
פרשת מקץ

פרק מב פסוק א

וַיִּרְא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יִשְׁשָׁבֶר בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לֵמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ:

רש"י

לָמָּה תִּתְרָאוּ עֲצֻמְכֶם בְּפָנַי בְּנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל וּבְנֵי עֵשָׂו שְׂבֻעִים, כִּי בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה עֲדִין הָיָה לָהֶם תְּבוּאָה.

מושג

אל תראו עצמכם כשאתם שבעים לא בפני עשו ולא בפני ישמעאל כדי שלא יקנאו בכם.

Translation:

Do not show yourselves when you are satiated, not before Eisav and not before Yishmael, so that they will not be envious of you¹.

Explanation:

Yaakov directs his sons to be careful not to arouse the envy of the nations of the world by appearing satiated while the nations suffered hunger². This warning, relayed as they prepare to go down to מצרים and begin relating to the non-Jewish world, applied to Yaakov's sons and to all future encounters that Bnei Yisroel would have in foreign lands. Jews must be careful in their interactions with the nations of the world not to arouse the envy of their hosts, for envy will lead to hatred and eventually to expulsion.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The words of the Pasuk ,למה תתראו, are difficult to understand. What was Yaakov asking his sons when he said, "Why should you be seen?" The Gemoroh explains that Yaakov's words are to be understood as a warning, not as a question.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Yaakov warns his sons to be careful not to arouse the envy of the nations by appearing satiated while the rest of the world suffers from hunger.

Understand: Why Yaakov felt it important to relay this warning to his sons as they prepare to go down to מצרים. Why Jews must be aware of the pattern of Jewish history, dating from the time of the Avos, in which Jews enter a new land, become very successful and arouse the envy of the non-Jews.

Think: How הו"ל find in seemingly insignificant words fundamentally important lessons.

1 See note #1

2 See note #2

NOTES

1. This Musag is taken from (י:), מסכת תענית, where the Gemoroh is instructing one who is not fasting on a רעב ציבור not to eat, or appear satiated, in front of others. Our Pasuk is used as an illustration of such, as Yaakov tells his sons not to appear satiated in front of all those who are experiencing hunger, for this will arouse their envy.

It is interesting to note that Rashi does not quote the reason provided in the Gemoroh כדי שלא יקנאו בכמ. Additionally, the Ramban questions why Yaakov would fear how they would appear before Eisav and Yishmael; after all, both Eisav and Yishmael were not living in ארץ כנען at the time! Why, he asks, was Yaakov not concerned how they would look in the eyes of the כנענים? The Ramban answers that perhaps Yaakov was concerned that Eisav and Yishmael would travel to Egypt to buy food and would pass through ארץ כנען on the way. If they saw that Yaakov and his sons were satiated they would ask for food (being they were family) and thus deplete their supplies. This, concludes the Ramban would explain the end of the Pasuk, וינחיה ולא נמות³. For if they were to be forced to feed Eisav and Yishmael they would soon be starving as well.

It is clear from the commentary of the Ramban that Yaakov's fears had nothing to do with arousing the envy of Eisav and Yishmael. Indeed, when he quotes the ל"הז"ל he leaves out the words כדי שלא יקנאו בכמ, as did Rashi.

It is possible that Rashi also chose to explain the Pasuk as did the Ramban⁴ and not as did the Gemoroh, explaining why עשו וישמעאל are mentioned. However, the Gemoroh itself still requires explanation. If Yaakov was afraid of arousing envy, why mention Eisav and Yishmael? See following note.

2. While the Gemoroh only mentions the hunger issue (due to the context of the Gemoroh as mentioned in the note above) the Midrash⁵ adds an additional warning, also learned from the word תתראו:

למה תתראו: אמר יעקב לבניו אתם גבורים אתם נאים אל תכנסו בשער אחד ואל תעמדו במקום אחד שלא תשלוט בכמ עין הרע.

The Yalkut Shimoni⁶ combines the two warnings:

ויאמר יעקב לבניו למה תתראו א"ל אל תצאו ובידכם פרנסה ואל תכנסו כלכם בפתח אחד. אל תצאו ובידכם פרנסה מפני התרעומות ואל תכנסו כלכם בפתח אחד מפני העין תנו רבנן ההולך ממקום שאין מתענין למקום שמתענין הרי זה מתענה עמהו, שכח ואכל ושתה אל יתראה בפניהו ואל ינהיג בעצמו עידונין שנאמר ויאמר יעקב לבניו למה תתראו אל תראו עצמכם בפני בני עשו ובפני בני ישמעאל כאלו אתם שבעים אמר להם יעקב לבניו בבקשה מכם היו מצניעים את עצמכם שאין קשה מעין הרע, לוחות הראשונות על ידי שנתנו בקולות נשתברו, אבל לוחות אחרונות שנאמר ואיש לא יעלה עמך נתקיימו ואף ירושלים חרבה מפני העין הזאת העיר שיאמרו כלילת יופי:

To fully understand, it is important to appreciate Yaakov's words. Yaakov was not simply warning his children regarding an immediate danger, but rather, prophesying for all future generations as well. The history of the Jewish people in exile follows a tragic pattern. Jews move in to a new country as strangers and soon begin to prosper. Once they become too successful they arouse the envy of the host nation and hatred, pogrom and exile follow. One can notice this pattern in ספר when Yitzchok moves to Gar⁷, and his success is followed by envy and finally banishment. The story of Yaakov in Lavan's home is yet another example. He begins to prosper, raises the envy of Lavan's sons⁸ and is compelled to leave.

3 The end of the Pasuk is difficult to understand, for if they had food at the time, why would Yaakov fear that they would die of hunger?

4 The שפתי חכמים understands Rashi thus.

5 A similar idea is found in the Tanchumah as well.

6 ילקוט שמעוני תורה פרשת מקץ [רמז קמז]

7 יב ויזרע יצחק בארץ ההוא וימצא בשנה ההוא שבעים ויברכוהו ה': יג ויגדל האיש ויגדל הלוף ויגדל עד פייגדל מאד: יד ויהיו לו מקנה צאן ומקנה בקר ועבדה רבה ויקנאו אתו פלשתים: טו וכל הבארות אשר חפרו עבדי אביו בימי אברהם אביו סתמום פלשתים וימלאום עפר: טז ויאמר אבימלך אל יצחק לך מעמנו פיי עצמת ממנו מאד:

8 פרק לא א וישמע את דברי בני לבן לאמר לקח יעקב את פלא אשר לאבינו ומאשר לאבינו עשה את פליהפכד הנה: ב וירא יעקב את פני לבן והנה איננו עמו כתמול שלשום:

As Yaakov contemplates sending his sons to מצרים, which will be their first extensive interaction with the outside world, he is careful to warn them of this dangerous equation. As the Midrash quoted by Rashi⁹ on the next Pasuk explains, Yaakov fully understands that the circumstances that require this ירידה למצרים may very well be the beginning of the exile of which אברהם אבינו was foretold. Be careful, as you begin the exile, how you appear before the nations of the world. While Yaakov's message was focused on the Egyptians, or on other nations they might encounter, the Midrash picks up on his message and relates it to subsequent generations. Just as Yaakov feared how his sons appeared before the מצרים and כנענים, so too we must take heed of his warning while we live amongst עשו וישמעאל.¹⁰

3. Questions for Further Thought:

- a. We explained how both Yitzchok's problems in Grar and Yaakov's problems with Lavan's sons were caused by jealousy of Yitzchok's and Yaakov's success. Is there anything Yitzchok or Yaakov could have done to alleviate the problem?
- b. According to the Ramban, why did Yaakov worry about feeding עשו וישמעאל and wouldn't Yaakov feel obligated to help them?

⁹ רדו שמה. ולא אמר 'לכו', רמז למאמץ ועשר שנים שנשתעבדו למצרים כמנן רד"ו

¹⁰ The different ways to understand Yaakov's warning may explain a difference in the wording of our Musag. In the text of the Gemoroh we find Eisav mentioned before Yishmael, and yet Rashi mentions Yishmael before Eisav. It would seem rather obvious to put Yishmael first since he preceded Eisav. However, the Gemoroh which understands Yaakov's fear to be based on jealousy puts Eisav, who is more likely to be jealous of Yaakov, before Yishmael. (See the ר' ממ"ש of פירוש על רש"י for a similar explanation)