

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayikroh

13 Adar II, 5784 – March 23, 2024

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא א', ט': וקרבו וקרעו ורתץ במים והקטיר הפקן את־הפל' המזבחה עלה אשה רים־ניהום לה:
רש"י ד"ה ניהוח: נחת רוח לפני, שאמרתי ונעשה רצוני:

Vayikroh 1:9: And he shall wash its innards and legs with water. Then, the Kohen shall cause all animals to (go up in) smoke on the altar, as a burnt offering, a fire offering, (with) a pleasing fragrance to the Lord.

Rashi Heading - pleasing: (This word stems from the same root as the expression, "contentment." G-d says: "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure for Me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled!"

Synopsis

This week's Torah portion is also the beginning of the third book of the Torah, Vayikroh, which deals primarily with sacrificial law. Regarding many sacrifices taught here, including the first, the Torah says they were¹ "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." Rashi cites the word "pleasing" and explains, "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled." Likewise,² the Torah says that the rams brought during the seven-day inauguration of the altar "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." There, Rashi cites the words "a pleasing fragrance" and also explains, "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled."

After the Great Flood, we find a similar expression regarding Noah's offerings to Hashem. When he and his family left the ark, the Torah tells us³ that Noah built an altar where he offered burnt offerings. Immediately after that, the Torah says, "And the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma." There, Rashi does not mention anything about the fragrance being pleasing to Hashem.

However, we can explain that differently. When Noah left the ark and saw Hashem saved him and his family, he felt pleasure and gratitude and offered sacrifices to express this. When the Torah says that the aroma was pleasant, it means that Noah found it pleasing.

However, this poses a question. Why should sacrifices arouse a feeling of "pleasure to Hashem" more than other Mitzvos? Rashi explains that the offerings listed here are "a pleasure to Me, for I said,

1. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 1:9.
2. Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 29:18.
3. Parshas Noach, Bereishis 8:20 – 21.

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and My will was fulfilled." The fulfillment of this Mitzvah is different than any other. Even Mitzvos, termed "Chukim," meaning that they have no rational reason, are different from sacrifices. Chukim train us to accept the yoke of G-d's kingship over us. Sacrifices, on the other hand, "seem" to benefit Hashem. We refer to them as "His food." We perform this service purely for Him, without deriving any benefit ourselves. That is what is meant by "I said, and My will was fulfilled." The fact is that G-d is non-corporeal and derives no benefit whatsoever from sacrifices. Therefore, Rashi explains that He "enjoys" them (so to speak) because they fulfill His will.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion is also the beginning of the third book of the Torah, Vayikroh. The end of the previous book, which we just concluded, discussed the building of the Sanctuary. This book discusses the services they performed within the Sanctuary. Since a large part of the Temple service was offering sacrifices, a large percentage of this book deals with sacrificial laws.

Regarding many of the sacrifices discussed in the Torah, including the very first sacrifice mentioned in this week's portion, the Torah tells us that they are⁴ "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." Rashi cites the word "pleasing" and explains, "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled." We find the same earlier regarding the rams offered during the seven-day inauguration of the altar, and the Torah says that they provided⁵ "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." There, Rashi cites the words "a pleasing fragrance" and also explains, "(This sacrifice) is a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled."

Supercommentaries, particularly the Sefer Hamizrachi⁶, explain that Rashi's purpose here is to negate the possibility of defining "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem," as meaning that the pleasant odor of the sacrifice caused Hashem to relax (as so to speak). This might be similar to a person settling to rest with pleasant-smelling spices. Rashi explains that it is impossible to make such a statement regarding Hashem. Instead, G-d's pleasure (so to speak) came from the fact that we fulfilled His will.

However, we cannot say that Rashi needs to tell us that the Torah does not mean Hashem rested due to smelling the pleasant fragrance. If Rashi wanted to teach us that, he would have said so when the

4. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 1:9.

5. Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 29:18.

6. Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi (1455 – 1525 or 26) was a great Talmudist and Halachic codifier who was born in Constantinople. He is perhaps best known for his supercommentary to Rashi.

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Torah first used that expression. After the great flood, upon Noach and his family leaving the ark, the Torah tells us⁷ that Noach built an altar upon which he offered burnt offerings. Immediately after that, the Torah told us, "The Lord smelled the pleasant aroma." There, Rashi does not comment on these words at all.

Additionally, it would seem that regarding Noach, there is all the more reason for Rashi to tell us that "the pleasing aroma" did not "relax" Hashem. There, it says explicitly that the Lord *smelled* the pleasant aroma. However, while describing later sacrifices offered in the Tabernacle, the Torah makes no such statement.

We can distinguish between "the pleasing fragrance to Hashem" in our Torah portion and "the pleasant aroma" regarding Noach's sacrifices. With Noach, we can explain that the Torah is not saying that the fragrance pleased Hashem; instead, it is saying that the fragrance pleased Noach, i.e., he was pleased by the aroma of the sacrifices. However, in our portion, which states outright that the scent pleased Hashem, Rashi needs to explain that Hashem's pleasure was because we fulfilled His will.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

We cannot say that because Noach's sacrifices pleased him, and the sacrifices offered later pleased Hashem is the difference between the two. We know that Rashi always cites the words from the verse he explains. We also know that he is precise; he quotes those words he explains, no more and no less. If Rashi was primarily concerned with explaining why it says "a pleasing fragrance to Hashem," why does he only cite "pleasing?"

On the contrary, regarding Noach, it says that "the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma." In other words, it would seem that Hashem found the aroma pleasant! We cannot say that a burnt offering is pleasing to a person, as the smell of meat and bones burning is unpleasant. How can we say that Noach found it pleasant?

There is a more general question that we need to ask about sacrifices. What is the reason for this Mitzvah? Many other commentaries discuss this, but Rashi does not seem to mention it at all. As a rule, Rashi does not offer reasons for Mitzvos. However, here, it concerns Peshat. There seems to be absolutely no purpose or reason for a sacrifice. One burns either all or part of an animal on an altar. The burned part is useless to the person bringing the offering and is useless to Hashem! Hashem, being non-corporeal, neither "eats" nor "enjoys" the sacrifices. Why should we perform this service?

7. Parshas Noach, Bereishis 8:20 – 21.

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As we have often said, Rashi is extremely precise with his language. Why does Rashi say, "For I said, and My will was performed?" He should have said, "For I commanded, and you carried out my will.

The Explanation

From the above, we see that Rashi is telling us that the sacrifice's physical aroma was not pleasant. Therefore, we can understand the pleasure that came from the sacrifices brought by Noach. Hence, Rashi does not need to explain anything.

When Noach left the ark and saw Hashem saved him and his family, he felt pleasure and gratitude. That was why he offered sacrifices, as an expression of thanks to G-d. "As in water, face answers to face, and so does the heart of a man to a man."⁸ Noach expressed his love and pleasure toward Hashem for saving himself and his family, which was reflected by Hashem finding the aroma of the sacrifices he brought "pleasant."

We still have a question regarding the sacrifices that were (and will be) brought in the Bais Hamikdosh. Why should sacrifices arouse a feeling of "pleasure" to G-d more than other Mitzvos? That is what Rashi is explaining here. The sacrifices listed here are "a pleasure to me, for I said, and My will was fulfilled. The fulfillment of this Mitzvah is different than that of any other. The only real reason for bringing sacrifices is because G-d said so. Hashem derives (so to speak) pleasure from the fact that we do something which seems senseless. We burn an animal. Neither Hashem nor we derive any benefit from this act. Despite this, we fulfill Hashem's will. This is a source of pleasure for Him.

The only remaining difficulty is that we have an entire classification of Mitzvos called "Chukim – Statutes." Rashi explains⁹ that these Mitzvos have no reason according to human understanding. Why should this category of Mitzvos be any different than sacrifices? The Ramban¹⁰ writes that Chukim have reasons, albeit ones we cannot comprehend. However, in his commentary on the Torah, Rashi patently clarifies that Chukim have no rational explanation whatsoever. According to Rashi, why should sacrifices be any different than Chukim?

The explanation is that even according to Rashi, Chukim have a purpose. Their purpose is to help us accustom ourselves to being subjected to the yoke of G-d's kingship. On the other hand, sacrifices

8. Mishlei 27:19.

9. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 15:26, Parshas Toldos, Bereishis 26:5, Parshas Acharei, Vayikroh 18:4, Parshas Kedoshim, Vayikroh 19:19 and Parshas Chukas, Bamidbar 19:2.

10. Rabbi Moshe, the son of Nachman (1194 – 1270). He was a great Sephardic rabbi, philosopher, kabbalist, and Biblical commentator.

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"seem" to "benefit" Hashem, and the Torah refers to them as G-d's "food." By seeing to it that this service is performed and not viewing a sacrifice as a commandment but rather as something "that we are doing for Him" (so to speak), we generate great pleasure Above.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayikroh and Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5742, and Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5728)

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

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

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ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב