בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Toldos

4 Kislev, 5787 – November 14, 2026

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"ה, כ"ד: וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לָלֶדֶת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמִם בְּבִטְנָהּ׃

רש"י ד"ה וימלאו ימיה: אבל בתמר כתיב ויהי בעת לדתה. שלא מלאו ימיה כי לשבעה חדשים ילדתם: **ד"ה והנה תומם:** חסר, ובתמר תאומים מלא לפי ששניהם צדיקים, אבל כאן אחד צדיק ואחד רשע:

Bereishis 25:24: And her days to give birth were completed, and behold, there were twins in her womb.

Rashi Heading - And her days…were completed: But regarding Tamar, it is written: "And it came about at the time of her travail," because her term (of pregnancy) was not filled, for she gave birth to them after seven months. T**here were twins in her womb:** (תוֹמִם - twins is spelled) defectively[1] (missing an "Aleph" and a "Yud"), but concerning Tamar, it is written תְּאוֹמִים with the full spelling (with both an "Aleph" and a "Yud") because they (Tamar's children, Peretz and Zerach) were both righteous, but here, one was righteous (Yaakov), and one was wicked (Aisov)

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Toldos, the Torah tells us of our matriarch Rivkah conceiving and giving birth. Rashi comments on two points. Firstly, regarding Rivkah, it says that her days (of pregnancy) were completed. Later, when the Torah describes Tamar giving birth, it does not use this expression. Rashi explains that this is because Rivkah carried her twins for a full nine months. Tamar gave birth after only seven months. Secondly, regarding Rivkah, the Torah spells the Hebrew word for twins (Te'omim) defectively, i.e., missing two letters.

Regarding Tamar, it spells out the entire word. Rashi explains that Tamar's twins were both righteous. However, Rivkah gave birth to one Tzaddik and one Rosho.

The questions Rashi discusses here will not bother the student until he learns over thirteen additional chapters. Only then will he reach the verse regarding Tamar. Why is Rashi explaining it here? We also need to understand why Rashi points out the difference between the complete spelling and the same word with

1. Throughout all of the books of the Bible, most words are written מלא, complete, with all letters present. There are, however, also words which are written חסר defectively. This means that one or more letters are missing. The Hebrew word for twins, תאומים, is spelled fully when the Torah tells us of Tamar giving birth. However here, regarding Rivkah, it is spelled תומם, missing the א and the י.

missing letters. This is generally not an issue in Peshat. The only exception is when it answers a question. What is the question?

The explanation is that Rashi was not bothered by the differences between the Torah's description of Rivkah and Tamar. Instead, what bothers Rashi is that the Torah says about Rivkah, "and her days to give birth were completed." We do not find this expression anywhere in the Torah until this point. Rashi explains that the Torah uses that expression to contrast with Tamar's pregnancy. It was not complete. He is showing us that there is such a thing as carrying full term (nine months) and such a thing as being pregnant for only seven months. The Torah does not use this expression for Tamar to teach us that she only carried for seven months. She merited to have less of the pain that accompanies pregnancy because both of her children were Tzaddikim.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Toldos, we are told that our matriarch Rivkah conceived and later gave birth to twins: the righteous Yaakov, father of the Jewish nation, and the wicked Aisov, father of Edom. The Torah tells us of their birth. [2] "And her days to give birth were completed, and behold; there were twins in her womb." Rashi explains that "But regarding Tamar, it is written, [3] 'And it came about at the time of her travail,' because her term (of pregnancy) was not filled, for she gave birth to them after seven months." Tamar also gave birth to twins. However, regarding Rivkah, the Torah says that "her days to give birth were complete." The Torah does not use this expression regarding Tamar. What is the reason for the difference? Rashi explains that Rivkah carried for a full nine months. Tamar, on the other hand, only bore her babies for seven months.

Following this explanation, Rashi goes on to explain other words of the verse. When the Torah tells us that she gave birth to twins, Te'omim - תאומים, it leaves out the letters Aleph - א and Yud - י, spelling the word תומים. In contrast, regarding Tamar, the Torah uses the complete spelling, תאומים. Rashi explains why the spelling changes. Tamar's children were both righteous. However, in the case of Rivkah, one was righteous and the other wicked.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

When there is seemingly a contradiction between two different verses, Rashi always points it out when the Torah tells us the *second* verse. Until that point, there is no question. However, here Rashi points out the difference between Rivkah and Tamar *more than thirteen chapters* before the Torah tells us about Tamar! It

2. Our Parshah, Bereishis 25:24.
3. Parshas Vayeishev, Bereishis 38:27.

will be quite a while before the beginning student has a question, yet Rashi discusses it here! Moreover, Rashi answers the same question later, when the Torah tells us about Tamar giving birth!

We can ask the same question about Rashi's second comments on the difference between how the Torah spells the Hebrew word for twins here and there. The student has no question yet because he has not yet learned about Tamar.

Furthermore, as a general rule, whether the Torah spells a word entirely is not an issue, according to Peshat. That is why Rashi does not comment on a word that is spelled "defectively in the overwhelming majority of cases." The only instance that he does comment is when the fact that a word is spelled missing letters answers a question, according to Peshat. We need to understand the question and how leaving out two letters answers it.

The Explanation

Rashi is not bothered by the difference between what the Torah says here and what it says later about Tamar. The question that bothers Rashi is why the Torah says, "and her days to give birth were complete." Up until this point, we find no such expression in the Torah. What do these words add to our understanding of what the Torah is saying? The natural, regular way is for a woman to give birth after nine months.

Rashi answers this question by pointing out what the Torah says regarding Tamar: "And it came about at the time of her travail." If not for what the Torah writes here, we might assume the Torah is simply telling us that when Tamar gave birth after nine months, she realized she had twins. Because the Torah uses this unusual expression for Rivkah, we understand that Tamar did not carry it to term.

However, this explanation opens up several other questions. Based on what we just said, the Torah says "and her days to give birth were completed" to teach us that Tamar's pregnancy was not complete. In other words, she only carried her twins for seven months. Why did the Torah teach us this lesson here? Others gave birth closer to Tamar's story.

The Torah is not a storybook. It does not tell us every detail of what happened. Why do we need to know for how many months Tamar was expecting? Additionally, why does it matter that she gave birth after seven months? What does it teach us?

Finally, why did the righteous Rivkah have to carry her babies for a full nine months? We know that pregnancy is painful; as Hashem said to Chavah, [4] "I shall surely increase your sorrow and your pregnancy." Rashi, there, explains this to mean that "your pregnancy" refers to the pain of pregnancy. We also know that

4. Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis 3:16.

Rivkah's pregnancy was especially difficult. Our Torah portion tells us that, [5] "And the children struggled within her, and she said, 'If it will be so, why am I like this?' And she went to inquire of G-d." Rashi explains that with the words "if it is so," she said, "that the pain of pregnancy is so great." He further states that with the words "why am I like this," she said, "why did I desire and pray to conceive?" Why did Hashem cause this poor, righteous woman to suffer for nine whole months? He could have allowed her to give birth after seven months!

To answer these questions, Rashi says that "(תוֹמִם– twins) is spelled defectively (missing an 'Aleph' and "Yud"), but concerning Tamar, it is written תְּאוֹמִים with the full spelling, because they were both righteous, but here, one was righteous, and one was wicked." The Torah compares these two pregnancies. Both women gave birth to twins. But by pointing out differences between the two, we can compare and contrast all aspects of the pregnancies. Rashi notes that in Rivkah's case, the Hebrew word for twins is missing two letters, unlike in Tamar's case, showing an essential difference between the two.

This answers all of our questions. It answers why Rivkah was chosen to be the one from whom we would learn about Tamar's pregnancy. It also explains why Rivkah carried her twins for nine months, and Tamar did not carry them to term. Because Tamar gave birth to two righteous babies, she merited to experience less pain of bearing the babies, so she only bore them for seven months. Rivkah, who gave birth to one wicked child, had to carry them for the entire nine months.

A Deeper Explanation of Rashi

One question, however, remains. Tamar's conception came about in a manner that appeared to be very immodest. [6] On the other hand, we see in our Torah portion that Rivkah conceived in the most modest way imaginable. Her conception came about as an answer from G-d to the prayers of her and her husband, Yitzchok. Why is it that one of her children was wicked? Why was it that she had to suffer for nine months?

We can answer this question by the mystical interpretation of a strange saying of the Sages, which Rashi quotes. When it says that [7] "the children struggled within her," Rashi explains that "When she passed by the entrances of the Torah academies of Shem and Ever, Yaakov would run and struggle to come out; when she passed the entrance of a temple of idolatry, Aisov would run and struggle to come out." This requires a great deal of explanation. How is it possible that a child of Yitzchok and Rivkah, who were both the epitome of holiness, and were conceived in total purity, should have a natural inclination to idolatry and evil?

5. Our Parshah, Bereishis 25:22.
6. See Parshas Vayeishev, beginning with Bereishis 38:13.
7. Our Parshah, Bereishis 25:22.

The Rambam writes that there are two types of Tzaddikim[8]. Some do not incline to evil whatsoever. Others are drawn to sin and impurity from birth. Their purpose in life is to conquer their evil inclination. Aisov was such an individual. He had the potential to fully overcome his natural instincts. Had he done so, he would have been "even more complete and perfect" than the natural Tzaddik, as the Rambam writes.

That is why Rashi wrote that "one was righteous and the other evil." He did not mean to say that Aisov was evil. He indicated that that was his nature, but Hashem gave him the ability to overcome it, had he only used his potential.

That is also why Tamar's pregnancy is alluded to as far back as Rivkah. Her son Peretz was the ancestor of Moshiach. He is the one and only who has the power to nullify the evil of Aisov.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5744 and Shabbos Parshas Re'eh 5743)

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

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8. Shmoneh Perokim, Chapter 6.

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in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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