

"מעשה אבות סימן לבנים: חלק ב"

(The Events of the Patriarchs are Signs for their Descendants), Part II

Ramban on Parashat Vayishlach

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Ramban's Introduction to Vayishlach

פרוש הרמב"ן הקדמה דפרשת וישלח

This section was written in order to inform us that the Holy One, blessed be He, delivered His servant, and He redeemed him from the hand of him that is stronger than he, and he sent an angel and saved him, and in order to further teach us that Jacob did not place his trust in his righteousness and that he strove for delivery with all his might. There is yet in this section a hint for future generations, for everything that happened to our father with his brother Esau will constantly occur to us with Esau's children, and it is proper for us to adhere to the way of the righteous by preparing ourselves in the three things for which he prepared himself: for prayer, for giving him a present, and for rescue by methods of warfare, to flee and to be saved. Our Rabbis have already derived this hint from this section, as I shall mention.

נִתְּבָה הַפְּרָשָׁה הַזֹּאת לְהוֹדִיעַ כִּי הֶצִּיל
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת עַבְדּוֹ
וּגְאָלוֹ מִיַּד חֲזַק מִמֶּנּוּ, וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָךְ
וַיִּצִּילֵהוּ. וְלִלְמַדְנוּ עוֹד שֶׁהוּא לֹא בָטַח
בְּצַדִּיקוֹתוֹ וְהִשְׁתַּדַּל בְּהַצֵּלָה בְּכָל יְכָלָתוֹ. וַיֵּשׁ
בָּה עוֹד רִמּוֹ לְדוֹרוֹת כִּי כָל אֲשֶׁר אָרַע
לְאֲבִינוּ עִם עֲשׂוֹ אַחִיו יֵאָרַע לָנוּ תָמִיד עִם
בְּנֵי עֲשׂוֹ, וְרֵאוּ לָנוּ לְאַחֲזוֹ בְּדַרְכּוֹ שֶׁל
צַדִּיק שְׂנוּזְמִין עִצְמוֹ לְשִׁלְשֵׁת הַדְּבָרִים
שֶׁהִזְמִין הוּא אֶת עֲצָמוֹ, לְתַפְּלָה וּלְדוּרוּן
וְלְהַצֵּלָה בְּדַרְךְ מִלְחָמָה, לְכָרֶחַ וּלְהִנָּצֵל,
וּכְבָר רָאוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ הַרְמָזוּ הַזֶּה מִן הַפְּרָשָׁה
הַזֹּאת כְּאֲשֶׁר אֶזְכִּיר (להלן ל"ב ט', ל"ג ט"ו):

Ramban on Genesis 32:4

פרוש הרמב"ן על ספר בראשית ל"ב:ד'

4. TO ESAU HIS BROTHER UNTO THE LAND SEIR. Since the southern part of the Land of Israel adjoins Edom, and Jacob's father dwelt in the land of the South he had to pass through Edom or near there. Therefore, he feared lest Esau hear of it, and he took the initiative by sending messengers to him in his country. But the Sages have already taken him to task for this, saying in Bereshith Rabbah: "Like one that taketh a dog by the ears is he that passeth by, and meddleth with a strife not his own. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Jacob, 'Esau was going his way, and you send him messengers, and say to him, Thus saith thy servant Jacob!'"

(ד) אֵל עֲשׂוֹ אַחִיו אֶרְצָה שְׁעִיר. בְּעִבּוֹר
הַיּוֹת נִגַּב אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל יַדֵּי
אֲדוֹם וְאֲבִיו יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנִּגָּב, יֵשׁ לוֹ
לְעַבֵר דֶּרֶךְ אֲדוֹם אוֹ קְרוֹב מִשָּׁם, עַל כֵּן
פָּחַד אוֹלֵי יִשְׁמַע עֲשׂוֹ, וְהַקְּדִים לְשִׁלְחַ
אֵלָיו מַלְאָכִים לְאֶרְצוֹ. וּכְבָר תְּפַסְדוּהוּ
הַחֲכָמִים עַל זֶה. אָמְרוּ בְּבְרָאשִׁית רַבָּה
(ע"ה ג') מִחֲזִיק בְּאֲזְנֵי כָלָב וְגו' (מִשְׁלֵי כ"ו
י"ו). אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, לְדַרְכּוֹ
הַזֶּה מְהֵלֵךְ וְהֵייתָ מְשֻׁלַּח אֲצִלוֹ וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ
כֹּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב:

In my opinion this too hints at the fact that we instigated our falling into the hand of Edom [Rome] for the Hasmonean kings during the period of the Second Temple entered into a covenant with the Romans, and some of them even went to Rome to seek an alliance. This was the cause of their falling into the hands of the Romans. This is mentioned in the words of our Rabbis, and is well publicized in books.

וְעַל דַּעְתִּי גַם זֶה יִרְמוֹז כִּי אֲנַחְנוּ הִתְחַלְנוּ
נְפִילְתָנוּ בְיַד אֱדוֹם, כִּי מַלְכֵי בֵית
שְׁנֵי בָאוּ בְבִרְיֵת עִם הַרֹמָיִים (סֵפֶר
הַחֲשֻמוֹנָאִים א' ח') וּמָהֶם שָׁבְאוּ בְרוּמָה (כָּף
כּוֹתֵב רַבֵּנוּ בְּוִיקְרָא כ"ו ט"ז), וְהִיא הִיְתָה סִבַּת
נְפִילְתָם בְּיָדָם, וְזֶה מְזָכֵר בְּדַבְרֵי רַבּוֹתֵינוּ
וּמְפָרְסֵם בְּסִפְרֵים (יוֹסִיפּוֹן פָּרָק ס"ה):

Ramban on Genesis 32:9

פרוש הרמב"ן על ספר בראשית ל"ב:ט'

9. THEN THE CAMP WHICH IS LEFT SHALL ESCAPE. In line with the simple meaning of Scripture, Jacob stated this as a possibility. He said that perhaps one camp shall escape, for during the time he [Esau] smites one, the other will flee, or perhaps his anger will subside or deliverance will come to them from God. And so the Rabbis said in Bereshith Rabbah, "The Torah teaches you proper conduct: a man should not leave all his money in one corner."

(ט) וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר לְפִלִיטָה. עַל
דֶּרֶךְ הַפְּשֻט אָמַר זֶה בְּאוּלֵי,
כִּי אָמַר אוּלֵי יִנָּצַל הַמַּחֲנֶה הַאֲחֵד, כִּי
בְהַכּוֹתוֹ הַאֲחֵד יִכְרַחוּ הָאֲחֵרִים, אוֹ תָשׁוּב
חַמְתּוֹ, אוֹ תָבֹא לָהֶם הַצֵּלָה מֵאֵת הַשָּׁם.
וְכֵן אָמְרוּ בְּבְרָאשִׁית רַבָּה (ע"ו ג') לְמַדְתָּךְ
תּוֹרָה דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ לֹא יֵנִיחַ אָדָם כָּל מָמוֹנוֹ
בְּזוּיֵת אַחַת:

And Rashi wrote: "Then the camp which is left shall escape in spite of him for I will fight against him.' He prepared himself for three things: for prayer, for giving Esau a gift, and for war." And I have seen in the Midrash: "What did Jacob do? He armed his people underneath, and clothed them in white from outside, and he prepared himself for three things." And this is the most correct The intent of this is that Jacob knew that all his seed would not fall into Esau's hands. Therefore, in any case, one camp would be saved.

וְרַש"י כָּתַב, וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר
לְפִלִיטָה, עַל כְּרַחוּ כִּי אֲלֵחֵם
עִמּוֹ, הַתְּקִין עֲצָמוֹ לְשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים,
לְתַפְּלָה וּלְדוּרוֹן וּלְמַלְחָמָה. וְרַאֲיִיתִי
בְּמִדְרָשׁ (קה"ר ט' י"ח) מָה עָשָׂה, זֵינָם
מִבְּפָנִים וְהִלְבִּישָׁם בְּגָדִים לְבָנִים מִבַּחוּץ,
וְהַתְּקִין עֲצָמוֹ לְשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים. וְכֵן עָקַר.
וְהַפְּנִינָה בְּזֶה, כִּי יַעֲקֹב יוֹדֵעַ שְׂאִין זֶרְעוֹ
כָּלֹ נּוֹפֵל בְּיַד עֵשׂוֹ, אִם כֵּן יִנָּצַל הַמַּחֲנֶה
הַאֲחֵד עַל כָּל פָּנִים:

This also implies that the children of Esau will not formulate a decree against us designed to obliterate our name entirely, but they will do evil to some of us in some of their countries. One of their kings will formulate a decree in his country against our wealth or our persons while simultaneously another king will show compassion in his place and save the refugees. And so the Rabbis said in Bereshith Rabbah “If Esau come to the one camp, and smite it - these are our brethren in the south. Then the camp which is left shall escape - these are our brethren in the Diaspora.” Our Rabbis thus saw that this chapter alludes also to the future generations.

וְגַם זֶה יִרְמֹז שְׁלֹא יִגְזְרוּ עָלֵינוּ בְּנֵי עֵשָׂו לְמַחֲזוֹת אֶת שְׁמֵנוּ, אֲבָל יַעֲשׂוּ רָעוֹת עִם קְצָתָנוּ בְּקִצְתְּ הָאָרְצוֹת שְׁלֵהֶם, מֶלֶךְ אֶחָד מֵהֶם גּוֹזֵר בְּאָרְצוֹ עַל מְמוֹנָנוּ אוֹ עַל גּוֹפָנוּ, וּמֶלֶךְ אֲחֵר מְרַחֵם בְּמִקְוֵמוֹ וּמַצִּיל הַפְּלִיטִים. וְכֵן אָמְרוּ בְּבִרְאשִׁית רַבָּה (ע"ו ג') אִם יָבֵא עֵשָׂו אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָת וְהִכָּהוּ, אֵלּוֹ אַחֵינוּ שְׁבִדְרוֹם, וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנֶּשְׁאָר לְפִלִּיטָה, אֵלּוֹ אַחֵינוּ שְׁבִגּוּלָה. רָאוּ כִּי גַם לְדוֹרוֹת תְּרִמֹז זֶה הַפָּרָשָׁה:

Ramban on Genesis 33:15

פרוש הרמב"ן על ספר בראשית ל"ג:ט"ו

15. WHY THIS? LET ME FIND FAVOUR IN THE EYES OF MY LORD. Why this, that you should do me a favor which I do not need? Let me find favour in your eyes, and do not give me any recompense at present [for the gift which I have presented to you]. This is the language of Rashi. Now Jacob's meaning was that he did not want them and their company at all, the more so since he intended to go another way.

(טו) לָמָּה זֶה אֲמַצָּא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנָי. לָמָּה זֶה, תַּעֲשֶׂה לִּי טוֹבָה שְׂאִינִי צָרִיךְ לָהּ. אֲמַצָּא חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ, וְלֹא תִשְׁלַם עִתָּהּ שׁוּם גְּמוּלָה, לְשׁוֹן רַשִׁ"י. וְהַפְּנִינָה בְּיַעֲקֹב כִּי לֹא הָיָה חֶפֶץ בָּהֶם וּבְחַבְרֹתָם כְּלָל, וְכָל שֶׁכֵּן שֶׁהָיָה בְּדַעְתּוֹ לְלַכֵּת דֶּרֶךְ אַחֲרָת:

Our Rabbis have further seen an advisory aspect in this entire chapter. Thus they have said: “Before embarking on a journey to the Roman ruler, Rabbi Yanai would peruse this section of the Torah, and he never took Romans with him as an escort on the return journey. One time he did not peruse this section and he took Romans with him, and he had not yet reached Acco when he was compelled to sell his travelling cloak for bribery money.” This was because of the Rabbinical tradition that this was the section of the exile. Therefore when Rabbi Yanai entered Rome, in the court of the kings of Edom, concerning public matters, he would peruse this section of the Torah in order to follow the advice of the wise patriarch, for it is he that the generations are to see and emulate. Thus he would not accept the company of the Romans as an escort for they draw no man near to them except for their own interest and take liberties with people's belongings.

וְרַבּוֹתֵינוּ רָאוּ עוֹד בְּזֶה עֲצָה, אָמְרוּ (ב"ר ע"ח ט"ו) רַבִּי יַנָּאי כִּד הָיָה סָלִיק לְמַלְכוּתָא הָיָה מְסַתְפֵּל בְּהָדָא פְּרָשְׁתָא וְלֹא הָיָה נְסִיב עִמֶּיהָ רוּמָאין, חַד זְמַן לֹא אֶסְתַּכַּל בָּהּ וְנְסִיב עִמֶּיהָ רוּמָאין, וְלֹא הִגִּיעוּ לְעַכּוֹ עַד שֶׁמָּכַר פִּינָס שְׁלוֹ. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָיְתָה קַבְּלָה בְּיָדָם שְׂזוּ פְּרָשְׁת גְּלוּת. כְּשֶׁהָיָה בָּא בְּרוּמָה בְּחֶצֶר מַלְכֵי אֲדוּם עַל עֶסְקֵי הַצְּבוּר הָיָה מְסַתְפֵּל בְּפָרָשָׁה זֹאת לְלַכֵּת אַחֲרֵי עֲצַת הַזְּקֵן הַחֹכֵם, כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ יִרְאוּ הַדּוֹרוֹת וְכֵן יַעֲשׂוּ, וְלֹא הָיָה מְקַבֵּל חֶבְרַת אַנְשֵׁי רוּמֵי לְלוֹתוֹ שְׂאִין מְקַרְבִּין אֵלָּא לְהִנָּאת עֲצָמָן וּמְפַקִּירִין מִמוֹנֵי שֶׁל אָדָם: