

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vo'eiro

28 Teves, 5783 – January 21, 2023

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 אֶצְוֶנָּךְ וְאַהֲרֹן אֶחֱיֶיךָ יְדַבֵּר אֶל פַּרְעֹה וְשַׁלַּח אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶצוֹ:

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 Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel out of his land.

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

Synopsis

In our Torah portion, Vo'eiro, we find Hashem persuading Moshe to speak to Pharaoh. To Moshe Rabbeinu's response that it is difficult for him to speak, Hashem answered that Moshe would speak whatever Hashem commands, and Aharon would speak to Pharaoh. Rashi explains that this means that both Moshe and Aharon will speak to Pharaoh. However, Moshe will give over the words he heard from Hashem, and Aharon will interpret and explain them to Pharaoh to convince him to allow the Jews to leave Egypt.

This isn't easy to understand. The Torah already told us that after gathering the Jewish people, both Moshe and Aharon came. Furthermore, it uses the plural form, saying *they* said to Pharaoh. We already know that Moshe also spoke. What is the Torah adding here?

We also need to understand Rashi's language. We realize that Moshe Rabbeinu spoke to Pharaoh 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 rather than mission. Rashi writes that Moshe will give over as he heard it from Hashem. Isn't that obvious? Also, why does Rashi write that Aharon will interpret *and* explain Moshe's words? What is the difference between the two?

We find the explanation in a subtle distinction between Moshe's response the first and second time Hashem asked him to speak. The first time Moshe said that it was difficult for him to speak, and despite the difficulty, he believed that he could do it. The second time, he said he had a blockage in his mouth and was incapable of speaking. His response each time was different.

Hashem responded that he was sending Moshe on a mission. Moshe would be Hashem's emissary – Shliach. This would give him the ability to speak. However, his status as an emissary meant that he had to use

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Hashem's exact words. Hashem spoke once, so too could he only speak once. Hashem spoke to him in Hebrew, so he, too, spoke to Pharaoh in Hebrew. That is the difference between interpretation and explanation. To interpret can also mean to translate. Aharon had to be there to translate and explain everything which Moshe said to Pharaoh.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vo'eiro, Hashem persuades Moshe Rabbeinu to speak to Pharaoh. Moshe responds to G-d¹, "I am of closed lips, so how will Pharaoh listen to me?" Hashem's response to him was,² "I have made you a lord over Pharaoh. 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 "once for every mission, as you have heard it from My mouth. Your brother Aharon will interpret and explain it in Pharaoh's ears."

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

This contrasts with what we learned earlier when Hashem told Moshe to speak to the Jewish people, and Moshe responded⁴, "... I am not a man of words ... I have difficulty speaking." Hashem told him⁵, "he (Aharon) will speak on your behalf to the people."

Rashi must explain that both Moshe and Aharon will speak to Pharaoh. Several other commentators share this opinion⁶. The reason for this is twofold:

1. In the previous verse, the Torah already told us, "Your brother Aharon will be your interpreter." What reason would there be for saying in the 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. Ibid, Shemos 7:1-2.

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

4. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 4:10.

5. Ibid, ibid. 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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Pharaoh, 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 "afterward, Moshe and Aharon came and *they* said to Pharaoh ... and *they* said, 'The G-d of the Jews has happened upon us.'"

It seems logical to assume that since Moshe had difficulty speaking, he relied on Aharon to relay the message at length. This is what we find in the verse we are discussing, Rashi is not teaching us anything new! They both spoke to Pharaoh earlier; Moshe relayed Hashem's message briefly, and Aharon explained.

We find an even more incredible difficulty. Earlier, when Hashem asked Moshe to speak to the Jews, he said,⁸ "Please, Hashem! I am not a man of words but heavy of mouth and tongue." To this, Hashem responded⁹, "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 that he is making here! Here he says that "he is of closed lips," which appears to be a repetition of his earlier claim. 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 he uses. We can understand that Moshe Rabbeinu did not use many words when speaking to Pharaoh; he spoke briefly and concisely. Yet how does Rashi know that Moshe would only repeat G-d's message once? Furthermore, why does Rashi say, "one time for every mission?" It would seem more fitting for him to use the Torah's language; "you shall speak all that I *command* you," one time for each command. In addition to this, Rashi writes, "one time for every mission, *as you have heard it from My mouth* These words seem to be superfluous. 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

We must explain a subtle difference between the two verses to answer all of these questions. When Hashem asked Moshe to speak to the Jews, he tried to excuse himself with the claim that he was¹⁰ "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." Rashi explains that "heavy of mouth" means "I speak with difficulty." Here, Moshe claimed that¹¹ he is "of closed lips." Rashi explains there that the meaning of closed lips is that they are closed, meaning clogged.

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.

11. Our Parshah, Shemos 6:12.

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This explains why Moshe's second claim was different than his first. The first time Hashem asked him to speak, he thought 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 that he would transmit G-d's words to the best of his ability, and Aharon would go with him to explain what he said in short. However, after his first effort, he realized 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. Pharaoh could take his silence as acquiescence to whatever plans he had. If Pharaoh were to tell him that¹² "the labor should be made even more difficult for the Jews," he could not remain silent, and Pharaoh 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 would grant him this ability. That is the reason that Rashi says, "for each mission." Given he could not speak on his own. However, he could talk while carrying out a mission for G-d (and only then). That is also why Rashi's explanation is so long; "one time for every mission, as you have heard it from My mouth." Moshe did not go to Pharaoh 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 Hashem entrusted him. 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.

There remain two difficulties. Firstly, if Moshe used Hashem's exact words, he must have spoken to Pharaoh in Hebrew. That isn't easy because Rashi told us earlier that Pharaoh did not understand Hebrew¹³. To answer this question, Rashi says, "to interpret it and explain it." Rashi told us earlier¹⁴ that the Hebrew word we translated as "to interpret - Yamlitzenu" also has the meaning "to translate." From this, we understand that Aharon had two jobs every time they went to speak to Pharaoh. One was to translate his brother's words from Hebrew to Egyptian, and the other was to explain his words

However, if Pharaoh did not understand Moshe, why was Moshe there? Aharon could have gone alone and explained all of Hashem's words to Pharaoh in a way that he would understand. The explanation is that this Rashi is a continuation of the Rashi immediately preceding it. The Torah said,¹⁵ "I have made you a lord over Pharaoh, and Aharon, your brother, will be your speaker." Rashi cites the words "I have made you a lord over Pharaoh" and explains that it means "a judge and a chastiser, to chastise him with plagues and torments." In other

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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words, Moshe's job was not to give Pharaoh logical arguments or the like. That was his brother Aharon's job. Moshe was there to judge Pharaoh and to chastise him with plagues and punishments. Moshe had to tell him, "let my people go." He had to say it in a passionate voice filled with rage. Even though Pharaoh did not understand the words, he understood the message from Moshe's face and voice.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Chassidic Philosophy¹⁶ explains the verse "See, that I have made you (meaning Moshe) a lord over Pharaoh" 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 to serve their purpose, namely, to provide us with free choice and destroy them. However, whenever (G-d forbid) one of us gives in to temptation, they derive additional vitality. There comes the point that they become so powerful that even a Tzaddik is powerless against them.

Only one person can destroy them; the "Moshe" of each generation. That means, "See (an exclamation of astonishment), I have made you a lord over Pharaoh." Although Pharaoh 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 Pharaoh; only Moshe could 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)

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

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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.

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in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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מאריס

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הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

מאריס

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ומתוך בריאות הנכונה ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר

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