



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

G-d is my Shepherd

Towards the end of the *parsha*, when Yaakov finally arrives in *Mitzrayim* and meets Pharaoh, the first question Pharaoh asks Yaakov is: בְּמָה יָמֵי שָׁנֶיךָ חַיִּיךָ (47:8) — *essentially, How old are you?!*

Yaakov replies to Pharaoh that he is 130 years old and that he had a short and difficult life קָטַט וְרָעִים, הָיוּ יָמֵי שָׁנֵי חַיִּי קָטַט.

Why did Pharaoh inquire about Yaakov's age? One does not usually ask an older person their age- especially during their first interaction. In addition, Yaakov was asked only to reveal his age. Why does he respond with a description of his difficult life?

Rav Matisyahu Solomon answers our

questions utilizing the similarity of the words רעה (bad) and רועה (shepherd). In *Tehilim* Hashem is referred to as our shepherd (23:1) ה' רֹעֵי, לֹא אֶחָסֵר.

Yaakov Avinu had a tough life and he was a bit bitter. Why did Pharaoh inquire as to Yaakov's age? The Ramban explains that Yaakov appeared older than his hundred and thirty years because of how he carried himself. Yaakov was punished for Pharaoh's question in addition to his own answer because it was his demeanor that instigated Pharaoh's question in the first place. Pharaoh's question came about because of Yaakov's attitude of קָטַט וְרָעִים.

The ultimate in life is for us to place our faith in Hashem and to recognize He is in charge. What we perceive as רעה or misfortune, is being conducted by our רועה – our shepherd. We may not understand why we are being challenged but it is our fate. Rather than sulk in self



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sympathy– we need to recognize that it is the act of God and accept it and do what we can to improve the situation.

In *Parshas Vayechi* – Yaakov refers to Hashem as (48:15) הַאֱלֹקִים הָרַעָה אֹתִי. God who shepherds (guides) me. Yaakov has come to recognize that Hashem is the shepherd who is navigating our destiny. In fact, the word הָרַעָה is written without a vav, perhaps to highlight how these words are interchangeable, and that what appears as evil is in fact an act guided by Hashem as our shepherd.

During the past few months many individuals have experienced difficulty. Some lost loved ones, others suffered financial loss and routines were unraveled. Complaining of the bitterness does not improve the situation. Having a positive attitude may. The pasuk following הַאֱלֹקִים הָרַעָה אֹתִי is the pasuk of התּוֹלָאךְ הַגּוֹאֵל אוֹתִי – *the angel who redeemed me*. Once Yaakov understood God is our shepherd and all that transpires is guided from above, Yaakov was certain his salvation and redemption will be forthcoming as well. Strengthening our emunah, our faith in Hashem during these challenging times and recognizing that throughout this all, He is guiding us, as our shepherd, will enable us to persevere. ■

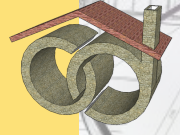
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