

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Shvi'ee Shel Pesach

21 Nissan, 5785 – April 19, 2025

Compiled from the works of  
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi**  
**Shvi'ee Shel Pesach<sup>1</sup>**  
**Likkutei Sichos Volume 11, Pages 52 – 54**

**Rashi in His Own Words**

שמות י"ד, י': ופרעה הקריב וישאו בני ישראל את עיניהם והנה מצרים | נסע אחריהם ויראו מאד ויצעקו בני ישראל אל ה':  
רש"י ד"ה ויצעקו: תפשו אומנות אבותם. באברהם הוא אומר (בראשית י"ט, ט"ז) אל המקום אשר עמד שם, ביצחק (שם כ"ד,  
ס"ג) לשוח בשדה, ביעקב (שם כ"ח, י"א) ויפגע במקום:

**Shemos 14:10:** Pharaoh drew near, and the Jewish people lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened. And the Jewish people cried out to Hashem.

**Rashi Heading - and they cried out:** They grabbed onto the trade of their forefathers (i.e., they prayed). Concerning Avrohom, it says, "to the place where he had stood before the Lord" (Bereishis 19:27). Concerning Yitzchok, "to pray in the field" (Bereishis 24:63). Concerning Yaakov, "And he entreated Hashem" (Bereishis 28:11).

**Synopsis**

In the Torah reading for this Shabbos, the Seventh Day of Pesach, the Torah tells us of the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea. The Red Sea was before us, and the Egyptian army was behind us. It seemed that there was no way out of this dangerous situation. What did we do? We cried out to G-d in prayer. Rashi explains that we pursued the "trade" or the "craft" of our forefathers. Rashi cites verses from the Torah, demonstrating that every one of our patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, prayed.

We need to understand why Rashi needs to explain this verse at all. We were in an untenable situation, surrounded. Naturally, we prayed to G-d! Even the beginning student understands the need for prayer.

However, this, too, is not all that simple. If we believed in G-d, we did not need to worry. He had already promised us salvation. What possible reason was there for prayer? If, on the other hand, we, G-d forbid, did not believe, what point would there be in praying? Additionally, other verses in the Torah cite more clearly that our patriarchs prayed. Why does Rashi choose to use these particular examples to make his point?

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1. Because the seventh day of Pesach is this Shabbos, we read a special Torah portion in place of the regular Parshah. The Splitting of the Sea took place on this special day, hence that is the subject of the Torah reading (Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 13:17 – 15:26). Therefore, we are presenting the explanation of a Rashi from this reading.

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The explanation is that Rashi is not merely telling us why the Jews prayed. He is explaining why they cried out. They grabbed onto their forefathers' trade. They prayed; that was what they did. G-d was a part of their lives. The verses that Rashi cites demonstrate that even when there was no particular reason to pray, they did that. Likewise, their children fully believed that Hashem would save them. Despite that, they prayed, just as their fathers did.

### Rashi's Explanation

In the Torah portion, we will read this Shabbos; the Torah tells us of the Splitting of the Sea. The Red Sea was before them, and the Egyptians closed on them from behind. The Torah says that<sup>2</sup> "Pharaoh was drawing close. The Children of Israel lifted their eyes, and Egypt traveled after them. The Jewish People were terrified, and they cried out to Hashem." Rashi cites the words from the verse, "and they cried out," and explains that "they grabbed onto the trade of their ancestors," i.e., they prayed.

Rashi continues by showing that prayer was the trade of each of our forefathers. "Regarding Avrohom, it says<sup>3</sup> 'to the place where he had stood (עמד means he had stood in Hebrew) before Hashem.' Regarding Yitzchok, it says<sup>4</sup> 'to speak (לשוח is the Hebrew word for speak) in the field.' Regarding Yaakov, it says<sup>5</sup>, 'he beseeched (ויפגע means he beseeched in Hebrew) Hashem.' "

In other words, Rashi is telling us that the terms "stood – עמד", "speak – לשוח" and "beseech – ויפגע" all convey the idea of prayer. Hence, from here, we see that all of our patriarchs prayed.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Why does Rashi find the need to give any explanation whatsoever here? The verse stands on its own quite well! The Jewish people saw that the Egyptian army was chasing them; they saw that they were in grave danger. Naturally, we cried out to G-d in prayer to save us!

One possible approach might be to say that Rashi explains the nature of the outcry of the Jewish people. He explains that they cried out in prayer and not out of anger to Hashem for placing them in this predicament. This explanation would seem to fit well with the flow of the verses. We find that immediately after our verse, the Torah says,<sup>6</sup> "They said to Moshe, is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert?"

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2. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 14:10.

3. Parshas Vayeiuro, Bereishis 19:27.

4. Parshas Chayei Soroh, Bereishis 24:63.

5. Parshas Vayetzai, Bereishis 28:11.

6. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 14:11.

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However, this explanation is untenable. If Rashi intended to negate this explanation of the verse, he would have phrased his comments differently. Upon citing the words "and they cried out," he would have first written that they prayed. Afterward, he could have told us that they grabbed onto the trade of their forefathers.

Furthermore, if there is a need to explain why the Jewish people cried out, Rashi should have explained it earlier, the first time the Torah mentioned it! The Torah already told us that<sup>7</sup> "the Jewish people cried out, and their cry ascended to Hashem ..." The context there is that they cried because of their suffering in Egypt. We cannot say that it means they cried out due to anger from their great grief because it is already said in the same verse, "and the Children of Israel sighed from the labor."

Furthermore, we must understand how it is suitable to describe prayer as a trade. Is prayer a vocation? Our forefathers had careers and occupations that the Torah frequently describes. The Torah often tells us what our forefather's occupation was; they were all shepherds. That was their profession, not prayer.

As mentioned above, Rashi cites three verses hinting that each patriarch, Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, prayed. However, many verses clearly state that they prayed regarding each of them. Rashi cites three specific verses as proof that they prayed. However, there are many others!

Regarding Avrohom, it says<sup>8</sup> (a verse that precedes the one Rashi cites), "He built an altar to G-d there, and called out in the name of Hashem." Rashi could also have quoted the verse immediately before this, "He built an altar there to G-d Who had appeared to him."

Moreover, the verse Rashi cites for Avrohom, "to the place where he stood," comes after the story of Avrohom's prayers to Hashem to save the cities of S'dom and Amora (Sodom and Gomorrah). Throughout this episode, Avrohom beseeched G-d many times to save these people. Yet Rashi chose a verse that appears after Hashem destroyed the cities. This verse only hints that he had prayed earlier.

Regarding Yitzchok, we find the same thing. The Torah says<sup>9</sup> that "Yitzchok prayed to Hashem." Rashi explains this to mean that "he prayed much and entreated Hashem with prayer." This is undoubtedly clearer proof that Yitzchok prayed than the verse Rashi quotes. Likewise, we find that the Torah tells us clearly that Yaakov prayed. The Torah says that he prayed to G-d,<sup>10</sup> "Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Aisov."

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7. Parshas Shemos, Shemos 2:23.

8. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 12:8.

9. Parshas Toldos, Bereishis 25:21.

10. Parshas Vayishlach, Bereishis 32:10–13.

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### The Explanation

The answer to all of these questions is as follows. Rashi answers a question on the word(s)<sup>11</sup> , "and they cried out." Why did they feel a need not only to pray but to *cry out* in prayer to G-d? Hashem already assured us that we would enter Israel, so it was evident that He would save us! Not only that, but the Torah tells us that<sup>12</sup> the Jewish people were "marching out (of Egypt) triumphantly."

If they believed in Hashem's assurance, what need was there to pray? On the other hand, if they did not trust Hashem, what was the purpose of prayer? What did they think that it would accomplish?

Rashi explains this by saying the Jewish People grabbed onto their forefathers' trade. The Patriarchs were, so to speak, "in the business" of praying. It was what they did. They did not need a "reason" to pray. They did not wait for a difficult situation to pray. They were as one with the Almighty and hence communicated with him regularly. The same is true of the Jewish Nation their children. Despite their confidence in Hashem's promise, they prayed.

The fact that afterward, the Jewish people said to Moshe<sup>13</sup>, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert?" was not because of a lack of faith. Instead, it was because they had already cried out to G-d, and He did not answer their prayers. The Egyptians were coming closer and closer!

They did not speak these words due to a lack of faith. Instead, they said this because of their seemingly impending doom. Human nature is that one speaks out of pain without giving the situation much thought. Our Sages say in the Talmud,<sup>14</sup> "A person is not held accountable for what he says at a time of distress." He is not speaking out of wickedness but rather out of a lack of judgment resulting from his seemingly impossible situation.

This is why Rashi did not cite the other verses we mentioned above. They all demonstrate that the Patriarchs prayed for a specific need. Those verses would not make Rashi's point at all. Each example that Rashi cites describes that prayer was our Patriarchs' occupation; it was something they (and we) do regularly.

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11. Hebrew is a very concise language. Linguists say that a Hebrew translation of something written in English will be on average 30% shorter than the original. That is the reason for the letter "s" (which indicates the plural) in parenthesis. The English translation of the single Hebrew word "ויצעקו" is "and they cried out."

12. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 14:6.

13. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 14:11.

14. Talmud Bava Basra 16, b.

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### A Deeper Explanation

We must all remember that prayer is our business, our occupation. It is not limited to stressful situations where we need G-d's help. Instead, it is what we, as Jews, do. We speak to G-d to connect with Him; we know He is here with us.

The same is true of Torah study. It's not just something we do to know the commandments we must perform. It's our profession. We are in the business of connecting with Hashem through studying His Torah. The same is true of fulfilling the Mitzvos. Furthermore, we "market" our business – sharing it with everyone around us.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 573)*

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

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