

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Tazria-Metzora

5 Iyar, 5781 – April 17, 2021

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Tazria-Metzora
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Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא י"ד, ל"ד: כי תבאו אל ארץ כנען אשר אני נתן לכם לאחזה ונתתי נגע צרעת בבית ארץ אֲחֻזְתְּכֶם:

רש"י ד"ה ונתתי נגע צרעת: בשורה היא להם שהנגעים באים עליהם, לפי שהטמינו אמוריים מטמוניות של זהב בקירות בתיהם כל ארבעים שנה שהיו ישראל במדבר, ועל ידי הנגע נותן הבית ומוצאן:

Vayikroh 14:34: When you come to the land of Canaan which I am giving you as a possession, and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as upon a house in the land of your possession ...

Rashi Heading – and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as: This is good news for them that lesions of Tzora'as will come upon them because the Emorites had hidden away treasures of gold inside the walls of their houses during the entire forty years that the Jews were in the desert. Through this lesion, he will demolish the house and find them (i.e., the hidden treasures).

Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Tazria-Metzora, tells us at great length of the disease called Tzora'as¹. The Torah tells us that this lesion can affect a person, a garment, or a house. The Torah announces that upon conquering and possessing the land of Canaan, there will be houses that will have this affliction. Rashi explains to us why this is a positive thing. The Jews wandered in the desert for forty years. Throughout this time, the Emorites were hiding treasures of gold within the walls of their homes. As a result of those homes being stricken with Tzora'as when the Jews took possession of them, they would need to be demolished to be purified². Hence the new Jewish owners would find the gold which the Emorites hid within the walls.

The Torah says that when the Jews come to Canaan, Hashem will place a lesion of Tzora'as upon the houses. However, Rashi, who explains each verse's simple meaning, tells us that the *Emorites* were hiding gold within the walls of their homes. Why single out the Emorites, who were only one of the Canaanite nations?

We explained many times that Rashi wrote his commentary so that there is no need to search for any information elsewhere. When it seems that such a need arises, it was explicitly explained earlier either in the Torah or in Rashi's comments. This is such an instance. In Hashem's covenant with Avrohom, Hashem said

1. Tzora'as was not a typical physical illness which came from bacteria or infection. Rather it was a spiritual malady. We see this from the fact that a doctor could not diagnose this sickness, which no longer exists; only a Kohen could issue the diagnoses. By the same token, the process which would purify (heal) the "patient" and allow him to re-enter the community was performed by a Kohen.

2. See our Parshah, Vayikroh 14:43-45.

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that³ "the fourth generation will return here⁴, for the iniquity of the Emorites will not be complete until then." Rashi explains the meaning of this. Our forefather Yaakov went down to Egypt. His son Yehudah was the first generation, Peretz was the second, and Chetzron was the third. The fourth generation, Kaleiv, the son of Chetzron, was among those who entered Israel. However, Rashi explains that we could not enter the land until the sin of the Emorites was complete, i.e., until they were fully deserving of punishment.

As the Torah continues telling us of G-d's covenant with Avrohom, it specifies ten nations that the Jews will conquer⁵, all of whom are included in the general term Canaanites. Nonetheless, the Emorites were those who would determine the time which the Jews will settle Israel.

This is what Rashi hints at by saying that the Emorites were hiding gold within their houses' walls throughout the forty years that the Jews were in the wilderness. They knew that at the time of the Exodus, their sin was complete, and it was time for them to be sent out of their land. Hence, they were the first of the Canaanite nations to begin hiding their gold. That is the reason that Rashi singles them out.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Tazria-Metzora, explains the disease of Tzora'as¹ in great detail. It defines three different types of Tzora'as; discolored lesions on the body, clothing, and houses. It also tells us how one can become healed (or more accurately purified) from this disease. Early on in the Parshah, it teaches us of Tzora'as that affects a person's body. It then defines Tzora'as lesions that affect one's clothing. Then, somewhat later, the Torah tells us how Tzora'as lesions can attack a house. The Torah begins this discussion by notifying us that⁶ "When you come to the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as upon a house in the land of your possession ..."

From the Torah's words, one could think that Tzora'as is beneficial. It sounds as if Hashem is announcing that He is giving us this wonderful land. Together with this gift, He is giving us Tzora'as. This is a spiritual *disease*! What is the reason for this announcement? Rashi cites the words from the verse, "and I will place a lesion of Tzora'as." He then explains that "this is good news for them that lesions of Tzora'as will come upon them because the Emorites had hidden away treasures of gold inside the walls of their houses during the entire forty years that the Jews were in the desert. Through this lesion, he will demolish the house⁷ and find them." This is how Rashi explains that finding Tzora'as on our houses in the Holy Land would benefit the Jews.

3. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:16.

4. Meaning that they will return to Israel, the Promised Land.

5. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:19-21.

6. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 14:34.

7. See Footnote 2.

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Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi explains a verse in the Torah that tells us what will happen when we come to the land of Canaan, which G-d is giving us. Yet his explanation singles out the Emorites. Hashem promised to provide us with the land of ten nations⁸. Collectively they were called the Canaanites. The Emorites are just one of these ten nations. Why does Rashi, who is explaining Peshat, not discuss all of the Canaanites?

We also need to understand why Rashi writes that "the Emorites had hidden away treasures of gold inside the walls of their houses during the entire forty years that the Jews were in the desert." Granted, the Canaanites knew that the Jews would conquer their land. At the splitting of the Red Sea, the Torah says that⁹ "all of the inhabitants of Canaan melted." Rashi explains that the Canaanites noted that "they are coming upon us to annihilate us and possess our land." Additionally, we find the same idea when the Jews began the conquest of Israel. After crossing the Jordan River, Yehoshua sent two spies to Jericho – Yericho. They spoke to Rachav, who told them that¹⁰ "... I know that the Lord has given you the land. Your terror is fallen upon us. All the inhabitants of the land have melted away because of you. For we had heard how Hashem dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt etc." They knew what was going to happen. However, they also saw that the Jews were stuck in the desert for a lengthy time. Why should they have spent all of those years hiding gold?

The Explanation

Rashi wrote his commentary to the Torah so that there would never be a need to consult with another book or commentary. What about instances such as this, when something which Rashi himself wrote seems to contain a difficulty? We must say that this obvious question was answered earlier by an explicit statement of the Torah (with Rashi's commentary).

That is the case here. We find that the Torah clearly emphasized the Emorites when discussing the Canaanite nations. Hashem promised our forefather Avrohom that He would give the land of Canaan – Israel to his descendants. In Hashem's covenant with Avrohom, G-d said to him³, "And the fourth generation will return here (to Israel), for the iniquity of the Emorites will not be complete until then." What exactly is meant by this? In Rashi's commentary to that verse, he cites the words "and the fourth generation" and explains as follows. "After the exile to Egypt, they will be there for three generations. The fourth will return to this land. It was in the land of Canaan that Hashem spoke with Avrohom and formed this covenant etc. And so, it was:

8. Actually, He gave us the land of seven nations. We will be given the land of the additional three nations with the coming of Moshiach.

9. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 15:15.

10. Yehoshua 2:9-10.

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Yaakov descended to Egypt. Go forth and figure his generations. Yehudah, Peretz, and Chetzron. Kaleiv, the son of Chetzron, was one of those who entered the land."

The Jewish people could have entered Israel immediately after the Exodus, were it not for the sin of the spies. Rashi cites the words "for the iniquity of the Emorites will not be complete," and explains as follows. "The Emorites should be sent out of their land until that time, for Hashem does not punish a nation until its measure is full¹¹, as it is said¹², 'When her measure is complete when You send her away, then You will strive with her.'"

From the above, we see that the Emorites were the first to reach their breaking point from all of the Canaanite nations. They were the first to have accumulated so much sin that they deserved exile from their land before any other Canaanite nations. Being aware that they deserved to be conquered by the Jews at the time of the Exodus, they immediately began hiding money in their walls. They knew their fate, but they hoped to reconquer their land and reclaim their gold ultimately. However, Hashem had other plans for them. That is why Rashi singled out the Emorites for special mention. They were the first to have reached the entire level of iniquity. Had the spies not sinned, the Jews would have entered Canaan and conquered the Emorites immediately. They could have lost their land at any point following the Exodus.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Rashi is providing us with a much more profound lesson here as well. Rashi has told us that the cause of Tzora'as is the sin of Loshon Hora – Gossip¹³. The Rambam carries this a step further. He says that the cause is not necessarily actual Loshon Hora. He says that what he calls "speech of the wicked" can cause the impurity of lesions. He explains at length that this includes all sorts of idle and pointless chatter¹⁴.

This is the impurity of the Emorites. The Hebrew word for Emorite - אַמֹּרִי, is from the same root as the Hebrew verb to say - אָמַר. That is why Rashi singles out the Emorite nation in regard to Tzora'as; they are essentially the same concept.

However, Rashi also tells us of the treasures of gold that were within the Emorite homes. By changing from slanderous or even idle speech to words of Torah, Prayer, and Mitzvos, we can find the most significant, most valuable treasures! That is why after discussing "speech of the wicked" at length, the Rambam goes on at such length describing proper, holy speech¹⁵. He concludes this section by writing that "In contrast, the

11. Despite the fact that Hashem knows that a nation will continue to sin, He will not punish them until they fully deserve to be punished.

12. Yeshayahu 27:8.

13. Parshas Tazria, Vayikroh 13:46, and Parshas Metzorah Vayikroh 14:4.

14. See Rambam at the end of the Laws of the Impurity of Tzora'as.

15. *Ibid.*

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speech of proper Jewish people only concerns words of Torah and wisdom. Therefore, Hashem assists them and grants them merit, as it says¹⁶, 'Then those who fear G-d conversed, each person with his fellow. Hashem listened and paid heed. And a book of remembrance was composed before Him for those who fear G-d and contemplate His name.'

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Metzora 5741)

I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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16. Malachi 3:16.

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