RASHI

THE MASTER TEACHER

A CANTATA
Presented by the Graduating Class
of
The Prospect Park Day School
of Brooklyn
1963 - 5723
Conducted by YAakov Goldstein

Tikva Records T83
RASHI THE MASTER TEACHER

"Chumash and Rashi" are two words that have been on the lips of millions of our people for hundreds of years. The child in school, the adult in the Synagogue or home, year in and year out, studied the weekly portion of the Bible with Rashi. Similarly, every student who opens a Talmudic volume knows that Rashi's commentary is always alongside, dependable, clear and succinct. As a matter of fact, without Rashi's illuminating comments, Talmudic studies would be tremendously difficult and at times impossible.

Many other scholars made important commentaries on the Bible and Talmud, but Rashi has remained the primary and basic one. It explains the difficult words and passages; lays down grammatical rules and calls the most interesting passages from the Midrashic literature. Rashi had an unusual and masterful ability to clarify the most complex passage. With a few well-chosen words he removes the obscurity, and the intent of the Biblical or Talmudic statement becomes as clear as daylight. Who is Rashi? He is Rabbi Shlomo, the son of Rabbi Itzchok born in Troyes, France in the year 1040 or 1046. Rashi are the first letters of his full name, Rabbeinu Shlomo Itzchaki. His father was a learned and pious man.

A number of marvellous legends are told in connection with Rashi's birth. His mother was a devout woman who went to the Synagogue daily. One day, while pregnant with Rashi and on her way to the Synagogue, she suddenly saw a large chariot coming at her. There was no time to escape. In desperation she pressed against the wall; the wall gave way, and an indentation was formed. And in this miraculous fashion both mother and unborn infant were saved. Until recent years, Jewish inhabitants of Worms used to point to the dent in the wall. The legend concludes that soon after Rabbi Itzchok and his family left the city for fear that his wife would be accused of being a sorceress.

Rashi studied in the Yeshivos of Mayence and Worms where his teachers were Rabbi Jacob ben Yahar, Rabbi Isaac ben Yehuda and Rabbi Isaac Halevy. These men in turn had been disciples of the great Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai.

At an early age Rashi showed signs of genius in learning and quickly won fame as an outstanding scholar. When he returned to Troyes, Rashi founded his own Yeshiva which soon became a great center of Torah studies. Rashi was also the Rabbi of the community and the leading Halachic authority of the whole area. Questions were sent to him from many other cities, but he derived his livelihood from a vineyard which he and his family cultivated.

Rashi's work is complete commentary of the whole Bible and on most books of the Talmud and the Midrash, many Responsa, prayers and poems (Piyutim). His writings are a marvel of clarity and simplicity. Quite often, difficult problems are anticipated and answered by the insertion of a single word or phrase. Today the study of Talmud is inconceivable without the indispensable guide of Rashi's comments.

But Rashi is more than a master teacher. From his writings there shines forth a great and majestic personality, full of modesty and humility. When unsure, he simply said - "I do not know" - in his vast writings there is no inkling of controversy, never a sharp or unfriendly comment. He quotes extensively from his teachers and other scholars and speaks of them in reverent tones.

His works also reveal him to be a man of inner peace and harmony. There is order and system to his comments. He uses his tremendous erudition not for the purpose of raising theological or controversial problems but rather to clarify the text or to draw a moral lesson from it.

His personality overflowed with deep and abiding faith, with boundless love for the Torah and with sympathy and respect for his fellow man.

Rashi had three daughters and no sons and they married noted scholars. Among his descendants were the famous Baalei Tosafists (additional commentators in the Talmud) Rabbenu Jacob Tam and Rashaam.

Rashi's last years were saddened by the suffering inflicted upon many French and German communities by the marauding Crusaders in 1096.

Rashi passed away at the age of 65 on the 29th Day Tammuz in the year 4665 or 1055.

He left behind a priceless legacy of scholarship and devotion to Torah which will forever stand as a tribute to his genius and indefatigable labor to make the Torah clear and sweet to all who study it.

THE CANTATA AND ITS AUTHOR

Yaakov Goldstein

The Cantata which depicts in words and songs the story, highlights and ideals of Rashi's life was written by the talented and well known choral conductor Mr. Yaakov Goldstein. The author has won renown in the field of Jewish and liturgical music. He is especially interested in Jewish education and is associated with a number of Hebrew and Day Schools for whom he has written original cantatas and has utilized his great talents to create orchestral and choral arrangements.

This Cantata was written on the occasion of the First Graduation of the Prospect Park Day School. Rashi's life is a most appropriate theme for a Yeshiva graduation, for Rashi is a central figure in the history of Yeshiva education. He is the students' best friend, and most reliable guide through the pathways of Torah studies.

The Prospect Park Day School in Brooklyn was founded in 1955 by the Prospect Park Jewish Center and its spiritual leader Rabbi Abraham Kelm. It has an enrollment of 300 children and has earned a reputation as an outstanding Yeshiva.

A staff of qualified and experienced teachers conducts an excellent program in Hebrew and General studies. Using the Hebrew language as the medium of instruction, the studies include Siddur, Bible, Talmud, Jewish history and law.

The general studies program encompasses the latest methods of Elementary syllabi plus a creative course of study in music, art and drama and many extra curricular activities.

The Cantata was performed with great distinction by the graduating class at the first Graduation exercises in June 1963.

SIDE ONE
Amar Rabbi Elazar
Yivarech Et Bitt Yisrael
Hafoch Bah
Zeh Hashaara
Dv'et Aaron
Habein Yakir Li Ephraim

SIDE TWO
Yehi Shalom B'Chaloch
Yismcha Hashamayim
Knei Chochmah
Ase Hu Chacham
Lo Tikom
Yaffeh Talmud Torah
Ahavai Olam Bet Yisrael
Lo Taasu Avel Bamisha'at