

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Chayei Soroh

25 Cheshvan, 5780 – November 23, 2019

Compiled from the works of

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi  
Parshas Chayei Soroh**

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

**בראשית כ"ה, א':** ויסף אברהם ויקח אשה ושמה קטורה: **ב':** ותלד לו את זמרון ואת יוקח ומדון וישבך ואת שואח:

**Bereishis 25:1:** And Avrohom took another wife and her name was Keturoh. **2.** And she bore him Zimron, Yokshon, Medon, Midyon, Yishbok, and Shuach.

**Synopsis**

In this week's Torah portion, Chayei Soroh, the Torah tells us that at the age of 140, Avrohom remarried Hogor, who bore to him six children. This is obviously a great miracle. Forty years earlier, when Avrohom was a *mere* 100 years old, the Torah makes it abundantly clear that his fathering Yitzchok was a miraculous event. Nevertheless, here no mention of a miracle is made. Rashi always explains everything needed by a beginner in order to understand the Torah. Yet here he offers no explanation of the power and the purpose of this miracle. We know that G-d does not perform miracles for no reason.

Before Yitzchok was born, G-d changed the names of both Avrohom and Soroh. Their new names indicated that they controlled and affected the entire world. Why was there a need to change their names?

In his commentary to the beginning of the Torah, Rashi cites the following Midrashic teaching. The Torah begins with the words "In the beginning." The Sages teach that the world was created for the sake of the Torah, which we find is referred to as "beginning," and for the sake of the Jewish people which are referred to as "beginning." In other words, Jews are not merely another detail of creation. Rather we are the essence of creation. Each Jew has the responsibility to realize that whatever he does affects the entire world.

The Torah tells us that Avrohom and Soroh's names had to be changed before the birth of Yitzchok, from whom the Jewish people would descend. This is to emphasize that the Jews are the essence of creation. Their new names emphasized their essential connection with creation. The miracle of his birth was accompanied by other miracles for the benefit of the entire world, which expressed the same idea. After Yitzchok was born, Rashi tells us that "... many prayers were answered together with hers (Soroh's), and there was much joy in the world." In other words, in her merit, the entire world was helped, in keeping with the seminal role of Jews in creation.

This took place soon after Yitzchok's birth, and without any effort on Soroh's part. That is because she was named Soroh, meaning that she was a princess over all nations. As royalty, removed from the people, the effect was immediate and involved no effort. Avrohom's merit in the birth of Yitzchok also brought miracles that affected the world. At the age of 140, he fathered six children who would be the heads of various nations. However, the miracles

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

brought through Avrohom, as the *father* of many nations, took time and effort. This is in keeping with the role of a father.

### Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Chayei Soroh, the Torah tells us that after the passing of Soroh, Avrohom married a woman whose name was Keturah. Rashi identifies Keturah as being one and the same as Hogor, who was married to Avrohom earlier and gave birth to Yishmoel. The Torah tells us that after marrying her the second time, she bore six additional children to Avrohom<sup>1</sup>; "And she bore him Zimron, Yokshon, Medon, Midyon, Yishbok, and Shuach." Many commentaries ask the following question. Years earlier, when Avrohom was 100 years old and Soroh was ninety, she miraculously gave birth to a baby, Yitzchok, who was to be the second of our forefathers. He and his descendants would continue the heritage of his father Avrohom. This was not only considered a miracle because of Soroh's advanced age. The Torah tells us numerous times that it was also miraculous that Avrohom could father a child at his age. When they were informed that they were to have a son, their reaction was as follows<sup>2</sup>. "And Avrohom fell on his face and rejoiced, and he said to himself, '*Will a child be born to one who is a hundred years old, (and will Soroh, who is ninety years old, give birth)?*'" Furthermore,<sup>3</sup> "Avrohom and Soroh were old, coming on in years ... And Soroh laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have become worn out, will I have smooth flesh? *And also, my husband is old.*'" " And she said, 'Who would have said to Avrohom ... for I have borne a son *to his old age!*'"<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was so miraculous, that Rashi writes that<sup>5</sup> "the scoffers of the generation were saying that Soroh had conceived from Avimelech."

We see clearly from all of the above-cited verses, that it was miraculous that Avrohom could father a child at the age of 100. However, based on Rashi's words, he married Keturah and fathered an additional six children forty years later, at the age of 140. The Torah tells us that<sup>6</sup> "Now Yitzchok was on his way, coming from Be'er Lachai Ro'i." He was on his way to get married to Rivkah. Rashi explains that he was in Be'er Lachai Ro'i because that was "where he had gone to bring Hogor (Keturah) to Avrohom his father, that he should marry her." Yitzchok was forty years old when he got married<sup>7</sup>, so it is clear that Avrohom was 140 years old when he married Keturah. He then went on to father an additional six children. If it was a miracle for him to have a child at the age of 100, how much more so is it miraculous to father children at the age of 140.

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1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 25:2.

2. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:17.

3. Parshas Vayeiros, Bereishis 18:11-12.

4. Parshas Vayeiros, Bereishis 21:7.

5. Parshas Toldos, Rashi's commentary to Bereishis 25:19.

6. Our Parshah, Bereishis 24:62.

7. Parshas Toldos, Bereishis 25:20.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

There are basic, fundamental principles of the Rebbe's methodology of understanding Rashi's commentary to the Torah. One all-important rule is that Rashi explains everything that a beginning student needs to know in order to understand the Torah. If we encounter something which appears to be questionable, and Rashi does not address it, there is one of two reasons. Either Rashi addressed it earlier, or it is not really a question<sup>8</sup>. Our difficulty in understanding Rashi here is not in understanding what he does say, but rather what he does *not* say. The Torah is telling us of a man who, beginning at the age of 140, fathered six children. Why doesn't Rashi explain to the beginning student why the Torah seemingly takes no notice of this great miracle?

The extent of how great this miracle was is especially true according to Rashi. He writes clearly that<sup>9</sup> "although the first generations begot children at the age of 500, in Avrohom's time, the years were already lessened, and weakness had come to the world. Go out and learn this from the ten generations from Noach to Avrohom, who hastened to beget children at the age of sixty and seventy. Yet Rashi fails to comment on this seemingly obvious question.

### The Explanation

This will be understood by looking into the story of the birth of Yitzchok. After Yitzchok's birth, the Torah tells us that<sup>10</sup> "Soroh said, 'Hashem has made joy for me; whoever hears will rejoice over me.'" Rashi explains 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." In other words, the birth of Yitzchok was such, that it brought joy and salvation to the entire world!

This also clarifies several other comments of Rashi. Rashi says the following, commenting on the verse<sup>11</sup>, "Who would have said to Avrohom that Soroh would nurse children ..." "Why is the word 'children' in the plural? (She was only nursing one child, namely Yitzchok!) On the day of the feast, the princesses brought their children with them, and she nursed them, for they were saying, 'Soroh did not give birth, but brought in a foundling from the street.'" Furthermore, we find that Rashi comments<sup>12</sup>, "People were murmuring against them, that they had brought a foundling from the street and were saying, 'He is our son.' So, each one brought her child with her, but not her wet nurse, and she (Soroh) nursed them all." If the entire point was to prove that Soroh had actually given birth to Yitzchok, why was it necessary for her to nurse the children of all of the princesses? She could have just shown them all that she could nurse

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8. For a better understanding of the principles used as part of the Rebbe's method of understanding Rashi, see our website by clicking here: <http://rebbeteacheshashi.org/rashi-s-principles>. Please be aware that what is written there are the simple basics; we are working on a more comprehensive list.

9. See Rashi's commentary to Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:17.

10. Parshas Vayeiros, Bereishis 21:6. See also Rashi's comments there.

11. Parshas Vayeiros, Bereishis 21:7.

12. See Rashi's comments to Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:16.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Yitzchok. Perhaps she could have nursed several other babies as additional proof. What was the reason for her to *nurse them all*? Rather, the miracle of Yitzchok's birth included a miracle and blessing for the entire world. Therefore, it was expressed by her nursing the babies of *all* of the princesses of all of the different nations of the world.

Just as the miracle of Yitzchok's birth caused miracles that affected the entire world in Soroh's merit, likewise other miracles were brought to the world in the merit of Avrohom. Namely, that even after "Avrohom was old, advanced in days, and the Lord had blessed Avrohom with everything," he could still father another six children. The miracles brought in Soroh's merit brought salvation to the entire world, to the extent 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." Miracles were also brought in Avrohom's merit. He brought six children into the world who would be the founders of other nations.

However, this just poses new questions. Why should the birth of Yitzchok have brought miracles and joy to the entire world? Additionally, we need to understand why those miracles which came in the merit of Soroh came immediately. They also occurred as a matter of course, automatically. They did not require any additional action. On the other hand, those brought in the merit of Avrohom took place forty years after the birth of Yitzchok. They also necessitated him marrying Keturah and fathering children.

We may explain, that these two differences allude to fundamental ways in which the Jewish nation affects the rest of the world. We find that Avrohom's name had to be changed, from Avrom, and Soroh's name had to be changed from Sorai before Yitzchok could be born. Rashi explains that<sup>13</sup> "Avrom will have no son, but Avrohom will have a son. Similarly, Sorai will not give birth, but Soroh will give birth. I will give you another name, and your destiny will change."

It's logical that the birth of Yitzchok is related to the change in the meaning of the two names, not merely to the fact that their names were changed. The names Avrohom and Soroh both indicate exercising control of the entire world. The name Avrom indicates that he was the father of Aram; while Avrohom indicates that he would be the father of the entire world. This is in keeping with the words of the Torah<sup>14</sup>, "And your name shall no longer be called Avrom, but your name shall be Avrohom, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." The change to Soroh is explained by Rashi's words<sup>15</sup>, "(Sorai means) 'my princess,' for me, but not for others. But Soroh, in an unqualified sense, shall be her name, that she will be a princess overall."

As mentioned above, their new names indicate control over the entire world. Before it was possible for Yitzchok to be born, their names had to be changed. Yitzchok was the first person to be born as a Jew. The teachings which

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13. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:5.

14. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:5. See also Rashi's commentary there.

15. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:15.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Avrohom began disseminating, were to be continued through Yitzchok alone. Yitzchok was to be the progenitor of the Jewish nation.

The Sages tell us<sup>16</sup>, that "*In the beginning*, Hashem created the world for the sake of the Torah, which is called<sup>17</sup> '*the beginning* of His way, and for the sake of the Jews, who are called<sup>18</sup> "*(the beginning)*, the first of His grain."

The meaning of this teaching of the Sages is clear. The entire universe was created for the purpose of the Torah and the Jewish nation. In other words, the Jewish people are not merely another part of creation. Rather Jews and Torah are the essences of creation. Therefore, whatever takes place with the Jewish people affects the entire world. Thus, we see that a tremendous responsibility is placed upon each and every Jew. Any act which a Jew performs affects the entire world.

In order to emphasize the seminal role of Jews in creation, it was necessary to change their names. This was also the reason that upon the birth of Yitzchok, "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." This is why Avrohom miraculously became the father of six children who went on to found "nations of the world." All of this expressed the role of Israel in creation. These were not additional miracles. They were actually part of the miraculous birth of Yitzchok. His birth affected the entire world.

As noted above, Avrohom was so named because he was a *father* of a multitude of nations. The role of a father takes time. Due to his role as a father, the miracles which occurred to the world in his merit came about through his "taking another wife," who bore six children. It also took time, in order to emphasize the effort required on the part of a father. Soroh, on the other hand, was so named because she was royalty, she was a princess over all of the nations. Royalty transcends the general populace. As such, great blessings came to the world instantaneously and automatically, by her royal decree.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Chayei Soroh and Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5745, and Yud Tes Kislev 5743)*

**I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.**

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16. This is stated in various Midrashim, and is quoted by Rashi in Parshas Bereishis, 1:1.

17. Mishlei 8:22.

18. Yirmiyahu 2:3.

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Mr. **Sholom Moshe** ben Reb **Shlomo Meir** Hacoהן ע"ה **Cohen**

Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

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**RABBI SHMUEL AND RIFKA** שיזיו **MENDELSON**

**מוקדש לזכות**  
**כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש**

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