

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Yisro

Shevat 20, 5779 – January 26, 2019

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

Likkutei Sichos Volume 21, Pages 100 – 107

Rashi in His Own Words

שמות י"ט – ב': ויסעו מרפידים ויבאו מדבר סיני ויחגו במדבר ויסן שם ישראל נגד הַהָר:

רש"י ד"ה ויחן שם ישראל: כאיש אחד בלב אחד, אבל שאר כל החניות בתרעומת ובמחלוקת:

Shemos 19: 2: They journeyed from Rephidim, and arrived in the desert of Sinai. They encamped in the desert, and Yisroel encamped there opposite the mountain.

Rashi Heading - and Yisroel encamped there: (The Hebrew for encamped is written in the singular form,) as one man with one heart. However, all of the other encampments were (written in the plural, i.e. “they camped”), with complaints and with strife.

Synopsis

Our Torah portion, Yisro, tells of the historic moment of the giving of the Torah. Before receiving the Torah, the Jewish Nation camped opposite Mount Sinai. The Torah says that “Yisroel (meaning the Jewish Nation) encamped there.” However, it uses the Hebrew word for *encamped* in the singular form rather than the plural. It does not say “they camped,” as is generally the case. Rather the Torah uses the word which means that “he (singular) camped.” Rashi explains that the reason for this is because the Jews camped “as one man with one heart. However, all of the other encampments were with complaints and strife.”

Rashi seems to be explaining the reason for the difference between the encampment in Sinai and all of the others. At all other encampments there was strife and plurality among the Jews. Hence the word “encamped” is written in the plural. At this one instance the Jews were in total unity. The word camped is therefore used in the singular form.

However, here we find that the Torah uses the word “Yisroel” to describe the Jews. The word Yisroel means the Jewish Nation, a singular entity. Since the verse is discussing one nation (as opposed to millions of individuals, i.e. “the Children of Yisroel”), the Torah *had* to use the singular form of the verb *encamped*. Since the subject of the sentence, “Yisroel” is in the singular, the verb “camped” must also be in the singular. Hence it would appear that we can derive nothing from the Torah’s use of the word camped in the singular.

The explanation is that we find collective nouns, such as Yisroel, throughout the Torah which are used both in singular and plural forms. The difference is as follows. When the Torah says that “Yisroel (the single group of Jews) saw,” it is logical according to Peshat to use the singular form; each individual saw the same thing. However, when the Torah says that the group felt an emotion, or understood something, the plural form must be used. Each individual felt or understood on their own level.

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Here the Torah is telling us of the Jews camping in preparation to receive the Torah. In this regard, each and every Jew was united “as one man.” What united us was our desire to receive the Torah “with one heart.”

Rashi’s Explanation

In this week’s Torah portion, Yisro, the Torah tells us of the momentous occasion of the Jewish Nation receiving the Torah. In preparation to this, the Torah says¹ that “They journeyed from Rephidim, and arrived in the desert of Sinai. They encamped in the desert, and Yisroel encamped there opposite the mountain.” Rashi cites the words from the verse “and Yisroel encamped there.” He explains that they camped “as one man with one heart. However, all of the other encampments were with complaints and with strife.”

Rashi seems to be explaining the significance of the encampment of the Jewish Nation in anticipation of receiving the Torah. He contrasts that with their encampments throughout the remainder of their 40 years in the wilderness. Here the Torah uses the word encamped in the singular; at other times the Torah uses the same word in the plural². The fact that it is used in the singular here, teaches us that they were of a *single mind* when they camped at Mount Sinai; “as one man with one heart.” Rashi contrasts this with the other encampments of the Jewish people, which were all “with complaints and with strife.”

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi is very precise with his wording. His precision does not only apply to the words which he uses in his commentary. Rather, it applies equally to the words which he cites from the verse which he is explaining. Those words alone are the ones which he is explaining. They also form the basis of his explanation. Here Rashi cites the words “and Yisroel encamped there.” The word *encamped*, in the singular is obviously important. That is how Rashi derives that all of the Jews were of one mind. The word *there* is also necessary. That teaches us that it was only there that the Jews were of a single mind; not at any of their other encampments.

However, we need to understand why Rashi adds the word *Yisroel*. It does not seem to add a thing to his explanation. Quite to the contrary; it seems to detract from his comments. The word Yisroel (meaning Israel, i.e. the Jewish Nation) is a collective noun. It refers to the Jewish Nation as one singular object. The Jews are not referred to as the “Children of Israel,” which would mean millions of individual Jews. If that were the case, it would be appropriate to use the plural form. However, from the use of the word Yisroel it would seem that it is

1. Our Parshas, Shemos 19:2.

2. Unlike English, Hebrew verbs are either singular or plural. To use our verse as an example, in English the verb would be “camped.” One would need to specify *who* camped in order to know whether it was singular or plural. “He camped” would be singular, and “they camped” would be plural. In contrast Hebrew, the verb itself would either be singular or plural. Generally, when discussing encampments of the Jewish People in the wilderness, the Torah says “Vayachanu – וַיַּחֲנוּ,” meaning “and they camped,” i.e. in plural form. In our verse, the Torah says “Vayichan - וַיִּחַן,” meaning “and *he* camped.”

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only grammatically correct to use the word *encamped* in the singular. The use of the word *Yisroel* seems to indicate that we cannot learn anything from this verse regarding the singularity of the Jewish Nation.

Additionally, Rashi seems to have expressed the same idea in last week's Torah portion. However there, he phrases his conclusion differently, and it is said regarding the Egyptians rather than the Jews. Prior to the miracle of the splitting of the sea, the Torah told us³ that "Paroh drew near, and the Jewish people lifted up their eyes, and behold! Egypt was travelling after them ..." Rashi cites the words "was travelling after them." He explains that since the Egyptians were travelling "with one heart, like one man," the Torah uses the singular form of travelling.

That instance is very similar to ours. The Torah uses the singular word *Egypt* rather than the plural form of *the Egyptians*. It also uses the singular *was travelling*, as opposed to *were travelling*. There too, Rashi explains that the reason for the singular *was travelling* was because all of the Egyptians were of the same mind. However, there the words which he cites from the verse are "was travelling after them." He does not include the word *Egypt* (was travelling after them) in his header. The apparent reason is as we said before. The singular form of the verb *travel* must be used with the singular noun *Egypt*. Yet in our verse, Rashi does include the word *Yisroel*. Furthermore, there Rashi says that Egypt was "with one heart, like one man." While in our verse Rashi says that the Jews were "like one man with one heart." We need to understand what the reason is for the different order.

The Explanation

We find many instances in the Torah of collective nouns which are used both in the singular and the plural. At times there is even a mixture of the two within the same verse. The simple reason for this is that it depends on exactly what is being discussed. When the Torah says that "Yisroel (the single group of Jews) saw," it is logical according to Peshat to use the singular form. Each individual saw the same thing simultaneously. However, when the Torah says that the group felt an emotion, or understood something, the plural form must be used. Each individual felt or understood on their own level. The Sages teach us⁴ that the way that people understand any given thing is not equal. The same applies to thoughts and emotions. No two of us experience or understand the same thing in the same manner.

One example of this would be the verse⁵ "Yisroel saw the great hand which the Lord had used upon the Egyptians. The nation feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in Moshe, His servant." "Yisroel saw" is in the singular. The entire nation saw the exact same thing! However, this that the people "feared the Lord," and believed in the Lord" are in the plural. No two people attain the same level of fear or belief.

3. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 14:10.

4. See Talmud Sanhedrin 38, a.

5. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 14:31.

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Another example is from our Parshah. After Hashem gave the Jews the Torah, it says that⁶ "... the nation saw and trembled; therefore, they stood from afar." The Torah uses the collective noun "the nation." It says, literally, that *he* saw, meaning that the word is used in the singular. Yet it says that "they trembled," in the plural. That is because each Jew experienced a different level of trembling, of fear of G-d.

This is the reason for Rashi's explanation of the verse regarding the Egyptians, which we asked earlier. The Torah says that⁷ "Paroh drew near, and the Jewish people lifted up their eyes, and behold! Egypt was travelling after them ..." Rashi explained that the Egyptians were "with one heart like one man." Why does he transpose the order which he uses here?

The emphasis there is not on the fact that Egypt was travelling. Rather, the main point is that they were travelling *after them*, after the Jews. They were all out to get the Jews; it was their hatred of the Jews which prompted their chase. What was the reason for their hatred? It was because⁸ "Paroh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people. They said, 'What is this that we have done, that we have released Israel from serving us?'" It was their wickedness.

One might think that there were various levels of hatred among the Egyptians toward the Jews. Paroh's hatred was certainly different than an Egyptian soldier. A soldier's hatred would be different than a regular Egyptian citizen. Rashi teaches us that they were all united. What was it that united them? Their wicked hearts caused them to become one united nation. They were "with one heart," and were therefore were "like one man."

That is quite different than our verse. There was obviously a vast difference between one Jew and another in terms of preparing to receive the Torah. Who from among the Jews could be compared to Moshe, the one and only who actually received the Torah from Hashem? We cannot even begin to fathom the preparations made by Aharon. What about the 70 elders? How could their preparations to receive the Torah begin to compare to those of a simple Jew?

Rashi therefore explains that they were like one man, and therefore it says that "Yisroel (he) camped." Why were the Jews like one man? The reason is because they were Yisroel; each had a G-dly soul. The entire Jewish nation is one large, united entity. Because we were as one man, we were also of one heart. There are differences between one Jew and another when it comes to studying the Torah. However, when it comes to receiving the Torah, all Jews have one heart.

That is the difference between the unity of the Jews, and that of the Egyptians. Because the Jews are as one man, each Jew is a part of an inseparable whole; therefore, they are of one heart. The converse is true of the Egyptians. Because they are of one heart, because of the enmity toward the Jews for each of them, therefore they

6. Our Parshas, Shemos 20:15.

7. See Footnote 3.

8. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 14:5.

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unite and become as one person.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

This world is called a “public domain⁹.” In the public domain, the street we see a multitude of different, none of which is connected to the other¹⁰. This is especially obvious in the realm of human beings. Our Sages tell us¹¹ that “not one person is comparable to another.” Each person is involved in activities that are not at all comparable to those of his fellow. Many people are involved in activities which totally contradict those of his fellow.

The way to unite the world is through *revealing* the truly *one* G-d. He totally transcends the limitations of the world. How can His presence be revealed here? It can only happen through those two things which are also above the world’s limitations; namely Torah and the Jewish Nation.

Rashi, teaching us Peshat, tells us this very thing. As the Jews prepared to receive the Torah they became as one person. This is brought about through the “spark,” the essence of the Jewish soul. This is what truly makes the Jews “as one person with one heart.”

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach (Tu Bishvat) and Shabbos Parshas Yisro, 5740)

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9. See Tanya, at the end of Chapter 33.

10. See Likkutei Sichos, Volume 15, Page 47.

11. See Talmud Sanhedrin, 37, a.

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the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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

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**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיחיו Morris**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR FATHER
Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Reb Shlomo Meir Hacoheh ע"ה Cohen
Passed away Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FAMILY

* * *

**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**

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