

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Shemos

21 Teves, 5779 – December 29, 2018

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

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

Likkutei Sichos Volume 16, Pages 1 – 12

Rashi in His Own Words

שמות א' - ח': וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ עַל מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת יוֹסֵף:

רש"י ד"ה ויקם מלך חדש: רב ושמואל חד אמר חדש ממש. וחד אמר, שנתחדשו גזרותיו: ואשר לא ידע: עשה עצמו כאלו לא ידע:

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. **who did not know:** he acted as if he did not know him.

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 exactly 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

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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. This book tells of the Jewish people's enslavement in Egypt, and our ultimate redemption from there. At the end of last week's Parshah, we read that the Jews were welcome guests in Egypt. This was because Yosef saved Egypt from starvation during the seven years of famine. In our portion, Shemos, we learn that the Egyptians enslaved us. 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 this change come about?

In our Torah portion we read that¹ "The Jewish people were fruitful and swarmed and increased and became very, very strong, and the land became filled with them." Therefore, the Torah tells us that² "a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know about Yosef." 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." Furthermore, Rashi cites the words from the verse "who did not know." Rashi explains that "he acted as if he did not know him."

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, which is the reason that 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 words "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 of 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.

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 1:7.

2. Our Parshah, Shemos 1:8.

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The Explanation

Rashi's source for this is from the Talmud³. 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 the words '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 uses the expression that a new king "arose." Generally, the Torah uses the word "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 something was 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 is it that he based his comments upon the Talmud? The reason is simple; here the Talmudic reasoning is based on Peshat, the simple meaning 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!

3. See the Talmud Eirubin 53, a and Sotah 11, a. See also the Midrash Shemos Rabbah Chapter 1, 8.

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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.

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 verse⁴. "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, just one generation after 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 permission⁵. 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 dwell⁶. 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 says⁷, 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 follows⁸. 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.

4. Our Parshah, Shemos 1:9.

5. Parshas Mikeitz, Bereishis 41:44.

6. Parshas Vayigash, See Bereishis 47:6 and 47:11.

7. See Bechoros 49, b.

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

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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 excuse⁹, which he felt that he could use with Hashem. Yaakov our forefather showed Paroh 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 king¹⁰.

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 Mitzrayim, he is interested in causing hardships for Jews¹¹. Moshe Rabbeinu spoke to Paroh in order to work within nature. 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 too 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 - אמתלא." The Rebbe often quoted that it is a contraction of two words; "Emes Lo – אמת לא meaning "not true."

10. The Rebbe cites 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 pattern 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 מיצר - Meitzar, which means a strait – a difficult situation.

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Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacoheן ע"ה Cohen
Passed away on 8 Shevat, 5778
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

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DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY

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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Sholom Dovid ben Reb Yitzchak Hacoheן ע"ה Mankes
Passed away on 11 Teves, 5776
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**DEDICATED BY
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For a complete and speedy recovery**

מוקדש לזכות
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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מרת ברכה בת ר' צבי נחמי' הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטרה ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' שלום דוד בן ר' יצחק הכהן ע"ה מנקס

נפטר ביום י"א טבת ה'תשע"ו

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