

בס"ז

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Beshalach

Shevat 11, 5778 – January 27, 2018

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

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Beshalach

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות י"ד, י': ופרעה הקריב וישאו בני ישראל את עיניהם והנה מצרים | נסע אחריהם ויראו מאד ויצעקו בני ישראל אל ה':
רש"י ד"ה ויצעקו: תפשו אומנות אבותם. באברהם הוא אומר (בראשית י"ט, כ"ז) אל המקום אשר עמד שם, ביצחק (שם כ"ד,
ס"ג) לשוח בשדה, ביעקב (שם כ"ה, י"א) ויפגע במקום:

Shemos 14:10: Pharaoh drew near, and the Jewish people lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened. And the Jewish people cried out to the Lord.

Rashi Heading - and they cried out: They grabbed onto the trade of their patriarchs (i.e., they prayed). Concerning Avrohom, it says, “to the place where he had stood before the Lord” (Bereishis 19:27). Concerning Yitzchok, (it says) “to pray in the field” (Bereishis 24:63). Concerning Yaakov, “And he entreated Hashem” (Bereishis 28:11).

A Brief Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Beshalach, the Torah tells us about our exodus from Egypt. The Red Sea was in front of us, and the Egyptian army was behind us. It seemed as if it was a hopeless situation. What did we do? We cried out to G-d in prayer. Rashi explains that we pursued the "trade," or the "craft" of our forefathers. Rashi goes on to cite verses from the Torah which demonstrate that each and every one of our patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, prayed.

We need to understand why Rashi needs to explain this verse at all. We were in a totally untenable situation, surrounded by all sides. Naturally we prayed to G-d! Even the beginning student understands the need for prayer. Furthermore, if we did believe in G-d, He had already promised us salvation. Hence, there would be no need to pray. If, on the other hand, we G-d forbid did not believe, what point would there be in praying? Additionally, there are other verses in the Torah which cite more clearly that our patriarchs prayed. Why does Rashi specifically cite these particular verses?

The explanation is that Rashi is not merely telling us why the Jews prayed. He is explaining why they cried out. They grabbed onto their forefathers' trade. They prayed; that was what they did. G-d was a part of their lives. The verses which Rashi cites demonstrate that even when there was no particular reason to pray, that is what they did. Likewise, here their children believed fully that Hashem would save them. Despite that, they did exactly what their forefathers did. They cried out in prayer.

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Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Beshalach, the Torah tells us the story of the Jews leaving Egypt. The Red Sea was in front of them, and the Egyptians were closing in on them from behind. The Torah says that¹ "Pharaoh was drawing close. The Children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold Egypt was travelling after them. The Jewish People were very frightened, and they cried out to Hashem." Rashi cites the words from the verse "and they cried out," and explains that "they grabbed onto the trade of their ancestors." This means that they prayed.

Rashi continues by showing that prayer was the trade of each of our forefathers. "Regarding Avrohom it says² 'to the place where he had stood (עמד means he had stood in Hebrew) before Hashem.' Regarding Yitzchok it says³ 'to speak (לשווח is the Hebrew word for speak) in the field.' Regarding Yaakov it says⁴ 'he beseeched (ויפגע means he beseeched in Hebrew) Hashem.' "

In other words, Rashi is telling us that the words "stood – עמד, "speak – לשוח" and "beseech – ויפגע" all express the idea of prayer. Hence, from here we see that all of our patriarchs prayed.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Why does Rashi find the need to give any explanation whatsoever here? The verse stands on its own quite well! The Jewish people saw that they were being chased by the Egyptian army; they saw that they were in grave danger. Naturally we cried out to G-d in prayer to save us!

One possible approach might be to say that Rashi is explaining the nature of the outcry of the Jewish people. He is explaining that they cried out in prayer, and not out of anger to Hashem for placing them in this predicament. This explanation would seem to fit well with the flow of the verses. We find that immediately after our verse, the Torah says⁵ "They said to Moshe, is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert?"

However, this explanation is untenable. If Rashi's intention was to negate this explanation of the verse, he would have phrased his comments different. Upon citing the words "and they cried out," he would have first written that they prayed. Afterwards he could have written that they grabbed onto the trade of their forefathers.

Furthermore, if there is a need to explain the reason that the Jewish people cried out, Rashi should have explained it the first time that it was mentioned in the Torah! The Torah already told us, that⁶ "the

1. Shemos 14:10.

2. Bereishis 19:27.

3. Bereishis 24:63.

4. Bereishis 28:11.

5. Shemos 14:11.

6. Shemos 2:23.

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Jewish people cried out, and their cry ascended to Hashem ...” The context there is that they cried because of their suffering in Egypt. We cannot say there that it means that they cried out due to anger from their great suffering, because it already said in the same verse “and the Children of Israel sighed from the labor.”

Furthermore, we need to understand how it is suitable to describe prayer as a trade? Is prayer a vocation? The Torah frequently states explicitly that the “vocation” of our forefathers was not prayer. They were shepherds.

As mentioned above, Rashi cites three verses that hint at the fact that each of the patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, prayed. However, regarding each of them we find a wealth of verses which clearly state that they prayed. Rashi cites three specific verses as proof that they prayed. However, there are many others!

Regarding Avrohom it says⁷ (a verse which precedes the one which Rashi cites) “He built an altar to G-d there, and called out in the name of Hashem.” Rashi could also have cited the verse which came immediately before this, “He built an altar there to G-d Who had appeared to him.”

Moreover, the verse which Rashi *does* cite for Avrohom, “to the place where he stood,” comes at the conclusion of the story of Avrohom’s prayers to Hashem to save the cities of S’dom and Amora (Sodom and Gomorrah). Throughout this episode, Avrohom clearly beseeched G-d many times to save these people. Yet Rashi chose a verse which appears after the cities were already destroyed. This verse only hints that he had prayed earlier.

Regarding Yitzchok we find the same thing. The Torah says⁸ that “Yitzchok prayed to Hashem,” which Rashi explains to mean that “he prayed much and entreated Hashem with prayer.” This is certainly a clearer proof that Yitzchok prayed than the verse which Rashi does quote. Likewise, we find that the Torah tells us clearly that Yaakov prayed. The Torah says that he prayed to G-d⁹ “please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Aisov.”

The Explanation

The answer to all of these questions is as follows. Rashi is answering a question on the word(s)¹⁰ “and they cried out.” What possible reason is there to not only pray, but to *cry out* in prayer to G-d?

7. Bereishis 12:8.

8. Bereishis 25:21.

9. Bereishis 32:10–13.

10. Hebrew is a very concise language. Linguists say that a Hebrew translation of something written in English will be 30% shorter than the original. That is the reason for the letter “s” (which indicates the plural) in parenthesis. The English translation of the single Hebrew word “ויצעקו” is “and they cried out.”

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Hashem already assured us that we would enter Israel, so it was obvious that we would be saved! Not just that, but we are told that¹¹ the Jewish people were “marching out (of Egypt) triumphantly.”

If they believed in Hashem’s assurance, what need was there to pray? On the other hand, if they did not believe, what was the purpose of prayer? What did they think that it would accomplish?

Rashi explains this by saying that the Jewish People grabbed on to their forefathers’ trade. The Patriarchs were, as so to speak, “in the business” of praying. It was what they did. They did not need a “reason” to pray. They did not wait for a difficult situation in order to pray. They were as one with the Almighty, and hence communicated with him regularly. The same is true of the Jewish Nation, their children. Despite their confidence in Hashem’s promise, they prayed.

The fact that afterwards the Jewish people said to Moshe¹², “is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert?” was not because of a lack of faith. Rather it was because they had already cried out to G-d and were not answered. The Egyptians were coming closer and closer!

They did not speak these words due to a lack of faith. Rather they said this because of their tremendously difficult situation. Human nature is to speak out of pain without giving the matter much thought. Our Sages say in the Talmud¹³ “a person is not held accountable for what he says at a time of distress.” He is not speaking out of wickedness, but rather out of a lack of judgment which comes as a result of his seemingly impossible situation.

This is the reason that Rashi did not cite any of the other verses we mentioned above. They all demonstrate that the Patriarchs prayed for a specific need. Those verses would not make Rashi’s point at all. The verses which Rashi does cite each demonstrate that prayer was our Patriarchs’ occupation; it was something they (and we) do regularly.

A Deeper Explanation

We must all keep in mind that prayer is our business, our occupation. It’s not something to do merely because we are in a difficult situation and need G-d’s help. Rather, it is what we, as Jews, do. We speak to G-d in order to connect with Him; we have the knowledge that He is here with us.

The same is true of Torah study. It’s not just something we do in order to know the commandments which we must perform. It’s our profession. We are in the business of connecting with

11. Shemos 14:6.

12. Shemos 14:11.

13. Talmud Bava Basra 16, b.

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Hashem through studying His Torah. The same is true of fulfilling the Mitzvos, and of “marketing” our business – sharing it with everyone around us.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 573)

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* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיחיו Morris**

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיחיו Morris

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR FATHER

Dr. Menachem Mendel Shlomoh ben Reb Chaim Aryeh Leib ע"ה Mendelsohn

Passed away on 11 Shevat, 5747

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FAMILY

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Tzivia שי' Cohen

&

Mrs. Berocho bas Soroh שתהי' 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

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

לעילוי נשמת

ר' מנחם מענדל שלמה בן ר' חיים ארי' ליב ע"ה מענדלסאהן

נפטר ביום י"א שבט, ה'תשמ"ז

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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לזכות

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ומרת ברכה בת שרה שתחי' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מאריס

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יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן