

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Rosh Hashanah

Tishrei 1, 5784 – September 9, 2023

Compiled from the works of
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Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Rosh Hashanah

Likkutei Sichos Volume 35, Pages 76 – 81

Introduction¹

This Shabbos and Sunday, we will celebrate the holiday of Rosh Hashanah. Instead of the regular Torah reading, we will read a portion in honor of the festival. The first day's reading describes the birth of our forefather, Yitzchok². Soroh, our Matriarch, had spent many years praying to G-d to have a child. Yet previously, she was barren. Here, the Torah tells us that *at age ninety*, she gave birth.

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we continue reading where we left off on the first day³. Here, the Torah tells us of Avrohom's most significant test, bringing his long-awaited son as a sacrifice. At the last moment, Hashem told him to offer a ram caught in a nearby thicket instead of his son.

What connection do these readings have to Rosh Hashanah? The Gemorah says⁴ that Soroh conceived on Rosh Hashanah. From this, we see that Hashem answers our prayers on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment. Furthermore, He answers our prayers even if we ask Him for something quite miraculous. When Hashem does answer our prayers, the blessing may sometimes appear awry. Even then, G-d will step in and help us.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good, sweet year in all respects. Hashem should grant our most fervent prayer of Moshiach Now!

Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית כ"ב, י"ב: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנְּעָר וְאֶל תַּעֲשֵׂה לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי | עֲתָה יִדְעָתִי כִּי יִרְאֵ אֱלֹקִים אֶתָּה וְלֹא חִשְׁבָתָ אֶת בְּנֵךְ אֶת יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי:

רש"י ד"ה כי עתה ידעתי: אמר רבי אבא אמר לו אברהם, אפרש לפניך את שיחתי, אתמול אמרת לי (לעיל כ"א, י"ב) כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע, וחזרת ואמרת (שם כ"ב, ב') קח נא את בנך, עכשיו אתה אומר לי אל תשלח ידך אל הנער. אמר לו הקב"ה (תהלים פ"ט, ל"ה) לא אחלל בריתי ומוצא שפתי לא אשנה, כשאמרתי לך קח מוצא שפתי לא אשנה, לא אמרתי לך שחטוהו אלא העלהו, אסקתיה אחתיה:

Bereishis 22:12: And he said, "Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad, nor do the slightest thing to him. For now, I know that you are a G-d fearing man, and you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me."

1. This introduction is not a part of the Sichah. It is the sole responsibility of the translator.

2. Parshas Vayeiro, Bereishis 21:1 – 21:34.

3. Ibid. 22:1 – 22:24.

4. Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a.

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Rashi Heading – for now, I know: Said Rabbi Abba. Avrohom said to Hashem, "I will explain my discussion before You. Yesterday, You said,⁵ 'for in Yitzchok will be called your seed.' You retracted and said⁶, 'Take now your son.' Now You say to me, 'Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad.'" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him⁷, "I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips." When I told you, "Take," I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not say to you, "Slaughter him," but, "Bring him up." You have brought him up; (now) take him down.

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Vayeiro, we are told of the tenth and final test with which Hashem challenged Avrohom⁸. After this test, Hashem told him, "*Now* I know you are a God-fearing man." Rashi tells us of Avrohom's conversation, in which he said that Hashem said to him that the continuation of his nation would come through his son Yitzchok. However, presently, Hashem commanded Avrohom to offer this son as a sacrifice. Rashi tells us that G-d said He doesn't change His mind. "I shall not profane My covenant; neither shall I change the utterance of My lips." When I told you, "Take," I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not tell you, "Slaughter him," but rather, "Bring him up." You have brought him up; (now) take him down.

According to Peshat, how does Rashi know all of the above from the words "now I know?" There doesn't seem to be any hint from these words that Avrohom wondered how Hashem previously told him, "for in Yitzchok will be called your seed," and now told him to offer Yitzchok as a sacrifice. The words also do not allude to Hashem's response: "'I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips.'" When I said to you, 'Take,' I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not tell you, 'Slaughter him,' but, 'Bring him up.' You have brought him up; (now) take him down." No part of this conversation appears to be hinted at by the verse!

According to Rashi's words, Avrohom is discussing with Hashem a conversation that he had earlier. Where do we find this conversation?

Avrohom did not doubt Hashem's words. The conversation Rashi is referring to was one that Rashi described in his earlier comments. In this same verse, Avrohom was told not to stretch forth his hand to the lad. Avrohom was concerned that this was because he did not pass this test with his entire heart. Therefore, he suggested inflicting a wound on him, extracting a small amount of blood, which he would sprinkle on the altar.

5. Our Parshah, Bereishis 21:12.

6. Our Parshah, Bereishis 22:2.

7. Tehillim 89:35.

8. See Pirkei Avos, Chapter 5, Mishnah 3.

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This would reconcile the two *seemingly* contradictory statements made by G-d. Therefore, Hashem told him that He knows Avrohom is a G-d fearing man. He had thoroughly passed the test.

Rashi's Explanation

In this Torah portion, Hashem gives Avrohom his tenth and final test. He is told by G-d⁹, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchok, and go away to the land of Moriah and bring him up there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will tell you." He woke early the following day and took his son to carry out Hashem's command. At the last minute, Hashem tells him, "Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad, nor do the slightest thing to him. For now, I know that you are a G-d fearing man, as you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me."

Rashi cites the words "for now I know" and says the following. "Said Rabbi Abba, Avrohom said to Him, 'I will explain my discussion before You. Yesterday, You said,¹⁰ 'for in Yitzchok will be called your seed.' You seemingly retracted these words and said¹¹, 'Take now, your son.' Now You say to me, 'Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "'I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips.'" When I said to you, 'Take,' I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not say to you, 'Slaughter him,' instead I told you to, 'Bring him up.' You have brought him up; (now) take him down."

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

According to Peshat, how does Rashi know the entire conversation between Hashem and Avrohom from the words "now I know?" There doesn't seem to be any hint from these words that Avrohom wondered how to reconcile the fact that Hashem previously told him, "for in Yitzchok will be called your seed," and then told him to offer Yitzchok as a sacrifice. The words also do not allude to Hashem's response: "'I shall not profane My covenant, neither shall I change the utterance of My lips.'" When I said to you, 'Take,' I was not altering the utterance of My lips. I did not tell you, 'Slaughter him,' but, 'Bring him up.' You have brought him up; (now) take him down." According to the simple understanding of the verse, no part of this conversation appears to be alluded to! From where does Rashi deduce this entire conversation?

9. Our Parshah, Bereishis 22:2.

10. Our Parshah, Bereishis 21:12.

11. Our Parshah, Bereishis 22:2.

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The Midrash Rabbah is the source of Rashi's words¹². However, Rashi changed the wording of the Midrash. There, it says Avrohom wondered how Hashem could say two contradictory things. However, according to Rashi, Avrohom does not ask Hashem how He could "*contradict*" Himself. He says that Avrohom said to Hashem, "I will explain my discussion before You." He does not imply surprise at Hashem's words. According to Rashi, Avrohom is not even discussing Hashem's conversation. Instead, he is talking about a conversation that he had earlier. Additionally, we need to know to which exchange he is referring.

The Explanation

Rashi is not implying that Avrohom questioned Hashem. He had complete faith in Hashem's words. According to Peshat, it is impossible to say otherwise. Earlier, the Torah told us that G-d commanded Avrohom to go to Israel. As soon as he arrived, a famine forced him to travel to Egypt temporarily. Rashi explained¹³ that the famine was "in that land alone (Israel). Hashem did this to test Avrohom, whether he would think that Hashem's words were contradictory. The fact is that He first ordered him to go to the Land of Canaan, and immediately after that, He forced him to leave it." Avrohom passed the test and had no ill thoughts about Hashem's words.

Likewise, we find in Rashi's words later that Hashem *scolded* Moshe. He told him¹⁴, "You have questioned My ways, unlike Avrohom, to whom I said, 'For in Yitzchok will be called your seed,' and afterward I said to him, 'Bring him up there for a burnt offering,' yet he did not question Me."

We see clearly from Rashi that, according to the simple understanding of the Torah, Avrohom never had any doubts regarding Hashem's words. Instead, he tried to explain his previous words (his conversation) with G-d.

In Rashi's previous comments on the same verse, he cites the words "do not stretch forth" and explains as follows. "To slaughter him. Avrohom said to Him, 'If so, I have come here in vain. I will inflict a wound on him and extract a little blood.' He said to him, 'Do not do the slightest thing to him.' Do not cause him any blemish."

In our Rashi, Avrohom is explaining Avrohom's words to Hashem. Why did Avrohom want to wound his son to extract blood? In this manner, both of G-d's words would be fulfilled. Hashem responded to this by saying that he was not to do anything to Yitzchok. He must not even cause him a blemish.

12. This would seem to answer the previous question. Rashi does have a source from where he derived the conversation. However, as explained in the body of the text, Rashi only explains the simple meaning of the verse. He does not explain the Torah based on Midrashim. He supplies a beginning student with what he needs in order to understand the Chumash. This does not (necessarily) have any connection with how the Midrash explains the Torah.

13. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 12:10.

14. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 6:1.

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When Avrohom was told not to stretch forth his hand, he was concerned that perhaps he had not fulfilled Hashem's command with a whole heart. Furthermore, when he was told not to even make a blemish on the youth to carry out Hashem's words, he was worried for the same reason. That is why G-d told him, "Now I know that you are a G-d fearing man, and you did not withhold your son, your only one, from Me." Despite his concerns, he had passed the test.

That is also how Rashi knows there was a conversation between Hashem and Avrohom. Otherwise, Hashem would not have needed to assure Avrohom that he passed the test.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayeiros, 5748)

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

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