



I Do Not Know

How often will people say to you "I do not know" something? Most people are very busy trying to show others what, and how much they know.

But Rashi, the master commentator on the Torah and Talmud, tells us this week EINI YODEI'A MA M'LAM-DEINU - I do not know what it teaches us."

Many praise him for his display of humility and his literal fulfillment of what is written in Pirkei Avot as one of the seven traits of a wise man (5:8) "regarding that which he had not understood he says, I do not understand it".

But Nechama Leibowitz pushes us to learn more from these four words written by Rashi. She asks why did Rashi tell us he doesn't know? He could have just not written anything on these words. He doesn't write an explanation for every word in the Torah. What was he trying to teach us by telling us that he didn't know?

The verse in question talks about Yitzchak sending Yaakov to Padan Aram, to Lavan, the son of Betuel the Aramite, the brother of Rivka, mother of Yaakov and Eisav (28:5). Rashi

tells us that he doesn't understand why the verse needs to tell us that Rivka is the mother of Yaakov and Eisav? This is completely superfluous since the whole portion deals with the relationship of Rivka with "Eisav, her elder son" and "Yaakov, her younger son". We know that she is their mother already so why does the Torah have to tell us again in our verse?

We know that each word in the Torah is important and comes to teach us something new, but Rashi could not find the purpose for the last three words of this verse. But why did he feel the need to tell us this? Why not just write nothing? Rashi himself couldn't find a reason for those three words, but he was convinced that they are there for a purpose. By telling us that he didn't know the reason, he was challenging all commentators and scholars to search for the answer. As a true educator, he wanted all of us to probe deeper into the verse of the Torah, and labor till we find the answer. (Try looking in Rashbam, Chizkuni and Eim LeMikra for answers given by commentators who took Rashi's challenge.

SINCE WE TALKED ABOUT Rivka being Yaakov and Eisav's mother, here is one of my mother's recipes. For all of you who still eat turkey on Thanksgiving this makes a nice side dish.

SWEET POTATO STUFFED ORANGES

3-4 Oranges

3 Sweet potatoes peeled and cut into large pieces

½-2 Tbsp sugar or honey (to taste)

Pinch of salt

Cinnamon (to taste)

Olive oil

Peel and boil sweet potatoes until tender. Drain and mash them up. Add sugar or honey and a pinch of salt. Cut oranges in half. Remove orange flesh and add the orange juice and flesh to the sweet potato mixture. You can leave some orange fruit pieces attached to the orange peel. Be sure to discard seeds. Mix well till there's no lumps. Taste for seasoning. Place orange halves in an oven safe dish. Fill each to the brim with sweet potato filling. Sprinkle with cinnamon and spray with a bit of olive oil. For a bit of a different taste you can add a bit of maple syrup or tamari sauce to the sweet potato mixture. To make it fancy you can top each one with a marshmallow that melts on top as you bake it. 🍌