

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayigash

11 Teves, 5784 – December 23, 2023

Compiled from the works of
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vayigash**

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית מ"ה, כ"ג: וְלֹאֲבָיו שָׁלַח כְּזֹאת עֲשָׂרָה חֲמֹרִים נְשָׂאִים מִטּוֹב מִצְרַיִם וְעֶשְׂרֵת אֲתֹנֹת נְשָׂאֹת כֶּרֶם וְלֶחֶם וּמִצּוֹן לְאֲבָיו לְדָרוֹ:

רש"י ד"ה שלח כזאת: כחשבון הזה. ומהו החשבון, עשרה חמורים וגו'.

רש"י ד"ה מטוב מצרים: מצינו בתלמוד ששלח לו יין (ישן) שדעת זקנים נוחה הימנו. ומדרש אגדה גריסין של פול:

Bereishis 45:23: He sent the following to his father; ten he donkeys carrying of the best of Egypt, and ten she donkeys carrying grain, bread, and (other) food, for his father for the way.

Rashi Heading sent the following: [Literally, "he sent like this." This means that he sent] according to this amount. And what is the amount? Ten he-donkeys, etc.

Rashi Heading - of the best of Egypt: We find in the Talmud¹ that he sent him aged wine because older people find contentment with it². According to the Midrash Aggadah³, however, this refers to pounded beans.

Synopsis

In the Parshah of the week, Vayigash, Yosef is reunited with his brothers. The Torah tells us that he⁴ "sent the following to his father; ten he donkeys carrying the best of Egypt, and ten she donkeys carrying grain, bread, and (other) food for his father for the way."

Rashi explains that the words "he sent the following" (lit. "he sent like this") means that he sent according to this amount. And what is the amount? Ten he-donkeys, etc. Rashi then explains the meaning of sending his father "the best of Egypt." He writes, "We find in the Talmud that he sent him aged wine because elderly people find contentment with it. According to the Midrash Aggadah, however, this refers to pounded beans.

We need to understand Rashi. Why does Rashi tell us that when the Torah says "כֹּזֶאת – like this," it means that he sent them the number of items which the Torah lists? What does that teach us? He then continues and specifies that he sent ten donkeys, etc. How does this help us understand the verse?

When Rashi explains "the best of Egypt," he cites both the Gemorah and the Midrash. Rashi rarely cites his sources. Furthermore, Rashi gives a reason for sending aged wine but not sending his father pounded beans.

1. Talmud Megillah 16b.

2. Some explain that older people find contentment in fact that wine improves with age.

3. Bereishis Rabbah 94:2 on verse 18.

4. Our Parshah, Bereishis 45:23.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

The explanation is that Rashi is answering the following question. Yosef told his brothers to "*Hurry* and go up to my father, and say to him, 'This is what your son Yosef said, Hashem, made me a lord over all the Egyptians. Come down to me *immediately*.'" Pharaoh told Yosef to tell his brothers, "Let your eye not be concerned about your utensils, for the best of all, the land of Egypt is yours." In other words, they would rush back to Canaan to get Yaakov, their father, and immediately return to Mitzraim. They would not need any utensils. This being the case, why did Yosef send such a large amount of food?

Pharaoh heard that Yosef's brothers were in Mitzraim and that he had a father in Canaan. He decided to send them gifts. When Yosef saw that Pharaoh was sending presents, he decided he must undoubtedly send his father as much as Pharaoh sent. Therefore, Rashi writes that the gift he sent was "according to *this* amount (at least the amount that Pharaoh sent), ten he-donkeys, etc."

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, Yosef, and his brothers' dreams climax. He tells his brothers,⁵ "...I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" After the discussion, Yosef told his brothers,⁶ "*Hurry* and go up to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Yosef said, G-d made me a lord over all the Egyptians. Come down to me *immediately*.'" Yosef then "sent the following to his father; ten he donkeys carrying of the best of Egypt, and ten she donkeys carrying grain, bread, and (other) food, for his father for the way⁷."

Rashi explains that the words "he sent the following" (lit. "he sent like this") means that "he sent according to this amount. And what is the amount? Ten he-donkeys, etc." Rashi then explains the meaning of sending his father "the best of Egypt." He writes, "We find in the Talmud⁸ that he sent him aged wine because elderly people find contentment with it. According to the Midrash Aggadah⁹, however, this refers to pounded beans.

It would seem that Rashi is explaining the Torah's use of the word כִּזָּאָה – like this. This word is seemingly superfluous; the Torah lists the items Yosef sent. Rashi teaches us that Yosef sent "like this," meaning that he sent each item according to the amount.

5. Ibid, ibid. 45:3.

6. Ibid, ibid. 45:9.

7. Ibid, ibid. 45:23.

8. Talmud Megillah 16b.

9. Bereishis Rabbah 94:2 on verse 18.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Why does Rashi tell us that "כִּזְאֹת – like this" means that he sent them the number of items that the verse lists? Of course, he sent the number of articles that the Torah details. Why would we think otherwise? Furthermore, Rashi specifies *which* items he sent: ten donkeys, etc. What does this teach us?

The second Rashi explains what "the best of Egypt" means. Rashi cites both the Gemorah and the Midrash. Rashi cites his sources very rarely. Why does he do so here? Furthermore, Rashi explains why Yosef sent aged wine; he does not explain why Yosef sent his father pounded beans.

The Explanation

The explanation is that Rashi is answering the following question. Yosef told his brothers to "*Hurry* and go up to my father, and say to him, 'This is what your son Yosef said,' 'G-d made me a lord over all the Egyptians. Come down to me *immediately*.'" Pharaoh then told Yosef to tell his brothers, "Let your eye not be concerned about your utensils, for the best of all, the land of Egypt is yours." Their round-trip to Canaan and back would be so quick that they would not need to bring utensils. They would soon return to Egypt. Since the trip was so short, why did Yosef send such a large food shipment?

When Pharaoh heard that Yosef's brothers were in Mitzraim and that he had a father in Canaan, Pharaoh decided to send them gifts¹⁰; "Pharaoh said to Yosef, 'Tell your brothers, load up your beasts and go into the land of Canaan.'" Why did Pharaoh send food for Yaakov? He sent it to honor Yosef's father. When Yosef saw what Pharaoh was doing, he decided to send his father as much as Pharaoh sent. Therefore, Rashi writes that the gift he sent was "according to *this* amount (meaning at least the amount that Pharaoh sent), ten he-donkeys, etc."

This seems to present us with a different question. Pharaoh said that the brothers should "load up their beasts." At that time, all eleven of Yosef's brothers were there. This means that Pharaoh sent them eleven animals. Why did Yosef only send ten?

To answer this, Rashi writes, "What is this amount? Ten..." Pharaoh only sent ten donkeys even though eleven brothers were returning to Canaan. How could this be? He told them, "Load up your donkeys," meaning each brother's donkeys.

Earlier verses explain this, and it is so simple that Rashi needn't spell it out: The first time Yosef's brothers traveled to Egypt for grain, Yosef did not allow Shimon to return home with his brothers. However, there was no reason for Yosef to retain Shimon's donkey. When the nine remaining brothers returned to Canaan, they took his

10. Our Parshah, Bereishis 45:17.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

donkey. So, only ten brothers returned to Egypt the second time, with ten donkeys. When Pharaoh said to "load up their donkeys," they loaded ten. Yosef sent his father ten donkeys, too.

We see that Yosef sent this to his father as a gift. The items were not provisions to sustain him during the famine. For this expression of honor to be complete, Yosef must send Yaakov something else. It would have to be something that would demonstrate that the gift's purpose was to honor his father.

That is why Rashi interprets "the best of Egypt" as "he (Yosef) sent him (Yaakov) aged wine because elderly people find contentment with it." In other words, he sent something his father would enjoy rather than something to satisfy his hunger.

This interpretation fits in well, allowing us to understand why Yosef sent this present. It doesn't work with the meaning of the words "the best of Egypt." We find nowhere that Egypt had the best wine. On the contrary, Egypt was known for legumes, not trees or vines. Therefore, Rashi writes that the source for this interpretation is from the Talmud. The main idea of the Talmud is to explain the Halacha. In this light, it makes sense why Yosef would have sent vintage wine even though this interpretation doesn't fit in so well with the phrase "the best of Egypt." Considering the Halacha to honor one's father, Yosef was proper to send "aged wine."

Nevertheless, since this interpretation does not fit with the words "the best of Egypt," Rashi cites another interpretation. "A Midrash says it was split beans." According to this interpretation, the meaning of "the best of Egypt" makes perfect sense because split beans are a type of legume – a kind of food for which Egypt was well known.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

We need to understand the opinion that Yosef sent his father aged wine. Yosef was sending gifts to honor his father. To honor his father correctly, he would want to send something his father did not have. He had no way of knowing whether his father had old wine. While it is true that there was a famine and there was no grain, there may have been grapes.

We can understand this based on what Rashi said earlier. The Torah writes that¹¹ Yosef ate with his brothers, "and they drank and became intoxicated together with him." Rashi comments, "Since the day that they had sold him, neither they nor he had drunk wine, but on that day, they drank." This means that neither Yosef nor his brothers drank any wine for twenty-two years. This was an expression of the pain they had over Yosef's plight. This being the case, it is evident that Yaakov, their father, who was inconsolable throughout these twenty-two years, did not drink wine. We can understand the effect of the wine that was sent to him by his beloved son Yosef.

11. Parshas Mikeitz, Bereishis 43:34.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

There is an additional reason that Yosef chose to send aged wine. Yosef was hinting to his father that although he (Yosef) had suffered in Egypt, he still trusted Hashem. He was confident that he would see his father once again. That is why, even though Yosef did not drink wine all those twenty-two years, he saved it for a long time, so long that it had aged. He wanted to have it ready when he and his father would be reunited.

We can learn a lesson from Yosef in our service of Hashem. Even when the world¹² seems to disturb us from serving G-d, we should never lose hope. Instead, we should strengthen ourselves with complete trust that G-d will surely make us successful in our daily affairs so that they will not hinder our service of Torah and Mitzvos.

We can learn another lesson from this. Yosef sent his present to his father alone, without Pharaoh, king of Egypt, telling him to do so. He did not even ask Pharaoh whether he could send his father a gift. Yosef did not consider the Pharaoh when doing a Mitzvoh, honoring his father. Instead, he went ahead and observed the mitzvah with great care. The same applies to each of us's Divine service. When a matter about Torah and mitzvot arises, we must not concern ourselves with worldly considerations. We should fulfill the Mitzvoh in the best possible way. If we learn this lesson from Yosef, we will succeed both in our service of Hashem and our this-worldly matters.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayigash, 5732)

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

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12. Olam - עולם in Hebrew, from the root He'elem - העלם, concealment.

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