



# Likkutei Sichos

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## A Time for Restraint

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## 1.

YOSEF REFRAINED; WHY DIDN'T THEY?

On the verse,<sup>1</sup> “Two sons were born to Yosef **before** the year of famine came,” Rashi remarks (citing the Gemara):<sup>2</sup> “From here {we learn} that during years of famine, a person is forbidden to have marital relations.”

*Tosafos* asks:<sup>3</sup> Yocheved was born<sup>4</sup> “between the walls”<sup>5</sup> (during Yaakov and his family’s arrival in Egypt), and “then, it was a time of famine”;<sup>6</sup> how can we say that Levi (Yocheved’s father) violated a prohibition, G-d forbid?

Similarly, commentators ask,<sup>7</sup> based on the verse,<sup>8</sup> “*He saw... Yitzchak jesting* — he saw him having marital relations”<sup>9</sup> — how could Yitzchak have done so when it was a time of “famine in the land”?<sup>10</sup>

The commentators discuss this matter at length<sup>11</sup> and resolve these questions in various ways. Among these answers:

- a) It is not an actual prohibition; it is only a matter of piety,<sup>12</sup> and Yitzchak and Levi were not scrupulous in observing matters of piety.<sup>13</sup> (Alternatively, before the Giving of the Torah, intimacy during a famine

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<sup>1</sup> *Bereishis* 41:50.

<sup>2</sup> *Taanis* 11a.

<sup>3</sup> *Taanis* 11a, *Tosafos*, s.v., “*asur*.”

<sup>4</sup> *Sotah* 12a; *Bava Basra*, beg. of 120a, beg. of 123b; et al.; cited in Rashi’s Torah commentary on *Bereishis* 46:15, 46:26; and similarly, in Rashi’s commentary on *Bamidbar* 3:15, 26:59.

<sup>5</sup> {That is, as they entered the city’s walls.}

<sup>6</sup> For Yaakov went down to Egypt two years after the beginning of the famine (see *Bereishis* 45:6 ff.; Rashi on *Bereishis* 47:19).

<sup>7</sup> *Re’em*; *Gur Aryeh*; **et al.** (on *Bereishis* 41:50).

<sup>8</sup> *Bereishis* 26:8.

<sup>9</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 26:8; see *Bereishis Rabbah* on *Bereishis* 26:8 (sec. 64, par. 5).

<sup>10</sup> *Bereishis* 26:1.

<sup>11</sup> See commentators on: *Taanis* 11a; Rashi on *Bereishis* 41:50; *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch, 31, sec. 12; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 574; **et al.**

<sup>12</sup> *Tosafos* on *Taanis* 11a, s.v., “*asur*.”

<sup>13</sup> Commentators have found this difficult — were Yitzchak and Levi not scrupulous in observing matters of piety? (*Tzeidah LaDerech* and *Or HaChaim* on *Bereishis* 41:50). Similarly, commentaries ask — why does the Gemara state that this is **prohibited** {if it is only considered an act of piety}? (*Gevuros Ari* on *Taanis* 11a; *Tzeidah LaDerech* on *Bereishis* 41:50; et al.).

was not prohibited.<sup>14</sup> The “proof” based on Yosef’s abstinence was merely brought as support {for a later rabbinic injunction}.<sup>15</sup>

- b) The prohibition does not apply to those who are “childless”<sup>16</sup> — who have not yet fulfilled the mitzvah of procreation<sup>17</sup> (such as [Yitzchak and] Levi,<sup>18</sup> at that time) — or<sup>19</sup> “on the night of immersion.”<sup>20</sup>
- c) The prohibition only applies when “the Jewish people are suffering adversity.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, this prohibition did not apply to (Yitzchak<sup>22</sup> and) Levi,<sup>23</sup> since Yaakov and his sons were not suffering, for they had grain at the time.<sup>24</sup> Yosef refrained from marital relations because he was unaware that his father and brothers still had grain, so Yosef believed they were suffering adversity.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Beis Yosef* on *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 574; see *Bartenura* on *Bereishis* 41:50 (his first answer); *Yefeh Toar* on *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 31, sec. 12; *Taz* on “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 574.

<sup>15</sup> *Beis Yosef*, *ibid.*; see (as presented differently in) *Bartenura*, *ibid.*; *Taz*, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> This solution is offered by *Baal HaTurim*, *Bartenura*, *Re'em*, *Gur Aryeh*, et al., commenting on *Bereishis* 41:50; as well as by some commentators (see *Maharsha* [*Chiddushei Halachos* and *Aggados*] on *Taanis* 11a; *Tzeidah LaDerech* on *Bereishis* 41:50; *Bach* on *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 574) who explain that this is the intent of *Tosafos* — that for Yosef, it was only considered a matter of piety, because Yosef didn’t have a daughter, and thus he had not yet fulfilled the mitzvah of procreation.

<sup>17</sup> Rashi on *Taanis* 11a; and most commentators are of this opinion; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Taaniyos*,” ch. 3, par. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Who didn’t have a daughter.

<sup>19</sup> *Shelah*, “*Shaar HaOsiyos*” (103b), cited in *Magen Avraham*, “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 574; *Drisha* on *Tur*, *ibid.*; *Maskil LeDavid* on *Bereishis* 41:50.

<sup>20</sup> In line with the halachic ruling of *Beis Yosef*, *ibid.* (this is explained similarly in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Taanis*,” ch. 1, end of halachah 6).

<sup>21</sup> Wording of *Ran* on *Taanis* 11a {in the original, “*ישראל שרויין בצער*”}.

<sup>22</sup> As *Nachalas Yaakov* on *Bereishis* 41:50 writes.

<sup>23</sup> *Ran* on *Taanis* 11a; see also *Chizkuni*, *Tzeidah LaDerech*, *Be'er Mayim Chaim* (by *Maharal*’s brother), *Devek Tov* (in a gloss), *Nachalas Yaakov*, *Or HaChaim*, et al., on *Bereishis* 41:50; see *Chochmas Shlomo* on *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 574 for other answers to this question.

<sup>24</sup> *Taanis* 10b; cited by Rashi in his commentary on *Bereishis* 42:1.

<sup>25</sup> See a different presentation in *Be'er Mayim Chaim* and *Devek Tov*, *ibid.*

## 2.

### RASHI DISMISSES THESE SOLUTIONS

In light of this discussion {among the commentators}, something very perplexing emerges from Rashi's commentary: Why doesn't Rashi address the difficulties mentioned above concerning Yitzchak's and Levi's conduct?

[For these questions (also) arise when learning Scripture according to *pshat*:<sup>26</sup> On the verse,<sup>27</sup> “Avimelech gazed...,” Rashi explains, “He saw Yitzchak having marital relations.” Rashi says explicitly that at the time (there wasn't just a “famine in **the land**” but that) it was a “**year** of famine.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, in his Torah commentary,<sup>29</sup> Rashi says that Yocheved was “born between the walls,” and this took place during the years of famine, as the Torah says **explicitly**.]<sup>30</sup>

We cannot posit that Rashi relies on one of the abovementioned solutions. After all, in addition to the various difficulties with each of these solutions (and this is not the time to elaborate on these difficulties),<sup>31</sup> the same question could be raised concerning each of the solutions: Rashi **alludes** to **none** of these suggested solutions in his commentary!

[As we have discussed several times, Rashi wrote his Torah commentary in such a way that “a five-year-old beginning to study Scripture” would be able to discern the intent of Rashi's (concise) wording without needing to search for any additional explanation.]<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture.” When the plain meaning is understood clearly, Rashi does not comment. Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

<sup>27</sup> *Bereishis* 26:8.

<sup>28</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 26:12.

<sup>29</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 46:15, 46:26; similarly, Rashi on *Bamidbar* 3:16, 26:59.

<sup>30</sup> See fn. 6 above.

<sup>31</sup> The commentators raised and extensively discussed numerous questions. See footnotes 12, 13, and 21 in the original *sichah*.

<sup>32</sup> {“*Ben chamesh lemikra*,” in the Hebrew original, meaning “a five-year-old beginning to study Scripture.” This term, borrowed from *Pirkei Avos*, teaches that the appropriate age for a child to begin studying *Chumash* is at the age of five. Rashi wrote his commentary on *Chumash* to solve problems that a five-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse. Additionally, Rashi never expects a novice student to know more than the plain meaning of earlier verses.}

From the fact that Rashi wrote **here, without qualification**, without exception, and not subject to any conditions, that “it is forbidden for a person to have marital relations during years of famine,” it is clear that: (a) as plainly stated, this is a prohibition; (b) this prohibition applies to everyone without exception — it also applied to Yosef (who lived before the Giving of the Torah) and it applies to those who are “childless” (and on the night of immersion), and (c) it is not dependent on the Jewish people experiencing adversity specifically. Rather, as long as the world is going through “years of famine,” marital relations are prohibited.

### 3.

“FROM HERE” — AND NOT FROM NOACH

Another perplexing point in Rashi’s explanation:

Rashi says, “From here {we learn} that a person is forbidden....” Meaning that this prohibition is derived from **this** verse. Rashi’s emphasis on “**from here**” indicates that Rashi intends to preclude deriving this law elsewhere, where one seemingly could have learned of this prohibition. Rashi clarifies that we learn this law **from here** specifically.

In fact, we find in the *Jerusalem Talmud*<sup>33</sup> and the *Midrash*<sup>34</sup> that in addition to deriving this prohibition from Yosef’s conduct, the Sages cite the verse concerning Noah,<sup>35</sup> “You shall enter the Ark — you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.” From this verse, the Sages learn that “once Noah entered the Ark, he was forbidden to engage in marital relations.” Seemingly, this is the same prohibition that is in force “during years of famine” — when the world is suffering adversity, marital relations are forbidden.

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<sup>33</sup> *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Taanis*,” ch. 1, end of halachah 6

<sup>34</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 31, sec. 12, ch. 34, sec. 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Bereishis* 6:18.

This is quite perplexing: Rashi himself says in his Torah commentary<sup>36</sup> that Noah was forbidden to have marital relations “when he entered the Ark”<sup>37</sup> “because the world was suffering adversity.”<sup>38</sup>

As such, why does Rashi say, “**From here** {we learn} that a person is forbidden...” — it is learned specifically “from here” — when this same lesson could have been inferred from an earlier verse concerning Noah?

#### 4.

##### DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES

The explanation — the difficulty itself serves as the basis of the solution:

By adding “from here” (which does not appear in the Gemara), Rashi indicates that (according to *pshat*.) the prohibition here **is not** the same prohibition that applied to Noah, because in our *parshah*, the proviso that “the world is suffering adversity” was not met.<sup>39</sup>

The clause “the world was suffering adversity” (during the Flood) refers {not to people and animals but} to the world **in general**. On the contrary, people and animals could not be said to have been “suffering adversity” because **they all** ceased to exist, as it says,<sup>40</sup> “He **wiped out** all existence.”

And if we were to interpret this clause to apply to the inhabitants of the “world” who were spared — those who inhabited the Ark (and to live in the Ark was considered to be “suffering adversity”) — then Noah, his sons, and their wives were **included** among those who were “suffering adversity,” and this would be inconsistent with the prohibition learned from the verse in our

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<sup>36</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 6:18; similarly, Rashi on *Bereshis* 7:7; see also Rashi on *Bereishis* 8:16-17.

<sup>37</sup> {*Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Taanis*,” ch. 1, end of *halachah* 6.}

<sup>38</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 7:7.

<sup>39</sup> Note Rashi’s wording, “**From here** {we learn} that it is forbidden... **during years of famine**,” which implies that this is a **new** criterion (and not based on the world “suffering adversity”).

<sup>40</sup> *Bereishis* 7:23.

*parshah*, which teaches us that on account of a number (a majority) of people suffering adversity **others** are obligated to take part in their adversity.<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, it is impossible to infer from Noach's conduct that during "years of famine," those who are **not** suffering from famine — such as, in our case, Yosef, who did not lack grain — were prohibited from engaging in marital relations.<sup>42</sup>

## 5.

YEAR OR YEARS?

This will be clarified by prefacing with an analysis of Rashi's nuanced wording: "(It is forbidden for a person to have marital relations) **during years of famine.**" Seemingly: True, this is the wording of the Gemara; however, the purpose of Rashi's commentary is to explain the **verse** (and Rashi doesn't even indicate that the source of this comment is the Gemara). As such, Rashi should not have deviated from the wording of the verse upon which he commented, "before **the year of famine** came" — Rashi should have said, "It is forbidden... **during a year of famine.**"

Rashi's wording is particularly glaring in light of the difference between these terms: Simply understood, the phrase, "the year of famine" means that **this** particular year there is a famine. In contrast, "years of famine" — in the plural — indicates a famine that lasts for some time.

The difference between these terms isn't only regarding their duration (whether the famine lasted only one year or longer); there is reason to say that there is a qualitative difference between them: When something happens once (in a single year), it is likely only a passing phenomenon; whereas when it repeats itself many more times (and people refer to it as "years of famine"), it

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<sup>41</sup> This approach is similar to the third solution cited above at the end of Section. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Thus {based on Noach's conduct alone}, Yitzchak and Levi also weren't prohibited from engaging in marital relations based on the criterion that "the world was suffering adversity" because they had grain.

becomes a time of famine, and not something incidental — it becomes “established.”<sup>43</sup>

[This is similar to **Rashi’s earlier** explanation<sup>44</sup> that Yehudah was afraid “lest he (Shelah) also die like his brothers,” because “it has been established about this one {Tamar} that her husband will die.”]

Likewise, in our case, if it had only been a “**year** of famine” — for one year, something **out of the ordinary** took place: no grain grew — this occurrence could be considered nothing more than unusual, a temporary, time-limited event caused by **that year’s** unusual circumstances. But since the famine was described as “**years** of famine,” this points to an extended period of unusual Divine governance during which Hashem brought “famine” into the world.

For this reason, according to *pshat*, during years of famine, a person who doesn’t suffer from the famine (and consequently, is not subject to adversity) is prohibited from engaging in marital relations because this period is “years of famine” during which Divine conduct does not follow {the typical course of nature described in the Torah}:<sup>45</sup> “Continuously, all the days of the earth, seedtimes, and harvest... shall not cease.” Instead, it is a time antithetical to the “settling of the world.”<sup>46</sup> As such, it is inappropriate for a person to occupy himself with fulfilling the command,<sup>47</sup> “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” — populating and cultivating the world.

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<sup>43</sup> {In the original Hebrew, “*chazakah*.”}

<sup>44</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 38:11; see also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5 (pp. 216 ff.), that this was the reason that the Torah emphasizes (*Bereishis* 42:4), “And Binyamin, **Yosef’s brother**, he did not send... lest disaster befall him” — since a disaster already befell his brothers on their journey, he was concerned lest disaster befall Binyamin on his journey. See there at length.

<sup>45</sup> *Bereishis* 8:22.

<sup>46</sup> {Cf. *Yeshayahu* 45:18.}

<sup>47</sup> *Bereishis* 1:28.



## 6.

### THE DURATION OF THE FAMINE

Since the prohibition was in consequence of the “**years** of famine” — the famine was “established,”<sup>48</sup> indicating that it was uniquely directed {from Above} — it is clear that as long as the famine wasn’t “established,” the prohibition was not in force.

**On the contrary:** Because of the **command** to “be fruitful and multiply,”<sup>49</sup> as long as it is not **certain** that this period is defined as “years of famine,” then according to *pshat*, it is clear that one is **prohibited** to refrain from procreation; it is forbidden to forego a positive mitzvah out of concern that these possibly are “years of famine.”

The above question regarding Yitzchak and Levi can be resolved in light of this. In Yitzchak’s time, there was (according to Rashi’s nuanced wording)<sup>50</sup> only a “**year** of famine” (and not “**years** of famine”). Similarly, concerning Levi, Yocheved was conceived at the **beginning** of (three months into) the second year of famine (since she was born at the end of the second year of famine). Thus, she was conceived before this period was established as being “**years** of famine.”

In contrast, Yosef knew **clearly** that the famine in his time was part of a uniquely directed course of Divine providence and that the “seven years of famine”<sup>51</sup> began at that time, as the Torah describes earlier, and at length in the passage that records Yosef’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream:<sup>52</sup> “What **Hashem is doing...** there shall be **seven years of famine.**” Therefore, the prohibition against marital relations applied to Yosef from the very first day.

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<sup>48</sup> {“*Chazakah*” in the original Hebrew — a state that gives it legal permanence.}

<sup>49</sup> *Bereishis* 1:28 (and in Rashi, “A man is commanded...” {to procreate}); *Bereishis* 9:7, and Rashi on the verse.

<sup>50</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 26:12.

<sup>51</sup> {*Bereishis* 41:27.}

<sup>52</sup> *Bereishis* 41:25 ff.

Therefore, “from here” we learn that in all cases where we know with certainty that these are “**years** of famine” (it has become established), “it is forbidden for a person to have marital relations.”

## 7.

### LEVI WAS UNAWARE

Seemingly, one could ask: Certainly Yosef’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream — that “**seven** years of famine” will arrive — was publicized, especially since people saw that the predicted famine was being fulfilled in actuality. As such, why wasn’t Levi concerned about violating this prohibition?

The simple answer: At the time, Levi was unaware that Yosef had interpreted Pharaoh’s dream. On the contrary, people knew that a young slave interpreted it and that Pharaoh’s magicians, who were Pharaoh’s **official** dream interpreters, hadn’t given this interpretation, etc. As such, Levi would have been forbidden to rely on **Pharaoh’s dream** and the interpretation of a young slave to **abrogate** Hashem’s **command** to “be fruitful and multiply.”

This point is especially compelling because even regarding a **Jew’s** dream, there is a principle (which **Rashi** cites **earlier** in his Torah commentary):<sup>53</sup> “There is **no** dream **that does not include** nonsense.” As such, it is entirely possible that even if Pharaoh’s dream was generally true, **this** detail — that “**seven** years of famine” (“**years** of famine”) were imminent — was “nonsense.”

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<sup>53</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 37:10.

## 8.

### ADVERSITY DURING A YEAR OF FAMINE

On this basis, the nuanced wording in *Tur*<sup>54</sup> and *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>55</sup> — which **deviates** from the wording in the Talmud (“during **years** of famine”), and says, “during **a year** of famine” — is also understood:

In the Gemara, immediately before it says, “a person is forbidden {to have marital relations}...,” it discusses the reward for one “who deprives himself during years of famine.” This is (as Rashi explains there) “*a reward for putting oneself in distress* — when {the Children of} Israel are in distress.” Similarly, immediately after the Gemara says, “it is forbidden for a person...,” it says: “When {the Children of} Israel are suffering adversity, and one of them separates himself...” This proves that according to **halachah**, the reason for this prohibition {of having marital relations} is (not for the reason based on *pshat*, as discussed above, but rather) because “{the Children of} Israel are suffering adversity.”<sup>56</sup>

Consequently, we cannot argue that the prohibition only applies in “**years** of famine” because also in a “**year** of famine,” “{the Children of} Israel are suffering adversity.”

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<sup>54</sup> *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 574; similarly, sec. 240; “*Even HaEzer*,” sec. 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 574 (although in “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 240, par. 12 and “*Even HaEzer*,” sec. 25, par. 6, and *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Taaniyos*,” ch. 3, par. 8, the wording is similar to that of the Talmud).

<sup>56</sup> This is in line with *Ran* on *Taanis* 11a; *Chizkuni*, *Tzeidah LaDerech*, *Be'er Mayim Chaim* (by Maharal's brother), *Devek Tov* (in a gloss), *Nachalas Yaakov*, *Or HaChaim*, et al., on *Bereishis* 41:50; note *Torah Temimah* on *Bereishis* 41:50.

## 9.

### YOSEF STARTED EARLY

Based on the above explanation of Rashi's commentary, we can explain another nuance:

The verse says, “**Two sons were born** to Yosef before the year of famine came.” Since the verse speaks of **birth**, it is clear that the prohibition against marital relations doesn't only apply during years of famine themselves; it also applies nine months prior so that the **birth** won't take place during the years of famine. Seemingly {this approach is problematic because} the wording of our Sages is, “to have marital relations *during* years of famine”!<sup>57</sup>

In light of the above, the resolution to this problem is clear: The reason for the prohibition is (not because “the Children of Israel are suffering adversity.” Indeed, if this were the reason for the prohibition, then only during the years of the actual famine [when there is distress] would it make sense to expect a person to refrain from engaging in {pleasurable} actions,<sup>58</sup> for engaging in these actions would display insensitivity {to the adversity of the Jewish people}. Instead, the prohibition is) due to the **time** in which {the course of Divine} providence is antithetical to the populating and cultivating the world. Therefore, at such a time, it would be inappropriate for children to **be born** (to engage in populating and cultivating the world actively).

[However, this applied only to Yosef since he knew clearly **at the outset** that “years of famine” were imminent. In contrast, the teaching derived “from here” that **everyone** (also those who don't **clearly** know that “years of famine” are imminent) must suspend their observance of the mitzvos of marital relations<sup>59</sup> and procreation only prohibits “(marital relations) during years of famine.”]

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<sup>57</sup> As also noted by *Yefei Toar* (complete ed.) on *Bereishis Rabbah*, sec. 4, par. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Note *Divrei David* (authored by *Taz*) on *Bereishis* 41:50, who says that specifically having relations purely for the sake of pleasure is prohibited.

<sup>59</sup> {*Shemos* 21:10 — “עֲתָתָהּ לֹא יִגְרַע, he shall not diminish his marital duty to her.”}

## 10.

### RASHI CORRESPONDS TO THE ZOHAR

From here, we see that Rashi's Torah commentary — about which Rashi says, “I have come only to explain the *pshat*”<sup>60</sup> — is interwoven with “the **wine** of Torah,”<sup>61</sup> the *sod*<sup>62</sup> level of Torah interpretation.

— As we have discussed previously at length,<sup>63</sup> just like among the Four {spiritual} Worlds, the world of *Atzilus*<sup>64</sup> correlates with the world of *Asiyah*<sup>65</sup> specifically,<sup>66</sup> so too the *sod* part of Torah (corresponding to the world of *Atzilus*) correlates with *pshat*<sup>67</sup> (corresponding to the world of *Asiyah*). —

The *Zohar* on our *parshah*<sup>68</sup> explains that the days of famine were “days of evil.” Therefore, Yosef “shut his wellspring in a year of famine (because children born from someone who “opens his wellspring at that time” are called “foreign children”).<sup>69</sup> The *Zohar* then concludes that Yosef was even more cautious “not to give children to the spirit of impurity.” This means — as my father<sup>70</sup> explains in his notes on the *Zohar*<sup>71</sup> — that Yosef was also cautious “that the **birth** {of his children} not take place in a year of famine” (even if “the children would be from seed originating entirely before the year of famine”), “for if... their birth would take place in a year of famine, it would mean, in any event, that they were born in a place of impurity.”

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<sup>60</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 3:8; **et passim**.

<sup>61</sup> *HaYom Yom*, p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> {*Sod* is a method of commentary focusing on the secrets and esoteric teachings of Torah, based on Kabbalah.}

<sup>63</sup> *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 1, fn. 3; p. 279.

<sup>64</sup> {*Atzilus*, lit., “emanation,” is the first and highest of the four spiritual worlds, the realm of spiritual existence which, although encompassing attributes which have a specific definition, is in a state of infinity and at one with the Infinite Divine Light.}

<sup>65</sup> {*Asiyah*, lit., “action,” is the fourth and lowest of the four spiritual worlds, the final level in the creative continuum, which also encompasses the physical universe, where *mitzvos* are performed.}

<sup>66</sup> See *Likkutei Torah*, “*Balak*,” end of 69c.

<sup>67</sup> See also *Likkutei Torah*, “*Vayikra*,” 5d.

<sup>68</sup> *Zohar* 204a.

<sup>69</sup> See also the opinion cited in *Ritva* (and others) on *Taanis* 11a; *Gur Aryeh* on *Bereishis* 41:50 (*Levush HaOrah* questions his approach; see there).

<sup>70</sup> {HaRav Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Rebbe's father.}

<sup>71</sup> *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 184-5; see also *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Zohar*, vol. 2, p. 48.

This dovetails with the above explanation of Rashi’s commentary that the reason for the prohibition was (not because “{the Children of} Israel are suffering adversity” but) because of the **time** — it was a time (that had the demeanor) of “years of famine,” as discussed above at length.

Here we see, again, the “wonders” in Rashi’s Torah commentary — when we learn Rashi’s commentary under the assumption that it was (also) written for a five-year-old beginning to learn Scripture, and consequently, we explain Rashi’s words according to the **plain meaning**

— to the extent that even when Rashi cites the wording of the Gemara, we understand that **his** intention in citing these words is in line with their **plain meaning**, as they would be understood by a five-year-old beginning to learn Scripture —

quite often, many questions and back-and-forth discussions by the commentators are resolved coincidentally, and wondrous ideas can also be gleaned in the “wine of Torah.”

— From a talk delivered on *Motzaei Shabbos Kodesh, parshas Miketz*, 5739 (1978)