

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayaishev

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית ל"ז, י"א: וַיִּקְנֶאוּ בּוֹ אֶחָיו וַאֲבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת הַדָּבָר:

רש"י ד"ה שמר את הדבר: היה ממתין ומצפה מתי יבא, וכן (ישעיה כ"ו, ב') שומר אמונים וכן (איוב י"ד, ט"ז) לא תשמור על חטאתי, לא תמתין:

Bereishis 37:11: His brothers envied him, but his father awaited the matter.

Rashi Heading - awaited the matter: He was waiting and looking forward in expectation of when it (the fulfillment of the dream) would come. Similarly,¹ "awaiting (שׁוֹמֵר) the realization (of Hashem's promise)," and² "You do not wait (תִּשְׁמֹר) for my sin." (In other words, this means that) You do not wait.

Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Vayaishev, tells us of Yosef's two dreams. The first implied that his brothers would bow down to him³. The second made it clear that besides his brothers, his parents would also bow down to him⁴. He described both dreams to his brothers. He also told his father, Yaakov, about these dreams in his brothers' presence. His father believed that these dreams would come to pass. The Torah concludes this story by telling us that his brothers envied him, but his father waited for his son's dreams to come true.

The Torah's verb for "waited" is quite unusual in that context. The Hebrew word "Shomar – שמר" usually means to guard. In this instance, however, Rashi tells us that it means that "he was waiting and looking forward in expectation of when it (i.e., the fulfillment of the dream) would come." Rashi cites two proofs from scripture that this verb can mean waiting. The first proof that he quotes is from the book of Yeshaya. "Awaiting (שׁוֹמֵר) the realization (of Hashem's promise)." The second is from the book of Iyov, "You do not wait (תִּשְׁמֹר) for my sin." Why does Rashi need to cite two different proofs? Either of them would have shown that the word "Shomar - שמר" can mean waited!

When waiting for something, he wants it to happen as soon as possible. He is anxious for it to happen. However, in our verse, the Torah placed the word "Es - את" between the words "waited" and "for the matter." The name "Es" has no actual translation. It is a grammatical tool often used to indicate a direct object. Yet, here we have something for which Yaakov is yearning, and yet we separate the words "waiting" and "the matter." The

1. Yeshaya 26:2.

2. Iyov 14:16.

3. Our Parshah, Bereishis 37:5 – 7.

4. Our Parshah, Bereishis 37:9.

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proof text from Yeshaya has no separation between the word "wait" and that for which we are waiting. However, it discusses waiting for something positive, namely redemption. The verse from Iyov talks about something unfavorable, namely sin. It does have a separator. From these two verses, we see that the word "Shomar - שׁמַר" can be translated as "to wait," regardless of whether or not it refers to something positive or not.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah Portion, Vayaishev, the Torah tells us of Yosef's two dreams. The first dream implied that his brothers would bow down to him. His second dream meant that in addition to his brothers, his parents would also bow down to him. He described them to his brothers. He then told his father, Yaakov, of them in his brothers' presence⁵, and his father rebuked him.

Why did his father rebuke him? His father *did* believe that Hashem would fulfill Yosef's dreams. Instead, he blamed Yosef for bringing hatred upon himself (see Rashi's comments in footnote 5). Our verse states that "his brothers envied him, but his father waited. The Hebrew verb which the Torah uses, שׁמַר, usually means that he guarded. Rashi cites the words from this verse, "his father waited for the matter," and comments that that "he was waiting and looking forward to when it, meaning the fulfillment of Yosef's dreams, would come. Rashi cites two prooftexts for this use of this verb. Firstly, the Prophet writes, 'waiting - שׁוֹמֵר for the realization (of Hashem's promise to bring the redemption).' It is also written in scripture, 'Do not wait - תִּשְׁמֹר for my sin,' meaning do not wait."

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

It seems clear that Rashi is only explaining one word from the verse upon which he is commenting, the term "Shomar - שׁמַר." Although in the overwhelming majority of places that we use this verb, it means guarded, he tells us that here, it means waiting. We know that Rashi is exceptionally particular and precise with the words that he uses in his commentary. He is equally exact by the phrase he cites in his comments' headings. If he is only explaining the term "waited," why does he also quote the words "his father (waited) for the matter" in the heading of his comments?

Furthermore, Rashi seems to be showing us that here, the verb שׁמַר is used by the Torah to mean "waited." Therefore, he cites proof that it can have this meaning. Why does he need to mention two tests, one from Yeshaya and one from Iyov? One would have sufficed.

When Rashi does cite his second proof from Iyov, "Do not wait for my sin," he follows it by clarifying that it means "do not wait." That the meaning of "not waiting for my sin" is "do not wait" is so evident that we

5. Our Parshah, Bereishis 37:10.

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would have understood it ourselves, even had Rashi said nothing. Furthermore, when Rashi cites his first proof from the verse in Yeshaya, he does not add any explanation whatsoever. Why does he need to explain this regarding his citation from Iyov?

The Explanation

The reason that Rashi is not satisfied with citing the verse from Yeshaya and cites proof from Iyov as well is as follows. If one is waiting for a particular thing, he feels close and connected to that which he awaits. The proof that Rashi cites from Yeshaya makes this clear. We, the Jewish nation, are waiting for Hashem to fulfill His promise and finally redeem us from exile. Therefore, the Prophet writes שומר אמונים and not את אמונים. The Hebrew word "Es - את" does not have an actual translation. Rather, grammatically, it indicates a direct object⁶. Because we long for and expect redemption immediately, the Prophet writes the verse without this word. No word – nothing, comes between "waiting – שומר" and "the realization of G-d's promise – אמונים." Hence, we see that the verb "Shomer - שומר," when it is not followed by the word "Es - את" indicates something that one expects.

However, this leaves us with a problem. In our verse, it says that Yosef's "father awaited the matter," which the Torah writes in Hebrew "ואביו שמר את הדבר." The word "Es - את" is inserted after the word "waited." Accordingly, it is challenging to say שמר means waited (i.e., was expecting) because if that was the case, the terms "waited" and "matter" should not be separated!

This is why Rashi is not satisfied with the proof from Yeshaya. From Yeshaya alone, we might think that in our verse, "Shomer – שמר" cannot mean "waited." The word "Shomer," as it appears in our verse, is not immediately followed by the term "matter." The word "Es - את" separates the two words. Therefore, Rashi brings additional proof from Iyov, "לא תשמור על חטאתי" - Do not wait for my sin." Here, the meaning is waiting, even though there is the word על meaning "upon" in the sense of "for" ("Do not wait on, meaning for my sin.") separating the words "wait" and "sin." From this, we understand that even with the name "Es - את" between שמר and דבר, it can still have the meaning of waiting for and expecting something.

That is why Rashi includes the words "his father (waited) for the matter" in the heading of his comments. Indeed, he is only explaining the concept "Shomar – שמר." Nevertheless, he is emphasizing a critical point. Although the name "Es - את" separates between "Shomar - Waited - שמר" and "Hadovor - the Matter – הדבר" nevertheless, the term "Shomar - שמר" here has the meaning of expecting something.

6. The word does serve another function as well. When the Sages study Scripture and derive all of its hidden teachings, the word את has the implication of "and," it demonstrates that we are to include something other than what is expressly written. For example, we find in Tractate Kesuvos 103a, that when the Torah tells us to honor our father and mother, it inserts the word "את - Es" before both "your father" and "your mother." It writes כבד את אביך ואת אמך. The Rabbis learn from this that in addition to honoring our parents we must honor our older siblings as well.

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There is still difficulty remaining. The proof from Iyov appears closer to our verse than that from Yeshaya. Accordingly, why did Rashi cite evidence from Yeshaya? Rashi could have sufficed by only mentioning the verse from Iyov!

The answer is that there are different sorts of waiting. The verb "to wait" can mean something the person is looking forward to. He is anxiously waiting for it to take place. That is the case in our verse, where Yaakov impatiently waits, "When will Yosef's dream finally be fulfilled." Therefore, Rashi says that he was "waiting and looking forward to" when his son's dream would come to pass. The same is true regarding the proof from Yeshaya; the Jewish people are anxiously awaiting the Final Redemption. However, "waiting" can also imply something one does not wish to occur, as is the case with the verse Rashi cites from Iyov, "Do not wait for my sin." Iyov said Hashem is (G-d forbid) not anxiously awaiting the opportunity to punish him. On the contrary, G-d always expects the person to do Teshuvah, thereby avoiding the punishment altogether.

That is why Rashi finds it necessary to cite two verses. The first verse (from Yeshaya) indicates that the word "Shomar – שמר" means waiting in the sense of anticipating something for which one anxiously awaits. The verse from Iyov demonstrates that "Shomar – שמר" means waiting, even for something one does not look forward to. Additionally, it indicates that this is the case even with a word separating between the "waiting" and that for which one is waiting. That is why he clarifies after citing the verse from Iyov that the meaning of the word is "wait." He emphasizes that even though the word "upon" comes between the two, it changes nothing.

A Deeper Explanation of Rashi

We have discussed many times that although the fact that Hashem caused us to be "exiled from our land" because of "our sins,"⁷ there is a deeper purpose to our exile. Namely, it allows us to reach a level even higher than the level we had attained before the exile. By withstanding the temptations inherent in exile, we can achieve a higher level than our stature when the Holy Temple stood. Exile allows us to reach the level needed for the ultimate redemption.

This means that although chronologically exile precedes redemption, the real purpose of exile is to attain redemption. Therefore, in terms of its intent and use, redemption precedes exile. Rashi alludes to this in his commentary by first citing the verse "waiting for the realization (of Hashem's promise to bring the redemption)," and then the verse "do not wait for my sin," sin which is the cause of exile.

The verse we are explaining discusses that for which Yaakov was waiting, namely the fulfillment of Yosef's dream. Yosef's dream had to take place to fulfill the prophecy that⁸ "your children will be strangers in a

7. This expression is based on the festival liturgy.

8. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:13. Hashem told Avrohom that his descendants would be strangers in a strange land (they would experience the Egyptian Exile), and that following that they would be redeemed with great wealth.

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strange land." Being "strangers in a strange land" refers to our exile in Egypt, which was the root of every future Golus.

Rashi tells us that each exile, which stemmed from our exile in Egypt, came from our sins, "do not wait for my sin." However, the first explanation quoted by Rashi is "waiting for the realization (of Hashem's promise to bring the redemption)."

The fact that Golus is a punishment for sin only explains how it occurs. However, the intent of exile, even before there was any sin, was to empower us to return to the land. Also, G-d made it possible that⁹ "a great congregation shall return there." Moreover¹⁰, "G-d will *expand* your boundaries...and He will give you the *entire* land,"¹¹ from the river of Egypt until the great river, the Euphrates... the Kenites ... "with the future redemption through our righteous Moshiach, who will come and redeem us immediately.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayaishev 5727)

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

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9. Yirmiyahu 31:7.

10. Parshas Shoftim, Devorim 19:8.

11. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:18 – 21.

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