

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Lech Lecho

10 Cheshvan, 5782 – October 16, 2021

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## An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Lech Lecho

Toras Menachem Hisvadu'yos 5742, Volume 1

### Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית י"ב, ג': וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מִבְּרַכְיָהּ וּמִקְלָלֶיהָ אֶאָר וְנִבְרַכְוּ בָךְ כָּל מְשִׁפְחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה:

רש"י ד"ה ונברכו בך כל משפחות האדמה: יש אגדות רבות, וזהו פשוטו. אדם אומר לבנו תהא כאברהם, וכן כל ונברכו בך שבמקרא. וזה מוכיח (בראשית מ"ח, כ') "בך יברך ישראל לאמר ישימך א-להים כאפרים וכמנשה":

**Bereishis 12:3:** And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you."

**Rashi Heading – shall be blessed in you:** There are many Aggados, but this is its simple meaning. A man says to his son, "May you be like Avrohom." This is the case in every instance (of the use of the words) "shall be blessed with you" in Scripture. The following proves this<sup>1</sup>, "With you, Israel shall bless, saying, 'May Hashem make you like Efraim and like Menasheh.'"

### Synopsis

Our Parshah, Lech Lecho, tells us that as a result of Avrom's travels, Hashem will make him a great nation, bless him, and cause his name to be great. Furthermore, he shall be a blessing<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, G-d says that "I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse. All the families of the earth shall be blessed in you." Rashi cites the words from the above verse "shall be blessed in you." He comments that "There are many Aggados<sup>3</sup>, but this is its simple meaning. A man says to his son, "May you be like Avrohom." This is the case in every instance (of the use of the words) "shall be blessed with you" in Scripture. The following proves this<sup>4</sup>, "With you, Israel shall bless, saying, 'May Hashem make you like Efraim and like Menasheh.'"

As we have discussed many times, Rashi's purpose is to explain the simple meaning of each verse. Why is he telling us that there are *many Aggados*? Additionally, what difference does it make just how many Aggadic explanations there are? Rashi is concerned with Peshat, not Aggadah.

The explanation is, that Rashi does not find a difficulty in the words that "all of the people of the earth will be blessed in you." A beginner will understand on his own that it means that a man will say to

1. Parshas Vayechi, Bereishis 48:20.

2. The above is paraphrased from our Parshah, Bereishis 12:1-2.

3. Aggados, the plural of Aggadah, refers to Midrashic interpretations of the Torah.

4. See footnote 1.

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his son “may you be like Avrom.” This much is obvious.

Rashi is explaining, as is often the case, the context of these words. Hashem just gave Avrom incredible blessings. They were both great physically and spiritually. Furthermore, He told Avrom that from this point on all of the blessings are entrusted to him. The final Berochoh, meaning that which is the greatest of all of the earlier blessings, is that even the nations of the earth, those who have no understanding of spiritual matters, will grant Avrom such esteem that they will bless their children to be like him. Why should this interest Avrom?

That is why Rashi begins by saying that there are many Aggados; it takes *many* Aggados to explain how lofty this Berochoh actually is.

### **Rashi’s Explanation**

At the end of last week’s Torah portion, Noach, we were introduced to Avrom, who would become the forefather of the Jewish Nation. In this week’s Torah portion, Lech Lecho, we read of Hashem’s command to him to go forth from his land, his birthplace, and his father’s house. Hashem further commanded him that he should go to the land which He will show him, namely the land of Israel. Because Avrom listened to Hashem and actually traveled to and throughout Israel, Hashem promised to make him a great nation, bless him, and cause his name to be great. Furthermore, Hashem said that Avrohom shall be a blessing<sup>5</sup>. Over and above that, G-d says<sup>6</sup> “I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse. All of the families of the earth shall be blessed in you.”

What is the meaning of “all of the families of the earth will be blessed in you?” Rashi cites the words from the verse “shall be blessed in you,” and explains as follows. He writes that there are many Aggados, Midrashic explanations of these words. However, Rashi continues that the simple meaning, i.e., Peshat is, that a man will say to his son, “may you be like Avrom.” Rashi quotes from further in Bereishis that <sup>7</sup> “With you, Israel shall bless, saying, ‘May Hashem make you like Efraim and like Menasheh.’” He tells us that this proves that whenever the Torah uses the expression “shall be blessed with you,” this is what is meant.

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5. The above is paraphrased from our Parshah, Bereishis 12:1-2.

6. Our Parshah, Bereishis 12:3.

7. See footnote 1.

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### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

First and foremost, we have stated many times that Rashi's goal is to explain the simple meaning of the Torah. We know this from his own words<sup>8</sup>; his commentary is the one and only tool that a total beginner needs in order to understand what the Torah is saying on a basic level. Why does Rashi find it necessary to write that "there are many Aggados?" What connection does this have with the simple meaning of the Torah, which is Rashi's objective?

Furthermore, why does Rashi find a need to specify that there are *many Aggados*? Why should the quantity of Aggados be relevant? After all, Rashi does not specify which Aggados or how many there are. What difference does it make?

Moreover, there are many instances where Rashi does quote an Aggadah. However, this is only in an instance where it is needed to explain the meaning of the verse<sup>9</sup>. Then too, it is only when there is a question regarding the simple meaning of the verse. However here, after stating that there are many Aggados, Rashi goes on to say that "this is its simple meaning ...". In other words, in our case, there is a simple explanation that can be understood. That just makes the question of why Rashi needs to cite Aggados an even greater question.

The question becomes even greater when you consider that Rashi concludes his comments by writing that "so is every instance of the words 'will be blessed with you' in Scripture." Since the same explanation applies throughout Scripture, it *must* be simple to understand. Not only does Rashi state that there are many Aggados which explain this, but he mentions the "many Aggados" before saying that there is a simple explanation! This certainly does not seem to blend with Rashi's standard procedure.

### The Explanation

When the beginner learns the verse "all of the families of the earth will be blessed in you" he has no doubt what it means; he understands on his own that it means that a man will say to his son that he should be like Avrohom. The question that arises here is not because of a difficulty with the meaning of the words, but rather with its meaning within the context of the verses. In other words, the difficulty arises here from how these words follow the preceding words. As we have already discussed many times, at

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8. See for example Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis 3:8; "There are many Aggadic Midrashim, and our Sages already arranged them in their proper order in Bereishis Rabbah and in other Midrashim. However, I have come only to teach the simple meaning of the Scripture and such Aggadah that clarifies the words of the verses, each word in its proper way."

9. See for example the previous footnote, where Rashi writes that besides Peshat he also quotes "such Aggadah that clarifies the words of the verses, each word in its proper way."

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times Rashi explains the meaning of a word itself, and other times he explains the connection between one verse and another.

The verse begins by telling of tremendous blessings which Hashem gave to Avrom<sup>10</sup>; “I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” Rashi explains that “you will be a blessing” means that from this point on, all of the blessings are entrusted into Avrom’s hand. The question arises, what is added by the blessing that “all of the families of the earth will be blessed by you?”

In other words, the earlier blessings were incredibly great – both physically and spiritually. Of what benefit is it to Avrom that even the families of the earth who have no comprehension of spiritual matters will hold him in such great esteem, that even they will bless their children to be like Avrom? This blessing does not compare to the earlier blessings, yet it is stated last. This implies that it is equal to all of the other blessings.

. Therefore, Rashi must begin his commentary by saying “there are many Aggados.” What is the significance of Aggadah? The Alter Rebbe teaches us<sup>11</sup> that between the afternoon and evening service, those who are in Shul should “study in groups of (at least) ten the innermost (i.e., the mystical) dimension of the Torah, i.e., the Aggadah contained in *Ein Yaakov*<sup>12</sup>. This is because most of the secrets of the Torah are concealed in it (i.e., in the *Aggadah*).”

These Aggados, which contain the hidden, mystical aspect of Torah, explain that the blessing that “all of the families of the earth will be blessed in you” is indeed an exalted blessing. Rashi states specifically that “there are many Aggados,” because only through many Aggados can the fact that this blessing is the equivalent of all of the previous blessings be understood. That would not be the case if there was only one Aggadah. But by combining the explanations of the various Aggados, one can see that this blessing indeed outweighs all of the others.

Nevertheless, Rashi does continue and writes “but this is its simple meaning; A man says to his son, ‘May you be like Avrohom.’” He writes this despite the fact that it appears to be problematic. It does not seem to flow from the earlier verses or to add anything to the previous blessings.

The reason that Rashi uses this explanation, despite the fact that it is not such a good fit, is because this is what “every instance of the words ‘will be blessed with you’ in Scripture” means. Furthermore,

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10. Our Parshah, Bereishis 12:3.

11. Igeres Hakodesh, Chapter 23.

12. Ein Yaakov is a compilation of all of the stories, the Aggadah, contained in the Talmud.

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Rashi proves this by quoting “With you, Yisroel shall bless, saying, ‘May God make you like Ephraim and like Menashe.’”

In other words, we learn from the instance that the Torah specifies “With you, Yisroel shall bless, saying, May God make you like Ephraim and like Menasheh,” that every other place throughout the Torah these words have the same meaning. Therefore, here too he cites this explanation, despite the fact that it doesn’t follow very well from the previous verses.

Nevertheless, first Rashi mentions the Aggados because only they explain how this verse fits with the preceding verses. However, Rashi doesn’t quote the Aggados because there are many; perhaps if there was only one, he would quote it.

Rashi states specifically that “there are *many Aggados*,” because only through many Aggados can the fact that this blessing is the equivalent of all of the previous blessings be understood. That would not be the case if there was only one Aggadah. But by combining the explanations of the various Aggados, one can see that this blessing indeed outweighs all of the others.

*(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecho 5742)*

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

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