

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Beshalach

13 Shevat, 5783 – February 4, 2023

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

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

**שמות ט"ו - כ"ב:** וַיִּסַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיָּם סוּף וַיֵּצֵאוּ אֶל מִדְבַּר שׁוּר וַיֵּלְכוּ וְשָׁלַשְׁתַּיִם יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְלֹא מָצְאוּ מַיִם:  
**רש"י ד"ה ויסע משה:** הסייען בעל כרחם שעטרו מצרים סוסייהם בתכשיטי זהב וכסף ואבנים טובות, והיו ישראל מוצאין אותם בים, וגדולה היתה ביזת הים מביזת מצרים, שנאמר (שיר השירים א', י"א) תורי זהב נעשה לך עם נקודות הכסף, לפיכך הוצרך להסייען בעל כרחם:

**Shemos 15:22:** Moshe led the Jews away from the Red Sea, and they went out into the desert of Shur. They went in the desert for three days but did not find water.

**Rashi Heading - Moshe led the Jews away:** (The literal meaning of the Hebrew words for "led the Jews away" is that he *caused* them to travel). He led them out against their will, for the Egyptians had adorned their steeds with ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones, and the Jews were finding them in the sea. The loot at the Yam Suf was greater than that in Egypt, as it says<sup>1</sup>, "We will make rows of gold with studs of silver for you." Therefore, he had to lead them against their will<sup>2</sup>.

**Synopsis**

Our Torah portion, Beshalach, tells us of the tremendous miracle of the Red Sea splitting. After this miracle, the Torah says that Moshe led the Jews away, meaning that he *caused* them to leave the Red Sea. Why did Moshe need to force the Jews to go against their will? Rashi explains that the Jews could plunder even more gold, silver, and precious stones at the sea than they had taken when leaving Egypt. They were so busy taking the loot of the Egyptians drowned in the sea that they were not anxious to leave.

However, this is not easy to understand. Every single Jew attained a sublime level of prophecy at the Yam Suf, and that is why all Jews could declare that<sup>3</sup> "This is my G-d." The word "this" only applies to that which one can see. When experiencing such a sublime revelation of Hashem, how could they be concerned about acquiring more physical wealth?

The explanation is that Moshe had told us earlier that we were each commanded to<sup>4</sup> "borrow from the

1. Shir Hashirim 1:11.

2. Rashi's source is from various Midrashim. See the Midrash Tanchumah (Buber edition) 16, Yalkut Shimoni quoting the Tanchumah and Midrash Lekach Tov on this verse.

3. Our Parshah, Shemos 15:2.

4. Parshas Bo, Shemos 11:2.

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Egyptians gold and silver vessels." We did this to fulfill the prophecy that the Jews would leave Egypt with great wealth<sup>5</sup>. However, this commandment was to empty Egypt of all of its wealth. When we saw that we had not fulfilled our mission and the Egyptians still had great wealth, we felt obligated to complete the job we had begun. That is why we did not wish to leave the Red Sea.

Hashem did not command the Jews to receive the Torah immediately; however, He did command us to empty Egypt of its treasures. In the words of the Sages<sup>6</sup>, "if not now, when?" There would not be another opportunity to fulfill this commandment.

### Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Beshalach, we are told of the Red Sea splitting, which took place during our exodus from Egypt. This miraculously saved us from the Egyptians who were chasing after us. After Hashem saved us, the Torah uses an unusual expression to tell us that Moshe urged us to leave the Red Sea. It says<sup>7</sup>, "Moshe led the Jews away from the Red Sea." The Hebrew words translated as "Moshe led the Jews away" literally mean that Moshe *caused us* to travel away from the Red Sea. Why was it necessary for Moshe to cause us to travel? Rashi cites "Moshe led the Jews away" and explains that "he led them away against their will. The Egyptians had 'crowned' their steeds with ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones, and the Jews were finding them in the sea. The loot at sea was greater than Egypt's, as the Torah writes<sup>8</sup>, 'We will make rows of gold with studs of silver for you.' Therefore, he had to lead them against their will."

It seems clear from Rashi that had Moshe not led us away, we would not have left all that quickly on our own. There was much loot remaining. Therefore, the Jews wished to get all of the gold, silver, and precious stones there.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

We need to understand the great desire to plunder the sea. Why did the Jews desire material wealth? At the Red Sea, all of the Jews sang out,<sup>9</sup> "This is my G-d." Rashi explains that<sup>10</sup> "He revealed Himself in His glory to the Jews, and they pointed at Him with their finger (as denoted by the words "*this* is my G-d;" the word *this* can only apply to that which one can see). At the Red Sea, even a maidservant perceived what prophets did not perceive." Having attained such a depth and clarity of prophecy, how could they have been so concerned about

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5. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:14.

6. See Pirkei Avos Chapter 1, Mishnah 14.

7. Our Parshah, Shemos 15:22.

8. See footnote 1.

9. Our Parshah, Shemos 15:2.

10. See Rashi's comments *ibid*.

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gold and silver<sup>11</sup>?

Here this is especially true. The Jewish Nation knew Hashem said<sup>12</sup>, "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain," meaning that upon leaving Egypt and the sea, we would merit receiving the Torah. We were so excited about receiving the Torah that we began counting the days until Hashem gave us the Torah from when we left Egypt<sup>13</sup>. How could our interest in collecting material wealth interfere with the yearning we had to receive the Torah?

### The Explanation

Based on the above, we must say that the Jew's reluctance to leave the sea was not because of their desire to attain even more wealth. They already possessed great wealth from "the plunder in Egypt." Rather, they believed that gathering the gold, silver, and precious stones from the sea was G-d's Will. Therefore Moshe had to get them to leave the sea against their will. They did not wish to leave the splendor of the revelation of Hashem's presence at the Red Sea, which moved them to take the spoils from the sea.

At the time of our redemption from Egypt, Hashem *commanded* us to<sup>14</sup> "Please, speak into the ears of the people, and let them borrow, each man from his friend and each woman from her friend, silver vessels and golden vessels."

Part of the reason for this command was to assure that the prophecy given to our forefather Avrohom would be fulfilled<sup>15</sup>. G-d told him that his descendants would be strangers in a strange land where they would be enslaved. However, Hashem promised Avrohom that, ultimately, they would be redeemed and leave with great wealth. Rashi explains that the reason for each man and woman borrowing gold and silver vessels was "so that Avrohom will not say that Hashem fulfilled His promise that 'they will enslave them and oppress them,' but did not fulfill his promise that 'afterward they will go forth with great possessions.'"

However, there was also a deeper reason. The Torah says we<sup>16</sup> "shall empty Egypt" of their gold and silver

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11. This is certainly so based on what the Rambam writes in the Laws of the Fundamental Principles of Torah at the beginning of Chapter Seven. He lists one of the conditions necessary in order to attain prophecy, that "one's Evil Inclination never overpowers him." Here, all of the Jews reached the level of the greatest prophets.

12. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 3:12.

13. See the commentary of the Ran at the end of Tractate Pesachim. This is one of the reasons that we count the Omer.

14. Parshas Bo, Shemos 11:2.

15. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 15:14.

16. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 3:22.

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when we leave. As our Sages said<sup>17</sup>, we left Egypt like a trap with no corn<sup>18</sup> and like the sea's depths without fish<sup>19</sup>. In other words, Hashem commanded us to take all of Egypt's wealth. However, when we came to the sea and saw how much gold and silver remained with the Egyptians, we realized that we had not entirely "emptied them." We understood that we were obligated to stay there until we completed the Torah's commandment.

The fact that it would delay the fulfillment of "you will serve G-d on this mountain," i.e., receiving the Torah, was irrelevant. That was not a command. Hashem was merely telling us that we would receive the Torah after leaving Egypt, and it did not say when this would occur. Here, however, we were faced with the obligation of emptying Egypt, which was the overriding consideration that could not wait.

We would lose the opportunity to perform the Mitzvah of removing all of Egypt's wealth if we did not do it now. No one else would be able to accomplish that Mitzvah. The Halachah is that a Mitzvah that another cannot perform supersedes the Mitzvah of Torah study<sup>20</sup>. In this case, the Torah study's meaning was the Jew's progress to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. Granted, Moshe was urging them to receive the Torah and to learn Torah. However, based on their understanding of Jewish law, they were obligated to continue the Mitzvah they had begun. Otherwise, they would lose it forever. No one else would ever be able to perform this Mitzvah. Therefore, it took precedence. Their inspiration to carry out what they understood to be the Torah's ruling came from their great spiritual experience at the sea's splitting. That was why Moshe needed to urge them to continue on their way against their will.

### A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

We need to understand why it was so important for the Jews to plunder all of Egypt's wealth. We can understand this according to a more in-depth explanation of the Torah. Hashem created the world because<sup>21</sup> "He desired to have a dwelling place *below*." The meaning is that this low world should be His dwelling place. His complete essence is revealed in one's dwelling place, in his home. However, He wanted to reveal His essence specifically *below*, i.e., in a physical world. It should be a world where His presence is not apparent. Despite that, His existence should be revealed throughout this entire world.

Egypt was a place of evil. Its Hebrew name is Mitzrayim, which connotes limitations, contrasted to the

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17. See Tractate Berochos 9, b.

18. Rashi explains there that those who trap birds place corn in the traps in order to attract the birds. Without bait, the trap is useless.

19. Rashi explains there that fish do not live in the depths of the sea.

20. See Tractate Moed Katan, Page 9, at the beginning of Side b. See also the Talmud Yerushalmi Tractate Berochos, Chapter 1, at the end of Halachah 2. See Rambam, Laws of Torah Study Chapter 3, Paragraph 4. See Tur Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Chapter 246, Paragraph 18. See the Laws of Torah Study from the Alter Rebbe, Chapter 4, Paragraph 3. See also the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Chapter 444, Paragraph 18.

21. See the Midrash Tanchumah Parshas Naso Chapter 16. See also Tanya at the beginning of Chapter 36.

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unlimited G-d. Egypt was also called "the abomination of the earth," the center of hedonism in the world. The idea of "emptying Egypt" was to take away their wealth and give it to the Jews. It was to transfer Egypt's wealth to the Jews, who were on the verge of receiving the Torah and building the Tabernacle. The Mishkan was a sanctuary where Hashem would be revealed in this world. In this manner, the wealth that was initially used for immoral purposes would be used to create a world in which the Almighty can be "at home."

The lesson to be learned from this is clear. There comes a time when Hashem draws us close. We feel the importance of fulfilling His commandments. We can become so involved in one of His commandments that we will not stop for anything, even a different commandment performance. We must learn from here that when the Shulchan Aruch or Moshe Rabbeinu (or his extension in every generation<sup>22</sup>) tells us to change gears, we must listen. We must always be occupied with what He wants at any point in time. This is true even if it means going "against our will." This is the way for us to reach the complete and true redemption.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5734)*

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

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22. See Tikkunei Zohar Chapter 469 (Pages 112, a and 114, a).

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in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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