

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Ha'azinu

13 Tishrei, 5783 – October 8, 2022

Compiled from the works of

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A Project of

Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Ha'azinu**

Likkutei Sichos Volume 34, Pages 206 – 210

Rashi in His Own Words

דברים ל"ב, י': וּמְצָאָהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר וּבְתֵהוּ יְלֵל וְשִׁמּוֹן וְסַבְבָּנָהוּ וְבוֹנִנָּהוּ וְצָרְנָהוּ כְּאִשׁוֹן עֵינָיו:

רש"י ד"ה **ימצאהו בארץ מדבר**: אותם מצא לו נאמנים בארץ המדבר, שקבלו עליהם תורתו ומלכותו ועולו מה שלא עשו ישמעאל ועשו, שנאמר, וזרח משעיר למו הופיע מהר פארן: ואונקלוס תרגם **ימצאהו** יספיקהו כל צרכו במדבר, כמו ומצא להם, לא ימצא לנו ההר:

Devorim 32:10: He found them in a desert land, and in a desolate, howling wasteland. He encompassed them and granted them understanding; He protected them as the pupil of His eye.

Rashi Heading - He found them in a desert land: G-d found them (meaning the Jews) faithful to Him in a desert land, for they accepted His Torah, His sovereignty, and His yoke upon themselves. (This was) something that Yishmoel and Aisov did not do; as the Torah states, "The Lord... shone forth from Seir to them, and appeared from Mount Paran." Now, Targum Onkelus translates **He found them** as G-d provided Israel with all their needs in the desert. (The use of the word (מְצָא) "He found" is similar to "(Will flock and cattle be slaughtered for them) to provide (וּמְצָא) them?" and "The mountain is not enough (יְמָצָא) for us."

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Ha'azinu, the Torah tells us¹, "He found them in a desert land, and a desolate, howling wasteland. He encompassed them and granted them understanding; He protected them as the pupil of His eye." Rashi, citing the words "He found them in a desert land," explains that "G-d found them, (meaning the Jews) faithful to Him in a desert land, for they accepted His Torah, His kingship, and His yoke upon themselves; unlike Yishmoel and Aisov, as the Torah states², 'The Lord... shone forth from Seir to them, and appeared from Mount Paran.'"

Rashi's explanation is a continuation of his explanation of the previous verse, which says,³ "Because the Lord's portion is His nation; Yaakov is the string of His inheritance." This isn't easy to understand. The verse begins talking about the Jewish Nation and then discusses Yaakov, our forefather. That is how Rashi says that our verse is a direct continuation of the previous one. Yaakov had three merits, unlike Yishmoel or Aisov. His own, his father's, and his grandfather's. The Torah continues by explaining that Yaakov's progeny also has threefold merit, that of accepting "*His Torah, His sovereignty, and His yoke,*" which parallels those of Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov.

1. Our Parshah, Devorim 32:10.
2. Our Parshah, Devorim 33:2.
3. Our Parshah, Devorim 32:9.

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Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Ha'azinu, the Torah writes⁴, "He found them in a desert land, etc." First, Rashi explains, citing these words, that "Hashem found them, (meaning the Jews) faithful to Him in a desert land, for they accepted His Torah, His sovereignty, and His yoke upon themselves. (This was) something that Yishmoel and Aisov did not do; as the Torah writes⁵, "The Lord... shone forth from Seir to them, and appeared from Mount Paran." After explaining the entire verse at length, Rashi reinterprets this, according to Targum Onkelos. He states that "Now, Targum Onkelos translates, "He found them" as G-d provided Israel with all their needs in the desert. (The use of the word - נָצַח which we translated as "He found" is) similar to⁶ '(Will flock and cattle be slaughtered for them) to provide (נָצַחָם) them?' and⁷ 'The mountain is not enough (נָצַחָם) for us.'" In other words, Rashi is saying that according to Onkelos' explanation, the translation of the Hebrew נָצַחָם is not that "He found them," but instead that He supplied them with enough for all of their needs.

It would seem that Rashi could explain this verse, as others do. Hashem "found" this Nation, meaning He "chose" the Jewish people in the desert when He gave us the Torah. However, it is not all that simple to explain the verse in such a manner. G-d chose the Jewish Nation before we entered the wilderness; when we were still in Egypt. Thus, we find that⁸ "... He came to take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation (meaning the Egyptians) ..." Therefore, rather than explaining that Hashem "chose us" in the desert, Rashi gives two different explanations. First, He found us "faithful to Him" in the desert. According to Onkelos' explanation, the second is that He supplied us with all our needs in the wilderness.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

It seems as if Rashi's explanation does not fit with the flow of the verses. In this week's portion, the Jewish people are rebuked. We are told repeatedly of all the good G-d did for us. Conversely, we are told that we repaid Hashem's kindness with evil. Rashi himself says here⁹ that "these are words of reproof. Moshe called upon Heaven and earth as witnesses, and this Torah portion would also serve as a witness that, eventually, the Jews would betray Hashem, and they would neither remember what G-d did for them nor what He was destined to do to them. Hence, this should be understood to refer to the past and the future. This entire passage is apropos of¹⁰ 'Remember the days of old; reflect upon the years of other generations.'... They should have remembered all this."

So too, is the case with the very verse we are explaining. After telling us, "He found them," our verse continues, "He encompassed them and bestowed understanding upon them; He protected them..." Rashi himself

4. See Footnote 1.

5. See Footnote 2.

6. Parshas Beha'aloscho, Bamidbar 11:22.

7. Yehoshua 17:16.

8. Parshas Vo'eschanan, Devorim 4:34.

9. Our Parshah, Devorim 32:10.

10. Our Parshah, Devorim 32:7.

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explains the words "He encompassed them" by "surrounding them with protective clouds ... and He surrounded them with divisions in four directions." Rashi then explains that "He bestowed understanding upon them," saying, "He bestowed upon them Torah and understanding." Finally, he explains that "He protected them" from "snakes, serpents, scorpions, and hostile nations."

The explanation of Onkelos that the verse describes G-d's kindness by explaining how He supplied us with all of our needs seems to fit much better with this portion. Even if it is possible to define the verse following Rashi's first explanation, Hashem chose us in the wilderness; it should not be his first resolution. Whenever Rashi cites two different explanations, it is because there is a difficulty with each. However, the explanation that he states first is closer to Peshat. The second explanation, which Rashi cites as that of Onkelos, would seem more comparable to Peshat than the first.

We also need to understand why Rashi states his explanation in such a lengthy manner. Rashi tells us that the Jews accepted "*His Torah, sovereignty, and yoke* upon themselves." He then adds that "Yishmoel and Aisov did not do so, as the Torah states, 'The Lord... shone forth from Seir to them, and appeared from Mount Paran.'" It would have seemingly been sufficient to say that the Jews accepted "His Torah" without mentioning the other nations. Furthermore, the words *sovereignty* and *yoke* are seemingly synonymous. Throughout the works of the Sages, we find the expression "the yoke of the Kingship (of Heaven). Rashi himself uses this expression¹¹.

It may be possible to explain that the word yoke here means the yoke of His commandments rather than the yoke of His kingship or sovereignty. Rashi tells us elsewhere that these are two separate things¹²; "you have accepted upon yourselves the yoke of My sovereignty, now it is incumbent upon you to accept the yoke of My commandments."

It would not be easy to use this explanation. For one thing, Rashi writes that the Jews accepted "His Torah, His sovereignty, and His yoke upon themselves." The "yoke of My Torah" would be included within the words "His Torah," which Rashi mentioned, and it does not only refer to Torah study but also Mitzvah observance. Also, why does Rashi use the word "yoke" without specifying which "yoke?" After all, this word can be explained in more than one way.

The Explanation

Rashi's explanation here continues his explanation of the previous verse. The verse just before ours says¹³, "Because the Lord's portion is His nation; Yaakov is the string of His inheritance." Rashi explains, "Why did Hashem go to all this effort (to save humanity, as discussed in the previous verse)? *His* portion was hidden within them. It was destined to come forth (from them). And who is G-d's portion? '*His nation*,' and who is His Nation? '*Yaakov*,

11. See Rashi's commentary to Parshas Kedoshim, Vayikroh 20:26.

12. See Rashi's commentary to Parshas Kedoshim, Vayikroh 18:2.

13. Our Parshah, Devorim 32:9.

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the string of His inheritance." Rashi makes it quite clear that when the Torah says "Yaakov," it is not discussing the Jewish Nation, which is also sometimes called by the name Yaakov. Rashi continues that "he is the third among the Patriarchs. He is endowed with a threefold (parcel) of merits: The merit of his grandfather, the merit of his father, and his merit, totaling three, like a rope composed of three strands (twined together for added strength) ...not Yishmoel the son of Avrohom, and not Aisov, the son of Yitzchok."

We see that the verse begins speaking about "His nation," i.e., the Jewish Nation. Nevertheless, it concludes by discussing Yaakov himself, the forefather of the Jewish people. For consistency, the verse should have ended by saying that "the *children* of Yaakov are the string of His inheritance," not Yaakov himself.

Therefore, Rashi finds it necessary to explain our verse as a continuation of the words "Yaakov is the lot of his inheritance." First, the Torah describes the greatness of Yaakov. This greatness was only Yaakov's, neither Yishmoel's nor Aisov's. Only he was the third among the Patriarchs, who had three merits. The Torah explains that Yaakov's progeny inherited these three merits. The Jewish Nation has the merits of "*His Torah, His sovereignty, and His yoke,*" which parallel the merits of Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov.

This explains why Rashi has to tell us that the nations of "Yishmoel and Aisov did not do (as we did), as the Torah states, 'The Lord... shone forth from Seir to them, and appeared from Mount Paran.'" Just as Yaakov had threefold merit, which neither Yishmoel nor Aisov possessed. Likewise, his offspring possess triple merit, which the descendants of Yishmoel and Aisov did not.

We will understand this by explaining the merit of G-d's Torah, sovereignty, and yoke. We will then explain how these parallel our three forefathers.

- **Torah:** This refers to Torah study, which is an intellectual pursuit. Accepting His *decrees*, which *transcend the intellect*, is not emphasized here. Hence, the Mitzvos, which one accepts as a result of Torah study, result from *rational commandments*.
- **Sovereignty:** He accepts Hashem's kingship and the fulfillment of His decrees. An inherent part of accepting a monarch is accepting to do whatever he commands, whether one understands or not.
- **Yoke:** Accepting the yoke of a king is something far more profound. It is not merely accepting to *fulfill* the king's commands and making one's *essence* subservient to the king.

This explains the difference between the acceptance of sovereignty and the acceptance of a yoke. One can accept a king and remain free. He can have a personal life, provided he follows the king's rules. These would only apply to matters related to the country, i.e., the monarchy or the king himself. Acceptance of the *yoke*, however, is different. One must be totally and constantly subservient to the king in all matters without exception.

This is what was accomplished in the wilderness at Mount Sinai. Each Jew accepted not only to fulfill the commands of the Torah and not only to take Hashem's sovereignty. Instead, we all accepted to be dedicated to G-d day and night, with every fiber of our being.

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We can also explain the connection between these three merits and our forefathers based on the above. *According to Peshat*, each of them excelled in one of the three, and we find a special connection each had to one of them.

- **Torah:** Yaakov was primarily known for his greatness in Torah study; as the Torah says,¹⁴ "... Yaakov was an innocent man, dwelling in tents." Rashi says that "tents" refers to the Yeshiva of Shem and the Yeshiva of Aver.
- **Sovereignty:** This is particularly relevant to Avrohom. He dedicated his life to publicizing the kingship of Hashem over the world. The Torah says,¹⁵ "... and he called there in the name of the Lord, the G-d of the world." Rashi comments that because of Avrohom's efforts, Hashem was called "the G-d of the entire world."
- **Yoke:** Yitzchok always felt the yoke of Hashem. As Rashi explains¹⁶, he had been sanctified on Mount Moriah as a perfect burnt offering.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

The verse we are explaining begins with the words "He found them," meaning the Jewish people. What is the significance of a found object? If one acquires something by working for it, what he receives is proportional to the work he invests. On the other hand, an item that one finds is infinitely more significant than any effort involved. Based on this, the Tzemach Tzedek explains Rashi's words¹⁷. "G-d found them (meaning the Jews) faithful to Him in a desert land, for they accepted His Torah, His sovereignty, and His yoke upon themselves." The "find" was that the Jews were faithful. We believed and had faith in Hashem. Just as a found object transcends nature, so does trust transcend the intellect.

Based on this, we can also explain why Rashi says the Jews accepted not just Hashem's Torah but also His sovereignty and yoke. We accepted G-d's kingship fully and without question in a manner that transcends nature. Since Hashem rewards us measure for measure, he *found* us in the desert and connected with us at Mount Sinai in a way that is totally above nature.

(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Parshas Ha'azinu 5732 and 5737)

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

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14. Parshas Toldos, Bereishis 25:27.

15. Parshas Vayeiro, Bereishis 21:33.

16. Parshas Toldos, Bereishis 25:26 and 26:2.

17. See Ohr Hatorah on this verse, beginning with *pp.* 1,669.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE**

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

**Dr. Mindel Rivka (Muriel) bas Reb Menachem Mendel Shlomo ע"ה
Stitt**

Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Lech Lecha, 10 Mar-Cheshvan, 5782
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY שיהיו

* * *

IN HONOR OF

The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"

Chaim and Aiden Oded שיהיו

Morris

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride
to their family and a Torah light to their community

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיהיו**

Morris

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Esther שתחי' Sharabani

May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON

Mr. Gershon (Geri) שי' Bentov

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

מרת מינדל רבקה בת ר' מנחם מענדל שלמה ע"ה

סתית

נפטרה ש"ק פרשת לך לך, יו"ד מר-חשון תשפ"ב

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדבת בני משפחתה שיחיו

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם"

חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו

מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

מאריס

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מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת גואל צדק
ומתוך בריאות הנכונה ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר

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ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב