

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Chukas-Balak

12 Tammuz, 5786 – June 27, 2026

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

by  
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn  
North Miami Beach, FL

A Project of  
**Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos**  
Copyright 2026©

**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi**  
**Parshas Chukas-Balak**  
**Likkutei Sichos Volume 33, Pages 131 – 137**

**Rashi in His Own Words**

במדבר כ"א, כ"א: וישלח ישראל מלאכים אל סיחון מלך האמורי לאמר:

רש"י ד"ה וישלח ישראל מלאכים: ובמקום אחר תולה השליחות במשה, שנאמר (דברים ב', כ"ו) ואשלח מלאכים ממדבר קדמות, וכן (במדבר כ', י"ד) וישלח משה מלאכים מקדש אל מלך אדום, וביפתח הוא אומר (שופטים י"א, י"ז) וישלח ישראל מלאכים אל מלך אדום וגו', הכתובים הללו צריכים זה לזה, זה נועל וזה פותח, שמשה הוא ישראל וישראל הם משה, לומר לך שנשיא הדור הוא ככל הדור, כי הנשיא הוא הכל:

**Bamidbar 21:21:** Yisroel, (the Jewish people,) sent messengers to Sichon the king of the Emorites, saying:

**Rashi Heading - Yisroel sent messengers:** Elsewhere, the sending (of messengers) is ascribed to Moshe, as it says<sup>1</sup>, "So I sent messengers from the desert of Kedamos." Similarly,<sup>2</sup> "Moshe sent messengers to the king of Edom...." Concerning Yiftach, it says<sup>3</sup>, "Yisroel sent messengers to the king of Edom..." These verses supplement each other; one holds back, and the other reveals. Moshe is Yisroel, and Yisroel is Moshe. This is to teach you that the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation, because the leader is everything.

**Synopsis**

This week's Torah portion, Chukas-Balak, tells us how the Jewish people, traveling through the desert, wished to cross the land of the giant Sichon. The Torah tells us that "Yisroel<sup>4</sup> sent messengers to Sichon." Rashi cites the words "Yisroel sent messengers." It explains that "Elsewhere, the sending (of messengers) is ascribed to Moshe, as it says, <sup>1</sup> 'So I (meaning Moshe) sent messengers from the desert of Kedamos.' Similarly<sup>2</sup>, 'Moshe sent messengers to the king of Edom...,' and concerning Yiftach it says<sup>3</sup>, 'Yisroel sent messengers to the king of Edom...'. These verses supplement each other: one holds back (by not telling us who authorized the sending of the messengers), and the other reveals (that Moshe actually sent them). Moshe is Yisroel, and Yisroel is Moshe. This is to teach you that the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation because the leader is everything."

It would seem as if Rashi is explaining an apparent contradiction. Who sent the messengers, Moshe or Yisroel? Further on, we find that Moshe sent the messengers. Yet here we find that Yisroel sent them. However, this cannot be what is bothering Rashi. When two verses seem to contradict each other, Rashi explains the second verse; it is only then that the question arises! Additionally, why does Rashi give such a lengthy explanation?

Rashi is actually explaining something else. A few verses earlier, it said that "Moshe sent messengers," but in the very same verse, it says that "so said your brother Yisroel." Our verse says that Yisroel sent messengers, but from further on it seems that Moshe sent them! Who sent the messengers, Moshe or the Jewish people?

1. Parshas Devorim, Devorim 2:26.
2. Our Parshah, Bamidbar 20:14.
3. Shoftim 11:17.
4. Wherever it says "Yisroel" in our context it refers to the Jewish nation.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Rashi answers this question by saying that if we look at just one verse, it is unclear; i.e., it holds back. It is only by looking at the other verses that we get everything in perspective. Moshe sending the messengers is the same as Yisroel sending them, and Yisroel is the same as Moshe. The only difference is to whom the mission is being ascribed. The reason for this is that "Moshe is Yisroel, and Yisroel is Moshe. This is to teach you that the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation because the leader is everything."

### **Rashi's Explanation**

This week's Torah portion, Chukas-Balak, tells us how the Jewish people, on their way through the desert, wished to pass through the land of the giant Sichon. They first sent messengers to make their request. The verse which we are discussing tells us that "Yisroel sent messengers to Sichon." Rashi cites the words "Yisroel sent messengers," and explains that "Elsewhere, the sending (of messengers) is ascribed to Moshe, as it says, 'So I (meaning Moshe) sent messengers from the desert of Kedamos.' Similarly, 'Moshe sent messengers to the king of Edom...,' and concerning Yiftach it says, 'Yisroel sent messengers to the king of Edom...'. These verses supplement each other; one holds back (information by not informing us who authorized the sending of the messengers), and the other reveals (that Moshe sent them). Moshe is Yisroel, and Yisroel is Moshe. This is to teach you that the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation because the leader is everything."

Looking at Rashi superficially, it would appear that Rashi is reconciling the seeming contradiction between these verses. Who sent the messengers to the land of Sichon, Moshe or the Jewish nation? However, we know that this is not what is bothering Rashi. We have discussed at length many times that Rashi will not answer a question or reconcile two verses that seem to contradict each other until the Torah actually writes the second verse that poses the contradiction. In this case, the verse that says the Jews sent the messengers appears in Bamidbar, the fourth book of the Torah; the verse that indicates that Moshe sent the messengers appears in Devorim, the fifth book of the Torah. That is where Rashi should explain this seeming contradiction.

It may be possible to explain that the question that is bothering Rashi here is from a previous verse, which Rashi also mentions here. In the previous chapter, it says,<sup>5</sup> that "Moshe sent messengers to the king of Edom ..." To answer this question, Rashi also explains the statement in Devorim that says Moshe sent messengers.

### **Difficulties in Understanding Rashi**

Rashi's wording is extremely unusual. Why does he need the introduction, "These verses supplement each other; one holds back, and the other reveals<sup>5</sup>?" Additionally, why does Rashi use the seemingly redundant expression, "Moshe is the Jewish people, and the Jewish people are Moshe?"

We see that Rashi does use this double expression. If it is important to phrase it in this manner, why does Rashi not also say that "the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation, and the entire generation is like the leader

---

5. Rashi is quoting these words from a Midrash. However, we know that Rashi only quotes a Midrash when it adds to our understanding of Peshat. Additionally, the actual Midrash says that "all words of Torah supplement each other; one holds back and the other reveals." This means that the Midrash is using this as a general explanation of the entire Torah, while Rashi is using the same phrase to explain these verses.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

of the generation."

What is Rashi adding with the words "because the leader is everything<sup>6</sup>?" What does this add to what he previously wrote, that "the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation?" To the contrary, first, Rashi says that the leader is only *comparable* to the entire generation. He then says that the leader of the generation *is actually* everything!

Rashi begins his explanation by saying that "elsewhere, the sending (of messengers) is ascribed to Moshe, as it says, <sup>1</sup> 'So I (meaning Moshe) sent messengers from the desert of Kedamos.' "Rashi does not use unnecessary words. Why does he not just say, "elsewhere it says, 'so I sent messengers'?"

### The Explanation

The last of the above questions, the fact that Rashi goes on at length explaining that "elsewhere, the sending (of messengers) is ascribed to Moshe ...," emphasizes the difficulty *here*, in our verse, according to *Peshat*. The fact that, regarding the mission to Sichon, it says "Yisroel sent messengers," and regarding the mission to the king of Edom, it says "Moshe sent messengers," does not mean that there was a difference in who sent the messengers. We cannot say that Moshe sent the emissaries to the king of Edom and that the nation sent the emissaries to Sichon, because the Torah narrative makes it clear that the Jewish people were the ones who sent the emissaries to the king of Edom. It says clearly, <sup>7</sup> "So says your brother, Yisroel ... Our fathers went down to Egypt ... We cried out to the Lord and He heard our voice ..." That being the case, why does it begin the narrative by saying "and Moshe sent?" Because Moshe represented the Jews, whatever they did was done through him. Likewise, when it says that the Jewish nation sent, Moshe dispatched the emissaries on behalf of Yisroel.

Based on this, we see that the only difference between a mission that begins with "and Yisroel sent" and one that begins with "and Moshe sent" is the *wording* used by the Torah. They both mean the same thing, at least in terms of *Peshat*. That is the reason that Rashi says that "elsewhere, the sending (of messengers) is ascribed to Moshe." In other words, there is no difference in who actually sent the emissaries. The only difference is to whom the Torah ascribes their sending.

The only thing that requires explanation is why the Torah ascribes sending the messengers to the king of Edom to Moshe and sending messengers to Sichon, the king of the Emorites, to Yisroel. This is especially true because the Torah seems to express that sending the messengers to the Edomite king involved the entire nation, as it says, "So says *your brother, Yisroel*." Nevertheless, there it says, "And Moshe sent."

We may attempt to explain that the one to whom the mission is ascribed is not merely a question of language; it is a question of who initiated the task. Therefore, sending emissaries to Edom was attributed to Moshe because Hashem commanded him to do so. Moshe was Hashem's servant and emissary. He carried out whatever Hashem decreed. Therefore, sending the messengers is ascribed to Moshe. However, regarding the mission to Sichon, Rashi clearly says that Hashem did not command us to approach him with the option of making peace. That could lead us to believe that the entire mission was the initiative of the Jews. Therefore, it is ascribed to the Jews, "and Yisroel sent."

---

6. The first printed edition of Rashi, as well as a number of Rashi's manuscripts say that "the leader is the entire generation," rather than saying (as in our editions) that "the leader is everything."

7. Our Parshah, Bamidbar 20:14 - 16.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

It is to negate this explanation that Rashi begins his commentary by saying that "elsewhere, the *sending (of messengers) is ascribed to Moshe*, as it says, 'So I (meaning Moshe) sent messengers from the desert of Kedamos.'" It is explicit that this mission was Moshe's and could not be ascribed (solely) to Yisroel. Rashi continues and says that "Similarly, 'Moshe sent messengers to the king of Edom...,' and concerning Yiftach it says, 'Yisroel sent messengers to the king of Edom...'" In other words, when the Torah says, "And Moshe sent," it is not singling out *Moshe* exclusively and implying that the nation was not involved, because it explicitly says, "and Yisroel sent."

This is why Rashi continues and says that "These verses supplement each other; one holds back (information by not informing us who authorized the sending of the messengers), and the other reveals (that Moshe sent them). Moshe is Yisroel, and Yisroel is Moshe."

If regarding sending messengers to the king of Edom, it only said, "and Moshe sent," it would be "holding back." It would force us to explain that only Moshe sent the messengers. Moshe did so as the Almighty's messenger, and this mission could not be ascribed to the Jewish people at all, even though it was for their benefit. The same is true of the purpose of Edom. If it had only said, "and Yisroel sent," it would be "holding back." We would be forced to explain that only the nation sent the emissaries, and Moshe was not involved.

Therefore, the other verse reveals that Moshe sent them. Moshe is Yisroel, and Yisroel is Moshe. When the Torah says, "And Moshe sent," it is as if it said, "and Yisroel sent," because Moshe is Yisroel. When the Torah says, "and Yisroel sent," it is as if it said, "and Moshe sent," because Yisroel is Moshe.

The remaining question is, how is it possible to say that Moshe is Yisroel, and Yisroel is Moshe? Rashi answers this question by concluding that "This is to teach you that the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation, because the leader is everything."

Rashi is making two statements here. The first is that "the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation." He then teaches us that "the leader is everything." Rashi's first statement shows us that "Moshe is Yisroel," and the second that "Yisroel is Moshe." The statement that "Moshe is Yisroel" is based on the idea that "the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation." This does not mean that Moshe is a communal figure; what he does is on behalf of the community, not as an individual. Instead, it means that Moshe's very being, his existence, is as the leader of the generation. Therefore, whatever he does is as if Yisroel did it.

Likewise, "Yisroel is Moshe" because "the leader is everything." Here, Rashi does not write that he is like the entire generation. Instead, here Rashi writes that he is *everything!* All of the needs of the generation are Moshe's needs, and they all come to us through Moshe. We saw this clearly in the wilderness; all of the people's needs, their food and drink, came through Moshe. Therefore, Yisroel, the Jewish people, *is* Moshe.

Whether the Torah attributes a mission to Moshe or the Jews is irrelevant, for it is all the same. If the mission is attributed to Moshe, it is the same as if it were attributed to all of the Jews. Likewise, if it were attributed to the Jewish nation, it is the same as if it were attributed to Moshe.

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

### A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

In the Midrash, which is the source of Rashi's comments, the expression that is used is the head (ראש) of the generation, rather than its leader or prince (נשיא). We can explain how this aligns with the novel concept taught to us by Rashi above. The meaning of the head (ראש) of the generation is that one's head conducts whatever goes on within his body. So too does the head of the generation conduct and lead the entire generation. However, the word prince (נשיא) of the generation is related to the Hebrew words "נשיאה והרמה," meaning "uplifted"; it describes one who is above the nation or the community.

Therefore, when the Midrash says that the *head* of the generation is the entire *generation*, it can be explained as follows. The head controls the whole body equally, every single part of it. This means that the whole generation is one unit, a being that is one with its head. That is the real reason that the Midrash says that the head of the generation is the entire generation. However, this applies only regarding communal matters. Through the acts he performs for the whole nation, he unites the nation as one entity.

However, the expression that Rashi uses has a different connotation. The *leader, prince* - נשיא of the generation, is comparable to the entire generation because the leader is everything. The leader of the generation is uplifted above the entire generation. Simultaneously, he is the whole generation.

This presents us with two different aspects of a prince - נשיא. On the one hand, one may have thought that his actions are equal, or at least proportionate to those of the entire nation. However, since every aspect of his life is a part of his existence as a prince, his actions are elevated high above those of the rest of the nation. On the other hand, since, as Rashi says, "the leader of the generation is comparable to the entire generation, because the leader is everything," even though he is head and shoulders above the rest of the nation<sup>8</sup>, his actions still affect and can be drawn down into the entire generation.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Chukas 5741)*

**I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.**

**Click here to dedicate a week, a month, or a year to the Rashi of the Week.**

**You can find us online at [www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org](http://www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org).**

---

8. This expression is based on the description of King Saul in I Shmuel 9:2.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE**

\* \* \*

**IN HONOR OF**

The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"

**CHAIM, AIDEN ODED, ZACHARIAH MATAN, AND NOACH ARIEL שׂיחיו  
MORRIS**

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride  
to their family and a Torah light to their community

\*

**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS**

Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem Mendel** and **Chaya Mushka שׂיחיו  
Morris**

\* \* \*

**IN HONOR OF**

**Mrs. Esther שתחילי Sharabani**

May she go from strength to strength  
in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

\*

**DEDICATED BY HER SON**

**Mr. Gershon (Geri) שי' Bentov**

**מוקדש לזכות  
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש**

\* \* \*

**לזכות  
חיילי "צבאות השם"  
חיים, עזן עודד, זכרי' מתן, ונח אריאל שיחיו  
מאריס**

\*

**נדפס ע"י הוריהם  
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו**

**מאריס**

\* \* \*

**לזכות  
מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני  
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת גואל צדק  
ומתוך בריאות הנכונה ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר**

\*

**נדפס ע"י בנה  
ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב**