

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Tazria

Parshas Hachodesh

1 Nissan, 5779 – April 6, 2019

Compiled from the works of
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Hachodesh¹**

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות י"ב, ג': דברו אל כל עדת ישראל לאמר כעשר לחודש הזה ויקחו להם איש ששה לבית אבת ששה לבית: שמות י"ב, ו': והנה לכם למשמרת עד ארבעה עשר יום לחודש הזה וישחטו אתו כל קהל עדת ישראל בין הערבים:
רש"י ד"ה והיה לכם למשמרת: זה לשון בקור שטעון בקור ממום ארבעה ימים קודם שחיטה, ומפני מה הקדים לקיחתו לשחיטתו ארבעה ימים מה שלא צוה כן בפסח דורות, היה ר' מתיא בן חרש אומר הרי הוא אומר (יחזקאל ט"ז, ח') "ואעבור עליך ואראך והנה עתך עת דודים," הגיעה שבועה שנשבעתי לאברהם שאגאל את בניו ולא היו בידם מצות להתעסק בהם כדי שיגאלו, שנאמר (שם ז') "ואת ערום וערירי," ונתן להם שתי מצות דם פסח ודם מילה, שמלו באותו הלילה, שנאמר (שם ו') "מתבוססת בדמך," בשני דמים, ואומר (זכרי' ט'), "גם את בדם בריתך שלחתי אסיריך מבור אין מים בו," ולפי שהיו שטופים בעבודה זרה אמר להם (פסוק כ"א) "משכו וקחו לכם," משכו ידיכם מעבודה זרה וקחו לכם צאן של מצוה:

Shemos 12:3: Speak to the entire community of Israel, saying, "On the tenth of this month, let each one take a lamb for each parental home, a lamb for each household. **Shemos 12:6:** And you shall keep it for inspection until the fourteenth day of this month, and the entire congregation of the community of Israel shall slaughter it in the afternoon.

Rashi Heading: And you shall keep it for inspection: This is an expression of inspection, that it (the animal) requires an inspection for a blemish four days before its slaughter. Now why was it to be taken four days before its slaughter, which was not required in the Passover sacrifice of later generations? Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh used to say², "Behold He says, 'and I passed by you and saw you, and behold your time was the time of love.' The time to fulfill the oath that I swore to Avrohom that I would redeem his children has arrived. But they, the Jewish Nation, had no commandments in their hands with which to occupy themselves in order that they be redeemed,

1. There are four additional Torah readings which the Sages established to be read beginning with the Hebrew month of Adar, leading up to Pesach. The first is Parshas Shekalim, which is read on Rosh Chodesh Adar (if it falls out on Shabbos), otherwise it is read on the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh. The second is Parshas Zachor, which is read on the Shabbos before Purim. Third on the list is Parshas Poroh, which is read the Shabbos prior to the fourth, which is Parshas Hachodesh. Parshas Hachodesh is read either on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Nissan (as is the case this year), or on the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh (if Rosh Chodesh is during the week). This marks the beginning of the month during which the exodus from Egypt took place, and is therefore the month in which we celebrate Pesach every year. It discusses the commandment for the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Jewish Court to establish the months of the year. By determining the beginning of each month, the Sanhedrin is also deciding when each festival begins, because the holidays begin on specific days of the Hebrew month. It also discusses the laws pertaining to the offering of the Paschal Lamb, particularly that first year during which the Exodus actually took place. We shall see in the Rebbe's discussion, that there were certain differences (albeit few) between the offering of the Pesach Sacrifice as it was brought then, and as it would be brought in future generations.

2. Yechezkel 16:8.

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as it is said³, 'but you were naked and bare.' So, He gave them two Mitzvos, the blood of the Passover Sacrifice and the blood of circumcision. They circumcised themselves on that night, as it is written⁴, 'downtrodden with your blood,' with the two types of blood. Hashem also said⁵, 'You too, with the blood of your covenant I have freed your prisoners from a pit in which there was no water.' Moreover, the Jews were passionately fond of idolatry. Moshe said to them⁶, 'Withdraw and take for yourselves.' (What he meant was, to) withdraw from idolatry and take for yourselves sheep for the Mitzvoh.

Synopsis

This week's additional Torah portion, Parshas Hachodesh⁷, tells us that Hashem told Moshe to tell the Jews to take a lamb and bring it into their houses on the tenth of Nissan. They were to keep it for inspection until the fourteenth of Nissan, and on that day to slaughter it in the afternoon. Rashi cites the words from the verse⁸ "and you shall keep it for inspection," and explains that the reason is because "it requires an inspection for a blemish four days before its slaughter."

Rashi then quotes a Midrash which asks a question. The very first Pesach Sacrifice was required to be taken on the tenth of the month, but was not offered until the fourteenth. Why is there was no such obligation for future Pesach Sacrifices?

Rashi explains in the name of Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh the time had come for Hashem to redeem the Jews from Egypt. The problem was, that the Jews lacked the merit to bring the Redemption. Therefore, G-d gave them two Mitzvos with which to be occupied; the blood of Bris Milah⁹, and the blood of the Pesach Sacrifice.

At first glance, Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh does not seem to answer this question! The question is why the commandment of taking the lamb four days before offering it only applied to the very first Pesach Offering. His answer does not explain that. Furthermore, what does Bris Milah have to do with a commandment to take the first Pesach Sacrifice on the tenth of Nissan?

Rashi concludes his words by saying that the Jews were passionately fond of idolatry. Moshe told them to withdraw from idolatry and take for themselves sheep for the Mitzvoh. It would seem from Rashi that this is the continuation of Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh's words. However, it is not. These words were said by a different Sage, Rabbi Eliezer Hakafor. Yet Rashi does not mention that!

3. Yechezkel 16:7.

4. Yechezkel 16:6.

5. Zechariah 9:11.

6. Parshas Bo, Shemos 12:21.

7. Parshas Bo, Shemos 12:1 – 20.

8. Parshas Bo, Shemos 12:6.

9. Only a circumcised Jewish male was permitted to partake of the Pesach Sacrifice.

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The explanation is, that the answer is taken from Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh's words together with those of Rabbi Eliezer Hakafor. The Jews were *passionately* involved in idolatry. We had to uproot that passion prior to bringing the offering. We had to become occupied (as in the words of Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh) with two Mitzvos. These needed to be general Mitzvos; one which would show the Jew's allegiance to Hashem, and another to demonstrate refrainment from the negative.

The Mitzvoh of Bris Milah is a general Mitzvoh. It is referred to by the Torah as¹⁰ "a sign of a covenant between Me and you." This covenant with Hashem aligns us with Him in terms of the performance of Mitzvos. Secondly, by bringing one of the idols of the Egyptians¹¹ into our homes for four days, it became clear that the passion from evil was uprooted. The fact that it was four days, demonstrated that it was a decision which was made with great composure, not on the spur of the moment.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's additional Torah portion, Parshas Hachodesh⁷, tells us that Hashem told Moshe¹² to "Speak to the entire community of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month, let each one take a lamb for each parental home, a lamb for each household.'" G-d continues, telling Moshe to tell the Jews¹³ to "keep it for inspection until the fourteenth day of this month, and the entire congregation of the community of Israel shall slaughter it in the afternoon." In other words, Hashem is commanding the Jews, who were preparing to leave Egypt, to take a lamb on the tenth of the month of Nissan. They were to slaughter it as an offering on the fourteenth of Nissan. Rashi cites the words from the verse "and you shall keep it for inspection," and explains that the reason is because "it requires an inspection for a blemish four days before its slaughter." Rashi then quotes a Midrash. "Now why was it to be taken four days before its slaughter, something not required in the Passover sacrifice of later generations? Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh used to say², 'Behold He says, and I passed by you and saw you, and behold your time was the time of love.' The time to fulfill the oath that I swore to Avrohom that I would redeem his children has arrived. But they, the Jewish Nation, had no commandments in their hands with which to occupy themselves in order that they be redeemed, as it is said³, 'but you were naked and bare.' He therefore gave them two Mitzvos; the blood of the Passover Sacrifice and the blood of circumcision. They circumcised themselves on that night, as it is written⁴, 'downtrodden with your blood (in Hebrew blood is written in the plural),' meaning with the two types of blood. Hashem also said⁵, 'You, too, with the blood of your covenant I have freed your prisoners from a pit in which there was no water.' Moreover, the Jews were passionately fond of idolatry. Moshe said to them⁶,

10. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 17:11.

11. Parshas Va'airo, Shemos 8:22. See Rashi's commentary there.

12. Parshas Bo, Shemos 12:3.

13. Parshas Bo, Shemos 12:6.

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'Withdraw and take for yourselves.' (What he meant was, to) withdraw from idolatry and take for yourselves sheep for the Mitzvoh.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

At first glance, Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh does not seem to answer the question! The question is why the obligation to take the lamb four days before offering it, only applied to the first Pesach Sacrifice. This commandment did not apply in subsequent years. He answered that Hashem wanted us to be occupied in Mitzvos. How does that answer the question? It does not explain the reason for keeping the animal four days, and not five days or three days. Also, if Hashem wanted to give us Mitzvos as a merit, why give us two Mitzvos? Why would one not be enough? If it is because we were "naked and bare" of Mitzvos, why not give us many Mitzvos?

Furthermore, Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh does not even mention the taking of the lamb. All that he discusses is the blood of the lamb. This seems to be totally unrelated to our question. Aside from that, Rashi's question has nothing to do with Bris Milah! Why does he even mention that particular Mitzvoh?

Additionally, why does Rashi mention the name of the Sage who made this statement? It is very uncommon for Rashi to quote a specific Sage by name. When he does, it's in order to shed additional light on his explanation. What is added by saying that this teaching was said by Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh?

Rashi concludes his words by saying that the Jews were passionately fond of idolatry. Moshe told them to withdraw from idolatry and take for themselves a sheep for the Mitzvoh. It would seem from Rashi that this is the continuation of Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh's words. However, they are not. They are the words of a different Sage, Rabbi Eliezer Hakafor. Yet Rashi cites all of their words together, as if they are one teaching!

The Explanation

The explanation is that Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh's words do not answer the question. The question is answered by the words of Rabbi Eliezer Hakafor, that the Jews were *passionately* involved in idolatry. They were *steeped* in idolatry. It was something which had to be undone prior to the Redemption. They needed to be occupied (as in the words of Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh) with two Mitzvos. Why specifically two? These needed to be general Mitzvos which would encompass the total being of a Jew. One would demonstrate allegiance to Hashem in performing positive actions, meaning Mitzvos. The other would demonstrate restraint from sinning.

The Mitzvoh of Bris Milah is a general Mitzvoh. It is referred to by the Torah as¹⁰ "a sign of a covenant between Me and you." This covenant with Hashem certainly aligns us with Him in terms of the performance of Mitzvos.

The taking of the lamb helped rid us of our passion for idolatry. Four days before offering the Paschal Lamb we took the animals, which were one of the Egyptian gods¹¹, and brought them into our homes. This uprooted our passion for idolatry.

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What is the significance of four days? Had the Jews taken the lambs and immediately slaughtered them, it would appear to be something done "on the spur of the moment," without giving it much thought. Keeping the animals for four days, with the self-sacrifice it entailed, meant that they had given up their passion for idolatry with total equanimity.

Where do we find that four days signifies composure? When our forefather Avrohom was commanded to bring his son upon a mountain as an offering¹⁴, G-d wanted to avoid giving the impression that he did it immediately, out of a confused state of mind. Hence, He arranged matters as such, that the (supposed) time to slaughter Yitzchok was on the fourth day after he received the command. Therefore, we see that a "cooling-off period" of four days demonstrates that one is behaving with total equanimity.

This also explains the need for mentioning the blood of the Pesach. Blood is analogous to excitement, or a burning desire. The blood of the sacrifice, helped rid us of our passion for idolatry. Ridding ourselves of the passion for idolatry and evil, and bonding ourselves to G-d with an eternal covenant, prepared us for the Redemption!

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Telling us this teaching in the name of Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh adds to our understanding of Rashi's words. The Talmud tells us that Rabbi Masyoh ben Chorosh's Yeshivah – Talmudic Academy was in Rome¹⁵. Rome was the epitome of Exile. In fact, it is the final exile in which we find ourselves now. Was this an appropriate place to house a Torah Academy? There were other Yeshivos in his time, including Academies located in Israel. His Yeshivah, which was the largest in his day, was established in Rome! This obviously caused many students to flock to Rome, in order to study under his tutelage.

Nevertheless, he consoled his students by telling them that even in a bitter exile such as Rome, when coming across those who are "naked and bare" of Mitzvos, we can bring the Redemption by making a Yeshivah there! Even in Exile, we can become occupied in Mitzvos, thereby bringing the Ultimate Redemption!

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Bo, 5737)

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14. Bereishis 22:4.

15. Talmud Sanhedrin 32, b.

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Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

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