

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayishlach

17 Kislev, 5777 – December 17, 2016

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi

Parshas Vayishlach

Likkutei Sichos Volume 10, Pages 100 – 108

Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית ל"ב, ד': וישלח יעקב מלאכים לפניו אל עשו אחיו ארצה שעיר שדה אדום:
רש"י וישלח יעקב מלאכים: מלאכים ממש:

Bereishis 32:4: Ya'akov sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Aisov, to the land of Seir, the field of Edom.

Rashi Heading – And Ya'akov sent messengers: Heb. ,מלאכים actual angels.

A Brief Synopsis

In the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, we are told that while returning home to Israel from Lovon's house, Ya'akov was concerned about meeting up with Aisov. His concern was fully justified. He therefore sent messengers to greet him and placate him. The Hebrew word which is used by the verse is "Malochim - מלאכים" which can either be translated as human messengers or angels. Rashi cites the words from the verse, "Ya'akov sent Malochim," and explains that they were actual angels and not mere human emissaries. Why would Rashi, who is explaining Peshat, choose to explain that Ya'akov sent "heavenly hosts" to greet his brother?

The explanation is, as explained elsewhere¹, that according to Jewish law, one is not permitted to send a messenger into harm's way². Moreover, the beginning student understands that the result of approaching Aisov on behalf of Ya'akov was likely to be dangerous. Therefore Ya'akov could not send human messengers, and he had no choice but to send angels who could not be hurt.

1. See Likkutei Sichos Volume 5, Page 391.

2. See Baal Haturim, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, at the end of chapter 603. There it is written that if one sends a messenger, and he is hurt as a result of the mission, the one who sent him must repent.

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Rashi's Explanation

In the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, while returning home to Israel from Lovon's house, Ya'akov was concerned about meeting up with Aisov. During his last encounter with his brother before leaving home, Aisov had wanted to kill him for taking their father's blessings to which he felt he was rightfully entitled. Therefore, the Torah tells us that³ "Ya'akov sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Aisov, to the land of Seir, the field of Edom." He sent messengers to greet his brother and placate him.

The Hebrew word which is used by the verse is "Malochim - מלאכים" which can either be translated as human messengers or angels. Rashi cites the words from the verse, "Ya'akov sent Malochim," and explains that they were actual angels and not mere human emissaries.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

In the Midrash there are two opinions regarding who the messengers were⁴. One opinion is that they were messengers of flesh and blood. The second is that they were angelic messengers. Since Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the verse, why would he choose to explain that Ya'akov sent heavenly beings?

We also see that other commentaries ask⁵ what gave Ya'akov the right to make use "heavenly hosts" for his personal needs. He could have just as easily used human emissaries. They would be just as capable of delivering Ya'akov's message to his brother.

The Explanation

The explanation is, as explained elsewhere, that according to Jewish law, one is not permitted to send a messenger into harm's way⁶. Moreover, the beginning student understands that the result of approaching Aisov on behalf of Ya'akov was likely to result in injury, or even death! He learned of Ya'akov's encounter with his brother years prior to this. He knows that Aisov had wanted to kill his brother. Therefore Ya'akov could not send human messengers. He had no choice but to send angels who could not be hurt.

3. Bereishis 32:4.

4. See Bereishis Rabbah, Chapter 75.

5. Ohr Hachaim Bereishis 32:4.

6. See the Baal Haturim, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, at the end of chapter 603. There it is written that if one sends a messenger, and he is hurt as a result of his mission, the one who sent him must repent.

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This also explains something else. We know that Rashi only cites the words from the verse which he is explaining. Here he is only explaining the word "Malochim – Messengers." Why does he cite the words "and Ya'akov sent messengers?"

The fact that Ya'akov sent them is exactly what forces Rashi to say that they were actual angels.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

The Previous Rebbe once related⁷ that the Shabbos when the Torah portion of Vayishlach was read in the year 5533 (1772), was the last Shabbos⁸ of the life (in this physical world) of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch⁹. While lying on his bed, he told over the following teaching to his students. "'And Ya'akov sent messengers.' Rashi explains that they were actual angels. The meaning of this is that Ya'akov sent the superficial substance¹⁰, meaning the bodies of the angels to Aisov. The spirituality of the angels, referring to their souls, remained with Ya'akov."

This teaching requires some explanation. The deeper reason for Ya'akov sending angels (as opposed to the reason according to Peshat which we explained earlier), was clearly in order to refine the coarseness of his brother. This is a mission which can only be carried out by angels, and not human beings. However, this being the case, why did he only send their "bodies?" Clearly, the mission of refining Aisov is primarily dependent on the spirituality of the angels, their "souls."

Furthermore, the very concept of separating a body from a soul sounds preposterous. Even regarding people, or animals for that matter, a body cannot do a thing without a soul. The entire being of the body is subservient and dependent upon the soul. A body is lifeless without a soul. The soul provides the vitality of the body. How much more so is this true of angels, for whom the soul is the primary factor!

Also, the meaning of Rashi's words according to Peshat, Vis a Vis their meaning according to the teaching of the Maggid seems to contradict each other. Rashi when seen alone is

7. See Sefer Hasichos 5703, Page 155.

8. This was four days before his passing, on Kislev 19, 5533.

9. He was the primary student of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidus. He was also the master of the Alter Rebbe, who was the founder of Chabad.

10. Just as is the case with people, angels also have a body and a soul. (This is explained in Likkutei Torah, Parshas Berochoh, Page 98, a.) However, obviously an angel's body is much more refined and spiritual than that of a person.

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bringing out that Ya'akov sent his brother "actual angels." In other words, he is negating any other definition of the word Malochim, and saying that Ya'akov sent the entire essence of the angels. On the other hand, the Maggid's explanation negates his sending the spiritual aspect, the soul of the angels.

Based on the above questions, we can see the true meaning of Rabbi Dov Ber's teaching. He did not mean to say that Ya'akov only sent the angel's bodies to his brother, and left their souls with himself. Rather, the meaning behind his words is as follows. Granted, the fact is that Ya'akov sent actual angels. However, he sent them in such a manner that they realized that even when they were with Aisov, the *true* place for their souls was with Ya'akov. Had they considered that their true being, the G-dliness that makes them actual angels, actually belonged with Aisov, they could not have fulfilled their mission. They would have been incapable of being a positive influence on Yaakov.

Hence we see that there is no contradiction between the simple interpretation of Rashi's words, and the way in which the Maggid explained them. According to both perspectives, the messengers which Ya'akov sent were complete actual angels. The Maggid just brought out, that unless the angels were aware that the place where they really belong is with Ya'akov, they would not be capable of fulfilling their mission. From this we can understand that the teaching of Rabbi Dov Ber only serves to emphasize the teaching of Rashi. Ya'akov did send actual angels. However even when they were with Aisov, who was the epitome of coarseness and physicality, they remained angels, spiritual beings. How did they manage this? They retained their connection with Ya'akov.

The word Torah means teaching. We can learn a lesson for our daily lives from everything in Torah. The same is true here. Each of us consists of both Ya'akov, who represents the soul, and Aisov, who represents the body. We are sent to this world with a special mission. We must refine the world through our performance of Torah and Mitzvos. There is only one way to accomplish this. We must realize where our true place is. We must know where we truly belong. Only then can we fulfill the purpose of creation. Namely, in the words of the Midrash which is often cited by all of the Lubavitcher Rebbes, that Hashem created this world in order to have a dwelling place below¹¹. We will see how this goal is finally attained with the coming of

11. See Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Naso, Chapter 16. See also Tanya Chapter 36.

our righteous Moshiach. Then, we will see that even in this physical world¹² “the knowledge of G-d will fill the world as the water covers the sea-bed.”

(Adapted from a talk given on Yud Tes Kislev 5725 Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5723)

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12. Yeshaya 11:9. See also Rambam at the conclusion of The Laws of Kings.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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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**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Sholom Dovid ben Reb Yitzchak Hacoהן 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 Hacoהן 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 Hacoהן 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
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Yisroel Hacoהן ben Berocho שי'
For a complete and speedy recovery**

* * *

**DEDICATED BY
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

*

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