

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Tazria-Metzora

3 Iyar, 5777 – April 29, 2017

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

Parshas Tazria-Metzora

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Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא י"ד – ל"ד: פי תבאו אל ארץ כנען אשר אני נתן לכם לאחזה ונתתי נגע צרעת בבית ארץ אחוזתכם:

רש"י ד"ה ונתתי נגע צרעת: בשורה היא להם שהנגעים באים עליהם, לפי שהטמינו אמוריים מטמוניות של זהב בקירות בתיהם כל ארבעים שנה שהיו ישראל במדבר, ועל ידי הנגע נותץ הבית ומוצאן:

Vayikroh 14:34: When you come to the land of Canaan which I am giving you as a possession, and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as upon a house in the land of your possession ...

Rashi Heading – and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as: This is good news for them that lesions of Tzora'as will come upon them, because the Emorites had hidden away treasures of gold inside the walls of their houses during the entire forty years that the Jews were in the desert. Through the lesion he will demolish the house (see verses 43-45) and find them.

Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Tazria-Metzora tells us at great length of the disease called Tzora'as¹. The Torah tells us that this lesion can affect a person, a garment or a house. The Torah announces that upon conquering and possessing the land of Canaan there will be houses which will have this affliction. Rashi explains to us why this is a positive thing. He explains that throughout the forty years that the Jews were wandering in the desert, the Emorites were hiding treasures of gold within the walls of their homes. As a result of those homes being stricken with Tzora'as when the Jews took possession of them they would need to be demolished in order to be purified². Hence the new Jewish owners would find the gold which had been hidden within the walls.

The Torah says that when the Jews come to Canaan Hashem will place a lesion of Tzora'as upon the houses. However Rashi, who is explaining Peshat, tells us that the *Emorites* were hiding gold within the walls of their houses. Why single out the Emorites who were only one of the Canaanite nations?

It has been explained many times that Rashi wrote his commentary in a manner that there is no need to search for any information elsewhere. In an instance where it seems that such a need arises, in fact it was

1. Tzora'as was not a typical physical illness which was caused by bacteria or the like. Rather it had a spiritual cause; it resulted from gossiping about others. The affect it had was very fitting. The afflicted was declared impure, hence separated from the community. The result of slandering another, thereby bringing division among the Jewish people caused the guilty party to be cast apart from others. This sickness, which no longer exists, could only be diagnosed by a Kohen. Likewise its cure, the process which would purify the "patient" and allow him to re-enter the community was performed by a Kohen.

2. See Vayikroh 14:43-45.

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explicitly explained earlier either in the Torah or in Rashi's comments. This is such an instance. In Hashem's covenant with Avrohom, Hashem said that³ "the fourth generation will return here⁴, for the iniquity of the Emorites will not be complete until then." Rashi explains the meaning of this. Our forefather Yaakov went down to Egypt. His son Yehudah was the first generation, Peretz was the second and Chetzron was the third. The fourth generation, Kaleiv the son of Chetzron, was among those who entered Israel. However, Rashi goes on to explain that we could not enter the land until the sin of the Emorites was complete; i.e. until they were fully deserving of punishment.

As the Torah continues telling us of G-d's covenant with Avrohom, it specifies ten nations who the Jews will conquer⁵, all of whom are included in the general term Canaanites. Nonetheless, the Emorites were those who would determine the time which the Jews will settle Israel.

This is what Rashi hints at by saying that the Emorites were hiding gold within the walls of their houses throughout the forty years that the Jews were in the wilderness. They knew that at the time of the Exodus that their sin was complete, and it was time for them to be sent out of their land. Hence they were the first of the Canaanite nations to begin hiding their gold. That is the reason that Rashi singles them out.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Tazria-Metzora, dwells at great length on the disease of Tzora'as¹. It defines three different types of Tzora'as. It also tells us how one can become healed (or more accurately purified) from it. Early on in the Parshah it teaches us of Tzora'as that affects a person's body. It then defines Tzora'as lesions which affect clothing. Then, somewhat later, the Torah tells us how Tzora'as lesions can attack a house. The Torah begins by telling us that⁶ "When you come to the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as upon a house in the land of your possession ..."

From the Torah's words, one could think that Tzora'as is beneficial. It sounds as if Hashem is announcing that He is giving us this wonderful land. Together with this gift He is giving us Tzora'as. This is a spiritual disease! What is the reason for this announcement? Rashi cites the words from the verse "and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as." He then explains that "this is good news for them that lesions of Tzora'as will come upon them, because the Emorites had hidden away treasures of gold inside the walls of their houses during the entire forty years that the Jews were in the desert. Through the lesion he will demolish the

3. Bereishis 15:16.

4. Meaning that they will return to Israel.

5. Bereishis 15:19-21.

6. Vayikroh 14:34.

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house (see verses 43-45) and find them.” This is how Rashi explains that finding Tzora’as on our houses in the Holy Land would indeed be beneficial.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi is explaining a verse in the Torah which tells us what will happen when we come to the land of Canaan which G-d is giving us. Yet his explanation singles out the Emorites. Hashem promised to give us the land of ten nations⁷. Collectively they were called the Canaanites. The Emorites are just one of these ten nations. Why does Rashi, who is explaining Peshat, not discuss all of the Canaanites?

We also need to understand why Rashi writes that “the Emorites had hidden away treasures of gold inside the walls of their houses during the entire forty years that the Jews were in the desert.” Granted that the Canaanites knew that the Jews would conquer their land. At the splitting of the Red Sea the Torah says that⁸ “all of the inhabitants of Canaan melted.” Rashi explains there that the Canaanites said that “they are coming upon us to annihilate us and possess our land.” Additionally, we find the same idea when the Jews began the conquest of Israel. After crossing the Jordan River Yehoshua sent two spies to Jericho – Yericho. They spoke to Rachav, who told them that⁹ “... I know that the Lord has given you the land and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away because of you. For we have heard how Hashem dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt ...” Obviously they knew what was going to happen. However, once they saw that the Jews were stuck in the desert for a lengthy period of time, why should they spend all of those years hiding gold?

The Explanation

It is known that Rashi wrote his commentary to the Torah in a manner that there would never be a need to consult with another book or commentary. What about times such as this when there does appear to be a question on something which Rashi wrote? It was answered earlier by an explicit statement of the Torah (with Rashi’s commentary).

That is the case here. We find that the Torah clearly emphasized the Emorites when discussing the Canaanite nations. Hashem promised our forefather Avrohom that He would give the land of Canaan – Israel to his descendants. In this covenant G-d said to him³ “And the fourth generation will return here (to Israel), for the iniquity of the Emorites will not be complete until then.” What exactly is meant by this? Rashi cites the words “and the fourth generation” and explains as follows. “After they will have been exiled to Egypt, they will be there for three generations. The fourth will return to this land. It was in the land of Canaan that Hashem spoke with Avrohom and formed this covenant ... And so it was: Yaakov descended to Egypt. Go

7. Actually He gave us the land of seven nations. We will be given the land of the additional three nations with the coming of Moshiach.

8. Shemos 15:15.

9. Yehoshua 2:9-10.

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forth and figure his generations. Yehudah, Peretz, and Chetzron. Kaleiv the son of Chetzron was one of those who entered the land.” In other words, the Jewish people were due to enter Israel immediately after the Exodus from Egypt. If not for the sin of the spies that would have been the case. Next Rashi cites the words “for the iniquity of the Amorites will not be complete,” and explains the following. “The Emorites should be sent out of their land until that time, for Hashem does not punish a nation until its measure is full¹⁰, as it is said¹¹, ‘When her measure is full, when You send her away, then You will strive with her.’”

We see from the above that from among all of the Canaanite nations it was the Emorites who were the first to reach their breaking point. They were the first to have accumulated so much sin that they deserved to be exiled from their land before any of the other Canaanite nations. Being aware that they deserved to be conquered by the Jews at the time of the Exodus, they immediately began hiding money in their walls. They knew what their fate was, but they hoped to ultimately reconquer their land and reclaim their gold. However, Hashem had other plans for them. That is why Rashi singled out the Emorites for special mention. They were the first to have reached the full level of iniquity. They could have lost their land at any point following the Exodus.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Rashi is providing us with a much deeper lesson here as well. Rashi has told us that the cause of Tzora’as is the sin of Loshon Hora – Gossiping about a fellow Jew¹². The Rambam carries this a step further. He says that the cause is not necessarily actual Loshon Hora. He says that what he calls “speech of the wicked” can cause the impurity of lesions. He explains at length that this includes all sorts of idle and pointless chatter¹³.

This is the impurity of the Emorite nation. The Hebrew word for Emorite - אַמֹּרִי, is from the same root as the Hebrew verb to say - אָמַר. That is the reason that Rashi singles out the Emorite nation in regard to Tzora’as; they are both essentially the same concept.

However, Rashi also tells us of the treasures of gold which could be found within the Emorite homes. By changing from slanderous, or even idle speech to words of Torah, Prayer and Mitzvos, we can find the greatest, most valuable treasures! That is why after discussing “speech of the wicked” at length, the Rambam goes on at such length describing proper, holy speech¹⁴. He concludes this section by writing that “In contrast, the speech of proper Jewish people only concerns words of Torah and wisdom. Therefore Hashem

10. Even though Hashem knows that a nation will continue to sin, he will not punish them until they fully deserve to be punished.

11. Yeshayahu 27:8.

12. Vayikroh 13:46, and Vayikroh 14:4.

13. See Rambam at the end of the Laws of the Impurity of Tzora’as.

14. *Ibid.*

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assists them and grants them merit because of it, as it is written¹⁵, 'Then those who fear G-d conversed, each person with his fellow. Hashem listened and paid heed. And a book of remembrance was composed before Him for those who fear G-d and contemplate His name.'

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Metzora 5741)

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15. Malachi 3:16.

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