

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Miketz, Sicha 2

The Verse:

And Yosef hastened, for his mercy was stirred toward his brother, and he wanted to weep; so he went into the room and wept there. (Bereishis 43:30)

The Rashi:

In his first comment, Rashi explains how Yosef's emotions overtook him. In conversation with his brother Binyamin, Yosef learned that he had given names to all his ten children that evoked the memory of his lost brother.

Rashi then continues with a second comment:

Was stirred — Heb. נִכְמְרוּ, was heated. In the language of the Mishnah, “on a heating (כִּמְר) vessel of olives” (Sotah 74a), and in Aramaic, “because of the heating (מְכִמְר) of the meat” (Pesachim 58a), and in the

Scriptures, “Our skin is parched (נִכְמְרוּ) because of the heat of hunger” (Eicha 5:10). So is the way of all skin; when it is heated, it shrivels and shrinks.

The Questions:

1. Why does Rashi need to provide three proof-texts for his translation of נִכְמְרוּ as “was heated”?
2. Why does he only provide the proof-text from Scripture after the Rabbinic proof-texts?
3. Why does Rashi first explain how Yosef's emotions were stirred before defining the verb itself describing that emotion?

The Explanation:

As Viceroy of Egypt, Yosef certainly exercised strong emotional suppression in public settings. Even in situations where many others would not be able to contain their emotions, Yosef would be expected to do so.

Case in point, even though Yosef had already seen Binyamin, his long-lost

maternal brother, he remained stoic. Therefore, when his emotional dam finally did break, there must have been some powerful event that precipitated it.

In the verse prior to this, Yosef sees Binyamin and blesses him: "And he said, "May God favor you, my son."

This blessing, Rashi notes, mirrors how Yaakov referred to his children in his encounter with Eisav: "And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and he said, "Who are these to you?" And he said, "The children with whom God has favored your servant." (Bereishis 33:5)

Thus, Yosef giving this blessing to Binyamin suggests a conversation that took place between concerning Binyamin's children. And being that this precipitated Yosef's emotional response, the conversation must have touched on matters relating to Yosef's and Binyamin's relationship. Rashi therefore quotes their entire exchange which shows how precious Yosef remained to Binyamin all these years later. This revelation broke Yosef's resistance, "so he went into the room and wept there."

Once Rashi has shown why Yosef reacted here as opposed to earlier, he can then continue to define נִקְמְרוּ as "was heated." Meaning, Rashi could only arrive at this

interpretation, that the word refers to an excessive, powerful, "heated" emotional response, after having shown the events that led to this response. Without that context, we would interpret נִקְמְרוּ as a more regulated, normal emotional response.

Regarding the proof-texts: Rashi cannot bring this term from other scriptural references, since the same vagueness of the term applies in those contexts as well. Instead, Rashi shows what the word נִקְמְרוּ means in other, non-emotional contexts — first in Rabbinic Hebrew, then in Aramaic which the sages used to explicate their Hebrew usage. In his final proof, Rashi does cite scripture, but in that context נִקְמְרוּ is describing the effect of the emotional response on the body, not characterizing the emotion itself.

The Deeper Dimension:

Yosef represents the general soul of the Jewish people. Binyamin, which means "son of my affliction," represents the soul in exile. Yosef's "mercy being stirred toward his brother" alludes to the need to reflect on the state of our soul, and to arouse mercy on it. Mercy is "heated" and arouses the soul to an emotional response, and to concrete positive action.
