

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayeiros

18 Cheshvan, 5783 – November 12, 2022

Compiled from the works of

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

By bn

Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn
North Miami Beach, FL

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vayeiro**

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית כ"ב, י"ב: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל תְּשַׁלַּח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנְּעָר וְאֶל תַּעֲשֵׂה לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי | עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי יִרְאֵה אֱלֹקִים אֶתָּה וְלֹא תִשְׁכַּח אֶת בְּנֶךָ אֶת יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי:

רש"י ד"ה כי עתה ידעתי: אמר רבי אבא אמר לו אברהם, אפרש לפניך את שיחתך, אתמול אמרת לי (לעיל כ"א, י"ב) כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע, וחזרת ואמרת (שם כ"ב, ב') קח נא את בנך, עכשיו אתה אומר לי אל תשלח ידך אל הנער. אמר לו הקב"ה (תהלים פ"ט, ל"ה) לא אחלל בריתי ומוצא שפתי לא אשנה, כשאמרתי לך קח מוצא שפתי לא אשנה, לא אמרתי לך שחטוהו אלא העלהו, אסקתיה אחתיה:

Bereishis 22:12: And he said, "Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad, nor do the slightest thing to him. For now, I know that you are a G-d fearing man, and you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me."

Rashi Heading – for now, I know: Said Rabbi Abba; Avrohom said to Hashem, "I will explain my discussion before You. Yesterday, You said to me¹, 'for in Yitzchok will be called your seed.' You retracted and said², 'Take now, your son.' Now You say to me, 'Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad.'" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him³, "I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips." When I told you, "Take," I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not say to you, "Slaughter him," but, "Bring him up." You have brought him up; (now) take him down.

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Vayeiro, we are told of the tenth and final test with which Hashem challenged Avrohom⁴. After this test, Hashem told him, "*now* I know that you are a G-d fearing man." Rashi tells us of a conversation that Avrohom had, in which he said that Hashem told him that the continuation of his nation would come through his son Yitzchok. However, presently Hashem commanded Avrohom to offer this son as a sacrifice. Rashi tells us that G-d said

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 21:12.
2. Ibid, Bereishis 22:2.
3. Tehillim 89:35.
4. See Pirkei Avos, Chapter 5, Mishnah 3.

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that He doesn't change His mind. "I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips." When I said to you, "Take," I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not tell you, "Slaughter him," but rather, "Bring him up." You have brought him up; (now) take him down.

According to Peshat, how does Rashi know all of the above from the words "now I know?" There doesn't seem to be any hint from these words that Avrohom wondered how Hashem previously told him, "for in Yitzchok will be called your seed," and now told him to offer Yitzchok as a sacrifice. The words also do not allude to Hashem's response: " 'I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips.' When I said to you, 'Take,' I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not tell you, 'Slaughter him,' but, 'Bring him up.' You have brought him up; (now) take him down." According to Pshat, no part of this conversation appears to be hinted at in the verse!

According to Rashi's words, Avrohom is discussing a conversation with Hashem he had earlier. Where do we find this conversation?

Avrohom did not doubt Hashem's words. The conversation Rashi is referring to was one that Rashi described in his earlier comments. In this same verse, Avrohom was told not to stretch forth his hand to the lad. Avrohom was concerned that this might be because he did not pass this test with his entire heart. He, therefore, suggested inflicting a wound on him, extracting a small amount of blood, which he would sprinkle on the altar. This would reconcile the two *seemingly* contradictory statements made by G-d. Therefore, Hashem told him that now He knows Avrohom is a G-d fearing man. He had thoroughly passed the test.

Rashi's Explanation

In this Torah portion, Vayeiros, Avrohom is given his tenth and final test by Hashem. He is told by G-d⁵, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchok, and go away to the land of Moriah and bring him up there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will tell you." He woke up early the following day and took his son to carry out Hashem's command. At the last minute, he is told, "Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad, nor do the slightest thing

5. Our Parshah, Bereishis 22:2.

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to him. For now, I know that you are a G-d fearing man, as you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me."

Rashi cites the words "for now I know" and says the following. "Said Rabbi Abba; Avrohom said to Him, 'I will explain my discussion before You. Yesterday, You said to me⁶, 'for in Yitzchok will be called your seed.' You seemingly retracted these words and said⁷, 'Take now, your son.' Now You say to me, 'Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "'I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips.'" When I told you, 'Take,' I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not say to you, 'Slaughter him,' instead I told you to, 'Bring him up.' You have brought him up; (now) take him down."

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

According to Peshat, how does Rashi know the entire conversation between Hashem and Avrohom from the words "now I know?" There doesn't seem to be any hint from these words that Avrohom wondered how to reconcile the fact that Hashem previously told him, "for in Yitzchok will be called your seed," and then told him to offer Yitzchok as a sacrifice. The words also do not allude to Hashem's response: " 'I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips.'" When I said to you, 'Take,' I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not tell you, 'Slaughter him,' but, 'Bring him up.' You have brought him up; (now) take him down." According to the simple understanding of the verse, no part of this conversation appears to allude to this! From where does Rashi deduce this entire conversation?

The Midrash Rabbah is the source of Rashi's words⁸. However, Rashi changes the wording of the Midrash. There it says that Avrohom wondered how Hashem could say two apparently contradictory things. However, according to Rashi, Avrohom does not ask Hashem how He could "*contradict*" Himself. He says that Avrohom said to Hashem, "I will explain my discussion before You." He does not imply surprise at Hashem's words. According to Rashi, Avrohom is not

6. Ibid, Bereishis 21:12.

7. Ibid, Bereishis 22:2.

8. This would seem to answer the previous question. Rashi does have a source from where he derived the conversation. However, as explained in the body of the text, Rashi only explains the simple meaning of the verse. He does not explain the Torah based on Midrashim. He supplies a beginning student with what he needs to understand the Chumash. This does not (necessarily) have any connection with how the Midrash explains the Torah.

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discussing Hashem's conversation; instead, he is talking about an earlier discussion. Additionally, we need to know to which exchange he is referring.

The Explanation

Rashi is not implying that Avrohom questioned Hashem. He had complete faith in Hashem's words. According to Peshat, it is impossible to say otherwise. Earlier, the Torah told us that G-d commanded Avrohom to go to Israel. As soon as he arrived, a famine forced him to travel to Egypt temporarily. Rashi explained⁹ that the famine was "in that land alone (Israel). This was done to test whether he would think Hashem's words were contradictory. The fact is that He first ordered him to go to the Land of Canaan, and immediately after that, He forced him to leave it." Avrohom passed the test and had no ill thoughts about Hashem's words.

Likewise, later we find in Rashi's words that Hashem *scolded* Moshe, telling him¹⁰, "You have questioned My ways. This was unlike Avrohom, to whom I said, 'For in Yitzchok will be called your seed,' and afterward I said to him, 'Bring him up there for a burnt offering,' yet he did not question Me."

We see clearly from Rashi that according to the simple understanding of the Torah, Avrohom never had doubts regarding Hashem's words. Instead, he tried to explain his previous words (his conversation) with G-d.

In Rashi's previous comments on the same verse, he cites the words "do not stretch forth" and explains them as follows. "To slaughter him. Avrohom said to Him, 'If so, I have come here in vain. I will inflict a wound on him and extract a little blood.' He said to him, 'Do not do the slightest thing to him.' Do not cause him any blemish."

In our Rashi, Avrohom is explaining Avrohom's words to Hashem. Why did Avrohom want to wound his son to extract blood? In this manner, both of G-d's words would be fulfilled. Hashem responded that he was not to do anything to Yitzchok and must not even cause him a blemish.

When Avrohom was told not to stretch forth his hand, he was concerned that perhaps he had not fulfilled Hashem's command with a whole heart. Furthermore, when he was told not to even make a blemish on the youth to carry out Hashem's words, he was worried for the same

9. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 12:10.

10. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 6:1.

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reason. That is why G-d told him, "now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, and you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me." Despite his concerns, he had actually passed the test.

That is also how Rashi knows there was a conversation between Hashem and Avrohom. Otherwise, there would have been no reason for Hashem to assure Avrohom that he passed the test.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayeiuro, 5748)

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

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to their family and a Torah light to their community

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

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