



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | Shemos | Sichah 1

A New King?

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1.

“A NEW KING AROSE OVER EGYPT” — RASHI'S COMMENTARY

From the verse,[1] “A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph,” Rashi cites the words, “A new king arose.” He comments, “Rav and Shmuel argue. One says: The king was actually new, and the other one says: His decrees were new.”

Rashi's interpretation is based on the Talmud,[2] where the necessity and the rationale of each opinion are explained: “The sage who says that *he was actually new*, does so because after all, Scripture says *new*. The sage who says that *his decrees were new*, does so because Scripture doesn't tell us that the old king died, and that a new one reigned in his place.” Although Rashi's self-stated purpose is to explain only the plain sense of a verse, *pshat*, he cites both interpretations because of the necessity for each of them that arises from *pshat*. On this basis we can understand why Rashi also quotes the words, “A king arose,”[3] even though he only explains the word “new.” For the word “arose” supports the second interpretation (“Scripture doesn't tell us that a new one *reigned*”[4]), while the word “king” supports the first interpretation.

Nonetheless, each of the two interpretations possesses an advantage over the other, solves a difficulty that can be raised on the other. Even so, as explained numerous times, the first interpretation offers the simplest understanding of the verse,[5] for the following reasons:

a) The most obvious meaning of “new” is *actually* new [i.e., the king was actually a new king]. It is less reasonable to posit that the word *king* is intended to mean the king's royal decrees—and that his decrees were new.

b) According to the second interpretation—“his decrees were new” [but the king was the same king who had known Joseph]—we must explain the phrase “who did not know Joseph” to mean that the king only acted as if he did not know him. As the Talmud explains, and as Rashi also points out: “and *who did not know Joseph*—he acted as if he had not known him.” [When quoting the verse, Rashi adds the conjunctive *and* in order to emphasize that the

interpretation “he acted as if he had not known him” is a continuation of the second interpretation, that “his decrees were new,” the interpretation immediately preceding this explanation.] According to the first interpretation [that it was a new king], the phrase “who did not know” can be understood in its simple sense.

c) The difficulty raised on the first interpretation – Scripture doesn’t tell us that a new one ruled – can be answered: The intention of the Torah is not to relate the chronicles of the Egyptian monarchs, but only to tell us what is relevant to the Jewish people, to their suffering as a result of the newly imposed, cruel decrees. So nothing would be gained by telling us that the old king died and that a new one ruled. What is important is the impact this had on the Jewish people. Namely, a new king *arose* who was hostile to the Jewish people, imposing new oppressive decrees[6]—“A new king arose.”[7]

Therefore, the first interpretation presents the most straightforward understanding of the verse.

2.

WHAT HAS MORE WEIGHT? THE *WORD* OR THE *CONTEXT*?

On this basis we can understand why Rashi notes the names of the sages who disseminated these interpretations – Rav and Shmuel – as knowing their identities help us to understand their fundamental disagreement. [For as explained many times, Rashi notes a sage’s name only when this information will help to solve a difficulty with Rashi’s commentary that an assiduous student is likely to raise.]

[Before proceeding to explain the underlying argument, a preamble is necessary. Namely, when the Talmud introduces an argument with the names of two disputants, and then says, “one opinion asserts..., and the other asserts...,” it makes sense to posit that the first opinion mentioned by the Talmud is that of the first disputant, while the second opinion is that of the second disputant.]

When we examine a number of disputes in the Talmud, between Rav and Shmuel, concerning their respective interpretations of biblical verses, particularly when these disputes are presented in the format of “one opinion

asserts,” “the other asserts” – the distinctive approaches of Rav and Shmuel to biblical exegesis are discernable:

Rav gives priority to the *word*, or words, of a verse even when doing so leaves the subject matter unclear. Shmuel, in contrast, gives priority to *the subject matter* as conveyed by a passage, even when doing so leaves the meaning of one or more words unclear.

A few examples of their divergent styles:

(a) On the verse concerning Joseph,[8] “he came to the house to do his work,” the Talmud says,[9] “Rav and Shmuel argue. One said: *his actual work*, and the other said: he entered *to take care of his needs* with her.” The first opinion maintains “his actual work,” as this is what the words in the verse denote. But from the continuation of the verse, “and none of the people of the house were there in the house,” it appears that scripture is amplifying for us what sort of *work* is meant here: the sort of *work* that requires, “none of the people...” That’s why the second opinion argues and says, “to take care of his needs.” For otherwise, Joseph would not have entered the house specifically when no one else was there, given that the master’s wife had already urged him to “lie with me,” “and that “she spoke to Joseph day in and day out... to lie beside her.” Thus, from the context, it is understood that he entered “to take care of his needs with her.”

3.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: “FROM HODU TO CUSH”

(b) On the verse in the Book of Esther,[10] *from Hodu until [וְעַד] Cush*, the Talmud comments,[11] “Rav and Shmuel argue. One said, ‘Hodu was situated at one end of the world, and Cush at the other.’ The other said, ‘Hodu and Cush were neighboring countries. And just as Achashveirosh ruled over Hodu and Cush, so did he rule over the entire world.’ A similar difference {between Rav and Shmuel} occurs with reference to the words,[12] *For he had dominion over all {the inhabitants} on this side of the River, from Tiphseh until [וְעַד] Gaza*. Rav and Shmuel {argue}....”[13]

One understands the word *until* in its simple sense—connoting a distance. Accordingly, he explains the phrase *from Hodu until Cush* as implying from one end of the world, to the other. However, the verse goes on to say, “one hundred twenty-seven provinces,” which we know encompassed the entire {civilized} world.” This compels us to say that the phrase *from Hodu until Cush* is not intended to be understood in its simple sense—from one end to the other end—(for this would be superfluous). Therefore, “one said” that the intent of the verse is to tell us, “*Just as he ruled over Hodu and Cush, so did he rule over the entire world—emphasizing the greatness of his dominion.*”[14]

4.

RAV – NIMROD; SHMUEL – AMRAPHEL

(c) In the Talmud,[15] two disputes are introduced (prior to the dispute about the verse, “A new king arose”):

“Now it came to pass in the days of Amraphel.”[16] Rav and Shmuel argue. One said, ‘His real name was Nimrod. And why is he called here *Amraphel*, אמרפל? Because he spoke, אמר, and had Abraham cast, הפיל, in the fiery furnace.’ The other said, ‘Amraphel was his real name. And why was he referred elsewhere as Nimrod, נמרוד? Because he incited the whole world to rebel, מרד, against His kingship.’”

Linguistically, the words “and Cush fathered Nimrod,” don’t suggest that the name Nimrod is any different than the majority of names given in the Torah, for which we have no cause to look for a reason as to why they were given.

And so when we encounter the verse, “Now it came to pass in the days of Amraphel,” and we know that scripture is referring to Nimrod, yet calls him by another name all the same, we are compelled to infer that there is a special reason as to why scripture refers to him by a different name—a reason that must be alluded to in the new name itself. That’s why one sage asks, “Why is he called here *Amraphel*, אמרפל? Because he *spoke*, אמר, and had Abraham *cast*, הפיל....”

But when we pay attention to the *subject matter* and the context of these two verses, namely, how immediately following “Cush fathered Nimrod,”[17] the Torah continues and tells us that Nimrod rebelled against God—“he began to be

a mighty man in the land. He was a mighty hunter *before G d,*” we see, as the “one says,” that the continuation of the narrative explains why he was named *Nimrod*. In contrast, in the case of the passage, “Now it came to pass in the days of Amraphel,” the Torah doesn’t tell us anything about him as an individual, so evidently, *this* was his actual name.

5.

RAV — TWO HOUSES; SHMUEL — DOUBLED IN COUPLES

(d) “*Machpelah* {double} Cave.[18] Rav and Shmuel argue. One said, ‘Two {horizontal} chambers, the outside one leading to the inside one.’ The other said, ‘A chamber and another one over it.’ Now according to the opinion that there was one chamber on top of the other, the term *machpelah* fits in. {Because there were two ceilings.} But according to the view that there were two chambers, the outside one leading to the inside one —in what sense was the cave doubled? It was *doubled* in {the sense of the four} couples {who would be buried there}.”

Here, too, Rav and Shmuel, offer interpretations that are consistent with their respective viewpoints. The simple meaning of the term “*Machpelah* Cave” – a single cave containing something doubled – fits in better with the interpretation that the cave was doubled with couples (“double” burial places[19]) than with the interpretation that the cave consisted of a chamber and another one over it. (Especially, since when speaking of two subterranean chambers, one over the other, the upper one is not higher in the same way as the upper story of a standing structure is.) Therefore, one opinion says, “Two chambers, the outside one leading to the inside one,” and that it was double in the sense of the couples who would be buried there.

But when we consider the context of the verses, such an interpretation (“two chambers, the outside one leading to the inside one”) that it was “doubled in couples,” is difficult: Abraham’s words {in which he referred to the plot of land he wanted as *Machpelah* Cave} were said as part of the favor he was asking:[20] “And he prostrated himself to the people of the land... And he spoke... If it is your will (and what was he asking?) that I bury my dead (singular) from before me (in order to ease his grief)...” So does it make sense to explain that when Abraham

asked “give me the *Machpelah Cave*” that he was asking for land sufficient for *eight* burial places?[21]

6.

THE DISPUTE OVER “A NEW KING” – ACCORDING TO THEIR RESPECTIVE VIEWPOINTS

In light of the above, we can explain the subject of our inquiry as follows: At first glance, it is puzzling why the Torah begins by telling us that a new king arose over Egypt. Why doesn't the Torah just say (after telling us about the phenomenal growth of the Jewish people, and therefore), “He (the Egyptian king) said to his people, ‘Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and stronger than we are; get ready, let us deal shrewdly with them’”? Why is it important to know whether he was, or was not, a new king?

The simple reason is this: If the Torah did not begin by introducing Pharaoh as a new king, very likely, a question would arise: How could Pharaoh, after all the prosperity that Joseph had brought him and the land of Egypt, issue such cruel decrees over Joseph and his children? The Torah solves this puzzle by relating, “A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.”

In explaining this statement, Rashi notes the names of the differing opinions, Rav and Shmuel. Rashi does so in order to give us a better understanding of the difference between the two interpretations, according to the viewpoints of Rav and Shmuel:

One sage approaches the verse consistent with his viewpoint, and explains the words “A new king arose... who did not know about Joseph” in their simple sense: The new king was unacquainted with Joseph, and therefore issued his decrees.

But when considering the *subject matter of the general narrative*, there is a problem. Even being a new king, certainly Pharaoh must have heard of Joseph's accomplishments, how in the previous generation he had saved the entire county?[22] Particularly, considering that the decrees were issued in consultation with the Egyptians – “He said to *his people*... Get ready, let us deal shrewdly with them” – amongst whom there must have been those whose lives were saved by

Joseph. Consequently, either way, we must explain “who did not know about Joseph” as meaning that Pharaoh acted as if he did not know Joseph.

Therefore, the second sage concludes that this verse is not parenthetical to the narrative (i.e., that this verse only explains how Pharaoh could have possibly issued such decrees, as the first opinion maintains). Rather, the purpose of the verse is to underscore Pharaoh’s great wickedness, in consonance with the *subject matter* of the subsequent verses that relate how “he acted as if he did not know.” (The second sage gives this interpretation even though doing so requires him to explain the words “a new king” as meaning that “his decrees were new,” which is different than their plain meaning.)

7.

HE PLANTED AN *EISHEL*

In view of the above, we can clarify another argument that Rashi cites in his commentary on Torah, identifying the disputants as Rav and Samuel (even though according to our text of the Talmud^[23] and Midrash,^[24] this argument was between other sages^[25]):

On the verse,^[26] “And he planted an *eishel* in Beer-Sheba,” Rashi quotes the word *eishel* and explains, “Rav and Samuel argue. One said that it was an orchard from which to bring fruits for the guests at the meal; and one said that it was an inn for guests, in which there were all sorts of food.^[27] We find the expression of *planting*, נטיעה, used in conjunction with tents, as it is written....”

The plain meaning of the *words*, “and he planted an *eishel*,” is that *eishel* refers to an orchard, which produced fruits, as one opinion in fact maintains. But the other opinion, however, following his viewpoint, considers the *subject matter* of the passage, “And he called there in the name of G-d, L-rd of the world.” (Rashi explains: “By means of that *eishel*,^[28] the Holy One, blessed be He, was called ‘L-rd of the whole world.’”) And according to the subject matter, it is more logical to say that the *verse* is referring not to an orchard of fruit trees but rather to an inn where guests stayed for a while,^[29] and where all sorts of food were offered to entice them to bless G-d^[30] for *all these good things*.^[31] (And this logic holds true, even though this entails having to understand the verb *plant* not in its simplest sense, and requires a proof text to show that *plant* can

be used in conjunction with tents.[32] As Rashi goes on to say, “We *find* the expression of *planting*, נטיעה, used in conjunction with tents...”)

8.

RASHI'S ATTRIBUTION OF NAMES

All this applies to what the *Talmud* and *Midrash* record concerning Rav and Shmuel. However, with regards to *Rashi's* commentary on scripture, it is difficult to accept that this is the reason why Rashi notes the names of Rav and Shmuel (i.e., in order to indicate that their interpretations are consistent with their established viewpoints). If this were the case, then Rashi would need to mention their names in *all instances* that he cites their opinions.

Instead, we find that only in a couple of the above instances does Rashi point out that Rav and Shmuel dispute the interpretation of a verse: On the verse,⁸ “he came to the house to do his work,” and on the verse in our *parsha*. In contrast, in all other places, Rashi does not point this out:

a) In *parshat Noach*, on the verse,¹⁷ “to be a mighty man (גבור) in the land,” referring to Nimrod, Rashi comments, “causing the entire world to rebel, להמרוד, against the Holy One, blessed be He.” [The basis of this novel interpretation (which is *inconsistent* with the usual simple meaning of the term גבורה) that the intended connotation of the word גבור, here, is ‘to cause to rebel,’ is from the name *Nimrod*, נמרוד.]

In *parshat Lech Lecha*, on the word *Amraphel*,¹⁶ Rashi comments, “This is Nimrod. And why is he called here *Amraphel*, אמרפל? Because he spoke, אמר, and had Abraham cast, הפיל, in the fiery furnace.” Rashi doesn’t note that this latter interpretation is based upon the opinion of Rav, while the former is based upon the opinion of Shmuel.

b) On the verse, “*Machpelah* Cave,”¹⁸ Rashi cites both opinions – “A chamber with an upper story over it. Another interpretation: [It was called so] because it was doubled with couples.”[33] But Rashi does not attribute the two interpretations to Rav and Shmuel.

c) In his commentary on *Megillath Esther*, Rashi explains the *pshat* of the verse in accordance with only a single opinion^[34] and makes no reference at all to the other.^[35] Similarly, Rashi does not attribute the opinion he does cite to its exponent – Shmuel.^[36]

We are compelled to say, therefore, that in those places that Rashi does provide attribution to Rav and Shmuel, Rashi does so not in order to inform us that their interpretations follow their respective viewpoints, as explained above. Rather, Rashi does so either because there is another viewpoint that is germane only in those places, or because Rashi is anticipating a difficulty that may arise here in the mind of an astute student.

9.

THE REASON FOR THE DECREE: PHARAOH'S WICKEDNESS

In our case, the explanation {why Rashi attributes the two interpretations here to Rav and Shmuel} is the following:

The most straightforward reason why scripture mentions that “a new king arose” is to inform us that the cause for “let us deal shrewdly with them” was the wickedness of the Egyptian king. Because even according to the opinion that this Pharaoh was actually a new king, it is impossible to say that the intent of the phrase “who did know Joseph” is that Pharaoh had not even heard about Joseph and his achievements – how he had saved Egypt – as explained above.

And even a young, novice student of scripture^[37] understands that Pharaoh's rationalization, “the people of the children of Israel... lest they increase... and join our enemies...,” has no logical foundation whatsoever. For it is against human nature^[38] to repay kindness with evil. We have already observed concerning Abraham's dealings with Avimelech^[39] – that because of a kindness that Avimelech had showed to Abraham,^[40] “Here is my land before you,”^[41] Abraham promised to show kindness and generosity to Avimelech, and also “to my son or to my grandson... and with the land.”

So, too, in our situation: The Jewish people were aware of the excellent relations between Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and Joseph and the Jewish people.

Pharaoh had freed Joseph from prison, and appointed him as viceroy, declaring, “Besides you, no one may lift his hand or his foot in the entire land of Egypt.”^[42] Also, Pharaoh had given his permission for the Jewish people to settle in the best region of Egypt, in the land of Goshen.^[43] Therefore, understandably, Pharaoh and his nation knew that the Jewish people, even a generation later, would not repay Egyptian kindness with an act of betrayal. Hence, clearly the Egyptian concern that the Jewish people would “multiply...” was a pretext, and the decree against them was driven by sheer wickedness.

With that, the question arises: What was the nature of Pharaoh’s wickedness? Was it principally a crime against G-d,^[44] or a crime against humanity?^[45] Rashi alludes to the answer by his attribution of his two interpretations to Rav and Shmuel, as will be explained forthwith.

10.

RAV – RITUAL LAW; SHMUEL – CIVIL CASES

The Talmud states,^[46] “{wherever Rav and Shmuel differ} the ruling is established in accord with Rav, in ritual law; in civil (monetary) cases, the ruling is established in accord with Shmuel.” The medieval^[47] Rabbis^[48] explain the rationale for this: Although Rav issued rulings regarding monetary matters, and Shmuel also issued rulings regarding ritual law, nonetheless, “Shmuel was regularly involved in the adjudication of monetary matters, and was accordingly very meticulous concerning them, analyzing them, and obtaining a deep and thorough grasp of each matter. Similarly, Rav was regularly involved in the meticulous analysis of ritual law. Therefore, his directives were relied upon concerning ritual law.” ^[49]

The difference between ritual and monetary law is that the ritual law concerns the relationship ‘between a person and G-d,’ while monetary law concerns the relationship ‘between one person and another.’

Consequently, when speaking about something that can fall into either category, Rav was inclined to view it from the perspective of ritual law, i.e., as a matter concerning the relationship ‘between a person and G-d,’ whereas Shmuel

was inclined to view it from the perspective of monetary law, i.e., as a matter concerning the relationship ‘between one person and another.’

11.

PHARAOH’S WICKEDNESS – AN AFFRONT AGAINST G-D OR AGAINST THE JEWISH PEOPLE?

Regarding our discussion: according to the opinion that the phrase “a new king” does not mean an actual, new king, Pharaoh’s wickedness was not such a horrible affront against G-d. For Jacob had given Pharaoh the honor befitting a monarch (both when Jacob had entered Pharaoh’s presence and when he had departed^[50]), and had accepted upon himself Pharaoh’s rulership.^[51] Therefore, Pharaoh had some justification, *from his outlook*, to rule over Egypt the way he saw fit.

But from a societal perspective, ‘between one person and another,’ in terms of Pharaoh’s relationship with the Jewish people and with Joseph, this defense does not justify his decrees. After all, this was the same king to whom Joseph had shown so much goodness and kindness. Consequently, the wickedness demonstrated between one person {Pharaoh} and another, was extremely grave.

However, if “a new king” means an actual new king, a king whom Jacob had not shown regal honor, and whose rulership the Jewish people had not accepted upon coming to Egypt (rather this Pharaoh had become a king after they were already in Egypt – not that they had come to Egypt under this Pharaoh’s aegis, or had accepted his sovereignty), then there was no basis for Pharaoh, vis-à-vis G-d, to justify his decrees.

However, in terms of Pharaoh’s relationship with his fellow man, with the Jewish people, Pharaoh’s wickedness was not so grave, since Pharaoh was “a new king” whom Joseph had not benefited.

In light of the above, it is understood that when the Torah underscores Pharaoh’s wickedness, Rav interprets this consistent with his viewpoint, viz., the wickedness was ‘between a person and G-d.’ Accordingly, he says that there was an actual, new king. For according to this interpretation, the degree of wickedness vis-à-vis Heaven is greater. However, Shmuel, whose principle

involvement was in civil law, 'between one person and another,' maintains that it was this Pharaoh was the same king as before, but just his decrees were new, as explained above.

12.

JOSEPH'S RIGHTEOUSNESS – BETWEEN 'MAN AND G-D' OR 'ONE PERSON AND ANOTHER'?

Based on the above, we can now explain why Rashi notes the names of Rav and Shmuel in the previous two disputes.

In *Parshat Va'yeshev*, the Torah tells us about Joseph's *righteousness*, both before the verse ("he came to the house..."⁸): "and he {Potiphar} appointed him over his house, and all he had he gave into his hand... he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he knew nothing about what was with him..."; "his master's wife lifted up her eyes... But he refused, and he said..., 'how can I commit this great evil...?' Now it came about when she spoke to Joseph day in and day out, that he did not listen to her...", and also afterwards, when the Torah relates how Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife. Concerning this narrative, there is a dispute how to understand the verse, "he came to the house to do his work," whether it was to do "his actual work," or "to take care of his needs with her."

According to Rav, who focuses mainly on the relationship between people and G-d, the intent of the verse is to "his actual work," and not "to take care of his needs with her," since according to this second interpretation, this would be a crime against G-d.[52]

In contrast, according to Shmuel, who focuses mainly on the interpersonal relationship between people themselves, it is understood why Joseph entered "to take care of his needs with her," specifically when, "*none of the people of the house were there in the house.*" Because in this way, no wrong would be committed, in terms of Joseph's responsibility to manage Potiphar's household, "and he appointed him over his house."

13.

THE DISPUTE CONCERNING *EISHEL*

“An *eishel*: Rav and Shmuel argue. One said that it was an orchard from which to bring fruits for the guests at the meal; and one said that it was an inn, for guests, in which there were all sorts of food....”

From the perspective of interpersonal relationships, there was clearly a greater benefit according to the interpretation that the *eishel* was “an inn for guests, in which there were all sorts of food” than according to the interpretation that the *eishel* was only an orchard.

Contrastingly, the interpretation that “it was an orchard from which to bring fruits” emphasizes man’s relationship with G-d. Because {aside from obviously benefiting other people through his generosity}, Abraham made a positive contribution to man’s relationship with G-d. This can be inferred readily from Kayin who had brought produce of the earth as a sacrifice to G-d.[53]

Therefore, Rashi mentions the names of the exponents of these two interpretations, choosing specifically the textual version with Rav and Shmuel, and not the Talmudic version with R. Yehudah and R. Nechemia.[54] Because this way, the underlying rationale of each of the interpretations is understood.

14.

A LESSON FOR TODAY: STAND FIRM AGAINST OPPONENT

The lesson from Rashi’s commentary for nowadays:

Some claim that “we have a sister in the king’s palace,”[55] a new friend or an old friend. So if a harsh decree is issued, G-d forbid, the Jewish people need not panic. Rather, they should comply with the decree, even if it runs contrary to the Torah. And we should do so even if this requires us to serve Pharaoh – to build Pithom and Raamses[56] – instead of serving G-d by studying Torah earnestly and assiduously; and embellishing the observance of mitzvot, fulfilling the directive, “in all your ways you shall know Him. After all, we are living in Egypt, in the choicest region, and we need to submit.

One must realize that there is no difference whether we are dealing with a new king or an inveterate king; or whether he uses one speaking style or another. It suffices that the king of “Egypt,” מצרים, distresses, מצירין, the Jewish people.

This is the stratagem of the Evil Inclination, to “let us deal shrewdly with them.” And “the kindness of the kingdoms is a sin.”[57]

We must conduct ourselves as the Hebrew midwives did during the Egyptian exile. Pharaoh had decreed,[58] “Every son who is born you shall cast into the Nile, and every daughter you shall allow to live.” As mentioned numerous times, this implies casting them {the boys} into matters of Egyptian idolatry (as known, the Egyptians worshipped the Nile), financial concerns, and the like. Not only was the Jewish body to be drowned, but his soul would be as well. Furthermore, “every daughter you shall allow to live” was part of the decree – to raise the girls and entice them to enjoy Egyptian pleasures – which distress the Jewish people.

The Hebrew midwives stood-up against the decree, and did everything possible to ensure that truly Jewish children would be born, children who would receive an authentic Jewish education.

As to what needs to be done in the natural order of things – to make efforts and to confer with non-Jews, and so on – has to be done in the manner of Moshe, *our teacher*: He accorded Pharaoh the honor that he was deserving,[59] but Moshe held “the *staff of G-d* in his hand,”[60] adopting a resolute, Jewish, G-dly stance, without kowtowing to the non-Jew, and certainly without trying to hide his Jewish identity.

By disregarding decrees that oppose Judaism, and by instead devoting ourselves wholly to the authentic religious-education of all Jewish children, we will succeed in raising a G-dly legion of Jews who are healthy in body and in soul. In this way, we will bring the true and complete redemption of the Jewish nation, through the coming of our righteous Moshiach, imminently indeed.

Based on a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Shemot*, 5736 (1975)

[1] *Ex.* 1:8.

[2] *Eruvin* 53a; *Sotah* 11a. See *Shmot Rabbah* 8:1, and elsewhere.

[3] This raises a difficulty with the explanation offered by the *Maskil Le'Dovid*. He writes that both Rav and Shmuel base their interpretation on the fact that the Torah specifically says a “new” king, and not simply a “different” king. But this fails to explain why Rashi also quotes the words, “A king arose.”

[4] But from the viewpoint of *pshat*, not telling us that the king *died* before a new one arose is not problematic, since whether the previous king died or not is of no practical importance.

[5] Obviously, Rashi cites the interpretations in the order he does not because this is their order in the Talmud. As Rashi’s objective (in presenting them in the order he does) is to clarify the *pshat*. This is clearly the case here, as Rashi doesn’t tell us that the source of the two interpretations is from the teachings of our sages, or the like.

Also, it’s not possible that the two interpretations are of equal standing but that Rashi could not cite them simultaneously. For if both were equally valid interpretations, Rashi would have introduced them (as he does when citing more than a single, perfectly valid interpretation) saying, “Rav and Shmuel dispute how to interpret this verse, or the like.

[6] Note that the *Chizkuni*, *ad loc*, and the *Chidushei Aggadot*, in his commentary on the above-mentioned Talmudic passage also explain in this manner the usage of the verb *arose*, according to the opinion who says that it was the king’s decrees that were new: The king arose over them [menacingly] with new decrees, etc.

[7] Nonetheless, this interpretation is still not entirely straightforward (for which reason Rashi brings a second interpretation). In the final analysis, if Scripture had meant an actual new king, it would still have made more sense to write that “a new king *reigned*.” Especially, as the verse continues “over Egypt,” and not “over Israel.”

[8] *Gen. 39:11*.

[9] *Sotah 36b*.

[10] 1:1.

[11] *Megillah 11a*.

[12] *I Kings 5:4*.

[13] The passage continues: “One said that Tiphseh is found at one end of the world; and Gaza, at the other. The other maintained that Tiphseh and Gaza are adjacent to each another [and that what is meant is that] as he [Solomon] ruled over Tiphseh and over Gaza, so he ruled over the entire world.”

[14] Achashveirosh’s authority was equally strong over even the most remote of his provinces.

[15] *Eruvin, ibid*.

[16] *Gen. 14:1*.

[17] *Gen. 10:8*.

[18] *Gen. 23:9*.

[19] As the *Gur Aryeh* explains Rashi, *ad loc.*

[20] *Gen. 23:7, 8.*

[21] Note that also according to the interpretation that there were two chambers, the outside one leading to the inside one, the continuation of the verse – “on the edge of his field” – is difficult. Because: a) it is impossible for both of them to have been on the edge of the field; b) it also implies that this was a large area, which contradicts Abraham’s apparent intent to diminish the value of the property.

On the other hand, if we explain that the phrase “doubled in couples” means simply (not burial places *suitable* for couples, rather) Adam and Chava, etc. (as the Talmud there says – and this is similarly understood from Rashi’s commentary there, s.v. “*sh’kefulah*”), this is also problematic, since the people of Heth were unaware of this.

[22] Furthermore, a number of Joseph’s accomplishments survived his passing. See *Gen. 47:20, et passim*, where the Torah relates how all private ownership of property was relinquished to Pharaoh, etc.

[23] *Sotah 10a.*

[24] *Bereishit Rabbah*, end of par. 54.

[25] R. Yehudah and R. Nechemia.

[26] *Gen. 21:33.*

[27] In our editions, “all sorts of *fruit*.” Similarly, in *Chidushei Aggadot*, on *Sotah, loc cit.*, explaining Rashi. But in the first and second editions, and likewise in several other extant ms., it reads, “food.” Concerning the point made in the *Chidushei Aggadot*, viz., that Rashi’s commentary here, “in which there were all sorts of *fruit*” fits in better with the simple meaning of the word *eishel*, which denotes a *tree*, this requires further study. For Rashi goes on to say, “We find the expression of *planting*, גטיעה, used in conjunction with *tents*.” If so, there is no need to explain *eishel* in the plainest sense of the word.

[28] The implication is that the causal relationship is true according to both interpretations. This, too, is implied in *Sotah, loc cit.*

[29] As Rashi writes in *Sotah, loc cit.*: “An inn – for guests to lodge there, and the word *eishel*, אשל, is an acronym for האכיל (eating), שתיה (drinking), לוייה (escorting), etc.”

[30] Although Rashi remarks, concerning the opinion that *eishel* means an orchard, “to bring fruits from it for the guests *at the meal*,” still, Rashi states that even according to this opinion, it was specifically on account of the *eishel* that people recognized G-d as ‘L-rd of the whole world.’ And according to the opinion that the *eishel* was an orchard, the phrase ‘he *planted an eishel*,’ means that Abraham actually planted an orchard, etc.

[31] This rationale can also be used to explain the divergent views of this issue in the Talmud. However, doing so necessitates further analysis to determine the linkage between the viewpoints, and their respective exponents – R. Yehudah and R. Nechemia. (Particularly, since in *Bereishit Rabbah* there, it says explicitly that it was R. Yehudah who maintains that *eishel* was an orchard, while it was R. Nechemia who maintains that *eishel* was an inn.) For as explained several times (in discussions of Rashi’s commentary on Deut. 11:6, and Deut. 32:43) this rationale can also be used to explain the divergent viewpoints of R. Yehudah and R. Nechemia, except reversed—Rabbi Nechemia gives precedence to the simple meaning of the word itself, while R. Yehudah gives

precedence to the context in which a word is found to determine the word's meaning. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 5, p. 264.

It is because of this aforementioned difficulty, we may say, that when commenting on the phrase, “and he planted an *eishel*,” Rashi cites the dispute between Rav and Shmuel, and not the dispute as recorded in the more popular, extant, version of the Talmud – and also in *Bereishit Rabbah* – between R. Yehudah and R. Nechemia. Because according to this, their traditionally held viewpoints are reversed in explaining the passage here. See *Likutei Sichot*, there, p. 267 (and fn. 28), for another approach to explaining the rationale underlying the disputes between R. Yehudah and R. Nechemia.

[32] {I.e., to erect a tent.}

[33] For an elucidation of Rashi's commentary on this verse, see *Likutei Sichot* vol. 5, the 2nd essay on *parshat Chayei Sarah*.

[34] From here we see that we cannot explain that Rav interprets scripture in its straightforward sense, פשוט, while Shmuel interprets it its homiletic sense, שרר. For Rashi interprets scripture, first and foremost, in its straightforward sense (as he says numerous times), yet cites only the opinion of Shmuel, without introducing this interpretation with the remark, “Our sages have expounded,” or the like. Rashi also cites Shmuel's interpretation regarding the name Nimrod. But based on what we have explained earlier, Shmuel's methodology of considering the simple meaning of the subject matter (or the context of a verse), is also in accord with Rashi's approach to explaining the simple meaning of scripture.

[35] Obviously, we cannot postulate that Rashi explains the verse, in *Megillath Esther*, in accordance with this opinion because the Midrash (*Esther Rabbah*, ch. 1, par. 4) mentions only this opinion, (as the *Siftei Chachomim* suggests, in his super-commentary on Rashi), because Rashi's commentary was intended to clarify *psbat*, and not simply to cite rabbinical commentary.

[36] It would be strained to suggest that Rashi does not attribute the interpretations in these cases to Rav and Shmuel because Rashi holds that their dispute in these cases is unrelated to their different approaches to scriptural interpretation.

[37] In the Heb. original, “*ben chamesh le'mikreh.*”

[38] See *Gen.* 44:4; and Rashi's comment on *Gen.* 11:5.

[39] *Gen.* 21:23.

[40] Rashi, *ad loc.*

[41] *Gen.* 21:15.

[42] *Gen.* 41:44.

[43] *Gen.* 47, 6, 11.

[44] {In Heb., “*Bein adam le'Makom.*”}

[45] {In Heb., “*Bein adam le'chaveiro.*”}

[46] *Bechorot* 49b.

[47] In the Heb. original, “*rishonim*.”

[48] *Rosh*, on *Bava Kama*, ch. 4, sec. 4.

[49] See *Responsa of Chavas Ya'ir*, sec. 94.

[50] *Gen.* 47:7, 10 (and Rashi, *ad loc*).

[51] Jacob also had benefitted from Pharaoh, when Pharaoh had granted the Jewish people the right to settle the region of Goshen, which contained within its borders the best land of Egypt.

[52] Earlier, Joseph had said, “Now how can I commit this great evil, *and sin against G-d?*” See *Abarbanel*, *ad loc*.

[53] *Gen.* 4:3.

[54] See fn. 31.

[55] {See *Megillah* 15b, as used in this context, “political influence.”}

[56] {*Ex.* 1:11.}

[57] *Prov.* 14:34; *Bava Batra* 10b; *Tanya*, ch. 1.

[58] *Ex.* 1:22.

[59] Rashi on *Ex.* 6:13, and 11:8.

[60] *Ex.* 4:20.