

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

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Compiled from the works of  
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi**  
**Parshas Behar-Bechukosai**

**Likkutei Sichos Volume 3, Pages 1012 – 1015**

**Rashi in His Own Words**

ויקרא כ"ו, ג': אם בקחתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם:

רש"י ד"ה אם בקחתי תלכו: יכול זה קיום המצות, כשהוא אומר ואת מצותי תשמרו, הרי קיום המצות אמור, הא מה אני מקיים אם בקחתי תלכו, שתהיו עמלים בתורה:

רש"י ד"ה ואת מצותי תשמרו: הו עמלים בתורה על מנת לשמור ולקיים, כמו שנאמר (דברים ה א) ולמדתם אותם ושמרתם לעשותם:

**Vayikroh 26:3:** If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them...

**Rashi Heading: If you follow My statutes:** I might think that this refers to the fulfillment of the commandments. However, when Scripture says, “and observe My commandments,” the fulfillment of the commandments is (already) stated. So what is the meaning of “If you follow My statutes”? It means that you must toil in the study of Torah.

**Synopsis**

In this week's Torah portion, Behar-Bechukosai, G-d tells us that<sup>1</sup> "If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them," He will give us very great rewards. The question is that "following in My statutes" and "observing My commandments" would seem to be the same thing! In order to explain this Rashi explains that "following in My statutes" refers to toiling in Torah study.

We understand that "following His statutes" cannot simply mean keeping the commandments. The next few words in the verse mention Mitzvah observance, and the Torah is not redundant. However the word which the Torah uses that Rashi explains as “toiling in Torah study” refers strictly to Mitzvos which have no rational explanation in human intellect. These are the Mitzvos which are called “Statutes - חוקים.”

If the Torah was referring to the fulfillment of the commandments (as the simple meaning of the words imply) it would be perfectly natural to specify this sort of Mitzvah. All Mitzvos, including those which we (seemingly) understand must be observed in the same manner as “Statutes - חוקים.” We must keep them because Hashem commanded us to; not because they make sense to us.

However since Rashi explains that these words refer to toiling in Torah study, “Statutes” does not seem to be the appropriate word. The primary idea of Torah study is not simply to remember that

1. Vayikroh 26:3.

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which we learn. Rather we must strive to understand each and every word and concept that we learn. The use of the word “Statutes” would seem to negate this. “Statutes” refers to that which is above human intellect.

We can explain this by looking at a deeper explanation of the Hebrew word “הַחֻקִּים.” Aside from having the meaning of statute, it is also derived from the word חִקְיָה meaning engraved. Ink and paper or parchment are two different things. Once one writes upon the paper they become united as one. On the other hand letters which are engraved in stone, such as those on the two tablets, have no existence of their own. They are a part of the stone upon which they are engraved.

Thus Rashi is explaining to us that the Torah is teaching us how we must study. In particular it is telling us how to toil in Torah study. Our very being must become one with the Torah which we study.

### Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Behar-Bechukosai, the Torah tells us the results of<sup>1</sup> “If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them...” As a result of following Hashem, the Torah continues that<sup>2</sup> “I will give your rains in their time, the land will yield its produce, and the tree of the field will give forth its fruit.” Hashem continues with increasingly greater rewards. He concludes with<sup>3</sup> “I will place My dwelling in your midst, and My Spirit will not reject you. I will walk among you and be your G-d, and you will be My people.”

The phrase with which this begins seems to be redundant; “If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments...” Both mean the same thing; Mitzvah observance. Therefore Rashi cites the words “if you follow My statutes.” He states that “I might think that this refers to the fulfillment of the commandments. However when the Torah says ‘and observe My commandments’ the fulfillment of the commandments is (already) stated. So what is the meaning of ‘If you follow My statutes’? It means that you must toil in the study of Torah.” In other words Rashi is explaining that here following My statutes refers to toiling in Torah study.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

There are three different types of Mitzvos:

1. **Ordinances - משפטים**. These are Mitzvos which have a very rational explanation. Even had the Torah not commanded us to perform these Mitzvos, we would have understood the need to keep them on our own. Examples of this sort of Mitzvah would be not to murder or rob.

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2. Vayikroh 26:4.

3. Vayikroh 26:11-12.

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This is in keeping with the saying of the Sages that<sup>4</sup> “had the Torah (G-d forbid) not been given, we would have learned modesty from a cat and honesty (not stealing) from an ant.”

2. **Testimonies - עדויות**. These are commandments which we can also comprehend with our human intellect. However, had the Torah not commanded us to perform these, we would not have felt a need to fulfill them on our own. An example would be that since Hashem redeemed us from the slavery of Egypt on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, we must celebrate Pesach every year on this same date.
3. **Statutes - הוקים**. These are commandments which human intellect cannot fathom. For example, the Torah’s prohibition against wearing a garment containing both wool and linen. The only reason for observing these commandments is, as the Sages say<sup>5</sup> “Because Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel saying, ‘What is this commandment, and what purpose does it have?’ Therefore, the Torah uses the term ‘statute.’ I have decreed it; you have no right to challenge it.”

Had the meaning of “following My statutes” been Mitzvah observance, we could easily understand the Torah’s use of the word “Statutes - הוקים.” After all, we must fulfill *all* Mitzvos as if they were statutes, regardless of whether or not we understand them. The word Mitzvah means commandment; all Mitzvos are the King’s commandments. Following them is an essential part of accepting the yoke of Hashem’s kingship. Our understanding is irrelevant.

However Rashi explains here that “following My statutes” does not refer to Mitzvah observance. It actually refers to the obligation of toiling in Torah study. The point of Torah study is striving to understand what one learns. This is certainly the case regarding *toiling* in Torah study. Study does not simply mean reviewing until one knows all of the Torah’s obligations by heart. Rather it means actually grasping and understanding the Torah that one learns to the greatest degree possible. The use of the term “Statutes – הוקים” would seem to contradict this idea, inasmuch as it refers to Mitzvos which we cannot comprehend.

The very fact that there are Mitzvos which we cannot comprehend in and of itself would seem to contradict what we are saying. As much as we may study these Mitzvos we cannot expect to understand them. However the overwhelming majority of Mitzvos can be understood to a greater or lesser extent. Based on this we need to understand how Rashi can explain going in Hashem’s statutes (following Mitzvos without a rational explanation) as “toiling in Torah.”

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4. See Talmud Eiruvim Page 100, at the end of Side b.

5. See Talmud Yoma Page 67, Side b. This is also cited in Rashi’s comments to Bamidbar 19:2.

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### A Deeper Lesson from Rashi<sup>6</sup>

The Alter Rebbe explains in Likkutei Torah<sup>7</sup> that the Hebrew word “חוקה” has an additional meaning other than statute. It is also related to the word “הקיקה” which means engraved. Based on this we can see that according to Rashi’s explanation the Torah is alluding to the manner in which I must toil in Torah.

We find two manners in which the Torah was presented to us. In a Torah scroll we have ink and parchment which are both different things. However when a scribe uses the ink to write a Torah on the parchment they become one.

However, we were also given two tablets of stone. The words were not written *on* the stone. They were engraved in the stone. The letters do not exist as a separate thing from the stone; rather they are one with the stone. A person’s toil in Torah must cause him to become one with the Torah itself.

It is obvious that to study Torah yet not allow it to penetrate oneself is unacceptable. We find this regarding Doeg Hoedomi<sup>8</sup>. The Sages teach us that the Torah which he learned was<sup>9</sup> merely “from his lips to the outside.” In other words despite his having learned a great deal of Torah, it never penetrated his heart. He never became one with the Torah which he studied. There is no need for the Torah to teach us that this is not the proper path.

However, one might think that uniting oneself with Torah in the same manner as written words is sufficient. I am one entity and Torah is another, yet we become one. That certainly seems to be a perfectly fine way of uniting oneself with the Torah! Our Parshah teaches us that even this is insufficient. My toil in Torah must be in a manner of הקיקה. The Torah must become absolutely one with me.

Our unity with G-d and His Torah must be along the lines of that which was demonstrated by Moshe Rabbeinu; the very first one to receive the Torah directly from Hashem. His unity with G-d and G-dliness was so great that he could actually say<sup>10</sup> “I will give grass in your fields.” How was he, a mortal, able to say these words? Because he was united with Hashem to the extent that<sup>11</sup> “the Shechinah spoke through his throat.” That is what is demanded from each of us.

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6. In this particular talk the Rebbe does not offer a simple explanation.

7. See Likkutei Torah at the beginning of Parshas Chukas.

8. He was an advisor to King Saul – Shaul Hamelech. We find in I Shmuel Chapters 21 and 22 that he was directly responsible for the death of a large number of Kohanim. Yet he was one of the greatest Torah scholars in his time.

9. See Talmud Sanhedrin Page 106, Side b.

10. Devorim 11:15. See also Likkutei Torah for Parshas Bechukosai, Page 50, Column a.

11. See Zohar Section 3, Page 232,, Side a. See also *ibid.* Page 7, Side a. See Page 265, Side a. See also Shemos Rabbah Chapter 3, 15 and Vayikroh Rabbah Chapter 2, 3. See also the Mechilta to Shemos, Chapter 18, 19.

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The ultimate reward for our toil in Torah study in this manner is<sup>12</sup> “I am the Lord your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt from being slaves to them. I broke the yoke of your yoke and led you upright.” Leading us upright refers to the redemption through our righteous Moshiach. He will bring us to<sup>13</sup> “a day which is total Shabbos and rest for eternity.”

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai 5722)*

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12. Vayikroh 26:13.

13. See the conclusion of Talmud Tamid.

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