

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Vayaishev

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

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

בראשית ל"ז, י"א: וַיִּקְנָאוּ בוֹ אָחָיו וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת הַדְּבָר:

רש"י ד"ה שמר את הדבר: היה ממתין ומצפה מתי יבא, וכן (ישעיה כ"ו, ב') שומר אמונים וכן (איוב י"ד, ט"ז) לא תשמור על חטאתי, לא תמתין:

**Bereishis 37:11:** So his brothers envied him, but his father awaited the matter.

**Rashi Heading - awaited the matter:** He was waiting and looking forward in expectation of when it (the fulfillment of the dream) would come. Similarly<sup>1</sup>, “awaiting (שׁוֹמֵר) the realization (of Hashem's promise),” and<sup>2</sup> “You do not wait (תִּשְׁמֹר) for my sin,” meaning that You do not wait.

**Synopsis**

This week's Torah portion, Vayaishev, tells us of two dreams which Yosef had. The first dream clearly implied that his brothers would bow down to him<sup>3</sup>. The second dream made it clear that in addition to his brothers, his parents would also bow down to him<sup>4</sup>. He described both dreams to his brothers. He also described these dreams to his father, Yaakov, in his brothers' presence. His father believed that these dreams would come to pass. The Torah concludes this story by telling us that his brothers envied him, but his father waited for his son's dreams to come true.

The verb which the Torah uses for "waited," is quite unusual in that context. The Hebrew word "Shomar – שמר" usually means guarded. In this instance, however, Rashi tells us that it means that "He was waiting and looking forward in expectation of when it (the fulfillment of the dream) would come." Rashi goes further, and cites two proofs from scripture that this verb can have the meaning of waiting. The first proof which he quotes is from the book of Yeshaya. "Awaiting (שׁוֹמֵר) the realization (of Hashem's promise).” The second is from the book of Iyov, “You do not wait (תִּשְׁמֹר) for my sin.” Why does Rashi need to cite two different proofs? Either one of them would have shown that the word "Shomar - שמר" can mean waited!

When one is waiting for something, he wants it to happen as soon as possible. He is anxious for it to happen. However, in our verse, the Torah placed the word "Es - את" between the words "waited," and "for the matter." This word has no real translation. It is a grammatical tool, which is often used to indicate a direct object. Yet, here we

1. Yeshaya 26:2.

2. Iyov 14:16.

3. Bereishis 37:5 – 7.

4. Bereishis 37:9.

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have something for which Yaakov is yearning, and yet we separate the words "waiting" and "the matter." The proof text from Yeshaya has no separation between the word "wait," and that for which we are waiting. However, it discusses waiting for something positive, namely the redemption. The verse from Iyov is discussing something which is not positive, namely sin. It does have a separator. From these two verses we see that the word "Shomar - שמר" can be translated "to wait" regardless of whether or not it has a word which separates, and whether or not it refers to something positive.

### Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah Portion, Vayaishev, the Torah tells us of two dreams which Yosef had. The first dream implied that his brothers would bow down to him. His second dream implied that in addition to his brothers, his parents would also bow down to him. He described his dreams to his brothers. He then told his father, Yaakov, of his dreams in his brothers' presence<sup>5</sup>, and his father rebuked him.

Why did his father rebuke him? His father believed that his dreams would be fulfilled. Rather, he rebuked Yosef for bringing hatred upon himself (see Rashi's comments to footnote 5). Our verse states that "his brothers envied him, but his father waited. The Hebrew verb which the Torah uses, שמר, usually means that he guarded. Rashi cites the words from this verse "his father waited for the matter," and comments that that "he was waiting and looking forward to when it (meaning the fulfillment of Yosef's dreams) would come. Likewise it is written 'waiting - שומר for the realization (of Hashem's promise to bring the redemption).' It is also written in scripture 'Do not wait - תשמור for my sin,' meaning do not wait."

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

It seems clear that Rashi is only explaining one word from the verse upon which he is commenting; the word "Shomar - שמר". Despite the fact that in the overwhelming majority of places in which this verb is used it means guarded, he is telling us that here it means waited. We know that Rashi is extremely particular and precise with the words that he uses in his commentary. He is equally precise with the words which he cites in the headings of his comments. If he is only explaining the word "waited," why does he cite the words "his father waited for the matter" in the heading of his comments? Additionally, it seems as if Rashi wishes to show us is that here the verb שמר is used by the Torah to mean "waited." Therefore, he cites proofs that it can have this meaning. Why does he need to cite two proofs, one from Yeshaya and one from Iyov? One proof would have sufficed.

When Rashi does cite his second proof from Iyov, "Do not wait for my sin," he follows it by clarifying that it means "do not wait." This is something which is so obvious that we would have understood it ourselves, even had Rashi said nothing. Furthermore, when Rashi cites his first proof from the verse in Yeshaya, he does not add any

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5. Bereishis 37:10.

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explanation, but assumes that we will understand that it means waiting. Why does he need to explain this regarding the proof he cites from Iyov?

### The Explanation

The reason that Rashi is not satisfied with citing the verse from Yeshaya, and cites a proof from Iyov as well, is as follows. If one is waiting for a particular thing, and looking forward to it, he feels close and connected to that which he awaits. This is the case regarding the proof which Rashi cites from Yeshaya. We, the Jewish nation, are waiting for Hashem to finally fulfill His promise and redeem us from exile. Therefore it is written שומר אמונים and not שומר את אמונים. The Hebrew word “Es - את” does not have an actual translation. Rather, grammatically it indicates a direct object<sup>6</sup>. Here, because we are longing for and expecting the redemption immediately, the Prophet writes the verse without this word. There is no word – nothing comes between “Waiting – שומר” and “for the realization (of G-d's promise) – אמונים.” Hence, we see that the verb “Shomer - שומר” when it is not followed by the word “Es - את” indicates something to which one is looking forward.

However, this leaves us with a problem. In our verse it says that “his father waited for the matter,” which is written in Hebrew "ואביו שמר את הדבר". The word “Es - את” is inserted after the word “waited.” Accordingly it is difficult to say that the meaning of שמר is waited – because if that was the case the words “waited” and the “matter” should not be separated by the word “Es - את”!

It is for this reason that Rashi is not satisfied with the proof from Yeshaya. From Yeshaya alone we might think that in our verse “Shomer – שמר” cannot mean “waited,” because it’s not immediately connected to the word “matter.” The word “Es - את” divides the two. Therefore Rashi brings an additional proof from Iyov, “לא תשמור על - הטאתי Do not wait for my sin.” Here the meaning is waiting despite the fact that there is the word על meaning “upon” in the sense of “for” (“Do not wait on - for my sin.”) between the words “wait” and “sin.” From this we understand that even with the word “Es - את” between שמר and דבר it can still have the meaning of waiting.

This answers why Rashi includes the words “his father waited for the matter” in the heading of his comments. Although he is only explaining the word “Shomar - שמר” he is emphasizing an important point. Despite the fact that the word “Es - את” separates between “Shomar - Waited - שמר” and “Hadovor - the Matter – הדבר” nevertheless, the word “Shomar - שמר” here has the meaning of waiting and looking forward to something.

There is still a difficulty remaining. If, as we said, the proof from Iyov is closer to our verse, why did Rashi need to cite a proof from Yeshaya? Rashi could have sufficed with only citing the verse from Iyov!

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6. The word does serve another function as well. When the Sages study Scripture and derive all of its hidden teachings, the word את has the implication of “and,” it demonstrates that we are to include something else other than what is expressly written. For example, when the Torah tells us to honor our father and mother, it inserts the word “Es - את” before both “your father” and “your mother.” It writes כבוד את אביך ואת אמך. The Rabbis learn from this that in addition to honoring our parents we must honor our older siblings as well.

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The answer is that there are different sorts of waiting. The verb “to wait” can be used to mean something to which the person is looking forward. He is anxiously waiting for it to happen. This is the case in our verse, where Yaakov was waiting for Yosef’s dream to finally be fulfilled. Therefore Rashi says that he was “waiting and looking forward to” the time that it would be fulfilled. This is also the case with the proof from Yeshaya; the Jewish people are anxiously awaiting the Final Redemption. However, “waiting” can also imply something which one does not wish to occur. This is the case with the verse which Rashi cites from Iyov, “Do not wait for my sin.” Iyov was saying that Hashem is (G-d forbid) not anxiously waiting for the opportunity to punish him. To the contrary; G-d always waits for the person to do Teshuvah and thereby avoid the punishment altogether.

This explains the reason that Rashi finds it necessary to cite two verses. The first verse (from Yeshaya) indicates that the word "Shomar – שמר" means waiting in the sense of anticipating something for which one anxiously awaits. The verse from Iyov demonstrates that "Shomar – שמר" means waiting, even for something which one does not anticipate. Additionally it indicates that this is the case even with a word separating between the “waiting” and that for which one is waiting. That is why he clarifies after citing the verse from Iyov that the meaning of the word is “wait.” He is emphasizing that even though the word “upon” comes between the two, it changes nothing.

### A Deeper Explanation of Rashi

We have discussed many times that although the fact that “we were exiled from our land” was a result of “our sins,<sup>7</sup>” there is a deeper purpose to our exile. Namely, it allows us to reach a level that is even higher than the level which we had attained before the exile. By withstanding the temptations inherent in exile, we can attain a level which is even higher than our stature at the time that the Holy Temple was standing. Exile allows us to attain the level needed for the ultimate redemption.

What this means is that even though chronologically exile precedes redemption, nevertheless since the true purpose of exile was in order to attain redemption, in terms of its intent and purpose redemption actually comes before exile. Rashi alludes to this in his commentary by first citing the verse “waiting for the realization (of Hashem’s promise to bring the redemption)” and then the verse “do not wait for my sin,” sin which is the cause of exile.

The fulfillment of Yosef’s dream which is discussed in the verse we are discussing (that is what Yaakov was waiting for) was in order to carry out the prophecy that<sup>8</sup> “your children will be strangers in a strange land.” This is a reference to our exile in Egypt, which was the root of all future exiles.

Rashi is telling us that each exile, which stemmed from our exile in Egypt, came as a result of our sins, “do not wait for my sin.” However, the first explanation prior to that of sins is “waiting for the realization (of Hashem’s promise to bring the redemption).”

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7. This expression is based on the liturgy for festivals.

8. Bereishis 15:13. Hashem told Avrohom that his descendants would be strangers in a strange land (they would experience the Egyptian Exile), and that following that they would be redeemed with great wealth.

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The fact that we are punished for sin, is only the reason for the manner in which the actual exile took place. However, the intent of exile, even before there was any sin, was in order to empower us to return to the land. Not only that, but G-d made it possible that<sup>9</sup> “a great congregation shall return there.” Moreover<sup>10</sup>, “G-d will *expand* your boundaries ...and He will give you the *entire* land,”<sup>11</sup> “from the river of Egypt until the great river, the Euphrates ... the Kenites ... “with the future redemption through our righteous Moshiach, who will come and redeem us immediately.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayaishev 5727)*

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9. Yirmiyahu 31:7.

10. Devorim 19:8.

11. Bereishis 15:18 – 21.

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the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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

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&

**Mrs. Berocho bas Soroh שתחי' Cohen**

For a complete and speedy recovery

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May he merit to be a Chossid, a Yerei Shomayim and a Lamdon

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