

# SICHA SUMMARY

## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 26

*Yisro, Sicha 2*

### The Context:

G-d famously opens His address at Sinai with the phrase, "I am the Lord, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Shemos 20:2) Rashi offers a long comment with several possible explanations for this introduction (we will turn to those other explanations later):

*Who took you out of the land of Egypt. (1)*  
Taking you out of Egypt is sufficient reason for you to be subservient to Me...

### The Classic Understanding:

Commentaries explain that Rashi is addressing the following question: Why does G-d introduce Himself at Sinai with His act of delivering the Jews from Egypt, rather than with His seemingly greater and more fundamental role as the Creator of heaven and earth? To answer this Rashi explains that the purpose of this introduction was not to list G-d's greatest accomplishments, but to justify why the Jewish people were

now obligated to accept G-d's expectations from them expressed at Sinai — because He took them out of Egypt, therefore they must be "subservient to Me."

### The Question:

The premise of this explanation is flawed, however. There is no reason to assume G-d would introduce Himself as Creator, because the very beginning of this verse tells us the purpose of this communication, "I am the Lord **your G-d.**" That is, G-d is now introducing Himself in terms of His particular relationship with the Jewish people. Obviously, then, He will mention the Exodus which is the event that solidified this particularist relationship, not Creation which speaks to G-d's universal dimension.

Furthermore, the idea that the Exodus justifies G-d's demands of service has been mentioned several times previously in the Torah, including in the leadup to the revelation at Sinai. What purpose is served by reiterating this again at the opening of the revelation?

## The Explanation:

Rashi's issue with the verse is rather the opposite: what is the purpose of mentioning the Exodus at all? We already know that it justifies G-d's claim over our service. What is added by its insertion here?

Rashi therefore explains that this phrase is actually adding a new dimension of G-d's claim over the Jewish people, that of "subservience." Mere servitude has some semblance of independence. While the servant must perform the tasks given them by the master, and their work and profit goes solely to the master, they still have their own time outside their obligations.

Subservience implies that there is no independence given whatsoever, the person is totally subsumed within the definitions of the master. Egyptian slavery placed this sort of total demand on the Jewish people, therefore, G-d says, "this is sufficient reason for you to be subservient to Me," G-d can make this absolute claim of subservience from the Jewish people as well.

Thus, the verse is communicating two claims that G-d has on the Jewish people, "I am the Lord your G-d," which is a basic level of service, and "who took you out of the land of Egypt," which places the greater demands of subservience.

## Rashi's Additional Explanations:

After this comment, Rashi offers two further explanation for this phrase:

"(2) Alternatively, [G-d mentions the Exodus] since He revealed Himself on the

sea as a valiant warrior, and here He revealed Himself as an old man full of mercy... Since I change in [My] appearances, do not say that they are two [Divine] domains, [but] I am He Who took you out of Egypt and [I am He Who performed the miracles] by the sea (Mechilta).

(3) Alternatively, [G-d mentions the Exodus] since the Jewish people heard many voices [during the revelation], as it is said: "And all the people saw the voices" (verse 15), [meaning that] voices came from four directions and from the heavens and from the earth, [so] do not say that there are many domains (Shemos Rabbah 5:9)."

Why does Rashi need to add these Midrashic comments to his literal-minded first explanation? The language of the verse presents a problem: it is written as a continuous sentence, "I am the Lord... who took you out." This implies that the entire verse is expressing one idea, while Rashi's first comment suggested that each phrase of the verse was introducing a different level of service. Because this explanation does not fit the literal verse so neatly, Rashi also offered these Midrashic commentaries.

## Concluding Lessons:

Rashi then concludes his comment with this idea:

"And why did He say [this] in the singular [possessive], אֲנִי? In order to give Moses an opening

to offer a defense in the incident of the calf. This is [the meaning of] "Why, O Lord,

should Your anger be kindled against Your people?” (Exod. 32:11). You did not command them, “You shall not have the gods of others before Me,” but [You commanded] me alone (Shemos Rabbah 43:5).”

Thus, G-d intentionally introduced Himself at Sinai with an ambiguous phrase that could be misunderstood just in order to

allow Moshe the opportunity to defend Jews who would commit the unthinkable sin of idolatry right after the revelation. This illustrates for us the lengths we must go to defend and draw close every Jew without exception. If G-d can do this for idolaters who experienced the revelation at Sinai, surely we can extend this love to every Jew we encounter.

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