

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Shemini Atzeres – Simchas Torah

22 Tishrei, 5784 – September 30, 2023

Compiled from the works of  
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**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi  
Shemini Atzeres – Simchas Torah**

Likkutei Sichos Volume 24, Pages 253 – 258

**Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Shabbos and Sunday, the twenty-second and twenty-third of Tishrei (October 7th and 8th), we will celebrate the concluding days of Sukkos. In Israel, they observe only one day of the festival. Therefore, Shabbos will be Simchas Torah, the day that we will complete (and begin anew) the reading of the entire Torah. Elsewhere, Simchas Torah will be celebrated on Sunday, twenty-two Tishrei. Therefore, we are presenting the Rebbe's explanation to a Rashi in the concluding section of the Torah.

The entire holiday Sukkos is the "Time of Our Rejoicing." On these two final days, the happiness reaches its peak. Our joy during these days should be spread throughout the entire year. This will undoubtedly bring the ultimate joy of the final redemption through Moshiach.

**Rashi in His Own Words**

דברים ל"ד, ה': וַיָּבֹכּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּעֶרְבַת מוֹאָב שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וַיִּתְּמוּ יָמָיו בְּכִי אֶקֶל מֹשֶׁה:  
רש"י ד"ה בני ישראל: הזכרים, אבל באהרן מתוך שהיה רודף שלום ונותן שלום בין איש לרעהו ובין אשה לבעלה נאמר (במדבר כ,  
כ"ט) כל בית ישראל, זכרים ונקבות:

**Devorim 34:8:** And the sons<sup>2</sup> of Israel wept for Moshe in the plains of Moav for thirty days; and the days of weeping over the mourning for Moshe came to an end.

**Rashi Heading - The sons of Israel:** The males. However, concerning Aharon, since he used to pursue peace and bring peace between a man and his fellow and between a woman and her husband, it is said<sup>3</sup>, "The whole house of Israel (wept for him)."

**Synopsis**

In this Torah portion, Berochoh, we conclude reading the Five Books of Moshe. We are told of the passing of Moshe and how all of the "sons" of Israel mourned for him for thirty days. Rashi points out that this was different than how Aharon was grieved at the time of his passing. The entire house of Israel, men and women

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

2. The Hebrew words "בני ישראל" are usually translated as "the children of Israel." The plural of "בן - son," can either be translated as sons, i.e. males, or it can include both males and females. However, here we have translated it as "the sons of." This is in keeping with Rashi's commentary which seems to imply that for the most part the men mourned for Moshe. However, as the Rebbe will explain, there are those who also translate it as "children," i.e. men and women, as well.

3. Parshas Chukas, Bamidbar 20:29.

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alike, cried for Aharon because he pursued peace "between a man and his fellow, and a woman and her husband." Because Moshe did not engage in this service, only the sons of Israel, the men, wept for him. We need to understand Rashi's explanation. Since the Torah is discussing the passing of Moshe, we would think that the emphasis should be on the greatness of Moshe. However, from Rashi's explanation of this verse, it seems that the Torah is telling us that Aharon's greatness surpassed that of Moshe. Why would the Torah use this occasion to teach us the greatness of Aharon?

The fact is that Moshe and Aharon each had a different approach to serving Hashem. Moshe's level and his mission in life were the truth. He could not deviate from the truth under any circumstances. Aharon's level, on the other hand, was that of kindness. He was occupied with restoring peace to everyone, even if it required deviating from the truth to a certain extent. For the sake of peace, this deviation was permitted by the Torah. However, Moshe, whose level was the absolute, unabashed truth, could not bring himself down to this level.

### **Rashi's Explanation**

This Torah portion, Berochoh, marks the conclusion of all of the five books of the Torah. It is not (necessarily) read on Shabbos, as are all other Torah portions. Instead, it is read on the last day of the festival of Sukkos. This day is called Simchas Torah, meaning the day of the rejoicing of the Torah<sup>4</sup>.

The portion tells us of the passing of our teacher, Moshe. This came after our forty years of wandering in the desert. After telling us of Moshe's death, the Torah says<sup>5</sup>, "And the sons of Israel wept for Moshe in the plains of Moav for thirty days, and the days of weeping over the mourning for Moshe came to an end." Rashi explains that the "sons of Israel" refer specifically to the males. However, concerning Aharon, both men and women mourned. This was because he would pursue peace, bringing peace between a man and his fellow and between a woman and her husband; it is said<sup>6</sup>, "The whole house of Israel (wept for him)."

Rashi is telling us that the mourning for the passing of Aharon was far more intense than the mourning for Moshe. Aharon pursued peace and brought peace between fellows and husbands and wives. He was, therefore, mourned by men and women alike. Moshe, on the other hand, was primarily mourned by men.

Regarding the mourning for each of them, there are two different opinions expressed by our Sages<sup>7</sup>. One is the opinion cited here by Rashi, namely that the men only mourned Moshe. The second is that the mourning

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4. It has a double meaning; the Jews rejoice with the Torah rejoices with the Jews.

5. Parshas Berochoh, Devorim 34:8.

6. Parshas Chukas, Bamidbar 20:29.

7. See Avos D'Rabbi Nosson Chapter 12, 4. Avos D'Rabbi Nosson is a work written by the Tanna'im, the sages of the Mishnah. It is similar to, and related to Pirkei Avos. It is written at greater length than Pirkei Avos, and provides greater explanation.

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for Aharon was greater than that for Moshe because Aharon predeceased his younger brother, Moshe. Everyone, without exception, saw how bitterly Moshe cried for Aharon. The entire nation cried for Aharon out of respect and awe of Moshe. However, when Moshe passed, in as much as no one of his stature was mourning, only the men cried.

From this, we see that the first explanation, which Rashi cites, emphasizes the greatness of Aharon. By telling us that (mostly) the men mourned for Moshe, we see that he did not excel in pursuing peace to the extent that Aharon did. However, the second explanation the Sages offers is expressing Moshe's greatness. All Jewish people mourned for Aharon only due to his greatness.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

This seems to present us with a difficulty. Here, the Torah is telling us of the passing of Moshe. One would think, mainly according to Peshat, that it would be appropriate for the Torah to use this occasion to teach us of Moshe's greatness. This is indeed the case. The Torah tells us that<sup>8</sup> "Moshe was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes had not dimmed, nor had he lost his (natural) freshness." Further, it says that<sup>9</sup> "there was no other prophet who arose in Israel like Moshe, whom the Lord knew face to face." Why would the Torah tell us that Moshe lacked something his brother excelled in?

Furthermore, we need to understand Rashi's choice of words. We are assuming that Rashi's intent here is to explain why, regarding Aharon, it says that he was mourned by *all* of the Jewish people, not only the men. This being the case, he should have *begun* his comments by saying, "Concerning Aharon, it is said that 'The whole house of Israel (wept for him).'" From the fact that Rashi begins by saying, "concerning Aharon since he used to pursue peace and bring peace between a man and his fellow and between a woman and her husband," we see that he is emphasizing the greatness of Aharon as compared to that of Moshe. Here, where the Torah is telling us of the passing of Moshe, why does Rashi underline the superiority of Aharon as opposed to that of Moshe?

We also need to understand why we do not find in the words of our Sages that Moshe strived to make peace between individuals. We know from the Torah that Moshe had unparalleled love of fellow Jews<sup>10</sup>. He was the "Faithful Shepherd" of each Jew. He took care of all of our needs, both spiritual and material. Spiritually, we find that he received the Torah and taught it to each Jew. He did not limit himself to teaching the fundamental laws but went into every detailed aspect of the Torah.

Materially, the Manna, which sustained all Jewish people throughout our forty-year sojourn in the wilderness, was in his merit. Not only that, but even those material needs which were in the merit of his siblings

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8. Parshas Berochoh, Devorim 34:7.

9. Ibid., Devorim 34:10.

10. The Talmud says in Menochos (65, a) that Moshe loved each and every Jew.

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Miriam and Aharon came in Moshe's merit after their passing. Despite his total devotion to his nation, we never find that he involved himself with restoring peace among Jews.

### The Explanation

The explanation of all of the above is as follows. Because of Moshe's reason for being, G-d did not choose him as His emissary to restore peace among Jews. Instead, that mission was given to his sibling Aharon. The Sages tell us that how Aharon made peace among Jews was as follows<sup>11</sup>. He would approach each of them if he heard that two people were involved in a dispute. He would tell one of the disputants he heard from his fellow how sorry he was. He would say he would like to apologize and make peace with him. He would then approach the other, to whom he would say the same thing. In this manner, he would restore peace between the two.

This is termed by the Sages "changing the truth." It was not considered telling a lie. Peace is so great that the Torah teaches us that one may change the truth for its sake<sup>12</sup>. However, although it is permissible, it is not in keeping with the level of Moshe. Moshe was a physical manifestation of the Divine attribute of truth. even though it is acceptable to "change the truth," and is not considered a lie, it nonetheless "conceals" the fact. This is not in keeping with the mission and level of Moshe, which is truth. It is, however, in keeping with Aharon's mission. His attribute was kindness. Moreover, Moshe was so great that he could not bring himself down to that level. He could not descend to the level of those who can only be brought together by concealing the truth.

Both Moshe and Aharon were excellent in their way. Moshe was the one who drew down the Torah from Above. He could not deviate from the truth to the slightest extent. On the other hand, Aharon could descend even to one for whom there was a need to conceal the truth, and to reach out to those on the lowest levels.

Throughout Moshe's lifetime, he was occupied with his life mission. He had no room for anything other than the entire truth, with no deviation from it whatsoever. Once his life's mission was complete, and it was time for him to "ascend to ... Mount Nevo<sup>13</sup>," he accepted Aharon's level. He could then accept an approach that would bring peace to *each* Jew without exception.

*(Adapted from talks given on the night of Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos and Simchas Torah 5742)*

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11. See the Avos D'Rabbi Nosson cited in footnote 3, Chapter 12, 3.

12. See Talmud Yevomos 65, b.

13. Ibid., Devorim 34:1.

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

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