

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Vayeshev, Sicha 5

The Context:

Yehuda negotiated with Tamar, who was incognito, to secure her services as a harlot. Tamar asked Yehuda to leave her with a security deposit as a guarantee that he would return with payment.

“So he said, ‘What is the pledge that I should give you?’ And she said, ‘Your signet, your cloak, and the staff that is in your hand.’ So he gave them to her, and he came to her, and she conceived his likeness.” (Bereishis 38:18)

The Rashi:

Your signet, your cloak — Onkelos renders: *עֲזָקְתְּךָ וְשׁוֹשֵׁפֶךָ*, your ring with which you seal, and your cloak with which you cover yourself.

The Question:

The literal meaning of the Hebrew words used in the verse is “stamp,” and “thread” or “belt.” Why does Rashi depart from the literal meaning of these words as used throughout Tanach, and instead, render them as “your ring, with which you seal, and your cloak, with which you cover yourself”?

The Explanation:

Tamar wanted items that identified Yehuda as their owner so that when she identified him as the father, he would be unable to deny her claim. She had no reason to assume that Yehuda was carrying his personal stamp, however, because he was on his way to shear his sheep and had no use for a stamp. Rashi, therefore, understands “chosamcha” as referring to a ring, which Yehuda would always carry on his finger. But it was the type of ring that Yehuda also used as a seal, which would link it directly to him, as opposed to a simple piece of jewelry.

Similarly, Rashi does not render “pesilcha” as a belt or a string, because there is nothing distinctive about those items. Instead, Rashi interprets it as “your cloak, with which you cover yourself,” meaning, a unique article of clothing that was known to belong to Yehuda.

The Deeper Dimension:

The Midrash likens the addition of Shabbos to the six days of Creation, to a king who had a ring but no seal. Just as the ring is incomplete without the seal, so is creation incomplete without Shabbos.

Thus, the ring alludes to the natural order, but the natural order alone is incomplete, for it does not disclose its creator, leaving us with the impression that it is an

autonomous entity. The seal alludes to Shabbos. Just as a seal reveals the identity of the owner of the seal, so does Shabbos reveal that G-d is the author of Creation.

The ring and its seal is, thus, a metaphor for the fusion of nature and the supernatural.

This is the deeper explanation as to why Tamar requested this ring and seal — Tamar represents the Divine faculty of malchus, synonymous with the natural order. She requests a ring with a seal, the mark of the Creator, so that awareness of G-d’s transcendence is infused into the natural world. Ultimately, this union gives birth to Moshiach, whose soul will bring about the true fusion between nature and G-d.
