

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Tazria

5 Nissan, 5784 – April 13, 2024

Compiled from the works of
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

By
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn
North Miami Beach, FL

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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Tazria

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Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא י"ב, ב': דָּבָר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרִיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר וְטָמְאָה שְׁבַע יָמִים כַּיְמֵי נִגְתַּת דְּוֹתָהּ תִּטְמָא:
רש"י ד"ה אזה כי תזריע: אמר רבי שמלאי: קשם שִׁיזְרִיעוּתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם אַחֵר כֹּל בְּהֵמָה חַיָּה וְעוֹף בְּמַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית, כִּד תּוֹרָתוֹ נִתְפָּרֵשׁ אַחֵר
תּוֹרַת בְּהֵמָה חַיָּה וְעוֹף (ויקרא רבה יד):

Vayikroh 12:2: Speak to the children of Israel, saying: If a woman conceives and gives birth to a male, she shall be unclean for seven days; as [in] the days of her menstrual flow, she shall be unclean.

Rashi Heading: If a woman conceives: Rabbi Simla'i said¹: "Just as in the Creation, man was created after all domestic animals, wild beasts, and birds, so too, the law [concerning the cleanness] of man is stated after the law [concerning the cleanness] of domestic animals, wild beasts, and birds²." - [*Vayikra Rabbah* 14:1]

Synopsis

The Torah portion of *Tazria* deals with the laws of spiritual purity and impurity as they relate to man. Rashi³, quoting the Midrash⁴, states: "R. Simla'i said, 'Just as man's creation came after the creation of all animals, beasts, and birds, so too are the laws that relate to him explained after the laws relating to animals, beasts, and birds.'"

Why was man created last? Rashi writes, quoting the Midrash⁵, "So that if a man misbehaves, he is told: 'Even a gnat, even a worm, preceded you.'" This is a reason for man's creation but not for his laws. Why then does Rashi use the expression "Just as man was created... so too his laws," rather than, "Since man was created last... therefore [it follows that] his laws are [to be] stated last"?

This capacity for sin is why man's laws are stated after those of all other creatures and why he is created after all others. Therefore, the Midrash writes, "Just as man was created last... so too his laws are stated last." The same reasoning applies in both areas.

Torah study progresses from the simple to the complex. Thus, the reason man was created last—his capacity for sin and hence the need to tell him that the lowest of creatures preceded him—is also why his laws

1. Vayikra Rabbah 14:1.

2. Last week's Torah Portion, Shemini, discussed the Kashrus status of domesticated animals, wild beasts, fowl, and fish.

3. Vayikroh, Tazria 12:2.

4. See Footnote 2.

5. See also Sanhedrin 38a.

are stated last. It is simpler to purify and elevate that which is incapable of violating G-d's will than to purify and elevate man, a complex creature entirely capable of sin.

Rashi's Explanation

The Torah portion of *Tazria* deals with the laws of spiritual purity and impurity as they relate to man. Rashi states: "R. Simla'i said, 'Just as man's creation came after the creation of all animals, beasts, and birds, so too are the laws that relate to him explained after the laws relating to animals, beasts, and birds.'"

The expression "Just as... so too..." indicates that the laws concerning man are related last, not because man was created last, or the Midrash would have stated: "*Since* man was created last, *therefore*...." Rather, man's laws are related last for the same reason that man was created last.

Why was man created last? The *Midrash* explains: "So if a man behaves improperly, he is told: 'Even a gnat, even a worm, preceded you.'"

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

The commentators ask:⁶ This reason is germane to man's creation, but not his laws. Why then does the *Midrash* use the expression "Just as man was created... so too his laws," rather than, "*Since* man was created last... *therefore* [it follows that] his laws are [to be] stated last"?

The Explanation

The Alter Rebbe explains⁷ that the very fact that man is *capable* of sin, even if he never actually sins, implies a degree of inferiority in comparison to those creatures who are "incapable of violating G-d's will." ⁶

This capacity for sin is why man's laws are stated after those of all other creatures and is the reason for his being created after all others. The *Midrash* therefore states: "Just as man was created last... so too his laws are stated last," i.e., the same reasoning applies in both areas.

Torah study progresses from the simple to the complex. This applies to Torah sections as well: first come the portions that are more readily attainable and only then come the more difficult sections.

It thus follows that the reason for man having been created last — his capacity for sin and thus the need to tell him that the lowliest of creatures preceded him — is also the reason that his laws are stated last. For, as previously stated, the Torah goes from the simple to the complex, and it is simpler to purify and elevate that which is incapable of violating G-d's will than it is to purify and elevate man, a complex creature who is entirely capable of sin.

6. Commentators on Rashi, *ibid*.

7. Tanya, Chapter 29 (36b).

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Conversely, man's capacity for evil implies a greater achievement when he succeeds in vanquishing evil than if he had been granted goodness from above without having to struggle.

When man overcomes his capacity for evil, he realizes a greater degree of goodness because of the very fact that it was not revealed within him as his birthright, but rather had to be won.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Every Jew is blessed with a divine soul that is "truly a part of G-d above⁸," this spirituality is only revealed after much grappling with his baser instincts and surface sensations. But when man triumphs in this battle, he can be confident that the goodness within him is something he has internalized.

This also explains why the above statement was made specifically by R. Simla'i. R. Simla'i did not possess illustrious ancestry, and so could not rely on the merits of his forbears. His spiritual service therefore emphasized the importance of self-improvement and initiative. He perceived that man's most precious quality is the ability to overcome the nastier side of his nature — a nature that was such that man needed to be warned that without toil and effort, "even a gnat, even a worm, preceded you." With diligent effort, however, nothing can approach the spiritual achievements of man.

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

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8. *Ibid.*, beginning of Chapter. 2.

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*

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לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

*

נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב