



Likkutei Sichos

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It Pleased Him

Translated by: Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger
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HOW COMMENTATORS ON RASHI EXPLAIN – AND IT PLEASED HIM

From the verse,¹ “Moshe heard, and it pleased him,” Rashi quotes the words, “and it pleased him,” and comments:

“He admitted {that Aharon was correct} and was not ashamed, לומר {*into saying*, alternatively, *to say*}, ‘I have not heard.’”

Super-commentators² explain that if Moshe had been ashamed, he could have saved face by asserting, “I did not hear {this law from Hashem}.” (Thus, “He admitted and was not ashamed *into saying*, ‘I did not hear.’”) However, since Moshe “was not ashamed,” he did not say “I did not hear.” Instead, he “admitted,” and conceded, “I heard {this law} but forgot,” as related in the *Talmud*.³

From the vantage point of a straightforward understanding of Rashi, however, the above explanation is altogether incomprehensible: As known, Rashi employs a clear style in his commentary, such that a novice student of *Scripture* can readily understand it. If Rashi meant to say that Moshe had conceded, “I heard but forgot,” Rashi would not have omitted in his commentary the *main point* – the words that Moshe had said. (Especially, considering that the *Talmud* sees the need to specify this.)

It is likewise understood that Rashi is not relying on {the reader knowing} what is expounded in the *Talmud* – “I heard but forgot – because as mentioned a number of times, Rashi explains the verses *on the spot*, and doesn’t rely on explanations given elsewhere. This is

¹ *Vayikra* 10:20.

² *Mizrachi*; *Gur Aryeh*; *Divrei David* (by the *Taz*); *Sifsei Chachamim*; *et al.* {Accordingly, Rashi’s comments should be translated, “He admitted and was not ashamed *into saying*, “I have not heard.”

³ *Zevachim* 101a-b.

particularly true in this case, since Rashi doesn't reference the Talmud as the source for his commentary.

Thus, all of the aforementioned leads to the opposite conclusion: Rashi understands the verse (according to its *simple sense*) differently than how the *Talmud* (which interprets Scripture from a *halachic* perspective) understands it. This is particularly evident as an interpretation of this verse is found also in *Toras Kohanim*⁴ and its wording is *not* the same as the *Talmud's*, yet Rashi chooses to incorporate in his commentary the wording of *Toras Kohanim*.

2.

MORE QUESTIONS ON RASHI, AND ON THE ANSWERS OF THE SUPER-COMMENTATORS

In addition, we need to clarify:

a. What difficulty in the verse does Rashi want to solve (with his commentary that Moshe admitted, and wasn't ashamed...)? Seemingly, the meaning of the verse is simple: "Moshe heard" – after Moshe listened to Aharon's logic – "and it pleased him."

b. What, in the simple understanding of Scripture, compelled Rashi to remark, "He admitted and was not ashamed to say, 'I have not heard'"?

Some super-commentators maintain that Rashi's interpretation is based on the seemingly superfluous words, "Moshe heard." (Obviously, Moshe heard what Aharon had told him.) It would have sufficed for Scripture to say, "It pleased him." Yet since the verse begins by adding, "Moshe heard," Rashi deduces that Scripture is telling us that Moshe had *already* heard (from Hashem) the substance of what Aharon told him; however, Moshe had forgotten.

⁴ Except that in *Toras Kohanim*, the wording reads, "He admitted *immediately*, and was not ashamed..."

Therefore, after he was reminded, Moshe was satisfied by Aharon's reasoning, "and it pleased him."

However, the above explanation of Rashi does not seem to be straightforward. For if the above explanation were correct, Rashi could have said as much explicitly, especially, considering that this proposed explanation negates the simple meaning of the statement, "Moshe heard" (that Moshe heard what Aharon had said {and not something that Hashem had said earlier}). At the very least, Rashi should have *specified*, "*I have heard* {i.e., from Hashem} (and have forgotten)," and this would have clarified Rashi's understanding of the clause, "Moshe *heard*" (albeit strained).

[The difficulty raised above is in addition to the problems noted by some super-commentators:⁵ a) according to the proposed understanding of Rashi, Scripture should have written, "Moshe *had* heard,"⁶ emphasizing that he had heard in the past; b) Rashi should have made his remarks, (also) quoting the words, "Moshe heard" {instead of just citing "and it pleased him"}].

3.

WHY DOESN'T RASHI EXPLAIN HERE HOW MOSES CAME TO ERR?

Similarly, we need to understand: In *parshas Matos*, on the verse,⁷ "Elazar the priest said....," Rashi comments:

Since Moshe was angered, he came to err, forgetting the laws related to the purging of non-kosher vessels. A similar incident happened on the eighth day of the investitures, as it says,⁸ "Moshe became angry with Elazar and Isamar." Moshe was angered, so he

⁵ *Shach* (unredacted), *ad loc.*

⁶ I.e., Scripture should have employed a grammatical construct in Hebrew indicating the past-perfect tense.

⁷ *Bamidbar* 31:21.

⁸ *Vayikra* 10:16.

came to err. Similarly, in the incident of “Now listen, you rebels... and struck the rock,”⁹ through anger, he came to err.

From the above comment, we see that in order to understand the simple meaning of Scripture, we need to clarify what caused Moshe’ to err.¹⁰ In this case, why doesn’t Rashi address this difficulty – as to what caused Moshe to err – when the difficulty first arises – in our *parsha*? Rashi should have explained *here* that Moshe’ mistake stemmed from him having lapsed into a state of anger. Why does Rashi wait to address this problem until *parshas Matos*, instead of addressing it immediately, in our *parsha*?

4.

ACCORDING TO RASHI, MOSES HAD NOT HEARD THIS LAW FROM HASHEM

The explanation to this is: By his commentary, “He admitted and was not ashamed to say, ‘I have not heard,’” what Rashi means to say is conveyed by the *simple meaning* of these words. Namely, Moshe was not ashamed to admit that he had not heard from Hashem the distinction between one-time sacrifices and established sacrifices.

Rashi’s opinion differs than the *Talmud’s*. The *Talmud* maintains that Moshe had heard the distinction from Hashem, but had forgotten it: Moshe “admitted and was not ashamed,” and said “I have heard and have forgotten.”

Rashi interprets the verse differently than the Talmud because according to *the simple understanding of Scripture* the *Talmud’s* interpretation raises several difficulties:

⁹ *Bamidbar* 20:10-11.

¹⁰ Note Rashi on *Bamidbar* 27:5.
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a. What was exemplary about Moshe telling the truth, “I have heard and have forgotten,” and not alleging the opposite of the *truth*,¹¹ (“I have not heard”)?¹²

b. How can one possibly say, “It pleased him,” regarding a matter that he had heard from Hashem?¹³

c. The main difficulty: The connotation of the phrase, “it pleased him,” is that Moshe might not have been pleased, but we are informed that he was. However, if Moshe had heard this distinction from Hashem (but had forgotten), then “it was pleasing to Hashem.” {It would perforce be agreeable to Moshe, if this were Hashem’s expressed will!} What, then, is the clause, “It pleased him” coming to teach us?

Consequently, Rashi interprets this clause in its *simple sense*, i.e., Moshe had not heard this distinction from the Almighty. (Rashi indicates this, too, in his *previous* commentary, on what Aharon had told Moshe, “would it be pleasing to Hashem?” – “Although you have heard this ruling regarding one-time sacrifices, *you* cannot be lenient regarding established sacrifices.”)¹⁴ Accordingly, we understand: 1) The praise intended by the statement, “He admitted and was not ashamed to say, ‘I have not heard,’” since Moshe could have indicated his agreement to Aharon’s logic by silence, which is equivalent to admission; or he could have (even) verbally expressed his agreement, but without disclosing that he had not heard it from Hashem. 2) The

¹¹ Note *Bereishis* 18:15.

¹² Note *Gur Aryeh*, *ad loc.*

¹³ Note Rashi on *Shemos* 38:22.

¹⁴ Rashi, on the previous verse, 10:16, comments: “The Sages of Israel are divided on the matter (*Zevachim* 101a). Some said that the sacrifice was burnt on account of uncleanness that had come into contact with it. Others said that it was burnt because {Aharon’s sons were} אֹהֲנִים, and this sacrifice came under the category of established sacrifices {which would also be offered in future generations}. Nevertheless, later in the *parshah*, Rashi adopts mainly the second opinion, as he does in his comments on our verse. But this is not because Rashi favors the second opinion over the first. Instead, (as discussed numerous times) it is only because Rashi’s clarifying comments are necessary only according to the second opinion, whereas, as according to the first opinion, the explanation is self-understood. Alternatively, Rashi may adopt one opinion over the other if the one opinion dovetails better with the plain sense of a particular verse (although the other opinion also agrees with the plain sense of the verse). See *Mizrachi* on v. 19.

meaning of the clause, “it pleased *him*”: this was Aharon’s reasoning, reasoning that Moshe hadn’t heard from Hashem. Therefore, even if in certain respects established sacrifices *were* similar to one-time sacrifices – *comparable* to what Rashi explained *earlier*¹⁵ regarding the Paschal offering brought when leaving Egypt, that it shared a number of laws (but not all) with the Paschal offering established for generations – in the case of this law, Aharon’s decision to treat them differently “pleased” Moshe.

5.

“IT PLEASSED HIM” – APPARENTLY REDUNDANT

The difficulty in the verse that Rashi aims to solve is the ostensibly superfluous clause: “It pleased him.”

Consider that obviously Moshe *heard* what Aharon had told him. Therefore, the sense of the verb *heard* in the extra clause, “Moshe *heard*,” must be similar to its sense in the verses: “{And to man He said, “Because} you listened, שמעת, to your wife”};¹⁶ “They did not know that Joseph, שומע, was listening {since the interpreter was between them}”; and the like, implying understanding of what was being spoken and agreement. In other words, “Moshe heard” already implies that Moshe accepted Aharon’s way of thinking. So what, then, does the clause, “It pleased him,” come to tell us?

We are compelled to say that the clause, “it pleased him,” is *contributing* some new information. Namely, Aharon’s logic not merely found acceptance by Moshe, but it brought about something novel in Moshe’s approval. What was it?

To answer, Rashi tells us that by adding the clause, “it pleased him,” Scripture means to inform us that beyond just endorsing Aharon’s argument, Aharon’s argument was so persuasive – “it

¹⁵ *Shemos* 12:14, 17, et al.

¹⁶ *Bereishis* 3:17.

pleased him” – that Moshe also repeated it, לומר, to others. {Moshe “...was not ashamed, לומר, to say, ‘I have not heard.’”}

By writing, “it pleased him,” Scripture is praising Moshe who “admitted and was not ashamed, to say, ‘I have not heard.’” Although he could have simply agreed with Aharon’s opinion, Moshe was not satisfied to do so, but instead publicized the fact that he had not heard.

6.

ONLY IN *PARSHAS MATOS* IS THE EXPLANATION REQUIRED TO UNDERSTAND *PSHAT*

On this basis, we can understand why Rashi doesn’t explain here, as he does in *parshas Matos*, that Moshe’s mistake came as a result of his anger: The distinction between established sacrifices and one-time sacrifices is a rational one, and when considered rationally, there is room for both opinions. Consequently, (in order to explain *pshat*) here, Rashi is not compelled to come up with the *very* novel interpretation that Moshe (got angry and) made a *mistake*.

In *parshas Matos*, however, Rashi is compelled to say that Moshe’s anger caused him to err. But as mentioned, this is a very novel interpretation (and raises the question as to why specifically this incidence of anger caused him to err).

Therefore, to buttress this interpretation there, Rashi continues and says, “A similar (novel) incident happened on the eighth day of the inauguration, as it says, ‘Moshe became angry....’” Once it has been proven in *pshat* that Moshe’s anger led to him making a mistake, we can apply this interpretation to what happened on the eighth day of the inauguration. We can say that there, too, his anger caused him

to overlook the difference¹⁷ between one-time sacrifices, and established sacrifices¹⁸ (a difference that was self-evident to Aharon).

7.

THE “WINE” OF TORAH

From “the wine of Torah” in Rashi’s commentary:

If the difference of opinion between Moshe and Aharon was a rational one, we need to understand: a) Why was Moshe inclined to reason that there were no distinctions between one-time sacrifices and established sacrifices, whereas Aharon was inclined to reason that there were? b) Since Moshe’ opinion that no distinctions existed between one-time sacrifices and established sacrifices was evidently a strongly held viewpoint, as demonstrated by Moshe’ anger when he saw that unlike the one-time sacrifices, the established sacrifice was not eaten – why did Moshe change his mind after hearing Aharon out, even though Aharon hadn’t offered any proof to his opinion that the two sorts of sacrifices were to be treated differently? Consider, too, that the change in Moshe was so extreme that Aharon’s viewpoint delighted Moshe, “and it pleased him.”

From a deeper, mystical perspective, the proposed solution is the following:

As the Midrash indicates, Moshe and Aharon personified two distinct traits: “*Kindness*, this is Aharon; *truth*, this is Moshe.”¹⁹ One of the distinctions between truth and kindness is that truth doesn’t change. In all places and at all times, the *truth* remains steadfast at its

¹⁷ Not that Moshe “heard but forgot” – as Rashi does not subscribe to this interpretation as the simple meaning of Scripture, as explained above, in the text.

¹⁸ Note that in *Toras Kohanim*, there are two opinions regarding this verse, whether the anger led to the mistake, or the mistake, to the anger.

¹⁹ *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 5, sec. 10.

level and in its state. In contrast, *kindness* – doing someone an act of goodness – is subject to change, taking into account *the individual recipients* who differ from one another. Moreover, whenever an act of kindness is performed, the expression of kindness is experienced differently by the benefactor than by the recipient. As our Sages taught,²⁰ “Confer upon them an overabundance of goodness, and they will not be able to endure.”

Therefore, Moshe was predisposed, on account of his trait of truth, to rule any doubtful case in the same way, regardless of the time and the situation. Consequently, he was of the opinion that no distinction should be made between one-time sacrifices and established ones. The same sanctity present in the short-term must be present in the long-term.

Aharon, in contrast, “loved peace and pursued peace; loved people and drew them close to Torah.”²¹ He was devoted to all people, even the most unrefined; and he influenced them according to their own spiritual standing. Consequently, consistent with his trait of kindness, Aharon held that the sanctity of one-time sacrifices and established sacrifices were different: Because of the individuality of those who required the sacrifices, it was impossible to demand the same degree of sanctity at all varying levels and at all different times.

8.

MOSES: TOP-DOWN; AARON: BOTTOM-UP

This distinction is consistent with Moshe’s role as “companion of the King,” and Aharon’s role as “companion of the Queen”:²²

²⁰ *Taanis* 23a.

²¹ *Avos* 1:12; The dictum of Hillel.

²² *Zohar*, vol. 1, p.266b; vol. 2 49b; vol. 3, 21a, 53b, 275b.

Moshe's role as "companion of the King" – in service of the *King* – was to draw down G-dliness to the Jewish people, in a downward direction. From the vantage point of this level, the light descends below without changing from its state in the world of *Atzilus*. Likewise, this was his mode of service in bringing G-dliness down below.

Aharon's role as "companion of the Queen" – in service of the *Queen* – was to elevate the *Jewish people* to a higher station, bottom-up, a process that had to take into account the spiritual level of the Jews. Therefore, this service was subject to variations in accordance with the circumstances of the "bottom."

9.

ALL TRUTH COMES FROM DIVINE TRUTH

In spite of their divergent perspectives, after Moshe heard Aharon explain that from the vantage point of mortals living in the world of *Asiyah* – this physical world – there were differences, and that no equivalence could be made between short-term sanctity was long-term sanctity, "Moshe heard, and it pleased him." Meaning, Moshe accepted Aharon's reasoning, validating it not only from the vantage point of Aharon's trait – kindness – but also from Moshe's trait – the trait of truth.²³

The explanation for this {approval by Moshe} is as follows: Concerning the love of Hashem experienced by *beinonim*, it says in

²³ We can apply a similar approach in understanding Shamai's dictum in *Avos* 1:15, "Greet all the people with a pleasant countenance." Seemingly, this teaching is at odds with his own behavior to gentiles who approached him, desiring to convert (*Shabbos* 31a), since "all *the* people" is an inclusive wording, including gentiles (*Yevamos* 61a, *Tosefos*. s.v. ןרא). However, *after* Hillel's enlightening teaching "Be disciples of Aharon, loving peace... (*Avos* 1:12)," Shamai was influenced thereby, so that even from his perspective of severity, he would go on to teach "Greet all the people with a pleasant countenance," even though he remained inclined to employ strict standards with potential converts.

Tanya:²⁴ “Relative to the stature of *beinonim*, such service is deemed to be perfectly genuine, in terms of their level of truth, according to the level of each person, relative to their standing in the category of the *beinonim*,” even though “relative to the stature of *tzaddikim* who serve Hashem in perfect truth, such love {as experienced by *beinonim*} is not deemed to be genuine at all, since it passes and disappears after prayer.” “And it is written,²⁵ “The lip of truth shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.””

Absolute truth can be ascribed only to Hashem, as it says,²⁶ “But Hashem, the L-rd, is true.” In and of itself, this world is incapable of truth, since all created beings eventually cease to exist. Thus, when we do see truth in creation, albeit truth only relative to a specific level, not to a higher one (as indicated in the passage cited above from *Tanya*), we must perforce conclude that it springs from “the truth of Hashem is eternal, לעולם”²⁷ {לעולם} can also be rendered, “to the world,” viz.}, from the Divine truth existing within, and *illuminating*, created beings.

[A similar explanation is given concerning a different subject discussed elsewhere:²⁸ “Your might” (מאדך) – alluding to the boundless dimension within a person – {when evoked in, and applied to, the service of Hashem} awakens and elicits “might” Above – the true Divine Infinitude. Although the boundless dimension within a person is boundless relative to *this* person’s service, the service (love) itself is limited; and relative to the superior service of a person on a loftier spiritual level, the love of the other individual is surely limited. However, since the quality of boundlessness is possible only when speaking about Divinity, whereas created beings, intrinsically limited, are incapable (on their own) of exhibiting boundlessness, therefore,

²⁴ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 13.

²⁵ *Mishlei* 12:19.

²⁶ *Yirmiyahu* 10:10.

²⁷ *Tehillim* 117:1.

²⁸ *Torah Or* 39d; *Derech Mitzvosecha*, “*Shoresh Mitzvah HaTefillah*,” ch. 16.

when a mortal does exhibit a behavior (a service) that is beyond his limitations and boundaries, it is linked with and derived from Hashem who is truly boundless. For this reason, a person’s “might” resembles true boundlessness, and so awakens the “might” Above.]

10.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT SPRINGS FROM DIVINE TRUTH

Based on the above, we can also clarify our subject: Perceiving a difference between short-term and long-term sanctity (and service) is a complete and *genuine* service arising from the Divine Truth that illuminates a Jew’s circumstances at that moment.

This is completely consistent with how mortals experience the Divine Truth that relates “to the world,” לעולם, and in the world. However, at Moshe’ stature, the Divine truth is experienced as it exists on the level *Atzilus*,²⁹ in a state far more sublime than (how it radiates within) created beings. As a result, for Moshe, there *wasn’t* any difference between one-time sacrifices and established ones.

11.

THE ULTIMATE INTENT OF ATZILUS

Nonetheless, since the verse says, “Moshe heard, and it pleased him,” we see that Aharon effected a transition in Moshe so that even from Moshe’ perspective – the attribute of truth associated with *Atzilus* – there was a difference between one-time sacrifices and established ones.

To elucidate as to how such change was possible: As known, the purpose and inner intent of *Atzilus* is for the sake of the service of, and revelation of G-dliness within, created beings of this lowermost

²⁹ Comparable to the level of truth that characterizes the service of the righteous (*Tanya*, loc. cit.).
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realm. That is, *Atzilus* possesses two aspects: *Atzilus* itself, which is higher than creation; *Atzilus*, in terms of its purpose, which is for the sake of *Asiyah*.

Moshe also possessed these two aspects: Moshe himself (the personification of the attribute of truth associated with *Atzilus*) transcended the diversity (and truth) found within creation. Aharon, however, acting in his role as “companion of the Queen,” of the Jewish people, and who so “loved people and *drew them close to Torah*,” the Torah of Moshe, uncovered the inner intent of the truth of *Atzilus*, which was to enable revelation within creation down below. Thus, “*Moshe* heard, and it pleased *him*” – this perspective {of Aharon’s, which was latent all along within Moshe} became the manifest quality of Moshe (*Atzilus*).

12.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE OTHER PERSON’S SITUATION

The lesson that can be applied in our service of Hashem: When it comes to a person’s private Divine service, this must be carried out without deviations. Just as regarding the Almighty it says,³⁰ “I, Hashem, have not changed,” so, too, should this {Divine consistency} be emulated by the Jewish people, as alluded to by the continuation of the verse, “and you, the children of Jacob.” But when it comes to a person’s relationship with other Jews, or for that matter, with other human beings, a person must be able to empathize. He needs to know that times are not all the same. He needs to realize that he cannot begin to help someone else, particularly those in the category of “beings,” if he insists that the other person always be in a rarified

³⁰ *Malachi* 3:6. The verse concludes with astonishment, “and you have not ended!?”

state, such as is engendered by auspicious spiritual moments, and the like.

And if while working with other Jews, even those who are “common human beings,”³¹ he empathizes with them, then ultimately these people, too, will come to feel that “*Hashem’s truth* is eternal” – the level of referred to by the verse,³² “I, Hashem, have not changed.” In turn, this will perfect the truth within him. Concerning such perfection, it says,³³ “Kindness and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed.”³⁴ Then, Hashem’s goal in desiring “a home for Himself in the *lower* realms” will come to fruition.

-From a talk delivered on Shabbos *Parshas Shemini*, 5729 (1969)

³¹ See *Tanya*, ch. 32.

³² *Malachi*, *ibid.* See *Likkutei Torah*, “*Masei*,” 2.

³³ *Tehillim* 85:11.

³⁴ This comes about by synthesizing lovingkindness and truth, the attributes of Aharon and Moshe, respectively.