

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XV: Bo (Ex. 10:1–13:16)

Essay 7. The mutual respect between Moses and Aaron

פסוק "דברו אל-כל-עדת ישראל לאמר בעשר לחודש הזה" (שמות י"ג), פירש רש"י וכי אהרן מדבר וכו'?

The opening **verse[s]** of chapter 12 of Exodus read: “The L-rd said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ‘This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you. **Speak to the whole community of Israel, saying that on the tenth of this month** each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household.’ ” (Ex. 12:1–3). **Rashi explains: “But did Aaron speak?** Has it not already been stated, ‘You [Moses] shall speak etc.’ (Ex. 7:2). But the explanation is: they paid respect one to the other, saying to each other, ‘Instruct me what to say,’ and the divine communication in question issued from both of them, so that it was as though they were both speaking (Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 12:3:2).”

המפרשים דקדקו עצמם להבין כוונת רש"י ז"ל. ונראה שרש"י הרגיש מדקדקתיב "דברו" בלשון רבים, דאם בא לומר שיידברו שניהם ביחד זה אי אפשר כדאמרנו בפרק הקורא עומד, דבתורה תרי קלי לא משתמע, ומכל שכן בפרשה חמונה כזו.

The commentators pushed themselves to understand the intention of Rashi, of blessed memory. It seems that Rashi felt a conflict from the writing of “Speak” (דברו) (*dabru*) in the plural form: that if [Scripture] was coming to say that [Moses and Aaron] should speak together, that would be impossible in light of what we learn from the Talmud. For it says in the third chapter of tractate Megillah (which is entitled, “The reader of the Megillah stands or sits [as he prefers]”¹), that in regards to the Torah, two voices speaking simultaneously are not heard clearly,² and certainly not in such a serious matter.

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¹ Megillah 21a.

² Megillah 21b: “The Sages taught: [When reading from] the Torah, one [person] reads and one may translate [the reading into Aramaic for the congregation], provided that there are not one [person] reading and two [people] translating [because two voices cannot be heard simultaneously].”

ואם בא לומר שמשנה דבבר ואהרן יפרש, כמו שהיו עושים לפני פרעה, אם כן היה לו לומר דבבר אל-כל-עדת ישראל, כמו שאומר בהתראת המכות "בא אל-פרעה ודברת אליו", שאף על פי שהיה אהרן מפרש דבריו, מפל מקום עקר הדיבור תלוי במשה.

If [Scripture] came to say that Moses would speak and Aaron would interpret, as they did when speaking before Pharaoh, then [Scripture] would have said, “Speak (דבר) (*daber*) to the whole community of Israel,” with “Speak” being in the singular form, as it says in the warning of the plagues, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the L-rd, the G-d of the Hebrews: Let My people go to worship Me.’ ” In that case, the verbs “go” and “say” are in the singular form. **For even though Aaron would interpret his words, in any regard, the important part of the speech depended upon Moses,** and therefore the singular form is used in that verse.

ואם תאמר שהואיל שבפעם הזאת כלל אהרן עם משה בדיבור כמו שפירש רש"י על פסוק "ויאמר ה' אל-משה ואל-אהרן" וכו', משום הכי לא היה יכול לומר דבר ואין הכי נמי שבפעם הזאת נצטנה גם אהרן בדיבור זה, אם כן הפסוקים סותרים זה את זה, שהרי כבר כלל לנו הכתוב "אתה תדבר את כל-אשר אצנך".

Perhaps you will say that in Exodus 12:3 it's written in the plural form because this time Aaron is included with Moses in the communication from G-d as a sign of honor, **as Rashi explains on the verse, “The L-rd said to Moses and Aaron”** (Ex. 12:1).³ Maybe this was the case because [perhaps Aaron] wasn't able to say anything, and it's indeed so that this time Aaron was also commanded in this communication from G-d as a sign of honor. **But** if that were the case, **then the verses again contradict each other, for Scripture has already included for us, “You will say all that I will command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart from his land”** (Ex. 7:2). That is, G-d did include a speaking role for Aaron.

ועוד שלא מצינו בכתוב אלא "ויקרא משה לכל-זקני ישראל" ואינו אומר ויקראו משה ואהרן וכו', ואם איתא שאהרן נצטנה כמו משה, למה לא קיים אף הוא דיבורו של מקום?

Moreover, chapter 12 of Exodus began with G-d telling Moses and Aaron, “Speak”—in the plural form—“to the whole community of Israel,” but then **we find in Scripture only: “Moses then called to all the elders of Israel and said to them, ‘Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the Passover offering’ ”** (Ex. 12:21). **It doesn't say, “Moses and Aaron called to the elders.” If it was brought that the plural form “Speak” in Ex. 12:3 means that Aaron was commanded in the same way as Moses,** then **why didn't he also fulfill the words of G-d?**

³ Rashi on Ex. 12:1 says: “Because Aaron had worked and toiled in performing the wonders just the same as Moses, He paid him this honor at the first command by including him with Moses in the communication (Tanchuma Yahshan 2:3:8).”

אֵלָא וַדַּאי צָרִיךְ לִזְמַר שְׁמָה שְׂאוֹמֵר הַפֶּתוּב "דַּבְּרוּ" בְּלִשׁוֹן רַבִּים לֹא הֵיךְ צִוּוּי לְשִׁנְיָהֶם, אֵלָא לְפִי שְׁהֵם הָיוּ רַגִּילִים בְּכַד לְחַלּוֹק כְּבוֹד זֶה לְזֶה בְּשֵׁאֵר הַזְּמַנִּים. מִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי אָמַר לָהֶם "דַּבְּרוּ" כְּפִי הַמְּנַהֵג שְׁלָכֶם, וְלֹא בָּא הַפֶּתוּב אֵלָא לְהוֹדִיעַ שְׂבָחָם.

Rather, it must surely be said that what the Scripture says in the plural form was not a command to both of them, but in accord with how they were accustomed to share respect for each other at other times. Because of this, [G-d] said to them, “Speak” in the plural form, as if to say, “in accordance with your custom to share respect,” and Scripture only came to inform us of their praise. That is how Rashi must have derived his understanding of Exodus 12:3.

וְעוֹד מִדְּכַתִּיב "דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עַדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר", וּמַהוּ לֵאמֹר? אִי אֶפְשָׁר לִזְמַר לֵאמֹר לְאַחֵרִים, שְׁהָרִי כְּבָר כְּתִיב "אֶל-כָּל-עַדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל", וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לִזְמַר לֵאמֹר לְדוֹרוֹת, שְׁהָרִי פֶסַח מִצְרַיִם בְּלֶבֶד הֵיךְ מְקַחוּ בְּעֶשְׂוֹר, וְטַעוּן הַזָּאָה עַל הַמִּשְׁקוּף וְכוּ'. מִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי צָרִיךְ לִזְמַר שְׁ"לֵאמֹר" הַיְיָנוּ הַפִּירוֹשׁ שֶׁל "דַּבְּרוּ", לֵאמֹר זֶה לְזֶה, כְּפִי הַמְּנַהֵג שְׁלָכֶם, וְלַעוֹלָם לֹא הֵיךְ הַמְּדַבֵּר אֵלָא אֶחָד.

Also, we can learn something from the fact that it is written, “Speak to the whole community of Israel, saying . . .” What is this word “saying” doing here? The word “saying” (לֵאמֹר) (*lei'mor*) has different interpretations, sometimes meant to introduce a quotation, other times meaning “explain with clarity.” It is impossible to say “saying” to others in this case if one interprets it as introducing a direct quotation, for [Scripture] already wrote, “to the whole community of Israel,” which includes instructions for the future generations. It’s impossible to say “saying” to the generations, for the instructions detailed sacrificing the Paschal lamb on the tenth of the month of Nissan and sprinkling its blood upon the doorposts, yet it was only the Paschal lamb in Egypt that had to be taken from the tenth of the month of Nissan and that required the sprinkling of its blood upon the doorpost with a bundle of hyssop.⁴ That is, it was not a requirement that had any relevance to the future generations. Because of this, it is necessary to say that “saying” in this case is not meant to introduce a quotation, but rather is the explanation of the plural form of “Speak” in Ex. 12:3. That is, “saying” meant, “Say to each other, in accordance with your custom,” and thus we understand there was always only one speaker in this instance.

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⁴ Mishnah Pesachim 9:5; Pesachim 96a: “What [are the differences] between the Paschal lamb [that the Jewish people offered in] Egypt and the Paschal lamb [offered in all later] generations? The Paschal lamb in Egypt [had to be] taken from the tenth [of the month of Nissan] and required [the people to] sprinkle [its blood] with a bundle of hyssop, and [its blood was also sprinkled] upon the lintel and the two doorposts, and it was eaten with haste; [in addition, the Paschal lamb in Egypt was only] on one night, [whereas] the Paschal lamb [throughout the] generations is observed for seven [days].”