

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Mikeitz

Kislev 28, 5778 – December 16, 2017

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית מ"ד, ז': וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו לָמָּה יְדַבֵּר אֲדֹנָי פְּדָבְרִים הָאֵלֶּה חֲלִילָה לְעַבְדֶּיךָ מַעֲשׂוֹת פְּדָבְרְךָ הַזֶּה:

רש"י ד"ה חלילה לעבדיך: חולין הוא לנו, לשון גנאי. ותרגום חס לעבדיך, חס מאת הקב"ה יהי עלינו מעשות זאת והרבה חס ושלום יש בתלמוד בלשון הזה:

Bereishis 44:7: And they said to him, "Why should my master say such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do a thing like this!

Rashi Heading - Far be it from your servants: Heb. חֲלִילָה, it is mundane for us, חולין, an expression of disgrace. The Targum renders: חס לעבדך, may your servants be spared, i.e., may the Holy One, blessed be He, spare us from doing this. (May He never allow us to do such a thing!) There are many such expressions in the Talmud: חס ושלום, G-d forbid.

A Brief Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Mikeitz, tells us that Yaakov's children went down to Egypt in order to procure food during the years of famine. They did not recognize the viceroy of Egypt, from whom they received food, but he recognized them. He was none other than their brother Yosef whom they had sold into slavery in Egypt years earlier. He gave them food to bring back to Israel, but he also gave them a warning. They may not come back without their youngest brother, Binyomin.

Their father Yaakov was afraid to send Binyomin, but he ultimately relented and sent him. Yosef again gave them provisions and sent them on their way. However, this time he had someone place his goblet in Binyomin's sack. He (falsely) accused them of stealing from him. They responded, asking why he should speak such words to them! Far be it from us (חלילה in Hebrew) to do such a thing. Rashi gives two explanations of the Hebrew word חלילה. One is that it is derived from the word חולין meaning mundane. Rashi goes on to say that the word mundane, also connotes something which is disgraceful. Rashi then cites another explanation from Onkelos, an Aramaic translation of the Torah. He explains the Hebrew word חלילה to mean that they should be spared by Hashem from doing something of the sort of stealing.

Earlier, the Torah uses the same Hebrew word in a different context. When Avrohom was pleading with G-d to save the people of Sodom, he used the same word. "Far be it from You to do such a thing," meaning to kill the righteous together with the wicked. There Rashi explains this word as

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meaning that it is "mundane" for You. Far be it from You to do such a thing! However, there Rashi does not mention that it is a disgrace. Rashi also does not add the explanation of Onkelos, as he does here. We need to understand why.

The explanation is, that there it was talking about G-d. Obviously Hashem will not do something which is mundane. Here, however, we are talking about people. They are great people; they were recognized as people for whom that which is mundane is considered disgraceful. Hence, they would not steal Yosef's cup. However, it is still not all that clear. Is doing something mundane worse than stealing? Therefore, Rashi adds a second explanation. They were praying to Hashem, that He prevent them from committing such an act.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah Portion, Mikeitz, we are told that Yosef's brothers came to Mitzraim to seek food during the years of famine. They had to deal with their younger brother Yosef, in order to procure food. After they had sold him into slavery in last week's Torah portion, he had become the second in command in all of Egypt. It was he who controlled all of the distribution of food. However, they did not recognize him, yet he recognized them¹. After he sent them on their way, he told them not to return without their youngest brother Binyomin. Their father had not wanted to send Binyomin, fearing for his life. However, having no choice but to comply with the viceroy's demand, they returned with Binyomin. When Yosef again sent them on their way, he had the overseer of his house hide his personal goblet in Binyomin's sack. He then had them accused of stealing his property.

The Torah tells us², "They asked him why my master should speak such words? Far be it (Hebrew -- חלילה - Chalilah) from your servants to do such a thing." Rashi gives two different explanations for the word חלילה - Chalilah far be it."

In his first explanation he says that the word "חלילה - Chalilah" comes from the word "חולין – Chulin³" meaning mundane. "It is mundane (unfitting) for us, (the word is being used as) an expression of disgrace."

1. Rashi explains (Bereishis 42:8) why they did not recognize him. It was because when they took leave of each other he did not yet have a beard. However, he recognized them because they were older, and they already had beards.

2. Bereishis 44:7.

3. We find many instances of the word חולין Chullin being used to describe something mundane. For example, sanctified sacrificial meat is described as קודש, or קדשים, meaning holy. Meat which has not been sanctified and has not been used for sacrificial purposes is described as חולין. Likewise we find that weekdays, as opposed to Shabbos and festivals are referred to as ימות החול.

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In his second explanation, Rashi quotes Onkelus, the classic Aramaic translation/commentary of the Torah. Onkelus says that the word חלילה is related to the Aramaic word “חס – Chas.” “The Targum translates it 'חס לעבדיך – May your servants be spared,' may Hashem spare us from doing this. There are many such expressions in the Talmud, such as חס ושלום (May G-d spare us).”

Previously, when Avrohom was pleading with Hashem to save the people of Sodom⁴ he said “Will You destroy the righteous together with the wicked?” There the expression "חלילה - Chalilah" is also used. Avrohom continues beseeching Hashem, saying⁵; ‘חלילה -- חלילה. Far be it from You to do such a thing.’ There Rashi explains “It is mundane (meaning unfitting) for You. They will say that this is His craft ...”

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Why is it that in when the word "Chalilah - ,חלילה" is used for the first time in the Torah, Rashi is satisfied with explaining that it means that “it is mundane for You.” However, in our Torah portion Rashi adds an additional explanation. Here he tells us that it is an "expression of disgrace.”

Moreover, here Rashi finds it necessary to add a second explanation of the word "Chalilah - חלילה." Here Rashi also cites the explanation of Onkelos. If his translation is necessary in order for us to understand the meaning of the word, why did Rashi not cite it the first time the word was used?

The Explanation

The first time the word "Chalilah - חלילה" is mentioned in the Torah, Avrohom uses it in reference to Hashem. It is obvious that the word “mundane” cannot apply to G-d. Merely saying that the act of destroying Sodom would be “mundane,” means clearly that G-d would not do it; Hashem would never perform such a deed. There is no need to say anything further.

However, in our verse we are using the word "mundane" regarding human beings. People regularly perform mundane acts. Had they said that stealing the cup would be a mundane act, would not persuade Yosef that the brothers would not have done so. They are human beings, and as such, at times they perform mundane actions. Therefore, if the point is to clarify to Yosef that the brothers would not have stolen his cup, Rashi must explain that the word "Chalilah - חלילה" as it is used here has an additional connotation. That is why Rashi found it necessary to tell us that here, the word "Chalilah - חלילה" also means a disgrace. The brothers were declaring their innocence by virtue of the fact that such a deed would not merely be mundane, but disgraceful as well. This was even apparent to the Egyptians.

4. Bereishis 18:23.

5. Bereishis 18:25.

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Yaakov's sons were seen by all as honorable people. They would view an action which is merely considered mundane for others as being disgraceful.

However, Rashi's comments leave us with a question. We are saying that according to Rashi, Yosef's brothers were incredibly pious. In other words, their righteousness reached a point that an activity which is merely mundane is disgraceful in their eyes. However, he is saying that a mundane act is even more disgraceful than stealing!

Therefore in order to justify themselves and declare their innocence they would have to state something which would clearly demonstrate that robbery would be out of the question for them. Therefore Rashi adds a second interpretation. He cites the Aramaic translation of "Chalilah - חלילה" which is found throughout the Talmud. It means "far be it from us." Based on this explanation the brothers were actually praying to G-d. They asked that Hashem should have mercy on them, and spare from such horrendous actions.

However, since we do not find the word "Chalilah - חלילה" used in this manner in the Bible at all, Rashi uses this as a second explanation. This is in accordance with one of the primary rules upon which the Rebbe's methodology for understanding Rashi is based. Whenever Rashi gives two explanations for something, there is a difficulty in each which is not present in the other. However, the first explanation is closer to Peshat.

A Deeper Explanation of Rashi

In Torah Ohr by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi⁶, it is written that every Jew contains attributes from each of our three patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. To coin a phrase, we can say that the attributes of our forefathers are a part of our spiritual DNA.

This is not true of Yaakov's children, who were the fathers of the "Shevotim – שבטים" meaning the tribes of Israel. Their descendants, the members of their respective tribes, inherited their individual traits and characteristics. This determined and marked the differences between the spiritual service of one tribe and another. However, general characteristics which were shared by all of Yaakov's children were passed down to all Jews.

This is true in the case of our verse. The claim that "this is mundane, an expression which connotes disgrace," is a statement that was not attributed to any particular brother. It was attributed to all of Yaakov's children equally.

6. See the discourse at the beginning of Parshas Va'airoh.

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A Jew must be aware that *his entire being* is holiness. He and the mundane world exist on totally different planes. The fact that one does need to busy oneself with physical, mundane activities should be considered a disgrace in one's eyes.

This is not something which should remain in the recesses of his soul. It must be obvious to everyone, including a gentile from the lowest of all nations, that anything which is not holy is every bit as disgraceful for a Jew as robbery is for someone else.

This is all true despite the fact that the Torah commands us⁷ that "six days shall you work and perform all of your labor," We are occupied with mundane, weekday activities. Nevertheless, rather than drawing ourselves down to the physical, we elevate the physical to transform it to holiness. We have the ability to do this as a result of following the guidelines of⁸ "all of your deeds shall be for the sake of Heaven," and⁹ "in all of your ways you shall know Him."

One may ask how a Jew becomes empowered to be within the physical, mundane world and to deal with it, while at the same time remaining separate from it. How can I be in the world, while at the same time finding mundane activities disgraceful? The answer is that we derive that power from Hashem; we are empowered by the G-dly spark within us, our G-dly soul. Creation comes from a level of G-dly light which is measured out in a manner that the world can handle it. Nonetheless, this light transcends the world, and can never be truly grasped by the world.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5725)

7. Shemos 20:9. Please note that there is an opinion that this is considered a positive commandment.

8. Mishnah Avos Chapter 2 Mishnah 12.

9. Mishlei 3:6.

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**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיחיו Morris**

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**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיחיו Morris**

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Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Tzivia שי' Cohen**
For a complete and speedy recovery

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**IN HONOR OF
Berocho bas Soroh שתחילי 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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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

נתרם ע"י

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