

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayaitzai

10 Kislev, 5777 – December 10, 2016

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית ל"א, י"ז: וַיָּקָם יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת בָּנָיו וְאֶת נָשָׁיו עַל הַגְּמֵלִים:

רש"י את בניו ואת נשיו: הקדים זכרים לנקבות, ועשו הקדים נקבות לזכרים, שנאמר (לקמן ל"ו, ו') ויקח עשו את נשיו ואת בניו וגו':

Bereishis 31:17: So Yaakov got up, and he lifted up his sons and his wives upon the camels.

Rashi Heading – his sons and his wives: He put the males before the females, but Aisov put the females before the males, as it is said¹, "And Aisov took his wives and his sons, etc."

A Brief Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Vayaitzai, we are told that after 20 years of labor in Lovon's house, G-d appeared to Yaakov and told him to leave and return to Israel. The Torah tells us that² "he lifted up his sons and his wives upon the camels" in preparation for his departure. Rashi points out that he put the males before the females. Rashi contrasts his actions with those of his brother Aisov, who "took his wives and his sons, etc." This demonstrates that *he* put the females before the males, unlike Yaakov.

Why does Rashi find a need to point this out? The beginning student has not yet learned that Aisov put the females before the males. That verse doesn't appear for another five chapters.

Additionally, we find elsewhere regarding Yaakov that his wives went before the his sons. Furthermore, Rashi does not explain what difference it makes whether the males or the females are placed first!

All of this is understood from the fact that Rashi writes "males and females" rather than "sons and wives." Yaakov's sons are not just his children. They are also his wives' children. Generally, the sons honored their mothers. As such, they would usually insist that their mothers go first. Here is the first instance that *Yaakov himself* "lifted up his sons." Out of respect to their father they could not refuse. Why did Yaakov disregard the respect due to the mothers? From

1. Bereishis 36:6.

2. Bereishis 31:7.

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Rashi we understand that it was because they were males. The reason that Yaakov initially got married was in order to father the twelve Tribes of Israel. Hence the males came first. The females were a means to an end.

Regarding Aisov, we find totally different behavior. Just as before he was married, he behaved immorally, the same was true after his marriage. Therefore, his primary concern was the females, his wives. He was not all that concerned about his sons.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vayaitzai, we are told of the 20 years that Yaakov toiled with back-breaking labor for his father-in-law Lovon. Finally, Hashem appeared to Yaakov and told him to³ "Return to the land of your forefathers and to your birthplace, and I will be with you." When they actually left, the Torah tells us that "Yaakov rose, and lifted up his sons and his wives upon the camels." Rashi cites the words from the verse "his sons and his wives," and comments that "he put the males before the females. However Aisov put the females before the males, as it is said 'And Aisov took his wives and his sons, etc.'"

It would appear that Rashi is explaining the difference between the two verses. Regarding Yaakov the sons are placed before the wives. However, regarding Aisov the wives are placed before the sons.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

One of the basic principles in understanding Rashi is that when there seems to be a contradiction between two verses, he does not reconcile it until we reach the second verse. In our case, the verse where we see that Aisov placed the females before the males is approximately five chapters after our verse. The beginning student has no need to reconcile the two verses, because he has not yet learned the second verse. Why does Rashi explain this here?

The source for Rashi's comments *here* is from the Midrash Rabbah⁴. Yet, as we have explained numerous times, Rashi's primary goal is to explain the simple meaning of the Torah. He only quotes Midrashim that are related to Peshat.

Furthermore, Rashi states that the difference between Yaakov and Aisov is that Yaakov placed the males first, while Aisov placed the females first. However, he does not explain what

3. Bereishis 31:3.

4. See Bereishis Rabbah Chapter 74, 5.

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the significance of this is, what difference does it make who is first? Rashi does not offer a word of explanation.

Additionally, we find earlier that Yaakov said to Lovon⁵, "... Yaakov said to Lovon, 'Send me away ... give me my wives and my children ...'" We see that on occasion Yaakov also placed his wives before his sons⁶. Why is it that Rashi does not comment on this?

The Explanation

Rashi answers all of these questions, by making a slight change in his comments from the words that are used in the verse. Instead of writing "sons and wives" as it is written in the Torah, he writes "males and females."

The regular order of things demands that his wives should precede his sons. This is the case for a number of reasons. First of all, a man is commanded to honor his wife more than himself⁷. Secondly, his sons are obligated by the Torah to honor their mother, and he has an obligation to train them to do so. That is the reason that there are instances of Yaakov's wives preceding his sons. Rashi does not comment on these instances; that is the way that it ought to be according to the natural order of things.

However, here where it says that Yaakov placed his sons "...," we have a question. Obviously, there is no difficulty involving his son's behavior. They did not honor their mother, because their father *placed* them first. They did not go before their mother of their own volition, because they would not disobey their father. The difficulty is only regarding Yaakov's behavior. Why did he depart from proper behavior?

Rashi answers this by saying that he placed the males before the females. He valued the males more. In fact, the entire reason that he married, was in order to have children. They were not just any children. Rather they established the 12 Tribes of Israel (Yisroel in Hebrew, which is another name of Yaakov our forefather).

Rashi does not suffice with this. Rather he goes on to tell us that Aisov's behavior was different. He does not tell us this in order to reconcile the two verses. Rather he is contrasting Yaakov's behavior with that of Aisov. Had Rashi not mentioned this, we would assume that

5. Bereishis 30:25-26.

6. We find a number of examples of the same thing in the Torah.

7. See Rambam Laws of Marriage Chapter 15, Paragraph 19. He writes there that "Our Sages commanded that one must honor his wife more than he honors his own body." See also the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, at the end of the Laws of Overcharging and Deception. The same law is cited in a number of other places.

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Aisov placed his wives first in order to allow his children to honor their mothers. After all, we know that he was particular about honoring his father Yitzchok⁸.

Without Rashi's explanation, we would think that the only reason that Aisov had for placing his wives before his sons was due to propriety. Therefore Rashi contrasts him with his brother, in order to show that it had nothing to do with propriety. He simply preferred females to males, due to his lust for women. Rashi told us⁹ that "during the first forty years of his life, Aisov 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.'" After his marriage, his lust remained just as strong. That is the reason he placed his wives first.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

There is also a deeper, mystical lesson contained in Rashi's words. Why does Rashi choose to tell us that Aisov gave precedence to women specifically in a verse which discusses Yaakov? Regarding the days of Moshiach, we are told that¹⁰ "a woman shall encompass a man." It is discussed in works of Chassidic philosophy¹¹ that the meaning of this is that the true greatness of a woman will be revealed. A woman's status will surpass that of a man.

Aisov was a son of Yitzchok just as Yaakov. Not only that, but in actuality, he was the first born. At that time this meant that he was originally designated to serve in the Temple. He had tremendous spiritual potential. The problem was that he chose of his own volition to give this all up with his own *free choice*. He chose to separate himself from the sanctity of his father Yitzchok.

That is the reason that when the Torah says that¹² "these are the generations of Yitzchok," Rashi explains that it refers to "Yaakov and Aisov who are mentioned in the Torah portion." In other words, this that Aisov is discussed as one of Yitzchok's children, is Aisov as he is in the Torah. This means Aisov as he had the potential to be, as he could have been according to the Torah. Because Aisov separated himself from his father, Yaakov had to perform the service which was designated for both brothers to perform.

8. See Rashi's comments to Bereishis 27:41. The fact that he was careful to fulfill the Mitzvah of honoring his father is also cited in other sources.

9. Bereishis 26:34.

10. Yirmiyahu 31:21.

11. See Likkutei Torah to Shir Hashirim 15, 3. The concept is also discussed in a number of other sources.

12. See Rashi's commentary to Bereishis 25:19.

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The same is true in our discussion. This that Aisov placed the females before the males, can be looked at as it would be done by Aisov who is written in the Torah, i.e. as he was meant to be, had he not separated himself from his father. From this perspective, Aisov was treating the females as if we were in the days of Moshiach. This "holy" aspect of Aisov is a reflection of how they are when they reach their ultimate greatness. May we merit to see this day very soon.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayaitzai and Vayishlach 5742, and
Shabbos Parshas Naso 5744)*

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

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

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**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**

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**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**

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**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**

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

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Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar שי' Mars**

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

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

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

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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.

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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.

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לזכות

ר' שמשון בן חסיבה שי'

ר' יוסף יצחק בן שרה שי'

ושושנה דבורה הודי' בת טובה שרה שתחי'

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נדפס ע"י משפחתם

ר' יונתן איציק הכהן

וזוגתו מרת שיינדל מרים שיחיו מנקס

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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.

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נדפס ע"י בנו וכלתו

ר' יואב וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה שיחיו האנטווערקער

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נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מאריס

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יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן