



# Likkutei Sichos

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One Person One Heart

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Translated by Rabbi Moishy Goldman

General Editor: Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | Editor: Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

Content Editor: Rabbi Zalmy Avtzon

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## 1.

### AS ONE PERSON WITH ONE HEART

In his commentary on the verse,<sup>1</sup> “Yisrael encamped there, opposite the mountain,” Rashi quotes the words, “Yisrael encamped there” {וַיִּחַן-שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל} and explains:

As one man, with one heart, but the other encampments were all with complaints and strife.

Understood simply,<sup>2</sup> Rashi’s inference and interpretation — similar to the exposition in the Mechilta<sup>3</sup> — relate to the singular form of the verb “וַיִּחַן” {lit., “he encamped”}. In all other places, the plural form of the verb “וַיִּחַנוּ” {“they encamped”} is used. To address this variation, Rashi explains that this particular encampment was “as one man with one heart, but the other encampments were all with complaints and strife” (which is why everywhere else, the plural form “וַיִּחַנוּ, they encamped,” is used).

On this basis, we need to clarify: Since Rashi’s entire inference is based on the singular וַיִּחַן, Rashi ought to have only quoted the word וַיִּחַן in his caption. Why does he quote the words שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל, as well?

As to why Rashi quotes also the word “שָׁם, there” — we can suggest the following: In Rashi’s view, the idea that “the other encampments were all with complaints and strife” is derived not only from {the contrast with} the plural verb “וַיִּחַנוּ, they encamped” used **elsewhere** — as explained in Mechilta — but from our verse itself: “encamped **there**.” Meaning, only “there” did they encamp, וַיִּחַן, in the singular form (“as one man, with one heart”), as opposed to “all the other encampments.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Shemos* 19:2.

<sup>2</sup> As per *Devek Tov, Dikdukei Rashi (Be'er Rehovos)*, and others.

<sup>3</sup> Mechilta on *Shemos* 19:2 {“*Yisro*,” *parsha* 1, sec. 6}; similarly, *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 41; *Vayikra Rabbah* ch. 9, sec. 9.

On the contrary, this verse is the **only** source for the idea that the other encampments were with complaints and strife, based on the **superfluous** word, “**there.**”

However, the word וַיִּתְּנוּ {which is used in reference to the other encampments} can be understood **literally** — it refers to several (diverse) people, tribes, etc., who did not complain or argue with each other at all.

Yet, the question remains: Why does Rashi also quote the word, “Yisrael”?

On the contrary, by quoting the word “Yisrael,” his interpretation becomes confusing. For since the word “Yisrael” appears in the verse, which refers to all Jews as **one** entity (a people), the singular form וַיִּתֵּן<sup>4</sup> is appropriate. In this case, what is the basis of Rashi’s inference — “as one man, with one heart”?

## 2.

PROVE IT!

Seemingly, what compels Rashi is not (really) the singular form of the verb וַיִּתֵּן, but the **shift** in this very verse: First, it says וַיִּתְּנוּ (in plural), and immediately afterwards, it says וַיִּתֵּן (in the singular).<sup>5</sup> The fact that the Torah switches from וַיִּתְּנוּ to וַיִּתֵּן in the middle of the verse demonstrates that when they were “opposite the mountain,” they were “as one man, with one heart.”

Nevertheless, we need to clarify: We find multiple places in the Torah where — in the same verse, and in the same narrative — the Jewish people are referred to using both forms, the plural and the singular. For example, we find later in this *parshah*:<sup>6</sup> “The people **saw** {וַיִּרְאוּ}<sup>7</sup> and they **trembled** {וַיִּתְּנוּ} and

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<sup>4</sup> The singular is not only used in reference to “the people,” which emphasizes their unity, but even when it says “Yisrael,” as in our parshah. (See *Shemos* 14:30-31: “Yisrael saw.”) And other sources. See further in this *sichah*.

<sup>5</sup> {וַיִּתְּנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּתֵּן-שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל לְנֶגֶד הַהָר.} (*Shemos* 19:2).

<sup>6</sup> *Shemos* 20:15.

<sup>7</sup> {In the singular.}

they **stood** {וַיִּעַמְדוּ}<sup>8</sup> from afar.” Similarly, in the previous *parshah*:<sup>9</sup> “Yisrael **saw** {וַיִּרְאֶה}<sup>10</sup> the great hand... the people **revered** {וַיִּירָאוּ} Hashem, and they **believed** {וַיִּאֱמִינוּ}....<sup>11</sup>

### 3.

#### RASHI VS. MECHILTA

We also need to clarify: The apparent source of Rashi’s interpretation is the Mechilta;<sup>12</sup> however, in the Mechilta, the wording is as follows:

Wherever it says, “they traveled” or “they encamped,” {it means that} they traveled with strife and they encamped with strife. But here, they were (all) equal — one heart. Therefore, it says, “Yisrael encamped there, opposite the mountain.”

Among the differences between Rashi’s and the Mechilta’s wording :

- a) The Mechilta says, “here, they were (all) equal — one heart,” whereas Rashi puts it, “as one man, with one heart.”
- b) The Mechilta says, “they traveled... and they encamped in strife,” whereas Rashi gives **two** descriptions, “with complaints and strife.”
- c) The Mechilta concludes, “therefore, it says, ‘Yisrael encamped there, opposite the mountain,’” whereas Rashi only addresses the words, “Yisrael encamped there,” and does not quote, “opposite the mountain.”

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<sup>8</sup> {“Trembled” and “stood” are both in the plural.}

<sup>9</sup> *Shemos* 14:31.

<sup>10</sup> {In the singular.}

<sup>11</sup> {In Hebrew, the verbs “revered” and “believed” are both in the plural.}

<sup>12</sup> However, it can be argued that Rashi’s sources are the *midrashim* cited in fn. 3; see further in this *sichah*.

## 4.

### MORE QUESTIONS ON RASHI

Another point that needs clarification: In Rashi's commentary on the previous *sedrah*, we find an interpretation that is substantially the same as Rashi's interpretation here, albeit with a few differences:

On the verse,<sup>13</sup> “The Children of Israel raised their eyes, and behold! Egypt was chasing {נִדְּעָ}”<sup>14</sup> after them,” Rashi quotes the words, “was chasing after them” in his caption and explains: “With one heart, as one man.” We see that in his commentary on that verse, Rashi does **not** (also) quote the word “Egypt (was chasing after them)” in his caption} — as opposed to his commentary on our verse, where he does quote the word “Yisrael.” The apparent reason for Rashi not also quoting the word “Egypt” is because, as mentioned above, this would **contradict** the inference from the verb “chasing” being in the singular form, as the subject of that verb is the nation as **one** whole.<sup>15</sup>

However, about the passage overthere, the following questions arise :

- a) The **verse** does, in fact, say, “**Egypt** was chasing after them” {even though Rashi does not quote the word “Egypt” in his caption}. This undermines the validity of Rashi's inference: “With one heart, as one man.”<sup>16</sup> {After all, the use of the singular form of the verb “chasing” is self-understood, as the subject is also singular. Thus, no novel insight can justifiably be inferred from it.}
- b) Why, in his caption, does Rashi (also) quote the word, “אֶתְרֵיהֶם, after them”?

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<sup>13</sup> *Shemos* 14:10.

<sup>14</sup> {In the singular.}

<sup>15</sup> {Since “Egypt” refers to a single nation, it is no surprise that נִדְּעָ is used. Therefore, it doesn't help us to infer, “with one heart, as one man.”}

<sup>16</sup> See *Midrash Sechel Tov* there: “**It is the way of Scripture to refer to** a nation in the singular, as it says, ‘Egypt said, I shall flee {אֶגְדָּל}’ (*Shemos* 14:25); ‘Yisrael is saved {יִשְׁעָ} by Hashem’ (*Yeshayahu* 45:17) and the like; **however, our Sages** said, ‘it does not say “נִדְּעִים” {in the plural}, but נִדְּעָ {in the singular}....” See *Chizkuni* on *Shemos* 14:10; *Dikdukei Rashi* on *Shemos* 14:10.

- c) In his interpretation here in our *parshah*, the order is, “as one man, with one heart,” whereas there, it is, “with one heart, as one man.”<sup>17</sup>

## 5.

### ACTIONS VS. FEELINGS

The explanation of all the foregoing is as follows:

It is reasonable to say, according to *pshat*,<sup>18</sup> that when recording the **action** of a group or an entire nation, the verb can be in either the plural or the singular form. For in that situation, there are two possibilities: When members of a group perform an action the **same** way, **equally**, the verb can be in the singular form, considering the subject as a singular entity that is performing the same action. When an action is performed in **multiple** ways by various members of the group (or a nation), then the plural form of the verb is used, since the parties have nothing in common to unite them as one.

Conversely, when the topic is the feelings or thoughts of a group — and “thoughts (or feelings, etc.) are dissimilar,”<sup>19</sup> since feelings and thoughts are always expressed in **multiple**<sup>20</sup> ways, the plural form of the verb is used.

Therefore, it is not perplexing that the Torah uses both forms — the plural and the singular, and sometimes even both in the same verse — when speaking about the collective of a nation, because the form of the verb used depends on the subject under discussion.

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<sup>17</sup> See also, *Shem Efraim*, by Rabbi Efaim Zalman Margolios, in his commentary on Rashi, here.

<sup>18</sup> {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture.” Though there are many depths of Torah interpretation, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

<sup>19</sup> See *Sanhedrin* 38a.

<sup>20</sup> See Introduction to *Tanya*.

As we see in the above-mentioned verse, “Yisrael saw {וַיִּרְא}”<sup>21</sup> the great hand... the people revered {וַיִּירָאוּ}... and they believed {וַיֶּאֱמִינוּ}”<sup>22</sup>: What Jewish people saw, which means their literal vision (seeing “what Hashem had done to Egypt”) was all the same. (Therefore, it says “saw, וַיִּרְא” in the singular). However, there were certainly numerous levels of reverence for Hashem and belief in Him, so the verbs in the clauses, “they revered, וַיִּירָאוּ” and “they believed, וַיֶּאֱמִינוּ” are in the plural. Each person revered and believed in Hashem differently.

Similarly, regarding the verse in our *parshah*,<sup>23</sup> “the people **saw** {וַיִּרְא}”<sup>24</sup> and **trembled** {וַיִּיָּעַרְוּ}, and they **stood** {וַיַּעֲמִדוּ} from afar”:<sup>25</sup> Insofar as what they saw, **in the simple sense**, they were all equal. They had the same vision (uniting them as one), as explained earlier. However, when it says that the nation “trembled” and “stood from afar,” these are feelings and reactions that vary depending on each person's sensitivity and excitement, and so forth. Accordingly, the plural form is appropriate, due to the plurality of responses and their diversity.<sup>26</sup>

## 6.

### EGYPTIAN UNITY

In the verse, “Pharaoh drew near; the Children of Israel raised their eyes, and behold! Egypt was **chasing after them**,” the emphasis is not on the act of “**chasing**” but on the **purpose** of their foray— “**after them**” — Egypt was **pursuing them**. This is related to the verse, “Pharaoh and his servants had a change of **heart**,”<sup>27</sup> relating their wickedness and evil intentions.

<sup>21</sup> {“Saw” is in the singular.}

<sup>22</sup> {“Revered” and “believed” are both in the plural.}

<sup>23</sup> {*Shemos* 20:15.}

<sup>24</sup> {“Saw” is in the singular.}

<sup>25</sup> {“Trembled” and “stood” are both in the plural.}

<sup>26</sup> For “they stood” does not refer to merely actually standing, in which everyone is alike (as in our *parshah*, 20:18), but rather to “they drew back” (Rashi, *loc. cit.*)

<sup>27</sup> {*Shemos* 14:5.}

Concerning these matters, not all the Egyptians were alike. Certainly there were differences between Pharaoh, the sorcerers of Egypt, those who “feared the word of Hashem,”<sup>28</sup> those who did not; and especially, those who had requested Pharaoh to release the Jewish people from Egypt. So this verse ought to have said “chasing” {נוסעים} in the plural.<sup>29</sup>

To explain, Rashi offers us a novel explanation: “with one heart, as one man.” On the contrary, the reason it says “chasing” {נוסע} in the singular is because the Egyptian pursuit was “**after them**,” of the Jewish people. In the context of pursuing the Jewish people (it was not as we might have imagined — each having different feelings along the lines of that which we described above — but rather, all) the Egyptians were “with one heart” — one heart, brimming with enmity toward the Jewish people. This caused them to be considered “as one man.” (And this explains the order: “with one heart, as one man”).

## 7.

### JEWISH UNITY

Along these lines, we can explain the meaning of the verse in our *parshah*, “Yisrael encamped there, opposite the mountain.” Concerning the actual Jewish encampment there (in its simple sense), the verse already informed us that “**they encamped** in the desert.” We must therefore say that by adding, “Yisrael encamped there, opposite the mountain,” the Torah’s intention is to explain something about the term “**encamped**”: **how** they encamped; and how they prepared for the Giving of the Torah, which was going to take place there.

A question arises: The spiritual preparation, the desire, and the anticipation for the Giving of the Torah was based on the level and spiritual standing of each Jew — different from that of another Jew — starting with Moshe, Aharon, and the seventy elders, and other various levels of Jews, until the level (at the other

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<sup>28</sup> {*Shemos* 9:20.}

<sup>29</sup> {Yet, the verse uses the singular “נוסע.”}



extreme) of a Jew who questioned, “Is Hashem among us?”<sup>30</sup> (even after he experienced the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea), and the like.

On this basis, the verse here should have said, “Yisrael encamped, וַיִּקְוּ, there (opposite the mountain)” — using the plural form of the verb.<sup>31</sup>

This question is anticipated by Rashi quoting {in his caption} the words of the verse, “Yisrael encamped there” (but not the continuation, “opposite the mountain”). Rashi explains that the intent of this verse is that all the Jews were “**Yisrael**” — all the Jews were “as one man,” united. Their collective posture did not reflect (their individual degrees of preparation and desire) to receive the Torah “opposite the mountain.”

This unity evoked their unification “with one heart,” so that they all had the same heartfelt desire to receive the Torah.

## 8.

### COMPARATIVE UNITY

This also explains the difference in wording regarding the Egyptians, where Rashi says “with one heart, as one man”; and the Jewish people, where Rashi reverses the order and says, “as one man, with one heart”:

The Egyptians became “as one man” as a result of the “one heart” they felt in “chasing after **them**” — the Jewish people. However, the Egyptians themselves were not united as one.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, Rashi only quotes the words, “chasing after them,” and not the earlier word, “*Egypt* was chasing after them.”

Conversely, in our *parshah*, the unity of the Jewish people (“as one man”) stemmed from the fact that they were **Jewish** — “as one man.” Therefore, Rashi

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<sup>30</sup> *Shemos* 17:7; and obviously, it was not the entire nation asking this.

<sup>31</sup> In a version of one of the manuscripts of Rashi that is extant, it says: “As if they were one man.”

<sup>32</sup> See Rashi on *Shemos* 15:5, s.v., “וַיִּמְנָ, *even*.”

quotes and emphasizes here that “**Yisrael encamped** there,” and this unity inspired their unity “with one heart” — to prepare for receiving the Torah.

However, according to the Mechilta, their unity was expressed in the fact that “they were (all) **equal** — one **heart**” — all Jews were equal in that they had a unified heart and desire to receive the Torah. Therefore, the Mechilta concludes by saying, “therefore, it says, ‘Yisrael encamped there **opposite the mountain.**’”

## 9.

### TWO ELEMENTS OF UNITY

Based on Rashi’s interpretation — that there are two {interrelated} concepts here: “as one man,” the unity among the Jewish people, and, “with one heart,” a unified desire to receive the Torah — we can clarify the repetitive wording later in Rashi’s remarks: “But the other encampments were all with complaints and strife”:

Since the verse emphasizes that “Yisrael encamped **there**,” it is clear that this unity was only in effect “there,” at Mount Sinai, “but the other encampments were all with complaints and strife.” At all the other encampments, the opposite of unity prevailed, and in both respects: “Strife” amongst **themselves**, the opposite of “as one man”; and “complaints” toward Hashem — the opposite of “with one heart” (in preparation for receiving the Torah).

## 10.

### UNITY IN THE WORLD

A lesson from the “wine of Torah” in Rashi’s commentary:

The world is a “public domain,”<sup>33</sup> {i.e., a fractured and divisive plurality of people} in which the connection and interdependency between one entity and next is not obvious.<sup>34</sup>

This {diversity} is especially pronounced in humanity: Hashem created people such that “one person is not similar to the other,”<sup>35</sup> and “people’s perspectives are unlike.”<sup>36</sup> This diversity is also reflected in people’s conduct, which is prompted by each person’s own understanding and feelings. Thus, the actions of one person are different than, and can even be the opposite of, the actions of another.

Unity of the world depends on the **revelation** of its One Creator — Hashem ***Echad***, Who transcends the world.

On this basis, we can explain the difference between the explanations of the Mechilta and Rashi:

The revelation of Hashem *Echad* in the world is achieved by two entities that transcend the world — the Torah and the Jewish people,<sup>37</sup> which constitute the purpose of the world’s creation.<sup>38</sup>

According to the Mechilta, the revelation of (the Giving of the) Torah, which transcends the world, had influenced the Jewish people even earlier — in the period of their preparation for receiving the Torah. Even then, when they

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<sup>33</sup> *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” end of ch. 33.

<sup>34</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> *Sanhedrin* 37a.

<sup>36</sup> See *Sanhedrin* 38a.

<sup>37</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 1, par. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Rashi on *Bereishis* 1:1; et al.

arrived at the Sinai desert, “they were (all) equal — one heart,” to receive the Torah.

According to Rashi, however, on the level of *pshat*, since this preparation actually took place during the time **preceding** the giving of the Torah, we cannot say that the **future** revelation brought about their unity earlier. Rather, their unity developed from within the Jewish people themselves — from the essence<sup>39</sup> of the Jewish soul, which transcends reason and logic (where differentiation exists). The *pintele Yid*,<sup>40</sup> which resides primarily (not in the mind, but) in the heart<sup>41</sup> (which was revealed for the Jewish people when they left Egypt),<sup>42</sup> caused and influenced them to achieve this unity: “*Yisrael encamped there — as one man.*”

And the Jewish people standing “as one man,” as a result of the revelation of the *pintele Yid*, awakened their wish and yearning to receive the Torah — “with one heart.”

## 11.

### COMPARATIVE UNITY, DEUX

The ultimate unity stems from the *pintele Yid* — the *yechidah* of the soul — is found only within the Jewish people.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, since “Hashem made this corresponding to that,”<sup>44</sup> there is at least a semblance of unity found among Gentiles<sup>45</sup> (since *kelipah*<sup>46</sup> mimics holiness just as a monkey mimics humans).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> {In the original, “*yechidah*,” the highest of the five levels of the divine soul.}

<sup>40</sup> {In the original, “*nekudas ha’yehadus*”; lit., “the (quintessential) point of Jewishness.”}

<sup>41</sup> See *Hemshech 5672*, vol. 1, sec. 35.

<sup>42</sup> It was then revealed that the Jewish people are “believers, the children of believers” (see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, end of p. 53 ff).

<sup>43</sup> *Likkutei Torah*, “*Ki Seitzei*,” 37c, et al.

<sup>44</sup> *Koheles 7:14*.

<sup>45</sup> See *Likkutei Torah*, “*Re’eh*,” 25a.

<sup>46</sup> {*Kelipah* translates literally as “a shell” or “a peel.” The term refers to anything that conceals, and thus opposes G-dliness, just as a shell or a peel conceals the fruit within.}

<sup>47</sup> *Zohar* vol. 2, 148b; in *Yahel Or*, p. 358, it says that this aligns with what our Sages expounded (in *Midrash HaGadol*) the verse (*Bereishis 5:3*) that humans were originally like monkeys.

It is, therefore, clear how the Egyptians also experienced the feeling of “with one heart” that led to “as one man” (as it resembled the experience of the Jewish people).

The only difference is that for Gentiles, as mentioned above, true unity cannot be cultivated internally (“as one man”); their unity is nothing more than the outcome of their shared hatred — “with one heart.” Conversely, for the Jewish people, whose *pintele Yid* is their true identity, a consummate unity can develop — “as one man.”

## 12.

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF UNITY

True, this genuine unity, found within the Jewish people because of the singular-essence of their souls, is not attainable by Gentiles. Nevertheless, since the Giving of the Torah brought about the dissolution of the decree that separated “the higher realms” from “the lower realms”<sup>48</sup> (between Divinity and created beings), this affected the Noahides,<sup>49</sup> as well: They, too, are able to perceive the Divine power enfolded in them.

And by perceiving the Divine power (whose characteristic is unity), they, too, can achieve a certain degree of unity — **resembling** the unity of the Jewish people. (But the unity they can achieve is not identical, since they cannot perceive [as Jewish people can] the aspect of Divinity that totally transcends creation. And **this** aspect of Divinity is the basis for genuine unity — “as one man”).

This idea — that following the giving of the Torah, even Gentiles can relate to the degree of Divinity that **transcends** reason (and division) — is expressed in a **halachah**. Namely, the seven Noahide laws must **not** be fulfilled “out of intellectual conviction” (and not even because of the command of Hashem to

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<sup>48</sup> *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 12, par. 3; *Tanchuma*, “*Va’era*,” sec. 15.

<sup>49</sup> {I.e., descendants of Noah, other than the Jews.}

Adam and Noach). Instead, the Noahide laws must be fulfilled “because the Holy One commanded the Noahides in the **Torah**, and informed us through Moshe, that Noach’s descendants had been commanded to fulfill them previously.”<sup>50</sup>

And “every single individual is obligated to say, ‘The world was created for me,’”<sup>51</sup> acknowledging that the entire world (from inanimate matter to human beings) was created for his sake, and that he must transform the world {from a “public domain”} into “a private domain for the unity of Hashem.”<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, every Jew must do their very best (not only to disseminate Torah and Judaism among the Jewish people, but also) to influence Noahides to observe their seven mitzvos,<sup>53</sup> and to observe them “because Hashem commanded them [to do so] in the **Torah**.”

— From talks delivered on Shabbos *parshas Beshalach* (15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat) and Shabbos *parshas Yisro*, 5740 (1980)

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<sup>50</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” end of ch. 8; see also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, pp. 61-62; vol. 20, p. 140 ff.

<sup>51</sup> *Sanhedrin* 37a (end).

<sup>52</sup> *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” end of ch. 33.

<sup>53</sup> See *Mishneh Torah*, loc. cit., par. 10.