

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Toldos

2 Kislev, 5779 – November 10, 2018

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית כ"ז, ב': וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי נָא זָקֵנָה לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי:

רש"י ד"ה לא ידעתי יום מותי: אמר רבי יהושע בן קרחא אם מגיע אדם לפרק אבותיו ידאג חמש שנים לפניהם וחמש לאחר כן, ויצחק היה בן מאה עשרים ושלוש, אמר שמא לפרק אמי אני מגיע, והיא מתה בת מאה עשרים ושבע והריני בן חמש שנים סמוך לפרקה, לפיכך לא ידעתי יום מותי, שמא לפרק אמי, שמא לפרק אבא:

Bereishis 27:2: And he said, "Behold now, I have grown old; I do not know the day of my death."

Rashi Heading – I do not know the day of my death: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh said that if a person reaches his parent's age (at the time that they passed away), he should worry five years beforehand and five years afterwards. Yitzchok was 123 years old (at this time). He said, "Perhaps I will reach the age of (the passing of) my mother who died at 127. I am thus within five years of her age. Therefore, 'I do not know the day of my death.' Perhaps I will reach my mother's age, and perhaps my father's age."

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Toldos, our patriarch Yitzchok says that he has grown old and does not know the day of his death, i.e. how long he has left to live. Why was he suddenly concerned at this point? Rashi explains this by quoting a teaching of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh¹. He states that one should be concerned when he reaches the age which is five years younger than his mother was at the time of her passing, and five years afterwards. He should similarly be concerned regarding the age at which his father passed away. Yitzchok was now 123 years old; hence he was concerned because he was five years younger than his mother was at the time of her passing. His mother Soroh lived to be 127.

Why does Rashi need to explain anything whatsoever here? Yitzchok himself explicitly said that he has grown old! That is why he was concerned!

The explanation is that we find earlier that instead of Yitzchok's father Avrohom blessing him, G-d Almighty Himself blessed him. Hashem is limitless. His blessing certainly included a

1. See Bereishis Rabbah 65:121.

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long life. He wouldn't be concerned simply because he reached old age. Rashi explains the reason for his concern by citing the teaching of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh.

In addition to blessing Yitzchok, G-d also blessed his parents. They both had a longer life-span than that which was pre-destined according to the laws of nature. Avrohom was meant to live until the age of 100, and Soroh until the age of 90. If not for G-d's blessing, Yitzchok would have needed to be concerned beginning with age 85. He had already passed that many years earlier. Hence, based on Hashem's blessing to his parents, Yitzchok knew that he had at least until the age of 123.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Toldos, we find that our patriarch Yitzchok said² "Behold now, I have grown old; I do not know the day of my death." Rashi explains the reason for Yitzchok's concern about not knowing the day he would pass away. He does this by quoting the Midrash³. "Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh said that if a person reaches the age of his parent's (passing), he should worry five years beforehand and five years afterwards. Yitzchok was 123 years old⁴. He said, 'Perhaps I will reach the age of (the passing of) my mother, who passed away at the age of 127⁵. I am thus within five years of her age. Therefore, 'I do not know the day of my death.' Perhaps I will reach my mother's age, and perhaps my father's age.'" With these words Rashi explains Yitzchok's concern at that particular point.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

It would seem that there is no question as to why Yitzchok expressed concern regarding the day of his passing here. He himself said "Behold now, I have grown old." That would certainly seem to be reason enough for concern over how much longer he would live! Why does Rashi need to offer any explanation whatsoever here?

Additionally, why does Rashi mention that this teaching was said by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh? It's unusual for Rashi to cite a source for what he writes. Only very rarely does he name

2. Our Parshah, Bereishis 27:2.

3. See Footnote 1.

4. It would seem that Yitzchok's concern should have begun at the age of 122. The Rebbe cites a note at the beginning of the Alter Rebbe's Laws of Torah Study which is related to this. See there for further insight into the question.

5. Parshas Chayei Soroh, Bereishis 23:1.

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the Sage who he is quoting. Here we see that Rashi does not cite his source; this entire teaching is from Bereishis Rabbah, yet Rashi does not credit the Midrash. He does, however, name the Sage who is quoted in the Midrash. Rashi only does so when it adds to our understanding of Peshat. What does our knowledge that Rabbi ben Korchoh taught this add to our understanding of the simple meaning of the verse?

The Explanation

The explanation of the above comments can be understood by looking at Rashi's comments on an earlier verse. It was previously written that⁶ "it came to pass after Avrohom's death, that G-d blessed his son Yitzchok ..." Rashi gives two explanations as to why Hashem blessed Yitzchok Himself. One of these is that "even though the Holy One, blessed be He, delivered the blessings to Avrohom, he was afraid to bless Yitzchok, because he foresaw Aisov coming from him. He therefore said, 'May the Master of blessings come and bless whomever He pleases.' And the Holy One, blessed be He, came and blessed him."

From this we see that G-d Almighty Himself blessed Yitzchok. A blessing from the omnipotent G-d certainly would include a blessing for a long life. With such a blessing, it is understood that the arrival of old age is not a cause for concern over one's life coming to an end. Therefore, Rashi's explanation is necessary. He lets us know that according to nature, the time for concern over one's passing is five years before and after the age his parents (both father and mother) were at the time of their passing. Since Yitzchok was 123 years old, and his mother passed away at age 127, he was worried. His concern was because of his specific age, not because he was old.

However, this still leaves us with a question. If the teaching cited by Rashi is the natural pattern of life, why should Yitzchok have been concerned? He had a blessing directly from Hashem. This blessing included long life. That blessing meant that he would live past the normal life expectancy. What was the cause for his concern? In fact, Yitzchok lived until the age of 180. That was five years longer than his father, who passed away at the age of 175⁷. Why was his lifespan within the normal life expectancy, and not longer?

The explanation is that Avrohom and Soroh were also blessed directly by Hashem. Therefore, their lifetimes were also longer than normal. When Avrohom was 100 years old, and

6. Parshas Chayei Soroh, Bereishis 25:11.

7. Parshas Chayei Soroh, Bereishis 25:7.

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Soroh was 90, the Torah tells us that they were not merely old, but they were⁸ "old, and coming in years ..." What is the meaning of the phrase, "coming in years?" Simply, they had both "come," meaning passed all of their years. In other words, without the Divine blessing which they both received, Soroh would have lived to be 90, and Avrohom to be 100. Hashem's blessing added 37 years to Soroh's life, and 75 years to Avrohom's.

Had Yitzchok lived to be 105, his lifetime would have extended five years beyond the amount of years which his father was originally allotted. We see from this that G-d's blessing added many years to his life. In fact, it was the same exact amount of years which were added to Avrohom's life. Yitzchok lived to the age of 180. Had his life-span followed the regular way in which things happen, he could have only lived until the age of 105. In other words, he merited to live an extra 75 years, just as his father.

The same is true regarding his mother. He began to consider when he would pass away five years before he reached his mother's age at the time of her death. Had she lived the 90 years which she was originally allotted, he may have only lived until the age of 85. However, his concern only began 37 years after that, after he passed the age of 122, and began the 123rd year of his life.

However, we are still left with a difficulty. The Torah told us earlier that Avrohom was blessed by Hashem that⁹ "you will be buried in a good old age." The meaning of that is that at the time of his death, all of his children would be righteous. Rashi explains that as a result of the blessing of being "buried in a good old age," Avrohom would lose five years from his life. Rashi states¹⁰ "that Aisov would not embark on his evil ways during his (Avrohom's) lifetime. Therefore, Avrohom died five years before his time, and on that very day, Aisov rebelled." In other words, in order to fulfill both the blessing of longevity and the blessing of having righteous children, he passed away at 175 instead of 180. One hundred and eighty was the number of years allotted to him, and this was only shortened in order to fulfill *both* blessings. However, it would seem that Yitzchok, who only had the blessing of longevity, should have lived to be 185!

Rashi answers this question by telling us the name of the one who stated this teaching. The Talmud tells us¹¹ of a number of our Sages who were asked why they merited longevity. Each gave a number of answers. They answered by stating certain Mitzvos regarding which they were

8. Parshas Vayeiros, Bereishis 18:11.

9. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:15.

10. *ibid.*

11. See Tractate Megillah, beginning with 27, b.

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exceptionally scrupulous. Obviously, each was particular in the fulfillment of all Mitzvos, but they were exceptionally careful in those which they stated. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh was one of the Sages who was asked this question. He was the only one who responded with just one answer. His response was that throughout his entire life, not once did he ever gaze upon an evil person.

From this we see that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchoh's position was that not gazing at an evil person is the equivalent of several other merits, in terms of bringing about long life. From this we can understand the converse. Gazing upon wicked people alone can cause a shortening of one's life. Therefore, we can understand why Yitzchok lived to the age of 180, rather than 185. He believed his son Aisov to be righteous. However, despite his belief, Aisov was actually evil. His gazing at Aisov shortened his life.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Toldos and Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5728))

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Chaim and Aiden Oded שיחיו Morris**

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Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיחיו Morris**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR MOTHER
Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacoheh ע"ה Cohen
Passed away on 8 Shevat, 5778
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY

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**IN HONOR OF
Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Tzivia שי' 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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