



ECHOES OF RASHI

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L'zecher Nishmat **Imma Morasi Shulamis bat HaRav Shmuel Tzvi Halevi a"h**

A VALLEY OF CONSENSUS

וַיֵּצֵא מֶלֶךְ סֹדֶם לִקְרֹאתוֹ אַחֲרֵי שִׁבוּיָם מִהַכּוֹת אֶת
כְּדָרְלֶעֶמֶר וְאֵת הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ אֶל עֵמֶק שְׁוֵה
הוּא עֵמֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ: (י"ד:י"ז)

When he returned from defeating Kedar-la'omer and the kings with him, the king of Sedom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King.

רש"י: "עמק המלך" - בֵּית רִיסָא דְּמִלְכָּא בֵּית רִיס
א' שְׁהוּא שְׁלִשִׁים קָנִים, שְׁהָיָה מִיַּחַד לְמֶלֶךְ לְצִחָק
שָׁם. וּמִדְרָשׁ אַגְדָּה עֵמֶק, שְׁהָשׂוּי שָׁם כָּל הָאֻמּוֹת
וְהַמְּלִיכִי אֶת אַבְרָהָם עֲלֵיהֶם לְנָשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים וּלְקָצִין:
"Valley of the King." – [Onkelos translates
it as] the king's racecourse: a hippodrome
that was thirty "kona" (measuring rods)
and was set apart for the king's sport. The
Midrashic explanation is that it was the
valley where all the nations unanimously
agreed (הוֹשׁוּי) in appointing Avraham as
prince and leader over them.

The victors of the war between the four kings and the five kings all gather in a valley called Emek Shaveh, the Valley of Equality. Rashi explains that after the war, all the kings gathered together there. The Midrash adds that they built a large platform where they essentially crowned Avram. Rashi himself doesn't describe the ceremony, but the idea is clear: this is a moment of public recognition. Avram had saved everyone. He had ended a brutal war that had raged for fourteen years. So, this becomes an Avram celebration.

They want to reward him. Melech Sedom offers him spoils, but Avram refuses. Beyond money, they all pay homage. They acknowledge him. This is the first time Avram becomes internationally renowned through peace, by ending violence and stabilizing a fractured region. This is the first concrete realization of "ve'heyey berachah" – "and you shall be a blessing" (12:2). Even before he is given the name Av Hamon Goyim – the Father of a Multitude of Nations – Avram is already functioning as a unifying moral figure on the world stage.

That's why everyone gathers in Emek Shaveh. It's the valley where there is consensus, where equals come together, where Avram is accepted and embraced. And it's hard not to hear something very contemporary in this. We hope that recognition of our right to the land of Israel grows through peace, reconciliation, and what Israel contributes to humanity. That is the vision of Emek Shaveh.

AVRAHAM GOES VERTICAL

וַיֵּצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הִבֵּט נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר
הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה
זְרַעְךָ: (ט"ו:ה)

[Then in the vision, God] took him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them" – continuing, "So shall your offspring be."

רש"י: "וַיֵּצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה" - לְפִי פְשׁוּטוֹ הוֹצִיא

מֵאֲהָלוֹ לַחוּץ לְרֹאוֹת הַכּוֹכָבִים, וּלְפִי מִדְּרֹשׁ אֲמִר
לוֹ אֵא מֵאֲטָטְגִינִית שְׁלֹךְ שְׂרָאִית בַּמְּזֻלוֹת שְׂאִינְךָ
עֲתִיד לְהַעֲמִיד בּוֹ, אֲבָרָם אֵין לוֹ בּוֹ, אֲבָל אֲבָרָהֶם
יֵשׁ לוֹ בּוֹ. שְׂרִי לֹא תִלְדֵּךְ, אֲבָל שְׂרָה תִלְדֵּךְ; אֲנִי קוֹרָא
לְכֶם שֵׁם אַחֵר וְיִשְׁתַּנָּה הַמָּקָל. דְּ"א הוֹצִיאֻ אוֹ מִחֲלָלוֹ
שֶׁל עוֹלָם וְהִגִּיחוּ לְמַעְלָה מִן הַכּוֹכָבִים, וְהָיוּ לְשׁוֹן
הַבְּטָה מִלְּמַעְלָה לְמַטָּה:

Another explanation: He brought him forth from the terrestrial sphere, elevating him above the stars, and this is why He uses the term הבט “look,” when He said “look at the heavens” – for this word signifies looking from above downward.

Each carries a different meaning. The distinction between sand and dust belongs more naturally to Parshas Vayeira, but here the focus is on stars.

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Hashem tells him: you are different. You are not governed by those systems. “Ein mazal l’Yisrael.” This phrase means that Jewish destiny is not fully bound by the natural frameworks that govern other nations. The ordinary forces of fate and historical probability may apply elsewhere, but not here. Avram is being taught that his relationship with Hashem places him beyond those constraints.

Hashem is laying the groundwork for Jewish history. A people who survives exile, destruction, dispersion, and return cannot be explained by ordinary political or cultural laws. Eighty years after the Holocaust, after losing a third of our people and much of our material world, we rebuilt a country. That recovery defies normal historical logic. The Jewish story has always been asymmetrical. We do not move according to the usual rules.

Rashi's third explanation of vayetzei oso ha-chutzah takes the phrase quite literally. Rashi's third explanation goes further. Hashem lifts Avram above the stars themselves. Avram is taken beyond the natural world and looks down from above. He is elevated and shown the world from a higher vantage point.

That reading is supported by the language of the pasuk. Hashem tells Avram, "Habet na hashamaymah." The verb habet usually means "to look down." It implies a position above the object being observed. If Hashem is instructing Avram to look with the language of habet, the language suggests that Avram is positioned above the stars and looking downward. Avram is being given, at least for a moment, a bird's-eye view of the world – kevayachol, a God's-eye view.

Why does that matter? This moment carries a larger message. Jewish destiny includes

responsibility for the broader world. When you are responsible for something, responsibility requires seeing the larger picture. The world becomes, in some measure, a pikadon entrusted to Avram.

Kevayachol, just as Hakadosh Baruch Hu looks upon the world He created and takes responsibility for it, Avram is being trained to see the world as something placed, in part, in his care. The stars therefore represent more than numbers or transcendence. They also point toward responsibility for the world below.

What makes this especially striking is that earlier generations who studied this Rashi could not visualize the globe. They had never seen the earth from above. But we can. We have images of the planet, of continents and oceans, of a fragile, interconnected world. We understand planetary responsibility in ways they could not. This allows us, in a small way, to imagine what Avram was shown – to picture him standing above the world, looking down at it, and understanding that part of his mission is to care for the world.

Seen this way, Rashi's explanations steadily widen Avram's perspective. He begins by looking at the stars, moves beyond their influence, and eventually sees the world from above. His chosenness carries responsibility for the world beneath him.

THE ALARM CLOCK OF HISTORY

וְגַם אֶת הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אֲנִי וְאַחֲרַי כֵּן יֵצְאוּ
בִּרְכָּשׁ גָּדוֹל: (ט"ו:י"ד)

and also the nation they shall serve i will judge, and in the end, they shall go free with great wealth.

רש"י: "וְגַם אֶת הָעוֹלָם" - וְגַם לְרִבּוֹת ד' מְלָכִיּוֹת, שֶׁאֵין
הֵן כָּלִים עַל שֶׁיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

"and also the nation." – the word "and



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also” includes the four monarchies (of the book of daniel) who also will perish because they enslaved israel.

One of the most climactic moments in Lech Lecha is the Bris Bein HaBesarim, in which HaKadosh Baruch Hu reveals to Avraham the burden and destiny of being Jewish. You will be chosen. And because you are chosen, you will be hated. You will be a stranger in a foreign land. You will suffer in Mitzrayim for four hundred years. But one day, I will redeem you, and I will return you to Eretz Yisrael. This is the historical covenant, the covenant of destiny.

When Hashem describes the redemption from Mitzrayim, He says, “V’gam es hagoy asher ya’avodu dan anochi” – the nation that enslaves you, I will also judge. But the pasuk begins with the word “v’gam.” Grammatically, it should have said simply es hagoy asher ya’avodu. Why v’gam? Rashi explains: l’rabos daled malchuyos.

Rashi expands the pasuk beyond Egypt. Mitzrayim becomes the template for later Jewish history.

That distinction matters. The bris milah is the personal covenant; you mark your body, your identity, your private commitment. The Bris Bein HaBesarim, however, is the covenant of history. It defines the Jewish mission,

and it also explains why that mission provokes hostility. Whenever people don’t like the message, they attack the messenger. We are the alarm clock of history. No one likes to be woken up, so they smash the clock. Mitzrayim is the first instance, but v’gam tells us this pattern will repeat itself again and again.

That’s why the redemption from Egypt is called leil shimurim: a night that is guarded or reserved. What happened in Egypt will happen again, both the suffering and the redemption. Our experience of foreign rule extended far beyond the four hundred years of Egypt. The bris therefore describes Egypt itself while also anticipating later Jewish history. ■



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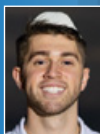
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