

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Beha'aloscho

19 Sivan, 5779 – June 22, 2019

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Beha'aloscho
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Rashi in His Own Words

במדבר ה', ב': דבר אל אהרן ואמרף אליו בהעלתך את הנרות אל מול פני המנורה ואירו שבעת הנרות:

רש"י ד"ה בהעלתך: למה נסמכה פרשת המנורה לפרשת הנשיאים, לפי שכשראה אהרן חנוכת הנשיאים חלשה דעתו, שלא היה עמהם בחנוכה, לא הוא ולא שבטו, אמר לו הקב"ה חייך, שלך גדולה משלהם, שאתה מדליק ומטיב את הנרות:

Bamidbar 8:2: Speak to Aharon and say to him, "When you light the candles (of the Menorah), the seven candles shall cast their light toward the face of the Menorah."

Rashi Heading: When you light: Why is the portion dealing with the Menorah juxtaposed to the portion dealing with the princes of each tribe? Because when Aharon saw the dedications of the princes, he felt distressed over not joining them in this dedication; neither he nor his tribe. So, Hashem said to him, "By your life¹, yours is greater than theirs. You will light and prepare the lamps."

Synopsis

This week we read the Torah portion of Beha'aloscho. The Parshah begins with Moshe being commanded to tell his brother Aharon to prepare and light the candles in the Menorah. Rashi cites the words "when you light," and explains the positioning of this Parshah. It immediately follows the story of the offerings brought by the twelve princes of the tribes in order to dedicate the altar of the Tabernacle. Rashi writes that Aharon was upset over not taking part in this dedication. Hashem "swore" to him that his lot is greater than theirs; he will light and prepare the lamps.

It is very common for the Midrash to explain the reason for the juxtaposition of sections of the Torah. Rashi on the other hand does this very rarely. The reason is, that the fact that a particular teaching of the Torah precedes or follows another teaching does not concern Peshat. When Rashi does explain the significance the positioning of the verses, he is explaining some difficulty according to Peshat. What might have trouble understanding here?

Aharon's command to light and prepare the candles of the Menorah was to begin on the day that the Mishkan was put to use, the first day of Nissan. This means that in all likelihood the command was given before that day; however, it was certainly given no later than that day. That very same day was when

1. This is an expression designating an oath; i.e. G-d said that "I swear to you ..."

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

the princes began bringing their dedications. In other words, the Torah waited twelve days to tell us of Aharon's command. Rashi explains that the reason for the delay was in order to console Aharon.

We need to understand several things. Why did Aharon find Hashem's words that "yours are greater than theirs" a consolation? Hashem never explained why they were greater. Perhaps it was something obvious which Aharon could understand on his own. If that was the case, why was Aharon upset? Furthermore, Aharon was commanded to perform many other services in the Tabernacle on a daily basis. That being the case, we need to understand what caused his distress.

The explanation is that he wasn't upset because the princes performed a job in which he did not take part. Rather his distress came from the fact that the prince's offerings served to dedicate the altar in the Mishkan. He had no part in the dedication of the altar. Therefore, Hashem told him that his preparing and lighting the candles served to dedicate the Menorah. This inauguration *was indeed* greater than theirs. The Menorah was inside the Tabernacle building itself, while the altar was outside in the courtyard. Additionally, the offerings they brought were a onetime occurrence. Lighting the Menorah was performed every day.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Parshah, Beha'aloscho, begins by telling us that Hashem told Moshe to² "Speak to Aharon and say to him, 'When you light the candles, the seven candles shall cast their light toward the face of the Menorah.'" Rashi cites the words from the verse "when you light" and explains as follows. "Why is the portion of the Torah which deals with lighting the Menorah juxtaposed to the portion dealing with the princes of each tribe? Because when Aharon saw the dedications of the princes, he felt distressed over not joining them in this dedication; neither he nor his tribe. So, Hashem said to him, 'By your life¹, yours is greater than theirs. You will light and prepare the lamps.'"

Rashi is explaining the connection between the end of the previous Torah portion, Naso, and the beginning of ours. Last week's Parshah concluded with the prince of each tribe bringing an offering with which to dedicate the altar of the new Tabernacle. Moshe Rabbeinu constructed the Tabernacle and dismantled it each day for seven days. On the eighth day, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, it was erected and left standing. That is when they began using it on a regular, daily basis. For twelve consecutive days, the leader of each tribe brought offerings with which to dedicate the new altar. Aharon was upset, because

2. Our Parshah, Bamidbar 8:2.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

neither he nor his tribe were included in this dedication. Therefore, Hashem consoled him here. Hashem swore to him that his preparing and lighting the Menorah in the beginning of our Parshah was greater than whatever offerings the princes brought. Hence the connection between the two Torah portions.

We have discussed many times that the Midrash often explains the reason for the juxtaposition of one section of Torah to another. Rashi, on the other hand, rarely does. The reason is obvious. In the vast majority of cases, the positioning of one section of Torah before or after another makes no difference according to Peshat. It generally does not pose any difficulty in our understanding of what the Torah is saying. There are several instances where the juxtaposition of different areas of Torah *does* create a question in Peshat. Those are the cases that Rashi explains. This is one such instance.

Aharon's command to light the Menorah began on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. The command to do so, which comes at the beginning of our Parshah must have come beforehand. The latest it could possibly have come was *on* Rosh Chodesh. The prince's dedications *began* on Rosh Chodesh and continued for 12 days. The question which arises in Peshat is why the Torah does not tell us of the command to light the Menorah until after it completes telling us of the sacrifices offered by each of the princes. Why did the Torah wait until twelve days had elapsed to tell us of Aharon's command to light the Menorah? Rashi explains this by telling us of Aharon's distress. He was consoled by his role in preparing and lighting the Menorah.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi writes that "yours (Aharon's) is greater than theirs (the princes)". Yet we do not find that Hashem ever explained why it was greater. Perhaps it was greater due to an obvious reason which Aharon could understand on his own. If that is the case why was he distressed?

There are a number of questions posed by the Ramban³ which present difficulties in Rashi's comments. Why was Aharon only consoled by the service of lighting the Menorah? Only he and his descendants were commanded to perform many other tasks in the Tabernacle – Temple. He was the one to offer the "Ketores – Incense" every day. Only Kohanim could offer all of the sacrifices which were offered in the Tabernacle. There was a special meal offering (called the Minchas Chavitin) which he alone⁴ brought, half in the morning and half in the evening. Greater than all of the above is the fact that he alone could fulfill the entire service of Yom Kippur. This included entering the Holy of Holies. No one else at any time was permitted there.

3. See the Ramban's comments to our Parshah, Bamidbar 8:2.

4. In following generations, it could only be brought by the High Priest, i.e. Aharon's successor.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Aside from the Ramban's questions there are other difficulties in understanding Rashi's comments⁵. Rashi says that Aharon was disturbed that neither he nor his tribe were included in the offerings to dedicate the Mizbe'ach. However, only he and his fellow Kohanim were able to actually offer all dedications upon the altar. We see that they were indeed included in a very special manner!

The Explanation

Aharon was not disturbed because the princes of each tribe took part in a particular service in which he could not participate. What he found distressing was the fact that he could not participate in the dedication, the inauguration of the Tabernacle. Therefore, Hashem told him that he is also participating in the inauguration of the Mishkan. Not only that, but "*yours* is (even) greater than *theirs*. You will light and prepare the lamps." *They* dedicated the altar. However, *you* dedicated the Menorah.

In Rashi's words, Aharon "felt distressed over not joining them in this *dedication*." That was what bothered him. Hashem comforted him by saying that "you will light and prepare the lamps." With this phrase Hashem explained to him why "his is greater than theirs."

1. *You*: The leaders of each tribe did indeed bring the offerings for the dedication of the altar. However only *you*, a Kohen was able to actually offer these gifts to G-d as sacrifices.
2. *will light and prepare*: All of the steps needed in order to dedicate the Menorah were performed by Aharon. Not only did he prepare the lamps but he also lit them. This is in contrast to the princes who could only perform the first stage of their dedication. All they could do was bring the offerings. They required the service of a Kohen to complete the service by actually offering it on the altar. Aharon could dedicate the Menorah from beginning to end; he could both light and prepare the lights of the Menorah.
3. *the lamps*: Aharon inaugurated the Menorah. This was inside of the Mishkan – Temple building. Additionally, this was a task which he (or one of his descendants) performed every day. This is done as long as there is either a Tabernacle or a Bais Hamikdosh in existence. On the other hand, the princes dedicated the altar which was in the outside courtyard. Additionally, their dedication only took place once. The leader of each of the twelve tribes had only one chance to bring his gifts.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

In works of Chassidic philosophy, it is explained that the spiritual candles of the Menorah are

5. This question is posed by the holy Ohr Hachaim.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Jewish souls⁶. This is keeping with the words of Scripture⁷ that “man’s soul is the Lord’s lamp.” The unification of all Jewish souls is called the Menorah. The seven lamps of the Menorah are parallel to the seven levels of G-dly service. Aharon’s job is to light the spiritual Menorah. He draws down Divine vitality into each and every soul. In this manner he lifts each one up. He brings each Jew to love G-d.

That is the deeper reason that when Aharon saw that “when Aharon saw the dedications of the princes, he felt distressed.” His distress was caused by the knowledge that this would be a onetime occurrence. He thought that the same may be true of the Menorah. That would mean that he could not be there for those Jews who require extra inspiration. He found the thought that the dedication of the “Menorah – Souls” would only take place once very upsetting. If that were the case it would only help those who left Egypt and received the Torah. They were already on a higher spiritual level.

Therefore, Hashem told him that by your life, yours is greater than theirs. You will light and prepare the lamps.” Hashem was telling him that he could spiritually be a positive influence on all Jews throughout all generations “by his life.” By the source of all life, the essence of G-d which transcends time and space, he would not be limited to one time, or even one generation. He will continue lighting the souls of each of us throughout all time.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Beha’aloscho 5725)

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6. See Likkutei Torah at the beginning of our Torah portion.

7. Mishlei 20:27.

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Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

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