בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Chayei Soroh

27 Cheshvan, 5787 – November 7, 2026

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 Their Own Words

בראשית כ"ה, א': וַיֹּסֶף אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וּשְׁמָהּ קְטוּרָה: **ב':** וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת זִמְרָן וְאֶת יָקְשָׁן וְאֶת מְדָן וְאֶת מִדְיָן וְאֶת יִשְׁבָּק וְאֶת שׁוּחַ:

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 him six children. This is a great miracle. Forty years earlier, when Avrohom was only 100, the Torah makes it abundantly clear that his fathering Yitzchok was miraculous. Nevertheless, here no mention of a miracle is made. Rashi always explains everything a beginner needs to understand the Torah. Yet here, he does not explain the miracle's power or purpose. 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 this necessary?

In his commentary on the beginning of the Torah, Rashi cites the Midrashic teaching. The Torah begins with the words "In the beginning." The Sages teach that the world was created for the Torah's sake. The Torah is called the "beginning." Hashem created it for the Jewish people, who are also called the "beginning." In other words, Jews are not merely another detail of creation; we are the essence of creation. Each Jew is responsible for realizing 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 emphasizes that the Jews are central to creation, and their new names highlight their essential connection to it. The miracle of his birth was accompanied by other miracles for the benefit of the entire world, expressing the same idea. After Yitzchok was born, "... many prayers were answered together with hers (Soroh). There was much joy in the world." In other words, in her merit, the entire world was helped, keeping with the seminal role of Jews in creation.

This happened soon after Yitzchok's birth and without any effort on Soroh's part. That is because she was named Soroh, meaning a princess over all nations. As royalty, who were 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 Avrohom brought as the father of many nations took time and effort. This fits 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 named Keturah. Rashi identifies Keturah as the same as Hogor, whom Avrohom had married earlier and who gave birth to Yishmoel. The Torah says that after marrying her a second time, she bore six additional children to Avrohom [1]: "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 Yitzchok, the second of our forefathers. He and his descendants would continue his father Avrohom's heritage. This was considered a miracle not only 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 told they would have a son, they reacted as follows. [2] "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,[3] "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*![4] In fact, it was so miraculous that Rashi writes that[5] "the scoffers of the generation were saying that Soroh had conceived from Avimelech."

The above-cited verses clearly show that it was miraculous that Avrohom could father a child at 100. However, according to Rashi, he married Keturah and fathered six more children forty years later, at age 140. The Torah says, [6] "Now Yitzchok was on his way, coming from Be'er Lachai Ro'i." He was on his way to marry 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 when he married, [7] so Avrohom was 140 when he married Keturah. He then fathered six additional children. It was a miracle for him to have a child at 100, and it was a far greater miracle to father children at the age of 140!

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

The Rebbe's methodology for understanding Rashi's commentary on the Torah rests on basic principles. One all-important rule is that Rashi explains everything a beginning student needs to know to understand the Torah. If we encounter something that appears questionable and Rashi does not address it, there are two possible

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 25:2.
2. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:17.
3. Parshas Vayeiro, Bereishis 18:11-12.
4. Parshas Vayeiro, 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.

reasons. Either Rashi addressed it earlier, or it is not a question. Our difficulty in understanding Rashi here is not what he says, but what he does *not* say. The Torah tells 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 does not take notice of this great miracle?

According to Rashi, this miracle was especially great. He writes that, [8]"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. Learn this from the ten generations from Noach to Avrohom, who hastened to beget children at sixty and seventy. Yet Rashi fails to comment on this seemingly obvious question.

The Explanation

We understand this by looking at the story of the birth of Yitzchok. After Yitzchok's birth, the Torah tells us that [9] "Soroh said, 'Hashem has made joy for me; whoever hears will rejoice over me.'" Rashi explains, "Many barren women were remembered with her. Many sick people were healed that 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 [10], "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, Rashi comments [11], "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." The point was to prove that Soroh had 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 Yitzchok. Perhaps she could have nursed several other babies as additional proof. What was the reason for her to *nurse them all*? Instead, the miracle of Yitzchok's birth included a blessing for the entire world. Therefore, it was expressed by nursing the babies of *princesses from different nations around the world*.

Just as the miracle of Yitzchok's birth caused miracles that affected the entire world in Soroh's merit, other miracles were brought to the world in the merit of Avrohom. Namely, 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 Soroh's merit and brought salvation to the entire world. "Many barren women were remembered with

8. See Rashi's commentary to Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:17.
9. Parshas Vayeiro, Bereishis 21:6. See also Rashi's comments there.
10. Parshas Vayeiro, Bereishis 21:7.
11. See Rashi's comments to Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:16.

her. Many sick people were healed on that day. Many prayers were answered with hers, and there was much joy in the world." Miracles were also brought in Avrohom's merit. He fathered six children who would found other nations.

However, this 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 automatically, as a matter of course, and did not require any additional action. On the other hand, those brought in the merit of Avrohom took place forty years after Yitzchok's birth and required him to marry Keturah and father children.

We may explain these two differences as pointing to the fundamental ways 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, [12] "Avrom will have no son, but Avrohom will have a son. Similarly, Sorai will not give birth, but Soroh will. I will give you another name, and your destiny will change."

Logically, Yitzchok's birth relates to the change in the meaning of the two names. It was not just that their names changed. The names Avrohom and Soroh both indicate exercising control of the entire world. The name Avrom shows that he was the father of Aram, while Avrohom suggests he would be the father of the whole world. This is in keeping with the words of the Torah, [13] "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, [14] "(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 Yitzchok could be born, they had to change their names. Yitzchok was the first person to be born a Jew. The teachings which Avrohom began disseminating were to be continued through Yitzchok alone. Yitzchok was to be the progenitor of the Jewish nation.

The Sages tell us [15] that "*In the beginning,* Hashem created the world for the sake of the Torah. The Torah is called [16] '*the beginning* of His way. He created the world for the sake of the Jews, who are called [17] the first of His grain."

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12. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:5.
13. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:5. See also Rashi's commentary there.
14. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:15.
15. This is stated in various Midrashim, and is quoted by Rashi in Parshas Bereishis, 1:1.
16. Mishlei 8:22.
17. Yirmiyahu 2:3.

The meaning of this teaching of the Sages is clear. The entire universe was created for 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 Jew. Any act that a Jew performs affects the world as a whole.

To emphasize the role of the 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 Israel's role in creation. These were not separate miracles; they were part of Yitzchok's miraculous birth. His birth affected the entire world.

As noted above, Avrohom was named so because he became the *father* of many nations. Fatherhood takes time. Due to his role as a father, miracles occurred throughout the world in his merit. They came about through his "taking another wife." This wife bore six children. It also took time to emphasize the effort a father must make. Soroh, on the other hand, was so named because she was royalty; she was a princess over all nations, and 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 you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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