

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayechi

14 Teves, 5779 – December 22, 2018

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית מ"ט, א': נִקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֶאֱסֹפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים: **ב':** הִקְבְּצוּ וְשָׁמְעוּ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְשָׁמְעוּ אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם:

רש"י ד"ה ואגידה לכם: בקש לגלות את הקץ ונסתלקה שכינה ממנו והתחיל אומר דברים אחרים:

Bereishis 49:1: Yaakov called for his sons and said, "Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days. **2:** Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisroel, your father.

Rashi Heading - and I will tell you: He attempted to reveal the End, but the Shechinah withdrew from him. He therefore began saying other things.

Synopsis

In this week's portion, Vayechi, we are told of the passing of Yaakov. Prior to his passing he told his children to gather together, in order for him to tell them what will happen at the end of days. He then proceeded to say that they should gather and listen to his words. After this, he blesses his children, and tells them prophetically various things which would occur to their descendants, the Tribes of Israel, in the future.

Rashi cites the words of the first verse "and I will tell you," and explains that "he attempted to reveal the time of the Messianic revelation, but Hashem's presence withdrew from him. He therefore began saying other things." Why does Rashi, who is explaining Peshat, not explain that it refers to the prophetic words which their father immediately told them regarding their individual tribes? Why must he say that "the end of days" literally means the End, the end of days as we know them?

The explanation is, that there are three Hebrew words for verbally relating something to someone else. One is "*Dibbur* - דיבור – speaking." Another is "*Amirah* - אמירה - saying." The third is "*Haggadah* - הגדה - telling." Despite the obvious similarity between these three words, they are not exactly synonymous. The first, *Dibbur*, speaking, refers to saying something merely with one's mouth. It is quite possible that he does not believe in or agree with that which he is saying. The second, *Amirah*, saying, is saying that which he believes superficially, but does not necessarily believe with all of his heart. *Haggadah*, telling, is called by the holy Zohar "words of wisdom." It refers to words which come from the depths of one's heart.

Here, Yaakov prophetically told his children "הֶאֱסֹפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם – gather and I will tell you," using the word "*Haggadah*." This means that he wished to impart to them the deepest secret of the Torah. The deepest secret is the time of the Messianic Redemption. At that time the innermost, most concealed part of the soul will be connected with the innermost part of Hashem through the innermost part of the Torah.

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Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vayechi, the Torah tells of the passing of our forefather Yaakov. Prior to his passing, the Torah tells us that¹ "Yaakov called for his sons and said, 'Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days. Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisroel, your father.'" Rashi comments on the words "and I will tell you," that "He attempted to reveal the End, but the Shechinah withdrew from him. Therefore, he began saying other things." Immediately thereafter he prophetically describes to his children things which will befall their descendants, the tribes of Israel, in the future. He also blesses them.

Rashi is explaining Peshat. According to the simple explanation of the verse, what reason is there to say that he wanted to tell them the time of the Messianic Redemption? Perhaps all that he wanted to say was that which he actually *did* tell them, the future of the 12 tribes which descended from them?

There are supercommentaries² who say that Rashi's proof is from the expression "the end of days." This expression used throughout the Tanach as a reference to the end of this world as we know it, the ultimate redemption^{3 4}.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

This explanation seems to have a number of difficulties. First of all, while it is true that the expression "the end of days" often refers to the ultimate redemption, we do find instances where this is not true. For example, Bilaam said⁵ "... I will advise you what this nation will do to your people at the end of days." Rashi explains that this refers to the time of King David⁶. Secondly, even if this does refer to the End, why must Rashi say that Yaakov intended to reveal its time? Regarding the exact time of the ultimate redemption Hashem says, as so to speak, that⁷ "I have kept My intentions in My Heart, and not revealed them to My Mouth." In other words, this means to say that Hashem has not revealed the time of the End. Perhaps Yaakov simply wanted to tell his children events which would occur at that time, i.e. at the time of the ultimate redemption. We see from Rashi further on in the Parshah that he did indeed reveal a number of future events. Finally, we need to understand why Rashi feels compelled to explain it in *this* manner according to Peshat, the simple explanation.

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 49:1-2.

2. See the commentaries of both the Gur Aryeh, written by the Maharal of Prague, and the Sifsei Chachomim to this verse.

3. See, for example, Parshas Vo'eschanan, Devorim 4:30, Yeshaya 2:2 and Yirmiyahu 22:20.

4. One might think that "the end of days" is a reference to the end of the Egyptian exile in which they found themselves. The Maharal tells us that this explanation is untenable. It was known that the Egyptian exile would last for 210 years. At this point the Jewish people, Yaakov's children had been in Egypt for 17 years. Hence there were 193 years remaining. An average life span at the time was over 100 years; the Torah would not refer to 193 years as "the end of days."

5. Parshas Balak, Bamidbar 24:14.

6. *ibid.* 24:17.

7. See Yalkut Shimoni Section 507. See also Sanhedrin 99, a and Koheles Rabbah Chapter 12, 10.

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The Explanation

The explanation is as follows. In the first verse which we cited⁸, the Torah says that “Yaakov called for his sons and said, ‘Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days.’” In other words, he asked his children to gather together. In the second verse, he once again told them “Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisroel, your father.” We see that he gathered them twice; once in verse one, and a second time in verse two. Yet he did not say a thing between the two verses. He only began speaking to them after the second time that he gathered them together. Each “gathering” was for the purpose of telling them something. What he told them must have been related to the second time that he got them together. Why doesn’t the Torah tell us what he told them the first time he gathered them? It must be that he intended to tell them something, but was prevented from doing so. Therefore, Rashi says that Yaakov tried to reveal the End to his children. However, he was prevented from doing so because the Shechinah withdrew from him. That was why Yaakov gathered them again, and began talking about other things.

We know that Yaakov wanted to say something, but could not do so. The question is why Rashi says that it was specifically the *time* of the End that he wished to reveal? It could just as easily have been events that would take place at that time that he wished to reveal.

The Hebrew language is unlike any other. It is called the “Holy Tongue⁹.” It contains no true synonyms; rather each word has a different shade of meaning. There are three Hebrew words which convey verbally relating something to someone else. One is “*Dibbur* - דיבור – speaking.” Another is “*Amirah* - אמירה - saying.” The third is “*Haggadah* - הגדה - telling.” The distinction between these three words is explained both in the holy Zohar¹⁰, and in Chassidic philosophy¹¹. The first, *Dibbur* or speaking, refers to saying something merely with one’s mouth. It is quite possible that he does not believe in or agree with that which he is saying. The second, *Amirah* or saying, is saying that which he believes superficially, but does not truly believe with all of his heart. We can see an example of this from a law stated by the Rambam¹². There are times that a Jewish person will say something which is contrary to the Torah. Likewise, he may refrain from saying something which the Torah obligates him

8. Our Parshah, Bereishis 49:1.

9. This is an addition made by the translator, and not a part of the original talk of the Rebbe. The Ramban writes (Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 30:13) that "As I see it, the reason for the Rabbis calling the language of the Torah the Holy Tongue is that the words of the Torah and of the prophecies and all sacred utterances were all spoken in that language; it is the language that the Holy One, blessed be He, speaks with His prophets and with His people, saying, "I am ...," "You shall not have ..." and the remaining commandments and prophecies; it is the language by which He is called in His sacred names... and in which He created His universe, gave names to heaven and earth and all therein ..."

10. See Zohar Section 1, Page 236, b.

11. See the Chassidic discourse of the Rebbe Maharash beginning with the words *Nachamu* from 5626 (1866), and that beginning with the words *Mahaichan Zachu* from the year 5627 (1867).

12. See his Laws of Divorce at the end of Chapter 2.

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to say. The only reason for this is because, in the words of our Sages¹³, “the eyes see and (as a result of this) the heart desires.” His “evil inclination” is coercing him either to speak or to remain silent contrary to G-d’s command. However, in his inner-most heart he desires to fulfill Hashem’s command. *Haggadah*, or telling, is called by the holy Zohar “words of wisdom.” This refers to words which come from the depths of one’s heart.

The same is true regarding the Holy One blessed be He, as so to speak. When the Torah uses the word *Haggadah*, it means to convey that He is drawing down His deepest, innermost secrets. Therefore, the Sages tell us¹⁴ regarding *Aggadah*¹⁵, “Would you like to recognize Hashem? Learn *Aggadah*! You will thereby recognize the Holy One, blessed be He ...” The reason for this is that in *Aggadah*, the innermost part of the Torah, the innermost aspect of Hashem is revealed.

Here, Yaakov told his children “הִתְקַבְּצוּ וְאֶתְּנֶה לָכֶם – gather and I will tell you.” He used the word “*Haggadah*,” which itself tells us that he wished to impart to them the most hidden, deepest secret. That is namely the time of the ultimate Redemption. At that time the innermost, most concealed part of the soul will be connected with the innermost part of Hashem through the innermost part of the Torah.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

From this we can learn an important lesson in our service of Hashem. The generations following the giving of the Torah have declined. There are those who (mistakenly) think that as a result of this, our “orphaned generation” cannot possibly receive the revelations of the future redemption. How can we if earlier generations, which were greater than ours, did not merit this revelation?

We can learn the answer to this from our Rashi. The Sages tell us that¹⁶ “the actions of the Patriarchs provide a message to their children.” However, they actually provide us with much more than a message. The deeds performed by Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov provide us with the ability to perform the same actions which they did. Through this that Yaakov “attempted to reveal the End,” he gave this power to all of his children at all times. Even a generation from which “the Shechinah withdrew,” a generation such as ours with incomparable concealment of G-d’s presence and total (spiritual) darkness, has the ability to reveal the End. In the mere blink of an eye, we are capable of bringing the complete and true redemption.

The very fact that there are those who claim that our generation does not deserve etc. is the greatest sign that now is the time for the revelation of Moshiach. The Sages tell us that¹⁷ “Moshiach will come when we are distracted.” The fact that we are in a generation in which there are those who say that there is no logical way that Moshiach can come for us, is the true distraction. It is the true sign that the redemption is so close.

13. See Rashi’s commentary to Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:39.

14. See the Sifri to Parshas Aikev, Devorim 11:22.

15. *Aggadah* refers to the stories of the Talmud. This word is derived from the word *Haggadah*, meaning “telling.”

16. See the Ramban’s commentary to Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 12:10.

17. See Talmud Sanhedrin 97, a.

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The meaning of the above saying of the Sages is not, G-d forbid that we need to be distracted from the coming of Moshiach. To the contrary; it is a fundamental principle of our faith that we must await his coming every day. Rather the meaning is that despite the fact that the arrival of Moshiach does not logically appear imminent, nonetheless we fervently wait for his coming each and every moment of each and every day.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 5725)

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* * *

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

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיקוי Morris

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR MOTHER

Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacoheh ע"ה Cohen

Passed away on 8 Shevat, 5778

May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Tzivia ש' Cohen

For a complete and speedy recovery

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

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

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מרת ברכה בת ר' צבי נחמי' הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטרה ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

*** * ***

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