The Gutnick Edition

Chumash

The Book of Exodus

With Rashi’s commentary, Targum Onkelos, Haftaros and commentary anthologized from Classic Rabbinic Texts and the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Compiled and Adapted by
Rabbi Chaim Miller
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We are delighted that Sefer Shemos of the Kol Menachem Chumash is now entering its fourth edition, which includes numerous amendments to both the Hebrew and English texts and commentary to the Haftaros.

We once again extend our thanks to Rabbi Meyer Gutnick, who has graciously accepted upon himself the labor and expense of publishing and distributing this work. May this merit be a source of eternal blessing for him and his family.

May we soon merit the true and complete redemption, with Mashiach Tzidkeinu, speedily in our days.

Kol Menachem
8th of Elul 5768
כשתם שוכנים צאן ו🤣ףackets שוכנים संगी चाल चाल चाल चाल चाल चाल

מהם שוכנים ים חים והנה נחל מרבך משאה

מחבם א텐הף פור חלישא קפה

חלישה ליבושה כולם אזולא אזולא גורש הפרשים

דראיה תביר יתיב ססיק ומרח פסוק: שלשה

קורין פרה מרבד אספול ירה בזים: 
The person who is called to the Torah takes hold of the handles of the Sefer Torah with his tallis, unrolls the Sefer Torah and, with his tallis (or the belt of the Torah) touches the beginning and end of the reading. The scroll is then closed, he turns slightly to the right and says:

בָּכְלֵךְ אַתָּה يִנְחְ בּוֹ מִתָּכְנֶה.

The congregation responds:

בֹּרְוַה יִנְחְ בּוֹ מִתָּכְנֶה הָעָלֵלָם וּדוּ.

The person called to the Torah continues:

בֹּרְוַה יִנְחְ בּוֹ מִתָּכְנֶה וּדוּ.


The person called to the Torah now reads along with the reader in an undertone.

After the reading is complete, the person called to the Torah touches the end and the beginning of the reading with his tallis (or belt of the Sefer Torah) and kisses it. He then closes the scroll, turns slightly to the right and says:


After the reading is complete, the person called to the Torah stays at the bimah until the next reading is concluded (or, if it is the last reading, until the Torah is raised).

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1. Sefer Haminhagim. According to the Rebbe’s personal custom, the handles are held directly, without the tallis in between.

2. Sefer Haminhagim. According to the Rebbe’s personal custom, the tallis is used to touch the beginning, the end and then the beginning of the reading again.

3. Sefer Haminhagim. According to the Rebbe’s personal custom, the tallis is used to touch the end, the beginning and then the end of the reading again.
In the early years of his leadership, the Alter Rebbe declared publicly:

“We have to live with the times!”

Through his brother, the Maharil, the senior chasidim discovered that the Rebbe meant that one should live with the Parsha of the week, and the particular Parsha of the day. One should not only study the weekly Parsha, but live with it.

(Hayom Yom, Cheshvan 2)
The Name of the Parsha

The word “Shemos” means “names,” as in the verse, “These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt” (1:1).

A person’s name is an extremely personal matter. Whenever a person hears his name called out, the word resonates in his heart and lifts his spirits. People feel so strongly for their names that they will pay fortunes to have their names written on buildings, as they yearn for their identity to be perpetuated in stone. In fact, a name is such a deep-rooted entity that, if a person faints (God forbid), whispering his name into his ear can actually bring him back to consciousness.

This is the inner significance of a name. Superficially, however, a name does not express a person’s unique, essential qualities at all. In fact, many different people possess exactly the same name!

A name thus expresses somewhat of a paradox. On the surface, a name tells you nothing about a person. And yet, on probing deeper, it is a word that represents a person’s total uniqueness.

And it is precisely for this reason—the paradoxical quality of a name—that this Parsha is called “names.”

The paradox in our Parsha is that we read here of a moment of gloom for the Jewish people. They descend into exile. They are enslaved. And when a glimmer of hope appears on the horizon, when Moshe comes to redeem the Jewish people, the immediate result is that things get worse.

And yet, on the other hand, the Midrash states that the key theme of our Parsha is redemption! (Shemos Rabbah 1:5)

But that is why the Parsha is called “Names,” for a name is also a paradox, precisely the same type of paradox which we witness in this Parsha. For just as a name is, superficially, a concealment of a person’s true identity—for so many other different people share the same name—and yet, deep down, a person feels that his name represents his total uniqueness; so too, Parshas Shemos is superficially a concealment of the Jewish spirit, but deep down, that spirit always remains intact and alive.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5746)
Why does the book of Shemos begin with the names of the sons of Ya'akov and the size of their families? (v. 1)

**RASHI:** Although God counted them by their names in their lifetime, He counted them again after they died, to teach us how precious they were to Him.

This is analogous to the stars, of which it is written (Isaiah 40:26), “He Who takes out their hosts by number, calls them all by name.”

**RASHBAM & DA'AS ZEKINIM:** The point of this entire section is to emphasize how the Jewish people grew at a phenomenal rate, to the extent that “the land became filled with them” (v. 7). Therefore, the Torah repeats the fact that, when Ya'akov came to Egypt, there were only seventy people in the entire House of Israel (v. 5) in order to stress the incredible speed at which they multiplied.

Why was there a change of attitude towards the Jewish people? (v. 8)

**RASHI:** The Torah states, “A new king arose who did not know Yosef.” The Talmudic Sages Rav and Shmuel disagreed about the meaning of this verse. One said that it was actually a new king. But the other said that it was the same king but that he came up with new decrees. According to this second opinion, verse 8 (that Pharaoh “did not know Yosef”) means that he made himself as if he did not know Yosef.

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Why is Naming the Best Sign of Affection? (Rashi, v.1)

Seemingly, there are greater signs of affection than mere naming. A parent can show love to a child through giving a gift, or through words of affection, or through physical embracing. Why did God show his affection to the tribes through repeating their names?

However, these other signs of affection are all relative to the situation at hand. For example, what might be a generous gift for one child would be an insult to another. Similarly, words of affection must be specific for a particular child at his level. And while a hug may always seem appropriate, it requires the presence of the child and his conscious alertness. Only the calling of a name breaks through these barriers and is applicable in all circumstances.

Consequently, when the Jewish people were immersed in the idolatrous culture of Egypt, they had few merits, and so the only possible sign of affection was to repeat their names. This teaches us that God’s love for a Jew is unconditional.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 6, p.8ff)
The first interpretation is that Pharaoh did not know Yosef. However, an interesting question one might ask is: Was Pharaoh's rebellion against God less severe? Pharaoh might have reasoned that if he acted like a new king, it would be ludicrous to presume that he had never heard of Yosef at all, for Yosef had been an extremely prominent minister in Egypt for many years.

One could, of course, suggest that the new king was not a descendent of the previous one, and that he came from a distant land, but such an argument is clearly far-fetched (Sotah 11a).

Midrash: The reason why the first opinion (Rav) holds that it was a different king is because the Torah uses the word “new,” which implies that it was literally a new king.

However, the second opinion (Shmuel) is troubled by the fact that there is no mention of the original king passing away. Therefore, he understands that when the Torah says that the king was new it means that he acted like a new king (Shemos Rabah 1:8).

Toras Menachem: Here enters a further distinction between Rav and Shmuel. The Talmud states (Bechoros 49b) that the halachah favors Rav in cases of pure religious law (Isur v’Heter), whereas the halachah is according to Shmuel in Jewish Civil Law. This is because each of these two sages specialized in one particular area of the law, so we presume that their rulings were more reliable in their own specialty. Rav’s mind, which was immersed in pure religious law, was predisposed to mitzvos directly between man and God, whereas Shmuel, who specialized in Civil Law, trained his mind to think always in terms of mitzvos between “man and his fellow.”

In our case, the natural predisposition of Rav and Shmuel to their respective specialties influenced the way in which they understood Pharaoh’s sin:

If it was the same king who enslaved the Jewish people, then the rebellion against God was less severe. Pharaoh might have reasoned that there was some sort of Divine sanction to do what he pleased with Ya’akov and his family, since:

a.) they had arrived in Egypt by Divine Providence, begging for food; and, b.) Ya’akov had always respected Pharaoh’s authority as king.

However, this excuse could not justify Pharaoh’s cruel behavior against God?
11 So they appointed over them tax collectors to afflict them with their burdens, and (the Jewish people) built storage cities for Pharaoh, namely Pisom and Raamses. 12 But as much as they would (set their hearts to) afflict them, so did they multiply and so did they spread. (The Egyptians) were disgusted because of the children of Israel.

13 The Egyptians enslaved the children of Israel with crushing labor. 14 They embittered their lives with hard labor, with mortar and with bricks and with all kinds of labor in the fields, all their work that they made them do was crushing labor.

JEWISH MIDWIVES DEFY PHARAOH

15 The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one whom was named Shifrah, and the second, whom was named Pu’ah. 16 He said, “When you help the Hebrew women give birth, and you look on the birth-stool, if it is a son, you shall put him to death, but if it is a daughter, she may live.” 17 The midwives, however, feared God and they did not do what the king of Egypt had told them. They kept the boys alive.

18 The king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, that you have let the boys live?”

19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are skilled as midwives. Before the midwife comes to them, they have already given birth.”

20 God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very strong.

21 It was because the midwives feared God that He made houses (family lines) for them.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Who were the Jewish midwives? (v. 15)

Rashi: “Shifrah” actually refers to Yocheved, the mother of Moshe. She was called Shifrah, as it is a Hebrew word which implies that she prettified (groomed) children at birth. Likewise, “Pu’ah” actually refers to Miriam (Moshe’s sister), since she was effective at cooing to children when they cried.

Ibn Ezra: Surely, there must have been more than two midwives to serve over 5000 women? Therefore, when the Torah states that there were only two, it means to say that these two were the supervisors of the other midwives, and that they were responsible for giving a head-tax to the king for each birth.

How did God reward the Jewish midwives for ignoring Pharaoh’s decree? (v. 21)

Rashi: When the Torah states, “It was because the midwives feared God, that He made houses for them,” it does not mean “houses” in the literal sense. Rather, this refers to the dynasties of priesthood and the exclusive tribe of Levi, which were descended from Yocheved, and the House of Royalty through King David, which was descended from Miriam. This is the implication of the verse (20), “God was good to the midwives.”

Sifsei Chachamim: Since Rashi learns in verse 21 that the houses that God made for Shifrah and Pu’ah were dynasties of honor (and

Yosef and his family who had been extremely helpful to Pharaoh personally.

Therefore, this view (that it was the same king) which emphasizes more the humanitarian evil of Pharaoh (his cruelty to Yosef), was adopted by Shmuel who always thought in terms of “man and his fellow.”

However, according to the opinion that it was a new king, the sin between “man and his fellow” was not so pronounced, as this king had not directly benefitted from Yosef. His sin against God however was more pronounced, as God had not shown him any sign that he may do with the Jewish people as he pleased (unlike the previous Pharaoh to whom God had sent the Jewish people begging for food). Therefore, he had no excuse to deceive himself that God sanctioned his decrees against the Jewish people.

Thus, Rav, who always thought in terms of mitzvos directly between man and God (pure religious law) favored this point of view, since it stresses Pharaoh’s sin as a direct rebellion against God.

(For further study, see Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 1ff.)

What forced Rashi to conclude that “Shifrah” and “Pu’ah” were actually Yocheved and Miriam? (v. 15, 21)

At the literal level, it seems rather unreasonable to suggest that the Torah would call a person by one name and yet mean somebody else. Why did Rashi deem it unacceptable that there actually were two women called Shifrah and Pu’ah?

The answer of Sifsei Chachamim is difficult to accept. He writes that Rashi’s non-literal interpretation of verse 21 (that “houses” means
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

not actual houses), therefore, he was forced to conclude earlier (v. 15) that Shifrah and Pu’ah were actually women of great stature.

BACHAYE: When the Torah states that, “He made houses for them,” it does not mean that God made them houses. Rather, it refers to Pharaoh, who made houses for Egyptians in the Jewish neighborhoods so that they could observe whether Jewish women were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and when we are told that they “were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied,” especially as we are told (in Rashi to verse 7) that they had multiple births of six children. [c.f. Ibn Ezra]

Rashi’s Problem

Rather, it appears that Rashi—who always addressed questions that even a child might ask—was troubled by two obvious problems here:

a.) How could two midwives suffice for the entire Jewish population, when we are told that they “were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied”? Especially as we are told (in Rashi to verse 7) that they had multiple births of six children.

b.) When Pharaoh rebuked the midwives for allowing the boys to live, they replied, “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are skilled as midwives. Before the midwife comes to them, they have already given birth” (v. 19).

They must have been telling the truth, for it is a point that could easily be verified (as we find that the Egyptians were even aware of such fine details as the progress of Yocheved’s pregnancy—see Rashi to 2:3). The obvious question is therefore: Why were midwives needed at all?

Rashi’s Solution

Due to the force of these questions, Rashi concluded that the midwives must have fulfilled their job by raising up the spirits of the Jewish women, through the mere knowledge of their appointment. Since the Torah states that there were only two midwives, we are forced to conclude that they must have been two exceptional ladies whose mere appointment as midwives raised up the spirits of the entire nation of Jewish women. Therefore, Rashi concluded that the Midrashic teaching that Shifrah and Pu’ah were actually Yocheved and Miriam must be true in the literal sense.

Why Does Rashi Reject the Simple Interpretations of “Houses” Suggested by the Other Commentators? (v. 21)

In verse 21, Rashi rejects the simple interpretation that “because the midwives feared God that He made them houses,” means actual houses, because:

a.) The verse suggests that God made the houses, not Pharaoh (“And it was because the midwives feared God, that He made houses”) of the midwives. This renders the answers of Bachaye and of Chizkuni problematic as a literal interpretation.

b.) If God built them actual houses, why does the verse say that, “He made houses for them,” and not, “He built houses for them”? This renders the answers of Ibn Ezra and of Chizkuni a problem.

c.) The phrase, “God was good to the midwives” (v. 20), implies that they were rewarded with something exceptional, and that not that merely merited to have families. After all, we learned above (v. 7) that all of the Jewish people merited fine, big families without risking their lives to defy Pharaoh. (This renders the answer of Abarábanel a problem.)

Therefore, Rashi searched for an interpretation which explains that God rewarded the midwives with an exceptional quality that is symbolized by a house. Since they were responsible for saving the babies that would
Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the Nile, and every daughter you shall allow to live.”

**The Birth of Moshe**

A man of the house of Levi went and took (remarried) a daughter of Levi. The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was good and she hid him for three months.

She could no longer hide him, so she took for him a reed basket, smeared it with clay and tar, put the child into it, and placed it amongst the reeds at the Nile’s edge. His sister stood from afar, in order to know what would happen to him.

**Classic Questions**

- What was unique about Moshe’s birth? (v. 2)
  - *Talmud*: The verse states, “She saw that he was good.” What, exactly, did she see?
    - One opinion states that she saw that he was born circumcised, indicating his greatness. Another opinion states that when he was born the entire house was filled with light, which explains why, “she saw that he was good” (Sotah 11a).
  - *Midrash*: All the leadership talents that Moshe possessed were inherent at birth (Shemos Rabah 2:4).

- Where was Moshe placed? (v. 3)
  - *Onkelos*: Moshe was placed by the side of the river, not in the river.
  - *Rashbam*: Yocheved hid Moshe by the side of the river in such a way that he was not visible to those walking on the riverbank itself. Only a person who was actually bathing in the river could see the basket. This explains why Pharaoh’s daughter, who bathed in the river, saw Moshe, whereas her maidens, who were on the riverbank, did not (see v. 5).
  - *Tzafnas Pane’ach*: Since the Nile was worshiped in Egypt as an idol, Yocheved did not want to put Moshe in it, as it is forbidden to make use of an object of idol worship, even to save a life. So, she left him by the riverside.

- Why was the river chosen as a hiding place? (v. 3)
  - *Midrash*: The Egyptian astrologists had seen that the savior of the Jewish people would meet his end through water. That is why Pharaoh decreed, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the Nile” (1:22).
  - Moshe’s mother Yocheved was aware of this, which explains why she chose the river as a hiding place. After Moshe was placed there, the astrologers reported to Pharaoh that the problem was over, and Pharaoh annulled the decree. (Midrash Rabah 1:22, 24 and Maharzu ibid.)
  - *Abarbanel*: 1.) Because, if he was kept at home it would have been almost certain death, and the presence of a baby endangered the entire family. By placing him by the river it is possible that he would be found and allowed to live. 2.) The riverside was a place where somebody was likely to find him. 3.) If he did die, his parents would not be present.

- Both Statements in the Talmud About Moshe’s Birth Actually Occurred. (v. 2)
  - The *Talmud* cites two opinions as to whether Moshe was: a.) circumcised at birth, or, b.) the house was filled with light.
    - It could be argued that both of these things occurred in actuality. The Sages of the *Talmud* are only arguing about which of these two occurrences was the most important, i.e. when the Torah states, “she saw that he was good” (v. 2), which of these two events is the verse referring to?
    - Since the *Midrash* states that all the leadership talents that Moshe possessed were inherent, these two extraordinary occurrences would both seem to be signs of his future greatness:

- Form the ancestors of the Jewish people for all generations, they were rewarded with a equally eternal merit—that they would be the Matriarchs of priesthood, Levites and monarchy.
  - Being born circumcised is a sign of exceptionally personal holiness and purity. The house filling with light indicated the ability of Moshe to impart holiness to the outside world.
  - Therefore, the two opinions of the *Talmud* were arguing: What was Moshe’s primary leadership talent? His unique personal connection with God, or his ability to illuminate others?

- Where Was Moshe Placed? Why? (v. 3)
  - Most commentators learn that Moshe was placed by the side of the river, and not in the river [see Onkelos and Rashbam]. This is because the river itself was a place of danger, so it is unlikely that Moshe’s mother would have placed him there.
  - However, this interpretation seems to contradict the statement of the *Midrash* that Moshe was placed into the water to confuse the Egyptian astrologists (since they perceived that the savior of the Jewish people would meet his end in water). According to this opinion, Moshe would...
actually have to enter the water, and not merely be near water. For, how could the astrologists have reported back to Pharaoh that the savior of the Jewish people had met his end through water, if Moshe had not even been in the water?

However, we could reconcile these two sources with the following suggestion: Through prophecy, Yocheved perceived the sequence of events that are described by Tzafnas Pane‘ach. (Namely, that when Pharaoh’s daughter would bathe in the Nile its idolatrous nature would be annulled. Then Moshe’s basket would enter the river). Therefore, she placed Moshe by the side of the river—which was both safe and free of idol worship—knowing that his basket would later enter the river, causing Pharaoh’s daughter would bathe in the Nile its idolatrous nature would be annulled. Then Moshe’s basket would enter the river. Through prophecy, Yocheved perceived the sequence of events described by Tzafnas Pane‘ach. (Namely, that when Pharaoh’s daughter would bathe in the Nile its idolatrous nature would be annulled. Then Moshe’s basket would enter the river). Therefore, she placed Moshe by the side of the river—which was both safe and free of idol worship—knowing that his basket would later enter the river, causing Pharaoh’s decree.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p.13)
Pharaoh’s daughter went down to bathe in the Nile, and her maidens were walking along the Nile, and she saw the basket among the reeds, and she sent her maidservant, and she took it. She opened it, and she saw him, the child. And look! A youth was crying! She had compassion on him, and she said, “This is one of the Hebrew boys.”

(Moshe’s) sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call for you a wetnurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?”

Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go!” So the girl went and called the child’s mother.

Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the boy and nursed him.

The child grew up, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became like her son. She named him Moshe, and she said, “For I drew him from the water.”

It was in those days that Moshe grew up, and he went out to his brothers and he saw their burdens. He saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, one of his brothers. He turned this way and that way, and he saw that no man was there, so he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

What happened during Moshe’s childhood? (v.11)

Yalkut Shimoni: Why does the verse state, “Moshe grew up”? After all, don’t all children grow up? Rather, the verse teaches that he grew exceptionally fast, and that at the age of five he already had the appearance of an eleven-year old (Remez 166).

Rashi: Why does verse 11 repeat, “Moshe grew up,” when in the previous verse it already stated “the child grew up”?

Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Ila’i said: The first verse teaches us that Moshe grew in stature. The second verse teaches us that he grew in rank, as Pharaoh appointed him to be in charge of his household.

Ramban: In verse 10 we learn that Moshe grew until he no longer required weaning. Then he was brought to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became like a son to her, living a royal lifestyle. The growth of Moshe mentioned in verse 11 refers to a maturity of mind which followed later.

Midrash: Some say that he was twenty years old when he went out to his people. Others say that he was forty (Shemos Rabah 1:27).

Why is Moshe’s growth mentioned twice? (v.10-11)

Rashi asks why the Torah repeats Moshe’s growth in two consecutive verses (10 & 11).

However, this repetition does not appear to be a problem at all. Verse 10 records the end of a story how Moshe was found by Pharaoh’s daughter and taken as her son. The verse concludes by telling us that, after being nursed by his mother, he was then passed on to Pharaoh’s daughter.

Verse 11 then begins an entirely new story, how Moshe went out to his people, eventually killing an Egyptian. So, it seems obvious that when the Torah states in verse 11 that “Moshe grew up and he went out to his brothers,” we are speaking about a considerable time afterwards. That is why the Torah needs to stress again—only one verse later—that he grew up, because there was a considerable pause between the two verses.

Thus the growth in the first verse was of no comparison to the second verse. The first verse refers to Moshe’s growth as a baby, whereas the second verse refers to Moshe’s growth as an adult.

So why is Rashi bothered by the fact that verses 10 and 11 both mention growth?

Rashi Rejects the Classic Interpretations

Furthermore, what is the meaning of Rashi’s statement that Moshe grew in “stature”? Surely, Rashi is not hinting to us that Moshe grew extremely fast (as Yalkut Shimoni states), because if he took such a non-literal stance he would have stated so explicitly.

Ramban suggests that the second mention of Moshe’s growth (v. 11), refers not to an advancement in age, but in intellectual maturity. However, Rashi appears to reject this interpretation, presumably because there is no indication in the verse to this point (c.f. Genesis 25:27).

Similarly, there is no indication in the verse to any of the ages mentioned in the Midrash.

What is the Relevance of Growing in Rank?

According to Rashi, verse 11 teaches us that Moshe grew in rank and was appointed in charge of Pharaoh’s house. But, there does not seem

The idolatrous nature of the Nile was annulled in order that Moshe could be saved. This was a prelude to his entire life, which would be devoted to weaning the Jewish people off idol worship and nourishing their faith in God.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 17)
The following point troubled Rashi: The Torah states, “The child grew up, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter...It was in those days, Moshe grew up...he went out...he struck the Egyptian” (v. 10-12).

TO Kasım MENACHEM

The Explanation

The following point troubled Rashi: The Torah states, “The child grew up, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter...It was in those days, Moshe grew up...he went out...he struck the Egyptian” (v. 10-12).
13 He went out on the second day, and look!—two Hebrew men were quarreling. He said to the wicked one, “Why would you strike your friend?”

14 He replied, “Who made you a man, a prince, and a judge over us? Do you plan to slay me as you have slain the Egyptian?” Moshe became frightened and said, “Indeed, the matter has become known!”

15 Pharaoh heard of this incident, and he attempted to kill Moshe. Moshe fled from Pharaoh and he settled in the land of Midian. He sat down by the well.

16 The governor of Midian had seven daughters. They came and drew water, and they filled troughs to water their father’s flock. But the shepherds came and drove them away. Moshe got up and rescued them and watered their flock.

17 They came to their father Reu’el. He said, “Why have you come so quickly today?”

18 They said, “An Egyptian man rescued us from the hands of the shepherds, and he also drew water for us and watered the flock.”

19 He said to his daughters, “So where is he? Why have you left the man? Invite him, and let him eat bread!”

20 Moshe agreed to live with the man, and (the man) gave his daughter Tziporah to Moshe. She bore a son, whom he named Gershom, for he said, “I was a stranger (“ger”) in a foreign land.”

God Remembers His Covenant

After many days had passed the king of Egypt died. The children of Israel groaned from the hard work, and they cried out. Their cries, caused by the hard work, went up to God. God heard their cry, and God remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Ya’akov.

25 God saw the children of Israel, and God knew (i.e. He took their cries to heart).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Did Pharaoh actually die? (v. 23)

RASHI: [Pharaoh did not actually die. Rather,] he was afflicted with tzara’as (leprosy), and he used to slaughter Jewish children and bathe in their blood for a cure.

MIZRACHI: Rashi is troubled as to why the verse states, “The King of Egypt died. The children of Israel groaned from the hard work, and they cried out.” Surely, the death of Pharaoh was a reason to be happy? Perhaps the next king would be better? (continued overleaf)

TORAS MENACHEM

The term, “those days” suggests that Moshe’s killing of the Egyptian was very soon after the end of his weaning, when he was brought to Pharaoh’s daughter to be a son. But how could Moshe have empathized with his brothers’ hardships and killed an Egyptian only shortly after he had been weaned?

Therefore, after learning verse 11 we are forced to reconsider our interpretation of verse 10. Since verse 11 occurred shortly after verse 10 (“in those days”) the growth that occurred in verse 10 must have been something more substantial than we had previously presumed.

Therefore, Rashi tells us that in verse 10, Moshe had already a full “stature” i.e. many years had passed and he had reached the age of an adult. Shortly afterwards, in verse 11, he grew in rank. This explains how the two phases of “growth” could have occurred so closely together.

We therefore have to explain: How could Moshe have been an adult in verse 10 when he was taken by his nurse to Pharaoh’s daughter?

The answer to this point is based on the fact that Moshe’s nurse was in fact his very own mother (see verses 7-9). We can presume that she made every possible excuse not to relinquish her son to Pharaoh’s daughter, claiming that the boy was very attached to her and that it would be psychologically damaging to break the connection. However, when Moshe reached the age of 11 or 12 and he was already beginning to presume adult proportions, such arguments would have surely proven futile.

Thus, in verse 10, Moshe is approximately 11 or 12 years old. Then, in verse 11, we read, “In those days Moshe grew up,” which Rashi explains to mean, “he grew in rank.”

But what “rank” could a boy of 11 or 12 have been appointed to? The Torah indicates an answer to this question with the words, “Moshe grew up.” The word “Moshe” here appears to be superfluous. The verse could have simply stated, “He grew up,” and we would have understood that the verse is speaking about Moshe.

The use of Moshe’s name here indicates that any normal person would not have achieved this “rank” at such a young age. It is only because we are speaking here of “Moshe,” who was loved dearly by Pharaoh’s daughter (who gave him this name), that he was able to receive a position of importance in Pharaoh’s house at such a young age.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 16, pp. 20ff.)
Therefore, Rashi concluded, this report of Pharaoh’s death is not to be taken literally. Rather, it teaches us that he contracted (leprosy) a condition that is compared to death (Nedarim 6:4)—and that he was recommended by his doctors to bathe in the blood of 120 Jewish children every morning and evening.

However, one problem remains that I cannot understand. What is the reason that the verse states, “The children of Israel groaned from the hard work”? Surely they were crying out because of the children being killed?

Sifsei Chachamim: The answer to Mizrachi’s question is as follows: Of course, the Jewish people were crying out because their children were being slaughtered, but they were unable to say so explicitly, for it would appear that they did not wish Pharaoh to recover from his sickness. Therefore, they made it appear as if their groaning was due to the hard labor.

Maskil leDavid: The Jewish people prayed to God that their servitude should end, a natural result of which would be that the slaughter of Jewish children would also end.
Moses was pasturing the flocks of Yisro, his father-in-law, the governor of Midian. He led the flocks into the desert, and he came to the mountain of God, at Choraiv.

2 An angel of God appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn-bush. (Moses) gazed, and—look!—the thorn-bush was burning with fire, but the thorn-bush was not being consumed. Moses said, “Let me turn now and see this great spectacle! Why will the thorn-bush not burn?”

4 God saw that he had turned to see, and God called to him from within the thorn-bush, and He said, “Moses, Moses!”

He said, “Here I am!”

5 (God) said, “Do not draw near here. Take your shoes off your feet, because the place upon which you stand is holy soil.” He said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Yaakov.”

Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

7 God said, “I have truly seen the suffering of My nation which is in Egypt, and I have heard its cries caused by its slave-drivers, for I know its pains.

8 I shall descend to rescue it from the hands of the Egyptians and to bring it up from that land, to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Chitites, the Amorites, the Perizites, the Chivites, and the Jebusites.”

9 “Now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are persecuting them. Now, go and I will send you to Pharaoh, and you will take My nation, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

What is the significance of a thorn-bush? (v. 2)

Rashi: The Angel of God revealed himself to Moshe specifically through a thornbush rather than another type of tree, in the spirit of the verse in which God says, “I am with him in distress” (Psalms 91:15).

Why Did Moshe Become a Shepherd? (v. 1)

The Midrash states that God tests righteous individuals to see if they are fit to lead His people, through first observing how they tend to sheep.

When Moshe was tending the sheep of Yisro in the desert, one sheep ran off and Moshe chased after it. The sheep eventually reached water and began to drink. When Moshe found the sheep he said, “I didn’t realize that you were running away because you were thirsty. You must be tired!” So, Moshe mounted the sheep on his shoulders and walked back. God saw Him and said, “You have such compassion for the sheep of a mere human being! You are going to shepherd My sheep, the Jewish people” (Shemos Rabah 2:2).

Based on the above Midrash it appears that Yisro appointed Moshe to be his shepherd—either unwittingly or unwittingly—in order to bring out his potential as a leader.

(See also Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5746, sec. 16-17 for a deeper explanation of this Midrash.)
Why was Moshe concerned that he would be asked,
“What is His Name?” (v. 13)

**STORNO:** The names of a person refer to specific qualities that he possesses. These qualities cause a person to act in a particular manner.

Therefore, Moshe was concerned that the Jewish people would ask Him, “With which attribute—referred to by its name—did God send you to redeem us?”

**RAMBAN:** Moshe was not concerned that the Jewish people doubted the existence of God. Rather, Moshe was worried that they would ask, “With which Name will God redeem us?”

Since each of God’s names reflects one of His different activities, the Jewish people will want to know the manner in which the redemption from Egypt is going to take place. Would it be through the name El Shadai (with which God revealed himself to the Patriarchs—see beg. Parshas Va’era) that leads God’s miracles to be concealed? Or, would it be through the name which implies God’s supernal mercy, which would mean that open miracles would take place?

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What was the meaning of God’s answer, “I shall be what I shall be”? (v. 14)

**RASHBA:** The Hebrew word אֶמּוּנָה (lit. “I shall be”) is actually a name of God. The name suggests, “I am able to carry out that which I promise.”

**RAMBAN:** The name אֶמּוּנָה refers to God, describing how His existence is absolutely imperative, in contrast to created beings whose existence is conditional. In this vein, verse 14 reads “the Existing Being which is the Existing Being” (Guide for the Perplexed, 163).

**ABARENEL:** Thus, with this name, Moshe would be able to convince the Jewish people that he had not been sent by an angel or some other heavenly messenger, but by God himself.

**RASHI:** “I will be what I will be,” means, “I will be with them in their present time of need, just as I will be with them at the time of future persecutions.”

**RAMBAN:** In other words, God was saying to Moshe, “Don’t worry about what My name is. All the Jewish people have to know is that I will be with them throughout all their sufferings. And when they call, I will answer them.” Thus, the interpretation that “I will be what I will be” is some sort of name of God is incorrect.
Moshe Declines God’s Mission

3:11 Moshe said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should take the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

12 He said, “For I will be with you, and this (burning thornbush) is a sign for you that you have been sent by Me (and that you will succeed). When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

13 Moshe said to God, “When I come to the children of Israel, and I say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His Name?,’ What shall I say to them?”

14 God said to Moshe, “Ehyeh asher ehyeh” (lit. “I will be what I will be”), and He said, “So shall you say to the children of Israel, ‘Ehyeh’ (“I will be”) has sent me to you.”

15 God also said to Moshe, “So shall you say to the children of Israel, ‘God, the God of your forefathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Ya’akov has sent me to you.’ This is My eternal Name, and this is how I should be recalled in every generation.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS
● Why did God give an additional answer, in verse 15?

RASHBAM: God said to Moshe that, even though he had now discovered God’s real name, it is not appropriate to use such a name in general speech. Rather, he should tell the Jewish people that God should always be referred to as a Master or King (“God of Avraham etc.”), for even a human king is not referred to by his actual name.

RASHI: The word דָּבָר ("eternal") in the phrase "this is My eternal name," is written here missing a letter vav (!). This teaches us that God’s name should always be “hidden,” and not read as it is written.

However, the point here is that the verse did not need to mention at all the type of vegetation from which the revelation occurred. The Torah could have simply mentioned that it occurred from a tree or bush, and we would have concluded for ourselves that it was a thornbush—the only species present in a desert.

Therefore, Rashi concluded, the specific mention of the thornbush teaches us a lesson—a lesson that is implicit in the unique qualities of the thornbush, i.e. that God is with the Jewish people, even during the distressful, thorny times of exile.

(Taken from Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5748)

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fully aware of an intact tradition of belief in God among the Jewish people. Obviously, if they were aware of the existence of God, they must have referred to Him by a particular name, especially when addressing Him in prayer, etc. So, why would there be any concern that the Jewish people would ask, “what is His Name”?

Therefore, Rashi concluded Moshe was apprehensive, not of an inquiry from the Jewish people (as Sforno and Ramban suggest), but of a challenge. Having suffered harsh slave labor and the slaughter of thousands of Jewish children, they would have a serious complaint: “If God cares about us so much, and He is saying, 'I have truly seen the suffering of My nation which is in Egypt, and I have heard its cries caused by its slave-drivers, for I know its pains etc.' (above v. 7-9)—then why did He put us in this situation in the first place?

And this was Moshe’s concern. When he will come to the Jewish people and say, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you” (v. 13), they are clearly going to reply, “What is His name?”, i.e. what kind of “name,” or conduct is this that He listens to us only after harsh labor and the murder of our children? Therefore, Moshe said to God, “What shall I say to them,” for he felt that they had a justified complaint.

Consequently, Rashi explains that God answered, “I will be with them in their time of need,” i.e. it is not the case that God overlooks the suffering of the Jewish people. Rather, He empathizes with their pain, as the verse states, “all their pain is pain for Him too” (Isaiah 63:9; c.f. Rashi to v. 2, above).

This however begs the question: If God is pained so much, why does He allow it to happen?
to me, the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov, saying, “I have truly remembered you and what is
being done to you in Egypt.”” 17 I have said, ‘I will bring you out from the affliction of Egypt, to the land
of the Canaanites, the Chittites, the Amorites, the Perizites, the Chivites, and the Jebusites, to a land
flowing with milk and honey.’”

18 “They will listen to your voice. You and the elders of Israel shall come to the King of Egypt, and say
to him, ‘God, the God of the Hebrews has come upon us. Now, let us go for a three day journey in the
desert and offer up sacrifices to God, our God.’”

19 “I (already) know that the King of Egypt will not permit you to go, unless (I show him) a mighty
hand. 20 So, I will send forth My Hand and I will smite the Egyptians with all My miracles which I will
perform inside their land. Afterwards, he will send you out.”

21 “I shall grant this people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that when you (eventually) leave,
you will not go empty-handed. 22 Each woman shall request from her neighbor and from (a woman)
living in her house, silver and gold objects and clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your
daughters, and you shall empty Egypt (of its wealth).”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Did the Jewish women actually borrow the gold and silver from the Egyptians? (v. 22)

RASHBAM: No. The Egyptian ladies actually gave the Jewish women the gold and silver as a present, not as a loan.

RABEINU CHANANEL: Heaven forbid to say that God permitted such fraudulent behavior, that the Jewish people should borrow the gold and silver vessels and not return them. Rather, the Egyptians gave them willingly as gifts (cited by Bachaye).

TALMUD: In the times of Alexander the Macedonian, an Egyptian party came, demanding that the Jewish people return the gold and silver that they took out of Egypt. They cited proof from verse 22 that the jewels were only borrowed. Geviyah ben Pesisah replied on behalf of the Jewish people, “And you owe us for the labor of 600,000 men who worked for you in Egypt.” Thus the Egyptians’ claim was refuted (Sanhedrin 91a).

TORAS MENACHEM

To address this problem, God gave an additional response (in v. 15): “And God also said to Moshe, ‘So shall you say to the children of Israel, “God (Havayeh), the God of your forefathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Ya’akov has sent me to you.” This is My eternal name.’”

This verse stresses two points:

a.) The Divine name Havayeh (the Tetragrammaton) is employed indicating God’s attribute of Mercy.

b.) God says in reference to this name, “this is My eternal Name.” The word “eternal” (בֵּית) is written here missing a letter vav, indicating that “My Name” (the Tetragrammaton; Divine mercy) is concealed.

Thus God was explaining to Moshe that during exile He does indeed have mercy on the Jewish people, but that this quality is concealed.

God’s Mercy During Exile

One could still ask: If God’s compassion is concealed then what practical benefit does it bring?

To answer this question, the verse continues, “and this is how I should be recalled in every generation.” Rashi explains that God taught Moshe how this concealed name is to be pronounced. This refers to the concept in Jewish Law that it is forbidden to pronounce the Tetragrammaton (Havayeh), and that instead the word Adonoy (“my Lord”) is used.

This law has a dual implication: On the one hand it is forbidden to pronounce the Tetragrammaton, indicating that God’s mercy (represented by this name) is concealed. But, on the other hand, the term Adonoy is not an alternative to the Tetragrammaton used in exile times, but rather, a substitution. Thus when a Jew uses the term Adonoy he actually is referring to the Tetragrammaton itself.

Consequently, this law brings to light the nature of God’s attribute of mercy during exile. On the one hand it is concealed (not pronounced). Nevertheless, on the other hand, it is active (referred to directly). Thus, by teaching Moshe this law, God explained His seemingly paradoxical behavior of mercy during exile: Just like the Tetragrammaton, God’s mercy is present and active in exile, but its effects are concealed.

Moshe now had a complete answer to the question that the Jewish people would ask about God’s ways, or “Name.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 19ff.)

Why Did the Jewish People Leave Egypt Laden with Gold and Silver? (v. 22)

There are two ways of understanding God’s promise that the Jewish people would plunder Egypt of their gold and silver. Was it, primarily:

a.) A punishment for the Egyptians? Or, b.) A reward for the Jewish people?

A practical ramification between these two possibilities:

If it was primarily a punishment for the Egyptians, then it would be

Sparks of Chasidus

After the true and complete redemption through our righteous Mashiaach, “all flesh will see together that the mouth of God (Havayeh) spoke.” And then we will be permitted to pronounce the Tetragrammaton exactly as it is written.

(Pesachim 50a; Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 25)
Was Moshe right to question God? (v. 1-9)

Rashi (v. 2 & 6): God turned Moshe’s staff into a serpent, hinting to him that he had spoken disparagingly about the Jewish people and had thus adopted the ways of a serpent. His hand was afflicted with tzara’as (leprosy), for the same reason.

Midrash: On this occasion Moshe spoke inappropriately. God said, “They will listen to your voice” (3:18), but Moshe replied, “they will not believe in me” (4:1). God said to him, “They are believers, and children of believers.”

Maharsha: What was Moshe’s sin here? Even if God knew that the people were going to believe him, Moshe clearly did not. Moshe was merely asking for a sign with which he can convince the people of his authenticity. He was not attempting to speak badly about them.

Furthermore, God informed Moshe that the Jewish people had been guarding an ancient tradition that their redeemer would use the verbal formula אַלּוֹ קַחָּם וַיִּקָּחֵם אֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁתַּמְרוּ לְךָ (4:13; “God will surely remember you”—See Bereisit 50:25). So, obviously Moshe was aware that the Jewish people were believers (Chidushei Agados, Shabbos 97a).

Abbaranel: Even though the Jewish people were steeped in idol worship, they nevertheless had: a.) The merits of their ancestors; and, b.) the promise that they were eventually going to become a holy nation.

Kli Yakar: God told Moshe to hold the tail of the serpent, hinting to him that the Jewish people—who are currently in a pitiful state, a “tail”—will eventually turn into a powerful staff that would defeat Pharaoh.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

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irrelevant how the Jewish people acquired the gold and silver. For example, if the Jewish people had helped themselves to the valuables during the plague of darkness, the Egyptians would still have been punished.

But if the gold and silver were primarily a reward for the Jewish people (as the Talmud seems to suggest) then it should have been given in a manner of payment, or compensation, i.e. if it was a reward, then it must be paid like a reward. Otherwise: i.) They may have not been aware it was a reward at all, and ii.) If it was not given willingly, there would always be the fear that the Egyptians will come and take it back. Consequently, the sensation of reward would be lacking.

Based on the comments of Rashbam and Rabeinu Chananel it is obvious that they sympathize with this second view (that the gold and silver was a reward), since they see it as imperative that the objects were given willingly as a present, and not borrowed.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 21, p. 12-13)
Moshe responded and said, “They will not believe me, and they will not listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘God did not appear to you.’”

God said to him, “What is this in your hand?”

(Moshe) said, “A staff.”

(God) said, “Cast it to the ground,” and he cast it to the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moshe ran away from it. God said to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand and take hold of its tail.” Moshe stretched out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his palm.

“This is in order that they believe that God, the God of their forefathers, has appeared to you, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Ya’akov.”

God then said to him, “Please place your hand on your chest.” (Moshe) placed his hand on his chest. He then removed it and his hand was leprous like snow.

(God) said, “Place your hand back on your chest.” (Moshe) placed his hand back on his chest, and when he took it out from his chest, it had returned to be like his flesh.

“Then, if they do not believe you, and they do not heed the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And then, if they do not believe either of these two signs, and they do not listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and spill it on the ground. The water that you take from the Nile will become blood on the ground.”

The Last Word

What, Exactly, Was Moshe’s “Sin”?

If Moshe knew that the Jewish people had a tradition from their Patriarchs that a redeemer would arrive (as Maharsha writes) then why did he fear that “they will not believe in me”?

However, Moshe’s fear was that after so many years of slavery and persecution, the thought of redemption would be too obscure for the Jewish people to take seriously. He knew they would believe him in a general sense, but he was concerned that they needed some additional sign to make their belief concrete and palpable. He felt that a miraculous sign might arouse their inherent belief to a more tangible state.

If so, why was God upset with Moshe’s comment? He did not deny that the Jewish people were believers at all.

However, Moshe was making an extremely subtle insult to the Jewish people. God was upset that Moshe did not realize that the Jewish heart remains intact and is impervious to the sufferings of lengthy exile.

In fact, this only points to the greatness of Moshe, that his personal perfection was so impeccable that such a tiny oversight could be considered sinful!

From all of the above we can learn the tremendous importance of always speaking positively about the Jewish people. [It is also significant to note that Moshe did not speak disparagingly directly to the Jewish people, but only privately to God.]

(Based on Sefer HaSichos 5751, vol. 1, pp. 247, 250)
verbal articulation was poor, unfit to present the case of the Jewish people before Pharaoh. Moshe's final argument was that, since he was not destined to enter the land of Israel, God should send the final redeemer of the Jewish people (i.e. Mashiach) instead. (see v. 13)

Eventually, God became angry with Moshe, and he accepted the mission upon himself.

Why did Moshe decline his mission? (v. 10)

Rashi: God spent seven days speaking to Moshe from the burning thornbush, trying to convince him to accept the mission to redeem the Jewish people. Moshe objected claiming that such an important job should be carried out by his older brother Aharon, especially as Aharon was already a prophet. Moshe also complained that his verbal articulation was poor, unfit to present the case of the Jewish people.

Eventually, God became angry with Moshe, and he accepted the mission upon himself.

What Made Moshe Change his Mind? (v. 10)

Rashi writes that after seven days of dialogue, God eventually became angry with Moshe. At this point, he withdrew all his previous objections, accepting upon himself the mission to redeem the Jewish people.

However, the Torah does seem to not give any indication how Moshe's preference for Aharon or Mashiach to be the redeemer was resolved. And Rashi too, seems to say nothing on the subject.

Rashi does write (v. 14) that God told Moshe not to be concerned, since Aharon would not be angry with him, as he had expected.
10 Moshe said to God, “I beg You, my Master! I am not a man of words, not yesterday, not the day before, not from the very first time that You spoke to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.”

11 God said to him, “Who gave man a mouth, or who makes a person dumb or deaf, sighted or blind? Is it not I, God? 12 So now, go! I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you should say.”

13 But (Moshe) said, “Please, my Master, send the one that you usually send (i.e. Aharon. Alternatively: Send the one that you will eventually send, i.e. Mashiach).”

14 God became angry with Moshe, and He said, “I know that Aharon your brother, the Levite, will surely speak (for you. When you return to Egypt you will find that) he comes to greet you, and when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart. 15 You will speak to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will then be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will instruct you both what you shall do. 16 He will speak on your behalf to the people. He will be your spokesman, and you will be his leader.”

17 “You shall take this staff in your hand, with which you will perform the signs.”

**Moshe Embarks on His Mission to Egypt**

4:18 Moshe went and returned to Yezer, his father-in-law, and he said to him, “Let me go now and return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and let me see whether they are still alive.”

Yisro said to Moshe, “Go in peace.”

19 God said to Moshe in Midian, “Go, return to Egypt, for all the people who seek your life have died.”

20 Moshe took his wife and his sons, mounted them upon the (famous) donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. Moshe took the staff of God in his hand.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **Why was a donkey chosen for Moshe’s mission? (v. 20)**
  - **Rashi:** Moshe mounted his wife and children on a unique donkey. This was the donkey which Avraham himself prepared for the journey to sacrifice his son, Yitzchak.
  - **Be’er Mayim Chayim:** Rashi is troubled why the verse says that he “mounted them upon the donkey,” rather than merely “a donkey.” Therefore, he concluded that the Torah must be hinting that it is a famous donkey.

- **Why did Moshe use only one donkey? (v. 20)**
  - **Chizkuni:** Since Moshe’s children were both very young, they needed their mother. So Moshe put his wife on the donkey, and she held the two small children.
  - **Abarbanel:** Perhaps, the Torah is merely telling us the species that was used, not the number of donkeys. In other words, they used many donkeys.

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**Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer:** This donkey was born to the famous donkey formed on the first Friday of Creation, after sunset (see Avos 5:6). It is the donkey on which Moshe rode when coming to Egypt. And it is the donkey upon which the son of David (Mashiach) will ride....” (par 31).
Especially, as this means the donkey will have to live an additional
have to know that this is the same donkey that Mashiach will ride.
would be sufficient to explain why the donkey was special. Why do we
Torah states "..."
Mashiach—he wanted them all to have the merit of riding on it.
the fact that Moshe piled his entire family on only one donkey (cf.
An alternative approach would be to argue that Eliezer was only a baby, so he
would have been held by his mother. And Gershom sat behind his
mother on the donkey.
Shach Al Hatorah: Moshe did not want to have the burden of
taking his wife and family. But, if he had declared, "I am going to
Egypt to redeem the Jewish people," he thought that his wife would
not believe him. She would suspect that he was returning back home
to find another wife from his own birthplace. Therefore, he crammed
them all onto one donkey, to make the journey so unpleasant that
they would soon beg to go home. Another interpretation is that
Moshe only took his wife and children to accompany him for the first
mile or two. For this purpose, one donkey was sufficient.

What is Troubling Rashi? (v. 20)
The answer of Be’er Mayim Chapin (that Rashi is troubled why the
Torah states "the donkey" and not "a donkey") is insufficient, because:
If so, the first part of Rashi’s answer—that it was Avraham’s donkey—
would be sufficient to explain why the donkey was special. Why do we
have to know that this is the same donkey that Mashiach will ride.
Especially, as this means the donkey will have to live an additional
3000 years!

Why Was Only One Donkey Used?
An alternative approach would be to argue that Rashi was troubled by
the fact that Moshe piled his entire family on only one donkey (cf.
Chizkuni, Abarbanel, Shach Al haTorah). Rashi answers that since it
was such a special donkey—the donkey of both Avraham and Mashiach—he wanted them all to have the merit of riding on it.

However, this too fails to solve our problem, since it only begs an even
greater question: Why did Moshe need such a special donkey, which
forced him to cram his entire family onto it?
Furthermore, if Moshe himself was riding the animal, one might
understand why he used such a historic donkey, since he was on his way
to redeem the Jewish people from Egypt. But since the verse only
mentions that he placed his wife and children on the donkey, it is difficult
to understand why it was so important to use this unique donkey.

Rashi’s Deviation From Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer.
Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer (on which Rashi based his answer here) mentions
another remarkable detail about this donkey—that it was born to the
famous donkey formed on the first Friday of Creation, after sunset.
But, while Rashi accepted the other two facts mentioned in Pirkei
d’Rabbi Eliezer (that it was the donkey of both Avraham and Mashiach),
he omitted this detail. Why?
God said to Moshe, “When you go to return to Egypt, reflect upon all the miracles that I have placed in your hand, and perform them before Pharaoh. I will, however, strengthen his heart, and he will not send the people away.

“You shall say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what God said: “Israel is my son, my firstborn.”’ (Therefore), I say to you, ‘Send my son so that he may worship Me. If you refuse to send him out, I am going to slay your firstborn son.’”

At an inn, on the way, (an angel of) God met him and wanted to kill him. So Tsiporah took a sharp stone, cut off her son’s foreskin and threw it at (Moshe’s) feet, and she said (to her son), “You are my husband’s attempted killer!”

When he (the angel) released him, she said, “My husband would have been killed because of the matter of circumcision.”

God said to Aharon, “Go to greet Moshe in the desert.” He went to meet him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him. Moshe told Aharon all the words of God with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him.

The Explanation

Rashi was troubled why the verse had to mention at all the method by which Moshe’s family traveled to Egypt. It could have simply said that “Moshe took his wife and family to Egypt.”

A more general issue that was troubling Rashi was a problem which remained unanswered from the previous section of verses. It was explained above (explanation to v. 10-17) that Moshe’s complaints to God were not given any specific response. Moshe had only agreed to accept the mission to redeem the Jewish people after “God became angry with him.” (see “Classic Questions” to v. 10) But, he was still without an answer why: a.) God did not send his older brother Aharon, and b.) God did not send the final redeemer (Mashiach) instead of Moshe.

Therefore, God arranged it for Moshe to use this famous donkey to carry his family, as the unique qualities of this donkey indicated the answers to his two questions:

a.) It was Avraham’s donkey, which he used for the journey to the Akeida. The Torah recounts that when Avraham was told to sacrifice his son, he did not question God and acted with the utmost haste, preparing his own donkey for the journey (Bereishis 22:3). Thus, God was hinting to Moshe, “You might not want to accept this mission, since you feel that your brother is greater. Why don’t you learn from Avraham, who did not question Me? He followed my orders right away without asking any questions, and his spirits were joyful, since He knew he was doing My will. And that was despite the inhumane act that he was asked to do!”

b.) It was Mashiach’s donkey. This indicated an answer to Moshe’s complaint that God should send the final redeemer instead of himself, “Please, my Master, send the one that you will eventually send” (4:13).

God was hinting to Moshe, “You may think that you are in no way connected to the final redeemer. But you are wrong! Mashiach will only come because you made the entire concept of redemption a possibility. Mashiach will finish off the task that you are now starting.”

Sparks of Chasidus

The Humility of Moshe and Mashiach

Moshe initially declined his mission, saying, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I take the Jewish people out of Egypt?” (3:11) The answer to this question is hinted to in the verse, “A poor man riding on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). The “poor man” is a metaphor for the profound humility of Mashiach. Likewise, the fact that he is riding on a mere donkey also points to his humility.

So, we have here an answer to Moshe’s question:

Just as Mashiach was chosen by God due to his great humility, so it was with Moshe. Thus, the fact that Moshe humbly declined the mission proved that he was the right person for the task.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 31, p. 19)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

RASHI: He meant, “Go and do the work that has to be done in your own houses.” For the slavery of Egypt was not imposed on the entire tribe of Levi (of which Moshe and Aharon were members). We see this from the fact that Moshe and Aharon were able to enter and leave the palace without asking permission (to be relieved from their labor).

MIZRACHI: The verse says, “Why, Moshe and Aharon, do you disturb the people from their work? Go and deal with your own burdens.” This implies that the “burden” of Moshe and Aharon was different from the “work” of the Jewish people. Therefore, Rashi concluded that Pharaoh was telling Moshe and Aharon to attend to their domestic affairs and leave the people to work.

RAMBAN: Pharaoh respected the fact that every nation needs moral and religious leadership. Therefore, he allowed the Levites to be free from physical servitude.

IBN EZRA: Pharaoh was telling Moshe and Aharon to go back to slave labor, since they were speaking as representatives on behalf of the entire Jewish people.

MALBIM: Pharaoh decreed that Moshe, Aharon and the tribe of Levi also be enslaved due to Moshe and Aharon’s insolence.

GUR ARYE: God informed Avraham that his descendants, the Jewish people, would be enslaved: “Your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them. They will afflict them four hundred years” (Bereishis 15:13). Presumably, this decree applied to all of the twelve tribes. How are we then to understand that the tribe of Levi was not enslaved?

However, we see that Yaakov himself attributed an elitist quality to the tribe of Levi, appointing them to be the recipients of ma’aser (tithes), as stated in tractate Bechoros. Therefore, they were spared the decree of slavery.

We might still ask why Pharaoh, a wicked man, would recognize the special qualities of the Levites and spare them from slavery?

Pharaoh knew of God’s promise to take personal vengeance on the nation which enslaved the Jewish people, “And also that nation, whom they shall serve, I will judge” (Bereishis 15:14). Therefore, he reasoned that he would not enslave the entire Jewish people, so as to be exempt from God’s judgment.
Moshe and Aharon Announce the News of Redemption

4:29 Moshe and Aharon went, and they assembled all the elders of the children of Israel. Aharon spoke all the words that God had spoken to Moshe, and he performed the signs before the eyes of the people.

And the people believed. They heard that God had remembered the children of Israel, and that He had seen their affliction. They bowed and prostrated themselves on the ground.

Afterwards, Moshe and Aharon came and said to Pharaoh, “This is what God, the God of Israel, said: ‘Send out My nation, and let them sacrifice to Me in the desert.’”

Pharaoh said, “Who is God that I should listen to His voice and let Israel out? I do not know of God, nor will I let Israel out!”

They said, “The God of the Hebrews has come upon us. Now let us go on a three-day journey into the desert and we will sacrifice to God, our God. Otherwise He may strike us (i.e. a polite way of saying “you”) with a plague or with a sword.”

The king of Egypt said to them, “Why, Moshe and Aharon, do you disturb the people from their work? Go and deal with your own burdens.”

Pharaoh said, “The people of the land are now numerous, and you are suggesting that they rest from their work!”

But, he did not realize that the tribe of Levi was exempt from the decree of enslavement in any case. Therefore, he was guilty of enslaving the entire Jewish people.

Another explanation: Pharaoh was aware that the tribe of Levi did not participate in carrying the coffin of Ya’akov (according to Ya’akov’s instruction). Therefore, Pharaoh understood that the Levites should be treated differently.

Maskil LeDavid: Pharaoh’s daughter demanded from her father that he not enslave the Levites, since she did not want Moshe to become a slave.

Toras Menachem

However, the detail that this donkey was born to the famous donkey formed on the first Friday of Creation was omitted by Rashi since it does not provide any additional insight into Moshe’s mission here. (Based on Likutot Sichot, vol. 31, pp. 14-19)

Why Does Rashi Reject the Simple Interpretation?

Superficially, it would seem that Pharaoh was telling Moshe and Aharon that they should carry out slave labor, like the rest of the Jewish people. [c.f. Ramban, Ibn Ezra, Malbim.]

However, Rashi rejected this interpretation for two reasons:

a.) The verse—“Why, Moshe and Aharon, do you disturb the people from their work? Go and deal with your own burdens”—suggests that Moshe and Aharon had different burdens from the people’s [as Mitzvah writes.]

b.) If Pharaoh felt that Moshe and Aharon should be enslaved, he would have said immediately, “Why are you coming to me? Go to work!” However, his main objection was, “Why do you...take the people from their work?”

Problems with Rashi’s Answer

a.) Why does Rashi conclude that Pharaoh’s statement, “Go and deal with your own burdens,” refers to the entire tribe of Levi? There does not appear to be any reference to the tribe of Levi in the verse at all.

b.) Where does Rashi get the idea that “your own burdens” means domestic work?

c.) Why should Pharaoh care whether or not domestic work is done in the homes of the Levites?

The Explanation

Pharaoh was answering Moshe and Aharon, “You claim that the Jewish people are being burdened with slave-like labor. That’s not true at all! They are being given a reasonable amount of work.” This is implicit in the phrase, “Why, Moshe and Aharon, do you disturb the people from their work?” i.e. They are not being burdened, merely “worked.”

Since Pharaoh genuinely felt that the Jewish people were not being overworked, he was left with a question: What are Moshe and Aharon complaining about? Pharaoh certainly did not believe that God had sent them, since he said explicitly, “Who is God that I should listen to His voice and let Israel out?” (v. 2). Pharaoh saw before him two fully grown, mature men, and he wondered, “Why have they come here? The Jewish people are not being treated unfairly. They are merely following the law of the land.”

The Last Word

The Jewish people were only redeemed from Egypt in the merit of their faith, as the verse states “and the people believed” (4:31).

(Mechila, Beshalach 14:31.)
This entire incident put the idea into Pharaoh’s mind that the Jewish people were lazy, which led him to devise ways of increasing their workload.

**Why Were the Levites Spared from Slavery?**

The *Gur Aryeh* asks two questions here: a.) Surely the tribe of Levi was also included in the decree that (Bereishis 15:13), “Your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.” If so, why were they not enslaved?

b.) Why should Pharaoh recognize the unique qualities of the Levites and spare them from slavery?
On that day, Pharaoh commanded the (Egyptian) taskmasters of the people and their (Jewish) guards, saying, “You shall not continue to give straw to the people to make the bricks like yesterday and the day before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. You shall impose upon them the same number of bricks that they have been making yesterday and the day before. Do not reduce it, for they are becoming lazy, and that is why they cry out, saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ Let the labor fall heavily upon the men and let them work at it, and let them not talk about pointless matters.”

The taskmasters of the people and their guards went out to the people, saying, “Pharaoh said, ‘I am not giving you straw. You must go and obtain straw for yourselves from wherever you can find it, because nothing can be reduced from your workload.’”

The people spread out throughout the entire land of Egypt to gather grain stalks for straw. The taskmasters were pressing them, saying, “Finish your work, each day’s amount in its day, just as when there was straw.”

The guards of the children of Israel whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had appointed were beaten. They were told, “Why have you not completed your requirement to make bricks like the day before yesterday, neither yesterday nor today?”

The guards of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, “Why do you do this to your servants? Straw is not given to your servants, but they still tell us, ‘Make bricks.’ Your servants are being beaten, and it is bringing sin upon your people.”

He said, “You are lazy, simply lazy! That is why you say, ‘Let us go, let us sacrifice to God.’

Gur Aryeh suggests answers based on the Talmud and Midrash, but it would appear that a simpler solution to these problems could be found within the Chumash and Rashi’s commentary itself:

On the verse (Bereishis 50:13), “His sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpeilah,” Rashi writes that Levi did not carry the coffin, since his descendants were destined to carry the Ark of the Covenant.

The passing of Ya’akov was a public affair of national proportions—“they mourned with a great and bitter lamentation....And when the inhabitants of the land...saw the mourning...they said, ‘This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.’” (ibid. 10-11). From this, we can presume that the Egyptians must have been given an explanation why Levi was not carrying his father’s coffin, to ensure that the wrong message was not conveyed. Consequently, the special quality of the tribe of Levi became public knowledge in Egypt. And so later, when Pharaoh enslaved the Jewish people, it would have appeared extremely negative in the public eye to enslave the tribe of Levi also.

As for the question why the Levites were excluded from the Divine decree of slavery in Egypt—this is also answered by the above incident. Rashi (ibid) writes that Menasheh and Efrayim carried the coffin on behalf of Levi (and Yosef, their father). From this we see that Levi was not exempt from carrying the coffin. It is only that some other member of Ya’akov’s family carried it on his behalf. So too, we can presume regarding the decree of slavery—the other tribes fulfilled the decree against the Levites on their behalf.

(Based on Sichos of Shabbos Parshas Shemos and Va’eira 5740)
What was God’s response to Moshe’s complaint? (v. 1)

**Rashi:** God replied to Moshe, “You questioned my ways! You are not like Avraham, to whom I promised to make Yitzchak his heir, and then I said to offer him up as a burnt offering. He did not question my ways.” Therefore, the verse says, “Now you will see,” meaning to say, “Now you will see the defeat of Pharaoh, but you will not see the defeat of the seven nations, when I bring the Jewish people into the Land of Israel.”

**Kli Yakar:** While Moshe did not expect things to improve immediately, he certainly did not imagine that the situation would worsen as a result of his mission from God. Moshe wondered if his speech impediment had made Pharaoh feel ridiculed, making him think, “The Jewish people are making fun of me, sending a person who can hardly speak!” So Moshe asked God, “Why have you sent me?”

The answer to Moshe’s question can be understood from natural phenomena. For example, just before dawn it becomes very dark, more so than during the rest of the night. Similarly, many people have a sudden burst of energy right before they pass away. The point here is that when a force becomes aware of its imminent extinction, it fights back with every possible reserve of strength.

So too, with the case of Pharaoh. Since the imminent redemption was going to eliminate Pharaoh, his natural reaction was to increase his offensive against the Jewish people.

God indicated this reply to Moshe with the words, “Now you shall see...” i.e. it is precisely because now is the time of redemption, that things are getting worse. The deterioration of affairs is thus a sign of imminent redemption.
18 “Now, go and work, but you will not be given straw. Nevertheless, you must produce the same number of bricks.”

19 The officers of the children of Israel saw them in distress, when they said, “Do not reduce the number of your bricks, each day’s requirement in its day.”

20 When they came out from Pharaoh’s presence (a group of Jewish people) met Moshe and Aharon waiting to meet them. 21 They said to them (Moshe and Aharon), “May God look upon you and judge, for you have made our scent abhorrent in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants. You have placed a sword into their hands to kill us.”

**Moshe Complains to God**

5:22 Moshe returned to God and said, “O God! Why have You mistreated this people? Why have You sent me? 23 Since I have come to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has mistreated this people, and You have not saved Your people.”

1 God said to Moshe, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh! For with a mighty hand he will send them out, and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.”

THE HAFTARAH FOR SHEMOS IS ON PAGE 298.

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**Why Does Rashi Cite the Case of the Akeida? (v. 1)**

Rashi writes that God rebuked Moshe for questioning His ways, citing the example of Avraham in the Akeida, who did not question God. However, there were many instances where the Patriarchs demonstrated their pure faith in God (c.f. Rashi to 6:9). Why was this case of the Akeida chosen by Rashi, in particular?

The answer to this point is that Moshe’s difficulty here and that of the Akeida both share a common theme which is not evident in other Divine tests. For, in both of these cases we find that God’s promise was the very cause which led to subsequent suffering:

In the case of the Akeida, God first promised Avraham a child, born to him in old age, which would perpetuate his family. And then, that very promise was the cause of the painful trial of the Akeida. Avraham could have complained to God, “It would be better if you had never given me a son if this is what it was going to lead to!”

Similarly in our case, Moshe’s mission from God to redeem the Jewish people was actually the cause of a further deterioration of affairs. It is thus directly comparable to the Akeida.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, pp. 47-49)
The word Va’eira means, “I revealed Myself,” as in the verse, “I revealed Myself to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya’akov with the name El Shadai, but with My (true) name “Adonoi” (“Havayeh”), I did not become known to them” (6:3).

Why did the Torah stress the negative here—that God did not reveal Himself to the Patriarchs with His True Name “Havayeh”? What lesson could we learn from this negative statement?

The redemption from Egypt was primarily a spiritual freedom which enabled a Jew to serve God without interference from gentile nations. Of course, the redemption from physical servitude is not insignificant, but in the ultimate scheme of things, the physical redemption occurred in order to make the spiritual redemption possible.

What, exactly, is a spiritual redemption?

The Alter Rebbe explains that this is the ability to serve God with total commitment, to the extent that a person has no private agenda at all (Torah Ohr, Va’eira 56a).

It is impossible for a person to achieve this level unassisted. So long as the person is working on his own, everything that he does is ultimately an extension of his “private agenda.” Even if he will decide to become totally committed to God, it was his personal decision and thus, in the final analysis, his private agenda.

In order to become truly committed to God, one needs God’s assistance. Thus, the Exodus from Egypt was to be a true spiritual redemption because it would involve Divine assistance from above.

This however begs the question: Surely the Patriarchs were also privileged to receive Divine revelation, so why do we still need the spiritual redemption from Egypt?

Therefore, God told Moshe, “I revealed Myself to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya’akov with the name El Shadai, but with My (true) name “Adonoi” (“Havayeh”), I did not become known to them.” I.e. it is only through a revelation of Havayeh—a name which represents God as He transcends all limits—is it possible for a person to become truly committed to God, beyond the limits of his own personal agenda.

And so too it will be with the true and complete redemption, when we will be genuinely free to serve God, as “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Havayeh as water covers the seabed” (Isaiah 11:9).

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 31, p. 23ff.)
How is the beginning of this Parsha connected to the end of the previous Parsha? (v. 2, 9)

Rashi (v. 2): The opening words of the Parsha, “God spoke to Moshe,” indicate that God spoke to him with words of rebuke for asking the question (5:22), “Why have you mistreated this people?”

Mizrahi: Rashi noted that the verse employs the Divine Name Elokim, which refers to God when He acts in a manner of severity. Therefore, Rashi concluded that God spoke “words of rebuke.”

Thus, the first verse here in the Parsha is actually split into two distinct halves. The initial words, “God spoke to Moshe,” are a direct continuation of the previous Parsha, where God rebukes Moshe for questioning His ways.

The second half of the verse, “And He said to him, I am God,” is an introduction to the following section, where God explains to Moshe how the time has come to fulfill His promise to the Patriarchs, to redeem the Jewish people.

Rashi (v. 9): However, the Midrash explains that this entire section (v. 1-4) is in fact a continued rebuke of Moshe for questioning God, “Why have You mistreated this people?” In the previous Parsha God was saying, “Alas, for those who are now lost and are no longer found! I now have good reason to grieve the passing of the Patriarchs. Many times I revealed Myself to them, and they did not say to Me, ‘What is Your name?’ But you did. When Avraham was forced to spend an exorbitant sum for a gravesite for Sarah which I had already promised to him, he did not question Me. When Yitzchak suffered for digging wells in the land which I promised to him, he did not question Me. And Ya’akov too spent money on a plot which had been promised to him, and he did not question Me. But you said, ‘Why did You harm this people?’”

However, this Midrash is incompatible with the text of scripture, for a number of reasons:

a.) The Torah does not state explicitly that the Patriarchs did not question God.

b.) If verses 1-4 all describe the rebuke of Moshe, then there is a sudden jump of subject in verse 5.

Therefore, I say that the text should be explained literally, with each statement in its appropriate context [as in comment of Rashi to v. 2]. However, the Midrashic interpretation is also appropriate, as the verse says (Jeremiah 23:29), “Is not My Word like a fire?” says God, “and like a hammer that shatters a rock?” i.e. It divides into many sparks.
God spoke to Moshe and said to him, “I am God. I revealed Myself to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya’akov with the name Almighty God (El Shadai), but with My (true) name ‘Adonoy’ (‘Havayeh’), I did not become known to them.

“I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their temporary residence in which they lived as strangers. I also heard the moans of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I remembered My covenant. Therefore, say to the children of Israel, ‘I am God, and I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt, and I will save you from their labor, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you as a people for Myself, and I will be a God to you, and you will know that I am God, your God, who is taking you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I will bring you to the land, regarding which I raised My hand (swearing) to give it to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya’akov, and I will give it to you as a heritage; I am God.’"

Moshe related this to the children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moshe due to shortness of breath and hard labor.

PROBLEMS WITH RASHI (v. 2, 9)

There are a number of serious difficulties with Rashi’s commentary here which do not seem to be addressed by the classical commentators:

a.) If Rashi feels that “this Midrash is incompatible with the text of scripture,” then why does he quote it in so much detail?

b.) This is certainly not the first time that Rashi has quoted the Midrash in his commentary. The entire book of Bereishis, and the previous Parsha of Shemos, is replete with references to Midrash from Rashi. So why does Rashi write a long justification for his citation of Midrash (“The Midrashic interpretation is also appropriate...”) as if he is citing the Midrash for the first time?

Furthermore, the first time Rashi does explain his use of Midrash (in Bereishis) he does not quote the verse, “‘Is not My Word like a fire?’ says God...” Why has it suddenly become appropriate here in Parshas Va’eira?

THE EXPLANATION

When the reader learns that Moshe had complaints against God — “Why have you mistreated this people?” (5:22)—he will certainly recall that the Patriarchs never had the audacity to complain to God, despite their formidable ordeals. It is therefore only logical that God must have made some rebuke to Moshe for his complaints.

So, having explained the entire story according to a literal rendition of the verses, Rashi was left with a problem: How is it that Moshe was never

TORAS MENACHEM

Sparks of Chasidus

Moshe served God primarily through intellect, which is why the Torah—God’s wisdom—was transmitted through him. The Patriarchs, on the other hand, served God primarily through emotion. Since the primary emphasis of the Patriarchs’ Divine service was not intellectual, they never found a need to question God or challenge Him for an explanation of His actions. Only Moshe, whose focus was intellectual, demanded to know, “Why have you mistreated this people?” (5:22).

Thus, Moshe’s question was not inappropriate. An inability to understand God’s actions would have weakened Moshe’s intellectual bond with his Maker. So, Moshe asked God, “Why have you mistreated this people,” not as a challenge, but rather, in an attempt to come closer to God.

God replied, “With My (true) name ‘Adonoy’ (‘Havayeh’), I did not become known to them.” The Tetragrammaton, ‘Havayeh’, transcends all limitations. Thus, God was replying to Moshe, “Do not serve me with intellect alone. Temper your intellect with emotion and faith so that you serve Me without limitation.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 3, p. 854ff.)
Therefore Rashi explains, “The Midrashic interpretation is also appropriate,” for, despite the fact that it “is incompatible with the text of scripture,” this Midrash is crucial to explain how God rebuked Moshe for falling short of the level of the Patriarchs.

So, we are left with two parallel interpretations—literal and Midrash—which are both crucial to understand the text at the literal level.

Rashi sets a new precedent

Obviously, when Rashi writes, “the Midrashic interpretation is also appropriate,” he is not trying to teach us that Midrash is also true, despite the fact that it is not literal. For that is a basic principle of faith.
God spoke to Moshe, saying, “Come, speak to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, that he should send the children of Israel from his land.”

Moshe spoke before God, saying, “If the children of Israel did not listen to me, then how will Pharaoh listen to me? I have sealed lips!”

Moshe and Aharon are Appointed as Redeemers

6:13

God spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, and He commanded them about the children of Israel and about Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

The following are the heads of their families:

The sons of Re’uwin, Yisra’el’s firstborn: Chanoch, Falu, Chetzron, and Karmi, these are the families of Re’uwin. 15 The sons of Shimon: Yemu’eil, Yamin, Ohad, Yachin, Tzochar and Sha’ul, the son of the Canaanite woman. These are the families of Shimon. 16 These are the names of Levi’s sons in order of their birth: Gershon, Kehos, and Merari. The years of Levi’s life were one hundred and thirty-seven years. 17 The sons of Gershon were Livni and Shimi according to their families.

The sons of Kehos were (Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 27ff.)

The sons of Merari were Machli and Mushi.

These are the families of the Levites in order of their birth. 20 Amram took Yocheved, his aunt, as a wife for himself, and she bore him Aharon and Moshe. The years of Amram’s life were one hundred and thirty-seven years.

The sons of Korach were Korach, Nefeg and Zichri. 21 The sons of Yitzhar were Korach, Nefeg and Zichri.

The years of Kehos’s life were one hundred and thirty-seven years.

The sons of Merari were Machli and Mushi.

Therefore, Rashi quotes a verse which illustrates this point, “‘Is not My word like a fire?’ says God, ‘And like a hammer that shatters a rock?’”

Rather, in the past when Midrash has been cited by Rashi, it has always been used to solve an otherwise insurmountable problem with the literal meaning of the text. When simple logic alone failed, Rashi cited Midrash.

However, Rashi’s point here is that a literal rendition of this text of scripture necessitates a parallel, Midrashic interpretation. And this is the first instance in the Torah where such a situation has arisen.

Thus Rashi writes, “This Midrash is incompatible with the text of scripture for a number of reasons,” for, in the final analysis the literal rendition is the only interpretation which is contextually concrete. And, nevertheless, there remains a secondary need for an additional Midrashic interpretation. To justify this innovative application of Midrash in a simultaneously literal and non-literal sense, he cites a verse, “Is not My word like a fire? says God, And like a hammer that shatters a rock?”

Normally, an interpretation is either: a.) Compatible with scripture—i.e. either a literal interpretation or a Midrash which is compatible with scripture; or it is b.) Incompatible with a simple translation of the text—i.e. a Midrash which cannot be reconciled with a simple rendition of the scriptural text.

But here, we have an entirely new phenomenon—a Midrash which does not fit with the simple translation, and yet it is crucial to the theme of the text, at the literal level.

Therefore, Rashi quotes a verse which illustrates this point, “‘Is not My word like a fire?’ says God, ‘And like a hammer that shatters a rock?”’ and he explains, “It divides into many sparks.” A fire sets off many sparks which fly in different directions, yet every spark is of the same dimensions and contains the same light. Likewise here, the two interpretations of our verse are of equal importance, but they have gone in different “directions,” one simple and one Midrashic.
Why is Aharon mentioned before Moshe in verse 26, and in verse 27 Moshe is mentioned first?

RASHI: Sometimes Aharon is mentioned before Moshe, and sometimes Moshe is mentioned before Aharon. This teaches us that they were equal.

Aharon and Moshe who are mentioned here are the same individuals mentioned above in verse 20, who were born to Yocheved and Amram.

BACHAYE: In verse 26, Aharon is mentioned before Moshe since he is the eldest. In verse 27, Moshe is mentioned first as his level of prophecy was greater.

CHIZKUNI: Verse 26 is a continuation of the previous section, listing the ancestry of the Tribe of Levi. Therefore Aharon is mentioned first, as he was born first. However, verse 27, which is speaking of Moshe and Aharon as redeemers, mentions Moshe first.

Why is Moshe and Aharon’s Lineage listed? (v. 26-7)

The following problems with the text of Chumah bothered Rashi:

a.) Verses 26 and 27 appear to be totally superfluous. We already know that “(It was the above-mentioned) Aharon and Moshe, to whom God said, “Take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their (tribal) legions”” (v. 26). And we know, “They are the ones who (followed their instructions to) speak to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt” (v. 27). What is the Torah trying to teach us with these statements?

b.) Why does the Torah interrupt the story here, from verses 14-25, just to relate the lineage of Moshe and Aharon?

RASHI’S ANSWER

Rashi answers the above difficulties by writing, “Aharon and Moshe who are mentioned here are the same individuals mentioned above, who were born to Yocheved and Amram.” At first glance, this statement of Rashi appears to be somewhat superfluous. However, with these words Rashi is answering the above problems, explaining why the Torah felt the need to list the entire lineage of Moshe and Aharon at this point:

When we are told formally that Moshe and Aharon were appointed to redeem the Jewish people (in verse 13), the obvious question is: Why? What merit did these two individuals have for which they deserved to be the redeemers of the Jewish people? To answer this question the Torah recounts their lineage to teach us that it was in the merit of their ancestors that they were chosen as redeemers. Specifically, Rashi points out concerning their parents, “they were born to Yocheved and Amram.” For their parents risked their lives to withstand Pharaoh’s decrees: Yocheved continued to assist the birth of Jewish babies despite the fact that it was forbidden, and Amram continued to have a marital relationship with his wife, despite the possibly fatal consequences to any children who might be born.

In this merit, their children, Moshe and Aharon, merited to be the redeemers of the Jewish people.
one of the daughters of Putiel for himself as a wife, and she bore him Pinchas. The above are the heads of the fathers of the Levites, according to their families.

26 It was (the above-mentioned) Aharon and Moshe, to whom God said, “Take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their (tribal) legions.” 27 They are the ones who (followed their instructions to) speak to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to take out the children of Israel from Egypt. Both Moshe and Aharon (completed this mission together).

28 It was on the day when God spoke to Moshe in the land of Egypt. 29 God spoke to Moshe, saying, “I am God. Tell over to Pharaoh everything that I speak to you.”

God Promises to Harden Pharaoh’s Heart

Moshe said before God, “But I have sealed lips! How will Pharaoh possibly listen to me?”

1 God said to Moshe, “See, I have made you a master (of plagues and torture) over Pharaoh. Aharon your brother will be your interpreter. 2 You should first say all My commands (to

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What was God’s reaction to Moshe’s further complaint, “I have sealed lips”? (v. 1-2)

Rashi: God told Moshe that he has now made him a master over Pharaoh, a judge and a ruler to rule over him with plagues and torture. He also told Moshe that with each mission of relaying a message to Pharaoh he should say the message only once, as he had heard it from God’s mouth. Then Aharon would interpret and explain the message to Pharaoh. (continued overleaf)

PROBLEMS WITH THE ABOVE

However, this explanation is somewhat problematic, because:

a.) These courageous acts of Yocheved and Amram occurred after Aharon was born. Therefore, the above argument would seem to apply more to Moshe than to Aharon.

b.) If this is the case, why does the Torah mention Aharon before Moshe (v. 26)?

The Explanation

Rashi therefore answers this problem by quoting the Midrash, “Sometimes Aharon is mentioned before Moshe—as is the case here. And sometimes Moshe is mentioned before Aharon. This teaches us that they were equal.”

At first glance, this notion appears to be absurd. How could one possibly accept that Moshe and Aharon are equal, when even a child knows that Moshe’s greatness exceeded that of Aharon in so many respects? The student of Rashi has already learned that when Moshe was born the entire room filled with light (Shemos 2:2), which was not the case with Aharon. So how could they be “equal”?

[The answers offered by Tzeidah Laderech, Maskil leDavid are complex, and not faithful to Rashi’s actual words.]

The answer to this question can be found through a comparison between Rashi’s comment, and the precise wording in Rashi’s source, the Midrash:

The Midrash writes, “this teaches us that they were equal to each other” (שניהם נראים כאחד). Rashi rejected this expression—due to the above problem that they are obviously not the same—and he wrote, “this teaches us that they were equal” (שניהם נראים כאחד).

In other words, Rashi was not implying that Moshe and Aharon were equal in stature, as the Midrash suggests. Rather, he stressed that in their mission to redeem the Jewish people they were one, for there was a single mission being carried out by two people. Therefore, the Torah interchanges their names freely, since in this respect they were two parts of a whole.

Nevertheless, Rashi did not need to write this detail explicitly, for the context of this verse discusses precisely this point—the mission incumbent on Moshe and Aharon.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, pp. 58-65)
So, now, when God told Moshe, “Tell over to Pharaoh” (v. 29), he was shocked, replying (v. 30), “I have sealed lips.” God consequently responded, “Aharon your brother will be your spokesman” (7:1). In other words, Moshe would have to speak to Pharaoh himself, but he would be assisted by Aharon.

Shach al HaTorah: Here, Moshe said that he had sealed lips, and he addressed God with the Tetragrammaton. Earlier, while at the burning bush, Moshe claimed that he was heavy of mouth and heavy of speech, and he addressed God with the term “Master,” יְהֵיטָר (4:10). Thus, Moshe was saying, that before God’s ineffable Name (the Tetragrammaton), he was completely speechless (“sealed”). But, before God as He is Master of the Universe (“Master”) he was able to speak, but in a limited manner (heavy of speech).

**Classic Questions**

**Problem of Ramban (v. 1-2)**

Ramban questions why Moshe repeats his complaint here of an inability to speak, when he had already argued the same point at the burning bush.

He answers that Moshe was not aware that he would ever have to speak to Pharaoh (and thus Aharon’s help was being offered only for the task of speaking to the Jewish people). So, now, Moshe was surprised when God told him that he would also have to speak to Pharaoh.

However, this answer is problematic, since God told Moshe explicitly that he would have to speak to Pharaoh, in the very first instance (Shemos 4:22). So, we are left without an answer as to why Moshe complained again here?

**Problems with Rashi**

a.) According to Rashi, God told Moshe here (in v. 2) that he would have to speak just once to Pharaoh, and that Aharon would do the rest. But, if this was to be the working relationship between Moshe and Aharon when approaching Pharaoh, why were they not informed of it the first time that they went to see him, in Parshas Shemos? (5:1-3)

b.) Obviously, the plan was that Moshe should speak less than Aharon. But why does Rashi stress that Moshe would be limited to speak just once on each occasion?

c.) Why the double expression that Aharon would interpret and explain the message to Pharaoh?

**The Explanation**

Earlier, at the burning bush, Moshe had merely complained of difficult speech (a heavy mouth and tongue). Therefore, Aharon’s assistance of interpretation to Pharaoh had sufficed.

Here, on the second occasion, Moshe now complained of a more severe problem “sealed lips,” i.e. a total inability to speak. [c.f. Shach al HaTorah]

God replied, “You should first say all My commands” (v. 2), i.e. God was not merely telling Moshe to speak, He was promising Moshe that He would help him speak. Thus, Rashi stresses that Moshe would be going on a Divine “Mission,” suggesting that it is purely through Divine assistance that he will be able to speak.

Consequently, Moshe was no more than a messenger of God, who was required to give over his master’s message. This explains why he was
Pharaoh), and Aharon, your brother, will then explain to Pharaoh that he should send the children of Israel out of his land.”

3 “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart (in order that) I should increase My miracles and wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 Pharaoh will not listen to you. I will lay My hand upon Egypt (to strike them), and I will take My legions, My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt with great acts of judgment. 5 When I stretch forth My Hand over Egypt the Egyptians shall know that I am God, and I will take the children of Israel out from among them.”

6 Moshe and Aharon did this. They did what God commanded them.

7 Moshe was eighty years old, and Aharon was eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

● When was Pharaoh’s heart actually hardened? (v. 3)

Rashi: God said, “Now that Pharaoh has behaved wickedly, and has willfully opposed me, I know that there is no good-will among these nations that would lead them to repent wholeheartedly. Therefore, it is a good idea to harden his heart so that I can increase My miraculous signs against him and you will be able to recognize My power....However, during the first five plagues the Torah does not mention that God hardened his heart. Rather, it states that his heart became hardened.

Ramban: God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was clearly a punishment for previous sins. However, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart may have occurred at two different points: a.) Before the plagues started (i.e. at this point). This would have been a punishment for his unjustified enslavement of the Jewish people. Or, b.) God only hardened Pharaoh’s heart after the first five plagues, as a punishment for ignoring His requests. Thus, at this point when God says, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” (7:2, and likewise earlier 4:21), He is merely informing Moshe about a future event.

Gur Aryeh: God hardened Pharaoh’s heart five times with the last five plagues as a measured punishment for the five times that Pharaoh deliberately ignored God’s will during the first five plagues.

Nachalas Ya’akov: Rashi never said that God did not harden Pharaoh’s heart during the first five plagues. All he writes is that the Torah does not mention that God hardened his heart. But, in fact, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart on all ten occasions. The only difference is that during the last five plagues God hardened Pharaoh’s heart directly. Whereas, during the first five plagues, He arranged circumstantial factors that would influence Pharaoh not to let the Jewish people be freed. For example, by the first plague of blood, God allowed the Egyptian sorcerers to duplicate the miracle so as to confuse Pharaoh into thinking that Moshe and Aharon might be mere magicians.

Rambam: Pharaoh was punished with the removal of his free choice as a punishment for his prior enslavement of the Jewish people. But, if God had already decreed that the Jewish people would be enslaved (see Bereishis 15:13), why were the Egyptians punished? Surely, required only to speak once, as his sole task was to give over the message to Pharaoh, exactly as he had heard it from God, with no elaboration.

Presumably, he said the message to Pharaoh in Hebrew, the language in which the message was transmitted to Moshe by God. Since Pharaoh did not understand Hebrew (see Rashi to Bereishis 50:6), how was he to understand what Moshe had said? In answer to this question, Rashi writes that it was necessary for Aharon to carry out two jobs: a.) translation; and, b.) explanation. Thus Rashi uses a double expression that Aharon would interpret and explain the message to Pharaoh.

But what was the point in sending Moshe to give a message to Pharaoh in a language he did not understand?

This point is answered by the previous comment of Rashi that God made Moshe a master over Pharaoh. I.e. Moshe’s role was not to explain to Pharaoh God’s decrees; that was Aharon’s task. Rather, Moshe’s function was to be a judge over Pharaoh to punish him.

Toras Menachem

Moshe was to tell Pharaoh, “Let my people go!” with a serious and angry expression and, being that he was being spoken to sternly in a language he did not understand, Pharaoh would feel a heightened sense of terror.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 16, pp. 69-74)

Problems With Rashi (v. 3)

Rashi writes here that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart as a punishment for previous bad behavior (as Rambam and Rambam also explain).

However, later in verse 14, the Torah states that God told Moshe before the plague of blood, “Pharaoh’s heart is heavy.” Rashi insists that the correct implication there is that Pharaoh’s heart was heavy of its own accord, and had not been made heavy at an earlier date. This seems to contradict the Torah’s statement here that it was God that made Pharaoh’s heart heavy: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” (v. 3).

So, what exactly happened? Was Pharaoh’s heart naturally heavy (as implied by v. 14)? Or, was it made heavy by God?

[Rashi does appear to suggest that Pharaoh’s free choice was not taken away until after the fifth plague, which would explain why his heart was naturally heavy during the first five plagues. However, Nachalas Ya’akov demonstrates that this interpretation of Rashi cannot be proven.]

Problems With Rambam

Rambam writes that God had decided that the Jewish people would be enslaved, but He did not decree on any individual to carry out this plan.

Sparks of Chasidus

Moshe was a shaliach (emissary) of God to break the forces of evil which Pharaoh embodied. Since a shaliach may not deviate from the commands that he received, Moshe spoke to Pharaoh in Hebrew, giving over God’s words precisely in the form he had heard them, before Aharon gave his explanations (ibid.).
Therefore, any Egyptian who participated in the persecution of the Jewish people deserved punishment.

However, while this answer explains well why each Egyptian was punished, it does not seem to be an answer for Pharaoh himself. For, according to Rambam, God’s decree was not on any individual, but on the nation as a whole. But, every nation must have a king, or leader. Therefore, a decree on the nation in general also refers to its leader in particular.

The question thus returns: If Pharaoh was destined by God to enslave the Jewish people, why was he punished?

**The Explanation**

We are therefore forced to conclude (according to Rambam) that it was decreed by God that Pharaoh would enslave the Jewish people. However, Pharaoh himself did not enslave the Jewish people in order to carry out God’s will, but rather, it was to satisfy his own evil desires. Therefore, he was punished.

Similarly, according to Rashi, we can understand that God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” before the ten plagues, as a punishment for his earlier wicked behavior. However, God still told Moshe that “Pharaoh’s heart is heavy” of *its own accord*, since he had a natural inclination to oppress the Jewish people, regardless of any Divine intervention.

(See also “Sparks of Chasidus” to beginning of Parshas Bo)
Aharon Performs a Miracle for Pharaoh

God spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying, 9 “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Prove yourselves (as emissaries of a higher power) with a miracle,’ you shall say to Aharon, ‘Take your staff, and cast it in front of Pharaoh.’ It will become a snake.”

10 Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh, and they did exactly as God had commanded. Aharon cast his staff in front of Pharaoh and in front of his servants, and it became a snake.

11 Pharaoh also summoned sages and magicians and they, the sorcerers of Egypt, did the same thing with their spells. 12 Each one of them cast down his staff, and they became snakes. Aharon’s staff (then reverted back from a snake to a staff and) swallowed their staffs.

13 Pharaoh’s heart became hardened, and he did not listen to them, just as God had said.

Classic Questions

• Did the snakes of Pharaoh’s magicians return to be staffs before they were swallowed up, or not? (v. 12)

Mizrachi & Gur Aryeh: Yes. That is why the verse stresses (v. 12), “Aharon’s staff swallowed up their staffs.”

Be’er Haitev & Tzeidah LaDerech: No. What would be the point of their staffs’ returning to be staffs first? Isn’t it a bigger miracle if an inanimate object swallows up living creatures? Nevertheless, the Torah says, “Aharon’s staff swallowed up their staffs,” (despite the fact that they were not staffs at the time) since their staffs only appeared to be snakes through magic, but they were in fact staffs (in contrast to Aharon’s staff, which actually turned into a snake through a miracle from God.)

• Did Moshe and Aharon each have their own staff, or did they share? (v. 10-12)

Zohar: They each had their own staff. It could not have been Moshe’s staff that swallowed those of the Egyptians, since Moshe’s staff was extremely holy (“the staff of God”—Shemos 4:20) and it would therefore have been inappropriate to be used to swallow the impure staffs of the Egyptians (Zohar II 28a).

Ibn Ezra: There was only one staff. Aharon borrowed Moshe’s staff when necessary.

Abarbanel: Each had his own staff, but Aharon used both Moshe’s and his own.

Toras Menachem

The floor and it would turn into a snake in front of Pharaoh, Aharon could not have possibly presumed that with this alone the purpose of his visit would be fulfilled. How would the transformation of a staff into a snake prove the omnipotence of God? Aharon must have understood that God was only telling him part of what was going to occur. Or, perhaps, God was merely telling Aharon the part that was incumbent on him, leaving God to do the main work.

Thus, when Aharon’s staff defeated (swallowed) those of the Egyptians, Pharaoh was given the message—which was the initial purpose of this visit—that God is invincible, even over mighty Egypt. Therefore, it turns out that the final swallowing that occurred by Aharon’s staff was not a “Plan ‘B’” which came into play when the original miracle failed to have its desired effect. To the contrary: the very purpose of Aharon and Moshe’s visit was to enable this final act to occur. The only purpose of this mission was to show Pharaoh a sign that God’s staff was more powerful than him and that only occurred when his representatives were swallowed by Aharon’s staff.

Now we can also understand why Rashi stresses that Aharon’s snake returned to be a staff before it swallowed those of Pharaoh:

If Aharon’s staff had swallowed the others while it was a snake, the event would certainly have been miraculous, but it would not have been a clear sign of the omnipotence of God.

Rather, after having returned to the form of a staff—which represented rulership—Aharon’s staff swallowed the others. This indicated that God’s power of rulership totally overwhelmed that of Pharaoh.

Thus, in the final analysis, the number or the extent of miracles here was irrelevant. The only point of the sign was to prove to Pharaoh that his power of rulership was of no significance compared to that of God. And that was indicated to him by the fact that Aharon’s symbol of leadership—his staff—was victorious. The need for miraculous intervention was thus secondary to the primary message. Hence, Rashi omits any mention of the presence of a “miracle within a miracle.”

Furthermore, according to the above logic, it is irrelevant whether Aharon’s staff swallowed those of Pharaoh when they were snakes, or after they had returned to staffs. For the message of Divine Omnipotence was conveyed to Pharaoh by the fact that Aharon’s staff proved victorious, while it was a staff (regardless of any other details.) Thus, Rashi avoids this issue, stressing that Aharon’s staff swallowed up all the others, without saying whether they were staffs or snakes, as it is irrelevant.

Thus the dispute between Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, Be’er Haitev and Tzeidah LaDerech on this matter is inconsequential to the main issue here.]

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 26, p. 49ff.)

How Many Staffs Were There? (v. 10-12)

Rashi makes no comment on this issue. Presumably he rejects the interpretation of the Ibn Ezra (that Aharon borrowed Moshe’s staff) since he makes no mention of this point. And, furthermore, the Torah implies strongly that Aharon had his own staff (v. 9): “You shall say to Aharon, ‘Take your staff.’”
the Egyptians would take water from barrels of water owned by Jews, just the Egyptians?

**MIDRASH:** The Jewish people were unaffected by the plague. When the Egyptians would take water from barrels of water owned by Jews, the part that they took miraculously turned into blood. Even if a Jew held a cup of water and allowed an Egyptian to drink water from it, the water turned into blood. Even when they drank together from the same dish, the Jew drank water and the Egyptian drank blood.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **Did the plague of blood affect the Jewish people also, or just the Egyptians?**

**MIDRASH:** The Jewish people were unaffected by the plague. When the Egyptians would take water from barrels of water owned by Jews, the part that they took miraculously turned into blood. Even if a Jew held a cup of water and allowed an Egyptian to drink water from it, the water turned into blood. Even when they drank together from the same dish, the Jew drank water and the Egyptian drank blood.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

The Zohar’s interpretation (that Moshe’s staff was too holy) would also have been unacceptable to Rashi, since Rashi himself writes that Moshe’s staff was associated with negativity and impurity. For, when God turned Moshe’s staff into a snake Rashi explained that it was a hint that he had spoke disparagingly about the Jewish people (see Shemos 4:3).

Rather, Rashi learns simply that Moshe and Aharon each had their own staff. The need for two staffs in our case is quite straightforward, even to a child:

If Aharon had taken Moshe’s staff immediately, before turning it into a snake, it would have appeared that Aharon could not turn any staff into a snake, only a special one. The Egyptians, however, were able to turn their own staffs into snakes, without resorting to the use of special staffs. Thus, if Aharon had taken Moshe’s staff, he would have appeared inferior to the Egyptian magicians.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Va’eira 5734; Likutei Sichos ibid., note 38)
7:14 God said to Moshe, “Pharaoh’s heart is heavy. He refuses to send the people out. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning when he goes out to the water, and stand opposite him on the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a snake. 16 Say to him, ‘God, the God of the Hebrews sent me to you, saying, “Send away My people, so that they may serve Me in the desert.” “Up to this point, you have not listened. 17 So God is (now) saying, ‘With this you will know that I am God.’ With the staff that is in my hand I am going to hit the water that is in the Nile, and it will turn to blood. 18 The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul-smelling. The Egyptians will become weary from trying (to find a way) to drink water from the Nile.’”

19 God said to Moshe, “Say to Aharon, ‘Take your staff and extend your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their canals, and over all their bodies of water, and they will become blood. There will be blood throughout the entire land of Egypt, even in wood (vessels) and in stone (vessels).’”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

However, if an Egyptian paid the Jew for some water, it did not turn into blood.

In this way, the Jewish people became wealthy from the plague of blood (Shemos Rabah 9:10).

IBN EZRA: This miraculous transformation of blood into water in the hands of the Jewish people is not mentioned at all here in the Torah. Therefore, in my opinion, the first three plagues of blood, frogs and lice affected both the Egyptians and the Jews. When it came to the fourth plague of wild beasts, which was more severe, God saved the Jewish people from being affected. Thus, in addition to the Egyptians’ digging for water (v. 24), the Jewish people were also forced to dig for water.

RADVAZ: It is forbidden to believe in these words of Ibn Ezra, that the first three plagues affected the Jewish people as well. Especially, as the Torah indicates the opposite, saying, “And all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink,” (v. 24) without any mention that the Jews did likewise.

Furthermore, if the plagues affected the Jewish people also then how would Pharaoh get the message that God was telling him to let the Jewish people leave? Pharaoh would see with his own eyes that the Jewish people were also afflicted. Where then is the proof that the God of the Jews is sending the plagues? (Responsa 1:813)

RASHI (v. 17): The Egyptians worshiped the Nile. Therefore, God first struck their deity with plagues, and then He struck them.

T ORAS MENACHEM

This begs the question: Why should the Jewish people have suffered from plagues which were meant to punish the Egyptians?

However, since the key threat here to Pharaoh was that his god (the Nile) was afflicted, it follows that if any part of the Nile was unaffected (e.g. in the area of Goshen where the Jewish people lived) then Pharaoh could come to the conclusion that at least part of his deity was mightier than God. Thus, it was crucial, that all of the Nile, even the parts used exclusively by the Jewish people (and even the parts that were outside the boundaries of Egypt) should be afflicted.

The above interpretation also explains why the Egyptians were able to obtain fresh water through digging (see second interpretation of the Chizkuni overleaf). Since the point of the plague was that Pharaoh’s god should be afflicted, it follows that only the Nile turned to blood, and that the water underneath the ground was unaffected. To the contrary, if any water other than the Nile had been affected, then in would not have been clear to Pharaoh that his deity was being targeted specifically.

In fact, the greatest embarrassment for Pharaoh was that his deity was struck by the plague, but the water immediately adjacent to his deity was totally unaffected.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, pp. 31-2; vol. 31, pp. 36-7; Sichas Shabbos Parshas Va’eira 5747)
When the Egyptian magicians copied the miracle, was it any different? (v. 22)

RABBANIM: Yes, there was a major difference. Aharon managed to transform enormous areas of natural water into blood, whereas Pharaoh's magicians were only able to change small amounts of water to blood they had dug up from underground wells.

ABARBADEL: The Egyptian magicians were not able to copy the miracle at all. They never turned water into blood in front of Pharaoh, or in public. They merely let loose a false rumor that they had repeated the miracle in private, and this was sufficient for Pharaoh to doubt whether Moshe and Aharon had really been sent by God.

For how long did the water remain blood? (v. 25)

RASHI: For a total of seven days the river did not return to its former state. Each plague lasted a quarter of a month, and for three quarters of a month Moshe would inform and warn the Egyptians.

RASHI: 9:12.

MIDRASH: Moshe warned them for 24 days, and then the plague lasted seven days (Shemos Rabah 9:12).
20 Moshe and Aharon did exactly as God had commanded. He raised the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile before the eyes of Pharaoh and before the eyes of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile turned to blood. 21 The fish-life that was in the Nile died, and the Nile stank. The Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout the entire land of Egypt.

22 The sorcerers of Egypt did the same thing with their spells. (This caused) Pharaoh’s heart to become hardened, and he did not listen to them, as God had said.

23 Pharaoh turned around and went home. He didn’t take (either miracle) to heart.

24 All the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, since they could not drink from the water of the Nile.

25 Seven days were completed after God had struck the Nile.

The Second Plague—Infestation of Frogs

7:26 God said to Moshe, “Come to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what God said, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. 27 But if you refuse to let them go, I will strike all your territories with frogs. 28 The Nile will swarm with frogs, and they will go up (from the river) and come into your house, into your bedroom, upon your bed, into the house of your servants and of your people, into your ovens and into your kneading bowls. 29 The frogs will go up into (the intestines of) you, your people and all your servants.’”’

Chizkuni: Actually, the water only turned into blood for a very short period of time, during which all aquatic life was killed (v. 20). Thus, when the Torah states, “the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile” (v. 21), it was not because the water had become blood (for it had already returned into water). But rather, it was because the water stank (v. 21). This explains why there was no request made by the Egyptians for the plague to be removed, since the blood turned back to water after a short period of time.

A proof for the above is that the Torah relates how, “the sorcerers of Egypt did the same thing with their spells” (v. 22), for if all the water had turned into blood, how would they have found water to turn into blood? Rather, we can conclude that the blood had already turned back to water beforehand.

Alternatively, one could learn that the water remained as blood for an entire week, and that the Egyptian magicians took water that was pumped from under the ground, and turned it into blood for Pharaoh. This is suggested by the verse, “All the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink,” from which we can presume that they were able to obtain actual water, since only the river was turned into blood.

The Length of the Plague of Blood (v. 25)

Why does Rashi stress that during the plague of blood, “the river did not return to its former state”? Is that not obvious?

The plague of blood differed from the others, in the respect that it was completed instantaneously, “He raised the staff and struck the water... and all the water that was in the Nile turned to blood” (v. 20). All the other plagues, in contrast, worsened each day.

Therefore, Rashi was troubled by the expression (v. 25), “Seven days were completed, after God had struck the river.” Since there were no new occurrences each day, what was there to complete? The Torah states explicitly that the miracle was completed in the first instance?

Rashi answers that the Torah wishes to stress here that a total of seven days had passed during which time the river had not returned to its former state. I.e. while there were no additional occurrences during the seven days, the very fact that the river did not return to water shows that there was a continuously passive activity. The fact that the Torah does not mention any intervention by God to return the river to water indicates that He was continuously transforming the water to blood during the period of seven days. When God stopped this miracle, the Nile returned to water automatically.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 31, pp. 28-39)

The warnings given to Pharaoh were not merely to inform him about the coming plagues. Primarily, they were to afflict him with additional suffering (see Rashi to 7:1). Consequently, the warning for the next plague was a direct continuation of the affliction of the previous plague.

This also explains why God sent Moshe and Aharon to warn Pharaoh about the plague of blood immediately after the miracle of the snakes. For, after being shocked by this miracle, the warning of an approaching plague would, in addition to informing Pharaoh, have more of a harsh effect on him. (ibid.)

Sparks of Chasidus

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How did the plague of frogs start? (v. 2)

**Rashi:** When the Torah states that “the frog came up” it means that there was one frog initially. They hit it and it streamouted swarms of frogs. This is the Midareshic interpretation. The simple interpretation is that a singular noun can be used to indicate the plural, as in verse 14 below.

**Be’er Basadeh:** Rashi is troubled why verse 28 above employs the plural: “The Nile will swarm with frogs,” whereas, in actuality, the Torah reports in verse 2 that only one frog came out: “Aharon stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frog came up.” Therefore, he quotes the Midrashic interpretation first, as it explains clearly how there was actually one frog that came out to start with. *Rashi’s simple interpretation—that “the frog” (singular) can be used to indicate the plural, or the species—was placed second, as it is more difficult to accept.

**Talmud:** Rabbi Akiva said that a single frog came out. It caused a swarm which spread throughout the entire land of Egypt. Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaryah said that one frog came out to start with. It whistled to the others, and they all came out (Sanhedrin 67b).

Why Does Rashi Reject the Talmud’s Solutions? (v.2)

At the literal level of Torah interpretation, which *Rashi* adheres to stringently, we avoid where possible resorting to explanations which involve supernatural occurrences. In our case, *Rashi* seems to have flagrantly defied this rule, since he cites the Midrashic interpretation that one frog came out of the Nile, and when it was hit it produced many frogs.

At first glance, we could argue that *Rashi* was forced to conclude that this miracle occurred, even at the literal level, as it is the only satisfactory explanation why the Torah records that only one frog came out of the river, “Aharon stretched out his hand...and the frog came up” (v. 2) [c.f. Be’er Basadeh].

However, this fails to explain why *Rashi* rejected the more simple interpretations of the Talmud. Both of these explanations also state that one frog came out of the Nile at first, and both explanations are less miraculous than *Rashi*’s interpretation that one frog turned into many when it was hit.

According to both explanations of the Talmud, the frogs that swarmed Egypt were pre-existing. *Rashi*, however, innovates that a tremendous miracle occurred with new frogs being created when the existing one was hit.

What forced *Rashi* to conclude, at the literal level, that this miracle occurred?

The Explanation

God told Aharon, “Stretch forth your hand with your staff...and raise up (לֹא) frogs upon the land of Egypt” (v. 1), i.e. God indicated to Aharon that he would personally raise up the frogs.

This is in contrast to the other plagues, where the involvement of Moshe and Aharon was merely an initiation or catalyst to the full development of the plague. For example, by the plague of locusts, God told Moshe, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locust swarm and it will ascend (לָךְ)...” (10:12. c.f. 7:19, 8:12, 9:8-9, 9:22, 10:21 which all stress that Moshe or Aharon’s involvement was that of initiation only.)
God said to Moshe, “Say to Aharon, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals, and over the ponds, and make the frogs come up over the land of Egypt.’”

Aharon stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frog came up (which multiplied) and covered the land of Egypt.

The sorcerers did the same thing with their spells, and they brought up the frogs over the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh summoned Moshe and Aharon, and said, “Plead to God that He remove the frogs away from me and from my people, and I will send out the people of Israel so that they may sacrifice to God.”

Moshe said to Pharaoh, “Give me a challenge. Tell me when I should plead for you, for your servants, and for your people, for the frogs to be eliminated from you and from your houses, leaving them only in the Nile?”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Were the Egyptian magicians able to create many frogs from one, like Aharon did? (v. 3)

MIDRASH: Rabbi Eliezer said that the Egyptians were able to create living organisms with their magic, but that they could not create organisms that were smaller than a barleycorn. The other sages said that they were not able to create living organisms at all. Rather, they were able to cause them to gather in a specific place through their magic. However, they were not able to do so with organisms smaller than a barleycorn (Shemos Rabah 10:7).

● Why did some frogs remain in the Nile (v. 5,7)?

IBN EZRA: Because that is where they were to start with.

In our case, however, God told Aharon that he would not only have to initiate the plague of frogs, but that he must actually “raise” the frogs.

Thus, in the following verse (v. 2) when we learn that “Aharon stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt and the frog came up,” the obvious question is: Where do we find that Aharon actually caused the frogs to come out of the Nile? He only seemed to initiate the plague by bringing out one frog?

Therefore, Rashi answers that a miracle occurred, such that when this frog was hit it stream out many new frogs. Consequently, it turns out that all of the frogs which infested Egypt came from the one frog that Aharon brought up. Thus, it is true to say that he personally brought up all the frogs.

This explains why Rashi chose the Midrashic interpretation as his first, primary explanation and rejected both interpretations of the Talmud, where Aharon only initiated the plague of frogs.

(Toras Menachem, beginning of plague of blood)

DID THE EGYPTIANS CREATE NEW FROGS? (v. 3)

The Midrash cites a difference of opinion whether the Egyptians were capable of creating an animal the size of a frog. In reference to the plague of lice, the Torah relates that the Egyptian magicians were unable to produce lice (8:14). Rashi writes (ibid.) that this was because their magic did not enable them “to create them,” since they were smaller than a barleycorn. Thus, Rashi appears to agree with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer in the Midrash, that the Egyptians were capable of creating organisms that were larger than a barleycorn.

In our case, therefore, we can presume that the Egyptians did copy Aharon’s miracle of creating many frogs from one frog.

Alternatively, we could argue that the Egyptian magicians were not capable of creating frogs, and thus were unable to duplicate the miracle in its entirety. In this way, God’s superior power was demonstrated in this instance (and in all the subsequent plagues) which the Egyptians could not duplicate at all.

Why Did Some Frogs Remain in the Nile? (v. 5,7)

This seems to be an important point, as the Torah stresses it twice, once in verse 5 and again in verse 7.

Ibn Ezra answers that some frogs remained in the Nile, as they were there to start with. However, Rashi clearly does not agree with this, since he writes (in his first, primary interpretation) that all the frogs came miraculously from one initial frog (v. 2). So, obviously, they were never in the Nile before.

The answer to this question is hinted to in a later comment of Rashi. In chapter 8, verse 17, Rashi explains that the purpose of the plague of frogs was twofold, “to scare them and to make them panic.” Presumably, the panic mentioned here occurred during the plague itself. But the “scaring” is likely to have been a long-term effect, as we always fear something that is distant.

Consequently, some frogs were left in the Nile after the plague as a constant reminder to the Egyptians of what occurred, so as to impose fear on them.

Nevertheless, this feature of a post-plague “reminder” was unique to the plague of frogs, since the purpose of this plague was to strike Pharaoh’s deity. Thus, on all future occasions where Pharaoh might feel that his god—the Nile—would save him, there would be a constant reminder that his deity was totally powerless, since he would see that the frogs still remained. [Especially, as we know that Pharaoh claimed he never needed to relieve himself, and so had to make clandestine visits to the Nile. Thus he would be reminded of the powerlessness of his deity on a daily basis.]

Therefore, the Torah stresses the remaining frogs in the Nile twice, as it was an important method by which Pharaoh’s spirits would be weakened during all the subsequent plagues.
The plague of frogs, however, showed, not only how Pharaoh's god was powerless, the plague itself was a source of tremendous damage and havoc to the entire nation. Therefore, it was more appropriate to—of the two plagues that affected Pharaoh's god—a reminder of the plague of frogs should remain permanently.

(Were the Jewish People Afflicted by Lice? (v. 14))

The Torah states that, “the lice were upon man and beast” (v. 14), without making a distinction between Jew and non-Jew. Therefore, we can presume that, at the literal level, this plague affected Jewish people.
Pharaoh said, “(Plead today for the frogs to be eliminated) tomorrow.”

He (Moshe) said, “(It will be) as you say, in order that you should know that there is none like God, our God. The frogs will depart from you and from your houses and from your servants and from your people. They will remain only in the Nile.”

Moshe and Aharon went out from Pharaoh’s presence, and (immediately) Moshe cried out to God about the frogs that He had brought upon Pharaoh.

God acted according to Moshe’s word, and the frogs within the houses, the courtyards, and the fields died. They gathered them into many heaps, and the land stank.

Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he continued to harden his heart, and he did not listen to them, as God had said.

**The Third Plague—Lice Infestation**

God said to Moshe, “Say to Aharon, ‘Stretch out your staff and hit the earth of the land, and it will become lice throughout the entire land of Egypt.’”

They did this. Aharon stretched forth his hand with his staff and struck the earth of the land, and the (creeping mass of) lice was upon man and beast. Throughout all Egypt the earth of the land turned into lice.

The sorcerers did the same thing with their spells, trying to create lice (from another place) but they were unable to do so. The lice were upon man and beast. The sorcerers said to Pharaoh, “It is the finger of God (and not witchcraft)!” However, Pharaoh’s heart became hardened, and he did not listen to them, as God had said.

**The Fourth Plague—Wild Animals Wreak Havoc**

God said to Moshe, “Get up early in the morning and stand yourself before Pharaoh when he goes out to the water. Say to him, ‘This is what God said, “Let My people go out and serve Me. For if you do not let My people go, then I will incite a mixture (of harmful beasts, snakes and scorpions) against you, your servants, your people and your houses. The houses of Egypt, and the land

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**Classic Questions**

- Why were the Egyptian magicians unable to duplicate the plague of lice? (v. 14)
  **Rashi:** Their sorcery was not able to control creatures smaller than a barleycorn. Thus, they were unable to create lice of their own.

- What did this plague consist of? (v. 17)
  **Rashi:** [The Torah refers simply to a “mixture” but,] this suggests a mixture of wild animals, snakes and scorpions, sent to cause destruction to the Egyptians.

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**Toras Menachem**

In fact, only by the following plague of wild animals does the Torah state, “I will set apart the land of Goshen where My people remain, so that there will not be any harmful beast there, in order that you know that I am God.” Here, however, there is no such statement suggesting that there was any distinction between Egyptian and Jew.

But why should the Jewish people be afflicted by a plague that was meant as a punishment for the Egyptians?

The plague of lice is defined by the Torah as having a specific purpose. Namely, it led Pharaoh’s magicians to realize “It is the finger of God” (v. 15). However, for this goal to be achieved, it was necessary that the plague affect everybody unconditionally, for only an unlimited plague would lead the magicians to conclude that it was caused by God, Who is unlimited. If the Jewish people had not been affected, then the sorcerers would have perceived the plague as an act of sorcery by Moshe and Aharon (as they had perceived the earlier plagues). Only, since they were unable to duplicate the plague—because the lice were smaller than a barleycorn (see Rashi)—they would have perceived Moshe and Aharon as greater sorcerers than themselves. Therefore, it was necessary for the plague to be totally without limits, in order for them to come to the realization that “it is the finger of God.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, p. 32)
The Midrash explains why each particular plague occurred by comparing the plagues to standard military tactics when laying siege to a city. First, the city’s water supply is hit. Then, the oppressors blow trumpets to scare the enemy and to wreak havoc upon them. Similarly, the frogs croaked and made noise etc. as explained in the Midrash Tanchumah.

SIFSEI CHACHAMIM: Rashi brings the analogy of “military tactics” here, and not at the beginning of the account of the plagues, since the reasons for the first three plagues are easily understood. The plagues of blood and frogs were to afflict the Nile which was the deity of Egypt, and the plague of lice led the Egyptian magicians to conclude that, “It is the finger of God” (v. 15). Therefore, at this point we are in need of an explanation for the current plague.

GUR ARYE: The first three plagues all arose from the immediate locality of the Egyptians. Blood and frogs came from the Nile, and lice came from the earth. Here, however, we are faced with an
on which they stand, will be filled with a mixture (of harmful beasts, snakes and scorpions). On that day I will set apart the land of Goshen where My people remain, so that there will not be any harmful beast there, in order that you know that I am God (and My decrees are upheld) on earth. I will bring about salutation (from this plague for My people), which will set apart My people and your people. This miracle will occur tomorrow.”

20 God did this, and a heavy mixture (of harmful beasts, snakes and scorpions) came to Pharaoh’s house and his servants’ house and throughout the entire land of Egypt. The land was destroyed because of the mixture (of harmful beasts, snakes and scorpions).

21 Pharaoh summoned Moshe and Aharon, and he said, “Go and slaughter to your God, (but do it) in this land.”

22 Moshe said, “It would not be appropriate to do that, for we will be sacrificing the deity of the Egyptians to our God! As if we could sacrifice the deity of the Egyptians before their eyes, and they wouldn’t stone us? Let us go for a three-day journey into the desert and sacrifice to God, our God, as He is going to tell us.”

23 Pharaoh said, “I will send you out in order to sacrifice to God, your God, in the desert, on the condition that you do not go too far away. Plead with Him on my behalf!”

24 Moshe said, “I am going away from you, and I will plead with God. The mixture of harmful beasts will depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow. Only Pharaoh should not continue to (act in a manner of) ridicule, by not sending the people to go and sacrifice to God.”

25 Moshe left Pharaoh’s presence and pleaded with God.

26 God acted in accordance with Moshe’s word. He removed the mixture (of harmful beasts) from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not a single one remained.

27 Pharaoh hardened his heart this time too, and he did not send the people away.

invasion of wild beasts which were extremely unusual in Egypt. Therefore, Rashi decided to give the analogy of “military tactics” at this point.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

A “MIXTURE” OF WHAT? (v. 17)

None of the commentators give a satisfactory explanation as to why Rashi brings the analogy of military tactics at this point. For they all answer that Rashi brings the analogy here to explain the reason for the plague of wild beasts. However, Rashi himself only quotes the analogy in reference to the plagues of blood and frogs, and he makes no mention how this helps us understand the plague of wild beasts!

Sifsei Chachamim and Gur Aryeh write that the reason for the first three plagues is self-understood. If so, why does Rashi then bring a further reason for these plagues in his analogy of military tactics—“First, the city’s water supply is hit. Then, the oppressors blow trumpets...”? Levush Ha’Orah claims that Rashi finds it difficult to understand why God did not kill all the Egyptians immediately. But, obviously, God did not want to kill them all, as we see in actuality that He did not kill all of the Egyptians with the plagues. And, even the last plague, which did aim to kill some Egyptians, was limited to a specific group (the firstborn).

TORAS MENACHEM

The Explanation

The Torah is extremely vague when describing the current plague. The verse states merely, “I will incite against you a mixture ” (v. 17), but it does not specify exactly what the mixture was. Furthermore, the Torah makes no reference to the effect of this mixture descending on Egypt. We are thus left clueless as to the nature and purpose of this plague.

LEVUSH HA’Orah: Rashi mentions the analogy of “military tactics” here, since he is troubled by the question: If God wanted the Egyptians to die, why didn’t He bring a plague to kill them right away?

The Last Word

The Divinely imposed mixture of wild beasts could have led the Jewish people to believe that God was in favor of mixtures. Perhaps this was a sign that all barriers could be broken down, and that Jew and non-Jew could mix alike!

Therefore, at the same time God sent a mixture, He also “set apart the land of Goshen where My people remain, so that there will not be any harmful beast there” (v. 18).

This teaches us that even when a Jew goes out into the wider world of “mixed values” and blurred boundaries, he should not come to the conclusion that God favors this mixing. Rather, it is the Divine will that the Jewish people and their values should remain distinct (“set apart”) from the rest of mankind.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, pp. 32-33)
all the Egyptians’ cattle were killed. But, since the vast majority of them died, the Torah writes that all of them died.

RASHI: Only the animals which were left outside in the fields died. All the livestock of the Egyptians died.

RASHI: The soot was taken from an extinguished furnace. God told Moshe to “thrust” the soot heavenward. Anything that is thrown with force can only be thrown with one hand.

So, there were many miracles taking place:

One was that the single hand of Moshe held that which filled both his and Aharon’s handful. Another miracle was that the soot traveled over the entire land of Egypt.

MIDRASH: A further miracle was that Moshe threw the ashes so high that they reached God’s throne of glory.
God said to Moshe, “Come to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what God, the God of the Hebrews, said, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For if you refuse to let them go, and you continue to hold on to them, Behold, the Hand of God will place a very severe epidemic upon your livestock that is in the field—upon the horses, upon the donkeys, upon the camels, upon the cattle, and upon the sheep. God will separate between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt, and not one (animal) belonging to a Jew will die.”

God set an appointed time, saying, “Tomorrow, God will do this thing in the land.”

The following day, God did this thing, and all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but from the cattle of the children of Israel not one died.

Pharaoh sent (messengers), and lo and behold, not even one of the cattle of Israel had died. Pharaoh’s heart became hardened, and he did not send the people away.

God said to Moshe and to Aharon, “Take for yourselves a double handful of furnace soot, and Moshe shall throw it towards heaven in front of Pharaoh’s eyes. It will become dust upon the entire land of Egypt, and it will become boils, breaking out into blisters upon man and upon beast, throughout the entire land of Egypt.”

They took furnace soot, and they stood before Pharaoh. Moshe threw it towards heaven, and then boils broke out into blisters on man and beast.

Did the boils erupt miraculously or naturally? (v. 10)

BACHAYE: The fact that a small amount of soot managed to spread throughout the entire land of Egypt was miraculous. The plague itself was also miraculous, for when the soot reached the skin of the Egyptians it erupted into boils.

RAMBAN: The soot was extremely hot, and it spread throughout the entire land of Egypt. Consequently, when it touched a person’s skin it had the effect of erupting boils naturally.

Rashi informs us that the mixture was wild animals, snakes and scorpions. But having clarified exactly what the plague was, we can now ask: Why is the key identifying feature of this plague the fact that it was a mixture?

To answer this question, Rashi brings the analogy of “military tactics,” from which we learn that a key tactic is to scare the enemy and to wreak havoc upon them. While the Midrash quotes this concept in reference to the plague of frogs, Rashi uses it here to answer our question about the mixture of wild beasts—namely, that the purpose of these animals is to cause fear and havoc. With this we understand the importance of a mixture of wild animals, as the greatest measure of havoc and fear is best achieved through a large variety of beasts.

In conclusion: The purpose of the plague of wild beasts was to wreak havoc and impose fear on the Egyptians. Therefore, the only detail which the Torah stresses is the variety of animals, by which the greatest degree of havoc would be achieved.

Alternatively, we could argue that when the soot reached the air, God transformed the nature of the air so that it caused boils to erupt.

CHIZKUNI: Surely God would not change nature unnecessarily and allow a small amount of soot to fill the entire land of Egypt? Rather, we must conclude that Moshe and Aharon merely initiated the plague, and the boils themselves erupted miraculously independent of the soot.

RASHI ACCEPTS THE ASSERTION OF BACHAYE AND CHIZKUNI

Rashi accepted the assertion of Bachaye and Chizkuni that the boils erupted miraculously. Nevertheless, he did not need to mention this miracle specifically in his commentary, as the actual eruption of boils is mentioned in the Torah itself (in v. 10). Thus Rashi wrote that there were “many miracles,” meaning to say that, in addition to the two miracles he
Why couldn’t the sorcerers stand before Moshe after the plague? (v. 11)

Ramban: Because they were covered in boils, so they were embarrassed to come to Pharaoh’s palace.

Abavanel: The plague affected them to the extent that they were unable to debate and argue with Moshe.

Toras Menachem

specifies, there was also the general miracle of the plague itself mentioned in the Torah.

How can we be sure that Rashi does not accept the (first) interpretation of the Ramban, that the boils erupted naturally from the hot soot?

Because, at the literal level it would be unreasonable to argue that the soot would stay hot long enough that, after its journey across Egypt, it would still burn skin, causing boils.

D therefore, through Moshe merely waving his staff (9:23, 10:13-14) and darkness through the waving of Moshe’s hand (10:22).

Only with the plague of boils do we find that Moshe and Aharon were active in spreading the catalyst of the plague (the soot) throughout the entire land of Egypt themselves.

b.) Effect on the Egyptian sorcerers.

After this plague, the Torah states (v. 11): “The sorcerers could not stand before Moshe due to the boils, for the boils were upon the sorcerers and on all Egypt.” The Ramban explains that they were embarrassed to appear before Pharaoh while stricken with boils.

However, this interpretation is difficult to accept, as it fails to explain why the magicians were not embarrassed to stand before Pharaoh when they were stricken with the previous plagues. There is no reason to presume that the magicians were not afflicted by the plague of lice, and yet we do not find that they “could not stand before Moshe,” as a result.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOILS AND THE OTHER PLAGUES

Two key points distinguish the plague of boils from all the other plagues:

a.) Active role of Moshe and Aharon.

Moshe and Aharon’s involvement in initiating the other plagues was either minimal or zero. Blood and frogs started with the mere waving of Aharon’s staff (7:20, 8:2), and the lice came when Aharon waved his hand (8:13). Similarly with the plagues: Hail and locusts came through Moshe merely waving his staff (9:23, 10:13-14) and darkness through the waving of Moshe’s hand (10:22).

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The sorcerers could not stand before Moshe due to the boils, for the boils were upon the sorcerers and on all Egypt.

God strengthened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them, as God had said to Moshe.

**The Seventh Plague—Hail Kills Humans and Animals**

God said to Moshe, “Rise early in the morning and stand in front of Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘This is what God, the God of the Hebrews, said, “Let My people go so that they may worship Me.” Because this time, I am sending (a plague equivalent to) all My plagues upon your heart, upon your servants and your people, in order that you know that there is none like Me in the entire earth. For now I could have stretched out My Hand and smitten you and your people with an epidemic, and you would have been annihilated from the earth. But, for the following reason I have kept you alive: In order to show you My strength and thus declare My Name all over the earth.’”

“If you still tread upon My people, not sending them out, then I am going to rain down a very heavy hail at this time tomorrow, the likes of which have never occurred in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.

“Now, send, gather in your livestock and all that you have in the field. The hail shall fall on any man or beast that is found in the field and not brought into the house, and they will die.”

**Classic Questions**

● How was Pharaoh warned about the plague of hail? (v. 18)

**Rashi**: Moshe scratched a line on the wall for Pharaoh, and said, “Tomorrow, when the sun reaches this point, the hail will come down!”

This totally confused the Egyptian magicians. For, up to this point they had only recognized the “finger of God” in an area where was outside the expertise of their own magic (the lice were smaller than a barleycorn, at which level they had no ability to make living organisms—see Rashi to 8:14). Here Moshe and Aharon used means that they would normally have control over, and yet they produced miracles (“many miracles” as Rashi writes) well beyond the capability of the Egyptians.

Thus, it was this plague that totally humiliated the magicians to the extent that they could no longer even stand before Moshe.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 36, pp. 26-32)

● What Made the Plague of Hail Unique? (v. 18)

**Rashi**: Moshe drew a line on the wall and told Pharaoh that the plague would start the next day when the sun reached the line.

What forced Rashi to accept this Midrashic interpretation that the plague started at a particular time? [We cannot answer that he wanted to give them sufficient notice to hide in their houses, so that those Egyptians who “feared God” would be saved if they were inside (v. 20). For during the plagues of wild animals and pestilence the Egyptians and their animals were also warned to go inside, and yet they were not given a specific time for the onset of the plague. [See Classic Questions to 9:3-6]]

Furthermore, why was this particular method of measuring time used? After all, we can surely presume that the Egyptians had more sophisticated and accurate methods of measuring time than merely following the shadows of the sun. Even a child is familiar with sand clocks and water clocks, which must have been used in Egypt. So, when the Torah states that Moshe warned Pharaoh that the plague would start at a particular time the following day, why couldn’t he let them work out the time? [The commentaries on Rashi do not address this point.]

Similarly, with the plague of frogs Rashi writes that they would enter the intestines of the Egyptians and croak (7:29), and yet we do not find that the magicians were embarrassed to come to Pharaoh’s palace with frogs croaking inside them!

**The Explanation**

The reason for the sorcerers’ disappearance here must have been more than the mere physical effect of the plague. Rather, the Torah is informing us that with this plague the magicians became totally humiliated. With the plague of lice they were sufficiently humbled to inform us that with this plague the magicians became totally humiliated.

Thus, it was this plague that totally humiliated the magicians to the extent that they could no longer even stand before Moshe.

For the onset of the plague. (See Rashi to 8:14).

As the plagues progressed, it became more obvious to the Egyptians that the miracles were coming from God. Initially, with the first two plagues, the Egyptian sorcerers were able to duplicate the miracles, which was a source of tremendous confusion for Pharaoh. But even the plague of lice—which the sorcerers could not copy and which they confessed came from God—must have appeared to be some form of magic, as it was initiated by the dramatic waving of Aharon’s hand.

The following two plagues of wild animals and pestilence, were thus the first miracles which were obviously from God, since they were not initiated by any actions of Moshe and Aharon at all. Consequently, we do not find that the magicians made any attempt to duplicate these two plagues, as it was clear to them that the plagues did not come through magic.

With the plague of boils, the Egyptians were given an even greater shock. Here they witnessed more personal involvement of Moshe and Aharon in initiating the plague than ever before, which seemed to imply that it might be mere magic. And yet, this plague was the most miraculous yet.
لا يوجد نص يمكن قراءته بشكل طبيعي من الصورة المقدمة.
20 Whoever feared the word of God among Pharaoh’s servants drove his servants and his livestock into the houses. 21 But whoever did not pay attention to the word of God left his servants and his livestock in the field.

22 God said to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand towards heaven, and hail will be upon the entire land of Egypt, upon man, beast and all the vegetation of the field in the land of Egypt.”

23 So Moshe stretched forth his staff towards heaven, and God gave forth thunder and hail, and fire came down to the earth, and God rained down hail upon the land of Egypt. 24 There was hail, and fire blazing inside the hail. (It was) very heavy, the likes of which had never been throughout the entire land of Egypt since it had become a nation. 25 Throughout the entire land of Egypt the hail struck all that was in the field, man and beast, all the vegetation of the field, and it broke all the trees of the field.

26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail.

27 Pharaoh sent (messengers) and summoned Moshe and Aharon. He said to them, “I have sinned this time. God is the righteous One. I and my people are the wicked ones. 28 Plead with God, and let God’s thunder and hail (which He has already sent down) be enough. I will send you away, and you shall not continue to remain (here).”

29 Moshe said to him, “When I leave the city, I will spread my hands to God. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, in order that you should know that the land belongs to God. 30 I know that you and your servants still do not fear God, the Almighty God. 31 The flax and the barley have been broken, since the barley was ripe, and the flax was (hard) in its stalk. 32 But the wheat and the spelt, however, have not been broken because they ripen late.”

33 Moshe went away from Pharaoh, out of the city, and he spread out his hands to God. The thunder and the hail ceased, and rain did not reach the earth.

34 Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased. He continued to sin, and hardened his heart, both he and his servants. 35 Pharaoh’s heart became strong, and he did not let the children of Israel go out, as God had said through Moshe.

THE HAFTARAH FOR VA’EIRA IS ON PAGE 302. THE HAFTARAH FOR ROSH CHODESH IS ON PAGE 328.

Maftir: Rosh Chodesh—p. 343.

THE EXPLANATION

In the warning that Pharaoh was given for this plague, we find a particularly terrifying threat, which had not been given previously. God said, “This time, I am sending (a plague equivalent to) all My plagues against your heart and upon your servants and your people, in order that you should know that there is none like Me in the entire earth.” I.e. this plague stood out from all its predecessors in that scripture declares openly that it proved the power of God more than the other plagues. Thus, in addition to being a miraculous plague, it was important that God also show His might through the time at which the plague began.

(Toras Menachem)

Thus, when Moshe told them the exact time that the plague would begin, it was important to make sure that the Egyptians would not make any mistakes in calculating the time (and that the magicians should not intentionally distort the Egyptian clocks). For, if there were to be a mistake, then Pharaoh would become confused as to whether the plague genuinely came from God.

Therefore, Moshe chose a method of time calculation which left no room for mistakes.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 31, pp. 41-44)
In addition to punishing the Egyptians, each plague furthered the Egyptians’ awareness of God, in the spirit of the above-quoted verse (Shemos 7:5). Below is a brief synopsis of how this was achieved by each of the plagues, according to Rashi and Toras Menachem.

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<th><strong>MIRACLE</strong></th>
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<td>Pharaoh is given the message that God’s rulership (staff) is mightier than his own</td>
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<td>The Nile turns into blood</td>
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<td>Infestation of frogs</td>
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<td>Lice infestation</td>
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“The Egyptians shall know that I am God”

In addition to punishing the Egyptians, each plague furthered the Egyptians’ awareness of God, in the spirit of the above-quoted verse (Shemos 7:5). Below is a brief synopsis of how this was achieved by each of the plagues, according to Rashi and Toras Menachem.
“Bo” means “come,” as in the verse, “Come to Pharaoh.” But why is the Parsha in which the Jews crush Egypt and leave it known as “Come to Pharaoh,” a statement which expresses the might of Pharaoh and Egypt?

This teaches us a lesson:

Some people think that to solve the problems in their religious and spiritual lives, they just need to do more good, and more good and more good...

The truth is however, that in addition to doing more good, a person also has to eradicate the bad. And not just bad in general, but bad that must be crushed at its root, so that it does not “grow back.”

Therefore, God told Moshe to “come to Pharaoh” in his palace, where he resides in all his glory. Moshe was told to seek out the evil of Egypt at its root, and then to crush it and humiliate it to the extreme. And only then would the Exodus occur.

In his daily life, this means that a person should try to identify the primary “desire” which burns in his heart—the root of his personal evil—and launch an attack on that desire with full force. When he succeeds in this mission, he will then find that his other personal struggles follow effortlessly in its wake.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bo 5751)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What was the purpose of Moshe going to Pharaoh if God had already hardened his heart? (v. 1-2)

RASHI (v.1-2): God told Moshe to warn Pharaoh of the upcoming plague (even though his heart had been hardened) in order to ridicule Egypt. Thus, the word ג'וקת (v. 2) is to be rendered as "I mocked" or "I ridiculed" (שמיה).

OHR HACHAYIM: The previous plague of hail was absolutely horrific and yet it failed to cause Pharaoh to change his mind. This weakened Moshe's spirits, as it seemed that nothing would convince Pharaoh to free the Jewish people. Therefore, God told Moshe (here in verse 1), "Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart," as if to say, "Don't worry! It is still worth coming to Pharaoh to inform him of the next plague! The only reason he didn't listen last time is because I hardened his heart. When I will remove the hardness he will let you go."

SFORNO: God told Moshe, "I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, in order that I put these miracles of Mine in his midst." I.e. the purpose of going to Pharaoh was not in order that he listen to God, for God had already hardened his heart. Rather, it was in order that Pharaoh refuse to let the Jewish people go, thus providing the opportunity for God to enact further miracles of historic proportion.

DIFFICULTY WITH OHR HACHAYIM (v. 1-2)

The opening of our Parsha appears to present a contradiction. On the one hand, Moshe is told, "Come to Pharaoh," and he is then told, "for I have hardened his heart," which appears to be a good reason not to come to Pharaoh.

TORAS MENACHEM

Ohr haChayim explains that God comforted Moshe, telling him that Pharaoh’s failure to listen did not represent a shortcoming of Moshe, but rather, it was the result of Divine intervention. However, this solution is difficult to accept because, so long as the Divine intervention continued—as it did with this plague—there still
God said to Moshe: “Come to Pharaoh (and warn him), for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, in order that I may put these miracles of Mine in his midst, and in order that you relate in the ears of your son and your grandson how I toyed around with the Egyptians, and about the miraculous signs which I performed among them. You will then know that I am God.”

Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh and said to him, “This is what God, the God of the Hebrews, said, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, so that they can worship Me! For if you refuse to let them go, then tomorrow I am going to bring a swarm of locusts into your border. It will obscure the view of the earth, and no one will be able to see the earth. It will consume everything of yours that remains from the hail, and it will eat all of your trees that grow from the field. They will fill your houses, your servants’ houses and the houses of all the Egyptians, in a way which your fathers and grandfathers have not seen since the day they came onto the earth until today.’”

He turned away, and left Pharaoh.

Pharaoh’s servants said to him, “How long will this one be a stumbling block to us? Let the people go and they will worship their God. Don’t you know yet that Egypt is lost?”

seems to be no point in Moshe visiting Pharaoh. When Moshe was told by God to “Come to Pharaoh,” what comfort would it have been to know that Pharaoh’s heart was still being hardened? Surely that would only confirm the conviction that the entire visit was futile?

Therefore, the interpretation of Sforno appears to be more acceptable at the literal level, i.e. that Moshe’s words to Pharaoh, and the ensuing plague, were intended purely as a further display of God’s might.

QUESTIONS ON SFORNO

However, the interpretation of Sforno presents us with a number of difficulties:

1.) According to Sforno, the goal in Moshe’s visit to Pharaoh was to achieve a specific result—to increase God’s miracles. The precise method by which this result was achieved (hardening of Pharaoh’s heart) was not of primary importance. Therefore the verse could have said simply, “Come to Pharaoh, in order that I may put these miracles of Mine before him.” The statement, “Come to Pharaoh because I have hardened his heart,” seems to be stressing the method more than the result.

2.) This is by no means the first time that Pharaoh’s hardness of heart has been mentioned in the Torah. Even before the first plague (blood), God promised Moshe, “I will harden the heart of Pharaoh” (Shemos 7:3), and before the plague of boils (the sixth plague) we are told that God actually did so: “God hardened the heart of Pharaoh” (ibid. 9:12). However, this was never given as a reason for Moshe’s visit to Pharaoh. Why do we find that, suddenly with this plague (the eighth) Moshe is told, “Come to Pharaoh because I have hardened his heart”?

3.) Similarly, the concept of increasing God’s miracles through hardening Pharaoh’s heart also seems to be a repetition here. Before the plagues started, God told Moshe, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart in order that I will increase My miracles and My wonders in the land of Egypt”

The mishnah states, “If a person says, ‘I will sin, and then I will do teshuvah (repent),’ then he is not granted the opportunity to do teshuvah” (Tora 65a). This appears, at first glance, to suggest that the person is denied the free choice of a later teshuvah.

However, the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya that it is still possible for this person to do teshuvah if, “he pushes himself hard and overcomes his evil inclination,” then, “his teshuvah is accepted” (Igeres Hateshuvah ch. 11). This explains why the mishnah uses the expression, “He is not granted the opportunity...” I.e. he could actually do teshuvah, through extreme personal exertion, but the odds are against his doing so. This is because the sin which he carried out weakened his sensitivity to spiritual matters, cooling off his earlier enthusiasm to do teshuvah.

The same could be argued for Pharaoh. God did not take away his free choice; rather, through the evil acts of persecuting the Jewish people he numbed his soul, making it more difficult for him to do teshuvah.

And this teaches us a powerful lesson:
If Pharaoh, whose spiritual nutrition was from the forces of evil, was still able to do teshuvah, then all the more so a Jew whose spiritual energy is derived from holiness is never beyond the scope of teshuvah.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 6, pp. 64-66)
8 Moshe and Aharon were brought back to Pharaoh (by a messenger). He said to them, “Go, worship God, your God. But exactly who will be going?”

9 Moshe said, “With our youth and with our elders we will go! With our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our cattle we will go, for it is a festival of God for us!”

10 He said to them, “(You will need) God to be with you (even if) I will (just) send you and your children (all the more so if I send the cattle too). See that the evil (which you intend to commit) turns back at you. 11 Not so! (I will not allow you to take the children as you are requesting now, rather) just the men can go and serve God, for that is what you have requested (in the past).” They were then driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.

12 God said to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt (to bring about the plague of) locusts. It will pass up over the land of Egypt, and eat all the vegetation of the earth that was spared by the hail.”

13 Moshe stretched forth his staff over the land of Egypt, and God caused an east wind to blow upon the land all of that day and all night. By the time it was morning, the east wind was carrying the swarm of locusts. 14 The swarm of locusts went up over the entire land of Egypt, and rested within all the borders of Egypt in a very severe manner. Before it, there was never such a locust swarm, and after it, there will never be one like it. 15 It obscured the view of all the earth, and the land became dark. It ate all the vegetation of the earth and all the fruits of the trees which were spared by the hail. No greenery in the trees or vegetation in the fields remained throughout the entire land of Egypt.

16 Pharaoh quickly summoned Moshe and Aharon and he said, “I have sinned against God, your God, and against you. 17 Now, please forgive my sin just this time and entreat God your God! Let him take away just this death from me.”

18 He left Pharaoh and pleaded with God, 19 God turned back a very strong west wind. It carried the swarm of locusts and plunged them into the Sea of Reeds. Not one locust remained within the entire border of Egypt.

20 God strengthened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not send the children of Israel away.

(Shemos 7:3). What is added by God’s statement to Moshe now, seven plagues later, that “I have hardened his heart... so that I might show these signs of mine before him”?  

RASHI’S SOLUTION

The previous plague of hail was the first instance in which God hardened Pharaoh’s heart in actuality: “God hardened the heart of Pharaoh,” (9:12).

With the following plague, which we read here, Rashi writes that Moshe was sent to Pharaoh “to warn him” of the upcoming plague. This is in contrast to the previous plague (hail) where no warning was given to Pharaoh. He was told, “Let My people go so that they may worship Me (ibid. 13),” but he was not warned what the consequences would be of ignoring God.

Thus, the current plague (locusts) presented an unprecedented scenario in the sequence of plagues: It was the first plague where, a.) Pharaoh’s heart was actually hardened, and, b.) Moshe was commanded to warn Pharaoh of the consequences of his actions.

Consequently, we are faced with the question for the first time: What was the point in warning Pharaoh if his heart had been hardened?

To explain this paradox Rashi writes that the simultaneous hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, together with a warning, achieved the effect of “ridiculing” or “mocking” Egypt. Pharaoh and his servants would have faced the terror of an upcoming attack, and yet they would be powerless to protect themselves from it, since Pharaoh’s free choice was diminished. This must have sent Egypt into a state of utter turmoil, for they were unable to avoid a decision which they knew would have disastrous consequences.

PHARAOH’S RESPONSE (v. 7-11)

With the above in mind, we can explain a difficulty in Pharaoh’s response to Moshe’s warning:

In verses 7-11 we read how, after Moshe and Aharon left Pharaoh, his servants argued that the Jewish people should be freed, for they were scared of the consequences of another plague. Pharaoh succumbed to their complaints, summoned Moshe back, and offered to let the Jewish people go if they would leave their children behind. Moshe, however, demanded the unconditional release of the Jewish people, to which Pharaoh did not agree.

The question begs itself: With the previous plagues, when Pharaoh’s heart was not yet hardened, we do not find that he was willing to make any concessions; and yet here—the first time Pharaoh is warned and his heart is actually hardened, we find that he is more generous than ever! In fact his heart seems to be considerably softened to the extent that he is willing to let the Jewish people go (if the children will remain).

However, based on the above explanation of Rashi, this problem can be solved:
What was the purpose of the plague of Darkness? (v. 22)

Rashi: It enabled the Jewish people to search the houses of the Egyptians and locate their possessions. Later, when the Jewish people left Egypt, they asked the Egyptians for their possessions. The Egyptians replied, “We don’t have any possessions,” to which the Jews responded, “I saw the possessions in your house,” continuing to list the precise location of all the Egyptians’ valuable items.

Midrash Rabah: The Jewish people were able to enter the houses of the Egyptians and see their silver and gold utensils, and clothes. In the land of Goshen, where the Jewish people lived, there was light. Furthermore, light also entered any place that a Jew would enter, illuminating that which was concealed within the barrels, storage boxes and buried treasures.

The purpose of Moshe’s warning to Pharaoh was to achieve the ridicule and humiliation of Egypt. The best possible ridicule occurs if a.) Pharaoh actually wants to free the Jewish people and yet, b.) he is unable to do so. Therefore, it is precisely by hardening Pharaoh’s heart at the very moment he is about to concede that the maximum humiliation of Egypt was achieved.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 6, p. 57ff.)
God said to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand towards the heaven, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt. The darkness will become more intense (than normal darkness).”

Moshe stretched out his hand towards the heaven, and there was thick darkness over the entire land of Egypt for three days. No person could see his brother, nor could any person rise from his place for three days. (However), the children of Israel had light in all their homes.

Pharaoh summoned Moshe and said, “Go and worship God! But your flocks and your cattle must remain. Your children may also go with you.”

Moshe said, “(Not only will we take our own cattle but) you will also provide us with (animals for) sacrifices and burnt offerings, and we will offer them for God, our God. Our cattle will also go with us—not a single hoof will remain—for we will take (sacrifices) from it to worship God our God, and we do not know how much worship will be (required from) God until we arrive there.”

God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not wish to send them out. Pharaoh said to him,

Or: b.) There was only one miracle, namely that the Egyptians should be in darkness. The Jewish people were simply unaffected by this miracle.

According to approach “a” (that there were two miracles) it turns out that the Jewish people were using a supernatural light to see during the plague of darkness. According to approach “b” however, they used normal, natural light.

It appears that the Midrash Rabah adopted approach “a,” since it states that the Jewish people enjoyed illumination which enabled them to see even buried treasures. This would only have been possible with a supernatural light.

Rashi however, appears to have adopted approach “b,” as he makes no mention of a light for the Jewish people which had supernatural qualities.

A major practical difference between these two approaches is that, according to Rashi, the Jewish people would not have been able to find buried treasures. The Midrash, on the other hand, understood that a further miracle occurred for the Jewish people, enabling them to locate even buried treasure. In this way they depleted Egypt of its possessions completely, fulfilling God’s directive to “empty out Egypt” (Shemos 3:22; 12:36) in the fullest sense.

**Extracting the Treasures of Egypt**

God told the Jewish people that, on leaving Egypt, “each woman shall request from her neighbor...silver and gold objects and clothing...and you shall empty Egypt of its wealth.” (Shemos 3:22). This was made possible by the plague of darkness, which enabled the Jewish people to locate the silver and gold, etc.

According to Rashi, it was a mitzvah from God to request the gold and silver vessels. There is a principle that all mitzvos must be done within the natural order, and that furthermore, even the preparation for a mitzvah must be natural and not miraculous. Therefore, since the preparation for finding the gold and silver was done through the plague of darkness, Rashi holds that the light which the Jewish people used must have been natural light. Otherwise, it would turn out that the preparation for a mitzvah was done via a miracle.

The Midrash however, rejected this logic on the basis that:

a.) The principle that mitzvos and their preparation must be done in the natural order did not apply before the giving of the Torah. b.) The borrowing of silver and gold vessels was not so much a “mitzvah,” but a method by which God rewarded the Jewish people. Therefore, it was immaterial if it occurred through a miracle.

Therefore, the Midrash understood that the Jewish people located the silver and gold via miraculous “X-ray” type light, for this would give them the advantage of finding the treasures that had been buried.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 31, p. 46ff.)

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Why did God bring darkness upon the Egyptians? Because there were wicked people among the children of Israel in that generation who did not want to leave Egypt. They died during the three days of darkness, so that the Egyptians would not see their downfall and say, ‘The Jewish people are being struck too by the plagues just like us!’” (Rashi to verse 22).

However, there were many other wicked people among the children of Israel—informants (Rashi to 2:14), and even idol worshipers (Shemos Rabah 43:8)—who did leave Egypt. Only “those who did not wish to leave Egypt” died in the plague of darkness and not the other wicked people.

This phenomenon could be understood in light of the principle that Yom Kippur atones for all sins except for the transgression of Yom Kippur itself (Shavuos 13a). This is because on Yom Kippur, a Jew’s intrinsic connection to God is illuminated which wipes away sin. Consequently, sinning on Yom Kippur itself inhibits this revelation, preventing the day from having its effect.

Similarly, those who did not wish to leave Egypt forfeited the merit which was the key to their redemption.

With the true and final redemption however, every single Jew will be redeemed. This is because, at the giving of the Torah, God chose the Jewish people forging an intrinsic connection which can never become totally “blocked.” Therefore, the final redemption which occurs after the giving of the Torah will be for all Jews.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, p. 2ff)
Moshe told Pharaoh that the tenth plague would begin at what time? (v. 4)

Rashi: At the literal level (p’shat), Moshe informed Pharaoh that the plague would start at midnight precisely.

A non-literal (agadic) interpretation is that God told Moshe the plague would start at precisely midnight, but that Moshe decided not to tell this fact to Pharaoh because he feared that the Egyptian astrologers might err in their calculations of the exact time of midnight. Then, when the plague failed to come at the time they expected, they would come to the conclusion that Moshe had spoken falsely. Therefore, Moshe told Pharaoh that the plague would start at “around midnight.”

Mizrachi: The Torah states that Moshe told Pharaoh the plague would begin "midnight." Literally, this means “around midnight.” However, it is unthinkable that God should express himself in such an uncertain manner. Therefore, Rashi understood that "midnight" means precisely midnight. This unusual translation was achieved by rendering the word not as a noun but as a verb, “when the night divides.”

The second, agadic interpretation of Rashi solves this problem by explaining that God did indeed express Himself in precise terms, but that Moshe chose to use a more ambiguous expression, for fear of being misjudged.

Ibn Ezra: The term "midnight" could be rendered “after midnight” i.e. in the second half of the night (as in Ruth 3:8).

Ramban: Moshe was clearly not trying to tell Pharaoh the exact timing of the plague at all, for he did not mention which day the plague would occur. Rather, Moshe was hinting generally, that the next plague would cause Pharaoh and his servants to arise in the middle of the night.

Shach al HaTorah: There are two phases here. First God went out into Egypt (“I will go out into the midst of Egypt”—11:4) which occurred at midnight (בָּאִים). However, the actual killing of the firstborn occurred later, in the second half of the night.

At midnight, God switches from a mode of severity to mercy. The killing of the firstborn required a mixture of Divine severity and mercy: severity to kill the Egyptians, and mercy to save the Jewish people. Therefore, God “came out” at the point of heightened severity (midnight), but he only started to kill the firstborn a while later, when His severity was tempered with mercy.

Mechilta: Since it is impossible for a human being to accurately determine the middle of the night, why did Moshe tell Pharaoh that God was going to reveal himself at midnight? Rabbi Yishma’el said: This teaches us that God, the night’s Creator, divided it. Rabbi Yehudah be Basaira said: God, the Master of time, divided the night (Mechilta to 12:29).

Radvaz: The two views in the Mechilta are perplexed by the following question: Surely the exact middle of the day or night is not a measurable entity, since it is a threshold and not an actual period of time? The threshold itself does not take up any time, but rather, it is the point at which one period of time ends and another begins.

So when God said He would be revealed at midnight, what did that actually mean if "midnight" is not a moment in time that actually exists?

In answer to this question the Mechilta brings two opinions:

a.) That God, being the Creator of the world, was able to divide the night through stopping the rotation of the sun for a moment, thus providing an actual period of time that was “midnight”—“God, the night’s Creator, divided it.”

b.) Rabbi Yehudah ben Basaira said that no miracle was necessary, for since God is the Master of time, He is not limited by it. Therefore, God was able to reveal Himself in the world at an infinitesimally small moment in time, a feat which is beyond human capability and understanding (Teshuvos Radvaz 814).
“Go away from me! Beware not to look at my face again, for on the day that you see my face, you shall die!”

Moshe said, “Well said! I will never see your face again!”

**THE TENTH PLAGUE—DEATH OF FIRSTBORN EGYPTIANS**

God said to Moshe (while he was standing in Pharaoh’s presence), “I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt and afterwards he will send you away from here. When he sends you out, he will drive you out of here completely. 2 Please speak in the ears of the people and tell each man to request from his friend, and each woman from her friend, silver vessels and golden vessels.”

3 God granted the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. Moshe was also a highly respected person in the eyes of Pharaoh’s servants and in the eyes of the people.

4 Moshe said (to Pharaoh), “This is what God said, ‘At the dividing point of the night, I will go out into

**PROBLEM WITH RAMBAN (V. 4)**

Ramban writes that Moshe could not have been stating a specific time for the plague of the firstborn, since he did not even mention the date. Rather, with the message, “at midnight I will go out...,” he was merely hinting to Pharaoh that this plague would cause him to get up in the middle of the night.

However, it is difficult to accept the Ramban’s solution as a literal interpretation of the verse, for it leaves us with a question: If Moshe was making a vague statement, why did he need to mention a specific time (midnight) at all? According to Ramban, he could have said more simply, “At night I will go out...” since both the time and date are irrelevant (c.f., “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night” 12:12).

Thus, in the final analysis, the association with midnight in particular must be significant (at the literal level).

**QUESTIONS ON RASHI**

The word הָלַל is found in two other places in scripture: in Psalms (119:62) and in Job (24:20). In both instances the word is rendered as “around midnight.” Thus, to translate the word as meaning “precisely midnight” (lit. “when the night divides”) appears to be a non-literal interpretation which has no parallel in scripture.

How then can Rashi write the exact opposite, that “precisely midnight” is the literal interpretation and “around midnight” is agadic (non-literal)?

**THE TIME OF THE FINAL PLAGUE**

Perhaps we could argue that Rashi accepted the problem presented by Ramban that the warning of a precise time seems totally superfluous here, as Pharaoh was in any case not informed of the date.

Furthermore, we do not find that most of the other plagues were associated with a specific time. Even in those instances when the dates were specified (e.g. before the plagues of death of cattle and hail) the time was not. So, why do we find that in this final plague, an exact time was given?

[One exception to this rule was the plague of hail. Rashi explains that Moshe drew a line on the wall and said that when the sun would reach the line, the hail would fall (Va’eira 9:18). But in that case, there was a reason for giving a time, so that those who “feared the word of God” (ibid. 20) would be able to put their slaves and cattle under shelter before the plague started. In our case, however, there is no practical reason to mention the time.]

Since the time appears to be of no relevance here, Rashi concluded that the reference to midnight was primarily a descriptive statement which conveyed the unique quality of the impending plague.

We are therefore left with a question: the distinctive feature of the plague of the firstborn is that it was carried out by God Himself, as verse 4 states, “I will go out into the midst of Egypt.” But if we would follow the usual translation of the word הָלַל, “around midnight,” (as noted in section 2, above), then how would the verse convey the unique quality of this plague, that God was involved personally? Surely, we would expect God Himself to be of the utmost precision?

[In fact, we find that the plague of hail was enacted with extreme precision (as above). So, it would be unreasonable to suggest that the plague which God enacted personally would be around a certain time, and thus less accurate than one of the previous plagues in which He was not directly “involved”!]

Therefore, Rashi was forced to conclude that, at the literal level, the time must be rendered (not as “about midnight” but) as “precisely midnight.” i.e. even though this is an unconventional (and thus apparently non-literal translation) it is nevertheless necessary to preserve the basic implication of the text, that the plague occurred at a specific time to express God’s personal involvement.

However, since this interpretation resorted to an unconventional translation, Rashi felt it necessary to bring also a second interpretation, from agadic sources.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 55ff.)

**Sparks of Chasidus**

**MIDNIGHT AS AN EXPRESSION OF INFINITUDE**

It was explained above that Pharaoh was informed of the time of the plague of the firstborn primarily as an expression of God’s personal involvement. This is highlighted by the comment of Rabbi Yehudah ben Basaira in the Mechilta (as explained by Radvaz) that midnight is not a definitive moment in time, but rather, a threshold. Thus God’s revelation at “midnight” expresses His true infinitude, how He can be simultaneously revealed in our world that is bound by time, and yet, remain aloof from it. (ibid.)
What is the significance of dogs' not barking at the Jewish people? (v. 7)

RASHI: The verse states that a dog always has an appetite and is never satisfied. This is hinted to by the fact that the dogs did not bark at the Jewish people, for if a group was not saved. According to the kabalah, a dog represents the forces of destruction which are never satisfied. This was a way of determining if an Egyptian tried to escape along with the Jewish people, for if a group was not saved. According to the kabalah, a dog represents the forces of destruction which are never satisfied.

DA’AS ZEKEINIM: When the Angel of Death comes to a town, dogs start barking. However, during the plague of the firstborn, God made a miracle and prevented the dogs from barking at the Jewish people.

TZEIDAH LADERECH: Besides the presence of the Angel of Death, there were two other reasons why the dogs should have barked:

1.) Because dogs usually bark in the second part of the night, after midnight.

2.) Because the Jewish people were carrying sticks, which incite dogs to bark.

BACHAYE: The fact that the dogs did not bark at the Jewish people teaches us that when a danger is prevalent, righteous people are saved. According to the kabalah, a dog represents the forces of destruction which are never satisfied. This is hinted to by the fact that a dog always has an appetite and is never satisfied.

TUR HA’ARUCH: Despite the fact that the land was filled with dead bodies due to the plague of the firstborn, which normally cause dogs to bark, they nevertheless kept quiet.

OHIR HACHAYIM: This was a way of determining if an Egyptian tried to escape along with the Jewish people, for if a group was not entirely Jewish the dogs would start barking.
the midst of Egypt, 5 and every firstborn in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the slave woman who is behind the millstones, and firstborn animals too. 6 There will be a great cry throughout the entire land of Egypt, like which there never has been before, and like which there will never be again. 7 Not one dog will bark ferociously at any man or animal of all the children of Israel, so that you will know that God will have distinguished between the Egyptians and Israel. 8 All these servants of yours will come down to me and throw themselves down in front of me, saying, ‘Go away! You and all your followers!’ Afterwards, I will leave (your land together with the entire people.)”

He (Moshe) then left Pharaoh in a very angry state.

9 God said to Moshe, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My miracles in the land of Egypt will be increased.”

10 Moshe and Aharon had performed all these miracles before Pharaoh, but God strengthened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not send the children of Israel out from his land.

 النبيُ العرش الْأَوْصَايْنَ

God spoke to Moshe and to Aharon in the land of Egypt, saying:

2 “This month shall be the head of the months for you. It shall be the first of the months of the year for you.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why is the precept of Rosh Chodesh (determining the new month) the first mitzvah recorded in the Torah? (v.2)

**Ibn Ezra:** When learning the first mitzvah recorded in the Torah a person will immediately be struck by the question: Where are the practical details of this mitzvah? The verse states only, “this month shall be the head of the months for you. It shall be the first of the months of the year for you.” (v. 2). No mention is made of the requirement of a Beis Din (Jewish court) to establish the new month, the need for witnesses who have spotted the new moon etc., which are all crucial parts of the mitzvah.

From this, however, we learn at the very outset, when embarking on a study of the very first mitzvah of the Torah, that Scripture can only be interpreted by means of the Oral Law.

In other words, right at the beginning of the legal component of the Torah, a foundation is laid down that the Written and Oral traditions are crucial to one another.

THE MIRACLE OF QUIET DOGS (v.7)

Two key issues require clarification here:

a.) Why did the plague of the firstborn cause dogs to bark, necessitating a special miracle to stop them from doing so?

b.) The verse states, “Not one dog will bark ferociously at any man or animal of all the children of Israel, so that you will know that God will have distinguished between the Egyptians and Israel” (v. 7). I.e. the silence of the dogs was a means by which the distinction between Jew and Egyptian was expressed.

But why was such a sign required at all? Surely the fact that the Egyptian firstborn died and the Jewish firstborn continued to live was the greatest sign of all that God, “distinguished between the Egyptians and Israel”? What could be insufficient about this awesome sign? And why was this problem solved by a miracle of quiet dogs?

Since Rashi’s commentary was written to solve basic difficulties with the Chumash at a rudimentary level, why does he fail to address these two critical issues?

The First Mitzvah—Fixing the New Month

- The Torah was given to bring sanctity to the world. Each time a mitzvah is observed this goal is brought one stage closer, as another place and another moment becomes holy.

- The mitzvah causes holiness to be felt in two dimensions: space and time, but most mitzvos are limited to a specific place or time. However, the mitzvah of fixing the new month is the sanctification of time itself, for every moment within a given month is dependent on the exact time which that month begins.

- Time is even more general and all-encompassing than space, since: a.) Time was created before space, and, b.) No place can exist outside time (see Hemshech Ayin Beis vol. 1, p. 339).

- Thus, the most generic of all mitzvos is the fixing of the new month, which is why it was written first.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 59ff.)
WHY DID THE DOGS NOT BARK AT CATTLE?

A further question remains: What was the need for the miracle that the Egyptian dogs did not even bark at the Jewish people’s cattle, as the verse states, “Not one dog will bark ferociously at any man or animal of all the children of Israel” (v. 7)? Isn’t that an unnecessary miracle?

The reason for this is self-understood from Moshe’s statement earlier, “Not one dog will bark ferociously at any man or animal of all the children of Israel” (v. 7). Isn’t that an unnecessary miracle?

Therefore, Rashi wrote that God’s miracle was merely to stop the dogs from barking sharply. For, to stop them from barking completely would be unnecessary, as the normal barking of dogs would not incite fear in the Jewish people. The complete silencing of Egyptian dogs would thus run contrary to the principle that “God does not perform an unnecessary miracle.”

Therefore, God simply blunted the sharpness of the dogs’ cry, from an excessive howling down to normal barking, so as not to scare the Jewish people. Thus, in Egypt that fateful night, the Egyptian people would have been disturbed by the hysterical howling of dogs, whereas the Jewish people remained in a relatively normal atmosphere.

This stressed the distinction between Jew and Egyptian more than in the previous plagues. For previously, only the plague itself distinguished between Egyptian and Jew. Here, however, even after the plague had ended and the firstborn had died, the open distinction between Egyptian and Jew continued to be evident.
3 “Speak to the entire community of Israel, saying:

- “On the tenth of this month they should take for themselves: one lamb (or kid) for one extended family, one lamb (or kid) for each household.”
- “But if the household is too small (to eat a whole) lamb (or kid), then he should take one with a neighbor of his who is near to his house, according to the number of people involved. Each person should be counted for the lamb (or kid) according to his ability to eat.”
- “You must have a perfect (unblemished) male lamb (or kid), in its first year;”
- “You may take either sheep or goats.”
- “You should hold it for inspection until the fourteenth day of this month. Then the entire congregation of the community of Israel shall have it slaughtered in the afternoon.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why was the Pesach lamb taken into the Jewish houses on the tenth of Nissan, four days before its slaughter, a detail which was not required in future generations? (v. 3, 6)

RASHI: To answer this question R’ Masya ben Charash used to say that the time had arrived for the Jewish people to be freed, but that they did not possess any mitzvos with which to busy themselves in order to be worthy of redemption, as the verse states, “you were naked and bare” (Ezekiel 16:7).

Therefore, God gave them two mitzvos: the blood of the Pesach lamb, and the blood of circumcision, for they circumcised themselves on that night, as the verse states, “I saw you wallowing in your bloods” (ibid. 6). (The use of the plural, “bloods,” suggests two types of blood.)

Because they were immersed in idolatry, God said to them, “Draw and buy for yourselves,” lambs and sheep (below v. 21), as if to say, “Withdraw from idolatry and buy for yourselves a lamb in order to fulfill a mitzvah!”

GUR ARYEH: Why was there a need for four days’ preparation for the Pesach lamb?

During these four days the animal was inspected for any blemishes that may render it unfit for a sacrifice. A number of days were necessary, for sometimes a person does not spot a blemish on one day, and yet he sees it the next. In the merit of occupying themselves with the mitzvah for four days the Jewish people became worthy of redemption.

DA’AS ZEKEINIM: Four days were required, since the recovery from a circumcision takes three days, and they needed to be healed in order to travel. Thus, on the fourth day the Pesach lamb was sacrificed.

MIDRASH: God wanted to redeem the Jewish people, but they were lacking in merit, so God told Moshe to circumcise them. However, many of them refused to circumcise. So, God, issued the command to make the Pesach sacrifice, and He made the aroma of Moshe’s sacrifice spread throughout the entire world, even to Gan Eden. The powerful aroma made the Jewish people crave for a taste of the sacrifice, so they gathered around Moshe, and they said, “Please let us eat some of your Pesach lamb!” God said, “If you are uncircumcised you cannot eat!” Immediately, they allowed themselves to be circumcised and they mixed the blood of the Pesach lamb with the blood of circumcision. (Shemos Rabah 19:5)

MASKIL LE DAVID: God wanted the Jewish people to be worthy of redemption, so he gave them the mitzvah of the Pesach lamb. However, since this mitzvah involved no personal discomfort (and eating the sacrifice was positively enjoyable) it was not a sufficiently meritorious act in itself. Therefore God demanded that the Jewish people should also circumcise themselves.

We see from the above Midrash that there were two series of circumcisions: 1.) Those that followed God’s instruction immediately.

TORAS MENACHEM

that, “With our youth and with our elders we will go! With our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our cattle we will go, for it is a festival of God to us!” (10:9), and, “Our cattle will go with us—not a single hoof will remain,” (ibid. 26).

In order for this promise to be fulfilled, it was necessary that the Egyptian dogs should not scare off even one animal belonging to the Jewish people.

(Based on Sichos of Shabbos Parshas Bo and Beshalach 5744)

Why Was the Pesach Lamb Taken Early?

Gur Aryeh answers that the four-day period was needed for the inspection of blemishes. However, this is difficult to accept, as it is not mentioned at all in the statement of R’ Masya ben Charash.

Da’as Zekeinim suggests that the Pesach Lamb was taken early in order to provide a recovery period for circumcision. R’ Masya ben Charash seems to hint at this answer by stating that the redemption depended on the two mitzvos of circumcision and the Pesach lamb.

According to this logic, the Jewish people would have circumcised themselves on the 10th of Nissan, allowing themselves to recover for three days. However, Rashi writes that they circumcised themselves on “that night” i.e. the 15th of Nissan, and he quotes the verse, “I saw you wallowing in your bloods,” to show that both types of blood were found at the same time. From this we see clearly that Rashi did not embrace the logic of the Da’as Zekeinim that the circumcision preceded the sacrifice by several days.

Maskil leDavid retorts that this problem can be solved from the Midrash, which states that there were two series of circumcisions. He argues that God requested the Jewish people to circumcise themselves on the 10th of Nissan (in order to provide a recovery period as Da’as Zekeinim suggests), but that many Jews ignored God. The remaining Jews eventually circumcised themselves “on that night,” on the 15th of
This would have left a three-day recovery period before the sacrifice would also agree that there was a first series of circumcisions (as the under duress.

that he only is referring to the second series of circumcisions. night," i.e. on the fifteenth of Nissan. But perhaps we could argue

states that the Jewish people circumcised themselves "on that

relates)
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12:7-14

- 7 "They shall take some of its blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they will be eating it."
- 8 "On that night, they shall eat the meat. They should eat it roasted over fire, together with matzos and bitter herbs."
- 9 "Do not eat it undercooked, or boiled in water, only roasted over the fire (in one piece), its head with its legs and with its innards."
- 10 "You shall not leave over any of it until morning."
- 11 "Any part of it that is left over until morning should be burned in fire."
- 12 "This is how you shall eat it: your waist should be belted (i.e. you should be ready to travel), your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You should eat it quickly. It is (called) a Pesach (to commemorate how) God (passed over the Jewish houses in Egypt)."
- 13 "I will pass through the land of Egypt on this night, and I will smite every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and upon all the gods of Egypt I will perform acts of judgment. I, God (will do this personally)."
- 14 "This day shall be for you as a memorial, and you shall celebrate it as a festival for God. For all generations you shall celebrate it as an eternal statute."

Nissan (as Rashi writes), so there were in fact “two bloods” together on the same night.

On this basis, Maskil leDavid concludes that God told the Jewish people to take the Pesach lamb into their houses early as an incentive to circumcise themselves. For they knew that the sacrifice could only be eaten by a circumcised person.

However, the Maskil leDavid’s words here are very difficult to understand, since Rashi writes explicitly (verse 43 below) that the Jewish people were told that circumcision is a precondition to eating the Pesach lamb, only on the fourteenth of Nissan. Thus, this detail could not have acted as an incentive for them to circumcise themselves three days earlier, as they were not yet aware of the law!

Explanation of Rashi

When R’ Masya ben Charash refers to the “blood of the Pesach lamb,” he is surely referring, not to the consumption of the Pesach lamb, but rather to the command to slaughter it and “take some of its blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they will be eating it” (v. 7). The purpose of this act was, as Rashi writes, to draw the Jewish people away from idolatry, which they were immersed.

In order to explain this concept, Rashi cited the saying of R’ Masya ben Charash, that two mitzvos were demanded from the Jewish people at this point to eliminate a spiritual handicap: the absence of merit through which to be redeemed.

At first glance, one single mitzvah would appear to be sufficient for this purpose, to ensure that the Jewish people were no longer “naked” of mitzvos. However, R’ Masya ben Charash explained that two mitzvos were in fact necessary. This is because the process of withdrawing from idolatry involved two elements:

a.) The positive involvement with good deeds and mitzvos. This was achieved through circumcision, which allows the Jew to enter into a covenant with God.

However, the occupation with good alone would not have been sufficient, as the people may still have remained passively attached to their former idolatrous ways. Therefore, a further act was required to withdraw from and denounce the idolatrous practice of Egypt. And this was:

b.) The public denunciation of the god of Egypt. The Jewish people were commanded to kill a lamb, which was the deity of Egypt (Va’eira 8:22 and Rashi ibid.) and splash its blood on their doorposts. This achieved a total disassociation from their previous idolatrous ways.

Thus, R’ Masya ben Charash stressed that the merit of the Jewish people was the “blood of the Pesach Lamb.”
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cיהו אהל הרשעים והעיוורים של עולם תחלתו: ושבתה ביום ששתית הקדש.

שבעת ימי עשה יהוה כ'utilisateur, וישב השמיים ובין הים."}

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הֵיכָל יָהּ אֶל הָעִנִיָּה הֶלְדוֹת וַחֲבָרוֹתָה הַנְּפָרָה מִשָּׁלְהָיו מִיַּם אַלְכָּל הָתְמוֹנָה: וְיִבְזְמוּ הָרָשָׁעָה: מִיַּם הָרָשָׁעָה מִקְרָאֲכֵל שֶׁבַּיָּם הַשָּׁבְעָה אָנָה תַעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ אֶל אָדָם לְכָל עַמֶּיָּה הַגְּדוֹלִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִשְׁמָאָה לְמַעַרְבָּם: וְאָדָם חֲבָרָה תַעֲשֶׂה הַגְּדוֹלִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִשְׁמָאָה לְמַעַרְבָּם.}

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הֵיכָל יָהּ אָלַחֶל חֲבָרָה: וְעַל אָדָם לְכָל עַמֶּיָּה הַגְּדוֹלִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִשְׁמָאָה לְמַעַרְבָּם.
• **15** “For seven days you shall eat matzos, but on the preceding day you shall eliminate all leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leaven from the first day until the seventh day will have his soul cut off from Israel.”

• **16** “On the first day there shall be a sacred holiday, and on the seventh day you shall have a sacred holiday. But the only work that you may do is that which is needed to provide food for (Jewish people or their cattle).”

• **17** “You shall guard the matzos, for on this very day I have taken your legions out of the land of Egypt. You shall observe this day throughout your generations, as an eternal statute.”

• **18** “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, you shall eat matzos, until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening.”

• **19** “For seven days, leaven shall not be found in your houses. If any person eats a leavening substance his soul will be cut off from the community of Israel. (This applies to both) the convert and the native-born of the land.”

• **20** “You shall not eat any leavening substance. Throughout all the places where you live you shall eat matzos.”

**Fifth Reading**

Moshe summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them:

• “Draw (from your own flock) or buy for yourselves sheep for your families and slaughter the Pesach sacrifice.”

• **22** “You shall take a bunch of hyssop and immerse it in blood that is in a basin. You shall touch the lintel and the two doorposts with some of the blood that is in the basin.”

• **23** “Not a single one of you shall go out from the entrance of his house until morning.”

• **23** “God will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and He will see the blood that is on the lintel and pass over you.”

**Psychological Withdrawal**

One problem remains:

Any one act, however dramatic it may be, is unlikely to achieve a complete withdrawal from a prolonged relationship. In our case, the Jewish People had been immersed in idolatry for many years, so the sudden slaughter of the Egyptian god could have proven insufficient to disassociate themselves entirely from idolatry. A more gradual, premeditated withdrawal was required.

Therefore, God told the Jewish people to take the Pesach lamb into their houses **three days beforehand**. During this time, the Jewish people would have gradually come to terms with the fact that they were about to kill the deity of Egypt and display its blood on their doorposts, and this psychological conditioning achieved a withdrawal from idol worship.

But from where do we know that psychological conditioning is achieved in just three days?

This fact was already taught in an earlier comment of Rashi, with the story of the Akeida (the binding of Yitzchak for sacrifice). We learned that God sent Avraham to a site which took three days to reach, and Rashi explains, “This was to dispel the impression that he acted haphazardly, **without taking time to contemplate what he was doing**” (Vayeira 22:4). From this we see that a three-day period is sufficient for a person to come to terms with what he is doing.

And this explains why God prescribed a three-day period between taking the Pesach lamb and slaughtering it: contemplating the public denunciation of idolatry for three days was sufficient for the Jewish people to disassociate themselves from their past.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 16, p. 114ff.)*
and the two doorposts. God will skip over the entrance and He will not permit the force of destruction to enter your houses and strike.”

- 24 “You shall keep this matter as a statute for you and for your children forever.”
- 25 “You will (only) have to keep this ritual service when you enter the land that God is going to give you, as He promised.
- 26 When your children say to you, ‘What is this ritual service to you?’ 27 You should say, ‘It is a Pesach slaughter (required by) God, because He skipped over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, and He saved our houses.’”

The people bowed and prostrated themselves (on hearing this news). 28 The children of Israel went and did (exactly) what God commanded Moshe and Aharon. (Moshe and Aharon also) did so.

**Death of Firstborn—Jewish People Leave Egypt**

It was at midnight that God (and His court) struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh sitting on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon, and every firstborn animal. 30 Pharaoh arose at night (from his bed), both he and all his servants and all Egypt. There was a great outcry in Egypt, for there was no house devoid of a corpse.

31 He called (personally) for Moshe and Aharon at night, and he said, “Get up and go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel! Go and worship God as you said. 32 Take also your flocks and your cattle, as you said, and go. Bless me too (that I should not die, as I am a firstborn).”

33 The Egyptians urged the people to send them speedily from the land, because they said, “We are all dying!”

**The Last Word**

**The Exodus From Egypt**

When the non-Jewish world, and even those of the Jewish world who have strayed from the Jewish way of life, challenge the observant and practicing Jew: You, who like us, live in a materialistic world, in the midst of a highly competitive society, facing a desperate struggle for economic survival, how can you escape subservience to the idolatry of the land (be it the dollar, or the fear to be “different”, etc.)? How can you adhere to a code of 613 precepts which “burden” your life and limit your competitiveness at every side and turn?

The answer is—Yetzias Mitzraim (departure from Egypt) provides the clue.

One of the fundamental features of the Yetzias Mitzraim message is the unlimited Bitachon—the absolute reliance on Divine Providence—which found such poignant expression in the historic event of the Exodus from Egypt. A whole people, men, women and children, several million in number, eagerly leave a well-settled and prosperous country, with all its fleshpots and material blessings, and go out on a long and perilous journey, without provision, but with absolute reliance on the word of G-d coming through Moshe Rabeinu.

And as in the case of Yetzias Mitzraim, when the Jews responded to the Divine call and precepts, disregarding so-called rational considerations, and breaking with the negative past, it turned out that precisely the application of this principle in actual life was the road to their true happiness, and not only spiritually (receiving the Torah and becoming the G-d chosen people and holy nation), but also materially (in coming to the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey).

So it is also today and always. By virtue of the Divine Law, which is called Torah Chayim, the Law of Life, and the Mitzvos, whereby Jews live and experience in daily life, regardless of how the past had been, the Jew attaches himself to the Creator and Master of the World, and liberates himself from all “natural” restrictions and limitations, and attains his true happiness, materially and spiritually.”

(Excerpt from a Letter written by the Rebbe on 11 Nissan 5721)
לא נמסרו פרשות מתאימותamente, על אף ש الحكم מתירה.

לפי חקוקה, אין כל תקנות מתאימותamente, על אף ש الحكم מתירה.

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The people picked up their dough when it was not yet leavened. Their leftovers (of matzah and bitter herbs) were wrapped in their robes on their shoulders.

The children of Israel followed the order of Moshe, and they requested from the Egyptians silver objects, golden objects, and robes. God granted the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and they granted their request. They emptied out Egypt.

The children of Israel journeyed (a large distance miraculously) from Ramses to Sukos, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides the young children.

Also, a great mixed multitude (of converts from other nations) went up with them, as well as flocks and cattle, a huge amount of livestock.

They baked the dough that they had taken out of Egypt into cakes of matzos, for it had not leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt, and they could not delay. Furthermore, they had not made provisions for themselves.

The children of Israel had inhabited Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. It was at the end of four hundred and thirty years, on that very day, that all the legions of God went out of the land of Egypt. It is a night which God (had been) keeping (in mind) to take them out of the land of Egypt. This is the night which God (told Avraham that He would redeem his children) and it is guarded (against harmful forces) for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

Additional Laws of the Pesach Sacrifice

God said to Moshe and Aharon, “This is the law of the Pesach sacrifice:

- “No stranger (non-Jew or apostate Jew) may eat from it.”
- “Any slave belonging to a person that was purchased for money shall be circumcised, and then he will be permitted to eat from it.”
- “A resident (alien) or a (circumcised non-Jewish) hired worker may not eat from it.”
- “It must be eaten within one house (i.e. one group). You must not take any of the meat outside the house (group).”

Why the Fourteenth? (v. 43)

Obviously, these additional laws were given at some prior date, as we read this section after the Pesach Sacrifice was offered and the Exodus has already occurred.

They could not have preceded the 1st of Nissan, as that is when the Jewish people were first told of the mitzvah to offer the Pesach sacrifice (see 12:1-27).

Why are the “additional” laws of Pesach written in the Torah after the Pesach sacrifice was offered? (v. 43)

Rashi: Even though they were written here, these laws were actually given on the 14th of Nissan, before the Jewish people offered the Pesach sacrifice.

Ramban: The Torah did not wish to interrupt its narrative of the departure from Egypt to mention these additional laws. Therefore, they were written at this point, even though they were given earlier on the 14th.

Maskil leDavid: Most of the laws were given on Rosh Chodesh Nissan (12:3-11). However, in order to encourage the Jewish people further, God gave these additional laws at the last moment, on the 14th.

Gur Aryeh: These additional laws contain the requirement for the Pesach sacrifice to be eaten only by a circumcised person. Since God wanted the Jewish people to circumcise themselves on the 14th of Nissan (so that the blood of Pesach and the blood of circumcision would coincide—see above v. 12:3,6), He therefore gave them these laws at the last moment.

Toras Menachem

Presumably, these laws could have been given at any time between the 1st and 14th of Nissan. What led Rashi to conclude that the laws must have been given on the fourteenth? And why does Rashi give no indication of his reasoning?

The Explanation

Rashi felt no need to give an explanation of his reasoning here, as the matter is self-evident from the verse itself.
Toras Menachem

The verse states, “This is the law of the Pesach sacrifice,” (v. 43). Clearly, the term “this” is only used in reference to an entity which is immediately apparent. Therefore, Rashi concluded that these laws must have been given on the day when the sacrifice was actually offered, i.e. the day on which it was “apparent.”

One might still ask, however: God told the Jewish people to take a lamb into their homes on the 10th of Nissan as a preparation for the Pesach sacrifice (See above, 12:3). This means that the sacrifice was “immediately apparent” for four days. Thus, it would be reasonable to argue that the additional laws were given at any point between the 10th and the 14th?

However, Rashi rejected this reasoning on the basis of a simple argument: One of the reasons why the Pesach lamb was taken into the Jewish houses early was in order to inspect it for blemishes (see “Classic Questions” to 12:3,6). If a blemish were found, the animal would be unfit for a sacrifice. Consequently, it could only be said that the Sacrifice was immediately apparent on the fourteenth of Nissan, when the animal was actually fit to be sacrificed.

(based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bo 5743)

Sparks of Chasidus

Most of the “Additional Laws of Pesach” were only applicable to future generations, and yet they were given before the Exodus from Egypt. This is parallel to the teachings of Pnimiyus Hatorah (the inner, mystical parts of the Torah) which will be the primary focus of Torah after the final redemption, and yet, were introduced beforehand, while the Jews were still in exile.

(ibid.)
You must not break any of its bones.”

47 “The entire community of Israel shall make it.”

48 “When a convert joins you, he should make a Pesach sacrifice to God. In order for him to offer it, all his male family members shall be circumcised. Then he will be like a native of the land (bringing the sacrifice in its prescribed time).”

49 “No uncircumcised male may eat from it.”

50 The native (born Jew) and the convert who joins you share the same law (for all the mitzvos of the Torah as well).”

51 All the children of Israel did as God had commanded Moshe and Aharon. They did it exactly.

Remembering the Departure from Egypt

1 God spoke to Moshe, saying:

2 “Sanctify to Me every firstborn. The first of each womb among the children of Israel, of humans and animals, is Mine.”

3 Moshe said to the people:

4 “Remember this day, when you went out of Egypt, from the house of bondage, for with a mighty Hand God took you out of here.”

5 “(Therefore) leaven should not be eaten.”

6 Today you are going out, in the month of Aviv (i.e. a spring month when the weather is mild).

7 When God will bring you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hitites, the Amorites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, and all the nations that are beyond you, you shall not eat any leavened bread.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Did Moshe depart from God’s instructions? God told him in verse 2 to sanctify the firstborn, but Moshe spends verses 3-11 discussing other matters before he finally refers to God’s instructions.

ABARBANEL: Moshe feared that when the Jewish people would hear the requirement to sanctify the firstborn they would presume that this precept, and this alone, was the method by which the Exodus from Egypt should be remembered. Thus, they would come to the conclusion that the prohibition of chametz and the requirement to eat matzah did not apply in future generations.

Therefore, before introducing the mitzvah of sanctifying the firstborn, Moshe first stressed the requirements of chametz and matzah to make clear that the three precepts collectively would be applicable for all generations, as a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.

ALSHICH: The Jewish people thought that the plague of the firstborn and the Exodus had occurred because God’s oath to Avraham, that the Jewish people would leave Egypt, had been fulfilled (Bereishis 15:13). In truth however, the Jewish people had left Egypt earlier than planned. This is because their level of morality had degenerated to such an extent that if they had stayed any longer they would not have been worthy of redemption.

In order to stress this point, Moshe decided to speak about chametz and matzah before introducing the mitzvah of sanctifying the firstborn. For, just as matzah turns to chametz in just a few minutes, so too, the Jewish people would never have been able to leave Egypt if they would have remained there just a few minutes more.

TORAS MENACHEM

Did Moshe Depart from God’s Instructions? (v. 2-12)

Earlier, at the beginning of chapter 12 (verses 3-20), we read God’s narrative to Moshe about the Pesach sacrifice, the festival of Pesach, the prohibition of chametz, and the mitzvah of eating matzah. Immediately, we are told, “Moshe summoned all the elders of Israel” (v. 21), to tell them the laws which he had just received from God.

However, on examining what Moshe actually told the Elders (v. 21-27), we find that he made no mention whatsoever of chametz, matzah or the festival of Pesach. In fact, Moshe only told the Jewish people of the command to sacrifice the Pesach lamb and put blood on the doorposts.

Presumably, Moshe felt that there was no need to give over the other mitzvos, since the mitzvah of the Pesach lamb was the only precept which
בכורות שלבים שלמים: בהיותם שלמים, שהם עוגנים, והם מעמידים את הענין המהווה את מרכז העניין המוצג במשפטים:

כותרת: בכורות שלבים שלמים
and the Jebusites,—which He swore to your forefathers to give you—a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall perform this ritual (Pesach) service in this month.

- 6. “For seven days you shall eat matzah.”
- 7. “The seventh day is a festival for God.”
- 8. “Matzoh shall be eaten during the seven days, and no chametz that belongs to you shall be seen in your possession. No leaven that belongs to you shall be seen throughout your borders.”
- 9. “You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘Because of this (i.e these mitzvos of Pesach, Matzah and Maror) God did this for me when I went out of Egypt.’”
- 10. “And you shall keep this statute at its appointed time, from year to year.”
- 11. “There will come a time when God will bring you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and to your forefathers, and then (you should consider that) He has given it to you (on that day, not as an inheritance from your ancestors). 12. You shall (then) set aside for God the first of every womb. The males belong to God from every miscarriage which emerges first from the womb (from an animal) that belongs to you.”
- 13. “You shall redeem every firstborn donkey with a lamb (or kid).”
- 14. “If you do not redeem it, you must break the back of its neck with an ax.”
- 15. “You should redeem every firstborn person among your sons (for five shekels).”
- 16. “And you shall set aside for God the first of every womb. The males belong to God from every miscarriage which emerges first from the womb (from an animal) that belongs to you.”

THE HAFTARAH FOR BO IS ON PAGE 305.

was relevant at that point in time. After all, the mitzvos of chametz, matzah and the festival of Pesach commemorate the departure from Egypt which had not yet occurred. Therefore, Moshe felt it unnecessary to burden the Jewish people with these additional details at such a busy and intense time.

Later, after the Exodus had occurred, God instructed Moshe about the mitzvah of sanctifying the firstborn and told him to give the precept over to the Jewish people. However, Moshe had still not given over the precepts of chametz and matzah etc. which God had told him earlier. Therefore, Moshe decided to give over the precepts in the precise order which he had received them from God.

Thus, after we read that God told Moshe, “Sanctify to Me every firstborn” (13:2), Moshe first launches into a lengthy description of the mitzvos which he had omitted earlier.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh 5741)
Parshas Bo contains 9 positive mitzvos and 11 prohibitions.

1. Establishing the new month. [12:2]
2. Ritual slaughter of the Pesach offering. [12:6]
3. Eating the flesh of the Pesach offering. [12:8]
4. Not to eat the Pesach offering under-roasted or cooked. [12:9]
5. Not to leave any flesh of the Pesach offering overnight. [12:10]
6. Removing chametz (leavened food) from one’s possession. [12:15]
7. Eating matzah (unleavened bread) on the first night of Pesach. [12:18]
8. That no chametz is to be found in one’s possession during Pesach. [12:19]
9. Not to eat anything during Pesach that has chametz in it. [12:20]
10. Not to give to an apostate Jew any part of the Pesach offering to eat. [12:43]
11. Not to give anything of the Pesach offering to a partial proselyte or a resident heathen who has rejected idol worship to eat. [12:45]
12. Not to carry any flesh of the Pesach offering outside the house. [12:46]
13. Not to break any bone of the Pesach offering. [12:46]
14. No uncircumcised person should eat of the Pesach offering. [12:48]
15. Sanctifying the firstborn in the land of Israel. [13:2]
16. Not to eat any chametz on Pesach. [13:3]
17. No chametz should be seen within a Jewish property during Pesach. [13:7]
18. Recounting the Exodus from Egypt. [13:8]
20. Beheading a firstborn donkey if it is not redeemed. [13:13]
The Name of the Parsha

Beshalach means “sent away.” The Torah states that Pharaoh sent away the Jewish people from Egypt.

Why didn’t they want to go of their own accord?
Because there were those among the Jewish people who did not want to leave Egypt, and it is only because Pharaoh sent them away that they left.

But how could a Parsha filled with wonders and miracles be given such a negative name? In this Parsha we read how the sea split, manna came down from Heaven, and water came out of a rock. And yet all of these privileges are collectively known as “Beshalach,” a word that expresses negative elements within the Jewish people, that they did not wish to leave Egypt!

However, the point here is that Pharaoh’s transformation—from an evil tyrant to one who actually assisted the Jews to leave—was a change which occurred as a result of the Jewish people. Since many Jews did believe in Moshe and followed God’s command, they not only overcame opposition from the non-Jewish world, but their good deeds actually caused their enemy to be transformed into an assistant.

So, in the final analysis, “Beshalach” expresses not the weakness, but the great influence of the Jewish people on the outside world—how through the observance of Torah and mitzvos, an enemy can be transformed into a friend.

From this we can learn a powerful lesson in daily life: Often, the secular world appears to present insurmountable obstacles to the observance of Jewish law and custom. However, God only created these obstacles in the first place so that we rise to the challenge and overcome them. In this way we lift ourselves up to be stronger and more committed Jews.

Once a hurdle has been successfully overcome, we often find that the very same person or thing that was the cause of the opposition makes a 180-degree turn and actually starts to help us follow the ways of Torah and mitzvos—like Pharaoh, who first opposed the Jewish people’s observance of God, and later assisted them.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5725 & 5734)
**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- Why did God lead the Jewish people on a roundabout route, and not straight to the land of Israel? (v. 17)

**RASHI:** If they had encountered war straightaway, such as the war of the Amalekites and the Canaanites (Bamidbar 14:45), then they would have returned. Consider, that even after God led them around in a roundabout route, they still said, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt” (ibid. 4), how much more so would they have made such plans if He had led them on a direct route.

**ABBABANEK:** The Jewish people had left Egypt with Pharaoh’s permission, as the verse states, “When Pharaoh sent the people away” (v. 17). Pharaoh was under the impression that the Jewish people went into the desert in order to offer sacrifices to God. Consequently, if they had headed straight for the land of Israel, Pharaoh would feel that he had been misled. For this reason, they took a more circuitous route.

**OHIR HACHAYIM:** Our Sages said that when the Jewish people left Egypt, Pharaoh and all his men escorted the Jewish people for a short distance, like a good host who escorts guests that leave his home. Since Pharaoh was wicked, God did not want him to be rewarded for performing this mitzvah. Therefore, God changed the route by which the Jewish people traveled, thus rendering Pharaoh’s “escort” ineffective, since it turned out that he led them in a different direction to which they were traveling.

However, as a result of the above, the Jewish people were forced to follow a longer route. Therefore the verse stresses that, “God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines because it was too close,” because “Pharaoh sent the people away.”

**KU YAKAR:** The Jewish people were not yet fit to receive the Torah, for their faith in Moshe was not complete. This is evident from the fact that only later, after the sea had split and the Egyptians had perished, the Torah finally states, “they believed in God and in Moshe His servant” (14:31). For this reason, God led the Jewish people on a circuitous route, so that they would come to a higher level of belief through seeing His miracles.
Jewish People Follow a Roundabout Route

When Pharaoh sent the people away, God did not lead them through the land of the Philistines because it was (too) close. This is because God said, “When the people see a war they may regret (leaving) and return to Egypt.” God led the people on a roundabout route through the desert to the Sea of Reeds. The children of Israel were armed when they went up out of Egypt.

Moshe took Yosef’s bones with him, because he (Yosef) had made (his brothers) swear that they would make (their children) swear (to do so), saying, “God will surely remember you, and you shall bring up my bones from here with you.” (On the second day) they traveled from Sukos, and they encamped in Eisam, at the edge of the desert. God went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to guide them along their route, and at night in a pillar of fire.

Classic Questions

- Why are Yosef’s bones mentioned here? (v. 19)

Yalkut Shimon: Throughout the forty years that the Jewish people were in the desert, they carried two sacred chests with them: the Holy Ark and the chest containing Yosef’s bones.

The Jewish people would be asked: “What are in these two chests?” to which they would reply that Yosef, the contents of one chest, had kept all the Ten Commandments—the contents of the other (ch. 227).

Kli Yakar: Verse 18 states, “The children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt.” The “armor” which the Torah speaks about here is a spiritual protection which was conferred on the Jewish people by virtue of carrying the two sacred chests, as the Yalkut Shimon relates.

However since, at this point, the Holy Ark did not yet contain the Ten Commandments (which had not yet been given) the Torah stresses here that Yosef’s bones were present, for this alone was sufficient to act as “armor” protecting the Jewish people.

Alternatively, one could argue that Moshe anticipated that the sea would have to split to save the Jewish people. Therefore, he took the bones of Yosef with him, in order that the sea split in Yosef’s merit.

Returning to Egypt (v. 17)

The beginning of our Parsha relates that God led the Jewish people on a tortuous route, to make it more difficult for them to return to Egypt in the face of difficulties.

But why would the Jewish people possibly want to return to Egypt, a place where they suffered from backbreaking slavery? In fact, our Sages taught that even women and children were put into labor in Egypt, so why would they consider going back?

In order to answer this question, the Torah stresses, “When Pharaoh sent the people out.” The Torah could have simply stated, “When the Jewish people left Egypt,” but instead we are reminded that it was Pharaoh who actually sent them away. This suggests that there were those among the Jewish people who did not wish to leave Egypt, and that they only headed into the desert because Pharaoh himself sent them away.

Presumably, these individuals felt that in the wake of the ten plagues, Pharaoh would not continue to oppress the Jewish people, and he would allow them to live in comfort and tranquility. So, why depart from a comfortable position in the world’s most powerful nation, to head unprepared into a desert?

Those who sympathized with this point of view would be likely to want to return as soon as they were confronted with obstacles. Thus, the verse states: “When Pharaoh sent the people away,” i.e. many of the Jewish people only left because Pharaoh sent them away, therefore, “God did not lead them through the land of the Philistines because it was (too) close (to Egypt), because God said, ‘When the people see a war they may regret (leaving) and return to Egypt’” (v. 17).

Yosef’s Bones (v. 19)

Both arguments of Kli Yakar are difficult to accept, since: a.) The Torah makes no mention here of the Jewish people transporting the Holy Ark with them.

b.) No indication is made in the Torah that the Sea of Reeds split in Yosef’s merit.

The following explanation could be argued:

When Yosef was born, the Torah states: “She called his name Yosef, saying, ‘May God add (Yosef) for me another son'” (Bereishis 30:24). The Hebrew word הוא (“another”) can also refer to things that are profane. Thus we find that evil is often termed the “other side.”

In this vein, the verse is suggesting that Yosef was blessed with the power to transform “another” into a “son,” i.e. an estranged Jew into an observant Jew. In fact, Yosef was unique among the forefathers in his ability to live in the secular world and yet remain a religious Jew, and he passed on this ability to his descendants.

With this we can understand why the Torah mentions Yosef here:

The Torah tells us that the Jewish people did not travel directly to the land of Israel, but that rather, “God led the people on a roundabout route through the desert” (v. 18). This caused them to be confronted with numerous trials and challenges (as we will read during the Parsha).

Therefore, it was crucial that, “Moshe took Yosef’s bones with him,” for these challenges could only be overcome successfully through the power that Yosef had bequeathed to the Jewish people.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 855f)
Where did Pharaoh obtain animals to pull his chariots?  Didn’t all the Egyptian animals die in the plagues? (v. 7)

Rashi: Those that feared God among the Egyptians took their animals indoors when they heard the warnings of the plagues. Now, these individuals gave Pharaoh their animals for his attack.

From this incident, Rabbi Shimon used to say: “Even the best of the Egyptians should be killed, and the best of snakes should have its brains crushed.”

Gur Aryeh: Rabbi Shimon is not suggesting, heaven forbid, that all non-Jews should be killed. Rather, his statement was referring specifically to a time of war, when any citizen of an enemy country may be killed. Rabbi Shimon mentioned the apparently irrelevant case of the snake to teach us the following point. If, in the case of a non-Jew who could convert to be a Jew, the Torah tells us to kill him in a time of war, because he has demonstrated a deep hatred for Jews—then a snake, which showed hatred for mankind (Adam) at the beginning of Creation, should surely be killed indiscriminately.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Problems with Gur Aryeh (v. 7)

Gur Aryeh argues that R’ Shimon’s statement, “Even the best of the Egyptians should be killed,” cannot refer to non-Jews in general, for how could the killing of innocent people be condoned? Rather, R’ Shimon’s intention was, “During wartime even the best of the Egyptians should be killed,” i.e. we do not have to be concerned about killing innocent citizens of our enemy at a time of war.

However, Gur Aryeh’s argument does not appear to be consistent with scripture, for the following reason:

The Torah states, “God spoke to Moshe, saying...I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them” (v. 1-4). From this we see that Egypt did not pursue the children of Israel because they were malicious and wished to attack the Jewish people. Rather, God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” Consequently, this was by no means a typical “war,” since the enemy’s free choice had been compromised.
pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel day and night. 22 He did not move away the pillar of cloud by day (until the pillar of fire was fully illuminated, nor did He move) the pillar of fire at night from before the people (until the pillar of cloud had risen fully).

Pharaoh Has a Change of Heart

God spoke to Moshe, saying: 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and let them turn back (in order to confuse Pharaoh) and encamp in front of the Mouth of the Rocks (Pisom), between Migdol and the sea. You should encamp opposite the (Egyptian deity) of Ba’al Tzefon by the sea (in order to confuse the Egyptians further). 3 Pharaoh will say about the children of Israel, ‘They are trapped in the land. The desert has closed in upon them.’ 4 I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. I will be glorified through (wreaking vengeance on) Pharaoh and his whole army, and Egypt will know that I am God.” (The children of Israel) did so, (as they had been commanded).

5 (On the fourth day) it was reported to the King of Egypt that the people had fled. Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart towards the people, and they said, “What have we done, that we have sent away Israel from serving us?”

6 So he harnessed his chariot, and persuaded his people to come with him. 7 He took six hundred select chariots and all the (remaining) chariots of Egypt, with officers over them all.

Egypt Pursues—The Jewish People Cry to God

God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt (because he was having second thoughts), and he chased after the children of Israel. The children of Israel were going out triumphantly.

The Egyptians chased after them and overtook them while they were encamped by the sea.

Therefore, we could not possibly use this incident as a precedent for how to treat an enemy of the Jewish people on other occasions, when the enemy would have total free choice.

Thus R’ Shimon could not be saying that from this incident we learn a general principle that during wartime even the best of the Egyptians should be killed, as Gur Aryeh suggests.

However, having rejected Gur Aryeh’s solution, we are left with his original question: How could R’ Shimon suggest that innocent Egyptians should be killed indiscriminately?

The Explanation

On this occasion, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart to pursue the Jewish people, just as God had hardened his heart many times during the ten plagues. This act of God was not—as it may appear at first glance—unfair, since the compromising of Pharaoh’s free choice was in fact a punishment for earlier crimes which Pharaoh had performed in enslaving the Jewish people (see above, commentary to 7:3). Thus, the series of plagues together with drowning at the sea was one single “package” of punishment from God for embittering the lives of the Jewish people.
THE LESSON FROM A SNAKE

What was the need for R' Shimon to mention the killing of snakes?

Based on the above, the following could be argued: The statement of R' Shimon, "Even the best of the Egyptians should be killed" suggests that R' Shimon used to say these words on a regular basis, as an ethical teaching which he would repeat over and over. However, above we argued that R' Shimon's statement was troubled by the following problem. The Jewish people had already been promised by God that they would reach the Land of Israel, and the Egyptians' cries for redemption were answered by God through the plagues. Therefore, they all suffered the same punishment. Thus, in the final analysis, R' Shimon's statement only referred to the Egyptians of that generation. "Even the best of the Egyptians should be killed," i.e., while it appeared at first glance that some Egyptians were decent and deserved to be saved, the proof was that even these apparently good Egyptians had pursued God's enemies. Therefore, they all suffered the same punishment.

RASHI: It is quite understandable that when faced with the Egyptians advancing after them (in total unity), Yitzchak and Yaakov felt the need to offer a long explanation of how the Jewish people were protected and saved. Yitzchak rose early in the morning to the place where he had stood (prayed) before God (Gen. 17:19). Yaakov prayed out to praying in the field (v. 10).

THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S CRISIS (V. 10)

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Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Why did the Egyptians cry out to God in their time of need? The verse is self-understood.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What did the Jewish people do when they saw the Egyptians approaching? (v. 10)

Rashi: They prayed to God, practicing the profession of their ancestors. This we find that Avraham prayed as the verse states: "Avraham rose early in the morning to the place where he had stood (prayed) before God" (Gen. 17:19). Yitzchak went out to pray in the field (v. 10).

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Every horse of Pharaoh’s chariots, his horsemen, and his army were there, by the Mouth of the Rocks, opposite Ba’al Tzefon.

10 Pharaoh advanced (ahead of his troops). The children of Israel raised their eyes, and look!—the Egyptians were advancing after them (in total unity). They were very frightened, so the children of Israel cried out to God.

11 They said to Moshe, “Is it because there was a shortage of graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the desert? What is this (that) you have done to us, in taking us out of Egypt?” 12 Aren’t these the words that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone, and we will serve the Egyptians, because we would rather serve the Egyptians than die in the desert?’”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Bartenura & Gur Aryeh: Immediately after the Jewish people prayed to God they complained to Moshe that he had brought them out of Egypt only to die in the desert. This shows that they did not really believe that God would save them, so their prayers to God must have been more of a complaint than a sincere prayer.

For this reason, Rashi states that they “practiced the profession of their ancestors,” i.e. they did not pray to God because they really believed that He would save them, but rather because they were accustomed to habitual prayer—a custom which they had inherited from their ancestors.

Ramban: It is inconceivable that the same group of people which prayed to God, also complained to Moshe—for prayer is an expression of faith, and complaining demonstrates a lack of faith.

There are a number of possible solutions:

1.) There were different groups. Some people prayed to God, others complained to Moshe.

2.) They believed in God but distrusted Moshe. They complained that God never intended them to leave Egypt, and Moshe had led them out on false pretenses. The ten plagues, they argued, were merely to punish the Egyptians, but they were not a sign that it was time to leave Egypt.

3.) They did not pray at all, but complained to God, as Onkelos suggests.

4.) First they prayed to God, but when they saw that the Egyptians were continuing to approach them, despite their prayers, they suffered a change of heart and began to distrust Moshe.

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(see Shemos 3:17, Va’ei’ra 6:8, Bo 12:25). If so, why did they need to pray to God to be saved? Surely, He had already promised them that they would leave Egypt “triumphantly” (14:8)?

And if the Jewish people did not believe in God, then why did they pray at all?

To answer this question Rashi explained, “They practiced the profession of their ancestors.” i.e. their prayers did not arise from a lack of faith, but rather, because Jewish people from time immemorial have always prayed to God at every opportunity. Thus, their prayers were not a desperate plea to God due to the crisis situation, but a natural and normal activity for Jewish people, like a “profession.”

This also explains why Rashi cited a number of verses:

Rashi cites three verses to prove that each of the three forefathers prayed. However, the verses which he cites are not the only instances in which we find that their prayers are mentioned explicitly in scripture.

In fact, these three verses depict them praying on a casual basis, whereas there are other verses which bring out their intense prayer at times of need (such as Yitzchak’s prayer for children (Bereishis 25:11) or Ya’akov’s prayer to be saved from Esau (ibid. 32:10-13)).

This is because Rashi wished to stress here, not that the forefathers prayed in a time of need, but rather, that their “profession” was one of prayer. Therefore, he cited verses which depict the forefathers’ praying on a regular, casual basis.

WHY DID THE JEWISH PEOPLE COMPLAIN?

If the Jewish people did indeed believe in God, then why do we find that they soon complained to Moshe: “Is it because there was a shortage of graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the desert? What is this (that) you have done to us, in taking us out of Egypt?” (v. 11). This seems to suggest that they were lacking in faith?

However, we could argue that their complaints were not due to a lack of faith, but rather, due to the state of emergency. I.e despite the fact that they believed, they still became frightened and complained to Moshe when they saw the Egyptians approaching. For, human nature is such that a person is likely to panic in a state of emergency, even if he genuinely believes that he will be saved by God.

In this vein our Sages said, “A person cannot be held responsible (for his words) at a time of personal disaster” (Bara Basra 16b), not because the person is acting wickedly, but rather, he is unable to think properly due to the pressure of the moment (See Rashi ibid.).

Thus, in our case, Rashi was not troubled by the Jewish people’s complaints to God, as they were said in anguish.

In fact, on verse 15 below, when God replies to Moshe’s prayers, Rashi comments: “They have nothing to do but to travel, for the sea will not stand in their way. The merit of their forefathers, their own merit, and the faith they had in Me when they came out (of Egypt) are sufficient to split the sea for them.”

From this we see clearly that, according to Rashi, their faith remained with them throughout the entire time between leaving Egypt and the splitting of the sea. Consequently their complaints here were not an expression of dwindling faith, but rather, an irrational sort of behavior that is typical of an emergency.

SOLVING BARTENURA’S QUESTION

Based on the above explanation we can solve a problem that was troubling Bartenura and Gur Aryeh. They were perplexed by the seemingly contradictory reaction of the Jewish people to Egypt’s attack. On the one hand we find that they displayed faith by praying to God; but on the other hand their complaints to Moshe seemed to portray a lack of faith. This led him to the conclusion that indeed the Jewish people lacked
The Last Word

faith and consequently, their prayers were probably insincere (c.f. Ramban).

However, based on the above explanation, this problem fades away. For it was not the prayers of the Jewish people that were insincere—but rather, it was their complaints that were not genuine. For, being said in a moment of panic, their complaints were not representative of the true status of the Jewish people at that point—total faith in God.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol 11, p. 52ff.)
13 Moshe said to the people, “Don’t be afraid! Stand firm and see God’s salvation that He will perform for you today! You may be seeing the Egyptians today, but you will never see them again! 14 God will fight for you, but you must remain silent!”

15 (Moshe stood praying to God, but) God said to Moshe, “Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and (tell them that all they have to do is) travel. 16 You should lift your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and split it. The children of Israel will come into the sea on dry land.”

17 Look! I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will come after them. I will be glorified (by wreaking vengeance on) Pharaoh, his entire army, his chariots, and his horsemen. 18 The Egyptians will know that I am God, when I will be glorified through (wreaking vengeance on) Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

**MIRACULOUS PROTECTION—SPLITTING OF THE SEA**

14:19 The angel of God, who had been going in front of the Israelite camp, moved and went behind them (to intercept the arrows and catapult stones of Egypt. At night), the pillar of cloud moved away from in front of them and stood behind them (instead of disappearing as it usually did).

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **How did Moshe respond? (v. 13-14)**

  **MECHILTA:** While standing at the edge of the sea, terrified by the advancing Egyptians, the Jews broke into four camps, each advocating a different course of action.

  The first camp said: “Let’s plunge into the sea,” preferring to drown themselves than return to Egypt.

  The second camp said: “Let’s return to Egypt,” willing to accept the yoke of bondage again.

  The third camp said: “Let’s wage war against them,” hoping that they would be victorious.

  The fourth camp said: “Let’s cry out to God,” appealing to God in prayer.

Moshe’s comment (v. 13-14) included a response to each of these four camps:

“Stand firm and see God’s salvation that He will perform for you today,” was addressed to those who wished to throw themselves into the sea. “You may be seeing the Egyptians today, but you will never see them again,” was addressed to those who wished to return to Egypt. “God will fight for you,” was addressed to those who suggested war. “You must remain silent,” was addressed to those who wanted to pray.

What was the proper course of action? God told Moshe, “Speak to the children of Israel and tell them to travel” (v. 15), i.e. to trust in God and proceed further in the path leading to Mount Sinai.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

Even though Moshe dismissed all four camps as being incorrect (see **MECHILTA**), the story was nevertheless written down in the Torah as a lesson for us to learn from. In fact, this incident provides us with a “prototype” of the different approaches to combat adversity:

- “Let’s plunge into the sea,” typified **MESIRAS NEFESH** (self-sacrifice). God had commanded the Jewish people that they should no longer be slaves in Egypt (see Vayikra 25:42), so they were willing to sacrifice their lives rather than transgress God’s will. The spiritual advantage of Mesiras Nefesh is that, through defiance, it weakens the world’s ability to oppose Judaism.

- “Let’s return to Egypt,” typified **IS’HAPCHA** (winning over mundane resources for holy purposes). Obviously, this group did not want to return to Egypt permanently. They felt that by returning to Egypt for an additional period they would eventually come out with more wealth (c.f. Shemos 3:22). The spiritual advantage of Is’hapcha is that it works together with the world, transforming it to assist Judaism.

- “Let’s wage war against them,” typified the approach of **BITUL HAMENAGED** (eliminating opposition). This is comparable to a person who, instead of attempting to appease his Evil Inclination, chooses instead to ignore it completely. The spiritual advantage of Bitul Hamenaged is that it simultaneously accepts opposition and yet denies it. It is thus a “middle path” between Mesiras Nefesh (denial) and Is’hapcha (acceptance).

- “Let’s cry out to God,” typified the approach of **CHIBUR** (fusing with God). This approach aims to elevate the world spiritually to such a point that it no longer acts as an opposing force to the observance of Judaism. This is achieved by revealing the true identity of the opposing force, that it too is a creation of God. The spiritual advantage of Chibur is that the opposition pales away automatically and the world becomes totally fused with God.

(Based on Sefer haSichos 5751, vol. 2, p. 842ff.)
**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **Why did the angel and the cloud move behind the Israelite camp? (v. 19-20)**

**Rashi:** This can be compared to a person who is making a journey with his son walking in front of him. When bandits came to capture the son, the father placed his son behind him. A wolf came behind him, so he put his son back in front of him. When bandits came in front of him and wolves from behind, he took his son on his arms and fought them off, as the verse states, "I sent (a leader) to train Efrayim, he took them on his arms." 

**Nachalas Yaakov:** When the Egyptians approached, it was daytime, and something was needed to protect the Jewish people. The cloud could not move behind the Jewish camp as it was required to lead them. Therefore, the angel moved behind the camp to protect them. Then, when night came and the cloud was no longer required at the front of the camp, the cloud, instead of disappearing as it usually did, moved behind the Jewish camp for protection. This freed the angel from its duties.

**Maskil LeDavid:** Rashi was troubled by the question: Why was it necessary for the angel of God and the cloud to move behind the Israelite camp? Rashi’s analogy explains that the angel was required to carry the Jewish people “on his arms” across the sea. This would have left the rear of the Israelite camp unprotected. Therefore, God sent the cloud to the rear of the camp to take the angel’s place.
20 It came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. Thus, the cloud and the darkness were there (for the Egyptians, but the children of Israel had the pillar of fire) which illuminated the night. So, one (camp) did not approach the other all night.

21 Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and God moved the sea with a strong east wind throughout the entire night. He made the sea into dry land, and the water split (miraculously throughout the entire world).

22 Then the children of Israel came into the sea on dry land. The water acted for them as a wall on their right and on their left.

23 The Egyptians pursued and came after them. Every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen came into the sea.

24 It was (in the latter third of the night) towards the morning that God looked down on the Egyptian camp with a pillar of cloud. (He turned the seabed into mud) and with a pillar of fire (He boiled the mud, causing the hooves of Egypt’s horses to come off). He threw the Egyptian camp into confusion. 25 He removed the wheels of their chariots (with the fire, causing their passengers’ limbs to dislocate), and He treated them harshly. Egypt said, “Let me run away from the Israelites, because God is fighting for them against the Egyptians.”

26 God said to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the water will revert (from being a wall) onto Egypt, onto its chariots and horsemen.”

27 Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and in the early morning the sea returned to its (original) strength. The Egyptians (were so confused that they) fled towards (the water). God stirred the Egyptians

Rashi’s Unexpected Analogy (v. 20)

A Torah analogy is always precise in every detail. To explain Rashi’s analogy here, a number of points need to be interpreted:

a.) Why did Rashi need to bring a lengthy analogy here?

b.) When traveling, a father does not usually send his son ahead of him. Where do we find that God sent the Jewish people ahead of Him?

c.) Who are the bandits? How did they try to capture the Jewish people?

d.) In the analogy, when the wolves come, it appears that the bandits have already left. What occurrence does this represent?

e.) What is the meaning of the phrase, “When bandits came in front of him and wolves from behind, he took his son on his arms”?

f.) Why does Rashi cite the entire verse, “I sent (a leader) to train Efrayim, he took them on his arms”? Surely, the only relevant part here is the end of the verse, “He took them on his arms”?

The Wandering Jews

After stating, “The angel of God...moved and went behind them” (v. 19), to protect the Jewish people, we are told that the pillar of cloud also moved behind the camp, accompanying the angel of God. At this point we do not yet know what the purpose of the pillar of cloud’s move was.

However, on reading the following verse (v. 20), we learn that the cloud appeared to serve exactly the same function as the angel of God, i.e. protection. The question therefore arises: Why were both necessary?

While, superficially, this appears to be a relatively minor problem, its solution is not a simple one. To answer this question and explain why God’s supernatural protection of the Jewish people occurred in the precise way that it did, Rashi found it necessary to introduce a lengthy analogy—a model which depicts the purpose of the Jewish exile, dating back to the times of Ya’akov our Patriarch.

Let us examine the analogy, section by section:

a.) “This can be compared to a person who is making a journey.” Rashi chose to employ this analogy of a traveler in order to address a general problem which the reader might have at this point. In the opening of our Parsha we read that God led the Jewish people on a roundabout route through the desert in order to avoid a war, which could have deterred the Jewish people from continuing. And yet, this special route seems to have been futile since, only six days later, we find that the Jewish people were confronted by...a war!

Furthermore, the entire story of the Exodus up to this point seems to be unnecessarily complicated. Why was there a need for ten plagues to convince the Egyptians to let the Jewish people leave, and then for a change of heart causing the Egyptians to chase after the Jewish people, necessitating further miracles in order to be saved? It would have been simpler for God just to kill the Egyptians at the outset, an act which He eventually carried out in any case.

To answer these questions, Rashi compared the Jewish people to a “person who is making a journey.” For, when a person is traveling he has only one priority: to reach the destination. If there are setbacks, so be it. Each setback must be dealt with as it arises. But the journey was not undertaken in the first place for the sake of overcoming setbacks, only for the sake of reaching the destination.

The Jewish people were on a journey to receive the Torah. They faced each setback as it arose, and God helped them where necessary. But, the fact that the setbacks were numerous and complicated should not trouble the reader, as the setbacks are totally secondary to the main issue at hand: the destination.

God’s Helping Hand

In order to clarify the confusing account of the angel of God and the pillar of cloud here (v. 19-20), Rashi found it necessary to explain the details
of the journey’s setbacks up to this point, and the Divine assistance that accompanied the Jewish people.

b.) “With his son walking in front of him.”

This is an allusion to God’s descend to Ya’akov, “Have no fear of descending to Egypt... I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I will surely bring you out again” (Bereishis 46:3-4).

The statement “I will descend with you,” suggests that Ya’akov and his family were instructed to go down to Egypt and that God would “follow along.” Thus, the Jewish people (“the son”) were walking “in front” of God, so to speak.

c.) “When bandits came to capture the son, the father took him from in front of him and placed (the son) behind him.”

The first disaster that the Jewish people encountered upon leaving Egypt was that they were trapped (“captured”) by the desert [c.f. Gur Aryeh]. In order to assist them, God ceased to “hide behind” the Jewish people and guided them from ahead with a pillar of cloud (13:23).

d.) “A wolf came behind him”

The problem of being trapped was temporarily alleviated when the Jewish people changed direction, heading back towards Egypt (14:2).

Since they were heading back, they were no longer trapped by the desert, and thus the “capture” by “bandits” (the desert) ceased.

Soon however, the Egyptians came chasing after the Jewish people. But since their intention was not to trap the Jewish people, but to kill them (c.f. 15:9), they are not described in the analogy as “bandits,” rather as “wolves.”

e.) “So he put his son back in front of him.”

That is, “the angel of God, who had been going in front of the Israelite camp, moved and went behind them” (14:19). The son (Jewish people) was now once again in front of the father (God). This protected the son from the wolves (Egyptians).

When night came, the cloud, instead of disappearing as it usually did, moved behind the camp to protect the Jewish people by plunging the
The waters returned and covered the chariots, horsemen and the entire army of Pharaoh who were coming after them into the sea. Not even one of them remained.

The children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the water was for them as a wall on their right and on their left.

On that day God saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians. Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

Israel saw the great might which God had enacted on the Egyptians, and the people feared God. They believed in God and in Moshe, His servant.

Moshe Leads the “Song at the Sea”

Then, (upon seeing the miracle), Moshe (led) the children of Israel in this song to God. They said as follows:

I will sing to God, for very exalted is He;
Horse and its rider He cast into the sea.

The Splitting of the Sea of Reeds and the “Song at the Sea”

The splitting of the Sea of Reeds contains a message so central to Judaism that the Code of Jewish Law requires the event to be mentioned every day, in both morning and evening prayers. Furthermore, the entire text of the “Song at the Sea” was included as part of the morning prayer.

In order to appreciate the immense significance of this event—despite its superficial appearance as a purely historical occurrence—consider the following point:

The predominant theme of the Song at the Sea is not, as one would expect, praise to God for saving the Jewish people. Rather, the vast majority of the Song highlights the impact which the miracle had on non-Jews: the death of the Egyptians and the terror which gripped the mightiest nations of the world.

One might therefore ask: the salvation of our people was surely more significant than the impact on non-Jewish nations. So why does the “Song at the Sea” stress the latter?

However, the point here is as follows. God’s love for the Jewish people takes two forms of expression: a.) Spiritual preference (supremacy of the Jewish soul etc.), and, b.) Material welfare. Of course, these two ideas are not disconnected; it is because of “a” that “b” occurs. But until “b” does occur, God’s preference, and more importantly, His power to express that preference, is not revealed in the world.

For this reason, the Song at the Sea is devoted almost entirely to the impact of the Splitting of the sea on the non-Jewish nations:

If the song would have been largely a praise to God for saving the Jewish people, it would only have expressed point “a,” how God chose the Jews as His own. However, by stressing the impact on non-Jewish nations who posed a threat to the material welfare of the Jewish people, an even greater praise was achieved. Namely, that God’s spiritual preference for the Jewish people (point “a”) was expressed in a tangible manner in the world through intimidating the enemies of the Jewish people.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5751)
How was the “Song at the Sea” recited? (v. 1-18)

**Ohr HaChayim**: “The Jewish people sang the Song in absolute unity, without difference and separation between them, for they were able to sing “as one person.”

Thus, since Moshe initiated the Song on behalf of all the people, their singing came as a result of being inspired by him. Therefore, they were able to sing “as one person.”

**Rashi**: His wars are not waged with weapons, but He wages battle with His Name, as David said [to Goliath before fighting him], “You come to me with spear and javelin] and I come to you with the Name of the Lord of Hosts” (Samuel I, 17:45).

*Clas** **ic Questions**

What does “God is His Name” mean? (v. 3)

**Rashi**: His wars are not waged with weapons, but He wages battle with His Name, as David said [to Goliath before fighting him], “You come to me with spear and javelin] and I come to you with the Name of the Lord of Hosts” (Samuel I, 17:45).
2 God’s strength and vengeance were my salvation.
   This is my God, and I will build Him a sanctuary,
   The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.

3 God is the Master of war;
   God (uses) His Name (to do battle).

4 He cast Pharaoh’s chariots and army into the sea.
   His elite officers sank in (the mud of) the Sea of Reeds,
   (So that) the deep waters would (return and) cover them.
   The (average ones) descended into the depths (quickly) like stone.

5 Your right hand, O God, is most powerful (and saves Israel).
   When Israel follows Your will,
   Your punishing left hand becomes like) your right hand, O God
   And (constantly) crushes the enemy.

6 (And that is merely Your Hand
   But when you reveal) Your great majesty
   Then your opponents are devastated
   (And that is merely Your majesty
   But) when you send forth Your burning wrath;
   The (most wicked of them) are consumed like straw.

Another explanation: God is His Name—even when He wages war
and takes vengeance upon His enemies, He upholds His attribute of
mercy on His creatures, sustaining all the inhabitants of the world.
This is unlike earthly kings who, when engaged in war, turn away
from all their other responsibilities, for they do not have the ability to
deal with both internal and external affairs.

MIZRACHI: According to the first interpretation of Rashi, that God
fights with His Name the verse should have said, “God is the Master
of war, God with His Name.” Due to this difficulty, Rashi found it
necessary to bring a second interpretation.

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the sequence of events that occurred before the Egyptians were drowned
in the sea: “He removed the wheels of their chariots (with the fire, causing
their passengers’ limbs to dislocate), and He treated them harshly. Egypt
said, “Let me run away from the Israelites, because God is fighting for
them against Egypt” (14:25).

Thus, the Egyptians suffered a two-phase attack from God:

a.) A weaponless battle of terror enacted by God’s Name.

b.) Destruction through drowning in the sea.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5742)
Why does the Torah mention the fear of Moav and Edom in particular? (v. 15)

RASHI: Moav and Edom had nothing to fear at all, because the Israelites were not advancing upon them. Rather, they trembled due to the extraordinary success of the Jewish people, which caused them emotions of grief and jealousy. But it did not do so to other nations.

If so, however, why didn’t the nations which were descended from Yishma’el, the nation of Amon (descended from Lot) and the nations descended from Avraham’s concubines have a feeling of grief and jealousy, for they too were related to the Jewish people?

THE EXPLANATION

Each of these nations had a specific reason why they did not become jealous: a.) Yishma’el himself did teshuvah (he repented), as Rashi states earlier in his commentary (Bereishis 25:9).

b.) The other children born to Avraham (through concubines) were “sent away” (ibid. 6), and thus had no connection with the Jewish people.
8 With the (angry) breath of Your nostrils,  
The waters were heaped up.  
The running water stood erect like a wall;  
The deep waters congealed,  
In the strongest part of the sea.

9 The enemy said: “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide spoils!  
“My desire will be filled from them.”  
“I will draw my sword, my hand will impoverish them.”

10 You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them;  
The (decent ones) sank like lead in the powerful waters.

11 Who is like You among the mighty, O God?  
Who is like You, powerful in holiness,  
Too awesome for praises, performer of wonders?

12 You tilted Your right hand;  
the earth swallowed them up.

13 With Your loving kindness  
You led the people You redeemed;  
You led with Your might to Your holy abode.

14 People heard, they trembled;  
A shudder seized the inhabitants of Peloshes.

15 Then the chieftains of Edom were confounded.  
Trembling gripped the powerful men of Moav.


What does verse 16 ("May dread and fear fall upon them?") refer to?

Rashi: “Dread” refers to the distant nations. “Fear” refers to the nearby nations. As the verse states, “For we have heard how God dried up [the water of the Sea of Reeds for you, etc.].” (Joshua 2:10).

Be’er Basadeh: According to Rashi the distant nations are mentioned in the verse before the nearby nations. Wouldn’t it make more sense the other way around? However, Rashi was forced to conclude that “fear” refers to the distant nations, as the Hebrew word מְמַצּוֹת, סַכְנָתִים נַעֲרֵחַ בָּרָאָה, מָכְרוֹת וְכָבָּרָה נַעֲרֵחַ בָּרָאָה; כַּפָּרָה כְּרָה נַעֲרֵחַ בָּרָאָה: מַכָּרָה כְּרָה נַעֲרֵחַ בָּרָאָה: מַכָּרָה כְּרָה נַעֲרֵחַ בָּרָאָה; מַכָּרָה כְּרָה נַעֲרֵחַ בָּרָאָה; מַכָּרָה כְּרָה נַעֲרֵחַ בָּרָאָה; מַכָּרָה כְּרָה

May fear and dread fall upon them means a prolonged type of fear, which must have been felt at a distance; whereas the word רַפרָא means a sudden terror which must have been felt only nearby.

What is the “Sanctuary” to which verse 17 refers?

Rashi: This refers to the final Temple which will be built in the Messianic Era.

Sforno: This refers to the first Temple which the Jewish people built after entering the land of Israel.

“Dread” and “Fear” (v. 16)

According to Be’er Basadeh, Rashi interpreted verse 16 according to the strict translation of the words (דָּרָא וַעֲרָא). However, Rashi himself gives no indication that these two words are limited to a strictly defined translation. Therefore, it would seem that Rashi’s comment here is based on a simple, logical point, rather than a grammatical technicality.

In fact, Rashi’s intention can be understood from the context of verse 16, which breaks a trend from the previous verses in shifting the subject from the past to the future. Verses 14 and 15 describe the fear and terror that was already gripping the nations of the world, whereas verse 16 is a prayer (or perhaps a prophecy) for the future, “May fear and dread fall upon them...until Your people cross over...the Jordan”...

I.e. the Jewish people were praying (or predicting) that the splitting of the sea and the miraculous defeat of Egypt should have a sustained impact on the nations, “until Your people cross over,” the Jordan into Israel.

Obviously, the main thrust of this prayer (or prediction) was that the fear instilled by the splitting of the sea should be sustained especially among the distant nations which occupy and surround the land of Israel. For it is these nations that the Jewish people would have to confront after their journey in the desert.

Thus, here at the splitting of the sea, the Jewish people realized that to succeed in conquering the land of Israel, the terrific impact of the splitting of the sea would have to linger with the nations of the world, particularly those (“distant ones”) in the vicinity of Eretz Yisra’el.

This explains why the Jewish people mentioned the distant nations first, as this was their primary focus of their prayer (or prediction).

In order to stress this point further, Rashi cited a verse which refers to an incident some forty years later, which shows how even at that point the nations were still terrified by how “God dried up the water of the Sea of Reeds for you.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 36, p. 65ff.)

Which Temple? (v. 17)

The explanation of Sforno, that verse 17 refers to the first Temple, appears to be more logical for two reasons:

a.) The Song at the Sea has depicted a step-by-step description of the Egyptians’ defeat and the terror which struck the other nations. The next
step that the Jewish people would have hoped for is their safe arrival in the Land of Israel. Thus, in verse 17 they stated that, after God finally brings them to the Land (“You shall bring them and plant them...”), they will build for Him a “sanctuary,” i.e. the First Temple. It seems to make no sense to argue that they would have already been thinking about the destruction of that Temple, which they had not even built yet, and were thinking instead of the final, Third Temple!

b.) Earlier, in Parshas Shemos (3:14), Rashi writes that: God said to Moshe, “I will be with them in this predicament as I will be with them in their subjugation by other kingdoms.” Moshe replied, “Master of the universe! Why should I mention to them another trouble? They have enough problems with this one!” God replied, “You have spoken well.” From this we see that the future exile of the Jewish people and the destruction of the first Temple was kept a secret from them. Thus it is unlikely that they would be singing here about the Third Temple.

However, Rashi was forced to reject these arguments, and write instead that the Jewish people were indeed singing here about the third Temple, for the following reason:

Generally speaking, there are no superfluous statements in scripture. Thus, any time an apparent repetition occurs, Rashi is required to explain the significance of the repetition. This leads us, however, to the following question:

When scripture records a song, do we say that every instance of repetition needs to be accounted for? Or, can we tolerate the repetition due to the fact that it is found in a song, which is not subject to the same rigid analysis?

Rashi adopted the former stance (that repetitions are accountable even in a song). Verse 17 contains the idea of a Temple or Sanctuary mentioned twice (“A place which You made, O God, for Your dwelling-place; The sanctuary, O God, which Your hands founded.”). Therefore, since Rashi held that there can be no meaningless repetition, even in a song, he understood that the first mention of a sanctuary (“dwelling-place”) refers to the first Temple, whereas the second mention of a sanctuary (The sanctuary, O God, which Your hands founded,”) must refer to another Temple, i.e. the Final Messianic Temple.

But how would Rashi answer our first question, that Moshe did not wish to reveal to the Jewish people news of the eventual destruction of the First Temple?

Our Sages explained that, if the Jewish people had merited, the true and final redemption would have occurred immediately on their entering the Land of Israel for the first time (Sifri to Devarim 1:2). Consequently, at that point, the destruction of the Temple was not an inevitability.

Therefore, the repetition of the idea of the Temple in the Song effectively constituted a prayer that the first Temple which is built in the land of Israel should indeed merit to be the one and only Temple that is ever built.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach & Yisro 5744)

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The Last Song

The Mechilta states, “There are ten songs,” beginning with the song at the sea led by Moshe, and concluding with the tenth song which will be sung with Mashiach. All the (nine) songs mentioned in scripture are written in the feminine (shirah), since their rejoicing was followed by (“gave birth to”) further servitude. The tenth song of Mashiach is written in the masculine (shir) to indicate that it is permanent (Mechilta to 15:1).

Chasidic teachings explain that the first nine songs emphasized primarily a desire to come closer to God from a distance, like a woman who longs to come closer to her husband. However, the tenth song of Mashiach will be sung from a feeling that God is already close and found openly in our midst, like a husband who is gracefully endearing himself to his wife.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5752)
Why does v. 20 stress that Miriam was “Aharon’s sister”?

**Rashi**: Because she became a prophetess when she was known only as “Aharon’s sister,” i.e. before Moshe was born. She said, “My mother is destined to bear a son who will save Israel,” as stated in tractate Sotah. Another explanation: The verse describes her as Aharon’s sister since he risked his life for her when she was afflicted with tzora’as (leprosy). Therefore, she is called by his name.

**Ramban**: Since Aharon was not mentioned throughout the entire song, the Torah honored him by mentioning his name here. Alternatively, it is possible that scripture always relates a person to his or her older brother (c.f. Chronicles 1:2-42).

**Kli Yakar**: Miriam is described as “Aharon’s sister” and not “Moshe’s sister” to teach us that her level of prophecy was similar to that of Aharon, but not similar to that of Moshe.

Problems with Ramban & Kli Yakar (v. 20)

Moshe and Miriam’s names are mentioned for a specific reason: because they led the Jewish people in song, whereas Aharon did not. Therefore, at the literal level, there is no need to mention Aharon here (as Ramban argues).

The second answer of Ramban—that scripture always relates a person to their oldest brother, seems inappropriate in this case, as Moshe had just taken the Jewish people out of Egypt, split the sea, and led the Jewish people in song. Therefore it would seem more fitting to relate Miriam to Moshe at this point.

The suggestion of Kli Yakar seems to be irrelevant here. Why would it be crucial for the Torah to teach us suddenly at this point about Miriam’s power of prophecy compared to Moshe?

Miriam the Prophetess

Rashi was troubled by the following points: a.) Why does the Torah mention that Miriam was a prophetess? Surely the description that she was Aharon’s sister suffices to inform us who she is?

b.) Furthermore, in order to lead the Jewish people in song, she did not have to possess the power of prophecy. So why does the Torah tell us of her prophetic ability here?

It could be argued that the following problem troubled Rashi. The Jewish people had just reached a heightened state of total unity, singing in harmony together with Moshe, their leader. We are told that they all, “believed in God and in Moshe, His servant” (14:31), a state of total commitment and loyalty to Moshe that had never before been reached.

So in the midst of this spirit of devotion between the people and their leader, how could Miriam stand up and take a leadership role without asking his permission first?

To answer this question, the verse states that she was “Aharon’s sister,” and Rashi explains that her powers were so famous, that she had been known as a prophetess even in her childhood, before Moshe was born. In fact, she had predicted Moshe’s birth, to the amazement of her parents.

All these details prove that Miriam’s level of prophecy was an extremely high one. Thus, when she stood up and led the women in song, it could not possibly have been conceived as an act of disrespect to Moshe, for it was well known that she was a prophetess before Moshe was born, and had even said prophecy regarding him.

Rashi’s Second Interpretation

However, in the final analysis, we have not fully explained why Miriam is called “Aharon’s sister.” Surely it would have been more appropriate to call her “Moshe’s sister”? Therefore Rashi brings a second interpretation which is uniquely connected with Aharon (that he suffered for her when she was afflicted with leprosy).

However, since this refers to an incident that happened well after the splitting of the sea, and is disconnected from it, Rashi deemed it somewhat far-fetched to argue that this was the Torah’s intention in referring to Miriam as “Aharon’s sister” here. Therefore, he relegated this interpretation to second place.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol 11, p. 556)
Miriam Leads the Women in Song

15:20
Miriam (who was) a prophetess (when she was) Aharon’s sister (even before Moshe was born), took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women came out after her with tambourines and with dancing.

21 Miriam called out to the (women, leading them in the above song):
“Sing to God, for very exalted is He;
a horse and its rider He cast into the sea (etc.).”

The First Complaint: Bitter Waters

15:22
Moshe moved Israel on (against their will) from the Reed Sea (since they were busy collecting the spoils of Egypt). They went out into the desert of Shur. They traveled for three days in the desert without finding water.

23 They came to Marah, but they could not drink water from Marah because it was bitter. Therefore, they named it Marah.

Classic Questions

What was the significance of tambourines? (v. 20)

Rashi: The righteous women of that generation were certain that God would perform miracles for them, so they took tambourines out of Egypt.

Mizrahi: Rashi was troubled by the question: Where did the women suddenly find tambourines? Miriam herself was a prophetess, so it is possible that she would have anticipated the need for a tambourine prophetically, but the other women were not. Therefore, Rashi answers that the women trusted in God while still in Egypt and so they took tambourines with them.

Tzeidah Laderech: In Jewish Law, a man is forbidden to listen to a woman sing, so the women shook tambourines to mask their voices.

Why Tambourines? (v. 20)

The suggestion cited by Tzeidah Laderech that the women took tambourines to mask their voices is untenable. It is incredibly unlikely that the women would have reasoned, “God is certainly going to perform miracles for us, and then we will sing a song together, and therefore we must take something with us out of Egypt to mask our voices so that the men will not hear us!”

Furthermore, Rashi stated earlier, “By the sea, even a maidservant saw that which prophets never saw” (15:2). Thus, on this elevated spiritual level, the prohibition of hearing a woman’s voice would not apply, since there is no fear that a person would come to lewd thoughts at the very moment he was seeing, “that which prophets never saw.”

Where Did the Tambourines Come From?

Mizrahi suggests that Rashi was troubled by the question: Where did the tambourines come from?

However, this matter does not appear to be a problem at all. Presumably, most families had in their home primitive instruments such as tambourines, which would have been used when family celebrations took place. Since we know that the Jewish people left Egypt with all their possessions, we can presume that they took even their tambourines with them. Thus, the question “Where did the tambourines come from?” does not appear to be a problem.

Rather, Rashi was bothered by the fact that so many women had tambourines. The verse states, “Aharon’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women came out after her with tambourines.” While many of the women would have taken their tambourines with them when leaving Egypt, it is extremely unlikely that there would have been sufficient tambourines for all the women. After all, the average family would have had just one, or perhaps two tambourines, and yet there might have been many women in the family.

This question prompted Rashi to find an explanation why every woman had a tambourine. Thus he explained that the women of that generation had such faith in God, even while under the servitude of Egypt, that they actively awaited redemption, each person preparing a tambourine to take with them to rejoice with when the redemption finally arrived.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5741)

The Last Word

Those righteous women did not delegate their responsibilities to their leader, Miriam the prophetess. Rather, each and every woman made for herself a tambourine, in a personal effort to trust in God’s redemption and rejoice in it when it comes.

There is always a temptation to leave the responsibility of inspiring the people to Jewish leaders. However, we can learn from the righteous women in Egypt that it is every single person’s obligation to inspire his or herself and all of the people that he or she comes into contact with (ibid.).
There are three ways of sweetening bitter waters:

a.) Dilution with a large amount of fresh water. (This method was not used here according to all opinions.)

b.) Transforming the bitter flavor into a sweet one. I.e. one adds an extremely powerful agent that is capable of transforming a bitter flavor into a sweet one. This is the opinion of the Zohar, that a piece of the Tree of Life was used to overwhelm the waters.

c.) Self realization. I.e. Making the bitter waters “realize” how bad it is to be bitter, so that they become sweet of their own accord.

This is the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha (Mechilta), that the waters were sweetened by adding bitter wood.

These three approaches correspond to three methods of eliminating evil: a.) Combating (“diluting”) evil with good. b.) Revealing a much greater good that makes evil fade away. c.) Teaching the evil how bad it is, so that it no longer wishes to be evil.

The latter method (‘c’) is the approach of the Baal Teshuvah who realizes that he is distant from G-d and abandons his or her former lifestyle for the better. (Likutei Sichos vol. 6, p. 393)
24 The people complained to Moshe, saying, “What shall we drink?”
25 He cried out to God, and God instructed him about a (type of) wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweetened.

THE FIRST REBUKE: ACCEPTANCE OF MITZVOS

There (at Marah, God) gave them the mitzvos (of Shabbos and the Red Heifer) and the laws (of monetary claims). He tested (the people by denying them water to see how they would treat Moshe). 26 He said, “If you will: (accept upon yourselves) to listen to the voice of God, your God, and you will (actually) perform (the commandments) which are just in His eyes, and you observe His commandments (with precision), and observe all His statutes (which defy logic)—then all the sicknesses that I have placed upon Egypt I will not place upon you, for I am God your healer.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Rashi: At Marah, God gave the Jewish people some sections of the Torah to busy themselves with, namely the laws governing Shabbos, the Red Heifer, and laws of monetary claims.

Ramban: Why is there no mention of the Jewish people being given these mitzvos in the Torah itself?
Because God gave them information about the mitzvos which they would later be commanded to observe. This was the “test” mentioned in the verse, i.e. God tested them by first informing them about the mitzvos without obligating them, to see if they would be willing to observe them or not. This is Rashi’s intention in writing that God gave them “some sections of the Torah to busy themselves with.” They were not yet commanded to observe these commands, but rather, to busy themselves with studying their laws.

Talmud: At Marah the Jewish people were given the monetary laws, and the mitzvos of Shabbos and honoring parents (Sanhedrin 56b).

Gur Aryeh: Rashi omitted here any mention of the mitzvah of honoring parents, though he does agree that this mitzvah was also given here at Marah, as he states so explicitly in his commentary to Devarim 5:16. Rashi reasoned that the word chok here in verse 25 refers to the suprarational commands of Shabbos and Red Heifer, and that the word mishpat (ibid.) refers to the monetary laws. Therefore, according to Rashi, the Torah indicates that the mitzvos of Shabbos, Red Heifer and monetary claims were given here, but that no indication of honoring parents is made. Therefore, Rashi only mentions at a later point that the mitzvah of honoring parents was also given when the Torah itself indicates that this is the case.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

WHAT IS RASHI’S SOURCE (v. 25)

Gur Aryeh explains Rashi’s source for including the mitzvah of the Red Heifer and omitting the mitzvah of honoring parents, which is included in the Talmud.

He writes that Rashi gave a logical interpretation of verse 25 itself. The two words chok and mishpat allude to two types of mitzvos, suprarational and rational.

Perhaps we could argue that Rashi in fact interpreted all three terms in verse 25, each term indicating a different type of mitzvah:
1.) Chok refers to the Red Heifer. There are only two mitzvos in the Torah referred to as a chok: Red Heifer (Bamidbar 19:2) and the Pesach Sacrifice (see above 12:43). The latter mitzvah was already given, so the term chok here must refer to the Red Heifer.
2.) Mishpat, reasoned Rashi, refers to all those laws included in Parshas Mishpatim, i.e. monetary laws.

THREE COMPLAINTS—THREE REBUKES

In this Parsha we find that the Jewish People complain to Moshe three times, and that they are rebuked by God on each occasion. Note that the intensity of the rebuke increases on each occasion (Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 165, note 21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<th>Rebuke</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15:24ff</td>
<td>Marah</td>
<td>No Water</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Desert of Sin</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>17:1ff</td>
<td>Refidim</td>
<td>No Water</td>
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</tbody>
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3.) V’Sham Nisahu ("And there He tested them") refers to Shabbos. This Rashi concluded from the following section which describes how God tested the Jewish people’s faith in Him to see if they would refrain from collecting the manna on Shabbos.

One problem with this interpretation (that Rashi simply “translated” the verse) is that the order of mitzvos in the verse is different from the order in Rashi’s commentary. According to the verse the order is: Red Heifer, Monetary Laws and Shabbos, whereas Rashi writes, “Shabbos, the Red Heifer, and laws of monetary claims,” placing Shabbos first.

However, the reason for this could be explained as follows: Generally speaking, Rashi kept to the order of the verse. He made an exception for the case of Shabbos as Shabbos, is a mitzvah which is mentioned explicitly in Parshas Beshalach (in the following section about the manna), whereas the other mitzvos are only alluded to (by the words chok and mishpat). Thus Rashi kept to the order of the verse, but he put Shabbos first, since it is mentioned explicitly.

As for the mitzvah of honoring parents, the fact that this mitzvah was also given at Marah was only deduced by Rashi at a later point (See Devarim 5:16).

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach & Va’eschanan 5728)

EXPLANATION OF RAMBAN

Ramban’s comment, that the mitzvos were only studied and not practiced at Marah, is explained below in Tora Menachem to 16:22.
27 They came to Eilim, where there were twelve water fountains and seventy date-palms. They encamped there by the water.

**The Second Complaint and Rebuke**

16 They journeyed from Eilim, and the entire community of the children of Israel came to the desert of Sin—which is between Eilim and Sinai—on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt.

2 The entire community of the children of Israel complained against Moshe and against Aharon in the desert (because their supplies of bread had run out). 3 The children of Israel said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of God in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat, when we ate bread to our fill! For you have brought us out into this desert, to starve the entire congregation to death!”

**Meat and Manna Arrive**

16:4 God said to Moshe, “Look! I am going to rain down for you bread from heaven.  (Every day,) the people will go out and gather what is needed for that day, so that I can test them whether or not they will follow My Torah.  5 On Friday, when they are preparing what to bring home, they will gather (the same amount as usual, but when they measure it, they will find that it is) double the amount that they gather every day.”

6 Moshe and Aharon said to all the children of Israel:

“In the evening, you will realize that (it is not us, but) God Who brought you out of the land of Egypt (because He will deliver you quails to satisfy your desires. But He will not give it to you gracefully, since you asked for it improperly)”

7 “In the morning, you will see God’s glory (in the beautiful way that he delivers you bread, indicating

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

*Why do Moshe and Aharon respond to the Jewish people in verses 6-7, and yet in verse 8 only Moshe speaks?*

**Abarbanel**: Both Moshe and Aharon were grieved by the complaints of the Jewish people. Therefore, as leaders, they felt the responsibility to address the Jewish people collectively. In verses 6 and 7, they stated that the Jewish people would see God’s glory through two miracles, in the evening and in the morning. However, since it was not clear what these miracles would be, Moshe was later required to explain in verse 8 exactly what they were.

**Alshich**: Since the complaints of the Jewish people were targeted at both Moshe and Aharon, they made a collective response in verses 6-7. In verse 8, Moshe added that both the bread and meat would come directly from God, and not through Moshe who usually acted as an intermediary between the Jewish people and God. Therefore, it was appropriate that Moshe alone should make this statement.

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**Moshi’s Personal Statement (v.6-7)**

The solution of Abarbanel is difficult to accept, for it fails to explain any real necessity for Moshe to have made a separate statement on his own. Surely, the details which Moshe added could have been included in the earlier statement of Moshe and Aharon?

Rather, it could be argued that the Jewish people’s complaints could be divided into two key areas:

a.) The content of the complaints, i.e. what food they had asked for. This was a matter pertaining to their physical needs.

b.) The method, i.e. they were issued in a manner of complaints, rather than as a polite request. This was more of a spiritual matter, for the complaints indicated a decline in the faith of the Jewish people.

These two areas necessitated two distinct responses:

a.) The method of the complaints was an issue of relevance to both Moshe and Aharon, for they had led the Jewish people out of Egypt together, and they were both responsible for the spiritual guidance of the Jewish people.

b.) However the response to the content of the complaints, was made by Moshe alone (without Aharon), as Moshe alone fulfilled the role of “shepherd” of the Jewish people, responsible for their physical needs.

Thus, in verses 6-7 Moshe and Aharon first address the spiritual problems arising from the method of the complaints, and in verse 8 Moshe addresses the direct physical needs of the Jewish people.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol 16, pp 164-5.)*
that) God has heard your (properly delivered) complaints against Him (about the lack of bread).”

“But of what (significance) are we, that you make the people complain against us?”

8 Moshe said, “God will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread in the morning to fill up. God hears your complaints, which you are causing (people to) complain against Him. But of what significance are we? Your complaints are not against us but against God.”

9 Moshe said to Aharon, “Say to the entire community of the children of Israel, ‘Draw near before (the cloud of glory where) God (will descend), for He has heard your complaints.’”

10 When Aharon spoke to the entire community of the children of Israel, they turned toward the desert, and look!—the glory of God appeared in the cloud.

11 God spoke to Moshe, saying, 12 “I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them and say, ‘In the afternoon you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be full with bread, and you will know that I am God, your God.”

13 That evening, quails came up and covered the camp.

In the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 The layer of dew evaporated, and look!—on the surface of the desert, there was a fine substance as fine as frost, uncovered on the ground.

15 When the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “It is a prepared food,” because they did not know what it was (to call it by its correct name).

16 Moshe said to them, “It is the bread which God has given you to eat. This is what God has commanded: each person should gather as much as he needs to eat, i.e. an Omer (measure) for each person. You should take (one Omer) for every person in your tent.”

17 The children of Israel did so. There were those that gathered too much, and those that gathered too little. 18 (When they came home and) measured it with an Omer-measure (they found that, miraculously), whoever had gathered too much did not have more (than an Omer per person), and whoever gathered too little did not have less. Each one had gathered exactly what he needed to eat.

19 Moshe said to them, “Let no man leave any of it over until morning.”

20 (Dasan and Aviram) did not listen to Moshe, and they left some of it over until morning. It became foul-smelling and bred worms, and Moshe became angry with them.

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Meat is a fatty food. It represents the mystical parts of Torah, which are not crucial to Torah observance but add inspiration, rather like fat, which adds richness of flavor to food.

Bread is a staple food. It thus represents the scriptural and legal (revealed) parts of Torah which must be studied in order for a person to know how to observe the mitzvos. For this reason, the request for bread was considered to be appropriate, as the scriptural and legal parts of Judaism are the staple diet of the Jew. The request for mysticism (meat) however, was considered inappropriate at the time, since before the giving of the Torah it was simply unnecessary to reveal such secrets. Now, however, the mystical teachings of Kabalah and Chasidus have become a welcome “supplement” to the staple diet of scripture and Talmud.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, pp 168f)
What was the purpose of the manna’s melting? (v. 21)

Rashi: The remainder of the manna in the field melted and formed streams from which deer and gazelles drank. The nations of the world would hunt some of these animals and taste in them the flavor of manna, and from this they came to know the greatness of the Jewish people.

Sifsei Chachamim: Obviously, the manna which the Jewish people collected did not melt, otherwise they would have had nothing to eat in the evening. Therefore, Rashi was forced to conclude that this verse refers to the manna left over in the field.

The Left Over Manna (v. 21)

Sifsei Chachamim explains that Rashi was troubled that if the manna which the Jewish people collected had melted, then they would have nothing to eat. Therefore, he writes that it was the manna in the field that melted.

However, this begs a greater question: Why did the Torah need to tell us at all what happened to the leftover manna? We are not told what happened to the leftover quails, or what happened to the rock after it produced water (see 17:6). So why do we need to know what happened to the leftover manna?

A further question: Why do we only discover what happened to the leftover manna on a daily basis after the incident with Dasan and Aviram (whose manna became full of worms after they ignored Moshe’s command not to leave any over—v. 19-20)? Surely, it would be more appropriate to describe how leftover manna melted in the earlier section, describing the first time that manna was collected (v. 15-18)?

However, when we first read of the manna and its collection, the issue of what happened to the remaining manna is irrelevant (just as the issue of what happened to the remaining quails is irrelevant).

Only later, when we read how Dasan and Aviram left over some manna and it became foul-smelling, is the reader left with the question: did the leftover manna did not become foul because:

a.) The decay of the manna was a punishment for disobeying Moshe’s order not to leave over manna. Since leaving manna in the field was not prohibited, it is unlikely that it would have been associated with a punishment.

b.) If all the leftover manna did become foul-smelling, then it would turn out that for forty years the entire Jewish camp was completely surrounded by a foul smell! Obviously, such a suggestion is outrageous.

Thus, the Torah found it necessary to explain what happened to the leftover manna: it melted in the sun.
21 They gathered it morning by morning, according to what each person could eat. When the sun grew hot (the remaining manna in the fields) melted.

**Double Portion of Manna for Shabbos**

16:22 On Friday, they gathered (what they later discovered to be) a double portion of bread, two Omers for each person. The heads of the community came and reported it to Moshe (because Moshe had not yet informed them about the precept of Shabbos, which God commanded him earlier to give over).

23 He said to them, “This is what God said, “Tomorrow is a rest day, a holy Shabbos to God. Bake whatever you wish to bake (today), and cook whatever you wish to cook (today). Whatever is left over put aside for storage until morning.” 24 They put it away until the morning, as Moshe had commanded, and it did not become foul-smelling or worm-infested.

25 Moshe said, “Eat it today, for today is a Shabbos to God. Today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you will gather it, but on (Yom Kippur and Festivals) there will not be any.”

**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- What was reported to Moshe? (v.22)
  
  **Rashi:** They asked him, “Why is this day different from other days?” From here we learn that Moshe had not yet told them the laws of Shabbos that he was given by God earlier, in verse 5 above.

  **Ohr HaChayim:** Moshe did not tell the Jewish people about Shabbos, because God had told it to Moshe as a secret. (See verse 5 above, where no specific command is given to Moshe to tell the Jewish people).

  This is because God wanted the Jewish people to discover the double portion of manna themselves, without warning, for in this way the concept of Shabbos would be impressed upon them more deeply as they would witness the miracle personally. If they had received the commandment first, then they would not have appreciated the miracle as much.

**Non-Jews Taste the Manna**

What prompted Rashi into a lengthy description about manna melting into streams, being drunk by animals which were then slaughtered by non-Jews? How is this comment compatible with Rashi’s mission-statement that “I only come to explain the simple meaning of scripture” (Bereishis 3:8)?

It was explained above that the question of what happened to the remaining manna in the field only arose after we learned how Dasan and Aviram’s leftover manna became foul. Therefore, the Torah waited to this later point to tell us what happened to the leftover manna in the fields.

However, in the final analysis, this does not fully answer the question. Since there would eventually be a need to inform the reader about the leftover manna in any case, the Torah could just have well have done so in the first instance.

Therefore, Rashi was forced to bring an explanation why the detail of the leftover manna was included at this point.

To answer this question, Rashi cited a description, how the melting of the manna eventually led the non-Jewish nations to appreciate the greatness of the Jewish people. This explains why this detail was included here specifically, for it is juxtaposed between other verses which also describe the greatness of the Jewish people:

a.) Verse 21 describes how, after Moshe’s rebuke in verse 20, even Dasan and Aviram “gathered it morning by morning, according to what each person could eat,” i.e they responded to Moshe’s rebuke and refrained from leaving over manna. Thus the fact that two such recalcitrant individuals as Dasan and Aviram actually accepted Moshe’s rebuke is indeed an expression of the greatness of the Jewish people (that even the worst of Jews will listen to Moshe).

b.) Verses 22-29 describe how God gave Shabbos to the Jewish people, which is clearly an expression of their greatness.

Thus, in v. 21 Rashi cited the Midrash which describes how the non-Jewish nations came to taste the manna, for it explains why this verse is juxtaposed between other verses which also stress the greatness of the Jewish people.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5736)

- When Did Shabbos Begin? (v. 22)

Rashi wrote above (see Classic Questions to 15:25) that, at Marah, the Jewish people were given “some sections of the Torah to busy themselves with,” including the laws of Shabbos. Ramban explains that they were not actually commanded to observe Shabbos, but rather, that they began to learn about Shabbos knowing that in the future God would actually command them to keep its laws.

This explains why the Jewish people were shocked when they found a double portion of manna here in verse 22, for although they were familiar with the concept of Shabbos they had not yet received the command to observe it.

Moshe then told the Jewish people, “Tomorrow is a rest day, a holy Shabbos to God. Bake whatever you wish to bake (today), and cook whatever you wish to cook (today)” (v. 23). I.e. Moshe said that from this point on it would be forbidden to cook on Shabbos. This is the reason why a double portion of manna had arrived early, on Friday, so that all...
the necessary cooking for Shabbos could be done in advance.

However, there is no mention that Moshe told them to observe any of the other laws of Shabbos. Thus, we can presume, that the only prohibition at this point was cooking.

In fact, this explains the statement in verse 27, “On the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather manna, but they did not find any.” Presumably, these people went out to gather the manna with bowls and pots with which to carry the manna home. It seems they transgressed the prohibition of carrying in the public domain on Shabbos!

However, based on the above, it is clear that they did not desecrate Shabbos at all, since the only prohibition that they had been given formally was that of cooking.

Later, in verse 29, God did indeed prohibit carrying on Shabbos, with the words, “Let each person remain in his place. Nobody should leave his place on the seventh day.” Nevertheless, until God said these words the Jewish people could not possibly have known that the prohibition of carrying on Shabbos had begun. Consequently, those who, “went out to gather manna, but they did not find any,” on Shabbos, did not sin.

But if they did not transgress then why did God become angry, saying, “How long will you refuse to observe My commandments and My teachings” (v. 29)?

However, this did not refer to carrying on Shabbos (whose prohibitions had not been given yet, as explained above), but rather, to the lack of faith which those people showed in ignoring God’s promise that, “today you will not find it in the field” (v. 25).

Thus, in the final analysis, the first Shabbos only contained one prohibition: cooking. After some people demonstrated a lack of faith in God by going to collect manna, the prohibition of carrying in the public domain was also added.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 31, pp. 86-88)
On the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather manna, but they did not find any.

God said to Moshe, “How long will you refuse to observe My commandments and My teachings?

You can see (with your own eyes) that God has given you the Sabbath (because a miracle occurs) on the Friday, and He gives you enough bread for two days.”

“Let each person remain in his place. Nobody should leave his place on the seventh day.”

So the people rested on the seventh day.

Manna is Named—Jug of Manna is Preserved

The house of Israel named it (the food) “manna.” It was (round) like coriander seed (but) it was white. It tasted like dough fried in honey.

Moshe said, “This is what God has commanded: ‘A full Omer of it should be stored away for your generations to come, in order that they see the bread that I fed you in the desert when I took you out of the land of Egypt.’”

(The following verse was actually said after the Tent of Meeting was built, but it was included here):

Moshe said to Aharon, “Take an (earthenware) jug and put a full Omer of manna into it. You should place it before (the Ark of) God, to be preserved for your generations to come.”

As God had commanded Moshe, Aharon deposited it in front of the Ark, to be preserved.

The children of Israel ate the manna for (almost) forty years until they came to an inhabited land (after crossing the Jordan. However) the manna (only descended) until they came to (the plains of Moab at) the border of the land of Canaan (where Moshe passed away, before they crossed the Jordan. After that, they ate from the manna which they had stored up on that day).

The Omer is one tenth of an Eifah.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why are we only told about the appearance, taste and name of manna at this point and not earlier on when the topic first arose? (v. 31)

Ibn Ezra: First the Torah wished to tell the stories of the miracles that occurred with the manna, before singing its praises.

Kli Yakar: After Shabbos, they decided to give the manna a name which somehow represented the double portion which had arrived in honor of Shabbos. Thus they chose the letters of the Hebrew alphabet which are spelled out in full by repeating the same letter (ם מ נ ש).

Manna & Shabbos (v. 31)

When reading the account of how a double portion of manna fell on Friday for Shabbos, we might think that the manna was restricted by (and therefore secondary to) the observance of Shabbos.

In fact, however, the reverse is true. It was explained in the previous section that Shabbos was not actually observed before the manna was given. Furthermore, even after the manna was given, not all the precepts of Shabbos were observed. Rather, only those aspects of Shabbos that pertain to the collection and preparation of manna were enforced. From this it is evident that the mitzvah of Shabbos itself was given for the sake of the manna.

This is because Shabbos and manna share the same theme of rest and pleasure:

a.) The manna was given in an edible form, so that the Jewish people did not have to have the bother of preparing food. Similarly, Shabbos is a day of rest from the tiresome activities of the week.

b.) The manna was a particularly delicious food, just like Shabbos, which is intended as a day of pleasure.
Therefore, in order to enhance the rest and pleasure which the manna would bring, God also gave the Jewish people the mitzvah of Shabbos (albeit in a limited form).

This explains why the Torah only tells us about the name and flavor of manna and its preservation for generations after describing how the manna did not fall on Shabbos. For, since Shabbos was given to enhance the manna, the true nature of the manna could not be fully appreciated until one Shabbos had passed.

(Based on Likutei Sichos ibid., pp. 88-90)

The manna reminds us that a Jew’s food, and his livelihood in general, come directly from God, in a manner of “bread from heaven.” I.e. even though, at first glance, it appears that a person earns his livelihood through hard work, in truth however the work of his hands is merely a “receptacle” into which God places His blessings.

In other words, it is not the hard work in itself that brings a person his daily bread; God provides a Jew with food in a manner which is not limited to the rules of nature. But in order not to disturb the natural order which He created, God garbs his gift in natural phenomena, so that it should appear to come from nature alone.

The eternal perpetuation of manna reminds us that, even though we no longer see bread coming from heaven, nevertheless, in truth the bread continues to come from heaven to this day.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Beishalach 5751)
The Third Complaint: No Water

The whole community of the children of Israel journeyed from the Desert of Sin, traveling according to God’s instructions. They camped in Refidim and there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moshe, and they said, “Give us water so we can drink.” Moshe said to them, “Why are you quarreling with me? Why are you trying to test God (if He can give water in a dry land)?”

The people thirsted there for water. The people complained to Moshe and said, “Why have you brought us up from Egypt to make me and my children and my livestock die of thirst?”

Moshe cried out to God, saying, “What shall I do for this people? (If I wait) a bit longer they will stone me!”

God said to Moshe, “Pass before the people (and you will see that your words were unfounded, as they will not stone you). Bring with you some of the elders of Israel (as witnesses), and take in your hand your staff, with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand before you there on the rock at Choraiv. You shall strike into the rock (and split it), and water will come out of it, and the people will drink.”

Moshe did so before the eyes of the elders of Israel.

He named the place Masah u’Merivah (testing and quarreling) because of the children of Israel’s quarreling and because they tested God, saying, “Is God among us, or not?”

The Third Rebuке—Attack of Amalek

(As a punishment for doubting God, the following occurred): Amalek came and fought with Israel in Refidim.

Classic Questions

● Moshe struck the rock in Choraiv (Sinai). How did the water reach the people in Refidim? (v. 6)

Ramban: Either they sent their animals to drink and youths to collect water. Or, most probably, so much water came out of the rock that it formed a stream all the way to Refidim.

● Why does the war with Amalek follow straight on after the complaint about water? (v. 8)

Rashi: This section about Amalek was placed straight after the verse, “Is God among us, or not?” to suggest God’s response: “I am always among you, and I am always prepared for all your necessities, and yet you say, ‘Is God among us or not?’ By your life! A dog will come and bite you, and you will cry out to Me, and then you will know where I am.” This can be compared to a man who mounted his son on his shoulder and set out on the road. Whenever his son saw something, he would say, “Father, take that thing and give it to me,” and the father would give it to him. This happened a second time, and then a third time.

Then they met a man, and the son said to him, “Have you seen my father anywhere?” His father said to him, “Don’t you know where I am?” He threw his son down off him, and a dog came and bit him.

Why Did Moshe Strike a Rock in Choraiv? (v. 6)

Moshe struck the rock at Choraiv which, as we read earlier, refers to Mount Sinai (see Shemos 3:1). Why was it necessary for Moshe to travel all the way to Mount Sinai to strike a rock, when it could have been done equally well where the Jewish people were located in Refidim?

In producing water from a rock at Mount Sinai, God wished to stress how He cherishes the Jewish people. For example, when the Jewish people lacked bread, God could have provided them with ordinary bread, but He decided instead to give them manna—bread from Heaven—to show how dear the people were to Him. Similarly in this case of the water: God could have produced water from a rock in Refidim, but in order to show how much He cherishes the Jewish people, He told Moshe to produce water from Mount Sinai itself, the location where the Torah was to be given.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5747)

Questions on Rashi (v. 8)

1.) Both the story of the water from the rock and the story of Amalek took place in the same place, Refidim. They both also occurred within a short period of time. If so, why must Rashi seek some explanation for the
just as the father carried his child. This occurs three times.

b.) In the parable we find the father carrying his child on his shoulder.

c.) In the analogy they meet "a certain man."

What do all these details refer to?

Rashi’s Problem

Rashi was not troubled why these two sections were recorded next to each other in the Torah, for they occurred chronologically one after another, and in the same location.

Rather, Rashi was bothered why “this section about Amalek was placed straight after the verse, ‘Is God among us or not?’” i.e. After the entire story with the water is over, and the Jewish people’s faith had been restored, the Torah repeats over once again their original doubt, “Is God among us or not,” before beginning the story of Amalek. This indicated to Rashi that the Torah wished to juxtapose the story of Amalek (not only to the story of the water in general, but more specifically) to the doubts which the Jewish people had in God.

To explain this peculiarity Rashi states that the attack of Amalek came as a repute for the Jewish people’s lack of faith.

However, this presents a further question: Why did this punishment come so swiftly? Usually we find that God is patient and slow to enact punishment. And why was the punishment so severe?

To address this point, Rashi brings the parable of the ungrateful child, to illustrate how the Jewish people had not only been doubtful of God, but they acted in a manner of chutzpah (impudence). Due to this chutzpah, the punishment had come swiftly and severely, just like in the parable, where the son was bitten by a dog straight after his father cast him down. A number of points in the parable highlight the chutzpah of the Jewish people here:

- The father could have led his son by his side, but instead he chose to carry him. This is analogous to the manna which God provided for the Jewish people. Earthly bread would have been sufficient for the Jewish people, but God decided to provide them with food in a special manner.

- Secondly, God protected the Jewish people in an exemplary manner with the clouds of glory.

- Thirdly, God provided water for them in the desert not from a plain rock, but from Mount Sinai itself (see Toras Menachem to v. 6 above). This was the third of the three instances which the parable refers to.

Then, they met a man, and the son said to him, “Have you seen my father anywhere?” Then, after being shown all of this special treatment by God, the Jewish people not only doubted God but they had the chutzpah to complain to Moshe.

(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5747)
9 Moshe said to Yehoshua, “Choose (strong and God-fearing) men for us, and go out (from the protection of the Cloud of Glory) and fight against Amalek. Tomorrow (during the battle) I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.”

10 Yehoshua followed Moshe’s instruction to fight against Amalek. Moshe, Aharon, and Chur (Miriam’s son) ascended to the top of the hill. 11 It happened that when Moshe raised his hand, Israel would prevail, and when he lowered his hand, Amalek would prevail.

12 Moshe’s hands grew heavy (because he was lax with his duty, discharging it to Yehoshua). (Aharon and Chur) took a stone and placed it under him, and he sat (directly) on it. Aharon and Chur supported his hands, one from this side, and one from that side. His hands were (spread heavenward) in faith (and prayer) until sunset.

13 Yehoshua weakened Amalek and his people (by decapitating their key warriors) with the edge of the sword (but he allowed the others to live).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

• Why did Moshe’s hands become heavy? (v. 12)

RASHI: Because he was lax in performing the mitzvah of waging war against Amalek and had appointed someone else in his place, his hands became heavy.

TARGUM YONASAN: Because he delayed the war until the next day and did not fight immediately. (see v. 9)

PESIKTA RABASI: His hands became heavy due to the sins of the Jewish people.

Moshe’s Heavy Hands (v. 12)

Rashi rejected the arguments of the other commentators, and suggested that Moshe’s hands became heavy because he had delegated the task of fighting the war against Amalek to Yehoshua, instead of leading the people himself.

Presumably, Moshe felt that at the age of 80 years he was too old to lead the people in battle. However, later in Parshas Pinchas we find that in the war against Sichon and Og Moshe did in fact lead the people to war (see Rashi to Pinchas 27:17), and at that time Moshe was nearly 120 years old! Why then was he reluctant to do so here with the war against Amalek when he was 40 years younger?

Perhaps the distinction could be argued as follows:

God can treat the Jewish people either with supernatural care and protection, or He can allow them to be subject to the laws of nature. Prior to the war with Amalek, God had guided the Jewish people in a supernatural manner, splitting the sea for them and causing bread to descend from Heaven. However, Amalek’s attack signified that God’s supernatural assistance had ended (as Rashi writes earlier, “He threw his son down off him, and a dog came and bit the son” (v. 8).)

Consequently, Moshe understood that this war must be fought in accordance with the laws of nature. Thus:

a.) Moshe himself, at the age of 80, was too old to lead the Jewish people in war.

b.) Moshe delayed the war until the next day so as to provide time to prepare for battle. (Thus Rashi rejected the approach of Targum Yonasan).

c.) Moshe instructed that the finest warriors should be chosen, as in the natural order this is crucial for military success (see v. 9).

However, in the case of the war against Sichon and Og, God told Moshe explicitly, “Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand.” I.e. God promised Moshe a Divinely assisted, supernatural victory. Therefore, Moshe understood that even though he was extremely old, he could still lead the war, as the victory was guaranteed in any case.

Despite all of the above, Moshe also understood that with the war against Amalek spiritual assistance was necessary. Therefore he sat on the mountain, praying for the success of the Jewish people. He also chose warriors that were tzadikim (see v. 9), as he saw the spiritual assistance of a religious army as crucial. (This also explains why Rashi rejected the solution of Pesikta Rabasi, as Moshe saw the religious integrity of the Jewish people as being the key to their success).

Nevertheless, Moshe’s reasoning was flawed. God indicated His dissatisfaction by making his hands heavy. What was Moshe’s subtle mistake?

“He was lax in performing the mitzvah of waging war against Amalek.” I.e. Even in the absence of overt Divine protection or supernatural assistance, a mitzvah remains the will of God. Thus the mitzvah carries....

Sparks of Chasidus

The quality of Amalek refers to coldness in the service of God. On the verse, "Remember what Amalek did to you...as you came forth from Egypt, how he met you on the way..." (Devarim 25:17-18), the Hebrew word korcha, usually translated as “he met you,” could also be interpreted as “he cooled you off.” Similarly, the Rabbis have noted the numerical equivalence (gematria) between Amalek ( enumerable) and the word safek (meaning “doubt.”)

A malek represents the potential which raises doubts in our minds and cools off our excitement after witnessing the miracles that accompany our personal exodus from Egypt. It deadens a Jew’s sensitivity to the providence with which God controls our lives. Therefore, for God’s sovereignty to be revealed, Amalek must be nullified.

(Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5751)
לפי תורת פָּרָסִים (ברשע), מי ולאמר יַרְדֵּנָה אֲלִילָשָׁה מתּא יַארָי
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14 God said to Moshe, “Inscribe (the story how Amalek attacked Israel before all the other nations) as a memorial in the book. Recite it in the ears of Yehoshua (who will bring the Jewish people into the land of Israel), because I will surely obliterate the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens.”

15 Then Moshe built an altar, and named it “God is my miracle.” 16 He said, “For there is a hand on the throne of God (which swears) that there shall be a war of God against Amalek from generation to generation.”

THE HAFTARAH FOR BESHALACH IS ON PAGE 306.

with it an inherent Divine assistance, regardless of whether this fact is recognizable in the world or not. All that God demands is a swift and enthusiastic response. The success of the matter depends entirely on the Divine blessing.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 89ff.)
**Parshas Beshalach** contains 1 prohibition.

1. Not to go out beyond the permitted limits on Shabbos [16:29]
Yisro was an idol worshipper. In fact, he had worshiped every idol that was known to exist.

How could the Parsha in which the Torah is given be named after an idol worshipper?

The idol worshipers were not fools, as it may seem at first glance. Rather, they were intellectuals, who spent their lives pondering the higher spheres of existence.

So, when Yisro, Priest of Midian, abandoned idolatry and came to the desert, it was an informed decision. And when he said, “Now I know that God is greater than all the other deities” (18:11), he was accrediting Torah with the honor that an esteemed individual testified that Torah is the greatest wisdom of all. In this way, he “handed over” his idol worship to the Torah.

Chasidus teaches that there is a subtle overtone of “idol worship” in any mitzvah that is done for an ulterior motive. The idol worshiper looks to a force other than God, and a mitzvah that is performed without the correct intentions is also an act that is done for a motive other than God’s Will.

Obviously, the comparison is an extremely remote one. Even if a mitzvah is performed for the wrong reasons, or out of rote, it is still a good deed.

But the fact remains that an ulterior motive makes a mitzvah “smell” of idol worship.

Does that mean that a person should stop doing mitzvos if his motive is not pure?

Not at all! A person should always continue to observe the mitzvos, even if his motives are not entirely pure, because eventually he will do them for the right reasons.

Then, he will become like Yisro. Because all the good deeds that he performed for the wrong reasons (his former ‘idol worship’) will be “handed back over” to God.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Yisro 5737)
What caused Yisro to come to the Desert? (v. 1)

Mechilta: What report did he hear that caused him to come? Rabbi Yehoshua said it was the story we have just read (i.e., the war against Amalek). Rabbi Eliezer said it was the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, since this event was heard from one end of the world to the other.

Rashi: What report did he hear that caused him to come? The splitting of the Sea of Reeds and the war with Amalek.

Mizrachi: Rashi held that the two opinions in the Mechilta were not arguing with each other, so he incorporated them both as one.

Maharash: Rashi came to this conclusion because the verse states, “Yisro...heard all that God had done,” and not, “Yisro saw,” or, “Yisro knew.” This suggests that the factor that caused him to come was some past experience that could only have been “heard” from a distance and not actually experienced. This rules out the manna and well of Miriam, which he could have only seen when he came.

Gur Aryeh: All the earlier miracles that had occurred to the Jewish people were specific to one area, e.g. the plagues in Egypt affected only Egyptians. For this reason, these miracles were not sufficiently impressive to Yisro to make him come to the Jewish people.

However, the war with Amalek and the splitting of the sea affected the most basic elements of creation. During the war with Amalek Moshe made the sun stop (Rashi to 17:2), and the splitting of the sea changed the nature of water. Therefore, it was these two miracles that made Yisro come.

Ibn Ezra: This Parsha is written here to contrast it with the war against Amalek which preceded it. Amalek acted wickedly against the Jewish people, but on the other hand, Yisro acted kindly.

Why does the Torah stress that Yisro was a priest? (v. 1)

Ohr haHayim: The Torah does not intend to insult Yisro by referring to him as a “priest of Midian.” Rather, this expresses his unusual virtue: Despite being so honored, he allowed Moshe to refer to him as a “priest of Midian.”
Yisro, the priest of Midian, father-in-law of Moshe, heard (about the splitting of the Sea of Reeds and the war with Amalek and) all that God had done for Moshe and for Israel, His people (providing them with manna and water in the desert and, most importantly,) that God had taken Israel out of Egypt.

2: Yisro, Moshe’s father-in-law, took with him Tziporah, Moshe’s wife, who had been sent away (back home by Moshe, to save her from entering Egypt), and her two sons. One of them was named Gershom, because he (Moshe) had said, “I was a stranger (Ger) in a foreign land,” and one was named Eliezer, because, “The God of my father came to my aid (ELohay avI be’EZri) and rescued me from Pharaoh’s sword.”

3: Yisro, Moshe’s father-in-law, came with his (Moshe’s) sons and his wife to Moshe, to the desert where he was encamped by the mountain of God. He (sent a message) to Moshe, “I, Yisro, your father-in-law, am coming to you, and so is your wife and her two sons with her.”

6: Moshe (together with Aharon, Nadav and Avihu and a huge welcoming committee) went out to greet his father-in-law, and he (Moshe) bowed down and kissed him. They asked about each other’s welfare, and they entered the tent.

3) Yisro did not come because of the Exodus (v. 1)

Why does Rashi reject the more obvious interpretation, which verse 1 itself suggests, that Yisro came to the desert on hearing about the Exodus from Egypt?

1) There is a gap of many weeks between the Exodus from Egypt and Yisro’s coming

The Exodus from Egypt was on the 15th of Nissan, but Yisro only came to “the wilderness” a considerable while after the Exodus from Egypt.

This must be the case because:

a) He had already heard about the descent of manna, which occurred on the 15th of Iyar, and he had also heard about the war with Amalek, which occurred later, when the Jewish people were already in Refidim.

b) Yisro came “into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God,” to the Sinai desert, and, “they came to the Sinai desert” on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, after they left Refidim.

Rashi therefore concluded that if Yisro was genuinely moved by the report of the Exodus from Egypt, he should have come immediately afterwards, on the sixteenth of Nissan. He would not have waited so many weeks.

2) The miracle was already over and there was nothing left to see.

The Exodus from Egypt were indeed a great miracle, but why should it bring Yisro to come to the desert? The miracle had already occurred and had already ended, so he would no longer be able to see it for himself.

Therefore, Rashi concluded that the report which “he heard that caused him to come” was the war with Amalek: a) The war with Amalek was only a short while before “Yisro came.” b) It was a reason for which he wanted to come, in order to correct the fiasco which the war with Amalek caused, as we will explain.

Yisro did not come to convert to Judaism

At first glance, it appears that Yisro came to the desert in order to abandon his idolatrous past and convert to Judaism.

However, this interpretation is problematic for the following reason: Verse 8 states, “Moshe told his father-in-law all that God had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians.” When he heard this, “Yisro rejoiced… Yisro said, ‘Now I know that God is greater than all the deities (which I have worshiped in the past),’” (v. 9-11)

This begs the question: Since “Yisro heard”—already, while still in Midian—“of all that God had done for Moshe, and for Israel his people… that God had taken Israel out of Egypt,” what was added by hearing it again from Moshe? Why did “Yisro rejoice,” and say, “Now I know that God is greater…” when hearing old news?

However, while it is true that Yisro was already aware of the greatness of God through the report he heard in Midian, he was not yet aware that “God is greater,” in an incomparable manner, “than all other gods,” and that “all other gods” have no power or rule at all.

Therefore, even when Yisro arrived in the wilderness, he was not yet ready to convert, because he still possessed a view which was not in accordance with Jewish beliefs.

Yisro came to annul the effects of Amalek.

But if Yisro did not come to convert, then why did he come? Rashi answers that he heard about “the war with Amalek.” Not “the victory over Amalek,” but rather, the war itself caused him to come.

The victory over Amalek was not a sufficient reason for Yisro to come since there was nothing left to see (as above). Rather, Yisro came to annul the negative impression that had been given to the nations of the world in the aftermath of the war with Amalek:

When the Jewish people came out of Egypt the world witnessed how God treated them in a miraculous manner, and, “people heard, they trembled” (Beshalach 15:14). None had the courage or strength to make war with the Jews.

Amalek, however, showed outright audacity: they were not scared of the Jewish people, and they were going to make a war with them, despite the miracles that had occurred.

Even though Amalek themselves suffered defeat, the very fact that they showed sufficient courage to fight caused the fear which the nations had
Why Does the Torah Call Yisro, "Priest of Midian"?

This leads us to understand why the verse states, "When Yisro, the priest of Midian, heard…". Why should the Torah speak to the discredit of Yisro, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard….

The revelations that had occurred at the splitting of the Reed Sea had been only Divine revelations, in order that the Torah be able to sanctify the realm of holiness. It was crucial that an event occur where the forces of impurity and evil were able to penetrate even the profane.

The Zohar states in Ch. 9a that Yisro’s arrival and conversion was a crucial preparation for the giving of the Torah, penetrating deeper into the spiritual realms than the accomplishments of the Jewish people. The revelation that had occurred at the splitting of the Reed Sea had all been only Divine revelations, in order that the Torah be sanctified over the side of holiness. This was the conversion of Yisro, whose history of expertise in idol-worship was elevated to the spiritual realm. He came, and he left "a place of honor in the world," then, "Yisro came," and he left "a place of honor in the world,"脏”。
8 Moshe told his father-in-law about all that God had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, and about all the hardships that had befallen them on the way (with the sea and with Amalek), and that God had saved them.

9 Yisro rejoiced (alternatively: his flesh became prickly with unease) about all the good that God had done for Israel (in sending them manna, but most of all because) He had rescued them from the hand of Egypt (since no slave had ever escaped from there before).

10 Yisro said, “Blessed is God, Who has rescued you from the hand of Egypt (a mighty nation) and from the hand of Pharaoh (a mighty king), Who has rescued the people from (the tyranny of) Egypt. (Even before this I believed in God, but) now I know that God is greater than all the deities (which I have worshiped in the past), for with the same thing that they plotted (i.e. to drown Jewish babies in water, He punished them, drowning the Egyptians instead in the Sea).”

12 Yisro, Moshe’s father-in-law, sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings to God. Aharon and all the elders of Israel came to dine with Moshe’s father-in-law before God (and Moshe himself served the meal).

**Yisro Advises Moshe to Appoint Judges**

(The following passage occurred much later, after the giving of the Torah)

18:13

On the day after (Yom Kippur, when Moshe came down from Mount Sinai with the second set of tablets) Moshe sat down to judge the people. The people stood before Moshe from the morning until the evening.

14 Moshe’s father-in-law saw what he was doing to the people, and he said, “What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you sit by yourself, while all the people stand before you from morning until evening?”

In answer to this, Rashi writes, “The splitting of the Reed Sea.” The splitting of the Reed Sea caused the nations to be stunned by the Jewish people. Thus, after Yisro was shocked by the report of the splitting of the Reed Sea, he was extremely impressed with the Jewish people. However, he did not come to the desert at this point, since there was nothing to be seen (as explained above). After the attack of Amalek, the Jewish people were in need of a boost in esteem, so Yisro decided to come to their assistance, having been so impressed by the splitting of the sea.

(Toros Menachem)

wilderness, in order to be with Moshe and the Jewish people. Through this act he uplifted the esteem of the Jewish people in the eyes of the nations, correcting the damage caused by Amalek’s attack.

**Yisro’s Motivation: The Splitting of the Reed Sea**

Why does Rashi also bring the interpretation that Yisro came because of “the splitting of the Reed Sea”? Rashi sought to explain the following question: Why would Yisro, the priest of Midian, abandon all his personal affairs and come to a wilderness in order to help the Jewish people?
Isn’t Yisro’s suggestion obvious? Why didn’t Moshe think of it? (v. 19-23)

**ABARANDEL:** Moshe knew very well that a nation needs leadership, and that it cannot be provided by a single individual, since he will wear himself out. Yet, Moshe preferred waiting for God to institute His own system rather than doing so himself based on mere human understanding, and meanwhile, he was willing to face a short period of overwork.

Thus, Yisro’s advice added nothing new to what Moshe already knew. Nevertheless, because Moshe respected Yisro, he accepted his advice graciously.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

The Simplicity of Yisro’s Suggestion (v. 19-23)

It seems preposterous that Moshe, the leader of the Jewish people, did not realize that “you will surely wear yourself out” (v. 18), and he did not think of the extremely simple solution to appoint assistants. Yet Yisro, who came from Midian, understood what had to be done after staying for only a short while!

**How Could Moshe Misunderstand the Jewish people?**

The solution to this question lies in another issue concerning the giving of the Ten Commandments where a similar question arises, albeit less alarming:

When the Torah was given, the Jewish people said to Moshe that they wished to hear the Torah through him, as the revelation directly from God was too intense (Devarim 5:22-25). On this, Rashi comments that Moshe said, “You have weakened me to be like a woman…You have pained me…Is it not pleasing for you to learn from God?”

Moshe had concluded that the Jewish people would be able to hear the Commandments directly from God. In actuality, they needed to hear the Torah through Moshe (except for the first two commandments which were heard directly from God). God Himself indicated that this was the correct course of action, “all that they have spoken they have said well” (ibid. 24).
15 Moshe said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to seek God’s teachings. If any of them has a claim, he comes to me, and I judge between a man and his fellow. I make known the statutes of God and His teachings.”

17 Moshe’s father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, along with (Aharon, Chur and) this nation that is with you! For the matter is too heavy for you. You cannot do it alone!”

19 “Now, listen to me. I will advise you, but let God be (in agreement) with you (on this matter). You should appoint them over (the people with differing levels of responsibility:) leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens.”

21 “(But, using Divine inspiration,) you should seek out from among all the people, (financially independent) men who fear God, men of truth (whose words are reliable), and who hate monetary gain (through litigation). You should appoint them over (the people with differing levels of responsibility:) leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens.”

22 “They will judge the people on a full-time basis. When any major matter arises, they will bring it to you, but the minor matters they will judge for themselves. This will make it easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.”

There seems to have been a misunderstanding on the part of Moshe, to the extent that he became “weakened like a woman”—as the actual standing of the Jewish people was quite different from what he had presumed.

Similarly, with regard to Yisro’s suggestion:

As Moshe had perceived the Jewish people, it was indeed possible that the people could stand “before Moshe from the morning until the evening,” and still “come to their destination in peace” (v. 23), without becoming weary.

Yet, as Yisro perceived the situation, he saw that “You will surely wear yourself out, along with (Aharon, Chur) and this nation that is with you! For the matter is too heavy for you!” (v. 18).

Could one imagine that Moshe made a mistake, God forbid?

**Moshe Raised the People to His Level**

It was Moshe’s presence and gaze upon the Jewish people that raised them up to the level where they could stand “from the morning until the evening” and still “come to their destination in peace,” without becoming weary. With Moshe by their side, they were capable of hearing the commandments issued from God Himself.

However, the Jewish people complained that they were only capable of hearing God’s voice because Moshe had brought them up to that level. They wanted to hear the words of Torah unaided, according to their own intrinsic capabilities. To this suggestion God replied, “All that they have spoken they have said well.”

Nevertheless, after the second set of tablets had already been given, and Moshe began to learn Torah with the Jewish people, he understood that he should resume teaching with full intensity, on his level. In this way, Moshe felt that he could impart to the Jewish people the sensation of learning directly from God, due to his own intrinsic closeness to God. This was the reason why Moshe felt that he alone was capable of acting as judge for the Jewish people.

Thus, when Yisro asked Moshe why he was acting as judge personally, he replied, “Because the people come to me to seek God” (v. 15), which Rashi interprets as meaning, to ask for teachings from the mouth of the Almighty.” Moshe was arguing that through learning from him, it was effectively as if one were learning directly from God.

**Yisro Saw the People on Their Level**

Yisro came, and he perceived the Jews in a different light (not how they existed as Moshe had elevated them to his level, but rather), how they existed by themselves, when Moshe would be in a different realm or a different place.

Thus, he argued that one has to prepare the Jewish people for the time when Moshe is up on the mountain, and they are down below. One has to prepare for the time after Moshe’s death when the people will need guidance.

Since Yisro came from the outside and converted to Judaism, he had experienced all different types of levels on his spiritual journey. Thus, he was fully aware of the regressive state that could occur without Moshe’s direct guidance.

And since this insight came through Yisro, this portion was added to the Torah in his name.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, pp. 203-210)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

**Why did Moshe send Yisro away? (v. 27)**

**Rashi:** To convert his family to Judaism.

**Sifsei Chachamim:** If Yisro had gone of his own accord, then we could not be sure that he went for a productive purpose. However, since the verse states, “Moshe sent his father-in-law off,” it is clear that Moshe had sent him to perform some good deed. Therefore, Rashi concluded that he went to convert his family.

**Sforno:** Yisro did not wish to go with the Jewish people to the land of Israel, since he was already too old.

**Yisro’s Departure (v. 27)**

Yisro experienced spiritual enlightenment in the desert, to the point that he exclaimed, “Now I know that God is greater than all the deities (which I have worshiped in the past)” (v. 11). It appears to be extremely unlikely he would do so without some very important reason. Hence, the verse itself. An unusual expression in the verse is “he exclaimed,” which is not a word found in the Talmud. This suggests that he went on some sort of mission. Therefore, **Rashi** concluded that he went for a productive purpose.

The only reason that he did leave was because Moshe sent him away (v. 27). Thus, **Rashi** was troubled: Why would Moshe want to send Yisro away? (v. 27) Why did Moshe send Yisro away? (v. 27)

**Rashi** being a literalist, understood that the answer must be hinted to in the verse itself. An unusual expression in the verse is “he went away (וַיֵּלֶךְ) to his land.” (Normally, one would say, “he returned (וַיֵּרָחֶם) to his land.”) This suggests that he went on some sort of mission. Therefore, **Rashi** concluded that he must have gone to convert his family.

However, this begs a question: Why did Moshe wait so long to send Yisro to convert his family? Moshe sent his father-in-law away in the month of Iyar (see Bamidbar 10:30), and we know that Yisro advised Moshe about the judges the day after Yom Kippur (see Rashi to v. 13). So it turns out that Yisro waited over six months until he went to convert his family. Why?

Perhaps we could argue the following: Yisro’s suggestion to appoint judges would have taken some time to implement, since there were “leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens” (v. 21). We can presume that Yisro was personally involved in this process, as the project was initiated by him. After six months, when all the judges were in place, he was then free to go and convert his family.

And this explains, according to Jewish law, why he did not leave beforehand:

When God consented to Yisro’s plan to appoint judges it became a mitzvah, and thus a halachic obligation. So long as Yisro was involved in this mitzvah he would not have been permitted to leave the desert to go and convert his family (which was not a mitzvah). Therefore, it was only six months later, in the month of Iyar, when the appointment of judges was complete, that Yisro could spend time converting his family.

*(Based on Sichos Shabbos Parshas Yisro 5733)*
23 “(Now consult God about this suggestion) and if (He consents and) you do this thing, you will be able to remain firm. Furthermore, (Aharon, Nadav, Avihu and the seventy elders who are also becoming worn out) will come to their destination in peace.”

24 Moshe listened to his father-in-law, and did all that he said. 25 Moshe chose (financially independent) men from among all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens. 26 They judged the people on a full-time basis. They would bring any difficult case to Moshe, and they judged the minor cases themselves.

27 Moshe saw his father-in-law off, and he went away to his land (to convert his family).

JEWISH PEOPLE CAMP BY MOUNT SINAI

On (the first day of) the third month after the children of Israel’s departure from Egypt, they arrived at the Desert of Sinai. 2 They had departed from Refidim (doing teshuvah) and they arrived at the Desert of Sinai (doing teshuvah). They encamped in the desert. Israel encamped there (towards the east side of) the mountain (in a state of total unity, as if they were one single person with one heart).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

• What was unique about this encampment? (v. 1-2)

Rashi: They encamped there like one man with one heart. But all the other encampments were riddled with complaints and strife.

Be’er Yitzchak: The verse states that Israel camped in the singular form, rather than the plural, as we would have expected. This led Rashi to conclude that they camped in a state of utter unity.

Be’er Yitzchak writes that Rashi’s comment was spurred by the use of the singular conjugation “And Israel camped” (יָנָהוּ).

But since the nation (“Israel”) is a noun in the singular, what other conjugation would one expect the verse to use?

Alternatively, one could argue that Rashi was troubled by the fact that the verse repeats the encamping of the Jewish people, once in the plural and then again in the singular: “They encamped (pl.) in the desert. Israel encamped (sing.) there....”

However, this explanation is untenable as there are other instances where the Torah uses a singular and plural conjugation in the same verse. For example:

• “The people saw (sing.) and they trembled (pl.)” (Shemos 20:15)

• “And Israel saw (sing.) the great might which God had enacted on the Egyptians... They believed (pl.) in God and in Moshe, His servant.” (ibid. 14:31)

Rashi makes no comment in either of these cases, indicating that this issue does not need clarification at the literal level.

So, what prompted Rashi’s statement?

Rashi’s Logic

The fact that a nation can sometimes be referred to in the singular and sometimes in the plural appears to have the following logic:

a. ) When we are speaking of an objective activity that the people are performing, such as seeing or doing, then every person is equal. In such a case, the singular could be used, since the entire nation is doing exactly the same thing.

b.) However, if a verse is describing a subjective emotion that the people are experiencing, then the plural must be used, as not all people will share the same feelings.

Thus, in the two above examples, the experience of seeing can be in the singular (“the people saw,” “Israel saw”), because everybody sees the same thing. But the subjective expressions are in the plural (“they trembled,” “they believed.”)

Consequently, when Rashi came to our verse, he was puzzled. Here we are speaking of the final encampment of the Jewish people before receiving the Torah. Every person knew that he was about to receive the Torah, which would mean a binding commitment to God for generations. Among the Jewish people there were leaders, and pious individuals, but there were also those who complained to Moshe that God had

TORAS MENACHEM

Like One Man with One Heart (v. 1-2)

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The Last Word

It is highly significant that the Torah was given in a desert, the Desert of Sinai. This emphasizes—as our Sages point out—that the Torah is not conditioned upon any particular place, or time, or any “normal” set of living conditions.

(From a letter written by the Rebbe on 10th of Sivan 5724)
What is the meaning of the words, “You shall be to Me a kingdom of kohanim”? (v. 6)

Ramban: It means, “You should be a kingdom of holy priests to Me.”

Rashi: The word kohanim [does not mean priests which is its usual connotation but] “officers,” as in the verse, “David’s sons were chief officers (kohanim)” (Shmuel II. 8:18).

What did God tell Moshe to tell the Jewish people? (v. 6)

Rashi: God told Moshe to tell the Jewish people exactly what He had said, without adding or subtracting anything.

Gur Aryeh: Why did God expect that Moshe might add or subtract from His words, to the extent that God warned Moshe not to do so?

God knew that Moshe was loyal. He merely warned him not to add anything.

Bartenura: If Moshe would have said less than God told him, the Jewish people would be lacking the explanation and warmth of God’s words. Therefore, they might come to accept His mitzvos not through love, but through fear.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS
Moshe ascended to God (on the second day of the month, early in the morning). God called to him from the mountain, saying, “You should say the following to the house of Ya’akov (i.e. the women) and tell (the same thing in a more explicit manner, stressing the punishments and fine details) to the sons of Israel (i.e. the men):

4 ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I gathered (you together in a short period of time, and I protected you through the angel of God, as if you were carried) on eagles’ wings, and I brought you to My (service).

5 Now, if you listen to Me and keep My covenant (through observing the Torah), you will be a precious treasure to me among all the peoples, for the whole earth is mine (and yet the other nations are like nothing to Me). 6 You shall be to Me a kingdom of ministers and a holy nation.’

“These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel, (no more and no less).”

7 Moshe returned and summoned the elders of Israel and placed before them all these words that God had commanded him.

8 All the people replied in unison and said, “Everything that God has said we shall do!”

(On the third day) Moshe (ascended the mountain once again and) conveyed the words of the people back to God.

9 God said to Moshe, “Look! I am going to come (down) to you in a fog (within its deepest part), in order that the people hear when I speak to you, and they will also believe in you (and the prophets that follow you) forever.”

Moshe (returned to relay God’s words and, on the fourth day, he ascended to) relay the people’s reply to God (that they did not wish merely to overhear God speaking to Moshe, but they wanted to hear God directly).

**TORAS MENACHEM**

abandoned them, and there were those who lacked faith and had collected manna on Shabbos. Obviously, all these people could not have shared the same emotions about the giving of the Torah, and yet the verse uses the singular conjugation, “Israel camped,” an expression reserved for instances of total unity.

This led Rashi to conclude that this encampment must have been unique: “They encamped there like one man with one heart.” I.e. in anticipation of the giving of the Torah the Jewish hearts became spiritually aroused causing the underlying unity between all Jewish people to be revealed.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 100ff.)

**“Priests” OR “Officers” (v. 6)**

The word kohanim usually means priests, as Ramban writes. However, Rashi rejected this interpretation here, since the verse already stresses that the Jewish people are a holy nation. Thus, if kohanim meant priests, the verse would be repetitive, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” which means the same thing.

Therefore, Rashi came to the conclusion that the Torah referred to the Jewish people here not as holy, but as ordinary people.

This highlights the fact that the Torah was not given to angels but to ordinary people who eat, drink and sleep (see Shabbos 88b). Nevertheless, they lift themselves up to become “a holy nation.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 18, p. 18ff.)

**Would Moshe Want to Change God’s Words? (v. 6)**

The commentators do not appear to explain satisfactorily why Moshe would want to add or subtract from God’s words:

Gur Aryeh explains only why Moshe would want to add, but he fails to explain why he would want to subtract.

Bartenura explains the danger of subtracting from God’s words, but he does not explain why Moshe would want to do so.

God’s “Ambiguous” Statement?

We could argue simply that God Himself had made a statement indicating that Moshe should add his own embellishments.

On verse 3, Rashi explains that God told Moshe to speak softly to the
God said to Moshe, “(If the people want to hear Me directly, then) go to the people and make them ready today and tomorrow. They should wash their garments. They should be prepared for the third day (having separated from their wives), for on the third day (from today, i.e. the sixth of the month), God will descend before the eyes of all the people on Mount Sinai.

You should set boundaries around (the mountain) for the people around, which say, ‘Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge! Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death!’ No hand shall touch it, for he shall be stoned or cast down; whether man or beast, he shall not live. When the shofar sounds a long, drawn out blast (God’s presence will depart and) they may ascend the mountain.”

Moshe went down from the mountain (directly) to the people. He prepared the people, and they washed their clothing. He said to the people, “Prepare yourselves for three days (alternatively: “for the third day”). Do not come close to your wife.”

On the third day when it was becoming morning (before the people arrived), there were thunder claps and lightning flashes—a thick cloud was upon the mountain—and a very powerful blast of a shofar. The entire nation that was in the camp shuddered.

Moshe brought the people out from the camp towards the Divine Presence (which approached them), and they stood at the bottom of the mountain.

The whole of Mount Sinai smoked because God had descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a limekiln, and the entire mountain shook violently.

The sound of the shofar grew increasingly stronger.

(Since God only spoke the first two commandments, and Moshe said the rest, the following method was used:)

Moshe would speak and (in order to make him be heard), God would respond by (amplifying) his (Moshe’s) voice.

God descended onto Mount Sinai, to the peak of the mountain. God summoned Moshe to the peak of the mountain. God summoned Moshe to the peak of the mountain to explain to the men the punishments and the details of the laws, things that are as harsh as wormwood. From this instruction, Moshe could have come to the conclusion that God wanted him to make embellishments, softening his words to the women, and being more explicit to the men. In order to negate such an interpretation, God said later in verse 6, “These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel (no more and no less).”

God’s “Contradictory” Statement?

However, according to the above reasoning, we are left with a difficulty: Rashi states that Moshe was to tell the men “the punishments and the details of the laws, things that are as harsh as wormwood.” However, in the content of God’s words to Moshe (in verses 4-6) there is no mention of any punishment or harsh words. God then prohibited Moshe to add his own words. This begs the question: How was Moshe supposed to add “punishments and the details of the laws,” which he had not been told, if he was forbidden to add any words of his own?

The explanation:

a.) First God told Moshe a general principle that Torah must be taught in a different manner to men and women. This is a totally separate command which applies to the entire Torah and is not specifically addressed to the verses which follow.

b.) Then God told Moshe some details that He wanted the Jewish people to know at this point (verses 4-6). In connection to these points (and these points alone) God instructed Moshe that he should not add or subtract a single detail.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 36, p. 86ff.)
when the verse states that God “descended” on Mount Sinai, it is simply a metaphor to assist the reader in understanding as much as the mortal mind can comprehend.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Deciphering Rashi’s “Riddle” (v. 20)

At first glance, Rashi appears to have used some poetic license here in describing God’s “descent” on Mount Sinai. However, since Rashi himself declared that the purpose of his commentary is “only to explain the literal meaning of scripture” (Bereishis 3:8), we can presume that all of his words here come to clarify problems at the literal level. Furthermore, the logic must be simple enough for a child to appreciate.

Let us examine Rashi’s words in order:

a.) You might think that He actually descended upon it. Most of this section (19:10-25) deals with God’s warning to the Jewish people that they must not touch Mount Sinai, and the drastic consequences that would arise if a single person were to do so. This might lead one to imagine that God Himself is descending on the mountain, for otherwise why would the consequences be so drastic? Therefore Rashi states, “You might think that He actually descended upon it.”

b.) To counteract this notion the Torah states: “You have seen that from the heavens I have spoken with you” (20:19). However, later on in this Parsha, the Torah states explicitly that God Himself did not descend on the mountain. Rather, He spoke, “from the heavens.”

At this point, the reader will be struck with a question: From, “the heavens” to Mount Sinai is surely a great distance. How did God’s voice reach from one to the other?

To answer this point, Rashi continues:

c.) This teaches that He bent down the upper heavens and the lower heavens. The Torah uses the plural expression, “from the heavens” (pl.) I have spoken with you.” Thus, at the literal level, there must be more than one “heaven.”

Presumably then, there must have been some channel through all the heavens to connect God with Mount Sinai. Thus, Rashi explains that a connection was made throughout the many heavens, “He bent down the upper heavens and the lower heavens.”

However, one could still ask: If God remained in the heavens, then how is it that the mountain itself became holy, and was forbidden to be touched. To answer this question, Rashi explains:
peak of the mountain, and Moshe ascended.

21 God said to Moshe, “Go down, warn the people (not to come up the mountain) lest they break (from their present position due to their desire to go nearer) to God, to see (His revelation) and if (any) of them will fall (it will be as tragic, as if) many (had fallen). 22 Also, the (firstborn) priests, (despite the fact that) they (usually) go near to God (to offer sacrifices, they should not consider themselves important enough to ascend the mountain. Rather,) they shall be ready to stand in their positions. Failing that, God will wreak destruction on (some of) them (to make a breach).”

23 Moshe said to God, “(I do not need to warn them, since) the people cannot ascend to Mount Sinai, for You (already) warned us, saying, ‘Set boundaries for the mountain and sanctify it.’”

24 God said to him, “Go down (and warn them a second time). Then, you should ascend (to the highest level), Aharon should come with you (but to a lower level), and the priests (can come up, but to a lower level still.) But the people must not break from their position to ascend to God, for failing that, He will make a breach against them. ”

25 Moshe went down to the people and said this (warning) to them.

God spoke all (the Ten Commandments in one single utterance. He then went back and specified each one individually.)
(The Jewish people) responded (“Yes” to the positive commands and “No” to the prohibitions):

How did the Jewish People respond to the Ten Commandments? (v. 1)

Rashi: They responded “Yes” to the positive commandments, and “No” to the prohibitions.

Mechilta: Rabbi Akiva said, “They responded ‘Yes’ to the positive commandments and ‘Yes’ to the prohibitions.” Rabbi Yishma’el said, “They responded ‘Yes’ to the positive commandments and ‘No’ to the prohibitions.”

What does it mean that “the people could see the sounds”? (v. 15)

Rashi: They saw that which was audible, which is impossible to see under any other circumstances.

Mechilta: Rabbi Akiva said, “They saw that which is usually heard and they heard that which is usually seen.” Rabbi Yishma’el said, “They saw that which is usually seen and they heard that which is usually heard.”

He spread them (the heavens) upon the mountain like a sheet on a bed. With this analogy Rashi explains from within the experiences of a child, how the Divine Presence “interacted” with Mount Sinai.

Every child knows that a sheet is placed on a bed to make it more comfortable. Nevertheless, the child says, “I am lying on the bed,” even though he is actually lying on the sheet, i.e. the sheet’s identity merges with that of the bed. Similarly, the Divine Presence was revealed at Sinai in such a way that its identity merged with the mountain. Consequently, the mountain itself became holy.

And the Throne of Glory descended upon them.

The child knows that a throne is a type of chair used for important people. He also knows that the purpose of a chair is to provide a fixed place to rest. After all, one can rest leaning against a wall or even standing up, but a chair provides a more firmly established form of rest.

Thus, in order to convey the message that the Torah and mitzvos which were revealed at Sinai are firmly established as the Jewish way of life, Rashi stressed here that, “the Throne of Glory descended upon them.”

R’ Akiva’s Dispute with R’ Yishma’el (v. 1, 15)

Rabbi Akiva came from a family of converts, individuals who had escaped from their previous non-Jewish life to embrace the Torah. Rabbi Yishma’el, however, was a High Priest who did not need to escape the world, since every part of his life was filled with holiness. The background and psychological conditioning of these sages affected how they perceived the “meeting of worlds” which occurred at Mattan Torah (the giving of the Torah).

Rabbi Akiva perceived Mattan Torah as an opportunity for the Jewish people to break loose from the world, and embrace a higher, spiritual reality. Therefore, he understood the verse (15, below), “The people could see the sounds,” literally (see Classic Questions ibid.), i.e. that the Jewish people had been lifted out of their normal, earthly perspective, to be more in tune with the spiritual worlds than the physical, to the extent that their physical sense of reality became blurred.

For the same reason, he understood, “They responded ‘Yes’ to the positive commandments and ‘Yes’ to the prohibitions,” since they were lifted to such a transcendent state that the distinction between positive or prohibitive became irrelevant to them.
Rabbi Yishma’el, however, was of the view that life itself must be filled with holiness. For him, the key element of Mattan Torah was not that the upper, spiritual realms engulfed and overwhelmed our material existence, but to the contrary, that the physical world embraced the spiritual.

Therefore, he was of the view that despite the spiritual intensity of Mattan Torah the Jewish people still, “saw that which is usually seen and they heard that which is usually heard.” I.e. the people were able to embrace God’s revelation from within the framework of normal existence, and they did not have to escape the world. According to Rabbi Yishma’el, the Jewish people would have been fully aware of the practical parameters of the commandments (in addition to their spiritual content) so they answered, “‘Yes’ to the positive commandments and ‘No’ to the prohibitions.”

Rashi’s Intermediate Path

Rashi appears to have incorporated into his commentary contradictory elements within this dispute. On the one hand, Rashi cites the opinion of Rabbi Akiva, that the sounds were actually seen. But on the other hand, he also quotes the opinion of Rabbi Yishma’el that the people answered, “‘Yes’ to the positive commandments and ‘No’ to the prohibitions.”

How are we to reconcile this contradiction?

A basic principle in understanding Rashi’s commentary is that, unlike Talmudic and Midrashic texts, Rashi’s words were intended to be digested even by a child who is studying the Chumash for the first time. Consequently, when he cites teachings from Midrashic sources (such as Mechila) he does not expect the reader (a child) to research these sources in order to discover their precise meaning and context. Rather, Rashi expects the reader to take his citations at face value.

Since his objective is to explain “the literal meaning of scripture,” Rashi’s comments are always intended to interpret a verse in the most straightforward manner. For this reason, he disregards the subtleties and profundities of Midrashic scholarship, and follows the most basic, rational approach to Torah interpretation.

In our case: when the Jewish people responded to the commandments, it is more straightforward to presume that they had not totally “escaped” the world (as Rabbi Akiva suggests), and that they could still discern the difference between a positive commandment and a prohibition, answering, “‘Yes’ to the positive commandments and ‘No’ to the prohibitions.” So, Rashi cited Rabbi Yishma’el’s statement. The fact that Rabbi Yishma’el himself had intended a deeper connotation within these words (physicality embracing spirituality etc, as described above) is beyond the scope of Rashi’s readership.

Later, when the verse states, “The people could see the sounds” (v. 15), it is more straightforward to take the verse at face value, that the Jewish people actually saw sounds. Thus, Rashi cites Rabbi Akiva’s words, “they saw that which is usually heard.” Rashi perceived that, to some extent, even a child can appreciate that Mattan Torah was a spiritually uplifting
2 “I am God, (the) God (of every one*) of you, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

3 “You shall not (possess an idol) of other deities (so long as I exist).  

4 You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image or any picture of that which is in the heavens above, which is on the earth below, or which is in the water beneath the earth.  

5 You shall not bow down before them nor worship them, for I, God, your God, am a God Who is zealous (to enact punishment), Who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, upon the third and the fourth generation of those who (continue in their fathers’ ways to) hate Me.  

6 But I act kindly to those who love Me and to those who keep His commandments for two thousand generations.”

7 “You shall not take the name of God, your God, in vain, for God will not absolve anyone who takes His name in vain.”

8 “Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it.  

9 Six days you work and perform all your labor,  

10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to God, your God.  You shall perform no labor, neither you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your beast, nor your convert who

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TORAS MENACHEM

**Sparks of Chasidus**

**Diversity Within the Ten Commandments**

- At first glance, the Ten Commandments consist of highly contrasting types of mitzvos. The first commandments, “I am God, your God,” and the prohibition against idol worship address the most spiritual matters related to God’s unity. The other commandments, however, consist of such simple instructions as “You shall not murder,” and “You shall not kidnap,” which are precepts of basic human decency.

- God placed these two contrasting categories of commandments together in the Ten Commandments to indicate that the Giving of the Torah accomplished a union of that which is spiritually “above” and that which is physically “below.”

- Prior to receiving the Torah the spiritual and material were two separate realms incapable of merging. But when the Torah was given, God nullified this decree, empowering the Jewish people with the ability to unite “earth” with “heaven,” by performing mitzvos.

- The Patriarchs, who lived before the revelation at Sinai, fulfilled many mitzvos with material objects, but they did not have the ability to instill sanctity into the materials themselves.

- The primary purpose of the mitzvos performed by the Patriarchs was to cause a spiritual revelation. The goal, however, was not to change the material object. For this reason there was less concern about the precise way in which a mitzvah was performed.

- However, the mitzvos we perform now do have the power to reveal sanctity even within the material object so that the physical substance itself acquires holiness. Thus, the precise details and exact requirements are necessary to ensure that this goal is achieved. (Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 3, p. 887f.)
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สบายות: "כי ישתיר אותו meshes של מון היה הארץ השם

ולפי כן בנה אחריה השם בחמה והיתה 판יה: א"ב כו.

הארנבים ערפיו את עזרה לו וקראו לו: "וי לא נותם כי לא הבננו

והב cls to מראות משמע על העולם כי עבת: "וי לא התלו כי לא האנדה ס"כ לה

והניב ס"כ לארז יצירנו בער הגבי מעשה א"ב כו.

אש르יה אל谑ה נני: "וי לא התחם א"ב כו.

ולגון הזנים יצירנו בער הגבי מעשה א"ב כו.

אש르יה אל谑ה נני: "וי לא התלו כי לא האנדה ס"כ לה.

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יואל יבר: "וי לא התחם א"ב כו.

ולגון הזנים יצירנו בער הגבי מעשה א"ב כו.
is within your gates. 11 For in six days God made the heavens, the earth and the sea—and all that is in them—and He rested (so to speak) on the seventh day. Therefore, God blessed the Sabbath day (by causing a double portion of manna to fall on Friday) and sanctified it (by not bringing the manna on the Sabbath)."

- 12 “Honor your father and your mother, in order that your days will be lengthened on the land that God, your God, is giving you.”
- 13 “You shall not murder.”
- “You shall not commit adultery.”
- “You shall not steal (people, i.e. kidnap).”
- “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
- 14 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or whatever belongs to your neighbor.”

All the people could see the sounds (which God spoke), the torches, the sound of the shofar, and the smoking mountain. The people saw and they trembled and they withdrew backwards (the full length of the camp).

16 They said to Moshe, “You speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us lest we die!”

17 Moshe said to the people, “Fear not, for God has come in order to promote your (reputation throughout the world), and in order that (having seen) His awe (you will know there is no other than Him), so that you shall not sin.”

18 The people remained a long way off. Moshe drew near (first through the darkness, then to the cloud, and deeper still) to the fog, where God was.

**ADDITIONAL MITZVOS ARE GIVEN**

19 God said to Moshe, “Say the following to the children of Israel:
‘You have seen that from the skies I have spoken with you (and I have shown My fire and might down on earth).’

- 20 ‘You shall not make images of any (of My spiritual servants) that are with Me.
- ‘(You should not make the Cherubs) from silver (thus rendering them as false) gods. (Rather, they must be made of gold.)
- ‘(You should not make more than two Cherubs, and if you do I will consider them as false) gods of gold.
- ‘You should not make for yourselves (a replica of the Cherubs in your own synagogues.)

experience that overwhelmed the senses. However, this does not mean to say that Rashi embraced the full force of Rabbi Akiva’s argument, that the Jewish people were so spiritually uplifted that they lost awareness of the world.

So, in the final analysis, it is of no concern that Rashi cited two statements that in the context of the Midrash oppose each other, for Rashi was speaking to the simple person who is studying Chumash at the literal level. Therefore he rejected the extreme viewpoint of Rabbi Akiva’s escapism and Rabbi Yishma’el’s total harmonization of the physical and the spiritual and opted instead for an intermediate path which most people could appreciate. Namely, that while the Jewish people did become spiritually uplifted, they still were aware of their worldly surroundings.

(Based on Sichas Chag haShavuos and Shabbos Parshas Naso 5727; Likutei Sichos vol. 6, p.119ff)
הנשיאות עליה אירע שללה, היא שלמה אשת-,—הנשיאה אשת-,—הנשיאה אשת-,—הנשיאה אשת-.—הנשיאה אשת-,—הנשיאה אשת-.—הנשיא
21 ‘You shall make for Me an Altar (attached to) the earth (alternatively: filled with earth), and you shall slaughter near it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings (which come from) your sheep and your cattle.

22 ‘Wherever I allow My name to be mentioned (i.e. only in the Holy Temple by the priests), I will come to you and bless you.

23 ‘When you make for Me an Altar of stones, you shall not build them of cut stones, lest you wield your sword upon it and desecrate it (by using an object of death to form the Altar, which is an object of life).

(When you build a ramp) to My Altar do not (make it) ascend with steps, so that it will not (look as if) your nakedness is exposed upon it.’”

THE HAFTARAH FOR YISRO IS ON PAGE 310.

The very first mitzvah that was given after the Jewish people received the Torah was something negative: not to make idols of silver and gold. This was immediately followed by the mitzvah to construct the earthen Altar which, while being a positive commandment, also has a negative connotation, since “earth” is something which everybody tramples upon. This teaches us that the first stage of spiritual growth must be “negative.” A person needs to discard his personal desires and whims if he is to become close to God. This acts as a spiritual “vacuum” which allows the holiness of the Torah to penetrate.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 540)
Parshas Yisro contains 3 positive mitzvos and 14 prohibitions.

1. To believe in the existence of God. [20:2]
2. Not to believe in any god other than God. [20:3]
3. Not to make a graven image. [20:4]
4. Not to bow down in idol-worship. [20:5]
5. Not to worship an idol in the way it is customarily worshiped. [20:5]
7. To sanctify Shabbos verbally. [20:8]
8. Not to do any work on Shabbos. [20:10]
9. To honor one's father and mother. [20:12]
10. Not to murder an innocent person. [20:13]
11. Not to commit adultery. [20:13]
12. Not to kidnap any Jewish person. [20:13]
13. Not to bear false witness. [20:13]
14. Not to covet what belongs to another. [20:14]
15. Not to make sculptures of a human form, even as an ornament. [20:20]
16. Not to build an altar of hewn stones. [20:22]
17. Not to walk up by steps to the altar. [20:23]
Mishpatim means civil and criminal laws which are self-understood. As Rashi comments, “Laws recorded in the Torah that, if they had not been given, it would have been appropriate to institute them in any case” (commentary to Bamidbar 18:4).

Furthermore, these laws are self-evident not only to the Jewish people, but also to the nations of the world, such that it is feasible that a secular law is identical to a Jewish Law.

For this reason, it is stated at the beginning of the Parsha, “And these are the Laws...,” to which Rashi comments, “these are also from Sinai,” meaning that even these laws which are rationally dictated by the human mind must be observed (not because of their intellectual credibility but) because they are God's commands. It is only that God wanted these commands to be understood by man.

For this reason, these laws are placed “before them”—“and not before the nations...even where their decision would coincide” (Rashi), since their laws are based on human reason, and it is necessary to observe our precepts as Divine decrees.

At a deeper level, it could be argued that the concept of mishpatim from Sinai implies that the very essence of rationality itself was also implanted at Sinai. If it were not for the criminal and civil laws being given at Sinai, human intelligence would not have been able to fathom them (just like the other suprarational commandments).

The rational nature of the laws is a result of God’s Will (which is intrinsically unfathomable) being invested in His Torah. Since the Torah is the “record and register” which was used to create the world, these laws became compatible with the fabric of the world and commensurate with human understanding. Consequently, the human mind (including that of non-Jews) naturally tends towards the wisdom of God, which is precisely what was communicated at Sinai.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5752)
Why was Parshas Mishpatim placed here, following the giving of the Torah? (v. 1)

Rashi: The Parsha begins, "And these are the laws..." Wherever it says, "these" (יהז לך) in the Torah, the word is used to separate from what has been stated previously. But where it says, "And these" (יהז לך) it signifies an addition to what was stated previously. In our case, the use of the term "these" teaches us that, just as what has been previously stated (the Ten Commandments) were from Sinai, the following laws are also from Sinai.

Why did the Torah record the laws pertaining to slaves before the other laws? (v. 2)

Ibn Ezra: To teach us that we should view the Torah with the mentality of a slave. If we understand its laws, all well and good. And if we fail to understand them, we should realize that the weakness is in our own comprehension and not in the Torah, God forbid—just like a slave who follows his master’s orders whether he understands them or not.

Ramban: The slave’s freedom after seven years is reminiscent of the Exodus from Egypt. It also reminds us of Shabbos which occurs on the seventh day of Creation, and Yovel (Jubilee) which occurs on the seventh (Shemitah) cycle. Since this law alludes to matters of paramount importance, it was recorded first.

What kind of slave is the Torah speaking of here? (v. 2)

Rashi: We are speaking here of a slave who is himself a Hebrew. Or, perhaps this is incorrect and the verse refers only to a slave belonging to a Hebrew, i.e. a non-Jewish servant whom you bought from a Hebrew, and concerning him, the Torah says, "He shall work six years" (v.2)?

To clarify this matter (that the Torah is actually speaking here of a slave who is himself a Hebrew) the verse (Devarim 23:5) indicates that only a Jewish slave (“your brother”) is freed after six years.

If a slave wishes to remain after six years, his ear is bored. Why? (v. 6)

Rashi: This refers to the right ear. Or perhaps this is incorrect and it means the left one? To clarify this matter, the Torah writes the word "ear" in two places to indicate by scriptural decree (gezeirah shavah)
21 And these are the laws that you should set before them:

- If you buy a Hebrew slave (who is sold to slavery by the court because he was a thief), he shall work for six years. But, in the seventh year, he is to be released without liability.
- If he was unmarried when he entered (service, he may not marry a non-Jewish slave-woman during his period of service). He shall be released unmarried.
- If he is married to a (Jewish) woman (when he enters service, the master must provide food for the wife and children until) he is released with his wife.
- If his master gives him a (non-Jewish slave-woman for a) wife, and she bears him sons or daughters then (when it is time to dismiss the Hebrew slave) the woman and her children will remain her master’s property, and he is dismissed alone.
- If the slave says, “I love my master, my (non-Jewish) wife, and my children. I will not go free,” his master shall bring him to the judges (of the Jewish court, who sold him the slave in the first

Classic Questions

Rashi’s Problem (v. 1)

Rashi was troubled by the fact that the civil laws mentioned here were already given to the Jewish People while they were encamped at Marah, before the giving of the Torah (see Beshalach 15:25). If this is the case, why does the Torah write here, “And these are the laws...” suggesting that this Parsha follows on directly from Parshas Yisro, where the Torah was given?

To answer this question, Rashi states, that, “Just as what has been previously stated (the Ten Commandments) was from Sinai, the following laws are also from Sinai.” I.e. despite the fact that these laws were already given at Marah, they were nevertheless repeated at Sinai. This was to endow civil law with the legislative authority and religious significance of Sinai.

(Torah Menachem)

Who Mentioned a Non-Jewish Slave? (v. 2)

The most literal translation of the term נבון (v. 2) is a “Hebrew slave” (c.f. Bereishis 41:12, Chronicles 1:34). Why was Rashi concerned that the reader might render the verse in an unconventional manner, mistakenly presuming that it refers to a non-Jewish slave?

A Jewish person is only sold to slavery when he is convicted of theft and is unable to pay compensation, or due to extreme poverty (see below 22:2).

However, when the Jewish people left Egypt, they were all extremely wealthy, as they had “emptied” Egypt of all its gold and silver. The question therefore arises: when God began to teach the Jewish people civil law, it would make sense for Him to teach them laws which were of the most immediate relevance first of all. Why did He begin by teaching an extremely wealthy nation the law of a Jewish person who is so poor that he resorts to theft, and then is sold to slavery due to inability to pay compensation? Surely this law was totally inapplicable to the Jewish people at the time.

Therefore, Rashi explains that one might be tempted to follow a more unconventional translation of the verse, that it refers to a non-Jewish slave. To refute this notion, Rashi brings proof that the verse does indeed refer to a Jewish slave.

Civil Law and Sinai

Even after reading Rashi’s proof, we are still left with our original question: Why did the Torah begin its codification of civil law with a subject of no immediate relevance to the Jewish people? Furthermore, we find that Ramban and Ibn Ezra both offered explanations why the Parsha should open with the laws of slaves. How could Rashi remain silent on such a pressing issue? However, it could be argued that Rashi felt no need to address this question directly, as any reader bothered by this matter will soon find his
question answered when reaching Rashi’s comment to verse 6. There, Rashi explains why the Hebrew slave is punished by boring his ear: “Why was the ear pierced if not for the purpose of marking all the organs of the body?” Raban Yochanan ben Zakai said: The ear that heard on Mount Sinai (‘You shall not steal’) and then went and stole, shall be bored.” Rashi explains that this punishment stresses graphically how civil law is directly connected with Mount Sinai (“the ear that heard on Mount Sinai”) therefore it was chosen as a preface to the entire body of civil laws that “are also from Sinai.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, pp. 251ff.)

C L A S S I C Q U E S T I O N S

T O R A S M E N A C H E M

The Right Ear (v. 6)

Rashi’s words here (v. 6) prompt a number of questions:

a.) If the slave’s pierced ear is a punishment for not listening to God’s command “Do not steal,” then surely his ear should be pierced immediately after the theft has occurred? Why do we wait six years before applying the punishment?

b.) Why does this punishment apply only if the slave decides to stay? Surely, any case of theft involves “the ear that heard on Mount Sinai, ‘You shall not steal,’ and then went and stole”?

c.) Rashi’s commentary confines itself strictly to the analysis of scripture at the literal level, which does not require an explanation of the reasons

 says, “I took you out of four hundred years of servitude to be a slave for Me, and you found yourself another master!” Therefore, he is struck with the piercings.

(from Kesubos 22b)

BAA L H ATU R I M: Why is the נְפָג עַל (pointed tool) used to pierce the slave’s ear? Because the word נְפָג עַל has a gematria (numerical value) of 400 alluding to the decree of 400 years of Egyptian exile. God

with Mount Sinai (above 20:13) and then went and stole, shall be bored.”}

Nor steal’}

Yochanan ben Zakai said: The ear that heard on Mount Sinai, ‘You shall not steal’ (above 20:13) and then went and stole, shall be bored.”
place.) Standing (the slave) next to a door (which is attached to) a doorpost, his master shall pierce his (right) ear with a pointed tool. He must then serve (his master) forever (i.e. until the Jubilee year).

- If a man sells his daughter as a (child) maidservant, she shall not be freed the same way that (non-Jewish) male slaves are released (i.e. through the loss of a tooth or an eye. Rather she must work for six years, or until the Jubilee year, or until she shows signs of puberty, whichever comes first).
- If she is displeasing to her master (and he decides) not to designate her for himself (as a future wife, an act which the Torah recommends), then he must let her be redeemed. If he does betray her (by not designating her as his future wife) he does not have the right to sell her to another (person).
- If (the master chooses instead to) designate her for his son, he must treat her like any other girl (providing for her food, clothing and marital relations).
- If (he keeps the maidservant as a wife and) then he takes another wife for himself, he may not diminish (from the maidservant) her sustenance, her clothing, or her times (of marital relations).
- If he does not do these three things (designate her for himself, for his son or redeem her), she shall be released without liability or payment (if she shows signs of puberty).

TORAS MENACHEM

for all the mitzvos in every case. Why is Rashi’s long “discourse” here crucial to a basic understanding of Chumash?

Let us examine Rashi’s words in order: This refers to the right ear. Or perhaps this is incorrect and it means the left one?...

The discussion here about which ear is pierced seems, at first glance, to be of minor importance to the student of scripture. However, Rashi entered into this debate because it clarifies a more pressing matter:

On reading the account of the slave who chooses to remain in his master’s service and is punished with a hole in his ear, we are immediately struck by the question: Why did the Torah pick a punishment so harsh as bodily mutilation? Here we are speaking of a pathetic, destitute soul who struck by the question: Why did the Torah pick a punishment so harsh as master’s service and is punished with a hole in his ear, we are immediately entered into this debate because it clarifies a more pressing matter:

Furthermore, as a slave the person built a new life for himself. He now has a wife and children, from whom he does not wish to part, so he decides to remain in his master’s service to continue his family life. Is this such a heinous crime that merits a permanent bodily disfiguration?

The force of this question suggests that the piercing of the slave’s ear was not intended as a severe punishment at all. Rather, the Torah picked this punishment precisely because of its innocuous and unobjectionable nature. We can presume that in those days, ear piercing was commonplace among men, women and children, so the slave’s “punishment” was an extremely minor one which would probably go unnoticed.

In other words, Rashi’s premise here is that the Torah reduced the punishment for the slave to be as minimal as possible.

To illustrate this point, Rashi challenged the basic presumption that the right ear would be pierced. “Or perhaps this is incorrect and it means the left one?” I.e. since the Torah is administering a minimal punishment, the left ear would appear to be more appropriate, since the left side is

The Zohar (iii 96b) teaches that the sale and servitude of Jewish slaves is symbolic of the descent of the soul into the body:

The Canaanite slave refers to the initial stages of man’s Divine service, when he must overcome the influence of the animal soul that lusts for worldly pleasures. This is accomplished with fear of the Master and acceptance of His yoke. The person coerces his animal soul to conform to the wishes of the Master, at least on the practical level.

The Hebrew slave has reached a higher level. In him the Divine attributes of the Godly soul illuminate the animal soul and influence it to feel some desire for Godliness. Nevertheless, the worldly desires of the animal soul have not been completely quieted or subdued.

The highest level of Divine service is symbolized by the Hebrew maidservant:

The law states that a Hebrew girl may be sold (by her father) only if the purchaser has an eligible son for the girl (Rambam, Laws of Slaves 4:11). I.e. the goal of female servitude is marriage (unity with a spouse).

Similarly, when the soul is sent on its earthly journey into a body, the ultimate goal is a total unity (marriage) with God. Thus, the Hebrew maidservant represents the person whose desire for worldly pleasures has been completely sublimated and transformed to desire only Godliness.

(Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 371ff)
considered by the Torah inferior to the right (c.f. Shemos 13:9 and Rashi ibid, that Tefillin is place on the left side, as it is weaker). To this point Rashi answers that, while this may be logically acceptable, there is a scriptural decree from the case of the leper teaching us that the right ear is pierced.

However, this begs the question: Why did the Torah choose the right ear? Therefore, Rashi continues with an explanation:

Why was the ear chosen to be bored out of all the organs of the body?
Raban Yochanan ben Zakai said: The ear that heard on Mount Sinai, “You shall not steal,” and then went and stole, shall be bored...
Laws of Assault & Kidnapping

- A person who strikes another man is (only) put to death if (the victim) dies.
- If a person did not ambush (another, and he did not intend to kill him), but God orchestrated it to happen to him, then I will make a place for you where he can find refuge.
- (Only) if a man plots deliberately against (another Jew) to kill him (and his strike is intended to kill), should he be put to death. (This applies even to a priest who wishes to serve) on My Altar.
- If a person strikes his father (or) his mother (causing a bruise) he must be put to death (through strangulation).
- If a person kidnaps a man, and (witnesses) found him in his possession (before he was sold), he shall be put to death (by strangulation).
- A person who curses his father or mother shall be put to death (through stoning).

Classic Questions

Isn’t verse 12 a repetition of the verse in Parshas Emor “When a man will strike any human soul he shall be put to death” (Vayikra 24:17)?

Rashi: While the verses are similar, each one teaches us separate details. Our verse teaches us that an aggressor is only liable to the death penalty if he actually kills the victim, “A person who strikes another man is put to death (if the victim) dies,” a detail which is absent from the verse in Parshas Emor.

The verse in Emor teaches us, “When a man will strike any human soul he shall be put to death,” i.e. that a murderer is liable for killing any person, be it man, woman or child.

Why is the prohibition of kidnapping (v. 16) placed in between the prohibitions of hitting and cursing parents (v. 15 &17)?

Rashi: This is the root of a Talmudic controversy (in tractate Sanhedrin). One opinion holds that the two prohibitions of striking and cursing parents are written in close proximity in the Torah to indicate that they share the same laws. The other opinion disagrees, arguing that there is no legal parallel between these two prohibitions.

Sa’adia Ga’on: Generally speaking, it is children who are kidnapped, and not adults. The children then grow up away from their parents and do not recognize them or form a close relationship with them. This then presents the possibility of a child cursing or hurting his parent, which otherwise would be unthinkable.

Toras Menachem

Sinai would then go and steal. Therefore, the slave’s ear is not bored immediately.

But after six years, the duress has certainly passed. Therefore, if the person wishes to remain in slavery, he clearly does not find the idea abhorrent that, “the ear that heard on Mount Sinai, ‘You shall not steal,’ went and stole,” and he is quite willing to continue his life of slavery which openly publicizes his former misdemeanors. Then, the ear “shall be bored,” for we see retroactively that his claim of duress was illegitimate for, in truth, he is not ashamed of his actions at all.

This is similar to the case of a person who sold himself into slavery voluntarily, due to extreme poverty. At first, it would appear that he acted under duress, so he is not punished; but when six years have passed, and he wishes to remain a slave, saying, “I love my master” (v. 5), then we realize retroactively that in the first instance he did not really mind becoming a slave at all. Therefore, “the ear is bored because it is the ear that heard, ‘For the children of Israel are slaves to Me.’”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, p. 89ff.)

Why Did Rashi Reject Sa’adia Ga’on’s answer?

An obvious question which springs to mind when reading the prohibitions of injuring or cursing parents is: how could any child possibly injure or curse his parents?

Sa’adia Ga’on’s answer explains quite satisfactorily how this possibility could arise, with a simple and logical explanation (that the child is kidnapped at an early age and does not form a relationship with his parents). This also clarifies why the Torah interrupted these two prohibitions to discuss the prohibition of kidnapping.

Why did Rashi, the literalist, reject Sa’adia Ga’on’s simple solution and choose instead to uncover a complex Talmudic controversy?

Rashi however was forced to reject Sa’adia Ga’on’s simple answer, as it contradicts an earlier statement that Rashi made to verse 12, above.
There Rashi writes that from the verse, “A person who strikes another man is put to death,” could be misinterpreted to mean that the murderer is only liable for killing a man but not a woman or child. I.e. it is reasonable to presume that when the Torah uses the word “man” it means so in the literal sense, a man and not a woman or child. Therefore, in our case, when Rashi read verse 16 which speaks about kidnapping, “If a person kidnaps a man...he should be put to death,” it is reasonable to presume that the Torah refers specifically to a man and not a child.
If two men quarrel, and one strikes the other with a stone or with a fist, and he does not die but is confined to his bed, (then the aggressor is put in jail, until it is determined if the victim will survive). If he gets up and walks about outside unaided, then the aggressor is acquitted. He need only give compensation for (the victim’s) inability to work, and he must (pay all) his medical (fees).

If a man strikes his male or female (non-Jewish) slave with a rod (that is capable of inflicting a fatal wound), and (the slave) dies under his hand (within 24 hours, the slave’s death) must be avenged (i.e. the killer is executed by the sword). However, if (the slave) survives for a day or two (i.e. 24 hours), he shall not be avenged, because he is his (master’s) property.

If two men quarrel (with each other) and (accidentally) hit a pregnant woman, and she miscarries but (the woman) does not suffer fatal injury, (the assailant) must (pay) a penalty. When the woman’s husband (takes him to court and) makes demands of him, then he must give (compensation) according to the judges’ orders.

If there is a fatal injury (to the woman), you shall give a life for a life (alternatively: full compensation for her life).

(Compensation must be paid: The value of) an eye for an eye (injury, the value of) a tooth for a tooth (injury, the value of) a hand for a hand (injury and the value of) a foot for a foot (injury).

(Compensation must be paid for pain suffered in the following cases: The value of) a burn for a wound (plus compensation for loss of income, healing, embarrassment where appropriate, and the value of) a bruise for a bruise.

If a man strikes the eye of his male (non-Jewish) slave or the eye of his female (non-Jewish) slave and destroys it, he shall set him free in compensation for his eye.

If an ox (or any other animal) gores and kills a man or a woman, the ox must be stoned. (After the ox is sentenced, even if it is slaughtered, and not stoned,) its flesh may not be eaten (nor benefit be derived from it). The owner of the ox is innocent.

If it is a habitually goring ox, both yesterday and the day before (i.e. on three occasions), and its owner had been warned (in the presence of witnesses), but he did not guard (the ox properly) and it kills a man or a woman, then the ox shall be stoned.

Also, its owner is (punished) with death (through the hands of Heaven). (Therefore,) an atonement fine must be imposed upon him. He must give whatever is assessed against him, in...
Why is there a fixed penalty of thirty shekels for negligence which leads to the death of a non-Jewish slave (v. 32)?

**Rashi:** This is a suprabation decretal of scripture that the owner of the ox must pay thirty shekels, regardless of whether the slave was worth a thousand zuz or whether he was worth no more than a dinar. The weight of the shekel is four pieces of gold, which equals half an ounce, according to the official weight of Cologne.

**Mizrahi:** I don’t know what Rashi is coming to teach us with these words. The verse states clearly that thirty shekels is given, no more and no less. I don’t see what Rashi adds.

**Maskil LeDavid:** There is a principle that when the Torah states first a general category, and then singles out a particular case which falls within that category, it does so to indicate that we are lenient in this particular case and not stringent. (Baisa d’Rabbi Yishmael, clause 9)

This is precisely what has occurred here. First the Torah states the general rule that if someone’s ox goeses any man or woman and the owner is at fault, then he must pay an atonement fine equal to the value of the victim’s life (v. 20–31). Then, in verse 32 the Torah singles out a specific case where the victim is a slave, and in this case thirty shekels must be paid. Since this is a particular case that was singled out of a general category, this verse must be indicating a leniency and not a stringency, i.e. that the owner pays no more than thirty shekels, but he may pay less.

Rashi came to teach us that this verse is an exception to the above rule. He writes that by a “decrees of scripture” one pays exactly thirty shekels, for in this instance the regular principle outlined above does not apply.

This solves Mizrahi’s question on Rashi.
order to redeem his soul. 31 This law is (also) applied to (a person whose animal) goeses a young boy or a young girl.

- 32 If an ox goeses a (non-Jewish) male slave or female slave, (the owner of the ox) must give (a fixed penalty) of thirty shekels of silver to (the slave’s) master. The bull is stoned.

- 33 If a person opens (the cover of) a pit, or if a person digs (an existing) pit (making it larger) and does not cover it, and then an ox or a donkey (or any other animal) falls into it, 34 the one responsible for the pit must pay (compensation, either) giving money to its owner (or any produce of value). The dead (animal) belongs to (its original owner).

- 35 If a man’s ox strikes his fellow’s ox and it dies (the owner of the attacking ox pays half the value of the loss, up to the value of the attacking ox. Thus if both oxen are of equal value) they (could

Therefore, Sa'adia Ga'ori's solution, that the verse refers to child kidnapping, was unacceptable to Rashi, so he opted instead for a Talmudic solution.

(Based on Sichos Parshas Mishpatim 5741)

Problems with Rashi (v. 32)

Maskil' leDavid's solution to Mizrachi's question is far too complex. We must endeavor to find solutions which are plausible to Rashi's intended audience, the basic student of scripture.

In addition to Mizrachi's problem with Rashi, we could ask the following:

a.) Rashi's commentary is not a compendium of laws and details. What scriptural problem is solved here by the information regarding the precise value of a shekel?

Furthermore, there were previous instances in the Torah where the shekel is mentioned (See Bereishis 23:16, 24:22, 33:19), and Rashi omits the details that he writes here. Why?

b.) The common text of the Talmud states that one must pay thirty shekels for a slave whether he is worth “1000 maneh [=800,000 zuz], or no more than a dinar” (Bava Kama 41a). Rashi however, rejected this version and wrote, “1000 zuz, or no more than a dinar.”

Why did Rashi opt for a text that mentioned a smaller sum of money, rejecting the common text of the Talmud?

c.) Similarly, the dinar is not the smallest value coin in the currency system. The pruta is worth less. Why did Rashi not write that the penalty is paid even if the slave is worth no more than a pruta?

A Law Out of Context

Parshas Mishpatim is filled with laws which are acceptable to the rational mind. In fact, up to this point only rational laws have been recorded.

 Upon reaching our verse—the fixed penalty for negligence which leads to the accidental death of a slave—the reader will notice that this law stands out as being remarkably unfair and irrational. Why should the same compensation be paid for a valuable slave as for an inexpensive one?

Therefore, Rashi responds that this is a "decree of scripture," i.e. it is indeed an irrational law which we must simply accept.

However, the reader may still be troubled: It may be true that this is ultimately a decree of scripture, but surely it is not devoid of any rationale whatsoever?

Rashi continues: "The weight of the shekel is four pieces of gold, which equal half an ounce according to the official weight of Cologne." To the citizens of medieval France, for whom Rashi wrote his commentary, this would have been a meaningful statement because: a.) They would have been familiar with the Cologne system of weights. b.) They were also familiar with the general value of a slave, since slavery was still commonplace in those days.

Therefore, Rashi was attempting to add some reason to the Torah’s decree that 30 shekels must be given for a slave, clarifying how this was

The Last Word

The principle that “the Torah speaks of that which usually occurs” alludes to the uniqueness of Parshas Mishpatim:

"The Torah speaks," hints to the creation of the physical world, which was brought about by G-d’s speech.

"That which usually occurs," refers to events that are normal and mundane.

The fusion of these two ideas together suggests that even a person’s everyday working and family life ("that which usually occurs") can be filled with the values and spirit of Torah ("the Torah speaks").

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 6, p.141)
RASHI: Said Raban Yochanan ben Zakai: God has great concern for people’s dignity. For stealing a bull, which walks on its own feet and therefore the thief [merely had to pull it along and] was not embarrassed by carrying it on his shoulder—he pays fivefold. For stealing a lamb, which the thief carried on his shoulder, he pays only fourfold because he was embarrassed by having to carry it.

Said Rabbi Meir: Come and see how great is the power of work! For the theft of a bull, which the thief caused to stop doing its work, he pays fivefold. For the theft of a lamb, which he did not cause to stop working [since a sheep does not carry out farm labor], the thief pays fourfold.

DIVREI DAVID: What is the difference in implication between the two statements of R’ Yochanan ben Zakai and R’ Meir?

R’ Yochanan ben Zakai holds that, in principle, the Torah requires a fivefold restitution for either an ox or a lamb. But since the theft of the lamb involved a humiliating act for the thief, having to carry it on his shoulders (and, “God has great concern for people’s dignity,”) he is given a dispensation and only has to pay a fourfold restitution and not the usual five.

R’ Meir however, holds that, in principle, the Torah only requires a fourfold restitution for either an ox or a lamb. But since the theft of an ox imposes an additional burden on its owner, for he is deprived of a working animal, the Torah imposed an extra penalty for its theft, whereas the lamb involves a humiliating act for the thief, having to carry it on his shoulders.

The reason for this seems to be that the act of slaughtering or selling stolen goods is a further sinful act in itself. Since the thief is guilty of both stealing and “laundering” stolen goods, he does not receive the usual penalty of “double,” but rather, four or fivefold.
a reasonable amount to pay for a slave. I.e. even though it is a seemingly unfair system to have a fixed penalty, the value of thirty shekels is nevertheless a reasonable amount to pay on average. This is consistent with a general principle that Rashi states on a number of occasions in this Parsha, that “the Torah speaks of that which usually occurs” (e.g. 21:28). In our case, since the usual value of a slave is thirty shekels, this sum was chosen as a penalty.

Based on this principle that, “the Torah speaks of that which usually occurs,” we can also explain why Rashi rejected the Talmud’s text that one must pay thirty shekels for a slave worth 1000 maneh and opted instead for the lesser sum of 1000 zuz:

Our verse speaks of a case where a slave is accidentally gored by an ox. However, it would not “usually” occur that an extremely valuable slave would be sent to rear oxen. Rather, a slave worth so much as 1000 maneh would surely be given a senior administrative or managerial role. Therefore, Rashi chose the text which recorded the lesser value of 1000 zuz (0.125% of the price), for it is more likely that a slave worth this smaller amount would be assigned to looking after cattle.

Similarly, a slave that is worth too little (a mere prutah) would presumably be so weak that he would be incapable of attending to cattle. Therefore, Rashi wrote the range of 1 Dinar to 1000 zuz, which is in the range of the “usual” value of a slave who attends to cattle.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5737)

The Thief’s “Double Exposure” (v. 37)

The reasoning of R’ Yochanan ben Zakai seems, at first glance, to be difficult to understand. He suggests that the thief suffers more “embarrassment” for stealing a lamb than an ox. But surely there is nobody present at the time when he steals the animal in any case, so what is there to be embarrassed about? In fact, this is the main distinction in Jewish law between the thief (ganav) and the robber (gazlan): the former carries out his work when nobody is present, whereas the latter is not afraid to confront another person and openly challenge him to hand over his property.

So, if nobody is present when the thief strikes, why should he receive a reduction for stealing a sheep on the basis that it involves more embarrassment? (see Divrei David)

However, a crucial detail here is that the fourfold restitution for stealing a lamb is only applied after the thief has sold or slaughtered the lamb and has been found guilty by the courts [c.f. Abarbanel]. At this point the act of theft becomes public knowledge and the thief suffers a great deal of embarrassment when his crime becomes exposed. (This is particularly painful for the thief, more than the burglar, as the thief went to every measure to conceal his crime, acting in total secrecy. Thus his exposure is all the more embarrassing).

In addition to the general embarrassment of being exposed, the public also becomes aware that, in order to steal the lamb, the thief acted in an extremely undignified manner, carrying the animal on his shoulders. While this additional embarrassment may be a fairly trivial one compared to the more serious disgrace of having being exposed as a thief, nevertheless, we are taught, “God has great concern for people’s dignity.” Therefore, R’ Yochanan ben Zakai explained that the thief is pardoned from part of the penalty (paying only fourfold, and not the full penalty of five times the value of the lamb), in consideration for the additional embarrassment that he has suffered.

This logic however appears to be unfair towards the owner of the stolen lamb. He could argue: In truth, I am owed fivefold compensation for the theft of a lamb! Why should I lose out, and only get fourfold compensation, just because the thief suffered embarrassment?

To address this problem, Rashi brought the further explanation of R’ Meir that, in truth, the Torah only requires fourfold compensation (and no dispensation is made for embarrassment), only the theft of an ox has an additional penalty, since it involves a loss of income for the owner (see Divrei David.)

Thus, in the final analysis R’ Yochanan ben Zakai and R’ Meir are not arguing. One is offering an argument which explains this law to the thief, and the other is explaining the law to the victim.

Aren’t These Trivialities?

We might still ask: Aren’t we dealing with trivialities here? Even after the above explanation, the additional embarrassment which the thief suffers appears to be insignificant. In fact, even the lost income from a stolen ox would be minor because: a.) Most of the time oxen do not work in any case, since ploughing is carried out only twice a year at the most. b.) This
ben Zakai that no person, even a non-Jew in the market, was able to greet

dignity.” In fact, the Talmud relates that, “they said about R’ Yochanan
of the individuals who taught these words.

sensitivity to detail which we are speaking of here is better understood in

to be fit for work in any case, for otherwise he would have sold it, reaping

penalty is given also when the thief slaughtered the ox, when it is unlikely

To address these problems Rashi cited the authors of the above
teachings (R’ Yochanan ben Zakai and R’ Meir) to indicate that the
sensitivity to detail which we are speaking of here is better understood in

R’ Yochanan ben Zakai is famed for practicing “concern for people’s
dignity.” In fact, the Talmud relates that, “they said about R’ Yochanan
ben Zakai that no person, even a non-Jew in the market, was able to greet

him without his greeting them first” (Brachos 17a). For a person who
excelled in concern for human dignity, it is understandable why he
considered the relatively minor embarrassment of the thief to be so
significant.

R’ Meir was the famous exponent of the opinion that “we take into
consideration rare cases” (Yevamos 61a). Therefore, it is understandable
that he would be concerned about the unlikely possibility that a loss
would be incurred due to the loss of work from a stolen ox. He felt that
some additional compensation was in order.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 258ff.)
If a man leads his animal into a field or a vineyard, whether he lets his animal loose (and it tramples crops) or it eats in another’s field, he must pay (compensation with land from) the best of his field or the best of his vineyard.

If a fire goes forth (even by itself) and (spreads through) thorns to destroy a stack of grain or standing grain, or (it scorched a ploughed) field (requiring it to be ploughed again), the one who ignited the fire must pay (compensation, even though he lit the fire in his own property).

If a person gives his friend money or articles for safekeeping (and does not pay him for his services), and they are stolen from the man’s house, then if the thief is found, he must pay twofold (to the owner).

If the thief is not found, the homeowner must approach the judges (if he is challenged by the owner, to swear an oath) that he has not laid his hand upon his friend’s property (and then he is exempt from compensation, since he was not paid for his services).

In every case of dishonesty (when swearing an oath, whether it is) about an ox, about a donkey, about a lamb, about a garment, or about any lost article, if (a witness) will say that “this thing here (is the very thing which you swore about, saying that it was not in your possession!”), then the claims of both parties shall come to the judges, and whoever the judges declare guilty must pay twofold to his friend.

If a man gives his friend a donkey, an ox, a lamb, or any animal for safekeeping (and pays him for his services), and it dies, breaks a limb, or is captured without witnesses, (then the dispute) between the two of them (is decided by the guardian swearing) an oath to God that he did not lay his hand upon his friend’s property (to use it for himself). Its owner must accept (the oath), and (the guardian) does not pay. (However), if it is stolen from him, he must pay its owner.

What are the four Guardians?

Talmud: There are four guardians: the unpaid guardian (v. 6-8), the borrower (v. 13-14), the paid guardian (v. 9-10), and the renter (v. 14). The unpaid guardian swears on all losses [and is absolved]; the borrower pays for everything; and the paid guardian and the renter swear in the case of breakage, robbery, and death, and pay for loss and theft. (Bava Kama 93a)

The Unpaid Guardian represents the individual who feels that he was only created to serve God. He sees his life and possessions as Divine “property” which has been placed in his trust, and he does not feel that God owes him anything in “compensation” for his efforts.

The Borrower benefits from what he borrows, and the owner enjoys no benefit. This represents an individual who seeks self-fulfillment alone. He does not feel that he owes anything for the use of life's blessings, even though he may acknowledge who the ultimate owner is.

The Paid Guardian is like the Unpaid Guardian in that he sees the fulfillment of God's will as the ultimate purpose of life. He differs only in that he reserves for himself a small amount of self interest, feeling that he also deserves some independence in return for his work as a guardian of God’s property.

The Renter resembles the Borrower in that he prioritizes the fulfillment and enhancement of self, but nevertheless, he feels that he ought to earn this privilege by “also” serving his Creator.

Sparks of Chasidus

The Four Guardians

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 31, p. 115ff)
Is lending money an option or an obligation? (v. 24)

Rashi: [The Torah used the word דק which usually means "if", which would suggest that lending money is optional ("If you lend money..."). However,] Rabbi Ishmael said: Every time the word דק is used in the Torah it means "if" except for three places, and this is one of them. [Thus it is an obligation to lend money].

Ohr HaChayim: Why does the Torah use such a confusing expression, suggesting an option when it really means an obligation?

However, the implication here is as follows: "If..." you see that you have more money than you need, and someone else needs it, then don’t comfort yourself that the money is yours. For, in truth, it is money which God has set aside for the poor person, but it has ended up in your hands, so, “Lend money to My people.”
If it (the animal) is torn apart (by a wild beast), he may bring witness(es to prove that he was not negligent) with it, and then he does not have to pay compensation for the torn (animal, so long as he could not possibly have saved it).

If a person borrows an animal from his friend and it breaks a limb or dies, and its owner is not (working for the borrower), he must pay compensation. If its owner is (working for the borrower), he shall not pay.

If the article was hired, it came (into his possession) for its hiring fee.

If a man seduces a virgin who is not married and sleeps with her, he must pay a dowry and must marry her. If her father refuses to give her to him in marriage, he must pay (a fixed) weight of (50) silver (shekels which is) the usual dowry money for virgins.

Do not allow a sorceress (or sorcerer) to live.

Any person who sleeps with an animal must be put to death (by stoning).

Whoever slaughters to gods other than God alone must be destroyed (i.e. put to death).

You should not verbally harass a foreigner (i.e. a convert), nor oppress him (by robbing his property), because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

You shall not oppress (any person, especially) a widow or orphan. If you do oppress him (be aware!) for if he cries out to Me, I will hear his cry, and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword. (Furthermore, there will not be witnesses to your death so) your wives will be (chained) widows, and your orphaned children (will be unable to inherit your property).

When you lend money (prioritize first) My people (i.e. Jews), the poor person, and (the inhabitant of your city) who is with you.
(If you know he cannot yet repay your loan), do not behave towards him as a lender (claiming your money forcibly).

Do not place interest payments upon him.

If (he fails to pay the loan on time and) you take your friend’s (daytime) garment as security, you must return it to him (for the entire day) until the sun sets.

(You must also return his night garments by night) for it is his only covering; it is his garment for his skin. With what shall he sleep? If he cries out to Me, I will listen because I am compassionate.

Do not curse a judge.

Do not curse a leader among your people.

Agricultural Offerings

Do not delay your offering (of first fruit) when it ripens, or your offering of Terumah.

You must present Me the firstborn of your sons (to be redeemed by the priest after thirty days).

You must do likewise with your ox and with your sheep (i.e redeem it after thirty days. But at the very minimum) for seven days it shall be with its mother, and on the eighth day you may give it to Me.

Do not curse a judge.

Judicial Laws & Avoiding Prejudice

Do not listen to a false report.

Do not associate with a wicked person (who is making a false claim) to be a corrupt witness.

Do not conform to the majority who are perverting justice. Do not condone a lawsuit (in which justice was perverted) by the majority.

Do not accord honor (i.e. be biased towards) a poor man in his lawsuit.

If you come across your enemy’s ox or his stray donkey, you must return it to him.

(Perhaps,) if you see your enemy’s donkey lying under its load you would (want to) refrain from helping him. (However) you must help him (unload).
Does one have to keep Shabbos during the Shemitah Year? (v. 12)

RASHI: Even in the seventh year, the weekly Shabbos, commemorating the Creation, is not uprooted. You shall not reason that, since the entire year is referred to as “Shabbos,” the weekly Shabbos need not be observed in it.

TORAH TEMINAH: The Shemitah Year and the weekly Shabbos have the same purpose, to remind us of how God refrained from work on the seventh day when creating the world. Therefore, we might reason that since during the Shemitah year there is already a reminder of the Divine act of creation, it follows that the further sign of the weekly Shabbos is unnecessary. This could be compared to the law that tefillin are not worn on Shabbos, since Shabbos is, in any case, a “sign” of the covenant between the Jewish people and God. To counteract this notion, Rashi informs us thus that even during the Shemitah year, the weekly Shabbos still applies.

Why does the Torah stress that Pesach occurs in the “month of springtime”? (v. 15)

RASHI: The Hebrew term for “month of Springtime” is יְחִלָה יְחִלָה, which suggests the month in which the grain becomes filled with its moisture (יְחִילָה). In addition, יְחִלָה is an expression related to the word for a father, יְחִילָה, the “firstborn” and the earliest month to ripen fruits.
FIFTH READING

- Do not pervert the judgment of your poor man in his lawsuit.
- Distance yourself from anything false.
- Do not kill a (convicted person, if fresh evidence arises before his execution suggesting that he is innocent); or one who has been vindicated (by the court, even if fresh evidence arises suggesting that he is guilty) for I will not let a guilty person escape punishment.
- Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of those who can see (i.e. Torah scholars) and corrupts righteous words.
- Do not oppress a foreigner (convert), for you know the feelings of the foreigner, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

SHABBOS & YOM TOV—MENTIONING IDOLS

- Six years you may sow your land and gather in its produce, but in the seventh year you shall cease to work in it and refrain from (eating its fruit). The poor among your people shall eat from it (without separating tithes), and what they leave over will be eaten by the beasts of the field. This also applies to your vineyard and to your olive grove.
- Six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day you must rest (even in the seventh year), in order that your ox and your donkey shall rest (in the field), and your maidservant's son and the resident alien shall be refreshed.
- You should be careful to keep everything that I have said to you.
- Do not mention the name of the gods of others.
- You should not cause (a non-Jew) to make heard (the name of his idol) through your mouth.

Three times you shall celebrate for Me during the year:

- Observe the festival of matzos. Eat matzos for seven days, as I have commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of springtime, since this is when you left Egypt.

SHABBOS IN THE SHEMITAH YEAR (V. 12)

Based on the argument offered by the Torah Temimah, it would seem that the reason why the weekly Shabbos is still necessary during the Shemitah Year is:

a.) The Shemitah Year only involves the cessation of agricultural work, whereas the weekly Shabbos requires a person to cease from all work.

b.) Agricultural work is not carried out 24 hours a day. Therefore, the Shemitah year is only observed, practically speaking, for a part of each day, whereas the weekly Shabbos is observed for a full 24-hour period.

SPRING (V. 15)

In Parshas Bo (13:4), Rashi also explains the meaning of the term "ch." However, there he writes the following:

"Do we not know in what month they went out? Rather, this is what Moshe said to them, ‘See the lovingkindness that God bestowed upon you, that He took you out in a month in which it is suitable to go out, when there is neither heat nor cold nor rain,’ as the verse states: ‘He takes the prisoners out at the most opportune time’ (Psalms. 68:7), in the month when it is best suited to go out."
The **mitzvah** of **Bikurim** (First Fruits) is described at length in **Parshas Ki Savo**. Why is it mentioned here too? (v. 19)

**RASHI:** We learn from here that even in the **Shemitah** Year, the offering of **Bikurim** is obligatory.

How are the **Bikurim** chosen? A person enters his field and sees a fig that has ripened. He winds a twine around it as a sign and sanctifies it.

**Bikurim** are brought only from the seven species with which the Torah praises the Land of Israel: “A land of wheat and barley, and vines and figs and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and honey” (**Devarim** 8:8).

**MASKIL LE DAVID:** Why does Rashi teach us some of the laws of **Bikurim** here, about which species may be used etc.?

Perhaps Rashi is hinting to us here a subtle message why the **mitzvah** of **Bikurim** and the prohibition of milk and meat are placed together in the same verse:

From the verse, “**Bring to the house of God, your God, the choicest of the first fruits of your soil,**” you would think that the law only applies to a kid. Nevertheless, our Sages explained that it is more stringent than the verse suggests and refers to many other animals.

Therefore, these two cases were placed together in the same verse to suggest that, just as a person accepts the Sages’ leniency with regard to milk and meat.  

Does the prohibition of cooking meat and milk only apply to a kid (**גָּוִיל**)? (v. 19)

**RASHI:** A calf and a lamb are also included in the term **גָּוִיל**, for **גָּוִיל** means a tender young animal:

This prohibition is written in three places in the Torah, one for the prohibition of eating meat with milk, one for the prohibition of deriving any benefit from meat with milk, and one for the prohibition of cooking meat with milk.

What is the reason behind this prohibition? (v. 19)

**RAMBAN:** It is an act of moral insensitivity to eat a kid which was cooked in its mother’s milk.

Even though this prohibition applies even if an animal is cooked in milk that does not come from its mother, nevertheless, the concept of eating meat cooked in milk is considered insensitive, as it resembles the above act (commentary to **Re’eh** 14:21).
- (When the Jewish people come to be seen before me on festivals) they shall not appear before Me empty-handed. (Rather, they must come with a burnt offering).

16 And the festival of the harvest (i.e Shavuos, which is the time of bringing first) fruits of your crops which you will sow in the field.

And the festival of the ingathering (i.e. Succos) at the end of the year, when you gather your produce from the field (into the house before the rain starts).

17 Three times during the year, all your males must appear before the Lord God.

18 Do not slaughter the blood of My (Pesach) sacrifice (until you destroy any) Chametz (that is in your possession).

The fat of My festive sacrifice must not be left overnight until morning.

19 Bring to the house of God, your God the choicest of the first fruits of your soil (even in the seventh year).

Do not cook a tender young animal in its mother’s milk.

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**Sparks of Chasidus**

**The Prohibition of Milk and Meat (v. 19)**

- **Ramban** writes that it is prohibited to eat meat cooked in milk, since it is an act of moral insensitivity. **Rashi** points out that, not only are we forbidden to eat milk and meat, but even cooking the mixture is forbidden. This renders the prohibition of milk and meat unique in that even the preparation of the prohibited mixture is also prohibited by the Torah.

From this we can learn how far we must take care to refrain from being morally insensitive.

- According to the Kabalah, milk and meat may not be mixed as this would cause the negative interaction of opposing spiritual forces. Meat is a physical manifestation of the Divine power of Gevurah (severity), as suggested by the red color of meat. Milk has its spiritual roots in the Divine power of Chesed (kindness), indicated by its white color. Being that these two powers have an opposite effect, they must not be mixed.

- **Bachaye** writes (on our verse), that in the Messianic Era, it will become permissible to eat meat that was cooked with milk.

This is because, in the spiritual realms, the mixing of Chesed and Gevurah is not counterproductive. Each Divine power works in harmony with the other, since both powers respect the fact that they emanate from the One God.

In the physical world, this harmony does not persevere, since physical things feel their own existence as paramount, and will not coalesce for a higher purpose. Therefore, the mixing of meat and milk in the physical world is forbidden for it will result in a “corruption” of the spiritual forces that they embody.

However, in the Messianic Era, we are promised that God will be felt tangibly within the physical world. Therefore, it will become possible to mix Chesed and Gevurah—through cooking milk and meat—even in the physical world.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 6, pp. 151-2; vol. 29, p 122ff)

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**Bikurim During the Shemitah Year (v. 19)**

When reading verse 19, the reader is immediately struck by the question: Why is the mitzvah of Bikurim (first fruits) mentioned here?

**Rashi** explains that the need to mention Bikurim here arises from the fact that this section of the Torah deals with the laws of the Shemitah year. Since the Shemitah year is a time when a person is not involved in agricultural activity, it would be logical to presume that this would exempt a person from his obligation to bring the first fruits. Therefore the Torah stresses that no such exemption applies.

Having made this point, which answers a valid question, why does Rashi launch into a detailed description of some of the laws of Bikurim? Rashi’s commentary is an explanation of scripture, not an anthology of laws. Why are these laws crucial to a basic understanding of this verse?
Therefore, **Rashi** offers two explanations: either the place was prepared for the Jewish people (simple interpretation). Or, the place was prepared by **God for Himself** (Midrashic interpretation), in the sense that God aligned His own “Heavenly Temple” opposite this location.

**Nachalas Ya’akov:** The problem with the simple interpretation, that God prepared the land of Israel for the Jewish people, is that the verse refers to a “place” and not an entire “land.” Therefore, **Rashi** brings a second interpretation which explains how a specific place (The Temple) was prepared, which fits in with the verse better.

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

- **What is “the place that I have prepared”? (v. 20)**

  **Rashi:** The simple meaning is: the place I (God) have designated to give to you.

  The **Midrashic** interpretation of “the place that I have prepared” is that “My Presence is already aligned opposite this place.” This is one of the verses which states that the heavenly Temple is aligned directly opposite the earthly Temple.

  **Mizrachi:** **Rashi** is troubled why the verse states, “the place I have prepared,” but it fails to tell us whom the place was prepared for.

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**TORAS MENACHEM**

The explanation: after reading **Rashi’s** first comment, that there is an obligation to offer **Bikurim** during the **Shemittah** year, we are immediately struck by the question—if a person is prohibited from cutting his crops during the **Shemittah** year, how will he reap the first fruit?

Therefore, **Rashi** answers: “A person enters his field and sees a fig that has ripened. He winds a twine around it as a sign and sanctifies it.” I.e. He does not cut the fruit straightaway, as that would be forbidden. Rather, he marks which is the first fruit, so that when the obligation to bring **Bikurim** comes, he will know which fruit to offer.

And since the fig ripens earlier, **Rashi** brings the example of the fig.

However, this leaves the reader with a further question: Surely, of all the fruits that exist, there are other fruits which ripen before the fig?

Therefore, **Rashi** explains, “**Bikurim are brought from the seven species...**” i.e. since we are dealing with a limited number of species, the fig is indeed the first to ripen.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5732)
**Dispersion of Enemies & Conquest of the Land**

*Sixth Reading*

(When you will sin with the Golden Calf, the Shechinah will not accompany you personally, rather) I will send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared (to give you). \(^{21}\) Beware of him and listen to him, for My Name is associated with him. Do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive your transgression (since he never sins himself).

But, if you listen to His voice and do all that I say, I will be the enemy of your enemies and I will oppress your oppressors. \(^{22}\) For My angel will go before you, and bring you to the Amorites, the Chhitites, the Perizites, the Canaanites, the Chivites, and the Jebusites, and I will destroy them.

Do not bow down to their gods. Do not worship them, and do not follow their practices. Rather, you should demolish (their gods) and completely shatter their stones (which they stand on so as to bow down to them). \(^{23}\) You shall worship God, your God, and He will bless your food and your drink. I will banish illness from among you.

*Seventh Reading*

(If you obey My Will) then there will not be a woman who miscarries or a barren woman in your land. \(^{26}\)

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**Classic Questions**

- Are there any conditions to the promise that “there will not be a woman who miscarries or a barren woman in your land”? (v. 26)

  **Rashi**: [Yes. God is making this promise] on the condition that “You carry out My Will.”

  **Gur Aryeh**: Even though the verse does not make any conditions for this promise to be fulfilled, it does not make sense to say that such a miraculous occurrence would occur without any pre-conditions whatsoever.

  **Mizrachi**: Therefore, Rashi explains that this verse is to be read as a continuation of the previous verses, “Do not bow down to their gods...You shall worship God...” (24-5), then, and only then, “there will not be a woman who miscarries, etc.”

**What Preparations?**

Rashi was troubled by a simple, logical problem:

How can God tell the people that He had “prepared” a place for the Jewish people when, at that time, the land of Israel was inhabited by enemies of the Jewish people? In the following verses (23, 28-31) we read how miracles would be necessary to eliminate these enemies and conquer the land, so how could it be said that the place was already “prepared”? This word suggests that the land was ready for habitation, just as we would say that the spare room of the house is “prepared” for guests. At this point however, the land was far from prepared.

Therefore, Rashi explains that the word “prepared” here is to be understood as “designated.” I.e. God had mentally assigned the Land of Israel for the Jewish people, even though it was not yet fit for them to inhabit.

**Nachalas Ya’akov’s Question**

However, this explanation is somewhat difficult to accept for, in the final analysis, why did the verse not say explicitly, “To the place which I designated?”

Furthermore, Rashi was troubled by the question: Why did the Torah use the word “place” to describe an entire country? Shouldn’t the verse have read, “To the land which I have prepared”? (See Nachalas Ya’akov).

Due to the force of these questions Rashi offered a second explanation, that the preparation had already taken place, but only in a spiritual sense— “My Presence is already aligned opposite this place.”

**Spiritual-Physical Disparity**

At this point, the reader may become bothered by the high degree of disparity between the spiritual and physical reality. On the one hand we are told that God’s Presence is “already aligned opposite this place.” We are then told that from a physical perspective the land is very far from being prepared for the Jewish people to the extent that it will be necessary to “send My terror ahead of you, and I will throw all the people among whom you will come into confusion. I will make all your enemies turn their backs (and flee from) you. I will send flying insects before you etc.” (v. 27-28).

To answer this question, Rashi stresses, “This is one of the verses which state that the heavenly Temple is aligned directly opposite the earthly Temple.”

I.e. do not think that the “spiritual readiness” above the site of the Temple is a new phenomenon which changed now. Rather, the spiritual Temple has existed for many years, as we can see from the fact that it is mentioned in a number of other verses (such as the incident where Ya’akov slept on the site of the Temple, at the beginning of Parshas Vayetzeli). Therefore, the reader need not be surprised by the physical/spiritual disparity of the current passage. To the contrary, now we are reading how God’s original plan, for the land is beginning to materialize.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 133ff)

**The Promise of Children (v. 26)**

There are no blessings in the Torah which are given regardless of whether a person observes the mitzvos or not.

Thus, even though verse 26 does not mention a specific condition to the blessing that “there will not be a woman who miscarries or a barren woman in your land,” nevertheless, it is obvious that conditions must apply.
On this basis, Rashi’s statement (along with the interpretations of Gur Aryeh and Mizrahi), appear to be obvious and unnecessary.

However, Rashi’s problem was not whether conditions apply to this blessing, but rather, which conditions apply? For, we have read in the preceding verses two sets of warnings:

a.) “If you listen to His voice and do all that I say, I will be the enemy of your enemies and I will oppress your oppressors” (v. 22). I.e. the dispersal of the Jewish people’s enemies from the land of Israel is dependent on the active observance of all the mitzvos (“all that I say”).

b.) “Do not bow down to their gods...and He will bless your food and your drink. I will banish illness from among you” (v. 24-25). This is a passive condition, that so long as the Jewish people do not worship other gods they will receive the blessings of food and health.

[Although the verse does seem to mention that these blessings come from active observance of mitzvos, “You shall worship God” (v. 25), nevertheless, this “worship” does not refer to the observance of all the mitzvos, but rather, to the worship of God in contrast to the worship of idols mentioned in the previous verse. (See Ramban ibid.).]

Presumably, our verse (26) follows on from verses 24-25. I.e. the blessing of children (absence of miscarriage and infertility) seems to be a continuation of the blessings which God promises for passively refraining from idol worship.

However, Rashi was troubled that this seems to be far too great a blessing to be earned from the passive restraint from idol worship. How could the miracle of fertility among every woman in the entire land of Israel (“in your land”) be bestowed for non-action (passive restraint)?

Therefore, Rashi came to the conclusion that this blessing must be connected, not to the previous verses, but to the preceding section (v. 22-23), where God promises blessings for the active observance of mitzvos. Thus, Rashi writes that the blessings will only be given if “You carry out—actively—My Will.”

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 32, p. 128ff.)
land. I will cause the days (of your lives) to be full. 27 I will send My terror ahead of you, and I will throw all the people among whom you will come, into confusion. I will make all your enemies turn their backs (and flee) from you.

28 I will send the hornet swarms before you (that will strike them in the eyes and inject venom into them) and they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. 29 I will not drive them away from you in one year, lest the land become depopulated and the beasts of the field become too many for you (to contend with). 30 Little by little I will drive them away from you, until you have increased and can occupy the land.

31 I will set your borders from the Reed Sea to the Philistine Sea, and from the desert to the River (Euphrates), for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and you will drive them away from you.

32 Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. 33 Do not let them live in your land, since they may cause you to sin against Me, in that you will worship their gods, which will be a trap for you.

**TORAS MENACHEM**

*The River Euphrates (v. 31)*

In verse 31, God promises that the borders of the land of Israel will reach to the “river,” which refers to the River Euphrates, according to Rashi.

This appears to contradict an earlier statement of Rashi in Parshas Beshalach. Rashi asks why the people of Edom and Moav “were confounded” when the Sea of Reeds split, for in any case the Jewish people were not headed for the lands of Edom and Moav, but for the land of Canaan (Israel), which God had told Moshe explicitly (see 3:8, 6:4), and once the Jewish people were informed of this we can assume that it became common knowledge. That being the case, why were Edom and Moav concerned? Rashi answers that they were not scared of being conquered, but rather, “They trembled due to grief, for they were grieving and suffering because of the glory of Israel” (See 15:15).

However, upon reading our verse we see that the nations of Edom and Moav did indeed have something to be scared of, as God was now promising that the boundaries would extend to the Euphrates river, which includes the lands of Amon, Moav and Edom! (See diagram).

The distinction here however, was that the Song of the Sea occurred before the giving of the Torah, and at that point, the plan was only to conquer the land of Canaan. After the Torah was given, God extended the plan of conquest to include the Lands of Amon and Moav etc. up to the River Euphrates, in our verse.

Nevertheless, we find that in actuality the Jewish people did not succeed in conquering these lands, since various mishaps occurred and Moshe was denied the privilege of entering the Land of Israel. The final conquest of these lands will occur with the coming of Mashiach.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5745)

*Sparks of Chasidus*

**“Blessing” or “Promise”**?

Through the passive restraint from idol worship the Jewish people are given a blessing—“He will bless your food and drink...” (v. 25).

However, for the active observance of mitzvos, the Jewish people are given a promise, “There will not be a woman who miscarries etc.” (v. 26).

A promise is, of course, superior to a blessing, since the latter may or may not materialize depending on the circumstances (as explained in Chasidic thought that, for various reasons, God’s channels of blessing can become “blocked”).

God’s promise, however, must come true in the literal, physical sense.

(iibid.)
### "THE TORAH IS NOT IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER"

*The sequence of events surrounding the giving of the Torah, as they are recorded in the Torah compared with the dates on which they occurred, according to Rashi*

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*Based on Rashi’s comments to chap. 19, verses 3, 8, 9, 11, 15; chap. 31, v. 18; chap. 33, v. 11.*
JEWISH PEOPLE ENTER INTO COVENANT WITH GOD

(The following was said by God on the fourth of Sivan, before the giving of the Torah):

To Moshe He said, “Go up to God, you and Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy elders of Israel, and bow down from afar. Moshe alone shall approach (the fog where) God (is), but they shall not approach, and the people shall not go up with him.”

(On the same day) Moshe came and told the people all the words of God (about separating from their wives and making a boundary around the mountain) and all the laws (of the Noachide code, and the laws of Shabbos, honoring parents, the Red Heifer and the civil laws which were given at Marah). All the people answered in unison and said, “All the words that God has spoken we will do.”

Moshe wrote down all of God’s words (from the beginning of the Chumash until the giving of the Torah).

(On the fifth of Sivan) he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and twelve stone monuments for the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent the (firstborn of the) children of Israel, and they offered up burnt-offerings, and they slaughtered bulls as peace-offerings to God.

When did this section actually occur? (v. 1)

Rashi: This section was actually said before the Ten Commandments were given. God told Moshe “Go up...” (v. 1) on the fourth of Sivan (see table).

Be’er Yitzchak: Rashi explains in his commentary to verse 6 that Moshe’s sprinkling of blood (mentioned in the verse) entered the Jewish people into a covenant with God. It does not make sense to say that this covenant began after the giving of the Torah. Therefore, Rashi came to the conclusion that this section was said before the giving of the Torah.

Ramban: According to Rashi the sequence of verses is extremely disorderly. Therefore, in my opinion, this section was said exactly where it was written, i.e. after the Giving of the Torah and after God had told Moshe all the civil laws that we have read above. This passage then tells us how Moshe went up to God one more time before he told the people all the laws he had received. The Jewish people responded positively (v. 3) stating that they were willing to observe all of the laws. (Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Abarbanal & Ohr haChayim concur with this opinion).

The Torah’s Perplexing Order (v. 1)

Rashi writes that the above passage (24:1-11) was said before the giving of the Torah in Parshas Yisro. While he may have good reason for this statement (as Be’er Yitzchak argues) it nevertheless results in the Torah being written in a very perplexing manner.

According to Rashi, after the Torah is given in Parshas Yisro, we then jump to the period when Moshe spent forty days and nights on the mountain, during which time the civil laws of Parshas Mishpatim were given over. Then, in the current chapter, we switch back to before the giving of the Torah. And then, only twelve verses later, we jump back again to after the Torah is given. To make matters even more complex we then leap to after the incident with the Golden Calf to read Parshiyos Terumah and Tetzaveh. (See table)

It appears to be no wonder therefore that Ramban and a host of other commentators found Rashi’s chronology too much to swallow!

Is there any way we could explain, according to Rashi, the motivating factor why these accounts were written in such a peculiar order?

The Twofold Implication of Torah

On the first occasion which Moshe ascended Mount Sinai, before the giving of the Torah (on the second of Sivan), God made the following “mission statement”: “If you listen to Me and keep My covenant, you will be a precious treasure to Me among all the peoples...” (Yisro 19:3).

Here we see that the giving of the Torah has a twofold implication:

a.) “If you listen to Me”—observance of the mitzvos, which were given (initiated) by God.

b.) “And keep My covenant”—general commitment to God, initiated by man.

After this “mission statement” was made, God divided the narrative of the giving of the Torah into two sections:

First He dealt with the mitzvos and their observance. This included the giving of the Torah together with its preparations, and the list of mitzvos in Parshas Mishpatim up to the end of chapter 23.

Afterwards, in the current chapter, He described the second element of the Giving of the Torah—the covenant between the Jewish people and God. For this, we must retrace the steps to the preparations for the giving of the Torah once again, to read how the Jewish people willfully accepted upon themselves their relationship with God (exclaiming, “All the words that God has spoken we will do!”—v. 3). We then read (in v. 4-8) how they consolidated that commitment by offering a sacrifice.

Thus, in the final analysis, the Torah did not write the narrative of the giving of the Torah in chronological order, as it wished instead to divide the narrative into two parts which each stress a different aspect of the Torah’s purpose: observance of the mitzvos (God’s initiative) and commitment to God (man’s initiative).
The purpose of dividing blood into two basins? (v. 6)

**Rashi:** Two basins were used, one for half the blood of the burnt-offering and one for half the blood of the peace-offering (see previous verse), in order to sprinkle the blood on the people. From here our Sages learned that our ancestors entered the covenant with circumcision, immersion (in a mikvah), and the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice on the altar, for there is a law that one may not sprinkle blood unless immersion has preceded it.

**Ibn Ezra:** One basin was used for the blood that was sprinkled on the altar, and the other basin was used for the blood that was sprinkled on the people.

**Chizkuni:** It is an ancient custom that when two parties enter into a covenant, they divide an animal into parts and pass between them—like we find with Avraham’s covenant with God (Bereishis 15:17).

Was blood actually sprinkled on the Jewish people? (v. 8)

**Rashi:** No. It was sprinkled on the altar on behalf of the Jewish people, as Onkelos writes.

**Bereishis:** Rashi was troubled by the question: How could there have been enough blood to sprinkle on 600,000 people? Therefore, he came to the conclusion that the Torah is speaking metaphorically here, and that the blood was actually sprinkled on the altar on behalf of the Jewish people.

**Ibn Ezra:** The blood was sprinkled on the elders, on behalf of the Jewish people.
half the blood and put it into (two) basins, and half the blood he cast onto the altar.

7 He took the Book of the Covenant (i.e. from the beginning of the Chumash to the giving of the Torah, plus the commandments they were given at Marah) and read it aloud so the people could hear, and they said, “We will do and we will hear everything that God has said.”

8 Moshe took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and he said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has made with you regarding all these words.”

9 Moshe and Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel, and beneath His feet was something like a sapphire brick (which God had placed before Him to remember the pain of Israel’s enslavement) which was as clear as the heavens (shining light which signified that the Jewish people had been redeemed). Upon (Nadav and Avihu and the elders), the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand (even though they deserved it for looking directly at God). They looked at God (while) they ate and drank.

**Moshe Ascends the Mountain for Forty Days**

24:12 God said to Moshe, “Come up to Me to the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets (which incorporate the entire) Torah and Mitzvah, which I have written to instruct them.”

13 Moshe arose with Yehoshua his servant (to the boundary. Since Yehoshua could go no further, he pitched his tent there and) Moshe went up to the Mountain of God. (As he left the camp), he said to the elders, “Wait for us here (and be ready to judge any dispute) until we return to you. Look! Aharon

This also explains why the narrative shifts immediately (after the completion of Parshas Mishpatim) to the construction of the Tabernacle, for this was the ultimate expression of the Jewish people’s initiative to connect to God, consolidating the covenant into an eternal edifice.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, pp. 153ff.)

**The Dispute Between Rashi & Ibn Ezra (v. 8)**

Chizkuni explains that the covenant between the Jewish people and God was formed with two types of blood, based on the ancient idea of consolidating a covenant with animal parts.

However, Rashi and Ibn Ezra argue as to which “two bloods” were used to form the covenant:

The Torah describes how two sacrifices were offered, a burnt-offering and a peace-offering (v. 5). Half the blood collected was sprinkled on the Altar, and half on the people (v. 6). We are also told that Moshe used two basins at some point in this task (ibid.).

What we are not told is what he used the two basins for. Ibn Ezra came to the logical conclusion that he put the blood which was to be poured on the Altar into one basin, and the blood which was to be sprinkled on the people into another basin.

But Rashi rejected this solution as it is inconsistent with a precise reading of verse 6. The verse states, “Moshe took half the blood and put it into basins, and half the blood he cast onto the Altar.” This suggests that half of the blood was first divided into two basins (“Moshe took half the blood and put it into basins,”) and then the other half was poured onto the Altar (“and half the blood he cast onto the Altar”). I.e. the blood that was destined for the Altar never reached the basins.

Therefore, Rashi came to the conclusion that the covenant was formed by separating the blood from the two different sacrifices (the burnt-offering and peace-offering mentioned in verse 5) into two basins.

How do the differing opinions of Rashi and Ibn Ezra reflect on the nature of the covenant, and the message that it conveys?

**Two Phases in Forming a Covenant**

The ancient ceremony of forming a covenant (which the Chizkuni describes) consists of two phases:

a.) Dividing an animal into parts.

b.) The parties who are forming the covenant then pass between these two parts

These two phases possess their own symbolism:

a.) The division of the animal represents the fact that, before the covenant, the two parties are separate from each other.

b.) Passing between the two parts symbolizes a unification of the two parties into a single whole.

Of these two elements, it is obvious that “b” (unification) is the key emphasis when forming a covenant, and that “a” (division) is merely a prelude to it.

Now we can explain Rashi’s criticism of Ibn Ezra:

According to Ibn Ezra the covenantal ceremony involved the division of two bloods (blood destined for the Altar, and blood destined to be sprinkled on the people), but the two bloods were never reunited. Thus, the crucial element of “unification” was lacking in the ceremony.

Therefore, Rashi rejected this interpretation, and argued instead that the two bloods were both destined for the same end, namely, sprinkling on the Jewish people. Only, before they were re-united at their final destination they were first divided into two basins (corresponding to the two different sacrifices). Thus, in this ceremony, both phases of forming the covenant “a” and “b” were evident: the two bloods were first divided into basins, and then reunited at the same destination.
What is the “cloud” which verse 18 speaks of?

RASHI: This cloud was like smoke, and God made a path within it for Moshe.

Furthermore, according to the opinion of Onkelos (cited by Rashi) the blood was never actually sprinkled on the people, but rather it was sprinkled on the Altar on behalf of the people.

In this detail we see a further dimension to the ‘unification’ which was expressed by the ceremony. For, in the final analysis, we see how all the blood from the sacrifices—both that intended for the Altar and that intended “for the people”—was eventually re-united on the Altar.

WHY TWO SACRIFICES?

There is a further symbolism in the fact that two different sacrifices were offered: The burnt-offering is consumed in its entirety on the Altar. It is thus “totally” for God.

The peace-offering is (partially) eaten by the Jew who offers it.

Thus, the joining of the two bloods together in the same destination represented the unification of Jew and God, in an everlasting covenant.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 36, p. 115ff.)

PROBLEMS WITH RASHI (v. 18)

“Cloud” and “smoke” are opposites. A cloud consists of tiny droplets of water, whereas smoke is the product of fire.

This begs the question: If verse 18 states that Moshe entered the “cloud” (insh), why did Rashi write that this cloud was, in fact, smoke (insh)?

And what led Rashi to conclude, “God made a path within it for Moshe”?
and Chur (the son of Miriam and Caleb) are with you. Whoever has a (legal) case should approach them.”

15 Moshe ascended the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of God rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered (the mountain) for six days. He called to Moshe on the seventh day from within the cloud (to say the Ten Commandments).

17 The appearance of the glory of God was like a consuming fire on top of the mountain, before the eyes of the children of Israel.

18 Moshe came (into a path) within the cloud, and he went up to the mountain. Moshe was upon the mountain forty days and forty nights.


TORAS MENACHEM

The Last Word

“Fire From a Rock”

Smoke represents the burning desire of man to escape the confines of corporeal existence, and ascend upwards to fuse with his Creator.

Normally, smoke can only be made when there is some “fuel,” present, be it animal or mineral.

But, at Mount Sinai, God made a “consuming fire” which emanated from the mountain itself—fire from a rock.

This teaches us that we need to bring enthusiasm even to the dreary, “inanimate” parts of our lives. A person may think that excitement—love and fear of God—are to be reserved for the Synagogue or for Torah study. But when it comes to petty chores and simple, mundane acts, these are totally disconnected from any higher purpose.

Not so! Remember that at Mount Sinai, even the rock burned. So too, even the most dreary and mundane acts can be brought alive with the fire and energy of Torah inspiration.

(ibid.)

Fire on Mount Sinai

Verse 16 states, “The glory of God rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered (the mountain).”

Obviously, if “the cloud covered the mountain,” then Moshe would have to walk through the cloud to get to the mountain. The statement in verse 18, “Moshe came within the cloud,” is thus an unnecessary repetition. Rashi came to the conclusion that this repetition indicates there were, in fact, two clouds. This is why “the cloud” is mentioned twice, once in verse 16 and once in verse 18.

Why was there a second cloud?

Presumably, the cloud in verse 18 is somewhat connected to the verse which precedes it. Verse 17 states, “The appearance of the glory of God was like a consuming fire.” Therefore, Rashi reasoned that the “cloud” mentioned in verse 18 is probably the smoke produced by the fire mentioned in verse 17, and he wrote, “This cloud was like smoke.”

Since it would have been disrespectful to Moshe to make him walk through smoke, Rashi came to the conclusion that “God made a path for Moshe within it.”

One question however remains: At the top of a mountain nothing grows. So what was there for the “consuming fire” to burn?

In response to this question Rashi was careful to write that, “The cloud was like smoke.” I.e. it was not actual smoke, for there was no fuel to burn. Rather, the “consuming fire” of God emitted something that resembled smoke.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 275ff.)
Parshas Mishpatim contains 23 positive mitzvos and 30 prohibitions.

4. One who buys a Hebrew slave-woman from her father may not sell her [21:8].
5. Not to diminish or withhold from one's wife: food, clothing or conjugal rights [21:9].
6. The court is to execute by strangulation anyone punishable by this form of death [21:12].
7. Not to strike a father or mother [21:15].
8. Laws of penalties [21:18].
9. The court should decapitate by sword a person punishable by this form of death [21:10].
10. The obligation of the court to judge damages caused by domestic animals [21:28].
11. Not to eat an ox that was sentenced to death by stoning [21:28].
12. The obligation of the court to judge damages caused by a pit [21:33].
13. The obligation of the court to impose payment on a thief [21:37].
14. The obligation of the court to judge damages done by a domestic animal's grazing or trampling [22:4].
15. The obligation of the court to judge damage by fire [22:5].
16. The obligation of the court to judge cases involving an unpaid guardian [22:6].
17. The obligation of the court to judge the case of a plaintiff and a defendant [22:8].
18. The obligation of the court to judge cases involving a paid guardian, or a hirer [22:9].
19. The obligation of the court to judge cases concerning the borrower of an object for use [22:13].
20. The obligation of the court to judge the case of a seducer [22:15].
21. Not to allow a sorcerer to live [22:17].
22. Not to verbally oppress a convert to Judaism [22:20].
23. Not to wrong a convert in matters of property [22:20].
24. Not to afflict an orphan or widow [22:21].
25. Lending to the poor [22:24].
26. Not to demand payment of a debt from a poor man who does not have the means to pay [22:24].
27. Not to help a borrower or a lender transacting a loan for interest [22:24].
29. Not to curse the name of God [22:27].
30. Not to curse a sovereign leader [22:27].
31. Not to separate the tithes from produce in the wrong order [22:28].
32. Not to eat of an animal that is a treifa [22:30].
33. Not to hear the claim of a litigant in court when his opponent is not present [23:1].
34. That a sinner should not give testimony [23:1].
35. Not to convict in a capital case on the strength of a majority of one judge [23:2].
36. That a judge who argues for innocence in a capital case should not argue for guilt afterwards [23:2].
37. To follow the majority in legal decisions [23:2].
38. Not to take pity on a poor man in judgment [23:3].
39. Unloading a burden from another's animal [23:5].
40. Not to pervert justice in a sinner's trial because he is wicked [23:6].
41. Not to decide a capital case by probability [23:7].
42. A judge should not take a bribe [23:8].
43. The mitzvah of shemitah—to leave produce ownerless in the sabbatical year [23:11].
44. Resting on Shabbos [23:12].
45. Not to swear by an idol [23:13].
46. Not to lead Jewish people to idolatry [23:13].
47. Bringing offerings to the Holy Temple on festivals [23:14].
48. Not to slaughter the Pesach offering while there is still chametz in one's possession [23:18].
49. Not to let the sacrificial parts of the Pesach offering remain overnight [23:18].
50. Bringing of the first-fruits to the Temple [23:19].
51. Not to cook meat in milk [23:19].
52. Not to make a treaty with the seven nations that were to be eradicated from the Land of Israel, nor with any idol-worshipper [23:32].
53. Not to settle an idol-worshipper in our Land [23:33].
Terumah means “contribution,” since the Tabernacle was constructed from contributions made by the Jewish people.

But why is the Parsha about God’s house named after man’s contribution?

Chasidic thought teaches that God created the world because He had a plan, but the plan contains a clause:

The plan is that God’s presence should be revealed in the world.

The clause is that this should occur by the efforts of man.

At the giving of the Torah, God stated His plan. He taught us that we can reveal His presence in the world by performing the mitzvos.

But, at that moment, everything had come from God.

With the construction of the Tabernacle, God’s clause began to be implemented. Now, man had made an effort to help God’s plan reach fruition.

It is for this reason that our Parsha, which speaks of God’s house, is named after man’s contribution. For God’s house could only be complete when His clause for human involvement was adhered to.

A problem with this Parsha is that it appears, at first glance, to be obsolete. The Tabernacle was a temporary structure, which was superseded by the Temple in Jerusalem. So why do we have to read about it at all?

The Tabernacle possessed one advantage which the Temple did not have:

The uniqueness of the Tabernacle is that it brought its contribution to the farthest of places, the desert.

So we read Parshas Terumah, year after year to remind us of the need to bring Judaism to the most distant places.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 21, p. 146ff)
Therefore the verse states, “Have them take a contribution for Me.” However, He strongly desired for His Presence to rest upon “to Me,” and yet contribution should be “dedicated to Me.”

God something that is already His? Rather, it means that the verse could not be meant in the literal sense, for how could one give “Have them take a contribution for Me”?

Belongs to God in any case. So, why does the Torah have to write, “("?

Specifically among the Jewish people. because through the construction of the Tabernacle, God dwelt child who is learning other texts, such as Yalkut Shimoni.

What does it mean that a contribution is given to God (“to Me”)?

Yalkut Shimon: God is found throughout the heavens and the earth. Nevertheless, He strongly desired for His Presence to rest upon the Jewish people, like a father who feels strongly for his child. Therefore the verse states “Have them take a contribution for Me,” because through the construction of the Tabernacle, God dwelt specifically among the Jewish people.

Rashi: “To Me” means, “dedicated to Me.”

Midrash: Rashi was bothered by the question that everything belongs to God in any case. So, why does the Torah have to write, “Have them take a contribution for Me”? Rashi answered that the verse could not be meant in the literal sense, for how could one give God something that is already His? Rather, it means that the contribution should be “dedicated to Me.”

Maskil leDavid: The Midrash’s solution is untenable, since there are many places in the Torah where God asks for things to be given “to Me,” and yet Rashi makes no comment. For example, in Parshas Bo (13:2) we are told, “Sanctify to Me every firstborn,” and yet Rashi was not troubled by the question why the verse says “to Me” when everything already belongs to God. This proves that it is not a valid question at all.

Rather, what troubled Rashi here is that the verse states, “Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take a contribution for Me.” Surely the verse should have said “give a contribution,” not, “take a contribution.”

Rashi answered that “to Me” means “dedicated to Me.” This is an allusion to the Yalkut Shimoni’s explanation, that God desired to dwell among the Jewish people, and that therefore, He asked for the Tabernacle to be dedicated to Him.

For this reason, the verse states, “Take for Me” (and not “give Me”), for by donating to the Tabernacle in which God’s presence dwelled, the Jewish people were effectively “taking” God for themselves.

Sforno: The Torah is speaking here to those who are appointed to collect the money. I.e. the command here is not that every person should give a donation, but that representatives should collect money from the Jewish people.

Classic Questions

What does it mean that a contribution is given to God (“to Me”)? (v. 2)

Yalkut Shimon: God is found throughout the heavens and the earth. Nevertheless, He strongly desired for His Presence to rest upon the Jewish people, like a father who feels strongly for his child. Therefore the verse states “Have them take a contribution for Me,” because through the construction of the Tabernacle, God dwelt specifically among the Jewish people.

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Sforno: The Torah is speaking here to those who are appointed to collect the money. I.e. the command here is not that every person should give a donation, but that representatives should collect money from the Jewish people.

Difficulties with Maskil leDavid (v. 2)

Rashi’s commentary was intended to be self explanatory, so that even a child who is learning Chumash for the first time can appreciate both the question that Rashi is addressing and his solution without referring to other texts, such as Midrash and Talmud.

Therefore the suggestion of Maskil leDavid—that Rashi’s words here allude to a Midrash which explains how the Jewish people “took” God for themselves—could not have been Rashi’s intention here, as it presumes prior knowledge of the Midrash.
God spoke to Moshe, saying: 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and have them (dedicate) to Me a contribution. Take My offering from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity.

3 These are the (types of) contribution that you shall collect from them:

- Gold, silver, and copper;
- turquoise, purple, and crimson wool;
- linen and goats’ hair;
- ram skins dyed red, (multicolored) tachash skins, and acacia wood;
- oil for the (eternal) lamp, spices for the anointing oil and for the incense fumes;
- shoham stones and filling stones for the Apron and for the Breastplate.

Classic Questions

Where did they obtain acacia wood in the desert (v. 5)?

Rashi: Rabbi Tanchumah explained that Ya’akov Avinu saw prophetically that the Jewish people were destined to build a Tabernacle in the desert, so he brought acacia trees to Egypt and planted them. He commanded his children to take the trees with them when they left Egypt.

Da’as Zekeinim: There was a forest of acacia wood near Mount Sinai. Thus we find a place in the desert that was named יַעֲנָה, presumably because acacia trees יַעֲנָה were found there (see Bamidbar 25:6).

Be’er Yitzchak: It is totally absurd to imagine that trees would grow in a desert, a place where even grass will not grow! Furthermore, later in Parshas Vayakhel the Torah states explicitly that the Jewish people were carrying acacia wood with them into the desert: “...and everyone with whom there was acacia wood” (35:24). Therefore, Rashi cited the Midrashic interpretation that the Jewish people took the trees from Egypt.

Divrei David: Rashi’s comment appears, at first glance, to be unnecessarily elaborate. Surely they could have bought acacia wood from local natives, as we find in the Talmud that they did indeed buy produce from local merchants (Yoma 75b).

However, Rashi was troubled by why the verse uses the expression “acacia trees” and not simply “acacia.” This additional word (“trees”) indicated to Rashi that this was not plain acacia which had been bought locally, but rather, “trees” which had a special significance unto themselves.

Toras Menachem

Rashi’s Question

Rather, it appears that Rashi was bothered by a much simpler question: Surely it is obvious that a contribution to the construction of the Tabernacle is for God’s sake? Why then does the verse have to stress, “Have them take a contribution for Me”? Who else would this donation be for?

Rashi answers that “for Me,” means “dedicated to Me.” I.e. the verse is teaching us a practical law, that if a contribution is not given with the correct intentions, it is invalid (as in the case of a Torah Scroll which is invalidated if it is not written with the specific intention that it is dedicated to be used for holy purposes).

“Give” and “Take”

We are still, however, left with Maskil leDavid’s question: Why does verse say, “Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take a contribution for Me,” and not “give a contribution to Me”? Surely this is a fundamental question which Rashi should have addressed?

To answer this problem, let us turn first to another difficulty with the above explanation of Rashi, that it seems to contradict a statement of the Mishnah:

The Mishnah states that if an individual did not make his contribution voluntarily, bailiffs were sent to his home to collect the funds, even against the owner’s will (Shekalim 1:3,5).

How then can Rashi write that the contributions must be “dedicated to Me” (i.e. with holy intention) to the extent that an inappropriate intention can invalidate the mitzvah, when we find that there were some individuals that were forced to make the contribution against their will? That would mean, according to Rashi, that they did not fulfill the requirements of the mitzvah in any case, since the intention was lacking. So what was the point of the entire exercise?

Both of the above problems are solved by Sforno. He writes that raising funds for the Tabernacle is not a mitzvah which is incumbent on each individual, but rather, on those who are appointed to collect the funds. Thus, if it becomes necessary to extract the contribution by force it is the bailiff—and not the contributor—who fulfills the mitzvah. Therefore, so long as the bailiff has the right intentions, then the mitzvah will have been fulfilled.

This also explains why the verse states, “Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take a contribution for Me,” and not “give a contribution to Me,” since the mitzvah is, in fact, for the collector to take the contribution from the person, and not for the contributor to give it.

Ya’akov’s Acacia Plantation (v. 5)

Based on the above, we can now explain a simple, logical reason why Rashi wrote that the Jewish people brought acacia trees out of Egypt (that had been planted by Ya’akov Avinu), rather than arguing more simply that the wood was purchased locally (See Divrei David):

It was explained above that Rashi accepted Sforno’s assertion that raising funds for the Tabernacle was a mitzvah incumbent on the collectors, as the verse indicates, “Take a contribution for Me.”

When a person is told simply to “take” something from another individual, it is obvious that we are speaking about a thing that is already in the possession of that individual.

Thus, when the Torah states, “Take for Me a contribution,” it appears that we are speaking about the collection (“taking”) of something that was already there. This led Rashi to conclude that the Jewish people must have already had acacia wood in their possession at the time.

In other words, if the mitzvah had been to donate specific materials to the Tabernacle, then it is feasible to require the Jewish people to give something that was not already their own, just like a person would acquire...
a Sefer Torah in order to donate it to a synagogue. However, if we were told, “Take a Sefer Torah from such and such a place for the Synagogue,” it is obvious that we are speaking of a Sefer Torah that is already found there.—Ed.

Therefore, in order to explain how the Jewish people already had acacia wood in their possession, making it possible for it to be “taken” from them, Rashi cited the Midrashic teaching of Rabbi Tanchumah.

A Demanding Law

At this point, we might ask: why did God require that donations to the Tabernacle be “taken” and not “given,” causing the Jewish people to carry with them a huge amount of extremely heavy wood? If it were not for the “taking” clause, they would have been able to acquire the wood locally, saving themselves a tremendous amount of hard work, in addition to the trouble of supervising a tree plantation in Egypt for over 200 years!

Rashi hinted to this issue by citing the name of the sage who taught the story of Ya’akov’s acacia trees: Rabbi Tanchumah.

Normally, in his commentary, Rashi does not mention the names of the Talmudic sages who authored the teachings that he cites. Thus, when he deviates from his usual practice, we can presume that it is for a reason. Namely, that a subtle difficulty with the teaching can be solved by taking into account who its author was.

In our case, Rashi mentions that Rabbi Tanchumah taught the account of Ya’akov’s Acacia plantation in Egypt. The word tanchumah is an etymological derivative of the word nechamah, which means “comforting.”

With this small detail, Rashi alluded to our above problem. The reason why God “inconvenienced” the Jewish people so severely, requiring them to plant acacia trees hundreds of years in advance and carry them into the Tabernacle, is an enigma. Perhaps, this is to teach us that when we refrain from doing bad, the purity of our intentions is not of paramount importance. But when we do good deeds and mitzvos, thereby making a “home” for God in this world, pure intentions are of the utmost importance.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 16, p. 2890)
25:10  
They should make an Ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits in its length, a cubit and a half in its width, and a cubit and a half in its height. You should coat it with pure gold, coating it inside and out, and you should make upon it a golden-rimmed edge all around.

12  You should cast four golden rings for it, and you should place them upon its four corners, two rings on its first side, and two rings on its other side.

**The Ark**

'They should make the Sanctuary and the design of all its vessels according to all that I show you.'

8  They should make a Sanctuary (dedicated) to Me and I will dwell among them.

9  You should make the Tabernacle and the design of all its vessels according to all that I show you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classic Questions</th>
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<td>Why does the Torah state, “They should make a Sanctuary (dedicated to) Me”? Surely we already know that the Tabernacle was dedicated to God? (v. 8)</td>
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**Talmud:** This teaches an additional law, that the workers who construct the Tabernacle should be paid, not from private funds, but from the Tabernacle fund itself. Thus, the verse states, “They should make a Sanctuary for Me,” as if to say, “They should make the Sanctuary from that which is Mine,” i.e. Tabernacle funds. (Temurah 31b)

**Rashi:** This verse means, “They should make a holy house dedicated to Me.”

**Torah Temimah:** Why did Rashi reject the interpretation of the Talmud? Rashi’s comment here is based on the instructions which King David received from Nathan the prophet about the construction of the Temple. First he was told, “Build a sanctuary for Me” (Shmuel II 5:7), and a few verses later scripture clarifies that King David’s son, Shlomo, “will build a house dedicated to Me.” From here Rashi derived that the term “for Me,” means “a house dedicated to Me.”

| Why does the Torah describe the Ark before we have learned about the Tabernacle itself? (v. 10) |

**Toras Menachem**

Desert, was to give them comfort throughout the period of their Exile. For at every moment during the 200 years of bondage, if their faith began to falter or hopelessness began to set in, the Jewish people had a physical reminder of their future redemption. For, together with them in Egypt, there was a small group of acacia trees planted by Yaakov their ancestor, from which the Tabernacle in the desert was one day going to be built.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 16, p. 284ff; vol. 31, p. 142ff.)

**The Last Word**

There is a special mission given to Jewish women, each of whom is called the “mainstay of the home,” for the conduct of the entire home depends on her. Every Jewish home must be similar to the Sanctuary and Holy Temple in which God’s presence resided. It must be pure and holy, so that God can say, “I will dwell within them.”

Since the woman is the “mainstay of the home,” it is she who makes the home a sanctuary, similar to the Holy Temple of which God says “I will dwell within them.”

(Based on Sicha of 27th of Elul 5742)
CLASSIC QUESTIONS

How are the “Tablets of Testimony” placed in the Ark? (v. 21)

Rashi: When the Ark is still alone, without a lid, the [Tablets of] Testimony are placed inside. Then the cover is placed over it. Thus we find that when Moshe erected the Tabernacle, the verse states: “He took the Testimony and placed it into the Ark,” and afterwards he, “he placed the lid on the Ark from above” (Shemos 40:20).

Ramban: The Ark and its cover are one single entity. Therefore, the structure must be assembled first in its entirety, Ark and lid together, and only then can the lid be removed to place the Testimony into the Ark. Otherwise the Testimony will be placed into an incomplete Ark.

Toras Menachem

The Ark and its Lid: One Item or Two? (v. 21)

Rashi and Ramban argue whether the lid of the Ark is considered to be a separate item in its own right, or if it was merely a part of the Ark.

Ramban’s view—that the lid was part of the Ark—reflects his general outlook that the purpose of constructing the Tabernacle was to cause God’s presence to dwell on Earth (see Classic Questions to v. 10). This was...
achieved by all the components of the Ark collectively. Therefore, Ramban perceived the lid of the Ark as being a component of the Ark as a whole.

Rashi however adopted the approach which is suggested by a straightforward reading of the verses:

In verses 10-15 the Torah describes the construction of the Ark, and in verse 16, concludes: “You should place into the Ark the Testimony (i.e. Torah) which I will give you.” This suggests that the purpose of the Ark was to act as a home for the Torah.

After this discussion is complete, the Torah then proceeds to describe the lid and its cherubs (verses 17-21). In verse 22 the Torah concludes: “I will arrange My meetings with you there. I will speak with you from above the lid between the two cherubs that are upon the Ark of the Testimony, and (what I speak to you there) is all that I will command you to tell the children of Israel.”

Presumably, the Torah is teaching us here the purpose of the lid and its cherubs, for the function of the Ark has already been described in verses 10-17.

This led Rashi to conclude that the Ark and its lid are separate items in their own right.

Practically this means that (according to Rashi):

a.) The Tablets can be placed into the Ark before its lid has ever been placed on top, as the Ark is complete without its lid.

b.) Since each item in the Tabernacle had to be constructed with its own specific intention it turns out that, according to Rashi, the lid would have to be built with its own distinct intention.

c.) The prohibition of constructing an imitation of the Tabernacle applies to the Ark and lid individually.

However, according to Ramban none of these three laws apply.

THE FACE OF THE CHERUBS (v. 18)

Based on the above, we can also explain why the Ramban differed with Rashi about the appearance of the cherubs:

Since the Ramban held that the purpose of the Ark, its contents and its lid, was a singular one, namely to cause the Divine Presence to dwell, he therefore understood that the faces of the cherubs would also reflect this idea. Consequently, he wrote that the cherubs resembled the Divine Presence itself (See Ezekiel ch. 1).

Rashi however understood the lid as having a separate function. He therefore accepted the idea that the cherubs represent God’s love for the Jewish people, (see Ba’al Haturim).

*(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 175ff.)*
אלא שֶלֶחָה בַּאֲשֶׁר אַזָּהָה אֲלֵנֵיהֶל אֶל-בָּנָי יִשְׁרָאֵל: מִכֵּן יִשְׁרָאֵל שֶלֶחָה.

אַךְ אִצְבַּת אָהֳלוֹ אֵלֶכָּה וָלֵשַׁיָּהוּ לְרָחֵב אָםּוֹ וֹאֵל הָבְּלֵים הַבָּלָהֵיהֶם.

לֹא מְסָרָה שָפָה שָפָה עִנְשָׁיָה וּרְעָבָה לְמִסְרָה לְאַרְבִּיעָה.

הָפַּאַת אֶשֶּר לְאַרְבִּיעָה רְגוּלָה: מִכֵּן מִלְּשָׁפָה לְאַשָּׁר לְאַהֲבָה הָלָהֵיהֶם בֵּין נְדוֹנָה וּבֵין בָּנָהֵיהֶם בֵּין נְדוֹנָה לְאַהֲבָה הָלָהֵיהֶם בֵּין נְדוֹנָה וּבֵין בָּנָהֵיהֶם.

אֶלֶךְ בַּשָּׁהָה אֲשֶׁר מְשֻׁמָּרָה מִצְפָּה וּמְשֻׁמָּרָה מִצְפָּה: מִכֵּן שָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה וּשָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה וּשָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה.

לָהֵם תַּנְפִּיסֵי שֵׁפָרֵים אָסָרָה אֲשֶׁר מְשֻׁמָּרָה וּמְשֻׁמָּרָה מִצְפָּה וּשָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה.

אַתָּה אֲשֶׁר מְשֻׁמָּרָה וּשָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה. מִכֵּן שָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה וּשָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה וּשָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה.

מְשֻׁמָּרָה מִצְפָּה וּמְשֻׁמָּרָה מִצְפָּה וּשָׁמָּה מִצְפָּה.

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**The Table**

25:23 You should make a Table of acacia wood, two cubits in its length, one cubit in its width, and a cubit and a half in its height. You should coat it with pure gold, and you should make for it a golden-rimmed edge all around.

24 You should make for it a frame one handbreadth in width all around. You should make a golden-rimmed edge for its frame all around.

25 You should make for it (the Table) four golden rings, and you should place the rings on the four corners of its four legs. The rings should be (attached to the legs) adjacent to the frame as holders for the poles with which to carry the table.

26 You should make the poles of acacia wood, and you should coat them with gold. The table should be carried with them.

27 You should make its (i.e. the table’s) bread-molds, its spoons, its separating bars—which will cover (the breads, and allow ventilation)—and its supporting bars. You should make them from pure gold.

28 You should place on the table multi-surface bread before Me at all times.

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**The Menorah**

25:31 You should make a Menorah of pure gold. The Menorah should be made hammered (from a single piece of metal). Its base and its stem, its (ornamental) cups, spheres, and flowers should all come from (the same piece of metal and not be made separately).

32 Six branches should be coming out of its sides (diagonally), three Menorah branches from one of its sides and three menorah branches from its second side.

33 On one branch put three decorated cups, a sphere and a flower. On the next branch put three decorated cups, a sphere and a flower. So too for all six branches that come out of the Menorah.
34 On (the stem of) the Menorah there should be four decorated cups (one below the point where the branches emerge, and three at the top) together with its spheres and its flowers.

35 There should be a sphere (on the stem) where the (first) two branches come out of it, a sphere where the (next) two branches come out of it, and a sphere where the (last) two branches come out of it. (This covers) all six branches that come out of the Menorah.

36 Its spheres and branches should all be (formed) from it. All of it should be one hammered mass of pure gold.

37 You should make seven lamps for it, and (the mouths of the lamps should be arranged so that when) he kindles its lamps they shed light toward its center.

38 Its wick-tongs and its ash-scoops should be of pure gold.

39 It should be made from (exactly) a kikar of pure gold, including all these utensils.

40 Observe their design which you are being shown on the mountain, and construct accordingly.

The Last Word

In recent years Rambam’s handwritten sketch of the Menorah has been discovered (shown to right). Two key points emerge from the diagram:

a.) The ornamental cups face downwards, as if they are spilling out their contents.

This detail reflects the general purpose of the Temple, which is to “spill out” spiritual light and holiness throughout the entire world. In fact we also find that the windows of the Temple are wide on the outside and narrow within (the reverse of common practice) indicating that light flows outwards from the Temple.

b.) The branches of the Menorah are straight (as in Rashi 25:32), unlike the popular misconception that the branches are curved, as depicted on the Arch of Titus.

Rambam’s drawing proves that the image of the vessels of the Tabernacle on the Arch of Titus in Rome, where the Menorah is depicted with curved branches, is inaccurate.

There are several possible reasons for this mistake: a.) Perhaps, the artist did not attempt to make a precise image. b.) Titus may never have discovered the Menorah, as many of the holy vessels were hidden. c.) The artist may have attempted to depict a different candelabra altogether.

Whatever the reason may be, the drawing is inaccurate and should not be copied in publications or in Chanukah Menorahs.

(Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 164f)
How did the Tapestries cover the Tabernacle?

Rashi: The tapestries were placed so that their length covered the interior width of the Tabernacle, ten of the tapestries’ middle cubits as the roof of the space of the width of the Tabernacle. Another cubit on each side covered the thickness of the tops of the beams, whose width was a cubit thick.

Sixteen cubits thus remained: eight on each of the northern and southern sides, covering the height of the beams, which were ten cubits high. Thus the bottom two cubits were exposed.

The tapestries were forty cubits wide when they were joined, twenty cubits for each set. Thirty of the forty cubits were for the roof of the Tabernacle’s interior space lengthwise. Add to that one cubit for the thickness of the beams on the Tabernacle’s western side, and one cubit to cover the pillars on the eastern side which supported the entrance curtain. Thus, there remained eight cubits that hung over the back of the Tabernacle on the western side, with the bottom two cubits uncovered. I found this in the Braisa of Forty-Nine Midos.

However, according to the Talmud (Shabbos 98b), the tapestries did not cover the eastern pillars, and nine cubits hung over the back of the Tabernacle.

Scripture appears to support the Talmud’s opinion, as the verse states: “You should place the partition [between the Holy of Holies and the rest of the Sanctuary] under the hooks” (verse 33). According to the Braisa, it would mean that the dividing curtain would be one cubit in front of the hooks. (v. 12)

Why Two Opinions?

Rashi wrote his commentary to help us understand Scripture. His goal was not to give an exhaustive treatment of any particular topic, but to clarify difficulties that the reader may have when trying to understand the basic meaning of the verses.

With this in mind, Rashi’s comment about the coverings of the Tabernacle is difficult to fathom. Rashi makes an elaborate description of two varying opinions about the exact position where the coverings were positioned—the opinion of the “Braisa of 49 Midos” and the view of the Talmud.
2 The length of each tapestry should be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each tapestry should be four cubits. The same measurements apply for all the tapestries.

3 Five of these tapestries should be stitched to one another, and the other five tapestries should also be stitched to one another.

4 You should make loops of turquoise wool on the edge of the tapestry which is at the end of the first group (of five tapestries), and you should do the same on the edge of the end tapestry of the second group (of five tapestries). 5 You should make fifty loops on the edge of the first tapestry, and you should make fifty loops on the edge of the tapestry from the second group. The loops (on the two different tapestries) should be aligned opposite to one another.

6 You should make fifty golden clasps, and you should fasten the (two groups of) tapestries to one another with the clasps, so that the (roof of the) Tabernacle will become one.

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**A: HANGING OF THE TAPESTRIES ACCORDING TO “BRAISA OF 49 MIDOS”**

**B: HANGING OF THE TAPESTRIES ACCORDING TO THE TALMUD**

(TAPESTRIES SHIFTED ONE CUBIT TO THE WEST)


So, if the Talmud’s opinion alone is consistent with scripture, what was the need for Rashi to cite the Braisa at all?

Rashi’s Dilemma

Rashi quoted two opinions because he was faced by a dilemma. If, of two designs, one is more aesthetically pleasing and the other more scripturally accurate, which one should prevail?

The opinion of the Braisa of 49 Midos is more aesthetically pleasing because:

a.) The edges of the tapestries fall neatly at the same length around the sides and the rear of the Tabernacle.

b.) The upper layer of goats’ hair covers the rear of the Tabernacle neatly, leaving nothing exposed. Even though this leaves the rear end of the goats’ hair uneven with the sides, it would nevertheless be neat and leave nothing exposed. Even though this leaves the rear end of the tapestries uneven with the sides and the rear of the Tabernacle, it is more aesthetically pleasing.

Tora Menachem

This begs the question: Why does Rashi have to confuse the reader with two different opinions? If his goal was to clarify the simple meaning of scripture, surely one opinion would suffice (as we find in many cases that Rashi cites only one of a host of Talmudic and Midrashic viewpoints.)

Furthermore, in our case, Rashi actually testifies that the opinion of the Talmud is supported by Scripture. According to the Talmud, it turns out that the row of hooks that connected the two panels of tapestries together was precisely 11 cubits from the rear of the Tabernacle (since the Holy of holies was 10 cubits in length and the top of the rear wall of the Tabernacle was 1 cubit in width, making a total of 11 cubits). This means that the partition which divided the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle was precisely 11 cubits from the rear of the Tabernacle (since the Holy of Holies was 11 cubits in width). This means that the row of hooks that connected the two panels of tapestries together was perfectly aligned with the partition dividing the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle.

The opinion of the Braisa of 49 Midos is consistent with scripture, even though it leaves the rear end of the tapestries uneaven with the sides, it would nevertheless be inappropriate to leave this wall uncovered since it is the rear wall of the Holy of Holies.

A partition under the hooks:”

You should place the partition under the hooks” (v. 33). According to the Braisa however, this condition could not be fulfilled, since the hooks were shifted one cubit to the east.

This means that the partition which divided the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle could be hung directly from the hooks. This detail is in fact required by the Torah, which states explicitly: “You should place the partition under the hooks” (v. 33). According to the Braisa however, this condition could not be fulfilled, since the hooks were shifted one cubit to the east.

This begs the question: Why does Rashi actually testifies that the opinion of the Braisa is consistent with scripture, even though it leaves the rear end of the tapestries uneaven with the sides, it would nevertheless be inappropriate to leave this wall uncovered since it is the rear wall of the Holy of Holies.

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a.) The edges of the tapestries fall neatly at the same length around the sides and the rear of the Tabernacle.

b.) The upper layer of goats’ hair covers the rear of the Tabernacle neatly, leaving nothing exposed. Even though this leaves the rear end of the goats’ hair uneven with the sides, it would nevertheless be inappropriate to leave this wall uncovered since it is the rear wall of the Holy of Holies.

This means that the partition which divided the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle could be hung directly from the hooks. This detail is in fact required by the Torah, which states explicitly: “You should place the partition under the hooks” (v. 33). According to the Braisa however, this condition could not be fulfilled, since the hooks were shifted one cubit to the east.
7 You should make sheets of goats’ hair for a covering over the Tabernacle. You should make eleven sheets. 8 The length of each sheet should be thirty cubits, and the width of each sheet four cubits. The same dimensions apply for the eleven sheets.

9 You should join five sheets by themselves, and the (other) six sheets by themselves. You should fold (half of) the sixth sheet over the entrance of the tent.

10 You should make fifty loops on the edge of the first sheet, at the end of one group, and fifty loops on the edge of the (end) sheet of the second set.

11 You should make fifty copper clasps. You should bring the clasps into the loops, and you should fasten the tent together so that it will become one.

12 (There will be an) overhanging excess in the sheets of the tent (since the sheets are bigger than the tapestries). Half of the extra sheets should hang over the rear (i.e. west side) of the Tabernacle (where the tapestries leave two cubits of beams exposed). 13 The (extra) cubit from one side and the cubit from the other side from the excess in the length of the sheets of the tent should hang over the (north and south) sides of the Tabernacle on both sides to cover it.

14 You should make a (further) covering for the (goats’ hair) tent, made of ram skins dyed red, and a covering of tachash skins should be made above.
26:15
FOURTH READING

You should make the beams for the Tabernacle of acacia wood, standing upright. The length of each beam should be ten cubits, and the width of each beam should be a cubit and a half. Each beam should have two square pegs (carved at the bottom, separated) like rungs, aligned opposite each other. In this way you should make all the beams of the Tabernacle.

You should make the beams for the Tabernacle (as follows): twenty beams for the southern side. You should make forty silver sockets under the twenty beams, two sockets under one beam for its two square pegs, and two sockets under the next beam for its two square pegs (etc.).

For the second side of the Tabernacle, on the northern side: twenty beams, their forty silver sockets: two sockets under one beam and two sockets under the next beam.

For the western end of the Tabernacle you should make six beams. You should make two (further) beams at the (northwestern and southwestern) corners of the Tabernacle at the end.

(All the beams) should fit closely next to each other at the bottom. They should fit together closely at the top and be connected (to each other) by a ring (which slots into grooves carved into the beam). So too for both of the two (beams) at the two corners.

(Thus, on the western side) there should be eight beams and their silver sockets—sixteen sockets—two sockets under one beam and two sockets under the next beam.

However, according to the Talmud: a.) The rear edge of the tapestries falls uneven with the sides. b.) The rear edge of the goats’ hair drags onto the floor, which is disrespectful.

Thus, from an aesthetic perspective, the Braisa’s opinion is highly preferable.

The drawback however with the Braisa’s stance is that it appears to contradict verse 33, the requirement for the partition between the Holy of Holies and the Sanctuary to hang from the golden hooks which hold the tapestries together. According to the Braisa, the partition would miss the hooks by one cubit (see diagram).

Nevertheless, it could be argued (in defense of the Braisa) that when the Torah required the partition to be “under the hooks,” it did not mean...
לא עשו היעל פלפתת תבלת או זרימה ושליטה של יישים מהות ישאר בהרי ים שלו.

לrikes המגלה התحما הمشاهدة ומישרינהعش צורות בוחרים.

ל(IOException) ואיתרו את הארגונים גם את הרקמות והכותרות בוהב.

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לIOException ואיתרו את הארגונים גם את הרקמות והכותרות בוהב.
26 You should make crossbars of acacia wood, five for the beams of one side of the Tabernacle, 27 five crossbars for the beams of the second side of the Tabernacle, and five crossbars for the beams of the rear side of the Tabernacle, on the western end. 28 The middle bar goes inside the beams and extends from one end to the other end.

29 You should coat the beams with gold. You should make rings (on the beams) of gold as holders for the crossbars, and you should coat the crossbars with gold.

30 (After constructing its components separately) you should erect the Tabernacle correctly, as you will have been shown on the mountain.

31 You should make a partition of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool thread twisted with fine linen thread. Animal designs should be professionally woven into it (on both sides).

32 You should place it on four pillars of acacia wood, coated with gold—with gold hooks (to hold the partition)—inserted into four silver sockets. 33 You should place the partition under the hooks.

34 You should bring the Ark of the Testimony there, to the inner side of the partition. The partition should separate for you between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies.

35 You should place the lid over the Ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies.

36 You should place the Table on the outer side of the partition, and the Menorah opposite the Table, on the southern side of the Tabernacle. You should place the Table on the northern side.

37 You should make a curtain for the entrance of the tent, of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool literally under the hooks, to the very inch. Rather, it was teaching us the general approximation of the partition to the hooks and, in our case, an approximation of one cubit is reasonable.

So, Rashi was left with a dilemma: Which takes precedence, the aesthetically pleasing view of the Braisa; or the more scripturally precise version of the Talmud?

In the final analysis, Rashi was unable to reconcile this question, so he cited both opinions. However, he described the Braisa’s view first, indicating that it is the more preferable of the two, since the Braisa only fails on a technicality. Overall, however, its approach is more tasteful and respectful.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 36, p. 131ff.)

**Sparks of Chasidus**

Every entity possesses three aspects:

a.) **Existential.** The fact of existence, a quality which the entity shares equally with everything else in the world.

b.) **Functional.** The specific, and unique function of the entity.

c.) **Particular.** Minor details of the entity, which are not crucial to its functioning, but nevertheless contribute to its character and disposition.

Since the Tabernacle was a universe in microcosm, its three key features—walls, apparatus and coverings—represented these three aspects:

a.) The “existential” dimension took expression in the walls of the Tabernacle, since the walls enclosed everything that existed in the Tabernacle.

b.) The “functional” dimension took expression in the apparatus of the Tabernacle—the Menorah, Table, Altar etc—since each piece of apparatus had a specific function.

c.) The “particular” dimension took expression in the coverings, most specifically the outermost layer of multicolored Tachash skins (see 26:14), which gave the Tabernacle an attractive color (a non-functional detail).

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 31, p. 138ff.)
thread twisted with fine linen thread, professionally woven (with images on both sides). 37 You should make for the curtain five pillars of acacia wood and coat them with gold. Their hooks should be gold. You should cast for them five copper sockets.

### The Copper Altar

You should make the Altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide. The Altar should be square, and its height should be three cubits. 1 You should make protrusions on its four corners. Its protrusions should be from (the same single piece of wood). You should coat it with copper.

3 You should make for it pots to remove its ashes, shovels, sacrificial basins, flesh-hooks and fire-pans. You should make all its utensils from copper.

4 You should make for it a lattice of copper netting, and you should make on the netting four copper rings on its four ends. 5 You should place it (the lattice) beneath the decorative border of the Altar downwards. The lattice should extend downward until the middle of the Altar.

6 You should make poles for the Altar, poles of acacia wood. You should coat them with copper. 7 Its poles should be inserted into the rings, and the poles should be on both sides of the Altar when it is carried.

8 You should make it (the Altar) hollow, out of panels.

Just as you were shown on the mountain, so should they do.

### The Courtyard of the Tabernacle

You should make the courtyard of the Tabernacle (as follows): On the southern side there should be (perforated) curtains for the courtyard of twisted linen, one hundred cubits long on one side. 10 It should have twenty pillars and twenty sockets of copper. The hooks of the pillars and their belts should be of silver. 11 So too for the length of the northern side: curtains one hundred cubits long,
מחא אראד וגדור (ועשייה כ"ה עטילאיי ואדריכלות ירושלים נפתלתי)

המש미ית שיא אונדרס ופלורנס עשתה ואריפית מקול

החברה נפתחה בקער, י"ה חבר הוחל מכף היד וקרובים

אני יי"ה קערת מרות ממחמה חכמה שאחת ואחרות שלחה.

אם היא ספורת בקערת חכמה קפעילי עמידה חכמה.

גזרני התחנה חמה חכמה קᙳים שלמה ו.nextElement

כבר מוקדם יותר, ניסיוןBEL N perpetrated חכמה.

ע"ע פסוקים. י"ע קיום. ש"ל סיום.
twenty pillars, and twenty sockets for them made of copper, the hooks of the pillars and their silver belts.

12 For the width of the courtyard on the western side: curtains fifty cubits (long), ten pillars and ten sockets for them.

13 The width of the courtyard on the eastern side: fifty cubits (consisting of an entrance of twenty cubits and a fifteen cubit “shoulder” curtain on each side). 14 The curtains on one shoulder should be fifteen cubits, with three pillars and three sockets. 15 On the second shoulder there should be fifteen (cubits of) curtains, with three pillars and three sockets. 16 At the entrance of the courtyard should be a professionally woven tapestry of twenty cubits, made of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool thread twisted with linen thread. (The tapestry should be supported by) four pillars and sockets.

17 All the pillars around the courtyard (including the east and west sides) should have silver bands, silver hooks, and copper sockets.

18 The length of the courtyard should be one hundred cubits and the width fifty. (The space within the courtyard to the east of the Sanctuary is fifty) by fifty cubits.

The height of the curtains should be five cubits made of twisted fine linen, and their sockets should be of copper.

19 All the equipment (used to assemble and dismantle) the Tabernacle for all its service, and all its pegs (used to tie the curtains to the ground) and all the pegs of the courtyard should be made from copper.

MAFTIR

17 All the pillars around the courtyard (including the east and west sides) should have silver bands, silver hooks, and copper sockets.

18 The length of the courtyard should be one hundred cubits and the width fifty. (The space within the courtyard to the east of the Sanctuary is fifty) by fifty cubits.

The height of the curtains should be five cubits made of twisted fine linen, and their sockets should be of copper.

19 All the equipment (used to assemble and dismantle) the Tabernacle for all its service, and all its pegs (used to tie the curtains to the ground) and all the pegs of the courtyard should be made from copper.


Parshas Terumah contains 2 positive mitzvos & 1 prohibition.

2. Not to remove the poles from the Ark [25:15].
3. Arranging the showbread and the frankincense [25:30].

TORAS MENACHEM

Sparks of Chasidus

The beams of the Tabernacle were made from acacia wood, סוכת שמס. Chassidic thought explains that the word שמס is related to the word שמש, meaning “folly.”

Folly can take two forms of expression: a.) A lack of reasoning that causes a person to act in a foolish manner. In this vein, the Talmud describes every sin as an act of folly, since inherently a Jewish person wants to observe the Torah, and it is only a “spirit of folly” that convinces him to sin. b.) Another form of folly stems from, not the lack of reason, but the ability where necessary to transcend reason.

Devotion to God demands this second type of “folly,” which enables a person to recognize and accept a higher being who transcends the limited human mind.

(Ma’amor, Bosi L’Cani 5711)
The word “Tetzaveh” literally means “command,” as the opening verse of our Parsha reads, “And you should command the children of Israel that they should bring to you pure olive oil…”

However, “Tetzaveh” is also a derivative of the word “tzavsa,” meaning “connection.” According to this translation, the verse would read, “And you should connect the Jewish people…” This hints to the fact that Moshe connects the Jewish people with God.

When he succeeds in this task, Moshe becomes spiritually strengthened. For, as a true Jewish leader, his entire essence and being is bound up with the people, so that when the people increase their connection with God, it makes Moshe stronger. This is hinted to at the end of the verse, “They should bring to you pure olive oil,” i.e. when Moshe connects the Jewish people to God, Moshe’s own spiritual light grows stronger.

The verse continues, “Crushed for lighting,” i.e. when the Jewish people are “crushed” in exile, there is always a Jewish leader of the caliber of Moshe to be found, referred to in the Zohar as “the extension of Moshe in every generation.” This leader can take a people who are spiritually crushed, and transform them to be ready, “for lighting”—spiritually awake and illuminated.

Then, the Jewish people can reach the level indicated by the end of the verse “to ignite the lamp until it burns continually.” i.e. that they become spiritually self-sufficient, to the extent that they no longer rely on their leader, and that they can “burn continually” without his direct input.

(Based on Sefer Hama’amorim Melukat vol. 6, p. 129ff)
Why does God tell Moshe, “And you should command the children of Israel that they should bring to you clear olive oil etc.”? (v. 20)

Ramban: Normally, when the Torah issues a command about the construction of the Tabernacle and its contents, we find that the expression, “You should make” is used. Here, however, this would be inappropriate, since the Jewish people would not have had any fresh olives with them in the desert from which olive oil could be produced. So how could they be told to “make” olive oil?

Rather, the command to donate olive oil must have been fulfilled using olive oil which the Jewish people already had with them, i.e. oil which they took out of Egypt. Therefore, the verse says, “They should bring to you clear olive oil,” since it was the existing olive oil that needed to be collected and passed before Moshe for inspection, to see if it was of sufficient quality.

Kli Yakar: The Torah is teaching us here that a miracle occurred when lighting the Menorah. Even though the lamps only burned from “evening to morning” (v. 21), the western lamp nevertheless burned “continually” (v. 20), in a miraculous fashion.

Moshe acted as a spiritual channel through which God caused miracles to occur. Therefore, God told Moshe, “You should command the Jewish people,” since Moshe himself was to act as the channel through which the miracle of the western lamp was to occur.

Ba’al Haturim: When the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, Moshe exclaimed to God that if He would not forgive the Jewish people then, “Please erase me from Your book (the Torah) which you have written!” (see below 32:32).

There is a principle that the request of a tzadik (saintly person) is always fulfilled unconditionally, regardless of any clauses that the tzadik himself may attach to the request. Thus in our case, even though the Jewish people were ultimately pardoned by God, Moshe’s request to be erased from the Torah, still had to be fulfilled in some way.

For this reason, Moshe’s name is not mentioned in this entire Parsha, so that in a subtle way, it could be said that he was indeed “erased” from the Torah. Therefore, the Parsha begins, “And you should command,” avoiding any reference to Moshe’s name directly.

What had to be pure: the olive oil, or the olives themselves? (v. 20)

Rashi: The olive oil had to be pure and free of sediment.

Ibn Ezra: The olives themselves had to be pure. If they were decayed or partially eaten (by birds) they could not be used.
Oil for the Menorah

27:20

And you should command the children of Israel that they should bring to you clear olive oil, crushed for lighting, to ignite the lamp (until it burns) continually. In the Tent of Meeting, outside the partition that is in front of the (Ark of) testimony, Aharon and his sons should arrange that it (has sufficient oil to burn) from evening to morning before God. This is an eternal law for the children of Israel.

Appointment of Priests—Priestly Garments

28

1 (When the Tabernacle is built) you should draw Aharon your brother close to you, together with his sons, (separating them) from the children of Israel, to serve Me as priests, i.e. Aharon, Nadav, and Avihu, Elazar, and Isamar, Aharon’s sons.

Classic Questions

● When did Moshe bring the priests “near” to him? (v.1)
Rashi: After the Tabernacle was constructed.

Toras Menachem

Crushed for lighting.” It is unclear what the word “pure” (Qed) here is referring to: does it mean that the oil has to be pure, or does it refer to the olives?

On the one hand, the fact that the word “pure” is sandwiched between two other words that refer to the olive itself (“...olive, pure, crushed...”) suggests that the requirement here is for pure olives. This was the conclusion of Ibn Ezra.

However, Rashi rejected this argument due to a practical consideration: The verse states, “You should command the children of Israel that they should bring to you clear olive oil, crushed for lighting.” It is unclear what the word “pure” (Qed) here is referring to: does it mean that the oil has to be pure, or does it refer to the olives?

Why did Moshe bring the priests “near” to him? (v.1)
Ibn Ezra: Moshe himself was a priest, the source of all priesthood. Aharon and his sons became priests by coming close to Moshe.

Sparks of Chasidus

Ba’al Haturim writes that Moshe’s name is not mentioned in this entire Parsha so that his request to “erase me from Your book” was fulfilled in some respect. Therefore, the opening verse of our Parsha does not refer to him by name (Moshe), but simply as “you.”

But how could any part of Torah be “devoid” of Moshe, even in a subtle way? Moshe and the Torah were truly one, to the extent that we refer to the “Torah of Moshe,” and the “Five books of Moshe.” Surely it is unacceptable to “erase” Moshe from the Torah in any manner, even through the relatively minor “omission” of not mentioning his name during an entire Parsha?

However, in truth, Moshe is not erased from this Parsha at all. He is mentioned, though not by name: A name is not the highest aspect of a person. It does not represent a person’s essence. For, ultimately a name is merely an identification tool used by others. Deep down, a person has an inner self that transcends his name.

So, it turns out that, in our Parsha, Moshe is indeed mentioned. The words “You should command” refer to his essence that is higher than his name.

(I based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh 5751)

Twofold of Perfectionism

On a deeper level, Rashi and Ibn Ezra appear to be arguing about the level of perfectionism that is required when observing mitzvos:

There is a general principle that all mitzvos should be carried out in the most exemplary manner, using the finest of materials.

However, a debatable point is how far this perfectionism has to reach:

a.) Do we say that the raw materials used to make the product may be lacking in perfection, so long as the final product is excellent?

or, b.) Do all stages of the production have to employ only the highest quality of materials?

In our case, Rashi took the former stance (“a”), that only the olive oil needs to be pure. The olives could, however, be partially decayed or pecked at by birds.

Ibn Ezra, however, adopted approach “b,” that not only the final product, the oil, but that all the materials used to produce the final product need to be of the highest quality.

(Priesthood (v. 1)

In this section we read how God chose Aharon and his descendants to be priests, and how they were honored with special garments in which they carried out the Temple (or Tabernacle) service.

In verse 1, we read the general principle: “You should bring Aharon your brother close to you, together with his sons, (separating them) from among the children of Israel, to serve Me as priests.” Then, in verse 3, we
KLI YAKAR: Through making the Golden calf, Aharon deserved death, and it was only due to Moshe’s prayers that he was saved (See Devarim 9:20). Therefore, God said to Moshe that He was only appointing Aharon as a priest because “you brought him close to you,” i.e. you prayed on his behalf, pleading that since he is your brother you cannot survive without him. Consequently, you separated him “from among the children of Israel,” i.e. from the other people who worshiped the Golden Calf.

MALBIM: God saw fit that one person should act as an intermediary between Himself and the Jewish people, a person who would be God’s shliach (emissary) to the people to teach them how to serve Him. God perceived that Aharon was suitable for this job, due to his unique soul, a quality that all his descendants would inherit from him.

Thus Aharon would now act as an intermediary between God and the Jewish people, by performing the services in the Tabernacle, just like Moshe who acted as an intermediary through which God gave the Torah on earth.

Moshe was the intermediary through which Divine service descended into the world, and Aharon was to be the intermediary through which Divine service would be carried out on earth, so that it would ascend heavenward. Therefore, it was necessary for Moshe to bring Aharon “near” to him, i.e. to draw Aharon up to his own level of being an intermediary between God and the Jewish people.

CLASİC QUESTİONS

Verse 1 states merely that Aharon and his sons were separated “from among the children of Israel, to serve Me as priests,” whereas verse 3 adds another detail, that Aharon wore the garments to, “consecrate him, so that he can serve Me as a priest.”

We are speaking here of two different dimensions to the inauguration of the priestly office, namely:

a.) Separation. First Aharon and his sons are distinguished from the rest of the Jewish people to be priests (v. 1).

are taught the relevance of the garments, “They shall make Aharon’s garments to consecrate him, so that he can serve Me as a priest.”

At first glance, these two verses appear to be speaking about the same process. i.e. Aharon and his sons are distinguished as priests (v. 1) and thus they wear the priestly garments (v. 3).

However, on closer inspection, there is a subtle nuance in verse 3 which makes it very clear that this verse is speaking of a totally different aspect of priesthood altogether:

Toras Menachem

(וְהֵנָּה הַמִּצְרָא לְכָנָנִי; אֵלָּה יְהֹוָה) (כָּנָנִי) (וְאָשְׁר לָהֶם אָשָׁר לָהֶם) (וְאָשְׁר לָהֶם אָשָׁר לָהֶם), (וְאָשָׁר לָהֶם אָשָׁר לָהֶם) (וְאָשָׁר לָהֶם אָשָׁר לָהֶם) (וְאָשָׁר לָהֶם אָשָׁר לָהֶם)

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**CLASSIC QUESTIONS**

**Why is the golden Forehead-Plate (tzitz) not mentioned in the list of priestly garments in verse 4?**

**IBN EZRA:** The forehead plate was not a garment, but rather, an adornment, like a piece of jewelry, and the verse only refers to "garments.

**OHR HACHAYIM:** The tzitz was hinted to by the words, “They shall make Aharon’s garments,” for Aharon alone wore the tzitz.

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**What was the appearance of the Apron? (v. 6-12)**

**RASHI:** I did not receive a tradition, nor find in the Baraisa d’Meleches HaMishkan (the Rabbinic Source which describes the Tabernacle and its contents) what the shape of the Apron is. My heart tells me that the High Priest was girded with it from behind, its width being like the width of an average man’s back, rather like an apron which noblewomen wear when they ride horseback.

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**What was the Purpose of the Apron? (v. 6-12)**

In general, the priestly garments served to glorify Aharon and his sons and inaugurate them as priests (see v. 3 above). More precisely however, there are two categories to be found within the priestly garb: a.) Some items were purely *decorative*. The most obvious example of this is the golden Forehead-Plate worn by the High Priest (see Ibn Ezra).
הפרק א"ת של הלוח יבש שם יש חמש מיליםbeeld: "שיהי כופה יחדח ליהוה אלארשי קדושית והבר: זה השלום שים רואים: "לאחר שכחה אמר העברית על הלאבנוןsprachятся השם ביטא וישראל: ישמהו שופטים על הדבר והאזהרה והשמית את השמות反过来 והבר: היא גבג.l של תורת되는 בכל אחרון הנני ידיעת והשמדה באב א"ת: ישמהו את התרבויות העברים על כימת.Heו יזג לישב איל א"ת ע"י ארצי קבצון מברק אנני א'هزניא.

ל כן ישב איל א"ת ע"י הלך האברсостоя וא"ת: א"ת ע"י יזג לישב איל א"ת ע"י ארצי קבצון מברק אנני א'هزניא.

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ל כן ישב איל א"ת ע"י הלך האברсостоя וא"ת: א"ת ע"י יזג לישב איל א"ת ע"י ארצי קבצון מברק אנני א'هزניא.
7 It should have two connected shoulder straps at both its ends. (The straps should be woven separately first and then) connected to it.

8 Its decorative belt, which is above it, should be made from it (woven professionally as one single piece, out of) gold (thread), turquoise, purple, and crimson wool, and twisted fine linen.

9 You should take two shoham stones and engrave upon them the names of the sons of Israel: six of their names on one stone and the names of the remaining six on the second stone, in the order of their birth.

11 Through a craftsman, you should engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel in (clear script, as is used on) a signet ring. You should make them surrounded by gold settings. You should put the two stones on the shoulder straps of the apron as stones of remembrance for the children of Israel. Aharon should bear their names upon his two shoulders before God as a remembrance (of the righteousness of the tribes).

THE SETTINGS AND THE BREASTPLATE

28:13 You should make settings of gold (for the Breastplate), and two cables of pure gold for the edges (of the Breastplate). You should make them from braided metal. (When you assemble the breastplate) you will (need to) place the cables on the settings.

b.) However, in addition to being decorative, most of the items were also functional as pieces of clothing.

At first glance, the Apron would appear to fall into the former category. It does not seem to have any functional use as a piece of clothing, since the High Priest would have already been fully dressed before putting on the Apron.

This, however, presents us with a problem when learning verse 4, above. The verse begins, “And these are the garments that they should make: a Breastplate, an Apron, a Robe, a checkered Tunic, a Turban and a Sash.” This suggests that all of the items in the verse here—including the Apron—fall under the category of functional garments.

Rashi was thus faced with the question: What was the function of the Apron as a piece of clothing?

First, he writes, “I did not receive a tradition, nor find in the Braisa d’Meleches HaMishkan what the shape of the Apron is.” Therefore, it is difficult to conclude what the purpose of this garment must have been.

Nevertheless, continues Rashi, “My heart tells me that the High Priest was girded with it from behind, its width being like the width of an average man’s back, rather like an apron which noblewomen wear when they ride horseback.”

A noblewoman would wear such an apron when riding horseback for reasons of modesty. Thus, concluded Rashi, the purpose of the Apron must have been likewise, to afford the High Priest with an extra measure of modesty when entering the Temple. In this respect, the Apron is similar to the Pants worn by the priests, which served to cover their “nakedness” from below (c.f. end of Parshas Yisro).

In fact, there is a tradition that Rashi once witnessed a noblewoman riding on a horse dressed in such an apron. Rashi wondered why God had caused him to see this. Later, when writing his commentary on the Torah, this memory provided him with the solution as to why the High Priests’ Apron could possibly be called a functional “garment.”

And that is why Rashi employed here the unusual expression, “My heart tells me,” since he could not help but feel that seeing the princess was a Divinely ordained event intended to assist him in understanding the Torah.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 191ff.)
## Classic Questions

### The Breastplate, Urim V’Tumim & Apron

**Points debated by Rashi & Rambam**

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1. If Urim V’Tumim is lacking, the breastplate is not invalidated.
2. If Urim V’Tumim is lacking, then the breastplate is invalided.
3. When asking a question from the breastplate, the high priest looks at Urim V’Tumim.
4. When asking a question from the breastplate, the high priest looks at the holy ark.
5. The high priest puts on the apron and ties its belt before attaching the breastplate.
6. The high priest puts on the apron without tying its belt, attaches the breastplate and then ties the belt.
7. Top of the apron does not reach the high priest’s elbows.
8. Top of the apron does reach the high priest’s elbows.
9. Names of tribes on shoham stones according to the order of their birth.
10. Names of tribes on shoham stones according to their mothers.
Through a professional weaver, you should make a “Breastplate of Judgment.” You should make it in a similar fashion to the Apron, (i.e.) you should make it from gold (thread), turquoise, purple, and crimson wool, and twisted fine linen.

When folded, (and ready to be worn by the High Priest,) it should be square, one span (=half a cubit) in its length and one span in its width.

You should set it with precious gems, four rows of stones. One row should be a row of red quartz, emerald, and yellow quartz

The second row: ruby, sapphire, and beryl (blue-green gem).

The third row: red zirconium, striped quartz, and (violet) amethyst.

The fourth row: yellow-green olivine, onyx, and jasper (opaque quartz).

They should be inlaid in gold in their settings.

The names of the children of Israel should be on the stones, twelve names in all. The names of the

Rashi & Rambam differ in a number of areas regarding the design and use of the Breastplate and Apron.

Perhaps it could be argued that all of these five disputes arise from one single, underlying point of contention. Namely: are the Breastplate, Urim v’Tumim one single unit, consisting of three component parts? Or, are they three distinct items?

Rashi adopted the latter stance, that they are three separate garments. Rambam perceived the Breastplate, Urim v’Tumim and Apron as one single entity. This led them to the following conclusions:

a.) Rashi understood that the Urim v’Tumim is not a crucial component of the Breastplate, since he viewed both items as separate entities in their own right. Therefore, in the second Temple, the absence of the Urim v’Tumim did not threaten the integrity of the breastplate.

Rambam however, saw the Urim v’Tumim as a crucial component of the Breastplate. Therefore, he held that in the second Temple the Urim v’Tumim must have been present (even if it was not functional), for otherwise, the Breastplate would have been disqualified.

b.) When asking a question to the Urim v’Tumim the Talmud states that the High Priest was required to face “the Divine Presence” (Yoma 73a). This could have one of two interpretations:

i.) The Divine Presence, as it is revealed in the Holy Ark.

ii.) The Divine Presence, as it is revealed in God’s full 42-letter name which is written on the Urim v’Tumim.

According to Rambam, the latter explanation was unacceptable, since he held that the Urim v’Tumim is one single entity with the Breastplate. Therefore, it would make no sense to say that the High Priest should “look at the Urim v’Tumim when asking a question from the Breastplate,” since they are one and the same thing. Therefore, Rambam concluded that the “Divine Presence” here must refer to the Holy Ark.

Rashi, however, did not have this problem, since he viewed the Urim v’Tumim and Breastplate as separate entities. Therefore, he learned more simply that the High Priest looked directly at the Urim v’Tumim when inquiring from the Breastplate.

c.) According to Rashi, the Apron and Breastplate are considered as two separate entities. Therefore, it would be logical to complete the donning of the Apron before beginning to put on the Breastplate. Consequently, Rashi held that the Apron’s belt is tied before the Breastplate is attached.

Ramabm however, held that the Apron’s belt is tied only after putting on the Breastplate, for this stresses his stance that the two items comprise one functional unit, as the tightening of the Apron’s belt also represented the completion of the donning of the Breastplate.

d.) Rashi and Rambam also argued about the size of the Apron. Rashi held that the Apron did not reach the elbows, like an ordinary riding apron (see Rashi and Tora Menachem to v. 6-12, above). However, Rambam held that this would be insufficient, for since the Apron and Breastplate are one single entity, it is logical to presume that they overlap each other, rather than leaving a gap of empty space in between. Therefore, Rambam ruled that the Apron reached above the elbows so that its top edge would vertically overlap with the bottom edge of the Breastplate.

e.) The two Shoham stones were attached to the shoulder straps of the Apron, and were engraved with the names of the tribes (see above v. 9-10). Verse 10 states that the names should be inscribed “in the order of their birth.” Rashi took this simply and literally to mean that the names are written: “according to the order in which they were born, i.e. Re’uwan, Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Dan, Naftali, on one stone. And on the second one, Gad, Asher, Yissachar, Zevulun, Yosef, Binyamin.”

However, Rambam held that the Apron and Breastplate were one entity. Therefore, he reasoned that the sequence of names on the Shoham
The Root of Contention

While we have explained the key point of Rashi’s dispute with Rambam and its various ramifications, we have still yet to clarify the logic that led them to their respective positions.

Rashi was loyal to the precise implication of scripture. Therefore, when verse 4 states, “These are the garments that they should make: a breastplate, an Apron, etc.,” he understood that the Breastplate and Apron must be separate entities, since the Torah refers to them as distinct “garments” in their own right. Similarly, Rashi saw great significance in the fact that the Torah first describes the Breastplate in its entirety (verses 13–28), and then mentions how Aharon should wear it (v. 29) before making any mention of the Urim v’Tumim that is placed inside.

This led Rashi to the conclusion that the Urim v’Tumim must be a separate entity from the Breastplate, otherwise the Torah would have included its details along with those of the Breastplate.

However, unlike Rashi who was writing a commentary on scripture, Rambam was codifying halachah (Jewish Law), which places more emphasis on the function of the items. In our case, Rambam understood that any one of the “priestly garments” that was not part of a person’s normal attire could not be considered halachically as “clothing.” Rather, these items would fall under the category of “decorations.” Of the eight priestly garments the Golden Forehead-Plate, Breastplate, Apron and Robe were all superfluous as items of clothing and were therefore considered to be decorations.

In other words, according to Rashi it is the precise wording of scripture which establishes whether an item is a “garment” or a “decoration.” According to Rambam these details are clarified using logic, based on the function of the items themselves as they are described by scripture.

Now, if a number of decorations are attached together as one, it makes sense to say that the result is one single decoration, since they share the same function and enhance each other. This was the basis of Rambam’s stance that the Breastplate, Urim v’Tumim and Apron are one single entity.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, p. 133ff; vol. 26, p. 191ff; vol. 31, pp. 159-60; vol. 36, pp. 146-150.)
How were the pomegranates and bells arranged at the lower hem of the Robe? (v. 33)

Rashi: The shapes were round and hollow, like a sort of pomegranate, shaped like hens’ eggs. The golden bells had clappers inside them. Between every two pomegranates, one bell was attached and suspended on the bottom hem of the robe.

Ramban: I don’t know why Rashi wrote that the pomegranates are separate from the bells, since according to this logic the pomegranates have no purpose whatsoever. And if you will say that the pomegranates were purely for decorative purposes, then why choose pomegranates! Surely apples would have been a better choice? Rather, it would seem that the bells are located separate from the bells, since according to this logic the pomegranates were purely for decorative purposes, then why choose pomegranates inside the pomegranates.

Why was it crucial for the bells to ring when Aharon entered the Sanctuary? (v. 35)

Ramban: The bells acted as a kind of “entry request” for the High Priest. For, just as walking into a king’s chamber unannounced is a capital offense, so too, walking into God’s sanctuary without warning would result in the death of the High Priest.
Breastplate of Judgment so that it will be over Aharon’s heart when he comes before God.  
Aharon will carry the (tool of) judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before God at all times.

**The Robe**

28:31  
You should make the Robe (worn under) the Apron entirely of turquoise wool. Its collar at the top should be hemmed inside, the work of a professional weaver, like the collar of a coat of armor. It must not be torn.

On its bottom edge you should make pomegranate shapes of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool, all around the edge, and golden bells among them all around. A golden bell (should be followed by) a pomegranate (which is followed by) a golden bell and (then another) pomegranate (and so on), on the bottom edge of the Robe, all around.

It should be on Aharon when he performs the service, and its sound should be heard when he enters the Holy Place before God, and when he leaves, so that he will not die.

**The Forehead-Plate**

28:36  
You should make a Forehead-Plate of pure gold, and you should engrave on it in (clear script, as is used on) a signet ring, (the words), “Holy to God.” You should place it upon a ribbon of turquoise wool, and it(s ribbons) should go over the Turban. It should be on (the forehead to

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**Classic Questions**

**Abarbanel:** The bells served to keep the High Priest aware that he was in a holy place. Or perhaps the bells were to inform others outside that the High Priest was still alive. For if the High Priest was not pure in his faith, he would not survive entry into the Holy Place.

**Toras Menachem**

The ba’al teshuvah (penitent) approaches Judaism in a totally different manner to the tzaddik (pious individual).

The tzaddik is at ease with the observance of mitzvos and the study of Torah. The everyday practice of Judaism is an environment in which he finds himself at home. His religiousity is “quiet” and uneventful.

The ba’al teshuvah on the other hand comes back to Judaism from a distance. As he follows the path of return, he finds himself wedged uncomfortably between two worlds: his former ways from which he gradually strips himself, and the new Torah lifestyle which he is attempting to embrace. Understandably, the process is one of considerable friction, which could be described as a “noisy” form of Judaism.

When the High Priest entered the Sanctuary, he did so on behalf of all the Jewish people: both those who were naturally pious, and those who were still struggling to come closer to Judaism. Therefore, his robe made noise, to remind him that he was representing even the “noisy” Jew.

Since this was the High Priest’s responsibility, his life was dependent on it, as the verse states, “Its sound should be heard when he enters the Holy Place before God, and when he leaves, so that he will not die” (v. 35).

For the same reason, pomegranate shapes were also attached to the Robe, since the pomegranate represents the distant Jew, as the verse states, “As many as a pomegranate’s seeds are the merits of your unworthiest” (Song of Songs 4:3). That, at least was Rashi’s opinion, for Rashi’s commentary was written for all Jews, even the “pomegranates” among us.

Ramban, however, who included mystical ideas in his commentary, suggested that apples should be placed on the Robe, rather than pomegranates. For the apple alludes to spiritual perfection, which mystically speaking, is the true, inner identity of every single Jew.

(Based on Likutei Sichos, vol. 16, p. 336ff.)
When Moshe dressed Aharon and his sons, did he dress them with the Pants? (v. 41)

Rashi: The commandment in verse 41 for Moshe to clothe Aharon and his sons includes all the garments: the Breastplate, Apron, Robe, Checkered Tunic, Turban, Sash, Forehead-Plate, and Pants.

Ohr haChayim: No. Note that the Pants are only mentioned in verse 42 after Moshe has already been told to dress Aharon and his sons in the priestly garments. From this we can conclude that Moshe was not required to put the Pants on Aharon and his sons.

Levush Ha’ohrah: No. God did not tell Moshe to dress Aharon and his sons with the Pants as it would be immodest to do so, and they could put them on perfectly well by themselves.

Why did Rashi Reject Ohr haChayim’s Logic? (v. 41)

In verse 41, Moshe is commanded to dress Aharon and his sons in the priestly garments. Presumably this refers to those garments which had been mentioned up to that point. This would logically exclude the Pants, which are only mentioned later, in verse 42, as Ohr haChayim writes.

However, Rashi rejected this argument, stating clearly that Moshe’s command to dress the priests in verse 41 referred also to the Pants in verse 42.
28:37-43

28:37 It should be upon Aharon's forehead, and Aharon (with it) will obtain (forgiveness for) the sin of sacrifices consecrated and all the holy gifts offered by the Jewish people (in a state of impurity). It should be upon his forehead at all times (when carrying out service in the Temple) to make them favorable before God.

THE TUNIC, TURBAN, SASH & PANTS

28:39 You should make the checkered Tunic from linen (to be worn under the robe).

You should make a linen Turban.

You should make a Sash, the work of a professional embroiderer.

For Aharon's sons (only four garments should be made.) You should make Tunics. You should make them Sashes. You should make them High Hats (i.e. Turbans) for honor and glory (and make them Pants, as mentioned below).

With the (eight garments described above) you should clothe Aharon, your brother, and his sons along with him (with four garments).

You should anoint (Aharon and his sons), inaugurate them (in office) and sanctify them so that they may serve Me as priests.

Make for them linen Pants to cover the flesh of their nakedness. They should reach from the waist down to the thighs.

The (appropriate garments) should be worn by Aharon and by his sons when they enter the Tent of Meeting (Tabernacle, or Holy Temple) or when they approach the Altar to serve in holiness, so they will not bear a sin and die. It should be an eternal law for him and for his descendants after him.

THE EXPLANATION

The process of appointing Aharon and his sons as priests and inaugurating them spans chapters 28 and 29. Throughout this entire narrative we find that every single activity is carried out by Moshe, whereas Aharon and his sons play a totally passive role.

The reason for this arrangement is made clear at the very outset. At the beginning of chapter 28, God tells Moshe, “You should bring Aharon your brother close to you, together with his sons, (separating them) from among the children of Israel, to serve Me as priests.” I.e. this entire process was one of Moshe’s bringing the priests close to his level (see commentary to 28:1). Therefore, it follows that every detail of the process, without exception, had to be performed by Moshe.

Thus, when reading verse 41 where Moshe is told to dress Aharon and his sons in the priestly garments, Rashi was convinced that this command referred also to the Pants, even though the command to wear Pants was only mentioned later, in verse 42. For, the Pants were also part of the priestly attire, and consequently a crucial part of the inauguration process, and it is inconceivable for any part of this process not to be carried out by Moshe.

(Based on Sichas Parshas Tetzaveh & Ki Sisa 5745)
עלול לו לדרום אתנייה: מ (ברוע) בה אזהר מצרפת גל花纹 ל לו אחר ארצה גבירה אשת
הנשעח לו לחם אפלים: ב- אותם ממתה והנה מצא באדם
הכיתורים מהרגו מהרות בברית: נ- ברית אחד באדם מסייע
הנה אז מתה: ג- ואות האśli בעלייה ממסיבי הגה אלה
שה Gör מזמה: ד- ואות האליל אופא לתהבגון האללה
הנה ד 적용 אש אפר גזע: ה- או גרבי האש אפר גזע
ולא ימען: ו- או גרבי אש אפר גזע

1. nbju, gu/ 2. ao gv/ 3. ao 4. zcjho bd/ 5. nsu, pWd nWt 6. "f d' s 7. zcjho bd:
219 / SHMOS - EXODUS - PARSHAS TETZAVEH 29:1-18

INauguration of Aharon and his Sons

This is what you should do for them in order to sanctify them to serve Me as Priests: Take one young bull and two rams, perfect ones (without blemish), 2 unleavened bread (which has been boiled and fried), unleavened loaves mixed with oil (before baking) and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (after baking), all of which you should make from fine wheat flour. 3 You should place them in a basket, and you should bring them in the basket, and the bull and the two rams.

4 You should bring Aharon and his sons near the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and you should (immerse them totally) in water.

5 You should take the garments and clothe Aharon with the Tunic, with the Robe (worn under) the Apron, with the Breastplate, and you should adorn him with the decorative belt of the Apron. 6 You should place the Turban upon his head and place the Holy Crown (i.e. the Forehead-Plate) on his (forehead, tightening the ribbons over) the Turban.

7 You should take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.

8 You should bring his sons near, and you should clothe them with Tunics. 9 You should gird them—Aharon and his sons—with Sashes, and you should dress them with High Hats (Turbans).

The priesthood will be an eternal law for them. (By means of all these things) you will inaugurate Aharon and his sons into office.

10 You should bring the bull to the front of the Tent of Meeting. Aharon and his sons should lean their hands upon the head of the bull. 11 You should then slaughter the bull before God, (in the courtyard of the Tabernacle) at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. 12 You should take some of the blood of the bull and apply it on the horns of the Altar with your finger, and you should pour out all the (remaining) blood onto the (protruding) base of the Altar.

13 You should then take all the fat covering the stomach, the diaphragm (together with some of) the liver, the two kidneys and the fat which is on them, and make them go up in smoke upon the Altar.

14 You should burn the flesh of the bull, its hide and its dung in fire outside the camp. It is a sin offering.

15 You should take the ram, and Aharon and his sons should lean their hands on the ram’s head. 16 You should slaughter the ram, and you should take its blood and sprinkle it on (two diagonally opposite horns of the) Altar (so it is visible) all around. 17 You should dissect the ram into its parts. You should wash its innards and its legs and put them with its (other) parts and with its head, 18 and you should make the entire ram go up in smoke upon the Altar. It is a burnt offering made to God, a pleasing fragrance (to Him). It is a fire offering for God.
19 You should take the second ram, and Aharon and his sons should lean their hands upon the ram’s head. 20 You should slaughter the ram, take some of its blood and put it on the cartilage of Aharon’s right ear and on the cartilage of Aharon’s sons’ right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. You should sprinkle the blood upon the altar all around. 21 You should then take some of the blood that is upon the Altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aharon and on his garments, on his sons and on his sons’ garments with him. He will become consecrated along with his garments, and his sons and their garments, with him.

22 You should take out of the ram the (abdominal) fat, the tail-piece, the fat that covers the innards, the diaphragm of the liver, the two kidneys along with the fat that is upon them, and the right thigh—for it is a ram of perfection— 23 one ( unleavened) loaf, one ( unleavened) loaf (which is boiled and fried in) oil, and one wafer (a total of one tenth) of the basket of matzos that stands before God. 24 You should place it all upon Aharon’s palms and upon his sons’ palms, and you (Moshe) should wave the (ir hands together with them from underneath) as a waving before God.

25 You should then take (the breads) from their hands and make them go up in smoke upon the Altar with the burnt offering as a pleasurable fragrance before God. It is a fire offering for God(’s sake).

26 You should take the breast of Aharon’s ram of perfection, and wave it as a waving before God, and it will become your portion.

27 (On future occasions follow a different procedure:) you should consecrate the breast of the wave offering through waving (horizontally) and the thigh of the raised offering by raising (vertically), from the ram of perfection (giving it to) Aharon and his sons (to eat).

28 This (donation of the breast and thigh) from the Jewish people will be an eternal law for Aharon and his sons, for it is a donation, and it should remain an offering from the children of Israel from their peace offerings. It is their donation to God.

29 Aharon’s holy garments should be (passed on to his successor as High Priest among) his sons after him, to be exalted through them and inaugurated into office through them.

30 You should make the sanctification of Aharon’s holy garments, and the sanctification of Aharon’s holy garments should be (passed on to his successor as High Priest among) his sons after him, to be exalted through them and inaugurated into office through them. 31 The (unique) one of his sons (who will succeed him as High Priest in his place, who will enter the Tent of Meeting to serve in the Holy Place, should wear them (first) for seven (consecutive) days.

32 Aharon’s holy garments should be (passed on to his successor as High Priest among) his sons after him, to be exalted through them and inaugurated into office through them. They should eat those things that cleansed them (of their non-priestly status) in order to inaugurate them into office. A non-priest may not eat from them, because they are (extremely) sacred.
34 If any of the flesh of the perfection offering or any of the bread is left over until the next morning, you should burn the leftovers in fire. It may not be eaten, because it is a sacred thing.

35 You should do everything (without exception) that I have commanded you to Aharon and his sons. Their inauguration will take seven days (and you should carry out the same procedures on each day).

36 Each day, you should offer up a bull as a Sin Offering to cleanse (the Altar from its previous state of profanity). You should apply blood to the Altar to cleanse, and you should anoint it, in order to sanctify it. 37 For seven days you should perform (this) cleansing on the Altar and sanctify it. Then, the Altar will be a holy of holies. (Even an invalid offering which) touches the Altar will become holy.

38 This is what you should offer on the Altar: lambs in their first year, two a day, regularly. 39 One lamb you should offer up in the morning and the other lamb you should offer up in the afternoon.

40 With the first lamb, offer one tenth of fine flour, thoroughly mixed with a quarter of a hin of crushed olive oil, and a libation of one quarter of a hin of wine. 41 You should offer up the second lamb in the afternoon. You should offer with it the same flour offering as the morning and its libation. (The flour offering is) a pleasurable fragrance, a fire offering to God.

42 It should be a regular burnt offering for your generations, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before God, where I will arrange meetings with you, to speak to you there. 43 There I will arrange meetings with the children of Israel, and (the Tabernacle) will be sanctified by My Presence. 44 I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the Altar, and I will sanctify Aharon and his sons to serve Me as priests. 45 I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel and I will be their God. 46 They will know that I, God, am their God, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt (in order) to dwell among them. I am God, their God.

THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR

You should make an Altar for bringing incense up in smoke. You should make it out of acacia wood. 2 It should be one cubit long and one cubit wide, a square, and two cubits high. Its horns should be one piece with it. 3 You should coat it with pure gold, its top, its walls all around, and its horns, and you should make for it a golden-rimmed edge all around.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Why is the command to build the Incense Altar recorded here, and not along with the other apparatus in Parshas Terumah? (v. 1-10)

SFORNO: The Tabernacle together with its apparatus caused the Divine Presence to dwell within it. The offering of sacrifices then brought God’s glory to the Tabernacle.

The incense, however, had a different function. Namely, that after all the above had been completed, the incense was burned to appease God, so that He should find all the service that had been carried out acceptable. To hint to this point, the command to build the incense Altar was placed here at the end of Parshas Tetzaveh.

OHR HACHAYIM: Any part of the Tabernacle which was suitable for use in the Holy Temple (in Jerusalem) was permitted to be used there on a permanent basis. An exception to this rule was the golden Altar which, despite the fact that its function did not change in the Temple, was nevertheless required to be replaced. This detail was hinted to in the Torah, by describing the golden Altar separately here at the end of Parshas Tetzaveh.
The Hebrew term for sacrifices, korbonos (כְּרוֹבָנֹם), is related to the word kiru (כִּירֵע) meaning "close." This suggests that the process of bringing sacrifices in the Temple brought man closer to his Creator. Ironically, however, the word "close" itself suggests a certain distance. For if two entities are merely "close" to one another, they remain—in the final analysis—separate. It is only that despite their inherent separateness, they have come closer together.

Incense, ketores (קֵטְרֶה), suggests "connecting" (כִּירֵע) is the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew word "kerev", meaning "knot" or "connection"). Here we are not speaking of two separate entities which have become close, but rather, of two entities that have become one.

Thus, the offering of incense in the Holy Temple was a process by which man and God, who had already become close through the offering of sacrifices, were then joined together in total oneness.

In order to stress this point, the command to build the Incense Altar was recorded here, at the end of Parshas Tetzaveh. For the Tabernacle had been erected, the Priests inaugurated and God’s presence rested in the Tabernacle (chaps. 25-29), nevertheless, God was only close to the Jewish people, and not one with them (at least, in a revealed manner) until the incense was offered.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh 5752)
4 You should make for it two golden rings underneath its rimmed edge on its two sides. You should make them on its two sides, so that they should serve as holders for poles with which to carry it. 5 You should make the poles out of acacia wood and coat them with gold.

6 You should place it in front of the partition, which is in front of the Ark of Testimony, in front of the Ark’s lid, which is on the testimony, where I will arrange to meet with you.

7 Aharon should make incense of spices go up in smoke upon it. Every morning when he cleans the lamps (of the Menorah) he should make it go up in smoke. 8 When Aharon kindles the lights in the afternoon, he should make incense go up in smoke. It is an eternal incense before God, for all generations. 9 You should not offer up on it unauthorized incense, a burnt offering or a flour offering. You should not pour any libation on it.

10 Once a year (on the Day of Atonement) Aharon should (pour blood) on its horns to achieve atonement. He should achieve atonement once a year with the blood of the atonement sacrifice, for all generations. It is holy of holies to God.

HAFTARAHS: TETZAVEH P. 316. ZACHOR - P. 334.
Parshas Tetzaveh contains 4 positive mitzvos & 3 prohibitions.

1. Preparing the lamps in the Menorah [27:20].
2. The priests should wear special garments [28:4].
3. The Breastplate should not become detached from the Apron [28:28].
4. Not to tear the Robe [28:32].
5. To eat the flesh of the sin offering and the guilt offering [29:33].
6. Burning of the incense [30:7].
7. Not to burn alien incense or offer up sacrifices on the golden Altar [30:9].
The term *Ki Sisa* literally means, “When you will raise up.” But, in the context of the verse, the term is translated “When you will count.”

Of all the *Parshiyos* in the Torah, this one seems to be the most unlikely candidate for the name, “When you will raise up the heads of the children of Israel,” for here we read of the most devastating spiritual descent in Jewish history. Just a few weeks after receiving the Torah directly from God, and as they are about to be given the two Tablets of the covenant, the Jewish people rapidly sink into the decadence of idol worship and, as a result, the Tablets are smashed. This is hardly what we would describe as “raising the heads” of the Jewish people?

Our Sages said about the Torah, “Learn it and learn it, for everything is in it” (*Avos* 5:21). At first glance this seems to mean that within the Torah as a whole, insights can be found into every area of life. However, at a deeper level, the statement that “everything is in it,” could be applied to each and every idea in the Torah. Since Torah is the infinite wisdom of God, it follows that each idea contains a truly unlimited amount of information, to the extent that “everything is in it.” And if this is true for a single idea, certainly an entire *Parsha* is macrocosmic.

However, this phenomenon, that “everything” is found in all *Parshiyos* of Torah, is more obvious in some *Parshiyos* than in others. Perhaps our *Parsha* could claim to bring this idea to light more than all the others, since it discusses three fundamental aspects of Judaism:

*Revelation*—God gives Moshe the Divinely inscribed first set of Tablets.

*Rebellion*—The incident of the Golden Calf

*Reconciliation*—by Moshe, for the sin on behalf of the Jewish people, followed by the giving of the second Tablets and climaxing with the shining of light through Moshe’s face.

The scheme of history also follows this sequence:

a.) Torah (revelation) preceded the world

b.) The world was created, which conceals God’s presence (rebellion).

c.) With the true and complete redemption through Mashiach, God will finally be “reconciled” with His world.

These three phases are each crucial parts of a larger whole. Thus, even the middle stage of “rebellion” was ultimately intended by God as a precursor to the reconciliation that was to follow.

This also explains why the whole of our *Parsha* is called *Ki Sisa* (“raise the heads”), for even the darkest moments of Jewish history have been orchestrated by God as a pathway to the redemption, when the ultimate “raising of the heads” will take place.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5752)
numbered things, and pestilence comes upon them, as we find in King David’s time (see Samuel II, ch. 24).

MIZRACHI: The word קָפָר could also be translated “lift up.” Consequently, the verse would be referring to the uplifting quality of donating the half-shekel which came after the spiritual descent of the sin of the Golden Calf. However, Rashi rejected this interpretation, since the verse can be rendered more literally as, “When you will wish to take the sum of the Jewish people.”

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What does the term קָפָר in verse 12 mean?

RASHI: It is an expression of “taking,” as Onkelos renders. The meaning of the verse is thus: When you wish to take the sum of their numbers (of the Jewish people) to know how many they are, do not count them by the head. Rather, each one shall give a half-shekel, and you shall count the shekels to know their number. Then there will be no plague among them, for the evil eye has power over every person and with a further problem. The verse is written in the wrong order: Surely one first collect half a shekel from every person and then the sum is counted to determine the number of people. Yet the verse writes the counting before the collecting.

To solve this problem Rashi rephrased the beginning of our verse to read, “When you wish to take the sum of the children of Israel to determine their numbers, count them by letting each man give...half a shekel.” With this turn of phrase, Rashi enabled us to read the verse simply and logically, so that the beginning precedes the end.

From Rashi’s addition (“wish to”) we see that, at the literal level, our verse is not speaking of a compulsory command to count the Jewish people. Therefore, the verse could not possibly be speaking about the half a shekel that was given to atone for the Golden Calf, since this was a mandatory donation.

Rather, God is telling Moshe that if, for whatever reason, he will choose to count the Jewish people, he should not count them directly, as this could attract the evil eye. Rather, Jewish people should always be counted by another means, such as through a fixed donation to charity.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5725)
Prohibition of Counting Jewish People

(The following occurred after the incident with the Golden Calf):

30:11 God spoke to Moshe, saying: 12 “When you (wish to) take the sum of the children of Israel to determine their numbers, count them by letting each man give to God an atonement for his soul. (Avoid counting them directly) then there will be no plague among them when they are counted.

Donation of Half a Shekel

30:13 This is what they should give—everyone who goes through the counting (system)—half a shekel according to the shekel (measurement system which is used for) sanctified (items, as follows:) Twenty gerahs equal one shekel. The contribution to God should be half a shekel.

14 “Everyone who goes through the counting (system), from the age of twenty years and upward, should give a contribution to God. 15 The rich should give no more, and the poor should give no less than half a shekel when giving the offering to God, to atone for your souls.

16 “You should take the atonement silver from the children of Israel and use it for making (sockets of) the Tent of Meeting. It will be a reminder for the children of Israel before God, to atone for your souls.

Classic Questions

What does it mean that the half-shekel is given “to atone for your souls”? (v. 15)

Rashi: This half-shekel donation formed a fund from which communal sacrifices were purchased. Since these sacrifices achieved atonement for the community, the verse states, “to atone for your souls.”

How Did the Half a Shekel Atone? (v. 15)

Rashi writes that the half a shekel achieved atonement for the Jewish people since the funds raised were used to purchase communal sacrifices, which bring about atonement.

Rambam, however, in his Sefer Hamitzvos, writes that we learn the atonement quality of the half-shekel donation from two different verses: “each man should give to God an atonement for his soul” (v. 12), and “this is what they should give” (v. 13)—(See Sefer Hamitzvos, Kapach edition, positive commandment 171). The key distinction between Rashi and Rambam is that Rashi sees the atonement as being achieved from the collective effect of all the communal sacrifices. Rambam, on the other hand, sees the atonement as being achieved from the donation of the half a shekel itself. He therefore quotes a verse which speaks of the atonement quality in the singular.

Sparks of Chasidus

“This is What They Should Give” (v. 13)

“God showed Moshe a coin of fire weighing half a shekel, and He said, ‘They should give one like this’” (Rashi v. 13).

Fire differs from all other elements on this earth, in that it strives upward, reaching ever higher, dancing, flickering, until finally it frees itself of its chains when the wick burns out and it unites with its source. Fire is the paradigm of self-effacement, having no distinct shape or form of its own.

A coin, however, is hewed from the depths of the earth, the lowest of the four elements that constitute the makeup of this world. The antithesis of fire, the coin falls ever downward, clearly defined in its shape and form. Fire represents the transcendence of the spiritual; a coin represents the crassness of the physical.

It was not despite the sharp contrast between them, but specifically because of it, that God showed Moshe a coin of fire. God taught Moshe that the coarse and the unrefined is not necessarily the antithesis of the most holy and pure. The physical does not repel the spiritual, rather they can work in harmony, until they reach complete fusion, absolute unity, as represented by a coin made of fire.

On a practical level, God taught Moshe that even coarse human beings who are naturally driven by selfish motives, self-love being their basic instinct, can also serve the Divine with the most noble of services, as represented by the complete selflessness of fire.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5749)
Where did the copper for the Urn come from? (v. 18)

Rashi: It came from the mirrors of the women who had given birth to legions of children in Egypt. The Israelite women owned mirrors, which they would look into when they adorned themselves. Even to legions of children in Egypt. The Israelite women owned mirrors, even to legions of children in Egypt.

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God spoke to Moshe, saying: 18 “You should make an Urn of copper to be used for washing and a base for it from copper. You should place it (in the area) between the Tent of Meeting and the Altar (to one side), and you should put water in it.

Aharon and his sons should wash their hands and feet (simultaneously) from it. 19 When they enter the Tent of Meeting, they should wash with water, otherwise they will die. Or, when they approach the Altar to serve, to make a fire offering rise up in smoke to God, 20 they should wash their hands and feet, otherwise they will die.

“This should be for them an eternal statute—for him (Aharon) and for his descendants, for all their generations.”

God spoke to Moshe, saying: 23 “You should take for yourself (high quality) spices: 500 (shekels) of common myrrh*, half that amount, 250 (shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 (shekels) of aromatic cane, 24 500 (shekels) of cassia herb—according to the shekel (measurement system

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**The Urn**

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**The Anointing Oil**

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**Class Questions**

- **How was the anointing oil made? (v. 24)**
  
  **Rashi:** The Sages of Israel disputed this matter:
  
  Rabbi Meir said: They boiled the roots (of the spices) in the oil.
  
  Rabbi Yehudah said to him: Surely the amount of oil did not even suffice to smear the roots, never mind boil them? Rather, they soaked the roots in water so that they would not absorb the oil, and then poured the oil on them until it absorbed the scent, and then they wiped the oil off the roots.

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**Toras Menachem**

- **Was Rabbi Meir Refuted? (v. 24)**
  
  Rashi cites two opinions as to how the anointing oil was made: Rabbi Meir holds that the spice roots were boiled in oil. Rabbi Yehudah holds that the roots were first soaked in water and then used to perfume the oil.

  However, Rabbi Yehudah’s criticism of Rabbi Meir’s view—that it was impossible for them to have boiled the roots as there was insufficient oil—was simply not responded to by Rabbi Meir. The fact that no answer was given seems to suggest that Rabbi Meir conceded to the view of Rabbi Yehudah. Why then, did Rashi choose to bring Rabbi Meir’s view if it had been defeated?

  Clearly, Rashi must have understood that Rabbi Meir’s perspective remained valid despite Rabbi Yehudah’s criticism. How then, are we to understand this debate?

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*See Sichas Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5747.*
which is used for) sanctified (items), and one hin of olive oil.

25 “You should make this into an oil for holy anointment, a professional mixture, made by a professional perfumer. It will be oil for holy anointment.”

26 “You should use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of Testimony, the Table and all its utensils, the Menorah and its utensils, the Incense Altar, the Sacrificial Altar and all its utensils, the Urn and its base. (The anointing) consecrates them so that they become holy of holies. Whatever touches them will become holy.

30 “You should anoint Aharon and his sons and consecrate them to serve Me as priests.”

31 “You should speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘This will be oil of holy anointment to Me for all your generations. It should not be poured upon human flesh. You must not use the same formula to make anything that is like it. It is holy. It will be holy to you. Any person who makes a mixture like it, or puts any of (the mixture made by Moshe) on an unauthorized person will be cut off from his people.’”

30:34

God said to Moshe: “Take for yourself spices: balsam sap, onycha and galbanum, (other) spices and pure frankincense. They should be of equal weight. You should make this into incense, a professionally mixed compound that is finely blended, pure, and holy.

36 “You should grind some of it finely, and you should set some of it (daily) before the (Ark of) Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will arrange meetings with you. It shall be holy of holies to you.
37 The incense that you will make should not be duplicated for personal use. It will be holy to you for God. Any person who makes anything like it, to smell its fragrance, will be cut off from his people.”

The Explanation

The Torah’s command concerning the production of the anointing oil is unclear, as it presents a practical impossibility. “You shall make this into an oil for holy anointment, a professional mixture... It will be oil for holy anointment” (v. 25). The command stresses two separate details:

a.) The final product must be “a professional mixture,” i.e. “mixed to the extent that one ingredient becomes totally absorbed by the other” (Rashi ibid.).

b.) The final result must be oil (“You shall make this into an oil”) and not sludge.

This command appears to be a practical impossibility, since the effective fulfillment of each condition inevitably compromises on the other.

If the ingredients were to be mixed to the optimum—thus fulfilling condition “a”—it would be necessary to cook them together. The second condition, however, would not be met, as a sludge would be produced and not a pure oil.

In order to meet the second condition and make pure oil, it would be necessary to mix the ingredients in a way that would allow them to be separated later, thus compromising the first condition (the optimum mixing of the ingredients).

This dilemma is the basis of Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehudah’s contention. Since the perfect fulfillment of both conditions is impossible, these two sages argue as to which condition should be regrettably compromised. Rabbi Meir maintains that the roots should be boiled in oil, compromising on the second condition (pure oil) in order to meet the requirements of the first (mixing). Rabbi Yehudah maintains that the oil should be smeared over the roots, compromising the first condition (mixing) for the sake of the second (pure oil).

In this final analysis we see that Rabbi Meir did not find it necessary to respond to Rabbi Yehudah’s criticism, as it was founded on his own understanding that the second condition is of primary importance. Since the verse makes no indication as to which is correct, Rashi cited both opinions.

The Crux of the Debate

What led Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehudah to their respective conclusions?
Why is the observance of Shabbos mentioned here, in verse 13?

Rashi: God was saying, “Although you will be eager and enthusiastic in the work of the Tabernacle, Shabbos should not be set aside because of it.”

Barshenura: Why would anybody come to the conclusion that the construction of the Tabernacle should override Shabbos? After all, building the Tabernacle is but one single positive mitzvah, whereas the observance of Shabbos constitutes two mitzvos—the positive commandment to rest and the prohibition of performing work. So, why would a single commandment override two?

However, there are minor prohibitions of Shabbos—such as driving an animal—which a person might think could be set aside for the building of the Tabernacle. Therefore, this warning was necessary.

Mizrahi: Alternatively, the Jewish people might have reasoned that since Shabbos is set aside for the offering of sacrifices, so too it could be set aside for the building of the Tabernacle in which sacrifices are offered. (Commentary to Kedoshim 19:30.)
God spoke to Moshe, saying: 2 “See, I have appointed (to work for Me) Betzalel the son of Uri the son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah, 3 and I have filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom, with insight, with Divine inspiration, and with the ability for all types of work: 4 to do master weaving, to work with gold, with silver, and with copper, 5 with the craft of setting gems and with the craft of wood, to do all kinds of work.

“I have also given him Ohaliav the son of Achisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Into all the (other) wisehearted (men among you) I have (also) instilled the wisdom to make everything that I have commanded you:

7 “The Tent of Meeting, and the Ark (which holds the Tablets of) testimony, as well as the lid which goes on it, all the tent equipment, 8 the Table and its implements, the pure Menorah and all its utensils, the Incense Altar, 9 the Sacrificial Altar and all its utensils, the Urn and its base, 10 the meshwork cloths (used to pack the Tabernacles’ utensils during transport), the sacred garments for Aharon the Priest and the garments of his sons in which to serve as priests, 11 the anointing oil and the incense (used to raise smoke which is) Holy.

“They should do everything that I have commanded you.”

God spoke to Moshe, saying: 13 “You should speak to the children of Israel and say: ‘But keep My Shabbos (even when you are building the Tabernacle)! For it is a sign between Me and you for all your generations (that I chose you, and so that the nations should) know that I, God, am making you holy. 14 Keep the Shabbos, for it is a sacred thing for you. Those who desecrate it should be put to death (if witnesses were present, but if no witnesses were present, then) anyone who performs work on it will have his soul cut off from amongst his people. 15 Six days work may be done, but on the...
means be enthusiastic about the construction of the Tabernacle, but beware that your zeal should not lead to the accidental desecration of Shabbos.

Thus, it turns out that there was no concern here that the Jewish people would desecrate Shabbos due to a halachic argument (as Bartenura and Mizrachi suggest). Rather, there was a practical fear that the pressure to complete the Tabernacle as soon as possible might lead to an oversight in the observance of Shabbos.

**Moshe’s Switch**

Based on this approach, we can also answer a problem that arises later in Parshas Vayakhel. When Moshe came down from Mount Sinai and gathered the Jewish people to instruct them about the Tabernacle, he first told them that Shabbos must be observed (Shemos 35:1-3). Rashi comments, “He prefaced them the instructions about the Tabernacle with the warning to keep Shabbos, to teach that the construction work does not override Shabbos” (v. 2 ibid.). This would appear to mean that the Torah placed the prohibition of Shabbos before the mitzvah of building the Tabernacle to indicate that it has a higher priority.

However, here in our Parsha, the order is reversed. The instructions about building the Tabernacle (v. 1-11) come before the mitzvah of keeping Shabbos (v. 12-17). So how can Rashi derive any significance from the order of these two mitzvos in Parshas Vayakhel, if the order is reversed here?

Based on the above explanation, however, the change of order can be easily understood: It was explained above that there was no concern that the Jewish people would desecrate Shabbos to build the Tabernacle due to mistaken halachic reasoning. Rather, there was a fear that their enthusiasm in speedy construction could lead to an oversight in the observance of Shabbos.
seventh day is a Sabbath of complete rest (with the intention of being) holy to God. Whoever performs work on the Sabbath day should be put to death. 16 The children of Israel should observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant. 17 It is an eternal sign between Me and the children of Israel that in six days God created the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day He ceased and rested.”

**The Sin of the Golden Calf**

(The following occurred before the construction of the Tabernacle):

When He had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai (telling him the laws that are found in Parshas Mishpatim), He gave Moshe the two Tablets of the testimony, stone Tablets, written with the finger of God.

1 The people saw that Moshe was delayed in coming down from the mountain.

The people gathered against Aharon, and they said to him: “Come on! Make us gods that will go before us (and lead us), because (as for) this man Moshe, who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we don’t know what has become of him.”

2 Aharon said to them, “Take the golden earrings off the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me,” (hoping to delay them until Moshe came down).

**Classic Questions**

- **How could Aharon and the Jewish people make a Golden Calf so soon after the Torah had been given and after they had witnessed God’s miracles? (v. 1-6)**

  **Sa’adia Ga’on:** Aharon wanted to test the Jewish people to see if they would actually worship idols, so he pretended to go along with their plan. Nevertheless, since he did not execute the idol worshipers immediately when they stumbled, God became angry with Aharon too.

  **Ibn Ezra & Kuzari:** The Jewish people did not intend to worship idols, God forbid. Rather, in Moshe’s absence, they were seeking a concrete form of Divine Service. The calf was thus intended to be an object through which they worshiped God, as Aharon said explicitly, “Tomorrow should be a festival to God” (v. 5).

  **Ramban:** The Jewish people did not intend to worship idols, God forbid. Rather, since Moshe had disappeared, they sought a replacement for him to guide them in serving God. Aharon chose a calf, since in the celestial chariot the face of an ox can be seen to the left side, representing God’s strength (see Ezekiel 1:10).

  **Da’as Zekeinim:** The Jewish people were split into three groups. a.) Those who were merely looking for a new leader. b.) Those who wished to worship idols. c.) The tribe of Levi, who remained totally loyal to God. (v. 26).

  **Tiferes Yehonason:** The Jewish people knew that if Moshe had not disappeared the Tabernacle would have been built and God would have spoken to Moshe from between the two cherubs (see above 25:22). When they saw that Moshe had departed, they decided to make the...
cherubs themselves so that God would speak to them. Thus, they told Aharon, “Make us gods that will go before us” (v. 1), in the plural since they intended to make two cherubs.

However, instead of making cherubs with the face of a child, as was intended for the Tabernacle, they chose instead the face of an ox (calf). This is because the face of an ox appeared on the left-hand side of the celestial chariot of Ezekiel, whereas Moshe is associated with God’s “right side,” as the verse states, “He led at Moshe’s right, the arm of His glory” (Isaiah 63:12). So, when Moshe departed, they presumed that God was no longer channeling His blessings through the right-hand side of the chariot, but rather through the left, via Aharon. Therefore, they made cherubs with the face of an ox (calf).

but rather, a replacement for Moshe (c.f. Ramban). The story begins with the words, “The people saw that Moshe was delayed in coming down from the mountain,” indicating clearly that the events that were to follow were merely an attempt to replace Moshe.

Nevertheless, the Jewish people requested from Aharon “gods that will go before us” (v. 2), which seems to suggest that they were seeking an actual deity. However, this could not possibly be the case since:

a.) Why would any deity “go before us”? Surely a worshipper must come before his god, and not the other way around? Therefore, the word אֱלֹהִים here could not be translated as “gods” but rather as “leaders.”

In fact, Rashi has already explained that this is a possible translation earlier in Parshas Shemos (on the verse, “He will be your spokesman, and you will be his leader” [4:16, see also 7:1]), so he does not have to repeat himself here.

b.) From the end of verse 2 it is obvious that we are speaking of a replacement for Moshe and not for God. The verse says explicitly that the reason why they wanted to make אֱלֹהִים is because “as for this man Moshe, who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we don’t know what has become of him.” Clearly, the correct translation of אֱלֹהִים here is “leaders,” since the riders were a replacement for Moshe.

Despite their pure motives, however, it is easily conceivable how some of the Jewish people were eventually misled, to the extent that they eventually leave Egypt and use these trees to construct the Tabernacle.

Why an Idol?

We have yet to explain though why a Golden Calf was considered by the Jewish people to be an appropriate replacement for Moshe.

Earlier, in Parshas Terumah, Rashi explained that Yaakov planted acacia trees in Egypt, and that he told his children that they would eventually leave Egypt and use these trees to construct the Tabernacle (26:15). From this we see that for many years the Jewish people had been yearning to build the Tabernacle.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

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Despite their pure motives, however, it is easily conceivable how some
of the Jewish people were eventually misled, to the extent that they
worshiped the calf as an idol.

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(26:15). From this we see that for many years the Jewish people had been
yearning to build the Tabernacle.
All the people stripped themselves of the golden earrings that were on their ears (immediately) and brought them to Aharon. He took (the rings) from their hands, tied it up in a cloth and (sorcerers from the mixed multitude) made it into a molten calf. They (the mixed multitude) said: “These are your gods, O Israel, who have brought you up from the land of Egypt!”

When Aharon saw (that the Golden Calf had life in it), he built an altar in front of it (to push them off further). Aharon called out and said: “Tomorrow should be a festival to God,” (for he was sure that Moshe would come down by then).

On the next day they arose early, offered up burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and they became depraved.

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Now they found that Moshe had left them without commanding them about building the Tabernacle (for the command comes later in Parshas Vayakhel). One detail they did understand about the Tabernacle was that its primary focus was the cherubs, from where God spoke. Therefore, they presumed that the cherubs were a form of “intermediary” between God and the Jewish people that could replace Moshe.

God had actually forbidden the manufacture of imitation cherubs, a command which he told Moshe explicitly after the Giving of the Torah (see Yisro 20:20 and Rashi ibid.). But Moshe was still up on the mountain and he had not yet told the Jewish people of this prohibition. This explains why Aharon was willing to participate in the making of the Golden Calf as, at that point, the Jewish people had no idea that imitation cherubs outside the Tabernacle were prohibited.

Thus we see that by reading the verses literally, bearing in mind Rashi’s previous comments, the entire story becomes clear. Therefore, Rashi did not need to explain why the Jewish people made the Golden Calf.

A HALACHIC EXPLANATION

Although Aharon never actually worshiped the Golden Calf, he did participate in making it (v. 4. See two opinions of Rashi ibid.). However, it could be argued that Aharon had no forbidden involvement with the Golden Calf for the following reason:

Normally, an object which has been used for idol worship becomes prohibited for any further beneficial use. However, one condition to this rule is that the idol worshiper worshiped the idol with his own property. If however, he used somebody else’s property then we apply the principle that, “a person cannot render prohibited that which does not belong to him” (Avodah Zarah 53b).

[For example, if Re’uvain pours wine on an idol then the wine is prohibited for any future benefit. But if Re’uvain takes Shimon’s wine and pours it on an idol to inconvenience him, then it does not become prohibited, for why should the Torah assist Re’uvain by rendering the wine prohibited? Therefore we say that “a person cannot render prohibited that which does not belong to him.” See Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 385:2, Yoreh De’ah 5:3—Editor’s note]

When Aharon told the Jewish people to collect gold, he was careful not to acquire it personally. He thus said, “Take the golden earrings off the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me” (v. 2), rather than saying, “give them to me,” which would indicate that he wished to acquire them.

Since Aharon did not possess the gold, the fact that he made an idol with it did not render it prohibited. And since Aharon never actually worshiped the Golden Calf, it turns out he had no forbidden involvement with it at all.

Questioning Aharon’s Exemption

The Talmud indicates that it is possible to cause another’s belongings to become forbidden. This is where the owner clearly consented to use his object for idol worship.

[In the previous example, if Re’uvain had asked Shimon to pour the wine to the idol, the wine would have become forbidden.]

In tractate Avodah Zarah (53b), the following discussion is recorded:

The Torah states, “[These are the laws that you shall observe to perform in the Land of Israel...] You should burn their trees of idol worship in fire” (Re’eh 12:1,3).

[The Talmud asks:] Surely, however, the trees belong to the Jewish people, since the Land of Israel was bequeathed to us by our forefathers, and “a person cannot render prohibited that which does not belong to him”? (i.e. since the non-Jews worshiped trees that did not belong to them they should not become prohibited. If so, why do they have to be burned?—Rashi)

[The Talmud answers:] When the Jewish people worshiped the calf, they indicated that they were interested in idolatry, so when the non-Jews came [to the land of Israel and worshiped the trees] they did so as agents on behalf the Jewish people.

This presents a problem to our earlier solution:

From the Talmud it is clear that Aharon’s exemption based on the grounds that “a person cannot render prohibited that which does not belong to him,” was invalidated when “the Jewish people...indicated that they were interested in idolatry.” After the fact, it became clear that Aharon had indeed made an idol. This appears to render our entire argument flawed.

However, in truth, our argument still stands, since the Talmud stresses that “when the Jewish people worshiped the calf, they indicated that they were interested in idolatry.” This proves that our exemption based on the grounds, “A person cannot render prohibited that which does not belong to him,” is only invalidated through worshipping an idol. And since Aharon never worshiped the Golden Calf, he was totally exempt.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, p. 143ff. See also vol. 36, p. 268)

The Last Word

Jewish Women (and children) did not give their gold for the making of the Golden Calf. Rather, their husbands took the gold from them. This shows that true belief in one God is stronger by women than men. (ibid.)
Why did Moshe tell God not to be angry? (v. 11)

RASHI: Moshe was saying to God, ‘Is a wise man jealous of anyone but a wise man?’

RAMBAN: Surely Moshe should have prayed to God respectfully, and remorsefully, rather than challenging Him, ‘Why are You angry?’ However, Moshe was saying to God, ‘Why have You directed Your attribute of judgment at Your people? Save that for their enemies!’

OHR HACHAYIM: Moshe was telling God: The people You chose personally have sinned, but eliminating them will be worse. So why be angry?

ALSHICH: The sin of the Golden Calf was orchestrated by the mixed multitudes of Egyptian converts who had joined the Jewish people. Therefore, Moshe told God, ‘Do not be angry at your people,’ since it is not the Jewish people who are at fault here but the mixed multitudes.
Moshe Calms God’s Anger

God said (sternly) to Moshe: “Go down, for your people that you have brought up from the land of Egypt have become corrupt. They have rapidly abandoned the way which I commanded them. They made themselves a molten calf, they bowed down to it, slaughtered sacrifices to it, and said: ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who have brought you up from the land of Egypt.’”

God said to Moshe: “I have observed this people and look! they are a stiff-necked people (who do not like being rebuked). Now leave Me alone, and My anger will be kindled against them and I will annihilate them. I will make you into a great nation (instead).”

Moshe pleaded before God, his God, and said:

“Why, O God, should Your anger be kindled against Your people whom You have brought up from the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand? Why should the Egyptians say: ‘He brought them out with evil intent to kill them in the mountains and to annihilate them from upon the face of the earth’?

“Withdraw from the heat of Your anger and change Your mind about doing evil to Your people! Remember Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, Your servants, to whom You Yourself swore when you said to them: ‘I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and all this land which I promised you I will give to your descendants and they will possess it forever.’”

God changed His mind about the evil that He had said He would do to His people.

Moshe Descends and Smashes the Tablets

Moshe turned and came down from the mountain bearing the two Tablets of the Testimony in his hand, Tablets inscribed (so that the letters could miraculously be read) from both their sides. They were inscribed on both sides. The Tablets were the work of God, and the

How Could Moshe Criticize God? (v. 11)

Rashi writes that Moshe actually criticized God for becoming angry, saying, “Is a wise man jealous of anyone but a wise man? A strong man of anyone but a strong man?”

This is problematic, because: a.) Moshe appears to have been disrespectful to God. b.) God did not reply to Moshe’s argument, and instead, He became appeased. This suggests that Moshe’s words were correct. But if Moshe was indeed justified in his complaint—and God should not really be jealous of other gods since they do not exist in any case—then why is worshiping idols such a terrible sin?

The Explanation

When the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf, God told Moshe, “Now leave Me alone, and My anger will be kindled against them and I will annihilate them” (v. 10).

The concept of capital punishment for a severe sin is certainly not being taught here for the first time. God appeared to be justified in wanting to annihilate the Jewish people for worshiping idols.

Moshe, however, questioned the method by which God wished to apply this punishment. God appeared to be unjustified on three counts:

a.) God seemed to be legally incorrect. According to Jewish law, a person can only be put to death after interrogation by a court.

b.) God seemed to be unreasonable in the speed that He wished to enact punishment. He said, “Now...I will annihilate them,” indicating that he wished to punish the Jews immediately. This appears to be unfair when one considers that Adam was given the death penalty when he sinned, but that the punishment was not enacted until 930 years later!

The Last Word

Only “three thousand men” were actively involved in the sin of the Golden Calf (see verse 28, below), which was a comparatively small percentage of the Jewish population of a few million.

Nevertheless, God told Moshe to “go down” (v. 7), on which Rashi comments, “Descend from your high position. I gave you this high position only for their sake.”

From this we see that a comparatively small number of Jewish people were of great significance, to the extent that they affected Moshe himself, who was not even present.

From the negative, we can also learn the positive—how significant the good deeds of even a small number of people can be for the entire Jewish population.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5748)
***CLASSIC QUESTIONS***

**Was Moshe correct to smash the Tablets? (v. 19)**

**TALMUD:** Moshe reasoned, “If a heretic is forbidden to eat from the Paschal Lamb, which is only one of the 613 mitzvos, then all the more so should the entire Torah not be given to these heretics.” God approved of Moshe’s smashing of the Tablets. God said to him, “Well done that you broke them!” (Shabbos 87a; Yevamos 62a)

**MOSHAV ZEKEINIM:** Wasn’t it disrespectful of Moshe to break the Tablets? If he did not feel that the Jewish people merited them, he could have buried them. However, the Tablets were very heavy and Moshe could only walk slowly with them. When he saw the Jewish people worshiping the calf, he wanted to stop them immediately, so he dropped the Tablets in order to reach the people more quickly.

**BACHAYE:** When Moshe came down from the mountain the writing that was on the Tablets disappeared, indicating that the Jewish people were not worthy to receive them. Since the Godly content of the Tablets had gone, Moshe saw no objection in breaking them.

Alternatively, one could argue that Moshe felt physically weakened when he saw the Jewish People worshiping the calf, and he was unable to bear the weight of the Tablets.

**MIDRASH:** Moshe was pained by the fact that he broke the Tablets. God said to Moshe, “Do not be pained! The first set of Tablets only contained the Ten Commandments, but in the second set of Tablets I will place halachos, midrash and aggados” (Shemos Rabah 46:1).

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Breaking the Tablets was not merely a forgivable act on Moshe’s part, but it proved to be a constructive one. Not only did Moshe’s actions meet with Divine approval, but they even elicited God’s encouragement, with the words, “Well done that you broke them!” (see Talmud). Presumably, this encouragement was due to the positive outcome of the whole affair, that the second Tablets had the additional benefit of “halachos, midrash and aggados,” as the Midrash states.

This, however, begs the question: Why did God not include these additional qualities in the first set of Tablets to start with? Then Moshe would not have had to break the first set, only in order to be encouraged by God that the second set would be better.

In a sense, the Written Law is limited, since it cannot be added to or detracted from. The Oral Law on the other hand is infinite in scope, since there is no limit to the number of innovations it can give rise to.

The infinite proportion of the Oral Law is thus an expression of God’s infinitude.

When the Torah was given, the Jewish people were at a spiritually heightened state. Ironically, this posed a certain disadvantage: the awareness of their own spiritual greatness made it difficult for them to feel humble at the same time.

God’s infinitude can only be appreciated by a truly humble person. So, since the Jewish people were lacking in humility at the giving of the Torah, they were not suitable receptacles for the Oral Law whose infinite proportion is an expression of God’s infinity.

Only through the humbling experience of the Golden Calf, and the subsequent reconciliation with God, did the Jewish people become sufficiently broken in their own eyes to become receptacles for the Oral Law. The breaking of the first Tablets thus represented the humbling of the Jewish people, which was the key to their later greatness.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 248ff.)
writing was the writing of God, engraved on the Tablets.

17 When Yehoshua heard the noise of the people shouting (rejoicing and laughing), he said to Moshe: “It sounds like a battle in the camp!”

18 Moshe said: “It is neither a voice shouting victory, nor a voice shouting defeat. It is a voice of blasphemy that I hear.”

19 When he drew closer to the camp and saw the calf and the dances, Moshe became angry, and he threw the Tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

Perlpetrators of the Calf are Punished

20 He took the calf they had made, burned it in fire, ground it to fine powder, scattered it upon the surface of the water, and gave it to the children of Israel to drink.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why did Moshe make the Jewish people drink the water containing powder from the Golden Calf? (v. 20)

Rashi: He intended to test them like the sotah [woman suspected of adultery who is tested by drinking bitter waters—see Bamidbar 5:11-31]

Three different death penalties were given in judgment here:

1. Those who had been witnessed worshiping the calf and had been warned were put to death by the sword (see verses 27-28), in accordance with the law which applies to a city which has been swelled up and they died.

20. He took the calf they had made, burned it in fire, ground it to fine powder, scattered it upon the surface of the water, and gave it to the children of Israel to drink.

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"I understand that the Jewish people have committed a grave sin, but Your response is more than is necessary. Presumably, this is because You are angry, but there is no need for anger or jealousy here, since the other 'gods' do not really exist, so you have nothing to be jealous of!"

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 402ff.)

What Happened to the “Mixed Multitude” (v. 20)

In a number of places Rashi writes that the primary perpetrators of the Golden Calf were the “mixed multitude,” the converts to Judaism who had left Egypt along with the Jewish people. For example, on verse 4 above, Rashi writes, “The sorcerers of the mixed multitude who came up with the Jewish people from Egypt made it (the calf) through witchcraft.”

In verse 7, when God says to Moshe, “Your people that you have brought up from the land of Egypt have become corrupt,” Rashi explains that this refers to, “the mixed multitude whom you accepted on your own and converted them without consulting Me...they became corrupt and caused corruption in others.”

Rashi’s expression here, “they became corrupt,” seems to suggest that all of the mixed multitude were involved in the sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, when we read Rashi’s comment to verse 20, about how those involved in worshiping the Golden Calf were killed, we can presume that this must have included all of the mixed multitude.

However, later in Parshas Beha’aloscha the mixed multitude re-emerge, causing trouble once again, inciting the people to complain to Moshe that they wanted meat. (See Rashi to Beha’aloscha 11:4).

This begs the question: If all the mixed multitude were the perpetrators of the Golden Calf then they must have been executed here in Parshas Ki Sisa. How is it that they re-appear later?
21 Moshe said to Aharon: “What (torture) did this people do to you that you brought such a grave sin on them?”
22 Aharon replied: “Do not be angry, my lord. You know that the people are always going off the tracks. 21 They said to me, ‘Make us Gods that will go before us (and lead us), because as for this man Moshe, who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we don’t know what has become of him.’ 24 I (only) said to them, ‘Who has gold?’ and they took it off (quickly) and gave it to me. I threw it into the fire and (to my surprise) out came this calf.”
25 Moshe saw that people had been exposed, for Aharon had exposed them to be disgraced before their enemies.
26 Moshe stood in the gate of the camp and said: “Whoever is for God, (let him come) to me!” All the Levites gathered around him. 27 He said to them: “This is what God, the God of Israel said: ‘(Any person who worships idols should be put to death. Therefore,) let every man place his sword upon his thigh and pass back and forth from one gate to the other in the camp, and let every man kill his (half-) brother, his friend, and his relative.’”
28 The sons of Levi followed Moshe’s word. On that day some three thousand men fell from among the people.
29 Moshe said: “Today you can be ordained (to be priests) for God with a blessing, for each man (was even willing to kill) his son and his brother.”
30 On the next day, Moshe said to the people: “You have committed a terrible sin. Now I will go up to God. Perhaps I will obtain atonement for your sin.”
31 Moshe returned to God, and he said: “Please! This people has committed a terrible sin. They have made themselves a god of gold. 31 Now, if You forgive their sin (then well and good), but if not, please erase me from Your book (the Torah), which You have written.”
32 God said to Moshe: “I will erase from My book whoever has sinned against Me!”
33 “Now, go and lead the people to the place which I told you about. My angel will go before you (not Me). When I bring punishment for their sins (in the future I will always take the Golden Calf into consideration).”
35 Then God struck the people with a plague, because they had made the calf which Aharon brought about.

**The Mixed Multitude Were not Killed**
However, a careful examination of Rashi’s words here (v. 20) will reveal that the mixed multitude were actually spared the death penalty, despite the fact that they were the primary perpetrators of the Golden Calf.

Rashi writes that there were three types of death penalty administered here:

a.) Decapitation by the sword, for those who were witnessed and warned. This is described in verses 27-8, “let every man kill his (half-) brother, his friend, and his relative...On that day some three thousand men fell from among the people.”

b.) Death by an act of God (plague) for those who were witnessed but not warned, as verse 35 describes, “God struck the people with a plague, because they had made the calf which Aharon brought about.”

c.) Death after drinking water (like a sotah) for those who had neither witnesses nor warning, as verse 20 states, “he took the calf they had made, burned it in fire, ground it to fine powder, scattered it upon the surface of the water, and gave it to the children of Israel to drink.”

Now, if we examine carefully the way in which these verses describe the victims of the various punishments, a crucial difference arises:

Death by sword and plague occurred to “the people,” (v. 28, 35) whereas the water test was given to “the children of Israel” (v. 20).

The latter term, “the children of Israel,” comes to exclude the mixed multitude who were not privileged with this title, as they were not descend-ed from the Patriarchs. [This can be proven from a verse in Parshas Bo, which states, “The children of Israel journeyed...about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides the young children...and also, a great mixed multitude went up with them” (12:37-38). From here we see explicitly that the term “children of Israel” does not include the mixed multitude.]

However, the more general term (“the people”) includes both the descendents of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov and the mixed multitude.

Thus, it turns out that the punishments of death by sword and plague were administered to all of the people, but that the special waters were only given to the “children of Israel,” and not the mixed multitude. Since this test was for those who had neither witnesses nor warning, it follows
that those members of the mixed multitude who were not witnessed or warned—which surely included at least some individuals—had no

punishment administered to them at all. This explains how they could have re-emerged later in Parshas Beha’aloscha.
33

1 God spoke to Moshe: “Go, up from here, you and the people you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land that I swore to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, saying: ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ 2 I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Chittites, the Perizites, the Chivites, and the Jebusites to a land flowing with milk and honey. (I am sending an angel) because I (personally) will not go up with you, since you are a stiff-necked people, and I may destroy you on the way.”

4 When the people heard this bad news (that the Divine Presence would not accompany them), they mourned, and no man put on his crown.

5 God said to Moshe: “Say to the children of Israel: ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I (instead of My angel) go up with you (and you rebel against Me, I will become angry) in one moment, and I will destroy you.”

“Now (you will be punished immediately in that) you take off your crowns, and (as for the rest of the punishment) I know what (I intend) to do to you.”

6 So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their crowns from Mount Choraiv.

Moshe’s Private Tent of Meeting

Moshe would take the tent (from then on until the Tabernacle was erected, since the Divine presence was banished from the camp) and pitch it for himself outside the camp, distancing it (two thousand cubits) from the camp. He called it the Tent of Meeting. Thus, anyone seeking God would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.

8 When Moshe would go out (from the camp) to the tent, all the people would stand up, and remain standing (until he was out of sight), each one at the entrance of his tent, and they would gaze at Moshe until he went into the tent.

9 It would be that when Moshe entered the tent, a pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and He (God) would speak with Moshe. 10 When all the people would see the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would stand up and bow down (to the Divine Presence), each one at the entrance of his tent.

Why Were the Mixed Multitude Not Punished?

On arriving at the above conclusion one is immediately struck by the question: How is it that those members of the Jewish people, who were merely associates in the sin of the Golden Calf, were all punished with death; whereas those members of the mixed multitude—who were the main perpetrators of the sin but who were not witnessed or warned—escaped punishment? Is that justice?

However, Rashi indicated the answer to this problem with the words, “He intended to test them like the sotah.” Later on, Rashi takes the husband/wife analogy a stage further. On chapter 34, verse 1, he writes the following:

“A king who went abroad and left his betrothed wife with the maidservants. Because of the immoral behavior of the maidservants, she acquired a bad reputation. Her valet arose and tore up her marriage contract. He said, “If the king decides to kill her, I will say to him, ‘She is not yet your wife.’” The king investigated and discovered that only the maidservants were guilty of immoral behavior, so he reconciled with her. Her valet said to the king, “Write her another marriage contract, because the first one was torn up.” The king replied to him, “You tore it up! You buy yourself another sheet of paper, and I will write to her with my handwriting.” The king represents God. The maidservants represent the mixed multitude. The valet is Moshe, and the betrothed wife of God is Israel.”

This answers quite simply our earlier problem: Since only the Jewish people are compared to God’s “wife,” only they can be tested by the sotah waters. The mixed multitude who were mere “maidservants,” could not be tested, as sotah waters cannot be used on a maidservant.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 408ff.)

Sparks of Chasidus

Our Sages said that the components of the Tabernacle were hidden and never destroyed. Their eternal existence is due to the fact that they were the work of Moshe’s hands (Sotah 9a).

This explains why the mixed multitude was never destroyed, for they were also the “work of Moshe’s hands”—the converts which Moshe himself had brought to the Jewish people.

(ibtid.)
God would speak to Moshe face to face, as a man would speak to his friend. (Afterwards), he would return to the camp (to teach the elders what he had learned), but his attendant, a lad, Yehoshua, the son of Nun, would not depart from the tent.

Moshe asks to Know the Ways of God

Moshe said to God: “Look, You say to me: ‘Bring this people up!’ But You have not informed me whom You will send with me (besides the angel, whom I do not desire), and yet You said: ‘I have distinguished you (from all other people) by (a special) name and you have also found favor in My eyes.’

Now, if I have indeed found favor in Your eyes, please let me know Your methods (of reward) so that I may know (what) You(r rewards are) and I (can appreciate what) finding favor in Your eyes (means). [My reward will be through] this nation Your people (and not through a new nation).”

He (God) said, “(Instead of an Angel), My Presence will go (with you), and I will give you rest (from your enemies).”

He (Moses) said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not take us onwards from here. For how else will it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us? Then I and Your people will be distinguished from every other nation on the face of the earth.”

God said to Moshe: “Even this thing that you have spoken (that the Divine Presence should not rest on the nations), I will do, for you have found favor in My eyes, and I will distinguish you by name (of importance).”

(Since Moshe perceived that the time was opportune), he said: “Show me, please, Your glory!”

He said: “I will let all My goodness pass before you. I will proclaim the name of God before you (but I will still) favor whomever I wish to favor, and I will have compassion for whomever I wish to have compassion.” He said, “You will not be able to see My face, for no man can see Me and live.”

God said: “Here there is a place (ready for) Me (to hide so you will not be harmed by My presence), and you should stand on the rock. When My glory passes by, I will place you into the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove My hand, and you will see My back, but My face will not be seen.”
Why did God tell Moshe, “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets? (v. 1)

RASHI: God showed Moshe a sapphire mine within his tent and said to him, “The leftover chips will be yours.” From there Moshe became very wealthy.

TORAH TEMIMAH: Why did Rashi say that Moshe became very wealthy? Since a person can only be a prophet if he is wealthy, Moshe must have already been somewhat wealthy beforehand, as he received prophecy before this point. Therefore, Rashi writes that now he became very wealthy.

Where did Moshe carve the second set of Tablets? (v. 1)

MIDRASH: This was the subject of a dispute between R’ Levi and R’ Yochanan. One said that he carved them under God’s throne of glory. The other said that he carved them in his tent, as God created a mine for him and he made the Tablets there. The leftover chips he kept for himself, and from there he became wealthy, since they were sapphire (Tanchumah, Ki Sisa 9).

The Making of the Second Tablets (v.1)

Bearing in mind that Rashi wrote his commentary as a literal interpretation of Chumash, avoiding any unnecessary words or ideas, his comment here to verse 1 requires some clarification:

a.) Rashi states that God showed Moshe a sapphire mine “within his tent.” Surely it is irrelevant, at the literal level, to know where the sapphire mine was. Why did Rashi need to tell us this? Furthermore, at the literal level it is hard to accept that a tent could be pitched on any sort of mine, since mines are surrounded by hard rock, whereas a tent must be placed on a soft surface in order to pin its pegs into the ground.

b.) The Torah mentions only that the second Tablets were to be carved from “stone.” What led Rashi to conclude that this meant sapphire, in particular? This question is especially difficult when one considers that sapphire is not a material which is naturally found in the desert and would have presumably required some sort of miracle to be made available to Moshe.

c.) The Midrash states that God “created” a sapphire mine for Moshe. Rashi however, adapted this statement to read, “God showed Moshe a sapphire mine.” Why?

d.) At the literal level the words פסלה<k> meaning, “Carve for yourself.” Rashi, however, interprets the word פסלה to be related to the word פסלה meaning, “wastage.” He thus renders the verse as suggesting, “The leftover chips will be yours.” In doing this, Rashi appears to have swapped the literal meaning of the word פסלה (carve) for a non-literal meaning (wastage). Surely this contradicts Rashi’s mission statement that “I only come to explain the literal meaning of scripture” (Bereshis 3:8)?

The Explanation

Rashi was bothered here by a simple question. The usual word for “carve” in Hebrew is ח maur. So, why did the Torah use the word פסלה here which can also mean “wastage,” a term which seems to be disrespectful in reference to the Tablets?

Due to this question, Rashi came to the conclusion that in addition to meaning “carve,” the word פסלה must be suggesting here some sort of wastage. So, he wrote, “God showed Moshe a sapphire mine within his tent and said to him, ‘The leftover chips will be yours.’”

Rashi then adds, “From there Moshe became very wealthy.” Rashi stresses here that he became, “very wealthy,” since we know that all the Jewish people became wealthy from looting the Egyptians’ possessions in
God said to Moshe: “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones, and I will write upon the Tablets the words that were on the first Tablets, which you broke.  
Go up Mount Sinai in the morning and stand before Me there on the top of the mountain.  
3 No man should ascend with you, neither should anyone be seen anywhere on the mountain. Also, the sheep and cattle should not graze facing that mountain.”

So he carved two stone Tablets like the first ones, and Moshe arose early in the morning and ascended Mount Sinai, as God had commanded him, and he took two stone Tablets in his hand.

**A Legal Perspective**

The above was an explanation at the scriptural level why God told Moshe to “carve for yourself two stone Tablets.” The following, however, could be argued at the *halachic* level.

The *Mishnah* states that when work is done by a craftsman at the premises of his contractor, then all leftover materials belong to the contractor (*end of Bava Kamma*). If the craftsman does the work at his own premises, then the specific type of material will determine whether he may keep the leftover material for himself. The *Talmud* (*ibid.*) clarifies that, in the case of a stonemason, he may keep the stone chippings for himself.

Applying this to our case: According to the first opinion cited by the *Midrash*, that the second Tablets were made “under God’s throne of glory,” it turns out that the work was carried out in the “premises of the contractor” (*God*). Therefore, the leftover materials (chips of sapphire) technically belonged to God. Since God wanted Moshe to keep the chips, it was necessary to tell him, “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets,” in order to inform Moshe that even though the chips *halachically* belonged to God, he would be allowed to keep them.

However, according to the second opinion in the *Midrash*—that Moshe made the Tablets in his tent—surely the chips should have belonged to Moshe in any case, since they were made at the premises of the craftsman? Why then did God need to tell Moshe, “carve for yourself two stone Tablets,” suggesting that he could keep them himself?

The question is even stronger when we consider that the second opinion in the *Midrash* is in fact the literal interpretation of scripture, since he “carved two Tablets,” before he “ascended Mount Sinai” (*v. 4*).
What was the cause of Moshe’s reaction to the proclamation of the Thirteen Attributes? (v. 8)

Rashi: When Moshe saw the Shechinah (Divine Presence) passing and he heard the noise of the calling (of Thirteen Attributes), he immediately prostrated himself.

Talmud: What did Moshe see that caused him to bow? Rabbi Chanina ben Galma said, “He saw the attribute of ‘slow to anger’” (v. 6). The Rabbis said, “He saw the attribute of truth.” (Sanhedrin 111a)

Maharsha: Certainly Moshe already knew of God’s attributes, therefore his excitement here must have been at one of the attributes in particular. Therefore, the sages of the Talmud argued which attribute was the cause of Moshe’s reaction (ibid.).

Hadar Zekeinim: When God said, “He visits the sins of parents for the children, the children’s children, to the third and fourth generations,” (v. 7), Moshe feared that God was going to add, “to the fifth generation and sixth generations,” so he immediately prostrated himself.

Ibn Ezra: The above argument is preposterous, as Moshe would not have attempted to interrupt God.

Chizkuni: Moshe saw God pass before him, and wanted to pray before Him, before He became concealed.
GOD PROCLAIMS HIS THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF MERCY

34:5

God descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and He (God) called with the name of God. 6 God passed before him and called out: God (of the sinner), God (of the penitent, the merciful) God, Who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness and true (to reward), 7 preserving kindness (that people do) for two thousand (generations), forgiving intentional sin and rebellion, and unintentional sin, Who absolves, but not all at once. He visits the sins of parents upon the children, and the children's children, to the third and fourth generations.”

Moshe hurried, bowed his head to the ground and prostrated himself.

He (Moshe) said: “If I have now found favor in Your eyes, O God, let God go now with us (as You promised) even if they are a stiff-necked people, and You should forgive our intentional and unintentional sins and make us Your own.”

NOT TO STRIKE A COVENANT WITH THE NATIONS

34:11

Keep carefully what I am commanding you today. Behold, I will drive out from before you the Amorites and the Cana'anites, the Chittites and the Perizites, the Chiites and the Jebusites.

12 Beware not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are coming, so that it does not become a trap in your midst. 13 But you should demolish their altars, shatter their monuments, and cut down their sacred trees. 14 For you should not bow down before another god, because God’s name is “Zealous One,” for He is a God Who is zealous (to exact payment).

However, a key distinction between our case here, and the example described in the Talmud, is that Moshe was carving sapphire and not mere stone. Presumably, the reason why a stonemason is permitted to keep the leftover chips of stone is because they are virtually worthless to their owner (the contractor). In the case of carving sapphire, however, we can presume that the halachah would require the craftsman to return even the leftover chips to the owner. This explains why, according to halachah, God told Moshe, “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets,” for otherwise Moshe would not have been permitted to keep such valuable wastage.

One problem with this solution is that, while it would be a perfectly acceptable argument for a human contractor, we are after all speaking here about God. And, for God, even sapphire chips are worthless, no less than stone chips to a human being. This seems to render our previous argument invalid.

However, in the final analysis, this criticism is incorrect because, unlike their predecessors, the second Tablets were made below on earth. Therefore, all halachic considerations needed to follow earthly values and not the heavenly value system.

WHY DID RASHI REJECT THE TALMUD’S EXPLANATION (V.8)

The Talmud questions what made Moshe bow, and answers that it was a reaction to hearing one of the attributes of mercy (citing a dispute as to which attribute, in particular, caused Moshe’s reaction).

Rashi’s words here appear to be entirely superfluous. The Torah states that, “God passed before him and called out… Moshe hurried, bowed his head to the ground and prostrated himself.” Rashi then comments, “When Moshe saw the Shechinah passing and he heard the noise of the calling (of the Thirteen Attributes), he immediately prostrated himself.” This appears to tell us nothing more than the Torah has already stated itself!

Similarly, Maharsha’s answer is difficult to accept at the literal level, for if Moshe already knew the Thirteen Attributes, then why would he become excited about just one of them now?

RASHI’S PROBLEM

Rashi’s words here appear to be entirely superfluous. The Torah states that, “God passed before him and called out… Moshe hurried, bowed his head to the ground and prostrated himself.” Rashi then comments, “When Moshe saw the Shechinah passing and he heard the noise of the calling (of the Thirteen Attributes), he immediately prostrated himself.” This appears to tell us nothing more than the Torah has already stated itself!

However, Rashi was troubled here by a simple question: Why did the Torah have to inform us that “Moshe hurried, bowed his head to the ground and prostrated himself”? It is a basic requirement that all matters of Torah and mitzvos should be performed with speed and alacrity. Obviously, Moshe would not have delayed his prostration of gratitude. Why then does the Torah need to tell us that “Moshe hurried”? 
לא נמצאו מילים קריטיות. על כן, לא ניתן пункт מילים או מילים סוליטריות. על כן, לא ניתן пункт מילים או מילים סוליטריות.
(Be careful) not to form a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they go astray after their gods, and they offer sacrifices to their gods, and they invite you, you will eat of their slaughtering, and you will take from their daughters for your sons. Then their daughters will go astray after their gods and lead your sons astray after their gods.

### Prohibition of Idolatry & Other Commands

- 17 You should not make cast metal gods for yourself.
- 18 You should observe the Festival of Matzos. For seven days you should eat matzos as I have commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of the early ripening, for in the month of the early ripening you went out of Egypt.
- 19 Every (human male) who is the first of the womb is Mine, as well as all your livestock who gives birth to a male, the firstborn of an ox or lamb (shall be Mine).
- 20 You should redeem a firstborn donkey with a lamb.
- If you do not redeem it, you should break its neck.
- You should redeem every firstborn of your sons.
- (When they go up to Jerusalem for a festival) they should not appear before Me empty of (a sacrifice).
- 21 Six days you may work, and on the seventh day you should rest. You should rest from plowing and harvesting.
- 22 You should make the Festival of Shavuos for yourself, with the first fruits of the wheat harvest (making them into two loaves), and the Harvest festival after the year turns.
- 23 Three times during the year should all your males appear directly before the Master, God, the God of Israel. (You will only be able to come three times a year) because, I will drive out nations from before you and I will widen your border (so you will live far away). No one will covet your land when you go up, to appear before God, your God, three times each year.
- 24 While chametz is in your possession, you should not slaughter or sprinkle the blood of My (Passover) slaughter.
- The (parts of the) Pesach slaughter should not remain overnight until the morning.
- 26 You should bring the first fruits of your land to the house of God, your God.
- Do not cook a tender young animal in its mother’s milk.

Rashi answers, “When Moshe saw the Shechinah passing and he heard the noise of the calling (of Thirteen Attributes), he immediately prostrated himself.” I.e. Moshe hurried so much in this case that he bowed down even before God had passed (when it was “passing”) and even before the calling had commenced, and its “noise” alone was audible. In other words, Rashi informs us that the bowing of verse 8 actually occurred some time during the events of verse 6. Only, the Torah did not record it there to avoid interrupting the narrative of God proclaiming the Thirteen Attributes.

This, however, begs the question: Why did Moshe bow down so quickly, even before the Shechinah arrived? Surely, Moshe should have waited for God to complete His announcement before bowing in gratitude?

However, Moshe did not wish to bow during God’s announcement, for that would be disrespectful (c.f. Ibn Ezra). Therefore he “hurried” and bowed before.

According to the above explanation we can also explain another problem. Rashi writes, “Moshe saw the Shechinah,” which seems to contradict God’s prior statement, “No man can see Me and live” (33:20). However, based on the above explanation that Moshe bowed down before the Shechinah arrived (when it was merely “passing”) it is obvious that there is no contradiction here. For Moshe did not see the “face” of God (“My face”), i.e. the full revelation of the Shechinah, but rather, that he saw only the beginning of God’s revelation before he bowed down.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 11, p. 153)
How Did Moshe Cope Without Food? (v. 28)

The fact that Moshe survived for forty days without food could be understood in three ways: a) Natural. Since he was so immersed in lofty activities he simply forgot to eat and did not feel hungry. b) Supernatural. God made a miracle each day to keep him alive even though he had not eaten for so long. c) Fusion of natural and supernatural. Moshe became like an angel that does not need to eat or drink. His natural functioning thus became elevated to a supernatural order.

It could be argued that these three approaches correspond to the three opinions of the Talmud, Shemos Rabah and Bereishis Rabah.

Despite the fact that these three sources appear to be similar, they differ in the following way:

i.) Shemos Rabah stresses that Moshe had to actively follow the “local custom” in heaven: “When you come to a city you must follow its customs.” This suggests that Moshe had to emulate the “local inhabitants” (angels) in every way. He would have thus had to have become like an angel. This corresponds to approach “c” above (fusion of natural and supernatural) that Moshe’s natural functioning became like that of an angel.

ii.) At the other extreme, the Talmud stresses the negative, “A person should never dishonor a local custom,” i.e there was no need for Moshe to act like an angel and dishonor this practice.

TORAS MENACHEM
Moshe Descends with the Second Tablets

G od said to Moshe: “Write these words for yourself (but not the Oral Law), for according to these words I have formed a covenant with you and with Israel.”

28 He was there with God for forty days and forty nights. He ate no bread and drank no water. He inscribed upon the Tablets the words of the Covenant, the Ten Commandments.

29 (On Yom Kippur) Moshe came down from Mount Sinai, and the two Tablets of the testimony were in Moshe’s hand when he came down from the mountain. Moshe did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while He (God) had spoken with him. 30 Aharon and all the children of Israel saw Moshe and, Look! The skin of his face had become radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.

(The following system was used by Moshe to convey God’s words):

31 Moshe called to them, and Aharon and all the leaders of the community returned to him, and Moshe would speak to them (telling them God’s words). 32 Afterwards all the children of Israel would draw near, and he would command them everything that God had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

33 When Moshe had finished speaking with them, he placed a covering over his face. 34 When Moshe would come before God to speak with Him, he would remove the covering until he left. He would then leave and speak to the children of Israel that which had been commanded. 35 Then the children of Israel would see Moshe’s face, that the skin of Moshe’s face had become radiant, and then Moshe would replace the covering over his face until he would come again to speak with Him.

Why did Moshe not eat for 40 days and nights? (v. 28)

TALMUD: A person should never dishonor a local custom, for Moshe went up on high and he did not eat or drink. And when the angels came below (to visit Avraham—See Bereishis 18:2ff.) do you think they ate or drank? Rather, they appeared as if they were eating (Bava Metzia 86b).

Moshe called to them, and Aharon and all the leaders of the community returned to him, and Moshe would speak to them (telling them God’s words). Afterwards all the children of Israel would draw near, and he would command them everything that God had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

(On Yom Kippur) Moshe came down from Mount Sinai, and the two Tablets of the testimony were in Moshe’s hand when he came down from the mountain. Moshe did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while He (God) had spoken with him.

When Moshe had finished speaking with them, he placed a covering over his face. When Moshe would come before God to speak with Him, he would remove the covering until he left. He would then leave and speak to the children of Israel that which had been commanded. Then the children of Israel would see Moshe’s face, that the skin of Moshe’s face had become radiant, and then Moshe would replace the covering over his face until he would come again to speak with Him.

C L A S S I C Q U E S T I O N S

Why did Moshe not eat for 40 days and nights? (v. 28)

What was the purpose of the covering that Moshe placed over his face? (v. 29)

Why did Moshe's face shine with light when he came down from Mount Sinai? (v. 29)

T O R A S M E N A C H E M

SHEMOS RABAH: An analogy for this is that when you come to a city you must follow its customs (47:5).

BEREISHIS RABAH: When you come to a city you must follow its customs. Since there is no eating or drinking in heaven, when Moshe went up on high he did not eat or drink (48:14).

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

● Why did Moshe not eat for 40 days and nights? (v. 28)

TALMUD: A person should never dishonor a local custom, for Moshe went up on high and he did not eat or drink. And when the angels came below (to visit Avraham—See Bereishis 18:2ff.) do you think they ate or drank? Rather, they appeared as if they were eating (Bava Metzia 86b).

to become like an angel. All that was necessary was to avoid any activity that would not be appropriate in heaven. Therefore, Moshe’s body did not need to change miraculously; he merely had to refrain from eating.

This corresponds to approach “a” above (the natural approach) that Moshe simply failed to eat since he was preoccupied.

iii.) Bereishis Rabah stresses both positive and negative aspects to Moshe’s conduct. On the one hand, it states, “Moshe did not eat,” in the negative, suggesting a passive adherence to local custom. On the other hand, we read, “When you come to a city you must follow its customs,” indicating an active observance. This corresponds to the supernatural approach (“b” above), where God consistently made miracles to keep Moshe alive. The supernatural effort to keep Moshe alive was thus an active attempt to follow the local custom; but, on the other hand, since his body did not change to be like that of an angel, his observance of local custom could be described as passive. Therefore, the Bereishis Rabah stresses both points.

Perhaps it could be argued that all three of these approaches occurred in actuality, during the three different visits that Moshe made up at Mount Sinai: The first time that Moshe went up the mountain was to receive the first set of Tablets. These Tablets were “the work of God,” i.e. totally supernatural. Since Moshe went to receive something miraculous, it follows that his own ability to eat and drink would also have been miraculous (i.e. approach “b” above, the supernatural).

The second time that Moshe went up was to seek forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf. At that time God was angry (see Rashi to 33:11 above), so we can presume that He withheld the use of all supernatural conduct. Therefore, on the second trip, Moshe’s ability not to eat would have been natural (approach “a” above).

The final time that Moshe went up the mountain was to receive the second Tablets. The second Tablets were a fusion of the natural and the supernatural, since they were given by God and yet they were made by Moshe (see 34:1). Therefore we can presume that Moshe’s ability not to eat or drink was also a fusion of the natural and supernatural (approach “c” above), and that he actually became like an angel.

WHY DID LIGHT SHINE FROM MOSHE’S FACE? (v. 29)

The above explanation also clarifies why Moshe’s face only shone with light when he came down from the mountain for the third time, with the second Tablets. For, on this occasion his natural physical functioning had been elevated to that of an angel, and consequently, the light of his soul was not obstructed by his body.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 36, p. 172ff.)
Parshas Ki Sisa contains 4 positive mitzvos & 5 prohibitions.

1. The giving of half a shekel each year [30:13].
2. The washing of hands and feet when ministering in the Temple [30:19-20].
3. To make the anointing oil [30:25].
4. An unauthorized person should not rub anointing oil on himself [30:32].
5. Not to make unauthorized anointing oil according to the formula [30:32].
6. Not to make unauthorized incense according to the formula [30:37].
7. Not to eat or drink from an offering to an idol [34:12,15].
8. Letting the land rest in the year of shmittah [34:21].
9. Not to eat meat and milk which has been cooked together [34:26].
What is more important: A team mentality, where every person belongs to a whole, giant community which is greater than its constituent parts? Or, is it more important to stress the worth of the individual, how each person was created by God, utterly unique, with his own talents and abilities which need to be nurtured in isolation?

This friction, between the whole and its parts, is encapsulated by the names Vayakhel and Pekudei, two Parshiyos that are often read together.

Vayakhel means “assembled,” as in “Moshe assembled.” In Hebrew, there are many words which mean “gather,” but “Vayakhel” in particular emphasizes how all the assembled members merge identity to form a single whole, an “assembly.”

Pekudei, means “counting,” an idea which stresses the worth of the individual, how every person “counts” as a separate entity.

So when these two Parshiyos come together, the Torah is teaching us—and giving us the spiritual potential—to harmonize these two opposing qualities.

In practical terms, this can take a number of expressions:

- Vayakhel represents quality in our Divine service, since merging with a greater whole confers on a person a qualitatively superior experience. He is now a “member” of a greater cause that he could not reach alone. Pekudei, on the other hand, represents the advantage of quantity.

- Vayakhel represents a penetrating view of the world, where the details of existence pale away to reveal a holistic, spiritual mass—the realization that there is nothing but God (Elokus b’pschitus). Pekudei represents a smaller view of the world, where every detail is seen in its own right, with the understanding that every detail reveals God’s glory in its own way.

- Vayakhel teaches us that however low a person may be, he is still part of the communal whole, and thereby intimately associated with the leaders of the community. Pekudei teaches us that, however low a person may be, he still has his own unique talents which God did not give to any other person.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5740, 5743, 5752)
When did Moshe assemble the Jewish people? (v. 1)

Rashi: He came down from the mountain on the day of Yom Kippur, and gathered the Jewish people the following day.

Mizrachi: Rashi concluded that Moshe gathered the Jewish people the first day that he came down, because “enthusiastic people will perform a mitzvah at the earliest opportunity” (Pesachim 4a)

Why was the prohibition of doing work on Shabbos mentioned before the command to build the Tabernacle? (v. 2)

Rashi: [Moshe] prefaced for them the warning not to transgress Shabbos before the commandment to construct the Tabernacle to indicate that the latter does not override the prohibitions of Shabbos.

However, in the final analysis, this argument appears to be flawed. For, at the beginning of the tenth of Tishrei of that year, it was not yet Yom Kippur. The entire concept of Yom Kippur only began when, some time later in the day, God decided to forgive the Jewish people for making the Golden Calf, which inferred upon the day its theme of repentance and forgiveness (See Rashi to Devarim 9:18).

Now, it makes little sense to suggest that the prohibitions of Yom Kippur would have been observed for half a day. Rather, we can safely presume that the laws of fasting, abstaining from work etc., were only observed the following year. Consequently, there would have been no need for Moshe to make any warnings about refraining from work on Yom Kippur before instructing the Jewish people about constructing the Tabernacle.

Thus, our original question returns: Why did Moshe wait until the day after Yom Kippur to give the Jewish people the mitzvah of constructing the Tabernacle?

The Explanation

Rashi was troubled by the following problem. The verse informs us that Moshe gathered the Jewish people. This would seem to suggest that he caused them to gather at a time when they were not already gathered, for otherwise the entire verse is redundant.

When Moshe descended the mountain on Yom Kippur, the Jewish people were already gathered to greet him. Therefore, concluded Rashi, it could not be said that Moshe gathered the people on that day. Nevertheless, since “enthusiastic people will perform a mitzvah at the earliest opportunity,” we can presume he did so at the earliest opportunity, on the day after.
Moshe Assembles the Jewish People

Moshe caused the whole community of the children of Israel to assemble (on the day after Yom Kippur), and he said to them: “These are the things that God commanded to be done. 2 For six days work may be done, but the seventh day should be holy for you, a day of complete rest to God. Whoever does work on it should be put to death. 3 You should not kindle fire in any of your dwelling places on the Sabbath day.”

4 Moshe spoke to the entire community of the children of Israel, saying: “This is the thing which God has commanded (me) to say (to you): 5 Collect from among yourselves a contribution offering for God. Every person whose heart inspires him to generosity should bring the (following) contribution for God:

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

• Were the contributions to the Tabernacle compulsory or voluntary? (v. 5)

KLI YAKAR: There appears to be a contradiction within verse 5. The verse begins, “Collect from among yourselves a contribution offering for God,” which suggests that we are speaking here of a compulsory donation which was “collected.” However, the verse concludes, “Every person whose heart inspires him to generosity should bring the contribution for God,” which suggests that the contributions were voluntary, depending on a feeling of generosity.

From this we see that there were in fact two types of contributions: compulsory and voluntary.

TORAS MENACHEM

Why did he wait? Presumably, the Jewish people were so overwhelmed by the giving of the second set of Tablets and immersed in the study of their contents that the mood was not yet appropriate for the issuing of practical commands. Therefore, Moshe waited until the following day.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 6, p. 210ff.)

Voluntary Contributions (v. 5)

The Kli Yakar writes that two types of contributions were given for the Tabernacle, compulsory and voluntary, and these are both referred to in verse 5.

However, in Parshas Terumah, when Moshe is instructed by God concerning the construction of the Tabernacle, no mention is made in the Torah itself of any voluntary contributions. Rather, we are told that all the contributions must be collected on a compulsory basis: “Take My offering from every person….This is the contribution that you shall collect from them” (ibid. 2-3). Yet, here, in Parshas Vayakhel, when Moshe is conveying God’s commandments to the Jewish people, he suggests that some contributions could be given on a voluntary basis.

This begs the question: Why are the voluntary contributions mentioned explicitly only here in Parshas Vayakhel and not in Parshas Terumah?

Sparks of Chasidus

When the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, the Jewish people were granted the privilege of causing God’s Presence to dwell on earth. However, this did not happen in actuality until the Tabernacle was built, as the Midrash states, “When did the Shechinah (Divine Presence) dwell on Earth? On the day that the Tabernacle was erected” (Bamidbar Rabbah 13:2; 12:6).

The building of the Tabernacle was thus, in effect, the “practical application” of the giving of the Torah. Just as the giving of the Torah had been preceded by a state of total unity among the Jewish people, where they encamped “as one person with one heart” (Rashi to Shemos 19:2), so too the practical construction of the Tabernacle was preceded by an “assembly of unity,” described here at the beginning of the Parsha.

In fact, this assembly was superior to that which preceded the giving of the Torah in the respect that the latter was a unity of intention (acceptance of the Torah), whereas this assembly was a unity of action (construction of the Tabernacle).

This sheds light on a number of details here:

• One of the greatest causes of disputes amongst people is money. Yet, here we see that the Jewish people willingly gave of their possessions for the construction of the Tabernacle.
• The assembly occurred on the day after Yom Kippur (Rashi to v. 2), a day of friendship, unity and forgiving.
• The assembly occurred on the day after Yom Kippur, indicating that the spirit of the holy day was being channeled into the mundane weekdays.
• The assembly was made by Moshe, since every Jew has a spark of Moshe within him, and it is through revealing this spark that the Jewish people come to a state of unity.
• Moshe mentioned first the mitzvah of Shabbos, since the observance of Shabbos is based on the belief that God provides a person with his sustenance, a belief which also prevents financial disputes between man and his fellow.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5749)
Gold, silver, and copper; turquoise, purple, and crimson wool; linen and goats’ hair; ram skins dyed red, (multicolored) tachash skins, and acacia wood; oil for the (eternal) lamp, spices for the anointing oil and for the incense fumes; shoham stones and filling stones for the Apron and for the Breastplate.

“Every wisehearted person among you should come, and they should make everything which God has commanded:

“The Tabernacle, its roof and its cover, its clasps and its beams, its crossbars, its pillars, and its sockets, the Ark and its poles, the lid and the partition, the Table and its poles and all its utensils, and the Multi-surface bread, the Menorah for lighting, its utensils and its lamps, and oil for lighting, the Incense Altar, its poles, the Anointing Oil, the Incense of spices, the curtain for the entrance of the Tabernacle, the Sacrificial Altar, its copper netting, its poles and all its utensils, the Urn and its base, the curtains of the courtyard, its pillars, and its sockets, and the curtain for the entrance of the courtyard, the pegs of the Tabernacle and the pegs of the courtyard, and their ropes, the meshwork cloths which are used in the Holy (Sanctuary to cover the apparatus during transportation), the holy garments for Aharon the High Priest, and the garments of his sons worn for service.”

Every person whose heart inspired him came, and everyone whose generous spirit inspired him brought the contribution for God, for the work of the Tent of Meeting, for all its necessities, and for the holy garments:

The men came together with the women (next to them). Everyone whose heart inspired him to generosity brought bracelets, earrings, rings and body ornaments, all kinds of golden objects—every man who donated an offering of gold to God. Everyone who had turquoise, purple, or crimson wool, linen, goats’ hair, ram skins dyed red or tachash skins, brought them. Everyone who set aside a donation of silver or copper brought the donation for God. Everyone who had acacia wood for all the work that needed to be done brought it. Every wisehearted woman spun with her hands, and they brought spun thread: turquoise, purple, and crimson wool, and linen. All the women whose hearts inspired them

The construction of the Tabernacle was a mitzvah which God gave to the Jewish people to achieve atonement for making the Golden Calf. In fact, the Tabernacle was named, “The Tabernacle of Testimony,” since, “it was a testimony for the Jewish people that God had forgiven them for making the Golden Calf, for the Divine Presence dwelled in their midst” (Rashi to 38:21).

Practically speaking, we see that this atonement was achieved by the donations of the Jewish people to the Tabernacle. Whereas previously they had given their gold enthusiastically to build an idol, now they were giving with even greater enthusiasm for a mitzvah, as the Torah states that the people brought “much more than (is needed) to do the work which God has commanded to do” (below 36:5).

This spirit of generosity was expressed to the greatest extent by the voluntary contributions. For, ultimately, any binding obligation can only express a limited degree of goodwill since, after all, the two parties are obliged by the agreement.

So, in Parshas Terumah, God only mentioned the compulsory nature of the donations of the Jewish people to the Tabernacle. Whereas previously the Sage explained that this atonement was achieved by the donations of the Jewish people to the Tabernacle.
the donations, as He wanted the voluntary contributions to be given willingly, and not due to the force of His command.

In our Parsha, when Moshe told the Jewish people what materials needed to be donated, he stressed that (with the exception of silver), they should be of a voluntary nature, from “every person whose heart inspires him to generosity,” since this was a crucial element in the construction of the Tabernacle, ensuring atonement for the Jewish people.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 262ff.)

**Problems With Rashi (v. 27)**

a.) Rashi’s comment here is rather lengthy. Could the basic idea not have been compacted into a few lines?

b.) The Torah’s approach is always a positive one. In fact, even in reference to animals the Torah does not speak disparagingly (Bava Basra 123a). Why was it necessary here to deviate from this path, and teach us that the leaders of the Jewish people were “idle”?

c.) When the leaders found that everything had been donated, why did they say, “What are we to do?” Surely, they should have said, “What are we to bring?”

d.) Why did Rashi discuss donations for the dedication of the Altar? Surely the explanation is understood without this detail.

**The Leaders’ Mistake**

In this instance, the leaders took their precedent from Moshe. When Moshe came down from Mount Sinai with instructions for the Jewish people, the Torah states, “Moshe went down from the mountain to the people” (Shemos 19:14). Rashi comments, “This teaches us that Moshe did not turn to his own affairs, but went directly from the mountain to the people” (ibid.).

Moshe’s actions here set a precedent, that a true Jewish leader attends to the needs of his people before he attends to his own needs.

Thus, in our case, the leaders considered it inappropriate for them to donate first to the Tabernacle before the people. Rather, they decided, “Let the community donate what they will donate, and whatever they are missing we will complete,” i.e. they put the spiritual needs of the people first.

Consequently, the fact that the leaders gave their donation last is not difficult to understand at all. Rather, the question is, to the contrary, “What prompted the leaders to donate first for the dedication of the Altar?”
with wisdom, spun the goats’ hair. 27 The leaders brought the shoham stones and filling stones for the Apron and for the Breastplate, 28 the spice, the oil for lighting, for the anointing oil, and for the incense.

29 Every man and woman whose heart inspired them to generosity to bring (a donation) for any of the work that God had commanded them through Moshe to make, was brought by the children of Israel as a gift for God

30 Moshe said to the children of Israel: “See, God has appointed Betzalel, the son of Uri, the son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. 31 He has filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom, with insight, with Divine inspiration, and with the ability for all types of work: 32 to do master weaving, to work with gold, silver, and copper, 33 with the craft of setting gems and with the craft of wood, to do all kinds of skilled work.

34 (God) gave both him (Betzalel) and Ohaliav the son of Achisamach, of the tribe of Dan the ability

C L A S S I C Q U E S T I O N S

What was the lineage of Betzalel & Ohaliav? (v. 30-34)

RASHI: Chur was Miriam’s son. Ohaliav was from the tribe of Dan, of the lowest of the tribes, of the sons of (Ya’akov’s) concubines. Yet God put him on the same level as Betzalel for the work of the Tabernacle, even though Betzalel was from one of the greatest of the tribes (Yehudah), to fulfill what is said: “and a prince was not recognized before a poor man” ( Job 34: 19).

T O R A S M E N A C H E M

How could the leaders have put themselves first and donated to the inauguration of the Altar before the people?

To answer this question, Rashi found it necessary to clarify, at some length, the precise reasoning of the leaders.

Briefly put, the leaders adopted an approach here which would usually be appropriate. In this precise case, however, it was somewhat miscalculated. They had reasoned that the Jewish people might not donate in a sufficient measure to construct the Tabernacle, and that their role as leaders would be to encourage the people to donate the full amount necessary.

However, when they saw that, without any assistance, “the community donated everything,” they realized that their leadership role (as they had perceived it) had proved redundant, so they exclaimed, “What are we to do?” In other words, “What is the point of our leadership if the Jewish people’s observance is impeccable without us”?

This prompted them to reconsider what their role should have been in this instance.

Obviously, the leaders were not “idle” in the literal sense. After all, we are speaking here of saintly individuals (tzadikim) whose example was inspirational throughout Israel. Rather, Rashi is suggesting that, in this instance—considering the situation at hand—their actions were devoid of the necessary alacrity.

It was explained above (see commentary to verse 5), that the construction of the Tabernacle was an atonement for the Golden Calf. Since the Golden Calf was constructed with a great degree of speed and enthusiasm, it was crucial that the donations to the Tabernacle be given with an equal, if not greater degree of enthusiasm, to ensure that the atonement would be complete.

The leaders’ mistake was that they feared that the Jewish people might not pledge sufficient donations, and that they would be required to inspire

S p a r k s o f C h a s i d u s

The Torah equates the talents of Betzalel, who was of esteemed lineage, with Ohaliav, who was from the lowest of the tribes (see Rashi to 30-34). This encouraged the poorer members of the community, who could not afford to make large donations, that their contribution was as meaningful to God as that of the rich man. (Likutei Sichos vol. 31, pp. 216-7)

T h e L a s t W o r d

The struggle between good and evil is always difficult, but sometimes, the choice between two apparently good actions can be even more difficult. The Jewish leaders were faced with a dilemma whether to lead from in front or from behind, and despite their righteousness they made a subtle miscalculation.

Similarly, in our own lives, a person is often forced to decide between two paths which both seem to be good and holy. In such a case one should reflect on whether there is an overtone of “idleness” or “laziness” in one of the paths. For example, a person may say, “I have no time to pray at length, since I am busy bringing Jews closer to Judaism.” That, of course may be true, but that person needs to ask himself, “Are you sure that you’re not just being lazy, because you can’t be bothered to pray at length?”

The story of the Jewish leaders teaches us that these types of decisions—between two apparently holy paths—can be the hardest of all. (Based on Sichas Parshas Vayakhel Pekudei 5726)
them to action. In truth, however, the Jewish people were already inspired, and the leaders’ role should have been to inspire the people to give their donations at an even greater pace, with even more enthusiasm. Therefore, despite the fact that a leader usually puts his own interests after that of the people, in this case the leaders should have given first, to set an example of speedy and enthusiastic donation.

Thus, in the final analysis, the leaders’ motives were noble, but their plan was slightly miscalculated. Therefore, when it came time to donate to the inauguration of the Altar, they corrected their mistake.

*(Based on Likutot Sichot vol. 16, p. 424ff.)*

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**Problems with Da’as Zekeinim? (v. 8)**

*Da’as Zekeinim* explains why the coverings of the Tabernacle were made first of all, so that they should be ready to cover the beams as soon as they were built. In this way the Tabernacle would not be left “uncovered for a moment.”

However, this solution appears to be problematic for two reasons:

a.) Why should leaving the beams “uncovered for a moment” present a difficulty? What is the basis for this argument?

b.) Even if we could find a reason why, theoretically, the beams should...
to teach (others). He instilled within them the wisdom of heart required to perform all the skills of a craftsman, an artistic weaver, an embroiderer, and a weaver, using turquoise, purple, and crimson wool and linen. (They are able) to do all kinds of work and weave professionally.

1 “Betzalel and Ohaliav should do (all the work) together with every wise hearted man into whom God had instilled wisdom and insight to know how to do all the work of the Holy (Sanctuary), in accordance with everything which God has commanded.”

2 Moshe called Betzalel and Ohaliav and every wisehearted man into whose heart God had instilled wisdom, everyone whose heart inspired him to dedicate himself to do the work. They took before Moshe all the contributions which the children of Israel had offered for the work of the Holy (Sanctuary). They continued to bring him more donations every morning.

Contributions are Completed and Construction Begins

36:4 All the wise men that were doing the work of the Holy (sanctuary) came. Each one of them (left) the work which he had been doing. They spoke to Moshe, saying: “The people are bringing a lot, much more than (is needed) to do the work which God has commanded to do.”

6 Moshe issued a command, and an announcement was made in the camp, saying: “No man or woman should do any more work for donations to the Holy (sanctuary),” and the people stopped bringing. The work (which people had done to bring the donations) was sufficient for (those who built the Tabernacle) to do all the necessary (construction) work, and to leave a surplus.

Then every wisehearted person among those doing the work made the Tabernacle out of ten tapestries made from fine linen thread twisted with turquoise, purple, and crimson wool. He made them with animal designs, the work of a professional weaver.

Rashi’s Solution
It could be argued, however, that Rashi has indeed addressed the problem, in one of his earlier comments.

Above, we read, “All the women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom, spun the goats’ hair” (35:26). Rashi comments, “This was exceptional craftsmanship, since they spun the goats’ hair while it was still attached to the back of the goats.”

This peculiar act of craftsmanship appears, at first glance, to make little sense:

a.) What was gained by spinning the goats’ hair on the goats? Surely there was more significance to this act than a mere demonstration of skill?

b.) Why was only the goats’ hair spun while on the goats, whereas the wool (for the tapestries) was not spun while still on the sheep? In fact, sheep being much more docile than goats, would seem to have been the more logical choice.

The Explanation
Two reasons could be suggested for the “spinning of the goats’ hair on the goats.”

a.) As Sforno writes (ibid.), that when the hair is still attached, it remains fresher, since it absorbs moisture and nutrition from the body.

b.) An animal offering is superior to a vegetable offering (as we find that Kayin brought an offering to God of flax, whereas Hevel brought animal offerings, and God accepted the latter—Bereishis 4:3ff.) Thus, by contributing goats hair thread that was still attached to the goats, a person had the advantage of making a live animal offering to the Tabernacle.
Since the goats’ hair was donated while still attached to the goats, it had to be shaven off immediately, for two reasons.

a.) If it was left attached, it would continue to grow, leaving a mixture of spun and unspun hair.

b.) Leaving the hair spun while attached to the animal for any time longer than was halachically necessary would be considered cruelty to animals.

Since detached hair quickly loses its moisture (as Sforno explained), they decided to make the goats hair sheets and the tapestries immediately, so that the thread would be woven together while fresh. Of the two coverings, the tapestries were the more important (since they formed the primary roof of the Tabernacle), so they were made first.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 449ff.)
The length of each tapestry was twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each tapestry was four cubits. The same measurements applied for all the tapestries.

He stitched five of these tapestries to one another, and the other five tapestries he also stitched to one another.

He made loops of turquoise wool on the edge of the tapestry which is at the end of the first group (of five tapestries), and he did the same on the edge of the end curtain of the second group (of five tapestries). He made fifty loops on the edge of the first tapestry, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the tapestry from the second group. The loops (on the two different tapestries) corresponded to one another.

He made fifty golden clasps, and he fastened the (two groups of) tapestries to one another with the clasps, so that (the roof of) the Tabernacle became one.

He made sheets of goats’ hair for a covering over the Tabernacle. He made eleven sheets. The length of each sheet was thirty cubits, and the width of each sheet was four cubits. The dimensions applied for the eleven sheets.

He joined the five sheets by themselves, and the (other) six sheets by themselves.

He made fifty loops on the edge of the first sheet, at the end of one group, and fifty loops on the edge of the (end) sheet of the second set.

He made fifty copper clasps to fasten the tent together so that it became one.

He made a (further) covering for the (goats’ hair) tent, of ram skins dyed red and a covering of tachash skins above.

He made the beams for the Tabernacle of acacia wood, standing upright. The length of each beam was ten cubits, and the width of each beam was a cubit and a half.

Each beam had two square pegs (carved at the bottom, separated) like rungs, aligned opposite each other. In this way he made all the beams of the Tabernacle.

He made the beams for the Tabernacle (as follows): twenty beams for the southern side.

Why is this entire section (36:8–38:7) repeated in all its detail from Parshas Terumah?

Abarbanel: The Tabernacle was actually constructed by Betzalel in a different sequence to that which God transmitted to Moshe in Parshas Terumah (see Rashi to 38:22). When the reader sees that the order is different to that of Parshas Terumah, he may suspect that, in addition to changing the order of construction, perhaps further changes were made. Therefore, the Torah repeated the construction process in intricate detail to show that only the order was changed, and that all the measurements and weights were preserved.

Ohr HaChayim: The Torah repeats all the details of construction here based on the Torah’s tendency to repeat things which are cherished and beloved. A precedent for this approach is the Torah’s repetition of Eliezer’s account of finding a marriage partner for Yitzchak which was repeated due to its cherished nature (See Rashi to Bereishis 24:42).

Problems with Abarbanel

Abarbanel’s solution is difficult to accept (at the literal level of Torah interpretation) since a.) If the Torah wished to inform us that the order of construction was different to that of Parshas Terumah, surely a shorter way could be found than repeating the entire Parsha in a different order?

b.) It is difficult to accept (at the literal level) that an entire Parsha would be repeated merely to avert the suspicion that various details might have been changed.

Rashi’s Solution

Rashi is silent here, because he presumed that the reader will always bear in mind his earlier comments and, on occasion, an earlier comment might solve a problem with a later verse.

In our case, Rashi has already explained in Parshas Chayei Sarah that the Torah sometimes repeats passages to indicate that a particular topic is especially cherished and beloved (as we find in the account of Eliezer seeking a spouse for Yitzchak—See Rashi to Bereishis 24:42).
দ্বিতীয় অংশ

লেখক কিছু কিছু নিয়ম বলেছেন যে রাজনৈতিক বিষয়ের সমস্ত প্রশ্নের জন্য মাঝে মাঝে যেখানে আইনের প্রয়োগ করা হয় তা উল্লিখিত করা হয়। এছাড়া তিনি বলেছেন যে রাজনৈতিক বিষয়ের প্রতিটি প্রশ্নের জন্য আইনের প্রয়োগ করা হয়।

তৃতীয় অংশ

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চতুর্থ অংশ

লেখক কিছু কিছু নিয়ম বলেছেন যে রাজনৈতিক বিষয়ের সমস্ত প্রশ্নের জন্য মাঝে মাঝে যেখানে আইনের প্রয়োগ করা হয় তা উল্লিখিত করা হয়। এছাড়া তিনি বলেছেন যে রাজনৈতিক বিষয়ের প্রতিটি প্রশ্নের জন্য আইনের প্রয়োগ করা হয়।
forty silver sockets under the twenty beams, two sockets under one beam for its two square pegs, and two sockets under the next beam for its two square pegs (etc.).

25 For the second side of the Tabernacle, on the northern side, he made twenty beams, 26 and their forty silver sockets: two sockets under one beam and two sockets under the next beam.

27 For the western end of the Tabernacle he made six beams. 28 He made two (further) beams at the (northwestern and southwestern) corners of the Tabernacle at the end.

29 (All the beams) fit closely next to each other at the bottom. They fit together closely at the top and were connected (to each other) by a ring (which slots into grooves carved into the beam). So too for both of the two (beams) at the two corners.

30 (Thus on the western side) there were eight beams and their silver sockets—sixteen sockets—two sockets under one beam and two sockets under the next beam.

31 He made crossbars of acacia wood, five for the beams of one side of the Tabernacle, 32 five crossbars for the beams of the second side of the Tabernacle, and five crossbars for the beams of the rear side of the Tabernacle, on the western end. 33 He made the middle bar to go inside the beams, extending from one end to the other end.

34 He coated the beams with gold. He made rings (on the beams) of gold as holders for the crossbars, and he coated the bars with gold.

35 He made a partition of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool thread twisted with fine linen thread, the work of an artistic weaver. Animal designs were professionally woven into it (on both sides).

36 He made for it four pillars of acacia wood, coated with gold—with gold hooks (to hold the partition)—inserted into four silver sockets.

37 He made a curtain for the entrance of the tent of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool thread twisted with fine linen thread, the work of an embroiderer (with images on both sides), 38 its five pillars and their hooks. He coated their tops and their decorative bands with gold, and their five sockets were made from copper.

The Tabernacle’s Apparatus is Made 男女

Betzelel (and his assistants) made the Ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits in its length, a cubit and a half in its width, and a cubit and a half in its height. 2 He coated it with pure gold, coating it inside and out, and he made upon it a golden-rimmed edge all around.

3 He cast four golden rings for it, on its four corners, two rings on one of its sides and two rings on its other side. 4 He made poles of acacia wood and coated them with gold. 5 He inserted the poles into the rings on the sides of the Ark, to carry the Ark.

6 He made a lid (for the Ark) of pure gold, two and a half cubits in its length and a cubit and a half in its width. 7 He made two golden cherubs (each with the face of a child). He made them (from the same

Therefore, in our case, Rashi felt it unnecessary to explain the reason why the Torah repeated various details here, as he presumed that the reader will remember the reason which was already explained in Parshas Chaye Sarah. [c.f. Ohr haChayim]

Why was the Tabernacle especially cherished and beloved?
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piece of metal) hammered out from the two ends of the lid.  

8 He made one cherub from one end and the other cherub from the other end. He made (one of) the cherubs at each of the two ends of the lid (from the same piece of metal).  

9 The cherubs had their wings spread upwards, sheltering the lid with their wings, their faces toward one another. The faces of the cherubs were turned towards the lid.

10 He made a table of acacia wood, two cubits in its length, one cubit in its width, and a cubit and a half in its height.  

11 He coated it with pure gold, and he made for it a golden-rimmed edge all around.

12 He made for it a frame one handbreadth in width all around. He made a golden-rimmed edge for its frame all around.

13 He made for it (the table) four golden rings, and he placed the rings on the four corners of its four legs.  

14 The rings were (attached to the legs) adjacent to the frame as holders for the poles with which to carry the table.

15 He made the poles of acacia wood, and he coated them with gold. The table was carried with them.

16 He made the table’s utensils from pure gold: its bread-molds, its spoons, its supporting bars and its separating bars, which covered (the breads, and allowed ventilation).

17 He made the Menorah of pure gold. The Menorah was made hammered (from a single piece of metal). Its base and its stem, its (ornamental) cups, spheres, and flowers were all from (the same piece of metal and not made separately).

18 Six branches were coming out of its sides (diagonally), three Menorah branches from one of its sides and three Menorah branches from its second side.

19 On one branch were three decorated cups, a sphere and a flower. On the next branch were three decorated cups, a sphere and a flower. So too for all six branches that came out of the Menorah.

20 On (the stem of) the Menorah there were four decorated cups (one below the point where the branches emerge, and three at the top) together with its spheres and its flowers.

21 There was a sphere (on the stem) where the (first) two branches came out of it, a sphere where the (next) two branches came out of it, and a sphere where the (last) two branches came out of it. (This covered) all six branches that come out of the Menorah.

22 Its spheres and branches were all (formed) from it. All of it was one hammered mass of pure gold.

23 He made its seven lamps, and its wick-tongs and its ash-scoops from pure gold.

24 He made it from (exactly) a kikar of pure gold, including all these utensils.

25 He made the Incense Altar out of acacia wood, one cubit in its length and one cubit in its width, a square, and two cubits in its height. Its horns were (formed) from it.  

26 He coated it with pure gold, its top, its walls all around, and its horns, and he made for it a golden-rimmed edge all around.

27 He made two golden rings for it underneath its rimmed edge on its two corners. He made them
on its two sides, so that they should serve as holders for poles with which to carry it. 28 He made the poles out of acacia wood and coated them with gold.

29 He made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense, professionally mixed.

THE COURTYARD AND ITS APPARATUS ARE MADE

He made the Altar for Burnt offerings of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide. (The Altar was) square, and its height was three cubits. 2 He made protrusions on its four corners. Its protrusions were from (the same single piece of wood). He coated it with copper.

3 He made all the utensils of the Altar, the pots, the shovels, the sacrificial basins, the flesh hooks and the fire pans. He made all its utensils from copper.

4 He made for the Altar a lattice of copper netting beneath its decorative border, extending downwards until the middle of the Altar. 5 He cast four rings on the four ends of the copper netting, as holders for the poles.

6 He made the poles of acacia wood, and he coated them with copper. 7 He inserted the poles into the rings on the sides of the Altar in order to carry it with them.

He made it (the Altar) hollow, out of panels.

8 He made the copper Urn and its copper base from the mirrors of the women who had (born) legions (of children in Egypt), who congregated at the entrance of the tent of meeting (to give their contribution).

9 He made the courtyard (as follows): On the southern side there were (perforated) curtains for the courtyard of twisted linen, one hundred cubits long. 10 It had twenty pillars and twenty sockets of copper. The hooks of the pillars and their belts were silver.

11 The northern side was one hundred cubits. There were twenty copper pillars, and their twenty copper sockets for them. The hooks of the pillars and their belts were silver.

12 The western side had fifty cubits of curtains, ten pillars and ten sockets for them. The hooks of the pillars and their belts were silver.

13 The eastern end was fifty cubits (consisting of an entrance of 20 cubits and a 15 cubit “shoulder” curtain on each side). 14 There were 15 cubits of curtains on one shoulder, with their three pillars and their three sockets. 15 So too on the second shoulder, so that on either side of the gate of the courtyard there were curtains of fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three sockets.

16 All the curtains that surrounded the courtyard were made from twisted fine linen. 17 The sockets for the pillars were made from copper. The hooks of the pillars and their belts were made from silver, and their covering on the tops was silver. All the pillars of the courtyard had belts of silver.

18 At the entrance of the courtyard was a professionally woven tapestry made of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool thread twisted with linen thread, twenty cubits high and five cubits wide, the same (height)
ה荣幸: בו Aç לפתיה והוריהם, ארצה נשאת ורוחה.

לأجر סכיפ בHASHA: מ-מ

כ"ב פסוקים, טנוא'ה ספימא.
as the hangings of the courtyard. 19 It had four pillars, and four sockets, made from copper. Their hooks were silver, and the covering on their tops and their belts were silver. 20 All the pegs of the Tabernacle and of the courtyard all around were made from copper.
Parshas Vayakhel contains 1 prohibition.

1. The court should not carry out an execution on Shabbos [35:3].
for insights into the name of the parsha, see vayakhel, p. 259.
Why does the Torah specify what was done with the silver and copper, but not with the gold? (v. 24-31)

KLI YAKAR: The Midrash states that, after the Tabernacle’s components had been made, Moshe made an audit together with Isamar and the Levites, of how all the donations had been allocated correctly in order to prove to the Jewish people that he was not guilty of embezzlement. However, the audit of silver showed 1775 shekels unaccounted for.

In fact however, these 1775 shekels of silver had been used to make the hooks which were attached to the pillars of the courtyard, but this detail had been forgotten. God perceived that Moshe’s reputation was in danger, so He made a heavenly voice announce, “The 1775 shekels were used for the hooks of the pillars.”

Once the heavenly voice had testified to Moshe’s honesty, the Jewish people did not need any accounting for the gold. Thus, the Torah does not mention the details of how the gold was allocated.
These are the accounts of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, which were counted at Moshe’s command. (All these items) were serviced by the Levites under the direction of Isamar, the son of Aharon the priest.

Materials of the Tabernacle are Audited

Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah, had made all that God had commanded Moshe. 23 With him was Ohaliav, son of Achisamach, of the tribe of Dan, a craftsman, an artistic weaver and an embroiderer of turquoise, purple, and crimson wool and linen.

All the gold that had been used for work in all the work of the Holy (sanctuary), which was the gold donated, (was) twenty-nine kikar, seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the shekel (measurement system which is used for) sanctified (items).

The silver census money from the community was 100 kikar and 1775 shekels, according to the shekel (measurement system which is used for) sanctified (items). (This consisted of) one beka per head, i.e. half a shekel according to the shekel (measurement system which is used for) sanctified (items), for each person who went through the counting (system), from the age of twenty years and upward (which totaled) 603,550 (people).

The 100 kikar of silver was used for casting the sockets of the Holy (Tabernacle) and the sockets of the partition. One hundred sockets were made from one hundred kikar, one kikar for each socket.

From the 1775 shekels he made hooks for the pillars, and he covered their tops and put belts on them.

The copper donated was 70 kikar and 2400 shekels. With it he made the sockets for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the Copper Altar, its copper netting, and all the utensils of the Altar, the sockets...

Problems With Kli Yakar (v. 24-31)

Kli Yakar explains why the audit of gold is not specified in detail, based on the Midrash. However, at the literal level of Torah interpretation this solution is problematic, since:

a.) If Moshe’s trustworthiness had already been testified to by the heavenly voice after the accounting of the silver (v. 27-28), why was it then necessary to make an accounting of the copper (v. 29-31), in order to prove that Moshe was reliable?

b.) At the literal level, it would be ludicrous to suggest that Moshe, Isamar and every one of the Levites all forgot about the hooks of the pillars!

We are thus left with the Kli Yakar’s question: Why then did the Torah not mention what all the gold was used for?

The Explanation

A large amount of gold was needed for the construction of the Tabernacle:

The Menorah contained a whole kikar, the Ark was 1.5 cubits long, coated in gold, and its lid was 1.5 cubits long. Each of the 48 beams was 10 cubits long and coated in gold.

Even a rough calculation would show that the figure mentioned here (in v. 24) of 29 kikars would have been vastly short (less than fifty percent) of the gold that was required.

From this we see that the Jewish people did not donate sufficient gold for the construction of the Tabernacle and that Moshe—who was extremely wealthy in his own right (see Rashi to Shemos 34:1)—was forced to supplement the remainder.
of the surrounding courtyard, and the sockets of the gate to the courtyard, all the pegs of the Tabernacle and all the pegs of the surrounding courtyard.

**Making of the Priestly Garments**

From the turquoise, purple, and crimson wool they made the meshwork cloths (used to pack the Tabernacles’ utensils during transport) to serve in the Holy (Sanctuary), and they made Aharon’s holy garments, as God had commanded Moshe.

1. He made the Apron of gold (thread), turquoise, purple, and crimson wool, and twisted fine linen.
2. They hammered out the sheets of gold and cut strands from them to work the gold into the turquoise wool, the purple wool, the crimson wool, and the fine linen, through the work of a professional weaver.
3. They made connected shoulder straps at both its ends. (The straps were woven separately first and then) connected to it.
4. Its decorative belt, which is above it, was made from it (woven professionally as one single piece, out of) gold (thread), turquoise, purple, and crimson wool, and twisted fine linen as God had commanded Moshe.
5. They prepared the shoham stones surrounded in gold settings, engraved in (clear script like is used on) a signet ring, with the names of the sons of Israel. He put them on the shoulder straps of the Apron as stones of remembrance for the children of Israel, as God had commanded Moshe.
6. He made the Breastplate, the work of a professional weaver in a similar fashion to the Apron, (i.e.) from gold (thread), turquoise, purple, and crimson wool, and twisted fine linen.
7. When folded (ready to be worn by the High Priest), it was square, one span (=half a cubit) in its length and one span in its width.
8. They set it with four rows of precious stones.
9. One row was a row of: red quartz, emerald, and yellow quartz
10. The second row: ruby, sapphire, and beryl (blue-green gem).
11. The third row: red zirconium, striped quartz, and (violet) amethyst.
12. The fourth row: yellow-green olivine, onyx, and jasper (opaque quartz).
13. They were inlaid in gold in their settings.
14. The names of the children of Israel were on the stones, twelve names in all. The names of the twelve tribes were engraved according to (the order of their birth) in (clear script, as is used on) a signet ring.
15. They made for the Breastplate chains at the edges, of braided, pure gold. They made two settings of gold and two golden rings, and they placed the two rings on the two ends of the Breastplate, and they placed the two golden cables on the two rings, at the ends of the Breastplate. They placed the two ends of the two cables upon the two settings, and these they placed on the shoulder straps of the Apron,

This explains why a detailed audit, to remove any suspicion that Moshe embezzled, was not required.

One problem with this explanation is that it seems to contradict the statement in Parshas Vayakhel that there was a surplus of materials donated (see 36:7). This would seem to suggest that more gold was donated than required.

However, the “surplus” here refers to a surplus of those materials which were available to the Jewish people. This did not preclude the possibility of there being items which they did not possess at all, or in insufficient quantities. For example, Rashi (35:27) states explicitly that they did not have Shoham stones, and yet the Torah still describes a surplus. From this we see that the “surplus” was meant in a general sense, but that there remained the possibility of some items being insufficient. This was the case with gold, where only 29 kikars were available.

(Based on Sichas Shabbos Parshas Pekudei 5744)
on its front part. 19 They made two golden rings, and they placed them on the two ends of the Breastplate, on its edge that is toward the inner side of the Apron. 20 They made two golden rings and placed them on the two shoulder straps of the Apron, from below, toward its front, adjacent to its seam, above the band of the Apron. 21 They fastened the Breastplate by its rings to the rings of the Apron with a turquoise cord, so as to be upon the band of the Apron, and the Breastplate would then not move off the Apron, as God had commanded Moshe.

He made the Robe (worn under) the Apron entirely of turquoise wool, through a professional weaver. 22 Its collar at the top was hemmed inside, like the collar of a coat of armor so that it should not be torn. 23 On its bottom edge they made pomegranate shapes of twisted turquoise, purple, and crimson wool. 24 They made bells of pure gold, and they placed the bells between the pomegranates on the bottom edge of the robe, all around, between the pomegranates. 25 A golden bell (was followed by) a pomegranate (which was followed by) a golden bell and (then another) pomegranate (and so on), on the bottom edge of the Robe, all around. (It was thus ready) for service (in the Tabernacle) as God had commanded Moshe.

They made the checkered Tunic from linen through a professional weaver, for Aharon and for his sons, 28 the linen Turban (for Aharon), and the beautiful linen Turbans (for his sons), and the linen Pants, (all from) fine twisted linen, 29 the professionally embroidered Sash of fine linen twisted with turquoise, purple, and crimson wool as God had commanded Moshe.

They made the Forehead-Plate, the holy diadem, of pure gold, and they engraved on it in (clear script, as is used on) a signet ring, (the words), “Holy to God.” 31 They placed on it a ribbon of turquoise wool to go over the Turban from above, as God had commanded Moshe.

All the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was completed. The children of Israel had done everything that God had commanded Moshe. They did it (correctly).

(When they found that the beams were too heavy to erect) they brought the Tabernacle to Moshe. Why was the Tabernacle brought to Moshe? (v. 33)

RASHI: Because they were unable to erect it. Since Moshe had done no work in the Tabernacle, God left for him the task of erecting it. No person could erect it because of the weight of the beams, for a human does not have the strength to hold them upright, but Moshe was able to erect it. Moshe said to God, “How could a human being possibly erect it?” He replied, “You work with your hands and it will appear as if you are erecting it, but it will actually go up by itself.” This is the implication of the verse, “The Tabernacle was set up” (40:17), i.e. (the passive verb suggests) it was set up by itself. From the Midrash of Rabbi Tanchumah.

MIZRACHI: Rashi was troubled why they brought the Tabernacle in pieces for, generally speaking, a craftsman aims to show his master a finished product. This forced Rashi to conclude that they were unable to assemble it.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

1. Why was the Tabernacle brought to Moshe? (v. 33)

a.) If collectively the craftsmen were unable to erect the Tabernacle because it was too heavy, why did they imagine that Moshe would be able to do so alone?

b.) What was the need to bring the Tabernacle to Moshe? Why did they not just go and ask him what to do?

c.) Why does Rashi cite his source here, the Midrash of Rabbi Tanchumah, when usually he does not cite sources?

d.) If they were able to bring all the parts of the Tabernacle to Moshe then it turns out that they were able to lift the beams (as stated explicitly in verse 33)! If so, why were they unable to erect the Tabernacle?

THE EXPLANATION

After all the components of the Tabernacle were made, the craftsmen decided to assemble them. Even though they had not heard directly from Moshe that they were required to erect the Tabernacle, they presumed
An exception to this rule was the command to make the Ark which was phrased in the plural (Terumah 25:10). This presented a problem, since no one person could lift the beams, and since this supporting bar required a miracle to be put in place—for it bent around the corners—they were unable to erect the walls.

NACHALAS YA’AKOV: The Talmud states that Moshe was 10 amos (15 ft) tall. At such a height it would have been possible to erect the beams without need for a miracle. The fact that Rashi says that a miracle was required here suggests that he rejected the idea that Moshe was exceptionally tall.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

BE’ER BASADEH: Even though one person could not lift the beams, surely a few people together would have been able to do so? I am astonished that none of the commentators addresses this obvious question.

Perhaps we could answer, albeit somewhat tenuously, that in order for the beams to stand upright, the central supporting bar needed to be inserted. And since this supporting bar required a miracle to be inserted. And since this supporting bar required a miracle to be

that this was logically included in the requirement to make it. However, when they came to erect the beams, they were faced with the following problem:

All the commands that were given by Moshe to the Jewish people concerning the construction of the Tabernacle were addressed in the singular. In fact, even the contribution of materials was phrased in the singular, “Every person whose heart inspires him to generosity should bring...” (35:5).

TORAS MENACHEM

From this, the Jewish people understood that every act of construction of the Tabernacle must be carried out by a single individual, for otherwise, the commands would have been phrased in the collective, plural conjugation* [cf. Be’er Basadeh]. This presented a problem, since no individual was able to erect the beams singlehandedly, as Rashi stresses, “No person (sing.) could erect it because of the weight of the beams.” They were convinced, however, that Moshe would be able to erect the Tabernacle, for two reasons:
Moshe, the tent and all its furnishings, its clasps, its beams, its bolts, its pillars and its sockets, the covering of rams’ skins dyed red, the covering of tachash skins, and the partition, the Ark of the Testimony and its poles and the lid, the Table, all its utensils and the multi-surface bread, the pure Menorah, its lamps—the lamps which were to be arranged (daily)—all its utensils, and the oil for lighting, the Golden Altar, the anointing oil and the incense, and the curtain of the entrance to the tent, the Copper Altar and its copper netting, its poles and all its utensils, the Um and its base, the curtains of the courtyard, its pillars and its sockets, the curtain for the gate of the courtyard, its ropes and its pegs, and all the utensils for the service of the Tabernacle, (i.e.) the Tent of Meeting, the meshwork cloths which are used in the Holy (Sanctuary to cover the apparatus during transportation), the holy garments for Aharon the High Priest and his sons’ garments for serving as Priests.

The children of Israel did all the work in accordance with everything which God had commanded Moshe. Moshe saw the entire work, and look! they had done it as God had commanded. They had done it (correctly), and so Moshe blessed them.

40

God Instructs Moshe to Erect the Tabernacle

1 God spoke to Moshe, saying: 2 “On the day (of inauguration in) the first month, on the first of the

a.) Moshe had erected his own “tent of meeting” outside the camp which could be described a miniature form of “Tabernacle,” since the Divine Presence dwelled there (See Shemos 33:7). Therefore, the craftsmen reasoned, “If Moshe can erect his own Tabernacle, then he will probably be able to erect ours too.”

b.) The failure to erect the Tabernacle had appeared superficially to be a physical problem, but the craftsmen feared that it was due to a spiritual deficiency. Even though, generally speaking, God had forgiven them for making the Golden Calf, perhaps they had not been completely exonerated, and that is why they had been unable to erect the Tabernacle? Moshe however, did not participate in the sin, and therefore he would not be affected by this problem. (They also feared that they had erred in presuming that they should erect the Tabernacle in the first place.)

Due to the above reasons the craftsmen were convinced that Moshe would be able to erect the Tabernacle, so they brought it to him. Carrying the Tabernacle to him did not pose a problem, as they were allowed to carry it collectively. They were only forbidden to erect it together.

In truth, however, this entire state of affairs had come about for one reason—because God wanted Moshe to participate in the construction of the Tabernacle. I.e. Rashi is teaching us that there was no spiritual deficiency on the part of the Jewish people, and that they had not been presumptuous in attempting to construct the Tabernacle. Rather, the entire scenario had been orchestrated by God to give Moshe a role in the construction process.

How Tall Was Moshe?
The Talmud (Nedarim 38a) states that Moshe was ten cubits (15 ft.) tall. However, Rashi seems to have rejected this assertion, as he writes that a miracle was required for Moshe to erect the beams. If Moshe had been ten cubits tall he would surely have been able to hold up beams that were no taller than himself [c.f. Nachalas Ya’akov, Be’er Basadeh].

Therefore, we can conclude that, at the literal level of Torah interpretation, Moshe was not ten cubits tall.

To indicate clearly that he rejected this assertion, Rashi cited his source as, “the Midrash of Rabbi Tanchumah,” and not the Talmud.

Rashi rejected the notion that Moshe was ten cubits tall for two reasons:
a.) There does not seem to be any indication of this fact in scripture, and if such an astonishing detail were true at the literal level, one could presume that it would be indicated somewhere.

b.) In Parshas Shemos, after Tziporah and her sisters met Moshe at the well, they reported to her father, “An Egyptian man rescued us from the hands of the shepherds, and he also drew water for us and watered the flock” (2:19). Now, if Moshe was ten cubits tall, his most remarkable, identifying feature would not have been that he was an “Egyptian man,” a quality he shared with many hundreds of thousands of other people. Rather, they would have said, “a giant man rescued us etc.” This proves that, at the literal level, Moshe was not ten cubits tall, so Rashi opted for the Midrash Tanchumah’s account that Moshe erected the Tabernacle miraculously.

(The Last Word)

Moshe already had his own “personal Tabernacle,” the “tent of Meeting,” which was outside the camp (Ki Sissa 33:7). Therefore, he did not need to be involved in constructing the Tabernacle, which was primarily for the Divine Presence to dwell also among the Jewish people. Nevertheless, God told Moshe that he should be involved, and He gave him the task of erecting the Tabernacle.

This teaches us that a person cannot only busy himself with his own spiritual development and Torah study. He needs also to be involved in helping others, just like God who wanted Moshe to be involved in the Tabernacle, not just as a spiritual leader and mentor, but also, “with his hands.”

(As mentioned in Sichas Shabbos Parshas Pekudei 5730)
Was the Tabernacle actually set up for the first time on “the first of the month” (of Nissan)? (v. 2)

RAMBAN: No. In Parshas Terumah, Moshe was told that after the components of the Tabernacle have been made, “you should erect the Tabernacle correctly, like you will have been shown on the mountain” (26:30). This occurred on the 23rd of Adar. Then, for seven days the inauguration ceremony of Aharon and his sons was carried out (as described at length in chap. 29, above). However, each day of the inauguration ceremony the Tabernacle was erected and dismantled.

Our verse conveys the command to Moshe to assemble the Tabernacle on the eighth day, on a permanent basis. From this point onwards, it was only to be dismantled for transportation purposes.

RASHI’S SILENT DISPUTE WITH RAMBAN (v. 2)

Ramban makes a non-literal rendition of verse 2. The verse states that God told Moshe, “on the first of the month, you should set up the Tabernacle.” This, argues Ramban, is difficult to accept since the Tabernacle was already erected for seven days prior to the first of Nissan, for the inauguration of Aharon and his sons as priests. Therefore, Ramban concludes that the verse is to be read as if it were written, “on the first of the month, you should set up the Tabernacle permanently.”

Presumably, if Rashi favored Ramban’s non-literal interpretation here, he would have indicated so. The fact that he makes no such comment

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- Was the Tabernacle actually set up for the first time on “the first of the month” (of Nissan)? (v. 2)
month, you should set up the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting. You should place the Ark of the Testimony there, and you should protect the Ark with the partition. You should bring in the Table and set up its arrangement (of multi-surface bread). You should bring in the Menorah and kindle its lamps. You should place the Golden Incense Altar in front of the Ark of the Testimony, and you should put up the curtain of the entrance to the Tabernacle.”

“You should place the Sacrificial Altar in front of the entrance of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting. You should place the Urn between the Tent of Meeting and the Altar, and you should put water there. You should set up the surrounding courtyard, and you should put up the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard.”

“You should take the anointing oil and anoint the Tabernacle and everything inside it. You should sanctify it and all its equipment, and it will become holy. You should anoint the Sacrificial Altar and all its utensils. You should sanctify the Altar, and the Altar will become a holy of holies. You should anoint the Urn and its base and sanctify it.

“You should bring Aharon and his sons near the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and you should bathe them in water. You should dress Aharon with the holy garments, and you should anoint him and sanctify him so that he may serve Me as a Priest. You should bring his sons near and clothe them with checkered tunics. You should anoint them, as you have anointed their father, so that they may serve Me as Priests. This should be done so that their anointment will confer on them an everlasting Priesthood throughout their generations.”

suggests that he interprets the verse at face value, i.e. in our verse God instructs Moshe to assemble the Tabernacle for the first time on the first of Nissan.

Obviously, Rashi would agree that in actuality Moshe assembled and dismantled the Tabernacle for seven days previously, to carry out the inauguration of Aharon and his sons. Only, Rashi holds that this was done without any direct command from God. The first time Moshe was commanded to erect the Tabernacle was on the first of Nissan, as stated in our verse.

This begs the question: How could Moshe possibly erect the Tabernacle without being commanded to do so by God?

Rashi understood that Moshe was commanded by God to erect the Tabernacle for the inauguration of Aharon and his sons, but he was commanded to do so indirectly.

Part of the instructions concerning the inauguration state, “You should bring Aharon and his sons near the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and you should (immerse them totally) in water” (Tetzaveh 29:4). Obviously, for this to occur, there had to be a Tent of Meeting standing. So, Moshe understood from this command that the Tabernacle needed to stand for the inauguration of Aharon and his command.

However, this did not mean to say that God had “officially” commanded Moshe to erect the Tabernacle. Rather, the requirement to erect the Tabernacle was a clause in the inauguration of Aharon and his sons.

Then, in our verse, God told Moshe that—after the inauguration was completed—he should erect the Tabernacle, officially.

To sum up: Ramban holds that Moshe was commanded twice to erect the Tabernacle. In Parshas Terumah (26:30) he was commanded to erect the Tabernacle for the seven days of inauguration of Aharon and his sons, and here in Parshas Pekudei he received a second command to erect the Tabernacle on the first of Nissan permanently. Rashi holds both verses, in Parshiyos Terumah and Pekudei, represent one single command. In Parshas Terumah Moshe was told, he would be eventually be required to erect the Tabernacle; and here in Parshas Pekudei, God communicated with Moshe again, to inform him of the date when this was to take place and various other details.

Moshe also assembled the Tabernacle for seven days prior to the first of Nissan, as a clause within the inauguration process of Aharon and his sons.

**HOW DID MOSHE LIFT UP THE BEAMS FOR SEVEN DAYS?**

One problem with this explanation is that it appears to contradict an earlier statement of Rashi.

On verse 33 above, Rashi explained that the craftsmen who constructed the Tabernacle were unable to erect it, since the beams were too heavy. Moshe was then given miraculous assistance from God, and he erected the beams single-handedly.

Presumably, this miraculous assistance would only have been granted at the point when Moshe was commanded to erect the Tabernacle, and not before. This begs the question: If Moshe was not commanded (directly) to erect the Tabernacle during the seven days of inauguration of Aharon and his sons, then how did he erect the beams without any miraculous assistance?

However, every detail of the Tabernacle’s construction had to be performed by individuals (see v. 33), and this prompted the need for miraculous assistance.

Clearly, this condition only applied when it was a mitzvah to erect the Tabernacle. During the seven days of inauguration of Aharon and his sons, it was not a direct mitzvah (command) from God to erect the Tabernacle. Therefore, the stipulation that a single individual must erect the structure unaided did not apply.
Were the tasks carried out by Moshe in the sequence that they are recorded here? (v. 18-33)

Ramban: No. Moshe could not possibly have carried out the tasks in the sequence they are recorded here, since then it would turn out that Moshe offered a sacrifice (v. 29) before the Tabernacle was complete. For, we are only told in verse 33 that he assembled the courtyard, and sacrifices must be slaughtered inside the courtyard.

Rather, the Torah mentions the sacrifice that Moshe offered in verse 29 since the verse speaks about the Altar. But he did not offer it until the courtyard had been assembled, as described in verse 33.
Moshe did according to all that God had commanded him. He did so (precisely).

17 It was in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the Tabernacle was set up. 18 Moshe set up the Tabernacle, positioned its sockets, put up its beams, put in its bolts, and set up its pillars (with miraculous Divine assistance as the beams were too heavy to lift). 19 He spread the (goats’ hair sheet) tent over the Tabernacle, and he placed the cover of the tent over it from above, as God had commanded Moshe.

20 He took the (the Tablets of) Testimony and placed them into the Ark, put the poles on the Ark, and placed the lid on the Ark from above. 21 He brought the Ark into the Tabernacle and placed the partition so that it formed a protective covering in front of the Ark of the Testimony, as God had commanded Moshe.

22 He placed the Table in the Tent of Meeting on the northern half of the Tabernacle, outside the partition. 23 He set an arrangement of bread upon it before God, as God had commanded Moshe.

24 He placed the Menorah in the Tent of Meeting, opposite the Table, in the southern half of the Tabernacle. 25 He kindled the lamps before God, as God had commanded Moshe.

26 He placed the Golden Altar in the Tent of Meeting in front of the partition. 27 He made the incense go up in smoke on it, as God had commanded Moshe.

28 He put up the curtain for the entrance of the Tabernacle.

29 He placed the Sacrificial Altar in front of the entrance of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, and he offered up the (daily) burnt offering and the meal offering (which accompanies it) on it, as God had commanded Moshe.

30 He placed the Urn between the Tent of Meeting and the Altar, and he put water there for washing.

31 Moshe, Aharon, and his sons washed their hands and their feet from it. 32 Whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting and whenever they approached the Altar they would wash, as God had commanded Moshe.

33 He set up the courtyard surrounding the Tabernacle and the Altar, and he put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And, (with this), Moshe completed the work.

34 The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of God filled the Tabernacle. 35 Moshe could
משה לִבְנָה, גַּלּוֹת: מִצְבָּהָה מֶנֶּהְרָה, עֵלְיָה הָעֵלֶּה יִפּוֹדְוּ יִבְנֵי יַהֲדוּתָם.

מלִיא הָרָא הַמֶּנֶּהְרָה מִצְבָּהָה מֶנֶּהְרָה: עֵלְיָה הָעֵלֶּה לִפְדוּ יִבְנֵי יַהֲדוּתָם.

לִבְנָה בַּר לַעֲכֵתֵר. יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּל מְסִילָה:

הָקֵתָבָה בַּר לַעֲכֵתֵר: יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּל מְסִילָה.

הָקֵתָבָה בַּר לַעֲכֵתֵר: הָקֵתָבָה בַּר לַעֲכֵתֵר: יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּל מְסִילָה.
not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud rested upon it and the glory of God filled the Tabernacle.  

36 When the cloud rose up from over the Tabernacle, the children of Israel would set out on all their journeys. 37 But if the cloud did not rise up, they did not set out until the day that it rose. 38 For God’s cloud would remain on the Tabernacle by day, and there was fire on it at night, before the eyes of the entire house of Israel in all their encampments.

The congregation*, followed by the reader, proclaims:

**Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!**


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TORAS MENACHEM

However, as explained above, Rashi holds that God did not tell Moshe to erect the Tabernacle during the period of Aharon and his sons’ inauguration. Therefore, until the Tabernacle was fully erected on the first of Nissan, it was not yet a functional Tabernacle and the usual laws applying to it were not yet in effect.

Therefore, Rashi made no comment here that the verses are in the wrong order, for he holds that the verses can be read chronologically. Thus, when Moshe offered a sacrifice in verse 26, the Tabernacle was not yet fully functional. The usual law—that the outer courtyard must be in place for a sacrifice to be offered—did not yet apply.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 31, pp. 220-2; vol. 11, p. 181ff.)

*According to Chabad custom, the person called to the Torah also recites chazak chazak venischazeik, in contrast to those authorities who deem this to be an interruption before the blessing which is said after reading the Torah (Sefer Haminagim, p. 31; see Likutei Sichos vol. 24, p. 411; ibid. vol. 25, p. 474ff. See also Chikrei Minhagim by Rabbi Eliyahu Yochanan Gurary (Oholei Shem, Lubavitch 5759), p. 126ff.).
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לי הדרים י荃 כזה יпродаж את יכדיך יפיי על ה…and.
Haftaros

הפתראות
The person who was called up for Maftir says the following before reading the Haftarah:

בָּרָאשָׁה אָתָּה יְהֹוָה אֲנָלֶהָּו מֶלֶךְ הָעֹלָם אָשֶׁר בָּהָר
בֹּקֵדָם מֹעְלָם וְרוֹצָה בְּדַבֵּרָיָם הָנָּאָמְר
כָּאָמָה בָּרָאשָׁה אָתָּה יְהֹוָה מֹשָׁה בָּהָר הַפָּנָי
עִבְרֵי וּבְיִשְׂרָאֵל עִםָּו בְּנֶבֶיָּה הָאָמֶת וּצְדָקָה

After the Haftarah the following blessings are recited:

בָּרָאשָׁה אָתָּה יְהֹוָה אֲנָלֶהָּו מֶלֶךְ הָעֹלָם, צוֹרֵךְ עֵלָּו הֶוְלֶלֶםיָם, זָרֵּךְ בֶּכֶל הָדוּרָה, חַלֵּל הָעֲמָדָם
הָאָמָר עֵלָּו הַמֶּהָרֶר הַמַּכְרוּם, שָכֵל בֵּצֵרְיָא אָמֵת וּצְדָקָה
נָאָמָה אָתָּה יְהֹוָה אֲנָלֶהָּו נַגְּבוּתָו בְּבִיכָדוּ, וּדְבַר
אָוֶּר מָהָרֶר איָוֶּר לָא יָשָׁבוּ רוֹקָּא, כִּי אָל
מֶלֶךְ בָּאָתוּ וּרְחָמוֹּן אָתָּה, בָּרָאשָׁה יְהֹוָה אֲנָלֶהָּו
בְּכֵלָּה בֵּצֵרְיָא:

רַחֵם עַל צִוָּאָתָי מֵיָּאָתָו בֶּי נַתיָּוֶּן, בֹּקֵדָם בָּעִמָּה
חַשְׂשֹׁנָא וּפָשֲׂפָהּ מַפְּרָתָו בְּמַצְיָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, בָּרָאשָׁה יְהֹוָה
מֵעָשָּׁה צִיּוֹן בֵּצֵרְיָא:

שָׁפָרֲעָה, יְיָ אֲנָלֶהָּו בָּאָתוּוֹת הַבְּנֶבֶיָּה עַבְּדוּ, בָּפָלָם
בֵּית יוֹדִּרְבָּוָה, בָּפָרֲעָה יֵבּוֹא וּנְדַלְּבָנָה
עַל בּוֹשָׁה לָא יָשָׁב וּרְוָּא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל נְזַלְּבָנָה, כִּי בּוֹשָׁה קַדְשָׁה נְשִׁבְּעָה לָא, שָׁלֵּא יַבְּשָׁו נְזַלְּבָנָה
לֹעֲלָמָה וּרְוָּא. בָּרָאשָׁה יְיָ, מַגְּן רוֹד.
On fast days end here. On Shabbos (including Shabbos Chol HaMo’ed) continue:

On a Festival, and Shabbos that coincides with a Festival continue here:

On Rosh Hashanah continue here:

On Yom Kippur continue here:
Haftarah of Parshas Shemos

Numerous connections have been suggested between this Haftarah and Parshas Shemos: a.) The Parsha opens with “the names of the children of Israel who came [ha-ba’im] to Egypt with Ya’akov,” and likewise, the Haftarah opens with the statement, “In the coming [ha-ba’im] days, Ya’akov will take root.” b.) Parshas Shemos mentions Egypt’s punishment for enslaving the Jewish people (Shemos 3:19-20), a theme which is also stressed in the second verse of the Haftarah. c.) The general theme of Parshas Shemos is the promise of Redemption, an idea which is also stressed by the Haftarah—“You will be gathered one by one” (27:12; Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5748).

The Haftarah is taken from the beginning of a portion of Isaiah which depicts punishments that are due to the Northern Kingdom (“Efrayim”) and Southern Kingdom (“Jerusalem”). Throughout the Haftarah, the prophet vacillates between promises of hope and redemption on the one hand, and warnings of impending punishment on the other.

In the coming (days), Ya’akov will take root, Israel will bud and blossom, filling the face of the earth like the produce of the field.

(Even in the days that God struck Israel) did He strike him (Israel) as He struck those that struck him? Did He slay him as He slew those that slew him (as He struck and slew the Egyptians)? (Only) according to their measure of sin (did He bring retribution and) contend against her fields and gardens (but not take the lives of her inhabitants.) He removed the fruit with a rough wind, on the day the (strong) east wind blows (mightily).

Because My mercy is upon them it will be easy for them to atone for their sins. Only) by this (small) thing shall Ya’akov’s sin be atoned, this will be his fruit (benefit) of removing his sin: When he makes all the stones of the Altar as chalk stones crushed to pieces, the idol-trees and the sun images shall rise no more. Then the great city will be lonely, its dwelling place will be empty from its inhabitants, forlorn like the desert. In its place, a calf will graze, and there it will rest and consume the tree branches that grow there. When their (Edom’s) measure of sin has reached its limit, they will have their downfall, (a nation) of feminine (weakness) will come and destroy it. For it (Edom) is not an understanding nation (to know that God is the One Who gave them any power in the first place). Therefore its Maker will not have mercy upon it and its Creator will not find favor in it.

It will be on that day that God will remove the produce (Israel) from the husks, (the nations) from (Assyria which lie) beside the (Euphrates) river until the land of Egypt, and you will be gathered one by one, Children of Israel. And it will be on that
day, (as though) a great shofar will be blown (to call everyone to gather), and those who are lost in the land of Assyria and those who are cast away in the land of Egypt will come and bow down to God upon the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

28:1 Woe (to the) crown of arrogance (that is) upon Efrayim’s drunkards, (it will quickly be destroyed, as fast as) a withering blossom. (So shall befall) the glory of his splendor, the head (so pampered, it is as full of oil as) a valley of oil. (So shall befall) those who were battered from wine (who became so drunk that they fell and hurt themselves). 

2 Behold! God’s wind is strong and powerful, as the hail (that breaks the trees), like a devastating storm (which causes destruction), as the speeding flow of mighty water (shall the mighty wind hurl their crown of arrogance and) throw it upon the ground with a mighty hand. 

3 By the feet (of the enemy) shall they be smothered, the crown of arrogance of the drunkards of Efrayim. 

4 The glory of their splendor which is similar to a withering blossom, which is like a crown upon the head (which is) like a valley of oil, will be like a fig which has (prematurely) ripened before summer, so one who sees it will immediately swallow it, while it is still in his hand (so quickly will the enemy cast down their arrogance.)

5 On that day, God, the Master of legions, will be the crown of glory, a diadem of beauty for the remnant of His people (the tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin). He will be a spirit (inspiration) of justice to (Chizkiyahu) who presides upon the seat of judgment, and for strength (to those of Yehudah who go to war. They will not need to fight, because God will fight for them, and they will be able to) return from the place of battle to (fortify) the gate (of the city).

6 Though they too (Yehudah and Binyamin) have erred through (being drunk of) wine, and stagger through strong drink. The priest (teacher) and the (false) prophet erred because of strong drink; (mistaken about what) they saw, they stumble in judgment. 

7 For all the tables (they eat at) are full of vomit and filth, so that there is no place clean. 

8 (Because the adults have turned to insobriety,) to whom shall (the prophet) teach knowledge? And who shall understand what (the prophet has heard) from God? To those who are (just) weaned from the milk and removed from (their mother’s) breasts?

9 (Because of their indulgence they are so distant from God’s commandments that they require precautionary laws) one law on top of another, one law on top of another. (As the measuring tool of a builder keeps each row of bricks in place, the prophet must give) a measuring line for a measuring line, a measuring line for a measuring line. A little there, (very) little there, (i.e. even where Torah is learned, very few study it, as it is considered a burden.)

10 For with unintelligible speech and another language do (the prophet’s words appear) to this people. 

11 (Although he speaks for their benefit, and) he tells them, “This is (how you will find) tranquility: leave the weary alone (and do not rob them), that dedication to God and unconditional acceptance of His authority, regardless of whether we appreciate (“taste”) his commandments or not. If this is done properly, then there will subsequently be a “budding and blossoming” of a persons reverence of God and Torah study (Sefer Hama’amorim 5730-31, p. 86).

12—And it will be on that day, (as though) a great shofar will be blown. Perhaps this alludes to the significant movement towards observant Judaism that has occurred in our generation (Sefer Hama’amorim Melukat vol. 6, p. 8, see ibid. note 61 where this verse is connected with the Six-Day War).
The second chapter of the book, which stresses God's love for Israel (2:1-3).

The prophecy of doom. Jeremiah, describes his inauguration as a prophet by God and his first people (17-19). The second vision initially expresses his misgivings (4-10).

Yirmiyahu, informing him of his role as a prophet, to which Yirmiyahu role as a prophet was extremely challenging too, because he lived in times of hardship and spiritual concealment for the Jewish people—as the Talmud notes, “Yirmiyahu speaks throughout destruction” (Bava Basra 14b). Clearly, to lift both himself and his nation out of such deplorable circumstances, Yirmiyahu could not merely bring illumination to the people, like many of the other prophets; he was forced to inspire transformation. (Likutei Sichos vol. 18, p. 342f).

Haftarah of Parshas Shemos according to Sefardic communities.

These are the words of Yirmiyahu the son of Chilkiyahu, one of the priests who (lived) in Anasos in the territory of Binyamin, to whom the word of God (first) came in the days of Yoshiyahu son of Amon, King of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. (He continued to receive prophecy) during the days of (Yoshiyahu’s successor) Yehoyakim son of Yoshiyahu, King of Judah. (His prophecy continued) up to the end of eleven years of (the rule of Yehoyakim’s successor), Tzidkiyahu son of Yoshiyahu, King of Judah, (i.e.) until the exile of Jerusalem (which was) in the fifth month.

The word of God came to me, saying, “Before I had formed you in the womb, I had appointed you as a prophet to the nations”—Before I had formed you in the womb (2:23).

How is a person to withstand the negative influences of the secular world around him? Says God: “Before I had formed you in the womb, I knew you”—the Jewish soul predates, and is thus higher than the world. So your spiritual side is more powerful than any worldly obstacle you will encounter. “And before you emerged from the womb, I had sanctified you”—and furthermore, while in the womb, you were prepared for this task by learning the entire Torah (Nidah 30b). “I had appointed you as a prophet to the nations”—So, do not be insular! Do not escape interaction with the outside world and live a ghettoized lifestyle. Be a light unto the nations, because you have the resilience to withstand the temptations of the world and its corrupting influences.

But the Jew responds to God, “I really don’t know how to speak, as I am young” (v. 6)—It is true that my soul is holy and that I still retain the Torah that I learned subconsciously, but how does that help me to be resilient to the world in day-to-day life?
formed you in the womb, I knew (that) you (would be fit to be a prophet), and before you emerged from the womb, I had sanctified you; I had appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

I said, “Woé! God Almighty! I really don’t know how to speak, as I am young.”

God said to me, “Don’t say, ‘I’m young,’ (because that is not a problem), for you will go wherever I send you, you will (only have to) speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid (that you might mislead the people to whom you will speak prophecy), for I am with you to save you,” says God.

(In my prophetic vision I saw) God stretch out His hand and touch my mouth. God said to me, “Now I have placed My words into your mouth. See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to uproot and to crush, and to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.”

The word of God came to me, saying, “What do you see, Yirmiyahu, (in your vision)?”

“I see a stick from an almond tree,” I said.

“You have seen well,” God said to me. “(The almond, which grows quickly, is a sign) that I will put My word into action speedily.”

The word of God came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?”

“I see a boiling pot,” I said. “It’s bubbling toward the north.”

God said to me, “From (Babylon, which is in) the north trouble will break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land (and they will gather in Jerusalem for protection, like pieces of meat in a pot, only to be boiled by the enemy). For, behold, I am calling (to the hearts of) all the families of the kingdoms of the north (to come to Jerusalem),” says God. “They will come, and each person will place his chair at the entrance gates of Jerusalem and against all its walls around and against all the cities of Yehudah. Then, I will utter My judgments against them for all their evil, that they left Me and offered up burnt-offerings to other gods and that they prostrated themselves to the work of their hands.”

“You should (hurry up), fasten your belt and get going. Repeat to them everything that I command you. Don’t fear them (and withhold any prophecy), for then I will break you (making you vulnerable) for them (to hurt you).”

God replies: “Don’t say, ‘I’m young,’ for you will go wherever I send you...Do not be afraid for I am with you” (v. 7-8)—God will help to ensure that your inner resilience takes outward expression. God is with you “to uproot and to crush, and to destroy and to demolish” (v. 10), in the path of turning away from evil; and, “to build and to plant” (ibid.), in the path of doing good. So engage with the world and sanctify it. Do not be afraid! (Likutei Sichos vol. 18, pp. 349-50).

12. (The almond, which grows quickly, is a sign) that I will put My word into action speedily. In his commentary to this verse, Rashi writes, “From its initial budding to its full ripening, this almond takes 21 days, the same number of days that are between the 17th of Tamuz, when the city walls were breached, and the 9th of Au, when the Temple was burned.”

According to Jewish custom, however, we do not refer to this period as the “Twenty-One Days” but as the “Three Weeks.” The Twenty-One Days have only a negative connotation, since they refer to the time of destruction, but the number three is positive, for it hints to the third Temple that will be built at the end of the exile. Therefore, by Divine Providence, this more positive name—the Three Weeks—was chosen (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Pinchas 5748).
The Haftarah of Parshas Va’Eira

This Haftarah describes the complete downfall of Egypt, a process which begins in the Parsha with the ten plagues.

The Haftarah is excerpted from a lengthy section of prophecies concerning the downfall of Egypt, which spans three chapters of the book of Yechezkel (Ezekiel). At that time, Jerusalem had been surrounded by Babylonians for close to a year, and the Jewish people were hoping to receive assistance from the Egyptians. Yechezkel thus warns the Jewish people that Egypt is a wicked nation that will suffer impending punishment and should therefore not be perceived as a source of salvation. The prophecy was initially a source of conflict among the Jewish population of Babylon, but when the prophecy later materialized Yechezkel was greatly revered.

The Haftarah opens with brief words of comfort for the Jewish nation, describing her future ingathering and resettlement (28:25-26), before progressing swiftly to main theme of Egypt’s forty-year period of desolation which is soon to come (1-12). Subsequently, Egypt’s glory will remain diminished, never again to be a source of possible salvation for Israel, or any other nation* (13-16).

*Editor’s Note: Until the times of Yechezkel, Egypt had been a major world power for many centuries, dominating numerous nations, including Israel, but since then it has largely been controlled by foreign powers and has not ruled over any other nations. In 1948, 1967 and 1973, Egypt launched attacks on the Land of Israel and was unsuccessful each time.

Ezekiel 28:25 – 29:21

This is what God, Almighty God said: “When I have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and I will be sanctified through (all the miracles I will perform for) them in the sight of the nations, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Ya’akov. They shall dwell safely in it, and shall build houses, plant vineyards, and they shall dwell securely, when I have executed judgments upon all those around them who despise them—and they will know that I am God, their God.”

In the tenth year (of the kingdom of Tzidkiyahu), in the tenth (month), in the twelfth day of the month, the word of God came to me, saying, “Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesize...”

Restoration of Israel

Promise of success

God’s love for Israel

Va’Eira / פארשא 베ʾאירא

(Ezekiel 28:25 – 29:21)
against him, and against all Egypt; "Speak, and say, ‘This is what God, Almighty God, says, ‘Behold, I am (going to war) against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, (who is compared to) a great snake-like fish that lies in the midst of his streams, since he has said, ‘My river is my own, and I have made it for myself.’ ‘I will put hooks into your jaws, and I will cause the fish of your streams to stick to your scales, and I will bring you up from the midst of your streams, and all the fish of your streams shall stick to your scales, (i.e. when the king falls, all the people fall with him,) ‘I will cast you into the desert, you and all the fish of your rivers. You(r corpse) shall fall upon the open fields. You shall not be brought together, nor gathered. I have given you for food to the beasts of the field and to the birds of the sky. ‘Then, all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am God (Who bestows reward and punishment, this will befall them) because they have been a staff of reed (a weak support that easily breaks) to the house of Israel. (Instead of being the help to Israel that they had promised, they brought harm and destruction.) ‘When they took hold of you by your hand, you broke, and tore all their shoulders. When they leaned upon you, you broke, and thus you made them stand on their own feet.

Therefore, this is what God, Almighty God, says: ‘Behold, I will bring a sword upon you and cut off man and beast from you, ‘the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste, and they shall know that I am God. (This will happen) because he has said, ‘The river is mine, and I (alone) have made (myself great).’ ‘Behold, therefore I am going to attack you, and your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt (completely dry to the extent that it is) utterly waste and desolate, from Migdol to Seveinei as far as the border of Kush. ‘No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited forty years. ‘I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate,

In a second, apparently unrelated prophecy, Yechezkel predicts that the plunder of Egypt will be won by Babylon as a reward for their thirteen year siege (586-573 BCE) of Tzor (17:20; see Ezekiel 26:7-9).

The concluding words of the Haftarah briefly allude to the glory of Israel after Egypt’s forty-year period of desolation (21).

28:26. קְנֵי רֵעַ יֵאֶד אֵלָי, עָצָי יְשֵׁית. —When I have executed judgments (shefatim) upon all those around them who despise them. This mirrors the “great acts of judgment (shefatim gedolim)” (Shemos 7:4), which God promised to enact on Egypt in the Parsha (Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 45, note 6).

29:9. בָּשָׁלֵם כֹּלָּם בְּלִי מְשַׁפֵּט אָנָּה, מַעֲשֵׂי עַנָּתוֹת אֱלֹהֵי בְּנָתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. —Because he has said, “The river is mine, and I (alone) have made (myself great).” This verse suggests that Egypt was punished due to its tremendous arrogance and denial of God (a sin between man and God). Verse 6, however, suggests a different reason for Egypt’s downfall, “because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel,” i.e. a failure to carry out promises of assistance to the Jewish people (a sin between man and his fellow man).

By juxtaposing these two sins together, the Haftarah teaches that they are strongly connected. A person might think that being ethical and kind to one’s fellow is not necessarily dependent on believing in God and fearing Him; but we learn here that the atrocities which Egypt inflicted upon the Jewish people were only possible due to their tremendous arrogance and denial of God, “The river is mine, and I (alone) have made (myself great).” The series of punishments were thus necessary to crush the arrogance of Egypt, and bring them to an awareness of God.

From here we see the tremendous responsibility resting upon the Jewish community to teach the rest of the world that ethical values must be based on belief in God; otherwise, these ethics may soon be dispensed with when they prove to be inconvenient (Likutei Sichos vol. 21, pp. 48-49).
and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the lands.”

11 For this is what God, Almighty God says: “At the end of forty years (and not earlier) I will gather the Egyptians from the people where they were scattered. I will bring back the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return to the land of Pathros (a part of Egypt), to the land of their origin, and they shall be there a lowly kingdom. It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and nevertheless shall it exalt itself above the nations, for I will so diminish them so that they shall never again rule over the nations.

16 Never again shall it be the reliance of the house of Israel (i.e. Israel will not sin again by relying upon Egypt, because Egypt will never have the power to help), recalling their iniquity (when they trusted in the might of Egypt and not in God), when they shall turn to them. Then they shall know that I am God, Almighty God.”

17 It was in the twenty-seventh year (of the kingdom of Nebuchadrezzar), in the first (month), in the first day of the month, the word of God came to me, saying, “Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard (to set siege) against Tzor. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was sore (from the effort of carrying stones on their heads and shoulders). Yet neither he nor his army had any reward for (conquering) Tzor, (on My behalf).” Therefore this is what God, Almighty God says, “Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take her multitude, and take her booty, and take her plunder, and it shall be the wages for his army. (As reward for) his action which he carried out against (Tzor), I have given him the land of Egypt; (punishment) for what (the Egyptians) did against Me,” says God, Almighty God.

21 “On that day (at the end of forty years) I will cause the glory of Israel to re-emerge and I will give you credibility among them (because they will have seen your prophecies fulfilled), and they will know that I am God.”

A practical ramification of the above teaching is that we should never be disparaging of the good deeds of another person on the basis that we suspect the person of impure motives. [One might think: Perhaps my parents only care for their children due to self-love, so is it really necessary to honor them?] However, even if this were to be the truth, the Torah teaches us that we must respect other people's actions and not their (supposed) intentions (Likutei Sichos vol. 21, p. 49-50).

29:21—I will give you credibility among them. The vast majority of the Jewish people did believe in Yechezkel before his credibility was enhanced by the above two prophecies coming true. We see, therefore, that all the wars depicted in the Haftarah, which must have involved tens of thousands of soldiers, were orchestrated by God for the benefit of the minority of the Jewish people who felt that Yechezkel lacked credibility (Likutei Sichos vol. 36, pp. 36-7).
The word that God spoke to Yirmiyahu the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon would come and strike the land of Egypt. “Announce (it) in Egypt, proclaim (it) in Migdol, and report (it) in Nof and in Tachpanchais. Say (to Pharaoh): Stand fast, and prepare, for the sword around you shall devour you. Why are your brave men swept away? None of them stood, because God thrust (them) down. He caused many to stumble, indeed, one (foreign soldier) fell upon another, and they said, “Arise, and let us flee Egypt and escape), from the oppressing sword (of Nebuchadrezzar).” They announced (in the Babylonian army barracks), Pharaoh king of Egypt (has arrogantly) made such a noise (about his strength). He has passed the time appointed (for war. He did not come to war because he is terrified).

As I live,” said the King, whose name is the God of Hosts, “surely as (Mount) Tabor is (firmly established) among the mountains, and as (Mount) Carmel is by the sea (and immovable) so shall he (Nebuchadrezzar) come. O you daughter of Egypt (who) dwells (now in security)! Furnish yourself with the baggage of exile (a jug to drink from, and a container to knead a dough), for Nof shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.

Egypt (was) a very beautiful calf(-like country). (However, Nebuchadrezzar) the destroyer, (will certainly) come from the north (from Babylonia). Also her (great) ministers in her midst are like fattened bulls (for slaughter,) for they also turned back, and have fled altogether; they did not stand (and fight the war,) because the day of their death came upon them, their time (to be recalled) for retribution. (Egypt’s) voice (will be heard from a distance) as that of a serpent, for they shall march with (a great) army, and come against her with axes, like woodcutters. “They shall cut down her forest,” says God.” (The vast number of the Babylonian forces) cannot be estimated, because they are more numerous than locusts, and are without number. “The daughter of Egypt shall be disgraced. She shall be delivered to the hand of the people of the north.”

The God of Hosts, the God of Israel, said, “Behold, I will punish the multitude of No (Alexandria), Pharaoh and Egypt, with their gods, their kings, and (just as I will punish) Pharaoh, (so too I will punish) all those who trust in him.”

Haftarah of Parshas Bo

This Haftarah describes the destruction of the nation of Egypt in the times of Nebuchadnezzar, similar to the plagues brought upon Egypt during the times of Moshe, described in the Parsha. The Haftarah opens with a proclamation that Nebuchadrezzar and his army will destroy Egypt, and various impressions of the news of impending terror are given (46:13-19). The imagery of Egyptian annihilation is depicted (20-26), but the Haftarah concludes with a message of hope and support for Israel, that they will return to their homeland (27-28).
Many have the custom to recite this verse in the evening after the Shabbos depart. But at this time, Jewish people make a transition from the elevated level of Shabbos (compared to the name “Yisrael”) where they are withdrawn from worldly matters, to the level of “Ya’akov My servant,” where they must re-engage with the world in order to sanctify them—being that the mission is daunting—requiring a person to be involved with worldly matters and yet, at the same time not become enticed by them—they are reassured, “Do not fear, O my servant Ya’akov.”

Deborah, a prophetess, a woman of fiery (enthusiasm), judged Israel at that time. She would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beis-Ail in Mount Efrayim. The people of Israel would come up to her for judgment.

She sent and called Barak the son of Avino’am from Kedesh-Naftali, and said to him, “Has not God, Almighty God of Israel, commanded, saying, ‘Go and gather your men to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naftali and of the sons of Zevulun?’ I will draw (Sisera) to you (by planting the idea to go) to the river Kishon (in the heart of) Sisera, the captain of Ya’ivin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude, and I will deliver him into your hand.”

I will deliver them to the hand of those who seek their lives, to the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and to the hand of his servants; and after (forty years) it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old,” says God.

But do not fear, O my servant Ya’akov, after seeing Egypt return so quickly from being exiled to a nearby country, and be not dismayed, O Israel, for behold, I will save you from (your place of exile, though it is) far away, and your descendants from the land of their captivity. Ya’akov shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid.

Do not fear, O my servant Ya’akov,” says God, “for I am with you. For I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you, but I will not make an end of you. I will punish you with (suspended) justice, but I will not wipe you out (and remove you from the world).”
Barak demands Devorah’s help

“Barak said to her, “If you go with me, then I will go. But if you not go with me, then I will not go.”

She said, “I will surely go with you. However the journey that you take will not be for your honor, as God will deliver Sisera by the hand of a woman.”

Devorah got going, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

Barak called Zevulun and Naftali to Kedesh and went up with ten thousand men at his feet. Devorah went up with him.

Chever the Kenite who was from the descendants of Chouav, the father-in-law of Moshe (i.e. Yisro), had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the plains of Tza’ananim, which is by Kedesh.

They told Sisera that Barak the son of Avino’am had gone up to Mount Tabor (to wage war).

Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Charoshes-HaGoyim to the river of Kishon.

Devorah said to Barak, “Arise! (do not hesitate) for this is the day (destined for victory. This is the day) in which God has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the day of God come? Has not this day come upon the tents of those who plundered Israel? From the Lecha and the Perek Hayei Sarah, we learn that the forty years of peace were to follow (31).

While fighting the war was Barak’s appointed task, nevertheless, when he refused to do so without Devorah’s assistance, she consented. From this we can learn a lesson in our daily lives about the need to assume responsibility for promoting Jewish observance and education. A person may ask himself, “Why should I be the one to reach out to this particular

trials to war, citing a Divine approbation (4:4-7). Barak makes his involvement conditional on Devorah’s assistance, but her consent is accompanied by the warning that the victory will be “by the hand of a woman” (8-9). They then head to battle together, and the enemy is defeated, with “not a man left” (10-16). However, General Sisera himself survives and flees to the tent of Chever, an erstwhile ally, but before Barak arrives Chever’s wife Ya’el fools Sisera with a sense of security and kills him in his sleep (17-22). The narrative concludes by briefly mentioning that the subsequent war efforts were successful in defeating the Canaanites (23-24).

Devorah’s Song (5:1-31) contains a variety of reflections and themes, including: memories of Moshe’s war against Sichon and Og and of Mount Sinai (4-5), the difficult times that preceded Devorah’s leadership (6-8), and her subsequent positive influence (9-12); rich praises for the victorious armies (13-23) and a poetic portrait of Ya’el’s killing of Sisera (24-30). The Song concludes with prayers for the demise of all enemies of God, and strength for His loyal adherents (31). A final note states that forty years of peace were to follow (31).

4:9 She said, “I will surely go with you.” —She said, “I will surely go with you.”
“(However,) in the days of Shamgar the son of Anas, in the days of Ya’el, the main roads ceased, and travelers walked through crooked back roads (to shake off the enemy who stopped fearing the Jews).

“Observance or education it is assistance because Divine providence has clearly led us to this call (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5744).”

“(However,) in the days of Shamgar the son of Anas, in the days of Ya’el, the main roads ceased, and travelers walked through crooked back roads (to shake off the enemy who stopped fearing the Jews).”

The inhabitants of the unprotected Jewish person when there are so many other individuals capable of this task?“ Devorah could have likewise argued, “Why should I go to war to assist Barak when God has appointed him to this task?” Nevertheless, Devorah apparently felt that since Barak had specifically requested her assistance it was a calling from above for her to be involved. And likewise with ourselves, when we hear of a Jewish person who is lacking in observance or education it is our personal responsibility to provide assistance because Divine providence has clearly led us to this call (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5744).

Then Devorah and Barak the son of Avino’am sang on that day, saying:

1 “Praise you God for the avenging of Israel (for making it appear that their strength accomplished the victory,) for the people willingly offered themselves (against overwhelming odds). 1 Hear, O you kings; give ear, O you princes; (I believe in God and He is my portion, therefore) I will sing to God (because of the salvation He has brought); I will sing praise to God, Almighty God of Israel. 2 God (when the Jewish people passed Mount Seir on the way to Israel, God warred against Sichon and Og), when You marched out of the field of Edom (all nations of the world trembled in fear, the angels representing the nations of the world sweated in fear), the clouds also dropped water (to frighten the enemy nations with the tremendous downpour). 3 The mountains perspired from (fear of) God, (just as) Sinai (feared) God, Almighty God of Israel.”

“Song of Devorah

God’s wars against enemies of Israel

Before Devorah

Song of Devorah

Before Devorah

51 Then Devorah and Barak the son of Avino’am sang on that day, saying:

5 “(However,) in the days of Shamgar the son of Anas, in the days of Ya’el, the main roads ceased, and travelers walked through crooked back roads (to shake off the enemy who stopped fearing the Jews).” The inhabitants of the unprotected

Ya’el dupes Sisera and kills him

Barak sees “honor taken by a woman”
villages ceased, they ceased (only) in Israel, until I Devorah arose, a mother in Israel. 6 (For when) they chose new gods; then was war in the cities; (however) was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel (in the days of Yehoshua)? 7 My heart goes out toward the dignitaries of Israel, who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless you, God. 8 Speak, you who ride on white (female) donkeys, you who sit in judgment, and you who walk on the road. 11 Instead of the sounds of archers in the places of drawing water, (now) they recite the righteous acts of God, the righteous acts toward His open cities in Israel; when the people of God go back down to the gates. 12 Awake, awake, Devorah! Awake, awake, utter a song! Arise, Barak, and lead away your captives, you son of Avino'am.

Then (the remnant of the Jewish people will) have dominion (over the mighty gentile nations); God made me have dominion over the mighty. 14 (Yehoshua who came) out of (the tribe of) Efrayim, out of their root (fought) against Amalek. After you, (a descendant of) Binyamin (slew a vast multitude of Amalek) with your tribes. (Noblemen came down to do battle,) leaders came down from Machir, (the whole tribe) of Zevulun came (even the scribes) who draw the pen. 15 And the scholars of Yissachar were with Devorah (despite the fact that they were inexperienced in battle)—Yissachar also (joined) Barak's forces. Into the valley they rushed forth, at his feet (at the same pace. The fact that) Reuvain separated himself (from his brethren and did not fight) there is much to ponder. 16 (If you were afraid then) why did you settle across the border (of the Jordan, near enemy territory)? Did you think that all you would have to do is to pasture your sheep and) hear the bleating of the flocks? (Therefore) for the separation of Reuvain there is much to investigate (his true intentions). 17 Gilad dwells beyond the Jordan; and why did Dan (who lived much closer to the battlefield) remain by the ships (of his merchandise and escape from his duty to defend)? Asher (however) lives at the seashore and (correctly) remained by its (country's) exposed points (to protect them). 18 Zevulun is a people who risked their lives to the death, and Naftali likewise, on the high places of the field. 19 (The other tribes did not come to defend, however) the kings (of other nations) came (to Sisera's aid) and fought, then the kings of Cana'an in Ta'anach by the waters of Megido fought (together with Sisera). They took no gain of silver, (so why didn't Reuvain come to help his brethren?)

Sisera's effort was for naught, because it was as if) they fought from heaven. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

the Song of David (read as the Haftarah for Parshas Ha'azinu) not chosen to represent the men?

The Alter Rebbe answered that the Song of a woman was chosen because, in the Parsha, the women rejoiced more than the men; the men simply sang, but the women danced and played with tambourines too (Shemos 15:20; Sefer Hasichos 5696-5700 p. 277).

The reason why the women rejoiced more than the men is because they suffered more from the Egyptian exile. For example, Pharaoh's decree to cast every baby boy into the Nile would naturally have caused more grief to the mother of the child than the father. Therefore, the subsequent sense of joy at being freed from the exile would have been felt more by the women than the men (Likutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 139).

11. ___________________________________________—The righteous acts toward His open cities in Israel. The Talmud states: "Rabbi Oshaya said, 'What is meant by the verse, 'The righteous acts toward His open cities [pirzono] in Israel'? God showed righteousness [kindness] unto Israel by scattering them [pirzono] among the nations" (Pesachim 97b). "In this way they could not all be destroyed together" (Rashi ibid.).

Besides the etymological connection between open cities (pirzono) and "scattering" (pirzono), what is the thematic connection? The Tzemach
The brook of Kishon swept them away, that ancient brook (which never overflowed before), the brook Kishon. My soul would march on in strength. Then, (upon seeing the flood) the horse hooves did beat (the soldiers tried to escape, but the hooves broke off), from the frantic galloping of his mighty ones. You shall curse (the place of) Mairoz, said the angel of God, curse bitterly its inhabitants, because they did not come to the help of God, to the help of God against the mighty men (of Sisera).

Blessed among women shall Ya’el the wife of Chever the Kenite be, blessed shall she be among (the modest, righteous) women in the tent. He asked for water, and she gave him milk (to make him sleepy). She brought cream in a fancy dish (so Sisera should not believe that she disrespected him). She put her hand to the tent peg, and her right hand to the workmen’s hammer, and with the hammer she struck Sisera. She struck through his head. She crushed and pierced his temple. At her feet he bent, he fell, he lay down—at her feet he bent, he fell. Where he bowed, there he fell down, bereft of life.

The mother of Sisera looked out at the window and cried through the lattice, ‘Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why do the hoofbeats of his chariots tarry?’ Her wise ladies answered her, she even answered herself (to comfort her, they told her): ‘Haven’t they (been delayed by) finding booty? Have they not divided the plunder? To every man a maiden or two; to Sisera a booty of diverse colors, a plunder of multicolored needlework, dyed double-worked garments for the necks of those who take the plunder.’

So may all Your enemies perish, O God, but those who love Him (should go from strength to strength) like the sun when it goes forth in its might (towards the afternoon).”

And the land had rest for forty years.

Yisro / יִשְׂרָאֵל

(Isaiah 6:1 – 7:6; ibid. 9:5-6)

In the year that king Uziah (became afflicted with leprosy, a disease so severe that it is considered like) death, I saw God sitting upon a throne, high and

Parshah, Beshalach). This is yet another illustration of the “advantage of light that comes amid darkness” (cf. Ecc. 2:13) which arises from the experience of exile (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5744).

Haftarah of Parshas Yisro

This Haftarah describes the revelation of God’s glory seen by Yeshayah the prophet, similar to the Divine revelation perceived by the Jewish
exalted, and His Feet filled the Temple. Above with Him (in Heaven) stood the Serafim (angels, to serve Him). Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face (so as not to gaze upon the Divine presence), and with two he covered his feet (because of modesty in God’s presence), and with two he flew (to do God’s mission).

They called to each other (to begin praying together), and (all together they) said, “Holy, holy, holy, is the God of Hosts (above the world of the angels, above the planets, and this louny world)! The whole earth is full of His glory.” The posts of the door moved (many feet) at the voice of he who cried, and the house was (as if it was) filled with smoke.

Then I said, “Woe is me! For I am lost; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The God of Hosts (I am surely unworthy to do so).”

Then one of the Serafim flew to me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the Altar. He laid it upon my mouth, and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin (of defaming the Jewish people) purged.

I heard the voice of God (consulting the angels), saying, “Whom shall I send (to speak to the Jewish people), and who will go for us?” I said, “Here am I! Send me!” He said, “Go, and tell this people: (Although you hear (the prophet’s words, you) do not understand. (Although you see (My miracles, you) do not recognize (them). The evil inclination) makes the heart of this people fat and makes their ears heavy, and shuts their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and return, and be healed.”

I said, “God, how long (will their hearts be insensitive)?” He said, “Until the cities are destroyed without inhabitants, and the houses without man, and the land is completely desolate,

people at the giving of the Torah, in the Parsha. The Haftarah opens with a vision of God “sitting on a throne,” surrounded by angels (Serafin) who sing His praise (6:1-4). Yeshayah’s immediate reaction is that he is unworthy of such a vision (5), and he is promptly “purged” from sin by a Seraph bearing a coal from the Altar (6-7).

Upon hearing a request from God to the angels that a messenger be found, Yeshayah enthusiastically volunteers (8). God instructs him to rebuke the people for failing to take the prophet’s words and God’s miracles to heart, and depicts the punishments of destruction that are looming (9-13).

According to Ashkenazic tradition, the Haftarah continues to document the failed siege of Jerusalem by the kings of Aram and Israel (7:1). The Haftarah then turns backwards to the period immediately before the war, relating how King Achaz, who ruled Yehudah at the time, was informed prophetically by Yeshayah that he would be victorious (2-6). The concluding passage, taken from a later chapter of Yeshayah, announces the birth of Chizkiyah, royal heir to the throne of David (9:5-6).
disparagingly of the Jewish people, a sin for which he was rebuked harshly by God (Shir Hashirim Rabah 1:6). We can only conclude that the purpose of Yeshayah’s actions was to pave the way of repentance for others, ensuring that we should be extremely careful not to speak negatively about God’s chosen people (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayikra 5750).

9:6. Much authority and peace without end. According to Chasidic thought, the “open” letter mem (א) alludes to exile, whereas the “closed” mem (מ) alludes to redemption. Thus, in one verse that speaks of exile we find an open mem uncharacteristically at the end of a word (“the walls of Jerusalem, which were [been] broken down”—Nehemiah 2:13); and in our verse, which alludes to redemption, we find a closed mem in the middle of a word (“much authority” inosh shelishi).

12 and God has exiled men far away, and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land. 13 Another ten (kings) will (rule) in it (before this destruction takes place), then it shall be consumed; but like a terebinth tree, or like an oak, whose stump remains, when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be its stump.”

Chabad and Sefardic communities conclude here. Ashkenazic communities continue:

7:1 It was in the days of King Achaz, son of Yosam, son of Uzziyahu of Yehudah, that King Retzin of Aram and Pekach, son of Remaliyahu, King of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war, but they could not conquer it. 2 (Before the war), the House of David was informed, “Aram has set camp with Efryam.” The (king’s) heart and the heart of his people trembled like the trees of the forest shaking from the wind. 3 God said to Yeshayah: “Go out to Achaz, you and your son Shar Yashuw, at the edge of the ditch by the upper reservoir, at the road near the launderer’s field. 4 Say to him, “Be careful, but be calm. Don’t be frightened. Don’t become disheartened because of these two firebrands (that have no power to burn and are just) smoking in anger—Retzin and the Arameans, and the son of Remaliyahu. 5 Since Aram, Efryam, and the son of Remaliyahu have plotted evil against you, saying, “Let’s go up against Yehudah, (besiege it to) repulse them (so they will open the gates and we can) break into it (and take it) for ourselves. Let’s appoint the son of Taval as King.”” 5: For a boy (Chizkiyah) has been born to us, a son has been given to us, and (he will allow the) authority (of Torah) to rest on his shoulders. He will be called "prince of peace,” by the Wondrous Advisor, God Almighty, Eternal Father. 4 (His name signifies) much authority and peace without end on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and support it with justice and righteousness, now and forever. God’s zeal will accomplish this.

The shape of the two letters actually depicts their message graphically. The open mem remains unsealed on one side, indicating that there is an “opening” for negative influences—hence the state of exile. The closed mem, on the other hand, is totally sealed, suggesting a state where a person is totally protected against sin, as will occur with the redemption.

It is also interesting to note the Talmud begins with an open mem and concludes with a closed mem, suggesting that through the process of observing all the laws that are detailed in the Talmud the world becomes spiritually refined, thus reaching a redemptive state. Likewise, we find that the name Menachem (מנחם), cited by the Talmud as one of the names of Mashiach (Sanhedrin 98b), begins with an open mem and ends with a closed mem (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayikra 5749, par. 6; Hadran al Hashas 5749, note 122).
The word that came to Yirmiyahu from God, after the King Tzidkiyahu had made a covenant with all the people who were in Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty to the (slaves) \(^1\) that every man should let his Hebrew slave, and every man his Hebrew slave-woman, go free. No person should enslave his brother Jew (after he has worked for six years).

When all the nobles, and all the people, who had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his slave, and every one his slave-woman, go free, that none should enslave them any more, they accepted and let them go. \(^2\) But afterward they regretted (their decision), and caused the slaves and the slave-women, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection as slaves and slave-women.

The word of God came to Yirmiyahu from God, saying: \(^3\) This is what God, the God of Israel says: I made a covenant with your fathers on the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves (and gave them the Torah), saying, \(^4\) “At the end of seven years each of you shall release his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to you, and when he has served you six years, you shall set him free from you.” But your fathers did not listen to Me (to observe this mitzvah), nor did they pay attention (to it). \(^5\) Now, you repented, and have done right in My sight, by each man proclaiming freedom for his (Jewish slave), and you have made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My Name. \(^6\) But you (then) regretted (it) and desecrated My Name, and each of you brought back (your) slave or slave-woman, whom you had set free for themselves, and you subjugated them (again) to be your slaves and slave-women.

Therefore this is what God says: “Since you have not listened to Me, to proclaim freedom, each man for his brother, and each man for his neighbor, (therefore) that Jerusalem will be destroyed (17-22). In order to conclude on a positive note, the Haftarah cites two verses from Chapter 33 of Yirmiyahu, in which God swears never to eliminate the Jewish people completely.

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**Haftarah of Parshas Mishpatim**

This Haftarah mentions the laws of release of Hebrew slaves, which were introduced in the Parsha.

The Haftarah opens by recalling the proclamation of King Tzidkiyahu that all Hebrew slaves should be freed. The prophet Yirmiyahu then laments that, after initial acceptance of the decree, the people soon began to ignore it (34:8-11). Yirmiyahu recalls how an identical sequence of events occurred after Sinai (12-16). God then proclaims His punishment, that He will “declare freedom” from protecting the Jewish people and that Jerusalem will be destroyed (17-22). In order to conclude on a positive note, the Haftarah cites two verses from Chapter 33 of Yirmiyahu, in which God swears never to eliminate the Jewish people completely.

14. \( \text{יְהוָה יִנָּאָר אֶתָּם אָבֵיתךְ} \)—But your fathers did not listen to Me. At first glance, this verse appears to refer to the Jewish ancestors in Egypt, mentioned in the previous verse. However, being that we read below how a failure to release slaves provoked the Babylonian exile (v. 21), it follows that those who were redeemed from Egypt must have released their slaves. The “fathers” of our verse therefore refer to the immediate ancestors of Yirmiyahu’s audience (Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 253, note 18*).
The Haftarah of Parshas Terumah

This Haftarah describes the beginning of the construction of the First Temple, built by King Shlomo, paralleling the description of the Tabernacle which is detailed in the Parsha.

The Haftarah opens by a brief reference to the treaty between Shlomo and Chiram, King of Tzor, through which cedar and cypress trees were obtained for the construction of the Temple (5:26). The main body of the Haftarah is then divided into two distinct parts. The remainder of chapter 5 describes the forced labor which was imposed by Shlomo to quarry the necessary stone for the Temple's construction. Chapter 6 then relates various details of the actual building of the Temple, including the date when construction began (6:1), the dimensions of the Temple and its hall (2-3) and its exterior (4-10). The Haftarah concludes with God's promise to Shlomo never to forsake Israel so long as they observe the commandments (11-13).
The Levy

Chiram’s workers). The levy was thirty thousand men.

28 He sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by turns. They were a month in Lebanon, and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the levy.

29 Shlomo had seventy thousand men who carried loads, and eighty thousand stone cutters in the mountains, besides the three thousand and three hundred of Shlomo’s officers who supervised the work (and) who ruled over the people who did the work.

Quarrying of stone

The King commanded, and they quarried great stones, heavy stones, to lay the foundation of the House with hewn stones. Shlomo’s builders, Chiram’s builders and the Gebalites (who were highly skilled craftsmen) cut them, and they prepared timber and stones to build the House.

Construction begins

6:1 It was in the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Shlomo’s reign over Israel, in the month Ziv (Iyar), which is the second month, that (he began) to build the House of God.

Dimensions of Temple

2 The House which King Shlomo built for God was sixty cubits in its length, twenty cubits in its width, and thirty cubits in its height.

3 The hall that was in front of the temple of the House was twenty cubits in its length, along the width of the House, and its width before the House was ten cubits.

Exterior of Temple

4 For the House he made windows wide on the outside and narrow on the inside.

5 Against the wall of the House he built an annex around the walls of the House, both of the temple and of the sanctuary, and he made side chambers all around.

6 The lowest chamber was five cubits wide, and the middle was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide, for outside around the wall of the House he made recesses (in the walls) around, so that the beams should not be fastened into the walls of the House.

7 The House, when it was being built was built of hewn stones to build the House.

5:26. ויהי חכם נדות—God gave Shlomo wisdom. Shlomo’s wisdom enhanced his sovereignty such that, “all the intelligentsia among the non-Jewish nations became utterly devoted to Shlomo due to his wisdom, without the need for any wars. This is suggested by his name, Shlomo, because there was peace (shalom) in his days” (Sha’arei Teshuvaḥ of the Mitteler Rebbe, 56a). Therefore, Rambam stresses that, likewise, Mashiach (the quintessential king) is both “from the House of David and the seed of Shlomo” (Commentary to the Mishnah, Sanhedrin, Perek Chelek, Principle 12), i.e. he excels in both areas of sovereignty and wisdom. Furthermore, it could be argued that in order to be responsive to the revelations of Mashiach, each Jewish person must likewise bring to light his or her faculty of wisdom to the utmost degree (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Emor 5751, par. 6-7).

28. דוד ושלום—Adoniram was in charge of the levy. The Kabalah teaches that at the inception of creation lofty spiritual sparks “fell” into the physical world and became trapped. Our life’s challenge is to extract these sparks and return them to their source by following the laws of the Torah. An interesting question is whether the difficulty in elevating these sparks stems entirely from our own psychological barriers (the evil inclination), or whether the sparks themselves can, in any way, resist elevation.

Our verse provides the answer. The name Adoniram (אדונירם) is a conjugate of two words עדר ("My Master"). ייר ("is exalted"), alluding to the elevation of sparks which reconnects the Godliness trapped in this world, where God is the “Master,” to the sublime “exalted” Source. The fact that “Adoniram was in charge of the levy,” a compulsory tax,
You, son of man, describe the House (which you saw in a vision) to the House of Israel, so that they (will be reminded of the Temple that was destroyed and) they will be ashamed of their iniquities (which caused its destruction). Let them (think in their hearts) the dimensions of the (future House) which is ready (to be built).

If they are ashamed of all that they have done (which caused the destruction of the Temple), describe to them the (general) form of the House, its (detailed) layout, its exits and its entrances, its dimensions (of each room), its laws (regarding the use of each room), all its (sculptured) decorations, all its regulations (regarding where the priests and the people may stand). Write (all this) for them to see, so that they may remember its whole form, and all its regulations, so that (they will merit to be resurrected in the future) and fulfill them.

Indicates that, from the spark’s perspective, elevation must occur. Thus, it follows that the only obstacle to this elevation is to be found within the person himself (Sefer Hama’amrim Me’ukat vol. 6, p. 39).

Nor any tool of iron heard in the House while it was being built. Iron was prohibited from being used in the construction of the First and Second Temples, since it is a symbol of war and destruction, being that weapons are made from iron (Shemos Rabah 35:5). However, the Third Temple will be built in the Messianic era when the forces of evil will have been transformed to good. Therefore, it would appear that iron will be used in the construction of the Third Temple, perhaps even as part of the building itself. In fact, even in the Second Temple, which was a precursor of the Third, there was at least some use of iron, since the Hasmoneans constructed a Menorah out of iron, and the bird trap on the roof was made of iron.

How are we to transform iron from a symbol of destruction to one of good? Our Sages taught, “Any Torah scholar who is not as strong as iron is not a Torah scholar” (Taanis 4a). I.e. through our unbending and uncompromising commitment to the Torah under all circumstances, we prove that being hard and brittle can be a good thing (Sicha of 10th of Teves and Shabbos Parshas Vayechi 5752).

Haftarah of Parshas Tetzaveh

This Haftarah describes the construction of the Altar and dedication of the priests in the Third Temple, similar to the description of the desert
Dimensions of the Altar

12 This is the law of the House: On the top of the mountain, its entire border around it shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the House. 11 These are the measurements of the Altar in cubits. The (holy) cubit (used in Temple measurements) is a (regular) cubit (of five handbreadths) plus an (extra) handbreadth (making a total of six): The (height of the) base shall be a (regular) cubit, and the width a (regular) cubit, and (each of its) border (horns) all around shall be a handbreadth (from its center) to its edge. (The regular cubit shall also be used to measure) the side of the (golden) Altar. 14 From the base on the ground to (the top of) the lower block shall be two cubits, and (then) a width of one cubit. From the (top of the) small block to the (top of the) large block shall be four cubits, and (then) a width of one cubit. 15 The (upper part of the) Altar shall be four cubits high. From the (upper part of the) Altar upwards shall be four horns.

Inauguration of the Altar

16 The (burning area at the top of the) Altar hearth shall be twelve (cubits) long by twelve wide, (perfectly) square on its sides. 17 The (entire) block shall be fourteen (cubits) long by fourteen wide, on its four sides. The (horns) around its edges shall be half a cubit. Its base shall be a cubit around. Its ramp shall (be arranged so that a person ascending it) faces the east.

18 He said to me: Son of man, this is what God, Almighty God, says: These are the laws of (inaugurating) the Altar on the day when they shall (finish) making it, (to make it fit) to offer burnt offerings on it, and to sprinkle blood on it. 19 You (will be resurrected, and you) shall give to the priests, who are from the tribe of Levi, who are the descendants of Tzadok, who come near Me to minister to Me—says God, Almighty God—a young bull for a sin offering. 20 You shall take some of its blood and put it on (the Altar’s) four horns, and on the four corners of the (top) block and on the surrounding base. (With this act) you will cleanse and purge it (of its prior non-holy identity). 21 You also shall take the bull of the sin offering, and it shall be burnt (by someone) at the extremity of the House, outside the sanctuary.

Altar, in the Parsha. The Haftarah, taken from the latter section of the Book of Yechezkel (ch. 40-48), is a vision of the Divine presence returning to Israel with the future Redemption which Yechezkel received in Babylon, shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. (The Haftaros of Parshas Emor and Parshas Hachodesh are also taken from this section of Yechezkel.)

The Haftarah opens at the conclusion of Yechezkel’s vision of the Third Temple (ch. 40-43:9), as God instructs the prophet to describe the future Temple to the public, so that they will be ashamed of their sins which had just caused the Second Temple to be destroyed (10-12).

The main body of the Haftarah consists of two passages, one describing the dimensions of the Altar (13-17), and the second, the sacrificial inauguration of the Altar (18-27).

10. מדרש יחזקאל—Describe the House (which you saw in a vision) to the House of Israel. The Midrash relates Yechezkel’s response to this command: “Yechezkel said to God, ‘Right now we are in a state of exile in the land of our enemies, and You are telling me to go and inform the Jewish people of the dimensions of the Temple, to write it before their eyes, to guard its measurements and laws! Is there anything they can do about it? Leave them until they come out of exile, and then I will go and inform them.’

“God said to Yechezkel, ‘Should My House be neglected because My children are in a state of exile?’ God said to him, ‘Reading about it in the Torah is as great as building it. Go and tell them to read the design of the Temple in the Torah, and in reward for reading it, for busying themselves with reading it, I will consider it as if they are busying themselves with
On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering. They shall cleanse the Altar (by sprinkling blood), as they cleansed it with the (blood of the) bull. 23 When you have finished cleansing it (with the goat’s blood), you shall offer a young bull without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish. 24 You shall offer them before God, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering to God.

For seven days you shall prepare every day a goat for a sin offering (as you did on the second day). They shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish. 26 For seven days they shall make atonement for the Altar and purify it. Thus, they shall consecrate it. 27 They shall complete these (seven) days, and then (from) the eighth day onwards, the priests shall offer upon the Altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, and I will be pleased with you—said God, Almighty God.

22 On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering. They shall cleanse the Altar (by sprinkling blood), as they cleansed it with the (blood of the) bull. 23 When you have finished cleansing it (with the goat’s blood), you shall offer a young bull without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish. 24 You shall offer them before God, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering to God.

For seven days you shall prepare every day a goat for a sin offering (as you did on the second day). They shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish. 26 For seven days they shall make atonement for the Altar and purify it. Thus, they shall consecrate it. 27 They shall complete these (seven) days, and then (from) the eighth day onwards, the priests shall offer upon the Altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, and I will be pleased with you—said God, Almighty God.

Ki Sisa / בִּיתְColumnType

(Kings I 18:1-39)

Ashkenazic communities begin here. Chabad and Sefardic communities begin on page 320.

It was after many days, God’s word came to Eliyahu in the third year (of the drought), “Go and appear before Achav, and I will send rain upon the earth.”

Eliyahu sent to Achav by God

18:1

Achav summoned Ovadyahu, who was in charge of the (King’s) house. Ovadyahu was very God-fearing.

Assistance of Ovadyahu

For, when Izveil (wanted to) kill God’s prophets,

building the Temple” (Tanchuma, Tzav 14). This is the basis for the popular custom which has been practiced now for many years, to study the “design of the Temple,” during the Three Weeks when we mourn the destruction of the Temple (17th Tamuz–9th Av). For at a time of the year when the Temple’s destruction is more stressed, the need for its correction, by rebuilding the Temple, also needs to be stressed (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Pinchas 5745, par. 27).

Haftarah of Parshas Ki Sisa

This Haftarah describes Eliyahu’s admonition of the Jewish people for worshiping the idols of B’al, similar to Moshe’s efforts in the Parsha, after the worship of the Golden Calf.

Chasidic thought stresses that the Parsha and Haftarah are joined by the theme of teshuvah (repentance; return). The inner reason why the Calf was made and worshiped was “in order to place a good argument in

the mouth of the penitents—so that if the sinner will say, ‘I will not repent, for I will not be accepted,’ he can go and learn from the case of the Calf, where they were guilty of heresy and yet their teshuvah was accepted” (Avodah Zarah 4b and Rashi ibid.). Likewise, the inner purpose behind the Jewish people’s errant behavior in the worship of B’al was, ultimately, so that they should come to teshuvah, as we read at the end of the Haftarah (Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 412ff.)

The historical setting of the Haftarah traces itself back to the collapse of King Shlomo’s empire when the kingdom split between Yehudah and the Ten Tribes. Both countries suffered greatly in the years that followed, especially from the attack of King Sheishak of Egypt, but it was the Ten Tribes whose infrastructure deteriorated much faster.

A few generations later, the country was forced to withstand another blow, an internal war between generals Zimri, Omri and Tivni. Omri eventually succeeded in controlling the kingdom, but it was his son,
Ovadyahu initially declines Eliyahu’s call

Ovadyahu took a hundred prophets, hid fifty in a cave (and fifty in another), and supplied them with food and drink. Achav told Ovadyahu, “Go through the land to all the water sources and the streams; perhaps we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so we will not lose the animals.”

They divided the land between themselves to pass through it. Achav went by himself in one direction, and Ovadyahu went by himself in the other.

Ovadyahu was going on his way, and he saw Eliyahu coming to greet him. He prostrated himself and said: “Is that you, my master Eliyahu?”

“It’s me,” he said. “Go and tell your master (Achav) that Eliyahu is here.”

“In what way have I sinned,” (Ovadyahu) said, “that you (want to) deliver your servant to Achav’s hand, so that he will kill me? Has my master not been told what I did when Izevel (wanted to) kill God’s prophets? I hid one hundred of God’s prophets, fifty in a cave (and fifty in another), and I supplied them with food and drink. And now you say: ‘Go, tell your master: Eliyahu is here! He’ll kill me (and there will be nobody to protect the prophets)!”

Eliyahu said, “(I swear) by the life of the God of Hosts, before Whom I stand, I will appear before him today!”

Achav, who brought military and economic stability through an alliance with Sidon. To cement this alliance, Achav married Izevel (Jezebel), the King of Sidon’s daughter.

Tragically, Achav’s political and economic success led to the religious corruption of his country. For, under Izevel’s influence, idol worship became officially sanctioned, and true prophets were eliminated.

Our Haftarah describes the efforts of Eliyahu the prophet to reverse the influence of Izevel. His initial campaign (related immediately prior to the Haftarah) was to orchestrate a drought upon the Land, thus sending the message that prosperity comes from God.

The Haftarah begins (according to Ashkenazic custom) in the third year of the drought, as God appears to Eliyahu and sends him to King Achav with the message that rain is soon to come (18:1). After digressing to describe the support for Eliyahu given by Ovadyahu (Obadiah) the prophet (3-6)—despite some initial resistance (7-15)—Eliyahu confronts Achav (16). Achav accuses Eliyahu of terrorizing Israel, and Eliyahu blames the matter on Achav’s sanction of Ba’al worship (17-18). Eliyahu then challenges Achav, and his 450 prophets of Ba’al to a confrontation on Mount Carmel (19). Achav accepts the challenge, and gathers the people and Ba’al prophets on Mount Carmel (20; the beginning of the Haftarah according to Chabad and Sefardic custom). Eliyahu pleads that the people should put an end to their ambivalence between Divine worship and Ba’al worship, but they do not respond (21).

A “showdown” between the 450 prophets of Ba’al against the lone prophet Eliyahu then begins. The terms, suggested by Eliyahu, are agreed upon: each side will sacrifice a bull and place it on a fireless altar; the prophets of Ba’al will appeal to their god, and Eliyahu to his God, to “answer with fire” (22-24).

The prophets go first, but their sustained efforts into the afternoon bring no results (28-29). Eliyahu then builds his Altar from twelve stones, representing the tribes of Israel, and he douses it with water to magnify the impending miracle (30-35). “Answer me, O God!” he cries, and, “the fire of God came down” (38). Stunned by what they had just witnessed, the people once again proclaim their allegiance to God (38-39).
a.) It is harder to repent from “waver” because one is uncertain if one really sinned in the first place.

b.) One who “wavers between two opinions” essentially believes in God but is willing to compromise some of his religious beliefs for the sake of convenience or social pressure, i.e., his spirituality is corrupted by materialism. On the other hand, a genuine idol-worshipper, while mistaken and misguided in his religious beliefs, is nevertheless loyal to his beliefs, and will not exchange his spiritual values for material ones.

c.) The one who wavers leads others astray because it is not clear that he is a heretic. The idol-worshiper, however, is an outright heretic and is mistaken and misguided in his religious beliefs, is nevertheless loyal to his beliefs, and will not exchange his spiritual values for material ones.

21. Achyahu went to greet Achay and told him (what had happened), and Achay went to greet Eliya. 

22. When Achay saw Eliya, Achay said to him, “Is that you, terrorist of Israel (who withheld the rain from them)?”

23. He said, “It is not I who have terrorized Israel, but (rather) you and your father’s house, by abandoning God’s commandments and following after the deities of Ba’al!”

24. “Now, (if you want rain), send messengers and summon all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, along with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Ba’al and the four hundred prophets of the Asheirah who eat at Izevel’s table.”

Chabad and Sefardic communities begin here. Others continue:

18.21. How long will you waver between two opinions? Why did Eliya criticize the people for merely “waver between two opinions,” rather than for the more serious transgression of worshipping idols?

It could be argued, however, that “waver between two opinions” is, in some respects, worse than worshipping idols:

a.) It is harder to repent from “waver” because one is uncertain if one really sinned in the first place.

b.) One who “wavers between two opinions” essentially believes in God but is willing to compromise some of his religious beliefs for the sake of convenience or social pressure, i.e., his spirituality is corrupted by materialism. On the other hand, a genuine idol-worshipper, while

16. Ovadyahu went to greet Achay and told him (what had happened), and Achay went to greet Eliya. 

17. When Achay saw Eliya, Achay said to him, “Is that you, terrorist of Israel (who withheld the rain from them)?”

18. He said, “It is not I who have terrorized Israel, but (rather) you and your father’s house, by abandoning God’s commandments and following after the deities of Ba’al!”

19. “Now, (if you want rain), send messengers and summon all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, along with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Ba’al and the four hundred prophets of the Asheirah who eat at Izevel’s table.”

20. Achay sent (an order) to all the people of Israel, and he gathered the prophets (of Ba’al) together in Mount Carmel.

21. Eliya approached all the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If God is the God (Who rules the world), follow Him. If it is Ba’al, then follow him.” The people did not answer him anything.

22. Eliya said to the people, “I am the only remaining prophet of God, but Ba’al’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men.” Let them give us two bulls, and let them choose one (of the) bulls for themselves, and cut it into pieces, and lay it on wood, but put no fire to it. I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on wood, but put no fire to it. You call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of God. The God Who answers by fire, He is God.”

All the people answered and said, “The matter is good.”

23. Eliya said to the prophets of Ba’al, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are the majority. Call upon the names of your gods, but put no fire to it.”
They took the bull which was handed to them (by Eliyahu), and they prepared it. They called on the name of Ba’al from morning until noon, saying, “O Ba’al, hear us,” but there was no voice, nor any who answered. They jumped on the altar which was made (in worship).

It was at noon that Eliyahu ridiculed them. He said, “Cry louder! For (you say) he is a god. (Maybe) he is talking (to others), or deep in thought, or on a journey? Or maybe he is sleeping and will be awakened (by your cries).”

They cried aloud, and scored themselves with knives and lances, as was their custom, until blood gushed out upon them. Then, when midday was past, they (pretended to) prophesy until the time of the offering of the afternoon sacrifice. But there was no sound, no one answered (for) there was no listener.

Eliyahu said to all the people, “Come near to me (so you can see that no trickery is taking place),” and all the people came near to him.

He repaired the altar of God that was broken. Eliyahu took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Ya’akov, to whom the word of God came, saying, “Israel shall be your name.” With the stones he built an altar in the Name of God. He arranged the wood, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, “Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.” He said, “Do it a second time,” and they did it the second time. He said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it the third time. The water ran around the altar. He also filled the ditch with water.

Then, at the time of the offering of the afternoon sacrifice, Eliyahu the prophet approached (God in prayer) and said, “God! God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and of Yisra’el, let it be known this day that You are God (Whose Presence dwells) in Israel, and that I am Your side, to anger God.” Eliyahu replied, ‘Oh bull, Oh bull, do not worry! Go with them and do not make a scene. For just as God’s Name will be sanctified through the bull, so too sanctification of God’s name as active worship itself.

Now, at first glance, we can appreciate why the bull may not have wanted to be involved with idol-worshippers, but what is the significance of the bull’s lengthy introduction, “My friend and I came out of the same womb etc., His lot has come out on God’s side”? Surely it would have been sufficient for the bull simply to say, “I do not want to go to Ba’al,” without any further clarification?

Apparently, the bull understood that he too would sanctify God’s Name when the fire would fail to come down on the altar of Ba’al. His complaint was that this would only be a passive sanctification, through not being burned as a sacrifice, whereas his friend would actively sanctify God’s name. Eliyahu thus replied, “Just as God’s Name will be sanctified by the bull that is with me, so too it will be sanctified through you,” i.e. that active and passive sanctification are equal in God’s eyes.

This story contains a powerful lesson. There is a tendency to think that, while it is important to spend time reaching out to Jewish people who are not observant, this activity is only secondary in importance to the “pure” religious activities of Torah study and prayer. The Midrash teaches us that even though outreach may take much “passive” time when one is not directly involved in Divine worship, this is nevertheless as great a sanctification of God’s name as active worship itself.
VAYAKHEL / יָכָל

(l Kings 7:13-26; ibid. 7:40-50)

Chabad and Sefardic communities read the following Haftarah. [Ashkenazic communities read the Haftarah on page 323.]

King Shlomo sent and brought Chiram (the craftsman) from Tzor. 14 He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naftali, and his father was a resident of Tzor, a coppersmith. (Chiram) was filled with wisdom and understanding, and skilled in doing any work in copper. He came to King Shlomo and did all his work.

15 He sculptured (molds for) two pillars of copper. Each were eighteen cubits high, and twelve cubits in circumference.

16 He made two spheres cast out of copper, to put on the tops of the pillars. The height of one sphere was five cubits (including a two-cubit base), and the height of the second sphere was five cubits (including a two-cubit base).

17 (He made) nets (resembling interwoven branches), and wreaths of chain work, for the spheres which were upon the top of the pillars—seven for one sphere, and seven for the second sphere.

In fact, the bull which passively sanctified God’s name was offered first, suggesting that this method of revealing God’s presence in the world takes priority (Likutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 415-6).

39 God is the Almighty God! God is the Almighty God! At the giving of the Torah there was a single proclamation, “I am God your God” (Shemos 20:2), whereas here the Jewish people declared twice, “God is the Almighty God! God is the Almighty God!” This is because at the giving of the Torah the Jewish people were on the level of tzaddikim, righteous individuals who have not sinned, whereas here they were on the superior level of ba’alei teshuva, who had erred and corrected their ways (Likutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 186).
(Having completed the molds) he made the pillars. He made two rows of (copper) pomegranates (tied together) around the nets, to cover the sphere that was on the top (of the first pillar). He did likewise for the second sphere.

The spheres that were on the top of the pillars were made with a rose-like design on the top, four cubits. The spheres that were on the top (of the first pillar). He did likewise for the other pillar.

He made a tank of cast (metal, for the priests to immerse in), ten cubits from rim to rim. It was circular all together with (the tank) when it was cast.

He made a tank of cast metal, for the priests to immerse in, ten cubits from rim to rim. It was circular all together with (the tank) when it was cast.

He made a tank of cast (metal, for the priests to immerse in), ten cubits from rim to rim. It was circular all together with (the tank) when it was cast.

(There were a total of) two hundred pomegranates in (two) rows all around, (and so too) on the second sphere.

He erected the pillars in the entrance hall to the sanctuary. He erected the right pillar, and called its name Bo’az. (After the pillars were erected) the rose-like design was (affixed) to the top of the pillars. The crafting of the pillars was then finished.

He made a tank of cast metal, for the priests to immerse in, ten cubits from rim to rim. It was circular all together with (the tank) when it was cast.

The spheres (were not merely on the edge of) the pillars, but they also covered the hollow in (the middle of the pillars), behind the net.

He made a tank of cast (metal, for the priests to immerse in), ten cubits from rim to rim. It was circular all together with (the tank) when it was cast.

He made a tank of cast (metal, for the priests to immerse in), ten cubits from rim to rim. It was circular all together with (the tank) when it was cast.

He made a tank of cast metal, for the priests to immerse in, ten cubits from rim to rim. It was circular all together with (the tank) when it was cast.

The ten bases, and the ten basins (set) upon the bases.
All the work that King Shlomo made for the House of God was finished. Shlomo brought in the things which David his father had dedicated. (He put) the silver, and the gold, and the utensils in the treasuries of the House of God.

Then Shlomo assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes (who are) the chiefs of the ancestral (houses) of the people of Israel—before King Shlomo in Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of the covenant of God from the city of David, which is Tziyon.

All the men of Israel assembled themselves to King David were transferred to the Temple treasury (7:51). Upon Shlomo’s instructions to the elders, the Ark and the holy vessels are then transferred from the City of David, amid a glorious procession, and installed in the Temple (8:1-9). All this meets Divine approval when, as the priests are departing the Holy of Holies after installing the Ark, the Divine Presence manifests itself in the form of a cloud (10-11), a sign of

**Pekudei / פקודו**

(I Kings 7:51 – 8:21)
Shlomo at the feast in the month of Eisanim (Tishrei), which is the seventh month. 1 All the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the Ark. 2 They brought up the Ark of God, the Tent of Meeting, and all the holy utensils that were in the Tent. The priests and the Levites brought them up.

3 King Shlomo, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled before him, were with him before the Ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen in such abundance that they could not be counted or numbered.

4 The priests brought in the Ark of the covenant of God to its place, to the Sanctuary of the House, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubs. 5 For the cherubs spread out their two wings over the place of the Ark, and the cherubs covered the Ark and its poles above.

6 The poles extended (so far), that the ends of the poles were seen (protruding into the curtain) from the sanctuary facing the inner sanctuary, but the poles themselves were not seen outside. They remain there to this day. 7 There was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets of stone, which Moshe put there at Choraiv, where God made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

8 Then, when the priests came out of the holy place (having installed the Ark), the (smoky) cloud filled the House of God, 9 The priests could not stand to perform (their) service because of the cloud, for the glory of God had filled the House of God.

10 Then (when he saw the cloud) Shlomo said, "I know that the Divine Presence is here because) God said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. 11 (Since the Divine Presence has descended, I am sure that) I have indeed built You a House to dwell in, a settled place for You to abide in forever."

12 The King turned his face around (towards the people) and blessed all the congregation of Israel. All the congregation of Israel stood. 13 He said, "Blessed be God, Almighty God of Israel, Who spoke with His Mouth to David my father, and has fulfilled it with His Hand, saying, 14 Since the day when I brought forth My people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city from all the tribes of Israel (in which) to build a House that My Name might be in there, but I chose David to be over my people, Israel."

15 "It was the intention of David my father to build a House for the sake of God, Almighty God of Israel. 16 God said to David my father, 'Since it was your intention to build a House for My sake, you have done well by so wishing (since the preparations will be in your merit). 17 Nevertheless, you shall not build the House,
The presence of the Divine is within the confines of a Parsha quality, a man of peace (was crucial that the Temple be built by a person who personified this God,” harmonized two opposites: the equilibrium, and this is the motif of the Temple which, being a “House for the sake of God, Almighty God of Israel.” I have set there a place for the Ark, where the covenant of God is, which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

**Erev Rosh Chodesh / ערב ראש חורש שלח יבשה**

(I Samuel 20:18-42)

Yoasaf said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty. For three (days) you should go down (and hide yourself) well. Come to the place where you hid on the day of the incident (when the King swore to me not to kill you), and sit by the traveler’s (marker) stone.

I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. Then, I will send a lad (saying to him), ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to the lad, ‘look!—the arrows are on this side of you,’ then you should take them and return, for it is safe for you, and there is no (dangerous) thing (looming. I swear this) as God lives.

The Plan

which is instantly recognized by Shlomo (12-13). The King then addresses the crowd, declaring that God has fulfilled His promise made to his father David, to make a permanent “house” for God (14-21).

Why was peacefulness a crucial criterion for the construction of the Temple? Peace is a process of harmonizing opposites into a healthy equilibrium, and this is the motif of the Temple which, being a “House for God,” harmonized two opposites: the spiritual presence of the Shechinah (Divine Presence) within the confines of a physical house. Therefore, it was crucial that the Temple be built by a person who personified this quality, a man of peace (Sefer Hama’amorim 5680, p. 187).

**Haftarah of Erev Rosh Chodesh**

This Haftarah mentions the eve of Rosh Chodesh: “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month” (20:18). At first glance, this connection appears to be somewhat tenuous, as the remaining narrative of the Haftarah is not connected with the theme of *Erev Rosh Chodesh*. Why should this be more pertinent than reading the Haftarah connected with the weekly *Parsha*? Chasidic thought explains that the renewal of the moon signifies redemption, and therefore, by logical extension, the eve of the new moon (*Erev Rosh Chodesh*) represents the work carried out during exile in order to bring the redemption. Being that this is the underlying significance of all our activities, it was considered a sufficiently important replacement for the Haftarah of the week (Hisoadusos 5711, vol. 2, p. 50, 56).

The Haftarah describes a climactic moment in the rift between David and Sha’ul, which arose from David’s successful military career. Sha’ul, who was king at the time, perceived David as a rebel that needed to be eliminated. Fearing for his life, David seeks the assistance of Yoasaf, the king’s son, who was David’s passionate admirer, but Yoasaf finds the conspiracy theory difficult to believe. In order to verify his suspicions, David suggests a plan: he will disappear for three days to test the king’s reaction, which would then be reported to David by Yoasaf with a secret sign.

The Haftarah opens as Yoasaf reviews David’s plan and confirms a secret sign to be enacted by shooting arrows and instructing certain phrases to his servant (20:18-23). Initially, the king appears indifferent to David’s absence (24-28), but on the second day he becomes furious with Yoasaf and states that David “deserves death” (29-34). So, the next morning, Yoasaf goes out to the field and communicates their pre-arranged sign by shooting arrows, and sends his servant home (35-40). David then comes out of hiding, and they part amid tears, swearing an oath “between my descendants and your descendants forever” (41-42).

The arrows are on this side of you, etc. When arrows are shot from a bow, the more the bow is extended backwards,


The king is furious

22 “But if I say this to the young man, ‘Behold, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go, because God has sent you.
23 “This matter of which you and I have spoken, behold!—God is (a witness) between me and you forever.”
24 David hid himself in the field. When the (first of the new) month came, the King sat down to eat the meal.
25 The King sat at his seat, as usual, on a seat by the wall. Yonasan stood up so that Auner could sit at Sha’ul’s side. David’s place was empty. 26 Nevertheless Sha’ul said nothing on that day, for he thought, “(He had) a (nocturnal) accident. He is not ritually pure. (He didn’t say nothing on that day, for he thought, “(He had) a
27 It came to pass on the next day, which was the second day of the month, that David’s place was empty. Sha’ul said to Yonasan his son, “Why didn’t the son of Yishai come to the meal, neither yesterday, nor today?”
28 Yonasan answered Sha’ul, “David asked me permission to go to Beis Lechem. 29 He said, ‘Please let me go, because our family (is offering) sacrifice(s today) in the city and my (oldest) brother (Eliav) has instructed me (to be there). Now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please excuse me (from the King’s duties) to see my brothers.' Therefore he has not come to the King’s table.”
30 Sha’ul became furious with Yonasan, and he said to him, “You are the son of a sinful and rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Yishai (for the monarchy) to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness (for the fact that you prefer that my enemy will lead people to suspect that you are not my son)? 31 For as long as the son of Yishai lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your Kingdom. Now (since you sent him away) send (for him) and fetch him to me, for he deserves death.”
32 Yonasan answered Sha’ul, his father, and said to him, “Why should he be killed? What has he done?”
33 Sha’ul raised a spear to strike him. Yonasan realized that his father was determined to slay David.
34 Yonasan rose from the table in fierce anger. He ate no food on the second day of the new moon, for he was upset for David, and his father had put him to shame (by insulting and threatening him).
35 In the morning, that Yonasan went out to the field to the appointed place (he had arranged) with David, and a young lad was with him. 36 He said to his lad, “Run! the further the arrows will reach. This is a metaphor for the spiritual accomplishments of exile: The more the Jewish people “extend themselves” to deal with the physical world in the most difficult of circumstances, the greater and more “far reaching” is the spiritual accomplishment. David wanted to know if these accomplishments had already been completed, heralding the time of redemption. So Yonasan told him that if “the arrows are on this side of you,” i.e. if the task of exile, represented by the arrows, is complete, “then you should take them and return, for it is safe for you,” i.e. the time of redemption has arrived. But if the arrows are beyond you,” then there is still much work to be done in exile. But do not be afraid to continue this work, “because God has sent you” (Hisraduṣ ibid.).
Find now the arrows which I shoot.” As the lad ran (for the first arrow), he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 When the lad came to the place of the (first) arrow which Yonasan had shot, Yonasan called out after the lad and said, “Isn’t the (last) arrow beyond you?”

38 Yonasan called out after the lad, “Go quickly! Hurry (after the second arrow). Don’t stay (by the first)!"

Yonasan’s lad gathered up (both) the arrows, and came to his master. 39 The lad knew nothing (about the sign). Only Yonasan and David knew the matter.

40 Yonasan gave his bow and arrows to his lad, and said to him, “Go and carry them to the city.” 41 As soon as the lad had gone (towards the city), David (understood that it was safe and) stood up from near the south (side of the stone). He fell on his face to the ground, and prostrated himself three times. They kissed one another, and wept with one another, until David (wept) greatly (more than Yonasan).

42 Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, ‘God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’”

Shabbos Rosh Chodesh /

(Shabbos Rosh Chodesh)

The Maitir reading for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh is on page 343. (Bamidbar 28:9-15)

66:1 This is what God said: “The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool, (so) what house could you build (worthy) for Me, and what place (is worthy for) My Presence to rest? My hand has made all these things (Heaven and earth), and (therefore) all these things came into being,” says God.

“But (even though I am so exalted), to this I will pay worshipers will be punished (15-18) and the nations that remain will come to Tziyon, bringing the Jewish people along with them (19-20). New priests will be appointed, and all mankind will worship God (21-23). The rebels’ corpses will remain in the valley of Yehoshafat as an ominous reminder to all mankind (24; verse 23 is then repeated so as to finish on a positive note).

1 This Haftarah mentions the sacrificial worship that will occur every new month (Rosh Chodesh) after the ingathering of the exiles. The Haftarah was addressed by the prophet Yeshayah (Isaiah) to the Jewish people in Babylon after the exile, at the end of the 6th century B.C.E.

The Haftarah opens with God’s proclamation of omnipresence and the insufficiency of one House to contain Him (66:1). God will turn His attention to those who fear Him (2), and all types of insincere worship are abhorred by Him (3-4). Those who fear God will ultimately be joyous, but those who hate and ostracize God’s servants will be chastised by a “voice from the Temple” (5-6). Tziyon’s (Zion’s) deliverance is compared to that of a mother who gives birth without pain (7-9), and the rejoicing at Jerusalem’s rebuilding is depicted (10-14). All enemies and idol-worshippers will be punished (15-18) and the nations that remain will come to Tziyon, bringing the Jewish people along with them (19-20). New priests will be appointed, and all mankind will worship God (21-23). The rebels’ corpses will remain in the valley of Yehoshafat as an ominous reminder to all mankind (24; verse 23 is then repeated so as to finish on a positive note).
On occasion, however, one can draw from these energies of the soul in order to break free from existing limitations in one’s life.

c.) Essence. Then there is the very essence of the soul which is not limited to being inside or outside the body. The route to access the soul’s essence is through humility, simplicity and sincere dedication.

These three levels of the soul are alluded to in the opening of the Haftarah. “The heavens” and “earth” allude to Torah and mitzvos respectively (because Torah was given from Heaven, and the mitzvos are performed with physical objects here on earth), i.e. things which are observed in everyday life with the normal faculties of the soul found in the body. The “house” mentioned by the verse alludes to the soul powers which encompass the body, just as a house encompasses a person. While these powers are indeed impressive, scripture nevertheless bemoans their insufficiency (“What house could you build (worthy) for Me?”), because the most profound form of Divine service comes from the essence of the soul. And this essence is reached through humility: “To this I will pay attention: to he who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word. 1 “However, he who kills an ox (offering his sacrifice without trembling at My word) it is as if he slew a man. He who sacrifices a lamb (without trembling), is as if he cut off a dog’s neck. He who offers a meal-offering (without trembling) is as if he offered swine’s blood. He who burns incense (without trembling), is as if he blessed an idol. He who offers up frankincense (without trembling) is as if he offered an inappropriate gift. They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations. 10 For this is what God says: ‘Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations (will rush to her) like a flowing stream. (You who have mourned her) shall (be rewarded) to draw (effortlessly from) the wealth of the nations. You shall be (honored by the nations, like a baby who is) carried on (its mother’s) sides, and dandled on her knees. 13 Like one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem (for your suffering).”
attention: to he who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word” (v. 2).

This explanation adds further significance to the reading of this passage on Rosh Chodesh (new moon). For just as the disappearance of the moon and its re-emergence as a miniscule point is the key to its later growth, likewise it is the path of humility and self-renunciation which reaches the essence of the soul, bringing the person to a genuine spiritual rebirth (Sefer Hama'amim Melukat vol. 3, p. 133).
If Sunday is also Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add (I Samuel 20:18,42):

20 Yonasan said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty.

42 Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, ‘God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’”

The Haftarah for Parshas Shekalim is on page 343. (Shemos 30:11-16)

Chabad and Sefardic communities begin here. Ashkenazic communities begin below on page 332.

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The Haftarah chosen to reflect this reading recounts the efforts of King Yeho’ash (9th century B.C.E.) to use donations to the Temple for a repair-fund (see 12:5). The Temple had been in disrepair for a number of years, since King Yehoshafat of Yehudah (r. 735-711 B.C.E.) formed a military alliance with King Achav (of Israel—see introduction to Haftarah to Parshas Ki Sisa), and allowed his son Yehoram to marry Achav’s daughter Asalya, bringing Ba’al worship to the Kingdom of Yehudah under Achav’s influence. This state of affairs lasted for many years, throughout Yehoram’s reign (711-706 B.C.E.) and the first year of his son Achazia’s reign. When Yehoram and Achazia were then murdered by Yehu, the King of Israel, Asalya executed the remainder of the royal family so as to establish herself as Queen, but Achazia’s baby son
Ashkenazic communities begin here. All others continue:

Yeho'ash was saved secretly by Yehosheva, Asalya’s sister. Six years later (699 B.C.E.), Asalya was assassinated in a revolt led by Yehoyadah the High Priest, leaving the seven-year-old Yeho'ash as King. Yeho'ash became King in the seventh year of Yehu’s reign). He reigned for forty years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Taiviyah of Be’ersheva. Yeho’ash did that which was right in the eyes of God his entire lifetime (so long as) Yehoyadah the priest instructed him. However, the (unauthorized) private altars were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high altars.

Yeho’ash said to the priests, “All the money of the consecrated things that is brought to the House of God, (i.e.) the census money (the half shekel), and the money which a person (vows to donate according to) the value of his (life), and the money that any man is prompted by his heart to bring to the House of God— let the priests take it for themselves, each man from his acquaintance, and (in return) let them repair the cracks of the House, wherever any crack shall be found (with their own money).

But by the twenty-third year of (the reign of) King Yeho’ash, the priests had not repaired the cracks of the House. King Yeho’ash called for Yehoyadah the priest and the other priests, and said to them, “Why are you not repairing the cracks of the House? From now on, do not take any more money from your acquaintances (for yourself), but give it (to a special fund for repairing) the cracks of the House.”

The priests agreed not to receive money from the people (for themselves), and not to repair the cracks of the House (from their own money).

Yehoyadah the priest took a chest, bored a hole in

12:1 Yeho’ash was seven years old when he became King. How was it possible for Yeho’ash to assume a leadership role when he was below the age of Bar Mitzvah (thirteen years), when responsibilities may begin? A Jewish king has two general roles: a.) to influence the non-Jewish nations that surround him; and, b.) to influence his own nation. For non-Jews, there is no rule that a child must reach the age of thirteen to be trusted with responsibility; it simply depends on the maturity of the child. Therefore, it could be argued that in order to fulfill a sovereign’s role of influencing the non-Jewish nations there is no specific age limit, which is why it was possible for Yeho’ash to be appointed king at this time. However, leadership of the Jewish people is only possible after the age of Bar Mitzvah, regardless of the child’s personal level of maturity, and clearly Yeho’ash would not yet have been able to fulfill this role (Hisvaduyos 5748, vol. 2, p. 558).

6. —Let them repair the cracks of the House. Of what practical relevance to us is the account of the repair to the cracks of the house,” being that the next Temple will descend from heaven, formed by God’s Hand (Rashi to Succah 41a), and will thus be perfect, requiring no maintenance at all?
The (surplus) money of guilt-offerings and the money of sin-offerings were not brought (to repair) the House of God. It was delivered to the priests.

If Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add the following (Isaiah 66:1,23-24; ibid. 23;)

66:1 This is what God said: “The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool, (so) what house could you build (worthy) for Me, and what place (is worthy for) My (Presence to) rest? 21 “It will then be, that every (first of the) new month, and every Shabbos, all mankind shall come to worship before Me (in the holy Temple),” says God. 24 The (non-Jews) shall go out (of Jerusalem, to the valley of Yehoshafat), and look upon the corpses of the men (of Gog and Magog) who have rebelled against Me, for the worms (that eat them) will not die, and the fire (that burns them) shall not be extinguished. They shall be a (symbol of) disgrace to all mankind. 21 It will then be, that every (first of the) new month, and every Shabbos, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says God.

While it is true that the future era will witness the elimination of evil and negativity, this does not mean to say that the concept of progress will end; it will still be possible to advance from level to level in holiness and goodness. So, even then, we will have to constantly inspect and “repair”
If Sunday is Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add the following (I Samuel 20:18,42):

20:18 Yonasan said to (David), "Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty.
42 Yonasan said to David, "Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, 'God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'"

**Parshas Zachor / פרשת זכור**

*(I Samuel 15:1-34)*

The Maftir for Parshas Zachor is on page 343 *(Devarim 25:17-19).*

Some communities begin here.

Chabad and Ashkenazic communities begin here:

15:1 Shmuel said to Sha’ul, "God sent me to anoint you as King over Israel, His people. Now listen to God’s voice!"

"This is what the God of Hosts said, “I remember what Amalek did to Israel, how they set (an ambush) for them on the way, when they were coming up from Egypt. 1 Now, go and strike Amalek, and completely destroy all that they have! Do not have compassion on them. Slay both man and woman, children and babies, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys."

Sha’ul called the people together, and counted them in (the place called) Telaim (alternatively: he counted them with sheep, to avoid the evil eye. There were) two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Yehudah.

Sha’ul came to the city of Amalek, and fought (them) in the valley.

Sha’ul said to the Kenites (who were descended from Amalek’s defeat, and the sparing of Yisro’s descendants, the Kenites)

ourselves of subtle “cracks” and deficiencies that may have arised due to a failure to progress sufficiently (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5743, par. 15).

**Haftarah of Parshas Zachor**

Parshas Zachor *(Devarim 25:17-19)* is a supplementary reading for the Shabbos read before the festival of Purim, dealing with the obligation to remember the evil nation of Amalek (being that Haman, whose downfall was on Purim, was a descendant of Amalek). The requirement to listen to this reading is of Biblical origin *(Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch 282:16)*, and according to many authorities, women are obligated in this mitzvah. It has therefore become common practice for women to come to the synagogue to hear this reading (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Zachor 5743). For further discussion of the commandments to remember and eliminate Amalek, see commentaries to Shemos 17:8-15 and Devarim 25:17-19.

The Haftarah describes King Sha’ul’s victory over the nation of Amalek and his subsequent rejection as King by God for failing to obliterate the nation completely—a command which we read at the opening of the Haftarah (15:1-3). We are informed briefly of the preparations for battle, Amalek’s defeat, and the sparing of Yisro’s descendants, the Kenites
Sha’ul defeated the Amalekites from Chavilah to the approach to Shur, which faces Egypt. He took Agag the King of the Amalekites alive, and completely destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

King Agag and cattle are spared

9 Sha’ul and the people took pity on Agag, and the cattle that were of low quality or slaughtered they destroyed. The cattle that were of low quality or slaughtered were spared along with all the choice livestock, because Sha’ul and the people “took pity” on them (8-9). God soon makes His disapproval known to the prophet Shmuel, who is profoundly distressed and prays all night (10).

Go, depart, descend from among the Amalekites, lest we destroy you (accidentally) with them, for you(r father Yisro) showed kindness to all the people of Israel, when they came out of Egypt (helping them to appoint judges).” The Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

Amalek is defeated

7 Sha’ul defeated the Amalekites from Chavilah to the approach to Shur, which faces Egypt. He took Agag the King of the Amalekites alive, and completely destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

8 He took Agag the King of the Amalekites alive, and completely destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

Sha’ul comes to Gilgal

9 Sha’ul and the people took pity on Agag, and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fat cattle, the fat lambs, and all that was good, and would not completely destroy them. The cattle that were of low quality or slaughtered they destroyed.

God disapproves

10 The word of God came to Shmuel, saying, “I regret that I have appointed Sha’ul to be king. For he has turned away from Me and has not performed My word.” It upset Shmuel and he prayed to God all night (on Sha’ul’s behalf).

11 Shmuel rose early to (go and) meet Sha’ul in the morning. Shmuel was told as follows, “Sha’ul came to Carmel, and behold, he was setting up a place for himself there to distribute (the spoils), and then he turned around and continued traveling to Gilgal.”

12 (When he arrived in Gilgal), Shmuel came to Sha’ul. Sha’ul said to him, “May God bless you (because, through you) I have (been able to) perform God’s command (to me)!"

13 Shmuel said, “(But if you have fulfilled God’s command then) what is the sound of sheep in my ears, and the sound of the cattle which I hear? (Are they from Amalek?)”

14 Sha’ul said, “They have (indeed) brought them from the Amalekites. The people (only) spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen (not for themselves, but for a mitzvah:) to sacrifice to God your God (so I could not rebuke them). The rest (which were not fit to be sacrificed) we have completely destroyed.”

15 Shmuel said to Sha’ul, “Retract (your words)! I will tell you what God has said to me last night.”

He said to him, “Speak.”

16 Shmuel said, “Even if you are little in your own eyes, you are (nevertheless) the chief of the tribes of Israel, and (furthermore) God anointed you king over Israel (so why did you not exert your authority and rebuke them?).” God sent you on a (mission), and said, ‘Go and completely destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are

(4-7). All the Amalekite people are executed, but their King Agag is spared along with all the choice livestock, because Sha’ul and the people “took pity” on them (8-9). God soon makes His disapproval known to the prophet Shmuel, who is profoundly distressed and prays all night (10). He confronts the King, and cautiously offers the criticism he has heard from God (11-19). Sha’ul defends his actions, claiming that the animals had been spared for a holy purpose, to offer sacrifices (20-21). When Shmuel retorts that these sacrifices represent the defiance of God’s will and are thus tantamount to idolatry (22-23), Sha’ul finally breaks down, admits his guilt, and pleads with Shmuel to ask God for forgiveness (24-
22. **Does God have as great a delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of God?** The Talmud states, "with regard to sin, Sha’ul was untainted, like a one-year-old child" (Yoma 22b), so clearly, it cannot have been Sha’ul’s intention to disobey God’s command. Sha’ul must have spared Agag and the Amalekite herds because he felt that this was God’s will, as he initially responded to Shmuel, “I have obeyed the voice of God and have followed the way which God sent me” (v. 20).

Sha’ul understood that a sacrifice gives pleasure to God because one takes something low and physical, such as an animal, and dedicates it to a lofty, spiritual purpose. He thought, “How apt it would be to take the evil Amalek’s animals and transform them to a state of holiness!”

In theory, his argument was extremely convincing—but it was a conclusion based on logic, not obedience. Even rational thought which follows the principles laid down by our holy Torah must have the underpinnings of unquestioning obedience and dedication to God. So Sha’ul’s mistake was not in the quality or spiritual truth of his reasoning; it was a subtle lack of plain obedience that belied his thought process.

25. Shmuel rejects the King’s request, and turns around to walk off, but Sha’ul grabs his cloak and it tears (27). That, concludes Shmuel, is a sign that the Kingdom has been “torn away” from Sha’ul and given to David (29). Realizing that his cause is lost, the king begs at least that he should not be publicly humiliated (30).

They return to the people together. Sha’ul prostrates himself before God, and Agag is executed by Shmuel (31-33). The Haftarah concludes with a note that Shmuel and Sha’ul then parted company and returned to their respective homes (34).

26. Shmuel said to him, “(This is a sign that) God has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a peer of yours (David), who is better than you. Furthermore, the Powerful One of Israel (has already given the monarchy to somebody else, and He) will not lie or change His mind, for He is not a man that He should change His mind.”

19 Why then did you not obey the voice of God (to destroy them completely? Through failing to rebuke the people it is as if you (yourself) rushed to grab the booty and did evil in the eyes of God!

20 Sha’ul said to Shmuel, “(Actually), I have obeyed the voice of God and have followed the way which God sent me. I have detained Agag the King of Amalek, and I have completely destroyed the Amalekites. Indeed, to obey (God) is better than a sacrifice (to Him), and to listen (to Him) better than the fat of rams (offered from a sacrifice).

21 For disobedience is like the sin of sorcery (since both sinners believe in man more than God), and adding (to a prophet’s words) is like (serving) false gods and idols. Because you have rejected the word of God, he has also rejected you from being King.”

22 Shmuel said, “Does God have as great a delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of God? Indeed, to obey (God) is better than a sacrifice (to Him), and to listen (to Him) better than the fat of rams (offered from a sacrifice). But now, please forgive my sin (against you). Return with me, and I will prostrate myself before God!”

23 Shmuel said to Sha’ul, “I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of God, and God has rejected you from being King over Israel.”

24 Shmuel turned about to go away, and (Sha’ul) grabbed the hem of his cloak (to prevent him from going), and it ripped.
50 (Sha’ul) said, “(Even though) I have sinned, please honor me in the presence of the elders of my people, and before Israel, and return with me, and I will prostrate myself before God, your God.” 51 Shmuel returned, (following) after Sha’ul, and Sha’ul prostrated himself before God.

52 Shmuel said, “Bring Agag the king of the Amalekites to me.” Agag came to him in chains.

Agag said, “Surely, the bitterness of death is turned (to me)”

53 Shmuel said, “Just as your sword has made women widowed and childless, so shall your mother be childless among women!”

Shmuel cut Agag in pieces before God in Gilgal.

54 Shmuel went to Ramah. Sha’ul went up to his house at Sha’ul’s hill.

The Maftir for Parshas Parah is on page 343. (Bamidbar 19:1-22)

The word of God came to me, saying, 17 “Son of man, when the House of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings. Their way was before Me like the uncleanness of a menstruating woman (which causes a woman to distance herself from her husband) 18 Therefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. 19 I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries, according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

20 They came to the nations (where they were exiled), and they profaned My holy Name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of God, and yet (God could not help them and) they have gone out from his land!’ 21 But I had concern for My holy Name, which the

Parshas Parah / פָּרָהָה בְּפִשְׁרַת פָּרָה

(Ezekiel 36:16-38)

36:16 The word of God came to me, saying, 17 “Son of man, when the House of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings. Their way was before Me like the uncleanness of a menstruating woman (which causes a woman to distance herself from her husband) 18 Therefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. 19 I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries, according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

20 They came to the nations (where they were exiled), and they profaned My holy Name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of God, and yet (God could not help them and) they have gone out from his land!’ 21 But I had concern for My holy Name, which the

Parshah of Parshas Parah / פָּרָהָה בְּפִשְׁרַת פָּרָה

Parshas Parah (Bamidbar 19:1-22) is a supplementary reading for Shabbos read in the weeks preceding the festival of Pesach. The reading discusses the ritual purification process through the Red Heifer that is required as a preparation for offering the Pesach sacrifice (Rashi to Megilah 29a), and the theme of ritual purity is likewise stressed by the Haftarah, “Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you etc.” (v. 25).

While we sometimes find that there is an interval between the supplementary readings of Shekalim, Zachor and Parah, the final reading of Hachodesh is always read on the Shabbos which follows the reading of Parah (Rambam, Laws of Prayer 13:21). This suggests that the themes of Parah (purification and repentance) and Hachodesh (exodus and redemption) are intimately linked: when the Jewish people repent, they are immediately to be redeemed (Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5748, par. 9-10).

The Haftarah is a prophecy of hope and comfort addressed by the prophet Yechezkel (Ezekiel) to the Jewish community in Babylon (6th century B.C.E). The opening words of the Haftarah constitute a sharp criticism of the people for defiling the land, which was the cause of the subsequent exile (36:16-21). The ingathering will ultimately occur so as not to profane God’s holy Name (22-24), and only then will the Jewish
people be purified and given a new spirit (25-28). Israel will live in comfort and will be ashamed of her past sins (29-32). Finally, God promises to repopulate the land extensively (33-38).

Thus, the verse describes three phases of the teshuvah (repentance) process: a.) Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you—

25. "Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you (from the ashes of the red heifer), and you shall be clean from all your filth, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26. I will also give you a new (upright) heart, and a new spirit I will put inside you. I will take away the (stubborn) heart of stone from your flesh, and I will give you a (soft) heart of flesh. 27. I will put My spirit inside you (so that you will become prophets), and cause you to follow My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them."

28. "You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God."

29. "I will save you from all the sinful uncleanliness to which you were accustomed (for I will arouse your heart to be aware of it). I will command (My blessing upon) the grain that it should increase, and lay no famine upon you. 30. I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the produce of the field, so that you shall never suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. 31. Then you will remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and will feel cut off due to your (former) sins and your (former) abominations."

32. "Not for your sake will I make this (redemption)," says God, Almighty God, “Let it be known to you, be ashamed and confounded from your (bad) ways (which were insufficient to bring the redemption), O House of Israel!”

33. "This is what God, Almighty God, says: “On the day when I have atoned you from all your iniquities I will populate cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt (fit for human habitation). 34. The land which is desolate (now) will be tilled, instead of being the desolation that was in view of all who passed by. 35. (Passersby will be shocked, and) they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden! The waste and desolate and ruined cities have become fortified, and are inhabited!’""
the nations who remain around you shall know that I, 
God, have rebuilt the ruined places, and have replanted 
that which was desolate. I, God, have said it (will 
happen), and I (am the one who) will do it.”

Chabad and Sefardic communities conclude here. Ashkenazic communities continue:

This is what God Almighty says: I will be sought by 
the House of Israel to do one more thing for them, I will 
make them multiply, men like sheep. 18 Like holy sheep, 
like the sheep (brought to) Jerusalem (for sacrifices) on 
its holidays, the ruined cities will be filled with flocks of 
men, and they will know that I am God (faithful to My 
word)!

Parshas Hachodesh / כפריה לשושה החודש

(Ezekiel 45:16 - 46:18)

The Maftir for Parshas Hachodesh is on page 344. (Shemos 12:1-20)

Many communities begin here. Chabad communities begin below:

45:16 All the people of the land should join (in 
giving) this contribution (including) the 
leader in Israel. 17 (In addition to the contribution), the 
leader will bear (responsibility for) the burnt-offerings, 
the meal-offerings and the (wine) libation of the festivals, 
new months and sabbaths, all the gatherings of the 
Jewish people. He will provide the sin-offering, the 
meal-offering, the burnt-offering and the peace-offerings 
(from his personal property) to atone for the House of 
Israel.

Chabad communities begin here:

18 This is what God, Almighty God, says: “In the first 
(month), on the first day of the month, you shall take a 
young bull without blemish (for a sin-offering), and (with 
it) you shall cleanse the sanctuary (thus inaugurating it). 
19 The priest shall take of the blood of the sin-offering, 
and put it upon the doorposts of the sanctuary, and upon

Initially, God sends the person a spiritual awakening; b.) And you shall be 
clean from all your filth—the person then repents, thus cleansing himself 
spiritually; c.) And from all your idols, I will cleanse you—After the 
person’s own efforts, God then provides further spiritual assistance from 
above to bring the person to a higher level of teshuva (Sichas Vay Tishrei 
5742, par. 37).
the four corners of the ledge of the Altar, and upon the doorsposts of the gate of the men’s courtyard. So you shall do (every day until) the seventh day of the month (to inaugurate the Temple. These sacrifices) will atone for the House from those who err and the fools (who enter the Temple without permission).

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall bring the Pesach (sacrifice). (During) the festival of seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten. On that day (the fourteenth of Nisan) the leader shall bring a bull for a sin-offering from his own property, for all the people of the land. He shall prepare a burnt-offering to God (from his own property) for seven days of the festival: seven bulls and seven rams without blemish daily for seven days, and a kid of the goats daily for a sin-offering. He shall prepare a meal offering of an eifah for a bull, and an eifah for a ram, and a hin of oil for an eifah.

In the seventh (month), on the fifteenth day of the month, he shall do the same in the festival of seven days, like the (above-mentioned) sin-offering, like the burnt-offering, like the meal offering, and like the oil.

This is what God, Almighty God, says: “The gate of the men’s courtyard that faces the east shall be closed for the six working days (since people do not come during the week), but on Shabbos it shall be opened, and on the first day of the month it shall be opened.

The leader shall enter by way of the outer porch of that gate from outside, and he shall stand by the post of the gate. (While he stands there) the priests shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace offerings, and he shall bow down at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be closed until the evening (because) the people of the land shall bow down at the door of this gate before God on Shabbos and (the first day of) the month.

The burnt-offering that the leader shall offer to God on the Shabbos day (for the inauguration) shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. The meal offering shall be an eifah for a bull, and an eifah for a ram, and for the lambs according to his means, and a hin of oil to an eifah.

On the (first day) of the month it shall be a young bull without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram. They shall be without blemish. He shall prepare a meal offering, an eifah for a bull, and an eifah for a ram, and for the lambs according to his means, and a hin of oil to an eifah.

Chodesh Nisan falls on Shabbos. Its Haftarah, which forms part of Yechezkel’s vision of the future Temple (6th century B.C.E), describes various laws of sacrificial procedure, including that of the Pesach offering.

The word hachodesh is a derivation of the term chidush, which means “novelty” or “innovation.” As an annual event, the reading of Parshas Hachodesh thus serves to awaken our potential to constantly refresh our observance of Judaism. Being that the challenges to our observance in exile times are many, there is a temptation to suffice with merely preserving our existing achievements; but the Torah demands—and therefore empowers us spiritually—that we constantly grow and “innovate” new levels of commitment to our mitzvah observance (Sichos Shabbos Parshas Tazria, Parshas Hachodesh 5744, par. 3).
When the leader shall enter (to watch the sacrifices being offered), he shall go in by way of the outer porch of that gate, and he shall go out by the same way.

But when the people of the land shall come before God on the festivals (to offer their obligatory sacrifices), he who enters in by way of the north gate to bow down shall go out by the way of the south gate, and he who enters by the way of the south gate shall go out by the way of the north gate. He shall not return by the way of the gate by which he came in, but shall go out straight ahead.

The leader among them (shall join them). When they go in, he shall go in (with them), and when they go out, he shall go out (with them).

On the festivals, the meal offering shall be an eifah for a bull, and an eifah for a ram, and for the lambs whatever he is capable of bringing, and a hin of oil to an eifah.

(During the six working days) when the leader shall prepare a voluntary burnt-offering or peace offering to God, the gate facing east shall be opened for him, and (the priest) shall bring his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings, as he does on the Shabbos day. Then he shall go out. After he goes out, the gate shall be closed (since people are working and cannot come to the Temple).

(In addition to the above inaugural sacrifices) you shall prepare a burnt-offering to God of a year-old lamb without blemish. You shall prepare it every morning.

You shall prepare a meal offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an eifah, and the third part of a hin of oil.

(In addition to the above) they shall (continue to) prepare the (usual) lamb, meal offering and oil, (required by the Torah) every morning for a continual burnt-offering.

Chabad and Sefardic communities conclude here. Ashkenazic communities continue:

This is what God Almighty says, “If (during his lifetime) the leader gives one of his sons a gift, since it is his rightful property, it will belong to his sons, and it will be their possession by inheritance. If he gives one of his servants a gift from his property, it shall be (the servant’s possession only) until the Jubilee. It then returns to the leader’s possession, and it remains as an inheritance for his descendants. The leader may not take (land) from the people’s portion and defraud them of their property. He may give his sons an inheritance (only) from his own property, in order that My people not be scattered, each man from his property.”

The Haftarah opens with regulations pertaining to communal donations to the Temple, and the responsibilities of the leader to provide offerings for the festivals, new months and Sabbaths (45:16-17). The next passage, where Chabad communities begin the Haftarah, details laws pertaining to the inauguration of the Temple (18-20) and the Pesach offerings (21-25). We also read various rules pertaining to gate
If Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add the following (Isaiah 66:1,23-24; ibid. 23):

66:1 This is what God said: “The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool, (so) what house could you build (worthy) for Me, and what place (is worthy for) My Presence to rest? 23 “It will then be, that every (first of the) new month, and every Shabbos, all mankind shall come to worship before Me (in the holy Temple),” says God. 24 The (non-Jews) shall go out (of Jerusalem, to the valley of Yehoshafat), and look upon the corpses of the men (of Gog and Magog) who have rebelled against Me, for the worms (that eat them) will not die, and the fire (that burns them) shall not be extinguished. They shall be a (symbol of) disgrace to all mankind.

If Sunday is Rosh Chodesh, Chabad communities add the following (I Samuel 20:18,42):

20:18 Yonasan said to (David), “Tomorrow is the (first of the) new month. You shall be missed, because your seat will be empty.
42 Yonasan said to David, “Go in peace, as both of us have sworn in the name of God, saying, ‘God be (a witness) between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’”

regulations (46:1-3) and details of the regular sacrificial offerings (4-15). Chabad and Sefardic communities end here, but Ashkenazic communities add a brief codification of inheritance laws for the leader and his family (16-18).

[The custom of the Chabad Rebbes, after accepting the mantle of leadership, has been to say the additional verses recited by Ashkenazic communities, being that they stress the role of a Jewish “leader” (Nasi)—Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayikra 5751, note 13].
מفتיר ל沙特 ראש חודש / Hàngazzat Bara'ah

(Bamidbar 28:9-15)

 Haftarah is on page 328.

מفتיר לשכאל / Haftarah

(Shemos 30:11-16)

Haftarah is on page 331.

מافتיר לצchor / Haftarah

(Devarim 25:17-19)

Haftarah is on page 334.

מافتיר לפורת פרה / Haftarah

(Bamidbar 19:1-22)
Maftir for Parshas Hachodesh / Mesirer l’reisha haToros

(Shemos 12:1-20)

**Haftarah is on page 337.**

**Haftarah is on page 339.**
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Bechor Shor — R' Yosef Bechor Shor (c.1140-1190). Talmudist of the school of the Tosafists who lived in Northern France. A disciple of Rabeinu Tam and a direct descendant of Yosef Hatzadik.

Be'er Basadeh — Supercommentary to Rashi's commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Meir Binyamin Menachem Danon of Bosnia, a student of Rabbi David Pardo (author of Maskil leDavid). First printed in 1806 in Jerusalem.

Be'er Haitev — Supercommentary to Rashi's commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Moshe Moss (c. 1540-1606) of Poland. Author of the Halachic work Mateh Moshe; a disciple of the Maharal.

Be'er Mayim Chayim — Supercommentary to Rashi's commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Chaim ben Betza'el (1515-1588), older brother of the Maharal of Prague, first published in Brooklyn and London between 1965 and 1971.

Be'er Yitzchak — Supercommentary to Rashi's commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Yitzchak Ya'akov Horowitz of Yaroslav (d. 1864).

Beis Yosef — Halachic commentary by R' Yosef Caro (1488-1575) on the Tur. He was also the author of the Shulchan Aruch and Kesef Mishneh, a commentary on Rambam's code.

Bereishis Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Genesis. (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Bi'ur HaGra — Commentary to Shulchan Aruch by the Vilna Ga'on. (See: Vilna Ga'on).

Biuray Maharay — Commentary to the Torah by R' Yisra'el Isserlein (c.1390-1460), German halachist, author of Sha'ilos v'Teshuvos Terumas Hadeshen. First printed in Venice in 1419.

Chacham Tzvi — Responsa by R' Tzvi Ashkenazi of Amsterdam (1660-1718).

Chelkas Mechokaik — Primary commentary to the Even Ha'ezer section of Shulchan Aruch by Reb Moshe Lima of Vilna (17th cent.).

Chiddushei Aggados — See Maharsha.

Chizkuni — Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Chezkiyah ben Manoach, who lived in the thirteenth century, in Provence.

Da'as Zekeinim — Commentary to the Torah by the Tosafists of France and Germany, circa. 1100-1300. Edited by Rabbi Yehuda ben Eliezer and first printed in 1783.

Degel Machaneh Efrayim — Important chasidic commentary to the Torah, based strongly on the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov, by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Efraim of Sidlikov (1748-1800), a grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov. Published in Koretz.

Devarim Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Deuteronomy. (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Devek Tov — Commentary on Rashi by Rabbi Shimon Oshenburg Halevi of Frankfurt, 16th century.
Derech Mitzvosecha — Compendium of fundamental Chasidic discourses on many mitzvos of the Torah by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (the “Tzemach Tzedek”). Also known as “Talmi Hamitzvos.” First published in 1911, in Poltova Ukraine.

Divrei David — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi David ben Shmuel HaLevi (1586-1667), author of Taz, a major commentary on the Shulchan Aruch.

Drashos Haran — Fundamental discourses by Rabbi Nissim of Gerona, Spain (14th century). See: Ran.

Eitz Yosef — Commentary to Ein Ya’akov, the homiletic passages of the Talmud, by Rabbi Chanoch Zundel (d. 1867).

Emunos v’Deos — Classic philosophical work written by Sa’adiah Ga’on, discussing the basic foundations of Judaism. First published in Constantinople in 1562. (See: Sa’adiah Ga’on)

Epistle to Yemen — Letter written by the Rambam in 1172 to the Jews of Yemen who were suffering from a fanatical Muslim movement that threatened the existence of their community.

Gur Aryeh — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by the Maharal of Prague, Rabbi Yehudah Loewe, (1512-1609), Chief Rabbi in Moravia, Posen, and Prague. Author of numerous works in all fields of Torah. He was a descendant of King David. All the Chabad Rebbeim are descendants of the Maharal.

Hadar Zekeinim — Commentary to the Torah by the Tosafists of France and Germany from around 1100-1300. First published in 1840.

Har Tzvi — Responsa by Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank (1874-1960), Rabbi of Jerusalem for many decades; active in establishing the chief rabbinate of Israel.

Hatamim — Scholarly journal published by the Students’ Organization of the Lubavitcher Yeshivah in Warsaw. A total of eight issues were printed, between 1935 and 1937.

Hayom Yom — Handbook of chasidic insights following the calendar, compiled by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. First printed in 1942.

Ibn Ezra — R’ Avraham (1080-1164). Born in Spain, he was the author of a classic commentary to Tanach, and was also a prominent grammarian and poet.

Igeres Hadeshuvah — Third section of Tanya, discussing the concept of Teshuah according to Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources (see Tanya).

Ikarim — “Book of Principles” which stresses three fundamental aspects of Jewish belief – faith in G-d, Torah from Sinai, and reward and punishment – by R’ Yosef Albo (1380-1444) of Spain.

Imray Shefer — Supercommentary to Rashi’s and Mizrachi’s commentary on the Torah by R’ Nasan Nata Shapira (d. 1577). First published in 1597.

Iyun Ya’akov — Commentary to the homiletic passages of the Talmud by Rabbi Ya’akov Back Reischer (1670-1733), which appears in standard editions of Ein Ya’akov.

Kesef Mishneh — Commentary to Rambam’s Mishneh Torah by R’ Yosef Caro, author of Shulchan Aruch.

Kli Yakar — Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Hakohen Ibn Ezra (1080-1167), author of classic commentaries on the Torah and other important works.

Kuzari — Important work on Jewish Philosophy by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (1074-1141) written in the form of a dialogue between the King of the Khazars and a Jewish scholar.

Levush Ha’ohra — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe (c. 1535-1612). Commonly known as the “Levush” after the ten works he wrote which contain that word within their names.

Likutei Torah — Fundamental chasidic discourses of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, author of the Shulchan Aruch Ha’Rav and Tanya, on Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Likutei Sichos — 39-volume work of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, analyzing all parts of the Torah in an original manner and bringing them into harmony with one another. Published by Va’ad Lehafatzas Sichos (Kehos) from 1962 to 2001.

Magid Mishneh — Commentary to Rambam’s Mishneh Torah, by Rabbi Vidal of Tolosa (c. 1360), printed in standard editions.

Maharik — Rabbi Yosef ben Shlomo Kolon (1420-1480) of France, and later northern Italy. Author of classic responsa and teacher of Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura. His commentary to the Torah was first published in Jerusalem in 1790.

Maharsha — Acronym for Moreinu HaRav Shmuel Eliezer Halevi Eidels of Ostroh, Poland (1555-1632), Rosh Yeshiva and Rabbi in a number of the leading communities of Poland. Author of important commentaries on the Talmud, divided into halachic and Aggadic sections.

Maharshal — Acronym for Rabbi Shlomo ben Yechezkel Luria (1510-1573), famed Talmudist, author of Yam Shel Shlomo, Chochmas Shlomo, Yerios Shlomo, and other important works.

Maharzu — Commentary to the Midrash Rabah by Rabbi Ze’ev Wolf Einhorn (19th century). (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Malbim — Acronym for Meir Leibush ben Yechezkel Michel (1809-1879), Rabbi in Germany, Romania, and Russia. Author of popular Bible commentary which connects the Oral and Written traditions.
**Maskil leDavid** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi David Pardo (1710-1792), Rabbi in Sarajevo and Jerusalem, author of important commentaries on *Tosefta* and *Sifri*. He was one of the leading Sephardic Torah scholars of the eighteenth century.

**Matnos Kehunah** — Commentary on *Midrash Rabbah* by Rabbi Yissachar Ber HaKohen (c.1520-1590), a student of the *Rama*.

**Mechilta** — Halachic *Midrash* of the Tannaic period to the Book of Exodus.

**Megaleh Amukos** — 252 explanations of Moshe’s Prayer in *Parshas Va’eschanan* and 1000 explanations on the small alef in the first word of Vayikra, according to Kabbalah, by R’ Noson Noteh Shapiro. First printed in Cracow in 1637.

**Megillas Esther** — Scholarly commentary to Sefer *hamitzvos* defending the *Rambam* against attacks from the *Ramban*, by Rabbi Yitzchok Lioven. First published in Venice in 1591.

**Me’or Einayim** — Chasidic commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl (1730-1797), a student of the *Baal Shem Tov* and the *Maggid of Mezritch*. First published in Slavita, 1798.

**Meiri** — Extensive Commentary to the Talmud by R’ Menachem HaMeiri (c. 1249-c. 1306).

**Metzudos** — Commentary on the Prophets and Writings, consisting of two parts, *Metzudas Tzion*, which explains the meaning of individual words, and *Metzudos David*, a running commentary to the text. Initial manuscripts of the commentary were authored by Rabbi David Altschuler, and published shortly before his passing in 1753. The commentary was edited and completed by his son, Rabbi Yechezkel Hillel, and published in 1780. The commentary has been preserved in this form. First printed in Jerusalem.

**Midrash** — Aggadic and Halachic teachings of the Talmudic period arranged according to the verses of the Torah.

**Midrash Hagadol** — Midrashic anthology arranged by R’ David al-Adeni of South Arabia (13th century). Many Midrashic teachings which were lost throughout the course of time have been preserved in this work. First printed in 1967 in Jerusalem.

**Midrash Lekach Tov** — (also known as *Pesikta Zutrasa*). Midrashic anthology arranged by R’ Tovia Hagadol (1036-1108) of Greece and Bulgaria.

**Midrash Rabah** — A major collection of homilies and commentaries on the Torah, ascribed to R’ Oshiah Rabah (c. 3rd century), perhaps assembled during the early Geonic period. First printed in Constantinople 1512.

**Mikdash Melech** — Commentary to the *Zohar* culled from the works of R. Chaim Vital, R. Avraham Azulai, and their students R. Yaakov Pinto, R. Yeshaya Cohen and R. Moshe Zacutto.

**Minchah Belulah** — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Avraham Menachem Rapaport (c. 1540-1604), Italian Torah scholar, doctor and grammarian.

**Minchas Chinuch** — Scholarly supercommentary to Sefer *haChinuch* by Rabbi Yosef Babad (1800-1875), Rabbi of Tarnipol, Poland.

**Mishnah** — Fundamental collection of the legal pronouncements and discussion of the *Tanna’im*, edited by Rabbi Yehuda haNassi early in the third century. The *Mishnah* is the basic text of the Oral Law.

**Mishneh Torah** — 14-volume halachic code by *Rambam* (Maimonides) encompassing all the laws found in the Talmud.

**Mittel Rebbe** — Rabbi Dov Ber Schneuri (1773-1827), son of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; second Lubavitcher Rebbe.

**Mizrachi** — Exhaustive supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi (1450-1525) of Constantinople, Chief Rabbi of the Turkish Empire.

**Moreh Nevuchim** — “Guide for the Perplexed” by Maimonides.

**Moshev Zekeinim** — Anthology of comments of about 130 different sources, the majority of whom are Tosafists of France and Germany, circa. 1100-1300. First printed in 1959.

**Nachlas Ya’akov** — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Ya’akov Yekl Solnick. First published in Cracow in 1642.

**Nimukei Yosef** — Halachic commentary on *Sefer Hahalachos* (of the Rif), by R’ Yosef Chaviva of Spain (14-15th centuries).

**Noda Biyehudah** — Halachic Responsa of Rabbi Ezekiel Landau, (1713-1793) Chief Rabbi of Prague.

**Ohr haChayim** — Commentary on the Torah by Talmudic and Kabalist scholar Rabbi Chaim ben Attar (1696-1743).

**Ohr haTorah** — Extensive exposition of Chabad chasidic thought by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel (the *Tzemach Tzedek*, 1789-1866). Printed in New York between 1951 and 1983 in 48 volumes.

**Ohr Torah** — Anthology of Chasidic commentaries by Rabbi Dovber, the Maggid of Mezritch (d. 1773). First published in Koretz in 1781.

**Orach Chayim** — One of the four sections of the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, dealing with laws that follow a time cycle.
Onkelos — Proselyte (c. 90 C.E.) who reinstated a forgotten, authoritative translation of the Torah into Aramaic, which was read alongside the Torah in Talmudic times to assist the congregation in understanding the Torah reading.

Pane'ach Raza — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Yitzchak ben Yehudah Halevi of France, 13th century. First printed in Prague in 1607.

Parashas Derachim — Treatises by Rabbi Yehudah Rozanes (1657-1727) of Constantinople, Turkey, author of Mishneh Lemelech, a major commentary to Rambam’s Mishneh Torah.

Pesachim — Tractate of Talmud in the Order of Moed (Festivals).

Pesikta Rabasi — Compendium of teachings by Sages of the Talmud, first published in Prague in 1653.

Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer — Midrashic work by the school of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (c. 100). First published in Constantinople in 1514.

Pnet Moshe — Running commentary to the Jerusalem Talmud, by Rabbi Moshe Margulies of Amsterdam and Zamut. (1710-1781).


Rabeinu Tam — Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir (1100-1171), his Talmudic discourses served as the basis for the Tosfos commentary to the Talmud. He often challenged Rashi’s interpretations, offering original and brilliant insights. Rabeinu Tam was also a successful wine merchant and financier.

Radvaz — (c. 1480-1573) Acronym for Rabbi David ibn Zamra, Chief Rabbi of Egypt. Author of a commentary to the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah and extensive responsa.


Ramak — R’ Moses Cordovero, Kabalist of 16th century Safed. Student of R’ Yosef Caro. Author of numerous works, including Pardes Rimonim, a classic work which explains fundamental concepts of Kabalah.

Rambam — “Nachmanides” (1194-1270), Acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman of Gerona, Spain, one of the leading Torah scholars of the Middle Ages; author of major commentary to the Torah and numerous other works.

Ran — Acronym for Rabbenu Nissim (1308-1376). Authored an important commentary to the Talmud, published in most major editions.

Rashbam — Acronym for Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, Talmud and Torah Commentator, who supplemented Rashi’s (his grandfather’s) commentary on the Talmud (c. 1085-1174). Brother of Rabeinu Tam.

Rashi — Acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), author of basic commentary on the Bible and Talmud. According to Chasidic tradition, his commentary to the Torah contains allusions to kabalistic concepts.

Rema — R’ Moshe Isserles (1530-1572), Rav and Rosh Yeshiva of Cracow. Author of many works. Most famous are his Ashkenazic annotations to Rabbi Yosef Caro’s Shulchan Aruch, which transformed this predominantly Sephardic work into a universal Code of Jewish Law.

Ritvah — Acronym for R’ Yom Tov Ibn Asevili (1248-1330), Talmudic Commentator and Halachist.


Rosh — Acronym for R’ Asher ben Yechiel, Talmudic commentator and author of halachic compendium arranged on the tractates of the Talmud (c. 1250-1327).

Sa’adiah Ga’on — (882-942) Author of works in many areas of Torah, including the philosophical work, Emunos v’Deos.

Sanhedrin — Tractate of Talmud in Order of Nezikin (Damages).

S’dei Chemed — Extensive Halachic encyclopedia by R’ Chaim Chizkya-h Medini (1832-1904), Rav of Karasubazar in Crimea, Russia, and later Chief Rabbi of Chevron in the Land of Israel. Revised edition by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, New York, 1949-1953 (Kehos Publication Society).

Seder Hadoros — A chronology of events and personalities from creation until 1696, based on rabbinic sources, by Rabbi Yechiel Heilprin (1660-1746) Lithuanian Rabbi, Kabalist, and chronicler. First published in 1769.

Sefer Chasidim — Classical work of ethical and halachic instruction by R’ Yehudah haChasid, (c. 1150-1217).

Sefer Ha’Agur — Halachic compendium by R. Yaakov ben Yehuda Landa (Germany, fifteenth century), based primarily on the Tur. Widely used as a source for halachic decisions until the appearance of the Shulchan Aruch.
Sefer haChinuch — Compendium of basic explanations on the 613 mitzvos by an unknown Spanish author among the Rishonim of the 13th century.


Sefer haMitzvos — Comprehensive list of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah and their basic requirements, by Ramban.

Sefer haSichos — Public talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, from the years 1986-92.

Sefer haZikaron — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary to the Torah, by R’ Avraham Bukrat Halevi (15th Century) of Spain. First published in Leghorn in 1845.

Sforno — Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno of Rome and Bologna, Italy (1470-1550).

Sha’ar haGemul — Short eschatological treatise of the Ramban discussing reward and punishment. In this work the author refutes Ramban’s assertion that the climax of Creation will be a spiritual “soul world,” arguing instead that the Resurrection of the Dead will be the ultimate era of perfection.

Shach al Hatorah — Abbreviation for Sifsei Kohein, a commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Mordechai Hakohen, incorporating numerous mystical interpretations and gematrias. First published in 1610. (Not to be confused with Rabbi Shabbai Hakohen of Cracow, author of Shach, a major commentary to the Shulchan Aruch).

Shaloh — Acronym for Shnei Luchos Habris (“The two tablets of the Covenant”), by Rabbi Yeshayahu Hurwitz (1560-1630). There is a tradition that the Tanya is significantly based on the Shaloh.

Shemoneh Perakim — Philosophical treatise of Rambam, discussing the ills and cures of man’s soul, prophecy, reward and punishment, free will, and the rule of the “golden mean.”

Shemos Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Exodus. See “Midrash Rabah.”

Shitah Mekubetzes — Compilation of numerous medieval commentaries to the Talmud by R’ Betzalel Ashkenazi (1520-1592).

Shulchan Aruch — Universally accepted halachic code encompassing all areas of practical halacha, by Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575).

Sifri — Halachic Midrash on the books of Bamidbar and Devarim.

Sifri debay Rav — Comprehensive commentary to Sifri by Rabbi David Pardo (1710-1792), author of Maskil leDavid.

Sifsei Chachomim — Anthology of supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Shabbai Bass (1641-1719). First published in 1712.

Smag — Acronym for Sefer Mitzvos Gadol, an important compendium of the 613 mitzvos by the Tosafist R’ Moshe ben Ya’akov of Coucy (13th century).

Talmud — Comprehensive term for the Mishnah and Gemara as joined in the two compilations known as Babylonian Talmud (6th century) and Jerusalem Talmud (5th century).

Tanchuma — Aggadic Midrash on the Torah by Rabbi Tanchuma bar Abba (4th cen.)

Tanna debey Eliyahu — A Midrash, consisting of two parts, whose final redaction took place at the end of the tenth century of the Common Era. The first part is called “Seder Eliyahu Rabah” (31 chapters); the second, “Seder Eliyahu Zuta” (15 chapters).

Tanya — Primary chasidic text authored by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. (See: Alter Rebbe

Targum Yonason — Elaborate Aramaic translation of the Torah by Yonason ben Uziel, a disciple of Hillel.

Tiferes Yehonason — Commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Yehonason Eybeschutz (d. 1764) of Prague, Metz and Altona.

Tikunei Zohar — Section of the Zohar discussing seventy permutations of the first word of the Torah – Bereisheis, and commentaries on various other sections of Scripture.

Torah Shlaimah — Comprehensive encyclopedia of all Talmudic and Midrashic commentaries on the Torah, with scholarly notes and essays, by R’ Menachem Kasher (1895-1983). This work is still being compiled and currently spans 47 volumes, covering the books of Bereisheis-Bamidbar, Megillos and Hagadah Shel Pesach.

Torah Temimah — Anthology of main Talmudic references to the Torah, along with commentary, by Rabbi Baruch Epstein (1860-1942), son of Rabbi Yechezkel Michel Epstein, author of Aruch Hashulchan.

Toras Ha’olah — A work discussing the measurements of the Holy Temple and reasons for sacrifices according to philosophy by Rema. (See: Rema)

Toras Kohanim — Halachic Midrash to the Book of Leviticus. Also known as Sifra.


Tosfos — Talmudic commentary of the French, German and English rabbis of the 12th and 13th centuries.

Tsafras Pane’ach — Precedent setting commentary to the Torah and Rambam’s Mishneh Torah which innovated a fresh, deeply analytical approach to Talmudic study, by Rabbi
Yosef Rozin, Chief Rabbi of Dvinsk, known as the Rogatchover Gaon (1858-1936). He also authored Responsa and a commentary on the Torah by the same name. Likutei Sichos makes much use of the Rogatchover’s methodology.

Tzemach Tzedek — Title of responsa authored by the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866), after which he is usually referred to.

Tzror Hamor — Commentary to the Torah by R’ Avraham Saba (15th century) of Portugal, and later Morocco.

Tur Ha’aruch — Second half of commentary to the Torah by Rabbi Ya’akov Meir ben Asher (1268-1340), author of the Tur. (See Ba’al Haturim)

Turei Even — Prodigious commentary to tractates Rosh Hashanah, Chagigah, Taanis and Megilah by Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Metz, author of Sha’agas Aryeh.

Tzeidah Laderech — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Yissachar Ber Ailenberg. First printed in Prague in 1623.

Vayikra Rabah — The section of Midrash Rabah on the Book of Leviticus. (See “Midrash Rabah”)

Vilna Ga’on — R’ Eliyahu ben Shlomo of Vilna (1720-1797) Lithuanian Talmudist, Kabalist, grammarian, and mathematician.

Yad Malachi — Compendium of rules and principles on which various major Rabbinic texts are based (including the principles on which the Mishneh Torah is based) by R’ Malachi ben R’ Yaakov haKohain, published in 1767.

Yefay To’ar — Major commentary on Midrash Rabah, by R’ Shmuel Yaffa-Ashkenazi, Rabbi in Constantinople, 16th century.

Yalkut Re’uvaini — An anthology of Midrashic and Kabalistic commentaries on the Torah, collected by Rabbi Avraham Re’uvain Hakoahin Katz of Prague (d. 1673).

Yalkut Shimoni — Comprehensive Midrashic anthology, covering the entire Bible, attributed to Rabbi Shimon HaDarshan of Frankfurt (13th century).

Yere’im — Halachic discussion of the mitzvos, by Tosafist R. Eliezer ben R. Shmuel of Metz (France, twelfth century) a student of Rabeinu Tam. First printed in condensed form in Venice, in 1565. Unabridged version published in 1892 in Vilna.

Yerios Shlomo — Supercommentary to Rashi’s commentary on the Torah. (See: Maharsha)

Yoma — Tractate of Talmud in the Order of Mo’ed (Festivals).

Zohar — Basic text of Kabalah, compiled by Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai and his disciples in the form of a commentary on the Torah. First published in the late 13th century by Rabbi Moshe de Leon (c.1250-1305), in Spain.
לוכלך

ורו"ח ורה"ח ר' (*)( מילעך שליחי

ורונה מרת חכן רוד תחי.

וילדייהו לאה, מנהם מענידל, ת' משהאם וול ניקח שיחוי

ותריהם שיחוי

לעילוי נשמה

ר' יעקב בן ר' מנהם דוד

ניומיא

זכרונים לברכה

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

לעילוי נשמה

ורו"ח ורה"ח ר' (*)( יסכיפ יצחק בן ר' יעקב

ליפسكان

זכרונים לברכה

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
לעיל וניתן להזדהות

הר"ח הרח"ח ר' מרדכי זאב הכהן גוטינוק

השידי ר' אברהם וזוגות עטלא פייגלן

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คอונות לברכה

תורי נשתתים בברות ברורות החמיש

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ולכות

הר"ח הרח"ח ר' שלום דובער שחייה הכהן גוטינוק

ראב"ד דק"ק מעלה בזורים י"א

זוגות מרית דבורה תחת

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מרית שרה נחמה תחת יא 页面

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דפים נוספים

הר"ח הרח"ח ר' מאיר שחייה הכהן גוטינוק

זוגות מרית שיניידל טענאת תחת

בניהם ונותניה:

הר"חشمואל מרדכי זאב הכהן וזוגות מרית פינוי דינה

וילדם שמואלה אסתר שפרה, דוד אריה וחי' משהקא

תניה בעלה הר"ח' תעי אלימלך שפרא

וילדיהם חי' משהקא, מנוחה מעניאל זוד ארי' רי

מנוחה רחל בעלה הר"ח' יוסף ציון בראברע

וילדיהם אטיז וחי' משהקא

עליזא בעלה הר"ח' מיוכאל מעניאל Leaving

וילדיהם חי' משהקא ושתבי

מנוחה מעניאל הכהן, סימה אסתר, שריפינס Laden, יוסף ציון הכהן,

אברם שלמה הכהן, חיה בתיה' דוד ארי' הכהן

שיהי לארץ ימים יבשימים טובים
לעילו נсמות

ר’ דוד הוזגנו להא סלענער
ר’ דוד הוזגנו רינה עטר
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היהנו נסמותיהם צרוות בצרור החים

גופס על דיי

ר’ דוד שייח’ סלענער
וזגנו מרת לארה חתי

בנוריתם:
הנה ושה מלכה

ולכות

ר’ ראובן שיח’ סלענער
וזגנו מרת ורגם חתי

מוקדש
לחזוק המ一刻ות
לכבוד כחשת הארץ מורי ורבני

נשיא דורנו