

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Mikeitz 5784

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The brothers go down to Mitzrayim to purchase food, because of the famine.

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׂבֵר בְּתוֹךְ הַבָּאִים כִּי־הָיָה הָרֶעֱב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:

“And the sons of Yisroel came to gather rations amongst all those that came, because there was a famine in the Land of Canaan.” (Bereishis 42:5).

What does it mean they came to “gather rations?” Is that term different than purchasing or acquiring or trading? Of course, they came among all the others that came to buy food, as the pesukim previously said. Therefore, why mention they came among others? Also, the Torah already said there was a famine, why does it repeat they came because of the famine?

In Gemara Yerushalmi Brochos 7:3, Rabbi Shimon says that this is one of the pesukim we learn that a minyan requires ten people. It says in this pasuk בְּתוֹךְ and it says later “One shall not desecrate My Name amongst Bnei Yisroel.” (Vayikra 22:32). That pasuk talks about public use of Hashem’s name. There it uses the word בְּתוֹךְ, too, and in our pasuk it refers to the ten sons so a minyan must be ten men. Now, the “amongst” in our pasuk actually refers to the many other Canaanites that came down not the ten sons that were among them. Rabbi Yose ben Rabbi Abun says, both pesukim say, “Bnei Yisroel.” What was Rabbi Shimon’s thought, did he not know how to read the pasuk?

There was a famine in Eretz Mitzrayim. However, that famine may not have occurred in Eretz Canaan. No one in Canaan had the dream of the seven years of plenty and seven years of famine and the dream seemed to specifically target Mitzrayim. וַיֵּרָא: “And Yaakov saw that there were rations in Mitzrayim. And Yaakov said to his children, ‘Why are you searching about?’” (Bereishis 42:1). The pasuk says Yaakov saw and Yaakov said. When the pasuk clarifies who spoke it either means the pronoun of the speaker would be unclear in the context or that this occurred on two separate occasions.

Yaakov and his family were wealthy. They had cattle and flock. He was not dependent on grain. If the famine was not in Eretz Yisroel then he would be self-sufficient even if no merchants were importing grain. However, if there was a famine in Eretz Yisroel then perhaps his livestock would have less to feed on and there would be no traders of bread. Further, since Yoseph was the keeper of grain in Mitzrayim, there were no merchants importing grain. How did Yaakov see there was rations in Mitzrayim? The famine did come to Eretz Canaan. He saw that no one was importing grain. He would also see that other were coming back from getting their own grain from Mitzrayim. As a wealthy person in the area, he kept an eye on the economy. But there is more.

Yaakov saw because he was looking. He was still looking for Yoseph. He watched over the matter of the dreams, waiting for their fulfillment. (Ibid 37:11). After the brothers

showed him the bloody tunic he refused to be consoled. (Ibid 37:35). The pasuk regarding being shown the bloody tunic, when read carefully, says, "He recognized it, and he said, 'It is my son's tunic, a wild animal devoured it. Yoseph is torn apart.'" (Ibid 37:33). Torn apart does mean destroyed (Shmos 22:12), however, but it does not necessarily mean Yoseph died. Yaakov does not say he died. He says the tunic was torn and now Yoseph was cut off from his family. Later, this is clarified by Yehuda when Yehuda tells Yoseph that Yaakov told them, "Alas, one son has gone out from me, and Yaakov said, 'He was surely torn up, and I have not seen him since.'" (Bereishis 44:28). He meant, Yoseph went away from me – he is still alive – he has been cut off from his family. נָסַח in that pasuk is inclusive, stating he was torn but he still lives.

Yaakov told his sons. "I am still looking around. What are you looking for?" He was lambasting them for not searching for Yoseph. Yoseph left their care and they have not spent any time searching for him. (It is interesting to note that later Yaakov left Shimon in prison in Mitzrayim and refused to send Binyamin down to redeem him until they ran out of food.)

Then our pasuk gives context and says that the famine did extend to Canaan. (Ibid 42:5). It also says the sons of Yisroel came among those that came to Mitzrayim seeking food. It also says, they came *because* of the famine. They came for the same reason everyone else did, to get rations. They did not come to seek Yoseph. They came because of the famine and not to find Yoseph or to search for his whereabouts.

Yoseph had this same concern. He calls them spies. וַיִּרְא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֶחָיו וַיִּכְרַם וַיִּתְנַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם. "And Yoseph saw his brothers and he recognized them. He spoke to them harshly and he said, 'From where did you come?' And they answered, 'From the Land of Canaan to procure food rations.'" (Ibid 42:7). Wrong answer! Yoseph wanted them to say, "We came from Canaan and we are looking for our brother." Obviously, they appeared before Yoseph to procure food rations. That was a rhetorical question. Everyone who came before Yoseph sought to purchase rations. Yoseph was asking them if they had any other business. They answered in the negative. He then accused them of being spies. (Ibid 42:9).

The term for rations here is not used elsewhere in the Torah, except for one time in Nechemiah. It refers to food rations, necessary food to survive. The word also has the root of "broken." It is like a broken portion. Until Yoseph was united with his family the family unit was broken. It was surely torn apart.

Rabbi Shimon knew the context of the pasuk. What he was teaching was that the motive of Bnei Yisroel to go down to Mitzrayim among those other Canaanites shows what a minyan is. A public minyan for prayer and reading the Torah, to recite Hashem's name, is when there is a group of men who have the same goal. They go for the same purpose even if it's merely to ask for and procure necessities. Livelihood, health, children, happiness, success, peace. That is the purpose of a minyan, to come together for a like cause. Bnei Yisroel is unique "amongst the nations."

As Channukah goes out and winter approaches may we only know of blessings and may we all procure our custom portions from Hashem.