, to bury your dead.”

¹¹ Avraham threw himself to the ground in front of the local people. ¹¹ He spoke to Efron, in (front of) the (gathered) audience of local people, saying, “But if only you would listen to me! I have the money (ready) for the field. Take it from me, and I will bury my dead there.”

¹⁴ Efron replied to Avraham, saying to him, ¹⁵ “Sir, listen to me! What is a (piece of) land worth four hundred shekels of silver between (friends like) me and you? (Forget about the money) and bury your dead!”

¹⁶ Avraham listened to Efron. Avraham weighed to Efron the (amount of) silver that he had mentioned in the presence of the people of Cheis: four hundred shekels of silver in standard currency (and he accepted it).

The field of Efron which was in Machpeilah, facing Mamre, was established (as Avraham’s possession. This included) the field and the cave which was in it, all the trees that were in the field, which

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

*The Cave of Machpeilah (v. 9)*

It is not disputed among the commentators that the word Machpeilah means “double,” but we do see a difference of opinion about what the “double” refers to. Rashi’s comment presents us with the following problems:

a.) Why does Rashi use the word “house” when surely he means that it was a double cave?

b.) How could we defend Rashi from the attack of Ramban?

c.) Why did Rashi bring two interpretations and not suffice with one?

d.) From the low price that Avraham paid, we can presume that Efron did not know that Adam and Chavah were buried in the cave (as Ramban writes). Why then (according to Rashi’s second interpretation) did Avraham refer to it as a cave “doubled with couples”?

*The Explanation*

In the current story, the term Machpeilah is mentioned three times, each with a different connotation:

1.) “His Cave of Machpeilah, which is at the end of his field” (v. 9). This suggests that the cave was called Machpeilah.

2.) “The field of Efron which was in Machpeilah” (v. 17). This suggests that the area was called Machpeilah.

3.) “The cave in the field of Machpeilah” (v. 19). This suggests that some other quality in the field besides the cave gave it the name Machpeilah.

The latter two verses strongly suggest that it was not the cave which was called Machpeilah, but some other local feature. Therefore Rashi explained, that there was “a house with an upper story over it.” I.e. Rashi is not suggesting, as one might presume, that the cave consisted of an upper and lower chamber, for then it would turn out that the field was named after the cave, and this notion is refuted by verse 19. Rather, to resolve the contradiction between the three verses above, Rashi writes that there was an additional feature in the field which gave it its name. Namely, a two-storey house, which presumably was quite a remarkable feature at the time, sufficient to give the area its name. This explains why the Torah uses the expression “the cave in the field of Machpeilah,” since the field acquired its name due to the two-storey house (“the field of Machpeilah”) and not due to the cave itself.

**Rashi’s Second Interpretation**

Rashi, however, perceived a problem with this interpretation: Surely, the term “cave of Machpeilah” was sufficient information to identify the cave? Why did Avraham need to add, “Ask Efron the son of Tzochar to give me his Cave of Machpeilah, which is at the end of his field”? (v. 9)

Due to this problem, Rashi deemed it necessary to bring an alternative explanation. “It was doubled for couples,” i.e. the cave had sufficient space to bury couples together. According to this interpretation, the “Cave of Machpeilah” was not a location, but rather, a description indicating the capacity of the cave. Therefore, Avraham had to add the location too, asking for the “Cave of Machpeilah, which is at the end of his field.”

Nevertheless, this second interpretation is also problematic, since it renders Avraham’s words somewhat inconsistent: First of all, Avraham requested only “to bury my dead,” in the singular; and then he asked for a cave big enough for eight people.

Since Rashi deemed this problem more serious than the difficulty with his first interpretation, he cited this solution last.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 105ff.)

**Establishing” the Field (v. 17)**

Rashi’s comment to verse 17 presents us with two problems:

a.) How can Rashi write that Efron was a “common person,” when just a few verses earlier he states that Efron was “an officer over them”? (v. 10)

Wouldn’t a more appropriate comparison be that the field “left the possession of a wicked man and entered into the possession of a righteous man”?
Why does the Torah repeat that “Avraham was old,” (v. 1) when this was already written in Parshas Vayeira (18:11)?

**MIDRASH:** The statement in Parshas Vayeira refers to old age with vigor. Our Parsha speaks of old age lacking vigor (48:19).

**RAMBAN:** The Torah wishes to explain why Avraham asked Eliezer to find a son for Yitzchak—it was because Avraham was getting old.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

b.) First Rashi writes that יברע means “it was elevated,” and then in a second interpretation, he explains that the “literal meaning” of the word is “it was established.” Surely Rashi should have taught us the literal translation first, before the more allegorical interpretation about the field’s “elevation”?

**TORAS MENACHEM**

Avraham’s intention in purchasing Efron’s field for its “full price,” rather than accepting it as a gift (see v. 9-16) was in order to disassociate the plot with its former owner as much as possible. Therefore, Rashi stressed that, at the literal level, Avraham’s primary intention was to “elevate” the field to complete Jewish ownership.
were within its entire border around. It became Avraham’s as a possession in the presence of the people of Cheis, who had come to the gate of his city.

Afterwards, Avraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave in the field of Machpeilah, facing Mamre, which is Chevon, in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave within it were established as Avraham’s burial plot, purchased from the people of Cheis.

Avraham Sends Eliezer to Find a Wife for Yitzchak

Avraham was old, but still immersed into daily life. God had blessed Avraham with everything (including a son). Avraham said to his servant, the senior member of his house, who was in charge of everything he had, “Please place your hand under my thigh (to swear an oath). I will make you swear by God, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, amongst whom I live. Rather, you should go to my Land, to my birthplace, and you will take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak.”

The servant said to him, “What if the woman will not want to follow me to this land? Shall I take your son back to the land from where you came?”

Avraham said to him, “Be insistent not to take my son back there.” God, the God of the heavens—

Classic Questions

○ Why was Yitzchak not allowed to leave Canaan? (v. 6)

Minchah Belulah: Yitzchak had the status of a ‘perfect burnt-offering’ and was not permitted to leave the Land of Israel.

Kli Yakar: Avraham did not want Yitzchak to marry a girl from Canaan (v. 3), for the local people had a genetic disposition to self-indulgent desires. The family of Lavan and Besu’el did not possess this genetic predisposition but, on the other hand, they were idol-worshippers.

A tendency to idol worship, however, is not a genetically inherited quality, but rather, a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, Avraham requested that: a.) Yitzchak’s wife should not be from Canaan but from “my birthplace,” so that she should be of good genetic disposition. b.) He insisted “not to take my son back there,” i.e. the girl must be removed from the idol worshipping culture and brought to Yitzchak, and not the other way round.

○ Why did Avraham say “God of the heavens”? (v. 7)

Rashi: He did not say, “And the God of the earth,” as he had said above, “I will make you swear [by God, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth]” (v. 3). Avraham said to him, “Now He is the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, because I have made it habitual for creatures to mention Him. But when He took me from my father’s house, He was the God of the heavens but not the God of the earth, because mankind did not acknowledge Him, and His Name was not commonplace on the earth.”

Toras Menachem

In fact, since this was the first piece of the Land of Israel which was acquired by the Jewish people, it was of the utmost importance to possess the land totally, stripping it of any non-Jewish connection.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 35, p. 82ff.)

Avraham was Old (v. 1)

It was explained above (Toras Menachem to 18:11), that the term קבלי דבי ל襜י means “immersed into daily life.” For as one becomes older there is a tendency to become apathetic and detached from everyday events. Therefore the Torah informs us that even when Avraham and Sarah grew old they were still immersed in daily life.

With this we can explain why the Torah repeats here the fact that “Avraham was old, (but still) immersed in daily life,” because Avraham was now around forty years older than his “advanced age” mentioned in Parshas Vayeiya (since Yitzchak was married at forty years (Toldos 25:20), and Avraham’s old age was mentioned in Parshas Vayeiya before Yitzchak’s birth). Therefore, a person might think that by this time Avraham had become apathetic and detached. Consequently the Torah teaches us that “Avraham was old (but still) immersed in daily life,” even some forty years later.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 89ff.)

Avraham’s Request (v. 6-7)

[Minchah Belulah writes] that Avraham did not want Yitzchak to leave the Land of Israel because he had the status of a “perfect burnt offering.” However, this explanation does not appear to be consistent with Rashi’s explanation later, in Parshas Toldos:

On the verse, “God appeared to him and said, ‘Do not go down to Egypt! ... Settle in this land...’” (26:1-3), Rashi comments, “[Yitzchak] had in mind to go down to Egypt as his father had gone down in the days of the famine. God said to him, ‘Do not go down to Egypt! You are a perfect burnt offering, and being outside the Land [of Israel] is not fitting for you!’”

[Yitzchak was consecrated to God as a burnt offering on the Altar (during the incident of the Akeda—see above 22:2ff.), he was not permitted to leave the Land of Israel, just as a burnt offering may not be taken out of the Temple Courtyard—[Mizrachi]]

This begs the question: Yitzchak clearly knew that he had been placed onto the Altar as a burnt offering at the Akeda, so how could he have ignored the prohibition of leaving the Land?

It seems therefore that until God told Yitzchak, “Do not go down to Egypt!” it was not yet prohibited for him to leave the Land of Israel. And that is why Yitzchak innocently planned on leaving the Land, until he was told otherwise by God.
Why did Eliezer place his hand "under the thigh" of Avraham to swear the oath? (v. 9)

Rashi: Avraham told him to grasp his circumcision organ, because a person who swears an oath must take an object used to perform a mitzvah in his hand such as a Torah scroll or tefillin. Since circumcision was his first mitzvah, and he had fulfilled it with pain, it was dear to him, so he took it (v. 2).

Toras Menachem

Thus, in our Parsha when Avraham told Eliezer, “Be insistent not to take my son back there” (v. 6), he could not have possibly meant that Yitzchak should not leave the Land of Israel because he is a “perfect burnt-offering” as Minchah Belulah writes, since Yitzchak had not yet been prohibited by God from leaving the land.

This, however leaves us with the question: Why did Avraham not allow Yitzchak to leave the land of Cana’an? And, if the land of Cana’an was so special, why was he not allowed to marry a girl from there? (c.f. Kli Yakar)

Rashi’s Solution

Rashi appears to remain silent on this issue. However, since it is a question which needs to be explained at the literal level, Rashi must explain the matter somewhere, in keeping with his goal to clarify every issue that is not self-understood at the literal level.

It could be argued however that Rashi clarified this matter in his comment to verse 7: “Avraham said to him, ‘Now He is the God of the heaven and the God of the earth, because I have made it habitual for creatures to mention Him, etc.”

At first glance, Rashi’s comment is somewhat perplexing. What forced Rashi to conclude that Avraham told Eliezer (“Avraham said to him”) this lengthy explanation about publicizing God’s Name? How is this connected with Eliezer’s mission to find a wife for Yitzchak?

However, Rashi’s comment here was prompted by our previous

Sparks of Chasidus

“The Servant Placed His Hand...” (v. 9)

Even though Avraham observed the entire Torah before it was given, his observance of the mitzvos did not impart sanctity into the objects with which they were performed. This is because Avraham had not been commanded to observe the mitzvos, an event which only occurred later at Sinai.

The only exception to this rule was the mitzvah of circumcision, which Avraham had received from God. Therefore, Avraham asked Eliezer to hold his circumcision organ when making the oath—despite the fact that it was the very opposite of the modest behavior by which Avraham was known (see Rashi to Lech Lecha 12:11)—since this was the only mitzvah object that existed at the time.

(Based on Sefer Hasichos 5751, vol. 2, p. 587)
who took me from my father’s house (in Charan) and from the land (of Ur Kasdim) where I was born; who spoke to me (about my needs), and swore to me (at the Covenant of the Parts), saying, ‘I will give this land to your descendants’—He will send His angel ahead of you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. 8 If the woman doesn’t want to follow you, then you will be absolved of this oath of mine. But don’t take my son back there!”

9 The servant placed his hand under the thigh of Avraham, his master, and made him this oath.

Eliezer’s Successful Trip

24:10

The servant took ten camels from his master’s (stock of muzzled) camels, and he left. In his hand was all his master’s belongings.

He set out, and went to Aram-Naharayim, Nachor’s city.

Classic Questions

● How did Eliezer carry “all his master’s belongings”? (v. 10)

Rashi: Avraham wrote a deed stating that he had given everything he owned to Yitzchak as a gift, so that they would jump at the chance to send him their daughter.

Be’er Mayim Chayim: Rashi explains how we can take the verse literally, that “In his hand was all his master’s belongings.”

Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer: Avraham gave Eliezer a will stating that he had bequeathed everything to Yitzchak.

Toras Menachem

question: Why did Avraham demand that Eliezer bring a wife from his birthplace back to Cana’an? Since this point is crucial to our understanding of the story, Rashi concluded that Avraham must have said some sort of explanation to Eliezer.

In order to clarify exactly what Avraham’s explanation was, let us examine Rashi’s precise choice of words:

“Now... I have made it habitual (יִהְבֶּאתִי חָסִידִים) for creatures to mention Him.” The use of the word “habitual” suggests that Avraham merely brought the people of Cana’an to a superficial awareness of God. They merely “mentioned Him,” habitually.

This explains why Avraham said not to “take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Cana’anites, amongst whom I live” (v. 3), since their recognition of God—despite Avraham’s efforts—was only superficial and habitual. Avraham thus preferred to take a wife from his own family, who were naturally better and more refined people, closer to the qualities of Avraham.

Nevertheless, Avraham did not want Yitzchak to leave Cana’an and return to Charan, because, “when He took me from my father’s house He was the God of the heavens but not the God of the earth, because mankind did not acknowledge Him, and His Name was not commonplace on the earth.” I.e. in Charan, Avraham had not succeeded in making God’s Name known (even habitually or superficially). Therefore, it was preferable for Yitzchak to stay in Cana’an, where at least it was “habitual for creatures to mention Him.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 155ff.)

Avraham’s Gift to Yitzchak (v. 10)

Rashi’s comment to verse 10 raises the following questions:

a.) What is the proof, at the literal level, that Avraham gave all his possessions to Yitzchak, and not to Eliezer? Eliezer was “the senior member of his house, who was in charge of everything he had” (above, v. 2), so surely he could be entrusted with all of Avraham’s property?

b.) Why did Rashi reject the view of Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer, that “Avraham gave Eliezer a will stating that he had bequeathed everything to Yitzchak”?

c.) What led Rashi to conclude that Avraham gave all his possessions to Yitzchak? Surely his most valuable belongings would have been enough?

d.) If Avraham had given away all his possessions how did he support himself financially?

The Explanation

a.) Rashi was troubled by an implicit contradiction in verse 10: “In his hand was all his master’s belongings.” Surely, the very definition of a “master” is a person who is rich in belongings? If Avraham had indeed given all his belongings away to Eliezer, then in what respect was he still a “master” over Eliezer? It appears that, to the contrary, Eliezer is now the master! Nevertheless, Eliezer states below that “I am Avraham’s servant” (v. 34). So Rashi wondered: how could Eliezer be a servant if he now owned all his master’s property?

To solve the problem, Rashi answered that Avraham gave his

The Last Word

Some parents think that when a child reaches the age of 20, the obligations of parenthood end. The son or daughter is now a mature adult who can, and must, learn to fend for his or herself.

However, we can learn from the conduct of Avraham that education never ceases. At this point, Yitzchak was 37 years old, and Avraham could have quite reasonably taken a “back seat,” allowing Yitzchak to make his own choices about where to live and whom to marry.

If fact, Avraham did precisely the opposite. Instead of relaxing and enjoying his own life, he relinquished his life’s savings and all his possessions, giving them to Yitzchak in an attempt to help him find an appropriate wife (Rashi to v.10).

From this we can learn that parenthood never ends. Even when our children become mature adults, we should be willing to sacrifice everything that we have for their benefit.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah 5730)
was very long, as we see that Avraham actually lived another fifty years before Yitzchak would inherit the money. In those days, life expectancy a will to Eliezer, since this would not have made an immediate impression on Lavan and Besu’el, since it was likely that many years would pass before Yitzchak would inherit the money. In those days, life expectancy was very long, as we see that Avraham actually lived another fifty years after this episode. Seeing a will would not have made anybody, “jump at the chance to send him their daughter.”

c.) Similarly, Avraham gave Eliezer “all his possessions” in order to guarantee as speedy a response as possible from Lavan’s family.

d.) As for Avraham’s own financial situation, we could presume that either: a.) Yitzchak supported him, thus fulfilling the mitzvah of honoring one’s parents. Or, b.) He sought means of making money.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Chaye Sarah 5730; Sefer Haschos 5752, p. 103)
11 He made the camels lie down outside the city, beside the well of water, towards the evening time when the girls go out to draw water.

12 He said, “O God! The God of my master Avraham, please let something happen to me today and do kindness to my master, Avraham. 13 Look, I am standing by the water well. The daughters of this city’s residents are coming out to draw water. 14 If I say to a girl, ‘Please tilt down your pitcher and let me drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I will also give your camels to drink,’ (she will be fit to) be chosen by You for Your servant, for Yitzchak (since she performs acts of kindness. If she is from the right family and shows kindness) I will know that through her You have acted kindly with my master.”

15 He had not yet finished speaking, and—look!—Rivkah, the daughter of Besu’el, the son of Milkah, who was the wife of Avraham’s brother Nachor, came out, and her pitcher was on her shoulder.

16 The girl was very pretty, a virgin, and no man had known her.

She went down to the spring, filled her pitcher and came back up.

17 (When he saw that the water rose from the well towards her) the servant ran toward her, and said, “Please let me sip a little water from your pitcher.”

18 She said, “Drink, sir.” She quickly took down her pitcher (from her shoulder) into her hand, and gave him a drink. 19 When she finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will also draw (water) for your camels, until they have finished drinking (as much as they want).”

20 She quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran to the well again to draw water. She drew

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**What was unique about Eliezer’s prayer? (v. 15)**

**Midrash:** Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said: Three people were answered while their words were still upon their tongues: Avraham’s servant Eliezer, Moshe and Shlomo. Regarding Eliezer, the verse states, “He had not yet finished speaking, and—look!—Rivkah...came out” (v. 15). Regarding Moshe, the verse states [that after his authority had been challenged by Korach], “When he finished speaking all these words, the ground split open” (Bamidbar 16:31). Regarding Shlomo, the verse states [that at the inauguration of the Holy Temple], “When Shlomo finished speaking to God, the fire descended from heaven” (Chron. II 7:1).

In fact, it appears that Eliezer’s prayer was even greater than that of Moshe or Shlomo, since they were only answered after finishing speaking, whereas Eliezer “had not yet finished speaking,” when Rivkah came out with a pitcher on her shoulder (Bereishis Rabah 60:4; Midrash Seichel Tov).

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**Eliezer’s Prayer (v. 15)**

The Midrash cites Eliezer’s prayer as one of the greatest in history, since he was answered immediately. In fact his prayer appears to be even greater than that of Moshe and Shlomo, since Eliezer was answered even before he had finished his prayer.

However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, it would be difficult to accept that Rivkah’s sudden appearance was actually a result of Eliezer’s prayer, since she must clearly have departed from her home before Eliezer started praying. Thus, her arrival was not caused by Eliezer’s prayer at all. What then was the significance of Rivkah’s arrival during Eliezer’s prayer?

**The Explanation**

When Avraham sent Eliezer on the mission to find a wife for Yitzchak, he said, “God, the God of the heavens... will send His angel ahead of you, and you will take a wife for my son from there” (above, v. 7). Note that Avraham did not say, “God will send his angel with you,” which would suggest a mere “helping hand” of Divine assistance on occasion. Rather, he said, “God... will send his angel ahead of you,” indicating that Divine intervention would preempt Eliezer’s efforts, ensuring his success.

This preemptive help from above became evident during Eliezer’s prayer. The fact that he was answered before he had finished praying indicated that God had orchestrated the events in Eliezer’s favor, even before he had begun to pray. This gave Eliezer much encouragement, as he witnessed Avraham’s promise of an angel going “ahead” actually unfold. The Divine providence in Rivkah’s appearance, before Eliezer concluded his prayer, was a first indication to him that this girl was none other than Yitzchak’s future wife.

**Eliezer’s Continued Success**

On reading the entire account of Eliezer’s mission, we see that he consistently relied on Avraham’s promise of preemptive Divine providence and that various supernatural events occurred which precluded problems arising later:

a.) Rashi writes that Eliezer miraculously completed his journey to Aram-Naharayim in only one day (Rashi to v. 42 & v. 66). This caused the timing to be such that Rivkah appeared in the middle of Eliezer’s prayer.

b.) Eliezer gave Rivkah the golden nose-ring and bracelets before he even asked who she was (v. 22-23). This appears to be irrational—surely he should have verified who she was before giving her the presents (see Rashi ibid.). Here we see that Eliezer trusted in Avraham’s promise of preemptive Divine assistance: The fact that Rivkah had appeared in the middle of Eliezer’s prayers was sufficient proof to him that this was the correct girl.
c.) When Besu’el heard of the supernatural assistance that Eliezer had enjoyed, he exclaimed, “This thing has come from God!” (v. 50).

d.) Rashi writes that Besu’el was planning to oppose Rivkah’s marriage to Yitzchak and therefore, “An angel came and put him to death” (Rashi to v. 55, below). Here again, we see that God’s angel eliminated potential problems for Eliezer before they arose.

e.) When Rivkah’s brother and mother suggested, “Let the girl stay with us a year or ten (months). Afterwards, she will go” (v. 55), Eliezer asked that she leave with him immediately, and Rivkah was called in to decide for herself (v. 55-7). Now, at that time, Rivkah was totally unaware of the reason for Eliezer’s visit. When he gave Rivkah the gold nose-ring and bracelet, the Torah makes no mention that he suggested a marriage partner to her, and when Eliezer discussed the matter with her brother Lavan and her mother, Rivkah was not present. Thus, when she was called into the room for consent, Rivkah was being asked for the first time to agree to a marriage, without any prior thought. Nevertheless, she replied immediately, “I will go (whether you like it or not)!“ (v. 58).

Here we see further the Divine assistance which Eliezer enjoyed, for he was not required to make any efforts to secure Rivkah’s approval.

Eliezer’s “Adjusted” Report

According to the above explanation—that Eliezer was assisted by an angel going ahead of him—we can explain an interesting point that arises when reading Eliezer’s report to Besu’el. Instead of repeating Avraham’s words, “God...will send His angel ahead of you,” Eliezer told Besu’el that Avraham had said, “God...will send His angel with you and lead your way to success.”
(water) for all his camels. 21 The man was amazed by her. He (observed her) silently to know whether God had led his way to success or not.

22 Then, when the camels had finished drinking, the man took a golden nose ring, weighing a beka, and two bracelets, weighing ten gold (shekels), for her hands. 23 (After giving her the presents) he said, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me if there is place for us to stay in your father’s house?”

24 She said to him, “I am the daughter of Besu’el, the son born to Milcah and Nachor.” 25 (In response to the second question,) she said to him, “We have plenty of straw and fodder and also a place to stay.”

26 The man knelt and prostrated himself to God.

27 He said, “Blessed is God, the God of my master, Avraham, Who has not withheld His lovingkindness and His truth from my master. God has led me on the path to the house of my master’s brothers!”

Eliezer Recounts the Story

24:28

The girl ran, and she told her mother, (who was sitting in her work)-house, what had happened.

29 Rivkah had a brother whose name was Lavan. Lavan ran to the man outside by the fountain (because) 30 he saw the nose ring and the bracelets on his sister’s hands, and he heard his sister Rivkah say, “This is what the man spoke to me...” (so he set his eyes on the money).

So, he came to the man, and—look!—he was standing over the camels at the well. 31 He said, “Come, you who are blessed by God! Why should you stand outside, when I have cleared the house (of idols), and made a place for the camels?”

32 So the man came to the house and unmuzzled the camels. (Lavan) gave straw and fodder to the camels and water (to Eliezer) to wash his feet, and the feet of the men who accompanied him. 33 Food was placed before him, but he said, “I will not eat until I have spoken my words.”

“Speak,” said (the host).

Toras Menachem

Why did Eliezer find it necessary to alter Avraham’s words? According to the above explanation, we can understand that Eliezer could not possibly have repeated to Besu’el Avraham’s exact words. Saying that, “God...will send His angel ahead of you,” was tantamount to declaring that, “I have already been granted success by God.” This would have led Besu’el to respond, “If you’ve already been guaranteed success, then why are you bothering to speak to me?” Therefore, Eliezer was forced to adjust Avraham’s words, reporting that the angel had merely accompanied him, providing Divine assistance, rather than telling the truth, that the angel had gone ahead to ensure a Divine guarantee of success.

This however begs the question: How could Eliezer accredit Avraham with a statement which he did not say?

In fact though, Eliezer did tell the truth, but not the whole truth. Eliezer had received Divine assistance, so he told Besu’el that God’s angel had helped him (the angel was “with him”). What he did not reveal to Besu’el was the additional fact that God’s assistance had been granted to him to the extent that his success was totally disproportionate to his efforts, and had been guaranteed in advance.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 99ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

Shortly before his marriage, Yitzchak had reached a remarkable degree of spiritual perfection. Right at the beginning of his life he was the first Jew to be circumcised at eight days. He was then educated by Avraham our father and later showed an eagerness to sacrifice his life to God, at the Akeida, from which point on he attained the sanctity of a burnt offering (an olah temimah).

Rivkah, on the other hand was “a rose among the thorns,” born into a wicked, idol-worshipping family.

The union of Yitzchak and Rivkah was thus a meeting of extremes.

And, for this very reason it is recorded in the Torah, since Torah itself is a guide to uniting extremes. For when any mitzvah is observed, a mundane physical object becomes infused with Godliness and holiness.

Thus, the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah represents the marriage of the spiritual and the physical. And, this explains why our Parsha spends so much time discussing their story, since it was the basis of everything that was to follow.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, pp. 95-96)
Why did Eliezer say, “I came today”? (v. 42)

**Rashi**: He was saying, “Today I left, and today I arrived.” From here we learn that his journey was miraculously shortened.

Rabbi Acha said: “The ordinary conversation of the Patriarchs’ servants is even more cherished by God than the Torah of their children. For, the section dealing with Eliezer is repeated in the Torah, whereas many fundamentals of the Torah were given only through allusions.

**Mizrahi**: Rashi was troubled by the seemingly unnecessary word “today.”

**Chizkiya**: Rashi cites a Midrashic teaching here. However, at the literal level, Eliezer’s account is repeated here in the Torah for without it, the reader would wonder why Rivkah’s family consented to her marriage so quickly.

**Torah Temimah**: Why was it necessary for Eliezer to inform Besuel that his journey had been miraculously shortened?

Before Eliezer’s departure, Avraham gave him a deed stating that he had given everything he owned to Yitzchak as a gift, in order that they would jump at the chance to send him their daughter (Rashi to v. 10, above). Consequently, if Eliezer had not revealed the nature of his miraculous journey, the deed would appear to have been post-dated. Besuel would thus have doubted the validity of the deed, since it is unlikely that Avraham would have made a post-dated document, an act which is discouraged by the Torah.
He said, “I am Avraham’s servant. God blessed my master tremendously, and he became great. (God) gave him sheep, cattle, silver, gold, manservants, maidservants, camels and donkeys. After she had become old, Sarah, my master’s wife, gave birth to a son for my master. (My master) has given him all that he possesses.”

“My master made me swear, saying, ‘Do not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell. Instead, you must go to my father’s house, to my family, and take a wife for my son.’

“I said to my master, ‘What if the woman will not want to follow me?’”

He replied, ‘God, before Whom I walked, will send His angel with you and lead your way to success. You should take a wife for my son from my family, from my father’s house. You will then be absolved from my oath. When you come to my family, if they do not give her to you, you will be absolved from my oath.’”

“So, I came today to the well, and I said, ‘God, God of my master Avraham, please lead my way to success! Look, I am standing by the well. When a girl comes out to draw (water), I will say to her, ‘Please, give me a little water to drink from your pitcher.’ If she says to me, ‘You (and your men) too can drink, and I will also draw water for your camels,’ she is the woman whom God has designated for my master’s son.’”

“I had not yet finished speaking to myself, and Rivkah suddenly came out with her pitcher on her head. She had not yet finished speaking to herself, and Rivkah suddenly came out with her pitcher on her head. I said to myself, ‘This is the woman whom God has designated for my master’s son!’

From this we can be assured of the speed with which God will move this teaching from a place which appears to be logically correct.

Therefore, at the outset of Eliezer’s story, Rashi incorporated two seemingly diverse interpretations in the same comment. First, he writes that Eliezer’s journey was miraculously shortened, and then he adds the teaching of Rabbi Acha, about the precious quality of “the ordinary conversation of the Patriarchs’ servants.” Surely, these are two totally distinct concepts?

Another further problem is why Rashi move this teaching from a place which appears to be logically correct?

Furthermore, on examining the source of Rashi’s comment (in the Talmud, Sanhedrin 95a) one sees that Rabbi Acha’s teaching is indeed associated with the beginning of Eliezer’s account (verse 32 above). Why did Rashi incorporate two seemingly diverse interpretations in the same comment. First, he writes that Eliezer’s journey was miraculously shortened, and then he adds the teaching of Rabbi Acha, about the precious quality of “the ordinary conversation of the Patriarchs’ servants.” Surely, these are two totally distinct concepts? Why does Rashi combine them together?

The Explanation

At the literal level of Torah interpretation, the repetition of Eliezer’s story is not problematic at all. The story is not inappropriate since it explains why Rivkah’s family consented so quickly to her marriage (as Chizkuni writes), and lengthiness alone does not pose a problem at the literal level. Therefore, at the outset of Eliezer’s story, Rashi found no need to comment at all.

On reading verse 42, Rashi was troubled why Eliezer stated that he had arrived “today.” Surely, this is an unnecessary detail which is redundant at the literal level? Rashi concluded that this must be hinting to the Talmudic teaching that Eliezer enjoyed a miraculously shortened journey, allowing him to arrive on the same day he departed (as Mizrachi writes). (Presumably, the miracle was stressed here, and not earlier when we read of Eliezer’s journey to Aram-Naharayim (v. 10), because at this point
As soon as we find that a particular detail is only mentioned once, we will explain why each detail was mentioned twice, because the two accounts were each said in a different context—once to inform the reader of any direct relevance.)

However, while the immediate problem—of the verse’s inclusion of the word “today”—has now been solved, Rashi’s explanation has actually generated a new, more serious difficulty:

At the outset, we presumed that the Torah’s repetition of Eliezer’s account was not problematic at the literal level. We had a rational explanation why each detail was mentioned twice, because the two accounts were each said in a different context—once to inform the reader as to what had occurred, and once again to impress Besu’el.

However, this explanation is only viable if every detail is repeated twice. As soon as we find that a particular detail is only mentioned once, we will immediately be struck with the question: If this detail could be mentioned only once then why could not all the details be mentioned only once?

Therefore, after Rashi explained that Eliezer’s miraculous journey was only hinted at once, in the repetition of his story, Rashi had to explain why the story was repeated at all.

Consequently, he continues (in the same comment), “Rabbi Acha said: “The ordinary conversation of the Patriarchs’ servants is even more cherished by God than the Torah of their children....” I.e. the Torah

However, this explanation is only viable if every detail is repeated twice.

The miracle assisted Eliezer in convincing Besu’el, whereas earlier it was not of any direct relevance."

The explanation has actually explanation why each detail was mentioned twice, because the two accounts were each said in a different context—once to inform the reader as to what had occurred, and once again to impress Besu’el.
shoulder, went down to the well and drew water. I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ 46 She quickly lowered her pitcher from her (shoulder), and said, ‘Drink, and I will give your camels to drink too!’ I drank, and she gave the camels to drink.”

“I questioned her and said, ‘Whose daughter are you?’”

“She replied, ‘The daughter of Besu’el, the son born to Milcah and Nachor.’ I then placed the ring on her nose and the bracelets on her hands.”

“I knelt and prostrated myself to God, and I blessed God, the God of my master Avraham, Who led me on the true path, to take the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.”

“Now, if you want to be kind and truthful to my master, tell me. If not, say so, and I will turn to the right (and find a girl from the daughters of Yishma’el) or to the left (and find a girl from the daughters of Lot).”

L

Lavan and Besu’el replied, saying, “This thing has come from God! We cannot refuse you (for any reason) either bad or good. 51 Rivkah is now yours. Take her and leave, and let her be a wife for your master’s son, as God has spoken.”

When Avraham’s servant heard their words, he prostrated himself on the ground to God.

(Later, when he saw Rivkah), the servant took out silver and gold items and pieces of clothing, and he gave them to Rivkah. He gave delicious (fruits from the land of Israel) to her brother and her mother.

Both (Eliezer) and the men who accompanied him ate and drank, and they stayed overnight.

When they got up in the morning, (Eliezer) said, “Send me away to my master.”

(Rivkah’s) brother and mother said, “Let the girl stay with us a year or ten (months). Afterwards, she will go.”

He said to them, “Do not delay me now that God has made my trip successful. Send me away, and I will go to my master.”

WHY ARE ONLY RIVKAH’S “BROTHER AND MOTHER” MENTIONED IN VERSE 55, AND NOT HER FATHER BESU’EL?

RASHI: Where was Besu’el? He wanted to stop Rivkah’s marriage, so an angel came and killed him.

IBN EZRA: Since Lavan surpassed his father in wisdom and stature, he answered on behalf of his father. Similarly, we find in verse 50 that Lavan answered before his father Besu’el.

TUR HA’ARUCH: Besu’el consented immediately to the marriage, saying, “Rivkah is now yours. Take her and leave” (v. 51). In v. 55, Rivkah’s brother (Lavan) and mother spoke up, requesting that she stay home a while longer. Besu’el is not mentioned in v. 55 as he was willing to let Rivkah leave immediately.

WHY DID THEY REQUEST THAT RIVKAH STAY HOME FOR ANOTHER YEAR OR TEN MONTHS? (v. 55)

RASHI: Because a girl is given twelve months before marriage to acquire adornments for herself.

BESU’EL’S UNTIMELY DEMISE (v. 55)

Rashi writes that the omission of Besu’el’s name in verse 55 indicates that he suffered an unnatural death, because he was planning to oppose the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah. This, however, appears to be a non-literal, Midrashic interpretation. Why did Rashi reject the more straightforward and logical explanations of Ibn Ezra and Tur Ha’aruch?

We can answer this problem by first addressing another question. Verse 53 states that Eliezer “gave delicious (fruits from the land of Israel) to her brother and her mother,” omitting any mention of Besu’el. Why did Rashi wait until verse 55 to ask the question “where was Besu’el” when Besu’el’s name was already omitted from verse 53?

Presumably, Rashi reasoned that one cannot prove Besu’el’s absence conclusively from the fact that he did not receive any presents. In fact, to give a gift of mere fruit to Besu’el, the owner of the house, might be insulting, whereas to Rivkah’s mother and brother it was a more
Why did they call Rivkah and ask her? (v. 57)

Rashi: From here we learn that one may not marry off a woman without her consent.

Sifsei Chachamim: Rashi was troubled as to why they asked for Rivkah’s consent, when they had already said earlier, “This thing has come from God! We cannot refuse you etc.,” without asking for her consent. Rashi thus explains, that even though her parents had appropriate present. Thus, there is no proof in verse 53 that Besu’el was no longer alive.

However, since it says in verse 55 that, “(Rivkah’s) brother and mother said, “Let the girl stay with us a year or ten (months),” it would be unreasonable to presume (at the literal level) that Besu’el would have remained quiet over this issue (as Ibn Ezra argues). Therefore, Rashi concluded that the Midrashic tradition that Besu’el had died was acceptable at the literal level, since it is indicated by scripture in verse 55.

(We thus see retroactively that, in verse 53, Besu’el was not given presents by Eliezer because he had in fact died).

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Rivkah’s Consent (v. 57-58)

As soon as Eliezer finished his story, “Lavan and Besu’el replied, saying, ‘This thing has come from God! We cannot refuse you (for any reason) either bad or good. Rivkah is now yours. Take her and leave’” (v. 50-51).

The next day, Rivkah’s family requested that she should stay for ten months or a year, which was the normal period of preparation for marriage (v. 55 and Rashi ibid.), but Eliezer insisted that she come with him immediately. To this they replied, “let us call the girl and ask her” (v. 57).

Now, presumably, they were not asking Rivkah to consent to the actual marriage itself, since Lavan and Besu’el had already agreed to the marriage with Eliezer the previous day (v. 50-51). Rather, it appears that they merely wanted to ask her whether she would like to go with Eliezer now, or wait a year like her family suggested (as Rashbam writes).

Rashi however understood that they were asking her to consent to the actual marriage itself. This is perplexing since, if “one may not marry off a woman without her consent,” as Rashi writes, then how could Lavan and Besu’el have told Eliezer to “take her and leave” (in verses 50-51) without Rivkah’s prior consent?
They said, “Let us call the girl and ask her.”

They called Rivkah, and said to her, “Will you go with this man?”

She said, “I will go (whether you like it or not)!”

So they sent away their sister Rivkah, with her nurse, Avraham’s servant and his men. They blessed Rivkah saying to her, “Our sister! May you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your descendants inherit the cities of their enemies (like God blessed Avraham).”

Rivkah and her maidsens set off, riding on camels, following the man. The servant took Rivkah and left.

The Marriage of Yitzchak and Rivkah

Yitzchak had returned (from escorting Hagar) from Be’er Lachai Ro’i (to Avraham, so that he could marry her), he was living in the southern part of the land. Yitzchak went out to pray in the field towards evening. He looked up and saw—look!—camels were approaching.

Rivkah looked up and saw Yitzchak (and she was stunned by his appearance). She lowered herself...
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● What did Eliezer tell Yitzchak? (v. 66)
**Rashi:** Eliezer revealed to him the miracles which had occurred: that his journey had been shortened, and that Rivkah had appeared during his prayer.

● How was Yitzchak comforted? (v. 67)
**Rashi:** The verse states that, “he brought her to the tent of Sarah his mother,” suggesting that, “he brought her to the tent, and look!—it was Sarah his mother,” i.e. she became the likeness of Sarah his mother. For, as long as Sarah was alive, a candle burned from one Shabbos eve to the next, the door would be blessed, and a cloud was attached to the tent. When she died these things ceased, but when Rivkah arrived, they resumed. From Bereishis Rabah.

**Midrash:** Four practices resumed when Rivkah came into Sarah’s tent: a.) A cloud was joined to the entrance. b.) The doors were always open wide to welcome the poor. c.) The candles burned from one Shabbos eve to the next. d.) She prepared her dough in a state of purity. (60:16).

**Gur Aryeh:** Why did Rashi omit the fourth practice mentioned in the Midrash, that Sarah’s doors were always open wide for the poor?

The three miracles that Rashi cites correspond to the three mitzvos for which women take the primary responsibility: separating of Chalah from dough, lighting Shabbos candles and Family Purity (symbolized by the cloud fixed to the tent). Since the fourth practice mentioned in the Midrash had no special significance, therefore Rashi omitted it.

**Levush Ha’ohr Ha’cha: Rikvah could not perform the mitzvah of providing for the poor until she was married, since she did not yet have the financial means with which to do so.

**Tzeidah Laderach:** Unlike the three practices which Rashi cites, the mitzvah of helping the poor is not specifically associated with women. Therefore, Rashi omitted it.

Rivkah’s Three Miracles (v. 67)

Rashi’s comment to verse 67 presents us with the following difficulties:

a.) What forced Rashi to conclude that Rivkah’s worthiness as a wife was proven to him through miracles, and not through her good deeds?

b.) At the literal level, if miraculous proof was indeed required, what led Rashi to believe that there were no less than three miracles?

c.) On the other hand, Rashi did not mention the fourth practice mentioned in the Midrash (welcoming the poor). Why? (See Gur Aryeh)

d.) Rashi does not usually cite any sources. Why does he mention here that the source is “Bereishis Rabah.”

e.) Why does Rashi cite the three miracles in a different order than that which they are recorded in the Midrash?

The Explanation

a.) The verse states, “Yitzchak brought her to the tent of his mother Sarah. He took Rivkah, she became his wife, and he loved her.” Rashi was troubled that the three words נקראה והשלמה שלה (“the tent of Sarah his mother”) are totally superfluous. The verse could simply have stated, “Yitzchak brought her to himself and took Rivkah, she became his wife, and he loved her.” Why do we need to be informed where he brought her?

Rashi came to the conclusion that even after Eliezer told Yitzchak about the miraculous manner in which he had found Rivkah (v. 66 and Rashi ibid.),

Toras Menachem
Avraham Remarries

Avraham took another wife and her name was Keturah, (also known as Hagar). 2 She bore him Zimran, Yakshan, Medan, Midyan, Yishbak and Shu‘ach.

1 Yakshan fathered Sheva and Dedan.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Who was Keturah? (v. 1)

Rashi: Hagar. She was called Keturah because her deeds were as pleasant as incense (תקוע מעשיה הריח). Chizkuni: How could Hagar be described as a person whose “deeds were as pleasant as incense” when, after Avraham sent her away, she returned to idol worship (Rashi to 21:14, above)? Clearly, she must have done teshuvah before Avraham took her for the second time, and the Torah calls her Keturah due to the sweet “aroma” of her teshuvah.

Kli Yakar: Avraham actually named her Keturah to make it known that she had done teshuvah.

Rashbam: At the literal level Keturah was not Hagar.

TORAS MENACHEM

Yitzchak was still not entirely convinced that she was fit to marry into the family, and whether she was of a similar caliber to Sarah, his mother. Therefore, when he took her into “the tent of Sarah his mother,” Yitzchak must have witnessed even greater miracles which convinced him that Rivkah was definitely fit to be his wife. And only then, “he took Rivkah, she became his wife, and he loved her.”

b.) What, exactly, was the nature of these miracles? Rashi concluded that the Torah hinted to them in the three extra words שבעה אמות באה מרפה (and thus there were three miracles in all):

הָנָּה ("the tent") refers to a cloud joined to the tent.

שֶׁרֵי ("of Sarah") refers to something unique to Sarah, namely the dough which we find that Sarah alone prepared (and when she was unable to do so, no bread at all was served—Rashi to 18:8)

מַאָם ("his mother") refers to the mitzvah given to Jewish women in general, especially the Jewish mother, the lighting of Shabbos candles.

c.) The fourth practice mentioned by the Midrash was thus omitted by Rashi as it is not alluded to by the verse.

d.) However, in the final analysis the miracle of Shabbos candles burning for an entire week is difficult to accept at the literal level. Therefore, Rashi cited the source of this comment—“Bereishis Rabah”—to indicate that while this miracle is indicated by the verse, it is somewhat beyond a literal interpretation.

e.) Rashi listed the miracles neither in the order they are mentioned in the verse, nor the order cited by the Midrash, but rather, in order of their impressiveness to Yitzchak as righteous acts: First, a miracle connected with a mitzvah, the lighting of Shabbos candles, which indicated her piety in the observance of mitzvos. Second, a miracle connected with her activities, making dough. And, third, a miracle which was not directly connected with her activities: the cloud by her tent.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 163ff.)

Hagar’s Teshuvah (v. 1)

What is Rashi’s proof that, at the literal level, Keturah was Hagar? (see Rashbam)

Rashi was troubled by a general question regarding the story of Avraham and Hagar. In Parshas Lech Lecha (12:5), Rashi wrote that, “Avraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women.” From this it follows that Hagar lived in a household where a primary focus was weaning people off idol worship and bringing them to a knowledge of the One God.

This begs the question: after living so many years in such an environment, how is it possible that Hagar, “reverted to the idols of her father’s house” (Rashi to 21:14) after leaving Avraham’s home? Even Yishma‘el, who initially deviated from Avraham’s path, eventually did teshuvah (Rashi to v. 7, below). Surely then, Hagar too must have done teshuvah? But where is this fact hinted at in the Torah?

Rashi concluded that this problem can be solved at the literal level, by presuming that Keturah was Hagar, a new name which she acquired indicating that she did indeed do teshuvah (see Chizkuni & Kli Yakar).

(The Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 174ff.)

The Last Word

In recent years the custom for girls to light Shabbos candles before their marriage has re-emerged. This is actually an ancient practice which is indicated by Rashi’s comment to verse 67. Here we see that Rivkah lit candles before she was married, for only after Yitzchak had taken her into “the tent of Sarah his mother” and witnessed her Shabbos candles burning for the entire week, did he take her to be his wife. If fact, it was primarily the observance of this mitzvah that proved to Yitzchak the suitability of Rivkah as a spouse, and a mother in Israel.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 168ff.)
לָהַלְמָה נַפְעֵを選ぶת מִיִּתְנָה: • בְּנִים מַדִּילָה עָפָר הַשָּׂרָה וְהָאָבִידָה

לָהַלְמָה נַפְעֵselectedIndexה בְּנִים קְסֹד: • יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבָּדָה גֶּה לַמַּעֲשֶׂה

לָהַלְמָה נַפְעֵselectedIndexה בְּנִים נְבָע: • לָאֵלְקֵנָה אֲבָּדָה אָשָׂרָה לַמַּעֲשֶׂה קְשׁוֹן.

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The sons of Dedan were Ashurim, Letushim, and Le’umim.

4 The sons of Midyan were Aifah, Aifer, Chanoch, Avida and Elda’ah.

All these were Keturah’s descendants.

5 Avraham gave all (the power of blessing) that he possessed to Yitzchak. 6 To the sons of Avraham’s concubine (Hagar, also known as Keturah), Avraham gave gifts. He sent them away eastward from his son Yitzchak while he (Avraham) was still alive, to the land of the East.

Avraham Passes Away

25:7

This is the total of the years of Avraham’s life that he lived: one hundred years, seventy years and five years.

8 Avraham breathed his last and died at a good age, old and satisfied, and his (soul) was gathered to (be with the souls of) his people. 9 His sons Yitzchak and Yishma’el buried him in the Cave of Machpeilah in the field of Efron—the son of Tzochar the Chittite—which faces Mamre, 10 the field that Avraham had bought from the sons of Cheis. Avraham and his wife Sarah were buried there.

11 After Avraham died, God blessed Yitzchak his son. Yitzchak lived near Be’er Lachai Ro’i.

Yishma’el’s Descendants

25:12

The following are the descendants of Yishma’el the son of Avraham, whom Hagar the Egyptian—Sarah’s maid—bore to Avraham:

13 These are the names of the sons of Yishma’el listed according to (the order of) their births: the firstborn of Yishma’el was Nevayos, then Kaidar, Adbe’ail, Mivsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Masa, 15 Chadad, Teiyma, Yetur, Naﬁsh, and Kaidmah. 16 These were Yishma’el’s sons and this is how they were called in their towns and their walled cities. There were twelve princes for their nations.

17 These were the years of Yishma’el’s life: (a total of) one hundred years, thirty years and seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people.

18 (His descendants) lived between Chavilah and Shur, which is near Egypt, towards Ashur. They dwelt (near) all their brethren.

The Haftarah for Chayei Sarah is on page 378.

Classic Questions

Why is Yitzchak mentioned before Yishma’el? (v. 9)

Rashi: From here we learn that Yishma’el did teshuvah and allowed Yitzchak to go before him [See Toras Menachem to 21:9-13 above].
On the words, “These are the descendants (Toldos) of Yitzchak,” Rashi comments, “These are Ya’akov and Eisav mentioned in the Parsha.”

According to Chasidic teachings, Ya’akov represents the soul, and Eisav, the body. The Parsha is thus named after both Ya’akov and Eisav, because the soul and the body each have their own exclusive qualities.

The soul is described as a “child” of God, because the love shared between the soul and God is a natural type of love, resembling the parent-child relationship.

The body, on the other hand, has no inherent love for God — on the contrary, it conceals God’s presence. But, ironically, when God “chose” the Jewish people, He chose primarily our bodies. For, it would not have been an act of true self-expression to choose the Jewish soul, since anybody would choose a superior product over an inferior one. Rather, it is the Jewish body, which appears to be quite similar to that of the non-Jew, that was selected by God (See Tanya ch. 49).

Of course, this does not mean to say that the soul was not chosen by God at all. It is only that the body has no redeeming feature of its own other than the fact that it was chosen by God—so its chosenness “stands out” more than in the case of the soul.

When soul and body are together, each begins to learn from the other’s unique quality: Through observing Torah and mitzvos, the soul teaches the body how to love God; the body, in turn, teaches the soul how to reveal its chosenness.

And that is why Ya’akov, the soul, and Eisav, the body, are both “mentioned in the Parsha.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parsha Toldos 5752)
Why does the Torah repeat, “Avraham fathered Yitzchak”? (end of v. 19)

RASHI: After the verse stated, “Yitzchak, the son of Avraham,” it was then found necessary to stress, “Avraham fathered Yitzchak,” because the cynics of the generation were saying that Sarah had conceived from Avimelech, since she had lived with Avraham for many years and had not conceived from him. What did God do? He fashioned the features of Yitzchak’s face to resemble Avraham’s, and everyone witnessed that Avraham had indeed given birth to Yitzchak. Thus the verse stresses here, “Avraham [is certainly] the son of Avraham,” because there is evidence that “Avraham fathered Yitzchak.”

TORAS MENACHEM

Sparks of Chasidus

According to Chasidic teachings, Avraham primarily served God with love, and Yitzchak with fear. In fact, their faces bore very little resemblance to one another, as an indication of their contrasting spiritual qualities. Thus, it took a miracle to make Yitzchak’s facial features resemble those of Avraham (see Rashi to v. 19).

With the above in mind however, Yitzchak’s name appears to be somewhat out of character with his nature. “Yitzchak” means “laughter,” which is associated with happiness and rejoicing—a rather inappropriate name, it would seem, for a person whose life was dedicated to the fear of God.
THE BIRTH OF YA’AKOV & EISAV

25:19

And these are the descendants of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham:

(The Torah now digresses, before continuing with Yitzchak’s descendants in verses 25-26)

(After God gave Avram the name) Avraham, (he) fathered Yitzchak. 20 Yitzchak was forty years old when he took Rivkah for himself as a wife. (Even though she was) the daughter of Besu’el the Aramean of Padan Aram, sister of Lavan the Aramean (she did not learn from their wicked ways).

21 Yitzchak prayed (repeatedly) to God (in one corner of the room) opposite his wife, because she was barren. God accepted his prayer, and his wife Rivkah conceived.

22 The children struggled inside her. She said, “If (the pain of pregnancy is) so (much) why did I (want to be like) this?” She went (to the Yeshivah of Sheim) to ask God (what was going to happen to her).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Was Yitzchak unable to have children too, or just Rivkah? (v. 21)

Midrash Hagadol: In fact, Yitzchak was also unable to have children. This is hinted at by verse 21, where the word “she” is not spelled in the Torah in the usual manner (אֵלֶה), but rather אֵלֶיה, which can also be read as אֵלֶיה, also could not have children.

● Why did the children “struggle inside her”? (v. 22)

Rashi: When she passed by the entrances of the Yeshivos of Sheim and Aiver, Ya’akov would run and struggle to come out. When she passed the entrance of a temple of idolatry, Eisav would run and struggle to come out. (See The Last Word)

● How did Rivkah “ask God” about her pregnancy? (v. 22)

Rashi: She went to the Yeshivah of Sheim. Sheim revealed to her what would happen through Divine inspiration (Rashi to v. 22-23).

Tur Ha’aruch: Why did Rivkah ask Sheim and not Avraham? Perhaps she did not wish to distress Avraham with the bad news that she was having a difficult pregnancy.

YITZCHAK’S CERTAINTY (v. 21)

The Torah states, “Yitzchak prayed (repeatedly) to God (in one corner of the room) opposite his wife, because she was barren” (v. 21). This begs the question: How did Yitzchak know that “she was barren”? Perhaps their inability to have children was his problem and not hers?

At first glance, one might argue that Yitzchak was sure of his own ability to have children because Avraham had already been promised by God that “your (true) descendants will be through Yitzchak” (above 21:12).

However, this solution is problematic, because we find that Ya’akov also received a promise from God that he would have children (below 32:13), and he still prayed to God that this promise be fulfilled in the fear that he had forfeited God’s promises to him through inadvertent sin (see Rashi ibid. v. 11). Surely then, Yitzchak would also have feared that perhaps he had stumbled in sin, thus forfeiting God’s promise to him?

THE EXPLANATION

In fact however, Yitzchak was certain that God’s promise to him would be fulfilled, and he was sure that he had not stumbled in sin at all. Rashi writes (v. 26): “Since she did not conceive, he knew that she was barren, and he prayed for her, but he did not wish to take a maid [as Avraham had done] because he had been hallowed on Mount Moriah to be an olah temimah [perfect burnt offering].” I.e. since Yitzchak knew he was an olah temimah, a perfectly holy being (which God told him explicitly—see Rashi to 26:2 below) he knew that he had not stumbled in sin. Therefore, he could be certain that the failure to have children, which he had been promised by God, was because of her inability to have children, not his.

(See Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5748)

WHY DID RIVKAH SEEK SHEIM’S ADVICE (v. 22)

Rashi writes that Rivkah went to the Yeshivah of Sheim to find an explanation as to why her pregnancy was so difficult. However, this begs the following questions:

a.) Why did she not ask her husband, Yitzchak, or her father-in-law Avraham? Surely, they both could have helped her equally as well as

The Last Word

How could Yitzchak, our righteous Patriarch, have a son whose very nature even in the womb was inclined towards idol worship? (see Rashi to v.22)

God can either make a person’s disposition naturally good or naturally bad. However, even if a person has a natural inclination to evil, that does not mean that he is evil per se, for he is given free choice. Rather, the reason why he was given such an inclination was to rise to the challenge and overcome it. Thus Eisav was given a natural tendency to evil so that he could excel in the Divine service of “quashing” the evil inclination.

Even though he failed in his task, we can nevertheless learn from Eisav that if a person has strong desires to do something bad, it means that he has been given the special Divine mission of overcoming his inclinations.

(See Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 108ff.)

* [Presumably the explanation of Midrash Hagadol, that they were both unable to have children, would have been unacceptable to Rashi since, at the literal level, we generally interpret a word as it is read, and not according to how it is written (c.f. Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 114, note 18)—Ed.]
Sheim and Aiver, but rather, to “ask God.” Therefore, she sought the advice of Sheim.

Rashi explains that Malkitzedek was none other than Sheim.

Sheim and Aiver. Why did Rivkah prefer to speak to Sheim than to Yitzchak or Avraham?

Since the Torah describes Sheim as “a priest to the supreme God,” we could presume that Rivkah would have sought his advice when “she went to ask God.” I.e she was not seeking to study Torah in the Yeshivah of Sheim and Aiver, but rather, to “ask God.” Therefore, she sought the advice of Sheim in particular (and not Aiver) since he was “a priest to the supreme God.”

Why did Rivkah prefer to speak to Sheim than to Yitzchak or Avraham?

Presumably, this was because either:

a.) She asked their advice first, but they failed to provide her with an explanation. Therefore she sought the advice of Sheim. Nevertheless, Rashi does not mention this point, as it is not hinted to at all in the Torah.

Or: b.) Perhaps she did not want to mention the matter to Yitzchak or Avraham, so as not to distress them. For, after so many years of waiting for Rivkah to become pregnant, Yitzchak and Avraham would surely have become pained to hear that “the children struggled inside her,” and the question of why Rivkah had waited so long would only have caused her additional anguish.

In fact, for Yitzchak and Avraham, this state of affairs would have been particularly distressing, because it would have been reminiscent of the Akeida (binding of Yitzchak) where, after finally being given a son, Avraham was asked to slaughter him. So too here, after many years of praying for Rivkah to become pregnant, Yitzchak and Avraham would surely be devastated to hear that Rivkah was suffering from an extremely difficult pregnancy. So, in order to save Yitzchak and Avraham from a challenge of faith resembling the Akeida, Rivkah sought the advice of Sheim instead.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5748)
23 (Through Sheim’s Divine inspiration) God said to her, “(The ancestors of) two esteemed individuals are in your womb. (Furthermore,) two kingdoms will separate from your innards (one to wickedness, one to innocence) One kingdom will (always) become mightier than the other kingdom (for when one rises the other will fall). The elder (son) will serve the younger (son).”

24 The term of her pregnancy was complete, and—look!—there were twins in her womb.

25 The first one came out reddish and completely (covered in hair), like a fur coat of hair. They named him Eisav. 26 Afterwards, his brother emerged, and his hand was grasping Eisav’s heel. (God) named him Ya’akov.

Yitzchak was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

**YA’AKOV BUYS THE BIRTHRIGHT FROM EISAV**

25:27 The boys grew up (and their differences became recognizable). Eisav was a man who knew how to trap (people with his mouth), a man of the field (who enjoyed hunting). Ya’akov was an honest person, dwelling in tents (the Yeshivah of Sheim and Aiver).

28 Yitzchak loved Eisav because (he provided) his mouth with game; but Rivkah loved Ya’akov.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**How did Eisav trap? (v. 27)**

**Rashi:** He knew how to trap and deceive his father with his mouth, asking him, “Father, how do we separate ma’aser (tithes) from salt and straw?” This made his father think that he was precise in the observance of mitzvos.

**Mizrachi:** Why did Rashi not interpret the term “trap” literally, to mean trapping animals? Rashi was troubled by the repetition of the verse, “Eisav was a man who knew how to trap, a man of the field.” Surely, these two expressions both mean the same thing, so why did the Torah make an unnecessary repetition? Rashi understood that “knew how to trap” must be referring to something else besides hunting, i.e., his ability to trap others with his mouth.

Eisav’s question, “How do we separate ma’aser (tithes) from salt and straw?” was deceptive because there is in fact no obligation in Jewish Law to separate ma’aser from salt or straw (ma’a’ser is only separated from agricultural produce). This would have led Yitzchak to think that Eisav was extremely particular in the letter of the law to separate ma’aser even in a case where there is no obligation to do so.

**Maskil LeDavid:** Surely, by asking, “How do we separate ma’aser (tithes) from salt and straw?” Eisav would have appeared to be an ignoramus, who did not know the basic law that ma’aser is only taken from agricultural produce? We must presume that Eisav was actually asking, “Since I am separating this as an additional stringency, not as a legal requirement, perhaps I should make some indication of this fact by altering some of the procedures?”

**Bartenura:** Eisav was not asking how to take ma’aser, since the answer to this is obvious: one simply separates a tenth of the produce.

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**Rashi’s Problem (v. 27)**

In addition to the answers of the commentators, the following could be argued: Rashi was troubled why the verse states, “Eisav was a man who knew how to trap, a man of the field.” Surely, the appropriate sequence should be “a man of the field who knew how to trap,” for one only starts trapping after going out into the field. Due to this problem, Rashi concluded that the “trapping” must have occurred at home, before Eisav went out “to the field.”

What “trapping” could be done in the house? Answers Rashi: “He knew how to trap and deceive his father with his mouth.”

**Eisav’s Deceptive Question**

Rashi’s comment, that Eisav asked his father, “How do we separate ma’aser (tithes) from salt and straw?” is somewhat perplexing. Since salt and straw are in fact exempt from ma’aser, Eisav’s question would seem to display ignorance rather than precision, “in the observance of the mitzvos” (as Maskil LeDavid writes).

**Maskil LeDavid** [and Mizrachi] answer that Eisav indicated to his father that he wished to separate ma’aser beyond the letter of the law, even from his possessions that were exempt from ma’aser.

However, from Rashi’s choice of words this does not appear to be the case. Eisav said, “How do we separate ma’aser from salt and straw?” Taking this statement at face value, it appears that Eisav did think that salt and straw were obligated in ma’aser. So what, then, was Eisav’s trap?

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**The Explanation**

Earlier, in Parshas Lech Lecha, we read, “(Avram) gave him a tenth (“ma’a’ser”) from everything” (14:20). Rashi writes, “Avram gave him ma’aser from all his possessions, because Malkitzedek was a priest.”

Here we see that, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, Avraham did indeed give ma’aser from all his possessions (“everything”), and not only from agricultural produce. Presumably, the clause that ma’aser is only separated from agricultural produce must have been added later, with the giving of the Torah (see Torah Menachem to Lech Lecha ibid.).
Since Avraham commanded “his household after him to keep the way of God, doing charity and justice” (ibid 18:19), we can presume that Yitzchak too was educated to separate ma’aser from all of his possessions (in addition to the Torah’s explicit statement that he separated ma’aser from agricultural produce—26:12, and Rashi ibid.). Likewise, Yitzchak would have taught Ya’akov and Eisav to give ma’aser from all their personal belongings too.

In this light, Eisav’s question, “How does one take ma’aser from salt and straw?” was quite appropriate, as in their household it was customary to take ma’aser from all possessions, even salt and straw.

We are now only left with one question: What, exactly was Eisav asking with his inquiry, “How does one separate ma’aser from salt and straw?” Surely, one simply takes off a tenth (as Baranura asks)?

However, there is a complication with salt and straw, as they are both substances of very little value, but when they are mixed with other things they can prove extremely important. E.g. salt is not merely a seasoning for food, but it brings out the flavor of the entire dish, without which it is tasteless. Similarly, straw as it stands alone is mere animal fodder, but mixed with other components it can make bricks (see Shemos 5:7).

Hence, in an attempt to appear pious in his father’s eyes, Eisav devised a cunning question: Do we simply take a tenth of the salt or straw as it is worth now, or do we take into consideration their increase in value when used in a final product, since that is when their genuine use becomes apparent? This would make a practical difference when the ma’aser was separated, because Avraham’s custom (which he passed on to his children) was not to separate ma’aser from each type of produce individually, but rather, to take a tenth of the value of “all his possessions” collectively. Thus there would be a difference in the total amount of ma’aser, depending on whether the salt and straw were evaluated as raw materials or not.

“This made his father think that he was precise in the observance of mitzvos,” as Eisav appeared to be paying attention to such subtle details within the obligations incumbent upon him.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 116f)
29. (On the day Abraham died), Ya’akov was cooking a (lentil) stew (to feed his father), when Eisav came (home) from the field, exhausted (from his murderous activities).

30. Eisav said to Ya’akov, “Pour some of this red stuff (down my throat) because I’m exhausted!”—He was therefore given the name Edom (meaning “red”).

31. Ya’akov (thought that Eisav was not fit to perform the sacrificial services carried out by the firstborn, so he) said, “Sell me your birthright (so that I own it indisputably) like day(light).”

32. Eisav replied, “Look, (with my lifestyle) I am going to (be punishable by) death (if I retain the right to sacrificial services) so why do I need this birthright?”

33. Ya’akov said, “Swear to me (so that I own it indisputably) like day(light).” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Ya’akov.

34. Ya’akov gave bread and lentil stew to Eisav, who ate and drank. Then he got up and left. Eisav despised (the whole idea of serving God which came with) the birthright.

26. There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that had been in the days of Abraham. Yitzchak went to Avimelech, King of the Philistines, in Gerar.

2. God appeared to him, and said, “Do not go down to Egypt! Inhabit the land which I will tell you (about).” 3. Settle in this land, and I will be with you and I will bless you. For I will give all these lands

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why did God tell Yitzchak not to go to Egypt? (v.2)

RASHI: He had in mind to go down to Egypt, as his father had gone down in the days of the famine. God said to him, “Do not go down to Egypt! You are a perfect burnt offering, and being outside the Land [of Israel] is not fitting for you.

MIDRASH: The verse states, “Settle in this land” (v.3). Rabbi Hoshiyah said, “[Yitzchak had the sanctity of] a perfect burnt offering. Just like a burnt offering is invalidated if it is taken outside its prescribed area, likewise, if you go outside the Land [of Israel] you will be invalidated (Bereishis Rabah 64:3).

“A Perfect Burnt Offering” (v.2-3)

While, Rashi and the Midrash seem to be making similar points, there are nevertheless two important differences between them: a.) The Midrash bases itself on verse 3, “Settle in this Land,” a positive statement, whereas Rashi’s comment is based on the negative verse 2, “Do not go down to Egypt” b.) The Midrash stresses that leaving the Land of Israel would render Yitzchak “invalidated.” Rashi merely writes, “Being outside the Land [of Israel] is not fitting for you.”

These two points are connected: The Midrash sees the Land of Israel as being the appropriate place for a “perfect burnt offering,” therefore it cites the positive verse, “Settle in the Land.” Rashi, however, stresses the negative qualities of the Diaspora (“being outside the Land is not fitting for you”) so he quotes the negative verse, “Do not go down to Egypt.”

What is the underlying difference between Rashi and the Midrash?

THE EXPLANATION

At first glance, one might presume that, according to the Midrash, Yitzchak was prohibited by God from leaving the Land of Israel because of its holiness, i.e. a positive quality. Rashi on the other hand was of the opinion that the land did not possess any holiness during the time of the Patriarchs, so he merely stressed the negative qualities of the Diaspora.

However, it was explained above (Toras Menachem to Lech Lecha 15:18) that according to all opinions, the Land of Israel did not possess holiness at that time. Therefore Rashi and the Midrash would not be arguing about this point. Rather, the following distinction could be argued.

“Eisav Despised the Birthright...” (v.34)

Even though Eisav’s moral and spiritual standing was extremely low, to the extent that he “despised (the whole idea of serving God which came with) the birthright,” and his very disposition indicated that he was a murderous person (Rashi to 25:25); nevertheless, we still find later on that Ya’akov sent messengers (“angels”) to inform Eisav that he was at peace with him, and sought his affection (see Vayishlach 32:4; Rashi to v. 6 ibid.).

From this we can learn a powerful lesson: We should “reach out” and “send messengers” even to those Jews who appear to be on the level of Eisav. Even such a Jew is your “brother,” who needs to be treated in a pleasant and peace-loving manner, with love and affection. He needs to be drawn closer to the Torah with “ropes of love” (Tanya ch. 32).

(Based on Hisvaduyos 5746, vol. 1, p. 693)
Midrash was a specific prescribed area within which he must not leave. At the Akeida, Avraham owned the entire land. Consequently the Diaspora became a different approach from the Covenant of the Parts. Therefore, when Avraham offered up Yitzchak on the Altar as a burnt offering, the entire Land of Israel became the prescribed area of the "sacrifice," since this was a natural boundary, based on the fact that Avraham owned the entire land. Consequently the Diaspora became a prohibited area for Yitzchak.

b.) Opinion of Rashi

Rashi, however, rejected the notion that the Land of Israel was given to Avraham at the Covenant of the Parts. Therefore, he was forced to adopt a different approach from the Midrash.

Rashi explained earlier, in Parshas Chayei Sarah, that when Avraham sent his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak, he said, "Now He is the God of the heaven and the God of the earth, because I have made it..."
to you and to your descendants, and I will uphold the oath that I swore to Avraham, your father. 4 I will multiply your descendants like the stars of the heavens, and I will give your descendants all these lands. All the nations of the Earth will give blessings to each other by (comparing themselves to) your descendants. 5 (All this is) because Avraham listened to My voice (when I tested him); he guarded My (secondary prohibitions that) protect (a person from transgressing Biblical prohibitions), My rational commands, My supra-rational commands, and My instructions (in the Oral Law).”

6 So, Yitzchak settled in Gerar. 7 When the local men asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” because he was afraid to say, “(She is) my wife,” (because he said to himself,) “perhaps the local men will kill me because of Rivkah, for she is pleasant looking.”

8 Then, when he had been there for many days (he felt it was safe to stop pretending as if Rivkah was his sister). Avimelech, king of the Philistines, looked through the window, and he saw—look!—Yitzchak was courting Rivkah, his wife.

9 Avimelech summoned Yitzchak, and he said, “She really is your wife! How could you have said, ‘She is my sister’?”

Yitzchak said to him, “Because I said (to myself), ‘perhaps I’ll die because of her.’”

10 “What have you done to us?” said Avimelech. “(I the king,) the highest of the people, might easily have lain with your wife, and (if I had done so) you would have brought guilt upon us.”

11 Avimelech instructed all the people, saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife will be put to death.”

Yitzchak sowed (crops) in that land (which was not as fertile as the main part of the Land of Israel), and he found (even) in that year (which was a bad one for crops, that the land yielded) a hundred times (more than average)—and God blessed him.

How did they know that the land yielded a hundred times more than average? (v. 12)

Rashi: They had estimated how much the land was fit to produce, and it produced one hundred measures for each measure that they had estimated. Our Rabbis said that the purpose of this estimate was for separating ma’aser (tithes).

Midrash: There is a principle that God’s blessing does not rest on something which is weighed, measured or counted. However, in the case of measuring for a mitzvah, this principle does not apply. Therefore, Yitzchak measured the field for the purposes of tithing.

Gur Aryeh: We see from the Midrash that Rashi’s two comments are one single explanation: Yitzchak measured the field specifically for a mitzvah, and therefore he received God’s blessings.
This begs the question: What is lacking with Rashi’s first explanation, that led him to bring the interpretation of the Rabbis?

Gur Aryeh, following the Midrash, explains that Rashi was troubled as to why Yitzchak would measure his field, knowing that “God’s blessing does not rest on something which is weighed, measured or counted.”

However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, there is no indication that this was Yitzchak’s concern. Therefore, it is difficult to accept that this was Rashi’s problem.

So what forced Rashi to conclude that Yitzchak measured the field for the purposes of separating ma’aser, and not simply because he had wanted to estimate its approximate yield at the time of purchase, to see if he was being charged the correct price?

The Explanation

A key distinction between Rashi’s two explanations, concerns the time at which the estimate was made. According to Rashi’s first interpretation—that Yitzchak measured the field to estimate how much it would yield—he obviously measured it before the crops had grown, presumably when purchasing the field, to assess its value. However, according to Rashi’s second interpretation (from ‘our Rabbis’) that he measured it for the purposes of separating ma’aser, it turns out that Yitzchak would have measured the crops after they had fully grown, since ma’aser is one tenth of the actual yield.

Obviously (according to both interpretations) the blessing of finding one hundred-fold must have occurred after Yitzchak had made his calculations, otherwise he would have no way of knowing that the magnitude of the increase was one hundredfold.

Thus, according to Rashi’s second interpretation (that he measured for the purposes of separating ma’aser), the one-hundredfold increase would have occurred after Yitzchak measured them. Thus, a great miracle must have occurred, that the crops increased one hundred fold, after Yitzchak measured them.

Therefore, according to the first interpretation, however, that Yitzchak estimated how much the field would produce in advance, the one-hundredfold increase could have occurred more naturally, throughout the entire period of the crops’ growth. Thus, Rashi placed this interpretation first, as it is more acceptable at the literal level.

Nevertheless, there is a problem with the first interpretation which led Rashi to add the explanation of the Rabbis:

According to Rashi, the land where Yitzchak was situated was infertile, and that year was a famine (Rashi to beginning of v. 12). Though it would
The man (Yitzchak) became prosperous, and he grew constantly greater until he had grown very great (even in comparison to Avimelech).  

He had flocks of sheep and cattle and many enterprises, and the Philistines envied him.  

The Philistines stopped up all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of Avraham, his father, and they filled them with earth.

Avimelech said to Yitzchak, “Go away from us, for you have become much stronger than us.”

Yitzchak went away from there, set up camp in the Gerar valley, and settled there.

(However, before he left Gerar) Yitzchak re-dug the water wells which had been dug in the days of his father, Avraham, and were stopped up by the Philistines after Avraham’s death. He gave them names; the same names that his father had given them.

(After settling) in the valley, Yitzchak’s servants dug, and they found there a well of living waters.

The shepherds of Gerar argued with Yitzchak’s shepherds, saying, “The water is ours,” so he named the well “Aisek” (“argument”), because they had argued with him.

They dug another well, and the (shepherds) quarreled about it also, so he named it Sitnah (“harassment”).

He moved away from there and dug another well. They did not quarrel over it, so he named it Rechovos. He said, “For now God has made space (“hirchiv”) for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.”

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### Classic Questions

Why does the Torah inform us that Yitzchak dug three wells? (v. 19-22)

**Ramban:** This account does not appear to have much significance at the literal level. However, there is a hidden meaning here, that the three wells hint to the three Holy Temples. The first well, named Aisek (“argument”), alludes to the First Temple, which was contested by the nations, who oppressed the Jewish people with wars, until they destroyed it. The second well, Sitnah (“harassment”), is a name actually used by scripture to refer to the Second Temple (see Ezra 4:6). The third well was called Rechovos (“spacious”), alluding to the future Third Temple which will be built without quarrel or feud, when God will expand our borders, speedily, in our days.

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### Third Reading

According to **Ramban**, the three wells dug by Yitzchak allude to the three Holy Temples. The analogy of digging a well precisely describes the process of building the Temple: First there is a phase of intense physical effort to dig the well, followed by the actual filling of the well with water which does not require any direct effort, it simply floods in. Similarly, the building of the Temple requires tremendous human effort, but the indwelling of the Shechinah (Divine Presence)—which is the very purpose of building the Temple—is an effortless consequence of the Temple’s construction.

This analogy appears to break down, however, in the case of the Third Temple which, according to the Zohar (III 221a), will be built by God, and not by man. It seems at first glance that Ramban’s analogy for the Third temple of digging a well is inappropriate.

However, even according to the Zohar, the Third Temple is built through human effort too. Not through the physical effort of working with stones and mortar, but rather, by the dedicated acts of supra-rational mitzvah observance by Jewish people, in defiance of the challenges of exile. The cumulative effects of these acts are thus described by the Zohar as a “building made by God,” though in fact, it is a building made by human mitzvah acts that are totally dedicated to God.

Thus, the building process of the Third Temple consists of mitzvos performed out of simple obedience to God. Therefore, they are eternal.

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(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 121ff; Sichas Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5727)
EHALIVAMAH, DAUGHTER OF TZIVON THE CHITITE (36:2)

EISAY'S WIVES

YEHUDIS, DAUGHTER OF BE'AIRIY THE CHITITE (26:34)  
AHALIVAMAH, DAUGHTER OF TZIVON THE CHITITE (36:2)

BASMAS, DAUGHTER OF AILON THE CHITITE (26:34)  
ADAH, DAUGHTER OF AILON THE CHITITE (36:2)

MACHALAS, DAUGHTER OF YISHMA'EL (28:9)  
BASMAS, DAUGHTER OF YISHMA'EL (36:3)
He went up from there to Be’er-Sheva. That night, God appeared to him and said, “I am the God of Avraham, your father. Do not be afraid, because I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of Avraham, My servant.”

He built an altar there, and he (prayed) in the Name of God. He pitched his tent there, and Yitzchak’s servants dug a well there.

Avimelech Swears an Oath with Yitzchak

Avimelech went to him from Gerar with a group of his companions and Pichol, his army general. Yitzchak said to them, “Why have you come to me, if you hate me, and you sent me away from you?”

They said, “We see that God was with you (and) we saw (that God was with your father), so we said: Let the oath that was between us (from the days of your father) be between ourselves and you. Let us form a covenant with you, that you do no harm to us, just like as have not touched you. And, just as we only treated you well and we sent you away in peace, you too—blessed one of God—now (do the same).”

Yitzchak made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. They got up early in the morning and swore an oath with each other. Yitzchak sent them off, and they went away from him in peace.

Then, on that same day, Yitzchak’s servants came and told him about the well that they had dug. They said to him, “We have found water.” He named it Shivah (“oath”). The city is therefore called Be’er-sheva to this very day.

Eisav Marries

When Eisav was forty years old he married Yehudis, the daughter of Be’airiy the Chittite, and Basmas, the daughter of Ailon the Chittite. (Their idol-worship) tormented Yitzchak and Rivkah.

Classic Questions

Why did Eisav marry when he was forty years old? (v. 34)

Rashi: Eisav has been compared to a pig, as the verse states, “The pig from the forest gnaws at it” (Ps. 80:14). This pig, when it lies down, stretches out its hooves, as if to say, “See, I am a clean (kosher) animal.” So do these [descendants of Eisav] rob and plunder and then pretend to be honorable. For forty years, Eisav kidnapped wives from their husbands and violated them. When he was forty years old, he said, “My father married at forty. I too will do the same.”

Eisav’s Wives (v. 34)

In Parshas Vayishlach, when Eisav’s descendants are listed, the Torah reveals the true names of Eisav’s wives (36:2-3). Rashi (ibid.) explains the significance of each of the pseudonyms that are used here in Parshas Toldos. However, one detail Rashi does not explain is why the name of Yehudis’s father is changed here from Tzivon the Chittite to Be’airiy the Chittite.

There is another, more general question: What is the connection between Eisav’s marriage and the preceding passage, about Yitzchak’s digging of wells and the oath with Avimelech?

The Explanation

According to Rashi, Eisav married at the age of forty to fool people into thinking that he was a loyal son who followed in his father’s footsteps, to the extent that he even married at the same age. In this vein, Rashi

Sparks of Chasidus

The Talmud states that in the future redemption we will say to Yitzchak, “You are our father,” more so than to the other Patriarchs (Shabbos 89b). This messianic quality of Yitzchak is evident here in the account of how Avimelech came of his own volition to make peace with Yitzchak (v. 26ff.), an act which is reminiscent of the time when, “in the End of Days, the mountain of God’s house will be established on the top of the mountains... all nations will flood to it...and many people will go and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of God.’” (Isaiah 2:2-3).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, pp. 127-8)
explains in Parshas Vayishlach that he gave his wife (who was really called Ahalivamah) the name Yehudis, a name whose meaning suggests that she had abandoned idol worship (Rashi 36:2).

And since Ahalivamah was born from a wicked family, as Rashi explains, Eisav was forced to change his father’s name too, in order to maintain the image that he had married a righteous person. So he called her Yehudis, daughter of Be’airiy the Chitite.

At the literal level, there is no need to explain the significance of every name. (Only those names which pose some sort of question or contradiction are explained by Rashi). Therefore, Rashi was not required to explain why Eisav chose the name Be’airy in particular, since it is already self-evident from Rashi’s commentary why Eisav was forced to change this name.

Perhaps it could be argued that Eisav chose the name Be’airy in order to further promote his deception. We read in the previous section that after Yitzchak dug a series of wells which were contested by Philistines, his third well was left in peace, and Yitzchak then swore an oath of peace with Avimelech, king of the Philistines. Therefore, after marrying at forty years to mimic his father, Eisav continued his ploy of paternal imitation by

Therefore, after marrying at forty years to mimic his father, Eisav continued his ploy of paternal imitation by

Toras Menachem

Rashi’s Three Interpretations (v. 1)

Rashi offers three explanations as to why Yitzchak’s sight became weak. However, Rashi’s comment is perplexing because:

a.) The Torah itself appears to explain why Yitzchak’s vision became impaired, because he was old: “Yitzchak had grown old. The vision of his eyes had dimmed” (See Rashbam). Why did Rashi need to offer any explanation at all?

b.) Why did Rashi find it necessary to bring three interpretations?
Yitzchak had grown old (and he wanted to bless Eisav*).

The vision of his eyes had dimmed. He summoned Eisav, his older son, and he said to him, “My son.”

“I’m here,” he replied.

1 “Look, now I have grown old. I don’t know when I will die. 2 So now, sharpen your tools, (take) your sword and your bow, and go out to the field to hunt game for me. 3 Make for me the tasty foods that I love, and bring them to me to eat. For (doing this) my soul will bless you before I die.”

5 Rivkah was listening when Yitzchak spoke to Eisav, his son.

Eisav went to the field to hunt game. (He intended) to bring (meat from stolen animals if he was unable to trap his own).

6 Rivkah said to her son Ya’akov, “Look, I heard your father speaking to Eisav your brother, saying, ‘Bring me game and make me tasty foods to eat, and I will bless you before my death, before God.’

Now, my son, listen to my voice, to what I am commanding you: 7 Go now to the flock, and take two of my choice kids from there, and I will make (one of) them into tasty foods for your father, (the types) that he loves (since a goat tastes like game). 8 You will bring (them) to your father to eat. For (doing this) he will bless you before he dies.”

11 Ya’akov said to Rivkah his mother, “But my brother Eisav is a hairy person, and I am a smooth

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **Rashi**: Because of the smoke of the above-mentioned [wives of Eisav] who would burn incense in idol worship.

Another explanation: When Yitzchak was bound on the altar and his father was about to slaughter him, the heavens opened and the ministering angels looked on and wept. Their tears fell upon Yitzchak’s eyes and as a result, his eyes became dim.

Another explanation: To enable Ya’akov to take the blessings.

**Rashbam**: Yitzchak’s eyes dimmed from old age.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

Towards the end of Parshas Chayei Sarah, the Torah states, “After Avraham died, God blessed Yitzchak his son” (25:11). Rashi explains why it was God, and not Avraham, who blessed Yitzchak: “Even though God gave over the blessings to Avraham, he was afraid to bless Yitzchak, since he foresaw Eisav coming forth from him. He said, ‘Let the Master of blessings come and bless whomever He pleases!’ So, God came and blessed him.”

Thus, on reaching our verse, “The vision of his (Yitzchak’s) eyes was dimmed,” Rashi was troubled by an obvious question: If God personally blessed Yitzchak, then how is it possible that he should lose his sight? Surely God’s blessing should have spared him from this aggravation?

Thus, Rashi searched for an explanation why Yitzchak’s loss of vision was not due to his old age, but rather, due to some external factor. In the final analysis, Rashi found it necessary to bring three interpretations, since each of them have their own respective advantages and disadvantages:

a.) Rashi’s first explanation: smoke damage

This explanation is preferable, as it is indicated by the Torah itself. In the previous verse, we read that Eisav and his wives, “tormented Yitzchak and Rivkah” (26:35), and Rashi writes that this was due to their idol worship. In the following verse we read, “Yitzchak had grown old. The vision of his eyes had dimmed” (27:1), so it follows that Yitzchak’s visual impediment here in 27:1 was caused by the idol worship mentioned in 26:35 (see Sifsei Chachamim). Since this is the most contextually preferable solution, Rashi cited it as his first and primary interpretation.

However, this explanation alone is insufficient, as we are left with two questions: Presumably, Eisav and his family would not have burned incense to idols in Yitzchak’s presence—they probably lived in a separate residence in any case—so why should Yitzchak have been affected by the smoke? And, if Yitzchak was affected, why was Rivkah not harmed too?

Therefore, Rashi looked for another interpretation.
As for Eisav’s wives, we can presume that either they indeed lost their sight, or they knew how to avoid the ill effects of the smoke. Eisav himself was “a man of the field” (25:27), who spent little time at home, so they presumably was he unaffected).

b.) Rashi’s second interpretation: damage by angels’ tears at the Akeida

This interpretation—that Yitzchak’s eyes were damaged by tears of the angels at the Akeida—is preferable to the other two explanations which Rashi brings, for two reasons. Firstly, it explains how Ya’akov received the blessing from Yitzchak due to a positive reason (Yitzchak’s courage at the Akeida) rather than the negative reasons of the other two interpretations. Secondly, this interpretation explains more satisfactorily why Yitzchak never noticed that Eisav worshipped idols, since he lost his sight at the Akeida, before Eisav was born. According to the other interpretations however, it is somewhat difficult to imagine how Eisav’s unholy activities would have remained totally undiscovered by Yitzchak for so many years.

However, this interpretation alone is unsatisfactory, since it is a non-literal, Midrashic teaching which is not indicated at all by scripture. Therefore, Rashi sought for a third solution.

c.) Rashi’s third interpretation: God took away Yitzchak’s sight

Rashi’s third interpretation—that God took away Yitzchak’s sight in order for Ya’akov to receive the blessings—is superior to the other interpretations, since it explains how Yitzchak lost his sight only at the end of his life, a fact stated explicitly by scripture (“Yitzchak had grown old. The vision of his eyes had dimmed”). Accordingly to the second interpretation, Yitzchak lost his sight at the Akeida, at the age of 37, well before old age; and according to the first interpretation, he lost his sight from the age of 100 when Eisav married, 80 years before his passing. The verse should thus have stated, “The vision of his eyes had

Toras Menachem

Rather than take away Yitzchak’s sight, God could have made Yitzchak give the blessing willingly to Ya’akov in a very simple manner: he could have revealed to Yitzchak that Eisav was in fact a wicked person.

From this we can learn to what extremes a person should go to avoid speaking negatively about another Jew. For God was willing to allow Yitzchak to lose his sight rather than to speak badly about Eisav.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 215-6)
(skinned) person. 12 Maybe my father will feel me, and see that I am an imposter—I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.”

13 But his mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son. Listen to my voice: go and get (the goats) for me.”

14 So he went, and took (the goats), and he brought (them) to his mother. His mother made tasty foods, that his father loved. 15 Rivkah took her older son Eisav’s clean clothing which she had in the house, and she dressed Ya’akov, her younger son. 16 She put the goats’ skins on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 She gave the tasty foods and the bread which she had made, into the hand of Ya’akov, her son.

18 He came to his father and said, “My father!”

(Yitzchak) said, “I’m here. Who are you, my son?”

19 Ya’akov said to his father, “I am...Eisav your firstborn. I did what you told me. Please come and sit (at the table) and eat some of my game, in order that your soul will bless me.”

20 Yitzchak said to his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?”

He said, “Because God, your God, brought it to me.”

21 (When Ya’akov mentioned God, Yitzchak became suspicious, so) Yitzchak said to Ya’akov, “Please come closer, so that I may feel you, my son, to see if you are my son Eisav, or not.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why did Yitzchak tell Ya’akov to come closer? (v. 21)

RASHI: Yitzchak said to himself, “Eisav doesn’t usually mention God’s name, but this man said: ‘Because God, your God, brought it.’”

MIDRASH: Yitzchak said, “I know that Eisav doesn’t mention God’s Name, and this man did mention it. He must be Ya’akov and not Eisav.”

TORAS MENACHEM

Yitzchak’s Suspicion (v. 21)

At first glance, Rashi appears to differ in opinion from the Midrash: Rashi writes, “Eisav doesn’t usually mention God’s Name,” whereas the Midrash stresses, “Eisav doesn’t mention God’s Name,” suggesting that he never mentioned it.

However, at the literal level we can only conclude that Eisav never mentioned God’s Name, otherwise the casual reference to God in verse 20 would not have aroused Yitzchak’s suspicion. Rashi’s intention here must be that Eisav never mentioned God’s Name, and he does not differ with the Midrash. Their slightly different phraseology is thus inconsequential in this instance (see Sparks of Chasidus).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 211ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

Yitzchak’s Blessing

If Yitzchak knew that “Eisav doesn’t mention God’s Name” (see Classic Questions & Toras Menachem to v. 21), then why did he want to bless Eisav, and not Ya’akov?

Yitzchak perceived that within Eisav were holy sparks of an extremely lofty spiritual source, more so than in Ya’akov’s case. Therefore, he chose to bless Eisav, because Yitzchak understood that his blessing had the spiritual power to elevate the sparks which were trapped within Eisav’s unholy existence, allowing them to return back to their source.

In a sense, Yitzchak was indeed correct—his blessings did have the power to rescue the sparks trapped within Eisav. But the blessing needed to pass first via Ya’akov, because Eisav was not sufficiently prepared to utilize Yitzchak’s blessing properly.

So, God arranged matters such that Ya’akov would first receive the blessing, and then, Ya’akov in turn would utilize the blessing to elevate the sparks trapped in Eisav.

(Based on Sefer Hama’amorim Melukat, vol. 4, p. 64, note 14)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What “fragrance” did Yitzchak smell? (v. 27)

RASHI: Surely there is no odor more offensive than that of goat’s hair [which Ya’akov was wearing—see v. 16]. This teaches us that Eisav’s garments, which were originally owned by Adam in the Garden of Eden?

Similarly, we need to explain why, at the literal level, Yitzchak exclaimed “What forced the aroma of the Garden of Eden to enter Eisav’s garments, which Ya’akov was wearing, from him] by Eisav. Nimrod obtained them from Adam, who wore them in the Garden of Eden.

NACHALAS YA’AKOV: Rashi cited the teaching of our Sages, that Yitzchak smelled a field of apples since it explains why the verse uses the term “field” in the singular. However, at the literal level, we can presume that the verse refers to fields in general. Thus Yitzchak smelled the fragrance of grasses and flowers.

Ya’akov’s Pleasant Aroma (v. 27)

What forced Rashi to conclude, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, that the fragrance of the Garden of Eden entered with Ya’akov? [Sifsei Chachamim suggests] that the aroma came from Eisav’s garments, which were originally owned by Adam in the Garden of Eden.

This argument is based on an earlier comment of Rashi to v. 15. The Torah describes Eisav’s garments as נחלות יאakov, and Rashi offers two interpretations: נחלות יאakov means “the clean ones,” as Onkelos renders, נחלות יאakov (clean ones). Another explanation: the garments that he had coveted נחלות יאakov from Nimrod.

However, even though Rashi does mention that Eisav acquired his garments from Nimrod, he makes no indication at all that they had a specific smell. Therefore, at the literal level, we can conclude that they had no particular smell. And, obviously, according to Rashi’s first interpretation that they were “clean garments,” they would have been odorless. So, why did Rashi conclude that he had the aroma of the Garden of Eden?

Similarly, we need to explain why, at the literal level, Yitzchak exclaimed that Ya’akov had the aroma of an apple field, in particular. What would be wrong with presuming that we are speaking here of an ordinary field, of grasses and flowers? [see Nachalas Ya’akov]

THE EXPLANATION

In order to answer the above questions, we need to first address an obvious problem with Rashi’s comment here:

Presumably, Rivkah did not foresee that the aroma of the Garden of Eden would enter with Ya’akov into Yitzchak’s chamber. So, if “there is no odor more offensive than that of goats’ hair,” why did Rivkah not take...
22 Ya’akov drew near to Yitzchak his father, and he felt him. (Yitzchak) said, “The voice is (polite like) the voice of Ya’akov, but the hands are the hands of Eisav!” 23 He did not recognize him because his hands were hairy like his brother Eisav’s hands, and he blessed him.

24 He said, “Are you my son Eisav?”

“I am,” he said.

25 He said, “Serve me, so that I can eat my son’s game. For (doing this) my soul will bless you.” (Ya’akov) served him, and he ate. He brought him wine, and he drank.

26 His father Yitzchak said to him, “Please come closer and kiss me, my son.”

27 (Ya’akov) came closer, and he kissed him. (Yitzchak) smelled the fragrance of (what he thought was) his garments, and he blessed him. He said, “Look, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field (of apples), which God has blessed!”

28 “And may the Almighty give you (repeatedly) from the dew of the skies and from the fatness of the earth, an abundance of grain and wine. 29 Nations will serve you; kingdoms will bow down to you.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- What did Yitzchak begin his blessing with the word, “And...” (v. 28)

RASHI: [He was saying:] “May He give, and give again.”

According to its literal meaning, the verse is a continuation of the previous topic: “Look, the fragrance of my son,” which God has given him, “is like the fragrance of a field....” (v. 27), and furthermore, “May He give you from the dew of the skies....” (v. 28).

SIFSEI CHACHAMIM: According to Rashi’s first interpretation, Yitzchak said, “May He give” blessings initially, and even if you will sin, He will “give again.”

Toras Menachem

any precaution to stop Yitzchak from smelling the goats’ hair? Surely such a foul odor would have been an obvious giveaway?

The solution to this problem, however, lies in Yitzchak’s instructions to Eisav: “Go out to the field to hunt game for me. Make for me the tasty foods that I love, and bring them to me to eat” (v. 3-4). Clearly this involved hunting an animal, slaughtering it, skinning and gutting it and then preparing it to eat. All these jobs would have rendered Eisav quite odorous indeed, so we can presume that Yitzchak was expecting Eisav to have a bad smell.

Therefore, when the Torah relates in verse 27 that Ya’akov actually had a pleasant fragrance, Rashi immediately asks: “Surely there is no odor more offensive than that of goats’ hair?” What happened to the foul smell of goats’ hair that Ya’akov was wearing, which served to imitate the bad aroma which Yitzchak was expecting?

Due to this question, Rashi understood that the Torah is hinting here, at the literal level, to the Midrashic teaching that the aroma of the Garden of Eden entered with Ya'akov.

Since Yitzchak was not aware that the aroma of the Garden had entered the room, he presumed that Ya’akov must have picked up the pleasant smell while he was cooking the “tasty foods,” which obviously involved the use of spices and sweet-smelling ingredients. Thus, Rashi rejected the notion that Yitzchak thought he was smelling a field of grasses and flowers, since these items are not used in cooking. Rather, Rashi accepted the Midrashic account that he smelled like a field of apples, since apples could be used when cooking “tasty foods.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5741)

THE BEGINNING OF YITZCHAK’S BLESSING (v. 28)

Rashi was troubled as to why Yitzchak would have begun his blessing with the word “and.” He therefore explained that Yitzchak was alluding to a twofold blessing, “May He give and give again.”

However, this interpretation is difficult to accept, since it begs the question: Since God’s blessing is unlimited and devoid of any imperfection, why would He need to give it twice?

Therefore, Rashi brought a second interpretation, that verse 28 begins with the word “and” because it is a continuation of verse 27.

Nevertheless, this interpretation is problematic, as there appears to be no connection between the subject of verses 27 and 28. So, Rashi cited both interpretations: The first, because it explains better the context of the verse, and the second, because it explains the use of the word “and,” in particular.

WHY IS GOD’S BLESSING REPEATED?

According to Sifsei Chachamim, Yitzchak gave a twofold blessing (“May He give, and give again”), to indicate that God’s blessings would be “given again,” even if Ya’akov and his descendants sinned.

However, this interpretation appears to contradict verse 40 below, where Yitzchak tells Eisav, “You shall serve your brother. But, when you grieve (about the blessings he took, because the Jewish people have transgressed the Torah,) then you will break his yoke off your neck.”

Here we see that if the Jewish people would sin, Yitzchak’s blessing, “You will be a master over your brothers, and your mother’s sons will bow down to you” (v. 29), would indeed be revoked, and that instead, “You (Eisav) will break his yoke off your neck.”

Rather, it would seem that the implication of Yitzchak’s twofold blessing is that the recipient would: a.) first receive the actual blessing itself; b.) He is then given the ability to utilize the blessing to its full extent. I.e. since God’s blessing is unlimited, there is reason to fear that the person will not use it to its full potential, so the person actually requires a further blessing, to enable him to use the initial blessing properly.

Thus, God gives the blessing, and then, He “gives again” the ability to utilize and internalize the blessing properly.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 80ff.; Sichas Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5724)
Why did Yitzchak become "extremely bewildered"? (v. 33)

Rashi: The Midrash Tanchumah states: Why did Yitzchak become bewildered? He said, "Perhaps I am guilty of a sin, for I have blessed the younger son before the older one, and thus altered the order of the relationship."

Then, Eisav began to weep, "He has already deceived me twice!"

His father said to him, "What did he do to you?"

He replied, "He took my birthright." [Yitzchak] said, "That is why I was troubled and bewildered, for I was afraid that perhaps I had transgressed the line of the law. But now I know that I actually blessed the firstborn, let him be blessed too." (see v. 33). (Rashi to v. 36)
You will be a master over your brothers, and your mother’s sons will bow down to you. Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed.”

Eisav Discovers That His Blessing Was Given Away

Then, when Yitzchak had finished blessing Ya’akov—just as Ya’akov had left his father Yitzchak’s presence—his brother Eisav came back from his hunt. He had also made tasty foods, and he brought (them) to his father.

He said to his father, “My father should get up and eat his son’s game, so that your soul will bless me.”

His father, Yitzchak, said to him, “Who are you?”

He said, “I am your son, your firstborn, Eisav.”

Yitzchak was extremely bewildered. He said, “Who then is the one who hunted game and brought it to me, then I ate it all before you came, and I blessed him? Let him be blessed too (in any case).”

When Eisav heard his father’s words, he cried extremely loudly and bitterly. He said to his father, “Bless me too, my father!”

(Yitzchak) said, “Your brother came ingeniously and took your blessing.”

(Eisav) said, “Is that why he was called Ya’AleKo[V, (because he was destined to deceive me [le’AleKVeini]]? He has deceived me twice! He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing!”

(Eisav) said (to Yitzchak), “Haven’t you saved a blessing for me?”

Yitzchak answered, saying to Eisav, “(Whatever blessing I give you will be of no use, because) I have already made him a master over you, given him all his brothers as servants, and I have sustained him with grain and wine. So, for you then, what shall I do, my son (if I bless you he will acquire your possessions in any case, since he is your master)?”

Eisav said to his father, “Haven’t you got just one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father.” Eisav raised his voice and wept.

His father Yitzchak answered saying, “Look, your dwelling place shall be from the fat places of the land [of Israel] is not fitting for you” (Rashi 26:2). From this we see that the intention to leave the Land of Israel did not invalidate Yitzchak as a “perfect burnt offering.” Likewise in our case, the intention to bless Eisav did not tarnish Yitzchak’s perfect holy status, and he was still protected from above to bless Ya’akov, his true firstborn son.

(Yitzchak’s Bewilderment (v. 33)

Why was Yitzchak “extremely bewildered” by the thought that he had blessed the wrong son? Surely this was an over-reaction?

However, Yitzchak’s primary concern was not that he had blessed the wrong person, but rather, that he had lost the status of “a perfect burnt offering,” a Divine assurance of purity and perfection (See Rashi to 26:2). It now appeared that he had not been given special protection from above to prevent him from giving the blessing to the wrong son (see Rashi’s citation of Tanchuma in Classic Questions).

Thus, when he discovered that Eisav had in fact sold the birthright to Ya’akov, Yitzchak was relieved that he had, after all, been protected from above against blessing the wrong son, and his that apparent “mistake” was actually Divinely inspired.

One might ask: surely the fact that Yitzchak wanted to bless Eisav was a mistake in itself? Why did Yitzchak not lose his status of “a perfect burnt offering” for this misjudgment alone?

However, earlier we witnessed that a misplaced intention is not sufficient to revoke the status of “a perfect burnt offering.” For Yitzchak actually planned to go down to Egypt when God told him, “Do not go down to Egypt! You are a perfect burnt offering, and being outside the

Sparks of Chasidus

“Your Brother Came Ingeniously…” (v. 35)

According to Kabalistic teachings, Ya’akov corrected the spiritual damage caused by Adam’s sin. Therefore, just like Adam had been misled by the ingenious plot of the serpent, the correction of Adam’s sin had to come through ingenious trickery—“Your brother came ingeniously and took your blessing” (v. 35).
Why did Rivkah suggest that Ya’akov get married at this point? (v. 46)

BIURAY MAHARAY: Rivkah did not want to tell Yitzchak that Eisav wanted to kill Ya’akov. She feared that Yitzchak might withhold some blessing from Ya’akov, so as not to further anger Eisav. She therefore claimed that she had sent Ya’akov away, because “I am sick of my life, etc.”

What is the “blessing of Avraham”? (v. 4)

RASHI: [God] said to [Avraham], “I will make you into a great nation’ (above 12:2), “[All the nations of the world] will be blessed through your children” (22:18). May those blessings be for you. May that nation and those blessed children come out from you.”

MIZRACHI: Why did Rashi not learn, more simply, that the “blessing of Avraham,” which Yitzchak gave to Ya’akov, is precisely that which
land, and from the dew of the skies from above. 40 You will live by your sword, and you shall serve your brother. But, when you grieve (about the blessings he took, because the Jewish people have transgressed the Torah) then you will break his yoke off your neck.”

Eisav Plans to Kill Ya’akov / Rivkah Tells Him to Flee

Eisav hated Ya’akov because of the blessing which his father had given him. Eisav said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father will soon come, and then I will kill my brother Ya’akov.”

Rivkah was told (by Divine inspiration) the words of Eisav, her older son. She sent (a message) and summoned Ya’akov, her younger son. She said to him, “Beware, your brother Eisav regrets (his relationship) to you (and wishes) to kill you. 41 Now, my son, listen to my voice! Go and run away to my brother Lavan, in Charan. 44 You can live with him for a few days until your brother’s anger has calmed down, 45 until your brother’s anger against you has calmed down, and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send (for you) and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved from both of you on one day (for if you kill him, his sons will kill you)?”

Yitzchak Instructs Ya’akov to Marry

Rivkah said to Yitzchak, “I am sick of my life because of the Chitite girls. If Ya’akov takes a wife from a Chitite girl like one of these, from the daughters of this Land, what use is life to me?”

Yitzchak called Ya’akov and blessed him. He instructed him, saying to him, “You should not take a wife from the Canaanite girls. 2 Go and travel to Padan-Aram, to the house of Besuel, your mother’s brother, and take yourself a wife from there, from the daughters of Lavan, your mother’s brother. 3 May God Almighty bless you, make you fruitful and multiply, and you will become an assembly of nations. 4 May He give you the blessing of Avraham to you, and to your seed with you, that you will inherit the land in which you (only) wandered (in up until now), which God gave to Avraham.”

Classic Questions

is mentioned in verse 4 itself, “that you will inherit the land in which you wandered, which God gave to Avraham”?

However, this could not be Yitzchak’s blessing, as the Land of Israel was given to Avraham as a gift, and not as a blessing.

“'The Blessing of Avraham” (v. 4)

Mizrahi questions why Rashi needed to explain the meaning of “the blessing of Avraham” at all, since the verse itself seems to state precisely what the blessing was: “May He give you the blessing of Avraham to you, and to your seed with you, that you will inherit the land in which you wandered, which God gave to Avraham.”

Mizrahi explains that the inheritance of the Land of Israel could not possibly have been “the blessing of Avraham,” since the Land was already given to Avraham as a gift, and not as a blessing for the future.

However, it was explained above that a precise reading of Rashi indicates conclusively that, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, God only promised to give the land in the future, He did not actually give it, so the blessing was not yet fulfilled (See Toras Menachem to 15:18, sec. “d”).

Why then does Rashi refuse to take the verse at face value, that Yitzchak was now blessing Ya’akov that the “blessing of Avraham” should be fulfilled in him?

The Explanation

Normally, when the Torah relates how a certain individual received a particular blessing, we are informed why the blessing was given. For example, in the preceding section we read how Yitzchak wanted to bless Eisav because he was getting old. Similarly, we read earlier that God gave a series of blessings to Yitzchak to prosper in the Land of Israel, to counter his intention to leave the Land (above 26:1-4). Avraham likewise received God’s blessing for a specific reason, “All the nations of the world will be blessed through your children, because you listened to My voice.” (22:18).

In the current passage, we read how Yitzchak blessed Ya’akov before his departure to Padan-Aram to find a wife. The blessing in verse 3, to be “fruitful and multiply, and you will become an assembly of nations,” thus makes sense, as this was connected to Ya’akov’s marriage.

However, when reading verse 4, Rashi was troubled by the question: How is the blessing of Avraham and the inheritance of the Land of Israel connected with Ya’akov’s journey to find a wife? This blessing seems rather out of place.

Therefore, Rashi searched for an explanation as to why the “blessing of Avraham” could be connected with Ya’akov’s marriage preparation. Rashi came to the conclusion that Yitzchak’s blessing here must have been the words that God said to Avraham in connection with having children: “I will make you into a great nation” (12:2), and, “[All the nations of the world] will be blessed through your children” (22:18).
In fact, the former blessing is particularly appropriate in this case as it was given to Avraham before embarking on a journey, which is precisely what Ya’akov was about to do here. Rashi comments there that God gave Avraham this blessing because, “traveling diminishes... fertility,” so “the blessing of Avraham,” was especially apt for Ya’akov at this time, when Avraham was embarking on the task of building a family.

One serious problem here however is that God’s blessing to Avraham only merited to have many children was not, in fact, fulfilled. For during his travels, Avraham only merited one son who proved to be a true heir.

Why Did Yitzchak Send Ya’akov Away?

Based on the above explanation, we can solve a problem with the Torah’s narrative here:

In Parshas Chaye Sarah we read that when Avraham was seeking a marriage partner for Yitzchak, he did not send his son away, but that
Yitzchak sent Ya’akov off, and he went to Padan-aram, to Lavan the son of Besu’el the Aramean, the brother of Rivkah, Ya’akov and Eisav’s mother.

Eisav Marries Yishma’el’s Daughter

Eisav saw that Yitzchak had blessed Ya’akov and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him, he instructed him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Cana’an”; (and he saw that) Ya’akov listened to his father and his mother, and went to Padan-Aram. (So, since) Eisav saw that the daughters of Cana’an were displeasing to his father Yitzchak, Eisav went to Yishma’el, and took for a wife Machalas, the daughter of Avraham’s son Yishma’el, a sister of Nevayos—in addition to his other wives.

THE HAFTARAH FOR TOLDOS IS ON PAGE 380. THE HAFTARAH FOR EREV ROSH CHODESH IS ON PAGE 394.

rather, he sent his servant Eliezer to find a wife, and bring her back home to Yitzchak. So why did Yitzchak not do the same for his son?

At first glance it seems that Yitzchak sent Ya’akov away to save him from being murdered by Eisav.

However, at the literal level, we can presume that Rivkah did not tell Yitzchak about Eisav’s plot, for fear that Yitzchak might refuse to bless Ya’akov further (as Biuray Maharay explains).

One might suggest that Avraham did not want Yitzchak to leave the Land of Israel, because he had the status of a “perfect burnt offering” that must remain within the Land (See Rashi to 26:2, above).

However, Yitzchak was only informed that he was a “perfect burnt offering” that must stay in the Land of Israel after his marriage. So, this could not have been the reason why Avraham insisted that he not leave home to find a wife (see above, Toras Menachem to 24:6-7).

Rather, the reason why Yitzchak instructed Ya’akov to travel away from home to find a wife is because: a.) Avraham’s blessing for having many children had not yet been fulfilled, so Yitzchak was certain that it would be fulfilled through Ya’akov; and, b.) Avraham’s blessing was to have children while he was traveling away from home. Therefore, Yitzchak instructed Ya’akov to leave.

INHERITANCE OF THE LAND

After giving Ya’akov the “blessing of Avraham,” only one fear might have remained in Ya’akov’s mind: Since Eisav was remaining in the Land of Israel and Ya’akov was leaving, perhaps Eisav would seize the land for himself?

To relieve Ya’akov from this worry, Yitzchak added “that you will inherit the land in which you (only) wandered (in up until now), which God gave to Avraham.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 116ff.)

Eisav’s Marriage to Machalas

In Parshas Toldos we read about Eisav’s deceptive acts towards his father, climaxing here at the end of the Parsha, where he marries one of Yishma’el’s daughters in order to appear righteous in Yitzchak’s eyes. Rashi, however, comments that, in fact, “He added wickedness upon his wickedness, in that he did not divorce the first ones” (v. 9). I.e. just like he had married his first wives in an attempt to appear righteous (see 26:34 above), so too here “he added wickedness upon wickedness,” marrying once again, this time to a member of Avraham’s family in order to maintain his deceptive veil of righteousness.

In the following Parsha, Vayeitzei, we read of another trickster, Lavan, who acted deceptively towards Ya’akov. However, it could be argued that Eisav’s deception towards his father represented a greater degree of moral corruption than the acts of Lavan, because Eisav actively promoted himself as a righteous person. Lavan, on the other hand, may have acted deceptively, but he did not scheme to find ways of proving his righteousness to others. He merely concealed his selfish and corrupt motives so that Ya’akov would not come to uncover his plans.

So, the Torah’s description of Eisav here, at the end of Parshas Toldos, comes to warn us of the moral corruption which was exemplified by Eisav. Here we are warned to steer clear of this lowly activity: promoting oneself as righteous while the truth is something very different indeed.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 116ff)
**parshas Vayeitzei**

**The Name of the Parsha**

Vayeitzei connotes having “departed.” At the beginning of our Parsha, Ya’akov leaves his home in the Land of Israel, and at the end he returns, having become “exceedingly wealthy.” While he was away from home, Ya’akov established most of his family—eleven of his twelve sons—all of whom remained loyal to the path of their father.

And yet ironically, Avraham and Yitzchak who spent all their days in the Land of Israel, both suffered from rebellious children. Why was it that Ya’akov achieved a “perfect complement” of children outside the Land?

While Ya’akov was a tzadik (a naturally righteous person), being the founder of the Jewish people, he also possessed the spiritual advantage of the beinoni and the ba’al teshuvah—those who struggle with evil and overcome it.

This element of his personality began to express itself when Ya’akov departed from the spiritually conducive atmosphere of the Land of Israel, and joined Lavan in Charan. Here Ya’akov was forced to immerse himself in a corrupt world, and yet at the same time build a family and conduct his business dealings honestly. This brought to the surface Ya’akov’s innate abilities as a spiritual fighter.

The other Patriarchs, by contrast, expelled the negative traces within them rather than fight with them. Thus, Yishma’el became totally disassociated from Avraham as an heir, and likewise Eisav from Yitzchak.

Ya’akov however had the ability to fight evil. His period in Charan, where he fought the external evil of his surroundings, was also a time where he learned how to eliminate any potential evil within his family.

And thus, it was precisely in an unholy environment that he built a perfect complement of loyal sons, because fighting the evil around him taught him how to conquer—and not expel—the potential evil within.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei 5750)
Why did the Torah mention Ya’akov’s departure? (v. 10)

Rashi: Scripture only needed to write: “Ya’akov went to Charan.” Why did it mention his departure?

This teaches us that the departure of a righteous man (tzadik) from a place makes an impression. For while the righteous man is in the city, he is its [awesome] aura, he is its [guiding] light, and he is its honor. When he departs from there, its [awesome] aura has departed, its [guiding] light has departed, its honor has departed.

Ya’akov’s Departure (v. 10)

The Midrash asks why Ya’akov’s departure caused the light and honor of Be’er Sheva to leave, when Yitzchak and Rivkah still remained. The Midrash answers that the departure of even one righteous person is noticeable.

This question seems to be an issue that needs to be addressed at the literal level of Torah interpretation. Why did Rashi fail to clarify this point?

The Explanation

Rashi and the Midrash differed in their understanding of how a tzadik influences the town in which he lives. The Midrash stressed, “You cannot compare the merit of one righteous person to the merit of two righteous people.” I.e., according to the Midrash, the tzadik does not influence his neighbors directly by his actions, but rather, his mere presence is a “merit” for the town, which helps protects it.

Rashi, however, rejected this interpretation since, at the literal level, this concept has already been taught earlier in the Torah:

In the account of the destruction of Sodom, in Parshas Vayeira, we read how Avraham pleaded with God to save the city if he could find a handful of righteous people there (above 18:26ff). Though he ultimately failed to do so, we nevertheless learned from the story that the presence of righteous people in a town is a merit which helps protects it. Therefore, Rashi concluded that here—in the account of Ya’akov’s departure from Be’er Sheva—it is unlikely that the Torah would be teaching the same concept again.

Rashi reasoned that the Torah must be speaking here of a different way that a tzadik affects his locality, not by the spiritual effects of his presence, but rather, through his direct, physical influence on his neighbors.

Thus, Rashi describes the tzadik’s actions as having three effects:

“Honor” (ז”ח)—The visible presence of the tzadik makes the local inhabitants proud that their town is the place where a great person resides.

“[Guiding] light” (ז”ז)—A “ziv” is a ray of light which is emitted from a light source. This depicts how the tzadik “emits” inspiration for others to perform more good deeds.

“[Awesome] aura” (ז”א)—“Hod” indicates a stronger beam of light, as in the expression in Mishnah, a beam of splendor (Moshe’s beams of splendor)—Rashi to Shemos 34:30. Thus, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, the “beam” (or “aura”) of a tzadik refers to his intimidating effect on others, promoting fear of God in his vicinity—as in the verse, “the skin of his face had become radiant, and they were afraid to come near him” (ibid.).

Obviously, in order to affect other people in these ways, the tzadik must be seen visibly by others and interact with them. Thus, when Ya’akov left Be’er Sheva, the, “honor,” “[guiding] light” and “[awesome] aura” actually departed from the town, since Yitzchak was homebound due to his blindness (see Rashi to 28:13, below), and thus he was not seen by any of
Ya'akov’s Journey

28:10  Ya’akov left Be’er Sheva, and went (towards) Charan.

11 He came across the place (i.e. Mount Moriah) and spent the night there because the sun had set (suddenly). He took some of the stones of the place and placed (them) around his head (for protection from wild animals), and he lay down (to sleep) in that place.

12 He dreamt, and—look!—a ladder was wedged in the ground and its top reached to heaven, and—look!—angels of God were going up and down on it.

Classic Questions

Why does the Torah stress that he departed from Be’er Sheva? (v. 10)

Midrash: Be’er Sheva means “the well of the oath.” [Ya’akov] said, “I do not want Avimelech to approach me and demand, ‘Swear to me, like your grandfather swore to me,’” and then I would cause the rejoicing of my descendants to be delayed by seven generations,” because Avraham’s oath with Avimelech delayed the entry of the Jewish people into the Land of Israel by seven generations (Bereishis Rabah 68:7; 54:4).

Why were the angels “going up and down” (v. 12)

Rashi: [Note that] they went up before they went down. The angels were not permitted to leave the Land, so they ascended to heaven, and when they returned to the Diaspora, they descended to escort him.

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The local inhabitants. Presumably, Rivkah spent all of her time attending to Yitzchak, so she was not seen either (in addition to her general modesty).

Therefore, Rashi was not troubled by the Midrash’s question—how could the honor etc. of the town have departed when Yitzchak and Rivkah remained—since Rashi understood that we are speaking here of the personal influence of the tzadik on others, which was out of the question at that time for Yitzchak and Rivkah.

The Midrash, on the other hand, understood that we are speaking here of the merit of the tzadik (as explained above), and that merit remains regardless of whether the tzadik is publicly active or not.

So the Midrash was troubled: Why did the town’s merit leave with Ya’akov when Yitzchak and Rivkah remained? The Midrash answers that each tzadik makes his own unique contribution to the town’s merit, and, “The merit of one righteous person is incomparable to the merit of two righteous people.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 119ff.)

The Angels in Ya’akov’s Dream (v. 12)

Rashi writes that the angels which escorted Ya’akov in the Land of Israel were not permitted to leave the Land, so they ascended to heaven, and that the angels of the Diaspora descended from heaven to escort him further.

Sparks of Chasidus

According to the Midrash (and Matnos Kehunah), Ya’akov did not want to make an oath with Avimelech, as his father and grandfather did, for this would delay the Jewish people’s entry into the Land of Israel by seven generations (see “Classic Questions”).

This, however, begs the question: Why did Avraham and Yitzchak make such an oath?

Avraham and Yitzchak both promoted the awareness of God, but their effect was more superficial. They did not win over their enemies. Therefore, both Avraham and Yitzchak were forced to make peace treaties with their enemies.

Ya’akov, on the other hand, succeeded in bringing people to a deeper recognition of God. Therefore, it would have been inappropriate for him to make peace with his enemy, as he had the ability to transform the forces of evil to become good.

And that is why all of his children were righteous, because he transformed any negative traits into positive ones.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 88ff.)
What happened to the place where Ya’akov slept? (v. 13)

Rashi: God folded the entire Land of Israel under him, hinting to him that it would be easily conquered by his children.

Chizkuni: Rashi does not mean that the entire Land of Israel was folded under Ya’akov literally. Rather, this was part of Ya’akov’s dream.

Maskil leDavid: Rashi was troubled by the fact that the verse states, “I will give to you and to your descendants the land on which you are lying,” suggesting that God was only promising him the four cubits on which he was lying! Therefore, Rashi explained that, in this instance, the entire Land of Israel had been miraculously folded under Ya’akov.

But how was such an astonishing miracle possible? And what was the point of it? Where did all its inhabitants go?

It seems to me, that the whole of the Land of Israel was not folded under Ya’akov in the literal sense. Rather, God uprooted Mount Moriah, on which the “foundation stone” of the world is located, and placed it under Ya’akov (see Rashi to v. 11). Since that stone was the foundation of the entire Land of Israel, the result is that when Ya’akov was lying there, it was as if the whole Land was underneath him.

The Explanation

When we say that the Land of Israel was not holy in the times of the Patriarchs, it means that the physical Land itself had not become holy. In heaven, however, the Land has always been desired by God.

Therefore, the Patriarchs who lived down here on earth were permitted to leave the Land, since the physical Land had not yet become holy. But the angels, who dwelled in heaven, were not permitted to leave, because in heaven the Land of Israel has always been associated with holiness.

(Toros Menachem)

Did the Land of Israel Fold Literally? (v.13)

Rashi writes that when Ya’akov was sleeping, the entire Land of Israel was folded by God miraculously underneath him, as a sign that the Land would be easy to conquer by his children.

Chizkuni and Maskil leDavid write that this miracle could not have happened literally, for it appears to be an unnecessarily extreme violation of nature, and they offer alternative explanations for Rashi’s words.

(Rashi however gives no indication whatsoever that the miracle did not occur in the literal sense, and bearing in mind that Rashi wrote his commentary for a child who is learning the Torah for the first time, we can presume that Rashi expected the reader to take his words at face value.

This however leaves us with the question: Why did God make such a grandiose miracle, compacting hundreds of miles into the space of a few feet, merely as a “hint” to Ya’akov that the land would be easy to conquer in the future?

Rashi’s comment is even more alarming when one compares his words with the source of this teaching in the Talmud (Chullin 91b):

The Talmud states that, “God folded the entire Land of Israel under Ya’akov our father, so that its conquest by his children would be easy.” I.e. according to the Talmud, this miracle somehow helped Ya’akov’s children conquer the land.

Rashi, however, adapted the Talmud’s words to read, “God folded the entire Land of Israel under him, hinting to him that it would be as easily conquered by his children.” I.e. the miracle was of no practical help. It merely hinted to Ya’akov about the future conquest of the Land.

Hence with Rashi’s turn of phrase, he actually reduced the impact of the miracle, from miraculous assistance, to a mere “hint.” This magnifies our earlier question: Why did God perform such an earth-shattering miracle merely to provide Ya’akov with a hint?
Suddenly, God was standing over him, and He said, “I am God, the God of Avraham your father, and the God of Yitzchak. I will give to you and to your descendants the land on which you are lying.

Your descendants will be as (widespread as) the dust of the earth, and you will be strong to the west, to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants.”

“Look, I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go (from Eisav and Lavan). I will bring you back to this land, for I will not abandon you until I have carried out what I have spoken (to Avraham, a promise that was intended) for you (and not Eisav).”

What was Troubling Rashi?

In order to solve this problem, we first need to clarify why our verse troubled Rashi, prompting him to offer an explanation.

At first glance, Rashi appears to have explained this matter in his commentary to the Talmud (ibid). There he writes that the reader will be troubled as to why the verse states, “I will give to you and to your descendants the land on which you are lying,” which seems to suggest that God was only promising Ya’akov the four cubits on which he was lying. (The Talmud thus answers that God compacted the Land of Israel into four cubits underneath him to make the whole Land as easy to conquer as if it were merely four cubits).

However, it appears unlikely that this was Rashi’s problem here in his commentary to the Torah, for the following reasons:

a.) Rashi’s commentary to the Talmud was written for a more advanced student than his commentary to the Torah, since “a five year-old begins scripture and…a fifteen year-old begins Talmud” (Avos 5:22). Therefore, it would be unacceptable to presume that a detail which required clarification in the Talmud to the fifteen-year-old was obvious to the student of scripture at the age of five. Rashi does not indicate here in his commentary to the Torah that he was troubled by the above question (why God was only giving four cubits of land to Ya’akov), and he would not have expected the five-year-old to work it out by himself, if even the fifteen-year-old student of Talmud needed prompting on this matter.

b.) Earlier, in Parshas Lech Lecha, God told Avraham, “Please raise your eyes and, from the place where you are positioned, look northward, southward, eastward and westward. Because, I will give all the land that you see to you and to your descendants for eternity” (13:14-15).

Now, even if Avraham was on a high mountain, he would not have been able to see the entire Land of Israel. Nevertheless, it is obvious to the reader that when God said, “I will give all the land that you see to you etc.,” He was not limiting the promise to the area which Avraham was able to see physically at that moment in time. Rather, it is self-evident that God promised him the entire Land, and that Avraham was looking at a portion of it. This point is so obvious that Rashi deemed it unnecessary to make any comment.

The same applies in our Parsha, when God promised Ya’akov, “I will give to you… the Land on which you are lying” It is self-evident, at the literal level, that God intended to give Ya’akov the entire Land, and that Ya’akov was sleeping on part of it. God was merely giving an indication to which land He was referring.

Rather, Rashi was troubled by a much simpler question: Why did God need to mention at all that Ya’akov was sleeping on the land? He could have simply said, “I will give this Land to you and your descendants.” What was the significance of Ya’akov sleeping on it?

Due to this problem, Rashi came to the conclusion that with the words, “the Land on which you are lying,” God was not indicating to Ya’akov the geographic location of the land. Rather, He was hinting to Ya’akov’s ownership of it.

In other words, just like in the above case of Avraham, God told him to carry out a physical act which reinforced his future ownership of the land (“Get up and walk through the land, across its length and its breadth, for I am going to give it to you”—13:17); so too here in the case of Ya’akov, God miraculously compacted the entire land physically underneath where Ya’akov was sleeping, to underscore the future ownership of the land by his descendants.

There is however one significant difference between Avraham and Ya’akov’s acts: Avraham actually performed a positive act, whereas Ya’akov merely slept, while God compacted the land underneath him. So, what did Ya’akov accomplish?

To clarify, Rashi continues that this event served the purpose of “hinting

The Last Word

“UFARATZTA” (v. 14)

Ufaratza—spreading forth without limits—means the breaking down of barriers, even when those barriers represent good and valid limitations. For example: extending beyond one’s fixed times for Torah study; or giving more charity than Jewish law requires; or meditating on the greatness of God for extended periods before, during and after prayer.

This ability to break beyond all constraints is the inheritance of Ya’akov, our father.

The Sparks of Chasidus

The highest aspect of the Jewish soul—the yechidah—is so sublime that it cannot be contained within the body, and it spreads to a distance of four cubits (approx. 6 ft) around a person. The yechidah is also a level of the soul which can never become tarnished, because it is not susceptible to any negative influences.

Thus, when God placed the entire Land of Israel within four cubits of Ya’akov to stress his future ownership of it (see Torah Menachem), the Land became connected with Ya’akov’s yechidah, and so too, with the yechidah of every single one of his descendants.

And that is the reason why “it would be as easily conquered by his children,” because the land was associated with a level of the soul which is impervious to any opposition.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 134ff.)
Why did Ya'akov make his promises (v. 22) conditional on the clauses specified in v. 20-21?

PANE'ACH RAZA: Ya'akov did not intend to fulfill his promise only if God would abide by the specified conditions, since a person should serve God regardless of the reward. Rather, he was saying to God, "Just as I am fulfilling my promise, I hope You will fulfill Yours."

MASKIL LEDAVID: A person is only obligated to separate a tenth of his produce for ma'aser (tithe) but Ya'akov promised to separate a fifth, on the condition that God fulfill His promises. This was not inappropriate since Ya'akov made his additional gift to God conditional, but not his basic obligation.

What did Ya'akov mean with the phrase, "God will be my God"? (v. 21)

RASHI: That His Name will rest on me from beginning to end so that no disqualification should be found among my descendants.

RAMBAN: Rashi is incorrect in his assertion that the words "God will be my God" was the last of Ya'akov's clauses. In fact, it was the first of his promises. Ya'akov was saying, "If I return to my father's house then I will worship God as He is known by His true Name, in the Chosen Land, at the location of this stone which will be for me a house of God, and there I will separate ma'aser."
16 Ya’akov woke up from his sleep, and he said, “God is truly in this place, and I didn’t realize (otherwise I wouldn’t have slept here)!”

17 He felt frightened. He said, “How awesome this place is! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven (through which all prayers ascend).”

18 Ya’akov arose early in the morning. He took the stone that he had placed at his head, set it up as a monument, and poured oil on top of it. 19 He named the place Beis-Ail, but Luz was originally the name of the city.

20 Ya’akov made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me (keeping His promises), and He will guard me on this route in which I am going (like He said He would), and He will give me bread to eat (as He promised not to abandon me) and garments to wear, 21 and if I return in peace to my father’s house (as He promised I would), and God will be my God (to prevent any of my children from going off the path— 22 then I will do the following for You:) This stone, which I have placed as a monument, will (eventually be built to) be a house of God, and I will definitely separate tithes for You from everything that You give me.”

**TORAS MENACHEM**

to him that it would be easily conquered by his children.” I.e. unlike Avraham’s symbol of future ownership—which had entailed a significant effort on his part, walking from one end of the land to the other—Ya’akov’s act had been effortless. This hinted to him that the future conquest of the Land of Israel by his descendants would likewise be devoid of any effort at all.

Thus, in the final analysis, it turns out that at the literal level of Torah interpretation God gave Ya’akov an even greater promise than that which the Talmud conveys. For, according to the Talmud, God was making the Land of Israel as easy to conquer for Ya’akov as if it were only four cubits, but nevertheless, those four cubits still needed conquering. According to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah however, God was promising that the conquest would be totally effortless, just like sleeping on the ground.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 129ff.)

**Ya’akov’s Promise (v.20-22)**

Pane’ach Raza and Maskil leDavid question why Ya’akov made a conditional promise to God, when a Jew is supposed to serve God without contemplating the benefits that might result from his observance. Maskil leDavid answers that Ya’akov was not expecting God to reward him for his observance of mitzvos, but for his additional promises that extended beyond the basic obligations of Jewish law. Therefore, Ya’akov attached conditions only to his additional promises to God, which he expected to yield fruit.

However, such an act appears to be out of character with the moral caliber of the Patriarchs. Our Sages taught that the Patriarchs were so devoted to God, at the expense of any personal agenda, that they are compared to a “chariot” which follows the direction in which it is led without deviating to either side (see Bereishis Rabah 47:6). Thus, it is somewhat unsatisfying to conclude that Ya’akov would have made any conditions in his Divine service, even in matters in which he was not strictly obligated.

Rather, it would appear that Ya’akov was not demanding rewards from God; he was merely requesting the necessary working conditions to fulfill his promise. I.e. in order to build a “house of God” and perform the mitzvos (tithes) properly, Ya’akov would need God’s protection, provision of food and clothing, assistance to return back to the Land of Israel, assistance to build a family. Thus Ya’akov was merely requesting from God the necessary means to be able to serve Him.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 243)

**Sparks of Chasidus**

According to Chasidic teachings, Ya’akov’s promise could be understood as follows (translation follows Ramban):

*If God will be with me—to help me serve Him.*

*And He will guard me on this route in which I am going—He guards me from transgressing the prohibitions of the Torah.*

*And He will give me bread to eat—i.e. he will help me to study Torah which is described as “bread” (spiritual sustenance).*

*And garments to wear—this refers to mitzvos, which are described as “garments” for the soul.*

*And if I return in peace to my father’s house—this refers to utilizing non-holy objects for the sake of heaven, causing the sparks of holiness within them to “return” to their source.*

*Then God will be my God—Then I will reap personal, spiritual gain, because the soul which descended into my body will enjoy an “ascent,” having completed its mission successfully.*

*And this stone, which I have placed as a monument, will be a house of God—But, more importantly, the physical world itself (“this stone”) will become a home for God below (a “house of God”) through my Divine service.*

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 249-250)

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Ya'akov (found it easy to) lift his feet (after hearing the good news), and went off towards the land of the people of the East.

He glanced, and—look!—a well was in the field; and—look!—three flocks of sheep were lying beside it, because they would give water to the flocks from that well.

There was a huge rock on the mouth of the well. (When) the flocks would gather there, they would roll the rock off the mouth of the well and give water to the sheep, and (then) they would return the rock onto the mouth of the well, to its place.

Ya'akov said to them, “Where are you from, my brothers?”

They said, “We’re from Charan.”

He said to them, “Do you know Lavan, the (grand)son of Nachor?”

They said, “We know (him).”

He said to them, “Is he well?”

They said, “He’s fine. Here is his daughter Rochel, coming with the sheep.”

(Ya’akov saw that the flocks were lying down before the day’s work had ended, so) he said, “It’s still the middle of the day. It’s not yet the time to take in the flocks. (Why don’t you) water the sheep and then go and pasture.”

They said, “We can’t, until all the flocks are gathered together and they’ll roll the rock off the mouth of the well. Then we’ll give water to the sheep.”

While he was still talking with them, Rochel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

Then, when Ya’akov saw Lavan’s daughter Rochel, his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Lavan, his mother’s brother, Ya’akov stepped forward and rolled the rock off the mouth of the well (effortlessly, showing his great strength), and he watered the sheep of Lavan, his mother’s brother.

Ya’akov kissed Rochel. (He perceived prophetically that she would not be buried with him so) he wept loudly.

Ya’akov told Rochel that he was her father’s relative and that he was Rivkah’s son. She ran and told her father (since her mother was no longer alive).

Ya’akov Works Seven Years For Rochel

Then, when Lavan heard the news about Ya’akov, his sister’s son, he ran towards him (thinking that he would be laden with money, like Eliezer. When he saw no money) he embraced him (to feel what was in his pockets), and he kissed him (to see if pearls were hidden in his mouth).

(Lavan) brought him into his house. He told Lavan what had happened (with Eisav, how he had run for his life without any money). Lavan said to him, “(Since you have no money I should really turn

Sparks of Chasidus

The word “well” is mentioned seven times in our Parsha. This alludes to the seven wells which were dug by Avraham and Yitzchak (who dug three and four wells respectively).

Thus, Ya’akov merited that the well that he saw had the spiritual greatness of all the other seven wells put together.

(Toras Levi Yitzchak p. 174)
Why were Leah’s eyes tender (v. 17)?

**Rashi:** She expected to fall into Eisav’s lot and become his wife, thus, “like a newborn baby.” [Thus, since Ya’akov converted Rochel and Leah before marrying them, they were “newly born” and thus no longer considered to be sisters in Jewish Law.] (v. 28)

**Ramban:** The Patriarchs only kept the entire Torah while they were in the Land of Israel. Ya’akov, at this point, was outside the Land, so he was able to marry two sisters (26:5).

**Parashas Derachim:** Ya’akov was told by God to marry both Leah and Rochel. This was in order that he would be able to establish twelve tribes (Toras Menachem).

The solution [of Chizkuni] that Rochel and Leah ceased to be sisters after their “conversion,” is difficult to accept because:

a.) At the literal level of Torah interpretation, there is no evidence that Avraham or his descendants were obligated to observe the mitzvos of the Torah. The Patriarchs who kept the mitzvos did so as a personal stringency, not because they were obligated to do so (with obvious exceptions, such as circumcision, etc.). Consequently, the concept of “conversion” did not exist in the literal, halachic sense.

b.) Rashi does not mention anywhere in his commentary that “a person...

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**Classic Questions**

- Why were Leah’s eyes tender (v. 17)?
- If the Patriarchs kept the entire Torah before it was given, how could Ya’akov marry two sisters (v. 18-30)?

**Chizkuni:** Our Sages said that a person who converts to Judaism is like a newborn baby. [Thus, since Ya’akov converted Rochel and Leah before marrying them, they were “newly born” and thus no longer considered to be sisters in Jewish Law.] (v. 28)

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**Toras Menachem**

How Could Ya’akov Marry two Sisters? (v. 18-30)

Rashi does not offer any explanation as to why Ya’akov married two sisters, which seems to defy the principle that the Patriarchs kept the entire Torah before it was given (Rashi to 26:5). Rashi clearly rejected the assertion of Ramban that this rule only applied in the Land of Israel, since he writes that Ya’akov said, “I lived with the wicked Lavan, but I guarded the 613 commandments, and I did not learn from his evil deeds” (Rashi to 32:5).

Clearly, according to Rashi, Ya’akov did keep the entire Torah even outside the Land of Israel.
you away) but, you are my bone and my flesh (so you can stay).” (Ya’akov) stayed with him a month (and pastured Lavan’s sheep).

15 Lavan said to Ya’akov, “Should you work for me for free just because you are my relative? Tell me what your wages should be!”

16 Lavan had two daughters, the older one was called Leah, and the younger one was called Rochel. Leah’s eyes were tender, and Rochel had beautiful (facial) features and a beautiful complexion.

18 Ya’akov loved Rochel, so he said, “I will work for you seven years for Rochel, your younger daughter.”

19 Lavan said, “It’s better for me to give her to you than for me to give her to another man. Stay with me.” 20 So Ya’akov worked for Rochel seven years, but to him it felt like a few days because of his love for her.

**Lavan Deceptively Gives Leah to Ya’akov in Marriage**

29:21 Y a’akov said to Lavan, “Give me my wife, for my time is up, and let me come to her (and establish the future generations).”

22 Lavan gathered all the local people, and he made a feast. 23 Then, in the evening (when it was dark), Lavan took his daughter Leah, and brought her to (Ya’akov. She told Ya’akov the secret code which Rochel had divulged) and he came to her. 24 Lavan gave Zilpah his maid to his daughter Leah as a maid.

who converts to Judaism is like a newborn baby.” So, it would be unreasonable to presume that Rashi expected his readership—which includes the child studying Chumash for the first time—to be familiar with this concept (especially when one considers this concept appears to fly in the face of reality).

The solution cited by Parashas Derachim is also difficult to accept at the literal level since there is no indication in scripture itself that God told Ya’akov to marry two sisters.

**The Explanation**

Rashi did not explain why Ya’akov married two sisters, as he felt the explanation was obvious from scripture itself:

After being fooled into marrying Leah, Ya’akov challenged Lavan, “Why have you deceived me?” (v. 25). I.e. Ya’akov accused Lavan of fraud. From this we see (at the literal level) that Noachide Law prevented one person from deceiving another, otherwise Ya’akov’s words would have had no basis.

Consequently, Lavan could not merely shrug off Ya’akov’s request—to give the younger one before the firstborn—(v. 26). I.e. his behavior was not fraudulent because Ya’akov’s request to marry Rochel was a breach of local practice.*

However, since Ya’akov had promised to marry Rochel, and she had been waiting to get married for seven years, Ya’akov was unable to renege on his promise. Otherwise, he too would be guilty of deception, which we see from scripture was prohibited at that time.

Thus, Ya’akov was forced to overlook his personal stringency of keeping the entire Torah, which does not allow a person to marry two sisters, so as not to be guilty of deception towards Rochel, which was prohibited.

*Rashi,* Sparks of Chasidus

**Leah & Rochel (v. 17 & Rashi)**

Rochel represents the approach of tzadikim (righteous individuals) whose lives are totally holy; and Leah, the approach of ba’alei teshuvah (penitents) who elevate the secular world to holiness.

Thus, Rochel was naturally attractive—“Rochel had beautiful (facial) features and a beautiful complexion” (v. 17)—like the tzadik whose character is flawless; whereas Leah cried profusely (see Rashi), alluding to the process of teshuvah. She was also naturally outgoing (see below 30:16; Rashi to 34:1), a talent which helps a person to bring the outside world to the realm of holiness.

“Ya’akov was an honest person, dwelling in tents” (Toldos 25:27), i.e. he busied himself only with matters of holiness—the approach of tzadikim. Therefore, people said that Ya’akov was destined for Rochel, since their characters matched. Eisav, on the other hand, was an outgoing “man of the field.” Therefore people said that he would be a good match for Leah, for only the talented, outgoing Leah would have the ability to make Eisav do teshuvah.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, pp. 152-3)

* Of course, this begs the question why Ya’akov attempted to marry Rochel first, in breach of local practice? Rashi, however, explains this matter with his comment to v. 17: Since “everybody was saying that Ya’akov was a perfect match for Rochel, and that Leah was destined for Eisav, he presumed that it was already accepted locally that he could marry Rochel. Lavan however argued that, notwithstanding the above, the local policy of marrying the older daughter first cannot be waived—Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei 5732.*
Divorcing Leah was not an option since, a. In any case the Torah prohibits marrying the sister of one’s ex-wife in the latter’s lifetime (see Vayikra 18:18). b. This would have caused unnecessary distress to Leah.

Nevertheless, Ya’akov was still able to declare confidently, “I lived with the wicked Lavan, but I guarded the 613 commandments”—even though he did not refrain from marrying two sisters—since he did not say that he observed the 613 commandments, but rather he “guarded” them. I.e. he avoided transgressing them whenever it was possible to do so.

One further detail requires explanation: While scripture indicates that it was forbidden to deceive or defraud another, this prohibition is not mentioned explicitly in the Noachide code. On what basis was it prohibited?

Presumably, in addition to the Noachide code of seven basic mitzvos, the non-Jewish nations had added further prohibitions which were universally accepted, and thus had the force of law.

In fact, this idea is supported by various statements of Rashi:

“The nations had restricted themselves from illicit relationships because of the Flood” (Rashi to 34:7, below), i.e. they restricted themselves from further illicit relationships, more than was already prohibited by Noachide law.

Similarly, we find, “Scripture related Terach’s death before Avram’s departure, so that the matter should not be publicized to everybody and they would say, ‘Avram did not honor his father, for he left him in his old age and went away’” (Rashi to 11:32, above). Here we see that, even though honoring one’s parents is not part of the Noachide code, it was nevertheless universally accepted by non-Jews as a necessity.

So too in our case, we can presume that the principle of not deceiving or defrauding another had been accepted universally by the nations, and Ya’akov was thus bound by it.

**An Alternative Explanation**

In the final analysis however, there remains the possibility that, at the literal level, the nations would also have instituted a prohibition against marrying two sisters, since it is an act of cruelty which breeds enmity between sisters.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that in Ya’akov’s case the prohibition would not apply:

The Torah states, “You should not take a woman in addition to her sister, to make them rivals” (Vayikra 18:18). In our case though, there was prohibiting themselves, but not necessarily marrying them.

So, Ya’akov was willing to forego his own personal stringency—of keeping the Torah before it was given—to avoid hurting the feelings of Rochel, who had waited seven years to marry him.

From this we can learn that a person should be willing to overlook his own spiritual luxury to help another person acquire a spiritual necessity.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 148)*
Then, in the morning, (Ya’akov saw that)—look—it was Leah! He said to Lavan, “What’s this that you’ve done to me? Didn’t I work with you for Rochel? Why have you deceived me?”

Lavan said, “In our neighborhood, we don’t do such a thing, to give the younger one before the firstborn. Finish the week (of feasting for) this (newlywed), and we’ll give you (her sister) too (for a wife straightaway—in return) for the work that you will do for me for another seven years (after the second wedding).”

Ya’akov did just that. He completed the week (of feasting for) this (newlywed), and (Lavan) gave his daughter Rochel to him as a wife. Lavan gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rochel as a maid.

( Ya’akov) came to Rochel too. He also loved Rochel, rather than Leah.*

He worked with (Lavan) for another seven years.

Ya’akov Builds His Family

God saw that Leah was hated, so He opened her womb. Rochel was barren.

Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Re’uvain, because she said, “For God has seen (Ra’ah) my affliction (Be’aNyiy), since now my husband will love me.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why was Re’uvain given this name (v. 32)?

Rashi: Our Sages explained: [Leah] said, “See (RE’U) what is the difference between my son (BeNiy) and my father-in-law’s son [Eisav], who sold the birthright to Ya’akov. But this [son of mine] did not sell [his birthright] to Yosef. He did not protest [against Yosef the firstborn sons of both Avraham and Yitzchak deviated from the paths exemplified by their respective fathers. This was likely to have placed a doubt in Ya’akov’s mind about the future of his own firstborn son.]

The Explanation

After Re’uvain was born, Leah exclaimed, “Now my husband will love me.” In any normal case, this would make sense, since when a woman gives birth to a child it endears her more to her husband.

However, in this case, we read in the previous verse that, “Leah was hated.” It thus seems unlikely that the birth of a son would have been sufficient to transform Ya’akov’s hatred into love. At that time, Ya’akov was expecting to have children from Rochel—since it is unlikely that he had realized that she was barren—so why would the fact that Leah happened to give birth first radically affect his feelings towards her?

A further problem here concerns Ya’akov’s family history in general. The firstborn sons of both Avraham and Yitzchak deviated from the paths exemplified by their respective fathers. This was likely to have placed a doubt in Ya’akov’s mind about the future of his own firstborn son.

So, Rashi was troubled by the question: Why was Leah sure that Re’uvain received his name in commemoration of something negative?

To solve this problem, Rashi cited a teaching of our Sages which explains why Re’uvain’s birth would have been a sufficiently powerful event to transform Ya’akov’s hatred into love, because:

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The Explanation

After Re’uvain was born, Leah exclaimed, “Now my husband will love me.” In any normal case, this would make sense, since when a woman gives birth to a child it endears her more to her husband.

However, in this case, we read in the previous verse that, “Leah was hated.” It thus seems unlikely that the birth of a son would have been sufficient to transform Ya’akov’s hatred into love. At that time, Ya’akov was expecting to have children from Rochel—since it is unlikely that he had realized that she was barren—so why would the fact that Leah happened to give birth first radically affect his feelings towards her?

A further problem here concerns Ya’akov’s family history in general. The firstborn sons of both Avraham and Yitzchak deviated from the paths exemplified by their respective fathers. This was likely to have placed a doubt in Ya’akov’s mind about the future of his own firstborn son.

So, Rashi was troubled by the question: Why was Leah sure that Re’uvain received his name in commemoration of something negative?

To solve this problem, Rashi cited a teaching of our Sages which explains why Re’uvain’s birth would have been a sufficiently powerful event to transform Ya’akov’s hatred into love, because:
Why did Leah think that, “my husband will be attached to me” after Levi’s birth (v. 34)?

Rashi: Since the Matriarchs were prophetesses, they knew that twelve tribes would come from Ya’akov, and that he would marry four wives. She said, “From now on, he has no cause for complaint against me, for I have contributed my [quarter] share of sons.”

Chizkuni: Leah thought, “Up until now I had two sons, whom I looked after with my two hands. Now, with the third son, I will need my husband’s help.”

Sforno: When something occurs three times, it constitutes a chazakah (legal precedent). Levi’s birth thus appeared to be evidence that Leah would have many more children.

a.) It stresses that Leah had given birth to a person who cherished his position as Ya’akov’s firstborn.

b.) Despite the fact that Re’uvain valued the birthright, and did not sell it (like Eisav), he showed further good character by not protesting when the birthright was taken away and given to Yosef.

c.) Not only did Re’uvain not harbor any ill feelings, he did not even show resentment against Yosef. To the contrary, he wanted to save Yosef from the pit, demonstrating utter selflessness.

Thus, when Ya’akov would see that such a special son had been born, quite distinct from the firstborn sons of Avraham and Yitzchak, Leah was convinced that, “now my husband will love me.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 92ff.)

Le’ah’s Prophecy (v. 34)

Rashi’s comment provokes a number of questions: a.) What evidence is there, at the literal level, that “the Matriarchs were prophetesses”? 
She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. She said, “Since God has heard (SHaMah) that I am hated, He gave me this one too,” and she named him Shimon.

She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. She said, “Now this time my husband will be attached (yiLaVeh) to me, for I have borne him three sons (one quarter of the twelve tribes).” Therefore, (God) named him Levi.

She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. She said, “This time, I will thank (oDeH) God (because I have had more than my quarter-share of the twelve tribes).” Therefore, she named him Yehudah.

Then, she stopped having children.

Rochel saw that she had not borne Ya’akov children. Rochel was jealous of her sister’s good deeds, due to which she had merited children. She said to Ya’akov, “Give me children (through your prayers), Otherwise, I am (as good as) dead.”

Ya’akov became angry with Rochel. He said, “Am I in place of God, who has withheld the fruit of the womb from you?”

She said, “Here is my maid Bilhah—come to her. She will bear children whom I will raise, so that I too will be built up from her.”

So she gave him Bilhah, her maid, for a wife, and Ya’akov came to her.

Bilhah became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Ya’akov.

Rochel said, “God has judged

Who gave Levi his name (v. 34)?

Rashi: In all the other cases, the Torah states, “and she named,” whereas in this instance, the Torah states, “and he named.” There is a Midrash in Devarim Rabah, that God sent [the angel] Gavriel who brought [the baby] before Him. He gave [Levi] this name, and gave him the twenty-four priestly gifts. Because he was accompanied (Uv/glyph122/glyph120k) with gifts, He named him Levi.

Rashbam: Ya’akov gave Levi his name.

b.) Since Leah was a prophetess, surely she knew that she was to bear six children for Ya’akov?

c.) Why does Rashi change the positive expression of the verse for a negative one: The verse states, “Now this time my husband will be attached to me for I have borne him three sons,” but Rashi rewords Leah’s statement to read, “From now on, he has no cause for complaint against me for I have contributed my [quarter] share of sons.”

The Explanation

a.) When Sarah told Avraham to expel Hagar, God told Avraham, “Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice” (above 21:12). Rashi comments, “We learn from here that Avraham was inferior to Sarah in prophecy.”

Similarly, in the case of Rivkah, the Torah states that, “Rivkah was told the words of Eisav, her older son” (27:42), and Rashi comments, “She was told by Divine Inspiration what Eisav was thinking in his heart.”

Since Sarah and Rivkah were both prophetesses, it follows that this was a quality of the Matriarchs in general. So Rashi writes, “Since the Matriarchs were prophetesses…,” without the need for any clarification.

b.) Being a prophetess, Leah would have indeed been aware that she was destined to bear another three sons. Nevertheless, she declared, “Now this time my husband will be attached to me, for I have borne him three sons,” since at this point she had actually borne one quarter of Ya’akov’s twelve sons.

c.) Since Avraham was inferior to Sarah in prophecy,” it was quite possible that Ya’akov too was inferior to Leah, and that he had not prophesied his children’s births (at least, not as clearly as Leah).

Therefore, at the literal level, Leah could not be certain that Ya’akov of his own accord would “be attached” to her, since he may not have known that Leah had given birth to a quarter of his sons. So, Rashi could not write that Leah was totally confident that “my husband will be attached to me.”

Nevertheless, Leah could be sure that if for whatever reason Ya’akov would have complaints against her, she was armed with a defense which proved her legitimacy as his wife, for she could reveal her prophecy to Ya’akov. Therefore, Rashi adapted Leah’s reaction to read, “From now on, he has no cause for complaint against me, for I have contributed my [quarter] share of sons.”

(Based of Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei 5729)

Who Named Levi? (v. 34)

Why did Rashi reject the simple explanation of Rashbam that the Torah states, “And he named him Levi,” in the masculine, because Ya’akov named him, and not Leah?

However, it was explained above (previous section) that, at the literal level, Ya’akov did not know of Leah’s statement, “Now this time my husband will be attached to me etc.” Therefore, he could not have given Levi his name.
me (DANani, and acquitted me). He has also listened to my voice and given me a son.” Therefore she named him Dan.

7 Rochel’s maid Bilhah became pregnant again and gave birth to a second son for Ya’akov. 8 Rochel said, “I have stubbornly offered my tortuous prayers (NAFTuLa’iy) to God, and my prayers were accepted, as with my sister. I too have been successful,” and she named him Naftali.

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Ya’akov for a wife. 10 Leah’s maid Zilpah gave birth to a son for Ya’akov.

11 Leah said, “Good fortune (GAD) has come,” and she named him Gad.

12 Leah’s maid Zilpah gave birth to a second son for Ya’akov 13 Leah said, “I am praised (ASHRiy), because women (now) praise me,” so she named him Asher.

14 In the days of the wheat harvest, Re’uwain went and found jasmine plants in the field, and he brought them to Leah, his mother. Rochel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s jasmine plants.”

15 “Isn’t it enough that you’ve taken away my husband?” she said to her. “(Now you want) to take my son’s jasmine plants too!”

Rochel said, “In that case, Ya’akov can sleep with you tonight (instead of me) as payment for your son’s jasmine plants.”

16 When Ya’akov came from the field in the evening, Leah came out towards him. She said, “You can come to me (tonight), because I have paid a fee for you (to Rochel) with my son’s jasmine plants.” And he slept with her on that night.

17 God listened to Leah’s prayers to have more tribes born through her). She became pregnant and gave birth to a fifth son for Ya’akov. 18 Leah said, “God has given (me) my reward (SeCHARiy) because I have given my maid to my husband,” and she named him Yissachar.

19 Leah became pregnant again, and she gave birth to a sixth son for Ya’akov. 20 Leah said, “God has given me a good portion (ZeVed). This time, my husband will live with me (more than with his other wives), for I have borne him six sons (as many as all the other wives put together will produce),” and she named him Zevulun.

21 Afterwards, she gave birth to a daughter, and she named her Dinah.

22 God remembered (that) Rochel (had divulged Ya’akov’s code to Leah to save her from Eisav. She feared Ya’akov would divorce her for being childless, and Eisav had already set his eyes on her). So, God listened to her, and opened her womb.

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

**The Naming of the Twelve Tribes**

Our Sages taught, “Only three may be called Patriarchs” (Brachos 16b)—Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov—because the spiritual qualities of these three are to be found within every Jewish person.

The twelve tribes, on the other hand, each had their own distinct qualities, but these qualities are not found universally amongst all Jews. Thus, the Patriarchs represent the general source of Jewish spirituality, whereas the tribes highlight more specific features.

As we pass from the general to the specific, emphasis on detail becomes more important. Therefore the name of each tribe is explained in the Torah—in contrast to the Patriarchs, whose names are not formally explained—since the more detailed spiritual motif of each tribe requires a more specific emphasis.

And this too sheds light on the fact that it was the matriarchs, and not Ya’akov, who named each tribe. For just like it is the mother who nurtures the specific features of the child in her womb, so too the more detailed spiritual features of the Jewish nation were defined by our matriarchs.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 96f)
23. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She said, “God has concealed (aSaF) my disgrace.”
24. She named him Yosef, saying, “May God add (YOSEF) another son for me!”

**Ya’akov Continues to Work for Lavan and He Prospers**

30:25 Then, when Rochel had given birth to Yosef (who was destined to destroy Eisav, Ya’akov felt safe to return). Ya’akov said to Lavan, “Send me away! I will go to my place and to my land. Let me have my wives and my children, for whom I served you, and I will go—for you are aware of my services, which I have carried out for you.”

26. Lavan said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes, please (stay)! I have found out by divining, that God has blessed me because of you.”

27. He said, “Specify (what is to be) your wage from me, and I will give (it).”

28. (Ya’akov) said to him, “You know how I have worked for you, and how (few) your flocks were (when they first came to be) with me. For the few that you had before I (came) have increased extensively, and God blessed you (because of) my arrival. But now, when will I also do something for my own household?”

29. (Lavan) said, “What can I give you?”

Ya’akov said, “Don’t give me anything. If you’ll do the following for me, I will come back, pasture your flocks (and) guard (them): Let me pass throughout all your flocks today, and remove from there every spotted and patched lamb and every brown lamb, from among the sheep; and every patched and spotted one from among the goats (for your sons to guard separately, so you will not claim that I am breeding these types). My wages shall be (any spotted or patched goats, or brown sheep that are born from the remaining sheep that I guard). Thus, at a future time (when I leave), my financial integrity will be self-evident before you, (because) any non-spotted or non-patched goats or non-brown sheep in my (personal) possession will (obviously be) stolen (from you).”

30. “Agreed!” said Lavan. “(I) only (hope) it will be as you say (and you won’t change your mind)!”

31. On that day (Lavan) removed the ringed and patched male goats and all the spotted and patched female goats, whichever had white (patches) on them, and all the brown ones (from) among the sheep,

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**Classic Questions**

**How much did Lavan prosper due to Ya’akov? (v. 27, 30)**

ZOHAR: “I have found out by divining, that God has blessed me because of you” (v. 27). Lavan used magic and sorcery and tested his mazal to see if [he was blessed] because of Ya’akov. He found that due to Ya’akov he received an additional hundred sheep, a hundred lambs, and a hundred male goats to his flocks every month.

R’ Abba said: Ya’akov used to bring an additional thousand cattle, a thousand lambs, and a thousand male goats every month, as the verse states, “For the few that you had before I (came) have increased extensively, and God blessed you (because of) my arrival” (v. 30). Blessing from above does not dwell on less than a thousand of each kind. So there were a thousand sheep, a thousand lambs, and a thousand male goats (Zohar I 161a).

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**Lavan’s Blessing (v. 27, 30)**

Did Lavan receive the blessing which God had reserved for him? Or, did he merit to share in a portion of Ya’akov’s personal blessing?

This point was disputed by the two opinions of the Zohar:

The first opinion understood that Lavan was receiving his own blessing. Therefore, he received a smaller amount (100 per month), and the Zohar quotes Lavan’s own words (v. 27) as proof.

R’ Abba understood that Lavan actually merited to receive part of Ya’akov’s blessing. Thus, the blessing was greater (1000 per month) and, to stress this point, R’ Abba quoted a proof from Ya’akov’s words (v. 30).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 136ff.)

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

The first opinion of the Zohar perceived the non-Jew to be secondary to the Jew. Therefore, Lavan received an inferior blessing to Ya’akov.

R’ Abba on the other hand took a deeper approach, seeing the non-Jew not merely as an assistant but as a real partner in a Jew’s observance of Torah and mitzvos. Therefore, Lavan was able to share a part of Ya’akov’s personal blessing (ibid.).
Where did Ya'akov obtain servants and maids? (v. 43)

Rashi: He would sell his flocks at a high price and purchase all these things.

Be'er Yitzchak: The Torah only mentions that Ya'akov possessed flocks, so Rashi was troubled why our verse states that he had concluded that he must have acquired these possessions through the sale of his flocks. Rashi's statement that he sold the animals at a “high price” was his own conclusion based on logic. For, since Ya'akov's flocks were “extremely fertile,” it follows that he would have fetched a high price.

Ya'akov's Wealth (v. 43)

There are two problems here:

a.) Verse 43 states that Ya'akov accumulated great wealth and, as Rashi explains, he sold off some of his flocks to buy, “maids, servants, camels and donkeys.” Later, when the Torah describes Ya'akov's departure from Charan, the matter resurfaces. The verse states, “He led off all his livestock and all his possessions that he had acquired in Padan-Aram—purchased from what he owned” (31:18). On the words, “purchased from
and he gave (them) into the hands of his sons.  

He set three days’ journey between himself and Ya’akov, and Ya’akov tended (the dregs of) Lavan’s remaining flocks.

Ya’akov took himself fresh sticks of poplar, hazel and chestnut (wood), and he peeled white streaks on them by uncovering the white that was (inside) the sticks.  He inserted the sticks that he had peeled, into the (ground, by the) pools (into which) the watering troughs (would fill) where the flocks would come to drink, so that they faced the animals. (This caused them) to become stimulated (and mate) when they came to drink.  The flocks became stimulated (and mated on seeing) the rods, and the flocks bore ringed, patched, and striped (young).

Ya’akov segregated the (newborn) sheep: He made the (other) animals in Lavan’s flocks (in a group behind, so that) they faced the ringed ones and all the brown ones. (Ya’akov) separated the flocks (in the above manner) for his own (benefit). He did not place them with Lavan’s animals.

What happened was, that whenever the early-bearing flocks would become stimulated (ready to mate), Ya’akov would place the sticks in the troughs, before the eyes of the animals, (in order) to stimulate them (into mating) by (means of) the rods. But when the flocks were late in bearing, he would not place (the sticks). Thus, the ones that were born late went to Lavan, and the ones that were born early to Ya’akov.

The man (Ya’akov) became exceedingly wealthy. He had extremely fertile flocks and maids, servants, camels and donkeys.

what he owned,” Rashi comments, “The servants, maids, camels, and donkeys which he had purchased from [the sale of] his flocks.” This is clearly a reference to our verse here (v. 43).

One detail however requires clarification: Why did Rashi alter the sequence of Ya’akov’s possessions as described by the Torah? In our verse we read that he had, “maids, servants, camels and donkeys,” whereas below (31:18), Rashi switches the first two items, stating that he had, “servants, maids, camels, and donkeys?”

b.) A further problem arises in Parshas Vayishlach, when we read that Ya’akov told Eisav, “I have acquired oxen, donkeys, flocks, servants, and maids” (32:6). Again, there appears to be an inconsistency: In our verse, here in Parshas Vayetzei, we are not informed at all that Ya’akov acquired oxen, and yet this was the first thing that Ya’akov told Eisav in Parshas Vayishlach. Furthermore, Ya’akov omitted to tell Eisav that he had acquired camels. What is the reason for all these changes?

The Explanation

a.) After God blessed Ya’akov with “extremely fertile flocks,” Ya’akov would soon have been unable to tend to them singlehandedly. Thus, the first purchase that Ya’akov made with the money raised from the sale of his flocks would have been servants, to help him attend the flocks. Therefore, when Rashi lists Ya’akov’s acquisitions (below 31:18) he places servants first, as this would surely have been Ya’akov’s first purchase.

But this begs the question: If Ya’akov purchased servants first then why does our verse (v. 43) mention maids before servants?

Presumably, just as God blessed Ya’akov’s flocks to be “extremely fertile,” He would also have blessed Ya’akov’s maids to bear many children. To stress this point, the Torah juxtaposed “flocks” to maids: “He had extremely fertile flocks, maids, servants, camels and donkeys.” In this way, the term “extremely fertile” actually refers both to the flocks and the maids.

In other words, since we are coming to stress here how Ya’akov “became exceedingly wealthy,” the Torah slightly altered the actual sequence in which Ya’akov acquired his possessions, to stress how he became so wealthy—because he had “extremely fertile flocks and maids.”

However, when Rashi listed Ya’akov’s possessions, below in 31:18, there was no need to cite the list out of order. So Rashi wrote servants first, as this would have been Ya’akov’s first acquisition.

b.) In order to explain why no mention is made in our verse of Ya’akov’s oxen, let us first pose another question:

Before Ya’akov came to Lavan’s house, he asked that God give him “bread to eat and garments to wear” (28:20). Why do we not find any mention in the Torah that this request was fulfilled? Presumably this is

The Last Word

The Midrash describes the Jewish people as God’s “sheep” (Shir Hashirim Rabah 2:16), as an expression of their total dedication to God, like sheep that follow their shepherd unquestioningly.

Ya’akov exemplified this level of dedication while he worked for Lavan, remaining loyal to God’s commands despite the spiritually alien environment. Thus, to hint to Ya’akov’s dedication, God rewarded him with wealth that came about through amassing sheep.

However, when Ya’akov returned to confront Eisav, he did not stress sheep as his most important acquisition, but rather, oxen (32:6). Ya’akov was hinting, “Because I am dedicated to God like a quiet sheep, therefore I have God’s might behind me, so I will be as strong as an ox against you!”

This teaches us that, in our observance of mitzvos we should be utterly humble towards God like a sheep; but when fighting the forces that oppose Judaism in the outside world, we cannot stand by sheepishly and watch Jews be drawn away from their heritage. Rather, we must fight for Jewish values with the strength of an ox.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 252ff.)
when we read that “the man became exceedingly wealthy” it is obvious that he had the basic necessities of food and clothing.

Thus, it turns out that when our verse states that Ya‘akov had, “extremely fertile flocks, maids, servants, camels and donkeys,” we are not reading an exhaustive list of all of Ya‘akov’s possessions. Rather, the items that are mentioned here are those which Ya‘akov possessed in extreme abundance.

Consequently, it goes without saying that Ya‘akov would have possessed some oxen, for he would have needed to carry out some agricultural work to provide his family with food—and for this, oxen are a necessity. But since his primary work was with sheep and goats, which are highly mobile, he would have had to keep his agricultural interests to a minimum, since he would not have been able to stay in one place with his flocks for a prolonged period. Therefore he would not have purchased too many oxen, so the Torah omits any mention of them here as they were not an expression of Ya‘akov’s exceptional wealth.

Eisav, on the other hand, lived predominantly in one place: Mount Se’ir. Consequently, when Ya‘akov wanted to impress Eisav with his wealth, he said, “I have acquired oxen, donkeys, flocks, servants, and maids,” stressing oxen—Eisav’s primary interest—and omitting any mention of camels, which he would not be interested in at all.

*(Based on Sichas Yud Kislev and Shabbos Parshas Vayetzee 5740)*

Toras Menachem
Then, he heard the words of Lavan's sons, saying, "Ya'akov has taken everything that belonged to our father, and he has amassed this entire fortune from what belonged to our father." 2 Ya'akov saw Lavan's face, and—look!—it was not (friendly) towards him like yesterday and the day before.

3 God said to Ya'akov, “Return to the Land of your forefathers, to your birthplace, and I will be with you.”

4 So Ya'akov sent (a message) and called Rochel and Leah to the field, to his flocks. 5 He said to them, “I see that your father's face is not (friendly) toward me like yesterday and the day before, but (my riches came because) the God of my father was with me. 6 You know that I served your father with all my might. 7 Your father mocked me and changed my wages a hundred times, but God did not permit him to harm me. 8 If he would say, ‘Spotted ones shall be your wages,’ then all the animals would give birth to spotted ones. If he would say, ‘Ringed ones shall be your wages,’ then all the animals would give birth to ringed ones. 9 God took away your father's livestock and gave it to me. 10 Then, at the time when animals became stimulated, I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, that—look!—(angels were bringing) ringed, spotted, and striped he-goats (from the flocks of Lavan's sons) to mate with the (female) animals.”

11 “In the dream, an angel of God said to me, ‘Ya'akov!’”

“I said, ‘Here I am.’”

12 “He said, ‘Now lift your eyes and see (that) all the he-goats mounting the animals are ringed, spotted, and striped, for I have seen all that Lavan is doing to you. 13 I am the God of Beis-Ail, where

### Ramban

In the dream, God's angel told Ya'akov that he no longer needed to use the mating method of the sticks, for from now on the sheep would be born with the correct patterns miraculously.

### What did Ya'akov dream? (v. 10)

**Rashi:** Although Lavan had set aside all [the goats], so that the animals would not conceive in their likeness, the angels were bringing them from the flock that had been transferred into the hands of Lavan's sons to the flock that was in Ya'akov's hands (see above v. 32ff).

### Were the animals born naturally or miraculously (v. 10)?

**Ralbag:** Ya'akov's technique of rods (above 30:37ff) was a natural method of causing animals to mate, though it was of course by Divine Providence.

**Ohr haChayim:** It was a phenomenal miracle, a reversal of nature.

### Ya'akov's Dream (v. 10)

In Ya'akov's dream we read for the first time about a type of animal called בִּלְקָלַטָה, which was not mentioned in the previous accounts of Ya'akov's flocks. *Ibn Ezra* understood that this is a type of patched animal, similar to the patched animal קָנָקָע mentioned above (v. 32ff). Rashi however rejected this interpretation and learned instead that בִּלְקָלַטָה is a totally new type of animal, which has not been mentioned before. Why did Rashi reject the interpretation of *Ibn Ezra* and come to the conclusion that Ya'akov saw a new type of goat in his dream?

### The Explanation

To clarify this matter, let us turn to the discussion of the commentaries concerning Ya'akov's method of promoting mating, using sticks (described above 30:37ff). *Ralbag* argues that this was a totally natural process; *Ohr haChayim* suggests that it was totally miraculous; and *Ramban* offers a third opinion, that up to the dream Ya'akov promoted mating naturally with the sticks, and that afterwards the process was supernatural.

Now, according to the first two approaches (totally natural or totally miraculous), Ya'akov would have continued to use the sticks after the dream in exactly the same way as before—either naturally or supernaturally. Thus, the same types of animals would have been produced both before and after the dream.

However, according to the third approach (*Ramban*), the dream witnessed a shift from a natural mating process to a supernatural mating process. Consequently, it is feasible that animals with a different mating pattern (קָנָקָע) would have resulted from the mating process.

According to Rashi, Ya'akov saw in the dream, “Angels were bringing them... to the flock that was in Ya'akov's hands,” i.e. a new, supernatural method of breeding flocks, similar to the third opinion above (of Ramban). Therefore Rashi sympathized with the view that בִּלְקָלַטָה was a new type of animal, heralding the new era of supernatural success for Ya'akov.
What can be learned from the way Ya'akov loaded the camels? (v. 17)

**Rashi:** He put the males before the females, but Eisav put the females before the males, as the verse states, “Eisav took his wives before his children (below, 36:6).

**Gur Aryeh:** Eisav was more interested in his wives, whom he married to satisfy his desires, than his children. Ya’akov however, only married in order to raise twelve tribes. Therefore, he placed his sons before his wives, for they were the reason for his marriage.

A problem with this explanation is that Moshe mounted his wives before his children (Shemos 4:20), and we even find later that Ya’akov too mounted his wives before his children (below 32:23).

However, Moshe mounted his children first because they were small at the time and needed to be placed into the care of their mother on the donkey. Below, Ya’akov mounted his wives first, since he transported them across a stream of water, and it is normal for a person who transports things across water to move the easiest things first.

Thus, the only instance where it is of significance that Ya’akov placed his children first is here, in our verse. For here, Ya’akov was embarking on a journey to the Land where they planned to settle permanently. Therefore, in this case, Ya’akov felt it necessary to stress that his sons would form his main “settlement.”
you anointed a monument and where you made a vow to Me. Now, get moving, leave this land, and return to the Land of your birth.”

14. Rochel and Leah replied, saying to him, “(It’s not as if) we still have a share or an inheritance in our father’s house (for that will go to our brothers). Aren’t we considered strangers to him, for he sold us (to you in marriage without a dowry) and (when you worked for him to marry us) he totally consumed our money! Rather, all the wealth that God separated from our father belongs to us and our children. So now, do everything that God said to you.”

17. Ya’akov got moving. He lifted up his sons and his wives onto the camels, and he led off all his livestock and all his possessions that he had acquired in Padan-Aram—purchased (through the sale of the livestock) that he owned—to come to Yitzchak, his father, in the land of Cana’an.

19. Lavan had gone to shear his sheep (which were with his sons, three days’ journey away), so Rochel stole her father’s idols (attempting to wean him off idol worship).

20. Ya’akov duped Lavan the Aramean by not telling him that he was running away. He fled, with all his belongings. He got moving, crossed the river, and headed towards Mount Gilad.

LAVAN CHASES AFTER YA’AKOV AND CONFRONTS HIM

31:22

On the third day, Lavan was informed that Ya’akov had fled. He took his relatives with him and pursued him. (He covered) seven days journey (in one day), and he reached (Ya’akov) at Mount Gilad.

24. God came to Lavan the Aramean in a nighttime dream. He said to him, “Beware not to speak with

THORAS MENACHEM

Ya’akov’s Departure (v. 17)

Rashi’s comment to verse 17 presents us with a number of questions:

a.) Rashi expected the reader to follow the Chumash in order. At this point the reader will not yet be troubled by the contradiction in the way Ya’akov and Eisav mounted their families, since we do not read about Eisav’s mounting until later, in Parshas Vayishlach. So, why does Rashi address the matter here?

b.) What exactly is Rashi’s point? He merely notes a difference between the conduct of Ya’akov and Eisav (which is self-evident from the verses themselves) without adding any commentary.

c.) What happened to Dinah, Ya’akov’s daughter? There is no doubt that Ya’akov must have taken her with him when the family fled from Lavan, and yet the verse only mentions that Ya’akov “lifted up his sons and his wives onto the camels,” without mentioning his daughter. Why does Rashi not address this basic point?

d.) The question of Gur Aryeh: Below, in Parshas Vayishlach, the Torah states that Ya’akov mounted his wives before his children (32:23). We also find that Moshe did likewise (Shemos 4:20). This appears to contradict Rashi’s statement here that placing the females before the males was an act which only Eisav would do!

The Explanation

The fact that both Ya’akov and Moshe mounted their wives before their children on other occasions does not present us with a problem at the literal level of Torah interpretation, for it is only respectful for a child to wait while his mother mounts a camel. To the contrary, for a child to mount the camel while his mother is standing below would be the very opposite of honoring one’s parents! Therefore both Ya’akov and Moshe mounted their wives before their children.

When reading our verse however, the reader will be troubled why Ya’akov indeed mounted his sons before his wives, an act which appeared disrespectful to his wives.

Rashi answers, “He put the males before the females.” This case was an historic moment, where Ya’akov set off with his family to make a permanent settlement in the Land of Israel, to build twelve tribes which would form the Jewish people as a whole. Therefore, on this occasion, Ya’akov decided that it was appropriate—as an exception, and not the rule—to mount “the males before the females,” i.e. to stress the importance of his sons as the founders of the Jewish nation.

Thus Rashi informs us that even though the verse uses the words “sons and wives,” the significance here is that he placed “males before females.” (Thus, Dinah was not mentioned explicitly as she was included in the term “wives” which means “females” in general).

However, even after this explanation Rashi was still troubled: Why did the Torah go out of its way to stress the above point which seems, at first glance, to be relatively unremarkable?

Therefore, in order to bring to light how Ya’akov’s actions were indeed impressive, Rashi cited the contrasting case of Eisav:

At first glance, when Eisav mounted his wives before his children, one might think that he was acting respectably, teaching his children the importance of honoring parents. Therefore, Rashi reveals to us that, in truth he “put the females before the males.” I.e. the parent/child relationship was irrelevant to Eisav here. He placed his wives first, merely for one reason: because they were females, who gave him pleasure.

This contrast stresses even further the greatness of Ya’akov our father who “put the males before the females.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, pp. 141ff; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Vayetzai 5742)
Ya’akov either good or bad (for even your ‘good’ is bad.).”

25 When Lavan caught up Ya’akov, Ya’akov had pitched his tent on the mountain, and Lavan pitched (his tent) with his relatives on Mount Gilad.

26 Lavan said to Ya’akov, “What have you done? You duped me, and led away my daughters like prisoners of war! Why did you flee secretly and deceive me? Why didn’t you tell me? I would have sent you off with rejoicing, songs, drum and harp! You didn’t allow me to kiss my sons and daughters. You have now acted foolishly.”

27 “I am sufficiently strong to harm you, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Beware not to speak with Ya’akov either good or bad.’

28 “Now, you have repeatedly (wanted) to go away, because you longed again and again for your father’s house (but we worked things out sensibly and you stayed!*) And why have you stolen my gods?”

29 Ya’akov replied (to the questions in order). He said to Lavan, “I ran off without telling you) because I was afraid, since I said (to myself), ‘perhaps you will kidnap your daughters from me.’”

30 (In answer to your second question:) Whoever you find has your idols shall not live. In front of our relatives, identify for yourself which (of your possessions) is with me, and take (it) for yourself”—but Ya’akov did not know that Rochel had stolen them.

31 Lavan entered Ya’akov’s (and Rochel’s) tent, then Leah’s tent and the tent of the two handmaids, but he did not find (them). When he came out of Leah’s tent he (re-)entered Rochel’s tent (since he was suspicious of her).

32 Rochel had taken the idols and placed them into the camel saddle, sitting on them. Lavan rummaged the entire tent, but he did not find (them).

33 She said to her father, “I hope my master will not be annoyed that I can’t get up before you, because the way of women is upon me.” (Lavan) searched, but did not find the idols.

34 Ya’akov became angry and argued with Lavan. He said to Lavan, “What is my crime? What is my sin, that you have pursued me? You have rummaged about all my things. Whatever you have found from among any of the utensils of your house, place it here, in front of my relatives and your relatives, and let them decide between the two of us (who is right).”

35 “It’s already twenty years that I’ve been with you, and your ewes and she-goats have not miscarried. I have not eaten the (newborn) rams of your flocks. I have not brought home to you an animal torn

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TORAS MENACHEM

Sparks of Chasidus

Lavan’s Chase

The Maggid of Mezritch taught: “Ya’akov had left behind letters from the Torah which he had not yet extracted from Lavan. This is why Lavan pursued him—to give him the letters which remained with him. An entire chapter was added to the Torah by these letters.”

(Orh Hame’ir, beg. Parshas Vayeitzei; see Orh Hatorah vol. 5, p. 869a)

The “letters of the Torah” which Ya’akov left behind were “sparks” of holiness. In fact, Ya’akov had spent twenty years in Lavan’s house extracting whatever sparks of holiness he could find there, and when the process was complete, he left. At least he thought it was complete....

In truth however, Ya’akov had left some sparks behind, so Lavan chased after Ya’akov to give them to him.

Why did Ya’akov leave sparks behind?

Chasidic teachings explain that while most of a person’s achievements in life come through his own conscious efforts, there are some “super-conscious” achievements that are so lofty they cannot occur intentionally. So, while we are usually the ones that choose our own paths in life—to find the sparks which we are destined to elevate—sometimes our “sparks” pursue us, because they are too sublime to be “extracted” solely by our own endeavors.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 260ff.)
(by a lion or a wolf. In such a case) I would suffer its loss (because) you would demand (payment) from my hand. (I also paid for) that which was stolen by day and that which was stolen at night.”

40 “(Where) I was by day, the heat consumed me. At night there was frost, and my eyes were deprived of sleep.”

41 “It’s twenty years that I’ve spent in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your animals, and you changed my wages a hundred times. 42 If it wasn’t for the God of my father, the God of Avraham and the (One who) Yitzchak feared that was with me, you would now have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, and He reprimanded (you) last night.”

**Lavan Makes a Pact With Ya’akov**

Lavan answered Ya’akov and said, “The daughters are my daughters! The sons are my sons! The flocks are my flocks! All that you see is mine! As for my daughters...what (harm) would I (dream of) doing to them today? Or to the children that they have borne?”

44 “Now come! Let’s make a pact—you and I. And may (God) be a witness between me and you.”

45 Ya’akov took a stone and set it up as a monument.

46 Ya’akov said to his (sons), “Gather stones!”

They took stones and made a pile, and they ate there by the pile. 47 Lavan called it Yegar-Sahadusa (“the pile is a witness,” in Aramaic). Ya’akov called it Gal-Aid (the same in its Hebrew translation).

48 Lavan said, “This pile is a witness between me and you today”—it was therefore named Gal-Aid. 49 (It is also known as) Mitzpah (“watch”), because he said, “May God watch me and you when we are hidden from each other. 50 If you neglect my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters when no one is with us—look!—God is a witness between me and you.”

51 Lavan said to Ya’akov, “Here is the pile and here is the monument which I have set up between me and you. 52 This pile is a witness, and this monument is a witness, that I am not to pass this pile (to go) to you, and nor are you to pass this pile and this monument to (come to) me to (do) harm. 53 May the God of Avraham, the god of Nachor and the god of their father judge between us.”

**Classic Questions**

- When could the “pile” be passed? (v. 52)
  
 **Rashi:** [Lavan said:] “You may not pass to do harm, but you may pass to do business” (see Sparks of Chasidus).

**Toras Menachem**

Sparks of Chasidus

The “Pile”

The “pile of stones” represents the boundary between the Jew (Ya’akov) and his non-Jewish surroundings (Lavan). This boundary is not a total barrier, whereby the Jew totally isolates himself from the world and wants nothing to do with his non-Jewish neighbors—or, for that matter, anything mundane.

Rather, as Rashi describes (ibid.), it is a “semi-permeable” interface: “You may not pass to do harm, but you may pass to do business.” i.e. a Jew should indeed interact with his surroundings, but not in a manner that causes him spiritual “harm.” Rather, he should “profit” spiritually from his interaction with the world, by training his eye to perceive how its physical existence is being constantly renewed at every moment by God.

Consequently, the person elevates himself and realizes that he is not dealing with mundane matters at all, but with physical objects that are a manifestation of God. In this way he will come to fulfill the dictum (Proverbs 3:6), “In all your ways know Him,” i.e. in one’s own mundane affairs, one comes to a heightened awareness of God.

(Based on Sefer Hasichos 5748, vol. 2, p. 437-8)
Why did angels of God encounter Ya’akov? (v. 2)

**RASHI:** Angels from the Land of Israel came to greet him, to escort him to the Land. The place was thus called “Double-Camp”—the camp of angels from the Diaspora who came with him up to this point, and those of the Land of Israel who came to greet him.

**RAMBAN:** Why would the angels of the Land of Israel have come to greet Ya’akov, as Rashi writes, since Ya’akov was still a long way from the Land? Rather, Ya’akov had a vision of angels here that came to inform him, “We are more with you than with your enemies,” since he was entering enemy territory.

**GUR ARYEH:** In my opinion, Ramban’s question is not valid at all. Since Ya’akov was on his way to the Land of Israel, it was appropriate that the angels of the Land should come and protect him, even though he was still some distance away, for it was for the benefit of the Land [that Ya’akov should arrive safely]. The other angels from the Diaspora protected him from other potential hazards.

**BECHOR SHOR:** The angels came to escort Ya’akov out of respect, not to guard him.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

**ANGELS FROM THE LAND OF ISRAEL (v. 2)**

According to Gur Aryeh, angels came from the Land of Israel to protect Ya’akov on his journey to the Land, in addition to the angels from the Diaspora, who were already accompanying him. However, this argument is somewhat difficult to accept, for why would Ya’akov need two sets of angels to protect him?
Ya’akov swore by the (One whom) his father Yitzchak feared.

Ya’akov slaughtered animals (for a feast) on the mountain. He invited his friends (who were with Lavan) to eat a meal. They ate a meal and slept over on the mountain.

1 Lavan got up early in the morning. He kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them, and then Lavan went off and returned to his home.

Angels From the Land of Israel Greet Ya’akov

32:2 Ya’akov went on his way, and angels of God (from the Land of Israel) encountered him (to escort him to the land). 3 When he saw them, Ya’akov said, “This is a camp of God,” and he named the place Machanayim (“Double-Camp”—due to the two sets of angels that had escorted him from the Diaspora, and that had escorted him to the Land of Israel).

THE HAFTARAH FOR VAYEITZEI IS ON PAGE 382.

Rather, it seems more logical to say that angels from the Diaspora were already protecting him, while additional angels came from the Land of Israel purely to show respect for Ya’akov—as Rashi appears to stress, that they came “to escort him.” [See Bechor Shor]

This however leaves us with another problem: Rashi writes near the beginning of our Parsha that the angels of the Land of Israel were not permitted to leave the Land (28:12; see Toras Menachem ibid.). Why then, were they allowed in this instance to come outside the Land to escort Ya’akov?

(According to Gur Aryeh the angels had a special sanction to leave the Land, because they came to protect Ya’akov, whose safe arrival in the Land of Israel was in the Land’s own best interest. Therefore, it could be argued that the angels were allowed to leave because their mission was a.) crucial, and b.) for the sake of the Land itself.

But, according to our above conclusion—that the angels only came to escort Ya’akov out of honor—we are left with the question: why would the angels be allowed to leave the land, merely to provide an escort?)

The Explanation

Rambam writes, “It is forbidden to leave the Land of Israel for the Diaspora in any circumstances, other than to study Torah, get married or to save oneself from gentiles, and afterwards one must return” (Hilchos Melachim 5:9).

Me’iri adds a further detail, based on the Talmud (Kidushin 31b), that “It is permissible to leave the Land of Israel to greet one’s father or mother, or for any other matter of offering respect.”

At first glance, it appears that Rambam did not consent to the ruling of Me’iri, since he omitted this case from his codification of the law.

However, there is a principle in Talmudic study that one always seeks to minimize disputes, and thus it would be preferable to argue here that Rambam did indeed consent to the ruling of Me’iri, but he did not include it in his codification for the following reason:

Rambam was listing the cases where there is a special sanction to leave the Land of Israel despite the person’s obligation to remain there. Me’iri, on the other hand, cited a case where a person leaves the Land of Israel for the sake of the Land itself, i.e. to greet a person who has decided to come and live in the Land. Therefore, Rambam did not list this specific case, as it is not an exception to the requirement to stay in the land, but an extension of it.

In our case, it follows therefore that the angels were permitted to leave the Land of Israel in order to escort Ya’akov to the Land, since this was the very purpose of the angels: to promote matters pertaining to the Land of Israel.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 150ff.)
Vayishlach means, “he sent,” which refers to the concept of shlichus, sending an emissary or representative.

In the broader sense, we are all shluchim (emissaries) of the Almighty. He placed our souls into our bodies in order for us to carry out a mission here on earth: to perform the mitzvos of the Torah, and to influence our surroundings positively so that the physical world becomes a “home” for God.

More specifically, this shlichus to affect the outside world can be divided into two phases:

a.) When he is away from the synagogue and study-hall, the Jew spreads the light of Judaism to his surroundings.

b.) He is not satisfied with the shlichus which he alone is carrying out, and he endeavors to make more shluchim—others who will also be charged with the enthusiasm to spread Torah and Judaism.

These two phases are alluded to in the two Parshiyos Vayeitzei and Vayishlach:

a.) Vayeitzei means “he departed.” Ya’akov left his homeland on a shlichus to influence an environment which was alien to Judaism.

b.) Vayishlach means “he sent,” alluding to the second phase of shlichus, where a shliach is not satisfied with his own ongoing achievements, and he inspires others to be shluchim.

Subsequently, we proceed to Vayeishev, which means “he settled,” (“Ya’akov wished to settle in peace”—Rashi), alluding to the peaceful harmony of the true and complete redemption.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5748)
What kind of messengers (חקלאים) did Ya’akov send? (v. 4)

**Rashi:** He sent actual angels.

**Midrash:** He sent human messengers. The Rabbis said: actual angels.

**Mizrachi:** Since the end of the previous Parsha spoke about Ya’akov’s encounter with angels, Rashi favored the opinion of the angels.

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**Why did Ya’akov Send Actual Angels? (v. 4)**

The **Midrash** cites two opinions, that Ya’akov either sent human messengers to inform Eisav of his arrival, or he sent actual angels. Rashi came to the conclusion that, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, Ya’akov sent actual angels.

**Mizrachi** explains that Rashi deduced this fact from the connection between the beginning of our Parsha and the end of the previous Parsha, Vayeitzei. Since the end of Parshas Vayeitzei speaks about actual angels—“Ya’akov sent on his way, and angels of God (from the Land of Israel) encountered him” (32:2)—it follows that in our Parsha too the word מלאכים is to be translated “angels” and not as human “messengers.”

Mizrachi’s solution, however, seems to have two problems:

a.) In the previous Parsha the Torah refers to מלאכי האל שיצאו ("angels of God"), in contrast to our verse where they are plain מלאכים ("angels"). This would suggest that we are speaking of two different entities.

b.) The Torah itself makes no indication whatsoever that the end of the previous Parsha and the beginning of our Parsha are linked. If there were a connection between them, then surely our verse should have stated, “Ya’akov sent some of the angels ahead of him”?

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**Classic Questions**

Rabbits that Ya’akov sent actual angels, achieving a consistency between the end of the previous Parsha and the beginning of our Parsha—both are speaking of angels.

**Levush Ha’ohrah:** Ya’akov sent Eisav actual angels to intimidate him. Eisav would wonder, “Is my brother so powerful that he has a host of angels under his control? Surely, I will not be able to overcome him.”

**Toras Menachem**

Levush Ha’ohrah argues that Ya’akov sent angels to Eisav to intimidate him, since Eisav would be deeply impressed that Ya’akov had angels under his control.

However, this appears to be inconsistent with a comment of Rashi below. On Ya’akov’s remark to Eisav, “I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God” (33:10), Rashi comments, “It is worthy and proper for you to accept my gift, because I have seen your face, and to me this is tantamount to seeing the face of the angel, for I saw your guardian angel…” Why did [Ya’akov] mention that he saw the angel? In order that [Eisav] should fear him and say, ‘He saw angels and was saved. From now on, I will not be able to prevail over him.’"

Now, if Ya’akov had already sent angels to Eisav, at the very outset, in order to intimidate him—as Levush Ha’ohrah suggests—then what would be added by Ya’akov’s remark later on that he had seen an angel? Surely, Eisav was already aware that Ya’akov dealt with angels from the very outset, when Ya’akov’s gift arrived, accompanied by angels.

It therefore seems that according to Rashi, the original gift-bearing angels must have appeared to Eisav as if they were human beings, otherwise Ya’akov’s ploy later on of hinting that he had an encounter with an angel would not have been necessary.


**Ya'akov Prepares to Confront Eisav**

**32:4**

Ya'akov sent angels ahead of him to his brother Eisav, to the Land of Se’ir, to the fields of Edom.

He instructed them, saying, “Say the following to my master, to Eisav: ‘This is what your servant Ya’akov said, “I have been living with Lavan (like a stranger, so there’s no need to be jealous of me), and I have been delayed until now. I possess oxen, donkeys, flocks, servants and maids (but Father’s blessing for ‘dew of the heavens and fatness of the earth’ has not been fulfilled). I have sent (this message) to tell this to my master (to let you know that I am coming), to find favor in your eyes (since I seek peace with you).’”

The angels returned to Ya’akov, saying, “We came to your brother (but he is still behaving like the wicked) Eisav. He is also heading toward you, and four hundred men are with him!”

Ya’akov was very worried (that he might be killed) and pained (that he may kill other people too), so he divided the people who were with him, the flocks, the cattle and the camels into two camps.

**Toras Menachem**

We are thus left with the question: what led Rashi to conclude that Ya’akov sent actual angels to Eisav, especially when one considers that they looked like human beings?

**The Explanation**

Rashi writes earlier that when “Eisav came (home) from the field, exhausted” (25:29), he was exhausted from committing murder.

Similarly, after Eisav discovered that Ya’akov had taken the blessing intended for him, “Eisav said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father will soon come, and then I will kill my brother Ya’akov’” (27:41).

Since Eisav was a murderous person and there was a considerable possibility that he still harbored resentment twenty years later, Rashi was troubled by the question: How could Ya’akov send messengers to Eisav when it is likely that they would be killed on the spot? And while Ya’akov had received a message that it was an appropriate time to return home [see 31:3 above], nevertheless, in a case where there is a threat to life every precaution must be taken.

Of course, Ya’akov could have sent spies, and not messengers, which would not have put them in any direct danger. Nevertheless, the Torah states explicitly that Ya’akov sent malachim, which means “messengers” and not “spies.”

Therefore, Rashi concluded that Ya’akov had sent “actual angels,” who of course could not possibly have been harmed by Eisav.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 389ff.)*

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Between the giving of the Torah and the final redemption two types of “spiritual elevation” need to be carried out:

a.) The “spiritual elevation” of the objects found in this physical world, by using them for holy purposes. This is achieved by the observance of the mitzvos, and also by dedicating non-religious acts “for the sake of heaven” etc.

b.) The “spiritual elevation” of the non-Jewish nations leading to the point where “I will convert the peoples to a pure language that all of them call in the Name of God, to worship Him of one accord” (Zeph. 3:9).

These two phases were also implicit in the life of Ya’akov:

While in the house of Lavan, Ya’akov observed the 613 mitzvos (see Rashi to v. 5), corresponding to “a” above.

Then, Ya’akov attempted to “spiritually elevate” Eisav, who represents the non-Jewish nations, by sending him angels, gifts and words of appeasement—corresponding to “b” above.

Only then was Ya’akov’s spiritual mission complete, enabling him to return back to “his father’s house” in the Land of Israel—corresponding to the true and complete redemption.

*(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5751, Vayeitzei 5752)*

**The Last Word**

Rashi writes that Ya’akov sent Eisav actual angels (malachim mamash). The Maggid of Mezritch taught that Ya’akov sent the “mamash” of the angels, their angelic “bodies,” to Eisav but that their souls remained with him.

Obviously, this does not mean to say that Ya’akov split the angels apart, dividing their “bodies” and souls. Rather, the Maggid’s intent was that even after the angels were sent off on their mission, they remained totally loyal to Ya’akov—their “souls” were with him.

This teaches us that when a Jew becomes involved with the physical world, he too must send out metaphorical “angels” or “messengers,” i.e. he must use his “sixth sense” to determine whether his physical endeavors could prove to be detrimental to his spiritual “health,” asking himself: Is this a physical pursuit that can easily be dedicated or “steered” to a higher purpose, or not?

And, even then, the person should not put the “soul” of his senses and faculties into physical matters. Rather, while he may use the “mamash” (body) of his senses for his physical pursuits, a Jew’s genuine enthusiasm—the “soul” of his senses—should be reserved only for spiritual matters.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 392ff.; vol. 10, p. 101)*
Was Ya'akov certain that the “remaining camp” would survive? (v. 9)

Rashi: “The remaining camp will survive against Eisav’s will, for I will wage war with him.”

[Ya’akov] adjusted himself for three things: for giving a gift, for war, and for prayer. For giving a gift: “[God of my father Yitzchak] Who said to me, ‘Return to your land, etc.’” omitting the extra word “God”.

Rabbi Meir states: “He who gives a gift is like one who goes to war, so it is written, ‘I will guard you wherever you go’” (ibid. v. 15).

[Secondly,] in Lavan’s house You said to me, “I am God, the God of Avraham your father, and the God of Yitzchak” (28:13), and there You said to me, “I will guard you wherever you go” (ibid. v. 15).

[Thirdly,] wherever you go” (ibid. v. 15).

Rather, this is what Ya’akov said to God: “You gave me two promises. Firstly, when I left my father’s house in Be’er-Sheva, when You said to me: “I am God, the God of Avraham your father, and the God of Yitzchak” (28:13), and there You said to me, “I will guard you wherever you go” (ibid. v. 15).

[Secondly,] in Lavan’s house You said to me, “Return to the land of your forefathers, to your birthplace, and I will be with you” (31:3). There You revealed Yourself to me with the Tetragrammaton alone, as the verse states: “God said to Ya’akov, ‘Return to the land of your forefathers, etc.’” Thus, the extra Tetragrammaton in our verse hints to this second promise.

With these two promises I am coming before You,” [Ya’akov said].

Why did Ya’akov say that he was “small”? (v. 11)

Rashi: [He said]: “My merits have diminished because of the kindnesses and the truth that You have rendered me. Therefore, I fear that perhaps, since You made those promises to me, I have become soiled by sin and it will cause me to be delivered into Eisav’s hand.

Why did Ya’akov refer to the “God of Yitzchak”? (v. 10)

Rashi: But above, the verse states: “the (One whom) Yitzchak feared” (31:42). And why did he repeat the Tetragrammaton? The verse should have stated: “[God of my father Yitzchak] Who said to me, “Return to your land, etc.” [omitting the extra word “God”].
9 He said, “If Eisav comes to one camp and strikes it down, (then I will fight with him), so the remaining camp will survive.”

10 Ya’akov said, “O God of my father Avraham and God of my father Yitzchak! God, Who said to me, ‘Return to the land of your forefathers, to your birthplace, and I will be with you,’ (My merits) have become small due to all the acts of kindness and the true (fulfillment of all Your promises) that You have done for Your servant, (so I fear that I’ve lost the merit to be saved from Eisav)—for (when) I crossed this (river) Jordan, I (only) had my stick, and now I have amassed two camps. Please save me from the hand of my (so-called) brother, from the hand of Eisav, for I am afraid of him. He might come and strike me, and even a mother with (her) children. You said, ‘I will do good to you (in your merit and) I will do good (in the merit of your forefathers), and I will make your descendants (as widespread) as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their great number.’”

14 He slept there that night.

(As a further preparation) he took a gift from his possessions for his brother Eisav: 15 200 female goats,
Therefore, before turning to God and pleading with Him to keep his earlier promises, Ya’akov decided that it was only logical to divide his camp into two groups: those which God had promised to save—his family and their personal needs—into one camp, and the remaining possessions promised to save, into another. (As we see from the Torah’s narrative below, that all of Ya’akov’s family was in one single...
20 male goats, 200 ewes and 20 rams, 16 30 nursing camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys. 17 He gave each (species in its own) herd separately into the hands of his servants.

He said to his servants, “Pass on ahead of me (about one day’s distance) and make a space (no more than the eye can see) between one herd and another herd (so that Eisav appreciates the size of the gift).”

18 He instructed the first (group), saying, “When my brother Eisav encounters you and questions you, saying, ‘Whose property are you? Where are you going? Whose property are these (animals) in front of you?’ You should say, ‘(We belong) to your servant Ya’akov. This is a gift sent to my master, to Eisav, and—look!—(Ya’akov) himself is (coming right) behind us.’”

20 He also instructed the second (group), the third (group), and all those who followed the herds, saying, “This is how you should speak to Eisav when you meet him. 21 You should also say, ‘Look, your servant Ya’akov is behind us.’” For (Ya’akov) said (to himself), “I’ll appease his anger with the gift that is going ahead of me, and afterwards I’ll see him face(-to-face). Perhaps he’ll accept me.”

22 So the gift passed on ahead of him, and he slept that night in the camp.

23 (During) that night he got up, and he took his two wives, his two maids and his eleven children (together with Dinah, who was hidden in a chest), and crossed the shallow part of (the river) Yabok. 24 He took them and brought them across the stream. He (went backwards and forwards and) took across everything he had.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

“THAT NIGHT”

The above explanation, however, leaves us with a problem: Ya’akov’s three-fold “adjustment” was surely an act of emotional turmoil. At the same time that Ya’akov was adjusting his emotions to fight in battle, and at the same time Ya’akov was pleading to God for mercy. Could a single human being be capable of harboring all these diametrically opposed emotions at once?

At first glance, it would appear that Ya’akov dealt with these three matters sequentially and he did not feel all three emotions at the same time.

However, at the literal level, the Torah seems to indicate that Ya’akov did manage to feel all these sentiments at once:

On three occasions in the current section, the Torah adds the seemingly superfluous statement that the events occurred “on that night.” a.) After Ya’akov’s prayer, the Torah concludes, “He slept there that night” (v. 14). b.) After sending the gift to Eisav, “He slept that night in the camp” (v. 22). c.) Before Ya’akov attempts to save his family and possessions by transporting them across the Yabok river, the Torah states “that night he got up.”

Here we see that the Torah is coming to emphasize that all these three emotions—adjustment to a) prayer, b) appeasement and c) war tactics—all occurred “on that night,” i.e. at the same time. Even though they appear to be contradictory, Ya’akov immersed himself in all three activities simultaneously.

Ya’akov achieved this feat since he was not expressing his own personal emotions. Rather, he “adjusted himself” to follow God’s directive, that a Jew should always plan for salvation that may come either through war or peace, naturally or supernaturally.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 265ff, Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5745)
What is the significance of Ya’akov’s fight with the angel?

**Ramban:** Our Sages said in the Midrash: "[The angel] touched all that Ya’akov had and all the city of Shechem—which is in the land of Canaan—perfect (in health, wealth and Torah knowledge)."

This entire event constitutes a hint to his descendants, indicating that there will be a generation from the seed of Ya’akov against his colleagues [117-138 c.e.].

There are other generations in which they have done to us such things as these, and even worse, but we have endured and it has passed over us. This is hinted to by the verse: "Ya’akov came to the city of Shechem—which is in the land of Canaan—perfect (in health, wealth and Torah knowledge)" (below 33:18).

Why is the place named “Peniy’ail” in verse 31 then called “Penu’ail” in verse 32?

**Ohr Hachayim:** Only Ya’akov himself called the place Peniy’ail. Thus when the Torah mentions the place in verse 32 it changes the name to Penu’ail.

**Bachaye:** Of the different levels of angels [see Ramban, Yesodei Hatorah 2:7], the tenth level is called an ish (lit. “man”). This is the term with which the Torah refers to the angel that fought with Ya’akov [v. 25].

The difference between the word מני and ידו is that the yud is swapped for a vav. When Ya’akov was fighting the angel, and his mind was fixed in the spiritual realms, he called the place Peniy’ail with a yud, hinting to his involvement with the angel of the tenth level (yud-10). However, later when he came back “down to earth” he changed the yud for a vav (=6) representing the physical world which consists of the six directions: north, south, west, east, up and down.
Ya’akov Fights with Eisav’s Guardian Angel

32:25 Y a’akov (forgot some small jars, and went back for them. He) was left alone....

(Eisav’s guardian angel, appearing as) a man, wrestled with him until the break of dawn. 26 When he saw that he could not prevail against (Ya’akov), he touched the joint of his hip. As he wrestled with him, the socket of Ya’akov’s hip became dislocated.

27 (The angel) said, “Let me go, for the morning has arrived (and I must recite songs of praise).”

(Ya’akov) said, “I will not let you go unless you (consent to the) blessing (which Eisav is grieved that my father gave) me.”

28 (The angel) said to him, “What is your name?”

“Ya’akov,” he said.

29 “(Please be patient!)” he said, “(God will reveal Himself to you in Beis-Ail, and then) your name will no longer be called Ya’akov (which denotes trickery [aKaVah] and deceit), but rather, Yisra’el (suggesting that the blessings were authorized [beSeRarah]), because you have fought with (an angel of) God and with (Lavan and Eisav), and you have overcome (them. I will be there too, and I will consent to your blessing then.)”

30 Ya’akov questioned him and said, “Tell me your name.”

He said, “Why is it that you ask for my name? (We angels simply don’t have a fixed name).”

(Ya’akov persisted that the angel consent to his blessings. Eventually the angel conceded) and he blessed him there.

31 Ya’akov named the place Peniy’ail (“God’s face”), “because I saw God face to face, and my soul was saved.”

32 When he passed Penu’ail, the sun rose for him, and he was limping on his thigh.

• 33 Consequently, to this day, the children of Israel may not eat the sciatic nerve (of an animal) which (arises) by the hip joint, because (the angel) touched the joint of Ya’akov’s hip at the sciatic nerve.

Peniy’ail / Penu’ail (v. 31-32)

At the literal level of Torah interpretation, not every name needs to be explained. However, when the Torah itself explains the reason for a particular name, that reason needs to make sense at the literal level.

In our case, when the verse states, “Ya’akov named the place Peniy’ail: ‘because I saw God face to face, etc.,’” clearly we are to understand that the word is a compound of the two words כַּן אֵל (“God’s face”). When reading the following verse the reader will therefore question why the name, and presumably the meaning, has changed. Why does Rashi, who addresses every difficulty at the literal level, fail to comment on this point?

The Explanation

Rashi felt it unnecessary to offer any explanation as the matter is self-understood from the verse itself. Ya’akov said, “I saw God face to face,” indicating that we are speaking of two faces here: God’s face and Ya’akov’s face. Thus, while Ya’akov was in the actual place where he saw the angel, he called it “God’s face.” After he left, he called it פינאיל (a place) after his own face: [ כַּן אֵל (“His (Ya’akov’s) face (has seen) God.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 137ff.)

The Last Word

According to Ramban, Ya’akov’s fight with the guardian angel of Eisav alludes to the suffering of the Jewish people during the times of Exile.

The fact that Ya’akov was later healed completely (see below 33:18 and Rashi ibid.) indicates that when the exile finally ends there will be no remnant whatsoever of Jewish suffering. In other words, the key emphasis here in Ya’akov’s battle with the angel is not the injury that Ya’akov suffered, but rather, the fact that it was only a temporary injury.

Thus, when we observe the prohibition against eating the sciatic nerve ( gid hanashe), our emphasis too should be a positive one. Namely, that rather than focusing on Ya’akov’s injury to the sciatic nerve, we should stress the fact that later he was totally healed, representing the ability of the Jew to withstand all the tribulations of exile and emerge unblemished.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 174; Sefer Hashichos 5751, p. 263)
Why did Eisav embrace Ya’akov? (v. 4)

Rashi: Eisav’s compassion was aroused when he saw Ya’akov prostrate himself all those times (see v. 3).

Was Eisav’s kiss sincere? (v. 4)

Rashi: There are dots over the word יֹשֵׁב ("and he kissed him") and there is a difference of opinion about this matter found in a braisa [teaching] of the Sifrei. Some interpret the dots to mean that he did not kiss him wholeheartedly. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: The fact that Eisav hates Ya’akov is obvious and [incontrovertible, like] a ruling in Jewish Law. However, at that moment Eisav’s compassion was warmed, and he kissed him wholeheartedly.

Sefer Hazikaron: Dots on a word indicate that the word has a weaker meaning than one would have otherwise presumed.

According to Rashi’s first interpretation (“he did not kiss him wholeheartedly”) this is understood—even though the verse states that “he kissed him,” this was a “weak,” insincere kiss.

However, Rabbi Shimon was troubled by this interpretation, since even without the dots we would have realized that Eisav did not kiss Ya’akov wholeheartedly, for “the fact that Eisav hates Ya’akov is obvious and [incontrovertible, like] a ruling in Jewish Law.”

Therefore, according to Rabbi Shimon, in this case the dots teach us that the kiss was not insincere, as one would presume, but to the contrary, “Eisav kissed him wholeheartedly.”

Why did Eisav weep? (v. 4)

Ibn Ezra: At the literal level it appears that Eisav did not intend to harm his brother Ya’akov. The proof of this is that he wept, just as Yosef wept when he confessed to his brothers (below 45:15).
Ya'akov looked around to see, and—look!—Eisav was coming, and four hundred men were with him! So (Ya'akov) divided the children among Leah, Rochel and the two maids. He placed the maids and their children first, Leah and her children behind (because they were more cherished), and Rochel with Yosef last (because they were most cherished).

He went ahead of them (to protect them) and prostrated himself (progressively) on the ground seven times, until he approached his brother. (This aroused Eisav’s compassion, so) Eisav ran toward him and embraced him. He fell on (Ya’akov’s) neck and kissed him, and they wept.

(Eisav) looked around and saw the women and the children. He said, “How are these (people related) to you?”

(Ya’akov) said, “(They are) the children whom God has graciously given your servant.”

The maids approached (Eisav, both) they and their children, and they prostrated themselves. Leah and her children approached and prostrated themselves, and afterwards, Yosef and Rochel approached and prostrated themselves.

(Eisav) said, “What was your (idea of) this whole entourage that I met?”

“To find favor in my master’s eyes,” said Ya’akov.

Eisav said, “I have plenty (more than I need). My brother, you can keep what is yours.”

Ya’akov said, “Please don’t (say that). If indeed I have now found favor in your eyes, then take my gift from my hand.”

Was Eisav Sincere? (v. 4)

Rashi’s comments to verse 4 prompt a number of questions:

a.) Why was Rashi certain that Eisav’s embrace was sincere, whereas regarding his kiss Rashi cites a difference of opinion?

b.) When dots are found on a word, they indicate that the word’s meaning is weakened. Thus, Rashi’s first cited opinion appears to be acceptable, since the dots indicate a weakening—even though Eisav kissed Ya’akov, “he did not kiss him wholeheartedly.”

However, according to Rashi’s second cited opinion (of Rabbi Shimon), that Eisav did kiss Ya’akov sincerely, it turns out that the word וְקָיוָּשׁ (“and he kissed him”) is not weakened at all by the dots. Thus, the dots appear to be redundant.

How is this acceptable, at the literal level?

(Sefer Hazikaron explains that in this instance the dots do not come to weaken the word, but that they have a different meaning. However, at the literal level, dots always weaken the meaning of a word, so it is difficult to accept that this case is an unprecedented exception)

The Explanation

Rashi was troubled by an obvious question in the current narrative: How was Eisav—who vied to kill Ya’akov (above 27:41), still hated him passionately (Rashi to 32:7), and was now approaching with 400 men—suddenly transformed from one emotional extreme to the other, to the extent that he embraced Ya’akov and kissed him?

To explain Eisav’s embrace, Rashi writes, “[Eisav’s] compassion was aroused when he saw [Ya’akov] prostrate himself all those times.” I.e. the exceptional honor which Ya’akov showed Eisav in bowing to him progressively seven times (v. 3), caused a sudden emotional change on Eisav’s part, and he hugged his brother.

In the case of Eisav’s kiss, however, this is not a satisfactory explanation, since a kiss is a far deeper and more sincere expression of emotion than a mere hug. So Rashi was troubled: Ya’akov’s prostrating on the ground may have been enough to elicit an embrace from Eisav, but surely not a hearty, brotherly kiss?

Rashi answers: “There are dots over the word וְקָיוָּשׁ (‘and he kissed him.’)” i.e. the dots weaken the word, indicating that Eisav’s kiss was deficient in some respect.

One possible explanation why Eisav’s kiss was deficient, is that it was insincere—he did not kiss him wholeheartedly.” Nevertheless, Rashi could not suffice with this interpretation alone, since it appears to be out of character with the rest of Eisav’s behavior here. Not only do we read that Eisav cried, which must have been sincere (see Ibn Ezra) but he also declined to accept Ya’akov’s gift, saying, “My brother, you can keep what is yours” (v. 9). And, finally, Eisav offers to, “Please let me station with you some of the men that are with me” (v. 15). There does not appear to be any indication that Eisav was insincere with these actions, which begs the question: Why would his kiss have been insincere? And if it was sincere, then why are there dots above the word, indicating a weakness?

Because of this problem, Rashi found it necessary to bring a second interpretation: “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: The fact that Eisav hates Ya’akov is obvious and [controvertible, like] a ruling in Jewish Law. However, at that moment Eisav’s compassion was warmed, and he kissed him wholeheartedly.”

Here we see that the dots indicate a different kind of weakness in Eisav’s kiss. Rabbi Shimon explained that Eisav’s kiss was indeed sincere, but only at that moment of his encounter with Ya’akov. This sincerity was temporary and totally uncharacteristic of Eisav, since, “the fact that Eisav hates Ya’akov is obvious and [controvertible, like] a ruling in Jewish Law.”
RABBI SHIMON BAR YOCHAI

In the final analysis however, the more astute reader may persist and argue that Rashi’s second interpretation appears to be a contradiction in terms. The same opinion which stresses that “The fact that Eisav hates Ya’akov is obvious and [incontrovertible, like] a ruling in Jewish Law,” also stressed the opposite, that “Eisav... kissed him wholeheartedly”(!)

Rashi hinted to the solution to this problem by quoting the author of the teaching, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Rashi does not usually cite the various authors of the Talmudic teachings that he cites, from which it follows that when he does do so, it is with an obvious intent. Namely, that a subtle problem with Rashi’s explanation can be solved by bearing in mind who its author was.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was a victim of the Roman regime, which forced him into exile in a cave for 13 years. Nevertheless, at a later date, when an ambassador was required to plead with the Roman government to annul a decree which had been passed against the Jewish people, the very same Rabbi Shimon who had fled from the Romans was chosen to appeal against them, on the basis that he was a miracle worker (Me’ilah 17a).

With this in mind, we can appreciate why it was Rabbi Shimon who saw it feasible that Ya’akov who fled from Eisav was later able to appeal successfully for mercy from his brother, since Rabbi Shimon had achieved the same feat in his own lifetime.

And just as Rabbi Shimon was chosen for the job because he was “a miracle worker” (ibid.) similarly we find that Ya’akov also performed wondrous acts, as Rashi writes, “He placed his staff into the Jordan, and the Jordan split” (Rashi to 32:11, above).

Therefore, the Torah placed dots on the word to indicate that Eisav’s kiss was deficient in that it represented only a subtle problem with Rashi’s explanation can be solved by bearing in mind who its author was.

Ya’akov is obvious and [incontrovertible, like] a ruling in Jewish Law,” argue that kiss was deficient in that it represented only a miracle worker” (ibid.) similarly we find that Ya’akov also performed wondrous acts, as Rashi writes, “He placed his staff into the Jordan, and the Jordan split” (Rashi to 32:11, above).
(Ya’akov intimidated Eisav by saying, “You deserve the gift simply) because I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of (an angel of) God, (for I have indeed seen your guardian angel)—and you have been appeased by me. 11 Please take my gift, which has been brought to you (through tremendous effort), for God has favored me, and I have everything (I need).”

(Ya’akov) urged him, and he took it.

12 (Eisav) said, “Set off and we’ll go (together). I will go alongside you (as slowly as you want).”

13 (Ya’akov) said to him, “My master knows that the children are tender. The flocks and the cattle, (which) are raising their young, depend upon me. If they push them too hard one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my master please go ahead (at his own pace) before his servant, and I will move at my own slow pace—according to the pace of the (animal) workforce (that I’m responsible for), and according to the pace of the children—until I come (and meet) my master at (our final destination of) Se’ir.”

15 Eisav said, “Please let me station with you some of the men that are with me.”

“Why is that (necessary)?” (Ya’akov) said. “May I find favor in my master’s eyes (and don’t pay me anything).”

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **Why did Ya’akov tell Eisav that he would meet him in Se’ir? (v. 14)**

**Rashi:** [Ya’akov] broadened the journey for him, for he only intended to go as far as Sukos. He said to himself, “If he [Eisav] intends to do me harm, he’ll wait until I come to him.” But [Ya’akov] didn’t go [to Se’ir]. And when will he go? In the days of Mashiach, as the verse states, “Deliverers will go up... etc.”

**Talmud:** “If [an idolator] asks you, ‘Where you are traveling to?’ you should broaden the journey for him, just as Ya’akov our father did to Eisav the wicked one. The verse states [that Ya’akov said, “I will move ...] until I come (and meet) my master at Se’ir” (v. 14), but the Torah states, “Ya’akov traveled to Sukos” (v. 17). (Avodah Zarah 25b)

**Midrash:** We have searched through all of scripture and we have not found that Ya’akov ever went to Mt. Se’ir. Could it be that Ya’akov, who was such a truthful person, deceived him? Actually, he was truthful, for he will come to him in the future, as the verse states, “Deliverers will go up on Mt. Tziyon to judge the Mt. of Eisav” (Ovadiah. 1:21). (Bereishis Rabah 78:14)

**Maharsha:** The Talmud and Midrash appear to be contradictory. The Talmud suggests that Ya’akov lied to Eisav in order to protect himself, whereas the Midrash suggests that he did not lie. How could Rashi’s commentary on the Chumash combine both the interpretation of the Talmud and that of the Midrash when they are contradictory?

However, it could be argued that Ya’akov made a statement which he knew would deceive Eisav. Nevertheless, since Ya’akov was such a righteous person, even his misleading statements will ultimately be fulfilled (i.e. his promise will be fulfilled in the Messianic era).

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

Consequently, Rashi does not write that Ya’akov “lengthened the journey for Eisav,” suggesting that he fabricated a false destination, but rather, that he “broadened the journey.” Increasing the “breadth” stresses that the length of the journey was not extended at all, but rather, that the same journey was undertaken, but it took more time, due to various delays and other considerations.

Thus, at the literal level, Ya’akov did not lie. He merely explained to Eisav that his journey was going to be extremely time-consuming—as the Torah states explicitly, “My master knows that the children are tender. The flocks and the cattle, (which) are raising their young, depend upon me.

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**The Last Word**

A Jew should never feel “at home” while we are still in exile. Rather, we must always be aware that the exile is only a temporary state, for in truth, we are in the process of a journey heading towards redemption—like Ya’akov whose journey will be completed only in the Messianic Era.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 164)
Where did Eisav’s 400 men go? (v. 16)

**Rashi** The verse states, “Eisav returned on...his way.” Eisav was alone. The four hundred men slipped away one by one.

Surely, as soon as his emotions passed, Eisav would have resumed his prior attack?

Rashi answers: “four hundred men slipped away.” I.e. Eisav’s emotions did pass very quickly, and he soon wanted to harm Ya’akov, but he was simply unable to do so because his army deserted him.

To stress this point further, Rashi writes that they slipped away, “one by one.” i.e. they left surreptitiously, trying to avoid Eisav noticing their departure. Now, if Eisav no longer wanted to harm Ya’akov, why would his army need to sneak away? Surely, they would be discharged, being no longer necessary?

From this we see that Eisav’s men were fully aware of their master’s intention. They were not fooled by Eisav’s emotional outburst, for they knew that it would soon pass and he would decide to launch an attack on Ya’akov. So, while Eisav was busy talking, they slipped away one by one, to avoid having to fight a war when Eisav’s anger would resurface.

Why did the men have a change of heart, and not want to fight against Ya’akov on Eisav’s behalf?

This can be understood from an earlier comment of Rashi. On verse 8, above, Rashi writes:

(Eisav) encountered groups of angels, who were showing him and his men and asking them, “To whom do you belong?”

They responded, “We belong to Eisav.”

(The angels) said, “Strike them! Strike them!”

(Eisav’s men) said, “Leave off! [Our master] is Yitschak’s son!” But [the angels] paid no attention.
16 On that day, Eisav went back to Se’ir, his usual hang-out, (alone).

17 Ya’akov traveled to Sukos and built himself a house. He made huts (“sukos”) for his cattle—therefore he named the place Sukos.

18 (After 18 months) on his way from Padan-Aram, Ya’akov came to the city of Shechem—which is in the land of Cana’an—whole (in health, wealth and Torah knowledge), and he encamped in front of the city. 19 He bought the part of the field where he had pitched his tent from the sons of Chamor, Shechem’s father, for a hundred kesitas. 20 He erected an altar there, and he named it (to commemorate the miracle of his salvation): “God (is the) God of Israel.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● How was Ya’akov “whole” when he arrived? (v. 18)

Rashi: He was physically whole, for he was cured of his limp; financially whole, for he did not lose anything because of the entire gift that he had given Eisav; and whole in his Torah knowledge, for he had not forgotten his Torah knowledge in Lavan’s house.

Talmud: Rav said, “He was physically whole, financially whole and whole in his Torah knowledge” (Shabbos 33b).

Midrash: Also, his family was whole, as the verse states, “If Eisav and Lavan)” (above 28:15 and 29:1).

When Ya’akov left his home to travel to Lavan’s house, God promised him, “Look, I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go (from EisaV and Lavan)” (above 28:15 and Rashi ibid.).

Thus, on reaching our verse, which describes the final return of Ya’akov to the Land of Israel, we can learn that this will not be the case! Ya’akov not only arrived safely—a point the Torah presumed too obvious for the Torah to mention—but, “he was physically whole, financially whole and whole in his Torah knowledge.” Likewise the Jewish people will emerge from this final exile unscarred by the experiences of exile, undrained of our physical resources and devoid of any spiritual compromise.

(Torahoch, vol. 25, pp. 173ff.)

The Last Word

While a Jew believes that he will ultimately emerge victorious from this long and bitter exile, he might think that the exile will nevertheless have taken its toll. Even after the redemption comes, one would presume that the Jewish people will be permanently “scarred”—both physically and spiritually—from the long and horrid tribulations of exile.

However, from the Torah’s account of Ya’akov’s arrival back in the Land of Israel, we can learn that this will not be the case! Ya’akov not only arrived safely—a point the Torah presumed too obvious for the Torah to mention—but, “he was physically whole, financially whole and whole in his Torah knowledge.” Likewise the Jewish people will emerge from this final exile unscarred by the experiences of exile, undrained of our physical resources and devoid of any spiritual compromise.

(Torahoch, vol. 25, pp. 173ff.)
fourth explanation of the Torah studies, which could only be expected when working day and night, without sleep, for 20 years (see above 31:40). Therefore, Rashi stresses that Ya'akov arrived “whole in his Torah knowledge.”

Based on the above we can also understand why Rashi omitted the fourth explanation of the Midrash—that Ya’akov’s family was whole—since God’s blessing, “I will guard you wherever you go,” obviously included protection for Ya’akov’s family. Therefore, it would be unnecessary for Rashi to stress here that God fulfilled his explicit promise, mentioned earlier.
Dinah—Leah’s daughter, whom she had borne to Ya’akov—went out to observe the daughters of the Land. Shechem—the son of Chamor the Chivite, prince of the land—saw her. He took her, lay with her, and violated her.

1 His soul cleaved to Dinah, Ya’akov’s daughter. He loved the girl. He spoke to the girl’s heart (telling her how much wealth he had, more than Ya’akov).

2 Shechem spoke to his father, Chamor, saying, “Take this girl for me as a wife.”

3 While his sons were with his flocks in the field, Ya’akov heard that (Shechem) had defiled his daughter Dinah. Ya’akov kept silent (waiting) until they came (home).

4 Chamor, Shechem’s father, went off to Ya’akov to speak with him.

5 When they heard (the news), Ya’akov’s sons came (home) from the field. The men were distressed and extremely angry, for (Shechem) had committed a disgraceful act in Israel, to lie with a daughter of Ya’akov. Such (acts) were not done (even by the nations, at that time).

6 Chamor spoke with them, saying, “My son Shechem’s soul yearns for your daughter. Please give her to him for a wife. (Your whole family can) marry with us: give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. Live with us! The land will be (free) before you. Settle (in it), do business in it and buy property in it.”

7 Shechem said to (Dinah’s) father and to her brothers, “May I find favor in your eyes. Whatever you tell me I will give! Impose upon me a large dowry and gifts and I’ll give whatever you ask me. (Just) give me the girl for a wife.”

8 Ya’akov’s sons responded ingeniously to Shechem and his father Chamor, and they spoke (up. Their response was not dishonest when one considers that) he had defiled their sister Dinah. They said to them, “We are unable to do this thing—to give our sister to a man who has a foreskin, as to us it’s a (blemish of) disqualification.”

9 “We will consent to you, however, with this (condition): if you will be like us, to have all your males

Classic Questions

Why is Dinah described as the “daughter of Leah”? (v. 1)

Rashi: Was she not the daughter of Ya’akov? However, because she “went out” [to observe the daughters of the land] she was called the daughter of Leah, since she [Leah] too was outgoing, as the verse states, “Leah came out towards him” (above 30:16). (About her, they coined the saying: “Like mother, like daughter.”)

Abarbanel: The Torah does not come here to disparage Dinah, as Rashi suggests, but rather to speak of her praise. She merely “went out to observe the daughters of the land,” and not to get up to any mischief. Since she was the only daughter in Ya’akov’s home, she wanted to see how other girls dress and adorn themselves. And she certainly would not have gone out alone.

Why then did Rashi intimate that the incident with Shechem occurred because Dinah was outgoing, just like her mother?

The Explanation

On the night before Ya’akov’s confrontation with Eisav, the Torah states that Ya’akov woke up in the night, and “he took his two wives, his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the shallow part of (the river) Yabok” (32:23, above). Rashi notes (ibid.) that the Torah’s mention of Ya’akov’s “eleven children” does not seem to account for his daughter: “Where was Dinah? He put her into a chest and locked her in, so that Eisav should not set eyes on her. Because of this, Ya’akov was punished for withholding her from his brother—for perhaps she would have influenced him positively—and she fell into the hands of Shechem.”
toras menachem

At first glance, this appears to be an outrageous assertion: How could Yaakov possibly have been expected to put his daughter at risk, allowing her to marry the morally debased Eisav, on the mere chance that "perhaps she would have influenced him positively"? Could any person be blamed, never mind punished, for wanting to withhold his daughter from a wicked man?

Rashi’s account of Yaakov’s punishment implies that Dinah was so obviously talented that Yaakov was in fact certain that she had the ability to make Eisav into a good person, without becoming corrupted herself. The only doubt here was that since ultimately Eisav had free choice, there was no guarantee that even Dinah would make him repent. Therefore, Rashi writes that there was a possibility of failure, “perhaps she would have influenced him positively.” Nevertheless, Yaakov was wrong in withholding his daughter from Eisav because she definitely had the ability to make him a better person, and every effort should be made to help a person do teshuvah, even if one is not guaranteed of success. So, in the final analysis, Yaakov was guilty. He had nothing to lose, for he could be certain that Dinah’s personality would be impervious even to Eisav’s wickedness, and on the other hand, Eisav had everything to gain.

From the above discussion we see that, Dinah was certainly not a weak person whose natural outgoingsness was liable to lead her “off the track,” as it appears at first glance. To the contrary, she was blessed with the precious talent of returning people to the path of morality through her wonderful, outgoing personality.

Thus, in our verse, Rashi could not possibly be coming to suggest any bad intention on the part of Dinah in “going out to observe the girls of the Land.” Rather, Rashi wished to stress that just like her mother, Leah used her outgoing personality only for the sake of heaven (“she desired and was seeking means to increase the number of tribes”), so too, it goes without saying that Dinah “went out” to use her God-given talent of
Then we will give you our daughters, and we will take your daughters for ourselves. We will live with you and become one people.”

“But if you do not listen to us, to be circumcised, we will take our daughter and go.”

Chamor and Shechem, Chamor’s son, were pleased with their words. The young man did not delay carrying out the matter, because he desired Ya’akov’s daughter. He was the most honored of all his father’s household.

Chamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city, and they spoke to the people of their city, saying, “These men are peaceful (and sincere) with us. They’re going to live in the land and do business in it. The land is clearly spacious enough for them (so there’s nothing to lose). We’ll take their daughters for ourselves as wives, and we’ll give them our daughters.”

“But the men will only agree to live with us, to be one family, on this (condition): by all our males being circumcised, just as they are circumcised.”

“Then, won’t all their flocks, their property, and all their cattle be ours? Let’s consent to them, and (then) they will live with us.”

All the residents of his city listened to Chamor and his son Shechem, and every male that lived in his city became circumcised.

And then, on the third day when they were in pain, Ya’akov’s two sons Shimon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took each man a sword. They came to the city confidently (since they knew the people were weak), and they killed every male.

How were Shimon and Levi justified in killing all the men of Shechem? (v. 25)

Rambam: One of the seven Noahide Laws, binding on all non-Jews, is to establish a justice system. Since the people of Shechem failed to judge Shechem for his crime against Dinah, all the people of Shechem were collectively liable for the death penalty for failing to uphold justice (Hilchos Melachim 9:14).

Ramban: Establishing a justice system is a positive command, but there is no prohibition punishable by death against failing to uphold justice, as Rambam argues. Rather, the people of Shechem were already liable for the death penalty, even before the incident with Dinah, since they were idol worshippers in any case. Thus, after Dinah’s abduction, Shimon and Levi sought revenge based on the people of Shechem’s prior sins (comment to v.13).

Classic Questions

Dinah’s Wish (Partially) Granted

Of course, Dinah’s plan ended in tragedy, as she was abducted by Shechem (though this was through no fault of her own, since it was a punishment for Ya’akov, as explained above.) Nonetheless, it could be argued that Dinah’s desire to bring the local people closer to Judaism was partially fulfilled as a result of the incident. For, when Ya’akov’s family encouraged the people of Shechem to circumcise themselves, this actually represented a process of conversion to Judaism. And, even though only the men underwent circumcision, it follows that the women would have converted too, as Ya’akov’s sons stressed, “If you will be like us, to have all your males circumcised. Then we will give you our daughters, and we will take your daughters for ourselves” (v. 15-16).

Thus, despite the fact that the men of Shechem were ultimately liable for the death penalty (see “Classic Questions” to v. 25), nevertheless, Dinah’s saintly desire to bring the people closer to Judaism did reach partial fruition, since all the people of the town ended up converting because of her. For, even though the men were killed, the women were not—as the verse states, “They captured and plundered all their wealth, all their infants, their wives and everything that was in the house” (v. 29). And we can presume that these women actually became part of Ya’akov’s household.

Thus, in the final analysis, Dinah’s well-meaning attempt to bring the “daughters of the Land” closer to Judaism was ultimately fulfilled, at least in part.

From Dinah’s conduct we can learn that those Jewish women who are blessed with a God-given ability to influence others positively, should make sure to use their talents productively outside the home as well. Of course, a Jewish woman must always maintain an air of modesty, and even when she is outside the home it should be recognizable in her actions that “the entire glory of the king’s daughter is within” (Psalms 45:14). Nevertheless, while retaining the utmost guard in all matters of modesty, it is crucial that Jewish women who are capable of bringing others closer to Judaism spend time outside the home, utilizing their God-given talents for the sake of Heaven.

The Last Word

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(Taken from Likutei Sichos vol. 35, pp. 154-5)
Why was Ya’akov angry with Shimon and Levi? (v. 30)

**Rashi:** ֒עָבָדָם is an expression denoting murky water. [Thus, Ya’akov was saying,] “Now my mind is not clear.”

According to the Midrash [he was saying]: “The barrel was clear, but you have made it murky.” The Canaanites had a tradition that they would fall into the hands of Ya’akov’s sons, but they said [that this would not happen], “Until you have increased and can occupy the land” (Shemos 23:30). Therefore, they have been silent [until now].

**RadvaZ:** If the people of Shechem were liable for the death penalty in any case [see Classic Questions to v. 25, above] why did Ya’akov become angry with Shimon and Levi?

Because, when the people of Shechem circumcised themselves, they actually converted to Judaism, and a convert is considered to be like a newborn baby, clean of sin.

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**Ya’akov’s Rebuke (v. 30)**

Both Rambam and Ramban explain that Shimon and Levi did not spill innocent blood, God forbid, when they killed the people of Shechem. Rather the people were in fact liable for the death penalty (see above, “Classic Questions” to v. 25).

A further proof of this point is that Ya’akov did not criticize Shimon and Levi for the actual killing of the people of Shechem. He appeared only to be worried about the consequences which could arise: “You have made (my mind) troubled, creating hostility (between) me and the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and among the Perizites. I have only a few (men). They can gather against me and attack me, and then I and my household will be destroyed!” (v. 30 see Rashi ibid).

However, from a later comment of Rashi in Parshas Vayechi it appears that Ya’akov was unhappy, not only with the potential consequences of the episode, but also with the actions of Shimon and Levi themselves. In his blessing to Shimon and Levi, before he passed away, Ya’akov criticized them, “They killed (every) man (in Shechem) to vent their anger” (49:6). Similarly he indicates his dissatisfaction that “their (murderous use of) weapons has been stolen” (ibid:5), on which Rashi comments, “This craft of murder is in their hands wrongfully, [for] it is [part] of Eisav’s blessing. It is his craft, and you, Shimon and Levi, have stolen it from him.”

From this we see clearly that Ya’akov was dissatisfied with the method which Shimon and Levi used to eliminate the people of Shechem, and not merely the potential dangers which could have arisen after the attack.

So we are left with the question [posed by RadvaZ]: If the people of Shechem were liable for the death penalty (as Rambam and Ramban write), why did Ya’akov disapprove of Shimon and Levi’s actions?

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**ToraS Menachem**

Two explanations could be argued:

a.) In principle, Ya’akov agreed that the people of Shechem were liable for the death penalty. However, it was physically impossible for Ya’akov and his family to eliminate an entire community singlehandedly, without resorting to actions which could be interpreted as “foul play,” i.e. to encourage the people to circumcise themselves and then kill them when they were weak. Obviously, such apparently deceptive plans would bring about a chilul Hashem (desecration of God’s Name). Therefore, considering the circumstances, Ya’akov considered it better to do nothing at all.

b.) Alternatively, perhaps Ya’akov argued that to the contrary, the deception was totally unnecessary in this case. The people of Shechem were liable for the death penalty, so despite the fact that it appeared to be impossible for two young men to wipe out an entire community in the natural order of things, Shimon and Levi should simply have trusted that God would assist them in their actions. Thus, Ya’akov felt that it was totally unnecessary for them to resort to the ethically dubious plan of encouraging the people to circumcise themselves under false pretenses, for this would cause a chilul Hashem. Shimon and Levi should simply have trusted in God, since they were intending to carry out a Divinely decreed punishment of death on the people of Shechem.

[In other words, while a person should always seek ways of carrying out his affairs in the natural order, ultimately success comes not from one’s own deeds, but from God’s assistance. It is only that God desired that a person make a physical effort though which His intervention can be channeled. However, if no “channel” is available which is both natural and ethical, then the only option is to rely on God’s supernatural assistance.]
26 They killed Chamor and his son Shechem with a sword. They took Dinah out of Shechem’s house and left.

27 Ya’akov’s sons came (to strip) the corpses (of their possessions). They plundered the city that had defiled their sister: 28 They took their flocks, their cattle, their donkeys—whatever was in the city and whatever was in the field. 29 They captured and plundered all their wealth, all their infants, their wives and everything that was in the house.

30 Ya’akov said to Shimon and to Levi, “You have made (my mind) troubled, creating hostility (between) me and the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and among the Perizites. I have

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Thus, in this case, Ya’akov criticized his sons: “Since your plan was justified on halachic (legal) grounds, you would have had God’s help. The fact that you did not see any means of success in the natural scheme of things should not have stopped you. You should have relied on God to help you, and not made a deceptive plan which has caused a chilul Hashem.”

In fact, this explanation seems to be supported by a later statement of Rashi. In Ya’akov’s rebuke of Shimon and Levi before his passing, he uses the expression שָׁפַר נִשָּׁפָר (49:6), which literally means, “They killed a man.” Noting the obvious discrepancy, that Shimon and Levi killed many men, Rashi writes, “All of them are considered as no more than one man.”

At first glance, this appears to be perplexing. Why was it relevant to Ya’akov’s rebuke that “all of them are considered as no more than one man”?

However, based on the above explanation, we can understand that Ya’akov was implying: “Why did you resort to plans of deception? You should have trusted in God’s help and considered them all to be as no more than one man!”

IN DEFENSE OF SHIMON AND LEVI

Why indeed did Shimon and Levi not trust in God and wage war on the people of Shechem without deception?

Two explanations could be offered: a.) Even though they trusted in God, in their humility they considered themselves unworthy of an open miracle. Or, b.) Since they were angry, they made a miscalculation (cf. Rashi to Bamidbar 31:21; Pesachim 66b).

Nevertheless, Shimon and Levi defended their actions to their father. They responded, “Could we (allow them) to make our sister like a harlot?” (v. 31). I.e. they were implying, “The way in which Shechem disgraced our sister aroused in us a feeling of utter indignation. We simply could not tolerate what had occurred, so we had to take some action. When one is in such a state, it is impossible to think rationally. One simply has to take action.”

WAS YA’AKOV SATISFIED WITH SHIMON AND LEVI’S REPLY?

We do not find that Ya’akov made any response to Shimon and Levi’s reply, which would suggest that he accepted what they said. Presumably, Ya’akov understood the value of passionate zealotry in matters of holiness—as the Torah praises Pinchas for being a zealot (Bamidbar 25:11f)—and he understood that in such a heightened state of indignation it is not possible to be entirely rational about one’s actions.

However, this begs the question: If Ya’akov was indeed satisfied with Shimon and Levi’s response, as the Torah appears to indicate here, then why did he rebuke them before his passing? (“Their (murderous use of) weapons has been stolen,” “This craft of murder is in their hands wrongfully... they killed (every) man (in Shechem) to vent their anger” 49:5-6 and Rashi ibid).

This problem can be explained in light of the end of the above-cited verse: “They killed (every) man (in Shechem) to vent their anger, and they willingly (attempted) to maim an ox.” Rashi writes, “They wanted to eliminate Yosef, who was called an ‘ox,’ as the verse states, ‘The firstborn of his oxen, grandeur is his’ (Devarim 33:17).”

Clearly, when the brothers harmed Yosef, it was not an act of righteous indignation or holy zealotry. Thus, the incident with Yosef caused Ya’akov to re-evaluate Shimon and Levi’s earlier actions with the people of Shechem. Now it was evident that these two brothers did have a subtle aggressive streak. So, while their actions against Shechem were still justified, it was nevertheless likely that their response was also a function of their personalities rather than being totally for the sake of Heaven. So, while Ya’akov had accepted Shimon and Levi’s argument for killing the people of Shechem at the time, he nevertheless considered it later on to be only partially valid.

WERE SHIMON AND LEVI DISRESPECTFUL TO THEIR FATHER?

One problem which remains is that Shimon and Levi appear to have been disrespectful to their father in seeking retribution against Shechem without his consent. As Rashi writes, “They were his sons, but nevertheless, Shimon and Levi conducted themselves like other people, who were not his sons, for they did not seek his advice” (v. 25).

However, it could be argued that, while Ya’akov may have initially complained that he had not been consulted, Shimon and Levi’s response proves that they had no requirement to consult their father first. In order to explain why this is the case, we first need to clarify the precise halachic requirement of honoring parents before the giving of the Torah (and likewise, for non-Jews after the giving of the Torah).

The Last Word

On the words “each man his sword” (v. 25), our Sages comment in the Midrash: “They were thirteen years old,” and it is on this basis that we derive that a boy becomes obligated in mitzvos at the age of thirteen.

At first glance, this appears to be perplexing: Why should the Torah teach us about the positive status of becoming obligated in mitzvos with the most negative incident, where Shimon and Levi slaughtered the people of Shechem?

However, in truth, the brothers’ action was not a negative one at all. They acted passionately, to defend the cause of righteousness, putting rational considerations aside to ensure an immediate and effective response.

This is a lesson for every Jewish boy who reaches the age of thirteen, that the observance of mitzvos should be carried out with every fiber of one’s being, with total self-sacrifice.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, pp. 150, 161-2)
Honoring parents is not one of the Seven Noachide Laws which are binding on all mankind. In fact, this mitzvah was given for the first time to the Jewish people while they were encamped at Marah (see Sanhedrin 56b), which suggests that beforehand there was no obligation to honor one’s parents. On the other hand, Rashi indicates clearly, in a number of places, that there was a precept accepted universally by the nations of the world, and not a personal stringency of Avraham, for giving of the Torah. For example, we find, “Scripture related Terach’s death before Avram’s departure, so that the matter should not be publicized to everybody and they would say, ‘Avram did not honor his father, for he left him in his old age and went away’” (Rashi to 11:32, above).

Here we see that honoring parents was a precept accepted universally by the nations of the world, and not a personal stringency of Avraham, for...
only a few (men). They can gather against me and attack me, and then I and my household will be destroyed!”

31 (Shimon and Levi) said, “Could we (allow them) to make our sister like a harlot?”

**Journey to Beis-Ail / Ya’akov’s Name is Changed**

God said to Ya’akov, “Get going and travel up to Beis-Ail, and settle there. Make there an altar to the God Who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Eisau.”

2 Ya’akov said to his household, and to all those who were with him, “Remove the foreign gods which are among you (from the booty of Shechem). Purify yourselves (from idol worship) and change your clothes (in case they were used for idol worship too). 3 We’re setting off to go up to Beis-Ail. I will make an altar to the God Who answered me on the day of my distress, and Who was with me on the way that I went.”

4 They gave Ya’akov all the foreign gods that were in their possession and the earrings that were in their ears. Ya’akov hid them under the (non fruit-bearing) tree that was near Shechem.

5 Then they journeyed. The fear of God was upon the cities that were around them, and they did not pursue the children of Ya’akov.

6 Ya’akov came to Luz—which is Beis-Ail—that is in the land of Cana’an—(both) he and all the people who were with him. 7 He built an altar there, and he called the place “God (is in) Beis-Ail,” for God was revealed to him there when he was fleeing from his brother.

8 Rivkah’s nurse Devorah (who had come to fetch Ya’akov from Lavan’s house) died. She was buried beneath Beis-Ail, at the bottom of the plain (“Alon”), so he named it Alon-Bachus.

9 God appeared again to Ya’akov (in the same location) as he was coming from Padan-Aram, and He otherwise the Torah would not be concerned about publicizing Avraham’s act to the nations.

If fact, we even find that Ya’akov was punished for failing to honor his father, which proves that there was indeed an obligation to do so: “Yosef was separated from his father only twenty-two years...corresponding to the twenty-two years that Ya’akov was separated from his father [when] he did not honor him...measure for measure” (Old text of Rashi, 28:9. See also 37:34).

How are these statements to be reconciled with the fact that the mitzvah of honoring parents was only given at Marah?

**The Explanation**

This matter can be explained, based on a statement of Ramban: “In my opinion, the requirement of making ‘laws’ which is included among the Seven Noachide commandments is not merely that they must appoint judges in each district [as Rambam suggests], but rather, He commanded them concerning the laws of theft, overcharge, wronging, a hired man’s wages, the laws of guardians and property, violation of a woman, seduction, principles of damage and wounding another, laws of creditors and debtors, laws of buying and selling etc.” (Ramban to 24:13).

In other words, Ramban understands that the Noachide code contains within it a requirement for all aspects of civil rights and social welfare which are needed to uphold civilization in general. This would obviously include a requirement to honor one’s parents, for by the very same reasoning that a person is required to pay back a financial debt, so he should repay his parents for caring for him when he was unable to do so himself (see Jerusalem Talmud, Pe’ah 1:1; Sefer Hachinuch, mitzvah 33).

Nevertheless, at that time, honoring parents was not a particular mitzvah in itself, but rather, a ramification of the general principle of maintaining a stable society. Only later, at Marah, did honoring parents become a specific halachic requirement in itself (for Jewish people).

A significant practical ramification which was added at Marah would occur, for example, in a case where a person wishes to carry out an act which is of tremendous social benefit, but which is offensive to his parents. If honoring parents is a particular obligation in itself, then the act may simply not be done, for a person may not commit a sin in order to enable him to carry out a mitzvah.

But if, on the other hand, we are speaking of a single, general requirement of upholding civilization, then each act needs to be evaluated in terms of how it achieves this purpose as a whole. Thus, if an act was of particular social value but it was offensive to one’s parents, it might nevertheless be permitted if it could be argued that there was an overall gain to society.

So, in the case of Shimon and Levi, when they replied to their father, “Could we (allow them) to make our sister like a harlot?” they actually provided halachic justification for their apparent failure to consult their father. Namely, that since they were involved in a significant act of social justice—to correct the appalling crime against Dinah, “a disgraceful act in Israel” (34:7)—it was crucial for the good of society that action be taken immediately, without delaying the matter for consultation. Thus, in this case, society was best served by Shimon and Levi in their not consulting their father.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 150ff; ibid. p. 403 ff.)
blessed him.  

10 God said to him, “Your name is Ya’akov. You will no longer be named Ya’akov (which denotes deception [aKaVah]). Rather, Yisra’el shall be your name (denoting a leader [SaR]),” and He named him Yisra’el.

11 God said to him, “I am the Almighty God (Who has the power to bless). Be fruitful and multiply! A nation (through Binyamin) and a multitude of nations (through Menasheh and Efrayim) will come from you, and kings (Sha’ul and Ish Boshes, descended from Binyamin) shall emerge from your loins.”

12 “I will give you the Land that I gave to Avraham and to Yitzchak, and I will give the Land to your descendants after you.”

13 God’s glory ascended from him, in the place where He had spoken with him.  

14 Ya’akov erected a monument in the place where God had spoken with him, a stone monument. He poured a drink-offering on it, and then he poured oil on it.

15 Ya’akov named the place where God had spoken with him Beis-Ail.

Binyamin is Born / Rochel Passes Away

35:16 They journeyed from Beis-Ail, and there was still considerable distance to come to Efras (when) Rochel went into labor. Her labor was difficult.

17 And then, when she was having difficulty giving birth, the midwife said to her, “Do not be afraid, for this one, too, is a son for you.”

18 And then, as her soul was departing, for she was dying, she named him Ben-Oni (“son of my sorrow”)—but his father called him Binyamin (“son of the south,” i.e. the Land of Cana’an).

19 Rochel died. She was buried on the road to Efras, which is Beis-Lechem.  

20 Ya’akov erected a monument on her grave which is the monument of Rochel’s grave until this day.

Re’uvain Moves Ya’akov’s Bed

35:21 Yisra’el journeyed, and he pitched his tent at some distance past the Tower of Aider.

22 And then, when Yisra’el was living in that land, Re’uvain (moved the bed of Ya’akov from where it) lay with Bilhah, his father’s concubine (as a protest that Ya’akov had not moved his bed to Leah’s tent after Rochel’s passing). Yisra’el heard (about it).

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“YOU WILL NO LONGER BE NAMED YA’AKOV” (v 10)

Ya’akov is a name which represents tactical wisdom (see above 32:29 and Rashi ibid). This teaches us that a Jew has the ability to tackle the spiritual concealment of this physical world, evaluating each move that he makes to ensure that it is spiritually productive.

The name Yisra’el was given, “because you have fought with (an angel of) God and with (Lavan and Eisav), and you have overcome (them)” (ibid.). This represents the ability to see through the concealment of “angels and men” and rise above it.

Even after Ya’akov’s name was changed to Yisra’el, we still find that the Torah refers to him with the name Ya’akov, indicating that both names—and the approaches they represent—are eternally appropriate.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 3, p. 795 ff.)

“RE’UVAIN (MOVED THE BED OF YA’AKOV)” (v. 22)

The Midrash refers to Re’uvain as “the first one to repent” for his sin (of moving his father’s bed). God said to him, “No man has ever sinned before me and repented. You have opened the path of teshuvah” (Bereishis Rabah 82:11, 84:19).

Even though we find that Adam and Kayin repented before Re’uvain, nevertheless they did so out of fear of Divine retribution. Re’uvain however, was the first one to truly return to God, because he realized that his sin was wrong.

For this reason, Ya’akov is said to have a “perfect complement” of children, for not only did he have sons who were tzadikim (perfectly righteous), he also had a son who was a genuine ba’al teshuvah.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 201; Sefer Hasichos 5750, pp. 164-6)
Did Yitzchak actually pass away at this point? (v. 29)

Rashi: The Torah is not in chronological order. The sale of Yosef actually preceded Yitzchak’s passing by 12 years:

— When Ya’akov was born, Yitzchak was 60 years old (25:26).
— Yitzchak died in Ya’akov’s 120th year, [because] the verse states, “Yitzchak was 60 years old [when she gave birth to them]” (ibid.), and if you subtract 60 from 180 [Yitzchak’s age at his death; v. 28], you have 120 left.
— Yosef was 17 years old when he was sold, and Ya’akov was 108 years old. How is this so? [Ya’akov] was blessed [by Yitzchak] at the age of 63 (Rashi to 28:9). For 14 years he hid in the academy of Aiver, until he was 77. He worked 14 years for a wife, at the end of which time Yosef was born—as the verse states: “Then, when Rochel had given birth to Yosef, Ya’akov said to Lavan, “Send me away!”” (30:25)—totalling 91. [Add to this] the 17 [years] until Yitzchak’s death, 108.

Ramban: Normally, the Torah relates the chronicles of a person, lists his children and then recounts his death before recounting the chronicles of the children, even if the generations overlap. Thus, in this case, Yitzchak’s passing should really have been recorded before the chronicles of Ya’akov’s life. Nevertheless, the Torah delayed the account of Yitzchak’s passing to stress how he passed away “in good age!” after his son Ya’akov had returned to him, and how Eisav and Ya’akov buried him together [which could obviously have only occurred after they had made peace].
Yaakov's Descendants

35:22 (cont.)

Yaa'akov now had twelve sons (after Binyamin’s birth):

23 Leah’s sons: Reu’vain—Ya’akov’s firstborn—Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissachar, and Zevulun.

24 Rochel’s sons: Yosef and Binyamin.

25 Rochel’s maid Bilhah’s sons: Dan and Naftali.

26 Leah’s maid Zilpah’s sons: Gad and Asher.

(All) these are Ya’akov’s sons who were born to him in Padan-Aram.

Yitzchak Passes Away

(Yitzchak’s passing occurred much later, 12 years after the sale of Yosef.)

35:27

Yaa’akov came to his father Yitzchak, at (the plain of) Mamre in Kiryas-Arba, which is Chevron, where Avraham and Yitzchak lived.

28 Yitzchak lived a total of one hundred and eighty years. 29 Yitzchak breathed his last and died, and (his soul) was gathered to (be with the souls of) his people. (He was) old and satisfied with (lengthy) days. His sons Eisav and Yaa’akov buried him.

Eisav’s Descendants

These are the descendants of Eisav, who is (also called) Edom:

2 Eisav took his wives from the Cana’anite girls:

Adah (also known as Basmas) daughter of Ailon the Chittite;

Ahalivamah (also known as Yehudis), daughter of Anah and daughter of Tzivon the Chivite;

3 and Basmas (also known as Machalas), sister of Nevayos, daughter of Yishma’el,

4 Adah gave birth to Elifaz for Eisav, and Basmas gave birth to Re’uel. 5 Ahalivamah gave birth to Ye’ush, Yalam and Korach. (All) these are the children of Eisav who were born to him in the Land of Canaan.

Yitzchak’s Passing (v. 29)

While “the Torah is not in chronological order,” any deviation from the actual chronology of events still needs to be explained. For the Torah is generally speaking written in chronological order, but exceptions are made on occasion to prove a certain point.

In our case, Rashi proves at some length how “the sale of Yosef actually preceded Yitzchak’s passing,” but Rashi does not explain why the Torah chose to record this event out of chronological sequence [c.f. Ramban].

Since Rashi’s commentary is a comprehensive analysis of the Torah at the literal level, we can presume that when an important detail appears to be omitted it is because: a.) The explanation was deemed by Rashi to be self-evident, or, b.) The matter can be understood based on one of Rashi’s prior comments.

In our case, the reason why Yitzchak’s passing is recorded here, well before its actual occurrence, could be explained based on Rashi’s earlier comment about Avraham’s passing:

“On that day [when Eisav sold the birthright] Avraham died, so he should not see Eisav his grandson falling into bad ways, for that would not be the ‘good old age’ (15:15) which God had promised him. Therefore, God shortened his life by five years, as we see that Yitzchak lived to 180, but he [Avraham, lived] 175 years” (Rashi to 25:30).

From this we can understand that in our case, even though Yitzchak did live to see his grandchildren “falling into bad ways” with the sale of Yosef, nevertheless, the Torah did not wish to publicize the fact. Therefore, Yitzchak’s passing was recorded discreetly, out of chronological sequence, before the sale of Yosef.

In fact, this concept has a precedent in an earlier comment of Rashi: “Scripture related Terach’s death before Avram’s departure, so that the matter should not be publicized to everybody and they would say, Avram did not honor his father, for he left him in his old age and went away” (Rashi to 11:32, above). Here we see clearly that the Torah will, on occasion, adjust the recording of the sequence of events so as to avoid publicizing something negative.

(Toras Menachem 35:27, 35:22 - 36:5)

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bo, 5743)
Rashi: The land in which they lived could not provide [sufficient] pasture for their animals.

The Midrash Agadah explains [that Eisav left] “due to his brother Ya’akov” (v. 6), because of the writ of obligation which [accompanies] the decree, “that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs. They will enslave them and oppress them” (15:13), which was put upon the descendants of Yitzchak. He [Eisav] said, “I will go away from here. I want no part in the gift—this land which he [Yitzchak] was given—not in the payment of the debt.”

Also, [he left] on account of the shame for having sold his birthright.

Rashbam: Ya’akov had purchased the birthright from Eisav, and thus owned the rights to inherit the Land of Israel. Therefore Ya’akov remained in the Land, and Eisav was forced to leave.

Abarbanel: Since Eisav loved Ya’akov, he left him the Land of Cana’an, knowing that Ya’akov desired it and that his descendants would inherit it in the future.
Eisav took his wives, his sons, his daughters, all the people of his household, his flocks, all his animals and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Cana’an, and he went to (find another) land, due to his brother Ya’akov, because their possessions were too numerous for them to dwell together. The land which they inhabited could not support them because (there was not enough space) for their flocks (to graze).

So Eisav settled in Mount Se’ir. Eisav is (also known as) Edom.

These are the descendants of Eisav, the father of the Edom(ites), on Mount Se’ir:

Eisav’s sons: Elifaz, son of Eisav’s wife Adah, Re’uel, son of Eisav’s wife Basmas.

The children of Elifaz were Taiman, Omar, Tzefo, Gatam, and Kenaz. Timna was a concubine to Elifaz, Eisav’s son, and she gave birth to Amalek for Elifaz.

These are the children of Re’uel: Nachas, Zerach, Shamah, and Mizah. They are the children of Basmas, the wife of Eisav.

These are the children of Ahalivamah, daughter of Anah and daughter of Tzivon, Eisav’s wife: She gave birth to Ye’ush, Yalam, and Korach for Eisav.

These are the (family) heads of the children of Eisav:

(From) the children of Elifaz, Eisav’s firstborn: (the) head (of the) Taiman (family, the) head (of the) Omar (family, the) head (of the) Tzefo (family, the) head (of the) Kenaz (family), (the) head (of the) Korach (family, the) head (of the) Gatam (family, the) head (of the) Amalek (family). They are the (family) heads of Elifaz in the land of Edom. (All) these are the children of Adah, the wife of Eisav.

These are the children of Re’uel: Nachas, Zerach, Shamah, and Mizah. They are the children of Basmas, the wife of Eisav.

These are the children of Ahalivamah, daughter of Anah and daughter of Tzivon, Eisav’s wife: She gave birth to Ye’ush, Yalam, and Korach for Eisav.

These are the (family) heads of the children of Eisav:

(From) the children of Elifaz, Eisav’s firstborn: (the) head (of the) Taiman (family, the) head (of the) Omar (family, the) head (of the) Tzefo (family, the) head (of the) Kenaz (family), (the) head (of the) Korach (family, the) head (of the) Gatam (family, the) head (of the) Amalek (family). They are the (family) heads of Elifaz in the land of Edom. (All) these are the children of Adah.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- Eisav was already living in Se’ir earlier (32:4). Why does the Torah state now that “Eisav settled in Mount Se’ir?” (v. 8)

**CHIZKUNI:** Beforehand, Eisav was living in the land of Cana’an but he used to spend a lot of time in Se’ir, since there were many fields there (as in the verse, “the land of Se’ir, to the fields of Edom”—32:4) and Eisav was, “a man of the field” (25:27). Now, however, Eisav was forced to settle exclusively in Se’ir. [commentary to 32:4, 36:6]

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

**Eisav’s Departure (v. 6-7)**

Rashi’s comment here presents a number of problems:

a.) Why did Rashi find it necessary to bring no less than three explanations?

b.) Why did Rashi reject the simple explanation, argued by Rashbam, that Eisav was forced to leave because he had sold the birthright to Ya’akov?

c.) Why did Rashi bring an explanation from the “Midrash Agadah,” that Eisav left because of the “writ of obligation,” when the Torah itself stresses a different reason altogether: “because their possessions were too numerous for them to dwell together” (v. 7)? How can this be reconciled with Rashi’s statement that “I am coming only to explain the literal meaning of scripture” (Rashi to 3:8, above)?

d.) According to the Midrash Agadah, that Eisav left to avoid the decree of exile, why did Eisav wait until Ya’akov arrived back from Charan before vacating the Land of Israel? Surely Eisav was aware of the “writ of obligation” well before?

e.) There is a most strikingly obvious question: The decree of ‘exile’ which Eisav was trying to avoid, was to live in a land other than the Land of Israel: “Your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs” (15:13), “It does not say, ‘in the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘in a land’ that is not theirs” (Rashi ibid.). Thus, it appears to make no sense at all, that in order to avoid the decree of being exiled from the Land of Israel, Eisav left the Land of Israel! Eisav seems to have imposed upon himself the very decree that he was trying to avoid!

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**THE EXPLANATION**

The Torah states explicitly the reason for Eisav’s departure: “Eisav took his wives...and he went to (find another) land...because their possessions were too numerous for them to dwell together etc.” (v. 6-7). Thus, Rashi could not accept, at the literal level, the explanation of Rashbam—that Eisav left because he had relinquished his rights to the land by selling the birthright—since the Torah stresses a totally different reason: “because their possessions were too numerous.”

(Abarbanel’s explanation, that Eisav willingly left the land to Ya’akov is unacceptable at the literal level, since Rashi clarified earlier that Eisav still hated Ya’akov—see Rashi to 33:4 above).

At the literal level it could be argued that Eisav left because Ya’akov was “exceedingly wealthy. He had extremely fertile flocks, maids, servants, camels and donkeys” (30:43), so when it became apparent that, “the land which they inhabited could not support them because [there was not enough space] for their flocks (to graze),” it was only fair to let Ya’akov stay, as his need for the land was more pressing than Eisav’s.

However, Rashi found this reason alone difficult to accept. Why should Eisav leave the land because, “their possessions were too numerous for them to dwell together,” when Eisav was the one who had been living there for the past twenty years, and Ya’akov had just arrived? Surely, it was only fair that Ya’akov should leave? And yet, we find that without any argument about the matter, Eisav simply “took his wives, his sons, his daughters, all the people of his household, his flocks, all his animals and his property that he had acquired,” and left of his own accord!
Clearly, this explanation alone is vastly insufficient, since it is highly unlikely that Eisav would vacate the land, along with his family and possessions, just because Ya’akov had arrived. Therefore, Rashi searched for an additional explanation which would complement the above reasoning, making it more feasible at the literal level.

Rashi concluded that this additional explanation is hinted to by the words “due to his brother Ya’akov,” and he cites the Midrash Agadah that Eisav left to avoid the decree of exile. When both these explanations are combined together, we have a plausible scenario: Eisav had always planned to leave the Land of Israel to avoid the decree of exile, and so when “their possessions were too numerous for them to dwell together,” Eisav decided that this was a prime opportunity to enact his plan to move to Se’ir. Thus, both explanations complement each other, and both are indicated in the Torah itself.

Nevertheless, Rashi was not satisfied with the above, since one further problem remains: Even if Eisav had been planning to leave the Land for many years, the fact that he was prompted to do so by Ya’akov’s arrival would be perceived as an act of acquiescence to Ya’akov, and weakness on the part of Eisav. Surely, Eisav would have waited for another opportunity? To address this problem, Rashi explained that there was a third factor in Eisav’s decision: “Also, [he left] on account of the shame for having sold his birthright.” I.e. that Eisav’s entire stay in the Land of Israel was associated with embarrassment, since it constantly sparked shame for having sold his birthright. Therefore, despite the fact that his departure may have been perceived as an act of weakness, Eisav decided that it was time to leave the Land once and for all, rather than live in a state of eternal embarrassment.
These are (the family heads from) the children of Re’uel, Eisav’s son: (the) head (of the) Nachas (family), the head (of the) Zerach (family), the head (of the) Shamah (family), and (the) head (of the) Mizah (family). They are the (family) heads of Re’uel in the land of Edom. (All) these are the children of Basmas, Eisav’s wife.

These are (the family heads from) the children of Ahalivamah, Eisav’s wife: (the) head (of the) Ye’ush (family), the head (of the) Yalam (family), the head (of the) Korach (family). They are the (family) heads of Ahalivamah, daughter of Anah, Eisav’s wife.

These (mentioned above) are the children of Eisav. (All) these are their family chiefs. (Eisav is also known) as Edom.

**Se’ir’s Descendants**

These are the children of Se’ir the Chorite, the inhabitants of the land (before Eisav arrived there): Lotan, Shoval, Tzivon, Anah, Dishon, Aitzer, and Dishan. (All) these are the (family) heads of the Chorites, Se’ir’s children, in the land of Edom.

The children of Lotan were Chori and Heimam. The sister of Lotan was Timna.

These are the children of Shoval: Alvan, Manachas, Aival, Shefo and Onam.

These are the children of Tzivon: Ayah and Anah. He is Anah who (crossbred) mules in the wilderness when he pastured the donkeys for his father Tzivon.

These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Ahalivamah, the daughter of Anah.

These are the children of Dishon: Chemdan, Eshban, Yisran, and Keran.

These are the children of Aitzer: Bilhan, Za’avan, and Akan.

These are the children of Dishan: Utz and Aran.

These are the (family) chiefs of the Chorites: (the) head (of the) Lotan (family), the head (of the) Shoval (family), the head (of the) Tzivon (family), the head (of the) Anah (family), (the) head (of the) Dishon (family), the head (of the) Aitzer (family), and (the) head (of the) Dishan (family). All these are the (family) heads of the Chorites according to their families in the land of Edom.

**Eisav Settles in Se’ir**

The Torah continues, “Eisav settled in Mount Se’ir” (v. 8). This is difficult to understand since the Torah indicated above that Eisav was already living in Se’ir: “Ya’akov sent angels ahead of him to his brother Eisav, to the land of Se’ir, to the fields of Edom” (32:4).

Why did Rashi not explain this significant point?

It could be argued that Rashi did not clarify this matter, as he understood it to be self-evident from scripture itself. The Torah stated above that Se’ir was Eisav’s “usual (hang out)” (‘לָבְדָיו), and not his land (‘נָחַל). From this it is clear that Eisav had not made Se’ir his permanent home, and he shared his time between the Land of Israel and Se’ir—presumably because being a “man of the field” (25:27) he enjoyed “the fields of Edom” (32:4) very much. Thus, the Torah informs us here that, “Eisav settled in Mount Se’ir,” i.e. he made it his permanent, exclusive home (c.f. Chizkuni).

Based on the above we can also explain our earlier question (“e”), that in attempting to avoid the decree of exile on Avraham’s descendants, Eisav seems to have, in any case, imposed upon himself an exile from the Land of Israel. The meaning of “exile” is that a person temporarily finds himself away from his homeland; Eisav, on the other hand, “settled in Mount Se’ir,” permanently. Thus, he was not exiled from the Land of Israel, as he had totally disassociated himself from it.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, pp. 109ff.)

**The Last Word**

So long as we have not reached the end of exile when the Holy Temple will be built and we will all return to the Land of Israel, a Jew needs to be conscious that he is, “a stranger in a land that is not his own.” The fact that Jews inhabit any land other than the Land of Israel is a temporary situation. It was Eisav that “settled” in the Diaspora, but a Jew waits impatiently the time when he will cease to be a “stranger” in a foreign land, and he will return to his true home, the Land of Israel, in full and total settlement.

(ibid.)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why were there Eight Edomite kings? (v. 31)

Rashi: There were eight [Edomite kings], and Ya’akov established a corresponding number [of eight kings] in whose days the kingdom of Eisav [temporarily] ceased to exist. These [eight Jewish kings] were: Sha’ul, Ish-boshes, David, Shlomo, Rachavam, Aviyah, Asa, and Yehoshafat. But in the time of his [Yehoshafat’s] son Yoram, the Torah states, “In his days, Edom revolted from under the power of Yehudah, and they appointed a king over themselves” (Kings II 8:20), whereas [from] Sha’ul’s days [until the times of Yehoshafat] the Torah states: “There was no king in Edom. A deputy was king” (Kings I 22:48).

Mizrachi: Rashi informs us of this detail, because it is the fulfillment of the prophecy, “One kingdom will (always) become mightier than the other kingdom (for when one rises the other will fall)” (25:23 and Rashi ibid). From Rashi’s comment we see that so long as the eight Jewish kings ruled, the Edomite dynasty did not exist.

Why does the Torah state where each king was from?

Sifra: Because there was no one from among the people of Edom who was fit to rule, and so leaders had to be found from elsewhere.

The Kings of Edom (v. 31)

Since Rashi’s commentary is aimed exclusively at explaining the literal meaning of the Torah, his discussion here of eight Jewish kings who ruled many generations later, appears to be out of place. Why is this information crucial for us to understand the literal meaning of the text?

Mizrachi answers that Rashi cited the account of eight Jewish kings in order to explain how an earlier promise recorded in the Torah was ultimately fulfilled. When Rivkah was pregnant with Ya’akov and Eisav, she was told, “One kingdom will (always) become mightier than the other kingdom (for when one rises the other will fall)” (25:23 and Rashi ibid). Thus,
The Kings of Edom

36:31

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel. 32 Bela, son of Be’or reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhavah.

31 Bela died, and Yovav, son of Zerach of Batzrah, reigned in his place.

34 Yovav died, and Chusham from the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.

35 Chusham died, and Hadad, son of Bedad—who defeated the Midian(ites) in the field of Moav—reigned in his place. The name of his city was Avis.

36 Hadad died, and Samlah of Masaika reigned in his place.

37 Samlah died, and Sha’ul of Rechovos on the River (Euphrates) reigned in his place.

38 Sha’ul died, and Ba’al Chanon, son of Achbor, reigned in his place.

39 Ba’al Chanon son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place. The name of his city was Pa’u. His wife’s name was Mehytavail, daughter of Matraid, the daughter of May Zahav.

(After Hadar died, Eisav’s descendants lost their autonomy over their family groups. Instead the authority structure became regional, and each place was assigned its own leader):

40 These are the names of the (regional) heads of Eisav’s land, according to (what was previously) their families, (but now assigned by) their places, (all of which had) their (own) names:

(The) head (of the) Timna (area, the) head (of the) Aluah (area, the) head (of the) Yesais (area), 41 (the) head (of the) Ahalvamah (area, the) head (of the) Aliah (area, the) head (of the) Pinon (area), 42 (the) head (of the) Kenaz (area, the) head (of the) Taiman (area, the) head (of the) Mivtzar (area), 43 (the) head (of the) Magdi’ail (area, which is Rome, the) head (of the) Iram (area). These are the (regional) heads of Edom according to the inhabited areas in the land of their inheritance.

(Edom is also known) as Eisav, father of the Edomites.

Rashi explains here that this prophecy was eventually fulfilled, for during the entire period that the Jewish kings ruled, the Edomite kings fell.

However, Mirachi’s solution is difficult to accept at the literal level, for two reasons:

a.) Rashi’s commentary is aimed at explaining discrepancies that arise when attempting to make a literal rendering of the text. Rashi did not undertake to explain how various prophecies have materialized over the course of history. Thus the question when the prophecy of “one kingdom will (always) become mightier than the other kingdom,” came true, is not a matter which requires explanation at the literal level.

b.) Rashi himself stresses that after the rulership of the eight kings, “Edom revolted from under the power of Yehudah, and they appointed a king over themselves,” i.e. both the Jewish people and the Edomites had their own monarchies side by side. Now, if Rashi’s primary intention here was to prove that, “One kingdom will (always) become mightier than the other kingdom (for when one rises the other will fall),” then why would he bring a proof to the contrary, that both kingdoms existed simultaneously?

The Explanation

Rashi was troubled by the question: Why did the Torah, which is a book of instruction to Jewish people, include a lengthy account of the kings of Edom? Of course, one might ask the same question about the previous account of Eisav’s descendants, which does not appear to merit inclusion in the Torah. However, in that case, one could argue that the Torah included the details of Eisav’s descendants in order to stress how Yitzchak’s blessings to Eisav actually came true (see above 27:39-40).

But in the case of the Kings of Edom, the Torah stresses that these kings were not in fact descendants of Eisav (see Sforno), so their inclusion in the Torah is not connected at all to Yitzchak’s blessings. (To the contrary, it is a disgrace to Eisav that, despite Yitchak’s blessings, his descendants were not able to find any person fit to rule from among themselves.)

Furthermore, the account of the Edomite dynasty seems to contradict Yitzchak’s blessing to Ya’akov, “You will be a master over your brother” (27:29), and his promise to Eisav, “You shall serve your brother” (ibid. 40). For the Torah stresses here, “These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel,” and one would have expected the “master” (Ya’akov) to have established a monarchy before his “servant” (Eisav).

Therefore Rashi stresses that a.) The Edomite dynasty only lasted for a mere eight generations. b.) The eight Edomite Kings were totally nullified by the eight Jewish kings who later ruled over the land of Edom and its people of Edom.

Thus, overall, it could truly be said that Ya’akov was “a master over his brother.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5748)
Parshas Vayishlach contains 1 prohibition

1. Not to eat the *gid hanashe* (sciatic nerve) [32:33]
At first glance this Parsha seems to have a most inappropriate name. Vayeishev means "settled," and yet in this Parsha we read of the most unsettling event in Ya'akov's life: the disappearance of Yosef. In fact, at the beginning of the Parsha, Rashi writes, “When Ya'akov sought to settle in tranquility, Yosel's anger [against his brothers] sprang upon him.”

So how could a Parsha which speaks of Ya'akov’s upheaval come to be known as “Ya’akov settled”?

In truth, however, Ya'akov's request for peace and tranquility was eventually granted by God, as we find that in Ya'akov's last 17 years he lived a peaceful, comfortable life in Egypt. It is only that when Ya'akov sought peace, God wanted to give him a more sublime peace and tranquility than Ya’akov was yet worthy of. Therefore, God sent him the ordeal with Yosef, in order to challenge Ya’akov and thereby uplift him spiritually to the level at which he would be deserving of the greater peace.

And that is why our entire Parsha is called Vayeishev—“settled”—for in this Parsha we read of the ordeals which God sent Ya’akov to elevate him spiritually to the point where he could live a totally harmonious life in this world, as well as in the next.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 176ff.)
Why does the Torah stress that Ya'akov "settled"? (v. 1)

Rashi: The following was expounded by the Midrash on the word "בנה" ("he settled"): When Ya'akov sought to settle in tranquility, Yosef's anger [against his brothers] sprang upon him. The righteous seek to settle in tranquility. God said, "Isn't it enough for the righteous [to have] what's prepared for them in the World-to-Come?" Ya'akov took the blessings that were intended for him, at which time the following reason:

Ya'akov's Tranquility is Disturbed (v. 1)

Rashi writes that when Ya'akov sought tranquility, God denied him of it, and sent instead the ordeal of Yosef's sale. This statement appears to be difficult to accept at the literal level of Torah interpretation for the following reason:

The entire ordeal of Yosef's disappearance lasted a total of 22 years. (Yosef was 30 years old when he was appointed viceroy over Egypt (below 41:46), and he was reunited with his father 9 years later—after 7 years of prosperity and 2 years of famine—making Yosef 39 years old. Since he was sold at the age of 17, it follows that the entire incident lasted [39 - 17 = 22] years. C.f. Rashi to 28:9.)

Now, if one considers that Ya'akov lived a total of 147 years, of which only 22 were troublesome, we still find that many of Ya'akov's years were indeed spent in tranquility. How then can Rashi suggest that Ya'akov's request for tranquility in this world was not granted?

Of course, one might argue that the period which Ya'akov spent in Lavan's house and the following period when he encountered Eisav were not periods of tranquility.

Nevertheless, Eisav's hatred for Ya'akov was only aroused when Ya'akov was 30 years old (ibid.), where it is likely that he was completely safe. And even if he feared that Eisav would find him in the Yeshivah, we still find that Ya'akov lived a further 17 years in total tranquility after he came to Egypt, together with Yosef and his grandchildren.

Klus Yakar: What is the precise meaning of the expression, "Yosef's anger sprang upon him"? Yosef angered God with his evil reports about his brothers (see v. 2). Normally a lad of 17 years would not be punishable, since the heavenly court only considers a person liable at the age of 20. Nevertheless, in this case, since "Ya'akov sought to settle in tranquility," God decided to punish Yosef before the age of 20, in order to disturb Ya'akov's peace. Therefore, it is said, "Yosef's anger sprang upon him," i.e. the punishment for Yosef angering God was brought forward, before its time.
Yosef Angers His Brothers

Ya’akov settled in the Land which his father inhabited, the Land of Cana’an.

These are (the episodes of) Ya’akov’s descendants (until they were finally settled):

Yosef was seventeen years old. (For many years previously*) he would pasture the sheep with his brothers. He (would) do boy(ish things, like curling his hair and touching up his eyes to look attractive, and he spent his time) with Bilhah’s sons and Zilpah’s sons—(the sons of) his father’s wives—(whom Leah’s sons had treated disrespectfully). Yosef (used to) bring reports to their father (of all Leah’s sons’ behavior which he thought was) evil.

Rashi’s Problem

In order to understand Rashi’s comment—that “Yosef’s anger [against his brothers] sprang upon him” because Ya’akov desired tranquility—we first need to clarify exactly what was troubling Rashi here.

Rashi wrote earlier that Ya’akov worked for Lavan 6 years after Yosef was born, and that he then spent a further 2 years in transit on his way back to the Land of Cana’an (Rashi to 28:9). Thus, when “Ya’akov settled in the land which his father inhabited, the land of Cana’an,” Yosef was 8 years old. And yet, straightaway the Torah tells us, “Yosef was 17 years old.” So Rashi was troubled: What happened to the 9 years in between? Why does the Torah make such a sudden jump?

At the literal level, one could answer simply that nothing noteworthy happened in between, so the Torah jumps straight to the incident with Yosef when he was aged 17. However, Rashi felt that the jump is sufficiently bizarre for the reader to require some sort of explanation, even if the explanation is Midrashic and not purely literal.

Therefore, after prefacing his comment with the words, “The following was expounded by the Midrash,” Rashi explains that the Torah recorded Ya’akov’s “settling” in the Land of Cana’an immediately adjacent to the incident with Yosef in order to hint that one was the cause of the other—“When Ya’akov sought to settle in tranquility, Yosef’s anger [against his brothers] sprang upon him.”

Rashi, however, does not appear to explain why there was a 9-year gap between the cause and its effect. We can presume that Ya’akov wished to dwell in tranquility as soon as he arrived in the Land of Cana’an, so why did it take 9 years for the effect of Ya’akov’s request to materialize?

When Did Yosef Start to Bring Evil Reports?

In order to solve this problem, we need to first clarify another issue. The Torah states that Yosef would bring “evil reports” to his father about his brothers’ behavior. Rashi writes that one of the reports which Yosef brought was that, “Leah’s sons...disgraced the sons of the handmaids [Bilhah and Zilpah] by calling them ‘slaves.’”

When did all this occur? At first glance, one would presume that Yosef’s reports began when “Yosef was 17 years old” (v. 2), as the Torah states in the introduction to this passage.

However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, this is difficult to accept. Even a child studying the Chumash for the first time understands that a case of sibling rivalry where one group of brothers disgraces another would not suddenly have arisen when Yosef, the youngest brother, was 17 years old! Certainly, the friction between the brothers would have been a longstanding one, and surely Yosef would not have noticed this rivalry for the first time only upon reaching the age of 17. He must have been sufficiently mature at a much younger age to be aware of the disputes between the brothers, at which time he would have looked for a way to correct their behavior—and the natural reaction of a child would be to tell his father.

In fact, it could be proven from an earlier statement of Rashi that Yosef was indeed intellectually mature at a much younger age. Before Ya’akov confronted Eisav, the Torah states, “Leah and her children approached and prostrated themselves, and afterwards, Yosef and Rochel approached and prostrated themselves.” (33:7). Rashi comments, “In all cases, the mothers drew near before the sons, but in Rachel’s case, Yosef preceded her. He said, ‘My mother is pretty. Perhaps that scoundrel will set his eyes on her. I will stand in front of her and prevent him from gazing upon her.’”

The Last Word

Ya’akov’s request to live in tranquility was eventually fulfilled in the last 17 years of his life, when he lived peacefully in the Land of Egypt with his children and grandchildren. However, this only came about as a result of his sincere request to God.

This teaches us the importance of requesting from God that He should bring the true and complete Redemption without delay, as the Midrash states: “Even if the only thing the Jewish people possess is hope, they deserve redemption in the merit of the hope” (Yalkut Shimon, Tehillim, remez 636).

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 183)*

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* See Toras Menachem.
Why is Yosef called a נן קינך (v. 3)

Rashi: Because he was born to Ya'akov in his old age (לבט וקיתנ). Onkelos translates: "Because he was a wise son to him." Whatever Ya'akov had learned from Sheim and Aiver he passed on to him.

Another explanation: [Yosef's] features (יאפינין יד) resembled his own [Ya'akov's].

Ya'akov's Eventual Tranquility

While we have explained why Ya'akov had no tranquility before the incident with Yosef, we nevertheless find that Ya'akov did enjoy 17 peaceful and happy years in Egypt, at the end of his life. How is this to be reconciled with Rashi's statement that the righteous only enjoy tranquility in the next world?

If one examines Rashi's words closely however, he did not in fact state that the righteous are denied tranquility in this world. Rather, "God said, 'Isn't it enough for the righteous [to have] what's prepared for them in the World-to-Come, that they seek to settle in tranquility in this world too?'' I.e. since tranquility in this world is trivial in comparison to the rewards of the next world, the righteous need not concern themselves with it.

Nevertheless, when Ya'akov sought tranquility, God Who is infinitely kind, did not wish to deny it to Ya'akov, since God "fulfills the desire of those that fear him" (Psalms 145:19). So God did indeed bless Ya'akov with 17 years of peace and tranquility in Egypt—the very best years of his life.

(Based on Sichas Motzoi Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5739)
3 Yisra’el loved Yosef more than all his sons, because he was a son (born to him in) old age, so he made him a robe of fine wool. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and they couldn’t speak with him nicely.

5 Yosef had a dream and told his brothers about it, and they hated him even more. 6 (This is what) he said to them: “Please listen to this dream, which I have dreamed! 7 There we were, binding sheaves in the middle of the field, when—look!—my sheaf stood upright and it kept standing too. And then—look!—your sheaves gathered round and threw themselves down (in front of) my sheaf.”

8 His brothers said to him, “(Does this mean that you want to) reign constantly over us, or rule us all the time?” And they hated him even more because of his dreams, and because of his (evil) reports (to their father).

9 (Yosef) had yet another dream, and he told his brothers about it. He said, “Here, I have dreamed another dream. Just look! The sun, the moon, and eleven stars threw themselves down before me!”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why did Yosef tell over his dreams to his brothers, if he knew that they hated him? (v. 5-11)

ROSH: According to Jewish Law, a person is prohibited from withholding a prophecy that he receives (Sanhedrin 89a). Therefore, Yosef was obligated to relate his prophetic dream, which described how he would rule over his brothers, despite what the consequences might be.

ABARBANEL: He was not planning on telling them the content of the dream right away. Often, close friends sit together and discuss their dreams, so Yosef thought that offering to have such a discussion would be interpreted by the brothers as a positive act of friendship.

SFORNO: Yosef was immature, and he made an unwise move.

RADAK: He wanted to enrage the brothers further, because they had shown hatred for him.

CHIZKUNI: Yosef was trying to show that the brothers need not be angry at their father for showing favoritism to him, because Yosef’s greatness was in fact Divinely decreed, as was evident from the prophetic dream.

SHACH AL HATORAH: Unless a dream is related to others it will not materialize (Brachos 55b). Since Yosef wanted the dream to come true, he related it to his brothers, but inevitably, this made them hate him even more.

OHAR HACHAYIM: Yosef wanted to indicate to his brothers that it was unwise to hate him because one day they would need him.

TORAS MENACHEM

Why Did Yosef Relate his Dreams? (v. 5-11)

When Yosef was 17 years old, we can presume that he was an extremely wise person, as Rashi writes, “Whatever [Ya’akov] had learned from Sheim and Aiver he gave over to him” (v. 3). So, why did he tell a dream to his brothers that “your sheaves gathered round and threw themselves down (in front of) my sheaf” (v. 7), when he already knew that they hated him?

The Last Word

Yosef had two dreams: one about physical matters (binding sheaves), and one about spiritual matters (the sun, moon and stars, which are heavenly bodies). Nevertheless, both dreams shared exactly the same message.

This teaches us that the Jew’s physical and spiritual affairs should not be separated from each other, each having its own separate, “message.” Rather, a person should align his physical and spiritual affairs to complement each other. For example, one’s physical activities, such as eating and drinking, should be done for the sake of Heaven, in order to serve God properly.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 3, p. 805ff.)

Then, after seeing that “they hated him even more” (v. 8), Yosef persists and relates yet another provocative dream to his brothers: “The sun, the moon, and eleven stars threw themselves down before me” (v. 9)!

And even then Yosef is not satisfied and he repeats the dream in the presence of his father and his brothers.

What could have been Yosef’s logic behind this entire exercise?

At first glance, one might argue that Yosef was unaware that his brothers hated him. However, Rashi dispels this notion with his comment to the words, “They couldn’t speak with him nicely” (v. 4)—“From what is stated to their discredit, we may learn something to their credit, that they did not say one thing with their mouths and think differently in their hearts.” Here we see explicitly that, according to the literal interpretation of Rashi, Yosef was well aware of the bad feelings that his brothers harbored towards him. Why then did he insist on relating his dreams to them?

The Explanation

When Yosef saw that his brothers were jealous of him, because Ya’akov had made him a special robe and taught him the wisdom of Sheim and Aiver, Yosef would have looked for a means to reduce his brother’s jealousy. Obviously he could not deny receiving the robe or the wisdom, for they were indisputable facts, but he would have constantly looked for some sort of plan which might diffuse his brothers’ anger.

When he had the first dream, it dawned on Yosef that he now had a perfect method of calming his brothers anger, because he presumed that his brothers would take the dream at face value.
All the dreams which have been mentioned in the Torah up to this point came true in the literal sense. When Ya’akov dreamed of angels, angels did indeed accompany him (28:12 and 15:12-13), it actually happened; as Rashi writes (ibid.) that the 400 years began immediately upon the birth of Yitzchak. From this, the student of scripture will have understood that dreams are to be interpreted literally.

Thus Yosef presumed that when he would tell his brothers, “Your sheaves gathered round and threw themselves down (in front of) my sheaf” (v. 7), they would interpret the matter literally, i.e. that his sheaves were stronger and would be more valuable than those of his brothers. This, thought Yosef, would diffuse the brothers’ anger for they would see that his superiority over them was no more than a matter of being successful in rearing better crops.

However, since hatred tends to hinder a person from being rational, the brothers did not take the dream literally. Rather, they saw it in the light of their own prejudice against Yosef: “(Does this mean that you want to) reign constantly over us, or rule us all the time?” (v. 8).

When Yosef had the second dream, he thought that it would surely calm his brothers, for it demonstrated even more clearly how they had no reason to be jealous. For, in this dream, it was clear that Yosef was not destined to have any physical advantage over his brothers at all. Rather, it is only that “the sun, the moon, and eleven stars threw themselves down in my presence” (v. 9), i.e. it was only the stars, representing the magalos (spiritual shadows) of the brothers (see Rashi to 15:5) that were bowing down to Yosef, and not the brothers themselves.

Nevertheless, when this plan failed too, Yosef thought of a further solution: He would relate the dream to his brothers in Ya’akov’s presence, hoping that Ya’akov would explain to them the correct, literal interpretation of the dream. However, this too did not succeed, and instead, Ya’akov became angry.

Thus, in the final analysis we see that Yosef did indeed follow a logical path, because he expected that everybody would take his dreams literally, just as he had done. Then, his brothers would have seen that, while Yosef had received some genuine favoritism, it was really nothing to be jealous about.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5734)
10 He (then) told it to his father (in the presence of) his brothers. His father rebuked him (in order to calm the brothers down). He said to (Yosef), “What is this dream that you have dreamed? How could I, your mother, and your brothers come and throw ourselves down to you on the ground (when your mother has already passed away)?” But his brothers (still) envied him.

His father (however believed in the dream) and kept (waiting) for the event (to occur).

The Sale of Yosef

His brothers went to pasture their father’s flocks in Shechem. 13 Yisra’el said to Yosef, “Aren’t your brothers pasturing in Shechem? Come, I’ll send you to join them.”

“I’m ready,” (Yosef) said to him (even though he knew his brothers hated him).

(Yisra’el) said to him, “Go now and see how your brothers are doing and how the sheep are doing, and bring me back news.”

So (Yisra’el) sent him off from the Chevron valley, and he came to Shechem.

(The angel Gavriel in the guise of) a man found him, and—look!—he was lost in the field. The man questioned him, saying, “What do you want?”

(Yosef) said, “I am looking for my brothers. Please tell me where they are pasturing?”

The man said, “They’ve left here (they’re not acting like your brothers any more), for I heard them saying, ‘Let’s go to Dosan (we’ll find a legal pretext to kill our brother).’”

What was Ya’akov’s reaction to the dream? (v. 11)

RASHI: He waited expectantly for the dream to materialize.

Who was the “man” that Yosef met? (v. 15)

RASHI: It was [the angel] Gavriel.

IBN EZRA: At the literal level, it was one of the passersby.

What did he tell Yosef? (v. 17)

RASHI: “They’ve left here” — “They’ve parted from brotherhood.”

“Let’s go to Dosan (ולהקב ידוקניק)” — “They went to seek legal pretexts (תתיה רכתי) to put you to death.”

Dosan is [also] however the name of an actual place, since scripture does not depart from its literal meaning.

RAMBAN: Rashi’s interpretations were not actually said by Gavriel to Yosef, for Yosef would surely not have gone to his brothers if he knew they were planning to kill him. Rather, Rashi is explaining the double entendre of scripture.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why did Ya’akov wait expectantly for Yosef’s dream to materialize? (Rashi to v. 11)

a.) All the other brothers chose to be shepherds, because in order to devote themselves properly to God they needed to isolate themselves from the distractions of everyday life. Yosef was thus superior in the sense that he was able to be immersed in worldliness, and yet remain perfect in his service of God. Therefore, Ya’akov waited impatiently for Yosef’s dream—that the brothers would become submissive to Yosef—to be fulfilled, for then they would also benefit from some of Yosef’s greatness. In fact, it is only through obtaining some of Yosef’s spiritual greatness that the other tribes would be able to withstand the difficulties of exile.

Or: b.) Ya’akov was waiting impatiently for Mashiach ben Yosef, the precursor of Mashiach ben David.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 160ff.)

TORAS MENACHEM

The “Man” in the Field (v. 15-17)

What led Rashi to conclude that, at the literal level, the “man” in the field was none other than the angel Gavriel? Why did he reject the simple interpretation [of Ibn Ezra] that it was one of the passersby?

Rashi was troubled by the Torah’s expression, “A man found him,” which suggests that the man was actually looking for Yosef. This begs the question: Why would a passersby be looking for Yosef?

Rashi thus concluded that the Torah is hinting to the Midrashic teaching that it was in fact the angel Gavriel who had been sent by God to find Yosef, and he appeared in the image of a “man” (Tanchumah 2).

However this leaves us with the question: Why was it necessary for God to send Gavriel? Surely it would have been sufficient for Yosef to ask for directions from one of the passersby?

To answer this problem, Rashi explained that the “man’s” reply actually contained a message which only the angel Gavriel would have known: “They have parted from brotherhood. They went to seek legal pretexts to put you to death” (Rashi to v. 17).

At first glance, it does not appear that Gavriel actually said this to Yosef, but rather, it is a double entendre of scripture. For otherwise we are left with Ramban’s question: Why would Yosef have gone to find his brothers if he knew they were plotting to kill him?
However, if this is the case, then we are left with our original question: If the man only said that the brothers had gone to Dosan, then why did God have to send the angel Gavriel to carry out this mission? Surely, a passerby could have done precisely the same task?

Therefore, Rashi’s intention here must be that Gavriel actually told Yosef, “They have parted from brotherhood. They went to seek legal pretexts to put you to death.”

As for Rambam’s question—why Yosef still went to his brothers, knowing that they wanted to kill him—Rashi would answer simply that this brings to light the greatness of Yosef. Even though he was fully aware of the potential dangers involved, Yosef still went to seek his brothers in order to carry out his father’s instruction: “Go now and see how your brothers are doing and how the sheep are doing and bring me back news” (v. 14).

In fact, upon failing to find his brothers in Shechem, Yosef would have had the perfect excuse to return home, since his father only told him to go to Shechem, and not to Dosan (above v. 13). Nevertheless, out of his great loyalty to his father, Yosef continued on his mission, beyond the “letter of the law” of what his father had demanded, out of his tremendous enthusiasm in fulfilling this mitzvah.

In the final analysis, we see that God sent Gavriel—the angel of severity—to test Yosef in order to see how far his loyalty to his father would extend. Yosef passed the test with distinction, demonstrating the utmost dedication to the observance of a mitzvah, even at the risk to his own life.

The Halachic Basis of Yosef’s Actions

The above dispute between Rashi and Rambam, whether Yosef was told that his brothers planned to kill him or not, follows a dispute in Jewish law about sacrificing one’s life to carry out a mitzvah.

While it is universally accepted that a person must sacrifice his life rather than transgress the prohibitions of idol worship, forbidden relations or murder in public (Sanhedrin 74a), there is a dispute regarding the permissibility of sacrificing one’s life to avoid other prohibitions:

Rambam rules: “In any case where the Torah says you should transgress rather than be killed, and the person decides to be killed rather than transgress, he is guilty of taking his own life” (Hilchos Yeosedei Hatorah 5:4).

Tosfos however dissents, ruling, “If a person allows himself to be killed rather than transgress, he is considered to have performed an act of righteousness” (Avodah Zorah 27b).

In our case, we see that Ramban held in accordance with the opinion of Rambam, that Yosef would not have risked his life to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring his father. Thus, Ramban concluded that Gavriel could not possibly have told Yosef that his brothers were planning to kill him, for otherwise he would not have placed himself at risk in order to join them.

Rashi, however, understood that the literal level of Torah interpretation follows the view of Tosfos. Therefore, it is quite plausible that Gavriel actually told Yosef about his brothers’ plot and that he went to join them regardless, “to perform an act of righteousness.”

What Did Yosef Gain?

One problem with the above analysis is that Yosef’s actions seem to have thwarted his goal. It is all very well that he was willing to risk his life to carry out his father’s instructions to join the brothers, but Ya’akov also requested Yosef to, “bring me back news” (v. 14). Thus, it turns out that in his eagerness to fulfill his father’s command of joining the brothers, he actually failed to fulfill his father’s primary request of bringing back news. Why then did Yosef see fit to join his brothers, thus putting his entire mission into jeopardy?

However, Yosef’s actions can be understood in light of the ruling of Nimukei Yosef: “A great man who is pious and God-fearing, who sees that the generation is morally corrupt, is permitted to give up his life, even over a small mitzvah, in order that the people should see and learn from him” (Nimukei Yosef 4).

Yosef deemed the brothers to be “morally corrupt,” since they had been consistently disrespectful to their father: Shimon and Levi massacred the people of Shechem against Ya’akov’s wishes (see above 34:30); Reu’vain moved his father’s bed in an act of rebellion (35:22); and, in general, their hatred for Yosef was an act of disrespect to Ya’akov because, after all, the favoritism towards Yosef had come from Ya’akov himself.

Therefore, in this instance, Yosef deemed it appropriate to risk his life in the fulfillment of the very mitzvah in which they had become corrupt—the honoring of one’s parents.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5743; Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 169ff.)
So Yosef went after his brothers, and he found them in Dosan. 18 They saw him from a distance, and before he came near them they plotted against him to put him to death. 19 They said to each other, “Look! That dreamer is coming. 20 So now, come and we’ll kill him! Then we’ll cast him into one of the pits, and we’ll say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’”

(But God said,) “We are going to see what (indeed) will become of his dreams!”

21 When Re’uvain heard (their plan) he saved (Yosef) from their hands. He said, “Let’s not give him a lethal blow.”

22 “Don’t shed blood!” Re’uvain said to them. “Throw him into this pit that’s in the desert, but don’t lay a hand upon him.” (He said this only) in order to save (Yosef) from their hands, and (then he planned to rescue him and) return him to his father.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **Why did the brothers plot to kill Yosef? (v. 18)**
  - **Sforno:** The brothers thought that Yosef was joining them, not in an act of friendship, but to find fault in their actions. They thought he would then make a bad report to Ya’akov, who would curse the brothers in anger (or that God himself would punish them), and they would die. Yosef would then remain alone, as the blessed of the sons.

  The other brothers were complete tzadikim (pious individuals), as we find that all their names are mentioned on the breastplate. In this case, they followed the halachic principle that if a person comes to kill you, you should kill him first, in self-defense (Sanhedrin 72b).

- **How did Re’uvain hope to save Yosef? (v. 21-22)**
  - **Zohar:** If there were snakes and scorpions in the pit [see Rashi to v. 24] why is it written of Re’uvain, “(He said this only) in order to save (Yosef) from their hands, to return him to his father” (v. 22)? Didn’t Re’uvain fear that the snakes and scorpions would harm Yosef? If so, how did he plan “to return him to his father”? The verse states [that his actions were] “in order to save him.”

Re’uvain saw that Yosef would surely come to harm in their hands, for he knew how much they hated him and wished to kill him. Re’uvain said, “It is better to cast him into the pit of snakes and scorpions than to deliver him to those who hate him and who have no compassion for him...For, in a place of snakes and scorpions if a man is righteous God will perform a miracle for him and save him, or sometimes he is saved by the merit of his fathers. But once delivered into the hands of enemies, few escape...”

Come and behold the piety of Re’uvain! He knew that Shimon and Levi were ruthless and cunning when they joined forces. When they joined against Shechem, they killed all the males...Re’uvain said, “If such a great city did not escape them, then if this boy falls into their hands, not a shred of flesh will remain. Therefore, it is better to save him from them.”

- **Ohr HaChayim:** Since a person has free will, he is able to kill a man who is not actually liable for the death penalty in the Heavenly Court. Therefore, the verse states that Re’uvain wanted to save Yosef “from their hands,” i.e. from the hands of those that had free choice. The brothers believed that by killing Yosef they would be able to annul the effects of his prophetic dream.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

**Re’uvain’s Attempt to Save Yosef (v. 21-22)**

If Re’uvain was attempting to save Yosef, why did he suggest throwing him into a pit which contained “snakes and scorpions” (Rashi to v. 24)?

At the literal level, one could argue that Re’uvain simply was not aware that the pit contained any potential danger, such as snakes or scorpions, and that he was planning to rescue Yosef later.

Nevertheless, it seems somewhat unreasonable to suggest that Re’uvain would not have realized that a dry pit was likely to contain snakes and scorpions. If so, why did he suggest putting Yosef there?

[The Zohar and Ohr HaChayim explain] that the pit was less of a danger, since the brothers had free choice, whereas snakes and scorpions do not. Thus, while the brothers could have executed Yosef, the snakes and scorpions would only have been able to kill him if he actually deserved to die, according to the ruling of the Heavenly Court. So, Re’uvain felt that Yosef would be relatively safe in the pit.*

However, this explanation is still problematic, as to be saved from a pit of snakes and scorpions one still requires a special merit. And, while Yosef may have indeed been safer there than with his brothers, we are still left with the question: How could Re’uvain consent to placing Yosef in a situation of danger, among snakes and scorpions?

**The Explanation**

The brothers argued that Yosef had to be killed in an act of self-defense, since he was effectively seeking to kill them [as Sforno writes]. Re’uvain disagreed with their logic, but since he was in a minority of one against nine, he had no choice other than to consent to their plan. His only hope to save Yosef was not to challenge the other brothers directly, but to devise a scheme by which Yosef could be saved.

Thus we find that, as a pretense, he agreed with the brothers’ plan. Re’uvain suggested, “Let’s not give him a lethal blow” (v. 21), including himself with the other brothers (rather than saying “Don’t give him a lethal blow”), so as to deceive them into thinking that he consented to the idea

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* At first glance, this is difficult to understand, since even a person who is endowed with free choice cannot act in defiance of the Heavenly court. For example, if Mr. A chooses to harm Mr. B, it must be the case that Mr. B actually deserved this harm, and God merely arranged it that Mr. A should be present to inflict the harm. But this does not mean to say that Mr. A is denied his free choice, for he could have chosen not to do the harm and God would have found another agent to willingly harm Mr. B instead, since “God has many agents” (See Tanya, Igeres Hakodesh, Ch. 25). Thus, the brothers’ free choice does not appear to render them any more of a threat than the scorpions. Nevertheless, the Talmud teaches that at a time of danger, the Heavenly Court judges a person to see if his merits are sufficient for him to be saved (Shabbos 32a). Consequently, it could be argued a person who has free will is a greater danger than an animal, which does not, and thus a greater merit is required to be saved from it. This was the basis of Re’uvain’s logic (See Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 297).
"Come and behold the piety of Re'uvain?" Surely it is a basic obligation to save another person who is in life-threatening danger, and not an exceptional act of piety?

However, it was explained above that in order to save Yosef, Re’uvain was forced to act in a manner of deception, and that this was the very opposite of his nature. Rashi explains on the verse, “They couldn't speak with him nicely” (v. 4)—“From what is stated to their discredit, we may learn something to their credit, that they did not say one thing with their mouths and think differently in their hearts.” Certainly, this statement included Re’uvain too, which indicated that he was an extremely honest person. Thus, in order to save Yosef, he was forced to change his nature and act deceptively.

And this is the very definition of a pious person (chasid): one who goes beyond his natural inclinations. Therefore, the Zohar declared, “Come and behold the piety of Re’uvain.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5736)
Then, when Yosef came to his brothers, they stripped Yosef of his tunic, and the fine woolen robe which he had on. They took him and cast him into a pit.

The pit was empty. There was no water in it (but there were snakes and scorpions in it).

They sat down to eat a meal. They glanced around and saw—look!—a caravan of Arabs was coming from Gilad. Their camels were laden with spice mixtures, balsam, and birthwort. They were on their way to take (them) down to Egypt.

Yehudah said to his brothers, “What (profit) will we gain if we kill our brother and hide his blood(y death)?” Come, let’s sell him to the Arabs, and let our own hands not (act) against him, for he is our brother, our flesh.” His brothers listened (to him).

(Meanwhile, another caravan of) Midianite men, merchants, passed by.

(The brothers) pulled Yosef and lifted him up from the pit. They sold Yosef to the Arabs for twenty silver (pieces, and the Arabs sold him to the Midianites). They brought Yosef to Egypt.

Re’uwan (had been tending to his father. He) returned to the pit, and —look!—Yosef wasn’t in the pit. He tore his garments. He returned to his brothers and said, “The boy’s not there! Where can I go (to escape my father’s anguish)?”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● What was in the pit? (v. 24)

Rashi: Since the verse states, “The pit was empty,” don’t I already know that “there was no water in it”? Why did the Torah need to write, “There was no water in it”? [The Torah is hinting that] there was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it.

● Where did Re’uwan go? (v. 29)

Rashi: When [Yosef] was sold, [Re’uwan] was absent, because it was his day to go and tend to his father.

Another explanation: He was busy with his sackcloth and his fasting for disturbing his father’s bed (see above 35:22).

Shach al Hatorah: Yosef had been tending to his father during the period before he left, so now somebody else had to replace him. Since Re’uwan was the firstborn, he went first.

Sifsei Chachamim: Rashi understood that Re’uwan would certainly not have left for a personal matter while Yosef was in danger. He must have left to perform a mitzvah.

Rashi was not satisfied with his first interpretation, for we are left with the question: Why did the verse state that Re’uwan returned? It should have written that Re’uwan went to the pit to find Yosef.

Rashi saw this as a hint to the teaching that Re’uwan was busy with teshuvah, or “return”—as in the verse, “Mordechai returned to the King’s gate” (Esther 6:12), on which Rashi comments that Mordechai was dressed in a sackcloth and was fasting.

TORAS MENACHEM

Where Did Re’uwan Go? (v. 29)

On reading verse 29, that Reu’vain returned to the pit only to find that Yosef had gone, the reader is immediately struck by the question: Where did Re’uwan go? The Torah did not mention that he had departed, and we had presumed up until this point that he had been present all along.

Rashi offers two answers to this question. The first answer, that he went to help his father, is self-understood since Yosef had left Ya’akov without assistance [see Shach al Hatorah]. But why did Rashi feel it necessary to bring a second explanation, that Re’uwan was doing teshuvah?

Sifsei Chachamim answers that Rashi’s second explanation was prompted by the Torah’s expression, “Re’uwan returned,” and he cites proof from Rashi’s commentary to Megillas Esther.

However, this is difficult to accept, at the literal level, because:

a.) If Rashi’s comment here was based on an idea in Megillas Esther, he would have indicated so explicitly, because Rashi’s commentary was written for the first-time student of scripture, who has not yet learned other texts.

b.) The two cases are dissimilar: In Megillas Esther, Mordechai “returns” to his sackcloth. Here, Re’uwan returned from his sackcloth.

c.) In numerous other places the Torah uses the concept of “return” in the physical sense, and there is no indication that at the literal level this...
How was the secret of Yosef’s sale withheld from Ya’akov? (v. 33)

Rashi: Why did God not reveal to him [that Yosef was alive]? Because [the brothers] excommunicated and cursed anyone who would reveal [it], and they included God as a partner with them. Yitzchak however, knew that he was alive [but] he said, “How can I reveal it, and they included God as a partner with them.”

Midrash: They said, “Let us make a vow of excommunication among us, that none of us will tell Ya’akov, our father.” Yehudah said to them, “Re’uvain is not here, and a vow of excommunication is only valid in the presence of ten.” What did they do? They included God as a partner with them in their vow of excommunication not to tell their father...Thus even God...did not tell [Ya’akov], because of the vow. (Tanchumah 2).

The Explanations

Obviously, when a person embarks on a long journey he departs in the morning, to leave plenty of daylight hours ahead of him. So we can presume that when Ya’akov sent Yosef off to Shechem, he would have left early in the morning and arrived late in the day, at which time his brothers threw him into the pit.

When Yosef arrived, Re’uvain was definitely with his brothers, as he wondered. “He must be listening to our plans in an attempt to save Yosef!” Therefore, Re’uvain was forced to go to another location.

However, in the final analysis, this interpretation is the more difficult of the two to accept at the literal level, since Rashi wrote earlier, “All of them [Ya’akov’s sons] were equal, and all of them were righteous, for Re’uvain had not sinned!” (Rashi to 35:22). So, if Re’uvain had not sinned, he certainly would not be sitting in a sackcloth and fasting all day. Therefore, Rashi cited this as his secondary interpretation.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5736)

The Brothers’ Vow of Excommunication (v. 33)

Rashi’s comment to verse 33 prompts a number of questions:

a.) What was the need to make a vow of excommunication? Surely, the brothers could have simply resolved among themselves not to reveal what they had done to Ya’akov? Similarly, they could have prayed to God not to reveal the matter to Ya’akov. Why did they “include God as a partner with them” in the vow?

torahtext
They took Yosef’s robe, slaughtered a young goat, and dipped the robe into the blood. They sent the fine woolen coat (with messengers who) brought it to their father. They said, “We have found this. Please could you identify if this is your son’s coat or not.”

He recognized it, and he said, “(It’s) my son’s coat! A wild beast has devoured him! Yosef has been ripped apart again and again!”

Ya’akov tore his garments, and tied sackcloth around his waist. He mourned many days for his son. All his sons and all his daughters tried to console him, but he was unable to be consoled. He said, “I will go down to my grave while I am (still) mourning for my son (for I will never be consoled).”

(Ya’akov’s) father (Yitzchak) wept for him.

The Midianites sold (Yosef) to Egypt, to Potifar, Pharaoh’s officer, chief of the butchers.
regretted selling him and decided to behave toward him in a brotherly manner, and to redeem him for whatever amount of money would be demanded of them” (Rashi ibid. v. 3), the vow was now nullified, and the sign of Ya’akov’s vision represented God’s “consent.”

Similarly, when Yosef saw that his brothers were trying to find him, he understood that the time for his reunion with Ya’akov was near. But he could not be sure that the vow of excommunication had ended, so he did not send a personal messenger to his father to say that he was alive. Rather, he told his brothers, that “I am Yosef, your brother,” and relied on those who had made the vow of excommunication in the first place, to decide when it had ended and reveal to Ya’akov that “Yosef is still alive.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5733, Likutei Sichos vol. 10, p. 129ff.)
It was at that time that Yehudah’s level of respect from his brothers went down (since they blamed him for not averting the entire incident with Yosef), so he turned away (from his brothers and went into partnership) with an Adulamite man, named Chirah. There, Yehudah saw the daughter of a businessman, named Shua, and he married her and came to her.

1. She conceived and gave birth to a son, and he named him Air.
2. She conceived again and gave birth to a son, and she named him Onan.
3. She bore another son yet again, and she named him Shailah. (Yehudah) was in Keziv when she gave birth to him.
4. Yehudah took a wife named Tamar for Air, his firstborn.
5. Air, Yehudah’s firstborn, was evil in the eyes of God, and God made him die. So, Yehudah said to Onan, “Come to your brother’s wife and enter into levirate marriage (yibum) with her, and raise up children in your brother’s name.”
6. Onan knew that the children would not (be named after) him. So, whenever he came to his brother’s wife, he would waste on the ground, so as not to establish children in his brother’s name.
7. What he did was evil in the eyes of God, and He made him die too.
8. Yehudah said to his daughter-in-law, Tamar, “Stay as a widow in your father’s house until my son Shailah grows up.” ( Whenever she asked about Shailah, he pushed her off), for he said (to himself), “Maybe he’ll die too, like his brothers.” So Tamar went, and she stayed in her father’s house.
9. Many days passed and Yehudah’s wife—Shua’s daughter—died. After Yehudah was consoled, he went up to Timnah, both he and his Adulamite friend, to supervise his sheepshearers.
10. (Someone) reported to Tamar, saying, “Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.”
11. She took off her widow’s clothes, covered (her head) with a scarf and covered her face. She sat down at the crossroads which is on the way to Timnah (in order to offer herself to Yehudah). For she saw that Shailah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife (and she desired to have children from Yehudah).

Why is the story of Yehudah and Tamar written here?

RASHI: Why was this section placed here, where it interrupts the section dealing with Yosef? To teach us that [Yehudah’s] brothers demoted him from his high position when they saw their father’s distress. They said, “You told us to sell him. If you’d have told us to return him [to our father], we would have listened to you” (v. 1).

MIDRASH: The brothers were busy selling Yosef, Yosef was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Re’uvain was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Ya’akov was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Yehudah was busy finding himself a wife—and God was creating the light of Melech haMashiach.” [This refers to Peretz, the ancestor of Mashiach, who was born from Yehudah and Tamar.] (Bereishis Rabah, 85:1).

TORAS MENACHEM

Sparks of Chasidus

Rashi explains the simple reason why the Torah begins to speak of Yehudah in the middle of the story of Yosef, “To teach us that [Yehudah’s] brothers demoted him from his high position.” However, Rashi does not explain why the entire account of Yehudah and Tamar was recorded here, leading up to the birth of Peretz and Zarach.

However, according to the explanation of the Midrash, we can understand that the account of Yehudah and Tamar was included here to explain the reason why Yosef was sold: because God was paving the way for Mashiach. Thus, before we read of Yosef’s enslavement, and the ensuing Egyptian exile, the Torah “prefaces the cure before the disease,” informing us of God’s inner intent.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5751)
Why did Yehudah say, “let her be burned”? (v. 24)

Rashi: Efraim Maksha’ah said in the name of Rabbi Meir: “She was the daughter of Sheim, who was a priest. Therefore, she was sentenced to be burned.”

Ramban: Rashi did not explain himself clearly. The daughter of a priest is not liable to be burned for harlotry, only for adultery—as the Talmud states explicitly (Sanhedrin 51b)—and here, Tamar was single.

Rada: Since there is an obligation for a brother-in-law to marry his brother’s childless widow (i.e. levirate marriage, or yibum), Tamar had an obligation to marry Shailah, so she had the legal status of being bound in marriage. Thus, Yehudah’s act with her was effectively an act of adultery.

Chizkuni: Her act of harlotry would normally have been punishable by decapitation. But in this case Tamar was sentenced to the more severe penalty of burning, since she was the daughter of a priest.

Mizrachi: To set an example to a morally corrupt generation.

Gur Aryeh: The Talmud states explicitly that after the Flood the court of Sheim decreed death for an act of harlotry (Avodah Zarah 36b). Rashi adds here, that for a priest’s daughter who committed an act of harlotry, the decree was harsher: death by burning.
When Yehudah saw her, he thought she was a harlot (because she was sitting by the crossroads, and he did not recognize her) because she had covered her face. He turned off (the road on which he was traveling) to the road (where) she (was). He said, “Get ready please, let me come to you,” for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

She said, “What will you give me if you come to me?”

He said, “I will send a young goat from the herd.”

“(Only) if you give me some collateral until you send it,” she said.

“What collateral should I give you?” he said.

She said, “Your signet-ring, your cloak, and the staff that’s in your hand.”

He gave them to her, and he came to her. She conceived from him (men of similar might and righteousness as Yehudah).

She got up and went off. She removed her scarf, and put on her widow’s clothing.

Yehudah sent the young goat through his Adulamite friend to take the collateral from the woman’s hand, but he did not find her.

So he asked the people of her locality, saying, “Where is the harlot who was at the crossroads on the way?”

They said, “There was no harlot here.”

He returned to Yehudah, and he said, “I have not found her, and the people of the place also said, ‘No harlot was here.’”

Yehudah said, “Let her keep them for herself, otherwise we’ll be put to shame (if everyone finds out, and I’ve made every effort to pay her, for) look, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her.”

Then, after nearly three months, (someone) reported to Yehudah, saying, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has acted as a harlot, and—look!—she is pregnant from harlotry!”

Yehudah said, “Take her out, and let her be burned!”

TORAS MENACHEM

According to Torah law, a priest’s daughter who commits an act of harlotry is not sentenced to death by burning (see Vayikra 21:9 and Rashi ibid). Why does Rashi write here that Tamar was “the daughter of Sheim, who was a priest? Therefore, she was sentenced to be burned”? (as Ramban asks).

Mizrachi and Gur Aryeh, explain that, in those days, it had been universally accepted (or decreed) that a harlot is punished by the death penalty. Tamar however was sentenced to the more severe penalty of burning, because she was a priest’s daughter, or in order to set an example to the generation.

However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation this argument is difficult to accept, because:

a.) If any act of harlotry was indeed punishable by the death penalty, in those days, then Tamar would surely not have risked her life and “sat down at the crossroads” (v. 14), acting as a harlot.

b.) We can presume that Yehudah was stringent in observing the law. Thus, the fact that he came to Tamar indicates that such an act must have been permissible in those days, according to Noachide law.*

Radak’s argument (that Tamar’s act was tantamount to adultery, since she was legally bound to marry Shailah), is difficult to accept at the literal level because Tamar was exempt from marrying Shailah. As Rashi writes, that after marrying two husbands who had died, Tamar had the status of a woman who is legally presumed to cause the death of any man that she would marry (Rashi to v. 11, above). On this basis, it was prohibited for Shailah to marry her, and thus the requirement for levirate marriage was automatically annulled.

Thus, we are left with the question: Why was Tamar sentenced to be burned to death?

Sparks of Chasidus

The Zohar (III 72a) teaches that the words, “Take her out and let her be burned” (v. 24), refer to the soul in the times of exile: Even though the soul has been “taken out” of its natural habitat of being close to God, it still “burns” with the love for God.

One might ask: What keeps the soul going? How does it continue to burn with love for God in a world which hides God’s presence?

Rashi answers, “She was the daughter of...a priest.” I.e. the soul is so closely connected to God—the “Priest”—that all the difficulties of this world can never extinguish the soul’s love for her Father in heaven.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, pp. 194-5)

* Nevertheless, Yehudah was careful to ask, “Get ready please, let me come to you” (v.16), since the act did require the consent of both parties. Thus, Shechem was culpable for the abduction of Dinah, since it was done without her consent, as Rashi writes explicitly (34:7).
The Explanation

Rashi writes, “Due to the Flood, the nations prohibited themselves from forbidden relations” (Rashi to 34:7). Rashi, however, does not explain which specific acts the nations prohibited themselves from, and what punishments were administered. Nor does the Torah give any indication of these details.

Thus, at the literal level, the reader only discovers that a certain act was prohibited—and punishable in a particular manner—when he reads that the act was committed and the punishment was applied.

For example, when we read that Shimon and Levi decimated the people of Shechem for the abduction of Dinah, the reader understands that abducting a girl was an offense punishable by death, when we look!—she is pregnant from harlotry” (v. 24), he presumed that she was abducted unwillingly, and did not make herself available to Shechem.

Dinah was only "like a harlot", therefore, Dinah was only "like a harlot," since he was abducted unwillingly, and did not make herself available to Shechem.

So in our case, when Yehudah heard that Tamar "has acted as a harlot, and look!—she is pregnant from harlotry" (v. 24), he presumed that she had made herself available to others, and therefore he judged her with the death penalty (since she was a priest’s daughter). However, when he discovered what had really happened—that Tamar had not made herself loosely available to other men but had targeted Yehudah in particular in order to have children from him—it became clear that she had not been a harlot at all.

One remaining problem with Rashi’s comment is that the current story must have occurred many years after Sheim’s passing (since Ya’akov was 50 when Sheim passed away, and Yehudah did not get married until after the sale of Yosef, when Ya’akov was 108). During this time Tamar was married twice to non-priests, so her connection to priesthood through her father’s house would have been lost. How then can Rashi assert that Tamar was liable for the death penalty for a priest’s daughter?

Rashi hinted to the solution to this problem by citing the author of the teaching that Tamar was Sheim’s daughter: “Efrayim Maksha’ah said in the name of Rabbi Meir…” as if to say that one needs to bear in mind who authored this teaching.

she had still committed an act of harlotry, and so as a priest’s daughter she was liable to be punished?

Therefore, the answer to this question can be gleaned from an earlier statement of Rashi. On the words, “Could we (allow them) to make our sister like a harlot?” (34:31), Rashi comments that a harlot is one who makes herself available ("םשה") and accordingly, Dinah was only “like a harlot,” since he was abducted unwillingly, and did not make herself available to Shechem.

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TAMAS MENACHEM
25 She was taken out (to be burned). She sent (a message) to her father-in-law, saying, “I am pregnant from the man to whom these belong.” She said, “Please identify whose signet ring, cloak, and staff are these?”

26 Yehudah recognized (them). He said, “She’s right (in what she says. She became pregnant) from me (justifiably), because I did not give her to my son Shailah.” But he didn’t continue to be intimate with her anymore (alternatively: he did continue).

**The Birth of Peretz and Zarach**

38:27 Then, when she was giving birth—look!—there were twins in her womb.

28 What happened was, when she was giving birth (one baby) stretched out his hand. The midwife took a crimson thread and tied it on his hand, saying, “This one came out first.” 29 Then, after (the baby) brought his hand (back inside)—look!—his brother emerged.

She said, “With such strength you have forced yourself (PaRaTZta alecha PaReTZ)!” So he (Yehudah) named him Peretz.

30 Afterwards, his brother emerged, the one who had the crimson thread on his hand, and he named him Zarach (because of the shining appearance of the crimson).

**Classic Questions**

● Why did Zarach not succeed in becoming the firstborn, even though he began to emerge first? (v. 28-29)

**Rashi:** Four “hands” are written here, corresponding to the four violations against prohibited property committed by Achan—who was descended from [Zarach]. Another opinion is that they correspond to the four things that he looted [from the spoil of Jericho]: a cloak from Shinar, two pieces of silver worth two hundred shekels, and a wedge of gold.

The Talmud relates that Efraim Maksha’ah noted in the name of Rabbi Meir, the irony that Ovadiah—who prophesied the downfall of Edom in the Messianic Era—was in fact an Edomite. He compared this to the common saying that “the handle of the ax which chops the forest comes from a tree in the forest” (Sanhedrin 39b).

Now, Ovadiah lived in the times of the First Temple, and he was prophesying about the Messianic Era, which renders the “ax” and its “chopping” some 2000 years apart. Surely the comparison is a very distant one?

From this we see that Efraim Maksha’ah did not perceive long intervals in time as a serious interruption in concept. So Rashi stressed, that “Efraim Maksha’ah said...She was the daughter of Sheim,” to help us understand why the long time interval and events between Sheim’s death and the incident with Yehudah and Tamar did not weaken the connection between father and daughter.

A further teaching of Efraim Maksha’ah, in the name of Rabbi Meir, is that when Avraham was visited by the three angels, he did not serve them bread, since he only ate bread which was prepared in a state of ritual purity, and Sarah was unable to do so at that time (Bava Metzia 67a).

This begs the question: Just because Avraham took on the stringency to eat bread only if it had been prepared in ritual purity did not mean that he had to impose such a stringency on his guests (especially when one considers that they appeared to be idol worshippers).

However, from here we see that Efraim Maksha’ah maintained that when a person is in somebody else’s home, he is required to follow all the customs of the host.

This sheds light on our case: Since Tamar “stayed in her father’s house” (above, v. 11), she would have been required to keep all the stringencies of her father, Sheim the priest.

(On based Likutei Sichos 30, pp. 188-9)

According to Sefer Habahir (ch. 197), Zarach and Peretz correspond to the sun and the moon respectively. The sun, whose light is constant and reliable, alludes to the tzadik who serves God consistently, without failure. The moon, which waxes and wanes, alludes to the ba’al teshuvah (penitent), who initially falls, only to rebound with greater force.

Mashiach arises from Peretz (the moon), since Mashiach is associated with teshuvah, to the extent that “he will influence tzadikim to teshuvah” (Zohar, cited in Likutei Torah, Shemini Atzeres 92b). This is also hinted to in the name Peretz, which indicates breaking through boundaries, a task which is crucial to the process of teshuvah.

Peretz was the firstborn, alluding to the fact that the ba’al teshuvah is higher than the tzadik. However, Zarach’s hand emerged first, indicating that, initially, a person should endeavor to be a tzadik. But, since Achan was destined to come from Zarach (see Rashi), Zarach too needed to recognize the advantage of teshuvah—and so it was Peretz who emerged first.

(On based Likutei Sichos vol. 30, pp. 188-9)
CROSS REFERENCE

Why does this section follow the account of Yehudah and Tamar? (v. 1)

Rashi: [Scripture] returns to the previous topic which it had interrupted in order to juxtapose the demotion of Yehudah with the selling of Yosef, to imply that because of [Yosef, his brothers] demoted [Yehudah] from his high position; and also to juxtapose the incident of Potifar’s wife with the incident of Tamar, to teach you that just as [Tamar’s intentions] were for the sake of Heaven, likewise [Potifar’s wife’s intentions] were for the sake of Heaven. For she saw through her astrology that she was destined to raise children from [Yosef], but she did not know whether [they would be] from her or from her daughter.
Yosef had been brought down to Egypt, and Potifar—Pharaoh’s officer, chief of the butchers, a native Egyptian—purchased him from the Arabs who had brought him down there.

God was with Yosef, and he became a successful person (while) he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that (the Name of) God was (always) on his (lips), and that whatever he put his hand to, God made successful. Yosef found favor in his (master’s) eyes, and he attended to him (personally). Potifar appointed him over his house, and he gave everything he had into (Yosef’s) hand.

What happened was, that from the time that he appointed (Yosef) over his house and over everything he had, God blessed the house of the Egyptian because of Yosef. God’s blessing was (found) in everything he had, in the house and in the field. He left everything he had in Yosef’s hand, and he didn’t (care to) know about anything of his, except the crumpet that he ate. (Since Yosef was in control, he pampered himself so) Yosef had handsome features and a beautiful complexion. (God said, “You are pampering yourself while your father mourns! I will incite the Potifar’s wife against you!”)

Then, after these words (of God), his master’s wife cast her eyes on Yosef, and she said, “Sleep with me!”

But he refused. He said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master doesn’t (care to) know about any of my (affairs) in the house, and he has given everything that’s his into my hand. In this house there’s no one greater than me, and he has not withheld anything from me except you, since you’re his wife. So how could I do this extremely wicked (act), and sin against God?”

When she would speak to Yosef day in and day out, he would not listen to her, (even) to lie (in the same bed as) her (or) to be with her.

Then, when a certain (religious holiday) arrived, (Yosef) came to the house to do his business, and

The True Intentions of Potifar’s Wife (v. 1)

Rashi writes that, “just like [Tamar’s intentions] were for the sake of Heaven, likewise [Potifar’s wife’s intentions] were for the sake of Heaven.”

This however appears to differ from one of Rashi’s comments below, at the beginning of Chapter 40: “Since that cursed woman had accustomed everybody to talk [badly] about [Yosef] the righteous one, God brought to the Egyptians the sin of these [men, the butler and the baker], so that the Egyptians would turn [their attention] to them and not to [Yosef].”

Why does Rashi first describe Potifar’s wife as having intentions “for the sake of Heaven,” only later to call her a “cursed woman”?

The Explanation

Rashi may have written that Potifar’s wife was “cursed,” but he did not state that she was “wicked,” for it is quite possible for a person to be both righteous and cursed at the same time. As we find in the case of Eliezer, Avraham’s servant, that “Eliezer had a daughter, and he was looking for a pretext so that Avraham would allow Yitzchak to marry his daughter. Avraham said to him, ‘My son is blessed, and you are cursed, and one who is cursed cannot unite with one who is blessed’” (Rashi to 24:39).

Obviously, Eliezer was not a wicked person, for “he drew water from his master’s teachings and gave others to drink” (Rashi to 15:2), and we even find that he risked his life to fight a war on Avraham’s behalf, virtually singlehandedly (ibid. 14:14). But even though Eliezer was a righteous individual, he was still called “cursed” by Avraham because he was a slave who was lacking in personal freedom.

Similarly, we find in the case of Cana’an, whose status of being a slave is described as a curse: “Cursed be Cana’an! He shall be a slave among slaves to his brethren!” (above, 9:25).

Thus, in the case of Potifar’s wife, Rashi’s two statements are not in fact contradictory. Although Potifar’s wife was indeed a righteous person, and her intentions were genuinely for the sake of Heaven, she was nevertheless called “cursed” because in a certain respect she was lacking in personal freedom.

To understand why Potifar’s wife was considered by Rashi to be a “slave,” let us first consider the following problem:

When Yosef was asked by Potifar’s wife to “sleep with me” (v. 7), Yosef would certainly have explained to her that such an act would be totally unethical, utterly irrational, and a “sin against God” (v. 9). So, if her intentions were indeed for the sake of Heaven, why did she persist?

Rashi explains, “She saw through her astrology that she was destined to raise children from [Yosef], but she did not know whether [they would be] from her or from her daughter.” In other words, Potifar’s wife acted irrationally because she was totally convinced by what she had perceived through astrology. In effect, she was nothing less than a “slave” to her own astrological prediction! (cf. Rashi to 15:5, above)
Thus, due to the fact that Potifar’s wife had been “enslaved” by her predictions, leading her to irrational behavior, Rashi described her as being “cursed,” like a slave who is not a free agent to act as he pleases, but is driven by an external authority.

Even after the above explanation, we are still left with the question why Potifar’s wife “accustomed everybody to talk [badly] about [Yosef] the righteous one”? If her intentions were truly for the sake of Heaven, then why would she speak badly about Yosef?
none of the members of the house were there in the house (since they had all gone to the temple of idolatry). She grabbed him by his clothes, saying, “Sleep with me!”

Yosef dashed off and went outside, leaving his clothes in her hand.

13 Then, when she saw that he had left his clothes in her hand and had dashed outside, she called the members of her house, and spoke to them, saying, “See! (My husband) brought us a Hebrew man to deprave us! He came to me, to lie with me, but I called loudly, and so when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his clothes with me, and dashed off outside.”

16 She left his clothes beside her, until (Yosef’s) master came home. Then she told him the same thing, saying, “The Hebrew slave that you brought us came to me to deprave me. And then, when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his clothes with me, and dashed off outside.”

19 Then, when (Yosef’s) master heard his wife’s report which she told him, saying, “Your slave did things like this to me,” he became furious. Yosef’s master took him and put him into prison, the place where the King’s prisoners were imprisoned.

(While) he was in the prison, God was with Yosef, and He granted him a favorable image, and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison’s warden. So, the prison’s warden delivered all the captives that were in the prison into Yosef’s hand, and everything that was done there was done through his command. The prison’s warden did not see (fault) in anything that was in (Yosef’s) hands, because God was with him. God made whatever he did successful.

Yosef Interprets Dreams in Prison

Then, after these words (of Potifar’s wife, who bad-mouthed Yosef throughout Egypt, the attention was taken away from Yosef when), the King of Egypt’s butler and baker committed an offense against their master, the King of Egypt. Pharaoh became furious at his two officers, the

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why does this section follow the account of Potifar’s wife? (v. 1)

Rashi: Since that cursed woman had accustomed everybody to talk [badly] about [Yosef] the righteous one, God brought to [the Egyptians] the sin of these [men, the butler and the baker], so that [the Egyptians] would turn [their attention] to them and not to [Yosef]. And furthermore, so that relief would come through them to [Yosef], the righteous one.

However, this again was an expression of her “slavery” to astrology. After Yosef was already in jail, she realized that the idea of her having children through Yosef was a lost cause. The only option that remained was for her daughter to have children through Yosef.

So Potifar’s wife wondered, “How can I make sure that Yosef remains in jail until her daughter reaches marriageable age? He desperately wants to return home to his father. I’m sure he’ll find his way back, sooner or later.”

Potifar’s wife concluded that the only way to ensure that Yosef remained in jail until her daughter was ready was to spread a negative propaganda campaign about him throughout Egypt. Therefore, she, “accustomed everybody to talk [badly] about [Yosef],” in order to make sure that it would be impossible for him to argue his way out of jail, and return home unnoticed.

Thus, in the final analysis we see that even Potifar’s wife’s campaign to discredit Yosef throughout the whole of Egypt was in fact—at the literal level of Torah interpretation—an act carried out “for the sake of Heaven.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5740)
ול构筑ר החול שאירק את קולו, אומץ פועלו. לא יفجرו המבנה!

לאירק את קולו שאירק את קולו, אומץ פועלו. לא יفجرו המבנה!
chief butler and the chief baker, and he placed them into the custody of the chief butcher’s house, in the prison where Yosef was held. The chief butcher assigned Yosef (to be) with them, and he attended to them. They were in custody for (many) days, (a whole year).

Both of them—the King of Egypt’s butler and baker, who were confined in the prison—had a dream. Each person had his dream on the same night (as the other), and each person dreamed his own destiny.

Yosef came to them in the morning. He saw them and—look!—they were depressed. So he asked (these) officers of Pharaoh, who were with him in custody (in) his master’s house’s, saying, “Why do your faces (look) so down today?”

They said to him, “We’ve had a dream, but there is no one to interpret it.”

Yosef said to them, “Don’t (dream) interpretations come from God? Please tell me (your dreams).”

The chief butler told his dream to Yosef. He said to him, “In my dream—look!—a vine was before me. On the vine were three tendrils. It seemed to be blossoming, and its buds came out. (Then) its clusters ripened into grapes.”

Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup. I placed the cup on Pharaoh’s palm.”

Yosef said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three tendrils are three days. In another three days, Pharaoh will (count his officers to serve him at a meal and) he will count your head, and restore you to your position. Then, you will place Pharaoh’s cup into his hand, just like when you were his butler in the first instance.”

“If you would then remember me, alongside you, when things go well for you, please, do me a favor and mention me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this prison. For I was kidnapped from the Land of the Hebrews, and I haven’t done anything (wrong) here either, for them to have put me into prison.”

The chief baker saw that he had interpreted well. So, he said to Yosef, “In my dream, I too (was there) and—look!—there were three wicker baskets on my head. In the upper basket was a selection

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**Yosef’s Salvation (v. 1, 23)**

In his commentary to verse 1, Rashi writes that Pharaoh’s butler and baker were imprisoned, “so that relief would come through them to [Yosef], the righteous one” (see Classic Questions on page 279).

This, however, appears to contradict a later comment of Rashi, at the end of the Parsha:

On the words, “the chief butler did not remember Yosef” (v. 23), Rashi comments, “Because Yosef relied on [the butler] to remember him, he was compelled to be confined for two years, in the spirit of the verse, ‘Happy is the man who trusts in God and did not turn to the arrogant’ (Ps. 40:5), [i.e.] he did not trust in the Egyptians, who are called ‘arrogant.’”

This begs the question: If God’s intent in sending the butler and the baker to be imprisoned with Yosef was “so that relief would come through them to him,” then why was Yosef wrong to have “relied on [the butler] to remember him”?

And why was Yosef’s punishment a further two years in prison?

**The Explanation**

While it is indeed true that God sent the butler and baker to jail as a means of saving Yosef, Yosef nevertheless made a subtle miscalculation concerning the significance of their arrival.

Obviously, Yosef would have been very excited that he was chosen to share a cell with two of Pharaoh’s top ministers, and he would have surely seen it as a possible route by which he might be able to leave jail.

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**The Last Word**

The natural reaction for Yosef, after being wrongly imprisoned, would be utter contempt for Egypt and its government. Thus, when Yosef was joined by the chief butler and chief baker—two of Pharaoh’s high-ranking ministers—it would only have been natural for Yosef to shun them and hate them.

Yosef, however, did the very opposite. Not only did he bear no grudge against Pharaoh’s ministers, who were key members of the corrupt regime that had wrongfully imprisoned him, but he took an active interest in their welfare. In fact, he was even sensitive enough to notice that they had been troubled by their dreams, inquiring, “Why do your faces (look) so down today?” (v. 7).

In hindsight we see that from this single act of kindness Yosef was eventually saved, leading him to save the entire Egyptian people from starvation!

This teaches us: a.) How important it is to be caring about other people. And, b.) Never to underestimate the power of one single good deed. Yosef’s sensitivity to another’s distress, a person whom he had every right to despise, led to the salvation of Egypt.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5734)
Yosef’s mistake was that he saw his newfound relationship with the butler and the baker as the way out of jail, rather than a possible means by which God would send salvation. Thus, Rashi stresses, “Because Yosef relied on [the butler] to remember him, he was compelled to be confined for two years.” Yosef should have relied directly upon God, Who can send help in any possible manner imaginable, rather than relying on what he thought was God’s chosen route of salvation.

Of course, Yosef was not wrong in attempting to find a natural, logical route by which God might save him. He merely erred in the significance that he attached to that route, attempting to “write the script” on God’s
of all Pharaoh’s foods, made by a baker, and the birds were eating them from the basket on top of my head.”

18 Yosef replied and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. 19 In another three days, Pharaoh will remove your head from you and hang you on a gallows, and the birds will eat your flesh off you.”

20 And so it happened, that on the third day, (it was) Pharaoh’s birthday. Pharaoh made a banquet for all his servants and he counted the chief butler and chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief butler to his (position as) butler, and (the butler) placed the cup on Pharaoh’s palm. 22 And, just as Yosef had predicted, he hanged the chief baker.

23 But, (that day) the chief butler did not remember Yosef. And he forgot him (later on too).

THE HAFTARAH FOR VAYEISHEV IS ON PAGE 388. THE HAFTARAH FOR CHANUKAH IS ON PAGE 398.

Maftir readings for Shabbos Chanukah: day one—Bamidbar 7:1-17 (page 403); day two—ibid. 18-23 (page 403).

behalf. Instead of relying on God to save him via the butler, Yosef should have depended on God to save him in whichever way God deemed fit, while realizing that there was a distinct possibility that it might be through the butler.

TWO YEARS

Based on the above, we can also explain why Yosef was imprisoned for two further years for his “sin” of relying on the butler. To clarify this point, let us first turn to a peculiar detail in Yosef’s analysis of the butler’s dream.

In response to the butler’s statement that, “On the vine were three tendrils” (v. 10), Yosef explained, “the three tendrils are three days.” (v. 10). This begs the question: How did Yosef know that the three tendrils represented three days, and not three weeks? Or three months?

Presumably, Yosef reasoned that God had sent the butler to save him immediately. So, he interpreted the three tendrils to signify the lesser timespan of three days.

This would have been the case if Yosef had trusted in God sufficiently. But since Yosef erred in placing too much significance on the arrival of the butler (as explained above), God decided to punish him by following an alternative interpretation of the dream: that Yosef would be saved only after three years!

This case is comparable to Rashi’s earlier comment in Parshas Noach that “when God brought the rains down He brought them down with mercy, so that if the people would repent they would be rains of blessing. When they failed to repent, the rains became a flood” (Rashi to 7:12).

Likewise, in our case, God initially sent the butler to save Yosef and indicated that the salvation would be soon, in three days. But since Yosef responded incorrectly, the three days were increased to three years.

Nevertheless, since a punishment need not be administered in full measure, God lessened the sentence to two years and part of a third year.

Thus Rashi writes that Yosef stayed in jail a further two years, for in fact, he remained there for two years and a few days which, in God’s mercy, was considered to be an entire year.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5743)
The word Mikeitz means “At the end,” as in the saying, “the end of days” (Daniel 12:13).

In Aramaic the word “days” is almost identical to its Hebrew equivalent, but the last letter switches from a mem to a nun ( asmom = asno). The Zohar (I 62b) notes that this Aramaic word, tinh, is identical to the Hebrew word, ihn, meaning “right” and on this basis, the Zohar concludes: “There are two ‘ends,’ one on the spiritual ‘right’ and one on the spiritual ‘left’.”

In Jewish mysticism, “left” represents the side of evil. So, the “end of the spiritual left” refers to the day when evil will cease to exist, with the end of exile, i.e. “the end of days” ( asmom).

“Right,” on the other hand, represents goodness and holiness. Thus we refer to the “end of the right,” to indicate that there is no dilution of values in the realms of holiness, so the end is as good as the beginning. The term ihn (“end of the spiritual right”) is thus an allusion to the final redemption, when good will triumph over evil, and we will see how good is found consistently throughout the entire world.

We are thus left with the question: Which “end” does the word Mikeitz refer to—the “end of the left” or the “end of the right”?

In fact, both could be argued:

a.) At the beginning of our Parsha, Yosef is released from jail. This was the end of Yosef’s exile, i.e. the “end of the left.”

b.) On the other hand, we then read how Yosef suddenly rose to power and became ruler over Egypt—his redemption, represented by “the end of the right.”

How could the two opposite concepts of exile and redemption be alluded to by the same expression?

Chasidic thought explains that the inner purpose of exile is that the Jews should be scattered around the world in order to “rescue” sparks of holiness which had been lost in physicality. Thus, redemption is not the elimination of exile, but rather, it is the goal of exile. And therefore, both concepts are hinted to by the same word.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, pp. 200-1; Biuray haZohar p. 299)
**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

*Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams? (v. 8)*

**RASHI:** They did interpret them, but not satisfactorily for Pharaoh, for their voice did not enter his ears, and he had no satisfaction from their interpretation. They said, “You will have seven daughters, and you will bury seven daughters.”

**MIDRASH:** They said, “The seven good cows are seven daughters that will be born to you. The seven ugly cows mean that you will bury seven daughters. The seven good ears of grain are seven agricultural years, and the seven thin cows and thin ears of grain represented seven years of famine! This matter, however, was arranged by God so as to bring greatness to Yosef.

**CHIZKUNI:** The Egyptian sorcerers thought that the two dreams each had their own meanings. Therefore, they were unable to interpret them properly.

**ABARBAANEL:** The Egyptian sorcerers understood that according to the science of dream interpretation, a dream is never to be taken literally, because the imagination causes events to be expressed in a cryptic fashion. Therefore, they sought for a possible scenario which Pharaoh’s dream might hint to, e.g. seven daughters being born etc.

Yosef, however, knew by Divine inspiration that this case was an exception to the above rule, and that Pharaoh’s dream was a direct vision of the future which was indeed to be taken literally.
Yosef Interprets Pharaoh’s Dreams

At the end of two years, it happened that Pharaoh was dreaming, and—look!—he was standing by the Nile. Then, from the Nile—look!—there were seven nice-looking, well-built cows coming up, and they pastured in the marshland. Then—look!—seven other, ugly-looking, thin cows were coming up after them from the Nile, and they stood beside the (other) cows on the bank of the Nile. Then, the ugly-looking, thin cows devoured the seven nice-looking, well-built cows, and Pharaoh woke up.

He fell asleep and dreamed again, and—look!—seven healthy and good ears of grain were growing on one stalk. And—look!—seven thin ears of grain, parched by the east wind, were growing up after them. Then, the thin ears of grain swallowed up the seven healthy and full ears of grain.

Pharaoh woke up, and now (he had) a (complete) dream (that needed to be interpreted).

In the morning, his mind was buzzing (with agitation). So he sent (messengers) and called all the sorcerers of Egypt and all its sages. Pharaoh related his dreams to them, but no one interpreted them (satisfactorily) for Pharaoh.

The Failure of the Egyptian Sorcerers (v. 8)

Rashi’s comment to verse 8 prompts the following questions:

a.) Why did Rashi feel it necessary to cite—from the Midrash—the Egyptian sorcerers’ interpretation which was rejected by Pharaoh? The Torah itself does not hint at all to the content of the sorcerers’ interpretation, so why did Rashi mention it?

b.) The Midrash cites two interpretations offered by the Egyptian sorcerers. Rashi however, only cited one of them. Why?

c.) Why does Rashi not address the obvious question, posed by Bachaye, why Yosef’s extremely simple interpretation could not be fathomed by any of Egypt’s sorcerers?

Bachaye answers that God withheld the true interpretation from the sorcerers in order to bring Yosef to greatness. However, it would have been a very great miracle indeed for all the sorcerers of Egypt not to have thought of the obvious interpretation which Yosef offered. Thus, it is difficult to accept at the literal level that such a miracle occurred, without any indication of such an occurrence in the Torah or in Rashi’s commentary.

Chizkuni argues that Yosef’s genius was the realization that Pharaoh’s two dreams were actually one (see below, v. 25). However this interpretation is incompatible with Rashi’s commentary since, as mentioned above (question ‘b’), Rashi stresses that the sorcerers only offered one interpretation for both dreams (in contrast to the Midrash which offers a different interpretation for each dream). Thus according to Rashi, the Egyptian sorcerers also realized that both dreams had the same meaning.

And Abarbanel’s explanation is difficult to accept at the literal level because: a.) We do not have a precedent in scripture for the concept of how imagination affects a person’s dreams. b.) On the contrary, we find that Ya’akov and Yosef’s dreams did come true in the literal sense.

So we are left with the question: Why could a host of Egyptian sorcerers not fathom Yosef’s simple interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream, which was heralded as an act of utter genius and Divine inspiration (see below v. 38)?

Pharaoh’s dream is the very beginning of the story of Egyptian exile. The dream predicted a famine which eventually caused Ya’akov and his family to settle in Egypt where, a generation later, they were enslaved.

In times of exile, the Jewish people are forced to withstand the fluctuation between two contradictory modes of life: love of God at the time of prayer, and then total immersion into the physical world during one’s business and private affairs the rest of the day. Chasidic teachings compare this situation to a dream, because in a dream two opposite, contradictory phenomena can coexist simultaneously.

In order to hint to this idea, the precursor of the Egyptian exile—our current story—was recorded in the Torah as a dream.

The Last Word

Yosef, a righteous person, dreamed about working in the field with his brothers, binding sheaves. Pharaoh, a wicked man, had a dream which involved no effort on his part at all.

This highlights the fact that all matters of holiness require effort, ensuring that what we receive from God in return should not be unearned “bread of shame” (see Jerusalem Talmud, Orlah 1:3).

When a person dedicates himself to serious work, he has the promise of success that “you labored (and therefore) you discovered” (Megillah 6b). In fact, a person is capable of achieving success far beyond the proportion of effort invested—following the pattern of “always ascending when dealing with matters of holiness.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 346)
The chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying, “I (have to) mention my wrongdoings today! When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and he put me in prison in the house of the chief slaughterer—(both) me and the chief baker, we both dreamed a dream on the same night. Each person had a dream (that clearly depicted) his destiny.

There was a Hebrew lad with us, a slave of the chief slaughterer, and we told (the dreams) to him. He interpreted our dreams for us. He gave each person a (feasible) interpretation of his dream.

Then, things happened just as he had interpreted for us: (Pharaoh) restored me to my position, and he hanged (the chief baker).”

So Pharaoh sent (a messenger) and called for Yosef. They rushed him from the dungeon. He cut his hair (especially for the King), changed his (prison) clothes, and he came to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said to Yosef, “I’ve had a dream, but there is no one to interpret it, but I’ve heard it said about you with certainty that you listen to a dream, (understand it, and are then able) to interpret it.”

Yosef replied to Pharaoh, saying, “(The wisdom to interpret dreams) is not from me. God will put an answer that will appease Pharaoh (into my mouth).”

Pharaoh said to Yosef, “In my dream—look!—I was standing on the bank of the Nile. Then—look!—seven well-built, nice looking cows were coming up from the Nile, and they pastured in the marshland. Then—look!—seven other cows were coming up after them, (which were) weak, very ugly looking and thin. I have never seen such bad (cows) throughout the entire land of Egypt.”

Then, the thin, ugly cows devoured the first seven healthy cows. They were swallowed up inside them, but it wasn’t recognizable that they’d gone inside them. They looked as ugly as they were to start with. Then I woke up.”

“I saw in (another of) my dream(s): Look!—seven ears of healthy and good grain were growing on one stalk. And—look!—seven thin ears of dehydrated grain, parched by the east wind, were growing up after them. Then, the thin ears of grain swallowed up the seven good ears of grain.”

“I told (my dreams to all) the sorcerers, but no one is telling me (a satisfactory explanation).”

**The Explanation**

Pharaoh’s sorcerers wanted to take the dream literally, that the seven fat cows indicated seven good years etc., but there was one detail in the dream which held them back from doing so:

After the seven fat cows left the Nile, the Torah states, “Then, look!—seven other, ugly-looking, thin cows were coming up after them from the Nile, and they stood beside the (other) cows on the Nile bank” (v. 3). This perplexed the Egyptian sorcerers, for if the seven fat cows represent seven years of abundance and the seven thin cows seven years of famine, how is it possible that “they stood beside each other,” suggesting that all fourteen cows were present at the same time.

This problem led the sorcerers to conclude that the fourteen cows could not represent fourteen years which occur one after the other. Rather, the two types of cows must represent two phenomena which can occur simultaneously.

Therefore, Rashi writes that the Egyptian sorcerers told Pharaoh, “You will have seven daughters, and you will bury seven daughters.” For Pharaoh would certainly have had numerous wives and concubines, so it was quite feasible that, at the same time, he would have seven daughters and bury seven daughters.

Rashi however rejected the second interpretation of the Midrash that “The seven good ears of grain are seven countries that you will conquer; the seven bad ears of grain are seven colonies that will rebel against you,” because it is extremely unlikely, at the literal level, that Pharaoh would decide to conquer seven different countries at once, as it is militarily unwise to fight many wars at the same time.

How did Yosef overcome the above difficulty, and render the dream literally to Pharaoh’s satisfaction?

To solve this problem, let us first address a perplexing matter in the account of Yosef’s words to Pharaoh:

After interpreting Pharaoh’s dream, Yosef did not remain quiet. Rather, he continued to offer practical suggestions to Pharaoh: “And now, Pharaoh should select a person who is understanding and wise, and appoint him over the land of Egypt. Pharaoh should enact that he appoint officials over the land….Let them collect all the food…so that the land will not be destroyed by the famine” (v. 33-36, below).

This begs the question: How did Yosef have the audacity to tell Pharaoh how his country should be managed? Consider that Yosef was not an advisor of the King, but a “criminal” of Egypt, who had just been taken out of prison solely due to his excellent reputation in dream interpretation.
Surely, Yosef should have interpreted the dream—which was all he was asked to do—and then remained silent. How could a person, who just a few minutes earlier found himself in prison, come and advise the King of Egypt how to run his country, without being requested to do so?

It could be argued that Yosef was not offering advice at all, but that rather, this too was part of his interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream. The sorcerers’ mistake was that they perceived the dream purely as a vision of the future. Yosef however realized that the primary focus of the dream was a practical directive from God, informing Pharaoh what he should do.

This made it possible for Yosef to interpret the dream literally: that the seven fat cows and good ears of grain represented seven years of abundance, and the seven thin cows and thin ears of grain represented seven years of famine. As for the phrase which had perplexed the Egyptian sorcerers—that the thin cows “stood beside the (other) cows on the bank of the Nile”—Yosef explained that this represented God’s advice to Pharaoh. Namely, that during the seven years of abundance the Egyptians should save grain to use during the years of famine. In this way the two sets of seven years would “coexist,” not in actual time, but in their relationship with each other. I.e. during the seven years of plenty the people would be highly conscious of the seven years of famine, and their behavior would be strongly influenced by the prospect of the upcoming famine. Thus, God showed Pharaoh an image of the seven fat cows next to the seven thin cows as a message to him that the first seven years would be intimately associated with the next seven years.
Yosef said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s two dreams have a single (meaning). God has told Pharaoh what He is (planning) to do.” The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears of grain are (the same) seven years—it’s one dream. The seven thin and ugly cows coming up after them are seven years, as are the seven bare ears of grain, beaten by the east wind. They will be seven years of famine.

It is as I have told Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do!

“Look!—seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the entire land of Egypt. (The significance of the swallowing is that) seven years of famine will follow after them, when all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. The famine will destroy the land. (The fact that it wasn’t recognizable that the thin cows had swallowed the fat cows means that) the abundance will not be recognizable because of the famine that will follow, for it (will be) very severe.

Concerning the repetition of the dream to Pharaoh, this is because the matter is ready before God, and God is quickly going to carry it out.

And now, Pharaoh should select a person who is understanding and wise, and appoint him over the land of Egypt. Pharaoh should enact that he appoint officials over the land, and prepare the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. Let them collect all the food from these coming seven good years, and let them gather the grain under Pharaoh’s control, food guarded in the storehouses. The food (that is stored) will thus remain as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will be in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not be destroyed by the famine.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

If the repetition of a dream means that it will happen soon (v. 32), why did Yosef’s dreams take 22 years to materialize?

RASHBAM: The repetition of a dream is only a sign that it will occur quickly if the dream is repeated twice on one night. Thus, even though Yosef’s dreams were repeated (37:5-9), they did not materialize quickly, as the two dreams occurred on different nights.

TORAS MENACHEM

Based on the above, we can understand why Yosef’s interpretation led Pharaoh to exclaim, “There’s no one as understanding and wise as you” (v. 39), for Yosef’s genius, with which he excelled over all of Egypt’s sorcerers, was his ability to discern within the dream not only predictions, but practical advice too.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 339ff.)

THE REPETITION OF A DREAM (V. 32)

Rashbam’s explanation—that a dream only materializes quickly if it occurs twice in the same night—is difficult to accept at the literal level, since:

a.) The main point of verse 32 is surely that the theme of the dream recurs. Precisely when it recurs is a relatively insignificant point.

b.) Yosef’s explanation, as stated in the verse, does not take into account the point of Pharaoh’s dreams occurring on the same night.

So why did Yosef’s dreams not materialize quickly, since they were repeated just like Pharaoh’s? And why does Rashi not address this basic question?

THE EXPLANATION

Rashi did not feel it necessary to answer the above question, as he held the matter to be self-evident:

While Yosef’s two dreams contained similar elements, they were not, in fact, repeated because the second dream contained new information. I.e. that in addition to the brothers bowing down to Yosef, his father and stepmother* would bow to him too. Pharaoh’s two dreams, by contrast, contained exactly the same message, without any new information being added the second time.

* Or, alternatively, the detail of the “moon” bowing down in Yosef’s dream was nonsense—see Rashi to 37:10.
When Did Yosef Know That His Dreams Had Come True?

One problem with the above explanation is that it appears to contradict an explicit statement of Rashi. On the first occasion in which Yosef’s brothers bowed down to him (without Binyamin), Rashi writes: “He knew that [his dreams] had been fulfilled, for [his brothers] had prostrated themselves to him” (Rashi to 42:9). How does this fit with the above explanation, that not even one of Yosef’s dreams was fulfilled the first time that the brothers bowed down to him?

In truth, however, this comment of Rashi does not contradict our earlier explanation, for Yosef could not have been sure that all of his dreams would come true in all their detail. Thus, the first time that the brothers bowed down, Yosef presumed that this alone represented the fulfillment of both dreams, albeit with some details omitted. Only later did he see, retroactively, that both his dreams were actually fulfilled, in all their detail, on subsequent occasions.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5741)
41:37 The matter pleased Pharaoh and all his servants.

38 Pharaoh said to his servants, “(Even if we tried,) would we find (anyone else) like this? A man who has God’s spirit in him?”

39 Pharaoh said to Yosef, “Since God has let you know all this (it proves that) there’s no one as understanding and wise as you. 40 You will be in charge of my household, all my people will be fed through your command. Only (by virtue of) the throne will I be greater than you.”

41 Pharaoh said to Yosef, “See, I have appointed you over the entire land of Egypt!”

42 Pharaoh removed his ring from his hand and placed it on Yosef’s hand. He had him dressed in linen robes, and placed a golden chain around his neck. 43 He had (Yosef) ride in his second (royal) chariot, and they called out before him, “(This is) the King’s advisor.” (Pharaoh thus) gave (Yosef) authority over the entire land of Egypt.

44 Pharaoh said to Yosef, “I am Pharaoh (King of Egypt, and I hereby decree that), without your permission, no man may raise his hand (to hold a weapon) or his foot (to ride on a horse) in the entire land of Egypt.”

45 Pharaoh named Yosef “Tzafnas Pane’ach” (“explainer of hidden things”), and he gave him Asnas—the daughter of Poti-Fera (i.e. Potiphar), the priest of Oin—for a wife. And Yosef went forth (as a ruler) over the land of Egypt.

46 Yosef was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. Yosef then left Pharaoh’s presence, and visited the entire land of Egypt.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why was Yosef called “Tzafnas Pane’ach”? (v. 45)

RASHI: Tzafnas Pane’ach means, “He who explains hidden things.” The word Pane’ach has no parallel in scripture.

IBN EZRA: If this is an Egyptian name then we don’t understand it. If it is a translation [of his name into Hebrew], then we don’t know Yosef’s Egyptian name.

RAMBAN: It is possible that Pharaoh inquired of Yosef what a respectable name would be in his own language, or that he was familiar with the language of Canaan, as it was close to Egypt. Thus we find that Pharaoh’s daughter also gave Moshe a Hebrew name, “She named him Moshe, and she said, ‘For I drew him (MeSHisihu) from the water’” (Shemos 2:10).

RASHBAM: Yosef was given this name because it was the custom in Egypt to give a person a suitable name when he assumed a position of office. Thus, we find that Moshe “called Hoshea bin Nun, Yehoshua” (Bamidbar 13:16), when he was made Moshe’s assistant.

Yosef’s New Name (v. 45)

While Rashi explains the meaning of the name Tzafnas Pane’ach—“he who explains hidden things”—he fails to explain two basic issues which are addressed by the other commentators:

Was Tzafnas Pane’ach a Hebrew term, as Ramban suggests? Or was it the Torah’s translation of his Egyptian name, as Ibn Ezra questions?

And why did Pharaoh give Yosef a new name? Did Rashi accept the interpretation of Rashbam, that it was customary to give a new name to a person who took office? If this is the case, why did Rashi not say so?

The Explanation

Rashi’s commentary is indeed comprehensive, addressing every matter which will trouble the reader at the literal level. Nevertheless, Rashi did not comment on matters which he felt were, either: a.) So obvious that the reader can work the matter out for himself with simple logic; or, b.) If the matter can be understood on the basis of an earlier comment of Rashi.

In our case, when reading the verse, “Pharaoh named Yosef Tzafnas Pane’ach,” Rashi expected the reader to take the verse simply and literally, that Tzafnas Pane’ach was the actual name by which Yosef was called in Egypt, and not the Torah’s translation of this name into Hebrew.

Of course, the reader might question why Pharaoh would give Yosef a Hebrew name. But again, Rashi felt it unnecessary to deal with this issue, as there are a number of previous cases in the Chumash where non-Jews accepted names into their own languages which were based on Hebrew words. For example, the name “Bavel” (Babylon), was based on the idea that “God confused (BaLaL) the language of the entire earth” (Noach 11:9). Similarly, we find that Avimelech was a non-Jewish king who had a Hebrew name (which means, “My father is a king”). Presumably, this was his actual name and not the Torah’s translation.

Likewise in our case, since Pharaoh knew that the name Yosef was of Hebrew origin, he would have endeavored to give him an appropriate Hebrew name.

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CLASSIC QUESTIONS

 Why does the Torah stress that Menasheh and Efrayim
were born “before the year that the famine set in”? (v. 50)
RASHI: From here we derive the principle that it is prohibited to
conceive a child during years of famine.
TOSFOS: Our Sages taught that Yocheved was born while [her parents were] entering Egypt (Sotah 12a; Rashi to 46:15 below). Thus
[Levi, Yocheved’s father] appears to have had children in the years
of famine?
Evidently, we are not speaking here of an actual prohibition
which existed in those days, but rather, a personal stringency of
Yosef (Ta’anis 11a).
MIZRACHI: The prohibition of having children during times of
famine does not apply to a person who has not yet had both a son
and a daughter. Therefore, Levi was exempt from this prohibition, as
he had not yet had a daughter.
RAN: The prohibition of having children during a famine is because
it is a time when Jewish people are suffering. When Ya’akov and his
family entered Egypt they were not suffering since they still had
supplies of grain, and they knew that Yosef was not suffering either.
Therefore, it was permissible for Levi to have a child.
However Yosef did not know that his family still had sufficient
supplies of grain so he was not permitted to have children (Ta’anis ibid).
BAIS YOSEF: The argument of Mizrachi is difficult for me to accept,
for if Levi was permitted to have children during a famine because he
had not yet had a daughter, then Yosef too would be permitted for
the same reason. Ran’s argument is also difficult to accept, for how

would the brothers have known that “Yosef was not suffering either”?
At the literal level, it seems that they did not know whether Yosef
was dead or alive at the time when Yocheved was conceived, some
seven or nine months before they moved to Egypt.
Rather, it seems to me that before the giving of the Torah there was
no prohibition against having children during times of famine, and it
was enacted much later as a requirement of Rabbinic law (commentary
to Tur, Orach Chaim, ch. 574).
MAHARSHA: Bais Yosef’s solution is difficult to accept, since we
know that the Patriarchs kept the entire Torah—even Rabbinic law—
before it was given. Therefore, it is unacceptable to argue that the
principle of not having children during times of famine would have
been neglected by them.
Thus, it seems to me that Mizrachi’s solution is the most
appropriate: that the prohibition of having children does not apply to
a person who had not yet had both a son and a daughter. Levi was
clearly exempt from this prohibition, so he went on to have a
daughter.
Tosfos however adds that Yosef chose not to follow this exemption,
as a personal stringency beyond the requirements of Torah law
(Chidushei Agados, Ta’anis ibid).

 Why was all the grain stored locally? (v. 48)
RASHI: Because each land preserves its own produce. They would
put some of the local soil into the grain, and it would preserve the
grain, preventing it from decaying (see “The Last Word”).
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41:47 In the seven years of abundance, (the inhabitants of) the land gradually made collections (of grain).

(Youf) collected all the (surplus) grain of the seven years (of abundance) that was in the land of Egypt, and he placed the grain in the cities. He stored the grain of the fields surrounding each city in (its adjacent city, along with some local soil as a preservative).

Youf gathered grain in large amounts, like the sand of the sea, until (they decided to) give up counting it, since the counting had no (meaning).

41:50 Two sons were born to Youf before the year that the famine set in, whom Asnas, the daughter of Poti-Fera, the governor of Oin, bore to him. Youf named the firstborn Menasheh, because (he said), “God has caused me to forget (NaSHani) all my hardships and all that was in my father’s house.” He named the second one Efrayim, because (he said), “God has made me fruitful (hiFRani) in the land of my subjugation.”

As for the question why Pharaoh gave Youf a new name, Rashi again found no need to explain this matter as it is self-understood from one of his earlier comments. On the words of the chief butler that, “There was a Hebrew lad with us” (v. 12, above), Rashi comments that the chief butler described him as “a lad,” saying to Pharaoh that he was “a fool, unfit for a high position” (v. 39), he would have wished to change Youf’s name to reflect the way in which people’s perception of Youf had now been utterly transformed for the good.

Therefore, we can understand when Pharaoh discovered that in truth the very opposite was the case, and “there’s no one as understanding and wise as you” (v. 39), he would have wished to change Youf’s name to reflect the way in which people’s perception of Youf had now been utterly transformed for the good.

Surely, there must be a simple, logical explanation, indicated by Rashi’s words themselves, which the reader is expected to understand of his own accord?

The Explanation

The Torah states, “Two sons were born to Youf before the year that the famine set in,” suggesting that one should not have children during a single year of famine. Rashi however writes, “it is prohibited to conceive a child during years of famine,” in the plural, suggesting that the prohibition would only apply after two or more years of famine had passed.

Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5747)

having Children in times of Famine (v. 50)

Why did Rashi not address the fundamental problem raised by Tosfos, a question which arises at the literal level?

Tosfos and Bais Youf argue that not having children during times of famine was a personal stringency of Youf, and not a prohibition. But Rashi apparently rejects this solution, since he writes, “From here we derive the principle that it is prohibited to conceive a child during years of famine,” stressing that we are speaking here of a basic halachic requirement, and not a personal stringency.

Mizrachi’s solution is based on the principle that a person who has not yet had a son and a daughter may continue to have children during a famine. However, this principle is not mentioned at all by Rashi, and clearly, Rashi could not have expected the reader to come to a conclusion that is based on information which is not mentioned, or even hinted to, in his commentary.

Ran explains that the prohibition of having children during times of famine is based on the sympathy of Jewish people for one another. But again, Rashi makes no mention of this concept at all.

The Last Word

Soil represents humility—as in the verse recited at the end of the Amidah prayer, “May my soul be like soil to everybody.”

Just like soil preserves grain (see Rashi to v. 48), so too humility is an essential “preservative” for the Torah which a person studies, to prevent it from “decaying.” For without humility, knowledge of Torah may corrupt rather than refine a person, if his pursuit of wisdom is not driven by a desire to connect to God, but rather by his own self-love and inflated ego.

Rashi adds that, for this purpose, one must use local soil, i.e. one’s humility must be in the same area as one’s greatness. It is not sufficient for the Torah scholar to be meek and humble in his daily conduct, but silently arrogant about his understanding of the Torah. Rather, the scholar should be humbled by his Torah study too, realizing that what he knows represents but a drop of God’s infinite wisdom that is found within the words of Torah.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, pp. 224-5)

* At first glance it would seem that this detail is inconsequential, since Rashi appears to have quoted the Talmud verbatim, and the Talmud also uses the plural (Ta’anis 11a). In truth, however, Rashi did not anthologize Talmudic teachings, but rather, he adapted them to form a literalist commentary on the Torah. Therefore, since the Torah uses the singular, Rashi should also have done so.
If the Egyptians had been storing grain for seven years, why did they become hungry? (v. 55)

Rashi: Because all their grain which they had stored had rotted, except for Yosef’s.

Why did Pharaoh tell people to listen to Yosef? (v. 55)

Rashi: Yosef would tell them to circumcise themselves. When they came to Pharaoh and said, “This is what he said to us,” [Pharaoh] replied, “If so, do everything that he will tell you. He already issued a decree upon the grain, and it rotted. He might now issue a decree upon us and we’ll die!”

Kli Yakar: Why did Yosef tell the people to circumcise themselves? Because to be uncircumcised is described by the Torah as “shame” (תפארת), which is also a term used to refer to famine (see Ezekiel 36:30). Thus, Yosef suggested that through circumcision the famine would cease.

Yefay To’ar: Since uncircumcised people tend to mock circumcised people, Yosef pushed the Egyptians to circumcise themselves so that they would not be able to mock Jewish people.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Presumably, the reason why the prohibition begins after two years of famine is because it is not yet clear during the first year whether the agricultural setback is temporary or permanent. With two full years there is already a precedent (chazakah) that God wishes to wipe out His creations with famine, and it is thus inappropriate to have any further children. At that point one would be exempt from the Torah obligation to have children, since it has been legally established that a famine has begun. I.e. in order to push off a Torah obligation there must be a firm halachic basis for doing so, and this—writes Rashi—is after two years.

In fact, the reader will already be familiar with the concept of establishing a legal precedent from Rashi’s comment earlier, that Tamar was “legally presumed to cause the death of any man that she would marry” (Rashi to 38:11) because she had married two husbands who died. Therefore, Rashi found it unnecessary to inform the reader that two years constitute a legal premise, being that the reader is already familiar with this concept.

Based on the above, we can explain why Rashi was not troubled by the question of Tosfot (why Levi conceived a child during the famine):

Yocheved was born to Levi at the end of the second year of famine (see Vayigash 45:6), from which it follows that she was conceived after one year and three months of famine. Since the legal precedent of famine had not yet been established at that point, it was perfectly permissible for Levi to attempt to conceive a child at that point. To the contrary, it would have been prohibited for Levi not to do so.

Yosef, however, knew in advance from Pharaoh’s dreams that there was going to be a seven year famine, since he knew that, “God has told Pharaoh what He is (planning) to do” (above, v. 25). Thus, Yosef did not need to wait for two years in order to prove that the famine had begun, and so he stopped having children before the famine started.

In fact, since Yosef had advance warning of the famine, he was able to ensure that, not only would his children be conceived before the famine started, but furthermore, he was also able to ensure that “two sons were born to Yosef before the year that the famine set in” (v. 50).

Weren’t Pharaoh’s Dreams Publicized?

One apparent problem with the above explanation is that Pharaoh’s dreams would surely have been well publicized throughout the land of Egypt and beyond, so we can presume that Yaakov and his family knew about them. Thus, Levi too would have been aware that there was an impending seven-year famine and he did not have to wait for two years
When the seven years of plenty that were in the land of Egypt were finished, the seven years of famine began, as Yosef had said. There was famine in all the lands, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread. (Then all the accumulated grain rotted, except for Yosef's, so) the entire land of Egypt was hungry. (When Yosef demanded that the people become circumcised if they wanted grain) the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread, but Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Yosef. Do whatever he will tell you.”

The famine spread (even) to all the (wealthy) people of the land. Yosef opened all (the storehouses) in which there was (grain), and he sold it to the Egyptians. The famine intensified in the land of Egypt.

All (the inhabitants of) the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Yosef, because the famine had intensified throughout the whole earth.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**EITZ YOSEF**: Yosef saw prophetically that the Jewish people were to be exiled in Egypt. Therefore, he tried to ensure that the Egyptians would be circumcised, in order to prevent the Jewish people from abandoning the precept of circumcision due to assimilation (Eitz Yosef Midrash Tanchumah ch. 7).

**MASKIL LE DAVID**: Even though Yosef forced the Egyptians to circumcise themselves under duress, he hoped that later they would come to observe this mitzvah genuinely.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

Alternatively, Yosef feared that the Egyptians might attempt to remove him from power on the basis that he was circumcised and of a different religion. Therefore, he forced the Egyptians to circumcise themselves too.

Or perhaps, Yosef was attempting to send a covert message to his father that he was still alive. For when Ya’akov would hear that the ruler of Egypt was forcing the nation to circumcise, he would realize that it must be Yosef.

**CIRCUMCISION OF THE EGYPTIANS (v. 55)**

None of the commentators appear to offer an explanation as to why, at the literal level, Yosef forced the Egyptians to circumcise themselves.

The simple explanation would appear to be, as explained above (Toras Menachem to 17:11), that God commanded Avraham to circumcise “those born in your house and those purchased with your money” (17:13), i.e. those people who were under Avraham’s direct control.

Thus Yosef, who was the ruler of the entire land of Egypt, was required to instruct his citizens to circumcise themselves, as they were under his direct control.

This also explains why Rashi stresses, “Yosef would tell them to circumcise themselves,” suggesting that he did so on a regular basis (and not that “he told them to circumcise themselves” suggesting that this was a new practice which began with the famine). For, he did not suddenly instruct the people to circumcise themselves at this point, but rather, for many years he had been encouraging the people to circumcise themselves, in order to fulfill his halachic obligation. Clearly, however, with the onset of famine he was in a much stronger position to do so.

**PHARAOH’S DISCUSSION WITH HIS PEOPLE**

It could also be argued that Rashi’s citation of the discussion between Pharaoh and his people, about whether to follow Yosef’s command to circumcise (v. 55), is also crucial to understanding the Torah’s narrative here at the literal level:

After reading that the people complained to Pharaoh because they were told to circumcise themselves, we are left with the question: Why did Pharaoh support Yosef’s claim, saying, “Go to Yosef. Do whatever he will tell you” (v. 55)? Rashi concluded that Yosef must have demonstrated some awesome quality which had intimidated Pharaoh—not merely an intellectual or strategical prowess, but some sort of supernatural power. Therefore, Rashi accepted that, at the literal level, Yosef had decreed that all the grain in Egypt other than his own should rot, thus making Pharaoh fearful of further possible decrees: “He might now issue a decree upon us and we’ll die!”

Nevertheless, Pharaoh thought that if he would tell the people this fact directly, they would find it difficult to accept that the King of Egypt was at the mercy of Yosef. Therefore, Pharaoh decided to ask the people a “loaded question” which would lead them to admit of their own accord that Yosef was a power to be reckoned with.

Thus, He asked them, “Why didn’t you gather grain? Didn’t he announce to you that years of famine are coming?” knowing that they would reply, “We gathered a lot, but it rotted.” And having made the people themselves confess to Yosef’s power, Pharaoh was now in a position to convince the people to consent to Yosef’s request of circumcision.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 192ff.)
Ya'akov's sons made it appear that they had grain, Ya'akov feared jealousy from them. He criticized his sons, saying, "How can you show yourselves in front of the Yishma'elites and the sons of Eisav if you have plenty of grain?"

Ya'akov told his sons not to show off, even in front of them, because he knew that they had been intimidated by the massacre of Shechem. Ya'akov did not fear jealousy from the people of Cana'an, who were starving, so why would they be jealous of Ya'akov? He does not explain why the children of Yishma'el resented Ya'akov for taking the blessings from Yitzchak. Likewise, the children of Yishma'el resented Ya'akov for taking the blessings from Yitzchak. Therefore, Ya'akov told his sons to be wary of them in particular.

It would seem that the jealousy which we are speaking about here is one that could only arise between close relatives, since a person is expected to care for his brother at a time of suffering. Ya'akov feared jealousy only from the descendants of Avraham and Mo'avi.

The children of Eisav hated Ya'akov for taking the blessings from Yitzchak. Likewise, the children of Yishma'el resented Avraham's preference for Yitzchak. Therefore, Ya'akov told his sons to be wary of them in particular.

Ya'akov was afraid of jealousy from people in general and not just the Yishma'elites and the children of Eisav.

Ya'akov's Warning (v. 1)

Why did Rashi reject the simple explanation of Rashbam that when Ya'akov's sons made it appear that they had grain, Ya'akov feared jealousy from all the surrounding nations who were starving? What forced Rashi to conclude, at the literal level, that the jealousy would come only from the Yishma'elites and children of Eisav (as Rashbam asks)?

Ramban's solution to this question is difficult to accept because (in addition to the objection of Mizrahi):

a.) He only explains why the Yishma'elites and children of Eisav would be jealous of Ya'akov. He does not explain why the surrounding people of Cana'an, who were starving, would not be jealous.

b.) If indeed Ya'akov still had grain, it is difficult to accept that Ya'akov would actively try to avoid performing the mitzvah of welcoming guests.
42  Y'aakov saw (by Divine inspiration) that there was grain being sold in Egypt. Y'aakov said to his sons, “Why are you showing off (that we still have grain)?”

2  He said, “Look, I have heard that there is grain being sold in Egypt. Go down there and buy us (some) from there, so that we will live and not die.”

3  So Yosef’s brothers went down to Egypt (united in their mission) to buy grain (but split into) ten (about their decision to try and redeem Yosef). 4  But Ya’akov did not send Binyamin, Yosef’s brother, with his brothers, because he said, “Perhaps a fatal (accident) will occur to him.”

The solution of Mirachi has already been refuted by Nachalas Ya’akov and Maharsha.

The argument of Maharsha—that only close relatives are responsible for each other at a time of suffering—is difficult to accept at the literal level, since one would presume that a person takes responsibility for the suffering of his neighbors, as well as his relatives (c.f. Rashi to 7:7, above). In any case, Rashi makes no mention of this argument, and it would be unreasonable to suggest that Rashi expected the reader to fathom such a point himself.

Kli Yakar’s point—that the families of Yishma’el and Eisav in particular hated Ya’akov—could well be true, but it fails to explain why Ya’akov would not also be afraid of his neighbors, who would certainly be jealous when they saw that he had grain while they were starving.

The Explanation

In order to solve the above problem, let us first consider the following question: If all the nations were starving because “the famine spread (even) to all the (wealthy) people of the land” (41:56), then how is it that Ya’akov and his family did still have grain? Why did Rashi not address this obvious question?

Rashi did not address this question, as he presumed the matter to be self-understood, based on the reader’s prior knowledge of the Patriarchs’ prosperity during times of famine. In the case of Yitzchak we find, “Yitzchak sowed (crops) in that land, and he found (even) in that year (which was a bad one for crops, the land yielded) a hundred times more than average—and God blessed him. The man (Yitzchak) became prosperous.” (26:12-13). Thus, the reader would not be surprised by the fact that Ya’akov prospered, even in a time of famine, for since the Patriarchs were devout, pious individuals who trusted in their Creator, God continued to sustain them.

Nevertheless, this does not fully explain the above question, as we do find in the cases of both Avraham and Yitzchak that they were forced to travel away from their home due to famine. Why is it that Ya’akov continued to be sustained during the famine without having to relocate?

Rashi, however, clarified this matter earlier. In his explanation why God sent famine to the Land of Cana'an in Avraham’s days, Rashi writes that it was “to test him, whether he would doubt the words of God, Who ordered him to go to the Land of Cana’an, and now He was forcing him to leave it” (12:10). I.e. in essence, there was no need at all for Avraham to leave the Land of Israel during the famine, and God could have sustained him right there. The purpose of his relocation was merely a “test” from God.

Similarly, we can understand in the case of Yitzchak, that God could certainly have sustained him during the famine, without the need to move from his home. God’s intent behind Yitzchak’s move to Gerar must have been for another reason—perhaps to test him, as in Avraham’s case—because Yitzchak actually deserved to be sustained without having to relocate, even in times of famine.

Thus, the reader will not be surprised at all that Ya’akov had grain while his neighbors were starving, since he was a descendant of Avraham and Yitzchak.

However on reaching our verse, the reader will be troubled by a question: Why should Ya’akov be concerned that his sons were revealing to the local inhabitants that they still had grain? Surely the unprecedented manner in which Avraham and Yitzchak were miraculously blessed would already be famous even among non-Jews? Why would people be surprised to see that Ya’akov too had grain during a famine, just like his father and grandfather?

Therefore, Rashi explained that Ya’akov’s concern was only for “the sons of Yishma’elites and the sons of Eisav,” for since they were also descendants of Avraham and Yitzchak, they would have compared their situation to Ya’akov’s.

The key point here is that only Ya’akov understood that Avraham and Yitzchak had been forced to relocate in times of famine for secondary reasons (as a test). The Yishma’elites and children of Eisav were not aware of this fact. Thus when they saw that famine had begun, forcing them to go to Egypt for food, they would have presumed that Ya’akov too had been forced to relocate, just like Avraham and Yitzchak in their times.

Consequently, Ya’akov warned his sons, “Why do you show yourselves in front of the Yishma’elites and the sons of Eisav as if you have plenty of grain?” For if they discovered that Ya’akov still had grain, without being forced to go to Egypt, the Yishma’elites and children of Eisav would have wondered: “Even our fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, were forced to relocate in times of famine? How is it that Ya’akov still has grain without having to move?”

And since Ya’akov feared that this ill feeling and criticism might arouse heavenly prosecution against him and his family (forcing them to relocate), Ya’akov told his sons to conceal the fact that they had grain from the Yishma’elites and sons of Eisav.

In other words, even though Ya’akov’s sons were demonstrating a highly admirable quality—that they trusted in God to sustain them even in times of famine, and they publicized their faith to others – in this case, Ya’akov understood it was unwise to do so.

(Based on Sichos Motzoei Zos Chanukah 5741; Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 190ff.)
How did the brothers enter Egypt? (v. 5)
Rashi: They mingled so that they would not be recognized, because their father had commanded them not to appear all together at one entrance. Rather, each should enter through a different entrance so that the “evil eye” would have no power over them, for they were all handsome and strong.

What did the brothers reply to Yosef’s accusation that they were spies? (v. 10)
Rashi: “Don’t say that! Your servants have come to buy food.”
Mizrahi: Coming to buy food was not a proof that they were not spies, for spies often pose as merchants. They were saying, “Don’t say that! Your servants have come to buy food.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

1. How did the brothers enter Egypt? (v. 5)
Rashi: They mingled so that they would not be recognized, because their father had commanded them not to appear all together at one entrance. Rather, each should enter through a different entrance so that the “evil eye” would have no power over them, for they were all handsome and strong.

2. What did the brothers reply to Yosef’s accusation that they were spies? (v. 10)
Rashi: “Don’t say that! Your servants have come to buy food.”
Mizrahi: Coming to buy food was not a proof that they were not spies, for spies often pose as merchants. They were saying, “Don’t say that! It’s not true! Rather, your servants have come to buy food.”

*Note: The above text is a translation from Hebrew to English. The original Hebrew text is not shown.*
So the sons of Yisra’el came to buy (grain, mingling) among the visitors, for the land of Cana’an was in a state of famine.

Yosef was the ruler over the land. He was the one who sold grain to all the people of the land. So, Yosef’s brothers came and threw themselves to the ground in front of him, with their faces to the ground.

Yosef saw his brothers, and he recognized them, but he acted like a stranger to them, and he spoke with them harshly. He said to them, “Where do you come from?”

“We are all sons of one man. We are (telling the) truth. Your servants were never spies.”

“No!” he said to them. “You have come to see the land’s weak points!”

They said, “We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Cana’an. Right now, the youngest is with our father, and one is lost (so we split up to look for him).”

Yosef said to them, “When I said to you, ‘You are spies’ I was (correct).”

They replied, “Don’t say that! Your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. We are (telling the) truth. Your servants were never spies.”

Why did they tell Yosef that they were brothers? (v. 11)

SFORNO: Because it is highly unlikely that a king would pick ten spies who were all brothers.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Be’er Basadeh: The brothers were clearly not denying Yosef’s claim that they were spies, for they cited no proof of the matter. Rather, they were simply pleading with Yosef not to believe that they were spies: “Please don’t say that!”

TORAS MENACHEM

What Was the Brothers’ Proof (v. 10-11)

The commentators [Mizrachi and Be’er Basadeh] question the meaning of Rashi’s comment to verse 10, for Rashi does not seem to explain how the brothers denied that they were spies.

However, in handwritten manuscripts of Rashi’s commentary, an addition appears here: The brothers replied, “Don’t say that! Your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man.” I.e. in response to Yosef’s accusation that they were spies, the brothers responded that this could not possibly be the case, since they were all one single group of brothers. Thus, they could not be spies, since: a.) Spies work individually, and not in large groups. b.) The qualities required to be a spy are very rare, so it is virtually impossible that ten brothers would all be sufficiently talented to be spies [cf. SForno].

(Rashi’s intention is thus: “You won’t say that we are spies [any more, when you] hear this: Your servants have [clearly] come to buy food [because] we are sons of one man”)

Nevertheless, Yosef replied, “You must have come to survey the land’s weak points, because you entered by way of the ten gates of the city. Why did you not enter together through one gate?” (Rashi to v. 12).

In effect, Yosef was saying, “I did not conclude that you were spies because I thought there was no connection between you. On the contrary, the fact that you are brothers proves that you are spies, for why would members of the same family split up and enter the city through ten different gates?”

Why did you not enter together through one gate? (v. 10)

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Sparks of Chasidus

“They Did Not Recognize Him” (v. 8)

Generally speaking, there are two types of tzadikim (pious individuals): the “sequestrial” tzadik, and the “terrestrial” tzadik:

The sequestrial tzadik finds this world a distraction from his emotional union with God. The world is mundane; God is sublime. So the sequestrial tzadik shies away from interaction with people and things, secluding himself to a place where he can pray, meditate and study undisturbed.

The terrestrial tzadik, by contrast, is bound to God in a much stronger manner, to the extent that the world does not—and cannot—distract him from his consciousness of the Divine. This tzadik can interact with the world, at its most basic level, and yet remain totally enwrapped in Godly awareness.

Thus, the brothers who were sequestrial shepherds did not recognize Yosef who was a terrestrial governor—for they simply could not conceive how a person could be so intimately involved with the world, and yet remain a perfect tzadik.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 1 p. 88; vol. 3, p. 832)
Why did the brothers declare “we are guilty”? (v. 21)

Rabai: Just like Yosef’s brothers, a person should always see any punishment he receives as just, and search his actions in order to attribute the punishment to some bad that he has done.

Midrash Hagadol: Happy are the righteous, who accept affliction with joy, and declare God to be just in every way that He acts.

Sforno: The brothers still thought that they were justified in attempting to kill Yosef, since they believed that they followed the halachic principle that if a person comes to kill you, you should kill him first in self-defense (Sanhedrin 72b). However, now they regretted being cruel to him, and not listening to his cries for help. They understood that they were now being treated harshly as a punishment for their cruelty to Yosef.

Re’uvain thus replied: “His blood is also being claimed.” I.e. Yosef was an innocent child, so we are not just being punished for being cruel to him. Rather, we are guilty of spilling innocent blood.

Rada: The reaction of Yosef’s brothers teaches us that when bad things happen to a person, he should search his deeds to ascertain the bad that he has done, and then repent, confessing to God and asking forgiveness from Him.

The Brothers’ Reaction (v. 21-22)

Rabai, Midrash Hagadol and Sforno all perceive the brothers’ reaction (“It’s true, we are guilty etc.”) as a mere recognition of guilt. Re’uvain’s response (v. 22) was thus intended to warn the brothers, that it is insufficient only to recognize that their unfortunate predicament was a consequence of their earlier actions, but moreover, they needed to repent.
will be tested whether you’re telling the truth. But if you don’t (bring him, I swear,) as Pharaoh lives, that you are spies!”

17 He put them in prison for three days.

18 On the third day, Yosef said to them, “If you do as I say you will live. I fear the Almighty.”

19 “If you are genuine, one of your brothers will remain imprisoned where you are now, while you go and bring back grain (which you purchased to relieve) the hunger of your households. 20 Bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified, and you will not die.”

They (agreed) to do so.

**The Brothers Repent**

42:21 They said to each other, “It’s true, we are guilty for our brother, because we saw his distress when he begged us, and we didn’t listen. That’s why this trouble has come upon us.”

22 Re’uvain responded to them, saying, “Didn’t I warn you, saying, ‘Don’t sin against the lad’? But you didn’t listen...and also his blood (and our father’s anguish) is now being claimed!”

23 They did not know that Yosef understood (their language), for the interpreter was between them.

24 He turned away from them and wept (since he realized that they regretted selling him).

Then he returned to them, and spoke with them. He took Shimon from among them (the one who had thrown him into the pit) and imprisoned him before their eyes (until they left, when he set him free).

**TORAS MENACHEM**

One problem with this approach is that it does not explain the selfrighteous connotation of Re’uvain’s words, “Didn’t I warn you...but you didn’t listen!” If he was merely informing them that they needed to repent, and what their sins were, it would be unnecessary to do so in an I-told-you-so fashion.

Rather, it would appear that when the brothers said, “It’s true, we are guilty for our brother etc.,” they were, in fact, doing teshuvah (repenting) for their earlier sin, as Radak suggests. And since there are many different levels of teshuvah, Re’uvain interrupted the brothers to inform them that their teshuvah was not of a high enough level, and that they needed to repent with purer motives:

The brothers said, “It’s true, we are guilty for our brother, because we saw his distress when he begged us, and we didn’t listen. That’s why this trouble has come upon us.” I.e. they only began to repent because they found themselves in dire straits.

Therefore, Re’uvain—who was the first person to carry out a genuine teshuvah (Bereishis Rabah 94:19)—felt the need to get his brothers to refocus on the sin itself. “Didn’t I warn you, saying, ‘Don’t sin against the lad’? But you didn’t listen....” I.e. he was telling them that it was incorrect to do teshuvah as a result of the misfortune which had befallen them. Rather, they should have striven to feel genuine remorse for what they had done because the very act itself was evil.

In other words, they needed to focus their attention on what Re’uvain had been telling them all along, not to “sin against the boy,” so that their teshuvah could be complete.

To stress this point further, Re’uvain continued, “And also his blood (and our father’s anguish) is now being claimed!” I.e. the punishment, which we are currently suffering is a separate matter (“And also...”). It should not be the motivation for the teshuvah itself.

**When did the Brothers Start to Repent?**

One problem with the above explanation is that it seems to contradict an earlier statement of Rashi. On verse 3, above, Rashi writes that when the brothers went down to Egypt, “they regretted selling him and decided to behave toward him in a brotherly manner, and to ransom him for whatever amount of money would be demanded of them.” How can this be reconciled with our above explanation that the brothers only started to repent when they were treated harshly by Yosef?

However, the solution here again is that there are many levels of teshuvah. Thus:

a.) When going down to Egypt they began to regret the sale of Yosef,

**The Last Word**

The brothers realized immediately that when misfortune befalls a person, he must search his deeds to find a negative word or action that may have brought on such a punishment. Then he should do teshuvah. The brother’s teshuvah was remarkable in that:

- They were able to feel remorseful about a bad deed they performed some twenty years earlier.
- The fact that they could not find a more recent sin to explain their current misfortune shows that in the past twenty years they did not sin at all.
- Their teshuvah was immediately effective in reducing the punishment: Yosef had promised to imprison one of the brothers, but after the brothers did teshuvah, Shimon was released (see Rashi to v. 24). Similarly, Yosef’s harsh attitude towards them changed, for they were given food and their money was returned (below v. 25-26). And, eventually, as a result of their teshuvah, Ya’akov and their entire family were saved from hunger.

(Based on Sicha of the fifth day of Chanukah 5747)
not because they thought it was an evil act, but because of the suffering it caused their father.

b.) When they found themselves in dire straits, in the hands of the Egyptian governor (alias Yosif), they began to admit that selling Yosif was in fact a sin, and they confessed verbally.

c.) Then, Re’uvain informed them that even this was an insufficient teshuvah, because it was motivated by external factors. The brothers then realized why the act itself was wrong, regardless of the consequences it brought.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 198ff.)
Yosef commanded (his servants), and they filled (the brothers') bags with grain. (He also instructed) to return their money (with which they paid for the grain) into each person's sack, and to give them provisions for the journey, which (his servants) did for them. They loaded their grain onto their donkeys, and departed.

At the hotel, (Levi) opened his sack to give fodder to his donkey, and he saw his money. Look!—there it was, at the top of his sack. He said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and—look!—it's here in my sack!"

Their hearts sank. Trembling, they turned to one another, saying, "Why is God doing this to us?"

He came to Ya'akov their father, in the land of Cana'an, and they told him everything that had happened to them: They said, "The man, the chief of the land, spoke to us harshly. He accused us of spying on the land. We are twelve brothers, the sons of our father. One is missing, and now the youngest is with our father in the land of Cana'an." The man, the chief of the land, said to us, 'With this (test) I'll know if you are honest: leave one of your brothers with me, and (what's needed for) the hunger of your households, take and leave. Bring your youngest brother to me, so that I will know that you are not spies, and that you are honest. (Then) I'll give you your brother, and you can do business around the land.'"

Then, when they were emptying their sacks—look!—each person's bundle of money was in his sack. As they saw the bundles of their money, together with their father, they became frightened.

Their father, Ya'akov, said to them, "You have bereaved me! Yosef is gone, and Shimon is gone, and you want to take Binyamin! All these (troubles) have come upon me!"

Re'uvain spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I don't bring (Binyamin) to you. Put him into my care and I will return him to you."

Why were they given provisions for the journey? (v. 25)

Ramban: Yosef said, "I have no intention of harming you if your words are verified." So, he kindly gave them provisions for the journey so that they would be able to bring Binyamin back to him.

Bachaye: Yosef wished to show that he had no intention of harming the brothers if they were telling the truth that they were not spies.

Abiranel: When Yosef would eventually reveal his identity to the brothers, he wanted to be able to show that he had not been unnecessarily cruel. Therefore, he gave them provisions. He also gave them back their money to ensure that they would not delay in returning to Egypt due to lack of funds.

Malbim: Yosef wanted to make sure that they would not open their sacks on the way and discover that their money had been returned.

Why did Yosef give provisions? (v. 25)

Up to this point, Yosef had effectively concealed his identity by accusing the brothers of being spies, and treating them harshly. Then, in verse 25, Yosef suddenly changes his approach, filling the brothers' sacks with food and money, and offering them provisions for the journey. Surely, this is totally out of character with all of his previous efforts to conceal his identity!

With regards to the money, it could be argued that they would not discover it until later when they emptied their sacks on arriving home. But surely giving provisions for the journey would have aroused suspicion, for it was totally unheard of for the ruler of Egypt to provide those who had come to purchase grain with provisions for their journey home! Why does Rashi not address this basic question?

The Explanation

Rashi did not wish to deprive the reader of having to make any effort in the study of Chumash. Therefore he only offers additional information where it is crucial to answer questions at the literal level. But if the reader would be capable of working out difficulties that arise through applying simple logic to the information at hand, then Rashi deemed it unwise to "spoon-feed" the reader, denying him the privilege of toiling in Torah study.

In our case, a problem with the text at the literal level is that Yosef's treatment of the brothers was inconsistent. On the one hand, he spoke with them harshly, totally rejecting the notion that they were not spies, and he imprisoned them. On the other hand, Yosef did intimate that he suspected them of telling the truth, so since Yosef had declared himself to
be honest and God-fearing (42:18), he was forced to give them the benefit of the doubt and allow them the opportunity to prove their claims.

This begs the question: After Yosef admitted that the brothers may have been telling the truth, thereby admitting that his earlier denial of their claims was unjustified, why did he not make any effort to appease the brothers for the unnecessary distress he had caused them? After all, Yosef did say that he was dealing with them fairly—"I fear the Almighty" (ibid.)—so why did he not apologize for terrorizing them before they had a chance to prove their innocence?

Rashi did not address this question because the Torah itself provides the answer: Yosef did not appease them with words, but rather, with food, money and provisions. i.e. since Yosef had declared that he was attempting to be fair, he offered them some compensation for the unduly aggressive way that they had been treated.

In fact, the student of scripture has already learned of this phenomenon before: On the verse, "Awifeilech took flocks, cattle, servants and maids, and he gave (them) to Abram" (20:14), Rashi writes that this was "to appease him." Thus, with a little effort, the reader can also understand that Yosef’s gift here was also an appeasement.

So Rashi remained silent, encouraging the student to sharpen his mind, since all the necessary information is, in fact, already at hand.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Miketz 5747)
(Ya’akov) said, “My son shall not go down with you, because his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. A fatality will occur to him on the way in which you will be going, and you will bring my old age to the grave in grief.”

Ya’akov Acquiesces

The famine in the land was severe. So, when they finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little food.”

Yehudah spoke to him, saying, “The man repeatedly warned us, saying, ‘You will not see my face if your brother is not with you.’”

“If you send our brother with us, we’ll go down and buy food for you. But if you won’t send (him), we won’t go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face if your brother is not with you.’”

Yisra’el said, “Why have you harmed me, by telling the man that you have another brother?”

They said, “The man asked about us and about our family, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have a brother?’ We (were forced to) tell him (that we have a father and brother) to answer his questions. Could we have known that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down?’”

Yehudah said to Yisra’el, his father, “Send the lad with me. Let us get going and travel. Then we’ll live and we won’t die (of hunger)—both we and you and our young children too. I will guarantee his

Classic Questions

Why was Ya’akov concerned that Binyamin would suffer a fatality on the way? (v. 38)

Midrash: Could an accident not occur to him at home? Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’akov said: “From here we learn that the Satan only makes accusations at a time of danger” (Bereishis Rabah 91:9).

Be’er Basadeh: The Midrash was troubled why the verse stresses, “A fatality will occur to him on the way.” This led the Midrash to conclude that the cause of Ya’akov’s concern must have been the dangerous journey, and thus, “From here we learn that the Satan only makes accusations at a time of danger.”

Ya’akov’s Concern for Binyamin (v. 38)

The Midrash states that “from here—verse 38—we learn that the Satan only makes accusations at a time of danger.” Rashi, however, makes a similar comment above, “From here—verse 4—we learn that the Satan makes accusations at a time of danger.”

Why did Rashi come to this conclusion from a different verse? [cf. Be’er Basadeh]

A further problem is that, surely, the fear of accusation from the Satan at a time of danger applied to all the brothers, and not just Binyamin?

The Explanation

In verse 4, the Torah stresses that Ya’akov’s fear was connected with the fact that Binyamin was Yosef’s brother: “But Ya’akov did not send Binyamin, Yosef’s brother, with his brothers because he said, ‘Perhaps a fatal (accident) will occur to him.’”

Ya’akov was under the impression that Yosef had been torn apart by a wild animal while he was traveling, so he feared that his brother Binyamin might be prone to a similar misfortune. Furthermore, their mother Rochel had also passed away when traveling (albeit for other reasons too), so Ya’akov was concerned that this was a further indication of susceptibility to an accusation from the Satan while on a journey. Obviously, this concern did not apply to the other brothers, for they were not children of Rochel.

Nevertheless, when the brothers returned from Egypt without Shimon, Ya’akov began to review his entire perspective of what had happened to Yosef. Rashi writes, “He suspected them that perhaps they had killed [Shimon] or sold him like Yosef” (v. 36, above).

So, while earlier Ya’akov had feared that an accident may happen to Binyamin as it did to Yosef, now Ya’akov suspected that Yosef had not suffered a freak accident at all. Consequently, he rejected the theory that Binyamin was prone to accidents while traveling, which is why Rashi omits any mention of the concept here.

Rashi writes further: “A fatality will occur to him on the way in which you will be going,” as if to say: “He is likely to suffer a fatality through being in your company.”

(Toras Menachem)

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 213ff.)
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(safe return). You can demand him from my hand! If I do not bring him to you, standing up (alive) before you, I will have sinned against you forever.”

10 “For if we had not delayed (due to your hesitation), we would have already returned by now twice in this (time, and you would not have been troubled all these days by Shimon’s absence).”

11 Yisra’el, their father, said to them, “If in fact this is the case, then do the following: Take some of the land’s most exclusive products in your bags, and bring them to the man as a gift—a little balsam, a little honey, wax, birthwort, pistachios and almonds. 12 Take double the (previous amount of) money with you (for perhaps the prices have increased), and return the money that was given back in the top of your sacks along with you. Perhaps, it was an error.”

13 “Take your brother, get going, and return to the man. 14 May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, so that he will release your other brother (Shimon) and Binyamin back to you.”

“(Until your return I will consider myself to be bereft of my children due to doubt), and like I am bereaved (of Yosef and Shimon) I am (now) bereaved (of Binyamin too).”

Yosef is Reunited with All His Brothers

43:15

The men took the gift, and they took double the (previous amount of) money with them, and (they persuaded) Binyamin (to come). They got going and went down to Egypt, where they stood before Yosef.

16 Yosef saw Binyamin with them. He said to the supervisor of his house, “Bring the men into the house and (give orders) to slaughter an animal and to prepare (a meal), for the men will eat with me at lunch.”

17 The man did as Yosef had said. The man brought the men into Yosef’s house.

18 The men became afraid (that they were being framed) because they had been brought to Yosef’s house. They said, “We are being brought (here) on account of the money that was put in our sacks earlier on, so as to incite (a false accusation) against us which will fall on us. (This is in order) to take us as slaves and (confiscate) our donkeys.”

19 So they approached the man who supervised Yosef’s house and spoke to him at the house’s

Classic Questions

● What did Ya’akov say to his sons before they departed? (v. 14)

Rashi: Now you lack nothing but prayer. I am praying for you [so may] God Almighty—Whose mercy is sufficient, and Who has it in His power to give—grant you compassion.

TORAS MENACHEM

Why did Ya’akov say, “Now you lack nothing but prayer,” after the brothers had prepared gifts and money? Surely the correct approach would be to pray first to God for success, and then seek a natural means by which God might send salvation? (see 32:9, above)

However, it could be argued that this, precisely, was Ya’akov’s complaint to his sons. Yehudah had suggested that returning Shimon was an entirely straightforward matter that could not possibly go wrong: “For if we had not delayed (due to your hesitation), we would have already returned by now twice in this (time, and you would not have been troubled all these days by Shimon’s absence)” (v. 10).

Therefore, Ya’akov warned his sons, “Even if it is true, as you say, that there is no danger here, you still need to pray to God. Don’t just pray to God when you feel it is an emergency. You need His help for a natural plan to succeed too.”

From this we can learn that a person should not only turn to God when he feels he is lacking something. He should also ask God for things which he perceives will inevitably come his way. For, in truth, God is the only provider, whether the blessing comes naturally or supernaturally.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5745)
“Please sir,” they said, “we originally came down to purchase food. And then, when we came to the hotel we opened our sacks, and—look!—each person’s money (with which he had paid for the grain) was (back) in the top of his sack. We’ve brought it back with us. We brought down more money with us to purchase food. We don’t know who put our money (back) into our sacks.”

He said, “Don’t worry, everything’s okay for you. (Either) your merit (or) the merit of the God of your father has brought you a hidden gift. I did receive the money that you paid.”

He brought Shimon out to them.

The man brought the (brothers) into Yosef’s house. He gave (them) water, and they washed their feet. He gave fodder to their donkeys. They prepared the gift (in beautiful containers) before Yosef came for lunch, for they heard that they would be dining there.

When Yosef came home, they brought him the gift which they had with them, into the (main chamber of the) house and they threw themselves on the ground in front of him.

He inquired about their welfare. Then he asked them, “Is your elderly father, whom you mentioned, well? Is he still alive?”

They said, “Your servant, our father, is well. He is still alive.” They bowed (their heads) and then threw themselves to the ground (thanking him for inquiring about their welfare).

(Yosef) looked around and saw Binyamin, his brother, his mother’s son. He said, “Is this your little brother, whom you told me about?”

“May God be gracious to you, my son,” (Yosef) said.

(When Yosef heard how Binyamin had named all his sons after him,) his compassion was suddenly stirred up over his brother, and he wanted to cry, so he quickly went into the (side) room and cried there.

He washed his face and came out. He restrained himself and said, “Put out the food.”

They set for him separately and for them separately, and for the Egyptians who ate with him separately, since the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, because it is an abomination to the Egyptians (since Hebrews eat the animals which Egyptians worship).

● Why was Yosef’s compassion stirred up? (v. 30)

Rashi: [Yosef] asked [Binyamin], “Do you have a brother from your mother’s side?”

He replied, “I had a brother, but I don’t know where he is.”

“Do you have any sons?”

“I have ten,” he replied.

“And what are their names?”

“Bela, Becher, etc.,” he replied, [reciting all their names].

[Yosef] asked, “What is the significance of these names?”

He replied, “All of them are connected to my brother and the troubles that befell him. My first son was named Bela because my brother was swallowed up (niVLa) among the nations. My second son was named Becher because my brother was the firstborn (BeCHoR) of my mother. My third son was named Ashbail because God put my brother into captivity (SHeVa’a All). My fourth son was named Gaia because my brother lived away from home (nisGAyeR ba’achsanya). My fifth son was named Na’aman because my brother was very pleasant (Na’iM). My sixth and seventh sons were named Achi and Rosh because he was my brother (ACHi), and he was my superior (ROSH). My eighth son was named Cupim because my brother learned from the mouth of (MiPi) my father. My ninth son was named Cupim because my brother did not see my wedding canopy (CHUPasi), neither did I see his wedding canopy (CHUPaso). My tenth son was named Ard because my brother descended (yARaD) among the nations.”

This is taught in Tractate Sotah.

Immediately, on hearing this, “his compassion was stirred up.”

Rashi’s Problem (v. 30)

Why does Rashi cite the Talmudic account of the discussion between Yosef and Binyamin? Why is it crucial to a literal understanding of the verses? And why do we have to be informed of so much detail?

On reaching verse 30, Rashi was troubled by the question: Why was Yosef’s compassion suddenly stirred up at this point and not earlier in verse 29, when Yosef saw Binyamin for the first time? How is it that Yosef first asked, quite calmly, “Is this your little brother?” and then continued,
May God be gracious unto you, my son,” before being overcome with emotion? Surely, Yosef’s feelings would have been kindled immediately on seeing Binyamin?

Rashi concluded that in general Yosef was quite capable of holding in his emotions, which is why he did not break down in the first place. But here something specific must have occurred that is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah, which caused Yosef to lose control of himself.

What could have been powerful enough to stir Yosef’s emotions, which had been under control until this point?

Rashi concluded that the solution must be hinted to in the verse immediately prior to Yosef’s emotional outburst, “May God be gracious to you, my son” (v. 29). This particular formula of blessing is one used in connection with having children (as Ya’akov stated to Eisav, “(They are) the children whom God has graciously given your servant,” above 33:5). Therefore, Rashi concluded that a discussion about Binyamin’s children must have caused Yosef to be overcome by emotion, so he cited the Talmudic account of how Binyamin named all his children after Yosef.

At first glance, it may seem that an abbreviated version of the story from the Talmud would have been sufficient, without the need to mention every son’s name and his connection with Yosef. Nevertheless, since the reader has seen how much control Yosef had over his emotions up to this point, it follows that a tremendously moving exchange must have occurred in order to make Yosef break down. Therefore, Rashi cited the story in full, to bring across how exceptionally moving that moment must have been.
33 They sat before him (in age order): the firstborn (of each mother) according to his birthright (followed by the other sons from that mother down to) the youngest (who sat last) according to his young age, (and Binyamin sat next to Yosef).

The men (looked) in astonishment at each other. 34 (Yosef) had portions brought to them from (what was laid out) before him. Binyamin’s portion was five times as large as any of their portions (to include Yosef, Asnas, Menasheh and Efrayim too). They drank (for the first time since Yosef was sold) and became drunk with him.

**Yosef’s Goblet is Planted in Binyamin’s Sack**

H e commanded the supervisor of his house, saying, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money (which he used to pay for the grain) into the top of his sack. 2 Put my goblet, the silver goblet, into the top of the youngest’s sack, with his money (which he used to pay for) his grain.” (The supervisor) carried out the instructions which Yosef had said.

3 When it became light the (next) morning, the men were sent (on their way), both they and their donkeys. 4 When they had left the city, but had not gone far, Yosef said to the supervisor of his house, “Get going and chase after the men. When you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid good with evil (stealing my master’s goblet)? 5 This is none other than the (goblet) which my master drinks from. He (also) divines with it regularly. What you have done is evil!’”

6 (The supervisor) overtook them, and he said these words to them.

7 They said to him, “Why should my master say such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do a thing like this! 8 Look, (if) we (even) returned to you the money we found in the top of our sacks (all the way) from the land of Cana’an, how could we (possibly) steal silver or gold from your master’s house? 9 Whichever one of your servants is found to have (the goblet) shall die, and also, we will be slaves to my master (if it is found).”

10 He replied, “It’s true as you say (that you are all collectively guilty, but I will have mercy and only)

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**Classic Questions**

- **Was the brothers’ argument logical? (v. 8)**

  **Rashi:** This is one of the ten kal vachomer* (a fortiori) conclusions mentioned in scripture. They are all enumerated in Bereishis Rabah.

  **Torah Shlaimah:** At first glance, the brothers’ logic could be refuted. The money that they returned was much less valuable than the goblet that they had allegedly stolen, so why would the fact that they returned the money prove that they had not stolen the goblet?

  Two explanations could be suggested, for the brothers’ argument:
  a.) “The money was of little worth to the King: he didn’t even ask for it back, and yet we still returned it. So, all the more so would we not take the goblet, which was of tremendous value to him.”
  b.) “The money was not identifiable, but we still returned it despite the fact that it could never be traced. So how could we possibly have stolen the goblet, which is identifiable and easily traced?”

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**The Brothers’ “Kal Vachomer” (v. 8)**

What difficulty, at the literal level, was Rashi concerned that the reader would have with verse 8? And why do we need to know how many incidences of kal vachomer are found in the Torah, and where they are enumerated?

Rashi was troubled by a simple, logical question that the reader will have when reaching verse 8:

The brothers argued, “(If) we (even) returned to you the money we found in the top of our sacks (all the way) from the land of Cana’an, how could we (possibly) steal silver or gold from your master’s house?” An obvious problem with this argument is that it did not apply to Binyamin, since he had not accompanied the brothers on their first trip and thus had not returned any money from his sack. So the reader will be troubled: How could the brothers have used an argument that exonerated themselves at the expense of incriminating Binyamin?

Rashi answers: “This is one of the ten kal vachomer (a fortiori) conclusions mentioned in scripture. They are all enumerated in Bereishis Rabah.” I.e. if one looks in Bereishis Rabah at the other instances of kal vachomer which occur in scripture, they all have similar inconsistencies. Namely, that their less obvious cases (kal) do not exactly parallel their

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* A kal vachomer is a line of Talmudic reasoning where more obvious lessons are learned from less obvious cases. I.e. if a condition exists in a given situation where there is relatively little reason for it to apply, then all the more so does that condition exist in another situation where there is more reason for it to apply.
more obvious conclusions (chomer) in every detail. Nevertheless, since the two cases are partially similar in each of the ten instances, these comparisons are nevertheless termed “kal vachomer of scripture.”

For example, the next kal vachomer which occurs in the Torah is the complaint of Moshe to God, that the Jewish people had not responded to his announcement of redemption: “If the children of Israel did not listen to me, then how will Pharaoh listen to me?” (Shemos 6:12). Again, there is an inconsistency with this kal vachomer, since it could be argued that the reason why the Jewish people did not listen to Moshe was “due to shortness of breath and hard labor” (ibid. 9), whereas Pharaoh clearly did not have this disadvantage—so perhaps Pharaoh would listen?
the one with whom (the goblet) is found shall be my slave. (The rest of) you will be cleared.”

11 They hurried and each one lowered his sack to the ground and opened his sack. 12 (The supervisor) searched: he started with the eldest (so they would not sense that he knew where it was) and finished with the youngest. The goblet was found in Binyamin’s sack.

13 They tore their garments. Each one loaded up his donkey, and they returned to the city.

**Binyamin is Retained and the Other Brothers sent Home**

44:14  

**Maftir**  

Yehudah and his brothers came to Yosef’s house, and he was still there (waiting for them). They fell on the ground in front of him.

15 Yosef said to them, “What is this deed that you have done? Don’t you know that an (important) person like me regularly practices divination (so I could figure out that you stole the goblet)?”

16 Yehudah said, “What shall we say to my master? How can we speak? How can we justify ourselves? (We know we have done no wrong, but) God has found your servants’ guilt. Both we and the one in whose possession the goblet has been found will be (your) slaves.”

17 (Yosef) said, “Far be it from me to do this! The man in whose possession the goblet was found will be my slave. You may all go in peace to your father.”


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**TORAS MENACHEM**

Nevertheless, this *kal vachomer* is partially valid, since the tribe of Levi was not enslaved at all, so at least part of the Jewish people did not suffer from “shortness of breath and hard labor.” Thus Moshe’s logic would apply to them.

Consequently, Rashi writes (in his commentary to this verse), “This is one of the ten *kal vachomer* conclusions mentioned in scripture,” to indicate that the reader should not be troubled by the partial inconsistency, because all the ten instances of *kal vachomer* in scripture are partially inconsistent.

Likewise, in our case: Since the brothers’ argument was partially valid—for it applied to all of the brothers except Binyamin—it is thus no less a *kal vachomer* than the other cases stated in Bereishis Rabah, which all share similar inconsistencies.

**Two Further Cases of Kal Vachomer**

After Miriam was struck with tzara’as (leprosy), Moshe argued, “If her father turned to her with an angry face wouldn’t she be humiliated [and not show herself] for seven days? All the more so [now she was humiliated] by the Divine Presence [with tzara’as] let her be quarantined outside the camp... for seven days” (Bamidbar 12:14, and Rashi ibid).

Again, there is an inconsistency here: it is possible to send a girl away from her father in disgrace, but one cannot be “sent away” from God who is everywhere, even outside the camp.

However, Rashi did not find it necessary to make any comment in this case, since, at the literal level, the reader can understand that being sent outside the camp is not to “be distanced from God,” but rather it is a punishment. So, since the matter is self-understood at the literal level, Rashi made no comment.

The fourth case of *kal vachomer* is a statement of Moshe before he passed away: “For I know your rebelliousness and your stubbornness. Look!—even while I am still alive with you today you have been rebels against God, surely (you will be) after my death (too).” (Devarim 31:27).

Again, this *kal vachomer* can be refuted. For, it could be argued that the Jewish people were more rebellious when Moshe was alive, because in the back of their minds they knew that Moshe would defend their bad deeds before God. When Moshe would pass away however, they would be without their “defense attorney,” so they would be forced to improve their behavior (c.f. Sanhedrin 37a).

Nevertheless, since this problem is too elaborate for the five year-old student of scripture to fathom, Rashi felt no need to address the matter.

In the final analysis we see that all the *kal vachomer* arguments of the Torah have inconsistencies, but that Rashi only chose to alert the reader to this fact when the inconsistencies were problematic at the literal level.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5736)
The Name of the Parsha

The words, “Then Yehudah approached (Vayigash) him,” describe an occurrence which took place in three different worlds:

a.) The perceived reality—Yehudah was approaching the viceroy of Egypt, who was capable of deciding the future of Yehudah and his entire family.

b.) The reality—that the viceroy of Egypt was none other than Yosef, Yehudah’s brother.

c.) The mystical reality—Yehudah approaching Yosef represents a Jew approaching God in prayer (Bereishis Rabah 93:6; Ohr Hatorah, Vayigash 349a).

There is a principle that all the interpretations to any given verse are connected. In our case, the perceived reality is that the Jewish people are in exile and are subjugated to the gentile nations. In truth, however, the Jewish people are impervious to exile and they have the ability to rise above it—rather like the “reality” in our Parsha that Yosef, a Jew, was the ruler of Egypt.

How does a Jew muster the strength and the courage to lift himself from the perceived reality to reality? The answer is: via the mystical reality.

In our case, when a Jew approaches God in prayer, he reveals his inner bond with the Almighty, which gives him the ability to rise above the challenges of exile—and to succeed.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayigash 5751)
Why were the brothers concerned about taking Binyamin away from Ya’akov? (v. 22)

Rashi: “If he leaves his father, we are worried that maybe he will die while traveling, for his mother died while traveling.”

What was Ya’akov’s fear? (v. 29)

Rashi: That Binyamin would have a fatal accident, because the Satan makes accusations at a time of danger.

(See also Classic Questions to 42:38, above)

The Concern for Binyamin (v. 22, 29)

It was explained above (Toras Menachem to 42:38), that Ya’akov’s concern about Binyamin going down to Egypt changed after the brothers returned from Egypt without Shimon. Initially, Ya’akov thought that Yosef had been torn apart by a wild animal while he was traveling, and he was afraid that his brother Binyamin might be prone to a similar misfortune.

Furthermore, Rochel (their mother) had also passed away when traveling, and Ya’akov was concerned that this was a further indication of susceptibility to an accusation from the Satan while on a journey.

However, when the brothers returned without Shimon, Ya’akov suspected them that perhaps they had killed [Shimon] or sold him like Yosef” (Rashi to 42:36). Ya’akov thus rejected the theory that Binyamin was
44:18 Then Yehudah approached (Yosef) and said, “Please, my master! Your servant now (wants to) say something that (I hope) my master will listen to. (I’m going to be firm) so please don’t get angry at your servant, for you are as (important in my eyes) as Pharaoh (himself).”

19 “(From the very first instance,) my master interrogated his servants (accusingly), saying, ‘Have you a father or a brother?’

20 “(Nevertheless, we held nothing back from you). We said to my master, ‘We have an elderly father (who has) a baby born to him in old age. His brother is dead, so he is the only child of his mother, and his father loves him.’

21 “You said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, so I can see him for myself.’

22 “We said to my master, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he leaves his father (we are concerned that) he will die (en route, for his mother died while traveling).’

23 “You said to your servants, ‘If your youngest brother doesn’t come down with you, you’ll never see my face again!’

24 “Then, when we went up to your servant, my father, and we told him the words of my master, 25 our father said, ‘Go back and buy us a bit of food.’

26 “We said, ‘We can’t go down (like we did before)! We’ll (only) go down if our youngest brother is with us, because the man won’t let us see him if our youngest brother isn’t with us.’

27 “Your servant, my father, said to us, ‘You know that my wife (Rochel) bore me two (children). 28 One of them has departed from me, and I said, “He must have been ripped apart again and again*”—and I haven’t seen him since. 29 If you’ll take this one away from me too, and a fatal (accident) occurs to him, you’ll bring my old age to the grave in grief.’

30 “So, if I’ll come (back) now to your servant, my father, and the boy isn’t with us, (being that) his

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The Last Word

It appears at first glance that Yehudah approaching Yosef (v. 18) reflected the power of Yosef—the ruler of Egypt to whom Yehudah had to appeal. At the time Yosef was appointed by Pharaoh as the ruler of the land, Pharaoh was an absolute monarch, and Yosef was “like Pharaoh,” as Yehudah himself said (ibid.).

Nevertheless we see that Yehudah, not knowing that this was in fact his brother Yosef, was not intimidated by authority and acted with the greatest measure of confidence. Without even asking permission from Yosef, he approached him in an aggressive manner and spoke to him in harsh language. This was despite the fact that it was a life-endangering move, knowing how Yosef could respond to his chutzpah!

Thus, it appears that Yehudah approaching Yosef expresses, in fact, the power of Yehudah.

It could be argued that the powerful manner in which “Yehudah approached him” actually broke through a spiritual barrier, making it possible for Ya’akov and his children to later settle in a manner that “they acquired property there. They were fertile, and their population increased very rapidly” (47:27).

The reason for this could be argued as follows. The strength of a Jew in this world during exile can be in one of two manners:

a.) One’s strength is proportionate to what is possible according to the laws of nature and conduct of the world—according to the limitations of exile, government law etc. This was represented by Yosef.

b.) One is in a state which completely transcends the limitations of the world, the nations of the world, and even the exile itself. In fact, the person conducts himself with such a strong resolve that he is even able to change the national laws and practices. This was the level of Yehudah.

Thus, the strength of Yehudah made it possible for a Jew to be, not only a controlling force over the nations of the world (like Yosef), but, in addition, able to influence the world in a manner which completely transcends any limitation.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayigash 5752)
Based on the above, we can explain Yehudah’s comments here, in our Parshah. Regarding Ya’akov’s initial concerns, Yehudah explained that: “If he leaves his father, we are worried that maybe he will die while traveling, for his mother died while traveling” (Rashi to v. 22). Obviously, this was a slight modification of the truth, since Ya’akov’s real concern was that Binyamin might suffer a fatality on the way like Yosef did. Ya’akov, of course, was forced to tell a complete lie. For, Ya’akov had now begun to trust the remaining brothers with Binyamin in their hands. Obviously, he was forced to tell a complete lie.

However, when Yehudah explained Ya’akov’s concern for Binyamin on the second occasion that he appeared before the Egyptian governor (alias Yosef), he was forced to tell a complete lie. For, Ya’akov had now begun to suspect the brothers of disposing of Yosef and Shimon, and he did not trust the remaining brothers with Binyamin in their hands. Obviously, Yehudah could not offer this as an explanation to the Egyptian governor (alias Yosef)—for how could he reveal the fact that his father had suspected them of foul play?

Therefore, he was forced to lie and say that even on the second occasion Ya’akov’s concern had been “that Binyamin would have a fatal accident because the Satan makes accusations at a time of danger” (Rashi to v. 29). And consequently, Yehudah felt it necessary to tell a further mistruth, that Yosef had been “been ripped apart again and again” (v. 28), for this would make it appear feasible that there was indeed a genuine fear of an accident on the way.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 216ff.)
soul is attached to (the boy’s) soul, 31 he’ll simply die (from grief) when he’ll see that the boy is gone. Then your servants will have brought the old age of your servant, our father, to the grave in grief.

32 “Now, (I am speaking out here in particular because I), your servant, assumed responsibility for the boy (when we took him) from my father, saying, ‘If I don’t bring him (back) to you, I will have sinned against my father forever.’ 33 So now, please let your servant stay as a slave to my master instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. 34 For how could I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? (I can’t bear) to see the misery that my father would suffer!”

**Yosef Reveals His Identity**

Yosef couldn’t bear (the thought that) all (the Egyptians) standing beside him (would see his brothers’ shame when he revealed himself to them). So, he called out, “Take everyone away from me!” Thus, no one stood with Yosef when he revealed himself to his brothers.

2 He wept so loudly, that the Egyptians (who had been sent out) heard. (Soon, the whole of) Pharaoh’s household heard (about it)*.

3 Yosef said to his brothers, “I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were unable to answer him because they were ashamed before him.

4 (When he saw that they were ashamed) Yosef said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me.” They drew closer, (and he showed them that he was circumcised).

He said, “I am your brother Yosef, whom you sold to Egypt. 5 But now, don’t be upset or angry with yourselves that you sold me to this place, for (now we see that) God sent me ahead of you to save (your) lives 6 For it’s two years now that there’s been a famine in the land, and there won’t be any plowing or

**Classic Questions**

● Why did Yosef ask, “Is my father still alive” (v. 3), when he had already been told that Ya’akov lived? (43:27-8)

**Ralbag**: He thought they might have been lying to him as a ploy in order to get Binyamin back.

**Abbadnail**: Yosef knew that his father was still alive. However, he thought that the brothers would be shocked when he revealed himself, so he asked them, “Is my father still alive,” in order to enter into a conversation. He was then planning to ask them, “How are your families?” but the conversation could not continue, since they “were unable to answer him because they were ashamed before him.”

**Pane’ach Raza**: Yosef was not asking whether Ya’akov was alive, but rather, what the condition of his health was.

**Maharik**: He was asking about Ya’akov’s spiritual welfare. Yosef was saying: “Is my father’s prophetic spirit still alive?”

**Sforno**: Yosef was saying, “I can’t believe that my father didn’t die out of his deep concern for me.”

**Tiferes Yehonason**: Yosef was saying: “If you are scared that I will kill you, you have nothing to be scared of, because my father is still alive. Do you think I would be worse than Eisav, who refrained from killing his brother so long as his father was alive?” (see above, 27:41).

**Sparks of Chasidus**

We can learn from the example of Yosef towards his brothers that one should never seek revenge against a person who causes him any form of distress or damage. Rather, one should repay even a guilty offender with kindness (Tanya ch. 12).

Why should we be kind to guilty offenders?

Because whatever that person did to you ultimately stems from God. The person was merely an agent from God, Who decreed that this thing should occur to you. Thus, since “everything that God does is for the good” (Brachos 60b), you must repay the person—who brought this “good” to you—with kindness.

( Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 247)

**Yosef’s Revelation**

**Ralbag**’s interpretation is difficult to accept, since when Yosef asked, “Is your elderly father, whom you mentioned, well? Is he still alive?” (43:27), the brothers had no reason to suspect that this was a ploy to detain Binyamin in Egypt because Yosef had not yet asked for Binyamin. Thus, there would have been no need for them to lie that Ya’akov was alive.

**Abbadnail**’s solution is also difficult to accept at the literal level, for if Yosef wanted to ask his brothers “How are your families?” he could have done so immediately, without having to “enter into conversation” first.

Why does Rashi fail to explain this important matter?

**The Explanation**

When reading the current story, Rashi presumed that the reader would remember his previous comment in Parshas Vayeishv. On the words, “he was unable to be consoled” (37:35), Rashi comments: “A person is
Yosef then continued, "Hurry and go up (to the Land of Israel)... and you should quickly bring my father down here" (v. 9-13), because he was concerned that his father's life was in danger due to the amount of stress he had suffered in the past 22 years.

Thus, we see that Yosef emphasized his amazement that Ya'akov was still alive, in order to impress upon the brothers the urgency of bringing him to Egypt.
harvesting for another five years. 

7 God sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land, and to sustain (your families and flocks for the) great salvation (they will need, due to their substantial size*)."

8 “Now (we can see that) it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me an advisor to Pharaoh, a master over all his household, and a ruler over the entire land of Egypt.”

9 “Hurry and go up (to the Land of Israel,) to my father, and say to him, ‘This is what your son Yosef said: “God has made me a master over all the Egyptians. Come down here to me! Do not delay! 10 You can dwell in the land of Goshen—you, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your cattle and everything that’s yours—and you’ll be near me. 11 I will sustain you there—you, your household and everything that’s yours—so you don’t become poor, for there are still five years of famine.”’”

12 “Look, you can see for yourself—and my brother Binyamin can see for himself—that (I really am Yosef, because I am circumcised and) my mouth is speaking to you (in Hebrew).”

13 “You should tell my father about all the honor which I receive in Egypt and about everything that you’ve seen, and you should quickly bring my father down here.”

14 (Yosef) fell on his brother Binyamin’s neck and cried, and Binyamin cried on his neck. 15 He kissed all his brothers and cried over them. After his brothers (saw that he was sincere, they) spoke with him.

**Pharaoh and Yosef Send Gifts to Ya’akov**

45:16 The news was heard in Pharaoh’s house: (People were) saying, “Yosef’s brothers have come!” (The news) pleased Pharaoh and his servants.

17 Pharaoh said to Yosef, “Tell your brothers, ‘This is what you should do: Load up your animals (with grain) then go and bring them to the land of Cana’an. 18 Fetch your father and (the people of) your households and come to me. I will give you (the land of Goshen which is) the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the finest (produce) of the land.’"

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

* Why did Yosef and Binyamin cry? (v. 14)

RASHI: Yosef fell on his brother Binyamin’s neck and wept for the two Temples which were destined to be in Binyamin’s territory and would ultimately be destroyed. Binyamin wept on (Yosef’s) neck for the Tabernacle at Shiloh, which was destined to be in Yosef’s territory, and would ultimately be destroyed. (See “The Last Word”)

However, this begs the question: If there was such urgency, why did Yosef not go himself to Cana’an to greet his father, thereby fulfilling the mitzvah of honoring parents, rather than waiting for the brothers to bring him back to Egypt?

To clarify this matter, Yosef then said: “(Now we see that) God sent me ahead of you to save (your) lives... God sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land... it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me an advisor to Pharaoh, a master over all his household, and a ruler over the entire land of Egypt” (v. 5-8).

In other words, Yosef made it clear that his role in Egypt was one that was Divinely ordained (‘God sent me”). Therefore, it was not possible for him to leave his position in Egypt where God had sent him.

Therefore the only solution was to bring Ya’akov to Egypt, to be reunited with his son.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 387ff.)
needed something to calm him, as he had been distraught over Yosef's worries. Thus, even though Ya'akov's worries had now ended, he still gave Yosef aged wine.

The Egyptian split beans had the property of calming worries. Thus, even though Ya’akov’s worries had now ended, he needed something to calm him, as he had been distraught over Yosef's worries. Alternatively, these beans help a person sleep. Thus Yosef sent them because elderly people have trouble sleeping.

If 11 brothers returned, why were only 10 male donkeys sent with them (v. 23)?

Midrash Lekach Tov: Yosef did not send Binyamin back with the other brothers, otherwise he would have given him his own donkey.

Tur Ha'aruch: The fact that only 10 donkeys returned to Cana'an does not prove that Binyamin stayed in Egypt, since it is possible that Yosef did not want to burden Binyamin with taking care of a donkey.
19 (Pharaoh said to Yosef), “You have been commanded (by me to say to them), ‘This is what you should do: Take wagons for yourselves from the land of Egypt, for your young children and for your wives. Transport your father, and come here. 20 Don’t worry about (bringing) your belongings, because the best of all the land of Egypt is (now) yours.’”

21 Yisra’el’s sons did what (they were instructed). Yosef gave them wagons by Pharaoh’s orders, and he gave them provisions for the journey. 22 He gave each one of them a set of clothes, and he gave Binyamin three hundred silver pieces and five sets of clothes. 23 He (also) sent to his father the same (amount of donkeys that Pharaoh had sent): ten male donkeys carrying Egypt’s finest produce. (In addition, Yosef also sent) ten female donkeys carrying grain, bread, and delicacies for his father (to eat) on the way.

24 He escorted his brothers off, and they went. (As they left) he said to them, “Don’t argue on the way (about the past. It’s all over now).”

25 So they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Cana’an, to their father, Ya’akov. 26 They told him (what had happened), saying, “Yosef is still alive.” (They told him) that (Yosef) ruled over the entire land of Egypt, but his heart denied it, because he did not believe them.

27 (However) when they told him all of Yosef’s words which he had told them (including the content of the last discussion which Yosef had had with Ya’akov), and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Ya’akov was revived.

28 Yisra’el said, “(I have) a lot (to look forward to now), because my son Yosef is still alive. Let me go and see him before I die!”

According to Midrash Lekach Tov, the fact that only ten male donkeys were sent back to Cana’an by Yosef* is proof that Binyamin, the eleventh brother, must have remained in Egypt with Yosef.

However, at the literal level, this is difficult to accept because:

a.) The Torah states unequivocally that Yosef “escorted his brothers off, and they went” (v. 24), without making any indication that Binyamin remained.

b.) Yehudah stated earlier, “If I’ll come (back) now to your servant, my father, and the boy isn’t with us, (being that) his soul is attached to (the boy’s) soul, he’ll simply die (from grief) when he’ll see that the boy’s gone” (44:30-31). Here we see that it would have endangered Ya’akov’s life not to return Binyamin with the other brothers, and clearly Yosef would not have done anything that might endanger his father’s life.

**Tor Ha’aruch** writes that Binyamin was indeed sent back, but the Torah only mentions 10 donkeys, even though there were eleven brothers, because Yosef did not wish to burden Binyamin with looking after a laden donkey.

However, at the literal level, these ten donkeys were a gift from Yosef to Ya’akov which Yosef sent to honor his father (see note*). Thus, it is unlikely that Binyamin would consider his participation in this mitzvah of honoring his father a “burden”—especially when one considers that “his soul is attached to (the boy’s) soul.”

Rather, there appears to be a simple, logical explanation to this matter:

When the brothers came to Egypt seeking grain for the first time in Parshas Mikeitz, Shimon was detained as “security,” to ensure that his brothers would return. Clearly, there was no need to detain his donkey too, as Shimon alone was sufficient security. Therefore, the nine remaining brothers would have returned home with ten laden donkeys, for they would have loaded Shimon’s donkey to provide food for his family back at home.

When they returned to Egypt the second time, with Binyamin, they presumably took one donkey each, i.e. a total of ten. Thus, at this point in time, they had ten donkeys in Egypt, which Pharaoh commanded to be returned to Ya’akov, laden with grain (v. 17).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, pp. 155-6)

**2. Yosef’s Gift (v. 23)**

a.) Why does Rashi bring two interpretations of what Yosef sent Ya’akov, wine and split beans?

b.) Rashi does not usually cite sources for his explanations. Why, in this case, does he stress that one explanation is from the Talmud, and the other from the Midrash?

**The Explanation**

Yosef’s primary intention in sending food back to the Land of Cana’an could not have been to sustain his father and family for an extended period, for Yosef had requested that Ya’akov be brought to Egypt immediately (above, v. 9, 13). Rather, Yosef’s primary intention was to offer a gift to Ya’akov to fulfill the precept of honoring one’s parents.

Therefore, Rashi concluded that Yosef would have sent Ya’akov

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* In verse 17 Pharaoh instructed Yosef to load the brothers’ donkeys with a gift of grain for Ya’akov. As a son, Yosef was obliged to give his father a gift exceeding that of Pharaoh’s. Therefore, in verse 23 we read that he gave 10 male-donkeys, equivalent to Pharaoh’s gift (see Rashi ibid), plus an additional 10 female-donkeys, in order to surpass Pharaoh’s gift. Thus, while the Torah does not state explicitly (in v. 17) how many of the brothers’ donkeys were returned to Cana’an by Pharaoh, this was in fact equivalent to Yosef’s gift of 10 male-donkeys (in v. 23). We are thus left with the question: Since 11 brothers returned, why were there only 10 donkeys?—Likutei Sichos vol. 10, pp. 154-5.
Why was Ya'akov afraid (v. 3)

Rashi: The fact that he was forced to go outside the Land of Israel pained him.

Chizkuni: Ya'akov was saying, “Now that I’m going down to Egypt, it must be that God’s words to my grandfather are soon to be fulfilled and my children will be enslaved and persecuted in a foreign land.” God replied, “Do not be afraid of going down to Egypt. For, just as I warned him about what was going to happen, I am coming to you with a promise: While the days of slavery and persecution may be approaching, we are also approaching the time when the blessing that I gave to your grandfather will be fulfilled, “I will make you into a great nation” (12:2).

Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer: When Ya’akov heard that Yosef was alive, he thought to himself, “How could I leave the Land of my ancestors, the Land in which I was born and the Land in which God resides, and go to a land whose inhabitants do not fear God?”

The Message of Split Beans

Yosef did not send split beans for Ya’akov to eat, for Ya’akov was scheduled to come to Egypt without delay, so one would imagine that he sent this item in particular as some sort of message to his father. Consequently, Rashi stresses that the concept of Yosef sending split beans is found in the Midrash, for the Midrash is a text which deals primarily with allusions and allegory in scripture.

What was Yosef’s allusion within the split bean?

Yosef was concerned that when Ya’akov would discover that his son was alive, Ya’akov would immediately realize that the brothers had sold Yosef to Egypt as a slave, and fabricated the story of his disappearance. Clearly, this would trouble Ya’akov very much.

Therefore Yosef sent a gift of split beans. This was a hint to Ya’akov that, just as the split bean is only considered a special delicacy when it is split, similarly Yosef had succeeded by Divine Providence specifically when they were split apart.

(Based on Likutei Sichot vol. 10, p. 151ff.)
Ya’akov Travels to Egypt with His Family

Yisra’el traveled with all his possessions, and he arrived at Be’er-Sheva. He slaughtered sacrifices to the God of his father Yitzchak.

“Here I am!” (Ya’akov) said.

He said, “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid of going down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up (and bury you in the Land of Israel). Yosef (will outlive you) and he will put his hands on your eyes (after you pass away").

Ya’akov got going from Be’er-Sheva. The sons of Yisra’el transported their father Ya’akov, together with their young children and their wives, in the wagons Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They took their livestock and their possessions that they had acquired in the land of Cana’an, and they came to Egypt.

Ya’akov was together with all his descendants. His sons and his grandsons were with him. He brought his daughters, his granddaughters and all his descendants with him to Egypt.

Ya’akov’s Fear (v. 3)

Rashi’s comment to verse 3 prompts the following questions:

a.) It is self-understood that Ya’akov would be afraid to leave the Land of Israel and settle in Egypt. Why did Rashi need to make any comment at all?

b.) Not only does Rashi’s comment appear to be unnecessary, it actually seems to contradict the verse itself. The verse states that Ya’akov’s concern was about going to Egypt (“Do not be afraid of going down to Egypt”) whereas Rashi informs us that this was not his worry at all, but rather, he was only concerned about leaving the Land of Israel (“The fact that he was forced to go outside the Land of Israel pained him”).

Why did Rashi reject the simple interpretations of Chizkuni and Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer that Ya’akov was afraid of the upcoming exile, or about living in a place whose inhabitants did not fear God—since both these explanations take the verse literally, that Ya’akov was afraid of “going down to Egypt.” Rashi, on the other hand, states that Ya’akov’s concern was the opposite of what the verse states: He was not worried about going to Egypt, but rather, about leaving the Land of Israel.

At first glance, one might argue that Ya’akov’s reservations about leaving the Land of Israel were because he did not wish to leave a land which was holy, and settle in the Diaspora.

However, it was explained above that at the literal level of Torah interpretation which is adhered to by Rashi, the Land of Israel was not yet endowed with holiness during the times of the Patriarchs (see Toras Menachem to 15:18 above). Therefore, this could not have been Ya’akov’s concern.

The Explanation

Rashi was troubled by the following, simple question: Why does the Torah state that Ya’akov only feared going down to Egypt after he had already begun his journey, along with all his family and possessions, arriving at Be’er-Sheva? Surely, Ya’akov’s main concern about journeying to Egypt would have been felt before he departed? One would imagine that by the time he had already traveled several miles, he would have already come to terms with what he was doing. So Rashi wondered: Why was he suddenly struck with fear at Be’er-Sheva?

Since Be’er–Sheva is on the southern border of the Land of Israel, Rashi concluded that Ya’akov’s distress must have been connected with reaching the Land’s geographical boundary. So Rashi wrote, “The fact that he was forced to go outside the Land of Israel pained him.”

In other words, when leaving his home town Ya’akov had already come to terms with the fact that at some point in the near future he was going to depart from the Land of his ancestors. However, when reaching the border, Ya’akov became pained that he was now forced to leave the land in actuality.

One problem that still needs to be explained is that this was not the first time that Ya’akov left the Land of Israel. For when he was living in Lavan’s house Ya’akov was away from his homeland for 20 years, during which time he observed Torah and mitzvos and built a loyal family who followed in his footsteps. Surely then, Ya’akov was fully aware that it was possible to become “a great nation” in Egypt too? Why was he so pained at leaving the Land?

However, there is a clear distinction between Ya’akov’s position here in our Parsha, and the time when he left to live in Lavan’s house. For

The Last Word

God told Ya’akov, “I will make you into a great nation there”—in Egypt—but God did not tell Ya’akov that he was wrong for wanting to stay in the Land of Israel.

This teaches us that even when the Jewish people are successful in times of exile, to the extent that they become “a great nation,” one must always feel the deep pain and remorse that we are still in exile, away from our homeland.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, pp. 234-5)
46:8

THE SEVENTY SOULS THAT DESCENDED TO EGYPT

These are the names of the children of Yisra’el, Ya’akov and his sons, who went down to Egypt: Ya’akov’s firstborn was Re’uvain. 

Re’uvain’s sons were Chanoch, Palu, Chetzon and Carmi.

Shimon’s sons were Yemu’ail, Yamin, Ohad, Yachin, Tzohar, and Sha’ul the son of (Dinah, who was called) the Canaanite woman (because she was violated by Shechem, a Canaanite)

Levi’s sons were Gershon, Kehas, and Merari.

Yehudah’s sons were Air, Onan, Shailah, Peretz, and Zarach. Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. Peretz’s sons were Chetzon and Chamul.

Yissachar’s sons were Tola, Puwah, Yov, and Shimron.

Zevulun’s sons were Sereď, Ailon, and Yach’el.

The above were (from) the sons of Leah that she bore to Ya’akov in Padan Aram—as well as Dinah his daughter. All his sons and daughters (from Leah) totalled thirty-three souls.

Gad’s sons were Tzifyon, Chagi, Shuni, and Etzbon, Airi, Arodi, and Areli.

Asher’s sons were Yimnah, Yishvah, Yishvi, and Briyah, and their sister was Serach. Briyah’s sons were Chever and Malkiel.

The above were (from) the sons of Zilpah, whom Lavan gave to his daughter Leah. She bore these sixteen souls to Ya’akov.

The sons of Rochel, Ya’akov’s (main) wife, were Yosef and Binyamin. In the land of Egypt, Yosef fathered Menasheh and Efrayim, whom Asnas—the daughter of Poti-Fera, the governor of Oin—bore to him.

The sons of Binyamin were Bela, Becher, Ashbail, Gaira, Na’aman, Aichi, Rosh, Mupim, Chupim, and Ard.

Dan’s sons were Chushim.

Naftali’s sons were Yachtze’ail, Guniy, Yaitzer, and Shilaim.

The above were from the sons of Bilhah, whom Lavan had given to his daughter Rochel, and she bore a total of seven souls to Ya’akov.

The total number of people coming to Egypt with Ya’akov, his offspring, excluding Ya’akov’s sons’ wives was sixty-six souls. Yosef’s sons, who were born to him in Egypt, were two souls (plus Yosef himself made sixty nine, and Yocheved was born to Levi while entering Egypt). Thus, on entering Egypt, the house of Ya’akov totalled seventy souls.

TORAS MENACHEM

Ya’akov had established a large family of seventy souls, so the prospect of developing a large nation was now a reality. Therefore, he hoped that the Jewish nation would develop in their true homeland, the Land of Israel, which was promised by God to Avraham.

We can thus imagine Ya’akov’s disappointment that he was forced to leave the Land of Israel with his entire family and settle in Egypt. So God consoled him that, to the contrary, “I will make you into a great nation there.” I.e. the Jewish people were destined to become a great nation in the Diaspora.

Sparks of Chasidus

The “seventy souls” were an intermediate level between the Patriarchs and the Jewish nation, through whom the spiritual reserves of faith are channeled to the people during the harsh times of exile. Thus Rashi writes (v. 26) that it was Yocheved—a woman—who “completed” the total number of seventy souls, because the quality of faith is stronger in women than it is in men.
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

**Which five brothers did Yosef present to Pharaoh? (v. 2)**

RASHI: From the weakest among them who would not appear to be strong, for if [Pharaoh] would see that they were strong he might enlist them into his army. The [five] ones picked were: Re’uvain, Shimon, Levi, Yissachar, and Binyamin. [i.e] those whose names Moshe did not repeat when he blessed them (Devarim ch. 33). But he did repeat the names of the [six] strong ones: “And this is for Yehudah—hear God, the voice of Yehudah,” “And about Gad he said, ‘Blessed be He that extends Gad,’” “And about Naftali he said, ‘Naftali...’” “And about Dan he said, ‘Dan...’” And similarly regarding Zevulun and Asher.

The above is quoted from Bereishis Rabah which contains the Rabbinic teachings from the Land of Israel.

But, in our Babylonian Talmud (Bava Kama 92a) we find that those whose names Moshe repeated were the weak ones, and these were the ones that [Yosef] brought before Pharaoh—[except for] Yehudah,
Ya’akov is Reunited with Yosef

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to direct him to Goshen, and they came to the land of Goshen.

Yosef harnessed his chariot, and he went up to Goshen to meet Yisra’el his father. When (Yosef) appeared before his (father), he fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck profusely.

Yisra’el said to Yosef, “(If) I would die this time (I would be comforted), since I have seen your face, that you are still alive!”

Yosef said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and inform Pharaoh, and I’ll say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household who were in the land of Canaan have come to me.’

(I’ll also tell him), ‘The men are shepherds, and they’ve (always) been owners of livestock, so they’ve brought their flocks and their cattle and all their possessions.’

So if Pharaoh summons you and asks you, ‘What is your occupation?’ Say, ‘Your servants have been owners of livestock from our youth until now, both we and our ancestors.’ (You should do this in order) to live in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians (since they worship the sheep).”

Pharaoh Meets Yosef’s Family

Yosef came and informed Pharaoh. He said, “My father and my brothers have come from the land of Canaan with their flocks, their cattle and their possessions, and now they are in the land of Goshen.”

(Yosef) took five (of the weakest) men from among his brothers, and he presented them to Pharaoh (hoping that Pharaoh would not enlist them as warriors).

Pharaoh said to (Yosef’s) brothers, “What is your occupation?”

Classic Questions

whose name was repeated for a special reason, which is mentioned in Bava Kama, and not because he was weak.

The version which is recorded in our Talmud is also repeated in a braisa (teaching) of the [Midrashic compilation called] Sifri, in [the portion of] Vezos Habrachah.

Gur Aryeh: The Babylonian Talmud understood that when a name of a tribe is repeated it is a sign of weakness, because the repetition indicates that the tribe is in need of extra blessing due to its weakness. However, the Sages of the Land of Israel understood that the Torah repeated the names of the tribes that were strong, as an indication of their superiority and prowess.

Who Were the Strong Brothers? (v. 2)

Whenever Rashi brings two interpretations, this indicates that it cannot be proven categorically that one is superior to the other, at the literal level. The first interpretation will inevitably have a certain superiority over the second interpretation, and vice-versa. Nevertheless, in the final analysis the first interpretation will always be closer to the literal meaning of the text, which is why it is recorded first.

In our case, we need to explain: a.) The respective advantages and disadvantages of Rashi’s two interpretations, and, b.) The overall superiority of the first interpretation.

The Explanation

The Torah states that Yosef selected five of his eleven brothers to present to Pharaoh, but we are not told which five he picked. So Rashi wondered: Where do we find that the Torah makes a distinction between the tribes’ (Yosef’s brothers) singling out five in particular?

The Last Word

According to Rashi, Ya’akov sent Yehudah ahead of him (v. 28), “to establish for him a yeshivah (house of study),” and throughout the harsh Egyptian exile, “our ancestors were never without a yeshivah.” This teaches us that a yeshivah is the very life of the Jewish people even while we are in exile, providing the crucial direction and leadership needed for us to survive.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 95ff.)
whereas five did not. On this basis, the “Sages of the Land of Israel” concluded that these five must have been weaker, since the repetition of the other tribes’ names indicates that they were superior (as Gur Aryeh writes).

However, this explanation, that the weak tribes were Re’uvain, Shimon, Levi, Yissachar and Binyamin, is problematic for the following reason:

In Parshas Vayishlach we read that Shimon and Levi singlehandedly decimated the entire nation of Shechem (34:25ff.), which is certainly a very impressive act of strength. Therefore it is difficult to accept at the literal level that they would have been part of the weaker group of tribes.

This problem forced Rashi to bring a second interpretation that the repetition of the names in Parshas Vezos Habrachah was not a sign of strength, but of weakness. Presumably, the fact that they were weaker meant that they required more of Moshe’s blessing, so their names were repeated (see Gur Aryeh).

However, this interpretation is also problematic because: a.) According to this argument, it turns out that one of the strong brothers was Binyamin. This is difficult to accept at the literal level because he is described by the Torah as a “baby born to him (Ya’akov) in old age” (44:20), which suggests weakness [seeing that he was an adult at the time]. Furthermore, we find that Ya’akov was particularly concerned that Binyamin in particular would not survive the journey to Egypt (42:4, 38).

Yet another indication of his weakness is Yehudah’s statement to Yosef, “I am superior to him in all respects: in strength, in battle, and in service” (Rashi to 44:33). Therefore, it is unlikely that he was one of the stronger brothers, as Rashi’s second interpretation suggests.

b.) A further problem with Rashi’s second interpretation (that the weaker brothers’ names were repeated), is that we find six names repeated, and yet Yosef only brought five weak brothers to Pharaoh.

Rashi answers that Yehudah was an exceptional case here, because his “name was repeated for a special reason, which is mentioned in Bava Kama, and not because he was weak.” Nevertheless, even after Rashi’s answer, the first interpretation has the advantage of being more straightforward: the five weak brothers are clearly delineated by the fact that their names are not repeated. According to the second interpretation however, we start with a group of six and exclude one by exception,
They said to Pharaoh, “Your servants are shepherds, both we and our forefathers.” They said to Pharaoh, “We have come to sojourn in the land, for your servants’ flocks have no pasture, since the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, please let your servants settle in the land of Goshen.”

Pharaoh spoke to Yosef, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is (open) before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land—let them dwell in the land of Goshen. If you know that there are capable men among them (who are good at their occupation of tending sheep), then make them livestock officers over my (sheep).”

Yosef brought Ya’akov his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Ya’akov greeted Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Ya’akov, “How many years have you been alive?”

Ya’akov said to Pharaoh, “I’ve been wandering around for a hundred and thirty years. (Compared to) my fathers’ lifetimes, when they were wandering around, the days of my life have been few and miserable. (Even ignoring the miseries that I’ve had, my days) have not been (as good as theirs).”

Ya’akov blessed Pharaoh that the Nile should irrigate the land and he left Pharaoh’s presence. Yosef settled his father and his brothers, and he gave them property in the land of Egypt in the best of the land, in the district of Ramses (within the area of Goshen), as Pharaoh had commanded.

Yosef sustained his father, his brothers and his father’s entire household (with an excess of) bread (as if they were) young children (who need to be given extra food, as they waste so much).

which is more difficult to accept at the literal level. Therefore, Rashi recorded this as his secondary interpretation.

Furthermore, it could be argued that the problem with Rashi’s first interpretation could be answered relatively easily. For even though we raised the concern above that Shimon and Levi, who destroyed Shechem were unlikely to have been the weaker brothers—it could be argued that: a.) They did this out of a sense of responsibility, being two of the older brothers, and not because their strength surpassed the others. b.) It was not an exceptional display of strength, since the people of Shechem were debilitated, having been circumcised a few days earlier.

Thus, in the final analysis, Rashi’s first interpretation is superior since it has fewer problems, and its problems are more easily solved.

Rashi’s Sources

In the vast majority of cases, Rashi does not cite sources for his comments. Therefore, when he deviates from this pattern—such as in our case—Rashi is hinting that the various arguments need to be viewed in the context of their source texts.

Rashi states that his first interpretation is to be found in, “Bereishis Rabah which contains the Rabbinic teachings of the Land of Israel,” whereas his second interpretation is derived from, “our Babylonian Talmud.” What is the significance, at the literal level, of Rashi’s citations?

In order to explain this point, we first need to clarify the underlying dispute between the two above opinions. What is the reasoning why the repetition of names would indicate either weakness or strength?

Gur Aryeh explains that the repetition of a tribe’s name could indicate weakness, for it suggests that the tribe is in need of additional blessings, represented by the repetition of the name. On the other hand, the repetition could be indicative of strength, for perhaps the Torah wished to emphasize which tribes were superior by mentioning their names twice.

A practical ramification between these two approaches is whether the repetition of the names was actually said by Moshe, as part of his blessing, or if scripture repeated the names for the sake of emphasis:

According to the view that the repetition of the names represents weakness, it follows that Moshe himself would have repeated the names within his blessings so as to bless the weaker tribes with additional strength. However, according to the other approach (that the repetition of names indicates strength), it follows that the names were repeated by scripture to record for future generations which were the superior tribes, and the names were not necessarily repeated by Moshe at the time of his blessing.

With this in mind, we can explain the logic behind Rashi’s citations:

In general, the ‘Rabbis of the Land of Israel’ favored the approach of brevity, compacting their teachings to be as brief as possible (as we find throughout the Jerusalem Talmud). Therefore, they presumed that Moshe was as brief as possible when blessing the tribes, and he would not have needlessly repeated himself. This led the Rabbis to conclude that the tribes’ names were probably repeated by scripture at a later point, as a sign of superiority and strength.

The Babylonian Talmud, by contrast, tends to dwell at length upon a broader range of arguments and is less economical with words. Consequently, the Sages of Babylon would have understood it to be quite likely that Moshe’s blessings were said in rich, repetitive prose, so they came to the conclusion that the repetition of the tribes’ names was said by Moshe himself and not added later by scripture. It thus follows that Moshe repeated the names as a sign of additional blessing, suggesting that the tribes whose names are repeated were weak.

Of these two opinions, the Babylonian Talmud’s argument seems to be stronger, as it is more straightforward to presume that all of Moshe’s words were in fact blessings (and not later additions). Rashi hinted to this point by continuing, “The version which is recorded in our Talmud is also repeated in a braisa of the Sifri, in [the portion of] Vezos Habrachah.” I.e. one should bear in mind that all of Moshe’s words are part of the Parsha called Vezos Habrachah (“this is the blessing”), which would suggest that all the contents are, as their name suggests—blessings.

In conclusion, we see that in this case Rashi cited the various sources for his comments to provide some insight into the underlying logic of the respective arguments.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 391ff)
אני לא יכול לקרוא את התוכן המוצג在这張圖像.
There was no food in the entire land, for the famine had grown exceedingly severe. The land of Egypt and the land of Canaan were exhausted because of the famine. Yosef collected all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan through the purchase of grain that they were buying, and Yosef brought the money into Pharaoh’s house.

When the money was depleted from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Yosef, saying, “Give us food! Why should we die in front of you because the money has run out?”

Yosef said, “If the money has run out, give (me) your livestock, and I will give you (food in return) for your livestock.” So they brought their livestock to Yosef, and Yosef gave them food (in return) for horses, flocks of sheep (and goats), herds of cattle and donkeys. He provided them with food that (entire) year (by exchanging) bread for all their livestock.

When that year ended, they came to him in the second year (of the famine), and said to him, “We are not withholding anything from our master! Since the money and the herds of animals have been depleted (and come) into (the hands of) our master, there’s nothing left (to give to) our master except our bodies and our farmland. Why should we die before your eyes, (eliminating) us and (leaving) our farmland (desolate)? Buy us and our farmland (in exchange) for food, let us and our land become subjugated to Pharaoh. Just give (us) seed (to sow the earth), so that we will live and not die, and the farmland will not be desolate.”

So Yosef bought all the farmland of the Egyptians for Pharaoh, since each one of the Egyptians sold his field because the famine had become too strong for them. Thus, the land became Pharaoh’s.

(Yosef) transferred the people (from city) to city, from (one) end of the boundary of Egypt to its (other) end (to remind them that they no longer owned the land). The only land which he did not buy was that of the priests, for the priests were given a (daily) allotment (of bread) from Pharaoh. Since they (were able) to eat their allotment which Pharaoh had given them, they did not sell their land.

Yosef said to the people, “Since I have now bought you and your land for Pharaoh—look!—here

**The Last Word**

Yosef’s decision to provide the Egyptians with grain was similar to Moshe’s decision to take the “mixed multitude” out of Egypt. Both had good intentions. Both acted on their own initiative, without a specific directive from God. And both had catastrophic results.

Yosef intended to render the Egyptians homeless so that his family would not be perceived as immigrants (Rashi to v. 21). He also used his supply of grain to force the Egyptians to circumcise themselves (ibid. 41:55). Moshe too acted with good intentions in accepting the mixed multitude, attempting to embrace apparently genuine converts to Judaism. But, just as Moshe’s kindness backfired when the mixed multitude instigated the golden calf, so too Yosef’s benevolent offer of grain to the Egyptians was counterproductive. For it strengthened an Egypt which ultimately rebelled and enslaved the Jewish people.

From this we can learn a powerful lesson in our daily lives: When attempting to draw others closer to Judaism, there is sometimes the temptation to be “benevolent” with matters of Jewish Law, and to compromise a few halachic requirements in order to make Judaism a more attractive “product.”

Nevertheless, we can learn from the cases of Yosef and Moshe that such “benevolence” will ultimately prove counterproductive, since it is not based on a directive from God (i.e. Jewish Law). Even if one will indeed attract more people by dispensing with a few precepts, one is effectively trying to extinguish a fire with kerosene. For, by offering sanctions and compromises, one will only serve to reinforce the opposition to Torah-true Judaism, as Yosef strengthened Egypt.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 98ff.)
Where did the Jewish people settle? (v. 27)
RASHI: In the land of Goshen, which is part of the land of Egypt.

What did they do there? (v. 27)
RASHI: The verse states וַיְחַתְּךָ בָּאָרָם (which means “they acquired property in it.”)
MIDRASH: וַיְחַתְּךָ בָּאָרָם means that the land grasped them, like a person who is grabbed against his will.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

1. Where did the Jewish people settle? (v. 27)
RASHI: In the land of Goshen, which is part of the land of Egypt.

2. What did they do there? (v. 27)
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MIDRASH: וַיְחַתְּךָ בָּאָרָם means that the land grasped them, like a person who is grabbed against his will.
is grain-seed for you. Sow the farmland. 24. When the harvest (is gathered in) you must give one fifth to Pharaoh, and the (remaining) four parts of grain-seed will be yours—for (your) field(s), for your food, for the members of your households, and for your young children to eat.”

25. “You have saved our lives!” they replied. “Just let us find favor in our master’s eyes, and we will be subservient to Pharaoh (paying him the tax every year).”

26. So Yosef instituted a law, (that is in force) until today, that one-fifth of (whatever grows on) Egyptian farmland belonged to Pharaoh. The only (exception was that) the priests’ land did not belong to Pharaoh.

27. The Jewish people settled in Egypt, in the district of Goshen, and they acquired property there. They were fertile, and their population increased very rapidly.

THE HAFTARAH FOR VAYIGASH IS ON PAGE 391.

THE JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN GOSHEN (v. 2)

Why does Rashi inform us that Goshen was “part of the land of Egypt,” when the Torah stated this fact explicitly above (v. 6)?

On reading the account of how Ya’akov’s family settled comfortably in the district of Goshen, the best part of Egypt, Rashi was concerned that the reader would find this state of affairs at odds with God’s promise to Avraham. At the “Covenant of the Parts,” God said, “You should know that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs... and afterwards they will leave...” (above 15:13-14). Now, if the Jewish people had settled in the land and were even buying property in it, as Rashi writes, then how could they possibly be described as strangers?

Answers Rashi: they were in “the land of Goshen, which is part of the land of Egypt.” I.e. even though they were comfortably settled in Goshen, they were ultimately in a foreign land and thus could be considered to be “strangers.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 406-7)

Rashi writes that the Jewish people settled comfortably in Goshen (v. 2), whereas the Midrash understands that, to the contrary, the land “grasped” and possessed them.

However in truth, there is no contradiction here, as each commentary is speaking from its own viewpoint: Rashi explains that, at the literal level, the Jewish people prospered in exile. The Midrash however gives a deeper insight, and explains that even while the Jewish people appeared superficially to be prospering in exile, in truth however their very presence in a non-Jewish land was “grasping” them away from Jewish values.

The solution, of course, was Torah study. Thus we find that so long as the Jewish people were immersed in Torah, the physical exile did not begin (ibid.).
Vayechi means, “And he lived”—rather an inappropriate name, it would seem, for a Parsha which speaks almost entirely about the events surrounding Ya’akov’s passing!

What is life? The Torah teaches us: “You, who are connected to God, your God, are all alive today” (Devarim 4:4). I.e. true life means to be connected to God.

Of course, a Jew is inherently connected to God, but in order for that connection to be visible and apparent in the world, God sends the Jew trials and challenges in his Divine Service. When these hurdles are overcome we then have proof that the connection between a Jew and God is an unbreakable one.

Thus, we are only aware that a person is really alive when he is about to pass away. For only then is it evident that all the trials and tribulations of life were intended to highlight and express the powerful bond of the Jew to Torah and mitzvos. So, only when reaching Parshas Vayechi do we finally witness that Ya’akov indeed lived.

The Talmud states, “Just as his descendants are alive, he too is alive” (Ta’anis 5a). For the true commitment of a person to Judaism is ultimately only discernable when we see his children and grandchildren steadfast in their observance of Torah and mitzvos.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 427ff.)
In a Sefer Torah, why is there no gap between Parshas Vayigash and Parshas Vayechi? (v. 28)

Rashi: Why is the gap between this Parsha and the previous one closed?

Because when Ya’akov our father died, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were “closed” due to the suffering of slavery, for it was at that time that the Egyptians began to enslave them.

An alternative explanation: Because Ya’akov wished to reveal the End of Days, when Mashiach would come and the information was “closed” (concealed) from him.

Midrash: [After citing the above two explanations, the Midrash continues:] Another explanation—because all the troubles of the world were now “closed” for Ya’akov ( Bereishis Rabah 96:1).

Sifsei Chachamim: Why is the absence of a gap here an indication of events that occurred later in the Parsha? Ya’akov only passes away below in chapter 49 verse 33, and the “End of Days” was only concealed from Ya’akov in chapter 49 verse 1 (see Rashi there). So, why did the Torah not hint to these events by “closing” the text there, at the point when they occur?

The reason why the Torah hints to these events here with a “closed” Parsha is because it would be impossible to do so in any other place. For it is only recognizable that a space in the text is missing at the beginning of a Parsha where a space is usually found. The absence of space is not recognizable in the middle of the text, for one would not expect a break there in any case.

Mizrahi: Rashi’s statement, that the Egyptians began to enslave the Jewish people after Ya’akov’s death, appears to contradict his later comment that the Jewish people were only forced into slavery after Yosef and all his brothers had passed away (see Rashi to Va’eret 6:16).

And how could the Jewish people possibly have been enslaved while Yosef still ruled over Egypt for some 54 years after Ya’akov’s passing?

The Talmud explains that the enslavement began gradually with the Egyptians’ enticing the Jewish people to work for them with encouraging words and good pay, which gradually acclimatized the Jewish people to a working mentality (see Soto 11b and Rashi ibid.).

Even though this was not yet slavery in the literal sense of the word, it nevertheless distressed the Jewish people since they perceived that it was the precursor of slavery which they knew was yet to come.
47:28

Ya’akov lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years. (The total of) Ya’akov’s days, the years of his life, were a hundred and forty-seven years.

29 When the time drew near for Yisra’el to die, he called his son Yosef and said to him, “If I have now found favor in your eyes, please place your hand beneath my thigh (and swear an oath) that you people was already apparent. This fear of impending slavery was not alleviated by the fact that Yosef was still in command, for their relationship with him appeared to be so tenuous that he might not even care to take notice whether they were living safely and freely from Egyptian persecution.

Based on the above explanation, we can explain a further detail in Rashi’s comment. Why does Rashi stress that “the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were closed” after Ya’akov’s passing? Their downheartedness is understood, but why were their eyes closed?

However, based on the above we can understand that the onset of the exile began with the mere observation that their relationship with Yosef had weakened, and similarly, the observation that the Egyptians no longer respected them. As the years went on, this would have eventually made them downhearted because they knew that slavery was inevitable. Therefore Rashi stresses, “The eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were closed,” for the beginning of exile was a “closing of the eyes,” i.e. an observable change for the worse in the relationship between Jew and non-Jew.

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(Rased on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Va’ayehi 5749)

**Rashi’s Two Interpretations**

Rashi deemed it necessary to bring two interpretations, because each has a minor shortcoming:

According to the first interpretation, that the “closing” of the Parsha alludes to Ya’akov’s passing, we are left with the question: Why is Ya’akov’s passing hinted to by a verse which speaks of the very opposite, “Ya’akov lived in the land of Egypt...”?

This problem is solved by Rashi’s second interpretation, which explains that the “closing” of the Parsha does indeed allude to an event which occurred in Ya’akov’s life, the concealment of the End of Days.

However, this interpretation too is not entirely satisfactory, since if one takes a look at the account of the “concealment” later in our Parsha, we find that it is not “closed” at all in the Sefer Torah, but rather, set off as an entirely new paragraph (!) Thus it is difficult to accept that the “closure” at the beginning of our Parsha alludes to an event which is itself recorded in an “open” Parsha. And since this is a more serious shortcoming than the problem with Rashi’s first explanation, Rashi brought this only as his secondary interpretation.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 422ff.)

**Mizrachi’s Question (v. 28)**

Mizrachi notes the apparent contradiction between Rashi’s comment to v. 28 that slavery began straight after Ya’akov’s passing, and his statement later in Parshas Va’eira that the Jewish people were only enslaved after Yosef and all his brothers passed away.

At the literal level, the following explanation could be argued:

On the verse, “Yosef’s brothers saw their father had died” (50:15), Rashi comments: “What does it mean that ‘they saw’? They recognized his death through Yosef’s conduct. For they used to dine at Yosef’s table and he would receive them warmly out of respect to his father, but once Ya’akov died he no longer received them warmly.” In other words, the passing of Ya’akov caused, to a certain extent, a split between Yosef and his brothers.

Now, if Ya’akov’s absence had caused even Yosef’s bond with his brothers to weaken, then certainly it would have led the Egyptians’ relationship with the Jewish people to become strained. For, the Egyptians honored Ya’akov and his family, “because a blessing had come to them on account of him. Namely, the famine ended and the waters of the Nile became plentiful” (Rashi to 50:3). So when Ya’akov passed away, the motivating cause of their respect had gone.

Nevertheless, the Torah stresses that the brothers only “saw” that their father had died, i.e. the change in their relationship with Yosef was recognizable, but it was by no means sour. Similarly, one would imagine that the Egyptians would initially have had a subtle lack of respect for the Jewish people that was recognizable, but without any real practical ramifications.

However even this early stage could be described as “the suffering of slavery,” despite the fact that the Jewish people were not actually doing any labor, for the underlying desire of the Egyptians to enslave the Jewish

(Rased on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5744; Bereishis 5752)
Why did Ya'akov not want to be buried in Egypt? (v. 29)

**RASHI:** [He said]: “Because its soil will ultimately become lice and no one will choose it to dwell in, [while] Egypt will become a great place for dwellers [due to its fertility].”

**KLI YAKAR:** In fact, Rashi writes this explicitly in his commentary later (ibid), that Pharaoh said: “Had it not been for the oath I would not allow you to go.”

Why did Ya'akov bow down to his son? (v. 31)

**RASHI:** “When the fox is at his time of greatness, bow down to him.”

**MIZRACHI:** In other words, one even bows down to the fox, which might crawl beneath my body. Also, because the dead [who are buried] outside the Land of Israel will be resurrected only by suffering the pain of rolling through underground tunnels. Also, so that the Egyptians should not make a deity of me.”

**RAMBAN:** Ya'akov did not suspect that his righteous and beloved son would disobey him. Rather, Ya'akov made Yosef swear an oath in order that Ya'akov's wish to be buried in the Land of Israel would be taken seriously by Pharaoh, who may not have given Yosef permission to leave. Or, Pharaoh might want such a holy person as Ya'akov to be buried in his country as an honor and privilege to the nation. But Ya'akov knew that Pharaoh would not make Yosef violate an oath that he had sworn to his father, as we find later that Pharaoh said, “Go and bury your father, as he had you swear” (50:6).

**NACHALAS YA'AKOV:** It is impossible that Ya'akov bowed down to Yosef because he was dependent on him to carry out his wishes, not out of honor for Yosef's position of royalty.
will do for me true kindness: please don't let me be buried in Egypt. Let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their grave."

“Let me do as you say,” said (Yosef).

(Ya’akov) said, “Swear to me,” and he swore to him. Then Yisra’el bowed down to (Yosef, turning towards the Divine Presence which was) at the top of the bed.

**Ya’akov Blesses Efrayim and Menasheh**

Then, after these words (had been exchanged between Ya’akov and Yosef*, a messenger) said to Yosef, “Beware, your father is sick!” He took his two sons Menasheh and Efrayim with him (to Ya’akov to bless them before he passed away).

(A messenger) came to inform Ya’akov and said, “Look! Your son Yosef is coming to (visit) you.” Yisra’el summoned his strength and sat up on the bed (since Yosef was a king).

Ya’akov said to Yosef, “God Almighty appeared to me in Luz, in the land of Canaan, and He blessed me. He said to me, ‘Look, I will make you fruitful and cause you to multiply, and I will make you into a multitude of peoples, and I will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting inheritance.’”

And now, your two sons—who were born to you in the land of Egypt, before I came to you (here) in Egypt—(will be counted as) mine (to receive a share in the Land of Israel): Efrayim and Menasheh.

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**Yosef’s Oath (v. 30-31)**

Why does Rashi not address the basic question of Ramban, as to why Ya’akov made Yosef swear an oath to bury him in the Land of Israel (v. 31) when Yosef had already promised to do so (in v. 30)?

Kli Yakar writes that the answer can be understood on the basis of a later comment of Rashi, that the oath was made only in order to win Pharaoh’s consent.

However, Rashi, who wrote his commentary for the first-time reader, could not have expected the reader to be familiar with information recorded later in his commentary. Therefore, it seems more likely that Rashi held the matter to be self-evident to the reader here.

Also perplexing is Rashi’s comment to v. 31, that Ya’akov bowed down to Yosef, his son, because: “When the fox is at his time of greatness, bow down to him.” Pharaoh’s tendency was to look down at Yosef as a mere “fox,” the lowliest of creatures. But Yosef was nevertheless in a position of power, “a fox at his time of greatness.” So Ya’akov saw fit to “bow down to him,” to strengthen his feelings of self-importance and power so that Yosef should be able to win Pharaoh’s favor on behalf of his father.

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

The Talmud teaches, “A prisoner cannot free himself from jail” (Brachos 5b). I.e. the solution to escape from a particular confinement cannot come from within the confinement itself. It has to be an external solution.

Thus, the inner reason why Ya’akov did not want to be buried in Egypt is because he wished to provide the external (spiritual) solution for the Jewish people to leave exile. Being buried outside Egypt meant that Ya’akov remained higher than the Egyptian exile, thus empowering his children with the spiritual potential to rise above their confinement, and eventually escape.

However, Yosef chose to allow his casket to remain in Egypt, for he wished to remain with his people while they were exiled.

And since Ya’akov understood that he and his son differed in their opinion as to where a Jewish leader should remain, he made Yosef swear an oath that he would bury his father outside the Land of Egypt.

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*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 211ff.)*

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, pp 272-3)*
Why did Ya'akov mention Rochel's passing? (v. 7)

Rashi: [He said:] “Although I am burdening you to bury me in the Land of Canaan, which I did not do for your mother, for she died near Beis Lechem...And I did not even carry her to Beis Lechem in order to bring her to a [settled] land—and I know that you have it in your heart against me.”

“But you should know that it was by the word of God that I buried her there, so that she might help her descendants. For when Nevuzaradon will send them into exile and they will pass by way of the land of Canaan...and I buried her there.”

Toras Menachem

Rochel’s Burial (v. 7)

Why did Rashi reject the simple explanations of Ramban and Sforno, and cite a Midrashic teaching which does not appear to be indicated by Scripture at all—as Biuray Maharay asks?

The solution of Biuray Maharay—that Rashi’s solution is hinted to by some apparently superfluous words—is difficult to accept, since this is: a.) An extremely subtle scriptural allusion, and b.) It fails to explain why Rashi cites so much detail here.

The Explanation

In order to explain what was troubling Rashi here, let us first pose another question. The fact that Ya'akov never apologized to Yosef for burying Rochel en route up to this point suggests that Yosef had never demonstrated any hard feelings about the matter. Thus, it was only now, when Ya'akov asked Yosef to bury him in the Land of Israel, that Yosef’s resentment was apparently aroused. This begs the question: How could Yosef have acted so childishly? Here we are speaking about something that had not really bothered Yosef in the past, and it is only when he is burying Rochel en route that Yosef questions his father. The only problem here

Classic Questions

Biuray Maharay: A problem with Rashi’s explanation is that it does not appear to be hinted to by the Torah at all. Why would the Torah tell us that Ya’akov raised an issue about Rochel’s burial, without even hinting to us what Ya’akov’s explanation was?

However, it could be argued that the Torah did indeed hint Rashi’s solution to us, with the superfluous words “Rochel died on me while traveling through the land of Canaan...and I buried her there.” What information is added by these extra words “while traveling”? This is surely a hint to Rashi’s explanation, that God told Ya’akov to bury Rochel en route.

Ramban: Ya’akov said, “I had to bury Rochel en route, for I was unable to leave the children and their flocks unattended.”

Sforno: Ya’akov said, “I was so taken up with mourning that I was simply unable to travel.”
will be mine, like Re’uvin and Shimon. But (if) you have more children after them, they will be (counted as) your own (and not as separate tribes). Regarding their inheritance, they will (not be tribes unto themselves, but rather) classified according to their brothers’ names.”

“I (know that you are angry with me because) when I was coming from Padan (and) Rochel died on me—while traveling through the land of Cana’an, when there was still (about) a (half-a-mile) stretch of land to reach Efras—and (you’re upset that) I buried her there on the way to Efras, in Beis Lechem, (but you shouldn’t be upset, because God told me to bury her there).”

Yisra’el saw Yosef’s sons. (When he tried to bless them, the Divine Presence departed, so) he said, “(From) where were these (boys born, who are not worthy of being blessed)?”

(Producing his betrothal and marriage contracts,) Yosef said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God gave through (a marriage certified by) this (documentation).”

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

● Why did Ya’akov ask “where were these (boys born)” (v. 8)?

**Rashi:** He attempted to bless them, but the Divine Presence withdrew from him because of [the wicked] Yeravam and Achav, who were destined to be born from Efrayim, and Yehu and his sons [who were destined to be born] from Menasheh. [Ya’akov] said, “Who are these?” i.e. “From where were these boys born, who are unfit for blessing?” So Yosef said “with this,” showing [Ya’akov] his marriage deed* and his kesubah.

**Sifsei Chachamim:** Ya’akov suspected Yosef of failing to convert his heathen wife, thus rendering the children unfit for blessing.

**Toras Menachem**

Consequently, Ya’akov felt it necessary to explain that Rochel was buried en route for a positive reason. While she may have sacrificed the opportunity to be buried in the Cave of Machpeilah, her burial near Efras nevertheless gave her the opportunity to pray for the salvation of her children. This would certainly make it clear to Yosef that his mother had not “lost out” at all. To the contrary, her unusual burial offered her the very special privilege of helping her children in a future generation.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 236ff.)*

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Rochel lost her own spiritual luxury—the privilege of being buried in the Cave of Machpeilah—in order to help her children. This represents the unparalleled quality of the “Jewish mother” who is always willing to sacrifice her own needs, spiritual or physical, for the sake of helping her children.

And this is the inner reason why Jewish identity follows the maternal and not the paternal route. For even though the father possesses a greater degree of spirituality—since he has the privilege of observing more mitzvos than a woman—the quality of a Jewish mother is nevertheless greater. She is willing to forego much of that spirituality in order to enable her to raise a family with tender loving care. And since this quality is even more quintessentially Jewish than the spirituality of the man, it is the mother that actually makes her children Jewish.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 30, pp. 239-240)*

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* Nowadays, the marriage ceremony (kidushin) is carried out by the groom giving the bride an object of value (a ring). Another permissible method, which is not practiced today, is for the groom to give the bride a “marriage deed.” This should not be confused with the kesubah, which is a contractual relationship between husband and wife, and not a document which actually brings the marriage into being.
The Explanation

The introduction of marriage via a document or through a valuable object etc. (kidushin) at the giving of the Torah was so novel that it could not have been mimicked or anticipated beforehand. The very notion that a woman could be “acquired” as a wife with a ring, or through a piece of paper is so alien to human logic that to practice such an activity before there was a Divine command to do so would be absurd. Consequently, while it is true that the forefathers pioneered the observance of many other mitzvos before the giving of the Torah, they did not do so in the case of kidushin, for it defied the conventions of their times.
(When the Divine spirit returned, Ya’akov) said, “Bring them near to me, and I’ll bless them.”

10 Yisra’el’s eyes had become heavy with age (and) he could not see, so (Yosef) brought (the boys) near to him, and he kissed them and hugged them. 11 Yisra’el said to Yosef, “I didn’t (even) expect to see your face, and—look!—God has shown me your children too!”

12 (After Ya’akov kissed the boys) Yosef took them from (Ya’akov’s) lap (and placed one child to his right and one to his left, so that he could rest his hands on them and bless them. Yosef stepped back and) threw himself down on the ground. 13 Yosef then took them both: Efrayim on his right, to Yisra’el’s left, and Menasheh (the firstborn) on his left, to Yisra’el’s right (so that he would place his right hand on the firstborn), and he brought (them) close to him.

14 But Yisra’el stretched out his right hand and placed it on Efrayim’s head, although he was the younger, and (he placed) his left hand on Menasheh’s head. He guided his hands deliberately (in full awareness) that Menasheh was the firstborn.

15 He blessed Yosef and said, “O God, before Whom my fathers Avraham and Yitzchak walked! O God, Who has looked after me from my birth to this day! May the angel whom (You always sent) to redeem me from all harm bless these lads! May they be called by my name and the name of my fathers, Avraham and Yitzchak, and may they increase in the land like fish!”

16 When Yosef saw that his father was placing his right hand on Efrayim’s head, he became upset. So he lifted up his father’s hand, removing it from upon Efrayim’s head (in order to place it) on Menasheh’s head. 18 Yosef said to his father, “Father, that’s not right! This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head!”

18 But his father refused. He said, “I know, my son (that he is the firstborn), I know. He too will father a nation, and he too will be great. But his younger brother will be greater than him, and his children’s fame will spread throughout the nations.”

However Yosef, who was forced to live in a depraved Egyptian culture, felt the need to do more than his parents and grandparents. The incident with Potifar’s wife brought to his awareness all the more, that some extra measure of personal fidelity was necessary for him, more than that which was required for Ya’akov, Yitzchak and Avraham. So he decided that even though it was not possible to genuinely imitate the process of kidushin before the giving of the Torah, he nevertheless needed to sanctify himself in some similar way, in order to protect himself from the depravity of his surroundings. Therefore, he made a note of his marriage to Asnas.

This record later proved useful when Ya’akov was about to bless Menasheh and Efrayim before his passing, and the Divine Presence suddenly departed:

When Ya’akov asked, “Where did these boys, who are unfit for blessing, come from?” he did not suspect Yosef of a marital defect. For having lived with Yosef for 17 years he would have surely discovered any major marital defect by now. Rather he was concerned that since the boys had been born and brought up in the profane atmosphere of Egypt (see Rashi to 12:19; 20:15), perhaps they were not sufficiently pure to be blessed?

In response, Yosef showed his father the notes that he had kept for himself in Egypt, as a sign that he had conducted himself all those years with an additional degree of purity and holiness (even more than his parents.) This was sufficient to convince Ya’akov that the boys were indeed pure, and worthy of blessing.

(Second Reading)

Sparks of Chasidus

“This One is the Firstborn…” (v. 18)

Menasheh received his name because, “God has caused me to forget (NaShaNi) all my hardships and all that was in my father’s house” (41:51). This expressed how Yosef was pained by the fact that he found himself in a place which made him forget his father’s house. Efrayim was named, because “God has made me fruitful (hiFRani) in the land of my subjugation” (ibid. 52), expressing how Yosef had succeeded in Egypt.

Menasheh and Efrayim thus represent the two different reactions that a Jew has to being in exile. On the one hand he longs to leave the exile and return to “his father’s house.” On the other hand, since he finds himself—by Divine Providence—in exile, he realizes that there is a mission to be carried out there and he toils to succeed.

Menasheh was the firstborn because first of all a Jew needs to feel “out of place” in exile, to ensure that he does not assimilate. But the primary purpose of being in exile is to succeed in Divine service there—which is why Ya’akov wished to bless Efrayim first.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, pp. 432-4)
What did Ya'akov want to tell his sons when he gathered them round? (v. 1)

Rashi: He wanted to reveal the “End” [of days when Mashiach would come] but the Shechinah (Divine presence) departed from him, so he began to speak about other things.

The “End of Days” (v. 1)

Torah Temimah explains that the Shechinah could not possibly have departed from Ya’akov completely, since he continued to make a series of prophetic statements among the blessings to the tribes. Clearly, the Shechinah did not depart from him completely. It only left to a sufficient degree to deny Ya’akov the knowledge of when Mashiach would come, but his other prophetic abilities were still left intact.

Torah Temimah: If the Shechinah departed from Ya’akov, then why did he continue to make numerous prophetic statements among his blessings to the tribes? Clearly, the Shechinah did not depart from him completely. It only left to a sufficient degree to deny Ya’akov the knowledge of when Mashiach would come, but his other prophetic abilities were still left intact.

It therefore seems that the term Shechinah refers, not to the Divine revelations which Ya’akov himself was privy to, but rather, to his ability to make these Godly ideas available in the world around him ( heeft' בה נ'>{א"ב). In other words, Ya’akov himself never lost the knowledge of when Mashiach would come, he merely lost the ability to communicate it to others. Therefore Rashi did not write that the details of the “End of Days” departed from Ya’akov, for he was fully aware of them the whole time. Rather, it is only that “the Shechinah”—his ability to transmit that Divine inspiration—“departed from him.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 10, pp 168-9)
20 He blessed them on that day, saying, “(The children of) Yisra’el will (always) bless (their children) with your (names), saying, ‘May God make you like Efrayim and Menasheh.’” He placed Efrayim before Menasheh (in his blessing, to indicate that he would take precedence in the order of tribes).

21 Yisra’el said to Yosef, “Look, I’m going to die. God will be with you, and He will bring you back to the land of your fathers. (Since you are taking the trouble to bury me) I have given you one portion more than your brothers, (the city) of Shechem, which I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow (when they waged war against us after Shimon and Levi killed the people of Shechem.”)

YAA’AKOV BLESSES HIS SONS BEFORE PASSING AWAY

Ya’akov called for his sons and said, “Gather round and I will tell you what will happen to you at the End of Days,” (but Ya’akov found himself unable to reveal the time when Mashiach would come, so he changed the subject).

(He said, “Sons of Ya’akov, gather round and listen. Listen to Yisra’el, your father!)

“Re’uvain, you are my firstborn, my strength, (conceived from) my first (drop) of vigor. (You were worthy of being) privileged with priesthood and privileged with kingship. (But because of your reckless) haste (which was) like (running) water, when you interfered with your father’s bed, you will not be "you will not be privileged"—you will no longer receive all these superior positions that were fit for you.

What was the restlessness that you exhibited? You interfered with your father’s bed. Then, you profaned the Shechinah, which would rest on my bed.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What did Ya’akov tell Re’uvain? (v. 3-4)

RASHI: You were fit to be superior over your brothers with the priesthood...and superior with kingship...but you hastened to display your anger—similar to water which hastens on its course. Therefore

TORAS MENACHEM

Re’uvain’s Loss—Yehudah’s Gain (v. 3-4)

Rashi’s comments here, about how Re’uvain sacrificed the privilege of priesthood and royalty, seem difficult to reconcile with some of his statements elsewhere:

a.) No mention is made here that Re’uvain’s birthright was also forfeited as a result of moving his father’s bed (35:22), and given to Yosef. Yet this detail is mentioned explicitly by Rashi on more than one occasion:

Just a few verses earlier, in his commentary to 48:22 (“I have given you one portion more than your brothers”) Rashi writes that this, “refers to the birthright, that his [Yosef’s] children will receive two shares.” Similarly, in Parshas Vayishlach, Rashi writes that Re’uvain was the “firstborn in regard to inheritance [of his father’s estate], firstborn to perform the sacrificial service, firstborn regarding the counting of the tribes. The birthright was only given to Yosef in respect to tribes, in that he founded two tribes [Efrayim and Menasheh, who each inherited a portion in the Land of Israel]” (Rashi to 35:23).

Here we see explicitly that Re’uvain also forfeited some of the privileges of being firstborn, which were passed to Yosef. Why then did Ya’akov omit this important detail here, and mention only that “You were fit to be superior over your brothers with the priesthood...and superior with kingship”?

b.) An even more perplexing question arises when examining the reason why Yehudah merited to receive the privileges of priesthood and royalty that Re’uvain lost. Rashi writes (in his commentary to v. 9, below): “You withdrew yourself and said, “What will we gain [if we kill our brother and hide his blood]?” (37:26). So too in the case of Tamar’s execution, he confessed, “She’s right (in what she says. She became pregnant) from me (justifiably)” (38:26). Now, if these are the two reasons why Yehudah indeed inherited Re’uvain’s privileges of priesthood and royalty, then the matter appears to be grossly unfair on both counts:

The Last Word

Surely, if Ya’akov had indeed revealed the time of Mashiach’s coming to his children they would have been totally devastated to hear that they had so long to wait?

When Ya’akov’s sons would hear that Mashiach was not scheduled to come for a long time, they would have realized that some considerable additional effort was needed to bring him sooner—as the Talmud states that through additional merit the Redemption comes earlier (Sanhedrin 98a). Thus, Ya’akov hoped that by revealing that “the End of Days” was a long way off, it would motivate his children to add substantially in Divine Service, so as to bring Mashiach sooner.

Nevertheless, despite his good intentions “the Shechinah departed from him,” and Ya’akov found himself unable to reveal the “End of Days.” For, ultimately, God wants us to bring Mashiach through our own efforts, and not through the assistance of “revelations” from above.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 22Bff.)
While Yehudah indeed withdrew from the plot to save Yosef, he did so merely out of financial concerns. He said, "What profit will we gain if we kill our brother?" (Rashi to 37:26), suggesting instead to sell him as a slave. Re'uvain, on the other hand, planned to save Yosef and bring him back to his father (see 37:21-22). So it seems absurd that Yehudah was rewarded for this act with privileges that were taken away bring him back to his father.

Similarly, when one compares the teshuva of Yehudah and Re'uvain, Re'uvain appears to be far superior. Yehudah's act of saving Tamar was unimpressive in that: i.) It was a single moment of teshuva, after which we do not find that Yehudah continued to repent. ii.) If Yehudah had not confessed he would have caused the innocent death of Tamar and the children that she was carrying. In this light, Yehudah's confession is hardly an exceptional act of righteousness.

On the other hand, Re'uvain: i.) Continued to do teshuva for many years after his "sin," to the extent that at the sale of Yosef nine years later he was still "busy with his sackcloth and fasting" (Rashi to 37:29). ii.) Even his "sin" of moving his father's bed was a relatively minor matter, which he did out of respect for his mother.

So why was Yehudah granted Re'uvain's privileges?

The Explanation

The distinction between the privileges of priesthood and royalty in contrast to the birthright is that the former are leadership positions which involve dealing with other people, whereas the birthright is a personal privilege. A priest is responsible for blessing the nation (Rashi v. 3), and a king is responsible for the welfare of his people (ibid. v. 9), but the birthright is a personal privilege through which the firstborn inherits a double portion for himself.
privileged. (For) then, you desecrated (the Divine Presence which) rested above my bed.

5 “Shimon and Levi are (the) brothers (who plotted against Shechem and against Yosef too. Their murderous use of) weapons has been stolen (from Eisav).

6 “(When the tribe of Shimon will conspire against Moshe), do not let my own (name) be mentioned with their conspiracy!

“(When Levi’s great-grandson Korach and his colleagues will rebel against Moshe) do not let my honorable (name) be associated with their (rebellious) congregation!

(Shimon and Levi) killed (every) man (in Shechem) to vent their anger, and they willingly (attempted) to maim (Yosef who is like) an ox, (the king of animals). 7 Cursed be their wrath, for it is powerful, and their rage, for it is callous. I will separate them (by denying Levi a share in the land, like the other sons) of Ya’akov, and I will scatter (both of) them throughout Israel (since the tribe of Levi will be searching for tithes, and the tribe of Shimon’s source of income will cause them to spread out).”

8 (When Yehudah saw that Ya’akov was rebuking his sons he drew back, so Ya’akov called out to him), “Yehudah! You (are not like them)! Your brothers will acknowledge you (as their leader). Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father’s sons will bow down to you. 9 (From) Yehudah (King David will emerge, first as) a lion cub (during Sha’ul’s reign, and then a fully grown) lion (when he becomes king for himself).

“(Even though I suspected you of the plot) to tear (Yosef like) prey, you withdrew yourself (from the plot), my son, (and you refrained from killing Tamar. Therefore, your descendant King Shlomo will) crouch, and rest like a lion (while the Jewish people dwell in safety. No nation) will dare intimidate him, as if (he were) a lion.

When Re’uvain moved his father’s bed he forfeited all of these privileges, because he demonstrated incompetence at both the personal and the interpersonal level.

Re’uvain’s mistake on the personal level was his presumptuousness. He mistakenly presumed that the presence of Ya’akov’s bed in Bilha’s tent was an affront to Leah, his mother.

His error on the interpersonal level was the invasive and hostile manner in which he carried out his plan. By “charging in” angrily (as Rashi writes) and moving the bed, he deeply offended his father.

Re’uvain was punished measure for measure for both of these errors. For his personal miscalculation and presumptuous conclusion about his father’s bed he forfeited the birthright, which is a personal privilege. For his angry and hostile approach which caused pain to others, he forfeited the privileges of priesthood and royalty which, being positions of leadership, demand a sensitivity to the feelings of other people.

In our verse, Ya’akov only mentions this latter error of interpersonal insensitivity, “(But because of your reckless) haste (which was) like (running) water, when you interfered with your father’s bed.” Therefore, Rashi informs us that for this error in particular, a lack of sensitivity for others, Re’uvain forfeited the leadership privileges of priesthood and royalty. His loss of the birthright for his personal presumptuousness is a detail mentioned elsewhere.

Based on the above we can also answer our second question, why Yehudah merited the privileges which Re’uvain lost:

While it may be true that on a personal level Re’uvain’s attempts to save Yosef and the intensity of his teshuvah were more impressive than Yehudah’s—nevertheless, with regards to the effect on other people, Yehudah’s efforts were vastly superior. For Yehudah actually saved Yosef’s life, whereas Re’uvain did not. So too, Yehudah’s few seconds of teshuvah saved Tamar’s life, whereas Re’uvain’s nine years of teshuvah did not bring benefit to anybody but himself. In fact, it could even be argued that if Re’uvain would not have been so “busy with his sackcloth and fasting,” he might have been able to save Yosef while the brothers were busy eating a meal (37:25).

Consequently, when Re’uvain was denied the privileges of priesthood and royalty for his insensitivity to others, these privileges were granted to Yehudah. For Yehudah had demonstrated, more than all the other brothers, an ability to actually help other people. Therefore, his tribe merited to inherit the leadership roles of priesthood and royalty.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 439ff.)

With all of Re’uvain’s piety, he allowed Yosef to be sold, an act which eventually gave rise to the Egyptian exile. Yehudah’s intentions on the other hand may not have been as pure as Re’uvain’s, but his teshuvah actually saved Tamar’s life, as well as the lives of her two sons—eventually giving rise to Mashiach, who is a descendant of Peretz.

From this we can learn how crucial it is not to be satisfied with one’s own spiritual achievements, but to help other people. For it is evident that Re’uvain’s personal piety led the Jewish people into exile, whereas Yehudah’s care for another Jewish person was an act which led to the blossoming of Mashiach and Redemption.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 446)
10 "(The) stick (of authority) will never leave Yehudah, nor scholars from the feet (of his descendants), until the coming (of Mashiach)—to whom (kingship) belongs. He will gather the people.

11 "(In Yehudah’s territory, wine will flow like a fountain such that) a man will harness his donkey to a (single) vine, or a young donkey to a (single) vine branch (and it will already be loaded to capacity). (There will be so much wine that a person could) wash his clothes with wine, and his robe with grape juice. 12 (People will be) red-eyed from wine and white-toothed from (the abundance of) milk.

13 "Zevulun will live (in his territory) by the sea coast. He (will be) at the ships’ port (doing business). The end of his territory will be at Tzidon.

14 "Yissachar is (like) a donkey with strong bones (because he bears the yoke of Torah. Like a donkey that journeys day and night) temporarily between the city borders, (the Torah scholar cannot rest day or night from Torah study).

15 "(Yissachar) will see that his portion (in the Land of Israel) is good, and that the land is fertile (so he will not have to work hard. Consequently), he will bend his shoulders down to bear (the yoke of Torah) and he will pay his dues by serving (the rest of the Jewish people, teaching Torah Law).

16 "Dan will enact vengeance for his people (against the Philistines) and the tribes of Israel will be as one (with him). 17 Shimshon, a descendant of Dan will be a serpent on the road, a viper on the path, who bites the horse’s heels, so its rider falls backwards (without even having to fight with the rider).

17 (But when Shimshon will be overcome by his enemies, he will say) ‘I hope for your salvation O God!’

18 "(As for) Gad, troops will troop forth from him (over the Jordan river to conquer the Land). They will troop back in their own tracks (to the lands of their inheritance on the other side of the Jordan, and not one man will be missing from them).
20 "From Asher’s land) will come rich food, and he will provide royal delicacies.

21 “Naftali’s land will yield fruit like a gazelle that has just been freed and runs quickly, for which the people will give thanks and blessing.

22 "Yosef is a charming son, a son whose charm impresses the eye (that sees him. Egyptian) girls would step (along a wall) to gaze at his (beauty. 23 His brothers) made him bitter, quarreled with him and hated him. (They were) men (with tongues) like arrows. 24 But (in spite of that) his power was firmly established and (a golden ring) was placed on his finger, through the hands of (God), the Mighty One of Ya‘akov, and from there (he rose) to royalty (and was) the provider of Israel.

25 “(All this came to you) from the God of your father, and He will (continue to) help you. (Your heart was) with God (when you refused to listen to Potifar’s wife, and therefore) He will bless you (with) the blessings of the heavens above, and the blessings of the depths that lie below, the blessings that fathers and mothers (need).

26 “The blessings (which God gave) to your father surpassed the blessings (which He gave) to my parents, (for He gave me an unlimited blessing, reaching) to the end of the world’s hills. May (all these blessings) be on Yosef’s head, the man who was separated from his brothers.

27 “Binyamin’s descendants will be ‘grabbers,’ like a wolf that (grabs and) tears his prey. (From him, Sha’ul will arise) in the morning (of Israel’s history and) he will devour plunder. In the evening (of Israel’s history, Binyamin’s descendants, Mordechai and Esther,) will divide the spoil (of Haman).”

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

**Yosef the “Upper Tzadik,” and Binyamin the “Lower Tzadik”**

A tzadik (perfectly righteous individual) is a person who causes God to be revealed in this world. Generally speaking, there are two possible ways of achieving this goal: One approach is that the tzadik can act as a holy “channel” through which Godly revelation is brought into the world from the heavens above. A second approach is for the tzadik to work with the earth below, transforming the world itself to become open and receptive to Godly revelation from above.

This, says the Zohar (1153b), is the key distinction between Rochel’s two sons, Yosef and Binyamin. Both were tzadikim who brought revelation to the world. But Yosef was the “upper tzadik” who channeled that revelation from heaven to earth, whereas Binyamin was the “lower tzadik” who worked to render the earth itself receptive to spirituality.

These spiritual characteristics were also recognizable in their physical lives. Yosef was the “provider” of Egypt, who channeled God’s immense blessings into the world, to feed and sustain millions of people. Binyamin, on the other hand, is described as a “grabber” (see v. 27 and Rashi ibid.), since his holy task was to “seize” hold of the physical world and win it over to the side of holiness.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, pp. 281-2 and sources cited loc. cit)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What was unusual about Ya’akov’s passing? (v. 33)

Rashi: The Torah makes no mention of his death. Our Sages of blessed memory said, “Ya’akov our father did not die.”

Talmud: R’ Nachman and R’ Yitzchak were sitting at a meal. R’ Nachman said to R’ Yitzchak, “Please say some words [of Torah].”

He replied, “R’ Yochanan said that one should not speak while eating, in case the food enters the windpipe before reaching the gullet, which would be dangerous.” After the meal he added, “R’ Yochanan said, ‘Ya’akov our father did not die.’”

Ya’akov’s Passing (v. 33)

How is the student of scripture, which includes a child learning Chumash for the first time, supposed to understand Rashi’s statement that “Ya’akov did not die,” when the Torah states that he “breathed his last, and his (soul) was gathered in to his people” (v. 33)?

Even the Talmud itself—Rashi’s source for this statement—objects, “Was it for nothing that he was eulogized, embalmed and buried?” (Jer. 30:10).

The verse equates [Ya’akov] with his descendants, to teach us: just as his descendants are alive, he too is alive” (Y’ananis 5b).

The Explanation

Rashi did not clarify any matter which he felt the student would be able to work out for himself with simple logic and a knowledge of Rashi’s earlier comments. Earlier, in Parshas Bereishis, we also find an individual of whom “the Torah makes no mention of his death.” On the verse, “Chanoch... was no longer (around), for God had taken him” (above 5:24), Rashi comments, “He was a righteous man, but he could easily be swayed to evil, so God took him away quickly, causing him to die before his time. Therefore, the Torah describes his death in an unusual fashion, writing that he was ‘no longer (around)’ in the world to complete his allotted number of years.”

From here the student of scripture has already learned that the Torah will sometimes avoid using the term “death” to indicate that a person passed away in unusual circumstances, such as in the case of Chanoch who was “taken away” early by God to save him from becoming wicked.

Thus the reader will understand that the Torah took a similar approach in the case of Ya’akov’s passing: Like Chanoch, Ya’akov also passed away
28 These are all the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them.

(In addition to rebuking Reu’vain, Shimon and Levi,) he blessed them (too. He blessed each son) with the blessing (that fitted) him, (and) he (also) blessed (all of his sons with all of the blessings, in general).

**Ya’akov Passes Away**

49:29 He instructed them, saying to them, “I (will soon die and my soul) will be gathered in to (be with the souls of) my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in Efron the Chittite’s field, 30 in the cave that’s in the field of Machpeilah, facing Mamre in the land of Canaan—the field which Avraham bought from Efron the Chittite as a burial plot. 31 They buried Avraham and his wife Sarah there, they buried Yitzchak and his wife Rivkah there, and I buried Leah there. 32 The purchase of the field, and its cave, from the sons of Cheis (still stands).”

33 As Ya’akov finished commanding his sons, he gathered his legs onto the bed, breathed his last, and his (soul) was gathered in to (be with the souls of) his people.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

But, this begs the question: Surely Avraham and Yitzchak were also very great individuals. Why does the Torah state that they “died”?

**Sparks of Chasidus**

God is unlimited; the world is limited—and the Torah is the interface between them. For the Torah deals with worldly matters, and yet it remains the undiluted wisdom of God. The Torah says, “I will show you how to carry out God’s infinite will, on the world’s limited terms.”

But why must the Torah “bend” to the world? Why can the Torah not override the world if it gets in the way?

This could be for one of two possible reasons: a.) The world will not allow it. Or, b.) The Torah does not wish to override the world, because the Torah wishes all its activities to be at peace with God’s creations.

This point was disputed by R’ Nachman and R’ Yitzchak in the Talmud. R’ Nachman found it difficult to accept that “Ya’akov our father did not die,” because the world does not allow such things to occur. The Torah itself states that he was eulogized, embalmed and buried, which surely proves that the Torah recognizes the real limitations of this world, that a person cannot live forever!

To this R’ Yitzchak replied, “I will expound a verse [for you]!” i.e. the same Torah which, at the literal level, says that Ya’akov was buried, can also be expounded to reveal a deeper truth, that Ya’akov is still alive. This is not a contradiction, but rather two different perspectives of reality: On the one hand the Torah wishes to act within the world’s limitations; but for those who are capable of appreciating a deeper perspective, it will be evident that Torah is not constrained by the world’s limitations at all.

Thus, while it is natural for a Jew to feel that he is subject to the limitations of the world at large, he should know that if he would “refocus” his attitude, he would see that the Torah truly transcends the world and all of its limitations.

After all, how else could you explain the existence of the Jewish people against all odds for over two thousand years?

**The Last Word**

After Ya’akov had finished blessing each of his sons individually, he then repeated all the blessings to each of his sons (Rashi to v. 28). This teaches us that, while we each have our own areas of Divine service in which we excel, it is important that each person should encompass, to some extent, all aspects of Jewish life. Thus, the businessman needs to set aside times for Torah study, just as the Torah scholar needs to be charitable.

Of course, it is only natural that a person might lack enthusiasm in those areas in which he does not excel. Therefore, after Ya’akov blessed each son according to his specific talents, he repeated all of the blessings to each of his sons, so they would have the enthusiasm to fulfill all of the diverse responsibilities that a Jew is challenged with.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 290ff.)
Rashi did not feel obliged to address this point for, at the literal level, it is self-understood that each individual tzadik (righteous person) has his own unique qualities that another does not have.

On the other hand, perhaps one could argue that a tzadik’s purity can be seen through his children. Thus the births of Yishma’el and Eisav indicated some very subtle, undesirable qualities in their respective fathers. Only Ya’akov, who produced twelve righteous sons had the absolute purity to be totally disconnected from the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, so it can only be said of him that he truly did “not die.”

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayechi and Shemos 5746)
Yosef fell on his father’s face, wept over him and kissed him.

When the period of mourning for him had passed, Yosef spoke to Pharaoh’s household, saying, “If I have now found favor in your eyes, speak now directly to Pharaoh and tell him, (that) My father bound me by an oath, saying, ‘Look, I am (soon) going to die. You should bury me in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Cana’an.’ So now, please let me go and bury my father, then I’ll return.”

“Go and bury your father,” Pharaoh said, “as he had you swear.”

So Yosef went to bury his father. All Pharaoh’s servants, the senior members of his house, and all the senior (ministers) of the land of Egypt went with him, together with Yosef’s entire household, his brothers and his father’s household. They only left behind their young children, flocks and cattle in the land of Goshen. Chariots and horsemen also went along, so the entourage was very large.

When they reached Goren-Ha’atad, which is on the other side of the Jordan, they made a very grandiose and intense eulogy there. Then (Yosef) designated a mourning period of seven days for his father. When the Cana’anites, the local inhabitants, saw the mourning at Goren-Ha’atad they said, “This is an intense mourning for the Egyptians.” Therefore, they named (the place), which is on the other side of the Jordan, Avel Mitzrayim (“Mourning of Egypt”).

(Ya’akov’s) sons did for him exactly as he had instructed them (not to allow any Egyptian or even one of Ya’akov’s grandsons to carry him). His sons carried him to the land of Cana’an, and they buried

Did all of Ya’akov’s sons carry him? (v. 13)

Rashi: Ya’akov ordered, “Levi shall not carry it because he [i.e. his tribe] is destined to carry the Ark. Yosef shall not carry it because he is a king. Menasheh and Efrayim shall carry instead of them.”

Pan‘ach Raza: Ya’akov only told Yosef, “Carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their grave” (47:30), but he did not insist that Yosef should carry him throughout the entire journey. Note that Ya’akov did not say, “Carry me out of Egypt all the way to the land of Cana’an.”

Chizkuni: Moshe was from the tribe of Levi, so how is it that he carried Yosef’s coffin (Shemos 13:19)? In truth, however, Moshe did not need to carry the coffin, for it miraculously carried itself.

Why did Yosef and Levi not carry their father’s coffin? (v. 13)

Rashi explains the various reasons why Levi and Yosef did not carry their father’s coffin from Egypt to its resting place in the Cave of Machpeilah. However, Rashi’s explanation appears to contradict an explicit verse: Of all his sons, Ya’akov instructed Yosef alone, “Carry me out of Egypt, and bury me” (47:30). How is this to be reconciled with Rashi’s comment here that Yosef did not carry his father’s coffin?

Another problem concerns Rashi’s comment that Levi did not carry the coffin because “he is destined to carry the Ark.” This refers to the fact that the tribe of Levi was given the privilege of carrying the Holy Ark while the Tabernacle was in transit.

But why was Levi denied the privilege of observing the mitzvah of burying his father because of something that would happen to his descendants several generations later?
the fact that they carried the coffin would not have been objectionable to Ya'akov as they did not represent **themselves** at all, but rather, the ones who sent them.

**Levi’s Representation**

While the above explanation is satisfactory at the literal level, one detail remains somewhat perplexing: The fact that Yosef was represented by Levi is logical, but why was Levi represented by Menashe instead of Menashe himself? In order to solve this problem, let us first turn to the question of Chizkuni: Why was Moshe allowed to carry Yosef’s coffin when he left Egypt, if Moshe too was from the tribe of Levi? (Chizkuni’s answer, that the coffin carried itself, does not seem to be based on scripture.)

Rather, the answer can be understood based on an earlier comment of Rashi: “When Ya’akov our father died, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people were ‘closed’ due to the suffering of slavery, for [it was at that time] that [the Egyptians] began to enslave them” (48:28). It thus follows that Ya’akov’s burial represented the end of the “honeymoon period” of the Jewish people in Egypt and the beginning of slavery.

Both Yosef and Levi were “exempt” from slavery. Yosef was “a king” (as Rashi writes here), who was obviously not subject to the decrees of his own government; and the tribe of Levi was never enslaved throughout the period of Egyptian exile.

Thus, since Yosef and Levi were both “immune” to exile they did not carry their father’s coffin personally, for this was an act which represented the inception of exile. And clearly this does not contradict the fact that when Moshe left Egypt he carried Yosef’s coffin, since leaving Egypt was an act of redemption, not exile, which was highly appropriate for Moshe who was both the appointed redeemer and a descendant of Levi.

However, having explained Yosef and Levi’s disassociation with Ya’akov’s burial, we are now left with the reverse question: If Ya’akov’s burial represented the phenomenon of exile which Yosef and Levi had nothing to do with, then why did they need to send **shlichim** to represent themselves at all?

To answer this, let us pose another more general question: If God decreed that **all** of the Jewish people should be exiled (above 15:13), then how is it that the tribe of Levi was exempt?
him in the cave that is in the field of Machpeilah, facing Mamre—the field which Avraham had bought for a burial plot from Efron the Chitite.

14 After he had buried his father, Yosef returned to Egypt—both he, his brothers, and all those who had gone with him to bury his father.

**Yosef and His Brothers after Ya’akov’s Passing**

50:15 Yosef’s brothers saw (a change for the worse in Yosef’s conduct with them after) their father had died. They said, “Maybe Yosef will (start to) hate us and pay us back for all the bad things that we did to him.” 16 So they (fabricated a plan and) instructed (messengers to go) to Yosef and say, “Your father instructed us before his death, saying, ‘This is what you should say to Yosef, ‘Please will you now forgive the wrongdoing of your brothers and their sin, that they did evil things to you.’ So, please will you now forgive the wrongdoing of the servants of the God of your father (for even though your father died, his God is alive).’”

When the (messengers) spoke to him, Yosef wept.

18 (In addition to sending messengers) his brothers also went (to Yosef). They fell down in front of him, and said, “Look! We are your slaves!”

19 Yosef said to them, “Don’t be afraid for (God only desires the good for you). Am I instead of God?”

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**Classic Questions**

- What did the brothers “see”? (v. 15)

  Rashi: What does it mean that “they saw [their father had died]? They recognized his [Ya’akov’s] death in Yosef, for they used to dine at Yosef’s table, and he was friendly towards them out of respect for his father. But after Ya’akov died, he ceased to be friendly toward them.

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**Toras Menachem**

In truth however, the tribe of Levi was not exempt from the exile, but rather, they were partners with the rest of the Jewish people. The exile was not an end in itself, God forbid, but a process which was intended to elevate the Jewish people spiritually to a state which they had not been able to reach before. In order to retain this positive focus, it was crucial that at least part of the nation should not be enslaved so that they would constantly raise the spirits of their less fortunate brethren, helping them to withstand the exile until the time of their liberation.

Consequently, the fact that the tribe of Levi was not enslaved was not an expression of elitism. To the contrary, the very reason why they were not enslaved was to provide assistance to the rest of the Jewish people during difficult times, to ensure that the people as a whole would eventually merit redemption.

Thus, when it came to Ya’akov’s burial—the inception of the Egyptian exile—Levi did not physically take part, for his role in the exile was not one of direct involvement. But, on the other hand, he did send a shliach to indicate that his tribe would not be disassociated from the other Jewish people in exile.

And this also explains why Yosef’s sons were picked as shluchim for both Yosef and Levi. For Yosef’s sons were born in Egypt, so as shluchim they represented how the inherent ability of Levi (and Yosef) to rise above the exile was actually channeled down into the heart of Egypt, to lift the spirits of the Jewish people.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 20, pp. 235ff)

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**The Last Word**

Yosef’s brothers were all shepherds who enjoyed isolation, because they found the world a distraction from their primary interests of Torah study and prayer. Yosef, on the other hand, was able to remain strongly connected with God and, at the same time, be heavily involved in the running of a country (see “Sparks of Chasidus” to 42:8 above).

When the brothers came to Egypt, they were no longer able to live a life of total seclusion, and they were forced to have more involvement with worldly matters. Consequently, their relationship with Yosef became a crucial one, as only Yosef was able to teach them how to live in the world without becoming worldly.

In this light we can see the split between Yosef and his brothers (see Rashi to v. 15) was actually the cause of the ensuing exile. For without the support of Yosef, the brothers eventually found themselves unable to harmonize their spiritual and physical lives.

From this we can learn how crucial it is that our moments of Torah study and prayer have a direct effect on everyday life—harnessing one’s inspiration towards the goal of spiritual-physical integration.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayechi 5749)
הוקشهد הנחתים

פי'ה פסוקים. פי'ה אלה פסוק.

הכמו פסוק דספר בראשית א' וקח מהת ש 가운데 יהוה ושם ירא מעיב את יד פסוק רווחי ועב תורך הויה.

הפרשיםOi ווי זי השם עלא פסוק. עדוריי ע'י מיר'ידריי סימן. פאסווי' נ'י חומ'י סימן: מונק

הפרשים או'ג'ית זו מ'י יהוק מד'י חוק זי אחלה זי אחלה זי אחלה זי אחלה זי אחלה זי אחלה זי אחלה זי אחלה.

ועשר שלם והגנה אלה ושם זי השם בﺯיאה פסוק.
20 “You planned to do bad things to me, (but) God (had already) intended (that what you did to me should happen) for good (reasons)—in order to make things like they are today, (where I am) keeping a great number of people alive.”

21 “So don’t be afraid now. I will provide for you and your children.” He (continued to) comfort them and spoke (more words of encouragement) to their hearts.

Yosef Passes Away

50:22

Yosef lived in Egypt—both he and his father’s household—and Yosef lived a hundred and ten years. 23 Yosef saw children of a third generation (born) to Efrayim. The sons of Machir, Menasheh’s son, were born (and) Yosef (raised them) on his knee.

24 Yosef said to his brothers, “I am (soon) going to die. God will surely remember you and take you out of this land, to the land that He swore to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov.”

25 Yosef made the children of Yisra’el swear, saying, “God will surely remember you, and you should (then) take my bones out of here.”

26 Yosef died at the age of one hundred and ten years. They embalmed him and he was placed into a coffin in Egypt.

The congregation*, followed by the reader, proclaims:

Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!

THE HAFTARAH FOR VAYECHI IS ON PAGE 392.

Sparks of Chasidus

The End of the Book of Bereishis

Why does the Book of Bereishis finish with the rather dismal conclusion that Yosef “was placed into a coffin in Egypt”? Here we read that, not only did Yosef miss the opportunity of being buried with the Patriarchs in the Land of Israel, but—of all places—he remained in Egypt, a corrupt and profane land. And yet, after reading this verse we cry out “chazak chazak venischazeik” (“be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened”), which begs the question: What encouragement, or “strength” does one gather from reading that Yosef “was placed into a coffin in Egypt”?

However it could be argued that these words do in fact convey a very positive and crucial message of encouragement which is needed before embarking on Sefer Shemos, where we read of the bitter exile which the Jewish people suffered:

How were the Jewish people able to withstand the harsh Egyptian exile? Answers the Torah: Because Yosef “was placed into a coffin in Egypt.” Yosef, the dear leader of the Jewish people, who had sustained and supported them in times of famine, had not deserted them! He did not choose to spend the “afterlife” in a holy place, where he would personally enjoy a greater degree of Divine radiance. No! Even after his passing, Yosef wanted to be physically with his people, even if it meant being buried in Egypt, until the day when “God will surely remember you, and (then) you should take my bones out of here” (v. 25).

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayechi 5747)

*According to Chabad custom, the person called to the Torah also recites chazak chazak venischazeik, in contrast to those authorities who deem this to be an interruption before the blessing which is said after reading the Torah (Sefer Haminhagim, p. 31; see Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 411; ibid. vol. 25, p. 474ff. See also Chikrai Minhagim by Rabbi Eliyahu Yochanan Gurary (Oholei Shem, Lubavitch 5759), p. 126ff.).
The Themes of Sefer Bereishis

According to Chasidic thought, the Parshiyos in Sefer Bereishis represent a progressive message in Divine Service—from concept, to practice, and ultimate reward—Based on Sefer Hasichos 5750 pp. 176-8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Purpose of Creation</th>
<th>Purpose: The world was created for the Jewish people and the Torah.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bereishis</td>
<td>PLEASURE: Noach = Nachas Ruach, the pleasure which Divine Service brings to God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noach</td>
<td>DESCENT OF THE SOUL: The soul “goes out” from heaven to carry out its mission.</td>
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<td>Lech Lecha</td>
<td>REVELATION: The soul needs additional help from God in order to succeed in its mission</td>
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<td>Vayeira</td>
<td>SPIRITUAL SATURATION: Full expression of the soul's faculties, just as Sarah's life was perfect.</td>
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<td>Chaye Sarah</td>
<td>PRACTICAL APPLICATION: The soul’s rich faculties must be expressed in good deeds (toldos).</td>
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<td>Its method</td>
<td>Toldos</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TRANSFORMATION: One “goes out” into the world to transform its negative elements into good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION: Even the lowest levels of the world (Eisav) are transformed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HARMONY: After the world has been refined, Divine Service is “settled” and peaceful.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLIMAX: The “end,” where spirituality and physicality are totally harmonized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNIFICATION: The Jew binds to (“approaches”) God in total oneness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ETERNAL LIFE: All the Jewish people come back to life, with the revival of the dead.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Haftaros
The person who was called up for Maftir says the following before reading the Haftarah:

ברוך אתה הוהי אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר בחרך בבריותך ורבך בברית עד כאן.

After the Haftarah the following blessings are recited:

ברוך אתה הוהי אלוהינו מלך העולם.

בבריתWARD וברית עד כאן.

ברוך אתה הוהי אלוהינו מלך העולם.

ברוך אתה הוהי אלוהינו מלך העולם.
On fast days end here. On Shabbos (including Shabbos Chol Hamo’ed) continue:

עֵלֶּה הַמַּחֲגוֹרָה עֵלֶּה הָעִבְרָכָה עֵלֶּה הֶגְבִּיְיאִים עֵלֶּה
יְמֵם הַשִּׁבְעָה הָוָה שָׁמְתָה לָן עַד אֲלָכִיתֵנָהּ לָכֶם
ולְמַגְּרוֹן לִבְּנוֹת:

עֵלֶּה הַפְּלִיוֹת לִבְּנוֹת וּלְעֵשָׁהוּ כִּמְלָכֹת לַחְטָבָם אָנוֹתָהוּ
תִּכְנַכְּבָה עָשַּׁה כֵּפִי כֶּלֶם וְחַיִּדְלוּ לְעֵלֶּהָוֶה.

— On Shabbos Chol Hamo’ed Success add

*On a Festival, and Shabbos that coincides with a Festival continue here:

עֵלֶּה הַמַּחֲגוֹרָה עֵלֶּה הָעִבְרָכָה עֵלֶּה הֶגְבִּיְיאִים עֵלֶּה
יְמֵם הַשִּׁבְעָה הָוָה שָׁמְתָה לָן עַד אֲלָכִיתֵנָהּ לָכֶם
שְּמֵמִיתָה עָצַתָה הַדָּעָה

— On Shabbos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shemini Atzeres / Simchas Torah</th>
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<td>הָעִבְרָכָה</td>
<td>הָעִבְרָכָה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— On Shabbos

*On Rosh Hashanah continue here:

עֵלֶּה הַמַּחֲגוֹרָה עֵלֶּה הָעִבְרָכָה עֵלֶּה הֶגְבִּיְיאִים עֵלֶּה
יְמֵם הַשִּׁבְעָה הָוָה שָׁמְתָה לָן עַד אֲלָכִיתֵנָהּ לָכֶם
לְמַגְּרוֹן הַפְּלִיוֹת לִבְּנוֹת לִבְּנוֹת
מְדַבְּרֹתָהוּ לִבְּנוֹת לִבְּנוֹת
לְמַגְּרוֹן הַפְּלִיוֹת לִבְּנוֹת לִבְּנוֹת

— On Shabbos

*On Yom Kippur continue here:

עֵלֶּה הַמַּחֲגוֹרָה עֵלֶּה הָעִבְרָכָה עֵלֶּה הֶגְבִּיְיאִים עֵלֶּה
יְמֵם הַשִּׁבְעָה הָוָה שָׁמְתָה לָן עַד אֲלָכִיתֵנָהּ לָכֶם
נְפַרְדָּה הַפְּלִיוֹת לִבְּנוֹת לִבְּנוֹת
לְמַגְּרוֹן הַפְּלִיוֹת לִבְּנוֹת לִבְּנוֹת
לְמַגְּרוֹן הַפְּלִיוֹת לִבְּנוֹת לִבְּנוֹת

— On Shabbos

*On Shabbos: בֵּין יָמֵנִים שָׁבָּט, מַלְכָּל על כָּל הָאוֹרָה, פְּקַדְּשֵׁנָה (וּמְיַשֵּׁרָא הַיָּמִים).
This was said by the Almighty God, Who Created the heavens and stretched them out (like a tent), Who laid out the earth and made (all types of vegetation) grow from it, Who gives a soul to the people upon it, and a spirit to the (other creatures) who walk upon it:

6 “I am God. (What) I have said about you, (Mashiach, through the prophets,) is true (and everlasting)! I will hold your hand (to help you overcome every obstacle). I will guard you, and give you (the might to bring) the covenant of (Torah to My) people, (in order) to enlighten the (eyes of the) nations (about God), 7 to (open) eyes that have blindered (themselves not to see the work of God), to release (the Jewish people—who are) prisoners—from (their) captivity, and those who dwell in darkness from (their) imprisonment.

8 “I am God—that is My Name. I will no (longer allow the nations to diminish) My honor (by worshiping) other (gods, as they have done until now! No longer will) graven images (be given) My praise.”

9 The first (prophecies which I prophesized about Sanchairiv) have (already) occurred. I (will) tell (you) new ones (about the final redemption). I will (now) let you hear (what is going to happen) before (these events) unfold:

10 (When the Final Redemption comes, they will) sing a new song to God, and His praise (will be heard) from the ends of the earth. Those who navigate the seas, and (the creatures that live) in it (will praise God. Even) the islands (themselves) and their inhabitants (will praise God. 11 The whole) desert, together with its cities and villages (which are) inhabited by (the people of) Kedar, will raise (their voices in song). Those who live on stone peaks will sing—shouts (of joy will be heard) from the mountaintops. 12 (With their mouths) they will ascribe glory to God, and they will tell of His praises in the islands.

13 God will go out (to rescue the Jewish people), aroused with zeal (for His people) like a man of war. He will shout and cry out against His enemies, and He will overcome (them).

14 (Says God), “I have kept quiet for all this time (that the nations have persecuted My people). I have been silent (and) I have restrained Myself. (But now) I will scream like a woman in childbirth (to destroy them). I will obliterate them and swalllow them up all together. 15 I will destroy mountains and valleys, and I will dry out all their grass. I will make rivers into (dry

### Haftarah of Parshas Bereishis

This Haftarah praises God as Creator of Heaven and earth, similar to the Parshah which describes the creation of Heaven and earth by God.

The Haftarah opens with a description of how God will liberate the Jewish people from exile, and how the entire world will praise God after the final redemption arrives (42:5-12).

God promises to destroy the nations that have persecuted the Jewish people, and lead the people to their Land (13-17). He criticizes the Jewish people for being metaphorically “blind” and “deaf” to Torah and mitzvos (18-21) and laments over their sorry state during exile (22-25). Finally, the prophet repeats God’s promise to redeem them, just as He redeemed them from Egypt (43:1-10).

8. יִתְנָא אֵל לָעַל לֶאַכְבָּד יְהֹוָה—I will not give My glory to another. When a Jew sins, he causes energy from his soul to be “spilled” into the domain of evil, which is known as the “other side.” Nevertheless, only the peripheral layers of the soul could be involved in such an activity; the inner core of the soul always remains loyal to God. Thus, God says: I will not give My glory—the essence of the soul—to another, to the “other side” (Likutei Sichos vol.5, pp. 410-11).
and desolate) islands, and I will dry up their bodies of water.”

16 “I will walk (the Jewish people to their Land) on a way that they did not know (as if they were) blind. I will lead them on a path they did not know. I will turn the darkness (of an unknown path) into light before them. (I will make) crooked paths straight (for them). I have (already) done such things (previously, when they came out of Egypt), so I will (surely) not forsake them (in the future).”

17 “(Then) those who trust in graven images will turn backwards, (being) embarrassed with (great) shame. (That will be the fate of) those who say to the molten idols: ‘you are our god.’”

18 “(You, O Israel,) who are deaf (towards My words) and blind (towards My commandments, now listen and) look to see (the goodness that is awaiting you! I call all of you blind, even the righteous ones who serve Me, for) who is (really) blind if not one who serves Me, (and who knows how corrupt people are, yet he does not attempt to correct them? Who is) deaf if not the one who I (grace with wisdom and) send (to teach the people, and yet he pretends not to hear their evil actions, failing to correct them)? Who is as blind as a person who is perfect (in himself but does not reprimand others)? Who is as blind as a servant of God (who turns a blind eye to his people)? Such people) have seen much (wisdom), yet you do not guard (others from evil ways, so they deserve to be called ‘blind.’ They have) open ears (to understand the mitzvos), yet (act as if they) do not hear (when it comes to guiding others, so they deserve to be called ‘deaf’). The main reason why) God wants (such people, is not for their own merits, but) in order for (them to make another person) righteous, (and in order) for him to increase and strengthen (the) Torah (knowledge of others).”

Chabad* and Sefardic communities conclude here. Ashkenazic communities continue:

22 This people is looted and trampled. All their young men are dejected and and hidden in prisons. They are prey with no one to rescue them (from being looted); trampled with no one to say, “Return them (so they will be trampled no more).”

23 Who among you will pay attention to this, listen, and hear from now on (what will establish him in the end)? Who handed Ya’akov over to be trampled and Israel to looters? Was it not God, against Whom we have sinned? (For the Jewish people) did not desire His ways or obey His Torah, so He poured out (His) anger, His wrath and the might of war upon them. It blazed around very basic level (see Rambam, Laws of Torah Study 2.7). The fact that the same verse is employed in both cases means that they are connected: the sublime spiritual loftiness of very advanced Torah scholars is shared in some measure by even the most basic exercise of Torah study (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5717, par. 7).

*While the Chabad custom is to finish the Haftarah with verse 21, in a leap year the Rebbe followed the custom of saying the extended Haftarah (according to Ashkenazic custom), finishing with 43:10. However, the Rebbe indicated that this was a personal directive that he had received from the Previous Rebbe and was not to be copied by others (See Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5714, 5717, 5725 and 5744).
43.1  **Who created you, O Ya'akov, and formed you, O Israel.** Rendered literally, the verse states, "This is what God says: 'Ya'akov created you; Yisra'el formed you.' " On this, the Midrash expounds: "God said to his world, 'World of mine! World of mine! I will tell you who created you and formed you. Ya'akov created you; Yisra'el formed you'" (Vayikra Rabah 36:4 and Maharzu ibid.). In other words, being that the purpose of creation is that the mitzvos should be performed by the Jewish people ("Ya'akov"; "Yisra'el"), the world’s very existence is attributed to them. The verse further explains that this takes place on two levels. The lower level of "Ya'akov" represents the simple observance of mitzvos whose merit ensures the existence of the world's physical matter ("Ya'akov who created you"). In the merit of the higher level of mitzvah observance signified by Yisra'el, the world is given its form ("who formed you Yisra'el") (s.v. ha-ba’im 5743).

5-6.  **...I will bring your children from the east etc.** With regard to the east and west, scripture uses the expressions:

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I will bring...and gather,..." indicating that God is informing the Jewish people how He will unite them when the Redemption arrives. But in reference to the north and south God addresses the compass points, saying to them "Give (Me)," and, "Don’t hold them back." Of these latter two directions, the north is given the stronger instruction, to become a "giver," i.e., a force which actively contributes to the Redemption, whereas the south is merely told not to interfere with or prevent the redemptive process—"Don’t hold them back." This indicates the uniqueness of the Future Redemption: Even the north—which represents the forces of evil, "From the north, evil will venture forth" (Jer 1:14)—will be transformed into a positive force (Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1065).
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10.  **You are my witnesses.** Witnesses are only required to establish facts that have been concealed. Thus, as God’s “witnesses,” our task is to reveal the hidden identity of this physical world, demonstrating how every detail points to the presence of God (Hsavaduyos 5745, vol. 3, p. 1566).
Jerusalem in the times of Redemption

54:1 Says God: “(O Jerusalem! During exile times,) you (were like a) barren woman who never gave birth, (since you were a city devoid of people. But now, in the times of the Redemption, you can) sing! (O Jerusalem!) Open your mouth and sing loudly, for you (were a woman who) never had labor pains. (Now), the inhabitants of (Jerusalem—which previously) lay desolate—are more numerous than the inhabitants of the built up cities (of Edom).”

2 “(O Jerusalem!) Extend the area of your tent (to include all your children). Stretch the curtains (that mark the edge) of your dwellings so that they spread out far—do not hold (them) back. Lengthen your ropes (of your tents, expanding your borders) and strengthen your fastening-pins (so that your borders remain enlarged forever). For you will break through, (spilling into the territory) to the right and (to the) left. Your descendants will inherit nations and (they will multiply so much that) they will inhabit desolate cities.”

Promise to never bring another exile

4 “Do not fear (another exile after the redemption). Do not be ashamed or embarrassed (to proudly display your greatness, for fear that you may be exiled again), for you will not be disgraced (with another exile). You will forget the shame (of the exile) of your youth, and you will no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood (when you were a people without a king). For the Name of your Husband, who made you (great), is the God of hosts—(so who could possibly oppose you? Isn’t) your Redeemer (none other than) the Holy One of Israel, Who will (then) be called ‘God of the entire earth’ (by all, so why be afraid)?”

5 “For God has called you (to return to Him) like a (husband who calls to his) forsaken and dejected wife; like a man who was (briefly) disgusted by the wife of his youth (but soon forgives her),” says your God. “(When) I abandoned you (it was only) for a short moment (compared to the time) when I will gather you, (which will last forever, due to My) great mercy.

Haftaros of Parshas Noach

This Haftarah mentions God’s promise to Noach not to bring another flood that will destroy the world (v. 9). In general, the Haftarah describes the rebuilding of Jerusalem with the Final Redemption, and the universal knowledge of Torah that will be attained by the Jewish people.

The Haftarah opens with a description of how Jerusalem will be repopulated with the Redemption (54:1-3), followed with a promise that the present exile is only temporary (4-10). The prophet then describes how God will rebuild Jerusalem with gems (11-12) and how the Jewish people will master the study of Torah and be righteous, thus averting any threat from potential enemies (13-17). The prophet then lauds the virtues of Torah study (55:1-3) and describes the respect that the nations will have for Israel in the times of Mashiach (4-5).

5. Your Husband, who made you. Our Sages taught: “A woman [before marriage] is unfinished, and she enters into the covenant only with a man who will transform her [into] a [finished] vessel, as the verse states, ‘The Name of your Husband, who made you, is the God of hosts’” (Sanhedrin 22b). In the prophet’s analogy of the marriage between the Jewish people and God, the difference between being an “unfinished” or “finished vessel” is whether or not a person is a suitable receptacle to spiritual matters. If he performs mitzvos by rote, without enthusiasm, then he is an “unfinished vessel”; if he finds the mitzvos exciting and inspiring, then he is a truly receptive “vessel” to Godliness. Of course, for most people this does not come naturally, which is why the Chasidic movement stresses the importance of prolonged meditative prayer, which is aimed at transforming oneself into a “finished vessel” (Sefer haMa’amarim 5718, pp. 311-2).
Now incline your ears and come to Me (to hear my words)! Listen, and you will (merit to) live (again, with the revival of the Torah) and you will ‘eat’ well and satisfy your souls with ‘rich foods’!

Noach because they had a positive effect of cleansing the earth spiritually, like a mikvah, making it more sensitive to spiritual matters (Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 40; Torah Ohr, Noach 8c).

9. The waters of Noach. At first glance, the term “waters of Noach” appears to be self-contradictory, as Noach was the savior of his generation, whereas the waters constituted the punishment. A simple solution is that the waters eliminated the generation because of Noach, since he failed to pray sufficiently for the people to be saved (Zohar 167b).

However, Chasidic thought explains that the waters were named after Noach because they had a positive effect of cleansing the earth spiritually, like a mikvah, making it more sensitive to spiritual matters (Likutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 40; Torah Ohr, Noach 8c).

12. I will make your window panes from emeralds etc. This is not a mere metaphor. This prophecy will materialize physically in the future era (Sefer haMa’amorim 5734, p. 198, 202).
Eternal
covenant
with
Mashiach

dead)! I will make an eternal covenant with you, as enduring as (My) loyalty to David. 4 Indeed, I have made his (enduring dynasty) as a proof to the nations (that My word always endures, and Mashiach, his descendant, will be) a ruler and leader of the nations. (Likewise My promises to you will be fulfilled). Indeed, nations that you do not know will call upon you (to serve you), and nations which never knew you will run to you (to follow your orders. But they will not do this due to your own power, but) for the sake of the God your God, the Holy One of Israel (Who dwells among you and), Who has glorified you.”

Lech Lecha / לְךָ לְךָ

(Isaiah 40:27 – 41:16)

40:27 Y a’akov, why do you say—and Yisra’el, why do you declare— “My way (of serving God) has been hidden from (and ignored by) God, and my judgment passes (unrewarded) from my God”? 28 Don’t you know (from your own mind, even) if you have not heard (from your teachers), that God is an everlasting God, the Creator of the (entire) world (from) end (to) end? He does not become tired or weary (and fluctuate in His performance. So your reward will definitely come, but) there is no comprehension of His wisdom (as to why He delays it).

40:29 (The time will come when) He gives strength to the weary (people of Israel), and increases power to those without strength. 30 (The nations of the world who are now strong like) young men, will become tired and weary, and (their) young bachelors will repeatedly stumble. 31 But those who place their hope in God will regain (their) strength, (and) grow wings like eagles. They will run (to their land) and not become weary. They will walk and not get tired.

41:1 (You, who live in) islands, be silent (and listen) to Me! Let (the) nations muster their strength (to defend themselves before Me). (First) let them come (and listen to My prosecution, and) then they can speak (if they indeed have anything to say in their defense). Then, (the nations and I) will debate together, to judge (their claims that I am unable to save My people). 2 Who awakened (Avraham, when he was) in the East (to leave his home and despise idolatry? Everywhere that) he trod, he preached righteousness (demanding that people abandon their idols and believe in God. Who is the One that) placed nations before him, and (enabled him) to dominate (four mighty) kings? (Those killed by) his sword (were as numerous as) the dust, and his bow (killed many people) like (piles of) beaten straw. 3 He pursued them, and passed through in peace,
Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not turn away (thinking that I have abandoned you) because I am your God (as I have always been). I strengthened you (with positive words of comfort), I helped you (from the very beginning. When you were in the hands of the enemy) I supported you with My righteous right hand.

Indeed, all those who were angry with you will (eventually) be shamed and embarrassed. Those who quarrel with you will be like nothing and perish. (Even if) you will seek them, you will not find the men who fight with you. The men who wage war with you will be null and void. For I am God, your God, who takes hold of your right hand, and says to you, “Don’t fear, I will help you,” (so you can rely on My word). Do not fear (children) of Ya'akov, people of Israel, (who are as weak as) a worm (whose only strength is in its mouth, i.e. prayer). I have helped you (in the past), says God, and (I,) the Holy One of Israel, will be your redeemer (in the future).

I have made you into a new grooved threshing-hammer with sharp edges. You will thresh (kings mighty as) mountains and crush them fine, and make hills like chaff. You will scatter them. The wind will carry them away, and a storm will scatter them. You will rejoice with God, and praise yourself (for trusting in) the Holy One of Israel.

(though it was) a path where his feet had never tread.

Who caused and orchestrated (this for him)? The One Who calls (and designates the time and place of) each generation, from before (they are born). I, God, am the first One (before all the generations, and) I am the same (One Who remains) with the last (generations).

The (inhabitants of the distant) islands saw (the miracles that I performed for Avraham) and became frightened. (Even) the (ones who live at the) ends of the earth became terrified. They drew near and came (to Avraham, not to wage war, but merely to beg for their captives).

(Yet, despite all the miracles that the nations saw God make for Avraham,) each man (carried on) helping his friend (to make idols. Each person) would (encourage) his brother, saying “Be strong! (Keep on sculpting idols!”) (When a) carpenter (would make an idol) he would (hurry the) goldsmith (to finish off the idol’s coating quickly). The one who smooths (the idol with the small mallet would hurry) the blacksmith (who did the initial metalwork,) beating very hard (with the large hammer. The one who glued the idol together would) say (with glee) about the glue: “It’s good!” and he would fasten (the metal coating onto the idol) with nails, so that it should not fall off.

But you, Israel (are not like them because you are) My servant(s)! (Children of) Ya’akov! I chose you (to be My people because you are) the descendants of Avraham who loved Me (and separated from idol worship). (In the future) I will grasp you from the corners of the earth, and call (to release) you from (the control of) its powerful people. I told you “you are My servant” (from the time that) I have chosen you, (and) I have not despised you.

8. Avraham who loved Me. Avraham loved God with such a great and sublime love that he became a “chariot” to God (see Bereishis Rabah 47:6). In other words, his total dedication and surrender to God’s will resembled a chariot which does not deviate from side to side but follows the path of its driver directly (Tanya, Igros Hakodesh 15; Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 101).
A certain woman, one of the wives of the disciples of the prophets, cried out to Elisha, saying, “Your servant, my husband, has died. You are aware that your servant feared God. (Now, Yehoram ben Achau) the creditor has come to take my two children as slaves for himself!”

Elisha said to her, “What can I do for you? Tell me what you have in the house (that a blessing can rest in)?”

She said “Your maidservant does not have anything in the house, except a jug of oil (used for anointing).”

He said, “Go and borrow containers from (those who are) outside (your house, namely) from all your neighbors—empty containers. Don’t ask for (just) a few. Then enter (your home) and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour (the oil) into all these containers. (Once they are full) remove the filled ones (and replace them with empty ones, because the jug will be like a fountain).”

She left him and closed the door behind her and her sons. They would bring (the empty containers) to her (so she would not have to move), and she would pour.

When the (borrowed) containers were (all) full she said to her son, “Bring me another container.”

“There aren’t anymore containers,” he said to her. Then the oil stopped (flowing).

She came and told the Godly man (what had happened). He said “Go and sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons will live off the remaining (money).”

One day, Elisha passed through Shunaim. A distinguished lady (who lived) there insisted that he eat a meal (in her house. From then onwards,) whenever he passed by, he would go there to eat bread.

She said to her husband, “I realize that (the person) who comes regularly to us is a holy man of God (so it’s not right that

The opening of Parshas Vayeira describes how God revealed Himself to Avraham, and Chasidic thought explains that this revelation was inherited by Avraham’s descendants, such that every Jewish soul is privy to Divine revelation. The Haftarah, however, addresses the soul after it has been invested in a body which conceals the Godly revelation of the soul—indicated in this verse by “a certain woman” (the soul), who was “widowed” (concealed from God). Nevertheless, we learn here that, despite this concealment the soul still “cries out” from time to time and longs to be close to its Creator, with a powerful yearning that even the physical body cannot contain or repress (Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 335).
he live in the same quarters as us). 10 Let's make a small room in the attic, and put a bed, table, chair and lamp there for him. When he comes to us, he will stay there (in privacy)."

11 (After they built the room in the attic) the day (came) when (Elisha) arrived there. He stayed in the attic and slept there.

12 He said to Geichazi, his servant, “Call this Shunamite woman (over here).” He called her and she stood before him.

13 He said (to Geichazi), “Please say to her, ‘You have gone to all this effort for us, what (can I) do for you (to repay you)? Is there any matter (about which you want me) to speak about to the king or army commander on your behalf?’"

14 She said “(It’s fine,) I live (peacefully) with my family.”

15 “Call her,” (Elisha) said. (Geichazi) called her and she stood (modestly) at the doorway.

16 (Elisha) said ‘At the next possible occasion for you to give birth (i.e. in nine months’ time), you will be embracing a son’!

17 She said “Please sir, man of God, do not delude your maidservant (with false hopes).”

18 The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a boy, at the (earliest possible) time, just as Elisha said.

19 The child grew up. One day, he went out to his father (who was supervising the reaping of) the harvests, and he said to his father “My head (hurts)! My head (hurts)!"

20 (His father) said to the lad (who was working there), “Carry him to his mother.”

21 (The lad) carried him and brought him to his mother. (The child) sat on her knees until midday, and he died. 22 She went upstairs and laid him down on the bed of the Godly man, closed (the door) behind him and left. 22 She called to her husband and said “Send me one of the lads and one of the donkeys. I will rush to the Godly man and come back.”

23 He said, “Why are you going to him today? It’s not the (New) Moon, or Shabbos (when you usually see him).”

24 She saddled the donkey and said to her lad, “Get going! Don’t go slowly because of me, unless I tell you.”

25 She traveled and came to the Godly man at Mount...
Carmel. When the Godly man saw her from afar, he said to Geichazi, his servant, “The Shunamite (woman) is here! Now, please run towards her, and say to her, ‘Are you well? Is your husband alright? Is the child well?’”

She said, “Everything is well,” (for she wanted to conceal the matter even from Geichazi).

27 She came to the Godly man, who was on the mountain, and grabbed hold of his feet. Geichazi came over to push her away, but the Godly man said, “Leave her, for her soul is bitter. God has hidden (the problem) from me and has not told it to me.”

26 She said “Was it I who asked for a son from my master? Didn’t I say, ‘Don’t mislead me?’”

25 He said to Geichazi, “Fasten your belt (so you can travel fast), take my staff in your hand, and go. If you meet someone, do not greet him. If someone greets you, do not reply to him (so as not to delay your mission). You should place my staff on the boy’s face (in order to revive him).”

24 The boy’s mother said, “(I swear by the fact that) God lives, and by your life, that I will not leave you alone (if you don’t come along)!” So he got up and followed behind her.

23 Geichazi had gone ahead of them and placed the staff on the boy’s face, but there was neither a sound nor a response (because Geichazi had not followed orders, and he had stopped to jest and tell people of his mission). He returned to (Elisha) and informed him, saying, “The boy did not wake up.”

22 When Elisha arrived at the house, the boy was dead, lying on his bed. 23 He came inside and closed the door behind both of them, and prayed to God. 24 He climbed up (onto the bed) and lay on the child. He placed his mouth on (the boy’s) mouth, his eyes on his eyes, his palms on his palms. He spread himself out over him, and the child’s flesh became warm.

25 He went back (down off the bed) and walked backwards and forwards in the house. Then he climbed back (on the bed) and spread himself over (the body, and repeated these movements seven times). The boy sneezed seven times, and then he opened his eyes.

26 (Elisha) called to Geichazi, and said, “Call the Shunamite woman!” He called her. When she came to him, he said, “Pick up your child!”

27 She fell down at his feet and prostrated herself. Then she gathered up her son and left.

35 The boy opened his eyes. The fact that Elisha ensured the continued life of the child provides a further parallel with our Parsha. The Midrash relates that when Yitzchak was born, King Og commented that he could “crush him with his finger,” suggesting that the child would not survive too long. God replied that, to the contrary, Yitzchak was to survive and that it was Og who would be eliminated by Yitzchak’s descendants (Bereishis Rabah 53:10; Likutei Sichos vol. 5, p. 331).
Haftarah of Parshas Chayei Sarah

The opening of this Haftarah, which describes King David’s advanced years, resembles the statement in Parshas Chayei Sarah that Avraham had advanced in years (24:1).

The Haftarah describes King David’s last days before his passing (1:1-4), during which time his son Adoniyahu begins to celebrate his succession to the monarchy (5-10). Bas-Sheva, Shlomo’s mother, is thus advised to go to the King and reiterate his promise that Shlomo would become King (5-10). She does so, and Nasan joins the audience with the King to confirm the reports of Adoniyahu’s behavior (15-27). King David responds by instructing that Shlomo should be anointed as King immediately, in his own lifetime (28-31).

The notion that Shlomo was actually anointed as King in the lifetime of King David is somewhat problematic, as it appears to contradict the Talmud’s statement that God told King David, “The time of your son Shlomo’s monarchy has come, but one monarch will not overlap the other, even by a hairsbreadth” (Shabbos 30a). We also have the rule that “two kings cannot use the same crown” (Chulin 60b).

However, Shlomo’s appointment in David’s lifetime brings to light the distinctive quality of Davidic sovereignty. In the case of ordinary kings, the monarchy merely represents the prevailing seat of power which comes with the appointment of a king (and not a naturally endowed quality). Since it is only possible for one person to be the final authority, it follows that there can only be one king at any given time, for the term “king” has no implication other than “authority.”

1:1 King David was old. (The signs of old age were not premature but) came in the right time. They covered him with clothes, but he did not become warm. 2 His servants said to him, “Let a virgin girl be sought for my master the King. Let her stand (ready) before the King and provide warmth for him. She will lie in your bosom, so that my master the King will be warm.” 3 They looked for a beautiful girl throughout the entire territory of Israel. They found Avishag the Shunamite and brought her before the King. 4 The girl was extremely beautiful. She acted as a “warmer” for the King and served him, but the King did not know her (in an intimate way).

5 (Meanwhile), Adoniyahu, son of (David and) Chagis, was acting haughtily (like a king, as if he were actually) saying, “I will reign.” He prepared a chariot and horsemen for himself and fifty men running before him.

6 (Since) his father had never reprimanded him, saying “Why have you done this?” (he presumed that he had his father’s approval.) He also (thought that he was fit to be king because he) was very good-looking and he was born (right) after Avshalom (who had died, leaving Adoniyahu the eldest). 7 He consulted with Yo’av ben Tzeruiah, and Euyasar the priest. They supported Adoniyahu (because they knew that they were disliked by David). 8 But Tzadok the priest, Benayahu son of Yehoyadah, Nasan the prophet, Shimi, Rayee and David’s strongmen (Elazar, Adino and Shama) were not with Adoniyahu, (for they remained loyal to David).

9 Adoniyahu offered sheep, cattle and fat oxen at the Zocheles stone near (the fountain) Ein-Ragail, and he invited (those that supported him from among) all his brothers, the King’s sons, and all the people of Yehudah, the King’s servants. 10 But he did not invite Nasan the prophet, Benayahu and the strongmen, nor his brother Shlomo.
Nathan spoke to Bas-Sheva, Shlomo’s mother, saying, “Haven't you heard that Adoniyyahu, the son of Chagis, has (plans to) become king? Our master David doesn’t know (about it).” Now, please let me advise you, so that you will save your life and that of your son Shlomo (for Adoniyyahu will surely kill you both if he becomes king).”

“Go, and enter before King David, and say to him, ‘My master the King! Didn’t you swear to your maidservant, saying, “Shlomo your son will reign after me, and he will sit on my throne”? So why has Adoniyyahu become king?”

“Then, while you are still talking there with the King, I will enter after you and confirm your words.”

Bas-Sheva came to the King, into his bedroom. The King was very old and Avishag the Shunamite was serving the King. Bas-Sheva bowed down and prostrated herself before the King. “What do you want?” the King said.

She said to him, “My master! You swore to your maidservant (in the Name of) God Almighty that ‘Shlomo, your son, will reign after me and he will sit on my throne.’ But now—look!—Adoniyyahu has become King, and you—my master the King—did not know. (Proof of the matter is that he made a feast where) he sacrificed many cattle, fattened oxen and sheep. He invited all the King’s sons, Evyasar the priest and Yo’av the army general, but he did not invite (the heir) Shlomo, your servant. (Don’t think it was the people) who chose Adoniyyahu, for the eyes of all Israel are upon you, my master the King, to tell them who should sit on the throne of my master the King after him. (However, if you do not do so), when my master the King (passes on and) lies with his fathers, I and my son Shlomo will be deprived (of our lives)."

Then, while she was still talking to the King, Nathan the prophet arrived (in the King’s quarters). They announced to the King, saying, “Nathan the prophet is here.” He entered the King’s presence and he prostrated himself on the ground, on his face.

Nathan said, “My master the King! (Did) you say, ‘Adoniyyahu should reign after me and he will sit on my throne’? Because today he went down and sacrificed many cattle, fattened oxen and sheep, and he invited all people that he chose. Therefore, he could now be termed a king (despite the fact that he was not an acting ruler empowered with authority), as the anointing successfully brought out his royal attributes from ‘potential’ to ‘actual’ (Likutei Sichos vol. 30, p. 97ff).
the King’s sons, the army generals and Euyasar the priest (to what could only be a coronation feast). They are eating and drinking in his presence and they (will surely have) said, ‘(Long) live King Adoniyahu!’ 26 And he did not invite me, Tzadok the priest, Benayahu son of Yehoyadah, nor Shlomo, your servant. 27 If this matter has come from my master the King, (I wonder why) you have not (previously) informed your servant, who should sit on the throne of my master the King after him.”

28 King David replied and said, “Call Bas-Sheva for me.” She came before the King and stood before the King. 29 The King took an oath, saying “By the life of God who has delivered my soul from all suffering! 30 Just as I swore to you (in the Name of the) Almighty God of Israel, saying, ‘Shlomo, your son, will reign after me, and he will sit on my throne,’ so too I will (swear) today (that Shlomo will become King immediately, during my lifetime)!”

31 Bas-Sheva bowed with her face to the ground and prostrated herself to the King. She said “May my master King David live forever!”

**The prophecy—the word of God—to Israel, (transmitted) by Malachi**

"I loved you," said God. "But if you say, 'In what way did You (show Your) love for us (personally, and not merely due to the merit of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs)?' I will reply to you: "Was Eisav not Ya’akov’s brother (who shared the same ancestry as Ya’akov)?” said God, “Yet I loved Ya’akov, and I hated Eisav (despite his ancestors). I laid his mountains desolate, and his inheritance (a home) for the serpents of the desert. (So clearly, when I loved you, it was not only in the merit of your ancestors)."

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**The Haftarah was addressed to the Jewish people by the prophet Malachi, shortly after their return from their Babylonian exile (approx. 520 B.C.E.). Its predominant theme is an admonition for a lack of respect for the Holy Temple and its offerings. The Haftarah opens with a statement of God’s love for Israel and a promise of downfall and destruction for Israel’s hated enemy, Eisav (1:1-5). The prophet then laments Israel’s betrayal of God, particularly in the area of sacrificial service (6-10), claiming that Israel honors God less than the idol-worshipping nations (11). Further criticisms include the slandering of the Altar (12), and the offering of low-quality animals to the Holy Temple (13-14). God finally threatens to transform the Priestly blessings into**
“If Edom, (Eisav’s descendants that destroyed the Holy Temple), say, ‘We are (now) poor, but we will return and rebuild the desolate places,’ then the God of hosts says: ‘They will build, and I will destroy! (The destruction will be so awesome that) people will call it a wicked place (which clearly merited destruction by God), and (they will be called) a people with whom God is forever angry. 1 (When you return to your territory, with the Redemption,) your eyes will see (the extent of Edom’s destruction), and you will say about the territory of Israel, ‘God is great (for He performs wonders).’”

This idea is highlighted by our verse regarding God’s choice of the Jewish people: “Yet I loved Ya’akov and I hated Eisav.” This choice between two things can only occur when one entity has no obvious redeeming features over the other. For if one thing is clearly superior, its selection is merely an expression of common sense and not a personal choice. This idea is highlighted by our verse regarding God’s choice of the Jewish people: “Was Eisav not Ya’akov’s brother,” i.e. they were equal, “Yet I loved Ya’akov and I hated Eisav” (Likutei Sichos vol. 4, p. 1309).
“(Nevertheless, I still have mercy on you, for) how can I give you, Efrayim, (over to the nations, and) deliver you (into their hands)? How can I let you be (overturned) like Admah, (or) make you (desolate) like Tzevoyim? (Even though I am angry 

8 “(Nevertheless, I still have mercy on you, for) how can I give you, Efrayim, (over to the nations, and) deliver you (into their hands)?”

My people are wavering about (taking the first step in) returning to Me. (Even though the prophets) call to (the people) to rise up (and take the initiative to return to) the One above, (nevertheless) they are united (in that) nobody rises up!”

God’s mercy

Reluctance to repent

Special qualities of the priests

Priestly blessings become curses

Poor quality of animal offerings

a heavy animal, when really) it could be blown over (with a breath),” says the God of Hosts. “You (also) bring stolen (animals), lame and sick ones, and you bring (them as) gift offerings. Should I accept this from your hands?” says God.

11 “Cursed is the one who deceives (Me, claiming that he only has funds for a poor offering)! He has in his flock (better) male (animals) and yet he vows and then sacrifices abandoned (animals) to God. For I am a great King,” says the God of hosts, “and My Name is feared among the nations.”

2:1 “And now, this commandment (not to accept a poor sacrifice, is given) to you, the priests. 2 If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to honor My name,” says the God of hosts, “then I will release a curse upon you and I will make your (erstwhile) blessings into curses. Indeed, you are already (suffering from being) cursed by Me, for you do not take it to heart (to be careful about My honor). 3 Look! Because of you I will suppress the seeds (so that they will not grow). I will blow dung in your faces (like) the dung of your festival (sacrifices, with which you disgraced Me. Your sin) will cause you to (be disgraced like) this.

3 You should know that I sent you this commandment (of honoring My sacrifices) in order for (you to be rewarded from) My covenant with (Aharon, the head of the tribe of) Levi,” says the God of Hosts. 5 “My covenant was with him (and it brought him) life and peace. I gave these (mitzvos) to him (because of the fear (in his heart) before Me. He was in awe of My Name. 6 The Torah of truth was (being taught) by his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. (For the sake of My mitzvos) he walked with Me (guiding others) in peace and in righteousness. (Through his rebukes) he turned many (people) away from (their plans to) sin. 7 (All this applies to every priest) for the lips of a priest (are fit to) guard knowledge, (and it is fitting that people) should seek the Torah from his mouth (that he should teach them). For (a priest) is an emissary of the God of hosts.

VAYEITZEI / וַיֵּיטֵֽצֵּ֥הּ (Hosea 11:7 – 14:10)

Chabad and Sefardic communities begin here. Ashkenazic communities begin below, page 384.

11:7 // “My people are wavering about (taking the first step in) returning to Me. (Even though the prophets) call to (the people) to rise up (and take the initiative to return to) the One above, (nevertheless) they are united (in that) nobody rises up!”

6 “(Nevertheless, I still have mercy on you, for) how can I give you, Efrayim, (over to the nations, and) deliver you (into their hands)? How can I let you be (overturned) like Admah, (or) make you (desolate) like Tzevoyim? (Even though I am angry
with you) My heart has turned inside Me (to be kind to you. All) My (attributes of) mercy have been aroused all at once. 9 I will not act with My fierce anger. I will not return to destroy Efrayim, for I am God and not a man (who makes rash decisions. Once again) the holiness (of My presence) will rest among you, and I will not enter a(other) city (to join the nations instead of you)."

Times of Mashiach

10 (In the times of Mashiach) they will follow behind God (into their land. Just as animals follow the roar of the lion, their king, so too) He will roar like a lion (and gather them). For He will (arouse their hearts, as if they are being called by a lion’s roar, and (His) children (the Jewish people) will hurry from the West. 11 They will hurry from Egypt like a bird, and from Ashur like a dove. I will settle them (securely) in their homes,” says God.

Deceit of Efrayim

12:1 (The kingdom of) Efrayim has surrounded Me (pretending to return to Me, but it has been) with lies, (for they are not genuine), and the house of Israel (has treated me) with deceit. But Yehudah is still ruling (the people, and persuading them to be) with God, and he is faithful to (the) holy (God, to carry out His word). 1 Efrayim is a shepherd (of empty things like) the wind, and whereas the east(ward wind) all day he (speaks) much deceit, and extortion. They make a treaty with Ashur (to help them), and oil is brought (by them as a bribe) to Egypt, (to unite with Yehudah against the enemy). 1 (But afterwards, Yehudah too will offend God) and God will have a quarrel with Yehudah. He will remember the (bad) ways of (the children) of Ya’akov, (and) will repay them according to their deeds.

Ya’akov’s life

8 (While Ya’akov, their father was) in the womb he grabbed his brother’s heel, and with strength he fought with (God’s) angel, (the ministering angel of Eisav. 9) When he defeated the angel and ruled over him, (the angel) cried, and begged (Ya’akov to allow him to leave, saying, “God) will find us (together again) in Beis-Ail, and will speak with us there (and then I will bless you”—so why is Ya’akov now so weak?)

9 God, is the (omnipotent) God of (all the) hosts! (Almighty) God is His Name! 7 Turn to your God in peace. (Just) be careful (to be) kind and just, (then you can) constantly trust in your God (that He will grant your wishes).

10 (But you are like) a merchant (who) has deceitful scales in his hand, who loves to oppress others (rather than acting kindly and justly). 1 Efrayim said, “Surely (the reason that) I have become wealthy (is because) I have found strength for myself (and

Haftarah of Parshas Vayeitzei

This Haftarah describes the sins of “Efrayim,” the northern tribes of the land of Israel (among whom Hoshea lived), comparing the sins to events in Ya’akov’s life. Most notably, the Haftarah mentions Ya’akov’s flight to Aram and life there (12:13), which is chronicled in the course of Parshas Vayetzai.

The Haftarah opens with reproof, that the Jewish people are reluctant to repent for their sins; nevertheless, they will not be abandoned by God (11:7-9). After pausing to touch upon Hoshea’s vision of the times of Mashiach (10-11), the prophet returns to the mode of rebuke, criticizing the current deceit of Efrayim (12:1-2) and the future deceit of Yehudah (3). Ya’akov’s story is briefly retold (4-5), and his descendants are begged to return to God (6-7). This is followed by further accusations of deceit (8-9), despite constant Divine assistance (10-12), further historical references to Ya’akov’s life and the Exodus from Egypt (13-14), and repeated promises of retribution (15).

The Haftarah then turns to discuss the sin of Yaravam, the idol worship he incited, and the subsequent punishments (13:1-5). The message of guilt and doom is reiterated more vividly and forcefully (13:6-14:1).

Hoshea then makes an impassioned plea for repentance and sincere confession (14:2-4), with the promise of subsequent Divine pardon and love (5-9), urging the people to heed these words of wisdom (10).

12:8 (You are like) a merchant (who) has deceitful scales in his hand. The “deceitful merchant” is an analogy for
it is not from God. Furthermore the Almighty) will not find in all my (business dealings and) efforts any sinful wrongdoings (for God isn’t aware).

10 But am I (not) God, your God! Since (the time of your redemption from) the land of Egypt (I have looked after you. At a future time) I will again settle you in tents, as in those days. 11 I have spoken (about you) to the prophets and gave (them) many visions. I have given parables through the prophets (so you should understand them and be satisfied that I am carefully looking, and taking care of you). 12 If a misfortune befell Gilgal it was (not by chance, but) because they were false. In Gilgal they sacrificed cattle (to idols). Their altars (for idol worship) are also as numerous as mounds in the furrows of the field.

Ashkenazic communities begin here. Chabad communities continue:

Ya’akov fled to the field of Aram. Yisra’el worked (there) for a wife, and for a wife he tended (sheep, and left a wealthy man through My blessings). 14 By means of a prophet God brought Israel up from Egypt, and through a prophet they were guarded (on the way).

Chabad communities conclude here. Ashkenazic communities continue:

15 Efraim bitterly angered (God with his evil acts. Revenge for) his (acts of) bloodshed will reach him and be upon him. His Master will repay him for his act of disgrace (of worshipping idols).

Further rebuke

When (Yaravam, a descendent of) Efraim, spoke 13 When (Yaravam, a descendent of) Efraim, spoke

Ya’akov’s flight to Aram

early like the dew; like chaff blown away from the threshing floor, like smoke from the chimney. 4 (They deserve this punishment, because) I have been God your God since (I took you out of) the land of Egypt (and you accepted me as you God). Do not consider any other than Me to be God, (for) I am the only Redeemer. 5 I took care of you in the wilderness, in a thirsty land (so you deserve destruction for abandoning Me).

For while the soul did enjoy an intense love of God while above in heaven, its love will ultimately be strengthened by withstanding the challenges that it faces in this world (Torah Ohr, Vayeishev 26c).

the soul how it is found below in this world, enclothed in a body. “Deceitful,” because the natural tendency of the body is to do evil; but nevertheless the soul is a “merchant,” who intends to profit from this bodily “investment.”
Sefardic communities conclude here. Ashkenazic communities continue:

6 When they came to pasture (in the Land of Israel), they were content. When they were content, they became arrogant. This is why they forgot Me. (Therefore) I have become like a lion to them, like a leopard lurking by the road (for its prey). I confront them like a killer bear and tear (them open right down to) their hearts hidden (below the chest. When I find them) I devour them there like an awesome lion, rupture them (like) the beasts of the field. 7 Israel! You harmed yourself (by ignoring Me when) I was your Helper. 8 (I am still here but) where is your (mortal) king now? Let him come and save you in all your cities! And (where are) your rulers of whom you said, “Give us a king and ministers!” 9 In My anger I gave you a king, but I took him away in My wrath (because your request was not appropriate).

10 (I have not forgotten) Efrayim’s sin! (It is) is bound up (well); his transgression is stored away. 11 The pains of a woman in labor will come upon him. He is an unwise son, as otherwise he would not have delayed a moment up (well); his transgression is stored away.

12 (Originally, Efrayim) bore fruit among (his) brothers (and was greater than them. But now he has sinned with the calves) God will cause an eastern wind to come from the desert so that (Efrayim’s) fountain will be dried up, and his wellspring parched. It will render the treasures of whatever is precious as plunder. 13 Let Shomron be annihilated, for she has rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword. Their infants will be split into pieces and their pregnant women ripped open.

14 Israel, return to God your God, for you have stumbled on account of your sins. 3 (You do not need to take sacrifices. Just) take words (of confession) with you and return to God. Say to Him: “Lift away all sin and accept (our promises for) good (behavior in the future). Let (the confession) of our lips be in place of (the sacrificing of) bullocks. 4 We will no longer (ask) to be saved by Assyria, and we will not (put our trust in) riding (powerful) horses (into battle). We will never again call the (idol) made by our hands, ‘our god,’ because (we know that) the orphan finds compassion through You (alone).” 5 Then (after they confess) I will forgive them for their rebelliousness. I will love them deeply, because My anger will have turned away from them. 6 (My love) for Israel will be (perpetual) like dew. He will blossom like a rose, and his roots will spread like (the roots of a cedar from) Lebanon. 7 His young leaves will spread out, he will be beautiful like an olive tree, and he will have the aroma of Lebanon.

8 Those who sat in His shade will be peaceful. They will be peacefully self-sufficient like grain (sustains life), and they will blossom like the vine. Their fame will be like that of the wine of Lebanon. 9 (When) Efrayim asks, “What do I need idolaters
for anymore?” I will answer (all his requests) and look over (and supervise his needs). I (will attend to him) like a fresh cypress tree (which bends its head over its roots). The fruit of your (success) comes from Me.

Whoever is wise will understand these (words). The discerning will recognize them. For the ways of God are straight and the righteous will walk in them, but the wicked will stumble in them.

**Vayishlach / וישלח**

*(Obadiah 1:1 – 21)*

All Chabad, Sefardic and most Ashkenazic communities read the following Haftarah.

[Some Ashkenazic communities read Hosea 11:7-12:12, printed above as Haftarah for Vayetzei — page 382.]

The vision of Ovadiah. This is what Almighty God said about Edom: We (the prophets) have heard a message from God, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, (saying): “Get up! Let’s wage war against her!”

Look, (initially) I made you small among the nations (and) you were greatly despised. (But now that your kingdom is great), the wickedness of your heart has enticed you (to be overly proud). You (are like one) who dwell(s) in the (sheltered) clefts of a rock, (as secure as one) whose dwelling is lofty, who says to himself: ‘Who can (lower me from my lofty position, and) bring me down towards earth?’ (But even) if you lift (yourself) high like an eagle, and (even) if you place your nest between the stars, I will bring you down from there (to be conquered by the nations!” says God.

“If thieves came upon you, or robbers at night, (they would not totally clean you out, so) how have you been (totally) wiped out? Don’t they only steal what they require? If grape-gatherers came upon you, do they not (at least) leave some gleanings? (Yet you, Edom, will be totally wiped out).”

“How have (the houses of) Eisav been searched (and all their belongings removed? How) have his hidden places been sought out?” All your allies accompanied you (only) to the border (but then turned back, and left you to fight alone). Those who are at peace with you induced you (to go to war) and prevailed over you. Those who eat your bread have (schemed monotheism is accepted not only by the Jewish people, but by all the nations of the world (see v. 21). It is fitting, therefore, that these words were said by a gentle convert. It has even been suggested that the completion of Ovadiah’s prophecies in one single chapter—a quality which is not duplicated in any other book of the Bible—underscores the theme of oneness and unity which is the subject of his vision (Sichos Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5751).

The Haftarah opens with an invitation to the nations to go to war against Edom (1), as a punishment for her arrogance (2-4), promising total destruction with no help from her allies (5-7).
A brief image of the destruction is then painted (8-9), which is parenthetically interrupted to attribute blame to Edom for persecuting the Jewish people and rejoicing at their suffering (10-15). Before the narrative of doom and destruction concludes (16-18), the Haftarah ends with a description of how Edom's lands will be possessed and settled through the judgment of King Mashiach (19-21).
The nations in the times of Mashiach

This Haftarah alludes to the sale of Yosef, who was sold for silver by his brothers (v. 6; see Zohar Chadash, beginning of Parshas Vayishlach). The Haftarah is a harsh rebuke by the prophet Amos for the sins of the Jewish people during the reign of King Yaravam II (8th century B.C.E).

After opening with a forceful criticism of the corrupt judicial system (2:6-8), the Haftarah muses over God’s kindness to Israel from the times of the Exodus, lamenting how God’s gift of righteous prophets and Nazirites was abused (9-11). This is followed by a startling promise of terror, from which even the most mighty will flee (13-16).
God always sends prophets (and provided all your needs so you could come and possess the Land of the Emorites. 11) (Throughout the generations,) I raised prophets from among your sons (so that My Divine Presence should dwell among you) and (I inspired many) Nazirites from among your young men. Would you, Israel, deny this?” says God. 12 “But you persuaded the Nazirites to drink wine and commanded the prophets, ‘Do not prophesize.’

Punishment looms 11 “Watch, I will (surely) afflict you, (who were ungrateful to Me! You will not escape Me for I will afflict you) in your (own) places, as a full load of sheaves (weighs down and) afflicts a wagon. 14 The swift will not escape (because the enemy will be everywhere). The strong will not muster his strength (to win a war), and the warrior will not save his life. 15 The archer will not stand his ground (for he will flee out of fear. Even) the lightfooted will not escape, and the horse rider will not save his life (by fleeing).

Cause and effect 11 “Listen to this word that God has spoken concerning you, O Israel, concerning the entire people that I brought up from the Land of Egypt. 2 Of all the nations of the earth, I loved only you (yet you sinned against Me). That is why I will punish you for all your transgressions. 3 Do two people walk together without having arranged it (beforehand)? 4 Does a lion roar in the forest (and find) no prey? Does a lion cub cry out from its den without having trapped anything? 5 Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground if there is no snare? Does a trap spring up from the ground if it hasn’t caught anything? 6 If a Shofar is sounded in the city (to announce that the enemy is approaching), can the inhabitants fail to be terrified? (So too,) if there is a calamity in the city, can it not be God’s doing? 7 For Almighty God does not do anything without (first) revealing His secret to His servants, the prophets. 8 When the lion roars, who does not fear? (So too) when Almighty God speaks (to His prophets), who (could withhold God’s words) and not prophesize?

The prophet opens chapter three with a statement that God’s punishments are enacted only out of a profound sense of love for the Jewish people (1-2). A series of rhetorical questions are then posed that gradually impress upon the reader how every effect has its cause, rendering the concluding statement—that all calamities are orchestrated by God as a consequence of man’s actions—all the more powerful (3-6). This, then, is a great incentive to heed the words of the prophet (7-8).

3:4 — Does a lion roar in the forest? — The “lion” is an allusion to the months of Elul and Tishrei, when the Shofar (ram’s horn) is sounded to instill fear in the people as an incentive to repent (see v. 6). This is hinted to by the Hebrew word for lion, חֲנַנְאָה, which is an acronym for Elul (א ל), Rosh Hashanah (ה ש), Yom Kippur (י כפ) and Hoshana Rabah (ר ב) (Yom Too Shel Rosh Hashanah 5666, p. 571).

6 — If a shofar is sounded in the city, can the inhabitants fail to be terrified? — This verse is cited by Tur (Orach Chaim 581) as a scriptural basis for the custom of blowing Shofar (ram’s horn) during the month of Elul as an inspiration towards repentance. Note, however, that the verse does not indicate who is blowing the Shofar; it states only that the Shofar is “sounded,” in the passive voice.

Chasidic thought explains that this is because, in truth, the primary inspiration to return to God during Elul comes not from within man himself, but from Above. The fact that we blow the Shofar is merely the channel through which this inspiration is able to reach us.

Consequently, the verse indicates that the Shofar, the source of inspiration, is “sounded” not by man but by God Himself (Likutei Sichos vol. 19, p. 159, note 13).
If Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz coincides with Chanukah, the Haftarah of Chanukah I is read, on page 398, or the Haftarah of Chanukah II 401.

15 Shlomo awoke and (only then) he realized it was a dream. He then came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of God. He offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings and made a feast for all his servants.

16 Then two harlots came to the king and stood before him. 17 One of the women said, “Please, my master (listen to me)! I and this woman live in one house. I gave birth to a child in the house, and the other woman gave birth to another child. 18 And the first woman’s child then died during the night. 19 “This woman’s son then died during the night because she laid upon him (and crushed him). 20 She then got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me (while) your maidservant was still asleep, and laid him down in her bosom, and she put her dead son into my bosom.” 21 “I got up in the morning to nurse my son and—look!—he was dead. I then examined him in the morning and—look!—he was not the son whom I had given birth to.” 22 The other woman said, “No! My son is the living one, and your son is the dead one!” (The first woman) said, “No! My son is the living one, and your son is the dead one!” and they argued before the king.

23 The king then said, “This one says, ‘This, my son, is the living one and your son is the dead one,’ and the other one says, ‘No! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.’ 24 So the king said, “Bring me a sword,” and they brought a sword before the king. 25 The king said, “Cut the child in two, and give each woman half of it.” 26 So the harlot said, “O my master, please let the living child belong to me, and do not kill him.” 27 The other woman said, “Let it be my honor to take the dead one, but let the living one be for you.” 28 The king then said, “This is the case of the two harlots.”

**Haftarah of Parshas Mikeitz**

This Haftarah begins abruptly with the awakening of Shlomo from a dream, similar to the beginning of Parshas Mikeitz, which describes Pharaoh awakening from his dreams.

The preceding narrative, before the Haftarah begins, describes how God revealed Himself to Shlomo in a dream at Givon and offered to grant any request. God is pleased when Shlomo asks, not for his personal needs, but for wisdom to lead the nation properly. The Haftarah then describes an example of how Shlomo utilized this Divine gift, after returning to Jerusalem (v. 15), in adjudicating a difficult case.

Two harlots appear before Shlomo. Both share the same house and both had given birth within a period of a few days. Both concur that one of the children was smothered in the night and that the other harlot had switched the babies so as to have the live one for herself—and both claim that the guilty party is the other harlot (16-22).

Having no witnesses to verify either claim, the King employs his wisdom in a tactical maneuver. After summing up the pleas of both parties (23), the King instructs that the living child be severed in two, and half be given to each of the claimants (24-25).

Inevitably, the true mother could not bear to see her child killed and pleaded to the King that the baby be given to the other woman so as to spare its life. The other woman, however, was willing to accept the King’s proposition as a “fair solution” (24-26). Thus, the ploy was successful and Shlomo was able to return the child to its true mother (27).

News of Shlomo’s ingenious solution spread fast, further asserting the authority of his leadership (3:28-4:1).
the living child in two and give half to one (woman) and the other half to the other (woman).

26 The woman whose son was (really) the living one said to the king, “Please, my master! Give her the living child, but do not kill him!” for her compassion was roused for her son. But the (other) one said, “Let him be neither mine nor yours. Cut him!”  

27 The king then responded and said, “Give the living child to (the first woman) and do not kill him. She is the mother.”

28 All of Israel heard about the case that the king had judged and they were in awe of the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was with him to carry out (true) justice.  

41 Then King Shlomo reigned over all Israel (for all the people willingly accepted his sovereignty).

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**Vayigash**

(Ezekiel 37:15 – 28)

Then God’s word came to me, saying: 16 “And you, son of man, take a (piece of) wood and write on it, ‘For Yehudah and his fellow Israelites,’ and take another stick and write on it, ‘For Yosef — a stick for (his son) Efrayim and (the other tribes) the whole house of Israel with him.’

17 “Bring them close to one another, so they (resemble) one stick and they will (miraculously) join in your hands to be one.

18 “When your people say to you, ‘Tell us what these mean to you.’ Say to them, ‘Almighty God says, “Observe! I am taking the stick of Yosef which is in Efrayim’s hand, and the tribes of Israel with him, and I am placing the stick of Yehudah on it. I will make them one stick, and they will join in My hand.”’ 20 The sticks on which you have written should be (in your hands) before their eyes.”

21 “(While you are holding the sticks) tell them, ‘This is what Almighty God said: ‘I will take the Jews from among the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from (all) around and bring them to their Land.

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**Haftarah of Parshas Vayigash**

This Haftarah depicts a fusion of the kingdom of Yehudah with the kingdom of Yosef that will occur in the Messianic Redemption, the historical conclusion of the conflict between Yehudah and Yosef at the opening of Parshas Vayigash.

Here we see, once again, how the Haftarah is not merely a parallel reading to the Parsha, but often, a development and conclusion of the
The time of David’s death drew near. He instructed his son Shlomo, saying, “I am going to the time of David’s death drew near. He instructed his son Shlomo, saying, “I am going to guide you. I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it will be an eternal covenant with them. I will establish them there forever and cause them to multiply, and I will place My Sanctuary among them (so it stands) forever. My Divine Presence will be among them. I will be their God (to help them and save them), and they will be their God (to help them and save them), and they will be My people (to believe in Me and keep My mitzvos).” The nations will know that I am God, Who sanctifies Israel, since My Sanctuary will be among them forever.”

I will make them one nation in the Land, in the hills of Israel, and all of them will have one king. They will no longer be two nations (of Yehudah and the other tribes), and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer be defiled by their idols, their abominations and all their sins. I will save them (from where they are lost) in all the communities where they sinned, and I will purify them (from their sins). They will be My people (who believe in Me and observe My mitzvos), and I will be their God (to save them and help them).”

24 “My servant (Mashiach, a descendant of) David, will be king over them and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow My laws and guard My statutes (in their hearts), and fulfill them. They will settle in the Land that I gave to My servant Yaakov, the Land where their ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren will live there forever, and David my servant will be their leader forever.”

26 “I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it will be an eternal covenant with them. I will establish them (there forever) and cause them to multiply, and I will place My Sanctuary among them (so it stands) forever. My Divine Presence will be among them. I will be their God (to help them and save them), and they will be My people (to believe in Me and keep My mitzvos).”

28 “The nations will know that I am God, Who sanctifies Israel, since My Sanctuary will be among them forever.”

The unification of the two kingdoms at the time of the Redemption, under the leadership of Mashiach who is from the tribe of Yehudah (18-25). The Haftarah concludes with an idyllic picture of the Messianic utopia when the Divine Presence will rest among Israel (26-28).

Ideas expressed by the Parsha. This additional revelation which is found in the Haftarah represents the “advantage of light over darkness” which can only be appreciated through the experience of exile, for the custom of reading the weekly Haftarah was initially introduced as a result of an anti-Semitic decree which was later annulled (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayigash 5750).

The Haftarah opens with a command to Yechezkel the prophet to take two sticks, one representing the Southern Kingdom of Yehudah and the other the Northern Kingdom of Yosef, and to join them together (37:15-17). The symbolism is then clarified: The joining of the sticks represents the unification of the two kingdoms at the time of the Redemption, under the leadership of Mashiach who is from the tribe of Yehudah (18-25). The Haftarah concludes with an idyllic picture of the Messianic utopia when the Divine Presence will rest among Israel (26-28).

25 David my servant will be their leader forever. This cannot possibly refer to King David himself, returning as Mashiach after the revival of the dead, because, according to Jewish law Mashiach must be a leader whose direct effect is felt in the period preceding the redemption (Rambam, Laws of Kings 11:4). The resurrection (even of tzadikim), however, will only occur much later.
(of mercy and kindness), to keep His (suprarational) laws. His rational commandments (of conduct between man and God), His laws (of conduct between man and his fellow) and testimonial laws (that commemorate various events), as is written in the Torah of Moshe. (Then) you will become wise in whatever (aspect of Divine service) you do and wherever you turn. (Do this) in order that God may fulfill His word that He spoke about me, saying, 'If your sons are careful in their ways to go before Me truthfully, with all their hearts and all their souls, (then),’ said (God), "You will never cease to have one (of your descendants) upon the throne of Israel.'"

5 “You are also aware of what Yo’au ben Tzeruyah did to me, (i.e.) what he did to the two army generals of Israel, Avnair ben Nair and Amasa ben Yeser (to whom I guaranteed safety)—he killed them and (shed) the blood of war in (times of) peace. He put the blood of war in the belt around his loins and the shoes on his feet.

6 “You must act according to your wisdom, but don't let him have (honor for his) old age, and see to it that he does not go down to the grave with (a) peaceful death.

7 “Act kindly to the sons of Barzilay the Giladite, (aside from) letting them be among those who eat at your table, for that is (precisely) how they assisted me when I was fleeing from your brother Aushalom.”

8 “Now Shimi ben Gairah—of (the tribe of) Binyamin, from Bachurim, who (taught) you (Torah)—curse me bitterly on the day I went to Machanayim (when I was fleeing from Aushalom. But later) he came down to meet me at the Jordan (and appealed me), so I swore to him in God’s Name, saying, 'I will not kill you with the sword,' (so I can't take revenge against him personally).

9 However, now (you are not obligated by this oath, so) do not free him (from punishment), as you're a wise man and you know what to do to him. But don’t let him have (honor for his) old age, and see to it that he goes down to the grave with (a) bloody death.

David passes away

10 David then lay with his fathers, and he was buried in the City of David. 11 David reigned over Israel for a total of forty years. In Chevron he reigned for seven years, in Jerusalem he reigned for thirty-three years.

12 Shlomo then sat on the throne of his father, David, and his sovereignty was firmly established.

As for the fact that the Jerusalem Talmud (Brachos 2:4) mentions the possibility of King David returning as Mashiach (“If he is from the living, his name is David, and if he is from the dead, it will be David himself”)—it could be argued that this refers to the soul of King David being invested into Mashiach. In fact we find that this is precisely how Ohr HaChayim (Bereishis 49:11) explains the saying of our Sages, “Moshe is the first redeemer and the last redeemer” (Shemos Rabah 2:6), that part of the soul of Moshe will be invested into Mashiach.

These sources thus pose no contradiction to the ruling of Rambam that Mashiach’s leadership must arise during exile times and guide the Jewish people towards redemption from within the context of exile (Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 206, note 6).

Haftarah of Parshas Vayechi

This Haftarah describes the time before David’s passing and his instructions to Shlomo, his son, similar to the account of Ya’akov’s words to his children shortly before his passing, in Parshas Vayechi.

The Haftarah opens with King David on his deathbed, addressing his last wishes to his son Shlomo, who was twelve years old at the time. He charges him to keep the Torah (1-4) and offers political advice concerning certain trouble-making personalities that need to be eliminated (5-9).

The Haftarah concludes by chronicling David’s death and Shlomo’s succession.
The Plan

20.18 Yonasan said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty. 19 For three (days) you should go down (and hide yourself) well. Come to the place where you hid on the day of the incident (when the King swore to me not to kill you), and sit by the traveler’s (marker) stone.

20 “I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. 21 Then, I will send a lad (saying to him), ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to the lad, ‘look!—the arrows are on this side of you,’ then you should take them and return, for it is safe for you, and there is no (dangerous) thing (looming. I swear this) as God lives.

22 “But if I say this to the young man, ‘Behold, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go, because God has sent you.

23 “This matter of which you and I have spoken, behold!—God is (a witness) between me and you forever.”

24 David hid himself in the field. When the (first of the new) month came, the King sat down to eat the meal.

25 The King sat at his seat, as usual, on a seat by the wall. Yonasan stood up so that Avner could sit at Sha’ul’s side. David’s place was empty. 26 Nevertheless Sha’ul said nothing on that day, for he thought, “(He had) a (nocturnal) accident. He is not ritually pure. (He didn’t come because) he has not been ritually purified.”

27 It came to pass on the next day, which was the second day of the month, that David’s place was empty.

Sha’ul said to Yonasan his son, “Why didn’t the son of Yishai come to the meal, neither yesterday, nor today?”

28 Yonasan answered Sha’ul, “David asked me permission to go to Beis Lechem.” 29 He said, ‘Please let

The Haftarah of Erev Rosh Chodesh

This Haftarah mentions the eve of Rosh Chodesh: “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month” (20:18). At first glance, this connection appears to be somewhat tenuous, as the remaining narrative of the Haftarah is not connected with the theme of Erev Rosh Chodesh. Why should this be more pertinent than reading the Haftarah connected with the weekly Parsha? Chasidic thought explains that the renewal of the moon signifies redemption, and therefore, by logical extension, the eve of the new moon (Erev Rosh Chodesh) represents the work carried out during exile in order to bring the redemption. Being that this is the underlying significance of all our activities, it was considered a sufficiently important replacement for the Haftarah of the week (Hisudowos 5711, vol. 2, p. 50, 56).

The Haftarah describes a climactic moment in the rift between David and Sha’ul, which arose from David’s successful military career. Sha’ul, who was king at the time, perceived David as a rebel that needed to be eliminated. Fearing for his life, David seeks the assistance of Yonasan, the king’s son, who was David’s passionate admirer, but Yonasan finds the conspiracy theory difficult to believe. In order to verify his suspicions, David suggests a plan: he will disappear for three days to test the king’s reaction, which would then be reported to David by Yonasan with a secret sign.

The Haftarah opens as Yonasan reviews David’s plan and confirms a secret sign to be enacted by shooting arrows and instructing certain phrases to his servant (20:18-23). Initially, the king appears indifferent to David’s absence (24-28), but on the second day he becomes furious with Yonasan and states that David “deserves death” (29-34).

So, the next morning, Yonasan goes out to the field and communicates their pre-arranged sign by shooting arrows, and sends his servant home (35-40). David then comes out of hiding, and they part amid tears,
me go, because our family (is offering) sacrifice(s today) in the city and my (oldest) brother (Eliau) has instructed me (to be there). Now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please excuse me (from the King’s duties) to see my brothers. ‘Therefore he has not come to the King’s table.’”

30 Sha’ul became furious with Yonasan, and he said to him, “You are the son of a sinful and rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Yishai (for the monarchy) to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness (for the fact that you prefer that my enemy will lead people to suspect that you are not my son)?” 31 For as long as the son of Yishai lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your Kingdom. Now (since you sent him away) send (for him) and fetch him to me, for he deserves death.”

32 Yonasan answered Sha’ul, his father, and said to him, “Why should he be killed? What has he done?”

33 Sha’ul raised a spear to strike him. Yonasan realized that his father was determined to slay David.

34 Yonasan rose from the table in fierce anger. He ate no food on the second day of the new moon, for he was upset for David, and his father had put him to shame (by insulting and threatening him).

35 In the morning, that Yonasan went out to the field to the appointed place (he had arranged) with David, and a young lad was with him. 36 He said to his lad, “Run! Find now the arrows which I shoot.” As the lad ran (for the first arrow), he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 When the lad came to the place of the (first) arrow which Yonasan had shot, Yonasan called out after the lad and said, “Isn’t the (last) arrow beyond you?” 38 Yonasan called out after the lad, “Go quickly! Hurry (after the second arrow). Don’t stay (by the first)!”. Yonasan’s lad gathered up (both) the arrows, and came to his master. 39 The lad knew nothing (about the sign). Only Yonasan and David knew the matter.

40 Yonasan gave his bow and arrows to his lad, and said to him, “Go and carry them to the city.” 41 As soon as the lad had gone (towards the city), David (understood that it was safe and) stood up from near the south (side of the stone). He fell on his face to the ground, and prostrated himself three times. They kissed

swearing an oath “between my descendants and your descendants forever” (41-42).

21. הַשְּׁקָה = The arrows are on this side of you, etc. When arrows are shot from a bow, the more the bow is extended backwards, the further the arrows will reach. This is a metaphor for the spiritual accomplishments of exile: The more the Jewish people “extend themselves” to deal with the physical world in the most difficult of circumstances, the greater and more “far reaching” is the spiritual accomplishment. David wanted to know if these accomplishments had already been completed, heralding the time of redemption. So Yonasan told him that if “the arrows are on this side of you,” i.e. if the task of exile, represented by the arrows, is complete, “then you should take them and return, for it is safe for you,” i.e. the time of redemption has arrived. But if the arrows are beyond you,” then there is still much work to be done in exile. But do not be afraid to continue this work, “because God has sent you” (Hisoaduos ibid.).
Shabbos Rosh Chodesh / שבת ראש חודש

(The Haftarah of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh)

Shabbos Rosh Chodesh / שבת ראש חודש

The Haftarah reading for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh is on page 403. (Bamidbar 28:9-15).

66:1 This is what God said: “The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool, (so) what house could you build (worthy) for Me, and what place (is worthy for) My (Presence to) rest?  My hand has made all these things (Heaven and earth), and (therefore) all these things came into being,” says God. “But (even though I am so exalted), to this I will pay attention: to he who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word. 3 “However, he who kills an ox (offering his sacrifice without trembling at My word) it is as if he slew a man. He who sacrifices a lamb (without trembling), is as if he cut off a dog’s neck. He who offers a meal-offering (without trembling), is as if he offered suine’s blood. He who burns incense (without trembling), is as if he blessed an idol. He who offers up frankincense (without trembling) is as if he offered an inappropriate gift. They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations. 4 So too I will choose to mock them, and will bring their fears upon them, because when I called (to them through the prophets), none answered. When I spoke, they did not listen. They did evil before My eyes, and chose what I did not desire.”

5 “Hear the word of God, you who tremble at His word! Your (wicked) brothers who hate you and who ostracize you say, ‘(I

God is everywhere

Haftarah of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh

This Haftarah mentions the sacrificial worship that will occur every new month (Rosh Chodesh) after the ingathering of the exiles. The Haftarah was addressed by the prophet Yeshayah (Isaiah) to the Jewish people in Babylon after the exile, at the end of the 6th century B.C.E.

The Haftarah opens with God’s proclamation of omnipresence and the insufficiency of one House to contain Him (66:1). God will turn His attention to those that fear Him (2), and all types of insincere worship are abhorred by Him (3-4). Those who fear God will ultimately be joyous, but those who hate and ostracize God’s servants will be chastised by a “voice from the Temple” (5-6). Tsiyon’s (Zion’s) deliverance is compared to that of a mother who gives birth without pain (7-9), and the rejoicing at Jerusalem’s rebuilding is depicted (10-14). All enemies and idol-worshipers will be punished (15-18) and the nations that remain will come to Tsiyon, bringing the Jewish people along with them (19-20).

New priests will be appointed, and all mankind will worship God (21-23). The rebels’ corpses will remain in the valley of Yehoshafat as an ominous reminder to all mankind (24; verse 23 is then repeated so as to finish on a positive note).

1 The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. According to Chasidic thought, the various gradations of the human soul can be divided into three broad categories: a.) Internal. Those powers which rest within the body and interact with it. These parts of the soul give life to the body and control its intellectual and emotional activity, b.) External. The aura (makif) of the soul which surrounds the body and ordinarily has no direct contact with it. On occasion, however, one can draw from these energies of the soul in order to break free from existing limitations in one’s life. c.) Essence. Then there is the very essence of the soul which is not limited to being inside or outside the body. The route to access the soul’s
am so great that God is glorified because of my name!’ (But in truth) we shall see your joy and they shall be shamed. (Then there will be) a voice of rumbling from the city (of Tziyon), a voice from the Temple, the voice of God rendering recompense to his enemies (Gog and Magog).”

17 “Before she (Tziyon) feels labor pains she will give birth. Before her labor pain will come, she will be delivered a son. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such a thing? Has a land gone through its labor in one day? Has a nation been born all at once, for Tziyon labored and gave birth to her children? Shall I bring to the birthstool, and not cause her to give birth?” says God. “Shall I, who cause birth, hold back?” says your God.

10 “Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her (to see her rebuilt). Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her (in her destruction), so that you may (be rewarded to) nurse, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations. That you may drink deeply, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For this is what God says: ‘Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations (will rush to her) like a flowing stream. (You who mourned for her) shall be (rewarded) to draw (effortlessly from) the wealth of the nations. You shall be (honored by the nations, like a baby who is) carried on (its mother’s) sides, and dandled on her knees. Like one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem (for your suffering). When you see (Jerusalem rebuilt), your heart will rejoice, and (the health of) your bones will (be strengthened) like flourishing grass. The (mighty) Hand of God will be known to His servants, and His anger toward His enemies.

15 For, behold, God will come with fire (to destroy the armies of Gog and Magog), and with His chariots like a storm to repay (His enemies) with fury. His rebuke (will be) with flames of fire. For by fire God will execute judgment, and by His sword upon all flesh. The slain by God will be many.”

16 “Those who prepare and purify themselves (to go) to the gardens (of idolatry, one group) after another (to worship the idol) in the center (of the garden); those who eat swine’s flesh, abominable creatures, and mice—they will all perish together,” says God. “I (know) their works and their thoughts. (The time) has come, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see My glory.” I will scar them, but from them I will let survivors escape to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, the archers, to Tuwal, and Yavan, to far off islands, that have not heard My fame, nor have they seen My glory. They shall

Essence is through humility, simplicity and sincere dedication.

These three levels of the soul are alluded to in the opening of the Haftarah. “The heavens” and “earth” allude to Torah and mitzvos respectively (because Torah was given from Heaven, and the mitzvos are performed with physical objects here on earth), i.e. things which are observed in everyday life with the normal faculties of the soul found in the body. The “house” mentioned by the verse alludes to the soul powers which encompass the body, just as a house encompasses a person. While these powers are indeed impressive, scripture nevertheless bemoans their insufficiency (“What house could you build (worthy) for Me?”), because the most profound form of Divine service comes from the essence of the soul. And this essence is reached through humility: “To this I will pay
This explanation adds further significance to the reading of this passage (new moon). For just as the disappearance of the Rosh Chodesh: (Zechariah 2:14 – 4:7)

If Sunday is also Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add (I Samuel 20:18,42):

2018 Yonasan said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty.

22 Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us are on page 403-4.

CHANUKAH (FIRST SHABBOS) / (Shabbat Hovat HaNevuah)

(Zechariah 2:14 – 4:7)

The Maftir readings for Shabbos Chanukah I are on page 403-4.

2:14 “Sing and rejoice, daughter of Tziyon, for I am coming (to Jerusalem) and I will dwell in your midst,” says God. 22 “Many nations will attach them-

attention: to he who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word” (v. 2).

This explanation adds further significance to the reading of this passage on Rosh Chodesh (new moon). For just as the disappearance of the moon and its re-emergence as a miniscule point is the key to its later growth, likewise it is the path of humility and self-renunciation which reaches the essence of the soul, bringing the person to a genuine spiritual rebirth (Sefer Hama’amirim Melukat vol. 3, p. 133).
selves to God on that day, and they will become My people (too and believe in Me, but nevertheless) I will dwell (only) in your midst.” Then you will know that the God of hosts sent me (only) to you.

24 God will let Yehudah take possession of his position in the Holy Land (never to be exiled again), and (God) will once again choose Yerushalayim (to have His Shechinah dwell there). 13 Be silent before God (all you nations! Never again speak badly of the Jewish people), for (then) He will be roused from His holy abode (to exact retribution on the nations).

5:3 (In the prophetic vision) He then showed me Yehoshua the High Priest standing before God’s angel, with Satan standing at (Yehoshua’s) right to incriminate him (for failing to rebuke his children when they married non-Jewish women).

(An angel of) God said to Satan, “God will reprimand you, O Satan! He Who chooses Yerushalayim will reprimand you! Why, this (Yehoshua) was miraculously saved like) a brand rescued from fire (so how can you prosecute him)?”

Now, Yehoshua was wearing ‘soiled clothes’ (i.e. sins) while standing before the angel. (The angel) spoke up loudly and said to (the other angels) standing before him, “Remove the ‘soiled clothes’ (i.e. the non-Jewish women) from his (sons)!”

He said to him, “See, I have taken away your (past) sins from you and (when your current sins cease will you see that) I am clothing you in beautiful clothes (i.e merits).”

Then I (prayed for Yehoshua), saying, “Let them place a pure (priestly) turban on his head (signifying that his descendants would inherit the priesthood.” My prayer was immediately answered) and they put the pure turban on his head and clothed him in garments, while God’s angel stood by.

(Afterwards,) God’s angel warned Yehoshua, saying, "This is what the God of hosts said: ‘If your (children) will) walk in My paths and keep the things (I told them) to keep, then your (children) will (be appointed) to take charge of My house

The Haftarah opens with words of comfort about the return of the Divine presence and restoration of the Land (2:14-17). We then read the first of two visions depicted in the Haftarah, that of the “High Priest in soiled garments” who is condemned for his children’s sins by the Satan, but vindicated by God’s angel (3:1-5). This is followed by promises of a restored Temple and the coming of Mashiach (6-10). In the second vision, Zechariah sees the gold Menorah, a metaphor for Mashiach’s Divine presence and restoration of the Land (2:14-17). We then read the final verse, Zechariah sees the gold Menorah, a metaphor for Mashiach’s Divine spirit through which he will effortlessly subdue nations (4:1-7).

3:2 — Why, this (man) is like a brand rescued from a fire. God’s angel reprimanded the Satan for speaking disparagingly about one who was a “brand rescued from a fire.” As Rabbi Yosef Caro explains, in his commentary to this verse, “Only a tiny part of the Jewish people remain, like a brand saved from a fire, and you wish to utter judgments against them so that I should destroy them?”

In our post-Holocaust generation, every Jew is, quite literally, a “brand rescued from the fire.” God’s blank dismissal of Satan’s criticisms (that Jews possess the “soiled garments” of sin etc.) teaches us a powerful lesson—that in our generation, the key emphasis must be on lifting the spirits of the Jewish people through stressing the innate worth of every
single Jew, and God’s love to the Jew which is extended regardless of his level of observance (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayechi 5751; Mikeitz 5745).

3:7. שָׁבֵּת יָהֳעִי — I will permit you to walk among those (angels) who stand (there). In comparison to the angels, who are described as being static (“standing”), the soul is depicted as a dynamic (“walking”) entity. This does not mean to say that an angel cannot enjoy spiritual growth at all; rather, it means that whatever progress the angel makes is always proportional to its prior standing. A soul, on the other hand, is capable of making a truly “quantum leap.”

9. אַשְׁרָה בְּרֵסַת הָעֵדֶרֶךְ מַלְיָא צְלַל — ...will (participate in the construction of the Temple by) engraving inscriptions (on its stones),” says the God of hosts, “and I will remove the sin of that land in one day. 10 On that day,” says the God of hosts, “you will invite each other to come and (take shade) under the vines and under the fig trees (to enjoy the bountiful goodness which will then be).”

5:4. עִמּוּד לְעַנְדְּכֵא וְלָכַּא — “My master, what are these (alluding to)?” he asked me.

10. לְרֵם הָעֵדֶרֶךְ לְרֵם לְרֵם — “Don’t you know what they are?” replied the angel that spoke with me.

Second vision: the Menorah

An illustration of these two types of progress can be found in the sphere of Torah study. Normally, whatever knowledge a person has acquired assists him in gaining further knowledge, because the fresh information that he seeks is compatible with, and builds upon, his existing structure. However, we do find, for example, that Rabbi Zeira conducted one hundred fasts in order to forget the Babylonian Talmud so that he would be able to study the Jerusalem Talmud (Bava Metzia 85a). Apparently, this was because Rabbi Zeira was about to make a “quantum leap” to a new level of study where his prior knowledge would actually be an impediment (Sefer Hama’amrim 5711-3, pp. 246-7).
If Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add the following after the Haftarah* (Isaiah 66:1,23-24; ibid. 23; I Samuel 20:18,42):

"This is what God said: ‘The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool, (so) what house could you build (worthy) for Me, and what place (is worthy for) My (Presence to) rest?’ 21 It will then be, that every (first of the) new month, and every Shabbos, all mankind shall come to worship before Me (in the holy Temple),’ says God. 24 The (non-Jews) shall go out (of Jerusalem, to the valley of Yehoshafat), and look upon the corpses of the men (of Gog and Magog) who have rebelled against Me, for the worms (that eat them) will not die, and the fire (that burns them) shall not be extinguished. They shall be a (symbol of) disgrace to all mankind. 21 It will then be, that every (first of the) new month, and every Shabbos, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says God.

20:10 Yonasan said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty. 41 Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, ‘God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’”

**CHANUKAH (SECOND SHABBOS) / (ב) שבת חנוכה**

(Kings I 7:40 – 50)

The Maftir reading for Shabbos Chanukah II is on page 404.

7:40 Chirom then made the pots, shovels and basins. Chirom completed all the work that he had done on behalf of King Shlomo for the House of God:

**Haftarah of Chanukah (Second Shabbos)**

This Haftarah summarizes the copper-work completed by Chirom, the master craftsman of Shlomo’s Temple (see Haftarah for Parshas Vayakhel, page 52), including small utensils, columns and their fixtures and the vat (40-47). The concluding section describes the golden vessels which were made by Shlomo himself: the Altar, Table, supplementary Menorahs—hence the connection to Chanukah—musical instruments, small utensils and the keys to the Inner House (48-49).

Why was a Haftarah which describes the First Temple chosen for the second Shabbos of Chanukah, and a Haftarah describing the Second Temple chosen for the first Shabbos? Sefer ha-Eshkol writes that the vision of Zechariah (Second Temple) read on the first Shabbos has a stronger connection to Chanukah, since the story of Chanukah revolves around the Second Temple. Therefore it is read first (Sefer ha-Eshkol, Auerbach edition, p. 66). A further explanation is based on the principle that "we increase in matters of holiness and do not decrease" (Shabbos 21b), from which it follows that the second Shabbos of Chanukah must be on a higher level than the first. Therefore, on this second Shabbos we read a Haftarah about the First Temple, which enjoyed a superior spiritual standing, being that the Second Temple lacked “five key elements...the Ark, its lid, the Cherubim, fire, Divine Presence and Divine inspiration” (Yoma 21b, Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5740, par. 18).

7:40 נהרש—Chirom then made etc. At first glance, the Haftarah’s connection with Chanukah appears to be superficial. Only a
The vessels is the greatest achievement of all, even more so than describes the crafting of the vessels, seems to be teaching us that when the Temple was re-dedicated in the time of the Hasmoneans?

In the Book of Kings which speaks of the installation of the vessels in the connection to Chanukah. Why do we not read from the following section work crafted by Chiram, a topic which appears to have no special (which Shlomo made (v. 49), and most of the Haftarah discusses copper-work crafted by Chiram, a topic which appears to have no special connection to Chanukah. Why do we not read from the following section in the Book of Kings which speaks of the installation of the vessels in the dedication of the Temple, a theme which is directly related to Chanukah when the Temple was re-dedicated in the time of the Hasmoneans? Being that "we increase in matters of holiness and do not decrease" (Shabbos 21b), this second and final Haftarah of Chanukah, which describes the crafting of the vessels, seems to be teaching us that making the vessels is the greatest achievement of all, even more so than installing or using them! This rather bizarre conclusion points to a profound mystical truth: that preparing the world for Divine revelation ("making vessels") is an even greater accomplishment than bringing the revelation itself ("lighting the Menorah"). Holiness and Godliness will only rest in a place which is fitting, so there is nothing especially radical about bringing holiness to a place which is already prepared for it. A truly remarkable feat is to take something which is unreceptive and repellent to the notion of holiness, and to transform it into a fitting receptacle.

Therefore, we can appreciate that the spiritual motif of this second Haftarah, that of "making vessels" is the most profound message of all to be found in the Haftarahs of Chanukah (Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 424ff.).
**MAFTIR FOR SHABBOS ROSH CHODESH**

**SECOND DAY OF CHANUKAH**

In many communities, including Chabad, the custom is to begin here.

In many communities, including Chabad, the custom is to begin here.

Some communities have the custom to begin here.

2. ס"ל ב/day of Chanukah, האזכרה תפוקת בובות חגים

In many communities, including Chabad, the custom is to begin here.

Some communities have the custom to begin here.

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Some communities have the custom to begin here.
Seventh day of Chanukah

From the third Torah, we read the following Maftir:

Eighth day of Chanukah

From the first Torah, we read six Aliyos from the weekly Parsha. From the second Torah we read the following:

Sixth day of Chanukah

The sixth day of Chanukah is always Rosh Chodesh. We read from three Torahs. From the first Torah we read six Aliyos from the weekly Parsha. From the second Torah we read the following:

Fourth day of Chanukah

From the third Torah, we read the following Maftir:
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Be’er Mayim Chayim — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Chaim ben Betzael (1515-1588), older brother of the Maharal of Prague, first published in Brooklyn and London between 1965 and 1971.

Be’er Yitzchak — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Yitzchak Ya’akov Horowitz of Yaroslav (d. 1864).

Beis Yosef — Halachic commentary by R’ Yosef Caro (1488-1575) on the Tur. He was also the author of the Shulchan Aruch and Kesef Mishneh, a commentary on Rambam’s code.

Bereishis Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Genesis. (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Bi’ur HaGra — Commentary to Shulchan Aruch by the Vilna Ga’on. (See: Vilna Ga’on).

Biuray Maharay — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Yisrael Isserlein (c.1390-1460), German halachist, author of Sha’alos v’Teshuvos Terumas Hadeshen. First printed in Venice in 1419.

Chacham Tzvi — Responsa by R’ Tzvi Ashkenazi of Amsterdam (1660-1718).

Chelkos Mechokaik — Primary commentary to the Even Ha’ezek section of Shulchan Aruch by Reb Moshe Lima of Vilna (17th cent.).

Chiddushei Aggados — See Maharsha.

Chizkuni — Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Cheziyakh ben Manoach, who lived in the thirteenth century, in Provence.

Da’as Zekeinim — Commentary to the Torah by the Tosafists of France and Germany, circa. 1100-1300. Edited by Rabbi Yehuda ben Eliezer and first printed in 1783.

Degel Machaneh Efrayim — Important chassidic commentary to the Torah, based strongly on the teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov, by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Efraim of Sidlikov (1748-1800), a grandson of the Ba’al Shem Tov. Published in Koretz.

Devarim Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Deuteronomy. (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Devek Tov — Commentary on Rashi by Rabbi Shimon Oshenburg Halevi of Frankfurt, 16th century.
**Derech Mitzvosecha** — Compendium of fundamental Chasidic discourses on many mitzvos of the Torah by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (the “Tzemach Tzedek”). Also known as “Iyun HaMitzvos.” First published in 1911, in Poltova Ukraine.

**Divrei David** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi David ben Shmuel HaLevi (1586-1667), author of Taz, a major commentary on the Shulchan Aruch.

**Drashos Haran** — Fundamental discourses by Rabbi Nissim of Gerona, Spain (14th century). See: Ran.

**Eitz Yosef** — Commentary to Ein Ya’akov, the homiletic passages of the Talmud, by Rabbi Chanoch Zundel (d. 1867).

**Emunos v’Deos** — Classic philosophical work written by Sa’adiah Ga’on, discussing the basic foundations of Judaism. First published in Constantinople in 1562. (See: Sa’adiah Ga’on)

**Epistle to Yemen** — Letter written by the Rambam in 1172 to the Jews of Yemen who were suffering from a fanatical Muslim movement that threatened the existence of their community.

**Gur Aryeh** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by the Maharal of Prague, Rabbi Yehudah Loewe, (1512-1609), Chief Rabbi in Moravia, Posen, and Prague. Author of numerous works in all fields of Torah. He was a descendant of King David. All the Chabad Rebbeim are descendants of the Maharal.

**Hadar Zekeinim** — Commentary to the Torah by the Tosafists of France and Germany from around 1100-1300. First published in 1840.

**Har Tzvi** — Responsa by Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank (1874-1960), Rabbi of Jerusalem for many decades; active in establishing the chief rabbinate of Israel.

**Hatamim** — Scholarly journal published by the Students’ Organization of the Lubavitcher Yeshivah in Warsaw. A total of eight issues were printed, between 1935 and 1937.

**Hayom Yom** — Handbook of chasidic insights following the calendar, compiled by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. First printed in 1942.

**Ibn Ezra** — R’ Avraham (1080-1164). Born in Spain, he was the author of a classic commentary to Tanach, and was also a prominent grammarian and poet.

**Igeres Hateshuvah** — Third section of Taneya, discussing the concept of Teshuva according to Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources (see Taneya).

**Ikarim** — “Book of Principles” which stresses three fundamental aspects of Jewish belief – faith in G-d, Torah from Sinai, and reward and punishment – by R’ Yosef Albo (1380-1444) of Spain.

**Iyun Ya’akov** — Commentary to the homiletic passages of the Talmud by Rabbi Ya’akov Back Reischer (1670-1733), which appears in standard editions of Ein Ya’akov.

**Kesef Mishneh** — Commentary to Rambam’s Mishneh Torah by R’ Yosef Caro, author of Shulchan Aruch.

**Kli Yakar** — Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Lunshitz (c.1550-1619), Rosh Yeshiva in Lemberg and Rabbi of Prague.

**Kuzari** — Important work on Jewish Philosophy by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (1074-1141) written in the form of a dialogue between the King of the Khazars and a Jewish scholar.

**Levush Ha’ohrah** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe (c. 1535-1612). Commonly known as the “Levush” after the ten works he wrote which contain that word within their names.

**Likutei Torah** — Fundamental chasidic discourses of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, author of the Shulchan Aruch Ha’Rav and Tanya, on Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

**Likutei Sichos** — 39-volume work of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, analyzing all parts of the Torah in an original manner and bringing them into harmony with one another. Published by Va’ad Lehafatzas Sichos (Kehos) from 1962 to 2001.

**Magid Mishneh** — Commentary to Rambam’s Mishneh Torah, by Rabbi Yidal of Tolosa (c. 1360), printed in standard editions.

**Maharik** — Rabbi Yosef ben Shlomo Kolon (1420-1480) of France, and later northern Italy. Author of classic responsa and teacher of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura. His commentary to the Torah was first published in Jerusalem in 1970.

**Maharsha** — Acronym for Moreinu HaRav Shmuel Eliezer Halevi Eidels of Ostroh, Poland (1555-1632), Rosh Yeshiva and Rabbi in a number of the leading communities of Poland. Author of important commentaries on the Talmud, divided into halachic and Aggadic sections.

**Maharshaly** — Acronym for Rabbi Shlomo ben Yechezkel Lorin (c.1510-1573), famed Talmudist, author of Yam Shel Shlomo, Chochmas Shlomo, Yerios Shlomo, and other important works.

**Maharzu** — Commentary to the Midrash Rabah by Rabbi Ze’ev Wolf Einhorn (19th century). (See “Midrash Rabah”)

**Malbim** — Acronym for Meir Leibush ben Yechezkel Michel (1809-1879), Rabbi in Germany, Romania, and Russia. Author of popular Bible commentary which connects the Oral and Written traditions.
**Maskil leDavid** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi David Pardo (1710-1792), Rabbi in Sarajevo and Jerusalem, author of important commentaries on Tosefta and Sifri. He was one of the leading Sephardic Torah scholars of the eighteenth century.

**Matnos Kehunah** — Commentary on Midrash Rabbah by Rabbi Yissachar Ber HaKohen (c.1520-1590), a student of the Rama.

**Mechilta** — Halachic Midrash of the Tannaitic period to the Book of Exodus.

**Megaleh Amukos** — 252 explanations of Moshe’s Prayer in Parshas Vaeschanan and 1000 explanations on the small alef in the first word of Vayikra, according to Kabbalah, by R’ Noson Noteh Shapiro. First printed in Cracow in 1637.

**Megilas Esther** — Scholarly commentary to Sefer haMitzvos defending the Rambam against attacks from the Ramban, by Rabbi Yitzchok Lioven. First published in Venice in 1591.

**Me’or Einayim** — Chasidic commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (1730-1797), a student of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch. First published in Slavita, 1798.

**Meiri** — Extensive Commentary to the Talmud by R’ Menachem HaMeiri (c. 1249-c. 1306).

**Metzudos** — Commentary to the Prophets and Writings, consisting of two parts, Metzudas Tziyon, which explains the meaning of individual words, and Metzudos David, a running commentary to the text. Initial manuscripts of the commentary were authored by Rabbi David Altschuler, and published shortly before his passing in 1753. The commentary was edited and completed by his son, Rabbi Yechiel Hillel, and published in 1780. The commentary has attained great popularity for being concise and comprehensive.

**Midrash** — Aggadic and Halachic teachings of the Talmudic period arranged according to the verses of the Torah.

**Midrash Hagadol** — Midrashic anthology arranged by R’ David al-Adeni of South Arabia (13th century). Many Midrashic teachings which were lost throughout the course of time have been preserved in this work. First printed in 1967 in Jerusalem.

**Midrash Lekach Tov** — (also known as Pesikta Zutrasa). Midrashic anthology arranged by R’ Toviah Hagadol (1036-1108) of Greece and Bulgaria.

**Midrash Rabah** — A major collection of homilies and commentaries on the Torah, ascribed to R’ Oshiah Rabah (c. 3rd century), perhaps assembled during the early Geonic period. First printed in Constantinople 1512.

**Mikdash Melech** — Commentary to the Zohar culled from the works of R. Chaim Vital, R. Avraham Azulai, and their students R. Yaakov Pinto, R. Yeshaya Cohen and R. Moshe Zacutto.

**Minchah Belulah** — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Avraham Menachem Rapaport (c. 1540-1604), Italian Torah scholar, doctor and grammarian.

**Minchas Chinuch** — Scholarly supercommentary to Sefer haChinuch by Rabbi Yosef Babad (1800-1875), Rabbi of Tarnipol, Poland.

**Mishnah** — Fundamental collection of the legal pronouncements and discussion of the Tanna’im, edited by Rabbi Yehuda haNassi early in the third century. The Mishnah is the basic text of the Oral Law.

**Mishneh Torah** — 14-volume halachic code by Rambam (Maimonides) encompassing all the laws found in the Talmud.

**Mitteler Rebbe** — Rabbi Dov Ber Schneuri (1773-1827), son of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; second Lubavitcher Rebbe.

**Mizrachi** — Exhaustive supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Eliahu Mizrachi (1450-1525) of Constantinoople, Chief Rabbi of the Turkish Empire.

**Moreh Nevuchim** — “Guide for the Perplexed” by Maimonides.

**Moschav Zekeinim** — Anthology of comments of about 130 different sources, the majority of whom are Tosafists of France and Germany, circa. 1100-1300. First printed in 1959.

**Nachlas Ya’akov** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Ya’akov Yekl Solnick. First published in Cracow in 1642.

**Nimukei Yosef** — Halachic commentary on Sefer Hahalachos (of the Rif), by R’ Yosef Chaviva of Spain (14-15th centuries).

**Noda Biyehudah** — Halachic Responsa of Rabbi Ezekiel Landau, (1713-1793) Chief Rabbi of Prague.

**Ohr haChayim** — Commentary on the Torah by Talmudic and Kabalist scholar Rabbi Chaim ben Attar (1696-1743).

**Ohr haTorah** — Extensive exposition of Chabad chasidic thought by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel (the Tzemach Tzedek, 1789-1866). Printed in New York between 1951 and 1983 in 48 volumes.

**Ohr Torah** — Anthology of Chasidic commentaries by Rabbi Dovber, the Maggid of Mezritch (d. 1773). First published in Koretz in 1781.

**Orach Chayim** — One of the four sections of the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, dealing with laws that follow a time cycle.
Onkelos — Proselyte (c. 90 C.E.) who reinstated a forgotten, authoritative translation of the Torah into Aramaic, which was read alongside the Torah in Talmudic times to assist the congregation in understanding the Torah reading.

Pane’ach Raza — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Yitzchak ben Yehudah Halavi of France, 13th century. First printed in Prague in 1607.

Parashas Derachim — Treatises by Rabbi Yehudah Rozanes (1657-1727) of Constantinople, Turkey, author of Mishneh Lemelech, a major commentary to Rambam’s Mishneh Torah.

Pesachim — Tractate of Talmud in the Order of Moed (Festivals).

Pesikta Rabasi — Compendium of teachings by Sages of the Talmud, first published in Prague in 1653.

Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer — Midrashic work by the school of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (c. 100). First published in Constantinople in 1514.

Pnet Moshe — Running commentary to the Jerusalem Talmud, by Rabbi Moshe Margulies of Amsterdam and Zamut. (1710-1781).


Rabeinu Tam — Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir (1100-1171), his Talmudic discourses served as the basis for the Tosfos commentary to the Talmud. He often challenged Rashi’s interpretations, offering original and brilliant insights. Rabeinu Tam was also a successful wine merchant and financier.

Radvaz — (c. 1480-1573) Acronym for Rabbi David ibn Zimra, Chief Rabbi of Egypt. Author of a commentary to the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah and extensive responsa.


Ramak — R’ Moses Cordovero, Kabalist of 16th century Safed. Student of R’ Yosef Caro. Author of numerous works, including Pardes Rimonim, a classic work which explains fundamental concepts of Kabalah.

Rambam — “Maimonides” (1194-1270), Acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman of Gerona, Spain, one of the leading Torah scholars of the Middle Ages; author of major commentary to the Torah and numerous other works.

Ran — Acronym for Rabbenu Nissim (1308-1376). Authored an important commentary to the Talmud, published in most major editions.

Rashbam — Acronym for Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, Talmud and Torah Commentator, who supplemented Rashi’s (his grandfather’s) commentary on the Talmud (c. 1085-1174). Brother of Rabeinu Tam.

Rashi — Acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), author of basic commentary on the Bible and Talmud. According to Chasidic tradition, his commentary to the Torah contains allusions to kabalistic concepts.

Rema — R’ Moshe Isserles (1530-1572), Rav and Rosh Yeshiva of Cracow. Author of many works. Most famous are his Ashkenazic annotations to Rabbi Yosef Caro’s Shulchan Aruch, which transformed this predominantly Sephardic work into a universal Code of Jewish Law.

Ritvah — Acronym for R’ Yom Tov Ibn Asevili (1248-1330), Talmudic Commentator and Halachist.


Rosh — Acronym for R’ Asher ben Yechiel, Talmudic commentator and author of halachic compendium arranged on the tractates of the Talmud (c. 1250-1327).

Sa’adiah Ga’on — (882-942) Author of works in many areas of Torah, including the philosophical work, Emunos v’Deos.

Sanhedrin — Tractate of Talmud in Order of Nezikin (Damages).

S’dei Chemed — Extensive Halachic encyclopedia by R’ Chaim Chizkiyahu Medini (1832-1904), Rav of Karasubazar in Crimea, Russia, and later Chief Rabbi of Chevorn in the Land of Israel. Revised edition by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, New York, 1949-1953 (Kehos Publication Society).

Seder Hadoros — A chronology of events and personalities from creation until 1696, based on rabbinic sources, by Rabbi Yechiel Heilprin (1660-1746) Lithuanian Rabbi, Kabbalist, and chronicler. First published in 1769.

Sefer Chasidim — Classical work of ethical and halachic instruction by R’ Yehudah haChasid, (c. 1150-1217).

Sefer Ha’Agur — Halachic compendium by R. Yaakov ben Yehuda Landa (Germany, fifteenth century), based primarily on the Tur. Widely used as a source for halachic decisions until the appearance of the Shulchan Aruch.
Sefer haChinuch — Compendium of basic explanations on the 613 mitzvos by an unknown Spanish author among the Rishonim of the 13th century.


Sefer haMitzvos — Comprehensive list of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah and their basic requirements, by Rambam.

Sefer haSichos — Public talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, from the years 1986-92.

Sefer haZikaron — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary to the Torah, by R’ Avraham Bukrat Halevi (15th Century) of Spain. First published in Leghorn in 1845.

Sforno — Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno of Rome and Bologna, Italy (1470-1550).

Sha’ar haGemul — Short eschatological treatise of the Ramban discussing reward and punishment. In this work the author refutes Ramban’s assertion that the climax of Creation will be a spiritual “soul world,” arguing instead that the Resurrection of the Dead will be the ultimate era of perfection.

Shach al Hatorah — Abbreviation for Sifsei Kohein, a commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Hakohen, incorporating numerous mystical interpretations and gematrios. First published in 1610. (Not to be confused with Rabbi Shabsai Hakohen of Cracow, author of Shach, a major commentary to the Shulchan Aruch).

Shaloh — Acronym for Shnei Luchos Habris (“The two tablets of the Covenant”), by Rabbi Yeshayahu Hurwitz (1560-1630). There is a tradition that the Tanya is significantly based on the Shaloh.

Shemoneh Perakim — Philosophical treatise of Rambam, discussing the ills and cures of man’s soul, prophecy, reward and punishment, free will, and the rule of the “golden mean.”

Shemos Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Exodus. See “Midrash Rabah.”

Shitah Mekubetztes — Compilation of numerous medieval commentaries to the Talmud by R’ Betzalel Ashkenazi (1520-1592).

Shulchan Aruch — Universally accepted halachic code encompassing all areas of practical halacha, by Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575).

Sifri — Halachic Midrash on the books of Bamidbar and Devarim.

Sifri deyobn Rau — Comprehensive commentary to Sifri by Rabbi David Pardo (1710-1792), author of Maskil leDavid.

Sifsei Chachomim — Anthology of supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Shabsai Bass (1641-1719). First published in 1712.

Smag — Acronym for Sefer Mitzvos Gadol, an important compendium of the 613 mitzvos by the Tosafist R’ Moshe ben Ya’akov of Coucy (13th century).

Talmud — Comprehensive term for the Mishnah and Gemara as joined in the two compilations known as Babylonian Talmud (6th century) and Jerusalem Talmud (5th century).

Tanchuma — Aggadic Midrash on the Torah by Rabbi Tanchuma bar Abba (4th cen.)

Tanna de'eb Eliyahu — A Midrash, consisting of two parts, whose final redaction took place at the end of the tenth century of the Common Era. The first part is called “Seder Eliyahu Rabah” (31 chapters); the second, “Seder Eliyahu Zuta” (15 chapters).

Tanya — Primary chasidic text authored by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. (See: Alter Rebbe)

Targum Yonason — Elaborate Aramaic translation of the Torah by Yonason ben Uziel, a disciple of Hillel.

Tiferes Yehonason — Commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Yehonason Eybeschutz (d. 1764) of Prague, Metz and Altona.

Tikunei Zohar — Section of the Zohar discussing seventy permutations of the first word of the Torah – Bereishis, and commentaries on various other sections of Scripture.

Torah Shlaimah — Comprehensive encyclopedia of all Talmudic and Midrashic commentaries on the Torah, with scholarly notes and essays, by R’ Menachem Kasher (1895-1983). This work is still being compiled and currently spans 47 volumes, covering the books of Bereishis-Bamidbar, Megillos and Hagadah Shel Pesach.

Torah Temimah — Anthology of main Talmudic references to the Torah, along with commentary, by Rabbi Baruch Epstein (1860-1942), son of Rabbi Yechezkel Michel Epstein, author of Aruch Hashulchan.

Toras Ha’olah — A work discussing the measurements of the Holy Temple and reasons for sacrifices according to philosophy by Rema. (See: Rema)

Toras Kohanim — Halachic Midrash to the Book of Leviticus. Also known as Sifra.


Tosfos — Talmudic commentary of the French, German and English rabbis of the 12th and 13th centuries.

Tsafrnas Pane’ach — Precedent setting commentary to the Torah and Rambam’s Mishneh Torah which innovated a fresh, deeply analytical approach to Talmudic study, by Rabbi
Yosef Rozin, Chief Rabbi of Dvinsk, known as the Rogatchover Gaon (1858-1936). He also authored Responsa and a commentary on the Torah by the same name. Likutei Sichos makes much use of the Rogatchover’s methodology.

Tzemach Tzedek — Title of responsa authored by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866), after which he is usually referred to.

Tzror Hamor — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Avraham Saba (15th century) of Portugal, and later Morocco.

Tur Ha’aruch — Second half of commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Ya’akov Meir ben Asher (1268-1340), author of the Tur. (See Ba’al Haturim)

Turei Even — Prodigious commentary to tractates Rosh Hashanah, Chagigah, Taanis and Megilah by Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Metz, author of Sha’agas Aryeh.

Tzeidah Laderech — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Yissachar Ber Ailenberg. First printed in Prague in 1623.

Vayikra Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Leviticus. (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Vilna Ga’on — R’ Eliyahu ben Shlomo of Vilna (1720-1797) Lithuanian Talmudist, Kabalist, grammarian, and mathematician.

Yad Malachi — Compendium of rules and principles on which various major Rabbinic texts are based (including the principles on which the Mishneh Torah is based) by R’ Malachi ben R’ Yaakov haKohain, published in 1767.

Yefay To’ar — Major commentary on Midrash Rabah, by R’ Shmuel Yaffa-Ashkenazi, Rabbi in Constantinople, 16th century.

Yalkut Re’uvaini — An anthology of Midrashic and Kabalistic commentaries on the Torah, collected by Rabbi Avraham Re’uvain Hakohain Katz of Prague (d. 1673).

Yalkut Shimon — Comprehensive Midrashic anthology, covering the entire Bible, attributed to Rabbi Shimon HaDarshan of Frankfurt (13th century).

Yere’im — Halachic discussion of the mitzvos, by Tosafist R. Eliezer ben R. Shmuel of Metz (France, twelfth century) a student of Rabeinu Tam. First printed in condensed form in Venice, in 1565. Unabridged version published in 1892 in Vilna.

Yerios Shlomo — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah. (See: Maharsha)

Yoma — Tractate of Talmud in the Order of Mo’ed (Festivals).

Zohar — Basic text of Kabalah, compiled by Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai and his disciples in the form of a commentary on the Torah. First published in the late 13th century by Rabbi Moshe de Leon (c.1250-1305), in Spain.
לוכלות
הרח"ת הרה"ת ר' חיים מיליער חווני
והנני מפרים חנה רות חווני
ויוליחים לאה, מנחים מענלים וחיי מושקפא נוספים
והוריהם חווני

לילולי נשמה
ר' יעקב בן ר' מנחים דבר
ינוימא
זכרונים לברכה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

לילולי נשמה
הרח"ת הרה"ת ר' יוסף יעקוב בן ר' יעקב
ليبסקער
זכרונים לברכה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.
לילילי ג生产总

הרה"ג הרה"ח ר', מרדכי זאב הכון גוטניק

הסהד ר',Abrams ונווה עצלית פיגל

הרה"ג הרה"ח ר', אשר ונהגו הי' בתיה ארמסאן

הרה"ג הרה"ח ר', דוד אריה הכון יאומוש

כורונם лечכה

תניהה נשומתינו יזרוח בטרות החג

ולכות

הרה"ג הרה"ח ר', שלום דובער חי'י הכון גוטניק

ראב"ד דק' מעלבור ע"א

ווהנה מאר דוברה תחי'י

מאר שרה נחמה תחי'י יאומוש

נפש עד'

הרה"ב הרה"ח ר', מאיר שחי'י הכון גוטניק

והנה מאר שנינדל צעמא תחי'י

בניות ורגוניות:

הרה"ב שמואל מרדכי זאב הכון ונהגו מאר פיניא דינה,

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וילדים הם ייסוד אסתר שפירה, דוד אריה ותו' משה

_RENDERED_TEXT

והנה ابوך הרה"ת צבי אלימלך שפירה

וילדים הם', המושקא, מנוחת מענעד דולר אריה

מנוחת רחל ابوך הרה"ת יוסף י言い' בברבר

וילדים הם יי', משה

 Mandal אבך יי', מיכאל אלעפר עלבר

וילדים הם, המושקא

מנוחת מענעד הכון, סימה אסתר, שפיינה ליאור, יוסף יצחק הכון,

אובך שמלת הכון, תחי' בתיה', דוד אריה הכון

שייחי לארוך ימים וвшихו טובת
לעילוי נשמות
ר' דוד חונת ספר סלנגער
ר' דוד חונת דינה עד
תורמוס לבכה
ת OutlineInputBorderים צורור בצורת התהים

נדס על יד
ר' דוד שניי סלנגער
חונת שרה מלכה

ולצאת
ר' ראובן שניי סלנגער
חונת שרה מרים תחי

מקדש
לחיזוק התכשורת
לכבוד קדושת אדוננו מורנו רבין
נשיא דרומ