

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Yisro

20 Shevat, 5780 – February 15, 2020

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות כ', ב': אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים:

רש"י ד"ה אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים: כדאי היא ההוצאה שתהיו משועבדים לי ... ולמה אמר לשון יחיד, אלקיך, ליתן פתחון פה למשה ללמד סניגוריא במעשה העגל, וזהו שאמר (שמות ל"ב, י"א) למה ה' יחרה אפך בעמך, לא להם צוית, לא יהיה לכם אלקים אחרים, אלא לי לבדי:

Shemos 20:2: I am the Lord, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Rashi Heading - Who took you out of the land of Egypt: Taking you out of Egypt is sufficient reason for you to be subservient to Me ... And why did He say this in the singular ("your G-d," singular)? (He did so) in order to give Moshe an opening to offer a defense in the incident of the calf. This is (what is meant by¹) “Why, O Lord, should Your anger be kindled against Your people?” You did not command them, “You shall not have the gods of others before Me,” but You commanded me alone.

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Yisro, we are told how G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people. He began by saying² the words³, “I am the Lord your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Rashi cites the words "Who took you out of the land of Egypt," and explains that “Taking you out (of Egypt) is enough reason for you to be subservient to Me.” According to some commentaries, Rashi is explaining why the Torah doesn't say, "I am the Lord your G-d who created heaven and earth.” In other words, Rashi is explaining that the Torah says that He took us out of the land of Egypt to explain why *we* must be subservient to Him.

This reason, however, is not sufficient. According to Peshat, there seems to be *no reason whatsoever* to ask why the Torah says, “Who took you out of the land of Egypt.” The Torah is telling us that “I am the Lord *your* G-d.” This explains why *Jews specifically* must be subservient to Him! The Jews were the ones who were redeemed from Egypt.

1. Parshas Ki Siso, Shemos 32:11.

2. Our Parshah, Shemos 20:2-14. There are actually 613 commandments in the Torah. Our Rabbis demonstrate that all of these have a root in the ten commandments which are enumerated here.

3. Our Parshah, Shemos 20:2.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

The answer is that we already know that the purpose of leaving Egypt was in order to receive the Torah, thereby becoming Hashem's slaves and accepting Him as our king. However, being a slave does not negate the idea of having a certain amount of “free time,” during which one eats and sleeps. By saying that we are subservient to Him because He redeemed us from Egypt, Rashi is telling us that we are constantly His slaves. Our bond to G-d mirrors our bond to Pharaoh, which was 24/7. Rashi is not saying that “Who took you out of the land of Egypt” is the reason that “I am the Lord your G-d.” Rather he is explaining how we must serve Hashem. We must serve Him with all of our being.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Yisro, the Torah tells us of Hashem giving the Torah to the Jewish people, beginning with the Ten Commandments. These commandments begin with “I am the Lord your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Rashi cites the words “Who took you out of the land of Egypt,” and begins his explanation by saying that “The taking you out (of Egypt) is enough reason for you to be subservient to Me.”

As we have said many times, Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the Torah. His commentary answers a question that would otherwise bother a beginning student. What is the difficulty which Rashi is explaining here? The Sefer HaMizrachi⁴, as well as other commentaries to Rashi, explain that our verse seemingly has a question that would bother a beginner. Why is it that the Torah did not relate the fact that the Lord is our G-d Who Created heaven and earth? Creation took place long before our redemption from Egypt! The Torah could have said, “I am the Lord your G-d Who created heaven and earth!” Therefore, Rashi explains that the Torah is stating that had he only taken us out of Egypt, that would be sufficient reason for us to be subservient to Him.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

However, this is, in reality, no question whatsoever! G-d is telling us why He is *our* G-d, *the G-d of the Jewish people*. It is quite understandable why Hashem said something that only applies to the Jews! Why choose this specific event; the exodus from Egypt? The reason is that this event only concerns the Jews. It explains why we are a special, chosen nation. We have already been told that the purpose of our redemption from Egypt was in order to receive the Torah.

4. Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi (1455 – 1525 or 26) was a great Talmudist and Halachic codifier who was born in Constantinople. He is perhaps best known for his supercommentary to Rashi.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Furthermore, the Torah has already said quite a few times that Hashem is our G-d because He has redeemed us from Egypt in order to give us the Torah. If Rashi needs to comment on this, why did he not make this comment earlier? To note several examples, in the beginning of the book of Shemos, the second of the five books the Torah, Hashem told Moshe,⁵ “When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship Hashem on this mountain.” Further on it says,⁶ “Therefore say to the Jewish people ... and I will take you out from the burdens of Egypt... I will take you to Myself as a nation and I shall be a G-d to you... and you will know that I am the Lord your G-d Who took you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” In *our portion itself*, it says⁷ regarding the preparations for receiving the Torah, “You saw what I did to the Egyptians, and I carried you... and I brought you to Me... if you obey Me and keep My covenant... you shall be to Me... a holy nation...” We see clearly that the purpose of our redemption from Egypt was in order to receive the Torah and thereby become Hashem's chosen nation. Why did Rashi not point out the connection between the exodus from Egypt and being subservient to Hashem earlier?

Another apparent difficulty is, that we know how precise Rashi is in the words that he chooses. This to the words which he uses in his comments. It applies equally to those which he uses in the headings of his comments. We are explaining that Rashi is saying that “Who brought you out of the land of Egypt” is the reason for “I am the Lord your G-d.” This being the case, why does Rashi only cite the words from the verse “Who brought you out of the land of Egypt” and not the words “I am the Lord your G-d?”

Furthermore, in the *overwhelming majority of cases* where the Torah says that the purpose of the Exodus from Egypt was in order for us to accept Hashem as our G-d, Rashi uses the expression “I redeemed you *on this condition*,” or the like. Why does Rashi change this pattern here, and say that “taking you out of Egypt is sufficient reason for you to be subservient to Me?”

Also, in keeping with the expression “I am the Lord your G-d,” Rashi should have used a similar expression. He could have said, “in order that you should accept Me as G-d,” or “in order that you accept My kingship.” Why does Rashi use a different expression, “that you be subservient to Me.”

5. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 3:12.

6. Parshas Vo'eiro, Shemos 6:6-7.

7. Parshas Bo, Shemos 9:4-6.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

The Explanation

The beginning student would not wonder why it says, “Who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” *Quite to the contrary*, his question is that the words are seemingly superfluous. We already knew that we were leaving Egypt in order to receive the Torah. We knew what keeping the Torah entails; we would be G-d’s slaves rather than Pharaoh’s. What reason could there be for Hashem to tell us that “I am the Lord your G-d” *because* I took you out of Egypt? Every Jew without exception was aware of this.

That is why Rashi does not say that redeeming us from Egypt was the reason that Hashem is our G-d; instead, it is a separate statement that adds something to the way in which Hashem is our G-d. The Hebrew word for subservient, משעבוד comes from the word for a slave, עבד. However, it implies something much more than slavery. It means being totally given over to the owner in absolutely every respect. A slave is the property of his master.

Nonetheless he does have a private life to a certain extent. He has time to eat and sleep. Rashi is telling us that our relationship with G-d goes much deeper. Every second of every day of our entire life is dedicated to Hashem’s service. “I am the Lord; your G-d” means that we are his slaves. “Who took you out of the land of Egypt” signifies a deeper devotion than the devotion of a slave to his master. G-d redeemed us from our backbreaking work for Pharaoh in Egypt. Slavery was all-encompassing. By the same token, we are commanded to serve Hashem in the way that we eat, drink and sleep. Every action which we perform must be a part of our Divine service.

A Deeper Explanation

At the conclusion of Rashi’s words, he asks why G-d said “your G-d,” in the singular possessive. He explains that Hashem was leaving room for Moshe to be able to defend the Jews after the sin of the golden calf. In other words, Moshe could claim to G-d that the Jews understood from this commandment that He was *your* (Moshe’s) G-d. It does not seem like much of a defense. From this, we can learn a great lesson. G-d was concerned with every Jew, even one who could be led astray at the very beginning of our becoming G-d’s nation.

Moreover, when we say led astray, we are referring to idolatry. This did not occur after reading the prohibition in a book, but rather after hearing the prohibition from G-d Almighty Himself! We must learn from Hashem to tend to each Jew, without exception. We must help each Jew, both materially and spiritually. This includes one who has been led astray. We must reach out to everyone.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

In our time, this is especially true. The vast, overwhelming majority of those who have been led astray, is a part of a specific category in Jewish law. They are considered as "babies who were kidnapped by gentiles." This is because nearly all of those who are not observant have never received a Jewish education. They have no real idea of the real meaning of the Torah and Mitzvos. Therefore, they cannot be held responsible for their actions. How much more so do we all have a responsibility to help them observe Torah-true Judaism.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Yisro 5730)

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

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