

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Toldos

3 Kislev, 5777 – December 3, 2016

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

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

A Project of
Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
Copyright 2016©

An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Toldos

Likkutei Sichos Volume 15, Pages 217 – 220

Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית כ"ז, ב': וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא זָקַנְתִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי:

רש"י ד"ה לא ידעתי יום מותי: אמר רבי יהושע בן קרחא אם מגיע אדם לפרק אבותיו ידאג חמש שנים לפניהם וחמש לאחר כן, ויצחק היה בן מאה עשרים ושלוש, אמר שמא לפרק אמי אני מגיע, והיא מתה בת מאה עשרים ושבע והריני בן חמש שנים סמוך לפרקה, לפיכך לא ידעתי יום מותי, שמא לפרק אמי, שמא לפרק אבא:

Bereishis 27:2: And he said, "Behold now, I have grown old; I do not know the day of my death."

Rashi Heading – I do not know the day of my death: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh said that If a person reaches the age of his parent's (passing), he should worry five years beforehand and five years afterwards. Yitzchok was 123 years old. He said, "Perhaps I will reach the age of (the passing of) my mother who died at 127. I am thus within five years of her age. Therefore, 'I do not know the day of my death. Perhaps I will reach my mother's age, and perhaps my father's age.'"

A Brief Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Toldos, our patriarch Yitzchok says that he has grown old and does not know the day of his death, i.e. how long he has left to live. Why was he concerned now? Rashi explains by quoting a teaching of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh. He states that one should be concerned when he reaches five years before his mother's age at the time of her passing, and five years afterwards. He should likewise be concerned regarding his father's age at the time of his passing. Yitzchok was now 123 years old; hence he was concerned because he was within five years of his mother's age at the time of her passing. His mother Soroh lived to be 127.

Why does Rashi need to explain anything whatsoever here? Yitzchok himself explicitly said that he has grown old! That is the reason that he was concerned!

The explanation is that we find earlier that instead of Yitzchok's father Avrohom blessing him, G-d Almighty Himself blessed him. Hashem is limitless. His blessing certainly would have

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

included a long life. He wouldn't be concerned simply because he reached old age. Rashi explains the reason for his concern by citing the teaching of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh.

In addition to blessing Yitzchok, G-d also blessed his parents. They both had a longer life-span than they were pre-destined to according to the laws of nature. Avrohom was meant to live until the age of 100, and Soroh until the age of 90. If not for G-d's blessing, Yitzchok would have needed to be concerned at the age of 85. He had already passed that many years earlier. Hence, based on Hashem's blessing to his parents, Yitzchok knew that he had at least until the age of 123.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Chayai Soroh, we find that our patriarch Yitzchok said¹ "Behold now, I have grown old; I do not know the day of my death." Rashi explains the reason for Yitzchok's concern about not knowing the day he would pass away. He does this by quoting the Midrash². "Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh said that if a person reaches the age of his parent's (passing), he should worry five years beforehand and five years afterwards. Yitzchok was 123 years old³. He said, 'Perhaps I will reach the age of (the passing of) my mother, and she died at 127⁴. I am thus within five years of her age. Therefore, 'I do not know the day of my death.' Perhaps I will reach my mother's age, and perhaps my father's age.'" With these words Rashi explains Yitzchok's concern at that particular point.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

It would seem that there is no question as to why Yitzchok expressed concern regarding the day of his passing here. He himself said "Behold now, I have grown old." That would certainly seem to be reason enough for concern over how much longer he would live! Why does Rashi need to offer any explanation whatsoever here?

Additionally, why does Rashi mention that this teaching was said by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh? It's unusual for Rashi to cite a source for what he writes. We see that clearly right here.

1. Bereishis 27:2.

2. Bereishis Rabbah 65:12.

3. It would seem that Yitzchok's concern should have begun at the age of 122. The Rebbe cites a note at the beginning of the Alter Rebbe's Laws of Torah Study which is related to this. See there for further insight into the question.

4. Bereishis 23:1.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

The entire teaching is from Bereishis Rabbah, yet Rashi does not credit the Midrash. The only times that Rashi mentions a source, is when it adds to our understanding of Peshat. What does our knowledge of who said this teaching add to our understanding of the simple meaning of the verse?

The Explanation

The explanation of the above comments can be understood by looking at Rashi's comments on an earlier verse. It was previously written that⁵ "it came to pass after Avrohom's death, that G-d blessed his son Yitzchok ..." Rashi gives two explanations as to why Hashem blessed Yitzchok Himself. The second is that "Even though the Holy One, blessed be He, delivered the blessings to Avrohom, he was afraid to bless Yitzchok because he foresaw Aisov coming from him. He therefore said, 'May the Master of blessings come and bless whomever He pleases.' And the Holy One, blessed be He, came and blessed him."

It is clear from this that G-d Almighty Himself blessed Yitzchok. A blessing from the infinite G-d certainly included a blessing for a long life. With such a blessing, it is understood that old age setting in is not a cause for concern over one's life coming to an end. Therefore, Rashi's explanation is necessary. He lets us know that according to nature, the time for concern over one's passing is five years before and after the age his parents (both father and mother) were at the time they passed away. Since Yitzchok was 123 years old, and his mother passed away at age 127, he was worried. His concern was not because he was old.

However, this still leaves us with a question. If the teaching cited by Rashi is the natural pattern of life, why should Yitzchok have been concerned? He had a blessing directly from Hashem. This blessing included long life. That blessing meant that he would live past the normal life expectancy. What was the cause for his concern? In fact, Yitzchok lived until the age of 180. That was five years longer than his father, who passed away at the age of 175⁶. Why was his life-span within the normal life expectancy, and not longer?

The explanation is that Avrohom and Soroh were also blessed directly by Hashem. Therefore, their lifetimes were also longer than normal. When Avrohom was 100 years old, and Soroh was 90, the Torah tells us that they were not merely old, but they were⁷ "old, and coming

5. Bereishis 25:11.

6. Bereishis 25:7.

7. Bereishis 18:11.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

on in years ..." The literal translation of the words is "coming in years." What is the meaning of this phrase? That they had both "come," meaning passed all of their years. In other words, without the Divine blessing which they both received, Soroh would have lived to be 90, and Avrohom to be 100. Hashem's blessing added 37 years to Soroh's life, and 75 years to Avrohom's.

Had Yitzchok lived to be 105, he would have passed away five years after the amount of years which his father was originally allotted. We see from this that G-d's blessing added many years to his life. In fact, it was the same exact amount of years which were added to Avrohom's life. Yitzchok lived to the age of 180. Had his life-span followed the regular way in which things happen, he could have only lived until the age of 105. In other words, he merited to live an extra 75 years, just as his father.

The same is true regarding his mother. He began to consider when he would pass away five years before he reached his mother's age at the time of her death. Had she lived the 90 years which she was originally allotted, he may have only lived until the age of 85. However, his concern only began 37 years after that, after he passed the age of 122, and turned 123.

However, we are still left with a difficulty. The Torah told us earlier that Avrohom was blessed by Hashem that⁸ "you will be buried in a good old age." The meaning of that is that at the time of his death, all of his children would be righteous. Rashi explains that as a result of the blessing of being "buried in a good old age," Avrohom would lose five years from his life. Rashi states⁹ "that Aisov would not embark on evil ways during his (Avrohom's) lifetime. Therefore, Avrohom died five years before his time, and on that very day, Aisov rebelled." In other words, in order to fulfill both the blessing of longevity and the blessing of having righteous children, he passed away at 175 instead of 180. One hundred and eighty was the number of years allotted to him, and this was only shortened in order to fulfill *both* blessings. However, it would seem that Yitzchok, who only had the blessing of longevity, should have lived to be 185!

Rashi answers this question by telling us the name of the one who stated this teaching. The Talmud tells us¹⁰ of a number of our Sages who were asked why they merited longevity. Each gave several answers. They answered with a number of Mitzvos regarding which they were extremely scrupulous. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh was one of the Sages who were asked this

8. Bereishis 15:15.

9. *ibid.*

10. See Megilah 27, b and further.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

question. He was the only one who responded with just one answer. His response was that throughout his entire life, not once did he ever gaze upon an evil person.

From this we see that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh holds that not gazing at an evil person is the equivalent of several other merits, in terms of meriting a long life. From this we can understand the converse. Gazing upon wicked people alone can cause a shortening of one's life. Therefore we can understand why Yitzchok live to the age of 180, rather than 185. Despite the fact that he was not aware of it, Aisov was evil. His looking at Aisov caused a shortening of his life.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Toldos and Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach
5728)*

To dedicate a week, a month or a year of

The Rashi of the Week, visit

www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org/dedications.html

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

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיחיו Morris**

*

**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיחיו Morris**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Sholom Dovid ben Reb Yitzchak Hacoheh ע"ה Mankes
Passed away on 11 Teves, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

*

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Yoel ben Reb Sholom Dovid Hacoheh ע"ה Mankes
Passed away on 28 Nissan, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

*

**IN HONOR OF
Shimshon ben Chassibah שי'
Yosef Yitzchok ben Sarah שי'
and Shoshana Devorah Hodya bas Tovah Sarah שת'
For a complete and speedy recovery**

*

**DEDICATED BY
Mr. and Mrs. Yonatan Itsik Hacoheh and Shaindel Miriam שיחיו Mankes**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Dr. Chaim Yitzchok ben Reb Yechiel Moshe ע"ה Handwerger
Passed away on 25 Adar II, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

*

**DEDICATED BY HIS CHILDREN
Mr. and Mrs. Yoav and Devorah Leah שיחיו Handwerger**

* * *

**DEDICATED BY
Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar שי' Mars**

*

MAY HE MERIT TO BE A CHOSSID, A YEREI SHOMAYIM AND A LAMDON

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

*

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

ר' שלום דוד בן ר' יצחק הכהן ע"ה מנקס

נפטר ביום י"א טבת ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

לעילוי נשמת

ר' יואל בן ר' שלום דוד הכהן ע"ה מנקס

נפטר ביום כ"ח ניסן ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

לזכות

ר' שמשון בן חסיבה שי'

ר' יוסף יצחק בן שרה שי'

ושושנה דבורה הודי' בת טובה שרה שתחי'

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

*

נדפס ע"י משפחתם

ר' יונתן איציק הכהן

וזוגתו מרת שיינדל מרים שיחיו מנקס

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

ר' חיים יצחק בן ר' יחיאל משה ע"ה האנטווערקער

נפטר ביום כ"ה אדר שני, ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

נדפס ע"י בנו וכלתו

ר' יואב וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה שיחיו האנטווערקער

* * *

נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מאריס

*

יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן