בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayishlach

18 Kislev, 5787 – November 28, 2026

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vayishlach
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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית ל"ו ,ו': וַיִּקַּח עֵשָׂו אֶת־נָשָׁיו וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־בְּנֹתָיו וְאֵת כָּל־נַפְשׁוֹת בֵּיתוֹ וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ וְאֶת־כָּל־בְּהֶמְתּוֹ וְאֵת כָּל־קִנְיָנוֹ אֲשֶׁר רָכַשׁ בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־אֶרֶץ מִפְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב אָחִיו:

בראשית ל"ו, ז': כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב מִשֶּׁבֶת יַחְדָּו וְלֹא יָכְלָה אֶרֶץ מְגוּרֵיהֶם לָשֵׂאת אֹתָם מִפְּנֵי מִקְנֵיהֶם:

רש"י ד"ה ולא יכלה ארץ מגוריהם :להספיק מרעה לבהמות שלהם. ומדרש אגדה (פסוק ו) מפני יעקב אחיו, מפני שטר חוב של גזירת (ט"ו, י"ג) כי גר יהיה זרעך, המוטל על זרעו של יצחק, אמר אלך לי מכאן, אין לי חלק לא במתנה שנתנה לו הארץ הזאת, ולא בפרעון השטר. ומפני הבושה, שמכר בכורתו:

Bereishis 36:6: And Aisov took his wives, his sons, and his daughters. He took all the people of his household; He also took his cattle, all of his animals, and all his property that he acquired in the land of Canaan. He went to another land, because of his brother Yaakov.

Bereishis 36:7: For their possessions were too numerous for them to dwell together. The land of their sojourning could not support them because of their livestock.

Rashi Heading – and the land of their sojourning could not: provide [enough] pasture for their animals—the Midrash Aggadah.[1], however, explains "because of his brother Yaakov," [as follows:] Because of the note of obligation of the decree, "that your seed will be strangers. [2] This decree applied to the descendants of Yitzchok. He (Aisov) said, "I will get out of here. I have no share in the gift, because the land has been given to him (Yaakov). I also do not need to pay the debt." [He also left] because of the shame that [he felt, because] he had sold his birthright.

Synopsis

At the end of this week's Parshah, the Torah tells us that Aisov took his wives, children, his household, his livestock, and all his property and went to another land because of his brother Yaakov. He left because he and his brother had too many possessions for them to dwell together; Eretz Yisroel could not support both of them.

First, Rashi explains the simple meaning. Aisov left Canaan because the land was not big enough

1. Bereishis Rabbah Chapter 82, 13.
2. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:13.

for both of them to pasture their animals. Rashi then quotes a Midrash Aggadah. [3] What does it mean that Aisov left Israel because of his brother Yaakov? It was decreed that Yitzchok's descendants would be strangers in a strange land. Aisov wanted no part of that. The land was promised to Yaakov, so he would not have it anyway. He did not want to pay the debt that came with the land, i.e., being strangers in a strange land. He also did not wish to remain in Israel because he was embarrassed that he sold his birthright.

This requires clarification. Rashi only explains Peshat. At times he cites a Midrash which helps us understand Peshat. Why does he add a second explanation from a Midrash? It does not seem to add anything. Moreover, it seems to say the *opposite* of what the Torah says. The verse says, "They had too many possessions for them to dwell together." The Midrash gives a completely different reason!

Furthermore, the Midrash differs from the words Rashi quotes. The Midrash says, "Rabbi Elozor says, [that Aisov left the land] because of the note of obligation. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says [that he left] because of the shame." Conversely, Rashi includes both opinions as one.

The explanation is as follows. According to Peshat, the Torah words clearly follow Rashi's first explanation. Aisov left Canaan because there was not enough pasture for both of them. However, this raises another question. While there was not enough pasture for both, why didn't Yaakov leave instead of Aisov? Aisov had lived in Canaan the entire time, while Yaakov had just returned.

We cannot answer that Yaakov had more livestock than his brother. Therefore, he needed more space for pasture. Aisov would certainly not relinquish his claim to the land to help his brother.

That is why Rashi also quotes the Midrash. Aisov left "because of the note of obligation of the decree 'that your seed will be strangers.' This decree applied to the descendants of Yitzchok." Aisov did not leave the land to do Yaakov a favor. He knew that one of Yitzchok's children, either he or Yaakov, would have to pay a price (a note of obligation) to possess the land. They needed to separate because there was not enough room. Aisov chose to leave because he did not wish to pay the bill.

However, Aisov would obviously feel humiliated by having to move because of his brother. People would say that Yaakov, the "newcomer," forced Aisov to leave! Because of this, Rashi offers a second explanation from the Midrash. Aisov was already embarrassed because he sold the birthright to his brother.

By including the simple meaning and both opinions from the Midrash, Rashi answers all questions according to Peshat.

Rashi's Explanation

At the end of this week's Parshah, the Torah tells us that [4] "Aisov took his wives, his sons, his

3. See footnote 1.
4. Our Parshah, Bereishis 36:6-7.

daughters, and all of the people of his household. [He also took] his cattle, all of his animals, and all the property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went to another land because of his brother Yaakov. [This was] because they had too many possessions for them to dwell together, and the land of their sojourning (Eretz Yisroel) could not support them because of their livestock."

Rashi's first explanation tells us the simple meaning of the Torah's words. Why did Aisov leave Canaan? "Because the land did not provide [enough] pasture for their animals," meaning there was not enough room for the cattle of both Yaakov and Aisov. Therefore, Aisov decided to leave.

Rashi then offers a second explanation, quoting a Midrash Aggadah.[5] The Torah says that Aisov left Israel and went to another land because of his brother Yaakov. What does this mean? It was decreed that Yitzchok's descendants would be strangers in a strange land. Aisov wanted no part of that. He could not have the land anyway, because it was promised to his brother. Therefore, he did not want to pay the debt for the land, i.e., to be exiled. He also did not wish to remain because he was embarrassed that he sold his birthright.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi comments that [6] "I have come only to teach the simple meaning of the Scripture and such Aggadah that clarifies the words of the verses, each word in its proper way." This means he explains only Peshat. He will occasionally cite a Midrash which helps us understand Peshat. Why would he include a second explanation from a Midrash? His first explanation, that there was not enough pasture for both of their livestock, seems to explain our verse perfectly. The Midrash does not seem to add anything. Moreover, the Midrash seems to say the opposite of the Torah. The verse says that "they had too many possessions for them to dwell together." The Midrash gives a completely different reason!

Furthermore, the text (and the content) of the Midrash is quite different than the words that Rashi quotes. The Midrash says, "Rabbi Elozor says, [that Aisov left the land] because of the note of obligation. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says [that he left] because of the shame." In other words, according to Rabbi Elozor, he left for one reason, and according to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, for another.

However, Rashi tells us that Aisov left Israel for both reasons: the note of obligation and the shame. In other words, according to Rashi, Aisov left for both reasons, and according to the Midrash, these are two different opinions about Rashi's departure.

The Explanation

We can explain the above questions as follows. The meaning of Torah's words clearly and obviously

5. See footnote 1.
6. See Rashi’s comments to Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis 3:8.

follows Rashi's first explanation. The Torah says simply that [7] "Aisov took his wives… and he went to another land because of his brother Yaakov." Why did he do this? The verse continues to explain that it was "because they had too many possessions… and the land of their sojourning (Eretz Yisroel), could not support them because of their livestock." In other words, as Rashi says in his first explanation, "provide [enough] pasture for their animals."

This all seems to be clear. However, on closer examination, it is not so clear. Granted, there was not enough pasture for both. However, why didn't Yaakov leave instead of Aisov? Aisov and his entourage had lived in Canaan throughout the entire time. Conversely, Yaakov had just returned to Israel. He had been absent for twenty years. It would seem that he should have left.

Possibly, we can answer this question by saying that Yaakov possessed an unusually large amount of livestock and needed more pasture space than his brother did. Additionally, we find that Aisov [8] "was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field," meaning he understood all aspects of the field. He was not limited to using his field as pasture. Hence, he needed less space for pasture. Therefore, he left Canaan to allow his brother the land that he needed.

This is not a tenable answer. Nothing we know of Aisov indicates that he would cooperate to help his brother.

Because of this question, Rashi tells us that Aisov must have had additional reasons for leaving. Rashi teaches us that "Because of the note of obligation of the decree, 'that your seed will be strangers.' This decree applied to the descendants of Yitzchok." When the Torah says that Aisov left the land because of his brother Yaakov, it does not mean he did so out of goodness of heart. Rather, he knew that his father Yitzchok's descendants would have to pay a price (a note of obligation) to possess the land. Both he and Yaakov were Yitzchok's children. Until then, Aisov *remained* in the land; he had no reason to uproot himself and his family. However, the time came that he had to separate from his brother. They had to separate because there was not enough space for their animals to graze. Aisov chose to leave because he did not want to pay the bill.

However, this explanation still doesn't feel completely smooth. Aisov would obviously feel humiliated by having to move because of his brother. People would talk about him. All of the other inhabitants of the land would look at him and say that Aisov *lost*! Yaakov, the "newcomer," forced Aisov to leave! Based on what we know about Aisov, he couldn't tolerate that. He still wouldn't agree to leave the land for his brother.

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7. See footnote 4.
8. Parshas Toldos, Bereishis 25:27.

To address this difficulty, Rashi brings the second explanation from the Midrash. In general, Aisov felt embarrassed in Israel. This was especially true when Yaakov was present. He was ashamed that he sold the birthright to his brother.

We see that Rashi answers all questions according to Peshat only by including the simple meaning together with both opinions from the Midrash. From this we can understand the precision of every word of Rashi.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5729)

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

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