

בס"ה

## THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Vayikroh

1 Nissan, 5778 – March 17, 2018

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

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### Rashi in His Own Words

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְמֹשֶׁה וְכֹרֵב וְכֹרְאֵי יְרָאֵת בְּמִינֵּים וְהַקְטִיר כְּפָנָן אֶת-הַכְּבֵד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַלְהָ אֲשֶׁר-יִסְגִּיחּוּ מִזְבֵּחַ:

רַשִׁׁי ד"ה נִיחּוּת: נִחְתָּר רוח לִפְנֵי, שָׁמַרְתִּי וְנוּשָׂה רְצָוִי:

**Vayikroh 1:9:** And its innards and its legs, he shall wash with water. Then, the Kohen shall cause all of the animal to (go up in) smoke on the altar, as a burnt offering, a fire offering, (with) a pleasing fragrance to the Lord.

**Rashi Heading - pleasing:** (This word stems from the same root as the expression, נִחְתָּר רִיחַ, "contentment." G-d says: "This sacrifice) is a pleasure for Me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled!"

### Synopsis

This week's Torah portion is also the beginning of the third book of the Torah, Vayikroh, which deals primarily with sacrificial law. Regarding many sacrifices which are taught here, including the first, the Torah says that they were<sup>1</sup> "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." Rashi cites the word "pleasing," and explains "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled." Likewise, we find earlier<sup>2</sup> regarding the rams which were brought during the seven-day inauguration of the altar that the Torah says "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." There, Rashi cites the words "a pleasing fragrance," and also explains "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled."

After the Great Flood, we find a similar expression regarding Noach's offerings to Hashem. When he and his family left the ark, the Torah tells us<sup>3</sup> that Noach built an altar upon which he offered burnt offerings. Immediately thereafter the Torah says "And the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma." There Rashi does not mention anything about the fragrance pleasing Hashem.

However, that can be explained differently. When Noach left the ark and saw that he and his family were saved, he felt pleasure and gratitude. That was why he offered sacrifices; as an expression of this. When the Torah says that the aroma was pleasant, it means that Noach found it pleasant.

1. Vayikroh 1:9.

2. Shemos 29:18.

3. Bereishis 8:20 – 21.

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However this poses a question. Why should sacrifices arouse a feeling of “pleasure to Hashem” more than any other Mitzvah? That is what Rashi is explaining here – the fact that the sacrifices listed here are “a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled.” The fulfillment of this Mitzvah is different than any other. Even Mitzvos which are termed “Chukim,” meaning that they have no rational reason, are different than sacrifices. Chukim train us to accept the yoke of G-d’s kingship over us. Sacrifices, on the other hand, “seem” to benefit Hashem. They are referred to as “His food.” We perform this service purely for Him, without deriving any benefit ourselves. That is what is meant by “I said, and My will was fulfilled.” The fact is, that G-d is non-corporeal, and derives no benefit whatsoever from sacrifices. Therefore, Rashi explains that He "enjoys" them (as so to speak) because His will is fulfilled.

### Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion is also the beginning of the third book of the Torah, Vayikroh. The end of the previous book, which we just concluded, discussed the building of the Sanctuary. This book discusses, for the most part, the services which were performed within the Sanctuary. Since a large part of the Temple service was offering sacrifices, a large percentage of this book deals with sacrificial laws.

Regarding many of the sacrifices discussed in the Torah, including the very first sacrifice mentioned in this week's portion, the Torah tells us that they are<sup>4</sup> "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." Rashi cites the word "pleasing," and explains "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled." We find the same, earlier, regarding the rams which were offered during the seven-day inauguration of the altar. The Torah says that they provided<sup>5</sup> "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." There, Rashi cites the words "a pleasing fragrance," and also explains "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled."

Supercommentaries, particularly the Sefer Hamizrachi<sup>6</sup>, explain that Rashi's purpose here is to negate the possibility of explaining "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem," as meaning that the pleasant odor of the sacrifice caused Hashem to relax (as so to speak). This might be similar to the idea of a person settling down to rest with pleasant smelling spices. Rashi is explaining that it is impossible to make such

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4. Vayikroh 1:9.

5. Shemos 29:18.

6. 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.

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a statement regarding Hashem. Rather G-d's pleasure (as so to speak) came from the fact that His will was fulfilled.

However, we cannot really say that Rashi needs to tell us that the Torah does not mean that Hashem rested as a result of smelling the pleasant fragrance. If Rashi needed to tell us that, he would have said so the first time the Torah used that expression. After the great flood, upon Noach and his family leaving the ark, the Torah tells us<sup>7</sup> that Noach built an altar upon which he offered burnt offerings. Immediately thereafter, the Torah told us that "the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma." There Rashi does not comment on these words at all. Additionally, it would seem that regarding Noach there is all the more reason for Rashi to tell us that "the pleasing aroma" did not "relax" Hashem. There it says explicitly that the Lord *smelled* the pleasant aroma. However, while describing later sacrifices offered in the Tabernacle, the Torah makes no such statement.

It seems that we can distinguish between "the pleasing fragrance to Hashem" in our Torah portion, and "the pleasant aroma" stated regard Noach's sacrifices. With Noach we can explain that the Torah is not saying that the fragrance pleased Hashem. Rather it is saying that the fragrance pleased Noach. He was pleased by the fragrance of the sacrifices. However, in our portion where it states outright that the fragrance was pleasing to Hashem, Rashi needs to explain that the pleasure was derived from the fact that we fulfilled His will.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

We cannot say that the fact that Noach's sacrifices pleased himself, and the sacrifices offered later pleased Hashem, explains the difference between the two. We know that Rashi always cites the words from the verse that he is explaining. We also know that he is precise; he cites those words which he is explaining, no more and no less. If Rashi was primarily concerned with explaining the fact that it says "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem," why does he only cite the word "pleasing?" To the contrary, regarding Noach it says that "the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma." In other words, it would seem that Hashem found the aroma pleasant! We cannot possibly say that the aroma of a burnt offering is pleasant to a person. The smell of meat and bones burning is not at all pleasant. How can we say that Noach found it pleasant?

There is a more general question that needs to be asked about sacrifices. What is the reason for this Mitzvah? Many other commentaries discuss this, but Rashi does not seem to mention it at all. It is true that as a rule Rashi does not offer reasons for Mitzvos. However, here it concerns Peshat. There seems to be absolutely no purpose or reason for a sacrifice. Either all or part of an animal is burnt upon an altar.

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7. Bereishis 8:20 – 21.

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The part that is burned is of no use to the person bringing the offering and is certainly of no benefit to Hashem! Hashem, being non-corporeal, neither "eats" nor "enjoys" the sacrifices. Why should we perform this service?

As we have said many times, Rashi is extremely precise with his language. Why does Rashi say "for I said, and my will was carried out?" One would think that he should have said "for I commanded, and you carried out my will.

### The Explanation

From the above we see, that Rashi is telling us that it was not the physical aroma of the sacrifice that was pleasant. Therefore, the pleasure which came from the sacrifices brought by Noach is understood simply, hence Rashi does not need to explain anything.

When Noach left the ark, and saw that he and his family were saved, he felt pleasure and gratitude. That was the reason that he offered sacrifices; as an expression of thanks to G-d. The fact is, that<sup>8</sup> "As in water, face answers to face, so is the heart of a man to a man." Noach expressed his love and pleasure toward Hashem for saving himself and his family. This was reflected by Hashem finding the aroma of the sacrifices he brought "pleasant."

However here we have a question regarding the sacrifices that were (and will be) brought as a regular part of the service in the Bais Hamikdosh. Why should sacrifices arouse a feeling of "pleasure" to G-d more than any other Mitzvah? That is what Rashi is explaining here that the sacrifices listed here are "a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled. The fulfillment of this Mitzvah is different than that of any other. The only real reason for bringing sacrifices is because G-d said so. Hashem derives (as so to speak) pleasure from the fact that we do something which seems senseless. We burn an animal. Neither we nor Hashem derive any benefit from this act. The fact that despite this, we fulfill Gd's will, is a source of pleasure for Him.

The only remaining difficulty is that we have an entire classification of Mitzvos called "Chukim – Statutes." These are Mitzvos which Rashi explains<sup>9</sup> have no reason according to human understanding. Why should this category of Mitzvos be any different than sacrifices? The Ramban<sup>10</sup> does write that Chukim do have reasons, albeit reasons which are not revealed to us. However, Rashi in his commentary

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8. Mishlei 27:19.

9. Shemos 15:26, Bereishis 26:5, Vayikroh 18:4, Vayikroh 19:19 and Bamidbar 19:2.

10. Rabbi Moshe the son of Nachman (1194 – 1270). He was a great Sephardic rabbi, philosopher, kabbalist and Biblical commentator.

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to the Torah makes it patently clear that Chukim have no rational explanation whatsoever. According to Rashi why should sacrifices be any different than Chukim?

The explanation is, that even according to Rashi, Chukim do have a purpose. Their purpose is to help us accustom ourselves to being subjected to the yoke of G-d's kingship. Sacrifices, on the other hand, "seem" to be for the "benefit" of Hashem. They are referred to as G-d's "food." By seeing to it that this service is performed, and not viewing a sacrifice as a commandment but rather as something "that we are doing for Him" (as so to speak), we generate great pleasure Above.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayikroh and Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5742, and Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5728)*

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Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacohen ה"ע Cohen

Passed away on 8 Shevat, 5778

May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

\*

**DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY**

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**IN HONOR OF**

Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacohen ben Tzivia 'ש Cohen

For a complete and speedy recovery

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**DEDICATED BY  
Hatomim Moshe Shlomo Zohar 'ש Mars**

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

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כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליבאוויטש**

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**ת. ג. צ. ב. ה.**

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