

# PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA

From the Teachings of Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l

## PARSHAS VAYECHI

### The Mitzvah of Shema – From Chumash Bereishit until Chumash Devarim

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֶסְפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים:

*Yaakov called his sons and said, "Gather around and I will tell you that which will befall you in the End of Days." (Bereishit 49:1)*

In a number of *parshiyot* so far in *Chumash Bereishit* we have discussed the differences between different *signonot*, that is, styles or forms of expression used by the Torah, such as imperative, narrative, direct speech, and so on. In our *parshah*, we encounter something that wasn't written at all in any *signon*, but seemingly should have been.

#### The First "Shema Yisrael"

In the course of discussing Yaakov's berachot to his sons, the *Gemara* relates (*Pesachim 56a*):

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֶסְפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם, בִּיקָשׁ יַעֲקֹב לְגַלוּת לְבָנָיו קֶץ הַיָּמִין, וְנִסְתַּלְקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׂכִינָה אֲמַר שְׂמַא חַס וְשְׁלוֹם יֵשׁ בְּמִטְתִּי פְסוּל... אָמְרוּ לוֹ בְּנָיו "שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד," אָמְרוּ כִשֶׁם שֶׁאֵין בְּלִבְךָ אֵלָּא אֶחָד כִּךְ אֵין בְּלִבְנוּ אֵלָּא אֶחָד. בְּאוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה פִתַח יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ וְאָמַר "בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד."

Yaakov called his sons and said, “Gather around and I will tell you, etc.,” Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons the “End of Days,” but the Shechinah was removed from him. He said, “Perhaps, *chas veshalom*, there is something wrong with one of my children” ... His sons said to him, “Hear, Yisrael, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One, just as there is only one God in your heart, so too there is only one God in our heart.” At that moment, Yaakov said, “Blessed is the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.”

We have before us an entire *pasuk* which, according to Chazal, was originally said in *Chumash Bereishit*, and yet was not “*zocheh*” to be written in its historical context. However, unlike many things which Chazal knew from their *kabbalah* were said at the time but not written in the *netzach* of *Torah Shebichtav*, “*Shema Yisrael*” is unique in that it was written down, just much later on, in *Chumash Devarim*.

## Preserving the Signon of the Original Shema

It is worthwhile pointing out that with the change of location, the meaning of the word “Yisrael” shifts from referring to Yaakov the individual to the entire Jewish People. However, aside from that shift in meaning, the form of the sentence is preserved in accordance with the way Yaakov’s sons said it to him originally. Indeed, this is something the **Ramban** noted and raised as a question (*Devarim* 6:4, s.v. *shema yisrael*):

*You should reflect on the fact that the pasuk has departed from the norm and written “ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ — Hashem our God,” and did not say “ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ — Hashem your God,” as it does everywhere else (in Chumash Devarim), “שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּהָ עִבְרָה — שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּהָ עִבְרָה — Hear Yisrael, today you are crossing over ... For Hashem your God etc.,” “שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּהָ עִבְרָה — Hear Yisrael, today you are drawing close...for Hashem your God etc.,” and so it is with all the parshiyot in which Moshe speaks with Yisrael, he mentions “Hashem your God,” and also here it says<sup>1</sup> “וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶתְּהָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ — And you shall love Hashem, your God”!*

The Ramban asks, why did Moshe in this case depart from the way he always refers to Hashem while addressing Bnei Yisrael, moving from the second person (“your”) to the first person (“our”)?

Based on our understanding, namely, that in *Chumash Devarim*, Moshe Rabbeinu is “quoting” something that was said much earlier on in the time of *Chumash Bereishit*, we can appreciate the answer the **Netziv** gives to this question (**peirush to the Mechilta**, beginning of *Parshat Yitro*):

*This pasuk was said in Yaakov’s time, just before he died (Pesachim 56a). It is for this reason the Torah writes it in exactly the way the sons said it, and was (subsequently) written in the Torah “עַל פִּי ה' בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה — by the word of Hashem, through the hand of Moshe.”*

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1 [In the *pasuk* immediately following “*Shema Yisrael*.”]

In other words, although this was something originally said by Yaakov's sons, at a later point it became *Torah Min Hashamayim* when it was dictated by Hashem to Moshe.<sup>2</sup>

## Tracking the Progression

It appears that the way to explain the *Netziv's* words is as follows. We have seen that things that are included in the “narrative” part of *Torah Shebichtav* — the part we prefer to refer to as “*halichuti*,”<sup>3</sup> as it informs us how the Torah wishes us to live our lives — is not just for the sake of **information**. Rather, *Torah Shebichtav* contains matters whose importance is of **eternal significance** — **Netzach!** As the *Ohr HaChaim* expresses it (*Vayikra* 24:10), “When something is written in the Torah, the impression remains forever.” At the time when Yaakov's sons said “*Shema Yisrael*,” those words had not yet attained the level and potency of “*Netzach*.” Nonetheless, even though they had not yet achieved this level, the words themselves did exist in the Torah “stratosphere.”

In the fullness of time, these words reached the level of *Netzach* and were written in *Torah Shebichtav*, the dictation of which took place “From Hashem's ‘Mouth’ to Moshe's ear.”<sup>4</sup> However, as we noted, even when these words finally achieved a level where they could be written down, the form in which they were stated was the way Yaakov's sons originally said them; “ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ.”

## Parallels in Nevi'im and Ketuvim

In a similar manner, we find certain things that were not “*zocheh*” to be written in the Torah at all, yet came to be written in *Nevi'im* or *Ketuvim*, a concept known as “**עד דאתא יח** — **זקאל ואסמכיה אקרא** — until *Yechezkel* came and attached it to the *pasuk*.”<sup>5</sup> These were things that were given over to Moshe on the **d'Oraita** level of **Torah SheBaal Peh**, but not written in the Torah, and only entered *Torah Shebichtav* at a later stage on the level of *Nevi'im* or *Ketuvim*. These represent the three levels of potency through which Hashem's *Ratzon* is expressed.

And so we see that there are certain things that were “kept in Hashem's treasure house” until their time came to be written down or derived.

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2 See the *Maharsha* to *Pesachim* *ibid.* for a similar explanation.

3 Based on the *pasuk* (*Chabakuk* 3:6) “הַלִּיכוֹת עוֹלָם לִרְ” — *the ways of the world are His*.”

4 Ramban's Introduction to his *peirush* to the Torah.

5 [See e.g. *Zevachim* 18b.]