

IN HONOR OF 60 YEARS SINCE THE REBBE INTRODUCING HIS REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING RASHI, 5725–5785, THIS MONTHLY COLUMN FEATURES AN ADAPTATION OF ONE OF THE REBBE’S “RASHI SICHOS.”

ותכלת וארגמן... ועצי שטים. (כה, ד-ה)

Blue and purple [wool]... and acacia wood.

Why does Rashi quote the teaching of Rebbi Tanchuma (that Yaakov Avinu had planted acacia trees in Egypt many years prior) when he could have answered something much more simple—like, for example, that the *Yidden* purchased the trees from the surrounding nations, or that they cut them down from a nearby forest?

This detail reshapes our understanding of Rashi's question ("Where did they get these [trees] in the desert?"): The Yidden were traveling through the desert, and, normally, when someone travels, they don't take wood with them. Why, then, did they have the wood readily available?

Now that we understand Rashi's question, we can also understand why he gave the answer that he did: Any other answer (like the ones suggested above) would not explain how the *Yidden* had wood *readily available*. The only satisfactory explanation is the one based on Rebbi Tanchuma's teaching; that the *Yidden* had wood with them because of Yaakov's foresight and instructions to his family.



("וּמֵאִין הָיוּ לָהֶם בְּמִדְבָּר"), which, according to the rules of grammar, means that it is a continuation of a previous comment. The question is which one?

The answer is: Rashi's *pirush* on *possuk* 4 regarding *t'cheiles* and *argaman*:

At first glance, the words "*t'cheiles*" and "*argaman*" seem to be referring to the dyes themselves. Accordingly, the *possuk* is saying that these dyes should be collected from the *Yidden* so that wool could then be dyed in these colors. But why would the *Yidden* have dyes with them in the middle of a desert?

This is why Rashi interprets the words "*t'cheiles*" and "*argaman*" to mean (not the dyes themselves, but rather) wool dyed in these colors. And it's no wonder that the *Yidden* were carrying dyed wool with them, since the Torah explicitly states that the *Yidden* owned many sheep. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that they had a variety of wool—dyed wool included.

Having addressed the issue of how the *Yidden* had the necessary materials readily available in the middle of the desert—and interpreted the words "*t'cheiles*" and "*argaman*" accordingly—Rashi raises the same question regarding the acacia wood. But here it is with added emphasis, since (unlike in *possuk* 4) there doesn't seem to be an explanation that fits into the straightforward reading of the *possuk*.



Why, indeed, did Yaakov go through the trouble of transplanting trees from Eretz Yisroel to Mitzrayim 200 years before the *Yidden* left Mitzrayim and would need wood for the Mishkan?! As we have discussed, there are much simpler ways of procuring wood when the time arises!

The answer is that Yaakov intended that the trees offer comfort to the *Yidden* over the long years of *galus*. True, they

already had a promise from Hashem that the redemption would come ("וְאָנֹכִי אֵעָלֶךָ גַּם-עִלְיָה"), but the trees planted by Yaakov (for the *Yidden* to take with them when they leave Mitzrayim) turned the promise into something visible and tangible; they were a source of encouragement and reassurance during the long years of *galus*.

This is why Yaakov brought saplings with him from Eretz Yisroel (and did not simply buy them in Mitzrayim); so that the sight of the trees would encourage the *Yidden* and reassure them that, in the end, they would leave Mitzrayim and return to Eretz Yisroel.

This is also why Rashi mentions the source for this teaching by name (something which he does not usually do)—Rebbi Tanchuma: Tanchuma is associated with the word "*nechama*," meaning "comfort"; hinting at the fact that the trees were planted with the purpose of giving the *Yidden* encouragement and comfort throughout their *galus*.

Takeaway:

Every *galus*—including the present one—is referred to as "Mitzrayim"; just as the *Yidden* then drew strength from Yaakov Avinu's trees—so too now: "Yaakov Avinu's trees" refer to the *tzaddikim*—and, specifically, the Nossi—in each generation, who really don't belong in *galus*; their true place is in "Eretz Yisroel." But Hashem places them in every generation so that they can be a source of reassurance, inspiration and courage for us to carry on, and build a Mishkan for Hashem in this world.

(Likkutei Sichos vol. 31, p. 146)