

PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA

From the Teachings of Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l

PARSHAS VAYIGASH

Eretz Yisrael is Higher Than All Other Lands

מְהֵרָה וְעֲלוּ אֵלַי אָבִי:

Hurry and go up to my father. (Bereishit 45:9)

Commenting on the words “וְעֲלוּ אֵלַי אָבִי,” Rashi writes:

אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל גְּבוּהָהּ מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת.

Eretz Yisrael is higher than all other lands.

Why did Rashi Wait?

There is a difficulty that may be raised regarding this comment of Rashi. Usually, when Rashi wishes to explain a certain idea, he will do so on the first occasion that matter is mentioned. In our instance, we have already encountered many instances in *Chumash Bereishit* where the journey from Eretz Canaan to *Chutz La’Aretz* is termed “yeridah — going down,” and conversely, travelling from *Chutz La’Aretz* to Eretz Canaan is referred to as “*aliyah* — going up.” Why did Rashi wait until Chumash Bereishit was nearly finished to tell us that Eretz Yisrael is higher than all other lands?

We would like to suggest that “*Parshandata*,” Rashi,¹ is teaching us a great *chiddush*. In our *pasuk*, Yosef says “וַעֲלוּ אֵל אָבִי — *go up to my father*,” and made no mention of Eretz Canaan. Had the *pasuk* said “מהרו ועלו אל אבי אשר בארץ כנען — *hurry and go up to my father who is in Eretz Canaan*,” Rashi would not have provided any explanation, as surely as he offered no explanation concerning the words “וַיֵּרֵד אַבְרָם מִצְרָיִמָה — *Avram went down to Mitzrayim*” (Bereishit 12:10), “וַיַּעַל אַבְרָם מִמִּצְרָיִם — *Avram came up from Mitzrayim*” (13:1), “אל תֵּרֵד מִצְרָיִמָה — *do not go down to Mitzrayim*” (26:2), and other *pesukim* such as these. In all of those cases, Rashi has no need to explain that “Eretz Yisrael higher than other lands,” because, in using those terms, the *pasuk* itself is telling us this explicitly! However, in our case, where Yosef only mentions going up to his father, and makes no mention of Eretz Canaan, here Rashi feels there might be room to misunderstand and explain that he used the term “עלו” on account of the *kavod* of his father; that going to meet him is called “going up.” Therefore, Rashi emphasizes that even here, the term “עלו” is being used specifically because they were going to Eretz Yisrael.

Further Observations: The Maharal’s Principle Regarding How a Tzaddik Speaks

If our understanding of this matter is correct, perhaps this will help us answer another question. We mentioned in an earlier discussion² the *yesod* of the Maharal that a *tzaddik* does not speak in terms of “*yeridah*” — going down. It is interesting to consider why the Maharal did not bring as one of his proofs the words that Yaakov Avinu said regarding going to see Yosef in Mitzrayim (Bereishit 45:28): “אֵלַיָּהוּ וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ בְּטֶרֶם אָמוּת — *I will go and see him before I die*,” and did not say “אֵרְדֶּה וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ — *I will go down and see him*,” even though he would be travelling from Eretz Canaan to Mitzrayim. We may ask, is that *pasuk* not a support for his *yesod*? However, the truth is that there is no actual proof from there, for Yaakov did not say that he would go “to Mitzrayim” or even “to Yosef,” he simply says “אֵלַיָּהוּ — *I will go*”! In this case, having made no mention of his destination of Mitzrayim, or at least someone who is there, it would not be at all appropriate to use the term “אֵרְדֶּה” by itself. The word “אֵלַיָּהוּ” is clearly more appropriate, and therefore the Maharal does not mention this case as support for his idea of a *tzaddik* not using an expression of *yeridah*.

In a related matter, regarding this *yesod* that a *tzaddik* does not speak in terms of *yeridah*, the Maharal brought support for this from the fact that whenever we do find an expression of *yeridah* in the words of a *tzaddik*, it is always there to communicate some other message or idea.³ Here we ask in wonder that in our *pasuk*, Yosef HaTzaddik concludes by saying to his father “וְרָדָה אֵלַי — *come down to me*”! How is this appropriate speech for a *tzaddik*?

Perhaps the answer is simply a matter of symmetry, namely, since he used the expression “עלו” in the beginning of the *pasuk*, on account of Eretz Yisrael being higher than all other

1 [The term פרשנדתא as a reference to Rashi, which the Rav used frequently, was coined by the Ibn Ezra in his Introduction to his peirush on the Torah. In this context the term is as a contraction of the words “פרשן דתא — the (quintessential) commentator of the Torah.”]

2 See Parshat Mikeitz, Chapter 25.

3 Which “justifies” the use of the verb “ירידה.” See *Parshat Mikeitz* (ibid.) regarding the additional messages contained within Yaakov’s words “וְרָדָה אֵלַיָּהוּ” and the brothers’ words “וְיָרֵד יְרֵדְנוּ.”

lands, it was acceptable to use the corresponding term “רדה” in the end of the *pasuk*.⁴

Moreover, perhaps this is why Hashem says to Yaakov later in this *parshah* (46:3), “אל תירא, מֵרְדָה מִצְרַיִם — *do not fear going down to Mitzrayim*,” and does not use the more common term “מרדת.” Perhaps there is an extra message to Yaakov, namely, don’t be afraid of the “רדה” that Yosef mentioned when he told you to come down, as it was only due to him having first told the brothers “עלו אל אבי.”

⁴ Interestingly, there are those who are “*doresh*” the *gematria* of the word “רד” which is 209, and explain that Yosef was speaking a year after Yaakov said “רד” referring to the two hundred and ten years Bnei Yisrael would be in Mitzrayim.