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Sparks of Interpretation

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1.

THE TWO INTERPRETATIONS

In his commentary on the verses at the beginning of our *parshah*¹ — “I appeared to Avraham... and I also established My covenant with them...” — Rashi² offers two interpretations:

- a) The content of these verses introduce the **subsequent** verses:³ “Moreover, I have heard the wail of the Children of Israel... Therefore, say to the Children of Israel... I shall take you out...” Since Hashem had promised the Patriarchs⁴ and made a covenant with them “to give them the land of Canaan,”⁵ which hadn’t yet been fulfilled, Hashem therefore said, “Moreover, I have heard the wail of the Children of Israel... Therefore, say...” that He would now fulfill these promises.
- b) “Our Rabbis expounded this as referring to the **earlier** verse in which Moshe asks,⁶ ‘Why did You harm {this nation}?’” In other words, these verses refer to the *earlier* discussion, responding to Moshe’s question, “Why did You harm {this nation}?” {The subsequent verses} highlight the superiority of the Patriarchs: “They did **not** say to Me, ‘What is Your Name?’... They did **not** question My actions” — in stark contrast to Moshe: “But you said, ‘{If they will say to me,} ‘What is His Name,’”⁷ {what shall I say to them?} ... ‘Why did You harm {this nation}?’”

Rashi then continues (after offering his second interpretation):⁸ “But this interpretation does not sit well with the text of Scripture for several reasons.” (Rashi then raises two objections to this interpretation and concludes:) “Therefore, I say, let the text of Scripture be explained according to its simplest

¹ *Shemos* 6:3-4.

² Rashi on *Shemos* 6:3-4, 9.

³ *Shemos* 6:5-6.

⁴ {Our forefathers: Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.}

⁵ *Shemos* 6:4.

⁶ *Shemos* 5:22.

⁷ {*Shemos* 3:13.}

⁸ {Rashi on *Shemos* 6:9.}

meaning, each word stated in its appropriate context, and let the homiletical interpretation {*drashah*}⁹ be expounded, as it says, ‘My word is like fire — the word of Hashem — and like a hammer that shatters a rock,’¹⁰ which is divided into many *nitzotzos* {lit., ‘sparks’}.”

Simply, it seems that Rashi means to say:

- a) According to the approach of *pshat*,¹¹ Scripture should not be explained according to the midrash because it “does not sit well with the text of Scripture.” As Rashi says in many places, “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of Scripture”;¹² he only brings an *aggadah*¹³ that “resolves the words of Scripture, with each word stated in its appropriate context.”¹⁴
- b) On the other hand, Rashi anticipates {a possible misunderstanding} and explains that this doesn’t mean that midrashic interpretations have, G-d forbid, no place in Torah interpretation. Instead, “and let the homiletical interpretation be expounded.” The words of the Torah are divided into many different modes of study (“like a hammer that shatters a rock”), and according to the approach of *drash*, on the contrary, “let the homiletical interpretation be expounded.”

⁹ {*Drash* is an exegetical method of commentary in which the words of a verse are used as a platform to express an ostensibly extrinsic idea; a teaching that employs *drash* is referred to as a *drashah*.}

¹⁰ *Yirmiyahu* 23:29.

¹¹ {The plain meaning of Scripture. In his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8, Rashi says: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of Scripture.” Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation of the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

¹² Rashi on *Bereishis* 3:8; 3:24; and similarly in many places.

¹³ {*Aggadah*, otherwise known as *midrash*, is the method that uses homiletics to expound the Torah.}

¹⁴ Rashi on *Bereishis* 3:8, and similarly in many places.

2.

DIFFICULTIES IN RASHI'S REBUTTAL

According to the above explanation of Rashi, however, the following points are perplexing:

- a) For Rashi to offer an interpretation and then refute it is uncommon; he typically offers interpretations at the outset that fit according to *pshat*. In our case, however, Rashi offers the interpretation of our Rabbis (at length) and then immediately refutes it (because it does **not** “sit well with the text of Scripture”).
- b) If Rashi needed to clarify that even when a (midrashic) interpretation is not acceptable (according to the approach of *pshat*), it is, nonetheless, a valid interpretation of the Torah — because the words of Torah are “like a hammer that shatters a rock” — Rashi should have clarified this the **first** time he said that he doesn’t bring *aggadic* interpretations that don’t sit well with the text of Scripture — in *parshas Bereishis*.¹⁵

[This point is particularly compelling because Rashi elucidates many other details regarding midrashic interpretations **there**: “There are many aggadic midrashim, and our Rabbis have already arranged them in their proper setting in *Bereishis Rabbah* and in other midrashim. I have come only to explain the plain meaning of Scripture and for *aggadah* that resolves the words of Scripture with each word stated in its appropriate context.” (This is almost identical to Rashi’s wording here.) Rashi should have **then** immediately **explained** his words, concluding, “and let the homiletical interpretation {*drashah*} be expounded, as it says, ‘My word is like fire... which is divided into many *nitzotzos*.’”]

¹⁵ Rashi on *Bereishis* 3:8.

3.

ADVANTAGE OF THE SECOND INTERPRETATION

Understood simply, Rashi brings the interpretation of “our Rabbis” because their interpretation resolves many questions that could have been asked on the first interpretation (— according to the approach of *pshat*):

In his commentary on the words at the beginning of our *parshah*¹⁶ — “Hashem spoke to Moshe” — Rashi explains: “He spoke to him {with words of} rebuke for speaking harshly and saying, ‘Why did You harm this nation?’” And since in **this** interpretation, Rashi does not say “and our Rabbis expounded” (or something similar), it is clear that this is the plain meaning of the verse.

On this basis, it follows that according to Rashi’s first interpretation mentioned above [that the words “He said to him... I appeared...” are **not** a continuation of “Why did You harm {this nation}?” but rather, an introduction to, “I, too, have heard... Therefore, say...”], the (four) words “Hashem spoke to Moshe” are **independent** {from the rest of the verse}, and a continuation of the words “Why did You harm {this nation}?” in the **previous** *parshah*.

However, this is not smooth because:

[Aside from the fact that according to this interpretation, the verse of “{Hashem} spoke...” is split in half — the beginning of the verse, “Hashem spoke to Moshe,” comes as a continuation to the **previous** *parshah*, and from the words (in the second half of the verse) “and said to him, ‘I am Hashem’ (which is the beginning of the subsequent verse “I appeared...”), something new begins.]

Immediately following Moshe’s question, “Why did You harm {this nation}?” the Torah records Hashem’s response:¹⁷ “Now you will see....” If so, why would the Torah separate (just) **four** words (“Hashem spoke to Moshe”)

¹⁶ {*Shemos* 6:2.}

¹⁷ *Shemos* 6:1; and see Rashi’s commentary on the verse.

from the previous response and place them in a **separate** section and a separate *parshah*?

Therefore, Rashi brings the interpretation of the “Rabbis,” for according to their interpretation, the verses “I appeared... I also established...” are a continuation of {the words}, “Hashem spoke to Moshe” — these are the words of rebuke that Hashem spoke to Moshe “for speaking harshly and saying, ‘Why did You harm this nation?’”

4.

ORIGINAL QUESTION RETURNS

However, upon deeper analysis, this answer is untenable because Rashi says clearly, “**But this interpretation does not sit well** with the text of Scripture for **several** reasons.” In other words, the difficulties with this interpretation are so numerous (and significant) that it can not be accepted at all according to the simple meaning of the verse (even though it answers a question [or questions] in the verse).

This being the case, our original question returns: Why does Rashi offer (and at length) the interpretation of the “Rabbis” if he does not accept it?

For even in places where Rashi’s intent is only to point out that an *aggadic* interpretation resolves a question in the plain meaning of the verse (just that Rashi does not accept this interpretation according to the approach of *pshat*), Rashi’s method is to say concisely, “there are many *aggadic* interpretations,”¹⁸ or the like (as we find in Rashi’s commentary in many places¹⁹); he does **not**, however, bring the *aggadic* interpretation.

¹⁸ Rashi on *Bereishis* 3:8, and similarly in many places.

¹⁹ For example, in *parshas Bereishis* alone: *Bereishis* 3:22, 3:24, 4:8, 5:1, and 6:3.

5.

ROCK OR HAMMER?

The (above-mentioned) conclusion of Rashi — “and let the homiletical interpretation {*drashah*} be expounded, as it says, ‘My word is like fire — the word of Hashem — and like a hammer that shatters a rock,’ which is divided into many *nitzotzos*” — requires further elucidation:

On the words, “which is divided into many *nitzotzos*,” there is a debate among the commentators regarding the identity of the object that is “divided”:

One commentator²⁰ says that it refers to the **rock**, as it says, “like a hammer that shatters a rock.” The hammer shatters the rock [as **Rashi** explains in his commentary on the Gemara in tractate *Shabbos*:²¹ “*Just as this hammer — the rock is divided by it into many *nitzotzos*”]*

A second commentator²² maintains that it refers to the **hammer** [and others²³ have this version in Rashi’s commentary itself — like the words of the Gemara²⁴ — “**Just as this hammer** divides...”] — we are speaking about a hard rock that breaks and shatters the hammer.

A third commentator says²⁵ that this, indeed, refers to the hammer. However, this does not mean the hammer is broken into pieces. Rather, the hammer hitting the rock causes sparks {the literal meaning of the word *nitzotzos*} of **fire** to burst from the hammer.

²⁰ *Sefer Zikaron, Sifsei Chachamim*, and others; see *Nachalas Yaakov*.

²¹ *Shabbos* 88b.

²² *Be’er Mayim Chaim* (written by the brother of *Maharal*) here (“and it is almost implied from Rashi’s opinion...”).

²³ This is implied by the *Re’em, Gur Aryeh, Divrei Dovid*, and others — who have this version of Rashi. And in *Sefer Zikaron*: “This is the correct version. And this is the version in a few of the extant manuscripts of Rashi (and in one of them, these words are added on the side). However, see the *Nachalas Yaakov*, that “in our version, these three words, ‘just as this hammer,’ do not appear.” (Similarly, they are not found in the second printing of Rashi, in many of the extant manuscripts, or in our printing of Rashi.)

²⁴ *Shabbos* 88b. This is also stated in *Sanhedrin* 34a.

²⁵ *Bartenura, Gur Aryeh, Divrei David*, and *Nimukei Shmuel*; see *Chiddushei Aggados Maharal on Kiddushin* 30b, and *Zohar*, vol. 3 (*Idra Zuta*), 292b.

With each of these interpretations, there seems to be a difficulty:

In the first interpretation, the following is unclear (in line with the question of *Re'em*): Since it's a rock that is being "shattered," why would Rashi use the word "*nitzotzos*," which is (more) fitting for "something that shines," rather than wording it, "divided into many **fragments**"?

The second interpretation is altogether difficult according to the approach of *pshat*. (Additionally, the above-mentioned question of *Re'em* is also germane here):²⁶

- a) It contradicts the **simple meaning** of the verse to interpret "like a hammer that shatters a rock" to mean that the **hammer** is shattered by the rock. [This is especially so according to our version of Rashi, which does not include the words, "Just as this hammer (divides...)"; it is inconceivable that Rashi — who always insists on specifically the **straightforward** meaning (clarity) — would, in his own commentary: (a) write the words "like a hammer that shatters a rock' which is divided into many *nitzotzos*" **without clarification** {whether Scripture means the shattering of the hammer or the rock}; and (b) {the quoted verse actually} means that the **hammer** is what shatters (contrary to the straightforward understanding that the verse refers to the rock)].
- b) Rashi should have explained that we are talking about such a tenacious rock that can shatter a hammer {upon impact} (unlike a **typical** rock, that, on the contrary, is itself shattered by the hammer).

The third interpretation is also unclear because [in addition to the above, according to the simple meaning of the verse, it is impossible to explain that "(like a hammer) shatters (a rock)" refers to the rock {as the object that shatters, and not the hammer},] the simple meaning of the words, "which is divided into many *nitzotzos*," is that the **object** is being divided (and not that something is coming from that object that is "divided" — the sparks).

²⁶ As *Re'em* explicitly states.

In light of all of the above, the most perplexing point emerges: Since Rashi clearly wrote his commentary so that it should be understandable (even) for a novice student of Torah,²⁷ why would Rashi record his remarks in such an ambiguous manner to leave room for debate and various explanations regarding his intent?

This problem becomes even stronger: Since, in his commentary on Gemara,²⁸ Rashi phrases his interpretation of this teaching of the Sages very clearly (that it means “the **rock** is divided,” as mentioned above), how much more so should he have done the same in his Torah commentary!²⁹

6.

EXTRA WORDS?

Another nuance in the wording of Rashi’s remarks mentioned above:

When Rashi brings the verse “and like a hammer that shatters a rock,” he also cites the beginning of the verse, “My word is like fire — the word of Hashem.” This is puzzling: What relevance do **these** (opening) words have to the principle that Rashi wants to prove (that a single verse can have multiple interpretations)? Seemingly, only the (allegory at the) end of the verse is relevant — “and like a hammer that shatters a rock.”

This is even more perplexing: This principle [derived from the verse that “just as this hammer splits into many *nitzotzos*,” similarly, a single idea in Torah splits into many parts] is recorded in tractates *Shabbos*³⁰ and *Sanhedrin*.³¹

²⁷ {In the Hebrew original, “*ben chamesh lemikra*”; lit., “a five-year-old beginning to study Scripture.” This term, borrowed from *Pirkei Avos*, teaches that the appropriate age for a child to begin studying *Chumash* is five. Rashi wrote his commentary on *Chumash* to solve problems that a 5-year-old student would encounter trying to understand the simple meaning of a verse.}

²⁸ *Shabbos* 88b.

²⁹ {Regarding his Torah commentary, Rashi says, “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of Scripture” (*Bereishis* 3:8). Additionally, he wrote this commentary in a clear manner so that it should be understandable to (even) five-year-old beginning to study Scripture. His commentary on Gemara, however, tends to explain the text of the Gemara in a deeper, fuller, and often more complex manner.}

³⁰ *Shabbos* 88b.

³¹ *Sanhedrin* 34a.

In tractate *Shabbos*, we derive that “each and every utterance that emerged from Hashem’s Mouth divided into seventy languages,” and in tractate *Sanhedrin*, we derive that “{from} a single verse, several interpretations may emerge.”

But in both places, the beginning of the verse (“My word is like fire — the word of Hashem”) is indeed **not** cited; only the words “like a hammer that shatters a rock” are brought.

[Both tractates *Sukkah*³² and *Kiddushin*³³ bring the teaching: “If this scoundrel {the evil inclination} accosts you, drag him to the study hall... If he is like **iron**, he will be **shattered**, as it says: ‘My word is like fire — the word of Hashem — and like a hammer that shatters a rock.’” {In this teaching, the *entire* verse is quoted, not only the ending “like a hammer that shatters a rock.”}]

However, it is understandable why in those places, the Gemara chooses to {also} bring the beginning of the verse. The only reason why if you “drag him to the study hall,” causes that “if he is like iron, he will be shattered,” is (as **Rashi explains** there), “**for the Torah** is compared to a fire that melts iron.”³⁴ Therefore, it is pertinent and necessary to know that Torah’s words are compared to fire — “My word is like fire.”

In our context, however, the beginning of the verse is entirely irrelevant.]

³² *Sukkah* 52b.

³³ *Kiddushin* 30b.

³⁴ Rashi on *Kiddushin* 30b; and similarly, Rashi on *Sukkah* 52b.

7.

CONTRAST WITH PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

The difficulties mentioned above (in Sections 5 and 6) become even stronger when we compare **this** interpretation of Rashi with his **earlier** interpretation in *parshas Vayishlach*:

In his commentary on the verse,³⁵ “and he called it ‘Hashem is the L-rd of Israel,’”³⁶ Rashi offers two interpretations — one according to *pshat*, and the other, an interpretation in which “our Rabbis expounded” — and then concludes: “And the words of Torah are ‘like a hammer that shatters a rock,’ dividing into many lines of reasoning, but I have come to resolve the plain meaning of Scripture.”

Here, Rashi speaks precisely, expressing his point clearly and simply: (a) He concludes, “**dividing** into many **lines of reasoning**,”³⁷ which refers to “**the words of the Torah.**” Consequently, the interpretation of the **simile**, “like a hammer that shatters a rock,” follows its **straightforward** meaning — that the hammer shatters the rock into many pieces. (Accordingly, Rashi needn’t offer any further interpretation.) (b) Rashi doesn’t quote the beginning of the verse, “My word is like fire,” and only quotes the words “like a hammer that shatters a rock.”

In light of this, Rashi’s commentary in our *parshah* is even more puzzling. Why does Rashi **deviate** from the way he explained it in *parshas Vayishlach*: (a) by saying, “**which is divided** into many **nitzotzos**” (i.e., Rashi continues to speak about the **simile**), and consequently, the identity of the divided object remains ambiguous; and (b) by adding the beginning of the verse, “My word is like fire”?

³⁵ *Bereishis* 33:20.

³⁶ {The verse speaks about an altar that Yaakov set up when he arrived at Shechem.}

³⁷ Similar to the wording in *Sanhedrin* 34a.

8.

THE SPLITTING OF FIRE

The solution to the above difficulties is that each of these deviations {in Rashi’s commentary} explains the other:

Rashi makes two changes in his interpretation here as compared with his interpretation in *parshas Vayishlach*: (a) He adds the beginning of the verse, “My Word is like **fire**”; and (b) he uses nuanced wording, “which is divided into many **nitzotzos**.” By making these changes, Rashi makes his intent very clear: The word “divided” (in **this** comment of Rashi) refers back to “**fire**” at the beginning of the verse, for (and especially according to the approach of *pshat*, it is obvious that) only fire (and not a hammer or stone) can be divided into (many) *nitzotzos*, sparks.

The explanation is, as the **simple meaning** of Rashi’s wording implies: “My word is like fire” [the words of the Torah are likened to fire] “the word of Hashem — and like a hammer” (and likened to a hammer that) “shatters a rock” [and just like a hammer shatters a rock into many fragments, so too, the “**fire**” discussed **here**, the word of the Torah, is] “divided into many **nitzotzos**.”

The reason Rashi changes the wording in his commentary here when compared with the way he explains it in *parshas Vayishlach* (where he uses just the allegory of “like a hammer that shatters a rock” {and not as it clarifies the allegory of the fire}, as explained above), is that **here**, there is a **chiddush**³⁸ concerning the connection and relationship between the “midrashic” and “*pshat*” interpretations, and the only fitting illustration of this is of **fire** dividing into many sparks, as will be explained.

³⁸ {A novel idea. Rashi does not state the obvious in his commentary; he offers novel solutions to difficulties in the plain reading of the text.}

9.

SYNTHESIS

Rashi's intention in saying, "(Therefore, I say, let the text of Scripture be explained according to its simplest meaning,) and **let the homiletical interpretation {*drashah*} be expounded,**" is not the way it is understood superficially, that Rashi is informing us that *drash* is a legitimate method of Torah study (when studying according to the approach of *drash*), for this is obvious! Rather, Rashi intends that the "***pshat***" of the verse, in this context, **demands** the *drashah* be expounded.

This means something similar to what Rashi says in many places — "This **verse says** nothing but, 'Expound me!'"³⁹ — but with an essential difference: In those places, the (words of the) verse can not be explained on a *pshat* level; therefore, "This **verse says nothing but 'Expound me!'**": The (primary)⁴⁰ interpretation of the verse is according to the approach of *drash*.

In our verse, however, Rashi presents a new approach to explaining Scripture (that had never been employed until this point): Although the verse **has** a working interpretation according to the approach of *pshat*, and even more, this interpretation is the primary (initial) interpretation, since it explains the verse, "each word stated in its appropriate context," nevertheless, the *pshat* approach itself demands that "the homiletical interpretation {*drashah*} be expounded" — the *drash* interpretation needs to be incorporated. Put differently, the ***pshat* approach** compels the verse to be understood according to its *pshat* interpretation and {it is necessary that} "the homiletical interpretation (be expounded)."

For this reason, Rashi cites the midrash even though "this interpretation does not sit well with the text of Scripture" because, in this context, Rashi's **final**

³⁹ Beginning with *Bereishis* 1:1.

⁴⁰ However, since "I have come only to explain the plain meaning of Scripture," Rashi attempts to (also) interpret these verses (*Bereishis* 1:1; et al.) according to the *pshat* approach. ("If you would explain it according to its straightforward meaning....")

analysis abides by this interpretation, too. And as mentioned above, “let the homiletical interpretation (be expounded).”

10.

THE NEED FOR *DRASH*

The explanation:

In other places where Rashi says, “There are many *aggadic* midrashim” or the like, Rashi intends to highlight (as discussed above in Section 3) that there still is a difficulty with the simple meaning of the text, and that this difficulty will be resolved with a midrashic interpretation — but, if not for the difficulty (in the wording of the verse), there would be no proof or necessity for the midrashic interpretation.

And since the midrash **doesn’t** “resolve the words of Scripture with each word stated in its appropriate context” **at all** [and it only addresses specific difficulties with the text], therefore, Rashi cannot accept the midrash as the simple meaning of the verse.

However, in our case [in addition to the fact that the interpretation of our Rabbis helps explain difficulties in the wording of the verse that are not resolved by the first interpretation (as discussed above)], the content of the midrashic interpretation is compelled **regardless** {of this utility} (on its own merit) for the **substance** of the verses:

When a novice student of Torah reads Moshe’s question, “Why did You harm {this nation}?” and he reads of Hashem responding with words of rebuke — and he recalls what he has learnt about the Patriarchs, that although they endured many challenges, they nonetheless never complained against Hashem — it seems very obvious, that Hashem would respond to Moshe (to the effect of),

“Alas, for those who are gone (referring to the Patriarchs) and are no more to be found!”⁴¹

On the contrary, if Hashem *hadn't* responded in such a manner, it would raise a question in the mind of the novice student of the Torah: How could it be that Hashem didn't respond this way?

Therefore, after Rashi explains how “this midrashic interpretation does not sit well with the text of Scripture” (and the basic understanding of **the verse** follows the first interpretation), a question lingers: Since the **context** (including the plain meaning of the verses) indicates that Hashem responded with words of rebuke (“Alas, for those who are gone...”), why aren't these words of rebuke spelled out in the verse?

Although not **every** conversation between Hashem and Moshe is spelled out in the (Written) Torah, in this context, however, the verse states: “*Hashem spoke to Moshe* — He spoke to him {with words of} rebuke,” and it then continues to record other details and ideas that Hashem shared with Moshe **at that time**. Furthermore, in *parshas Shemos*,⁴² we are told that after Moshe asked, “Why did You harm {this nation}?” Hashem responded, “Now you will see” — with words of rebuke, as **Rashi** himself explains. Then why wouldn't the verse {also} mention **these** words of rebuke (“Alas, for those who are gone...”) ? This point is particularly compelling because this is a very well-founded complaint (also as understood in the approach of *pshat*).

For this reason, Rashi continues, “(Therefore, I say, let the text of Scripture be explained...,) and **let the homiletical interpretation {drashah} be expounded.**” Since the content of the verses indicates, and the wording of the verse alludes (at least according to *drash*) to **these** words of rebuke (“Alas, for those who are gone...”), this itself demands: “Let the homiletical interpretation {*drashah*} be expounded.” The ***pshat*** {dimension} (of the narrative) itself indicates that we must (**also**) interpret the verses homiletically.

⁴¹ {Rashi on *Shemos* 6:9.}

⁴² *Shemos* 6:1.

Meaning: According to *pshat*, the verse lends itself to **two** discussions between Hashem and Moshe: (a) the discussion spelled out clearly in the text, following the plain meaning of the wording, and (b) the words of rebuke alluded to in those words (following the homiletic interpretation of the verse).

11.

ROCK VS. FLAME

Ordinarily, it is quite clear where each respective interpretation belongs: The interpretations according to *pshat* (including the *aggadic* interpretations that sit well with the wording of the verse, with each word stated in its appropriate context, that is included in the category of *pshat*) are written in the *pshat* portion of Torah. The interpretations according to *drash* are written in the *drash* portion of Torah (*aggadic* midrashim).

In our context, however, we have an interpretation that “has made it ride on two steeds”:⁴³ It is necessary according to the **simple** meaning of the verse, yet it belongs (not in the category of *pshat* but rather) in the ***drash*** portion of Torah (which does not “sit well with the text of the verse”)!

Since Rashi needs to validate this mode of scriptural interpretation, he cites the verse, “As it says, ‘My word is like fire — the word of Hashem — and like a hammer that shatters a rock,’ which is divided into many *nitzotzos*,” which means (as explained above in Section 8) that the **fire** itself “is divided into many *nitzotzos*”:

The **straightforward** difference between the way a rock shatters into many pieces and the way a flame splits into many sparks is as follows:

When a rock is split into many pieces, each piece is **different** from the others — in size, in form, etc. In contrast, when sparks burst from a flame, each (of the sparks) appears the **same**, both in size and in form. There is no

⁴³ Similar to *Kesubos* 55b; et al.

discernible difference between one spark and the other. The only difference is that each spark flies in a different direction and place, this one toward the west, and the other toward the south, etc.

Similarly, the words of Torah can be broken up in two ways:

One way is how Rashi explains it in *parshas Vayishlach*, “And the words of Torah are ‘like a hammer that shatters a rock,’ dividing into various **rationales**”⁴⁴ — the words of the Torah are divided into various methodologies of study. This is analogous to how “a hammer shatters a rock,” which brings about a change not only in place but in its **substance** and “rationale,” as well: One interpretation has the “rationale” drawn from *pshat*, and the other has the “rationale” drawn from *drash*, etc.

[This is in line with the {difference between the} two interpretations that Rashi brings there on the verse, “and he called יְיָ, it {or “him”} ‘Hashem {is} the L-rd of Israel’’: The first interpretation — that the word “it” refers to the altar (“he named the altar after the miracle”) — follows *pshat*; and the second interpretation — “that Hashem called Yaakov ‘G-d’” — has a “rationale” based in *drash*.]

However, in our *parshah*, Rashi introduces a new insight regarding “My word” {of Torah}. This {manner by which Torah words are broken} is similar to the way fire divides into many sparks: Both interpretations share the **same** “rationale” — the logic of (and the necessity required by) the approach of *pshat* [just as all sparks are of the same size and shape]; the only difference between them is their **place**: One interpretation (the “spark” of *pshat*) is found in one area — in the simple understanding of the verse’s wording; and the second interpretation (the “spark” of *drash*) is found in a different area — in the midrashic understanding of the verse.

⁴⁴ {Rashi on *Bereishis* 33:20}.

12.

ONE TORAH

Based on everything discussed above, we can now see how the entire Torah is **one** Torah in a much stronger and more powerful way:

The term “one Torah” doesn’t only imply that these various modes of study are all interpreting the **same** verse or teaching (moreover, they are all a progression, one to the next; as is well known,⁴⁵ the four modes of study — פרד”ס *pshat, remez*,⁴⁶ *drush*, and *sod*⁴⁷ — correspond to the four Worlds {referred to by the acronym}, אבי”ע,⁴⁸ which are themselves a progression, one to the next). Therefore, all parts of the Torah must be in harmony.

Not only do all of the parts of the Torah combine to make up “a complete structure” (just as all of person’s limbs, both physical and spiritual, come together as one [complete] “person”),⁴⁹ but much more: Even as each part of Torah is in its own distinctive “location” [and the mode of study for each part of Torah follows its respective guidelines — for every part of Torah has its own guidelines of study], as a result of them being a part of Hashem’s Torah, which is “(My word...) **like fire**” — above division (just like actual fire) — they remain (in essence) one with the other parts of Torah. This unity is true to the extent that an interpretation mandated by a verse’s simple meaning can be integrated into the *drash* portion of the Torah.

⁴⁵ See *Eitz Chaim* (cited in the beginning of *Nagid Umitzavai; Nahar Shalom*, at the end of “*Hakdamas Rechovos Hanahar*”); *Mishnas Chassidim*, (“*Meseches Chiyuv Ha’neshamos*,” 1:2) — cited and elucidated in *Likkutei Dibburim*, vol. 4, p. 771a.

⁴⁶ {*Remez* is a method of commentary based on hints and allusions in the text, sometimes based on the numerical value of letters.}

⁴⁷ {*Sod* is a method of commentary focusing on the secrets and esoteric teachings of Torah, based on *Kabbalah*.}

⁴⁸ {*Abiya*— These are the main stages, and resulting realms, in the creative process resulting from the progressive self-screening of the Divine light known as *tzimtzum*; in descending order: *Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, often referred to by their acronym *Abiya*.}

⁴⁹ See *Likkutei Torah*, beg. of *parshas Nitzavim*; and in many other places.

13.

BODY AND SOUL

In light of the above discussion, we can derive a lesson concerning the *pnimiyus* of Torah⁵⁰ (“the soul of Torah”⁵¹): We must recognize that it is one entity with the *nigleh* of Torah⁵² (“the body of Torah”⁵³).

In several instances when learning a subject in *nigleh*, one encounters a difficulty that demands to be expounded by the *pnimiyus* of Torah.”⁵⁴ *Nigleh* of Torah itself necessitates an interpretation by “the soul of Torah.”

This reliance is particularly evident in the general practice of *nigleh* to attribute physical characteristics to Hashem — “His legs, His finger,” etc.⁵⁵ {where the interpretations of *pnimiyus* of Torah are essential for a basic understanding}.

Likewise, the converse is true — as demonstrated plainly by the numerous writings of the Arizal that discuss various interpretations and matters according to the approach of *pshat*.

By studying **all** parts of the Torah while being mindful of its singularity, we will immediately merit learning the Torah of Mashiach, who will teach it to the entire Jewish nation⁵⁶ speedily in our days.

-From talks delivered on Shabbos *parshas Vaera*, Shabbos *parshas Bo*, and the 15th of *Shevat*, 5741 (1981)

⁵⁰ {The inner dimension of Torah, i.e., Kabbalah, Chassidus.}

⁵¹ *Zohar*, vol. 3, 152a.

⁵² {The revealed dimension of Torah, i.e., Tanach, Mishnah, Gemara, Halachah, etc.}

⁵³ *Zohar*, vol. 3, 152a.

⁵⁴ {An stylistic adaptation of Rashi on *Bereishis* 1:1.}

⁵⁵ See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 1, par. 9.

⁵⁶ *Likkutei Torah*, *parshas Tzav*, 17a; and *Shaar HaEmunah*, ch. 56, et passim.