

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Bo

6 Shevat, 5779 – January 12, 2019

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

Likkutei Sichos Volume 31, Pages 61 – 68

Rashi in His Own Words

שמות י"ג - י"ד: וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה זֹאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:
רש"י ד"ה כי ישאלך בנך מחר: יש מחר שהוא עכשיו, ויש מחר שהוא לאחר זמן, כגון זה, וכגון (יהושע כ"ב, כ"ד) מחר יאמרו בניכם לבנינו, דבני גד ובני ראובן:

Shemos 13:14: It will happen when your son asks you tomorrow, saying, "What is this?" you will say to him, "With a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Rashi Heading - if your son asks you tomorrow: Sometimes the Hebrew word “מָחָר – Mochor” means “now” (meaning literally tomorrow). Sometimes the word “מָחָר – Mochor” means “at a later time,” such as it does here, and such as “In time to come ‘מָחָר - Mochor,’ your children might say to our children,” which refers to the children of Gad and the children of Reuvain.

Synopsis

Our Torah portion, Bo, tells us of the great exodus of the Jewish nation from Egypt. After describing all of the miracles with which Hashem removed us from Egypt, the Torah goes on to describe all of the commandments which we need to observe in order to commemorate these miracles. The Torah then says that¹ “... when your son asks you tomorrow (using the Hebrew word ‘מָחָר – Mochor’), saying ‘What is this?’ you will say to him, ‘With a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’” The simple meaning of the Hebrew word “מָחָר – Mochor” is tomorrow. That is how the word is commonly used. However, Rashi, quoting the Midrash, says that at times this word is used to mean “now” (tomorrow), and at times it is used to mean “in the future.” Rashi then explains that in our verse it means “in the future.” He then quotes a verse from Yehoshua where the word “Mochor” is used in the same manner.

Rashi is never verbose. We all know that the word “מָחָר – Mochor” generally means tomorrow. Why does Rashi require such a lengthy introduction to his comments? Why does he begin his explanation by telling us that sometimes the word is used to mean “tomorrow,” something which is well known? Rashi’s entire point is that here the word is not to be explained by its literal, common meaning!

The explanation is that Rashi is speaking to the absolute beginner. He teaches the simple explanation of the Torah, Peshat. However, when he quotes our Sages, he *also* uses their words in their simplest sense. This is true even if that was not the exact intent of the Sages. When the Midrash said that sometimes the word “מָחָר –

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 13:14.

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Mochor” means now, its intent was that it does not refer to a future point in time. However, Rashi is saying something totally different. He is telling us that here the word “מָחָר – Mochor” actually refers to any time after the event which is being discussed takes place. That is true even if it is today.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Bo, the Torah tells us that how G-d redeemed us from Egypt. In order to commemorate all of the miracles which He performed for us, we were given a number of precepts to perform. The Torah tells us that² “It will happen when your son asks you tomorrow, saying, ‘What is this?’ you will say to him, ‘With a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’” The Torah uses the Hebrew word “מָחָר – Mochor,” which is usually translated as tomorrow³. However, Rashi cites the words from the verse “if your son asks you tomorrow,” and explains that “sometimes the Hebrew word ‘מָחָר – Mochor’ means ‘now.’ Sometimes the word ‘מָחָר – Mochor’ means ‘at a later time,’ such as it does here. It also means at a later time in the verse⁴ ‘In time to come ‘מָחָר - Mochor,’ your children might say to our children,’ which refers to the children of Gad and the children of Reuvain.”

What Rashi seems to be telling us, is that the Torah is not saying that our children will ask the very next day about the rituals which we perform. Rather, the Torah is discussing our children's questions in future times. Rashi's source for this *appears* to be from the Midrash. The Midrash⁵ says that “at times the word ‘מָחָר – Mochor’ means ‘now,’ and at other times the word ‘מָחָר – Mochor’ means ‘at a later time.’ In our verse, ‘Tomorrow your son will ask what is this’ is referring to a later time. That which was stated earlier⁶, ‘This sign will come about tomorrow,’ means literally tomorrow. ‘In time to come your children might say to our children⁷’ refers to a later time.”

Various supercommentaries (commentaries of Rashi) explain why he had no reason to mention the proof cited by the Midrash that the word “מָחָר – Mochor” means tomorrow literally⁸. Firstly, that is the simple translation

2. See Footnote 1.

3. There are actually different explanations given by various commentaries as to the meaning of the word “Mochor.” The Radak writes in his Sefer Shoroshim, that the words meaning is “the day which will come after the day in which one currently finds himself; i.e. literally tomorrow. There are also those that explain it as referring not to the near future, but rather to the distant future.” The ibn Ezra explains that the Hebrew word “מָחָר – Mochor” is a contraction of “מֵאַחֵר,” meaning afterwards. He takes this to mean the day after today.

4. Yehoshua 22:24. The tribes of Reuvain and Gad asked Moshe for permission to remain on the east side of the Jordan. See Parshas Matos, Bamidbar Chapter 32 and Yehoshua Chapter 22.

5. See the Mechilta on our verse. See also the Midrash Tanchumah for our Parshah, Chapter 13.

6. Parshas Vo'eiro, Shemos 8:19. This was written regarding the plague of a mixture of wild beasts, snakes and scorpions.

7. See footnote 3.

8. See for example Nachalas Yaakov on our verse.

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of the word. Secondly, Rashi's point here is to explain that the word "מָחָר – Mochor" in our verse is not meant to be translated literally.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

However, we need to understand why Rashi needs to preface his comments on our verse by saying that "sometimes the Hebrew word 'מָחָר – Mochor' means 'now.'" Rashi's entire point is to explain that the word is not being used to mean now. He is explaining that here it refers to the future. That being the case, why begin his comments with such a lengthy explanation; "sometimes the Hebrew word 'מָחָר – Mochor' means 'now?'"

The Explanation

We will understand this, by first explaining that Rashi's commentary is geared toward a beginning student. As the Sages of the Mishnah teach us regarding the proper curriculum for Torah study⁹, "At age five one begins studying Chumash." This being the case, Rashi's style is extremely simple and straightforward. For one thing, his goal is to teach Peshat, the simple meaning of each verse. Additionally, even when he cites a teaching from the Sages, it is meant to be understood on its simplest level. This is even true if that understanding contradicts the meaning which the Sages intended to convey.

That is the case here. The Rabbis said that "sometimes the Hebrew word 'מָחָר – Mochor' means 'now.'" Their intent was that it means tomorrow, i.e. the day after today. They wished to convey that the word implies the near future. However, when Rashi uses the expression, he means to use the word *now* literally. In other words, Rashi is saying that the word "Mochor" can even refer to today, after a certain event takes place. It does not imply that the sun must first set and then rise again in order to be considered "Mochor."

Based on this, we can understand what the Torah is saying. If your son does not understand the reason for the Mitzvos, why should he wait until tomorrow to ask? Why doesn't he ask immediately? That is the reason that Rashi begins his commentary by saying that "sometimes the word 'Mochor' means now, and sometimes it means at a later time. It's not limited to meaning tomorrow. It can refer to the very same day, after something took place. It can also refer to something which will happen many generations later.

This will clarify the answer to yet another question. Why was it necessary for the Torah to use the word "Mochor" at all? It could have simply said "when your son asks you saying, what is this?" What difference can it possibly make *when* he asks you?

The explanation is that there are different types of questions which a child asks. There are questions which he asks simply because he is a child. He lacks the knowledge and background to understand "what is this." There are also different levels of children, as Rashi himself explains on our verse. He cites the words "what is this," and explains as follows: This is (the question of) the simple child, who does not know how to pose his question in

9. See Pirkei Avos at the end of Chapter 5.

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depth, and asks a general question; ‘What is this?’ Elsewhere the Torah says¹⁰, ‘What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments ...?’ This is the question of the wise son. The Torah spoke regarding four sons; the wicked one¹¹, the one who does not understand to ask¹², the one who asks general question, and the one who asks in a wise manner.

That is why the Torah adds the word “Mochor.” His question is not only prompted by the fact that he is your son; he is a child who has not yet had the opportunity to learn. Rather his question also stems from the fact that it is “Mochor.” He lives in a different era and a different generation. He did not experience the exodus from Egypt. That is the reason for his question.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Based on all of the above, we can understand why Rashi offers both understandings of the word “Mochor” on a totally different level. The reason that he tells us that the same word can be used to mean either “now,” or “at a later time” is in order to allude to something deeper. Each meaning of the word “Mochor” is geared toward a different type of child.

Each child is “Mochor,” i.e. from the next generation. However, there is a child that falls into the category which Rashi refers to as “sometimes the Hebrew word מְחֹר – Mochor means *now*.” He is indeed a child; he is a member of the next generation. However, nevertheless he is living the life of *now*. He lives the same sort of life that his father does. He is not separated from his father; his essence is that of Torah and Mitzvos. He provides a continuation, a direct continuation, from his father. It is quite obvious that we must strive to answer his questions. Only through answering his questions can he maintain his service of Hashem with joy.

However, there is also a child that is in the category which Rashi refers to as “sometimes the Hebrew word מְחֹר – Mochor means *at a later time*.” He is part of a *new* generation, a *new* era. He belongs to a generation¹³ “which did not know Yosef.” His questions do not merely stem from a lack of knowledge. Rather, his questions are derived from the fact that a life of Torah and Mitzvos are strange to him. Such a life is not suited to the manner in which he is *currently* living.

Rashi is teaching us, that we must answer this child’s questions as well, because he is *your* child! It is both your *responsibility* as well as your *merit* to answer his questions. We must draw the generation which lives “at a later time” under the wings of the Shechinah¹⁴.

10. Parshas Vo’eschanan, Devorim 6:20.

11. Our Parshah, Shemos 12:26.

12. Our Parshah, Shemos 13:8.

13. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 1:8. See also the talk of Shabbos Parshas Vayaishev, 5748. There the Rebbe connects this idea to our generation in particular. His predecessor, whose first name was Yosef, expended tremendous effort to work with this generation. By Divine Providence, he passed on at this very time; the Shabbos when Parshas Bo was read (10 Shevat, 5750).

14. See Midrash Tehillim Chapters 46 and 110.

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As a result of our being occupied with all sorts of Jewish children, we will merit to establish G-d's army¹⁵. We will merit *now* to the complete and true redemption through our righteous Moshiach. We will witness the fulfillment of the prophecy that¹⁶ “just as in the days of your exodus from Egypt I will show him wonders,” speedily in our days!

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Bo, 5730)

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15. Our Parshah, Shemos 12:41.

16. Micha 7:15.

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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**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR MOTHER
Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacoheh 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 Hacoheh 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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לעילוי נשמת

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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