

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Vayeshev, Sicha 3

The Verse:

The infamous incident of Yosef's sale begins with his father, Yaakov, sending him to check on his brothers.

“So he said to him, ‘Go now and see if all is well with your brothers and the sheep, and bring me back word.’ So he sent him from the valley of Chevron, and he came to Shechem.” (Bereishis 37:14)

The Rashi:

And he came to Shechem — a place destined for misfortune. The tribes became corrupted there, Dinah was violated there, and the kingdom of the house of David was divided there, as it is said: “And Rechavam went to Shechem” (Melachim I 12:1)

The Questions:

1. What is difficult about the plain meaning of verse that requires Rashi's explanation?
2. Dinah's rape preceded the sale of Yosef. Why doesn't Rashi list the misfortunes in chronological order?
3. Rashi's source (Sanhedrin 102a) writes explicitly, “the tribes sold Yosef there.” Why does Rashi write it more euphemistically, “the tribes became corrupted there”?

The Preface to the Explanation:

To answer the third question first: According to Rashi, the brothers sold Yosef in Dotan, as the man who Yosef met in Shechem told him, “They have traveled away from here, for I overheard them say, ‘Let us go to Dotan.’ So Yosef went after his brothers, and he found them in Dotan.” (Bereishis 37:17)

Therefore, Rashi could not say that the brothers sold Yosef in Shechem, but only that “they were corrupted in Shechem.”

They began their scheming in Shechem, but carried it out in Dothan.

The Explanation:

This leads to the question that Rashi addresses in this verse: If Shechem was just a stop along Yosef's journey, why does the Torah place such a heavy emphasis on his arrival in Shechem by concluding the verse, "and he came to Shechem"?

It could have incorporated this information incidentally by saying, "Then a man found him in Shechem and asked him..." By ending the verse with the dramatic, "and he came to Shechem," the Torah emphasizes his arrival as an important part of the story.

Therefore, Rashi explains that Shechem was "a place destined for misfortune" relating to Yosef's ordeal specifically. Shechem is not a place destined for general misfortune for all Jews. It is central in Yosef's story because all of his misfortunes began there.

This is why Rashi first notes that "the tribes became corrupted there" — this place is central to Yosef's misfortune.

The other two examples of misfortune are mentioned because they are related to Yosef's own misfortune. Earlier, Rashi

commented that Yosef slandered his brothers by telling his father three things: a) They ate limbs from living animals; b) they demeaned the sons of the handmaids by calling them slaves; and c) they were suspected of illicit relationships. Consequently, Yosef was punished in ways that corresponded to his slander. (Rashi to Bereishis 37:2)

Because Shechem was the place where Yosef's misfortune began, it is also a place that was primed for other misfortunes similar to Yosef's indiscretions.

1. Corresponding to Yosef's accusation that "they ate limbs from living animals" — a crime of violence — the tribes began plotting Yosef's death in Shechem.
2. Corresponding to Yosef's accusation that "they were suspected of illicit relationships," Dinah was violated in Shechem.
3. Corresponding to Yosef's accusation that "they demeaned the sons of the handmaids by calling them slaves," the "kingdom of the house of David was divided" in Shechem, an event that weakened tribal unity.
