

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayakhel

29 Adar I, 5784 – March 9, 2024

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות ל"ה - א': ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אלהם אלה הדברים אשר צוה ה' לעשות אתם:
רש"י ד"ה ויקהל משה: למחרת יום הכפורים כשירד מן ההר, והוא לשון הפעיל, שאינו אוסף אנשים בידיים, אלא הן נאספים על פי דבורו,
ותרגמו ואכניש:

Shemos 35:1: Moshe assembled the entire community of the Jewish Nation¹, and said to them, "These are the things that the Lord commanded to do."

Rashi Heading – Moshe assembled: on the day after Yom Kippur when he came down from the mountain. This is the verb's causative form (i.e., he caused the Jewish people to gather indirectly by speaking). This is because one does not assemble people directly, but instead, they are assembled through one's speech. Targum Onkelos translates the word into Aramaic וְאַכְנִישׁ (which means that he caused them to be gathered).

Synopsis

The weekly Torah portion, Vayakhel-Pekudei, begins by telling us that Moshe assembled the entire Jewish nation (literally caused them to be assembled). Once they were gathered, he relayed the commandment to build the Tabernacle to them. Rashi comments that this gathering was held the day after Yom Kippur when he descended from the mountain. Rashi seems to understand this because Moshe would not tell the Jews about this important Mitzvah until later. Rashi then says that Moshe did not directly gather the Jews; instead, he caused them to be gathered with his speech.

There are several things in Rashi that we need to understand. For one thing, it seems evident that Moshe would command us to build the Sanctuary at the first possible opportunity. Rashi does not appear to be adding something that the beginning student would not understand. Secondly, if Moshe did not wish to put off telling the Jews of the Sanctuary, why did he wait until the next day? It would seem he could have gathered them on the same day he descended from the mountain. Also, Rashi first tells us when this gathering took place. He then teaches us that Moshe did not gather the Jews individually. What does one have to do with the other? It would seem more appropriate to comment on both issues separately, as he usually does with two unrelated comments.

1. The literal meaning is that he caused them to be assembled.

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The explanation is that without Rashi's comments, we would think Moshe gathered the Jews on Yom Kippur. We said earlier that he would not have pushed it off until later. Secondly, when all of the Jews saw Moshe coming down from Mount Sinai with the second tablets, they would have gathered on their own to see and hear what happened. We would have thought that it is for this reason that the Torah uses the causative form here to let us know that Moshe gathered the people only by coming down the mountain! Therefore, Rashi begins by telling us this is not the gathering the Torah is discussing. The Torah discusses an assembly that took place due to something proactive that Moshe did, meaning that he spoke. That is why the Torah uses the causative form of the verb. From this, we know we are discussing the gathering the day after Yom Kippur. The Torah does not discuss that which took place automatically on Yom Kippur.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah reading, Vayakhel, the Torah tells us that² "Moshe assembled the entire community of the Jewish Nation³, and said to them, 'These are the things that the Lord commanded to do.'" He then relayed two matters to the Jewish people he had heard from Hashem on Mount Sinai. He first told the Jews about keeping the Shabbos⁴. He then told the Jews Hashem's commandment to build the Tabernacle.

Rashi cites the words "Moshe assembled" and begins his comments by explaining that this gathering took place "on the day after Yom Kippur when he came down from the mountain⁵ ..." How does Rashi know that this happened on the day after Yom Kippur? From which words does he derive it?

Some commentaries explain that this is a logical deduction, which we do not derive from any specific verse⁶. The Sages teach that⁷ "the zealous hasten to perform Mitzvos as soon as possible." From this, we

2. Our Parshah, Shemos 35:1.

3. See Footnote 1.

4. There was a special reason for teaching the Jews about Shabbos here, before telling them about the building of the Tabernacle. He was teaching them that as important as the Tabernacle was, its construction does not supersede the laws of Shabbos. See Rashi's comments to our Parshah, Shemos 35:2. Moshe's main point, however, was to give over the command regarding the building of the Tabernacle.

5. After the entire Jewish Nation heard the Ten Commandments, Moshe went up to Mount Sinai for forty days and nights. Upon his descent on the 17th of Tammuz, he discovered that his nation had sinned with the Golden Calf. He then broke the original set of tablets. He went back up to the mountain to pray and intercede with G-d on behalf of the Jews for another 40 days. After descending, he went back up for yet another forty days and continued praying for the Jews. He descended the third and final time on Yom Kippur carrying the second set of tablets. At that point, Hashem forgave the Jews. From then on Yom Kippur became a day of atonement for all time.

6. See the commentaries of the Mizrahi and the Gur Aryeh.

7. See Talmud Pesachim 4, a. See also Midrash Tanchumah Torah Portion of Vayeiro, Chapter 22. This is also explicit in Rashi's comments to Parshas Vayeiro, Bereishis 22:3.

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understand that Moshe did not push off telling the Jews the commandment of building the Mishkan, which he heard on Mount Sinai. Instead, after descending from the mountain, he gathered the Jews to relay Hashem's command to them the next day. G-d's forgiveness of the Jewish people would manifest in the "dwelling place" they would build for Him, within which His presence would rest. From there, He would reveal Himself to the entire world.

Rashi then tells us that "this is the causative form of the verb (i.e., he caused the Jewish people to gather indirectly by speaking). This is because one does not assemble people directly, but they are assembled through one's speech. Targum Onkelos translates the word into Aramaic שְׁנִיבְתֵי (meaning that he caused them to be gathered).

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

As a rule, Rashi does not tell us when a particular event occurred. The only exception to this rule would be an instance in which it adds to our understanding of Peshat⁸. Why does Rashi tell us this assembly occurred the day after Yom Kippur?

Furthermore, Moshe would command us to build the Sanctuary at the first opportunity. Even had Rashi said nothing, we would know on our own that Moshe gathered the Jews and commanded them these special laws the very day after his descent. What does Rashi add that the beginning student would not understand independently?

Additionally, if Rashi is telling us that Moshe did not wish to put off telling the Jews about building the Sanctuary, why did he wait until the next day? It would seem he could have gathered them on the day he descended from the mountain. One might think that perhaps he came down from Mount Sinai late in the day, so there was no time to do so. However, this is not the case. We know that the first time Moshe descended from the mountain was in the morning⁹. We compare Moshe's third series of forty days on Mount Sinai to his first forty days. Just as he descended in the morning the first time, we safely assume that he descended in the morning on the third time. Hence, he would have had time on the day of Yom Kippur itself. If the point is to do it immediately, why wait until the next day?

8. A good example of this is found in the Torah portions of Terumah and Tetzaveh. The detailed commands given to Moshe regarding the Tabernacle, its vessels and the priestly vestments are all laid out in these sections. Rashi does not mention a single word about when any of these commandments were given to Moshe. The reason is that it would not add anything to our understanding of Peshat. However, in Parshas Ki Siso, Shemos 33:11, where the dates do concern our understanding, Rashi goes into great detail.

9. See Rashi's comments to Parshas Ki Siso, Shemos 32:1. There Rashi writes that Moshe descended from the mountain on the fortieth day within six hours from sunrise.

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Also, at the beginning of his comments, Rashi tells us when this gathering occurred, i.e., on the day after Yom Kippur. Rashi then teaches us that Moshe did not gather the Jews individually. What does one thing have to do with the other? They appear to be unrelated concepts. Generally, when Rashi explains two disparate things, he presents them as comments with separate headings. However, here, he includes them both together. We need to understand why. We also need to know why Rashi tells us that Moshe did not gather the Jews individually, one by one. One cannot gather people in that manner. People are always gathered by speech. They are not objects that can be collected one at a time. The fact is that despite this, quite often, the Torah refrains from using the causative form of the verb to gather. For example, Hashem tells Moshe,¹⁰ "gather seventy people from among the elders of the Jews." The Torah then says,¹¹ "And he gathered seventy people." The same form is used earlier¹²; "Go and gather the elders of the Jews." Why must we utilize the causative form of the verb in our verse?

The Explanation

Without Rashi's explanation, we would have a completely different understanding of what the Torah tells us. We would have understood that the assembly for which the people were gathered was on Yom Kippur.

We would have thought so for two reasons. First, as we said earlier, the zealous hasten to perform Mitzvos. Who is more zealous in the performance of Hashem's commandments than Moshe Rabbeinu? That would certainly seem to be a good reason for him to gather the Jews immediately upon his descent from Mount Sinai. Furthermore, this verse does use the causative form of the verb. As we pointed out in the questions, a verb is not always used for assembling or gathering people. The Torah seems to emphasize that this gathering came about by itself. Moshe Rabbeinu indirectly caused it. Can we begin to imagine the excitement and commotion that must have been caused by Moshe descending the mountain and approaching the camp with the new tablets in hand? This certainly would have caused every Jew to stop whatever he was doing and approach Moshe. This indeed could have been described by the Torah's words that "Moshe caused the Jews to be assembled."

That is why Rashi must help us understand what the Torah *truly* conveys here. Granted, that (in Rashi's words) "one does not assemble people directly, but rather they are assembled through one's speech." However, to even say that Moshe Rabbeinu caused them to be gathered, there had to be some action on his part, at least speech, as Rashi says. His descent from the mountain was not enough. As Rashi says, "This is because one does not assemble people directly, but rather they are assembled through one's speech." The Torah discusses when Moshe

10. Parshas Beha'aloscho, Bamidbar 11:16.

11. Parshas Beha'aloscho, Bamidbar 11:24.

12. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 3:16.

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tells them to gather together the next day. Moshe called upon the Jews to reach their complete atonement by building G-d's dwelling place down below.

Who among us can imagine the joy which reigned in the Jewish camp? They were finally reunited with Moshe! They had received the second set of tablets, meaning Torah. In a way, the joy of the second tablets was even greater than that of the first. Rashi says,¹³ "On the tenth of Tishrei the Holy One blessed be He was appeased to Israel joyfully and wholeheartedly. He told Moshe, 'I have forgiven as you have spoken.' He gave Moshe the second tablets, and Moshe descended." It marked the fact that Hashem had forgiven us. We spent the day with Moshe, immersed in the words of Torah that he had heard from Hashem. We spent the day rejoicing with him over finally having attained forgiveness from G-d. The next day, the day after Yom Kippur, Moshe called us together once again. At that point, we were able to get down to business. We were ready to begin working on the Tabernacle, i.e., Hashem's physical manifestation in this world.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Rashi provides us with a tremendous lesson in our daily service of Hashem. Some are involved in Torah study. When learning, we must be wholly immersed in Torah study, just as the Jews were when Moshe came down from the mountain.

However, this does not suffice. We see that the day after Yom Kippur, we had to immediately get busy with the world and build Hashem's Sanctuary.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel, 5725)

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

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13. Parshas Ki Siso, Shemos 33:11.

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