

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Lech Lecho

Cheshvan 11, 5777 – November 12, 2016

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Lech Lecho

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית י"ז, ה': וְלֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת שְׁמֹךְ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שְׁמֹךְ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אַב הָמוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְתִּידָּהּ:
רש"י ד"ה כי אב המון גוים: לשון נוטריקון של שמו. ור"ש שהיתה בו בתחלה, שלא היה אב אלא לארם שהוא מקומו ועכשיו אב לכל העולם, לא זזה ממקומה, שאף יו"ד של שרי נתרעמה על השכינה עד שנתוספה ליהושע, שנאמר (במדבר יג טז) ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע:

Bereishis 17:5: And your name shall no longer be called Avrom, but your name shall be Avrohom, because I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

Rashi Heading - because the father of a multitude of nations: ("אב הָמוֹן" – Av Hamon - The father of a multitude" is) an acrostic of his name (*Av Ra Ham*). The "Resh - ר" that was originally in his name, denoted that he was the father only of Aram, which was his native place. Whereas now, he became the father of the entire world. Nevertheless the "Resh - ר" that was there originally was not moved from its place. For even the "Yud - י" (that was originally) in Sorai's name¹ complained to the Shechinah until it was added to Yehoshua, as it is said, "and Moshe called Hoshea (הוֹשֵׁעַ) the son of Nun, Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ)."

A Brief Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecho, Hashem changes Avrom's name to Avrohom. He says that² "And your name shall no longer be called Avrom, but your name shall be Avrohom, because I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." Rashi cites the words "because ... the father of a multitude of nations," and explains that Avrohom's new name is an acrostic; "the father" (*Av*) "of a multitude" (*hamon*). The "Resh - ר" that was originally in his name, denoted that he was the father only of Aram, which was his native place. Whereas now, he became the father of the entire world. Nevertheless the "Resh - ר" that was there originally was not moved from its place. For even the "Yud - י" (that was originally) in Sorai's name complained to the Shechinah until it was added to Yehoshua, as it is said, "and Moshe called

1. Avrohom's wife's name was originally "Sorai - שרי."

2. Bereishis 17:5.

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Hoshea (הוֹשֵׁעַ) the son of Nun, Yehoshua - יהושע³.

It seems that the proof which Rashi brings from Soroh's name, contradicts what he is saying. Rashi is making the point that despite the acrostic, the letter "Resh - ר" was not moved from its place. However, in the case of Soroh the letter "Yud - י" was removed. It was replaced in someone else's name several centuries later.

The answer to this question can be seen from the fact that Rashi does not mention Avrohom's original name; he only says that the "Resh - ר" which was originally in his name indicated that he was the father of Aram, and that this letter was not moved from its place. The reason for this is, that in the vast majority of cases, according to Peshat we are not concerned with the reason for names⁴. However, from the fact that Hashem named Avrohom, specifying an acrostic, and nevertheless the letter "Resh - ר" remained⁵, we see that it is significant. It is from this that Rashi understands that he was first the father of Aram, and then became the father of the entire world. Being the father of Aram is included within being the father of the world, hence the "Resh - ר" is not moved from its place. However, Soroh's original name had no significance.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Lech Lecho, Hashem changes Avrom's name to Avrohom. He says that "And your name shall no longer be called Avrom, but your name shall be Avrohom, because I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." Rashi cites the words "because ... the father of a multitude of nations," and explains that ("the father of a multitude – *Av Hamon* is) an acrostic of his name (*Av Ra Ham*). The "Resh - ר" that was originally in his name, denoted that he was the father only of Aram, which was his native place. Whereas now, he became the father of the entire world. Nevertheless the "Resh - ר" that was originally a part of his name was not moved from its place. For even the "Yud - י" (that was originally) in Sorai's name complained to the Shechinah until it was added to Yehoshua, as it is said, "and Moshe called Hoshea (הוֹשֵׁעַ) the son of Nun, Yehoshua (יהושע)"

The simple meaning of Rashi's comments is that the word "because" ("because I have made you") is the reason for changing his name from Avrom to Avrohom. Therefore, Rashi says

3. Bamidbar 13:16.

4. The only exceptions would be significant names, i.e. names which were given by G-d.

5. The letter "Resh - ר" was part of his original name, but had no place in the acrostic.

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that the name change is due to this acrostic. Instead of Avrom, his name was changed to Avrohom. He became the father - "Av" - of a multitude - "hamon" of nations. The question remains, that according to this his name should have become "Avhom," rather than "Avrohom." Therefore Rashi explains that the name "Avrom" had the letter "Resh - ר." This signified that he was the father of Aram, where he lived. The "Resh" remained in his name, or as Rashi says "was not moved from its place," in addition to the acrostic.

Rashi cites an example (and a proof) of this, from the name change of Avrohom's wife, Sorai. Further on, Hashem says to Avrohom⁶, "And G-d said to Avrohom, "Your wife Sorai (שרי - spelled with a י) you shall not call her name Sorai, for Soroh (spelled with a ה with the letter י removed) is her name. The name Sorai connotes "my princess," while the name Soroh connotes a princess over everyone. The letter "Yud - י" had "complaints" to Hashem, because it was removed from Sorai's name. The same is true here as well. In order that the ר not have a complaint to Hashem, it was left in Avrohom's name.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

The very first difficulty in understanding what Rashi says is, that the proof which he brings from Soroh's name seems to indicate the exact opposite of Rashi's point. The letter "Yud - י" was removed from Soroh's name. Granted, that the letter did have a complaint and was later replaced. However, it was replaced several centuries later in someone else's name. In the meantime, it was removed from Soroh's name. Why could the letter "Resh - ר" not be removed from Avrohom's name in the same manner?

Secondly, the way that Rashi phrases his comments seems to be unusual. He writes that "even the 'Yud - י' that was originally in Sorai's name had complaints to the Shechinah." One would think that he should write "likewise the 'Yud - י.'" "Even the Yud - י" implies that the "Resh - ר" from Avrohom's name should certainly have had complaints to the Shechinah. However, even the "Yud - י" could have complaints as well. What is the difference between the "Resh - ר" from Avrohom's name, and the "Yud - י" from Soroh's name?

The Explanation

The explanation will become clear, once we look a bit more closely at Rashi's words. Rashi does not mention that Avrohom's original name was Avrom. He also does not mention that this name is formed by an acrostic for "Av – the father of, Rom - Aram." Rather he begins his

6. Bereishis 17:15.

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comments by saying that "The "Resh - ר" that was originally in his name, denoted that he was the father only of Aram, which was his native place. Now, however, he became the father of the entire world." This tells us, that Rashi is not concerned with the original name. He is also not concerned with the acrostic. The reason for this is quite simple. According to Peshat we do not concern ourselves with the meaning of names. The only exceptions would be names which have great significance, for example names which were given by Hashem. However here, Avrohom's original name was given by his father Terach. The one thing that teaches us the significance of the name Avrom, is the fact that the "Resh - ר" was not moved from his name. This teaches us that it is important for us to know that he was first named Avrom. The fact that he was the father of Aram before becoming the father of the entire world is important.

Why indeed was the "Resh - ר" not moved from his name? Because being the father of Aram is included within being the father of the world. The "Resh - ר" did not need to move, because he still had his status as the head of Aram. However, Soroh was a completely different story. Her birth name does not have real significance, at least not in the world of Peshat. Therefore the "Yud - י" from her original name could only have complaints, but not more. This being the case, the letter was removed from her name.

If this is so, why does Rashi mention this? In order to teach us that the Hebrew letters can have "complaints," and that their complaints must be dealt with. In the case of Soroh it took quite some time to pacify the "Yud - י" from her name. That was because that particular letter did not have as strong a claim as the "Resh - ר" from Avrohom. Yet it was ultimately pacified.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

In the Chassidic work Torah Ohr⁷, the Alter Rebbe teaches us that the name Avrom is also an acrostic for the spiritual level which is called the Supernal Father. The word "Av" means father, and "Rom" means high. The spiritual concept of Father, is that of the G-dly level of Chochmah. Chochmah is generally translated as wisdom, yet that translation does not begin to explain the true meaning of Chochmah. It is the original "flash" of understanding. It contains all of the wisdom which can be extracted from it, but at this point, until the flash, the point of wisdom is given dimensions, it is not possible to understand.

In terms of our spiritual service, we begin at the stage of Avrom, the Supernal Father. It is Divine wisdom, but it is too high to be brought down into the world. We can ultimately reach the

7. See Torah Ohr, at the beginning of Parshas Lech Lecho.

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level of Avrohom - the father of a multitude of nations. At that point, we are able to bring down this hidden, supernal wisdom into a manner that the entire world, a multitude of nations, can understand it.

One might mistakenly think that as a result of drawing something which is so high down to such a low level, we are degrading it. Therefore, Rashi tells us that the "Resh - ר" is not moved from its place. The letter Resh, which stand for "Rom – High," retains its stature. G-dly light is such, that it can be brought down to the lowest of levels, and retain its original holiness.

All Jews have three patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. The reason that we each have these three specific forefathers, is because every Jew, without exception, has inherited qualities from each of these giants.

In other words, without exception, we all have the ability to draw down G-dly light throughout the entire world, wherever it may be. We can teach G-dliness and spirituality in such a way that it reaches even the multitude of nations. Since we are all empowered to do so, we are also obligated to perform this task.

Despite our obligation to become fathers throughout the entire world, we must also remember that included within our global outreach is Avrom. We must be fathers of our native land as well.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecho 5744)

**I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. **Oded** ben Reb **Aharon Dov** ע"ה **Stitt**
Passed away on 15 Sivan, 5775
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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לזכות

החייל ב"צבאות השם" חיים שי' מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריו

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" אלישע, דניאל ויעקב שיחיו נקש

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

ר' יניב וזוגתו מרת בריינא חנה שיחיו נקש

שיזכו להצלחה רבה ומופלגה בגו"ר בכל הענינים

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לזכות

ר' חיים יצחק בן חי' שי' האנטווערקער

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נדפס ע"י בנו ר' יואב וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה שיחיו האנטווערקער

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לזכות

ברכה בת שרה שתחיל' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נדפס ע"י חתנה ובתה

הרה"ת ר' שמואל וזוגתו מרת רבקה שיחיו מענדלסאהן

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' עודד בן ר' אהרן דב ע"ה סתית

נפטר ביום ט"ו סיון ה'תשע"ה ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.