

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vo'eiro

28 Teves, 5780 – January 25, 2020

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

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn
North Miami Beach, FL

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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 ו', כ': וַיִּקַּח עַמְרָם אֶת יוֹכֶבֶד דַּתּוֹ לֹא לְאִשָּׁה וְתֵלֵד לּוֹ אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת מֹשֶׁה וּשְׁנֵי חַיֵּי עַמְרָם שִׁבְעָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה:
רש"י ד"ה יוכבד דדתו: אחת אבוהי בת לוי אחות קהת:

Shemos 6:20: Amram took Yocheved, his aunt, as his wife. She bore him Aharon and Moshe. The years of Amram's life were one hundred thirty-seven years.

Rashi Heading - Yocheved, his aunt: His father's sister, the daughter of Levi, the sister of Kehos.

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Vo'eiro, the Torah tells us the lineage of Yaakov's children, Reuvain, Shimon and Levi. While describing Levi's descendants, the Torah tells us that Amram married Yocheved, his aunt. Rashi comments on the words "Yocheved his aunt," quoting from Onkelus¹ that she was "his father's sister, (in other words) the daughter of Levi and the sister of Kehos."

This all seems quite clear, aside from one point. One wonders why Rashi finds a need to explain it. According to several commentaries, it is because the Hebrew word "aunt - דודה" is used throughout the Torah to mean one's father's brother's wife. Rashi is explaining that this instance is an exception. The word aunt is used to mean his father's sister. Hence Rashi needs to explain. Since he is changing the meaning of the word from how it is used in every other instance in the Torah, he must let us know.

However, this leaves us with a number of other questions. Why does Rashi quote Targum in Aramaic? Rashi's commentary is written in Hebrew. Why does Rashi not credit Onkelus with the explanation? Why does Rashi need to change the meaning of the word here? Perhaps most importantly, why does the Torah need to tell us that Yocheved was Amram's aunt? We already know that Yocheved was Levi's daughter, and hence her husband Amram's aunt. What does the Torah add here, according to Rashi?

Rashi himself answers these questions. The reason that the Torah reviews the lineage of Levi, and his descendants is to tell us how special they are. That's why the Torah says that Yocheved was Amram's aunt. That was why he married her – they both had the same superb lineage. The fact that based on this, the meaning of the word "aunt - דודה" is changed is not a major issue. The word "uncle - דוד" is always used to mean one's father's

1. Onkelus translated the Torah into Aramaic. There are several other Aramaic translations of the Torah; that of Onkelus is primarily based on Peshat. Here, the words which Rashi quotes from Onkelus are in the original Aramaic.

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brother. The feminine form of לוי is לוויה. Therefore, the definition of an aunt as one's father's sibling is correct. However, in case one has a problem with it, Rashi quotes Onkelus' words as proof that it can be used in that manner.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vo'eiro, the Torah enumerates the descendants of Yaakov's children Reuvain, Shimon, and Levi. The Torah tells us that² "Amram took Yocheved his aunt as his wife." Rashi cites the words from the verse "Yocheved his aunt" and begins his comments by quoting Onkelus' translation of the word "aunt" in Aramaic (without attributing the comment to him³), "אחתי אבוי" – His father's sister." Rashi goes on to say that "she was the daughter of Levi and the sister of Kehos (who was Amram's father)."

Why does Rashi find it necessary to explain the Hebrew word "לוויה - aunt," a common word which appears throughout the Torah many times? A number of Rashi's supercommentaries explain that we find that the Hebrew word "לוויה - aunt" as used in the Torah always refers to one's uncle's wife – his father's brother's wife. The English word "aunt" can either mean one's father's brother's wife or one's father's sister. In the Torah, the Hebrew word which we translate as aunt only has the former meaning. This is apparent from the Torah's list of prohibited relationships. The Torah says⁴ regarding the prohibition of having relations with one's father's brother's wife "you shall not come near his wife; she is your 'aunt – לוויה." However, regarding the prohibition of having relations with one's father's sister⁵, the Torah does not use the word "aunt – לוויה."

Having established that the Hebrew word לוויה refers to one's uncle's wife, we would think that Yocheved had been married to Amram's father's brother. Therefore, Rashi explains that the word לוויה in this context does not have the same meaning as it usually does throughout the Torah. Yocheved was the sister of Kehos, who was Amram's father.

Rashi also proves that this was their relationship. He writes that Yocheved was the daughter of Levi. We know this because the Torah tells us that⁶ "The name of Amram's wife was Yocheved, who was born to Levi." We also know that Kehos, who was Amram's father, was a child of Levi. The Torah states this clearly, saying that⁷ "These were the names of Levi's sons... Kehos." In other words, it is quite clear that Yocheved and Kehos were brother and sister.

2. Our Parshah, Shemos 6:20.

3. This is noteworthy. Rashi quotes Onkelus quite often. However, in the vast majority of cases Rashi credits him.

4. Parshah Acharei, Vayikroh 18:14.

5. Parshas Acharei, Vayikroh 18:12.

6. Parshas Pinchas, Bamidbar 26:59.

7. Our Parshah, Shemos 6:16.

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This explanation would also answer two additional questions. Firstly, we know that besides being precise in the language with which Rashi phrases his comments, he is also particular about the words which he cites from the verse, i.e., the words which serve as the heading of his comments. Since Rashi is only explaining the word “אָהוּב – aunt,” why does he cite the words “*Yocheved* his aunt?” Based on our explanation, the reason is simple. The fact that we are discussing Yocheved, who was Amram’s father’s sister, serves as proof of the unique definition of “aunt” in our verse. This clarifies that the meaning of "aunt" here is different than it is everywhere else in the Torah.

Secondly, our explanation of Rashi's comments also explains why Rashi writes the words “אָהוּב אַבִּיהֵי – His father’s sister” in Aramaic, quoting the words of Onkelus verbatim. Rashi’s commentary is written in Hebrew! Our explanation of Rashi provides the answer to this question as well. Rashi quotes the words of Targum to support the fact that his translation of the Hebrew word "aunt" here is different than the way it is used elsewhere. Here it means his father's sister, just as Onkelus writes.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Whenever Rashi quotes Targum Onkelus, he says so explicitly; he will say, “As Targum says,” or use some such expression. Why does he suffice here with merely quoting Onkelus’ Aramaic words? One would expect him to attribute the words to Targum, whether or not he quotes them verbatim.

We are trying to explain that Rashi is defining the word “aunt” as it is used in our verse. He is telling us that here, as opposed to its general usage, the Hebrew word אָהוּב means one's father’s sister. Furthermore, in order to prove this interpretation, Rashi concluded his commentary by saying that Yocheved was “the daughter of Levi and (consequently) the sister of Kehos.” However, Rashi does not need to prove this! He has told us earlier that Yocheved was Levi's daughter. Near the end of the book of Bereishis, the Torah enumerates those that descended to Egypt. The Torah says, that⁸ "These are the sons of Leah, that she bore to Yaacov in Padan Aram, and (she also bore) Dinah his daughter. All the souls of his sons and daughters were thirty-three." Rashi cites the words "thirty-three" and explains the reason for the number. "But if you count them individually, you find only thirty-two. The missing one is Yocheved, who was born between the walls when they entered the city, as it is said: 'whom she bore to Levi in Egypt.' Her birth was in Egypt, but her conception was not in Egypt." In other words, Rashi already clearly told the beginning student that Yocheved was Levi's daughter. Why does he find it necessary to repeat it here?

We might be able to answer this question, albeit with difficulty. Since Rashi taught us this in an earlier book of the Torah, perhaps he needs to repeat it here. It could be that the beginner may have forgotten it by now.

8. Parshas Vayigash, Bereishis 46:15.

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However, even if he does need to say that Yocheved was Levi's daughter, he certainly does not need to say that Kehos was also his child; the Torah stated that just a few short verses earlier. Rashi surely could have merely said that Levi was Yocheved's father (to remind the beginner).

Since the definition of the word "אמה – aunt" is *always* a woman who was married to one's father's brother, there is no reason for us not to say that the same is not the case here. Aside from being Kehos' sister, she may have also been his brother's wife⁹. Levi may have had a second wife. She may have had a son who would be Kehos' paternal brother. It's further possible that Yocheved was married to him and divorced before she married Amram.

Granted, this would require many assumptions which the Torah does not mention. We would be assuming that Levi had a second wife. Furthermore, we would have to consider that she gave birth to a son. Then we would be required to believe that he married (and later divorced) his half-sister Yocheved and that Yocheved later married Amram. We would need a long list of assumptions. Our assumptions would include things at which the Torah does not even hint. Nevertheless, it may be easier (also according to Peshat) to assume all of this, rather than to introduce a new translation to a word that appears in the Torah many times.

Aside from the standard, accepted version of Rashi's commentary which is printed in our Chumashim, there are other older versions, including a number which are only found in manuscripts. There are versions of our Rashi which include the Hebrew word "Es –" ¹⁰אס" What purpose would be served by including this word in the heading of Rashi's commentary? We already stated that Rashi is extremely precise regarding the words which he does and does not include.

Finally, based on what we have said, it is abundantly clear that Yocheved and Kehos, Amram's father, were siblings. Why does the Torah tell us that Yocheved was Amram's aunt? It is certainly something which we would understand on our own.

The Explanation

The explanation is as follows: The reason the Torah tells us that Amram married his aunt Yocheved, is to let us know that she had great lineage. However, based on the usual translation of "אמה – aunt," she was a divorcee, who was previously married to Kehos' brother! This does not seem to emphasize her great lineage; it does nothing to tell us of the great and pious people from whom she was descended.

9. Please keep in mind that the rules were different before the giving of the Torah.

10. The Hebrew word אס does not have any English translation; however, it designates a direct object. Additionally, it is used throughout the works of the Sages, in order to derive laws from the Torah which were not explicitly written.

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That is why Rashi tells us that the word “דודה – aunt” has a different meaning than usual. The term “דודה – aunt” here tells us that Yocheved descended from the same saintly people as Amram. That’s why Rashi concludes his commentary that she was “the sister of Kehos,” who was the greatest of Levi's children.

How do we know that the point in these verses is to emphasize their lineage? Rashi said so clearly. He told us¹¹ that the reason that the Torah repeats the family-line of Reuvain, Shimon and Levi, is to teach us that it is held in high esteem. By referring to her as his “דודה – aunt,” the Torah is telling us that one of the reasons he married her was because her lineage was as high as his.

The fact that we do not find the word “דודה – aunt” used anywhere else in the Bible to mean one’s father’s sister is not problematic. We do see the name “דוד – uncle” used to describe one's father’s brother. The feminine form of the Hebrew word דוד is דודה, namely one’s father’s sister. However, as evident as it may be that the Hebrew word דודה can mean one's father’s sister, Rashi does find a need to prove this since we do not see that the word דודה carries this meaning elsewhere. Therefore, Rashi uses the translation of Targum Onkelus. However, since this translation does so obviously apply, Rashi does not feel the need to expressly state that his commentary is “according to Targum” as he often does.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vo'eiro 5728)

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

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The Rashi of the Week, visit

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11. Our Parshah, Shemos 6:14.

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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**

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**IN HONOR OF
Mr. Sholom Moshe Hachohen ben Tzivia שי' Cohen
&
Mrs. Berocho bas Soroh שתחילי Cohen
For a complete and speedy recovery**

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**DEDICATED BY
Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar שי' Mars**

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May he merit to be a Chossid, a Yerei Shomayim and a Lamdon

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