

בס"ז

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Ha'azinu

13 Tishrei, 5780 – October 12, 2019

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

דברים ל"ב, מ"ד: וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה בַּיּוֹם אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַשִּׁירָה־הַזֹּאת בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם הוּא וְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־נּוּן:

רש"י ד"ה הוא והושע בן נון: שבת של דיווגי היתה, נטלה רשות מזה ונתנה לזה, העמיד לו משה מתורגמן ליהושע, שיהא דורש בחייו, כדי שלא יאמרו ישראל בחיי רבך לא היה לך להרים ראש. ולמה קוראו כאן הושע, לומר שלא זחה דעתו עליו, שאף על פי שנתנה לו גדולה, השפיל עצמו כאשר מתחלתו:

Devorim 31:44: And Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song¹ into the ears of the people; he and Hoshea the son of Nun.

Rashi Heading - he and Hoshea the son of Nun: It was a Shabbos which had two leaders (because the office was being transferred to Yehoshua). Authority was taken from one and given to the other². Moshe appointed a “*meturgeman*”³ for Yehoshua, in order that he could expound the Torah in Moshe’s lifetime. This was in order that the Jews would not say to Yehoshua, “During your teacher’s lifetime you did not dare to raise your head!”⁴ And why does Scripture here call him Hoshea⁵? It is in order to imply that Yehoshua did not become haughty. Despite the fact that he was given high status, he humbled himself as he was at the beginning (when he was still called Hoshea)⁶.

Synopsis

In this week’s Torah portion, Ha’azinu, the Torah tells us that⁷ “Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song⁸ into the ears of the people; he and Hoshea the son of Nun.” Until this point, Moshe was the teacher, and all of Israel were his students. On this day, the last day of Moshe’s life, both he and Yehoshua (referred to as Hoshea, his original name) both taught.

Why was this so? Rashi explains that “It was a Shabbos which had two leaders (because the leadership was being transferred to Yehoshua). Authority was taken from one and given to the other. Moshe appointed a “*meturgeman*” for Yehoshua, in order that he could expound the Torah in Moshe’s lifetime.

1. The Song of Ha’azinu which was just concluded; our Parshah, Devorim 32:1-43.

2. Talmud Sotah, 13, b.

3. Meturgeman literally means a translator. Hear, as in common Talmudic language, it refers to a spokesman who relayed the teacher’s words to the public.

4. Sifrei 31:1.

5. His name had been changed to Yehoshua forty years earlier. See Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 13:16.

6. See the Sifrei on our Parshah, 32:44.

7. Our Parshah, Devorim 32:44.

8. See footnote 1.

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This was in order that the Jews would not say to Yehoshua, “During your teacher’s lifetime you did not dare to raise your head!” And why does Scripture here call him Hoshea? It is in order to imply that Yehoshua did not become haughty. Despite the fact that he was given high status, he humbled himself as he was at the beginning (when he was still called Hoshea).

Rashi always explains the simple meaning of the text. Even when he cites a Midrash or a Gemorah, his explanation fits squarely with Peshat. Here, not only is he quoting one teaching of the Sages; he is citing three separate, disparate teachings, and combining them as one. Why does Rashi find this necessary?

The explanation is, that Rashi is explaining the reason for this unique situation. Generally, the sun sets, meaning that the ruling of one leader concludes, and *then*, the sun rises, i.e. the new leader takes his place. Yehoshua would become the new ruler. However, in our verse Moshe, “he and Hoshea the son of Nun” both taught the nation together. Rashi is explaining why this was the case. Yehoshua was the perfect student. He was the picture of humility; totally devoted to his teacher Moshe. Had Moshe not appointed him to teach together with him, he would not have been accepted as a leader. It is by quoting these three Midrashim that Rashi brings out this point.

Rashi’s Explanation

This week’s Torah portion, Ha’azinu, begins with a song⁹. Hashem calls the heavens and the earth, which are eternal, to serve as witnesses to the Jewish Nation’s behavior. Immediately at the conclusion of this song, Hashem says that¹⁰ “Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song into the ears of the people; he and Hoshea the son of Nun.”

Why does the Torah tell us that both Moshe and Yehoshua (formerly known as Hoshea) taught the Torah to the Jews? Rashi explains that this was the last day of Moshe’s life. Had Yehoshua not taught in Moshe’s presence, he would not have been accepted as Moshe’s successor. He indeed had “very large shoes to fill.”

Therefore, on this day there were two leaders, both of whom expounded the Torah. Not only that, but Moshe himself appointed a *meturgeman* to convey Yehoshua’s teachings to the public. Rashi concludes by telling us that despite the fact that Hoshea had been known as Yehoshua for many years, the Torah refers to him by his original name here. This comes to teach us despite the fact that he reached greatness, and was the one and only who was chosen by Hashem to take Moshe’s place, he remained the same humble Hoshea.

9. Our Parshah, 32:1.

10. Our Parshah, Devorim 32:44.

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Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi's commentary serves the purpose of teaching us Peshat, the simple meaning of the Torah. He himself writes that "my sole intention is to explain Peshat" a number of times¹¹. Even when he does cite a teaching of the Sages, either from the Talmud or the Midrash, his explanation fits with the simple meaning of the verse.

In our case, however, we find something most unusual. Rashi's comments here consist of quotations from not one, but three different Midrashic sources. Furthermore, each of the three is a comment on a different verse.

The beginning of Rashi, that "It was a Shabbos which had two leaders," is a Gemorah in Sotah (see footnote 2). Rashi's words that Moshe appointed a *meturgeman* for Yehoshua, is from the Midrash of Parshas Vayelech (see footnote 4). Rashi's concluding words, explaining why Moshe's student is called Hoshea is from a Midrash on our Parshah (see footnote 6).

Furthermore, the content of the first two sources quoted by Rashi is basically the same. Each explains that permission was granted to Yehoshua to take over as the teacher and leader of the Jews. However, the third Midrash which Rashi quotes appears to be totally unrelated to this. It explains why the verse refers to Yehoshua by an old name. Despite the fact that it does not appear to be related to his first two statements, Rashi introduces it with the conjunction "and," which indicates that they are connected.

The Explanation

When we learn our Parshah, we are immediately challenged by a difficulty. Why does the Torah tell us here that Moshe came together with Yehoshua, "Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song into the ears of the people; he and Hoshea the son of Nun.?" Granted, we know that Yehoshua never left Moshe's side, as it is written¹² "his attendant, Yehoshua the son of Nun, a lad, would never depart from his (Moshe's) tent." This being the case, it is obvious that Yehoshua was present with Moshe. Why does the Torah specify this here? It is not telling us that Yehoshua was present. Rather it teaches us that when "Moshe came and spoke," he was not speaking alone. He was speaking together with Yehoshua, "he and Hoshea the son of Nun."

In other words, when the Torah tells us that Moshe recited the song of Ha'azinu, it adds that it was not *just* Moshe. Rather it was "he and Hoshea the son of Nun." The word "he" is seemingly superfluous. It teaches us here that he, i.e. Moshe, and Yehoshua, spoke together as equals.

11. See for example Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis 3:8, ibid. 3:24, and ibid. 8:6.

12. Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:11.

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Rashi is telling us, that this was indeed the case here. Rashi begins by telling us that it was a “Shabbos of two leaders.” Each generation has only one leader, as Rashi says elsewhere¹³, “there can only be one leader for a generation, and not two.” How was it possible for both Moshe and Yehoshua to rule simultaneously? Obviously, Moshe had to *appoint* Yehoshua as his successor. However, how could they both actually rule at the same time? First the sun sets, i.e. the leadership of one leader sets, and then the sun rises. How is it possible to have a “Shabbos of *two* leaders?”

Rashi teaches that this was indeed the case by quoting the above Gemorah. The Talmud uses the unusual word “דייזגי – Diyuzgi.” This word is a contraction of the two words “די – two,” and “זוג – pair.” In other words, Rashi is making it clear that they were literally two leaders at the same time.

That is also why Rashi continued by saying that Moshe appointed a *meturgeman* for Yehoshua. Addressing the nation through a *meturgeman* was a sign of leadership. Hence, it was important that they both spoke in the same manner¹⁴, with an interpreter.

Why was the transition from Moshe’s leadership to that of Yehoshua different than all others? Why was it necessary for both to teach and lead the people at the same time? In order to explain this, Rashi adds that Moshe appointed the *meturgeman* “in order that he (Yehoshua) could expound the Torah in Moshe’s lifetime. This was in order that the Jews would not say to Yehoshua, “During your teacher’s lifetime you did not dare to raise your head.”

Throughout Moshe’s lifetime, Yehoshua’s conduct was one of total subjugation. He did not conduct himself as leader in any sense of the word; he was a totally dedicated student who never left his teacher’s side. That is why we find that¹⁵ “his attendant, Yehoshua the son of Nun, *a lad*, would never depart from (Moshe’s) tent.” Because of this, the people would have looked at him more as a student than a teacher, had Moshe himself not made it clear that he was to be their teacher.

Rashi then makes it clear, that despite his ascent to greatness, “he humbled himself as he was at the beginning (when he was still called Hoshea).”

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Whoever merits a position of leadership receives Divine assistance to help him carry out his mission. Hashem never gives one a job which he is incapable of handling. Leading the Jewish People is certainly a most difficult task, as we saw throughout Moshe’s forty years of leadership in the wilderness. Together with the position, comes the Divine power which aids one in handling it.

13. Parshas Vayelech, Devorim 31:7.

14. This also helps to explain the use of the word “דייזגי – Diyuzgi.” Moshe and Yehoshua were one pair, not two. However, Moshe and his interpreter were one pair, as were Yehoshua and his.

15. Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:11. Please note that at this time, when Yehoshua was called a lad, he was fifty-six years old.

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The same is true of each and every Jew. We were all chosen for a tremendous position; to transform this physical world to Hashem's dwelling place. Due to this exalted position, and the Divine aid which we attain in order to help us carry it out, one may believe that he truly deserves his position due to his merit. This may cause a feeling of haughtiness. Nonetheless, we must all learn from Yehoshua, that no matter what position we attain, we must always retain the necessary feeling of humility.

May we all have a good, sweet year both in spiritual and physical matters. The new year which we just began should be sweet in a revealed manner. We should merit the ultimate blessing of Moshiach Now!

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Ha'azinu 5731 and 5743)

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