

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vo'eiro

28 Teves, 5779 – January 5, 2019

Compiled from the works of
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Vo'eiro**

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות ז' - ב': אַתָּה תְּדַבֵּר אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶךָ וְאַהֲרֹן אֶחָיִךְ יְדַבֵּר אֶל פְּרֹעֹה וְשַׁלַּח אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ:

רש"י ד"ה אתה תדבר: פעם אחת כל שליחות ושליחות כפי ששמעתו מפי, ואהרן אחיך ימליצנו ויטעימנו באזני פרעה:

Shemos 7:2: You shall speak all that I command you, and Aharon your brother will speak to Paroh, that he let the children of Israel out of his land.

Rashi Heading - You shall speak: one time for each and every mission, as you have heard it from My mouth. Aharon your brother will interpret it and explain it in Paroh's ears.

Synopsis

In our Torah portion, Vo'eiro, we find Hashem persuading Moshe to speak to Paroh in order that he let the Jews leave Egypt. To Moshe Rabbeinu's response that it is difficult for him to speak, Hashem answered that Moshe will speak whatever He commands him to speak, and Aharon will speak to Paroh. Rashi explains that the meaning of Hashem's words is that both Moshe and Aharon will speak to Paroh. However, Moshe will give over Hashem's words for each mission as he heard them from Hashem. Aharon will interpret and explain them to Paroh in order to convince him to allow the Jews to leave Egypt.

This is difficult to understand. The Torah already told us that after gathering the Jewish people, both Moshe and Aharon came. Furthermore, it uses the plural form. It says that *they* said to Paroh. We already know that Moshe also spoke. What is the Torah adding here?

We also need to understand Rashi's language. We understand that Moshe Rabbeinu spoke to Paroh as concisely as possible. Nevertheless, how does Rashi know that Moshe only repeated G-d's message once? Furthermore, why does Rashi say that he spoke one time for each mission? The Torah uses the word command, not mission. Rashi writes that what Moshe will give over is as he heard it from Hashem. Isn't that obvious? Also, why does Rashi write that Aharon will both *interpret* and *explain* Moshe's words? What is the difference between the two?

The answer is found in a large, but subtle difference between Moshe's response the first and second time that Hashem asked him to speak. The first time Moshe said that it is difficult to speak. Despite the difficulty, he believed that he could do it. The second time he said that he has a blockage in his mouth. He is incapable of speaking. His response each time was actually different.

Hashem responded that he is sending Moshe on a mission. He would serve as Hashem's emissary - shliach, which would give him the ability to speak. However, his status as an emissary meant that he had to use Hashem's

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exact words. Hashem spoke once, so too could he only speak once. Hashem spoke to him in Hebrew, so he too spoke to Paroh in Hebrew. That is the difference between interpret and explain. Interpret can also mean translate. Aharon needed to be there in order to translate and provide a logical explanation to Paroh of everything which Moshe said.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vo'eiro, Hashem is persuading Moshe Rabbeinu to speak to Paroh. Moshe responds to G-d that¹ "I am of closed lips; so how will Paroh listen to me?" Hashem's response to him was² "I have made you a lord over Paroh. Aharon your brother will be your speaker. You shall speak all that I command you. Aharon your brother will speak to Pharaoh that he let the Jewish people out of his land." Rashi cites the words "you shall speak," and explains that Moshe should speak "one time for each and every mission, as you have heard it from My mouth, and Aharon your brother will interpret it and explain it in Paroh's ears."

What Rashi is saying, is that Moshe should repeat Hashem's words to Aharon, and have Aharon repeat them to Paroh, rather than Moshe speaking directly to Paroh. The only difference was, that Moshe should relate Hashem's message to Paroh one time exactly. Aharon would then repeat the words to Paroh. He would interpret them and explain them. By elucidating Moshe's words, he would persuade Paroh to allow the Jews to leave Egypt³.

This is in contrast to what we learned earlier, when Hashem told Moshe to speak to the Jewish people (as opposed to speaking to Paroh). Moshe responded, in a similar manner, that⁴ "... I am not a man of words ... I have difficulty speaking." There Hashem told him that⁵ "he (Aharon) will speak on your behalf to the people."

Rashi finds it necessary to explain that both Moshe and Aharon will speak to Paroh. This opinion is shared by a number of other commentators⁶. The reason for this is twofold:

1. The Torah already told us in the previous verse that "Your brother Aharon will be your interpreter." What reason would there be for saying in the very next verse "You will speak ... and your brother will speak ... if it means that Moshe will tell his brother Hashem's words? It would seem to be redundant.
2. It was already said that "They (in the plural, i.e. both Moshe and Aharon) are the ones who spoke to

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 6:30.

2. Our Parshah, Shemos 7:1-2.

3. That is the reason that Rashi adds that Aharon should explain the words "in Paroh's ears." The Torah only says that he should speak to Paroh. However, the meaning is that his words should be persuasive.

4. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 4:10.

5. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 4:15.

6. This is the explanation offered by a number of commentaries to the Torah. See for example the commentary of Rabbi Avrohom ibn Ezra, and the translation/commentary of Rabbi Yonasan ben Uziel. See also the commentary of the Ramban to Our Parshah, Shemos 6:13.

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Paroh the king of Egypt ...”

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

However, it is difficult to explain the Torah’s words in this manner. Earlier, the Torah told us how Moshe and Aharon gathered the Jewish people. The Torah then says that⁷ “afterwards, Moshe and Aharon came and *they* said to Paroh ... and *they* said, ‘The G-d of the Jews has happened upon us.’”

It seems logical to assume that since Moshe had difficulty speaking, that he relied on Aharon to relay the message at length. This is what we find in the verse which we are discussing, Rashi is not teaching us anything new! They both spoke to Paroh earlier; Moshe relaying Hashem’s message in brief, and Aharon providing explanation.

We find an even greater difficulty. Earlier, when Hashem asked Moshe to speak to the Jews, he said⁸ “Please, Hashem! I am not a man of words ... for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.” To this Hashem responded that⁹ “he will speak for you to the people, and it will be that he will be your speaker, and you will be his leader.” It seems as if he already made the same claim which he is making here! Here he says that “he is of closed lips.” This seems to be a repetition of the claim he made earlier. Hashem responded to it then; why is he repeating the same claim?

In addition to the above questions, there are also several difficulties with Rashi’s language. As we have already learned many times, Rashi is extremely precise with the words which he uses. We can understand that Moshe Rabbeinu did not use many words when speaking to Paroh; he spoke briefly and concisely. Yet how does Rashi know that Moshe would only repeat G-d’s message one time? Furthermore, why does Rashi say “one time for each and every mission?” It would seem more fitting for him to write one time for each command. After all, that is the language which the Torah uses; “you shall speak all that I *command* you.” In addition to this, Rashi writes “one time for every mission, *as you have heard it from My mouth* ... These words seem to be totally superfluous. Obviously, Moshe Rabbeinu will only relate that which he heard from Hashem. We also need to understand the reason for Rashi’s apparent redundancy. Why does he say that Aharon would “*interpret* it and *explain* it?” What is the difference between the two?

The Explanation

In order to answer all of these questions, we must explain a subtle difference between two verses. When Hashem asked Moshe to speak to speak to the Jews, he tried to excuse himself with the claim that he is¹⁰ “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.” Rashi explains that the meaning of “heavy of mouth” is that “I speak with

7. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 5:1 and 5:3.

8. See Footnote 4.

9. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 4:16.

10. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 4:10.

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difficulty.” Here, Moshe’s claim was that¹¹ he is “of closed lips.” Rashi explains there, that the meaning of closed lips is that they are closed, meaning clogged.

This explains why Moshe’s second claim was different than his first. The first time that Hashem asked him to speak; he thought that he was merely “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.” He felt that he could speak, but that it would be difficult. Therefore, he accepted the fact that he would transmit G-d’s words to the best of his ability, and Aharon would go together with him in order to explain what he said in short. However, after his first effort, he realized that he was incapable of speaking. His mouth was blocked. How could one with such a condition fulfill his mission? Furthermore, it could be more harmful than beneficial. Paroh could take his silence as acquiescence to whatever plans he had. If Paroh were to tell him that¹² “the labor should be made even more difficult for the Jews,” he could not remain silent. Paroh would assume that he agreed!

When Hashem responded to him that “you will speak,” it was not merely a command. It was also a promise. Despite his inability to speak, G-d will grant him this ability. That is the reason that Rashi says “for each and every mission.” Granted, he could not speak on his own. However, when he was carrying out a mission for G-d (and only then) he could speak. That is also why Rashi’s explanation is so long; “one time for each and every mission, as you have heard it from My mouth.” Moshe did not go to Paroh in order to convince him to allow the Jews to leave Egypt. He was there as G-d’s emissary. He needed to carry out the mission with which he was entrusted. Then he would be there with the strength of the one who sent him. However, as Hashem’s emissary on His mission, he had to give over Hashem’s exact words. He had to transmit Hashem’s message using His exact words, neither adding nor subtracting from G-d’s words. Hashem told Moshe the words only once. So too was Moshe obligated to say them only once.

We are still left with two difficulties. Firstly, if Moshe used Hashem’s exact words, he must have spoken to Paroh in Hebrew. That is difficult, because Rashi told us earlier that Paroh did not understand Hebrew¹³. It is in order to answer this question that Rashi says “to interpret it and explain it.” Rashi told us earlier¹⁴ that the Hebrew word which we translated as “to interpret - Yamlitzenu,” also has the meaning “to translate.” From this we understand that Aharon actually had two jobs every time they went to speak to Paroh. One was to translate his brother’s words from Hebrew to Egyptian, and the other was to explain his words

However, if Paroh did not understand Moshe anyway, why was Moshe there? Aharon could have gone alone and explained all of Hashem’s words to Paroh in a way that he would understand. The explanation is that this Rashi is a continuation to the Rashi immediately preceding it. The Torah said¹⁵ “I have made you a lord over

11. Our Parshah, Shemos 6:12.

12. He actually did decree that. See Parshas Shemos, Shemos 5:9.

13. See Rashi’s comments to Parshas Vayechi, Bereishis 50:6.

14. Parshas Mikeitz, Bereishis 42:23.

15. Our Parshah, Shemos 7:1.

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Paroh, and Aharon your brother will be your speaker.” Rashi cites the words “I have made you a lord over Paroh,” and explains that it means “a judge and a chastiser, to chastise him with plagues and torments.” In other words, Moshe’s job was not to give Paroh logical arguments or the like. That was his brother Aharon’s job. Moshe was there in order to judge Paroh, and to chastise him with plagues and punishments. Moshe had to tell him “let my people go.” He had to say it in an impassioned voice filled with rage. Even though Paroh did not understand the words, he understood the message from Moshe’s face and his voice.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Chassidic Philosophy¹⁶ explains the verse “See, that I have made you (meaning Moshe) a lord over Paroh” based on Rashi’s explanation. Hashem made Moshe “a judge and a chastiser, to chastise him with plagues and torments.” There are forces of evil in the world, referred to as *husks*. They are not independent of G-d; nothing is! However, Hashem gives them a limited amount of vitality, in order to allow them to serve their purpose; namely to provide us with free choice, and for us to destroy them. However, whenever (G-d forbid) one of us gives in to temptation, they derive additional vitality. There comes a point that they become so powerful, that even a Tzaddik is powerless against them.

There is only one person who can totally destroy them. Moshe, and the “Moshe,” the leader of each generation. That is the meaning of “See (an exclamation of astonishment), I have made you a lord over Paroh.” Despite the fact that Paroh was in his full power, only Moshe was able to be “a judge and a chastiser, to chastise him with plagues and torments.” That is the deeper, mystical reason that Moshe had to be there when they went to Paroh; only Moshe was able to defeat him.

Just as we merited to be redeemed from Mitzrayim, so too may we merit redemption from our present exile.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vo’eiro, 5729 and 5715)

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16. See Ohr Hatorah on our Parshah, Page 231. See also the Chassidic discourse beginning with the words “See that I have made you,” from the years 5631, 5777, and 5715. It is also explained in this manner in the work Pelach Harimon on our Parshah, Page 64.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיקחי Morris**

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DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיקחי Morris

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR MOTHER

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

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheן ben Tzivia ש' Cohen

For a complete and speedy recovery

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא 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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לרפואה שלימה וקרובה