

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

**“And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Binyamin see that it is my mouth speaking to you.” (45:12)**

Rashi says that Yosef was speaking now in the Holy Tongue, and that was the proof that he was truly their brother Yosef. But the Ramban argues that Hebrew was spoken by all the peoples of the Land of Canaan, and surely many Egyptians spoke it, especially those in high government positions. What, then, was the proof that this ruler was really Yosef?

It may be that Rashi disagrees with the Ramban and holds that only Avraham Avinu and his family used the Holy Tongue. The Pirkei Derabbi Eliezer (chapter 24) says that when the people of Bavel build their tower, Hashem descended with 70 angels, put the 70 languages into the mouths of the nations, and appointed an angel over each language. Only Avraham, 48 years old at the time, was left with the original Holy Tongue that everyone had spoken until then.

Or, even if Rashi agrees that the Canaanites spoke Hebrew, it was not the same Hebrew that Yaakov and his family spoke. Rabbeinu Bachya (Bereishis 18:3) writes at length about the greatness and precision of the Holy Tongue and its nekudos (vowels). If someone changes even one sound, such as kometz to pasach, the entire meaning of the words changes, and sometimes it can be blasphemous or heretical. The Shelah (v. 1 p. 19) writes that Hebrew is called the Holy Tongue because all its letters and words have spiritual sources in the holy worlds above. The words are used to refer to physical objects in this world, but this is only in a borrowed sense; truthfully, each word is the name of a spiritual concept in the upper worlds.

Thus Yosef’s brothers were able to tell that he was speaking the true Holy Tongue, with precision, and in accordance with its Heavenly sources. This was a language only revealed to the Avos and their descendants, not the Canaanites or the Egyptians. (Divrei Yoel, p. 413)

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The Shomer Emunim (Rabbi Ahron Roth, 1894-1944) scrupulously avoided any words that came from the Zionist language, modern Hebrew. Once he was at an engagement meal and was honored with reading the tenayim (engagement contract). The tenayim said that the bride’s side promised to give “rehitim” (furniture). When the Shomer Emunim reached this word, he stopped reading and said, “This is a Zionist word! Although we find the word used in the Tanach (Shir Hashirim 1:17) and by Chazal (quoted by Rashi on Shir Hashirim), it has not been used for a long time, and so whoever uses it today is using it because of the influence of modern Hebrew!” (Furthermore, the original meaning of the word was beams or bolts, not furniture.) Then he tore up the document and told them to rewrite it. “But what word should we use for ‘furniture?’” they asked. He replied that they should use the Yiddish word “mebbel.” (Mishkenos Haro’im, p. 743)

Whenever the Shomer Emunim spoke about modern Hebrew, he would say, “I myself once stumbled and used a modern Hebrew word. A certain man who did not know Yiddish gave me an honor. I said to him, ‘Todah,’ using the Ashkenazic pronunciation. To this day I am still doing teshuva for that.” (ibid.)

Once the Brisker Rav was going over his household expenses with his daughter, and she had written, among the items bought, the word “mivreshes.” The Brisker Rav asked her what “mivreshes” meant. Just at that moment, his talmid Reb Mordechai Solomon came in. “Reb Mordechai, what is a ‘mivreshes?’” asked the Rav. “The

original Yiddish word was ‘bersht’ (brush),” said Reb Mordechai, “but the Zionists changed it to ‘mivreshes.’” Then the Brisker Rav said to his daughter, “If so, erase ‘mivreshes’ and write ‘bersht.’” (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 2 p. 192)



**His** sons and his grandsons with him; his daughters and granddaughters and all his seed he brought with him to Egypt. (46:7)

The Ohr Hachaim says (here and at the beginning of Shemos) that the Torah lists the names of the Bnei Yisroel who came down to Egypt in order to praise them, for they accepted the yoke of exile willingly. This is in contrast to Esav, who ran away from it. The Torah says (36:6), “And Esav went to a land away from Yaakov his brother,” and Rashi says that he did not want the Promised Land nor the debt of exile that came with it, both foretold to Avraham. The Midrash (Shemos 1) says that the slavery began only after all the original 66 souls who descended to Egypt had died. This lightening of the exile during their lifetimes, says the Ohr Hachaim, was a reward to them for accepting the exile. However, the daughters and granddaughters did not go on their own; Yaakov had to bring them, as the second half of the verse says. Thus, Serach the daughter of Asher and Yocheved the daughter of Levi did live to see the slavery. Yocheved was an unborn baby and Serach may have

been very young at the time they entered Egypt, so they cannot be blamed for their actions. Nevertheless, they lacked that extra merit of going willingly to fulfill the decree of the King.

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The Maharal in Gevuros Hashem, chapter 60, explains the mitzvos of the Pesach offering, matza and maror as symbolizing the fact that exile and redemption are two sides of the same coin and are peculiar to the Jewish people:

“The Pesach offering symbolizes the fact that we belong to the Holy One, blessed is He, and that only because of this can we escape the custody of nations such as Egypt, for Hashem is the G-d over all powers and all nations, and He takes us out from their domain. And just as our belonging to Hashem is the reason He redeems us, so also it is the reason why Israel experiences exile more than all other nations. For each nation has a special angel, and how can one angel be subjugated to the other? But Israel has no angel, but rather when they are living up to their full spiritual potential,

they belong to Hashem; and when they are not living up to their full spiritual potential, Hashem leaves them and they enter the domain of other nations. Do not say that Israel is equal to the nations, to the point where they would be, G-d forbid, in the domain of an angel – and then no nation would be able to subjugate it, as is the case with two equals who received portions. No, Israel received no portion, but they are the portion of Hashem, the Creator of all. The concept of portion does not apply to Hashem. And Israel has nothing to do with portions, that they should receive a portion together with the nations. Therefore they are fit for redemption: to go out from the dominion of the nations, since they belong to Hashem... Therefore, why should a person be surprised at the length of the exile? Something so peculiar to us is not easily removed... And that is why the Pesach offering is eaten together with matza and maror – this thing is very, very clear - for both these aspects are due to their being in Hashem’s portion. Because of this high status, they experience both redemption from the dominion of the nations [symbolized by matza] and subjugation under the dominion of the nations [symbolized by maror].”

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