

THIS RASHI IS NOT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS – IT IS FOR US

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Bereishis

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The first Rashi in Bereishis says:

Rav Yitzchak states that the Torah should have begun with "This month is for you..." [Shemos Chapter 12] (the first commandment, which involves the establishment of the holiday cycles on a lunar basis). Why did the Torah begin with the narration of creation? Because "The power of His works He declared to His people in giving them the inheritance of the nations" (Tehilim 111:6) For if the nations of the world should say to Israel: "You are robbers, because you have seized by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan, they could say to them "The entire world belongs to the Holy One Blessed be He, He created it and gave it to whomever it was right in His eyes. Of His own will He gave it to them and of His own will He took it from them and gave it to us."

What is the meaning of this Rashi? We are well aware that the "hypothetical situation" (If the nations of the world should say to Israel: "You are robbers...") has indeed come to pass. But will citing the argument put forth in the teaching of Rav Yitzchak make one bit of difference to the nations of the world? Will they be impressed by such logic? Certainly not!

Certainly, this teaching is NOT directed at the Arabs or at our enemies in the United Nations or at any of the enemies of the Jewish people throughout the millennia. This Rashi is for us! In order for us to tell our enemies with conviction "This is OUR land" we must in fact believe that it IS our land! If we ourselves are not convinced in the truth of our claim to the Land of Israel then we don't stand a prayer of convincing our enemies of that fact.

We are besieged internally by revisionists who question our claim to the land. "THEY were really there first." "It is just as holy for THEM as it is holy for us". When one has such an attitude and is not convinced himself that he has a valid claim, he will certainly not convince anyone else of that fact.

We must internalize Rav Yitzchak's teaching: "He created it and gave it to whomever it was right in His eyes." It is G-d's universe. He may have let other nations have the land for a while, but now he wants us to have it. If we are not convinced of that fact ourselves, we should forget it!

Expression, Seemingly Out of Sequence, Is Indeed Precise

As a result of participating in the sin of the Aitz HaDas [Tree of Knowledge], each participant - Adam, Chava, and the Snake were punished. Chava's punishment is documented by the following pasuk [verse]: "Unto the woman He said: I will greatly multiply your pain and your travail; in pain you shall bring forth children..." [Bereishis 3:16].

Rashi explains the expression "your pain and your travail" (itzvonech v'heyronech) to respectively refer to the pain of raising children (itzvonech) and the pain of pregnancy (heyronech).

We understand well both the pain of raising children and the pain of pregnancy. However, the sequence of this curse seems to be reversed from biological reality. Why does the Torah first mention "itzvonech" [the pain of raising children] and only later mention "heyronech" [the pain of pregnancy]? The fact is that women first suffer pregnancy/childbirth and only then suffer the pain of raising children!

Rav Reuven Margolis teaches the correct interpretation of this Rashi:

The Talmud [Sanhedrin 38b] describes the sequence of events on the sixth day of creation: "...in the seventh hour Adam was paired with Chava; in the eighth hour, two went upon the bed and four descended (i.e. - Kayin and Hevel were conceived and were born); in the ninth hour they were warned not to eat from the tree; in the tenth hour they sinned; in the eleventh hour they were judged; and in the twelfth hour they were banished..."

In other words, not only were Adam and Chava created miraculously but their first two children were also created miraculously. Chava was not pregnant for nine months. She conceived and gave birth to the two children in less than an hour! There was no pain of pregnancy or childbirth associated with that original experience. No morning sickness, no heartburn, no problems whatsoever!

But after this first birth experience (in hour number 8), she was cursed by the Almighty (in hour number 11): "You will suffer pain of raising children (itzvonech) and the pain of pregnancy (heyronech)." That is indeed what happened. First she had the normal pain of raising children (tzaar gidul bonim) in raising Kayin and Hevel and later on in future pregnancies she also experienced the pain of travail (heyronech). The sequence specified in the pasuk is exact and precise after all!

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bereishis are provided below:

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