

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Terumah

2 Adar, 5778 – February 17, 2018

Compiled from the works of  
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## An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Mishpotim

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### Rashi in His Own Words

שמות כ"ה, ה': ועלת אילם מאדמים ועלת תחשים ועצי שטים:

רש"י ד"ה ועצי שטים: מאין היו להם במדבר, פירש רבי תנחומא יעקב אבינו צפה ברוח הקודש, שעתידין ישראל לבנות משכן במדבר, והביא ארזים למצרים ונטעם, וצוה לבניו ליטלם עמהם, כשיצאו ממצרים:

**Shemos 25:5:** ram skins dyed red, tachash skins, and acacia wood;

**Rashi Heading - and acacia wood:** Where did they get these [trees] in the desert? Rabbi Tanchumah explained that our father Yaakov foresaw with the Holy Spirit that the Israelites were destined to build a Mishkan in the desert, so he brought cedars to Egypt and planted them. He commanded his sons to take them with them when they left Egypt.

### Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Terumah, Hashem commands us to build the Mishkan<sup>1 2</sup>. We are commanded to<sup>3</sup> "separate an offering" which should be<sup>4</sup> "taken for Me." We are then told to take specific items<sup>5</sup> which would be used in the building of the Mishkan. Among the items were acacia wood<sup>6 7</sup>. Rashi comments, citing the words "and acacia wood," as follows. "Where did they get these (trees) in the desert? Rabbi Tanchumah<sup>8</sup> explained that our father Yaakov foresaw with prophecy that the Jews were destined to build a Mishkan in the Desert, so he brought cedars to Egypt and planted them. He commanded his progeny to take them with them when they left Egypt."

Why does Rashi find Rabbi Tanchumah's explanation necessary? Why can't he simply say that the Jews bought wood from local merchants in the wilderness?

The explanation is that G-d did not say to "give" an offering. That would have implied that each Jew is to acquire the appropriate items and give them to those in charge of building the Mishkan. Rather He said to "take" an

1. Shemos 25:8.

2. The Mishkan is called the Tabernacle in English. Throughout our years wandering through the desert, and for some time thereafter, it was to be our temporary Holy Temple. The essence of G-d Almighty would be manifest there. From there it would spread throughout the world.

3. Shemos 25:2.

4. Shemos 25:3.

5. Shemos 25:3-6.

6. See the end of 25:5.

7. From Rashi's explanation we shall see that it must be a type of cedar.

8. Rabbi Tanchumah was the author of the Midrash Tanchumah. There are actually three different versions of the Midrash Tanchumah, the most authoritative of which is Midrash Tanchumah Buber which was compiled by S. Buber in Vilna in 1885. It is a collection of Midrashic and Aggadic texts explaining the Torah which were compiled by Rabbi Tanchumah in the fifth century, prior to the completion of the Babylonian Talmud.

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offering, i.e. to separate it from that which we already had in our possession. The treasurers of the Tabernacle would then come and take the items from us. Therefore Rashi cites Rabbi Tanchumah's explanation. All of the Jews owned vast amounts of gold and silver for the treasurers to take. We received these treasures when we left Egypt, and at the Red Sea. However, even if it was available, why would we carry lumber in the wilderness? Therefore Rashi explains that Yaakov prepared us for this when we left Israel to travel to Egypt.

This is still quite difficult to explain! Why would Yaakov have to start preparing wood over 200 years prior to the building of the Mishkan? Additionally, why did he need to bring the trees from Israel and replant them in Egypt?

The answer is that it was in order to offer consolation to the Jews for their bitter slavery. We knew that we would be slaves in Egypt. We also knew that Hashem promised to redeem us and have us build a Mishkan. However, removing the trees from Israel (which symbolizes redemption) and replanting them in Egypt gave us a physical, concrete sign of the ultimate Exodus from Egypt.

### Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Terumah, Hashem commands us to build the Mishkan. We are commanded to "separate an offering" which should be "taken for Me." We are then told to take specific items which would be used in the building of the Mishkan. We were told to bring gold, silver, copper, blue, purple, crimson wool, linen, goat hair, ram's skins died red and tachash<sup>9</sup> skins. Among the other offerings, we are told to bring acacia wood. Rashi cites the words from the verse "and acacia wood," and explains as follows. "Where did they get these (trees) in the desert? Rabbi Tanchumah explained that our father Yaakov foresaw with prophecy that the Jews were destined to build a Mishkan in the Desert, so he brought cedars to Egypt and planted them. He commanded his descendants to take the trees with them when they left Egypt." Rashi seems to be quoting Rabbi Tanchumah in order to explain how the Jews got lumber in a desert.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rabbi Tanchumah's teaching is a Midrash which seemingly has no place in Peshat! Why does Rabbi Tanchumah need to say that Yaakov brought trees from Israel over 200 years earlier in order to have wood to donate for the Mishkan? There are other ways in which we could have acquired wood; for example we could have purchased

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9. A *tachash* is a species of wild animal which was only available for a short time. It had many colors. Its colorful skins were used as part of the covering of the Mishkan.

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wood from neighboring nations. In fact, the Ibn Ezra<sup>10</sup> and the commentary of the Torah by the Baalei Tosfos<sup>11</sup> offer explanations which are far closer to Peshat. They both say that there was a forest near Mount Sinai from which we took the wood.

Additionally, it's not at all common for Rashi to use an expression such as "Rabbi Tanchumah explained." Usually Rashi would say something to the effect of "It is found in the Midrash Tanchumah," or as he often does, he could have simply stated the explanation and at its conclusion cited the source. What is the reason for Rashi's stylistic change?

Moreover, it does not seem to be true that "Rabbi Tanchumah explained," as Rashi states. He is not explaining the verse. He is merely teaching us something which answers a question which arises as a result of the verse.

### **The Explanation**

The explanation to all of these questions is that G-d did not command us to "give" an offering. That would have implied that each Jew is to acquire the appropriate items and give them to those in charge of building the Mishkan. Rather He said to separate an offering from that which we already have in our possession. Thus, the only thing incumbent upon those that made the donations was to separate that which was to be given. In other words, we separated those items from among our property which we wished to donate. The treasurers of the Tabernacle would then come and take the items from us. Rashi emphasizes this point by explaining the Torah's words<sup>12</sup> "an offering" as "a separation; they shall set apart from their property an offering for Me."

This is why Rashi cites Rabbi Tanchumah's explanation. All of the Jews owned vast amounts of gold and silver which they could designate as donations. We received this wealth upon leaving Egypt and at the Red Sea. However, why would we have lumber? From where would it have come? That is why Rashi explains that Yaakov prepared us for this when we left Israel in order to descend to Egypt. That is how it came to be that the Jews had a supply of lumber for the building of the Mishkan. That is why Rashi uses the unusual expression "Rabbi Tanchumah explained." Rashi was not bothered by where the Jews acquired the wood. There are other ways to explain that, as we said above. Being that the gifts had to be separated by the donors and taken by the treasurers, the Torah is telling us that the Jews already had wood in their possession. Each of the objects needed for the Mishkan had to already be in the possession of the Jews. Rabbi Tanchumah is explaining the verse itself, by telling us how it came about that

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10. Rabbi Avrohom Ibn Ezra (1089 – 1167) wrote a great commentary on the entire Tanach – Bible. His commentary to Divrei Hayomim – Chronicles has been lost over the centuries. Aside from his Biblical commentary, he was a great astronomer, philosopher, poet and linguist.

11. After Rashi's passing in 1105, the era of the Baalei Tosfos continued for about 200 years. The rabbis that made up this elite group of scholars were students of Rashi, including his sons-in-law and grandchildren. Their primary work was a deep insightful commentary of the Talmud, which to a large extent served as a supercommentary to Rashi's commentary to the Talmud. They also did write a commentary to the Torah which we are citing here.

12. Shemos 25:2.

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the Jews owned lumber.

This also explains Rashi's comments on the previous verse<sup>13</sup>, "blue, purple... *sheish*." Rashi explains "blue," as wool dyed with the blood of the *chilazon*<sup>14</sup> which bears a blue color." He explains "purple" as "wool dyed with a sort of dye named *argomon*." Finally, he defines "*sheish*" as "linen." It would appear as if Rashi is explaining what these three things are. However, that cannot be the case. Firstly, Rashi never defines *argomon*, regarding which there is a dispute among other medieval commentators as to exactly what color it is. Secondly, why does Rashi find it necessary to define "*sheish*?" The word appeared earlier<sup>15</sup>, and there Rashi did not define it. That makes it obvious that even the beginning student knows the meaning of the word!

This makes it clear that Rashi's purpose is *not* to explain the meaning of these words. Rather he is answering the same question that bothered him regarding the wood. The items needed to be in the possession of the Jewish people. How could they have had a *chilazon*? How could they have had *argomon*? Therefore Rashi explains that what is meant is *wool* dyed these colors, and we know that the Jewish Nation had many sheep. Rashi also tells us here that "*sheish*" means linen. This is in order to emphasize what he already told us<sup>16</sup>; Egypt has linen. Thus it is obvious that when the Jews left and "emptied out" Egypt, they brought linen. Rashi is just showing that we owned everything that was needed for the Mishkan. Since we know how precise Rashi is, we can now understand why he begins his commentary on our verse with the word "and." "And from where did they have wood in the wilderness?" It's a continuation of his explanation of the previous verse where he explained that we had wool and linen.

It still remains difficult why Yaakov started preparing for this over 200 years before it was time to build the Mishkan. We also do not understand what the need was to bring trees from Israel and replant them in Egypt. We can explain that Yaakov knew prophetically that Hashem would tell us to "take" the donations. But the fact that Hashem would require us to take trees from Israel and replant them in Egypt, only to take them out of Egypt more than 200 years later requires explanation!

Rashi answers this question by telling us that "Rabbi Tanchumah explained." Tanchumah is from the Hebrew word "*nechomoh*," meaning consolation. The Jews knew that G-d had promised to redeem us. However, throughout all of the years of slavery we could look at actual, physical cedars which were brought from Israel (conveying the idea of redemption) and be comforted from our suffering by an actual, concrete sign of redemption.

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13. Shemos 25:4.

14. The *chilazon* is an aquatic or semi-aquatic creature that is the source of a blue dye.

15. Bereishis 41:42.

16. Bereishis 2:11.

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### A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

The teaching of Rabbi Tanchumah – meaning consolation, quoted by Rashi, is not only a consolation for the Egyptian exile. Rather it is to comfort us in all of our exiles, including our prolonged present exile; for each exile is referred to as Egypt. The Midrash teaches us that exile is comparable to our wandering in the wilderness of the nations. The purpose of our wandering was in order to *build a sanctuary in the wilderness*. We were to take a barren wasteland, a place void of holiness, a place of<sup>17</sup> “snakes, vipers, scorpions and thirst ...” and to build a sanctuary there. We are to build a Mishkan and a Sanctuary to Hashem, a dwelling place for Him in the lowest of all places. At the conclusion of this work we will be able to fulfill the commandment<sup>18</sup>, “They shall make a sanctuary for me and I will dwell among them” in the simplest sense of the word. We will actually build the third Bais Hamikdosh, in which will be revealed the original Mishkan built by Moshe. Our ability to accomplish this and break through the darkness of exile is derived from the fact that Yaakov brought the cedars from Israel.

The significance of Yaakov bringing the trees from Egypt is that cedars (from which the Mishkan was built) allude to Tzaddikim. Particularly, because of their grandeur, they allude to the leaders of the Jewish Nation. This is the connection to Yaakov. The Hebrew word for the leader of the Jews is Nasi – נָשִׂיא, which is an acronym for “Nitzuso Shel Yaakov Avienu,” a spark of Yaakov our forefather. This is as the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya<sup>19</sup>, that the soul of Yaakov “included those of all Jews *from all times*.” This is why Rashi explains that “*Yaakov our forefather brought ‘cedars’ to Egypt.*” All of our leaders, who are sparks of Yaakov, stem from Israel. They are all above exile. However, in order to implant within us the ability to overcome the darkness of exile, they had to be “planted” in Egypt, i.e. during the time of exile.

This is our consolation. Even while we are in the wilderness of the nations, we can see the “cedars which were planted by Yaakov,” our Tzaddikim, leaders, of each and every generation. They inspire each of us to overpower the darkness of exile rather than being influenced by it. Then we can finally merit the only possible comfort for this lengthy exile; the complete and true redemption through our righteous Moshiach in the simplest sense of the word, now.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Terumah 5747)*

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17. Devorim 8:15.

18. Shemos 25:8.

19. Page 111, b.

**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 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 שי' Cohen**  
For a complete and speedy recovery

\* \* \*

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

\*

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

## מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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## 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

נפטר ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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## נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

\* \* \*

## לזכות

ר' שלום משה הכהן בן צבי' שי' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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## נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מאריס

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יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן