



Likkutei Sichos

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Questioning Hashem's Ways

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¹ Also, 24th of Teves {The day of the Alter Rebbe's passing}. See the end of the *sichah* (sec. 12).

1.

WHY DOES RASHI CITE THE AGGADAH AS *PSHAT*?

As discussed many times, although Rashi (primarily) clarifies *peshuto shel mikra*,² his commentary contains “wondrous matters”³ in other areas of Torah, including, “the wine of Torah.”⁴ However, in order to identify **these** ideas (in the other dimensions of Torah), we need to first study Rashi’s commentary according to *pshat*.

After Rashi explains the simple meaning of the verses at the beginning of our *parshah*,⁵ “I appeared to Avraham... and I also established...,” Rashi continues:⁶

Our Rabbis⁷ expounded (these verses) as referring to the subject above. Namely, that Moshe said,⁸ “Why did You harm {this people}?” Hashem said to him in response, “Woe for those who are lost, and are not found! I have {good} cause to bemoan the death of the Patriarchs. Many times I revealed Myself to them as י-וה ל-א,⁹ yet they did not ask Me, ‘What is Your name?’ — but you said,¹⁰ ‘{If they will ask me} what is His name, what shall I answer them?’” *And I also established...* — {Hashem said to Moshe:} “When Avraham sought to bury Sarah, he could not find property, until he purchased land for an exorbitant price. So, too, regarding Yitzchak: They made claims against him about the wells that he had dug. So, too, regarding Yaakov... yet they did not question My ways. You, however, said, ‘Why did You harm...?’”

² {The plain meaning of Scripture, often referred to as “*pshat*.” Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture.” Although there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

³ *Shnei Luchos Habris*, “Tractate *Shavuos*” (p. 181a).

⁴ *Hayom Yom* 29 Shevat. {“The Alter Rebbe once said: “Rashi’s commentary on *Chumash* is ‘the wine of the Torah.’ It unlocks the heart and reveals one’s essential love and fear for Hashem.” The term “the wine of the Torah” refers to the Torah’s inner secrets. In the idiom of the Sages, [*Sanhedrin* 38a] “When wine enters, the secrets come out.”}

⁵ {*Shemos* 6:3-4.}

⁶ *Shemos* 6:9.

⁷ See *Sanhedrin* 111a; *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 6, sec. 4; *Midrash Tanchuma* at the beginning of our *parshah*.

⁸ *Shemos* 5:22.

⁹ {Two of Hashem’s holy names combined. For an explanation, see www.chabad.org/2524632}

¹⁰ *Shemos* 3:13.

(Rashi concludes, “But the explanation offered by our Rabbis does not rest well with the text of the Scripture.”)

At the end of *parshas Shemos*, on the verse,¹¹ “Now you will see...” (which records — in Scripture — Hashem’s response to, “Why did You harm”), Rashi says: You questioned My ways, unlike Avraham to whom I said,¹² “For through Yitzchak will your seed be called,” following which I said to him,¹³ “Offer him as a burnt offering,” yet he did not question My ways....”¹⁴

We need to clarify

- a. Why, in the aforementioned explanation — “our Rabbis expounded” in *parshas Vayera* — does Rashi offer (from the teachings of our Rabbis) proofs that *all* the Patriarchs “did not question My ways,” whereas at the end of *parshas Shemos*, he only offers proof regarding Avraham?
- b. Even regarding Avraham himself, Rashi, in our *parshah*, explains the phrase “did not question My ways” cites a different event (when Avraham wanted to bury Sarah, etc.) than the one he cites in his commentary at the end of *parshas Shemos* (“to whom I said, ‘For through Yitzchak will your seed be called’”).
- c. Most importantly: At the end of *parshas Shemos*, Rashi brings this interpretation of the phrase “did not question,” without attributing it to an author. Meaning, this is his explanation — ***peshuto shel mikra***. In contrast, in our *parshah* — he prefaces with the opening phrase, “Our Rabbis *drashuhu* {expounded}” — a *drash*.¹⁵ Moreover, it is the type of *drash* that “does not rest well with the text of the Scripture.” This runs contrary to

¹¹ *Shemos* 6:1.

¹² *Bereishis* 21:12.

¹³ *Bereishis* 22:2.

¹⁴ See Rashi, *Bereishis* 22:12, “Avraham said to Hashem, ‘I will present **my words** to you....’”

¹⁵ {*Drush* is an exegetical method of commentary in which the words of a verse are used as a platform to express an ostensibly extrinsic idea. This method is employed in *Midrash* and in *Aggadah* Rashi cites “*Aggadah* that clarifies the words of the verses” only when the simple interpretation does not suffice.}

Rashi's rule that he only mentions *Aggadic* teachings that “clarify the words of the verses.”¹⁶

2.

WHEN THE PROMISE MAKES IT WORSE

We can posit that the final {unusual} nuance {discussed in the last question above} resolves all the aforementioned questions: At the end of *parshas Shemos*, Rashi explains ***peshuto shel mikra in that context***. According to *pshat*, the verse, “Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Now you will see...,’” is Hashem’s response (as mentioned) to Moshe’s complaint in the previous passage,¹⁷ “Why did You harm this people... From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he mistreated this people.”

Not only did this mission¹⁸ not bring salvation to the Jewish people (“You did not rescue Your people”)¹⁹ but **on the contrary**, “he **harmed** this people”! Therefore, {Hashem replied} “You will now see” — that which will be done to Pharaoh you will see, but not that which is to be done to the kings of the seven Canaanite nations...,”²⁰ since Moshe questioned Hashem’s actions.

This is unlike the way (he should have conducted himself, and the way, in fact, that) Avraham had conducted himself **in a similar situation**, for he did not question Hashem’s ways: Although, “I said to him, ‘for through Yitzchak will your seed be called,’ and afterwards I said to him, ‘offer him as a burnt offering,’” in that case, the **promise** itself also caused even more pain (just like our case — similar to, “From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he **harmed**...”)

As is plainly obvious, the distress of not having children cannot compare to the suffering that Avraham had endured by the prospect of losing his only son after

¹⁶ Rashi’s commentary on *Bereishis* 3:8, et al.

¹⁷ {*Shemos* 5:22-23.}

¹⁸ {*Shemos* 5:1-5.}

¹⁹ {*Shemos* 5:23.}

²⁰ {*Shemos* 6:1, Rashi. This was Moshe’s punishment for questioning Hashem’s ways.}

Hashem had blessed him to father one in his old age. Moreover, it was Avraham who was the one who had to do the {shocking} deed.²¹

On this basis, we can also understand why, as proof for Avraham not questioning Hashem, Rashi cannot offer the example, “when Avraham sought to bury Sarah, he could not find property. (Similarly, regarding Yitzchak, Rashi does not say, ‘they made claims against him...’; similarly, regarding Yaakov, Rashi does not say, ‘He bought the parcel of land...’)”²² For in those narratives, Hashem’s promise itself (to grant them the land) was not the cause for him to have to purchase the land for an exorbitant sum.

The only qualms they could have had {as to Hashem fulfilling His promise} was that since Hashem promised to give them the land, it should not have cost Avraham (so much) money²³ (and similarly, regarding Yitzchak and Yaakov). Thus, this doubt does not correspond **precisely** to Moshe’s, where Hashem’s mission itself caused that “he harmed this people.”

However, according to the **exposition** of “our Rabbis,” everything in the passage (including, “I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov”) is a thematic continuation of the subject of “the **matter** above.” As such, this is also part of Hashem’s response to Moshe’s statements and questions in **general** (even the ones that were not based specifically on the additional harm). This began from, “but you said, ‘If they will ask me, what is His name, what shall I answer them?’” Thus, we can appreciate why {in this explanation} Rashi mentions the **exegesis** of our Rabbis and cites proof that all three of the Patriarchs “did not question My ways (**at all**).”

²¹ {I.e., Avraham was told to sacrifice his only son Yitzchak at the *Akeidah*.}

²² *Bereishis* 33:19.

²³ See Rashi on *Bereishis* 23:9.

3.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Furthermore, we can propose {another answer}:

Moshe's question, "Why did You harm this people..." was not about a personal matter, relevant only to him. The issue he raised was germane to "this people," to the Jews as a whole. Thus, Rashi (following the methodology of *pshat*) could not cite a proof from Avraham who did not question Hashem's actions in the context of purchasing the cave of Machpelah, or from Yitzchak in the context of the well, or from Yaakov in the context of "he bought the parcel of land." For all these matters were relevant to them as individuals, and therefore, we could make a distinction and suggest that they had not questioned Hashem's actions because they had thought that Hashem's promise to them was not fulfilled because "sin intervened" (as Rashi **earlier** explained regarding **Yaakov**).²⁴

In contrast, Moshe complained about the harm brought upon the Jewish nation; thus, it's not possible that **Moshe's sin** would have led Hashem to harm the nation.

Therefore, Rashi cites in his explanation (according to *pshat*) at the end of *parshas Shemos*: "unlike Avraham to whom I said, 'For through Yitzchak will your seed be called,' and afterwards I said to him, 'Offer him as a burnt offering.'" For this was also relevant (not only to Avraham himself, but) to all subsequent generations. Thus, here, too, the intervention of a sin {by Avraham} could not have been the reason, and nevertheless, "he did not question My ways." In contrast, regarding Yitzchak and Yaakov, we do not find this type of event and conduct {and therefore Rashi only cites the above example from Avraham}.

This all holds true according to *peshuto shel mikra*. However, according to the way "our Rabbis expounded," according to the *Midrash (aggadah)* of Torah — which is connected to "the soul of the Torah,"²⁵ (for, "most of the secrets of the

²⁴ *Bereishis* 32:11.

²⁵ *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 152a. {"The soul of Torah" is its deeper, inner, or mystical dimension.}

Torah are hidden in it {in *Aggadah*}”²⁶ — “the Patriarchs were the ‘chariot,’”²⁷ meaning, even down here in this world they remained at the level of a “chariot,” just as they were in the supernal worlds.²⁸

Therefore, we cannot suggest that “I have become sullied with sin”²⁹ {which in turn, released Hashem from His promise to them} could have applied. Therefore, we can also prove that “they did not question Hashem’s actions” from events, which ostensibly were personal affairs, only relevant to them as individuals — the cave of Machpelah to Avraham, the wells to Yitzchak, and “he bought the parcel of land” to Yaakov — for they served as “a *chariot* for **nothing but** the Divine will, **throughout** their lives.”³⁰

4.

BODIES AND SOULS

From the wine of Torah in Rashi’s commentary:

This idea, we may adduce, is alluded to by the connection between Rashi’s two explanations, as mentioned above:

We have previously discussed at length the conduct of the Patriarchs Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.³¹ Their conduct has two planes:

- a) The {first is the} conduct of the Patriarchs as a function of their bodies. In this regard, it was possible for Avraham to have worried, “Perhaps I have

²⁶ *Tanya, Iggeres Hakodesh*, epistle 23 ;Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Talmud Torah*, ch. 2, par. 3.

²⁷ {The Patriarchs’ submission to the Divine Will was unique in its power, scope and consistency. They totally surrendered themselves to the Divine Will analogous to the submission of a chariot to its driver.} *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 47, sec. 6; ch. 82, sec. 6; **Rashi** (*Bereishis* 17:22) “and we learn (**from Avraham**) that the righteous are the chariot of the Omnipresent.”

²⁸ “For all of their organs were completely **holy** and detached from mundane matters... throughout their lives” (*Tanya*, ch. 23).

²⁹ Rashi, *Bereishis*, 32:11.

³⁰ *Tanya*, ch. 23.

³¹ *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 298, ff.

received reward for all my righteous deeds,”³² and for him to have asked for a “**sign** regarding the inheritance of the land,”³³ and similarly, for Yaakov {to have been concerned about Eisav}.³⁴

[We find a similar concept expressed in the story of the *Maggid of Mezritch*³⁵ who envisioned Moshe Rabbeinu studying Torah with young children {in *Gan Eden*}. Moshe was teaching his young students the verse, “Avraham fell upon his face and laughed; and he thought, ‘Shall a child be born to a hundred-year-old man? And shall Sarah — a ninety-year-old woman — give birth?’”³⁶ Moshe explained the narrative in keeping with the rule that “a verse does not depart from its straightforward meaning” {i.e., Avraham - as a mortal being, with a physical body, had difficulty accepting G-d’s promise that this would indeed happen, since “even a holy body is still flesh”³⁷}.]

b) The {second is the} conduct of the Patriarchs as a function of their **souls**; in this regard, it's impossible that they would question Hashem’s actions, etc.

We have also clarified that the explanations Rashi offers in his commentary on Torah, according to *pshat* (the body of Torah),³⁸ address the conduct of the Patriarchs as a function of their bodies. Whereas the explanations offered by *Midrash* — the *aggadah* of Torah — address the conduct of the Patriarchs as a function of their souls.

Similarly, in our context: In Rashi’s comments at the end of *parshas Shemos*, which conform with the method of **pshat**, he discusses the conduct of the Patriarchs as a function of their bodies. Therefore, he cannot cite a proof regarding Moshe’s question about “this people” from the fact that the Patriarchs did not question Hashem’s ways in their private affairs. For {as a mortal, with the limitations imposed by a physical body, it is possible that} Avraham may have

³² Rashi, *Bereishis* 15:1.

³³ Rashi, *Bereishis* 15:6.

³⁴ Rashi, *Bereishis* 32:9.

³⁵ Recorded in the *HaTamim* journal (vol. 2, p. 71) 83b; *Kovetz Michtavim* on *Tehillim* p. 197; {*Iggros Kodesh* of the Previous Rebbe, vol. 3, p. 454-455.}

³⁶ *Bereishis* 17:17.

³⁷ *Shabbos* 63a.

³⁸ {*Pshat* is “body” of Torah; *Aggadah* is its “soul.”}

thought that he {was undeserving, and he had} already received his full reward, etc., and the same applies to Yaakov.

In contrast, according to the way our “Rabbis ***drashuhu*** {**expounded**}” — the *aggadah* of Torah (wherein most of the secrets of the Torah are hidden) — we view the conduct of the Patriarchs as a function of their **souls** {and therefore} we can bring proof even from cases where the Patriarchs did not question Hashem’s ways in their private affairs {since on this plane, we cannot say that there was a lack in their divine service and they were undeserving}.

We can also explain this issue regarding Moshe along similar lines:

According to *peshuto shel mikra*, Moshe’s complaint to Hashem, at the end of *parshas Shemos* — “Why did You harm this people... From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he harmed this people...” — was a function of the first plane {Moshe’s body}. On this level, it is possible to say that Moshe **questioned** Hashem’s actions (and claimed, “I have grievance over the fact that You sent me”),³⁹ complaining to Hashem himself, as it were, that his mission had led to the Jewish people’s increased suffering. [Therefore, he deserved the punishment: “Therefore, you will now see — that which will be done to Pharaoh you will see, but not....”]

In contrast, according to our Rabbis’ exposition, which speaks from the perspective of the second level {Moshe’s soul}, we cannot suggest that Hashem took issue with Moshe because he questioned Hashem’s ways in a **literal sense** (and was punished as a result). Rather, Hashem’s grievance was that “many times I revealed Myself to them as י-הוה ל-א yet they did not ask Me, “what is Your name?” — **but you said... What is His name.**” Meaning, Hashem complained that Moshe wanted to know Hashem’s great and holy name, the secret of the explicit name, and to attain a greater knowledge of G-dliness⁴⁰ — the name *Havaya*, Hashem’s attribute of truth, the name of Hashem’s Essence.⁴¹ {From the perspective of his soul} even Moshe’s statement, “Why did You harm this people,”

³⁹ Rashi, *Shemos* 5:22

⁴⁰ As when he asked, “pray let me know Your ways,” and, “Show me, now, Your glory!” (*Shemos* 33:13,18).

⁴¹ As we see from the later verses **in our *parshah***.

was not **questioning** Hashem's ways, in the literal sense. Rather, here, too, Moshe wanted and asked {Hashem} to understand, in his mind, all the details of Hashem's mission, and the ways {it would become fulfilled}. (On this basis, we can appreciate why Rashi, when mentioning the exposition of the Rabbis, is careful to avoid the wording, "**question** My ways," regarding **Moshe**, as he writes in his commentary [at the end of *parshas Shemos*] according to *pshat*.)

5.

MOSHE RABBEINU QUESTIONED HASHEM'S WAYS?!

Still, we can counter: How can we possibly suggest that on the first plane {i.e., as a consequence of Moshe's body}, Moshe questioned Hashem's actions in the literal sense? After all, we are talking about Moshe Rabbeinu, about whom the Torah says immediately upon his birth, "She saw that he was good"⁴² — "the entire house became filled with light."⁴³ This is even more puzzling in light of the fact that we emphasize the contrast between the Patriarchs who did **not** question Hashem's ways, and Moshe — "the preeminent of human beings"⁴⁴ (including the Patriarchs) — who did, in fact, question Hashem's ways?

Additionally, we need to clarify: Since "Scripture does not speak disparagingly {even} of an impure animal,"⁴⁵ obviously the same holds true regarding a Jewish person, and certainly regarding Moshe Rabbeinu. Thus, why does Torah recount how Moshe questioned Hashem's ways? [What lesson does this contain for a Jewish person in his service of Hashem? Ostensibly, it would be difficult to suggest that a Jewish person must take a lesson as to the extent that questioning Hashem should be avoided, and to follow instead the example of the Patriarchs who did not question Hashem. For if Moshe Rabbeinu did not manage to avoid doing so, how can we expect this of every Jew in all times?]

⁴² *Shemos* 2:2.

⁴³ *Shemos* 2:2, Rashi.

⁴⁴ Rambam's *Commentary on Mishnah, Sanhedrin*, Introduction to ch. *Chelek*, principle 7.

⁴⁵ *Bava Basra* 123a.

6.

THE INHERITANCE OF G-DLY REVELATION

We will resolve these questions by first explaining why Rashi, commenting on the words, “I appeared,” explains, “to the Patriarchs.” There is a well-known question (as the commentators on Rashi ask): The verse itself immediately specifies, “I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov.” What is Rashi adding?

The explanation: With his interpretation, Rashi aims to explain that the idea and advantage alluded to by the phrase, “**I appeared** to Avraham...” — seeing G-dliness with certainty and lucidity (with the conviction afforded by physically seeing something) — which is why the Patriarchs could not question Hashem’s ways — was a quality the Patriarchs possessed as **fathers** of the Jewish people. Meaning, “I appeared” was gifted to them with the intent that it be conferred **as an inheritance** (from the “father”s) to their descendants, since “a father transmits to his son beauty... wisdom.”⁴⁶

As explained in *Torah Or* (on this *parshah*) regarding {the teaching of our Sages}, “One may only call three people Fathers,”⁴⁷ “the quality of the Fathers is an inheritance to their descendants after them in every generation... the quality of the Fathers must be present **in every person.**”

This explains Hashem’s complaint to Moshe: “Woe for those who are lost and are not found!” Since “**I appeared** to Avraham...” relates to the **Patriarchs**, the response that Avraham... {Yitzchak and Yaakov} were different {than Moshe} has no merit. Since this refers to the the “fathers,” every Jew is their “son,” and therefore, the level {of unquestioning faith in Hashem, brought about through} “I appeared” pertains to all Jews, since they possess it as an inheritance.

⁴⁶ *Eduyos*, ch. 2, *mishnah* 9.

⁴⁷ *Berachos* 16b.

WE ALL HAVE THE PATRIARCHS' VIRTUES

Seemingly, we could still make a distinction and suggest: Although a father bequeaths his traits to his child, nonetheless, it is self-evident that since the child possesses them as bequeathed traits, the traits, as such, are inferior as compared with those of the father.

This being the case, we could answer that {unquestioning faith in Hashem, brought about through their experience with the Divine, i.e.,} “I appeared,” inherited by a son cannot compare with the (lofty) level of {unquestioning faith, implicit in the term} “I appeared” that the fathers experienced.

The response to this is also hinted at in Rashi’s commentary: “*I appeared* — to the **Patriarchs**.” The revelation {introduced by Hashem saying} “**I appeared**,” came to the **Patriarchs**. Meaning, the revelation came to them not by virtue of (and according to) **their** unique status in their divine service (i.e., “Avraham, who loved Me,”⁴⁸ the path of love; [“The fear of] Yitzchak,”⁴⁹ the path of severity, etc.), but rather, it was entirely connected with their being **Fathers** (of **children** — who inherit everything). Thus, we can appreciate why in the context of {Hashem saying} “I appeared,” there is no distinction between fathers and children.

The advantage and virtue of a father over his son is only relevant with respect to things that the father attained by dint of his own unique traits and *avodah* as a servant of Hashem, etc. Although these traits are also then bequeathed to his children — as mentioned above from the *mishnah*, “A father bequeaths...” — these traits are not inherited by a son on the same lofty level as they are present within the father, the one who bequeaths them.

In our context, however, where the advantage of {unquestioning faith in Hashem, brought about through} “I appeared” (i.e., Hashem revealed Himself by His volition) came to the **Patriarchs** — {i.e., solely as a result of them being

⁴⁸ {*Yeshaya* 41:8.}

⁴⁹ {*Bereishis* 31:42.}

Fathers} an honorific indicating that their **identity** {as fathers} is created by their children — it is understood that the virtue {of faith} descends as an inheritance to the children {undiluted, i.e.,} as it exists within the father.

Based on all the above, this question is even more puzzling: If every Jew, and certainly Moshe, possesses the trait of resolute faith implicit in the term, “**I appeared**,” as an inheritance from the Patriarchs, how did this faith not restrain Moshe from questioning Hashem’s ways?

8.

BELIEVERS

The explanation:

Our Rabbis say, “The Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt only as reward for their faith.”⁵⁰ Meaning, their core Jewishness — the connection of the Jewish people with Hashem, which expresses itself in the faith that the Jewish people placed in Hashem — was **revealed**. This made them worthy of being redeemed from Egypt.

Although, previously, while still living under the hardship of the Egyptian exile, the Jewish people were “believers,”⁵¹ nonetheless, this was a result of their being “...sons of believers.”⁵² They had this faith as an **inheritance**, regardless of their own expressed spiritual state as children. However, from the perspective of the status and *avodah* of the Jewish people, i.e., the traits of the sons themselves, they were not yet “nourished by faith,”⁵³ they did not have the complete revelation of faith.

⁵⁰ *Mechilta, parshas Beshalach*, 14:31.

⁵¹ *Shemos* 4:31; *Shabbos* 97a; see Rashi, in his commentary on Torah, *Shemos*, 4:2.

⁵² See fn. 51.

⁵³ {*Tehillim* 37:3.}

In order for the Jews to be redeemed from Egypt by virtue of their own merits, i.e., as their own **reward**, the Jewish people's inherited faith in Hashem needed to become their own **personal** trait.

9.

MOSHE'S JOB OF PROVIDING FOR OUR FAITH

This was brought about by Moshe, as this is the difference between the way Moshe and the way that the Patriarchs conferred G-dliness {to the Jewish people}: From the perspective of the Patriarchs' level, as discussed, the core Jewishness and faith is conferred to every Jew as an inheritance, i.e., every Jew has it naturally, from his birth, being a child of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

However, Moshe, who besides being “one of the seven shepherds who elicit vitality and G-dliness to the the souls of Israel as a whole,” also “comprises them all, and is called ‘the faithful shepherd.’”⁵⁴ He sustains, provides for, and influences the Jewish people so that their inherent faith should “be nourished,” i.e., that they should internalize it. Meaning, a person's “faith should be wholesome and strong, and it should touch even the innermost part of his soul.”⁵⁵ Then faith will pervade the person's whole being and everything that he is involved with, including his practical conduct.

⁵⁴ *Tanya*, ch. 42.

⁵⁵ *Torah Or, Hosafos*, s.v., “*Ki sisa*.”

10.

MOSHE CHANGING THINGS UP

Based on all the above, we can also appreciate Moshe's question, "Why did You harm..." (which the Torah informs us of, even though "Avraham... did not question") and Hashem's response, "I appeared to the Patriarchs."

This discussion occurred close to the redemption, after Hashem had sent Moshe on a mission to free the Jewish people. The Jewish people's connection to Hashem through their faith had to be active not only because of their {inheritance of faith from the} Patriarchs, i.e., because they were "believers, the sons of believers." Rather, by this stage, their faith needed to permeate their personalities and dispositions.

Moshe accomplished this by asking and questioning, "Why did You harm?... From the time I came to Pharaoh... he harmed..." To which Hashem responded, "I appeared..." Meaning, the level of faith expressed by the phrase, "I appeared" — i.e., their absolute faith {in Hashem} (in the manner of **seeing**) and the Jewish people's connection to Hashem through their faith — now became true even at the level of the Jewish people's existence, which by itself, could, in fact, have questioned Hashem's ways. Thus, the superiority of a consummate faith in Hashem — "I appeared" — reached even this level {i.e., their own understanding, where questioning Hashem's ways had beforehand been possible}. Consequently, the possibility of questioning Hashem's ways was totally negated.

Therefore, at the end of *parshas Shemos*, Rashi says, "you questioned My ways, unlike Avraham ... who did not question My ways": By saying this, Rashi emphasizes that the level of {faith, as implied by the phrase} "did not question" that Moshe and all the Jewish people received from Avraham (the fathers) did not suffice (since (alone) overtly, "you **questioned**..."). For although this faith comes as an inheritance, faith can waver due to the son's own nature and makeup.⁵⁶ Moshe's achievement was that he eliminated this possibility of uncertainty — "you

⁵⁶ {In the Hebrew, "*metziuso*"; lit. "what he is."}

questioned.” He did so by {evoking} Hashem’s **speech**⁵⁷— the revelation of {the sublime, unwavering level of faith alluded to by His words}, “I appeared,” as discussed.

11.

SHEMOS VS. VAEIRA NUANCE

This demonstrates, even more so, the precision of Rashi dividing his two explanations, the one according to *pshat* (at the end of *parshas Shemos*) and the one according to the exposition of “our Rabbis” (in our *parshah*): We discussed above that Rashi’s interpretations according to *pshat* explain matters from the perspective of a person with a physical body. However, the intention is not that Moshe — because of the nature of his corporeal existence — could question Hashem’s ways, in a literal sense, G-d forbid. For since, “he was good,” as mentioned, it was impossible that he would question Hashem’s ways. Rather, the meaning is that he did something that could (according to *pshat* and the external impression) **be interpreted** as questioning, **literally** (which is a sin).

Therefore, according to *pshat*, the body of Torah, which is relevant to every Jewish person no matter their situation, this inquiry {of Moshe} is interpreted **literally** as “you questioned My ways.” Because this level of faith alluded to by the phrase, “I appeared,” needed to be instilled in all Jewish people, also those whose bodies (still) mask their souls so that the faith engendered by the soul is not **openly expressed**. That’s why they, possessing their {corporeal} bodies, in and of themselves, could **ask**, “Why did You harm...,” and question Hashem’s ways, **literally**.

Moshe, who comprises all the Jewish people,⁵⁸ brings about, for these people also, the revelation implied by the phrase, “I appeared,” i.e., the revelation, conviction, and connection through faith, which precludes the possibility of questioning, and is the antithesis of questioning.

⁵⁷ {Chassidus explains that speech is a revelatory faculty, disclosing the thoughts of the speaker to the one with whom he speaks. See, for example, *Tanya*, ch. 20.}

⁵⁸ *Arizal’s Shaar Ruach HaKodesh* (ed. Tel Aviv, 1963), 108d; *Shaar HaGilgulim*, “*Hakdama 17*”; et al.

In contrast, according to what “our Rabbis expounded” — “the soul of the Torah” — we see how a Jewish person’s soul shines; consequently, Hashem’s ways cannot be questioned in a literal sense. Rather {a person of faith has} a desire to understand “what is His name,” and to **understand**, “why did You harm” also intellectually. Moshe “nourished faith,” meaning, Moshe accomplished that the faith in, and the truth of, Divinity on the level alluded to by the phrase, “I appeared,” beyond intellect and reason, should be recognized even by the **mind**.

12.

CONNECTION TO 24 TEVES

Based on all the above, we can also appreciate the connection between the 24th of Teves — the Alter Rebbe’s *yahrzeit*⁵⁹ — and *parshas Vaeira* (in accordance with the well-known statement of the *Shelah* {that auspicious days are connected with the weekly *parshah* in which they occur}),⁶⁰ as this year⁶¹ (as in many years) this date falls in the week of *parshas Vaeira*:

[On the day of the Alter Rebbe’s *yahrzeit*, “all his actions, his Torah, and the *avodah* in which he engaged all the days of his life” ascend above, and “are revealed and radiate in a manifest way from above to **below**.”]⁶² Chabad Chassidus, which was revealed by the Alter Rebbe, introduced a novelty that overlaid the teachings of *Chassidus* of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch. Its innovation ({at least} one facet) is that “people will be **sustained** from it,”⁶³ i.e., from the inner dimension of Torah. Through the teachings of Chabad Chassidus, **this** faith in Hashem is revealed in a way that it **permeates** the entire person, beginning with his mortal intellect — *Chabad*.⁶⁴ Not only should the **nucleus** of a person’s latent faith be revealed, moreover, Chabad Chassidus

⁵⁹ {Day of passing.}

⁶⁰ *Shnei Luchos Habris*, “Torah Shebichsav,” beg. of *parshas Vayeishev*.

⁶¹ {This *sicha* was delivered in the year 5731 (1971).}

⁶² *Tanya, Iggeres Hakodesh*, epistle 27, 28.

⁶³ *Tikkunei Zohar* (*tikkun* 6, at the end).

⁶⁴ {An acronym for *chochmah*, *binah*, and *da’as* — the intellectual faculties: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.}

teaches that this {nucleus of} faith should be fully developed by his *avodah* and his faculties, even though earlier {before the advent of Chassidus Chabad}, on their own, they {his *avodah* and faculties} were not fit for this {i.e., to serve as the means and the conduit for this sublime, nucleus of faith to be developed}.

The Alter Rebbe accomplished this by immersing the teachings of *Chassidus* also into the soul's intellectual faculties. Ultimately, he brought the teachings also to “the outside,” which superficially⁶⁵ appears to be a discrete entity, which by itself, would conceal the **revelation** of the faith in Hashem.

Just as the Jewish people's faith was uncovered by Moshe asking, “Why did You harm,” and by Hashem saying, “**I appeared to the Patriarchs,**” i.e., **this** vision (conviction) of the Jewish people and their inherited faith in Hashem should become consolidated, integrated because of their traits and dispositions,⁶⁶ as elucidated above; and just as at the exodus from Egypt, the Jewish people were redeemed as a reward for their faith, — the same is true regarding the true and complete redemption.

By “**spreading** your wellsprings **outward,**” through a “**sustaining**” faith, as revealed through *Chassidus Chabad*, to the extent that the wellsprings suffuse the “outward,” then, “the master will come.”⁶⁷ This refers to King Moshiach. **All** the Jewish people, collectively, and every Jew individually, will then merit the true and complete redemption. May it come about speedily in our days, in actuality.

— Based on a talk delivered on *Shabbos parshas Vaeira* 5731 (1971)

⁶⁵ {In the Hebrew original, “*le'einay basar*”; lit. “to fleshly eyes.”}

⁶⁶ {In the Hebrew original, “*inyanam.*”}

⁶⁷ From a letter penned by the Baal Shem Tov (printed at the end of the book *Ben Poras Yosef*, and cited in several places).