

בש"ת

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Shemos

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Compiled from the works of  
**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**  
**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

by  
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn  
North Miami Beach, FL

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## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

# An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Shemos

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## Rashi in His Own Words

שמות א' - ח': וַיָּקֹם מֶלֶךְ חֲדֵשׁ עַל מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יְعַדֵּת יְהוָה:

רש"י ד"ה וַיָּקֹם מֶלֶךְ חֲדֵשׁ: רַב וּשְׁמוֹאֵל הַדָּם מִמֶּנּוּ. וְחַדֵּשׁ אָמַר, שְׁנַחֲדֵשׁ גּוֹרוֹתָיו: וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא יְדֻעַּ: עַשְׂה עַצְמָו כְּאֵלָיו לֹא יְדֻעַּ:

**Shemos 1:8:** A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Yosef.

**Rashi Heading - A new king arose:** (There is a difference of opinion between) Rav and Shmuel. One says that he was actually a new (king). The other says that his decrees were new. **and who did not know:** he acted as if he did not know him.

## A Brief Synopsis

Our Torah portion, Shemos, tells us how the enslavement of the Jewish people began in Egypt. We went "from riches to rags" because the Egyptians, led by Paroh, plotted against us. Our Parshah tells us that a new king arose over Mitzrayim who did not know Yosef. Rashi explains this by quoting from the Talmud, that there is a difference of opinion between two of our Sages, Rav and Shmuel. One says that it was actually a new king. The other says that it was the same king, but he changed his decrees.

Since the Torah tells us that a new king arose, why would we think it does not mean an actual new king? Furthermore, why does Rashi need to give us two explanations? When he does so, we know that there is a difficulty in the first explanation which is answered by the second, and vice versa. However, the first explanation which he offers is closer to Peshat than the second. How does that apply here?

The explanation is as follows. The Sages explain that the reason for saying that it was actually a new king is because that is what the Torah says; "a new king arose over Egypt." The reason for the second opinion is because the Torah does not explicitly state that the old king died, and the new king ruled. The Torah usually discusses kings ruling, not arising. Therefore there is an advantage to each opinion. However, each opinion also has a drawback.

It seems clear, based on the fact that the Torah said so, that it was actually a new king. According to the second opinion we must explain that since a king rules by royal decrees, a new king can mean new decrees. However, that seems to be further from Peshat. Additionally, if it was really the same king with new decrees, how can it be that he didn't know Yosef? This difficulty forces Rashi to explain "and he did not know Yosef," as meaning that he *behaved* as if he did not know Yosef. Furthermore, the difficulty with the first explanation, that the Torah does not say "and he ruled," is in truth not all that difficult. The Torah is not a book of the history of

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Egyptian kings! Based on the above, we can see why Rashi offers us two explanations, and the reason for their order.

### Rashi's Explanation

This week we begin reading and studying the second book of the Torah, Shemos. In short, this book tells of the Jewish people's enslavement in Egypt, and our ultimate redemption from there. Our Torah portion, Shemos, tells the story of how we went from "riches to rags." At the end of the first book of the Torah, we learned how Yosef saved Egypt from starvation during the seven years of famine. Paroh appointed Yosef the viceroy of Egypt. Paroh welcomed Yosef's entire family. The entire Jewish Nation immigrated to Egypt, and we were given the choicest land in which to dwell. We went from that elevated status last week, to becoming slaves in this week's portion. How did it happen?

In our Torah portion we read that<sup>1</sup> "The Jewish people were fruitful and swarmed and increased and became very, very strong, and the land became filled with them." Therefore<sup>2</sup> "a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know about Yosef." He met with his people. He feared that the Jews may become a fifth column. That is how our trouble began. Rashi cites the words from the verse "a new king arose," and comments that "(there is a difference of opinion between) Rav and Shmuel. One says that he was actually a new king, and the other says that his decrees were new."

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

We have explained a number of times that when Rashi offers more than one explanation for a verse in the Torah, there is some difficulty in the first explanation. That particular difficulty is not found in the second explanation. However there is an even stronger difficulty in his second explanation, and therefore the first is closer to Peshat. We need to understand what the difficulty is with each of Rashi's explanations, and why the first is closer to Peshat.

One additional difficulty is that the heading of Rashi's comments is "a new king arose." We know that Rashi is extremely precise with his language. This is even true of the words which appear in the heading of his comments. He only includes the words which he is actually explaining. It seems that he is only explaining the word "new." Why does he also include the word "a (new) king arose" in his heading?

We have also explained earlier that Rashi rarely cites the name of the particular Sage who he is quoting. When he does so, it is in order to allude to the answer to a question which would bother an especially bright student. We need to understand what Rashi is adding to our understanding of the verse by telling us that the two opinions are those of Rav and Shmuel.

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1. Bereishis 1:7.

2. Shemos 1:8.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

### The Explanation

Rashi's source for this is from the Talmud<sup>3</sup>. There, the reasoning behind each opinion is explained. The Talmud says there, that "the one who says that he was actually a new king says so because the Torah says 'a new king.' The reasoning of the one who says that it was merely the king's decrees which were new, is because the Torah does not say that 'the old king died and the new king ruled.'" The Torah does not use the expression that a new king "arose." The Torah consistently says that a king "ruled." Because the Torah does not use this word, it is logical to infer that we are speaking about the same king who ruled previously. However, we do see from the Torah's words that there was something new. Since a king rules through royal edicts, or decrees, he understands that it was the decrees that changed.

Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the verse. Why would he base his comments upon the Talmud? The reason is simple; here the Talmudic reasoning is based on Peshat, the simple words of the Torah. The first opinion is based on the words "new king," and the second opinion is based on the word "arose," as opposed to "ruled." This also explains why Rashi includes in the header the words "a new king arose." Both opinions are derived from the entire phrase.

Despite the fact that we can see the reason behind each view, the first is closer to Peshat for the following reasons:

1. Since we are explaining the simple meaning of the verse, it is more logical to say that it was actually a new king. After all, the Torah does say that "a new king arose."
2. According to the second explanation, we must also explain the words "who did not know Yosef." If he is the same king, he obviously knew Yosef. That is why Rashi also explains the words "who did not know Yosef." He explains that the Torah is actually saying that he *acted* as if he did not know Yosef. However, as we mentioned earlier, Rashi is very particular about the words he uses in the headings of his comments. Rashi adds to his heading the word "and," writing "*and* who did not know Yosef." He is connecting these comments to those which he made earlier, namely the second opinion of his previous explanation. According to the first opinion, however, those words can be explained simply.
3. The proof upon which the second opinion is based is that it uses the word "arose" rather than "ruled." There is a fairly simple explanation for this. The Torah is speaking about the king of Egypt. It is not trying to teach us the history of gentile kings!

From the above, we can see why the first opinion which Rashi quotes is closer to Peshat than the second. That is the reason that he mentions it first.

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<sup>3</sup> See the Talmud Eiruvin 53, a and Sotah 11, a. See also the Midrash Shemos Rabbah Chapter 1, 8.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

We still need to understand why Rashi mentions Rav and Shmuel by name. The explanation is, that the verse, "a new king arose ..." tells us the reason for the following verse<sup>4</sup>. "Get ready; let us deal shrewdly with them! If they continue to increase, and we become involved in a war, they may join our enemies and we will need to leave our own land."

Even according to the opinion that this Paroh was a new king, it is impossible to say that he was not aware of what Yosef had done. He was the king of Egypt, where just one generation earlier Yosef saved the entire nation. He must have been familiar with Yosef's actions!

Also, even a young child understands that he had no reason to suspect that the Jews would become a fifth column. Paroh and all of his advisors knew how good Egypt was to the Jews. Paroh had taken Yosef out of prison, and made him the second in command of Egypt. Not only that, but he had even declared that no one may make a move without Yosef's permission<sup>5</sup>. Later when all of the Jews arrived in Egypt, Paroh gave them the very best land in Egypt, the land of Goshen in which to dwell<sup>6</sup>. Even a generation later, it would not be natural for the Jews to repay goodness with evil. Anyone can understand that Paroh did not believe that the Jews would join with their enemies. It was simply an excuse for evil behavior.

The question is what sort of evil it was. One can be evil in terms of his relationship with G-d, or in his relationship with his fellow man. Was Paroh's evil mainly directed against Hashem, or against the Jews? Rashi answers this question (or alludes to the answer) by naming Rav and Shmuel, as will be explained.

The Talmud says<sup>7</sup>, that when there is an argument in the Talmud regarding prohibitions, we rule according to Rav. When there is an argument regarding monetary law, we rule according to Shmuel. The rabbis of the Middle Ages explain this as follows<sup>8</sup>. Both Rav and Shmuel were expert in all areas of Torah law. However, since Shmuel was constantly involved with monetary law, he was able to attain the greatest depth of their true meaning. The same is true of Rav regarding laws related to prohibited items. What is the difference between these two areas of Jewish law? Prohibitions concern what the Torah says about our relationship with Hashem. Monetary issues concern Torah law regarding our relationship with our fellow man. Hence, when Rav encountered an issue which could either be explained as being related to our relationship with G-d or our relationship with our fellow, he was more inclined to approach it as it affects our relationship with Hashem. Shmuel, on the other hand, was more inclined to link it to our relationship with each other.

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4. Shemos 1:9.

5. Bereishis 41:44.

6. See Bereishis 46:6, 11.

7. See Bechoros 49, b.

8. See the Rosh to Tractate Bava Kama, Chapter 4, Paragraph 4.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

According to Shmuel, he was actually the same king; the only thing which changed was his decrees. Based on Shmuel's focus on interpersonal laws, Paroh had an excuse<sup>9</sup> which he felt could be used with Hashem. Ya'akov our forefather showed him honor as a king. All of the Jews accepted Paroh's leadership. Furthermore, he displayed kindness to us by giving us the land of Goshen. He therefore had (at least in his own opinion) an excuse to deal with the Jews as he wished. He felt that "we owed him." However, regarding his relationship with the Jews, he had no "excuse" whatsoever. The Jews, especially Yosef, had showered him with kindness. Shmuel explained the verse according to his personal position, which was inclined toward Torah law as it regards the relationship between one Jew and another. Hence he understood the "new king" as the original king who passed new edicts.

Rav, on the other hand, was of the opinion that it was actually a new king. That being the case, he had no "excuse" for mistreating the Jews. He did not rule when the Jews arrived in Egypt. The Jews never accepted his rule. He never showed us any kindness whatsoever. Hence, his wickedness was in his relationship with Hashem. He therefore found that Paroh's wickedness was directed at Hashem. He therefore understood that the "new king" was in fact an actual new king<sup>10</sup>.

### A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

We must be aware, that there is no difference whether he is the same old king or a new king. If he is the king of Egypt – Mitzrayim, who is interested in causing hardships for Jews<sup>11</sup>, we may not follow his decrees. We must work within the laws of nature. This is what Moshe Rabbeinu did by speaking to Paroh. However, we may not pay attention to any decree which hinders our Torah study, Torah observance and providing our children with a proper Torah education. As a result of this, we will merit to have children who are indeed members of the "Army of Hashem." Just as the Jews were redeemed from Mitzrayim, so to will we merit the complete and true redemption through our righteous Moshiach!

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Shemos, 5736)*

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9. The Hebrew – Talmudic word for excuse is "Amaslo - אַמָּסְלוֹ" The Rebbe often quoted that it is a contraction of two words; "Emes Lo - - אֵם לֹא Not True."

10. The Rebbe gives other instances where Rashi writes "Rav and Shmuel; one says ... and the other says ..." He demonstrates how the same pattern applies. He also uses a different to explain all of the arguments between Rav and Shmuel in the Talmud, but that is not according to Peshat.

11. Bereishis Rabbah Chapter 16, Section 4, tells us that the Hebrew word for Egypt, Mitzrayim is derived from the word Maytzar, which means to cause hardship.

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Passed away on 11 Teves, 5776

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\*

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
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and Shoshana Devorah Hodya bas Tovah Sarah זי'ו  
For a complete and speedy recovery**

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Yisroel Hacohen ben Berocho זי'ו  
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MAY HE MERIT TO BE A CHOSSID, A YEREI SHOMAYIM AND A LAMDON

**מוקדש לזכות  
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליאו באויטש**  
\* \* \*

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חילוי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עוד שיחיו מארים  
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**נדפס ע"י הוריהם**

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מארים  
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**לעילוי נשמה**

ר' שלום דוד בן ר' יצחק הכהן ע"ה מנקס  
נפטר ביום י"א טבת ה'תשע"ו  
ת. ג. צ. ב. ה.  
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ר' חיים יצחק בן ר' יהיאל משה ע"ה האנטווערקיעד  
נפטר ביום כ"ה אדר שני, ה'תשע"ו  
ת. ג. צ. ב. ה.  
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**נדפס ע"י בנו וכלהו**

ר' יוֹאָב וָזָוְגָּתוֹ מִרְתַּת דָּבָרָה לְאָהֶן שִׁיחֵי האנטווערקיעד  
\* \* \*

**נתրם ע"י**

הה' משה שלמה זהר שי' מארס  
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יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיך, ירא שמים, ולמדן