

# Likkutei Sichos

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## Folded Land

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## 1.

### QUESTIONING RASHI

In his commentary on this week's Torah portion, Rashi initially appears to quote the Gemara's interpretation (almost verbatim). However, upon closer examination (particularly considering Rashi's nuanced wording), it becomes clear that Rashi had a different intention {than simply to cite the Gemara's interpretation}.

Regarding the verse,<sup>1</sup> “The ground that you are lying upon — I will give it to you and your descendants,” our Sages (in the Gemara)<sup>2</sup> say:

*The ground that you are lying upon... — what novelty does this introduce? (Did<sup>3</sup> Hashem promise to give Yaakov's children only the four cubits upon which he was lying?<sup>4</sup> — Rashi)?<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Yitzchak answers, “This teaches us that the Holy One folded the entire land of Israel and placed it beneath our forefather Yaakov (so)<sup>6</sup> that it would be easy for his children to conquer” (like the four cubits upon which he was lying — Rashi).*

Rashi, in his Torah commentary, quotes the words “lying upon” and comments:<sup>7</sup>

The Holy One folded the entire land of Israel beneath him. He thereby hinted to him that it would be easy for his children to conquer.

The commentators<sup>8</sup> explain that Rashi addresses the same question as the Gemara — “What novelty does this introduce?” — and he answers (similarly to the Gemara) that “The Holy One folded the entire land of Israel beneath him.” Additionally, the “novelty” of this assurance is “that it would be easy for his children to conquer” (with the same ease as it would to conquer “the four cubits upon which he was lying”).

However, this requires clarification:

- a) If Rashi, in his **Talmud** commentary, had to clarify (the Gemara's wording, “That it would be easy for his children to conquer”): “like the four cubits upon which he was

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<sup>1</sup> *Bereishis* 28:13.

<sup>2</sup> *Chullin* 91b.

<sup>3</sup> This is *Bach's* version of Rashi's commentary; *Re'em* on *Bereishis* 28:13 also has this version.

<sup>4</sup> See also *Zohar*, “*Vayeitzei*” (156a): “Did the Holy One promise only that specific place, which was four or five cubits, and no more?!”

<sup>5</sup> {Rashi on *Chullin* 91b.}

<sup>6</sup> This is how it is written in *Dikdukei Sofrim*, *Chullin* 91b, citing “all the manuscripts.” See Sec. 2 and Sec. 10 in the text below.

<sup>7</sup> {Rashi on *Bereishis* 28:13.}

<sup>8</sup> *Sefer HaZikaron*, *Re'aim*, *Gur Aryeh*, *Be'er Mayim Chaim* (brother of *Maharal*), *Devek Tov*, et al.

lying,” surely, Rashi should have added these (clarifying) words in his commentary on **the Torah** (which, as discussed many times, was [also] written for a **novice student of Scripture**).<sup>9</sup>

- b) Suggesting that the difficulty with the verse is, “What novelty does this introduce?” (How can we suggest Hashem merely promised Yaakov “four cubits” of the ground?) It does not fit smoothly. Rashi should have quoted the entire phrase from the verse, “**The ground** that you are (lying upon),”<sup>10</sup> since the difficulty lies not in the words “lying upon” alone, but instead in the minimal size (four cubits) of the **area of ground** “that you are lying upon.”

On this basis, it is understood that (according to *pshat*<sup>11</sup> — and consequently) for Rashi, the Gemara’s question, “What novelty does this introduce?” is not the issue. Instead, Rashi merely addresses (a difficulty within) the words “lying upon” alone. Similarly, the idea “that it would be easy for his children to conquer” is known (not from the size of the area — “**the ground** that you are lying upon” — but) from the words “lying upon” themselves.

## 2.

### FURTHER ANALYZING

The part of Rashi’s interpretation in which he says, “He thereby hinted to him that it would be easy for his children to conquer” itself requires clarification:

The Gemara’s wording is that “the Holy One folded..., (in order) that it would be easy for his children to conquer,” whereas Rashi (deviates and) adds, “He thereby **hinted to him** that it would be easy....” The difference between these two interpretations is, simply put: “(**In order**) that it would be easy for his children to conquer” implies that Hashem’s act — “the Holy One folded...” — **caused it to be** “easy... to conquer...” In contrast, “He thereby hinted to him that it would be easy...” merely suggests that Hashem hinted at and disclosed to Yaakov about a future event — conquering the land **would** be “easy.”

This needs to be clarified: Why does Rashi deviate from the Gemara’s interpretation? **Moreover**, the Gemara’s interpretation seems straightforward. By folding the land beneath

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<sup>9</sup> {In the Hebrew original, “*ben chamesh le’mikra*”; lit., “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 5-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse.}

<sup>10</sup> As the Gemara does.

<sup>11</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 Scripture.” When the plain meaning is understood clearly, Rashi does not comment.}

Yaakov as he was lying, Hashem **simplified** the future conquest of the land of Israel. Consequently, we can understand the necessity of the miracle. However, if the purpose was merely to give a **hint** to Yaakov about the future, the future event could have been disclosed through speech or by similar means, as was related **earlier** {in Scripture} concerning Avraham.<sup>12</sup> Why was a miracle, and such a significant miracle (which completely defied the laws of nature), necessary — to compress **the entire land of Israel** beneath (the **four cubits** of) Yaakov?!

### 3.

#### AN ATTEMPTED EXPLANATION

It may be suggested that, according to *pshat*, it is difficult to say that “the Holy One folded... beneath him” (**Yaakov**) to achieve the objective of making it “easy for **his children** to conquer” (**many** generations later). Therefore, Rashi interprets this phenomenon as only an allusion.<sup>13</sup> However, the question remains — Hashem foretells future events through speech, and the Holy One does not perform miracles indiscriminately.<sup>14</sup>

The following also requires clarification: The subject of the interpretation, “The Holy One folded...,” is also mentioned in Midrash.<sup>15</sup> However, in the Midrash, the message is (not “that it would be easy for his children to conquer,” but rather),<sup>16</sup> “As a person would say, ‘From under your head’” — by doing so, Hashem gave Yaakov ownership of the land of Israel.

Why does Rashi interpret “the Holy One folded...” to mean “that it would be easy for **his children** to conquer,” which is problematic, as mentioned above, instead of interpreting (like the Midrash’s interpretation) that it demonstrated **Yaakov’s personal** possession of the land of Israel (“from under **your head**”)?

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<sup>12</sup> See the numerous allusions mentioned in Rashi on *Bereishis* 15:9-17.

<sup>13</sup> {By mentioning the land he was lying upon, Hashem was alluding to the fact that He would give Yaakov the land of Israel.}

<sup>14</sup> See *Derashos HaRan*, “*Drush 8*,” intro. 1; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 124 ff. (et al).

<sup>15</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah* on *Bereishis* 28:13 (ch. 69, par. 4).

<sup>16</sup> He took possession of it like an object lying under his head (see *Yevei Toar HaShalem* and *Radal* on *Bereishis Rabbah*, loc cit; see also fn. 12 {in the original}).

## 4.

### QUESTIONING FURTHER

This becomes even more perplexing: Regarding **Avraham**, the Gemara<sup>17</sup> says that the reason for the command,<sup>18</sup> “Arise, **walk about** the land across its length and breadth, because I will give it to you,” was “so that it would be easy for his children to conquer.” However, Rashi does **not** mention this interpretation in his commentary on that verse. This implies that the notion that a father’s act can make it “easy for his children to conquer” is difficult to accept, according to *pshat*.

— The purpose for the command to “arise, walk about the land” {according to *pshat*} is **simple** (to the extent that Rashi does not need to interpret it explicitly). Avraham should perform an act — moving freely through the land without disturbance — which is an act of ownership, to demonstrate his ownership over the land of Israel (as explained below in Section 7.) —

So why does Rashi interpret that the teaching, “the Holy One folded...,” written concerning Yaakov (not as a demonstration of his ownership over the land [as the Midrash expounds], but rather, because it) signified that “He thereby hinted to him that it would be easy for **his children** to conquer”?

## 5.

### THE EXPLANATION

The explanation:

According to *pshat*, from the outset, there is no place for the (Gemara’s) question, “What novelty does this introduce?” After all, “that you are lying upon” refers not to the small patch of ground on which Yaakov was lying but to **the land** {of Israel}. The Gemara interprets the words “*the* land” — with a definite article indicating which land is being spoken about: the land you are lying upon — “I will give it to you and your descendants.”

Therefore, Rashi does not (also) comment on what was stated (**previously**) to Avraham,<sup>19</sup> “For all the land that **you see**, I will give it to you....” This seems bewildering,

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<sup>17</sup> *Bava Basra* 100a (according to the opinion of the Rabbis).

<sup>18</sup> *Bereishis* 13:17.

<sup>19</sup> *Bereishis* 13:15.

similar to our question above:<sup>20</sup> A person can only see a limited area<sup>21</sup> (of the land of Israel),<sup>22</sup> especially given that it is “a land of mountains and valleys.”<sup>23</sup> As such, what was intended with the promise, “The land that you **see**, I will give it to you”?

Even if we assume that Avraham was standing on a high mountain<sup>24</sup> and could see a vast area (“north, south, east, and west”),<sup>25</sup> it is still challenging to suggest that from that vantage point, he could see the **entire** land of Israel according to its {biblically delineated} borders. —

Instead, according to *pshat*, the question is not problematic from the outset: The phrase “the land that you see” was not meant to limit the land given to Avraham to the area he could see. Instead, it was merely a sign indicating which land would be given to him — the land he saw (in general).

## 6.

### CLARIFYING FURTHER

The question Rashi addresses in the verse is: Why was it necessary for Hashem to add (the phrase “lying upon” as) a sign for the land of Israel?<sup>26</sup> It would have been sufficient if He had said (as stated **in several places**),<sup>27</sup> “**This** land — I will give it to you...”!<sup>28</sup>

Understandably, it makes sense why Hashem said to Avraham, “Raise now **your eyes...**, the land that you **see...**” It is customary to show the recipient a gift that he will be given so that he is acquainted with it.

But what does the phrase “that you are **lying** upon” add?

Therefore, Rashi interprets: “The Holy One folded the entire land of Israel **beneath him.**” By saying, “The ground that you are lying upon,” Hashem was providing a sign (not about the **land** — as was the case with the phrase “that you **see**,” which was said to Avraham

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<sup>20</sup> As *Zohar* on our *parshah* {“*Vayeitzei*”} (155b) ask — and in continuation it asks (similarly) concerning the verse, “The ground that you are lying upon,” in our *parshah* (as mentioned in fn. 4, above).

<sup>21</sup> *Zohar*, *ibid*: Three *parsah*, or four of five *parsah*. See the references in *Nitzotzei Zohar*, *ad loc*.

<sup>22</sup> Which is 400 *parsah* by 400 *parsah* (Rashi on *Bamidbar* 13:25).

<sup>23</sup> *Devarim* 11:11,

<sup>24</sup> See *Bereishis* 13:3-4, “He went... to the site {of the altar that he had built there} **at first**” — and the site of the altar “at first” was on “**the mountain**” (*Bereishis* 12:8).

<sup>25</sup> *Bereishis* 13:14.

<sup>26</sup> {A sign that He would give Yaakov the land of Israel.}

<sup>27</sup> See *Bereishis* 12:7; 15:7, 18, et al.

<sup>28</sup> See *Yefei Toar*, *ibid.*, and *Maskil LeDavid* on *Bereishis* 28:13, which have a similar understanding.

— but rather) concerning **Yaakov’s ownership** over the land.<sup>29</sup> This is similar to the Divine directive given to Avraham, “Arise, walk about the land” (as discussed in Section 4).

## 7.

### A QUESTION

However, this explanation is still inadequate because:

The reason (according to *pshat*) that Hashem told Avraham, “Arise, walk about the land,” was **not** to strengthen **Hashem’s** promise (“I will give it to you and your descendants”).

— According to *drush*,<sup>30</sup> there’s a distinction between a promise of Hashem that is only in potential and a promise that is expressed with an “action.”<sup>31</sup> However, according to *pshat*, Hashem’s promise is not missing anything that it needs to be strengthened by being linked to an “action.”<sup>32</sup> —

Instead, the reason was related to **Avraham**: Hashem’s promise, “because I will give it to you,” should be realized such that Avraham would already conduct himself as the land’s **owner** as if the land had **already become** his. He moved freely throughout the land of Israel “across its length and breadth” as he would through his personal property.

In contrast, in our verse (regarding Yaakov), **Hashem** folded “the entire land of Israel beneath him” **without any action** from Yaakov demonstrating his ownership. No one saw this (or knew about it).

[Moreover, Hashem didn’t instruct Yaakov to “Lie upon it.” Instead, the verse says,<sup>33</sup> “he lay down” (Yaakov lay down on his own), and only **after** the land was “beneath him” did “the Holy One fold...” Then, “he dreamt...,”<sup>34</sup> and Hashem told him, “The ground that you are lying upon — I will give it to you....”]

What was accomplished (for **Yaakov**) when “the Holy One folded the entire land of Israel beneath him”?

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<sup>29</sup> Rashi does not find it necessary to explicitly write this, as it is **self-understood** (just as Rashi does not explain why Avraham was instructed to “Arise, walk about the land”).

<sup>30</sup> {“*Drush*” refers to a method of commentary, which is more analytical than *pshat*.}

<sup>31</sup> *Re’em* on *Bereishis* 28:13; see *Ramban* on *Bereishis* 12:6; et al.

<sup>32</sup> See also *Chiddushei Aggados Maharsha* on *Chullin* 91b; see *Derashos HaRan*, sec. 2; to reference **Rashi** on *Lech Lecha* ({*Bereishis*} 15:18) “The Holy One’s speech is considered as action.”

<sup>33</sup> {*Bereishis* 28:11.}

<sup>34</sup> {*Bereishis* 28:12.}

## 8.

### YAAKOV'S LAND

Regarding this point, Rashi continues, “He thereby hinted to him that it would be easy for his children to conquer”: Hashem granted Yaakov ownership of the land merely through him “lying upon” it. In contrast, concerning Avraham, Hashem said, “**Arise, walk about** the land.” This difference highlights the novelty in Hashem’s promise to Yaakov compared with His promise to Avraham.

Hashem’s promise to Yaakov ensured that his children would conquer the land **easily**, without painstaking effort. The sign of his ownership over the land of Israel, therefore, required no action from him. He **lay** upon the land (“lying upon”), and he acquired the land from Hashem (“the **Holy One** folded the entire land of Israel beneath him”).

Note that this demonstrates how specifically the *pshat* level of interpretation reveals a wondrous novelty as compared with our Sages’ teaching in the Gemara:

According to the Gemara, the idea of being “easy for his children to conquer” is connected with action (and effort) from “his children” — at least as much effort as it would take to conquer four cubits.

Rashi, in his Torah commentary, introduces the novel idea that the Jewish people would not even need this small effort. The land would be acquired in consonance with the phrase “**lying upon.**” Even before {they set out to conquer it}, Hashem took care of everything. This resembles King Chizkiyahu’s declaration:<sup>35</sup> “I will sleep on my bed while You act.”

In simple terms, it suffices for the Jewish people to be in the land — “lying upon” it — and all the Gentile nations (that need to be conquered) will agree that “**the entire land of Israel**” — **the entire land of Israel according to all its** {biblically delineated} **boundaries**, is the everlasting inheritance of the Jewish people. Thus, the entire land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people without any war, etc.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Eichah Rabbah*, ch. 4, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> See **Rashi** on *Devarim* (1:8): “None are objecting to the matter, so you do not need war...” (this indicates that it will be this way in the Future Era); see also *Rashbam* on *Bava Basra* (101a); *Maskil LeDavid* on *Bereishis* 28:13.



## 9.

ACCORDING TO CHASSIDUS

The deeper explanation is as follows:

The Mittlerer Rebbe — whose celebrated day of liberation is {held today} on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Kislev<sup>37</sup> — clarifies in his well-known discourse, “*Atah Echad*,”<sup>38</sup> that the essence<sup>39</sup> of a person’s soul illuminates his four cubits. The soul’s essence is such a sublime *makif*<sup>40</sup> that it cannot rest upon the body, even peripherally. Accordingly, it extends into the four cubits around a person, which constitutes his place.

This is the idea behind the statement that “the Holy One folded the entire land of Israel beneath him” — the four cubits that were Yaakov’s place. By doing this, Hashem connected the dominion of the land of Israel with the essence of Yaakov’s soul and, consequently, with the essence of every Jew’s soul (because all Jewish souls are “his children” as they are included in [and originate from] Yaakov’s soul).<sup>41</sup>

This also explains why this folding up of the land brought about “that it would be easy for his children to conquer,” to the extent that the conquest would be for the Jewish people in accord with the phrase, “lying upon,” with everything being brought about by Hashem, as explained above. Since nothing can oppose the soul’s innermost dimension,<sup>42</sup> the refinement it brings about happens automatically and on its own, without a war — in a **peaceful** manner.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The day the Mittlerer Rebbe was released from his imprisonment in the year 5587 — see for a detailed account, *Sefer HaToldos Admor HaEmtza’i* (Kehot publ.), ch. 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Maamar “Atah Echad,”* Kehot publ., 5725; see also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 229; **and the sources cited there.**

<sup>39</sup> {In the original Hebrew, “*yechidah*.”}

<sup>40</sup> {Lit., “encompassing,” a sublime emanation that cannot be confined within a limited creature; hence, it encompasses its subject in a pervasive and transcending form. In the case of the soul’s *yechidah*, as the text states, it is so sublime that it cannot be said to be encompassing the person.}

<sup>41</sup> *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” ch. 7 (111b).

<sup>42</sup> *Likkutei Torah*, “*Ki Seitzei*,” 37c; et al.

<sup>43</sup> See, at length, the Mittlerer Rebbe’s *Shaar HaTefillah*, s.v., “*padah beshalom*,” ch. 11-12.

Thus, we can explain the connection between the Mittlerer Rebbe’s celebrated day of liberation (10th of Kislev), and *parshas Vayeitzei* (as this date always falls near the week that this *parshah* is read). This will be understood in light of what is known (*Beis Rebbe*, vol. 2, ch. 5, in the fn.), that the Mittlerer Rebbe’s redemption coincided with his recitation of the verse (*Tehillim* 55:19 — from the monthly *Tehillim* cycle for the **10th** of Kislev) “He has redeemed my soul **in peace**...”

## 10.

### THE REALITY

Another wondrous concept that emerges from Rashi's Torah commentary when compared to our Sages' teaching in the Gemara is as follows:

The Gemara states that **the reason** “the Holy One folded...” was “(in order) to simplify the conquest of the land of Israel for **his children**.” In other words, if the Jewish people would attempt to conquer the land in the future, Hashem enabled the territory to be easily conquered, as it says, “I will give it to you and your descendants” — *Hashem* would give it. However, Hashem did not promise Yaakov that **the Jewish people would** {in fact, go ahead and attempt to} conquer (in an “easy...” manner).

— Nowadays, unfortunately, we see that some Jews, Heaven spare us, must be convinced that the entire land of Israel, according to its {biblically delineated} borders, belongs to the Jewish nation as an everlasting inheritance.

Rashi begins his Torah commentary<sup>44</sup> by saying that (only) **the Gentile nations** will come and say, “You are bandits....” Moreover, the Torah of truth instructs us how to respond (“The entire earth belongs to the Holy One..., by His wish, He gave it to them and by His wish, He took it from them and gave it to us”). Thus, it is clear that if we respond to the Gentile nations in this way, as Hashem's message and mission require — with the necessary conviction (so they feel that our words come from the heart) — it will completely squash the Gentile nations' objection.

Yet **Jews** come along and, Heaven spare us, claim the complete opposite, etc. —

Rashi, in his Torah commentary, clarifies, details, and expands (upon the Gemara's wording) by stating: “**He thereby hinted to him** that it would be easy for his children to conquer.” Hashem hinted this to **Yaakov** (and through him, “to his children” as well), which served as an inspiration, providing strength and **a mandate** to conquer the land because the entire creation is **founded upon** the principle, “In all that the Holy One created in His world, He did not create one thing in vain.”<sup>45</sup> How much more so, then, when **Hashem hinted to Yaakov** that He (Hashem) did not arbitrarily perform “one thing.” Instead, He performed a great miracle, etc.

We can posit further that according to Rashi's interpretation, the phrase “**that it would be...**” implies that this possible eventuality **would** come to be in actuality. Hashem

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<sup>44</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 1:1; see *Maskil LeDavid* on *Bereishis* 28:13.

<sup>45</sup> *Shabbos* 77b.

hinted to Yaakov the **reality** that “his children” **would**, in fact, conquer the land of Israel easily. —

This is because “The Torah **promises** that the Jewish people will ultimately repent at the end of their exile,”<sup>46</sup> which also includes the assurance that all Jews, while still “in their exile,” will have a genuine conviction in their dominion over the entire land of Israel, according to its {biblically delineated} borders.<sup>47</sup> Then, “they will be redeemed **immediately**” through our righteous Mashiach, speedily in our days.

— From a talk delivered on *motzaei Shabbos parshas Vayeitzei*, 5739 (1978)

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<sup>46</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” ch. 7, par. 5.

<sup>47</sup> And certainly, they will not cause a situation where, instead of preparing for, and facilitating, the time when “it would be easy **for his children** to conquer,” they create a situation, Heaven forbid, where “the land will be easy **for them** (the Gentiles) to conquer” (*Eruvin* 45a, Rashi, s.v. “*lasfar*”; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 329, par. 6). This would occur if border towns are handed over to Gentiles, contradicting *Shulchan Aruch*’s **explicit ruling** (ibid.) that even if Gentiles seek to come for a short while, to take straw and hay {it warrants Shabbos desecration to prevent it. Relinquishing these towns is} a {serious} prohibition, as it endangers the entire land.