



Sicha Summary

Chelek 15 | Vayeshev | Sichah 2

The Rashi:

Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. (Bereishis 37:1)

Yaakov sought to dwell in peace, but the troubles of Yosef leapt upon him. Similarly, the righteous seek to dwell in peace. But G-d says: "Is that which is prepared for the righteous in the World to Come insufficient for them, that they also seek to dwell in peace in this world?"

The Question:

Commentaries explain that Yaakov's desire for peace in this world was misplaced, for this world is but the antechamber to our destination — the World to Come.

But Rashi's wording and the context of the story imply otherwise:

- 1) It is unlikely that a consummately righteous person such as Yaakov would desire mere material tranquility in this transitory world.
- 2) After the episode of Yosef, Yaakov *did* enjoy seventeen years of tranquility in Egypt. If desiring tranquility is inappropriate, why was it eventually granted
- 3) The wording of Rashi — "Is that which is prepared for the righteous in the World to Come insufficient for them" — implies that the desire for peace in this world is not inherently inappropriate, it is only that they should be satisfied with the peace allotted to them in the World to Come.

The Seed of the Explanation:

We must, therefore, understand Yaakov's desire as a longing for spiritual peace. Yet, the degree of tranquility he sought could not have been obtained in this world, under normal circumstances, unless he experienced the troubles of Yosef. Once having passed through that painful chapter, he was granted the peace he sought for the last seventeen years of his life in Egypt.

The Preface to the Explanation:

There is a paradox at the heart of a *mitzvah*. On the one hand, the origin of a *mitzvah* is G-d's inscrutable desire. We fulfill it simply because He desires it to be performed. On the other hand, there are intelligible reasons for *mitzvos*. Similarly, the "reward for a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* itself." Meaning, the connection with G-d created by a *mitzvah* is the objective of the *mitzvah*. On the other hand, there are rewards and tangible benefits for observing *mitzvos*. Is a *mitzvah* G-d's unknowable desire that serves as a bridge to connect with G-d Himself? Or is it intended for the enlightenment and betterment of human beings?

The deepest satisfaction a *mitzvah* can bring is that it establishes a connection with the essence of goodness, G-d Himself. But G-d desired that *mitzvos* be experienced as pleasurable to every person at any level of spiritual development. He, therefore, applied attractive reasons and rewards to *mitzvos* so that every person would want to fulfill *mitzvos* — even those who cannot yet appreciate a relationship with G-d Himself. In the World to Come, however, when the Divine reality will be revealed, every person will appreciate the Divine will within *mitzvos*.

But the righteous can experience the innermost delight of *mitzvos* — the connection they establish with G-d — even in this world. To attain this level of perception, two criteria must be met: a) a person must eliminate any personal, self-conscious desire, even a spiritual desire. Even seeking spiritual illumination is a personal desire. The entire objective must be to fulfill G-d's will. b) The desire to fulfill G-d's will cannot be extraneous to him, i.e. he cannot simply succumb to the Divine will. But rather, fulfilling

G-d's will must become his own personal desire. His own desire is vacated, and it is then replaced with G-d's desire.

The Explanation:

We can now reexamine Yaakov's desire to dwell in peace: Yaakov desired to reveal the essence of *mitzvos* — the Divine delight that is its core — within the world. This is the ultimate “tranquility” for it resolves the tension between the reality of Divine unity and the facade of an autonomous world. To do so, Yaakov had to descend to the darkest plane of existence and unleash the Divine potential there, revealing how G-d was present even there. This was why Yaakov spent time with Lavan and then encountered Eisav — he was extracting the Divine sparks from the places in which they were “imprisoned.” Yet, during these encounters, he did not reach the consummate level of self-transcendence. He still retained power in his relationships with Lavan and Eisav. And so his personal spiritual desires were not yet eliminated.

Yosef was an extension of Yaakov. The “troubles of Yosef” — Yosef's descent into Egypt — brought Yaakov to the darkest corner of the world. Yosef had no power in his relationships. Even as viceroy, his power was contingent on Pharaoh's good will. Here, Yaakov (represented by Yosef) was stripped of power and relinquished all conscious spiritual desire. Yosef elevated the Divine sparks in Egypt with a sense of total abnegation to the Divine will. Thus, Yaakov was finally allowed to experience “tranquility” — the revelation of G-d's innermost desire in the lowest plane of existence.