

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Eikev

Menachem Av 20, 5777 – August 12, 2017

Compiled from the works of
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THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi

Parshas Eikev

Likkutei Sichos Volume 24, Pages 73 – 78

Rashi in His Own Words

דברים ז', י"ב: והיה | עקב תשמעון את המשפטים האלה ושמרתם ועשיתם אתם ושמר ה' אלהיך לך את הברית
ואת-החסד אשר נשבע לאבותיך:

רש"י ד"ה והיה עקב תשמעון: אם המצות הקלות שאדם דש בעקביו תשמעון:

Devorim 7:12: And it will be because you will heed these ordinances and keep and perform them, that the Lord your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers.

Rashi Heading: And it will be, because you will heed: If you will listen to the minor commandments which one usually tramples with his heels...

A Brief Synopsis

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Eikev, the Torah tells us the reward for fulfilling a certain type of Mitzvah. Specifically it is discussing "minor Mitzvos," precepts which people do not take all that seriously. Rashi explains this by pointing out the unusual use of a Hebrew word. The Hebrew word "Eikev - עקב" can mean because; i.e. "because you will listen to." However the translation of "Eikev" as heel is far more common. Hence Rashi says that the reward comes as a result of listening to the "minor" commandments.

Rashi's comments are based on the Midrash Tanchuma. The Midrash says that we are discussing "'Minor Mitzvos' to which people do not pay attention; rather they throw them under their heels." What is the meaning of "throwing Mitzvos under our heels?" Rashi's explanation makes it clear that we are talking about a type of Mitzvah; specifically a minor Mitzvah. However we do not generally give them the same significance as other Mitzvos. That is far closer to Peshat than the explanation given by the Midrash. According to the Midrash we are discussing Mitzvos which are not performed; they are just kicked under the heels. The Midrash continues and tells us how Dovid prayed to Hashem to protect him specifically from minor sins. He knew that he would not transgress something serious. However he was not sure about standing up to something which was considered minor. What

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

we do know is that Dovid was equally concerned about all Mitzvos. This is made clear by the conclusion of the Midrash Tanchuma. There he prays to be saved from minor sins.

King Dovid did not distinguish between Mitzvos. In his eyes all of the Mitzvos are the same. As mentioned earlier, the Hebrew word Mitzvah is related to the Aramaic word Tzavta – meaning connection. This is why through each Mitzvah we perform we attach ourselves closer to G-d.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Parshah, Eikev, begins by saying that¹ “and it will be because you will heed these ordinances and keep and perform them ...” It continues by telling us the rewards we will receive for following these commandments.

What specific sort of Mitzvah is the Torah discussing? Rashi comments that “If you will listen to the minor commandments which one usually tramples with his heels...” In other words, Rashi explains that the Torah is specifically telling us the reward for fulfilling Mitzvos which people view as being “*minor*.” These are Mitzvos which in most people's eyes are not all that important².

How does Rashi derive this? When the Torah writes “and it will be *because* you will heed these ordinances,” it uses an unusual word for because. It uses the word “Eikev - עֵקֶב.” There are times in the Torah that the word Eikev does have the meaning of because. However, more often than not Eikev is translated as heel. Based on the use of the word “Eikev,” Rashi derives that here the word has both meanings. Rashi writes that “if you (because you) will listen to the minor commandments which one usually tramples with his heels...”

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi bases his comments on the words of our Sages in the Midrash Tanchuma³. However the Midrash uses different wording. It says in the Midrash that we are discussing “‘Minor Mitzvos’ to which people do not pay attention; rather they throw them under their

1. Devorim 7:12.

2. The fact is that from one perspective all Mitzvos are equal; each Mitzvah connects us to Hashem. However from a different perspective each Mitzvah has a different affect of me and the world. The same is true of the limbs of the body. If (G-d forbid) any limb is missing the person is not complete. However there is a difference between each organ; between a brain, a liver and a kidney etc.

3. See the Midrash Tanchuma at the beginning of our Parshah.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

heels.”

Rashi makes it very clear that we are referring to Mitzvos which one usually tramples with his heels. People do not treat these Mitzvos with the proper respect which they deserve. This is therefore obvious according to Peshat that we are discussing “heels,” i.e. the part of the body which tramples. Everything fits together.

However the approach of the Midrash⁴ seems to have no connection to Peshat whatsoever. The Midrash does not discuss not showing the Mitzvos the respect due them; the Midrash talks about one who throws the Mitzvos away, under his heels. There is no remnant of the Mitzvos left. It has nothing to do with heels. This has nothing to do with Peshat.

The Midrash Tanchuma which we quoted continues. It tells us that Dovid Hamelech said⁵ “Why should I fear in days of misfortune? The iniquity of my heels surrounds me.” The Midrash explains that by “the days of misfortune” King Dovid meant the more severe sins of the Torah. Of these sins Dovid was not afraid. The only thing of which he was afraid was “the iniquity of his heels.” The heels, as we know refer to “so-called” minor sins. In other words King Dovid was not afraid of the more “severe” sins. However he was afraid of the “minor sins.” He was concerned that he may have overlooked something because it was minor! However the Torah explains that one must be as careful with a “major Mitzvah” as with one which is “minor.”

This requires explanation. Dovid was certainly careful about all Mitzvos, without categorizing them. In fact, the Midrash which we began quoting continues quoting King Dovid. He prays that G-d should⁶ “also withhold Your servant from willful sins; let them not rule over me; then I will be perfect and I will be cleansed of much transgression.” In other words, for Dovid there was no difference between one type of sin and another. He wanted to be, and certainly was, clean of sin in all respects.

The Explanation

The explanation is that we are not discussing one who has no desire to perform “minor Mitzvos.” We are certainly not discussing one who wishes to disparage the Mitzvos of any sort. Under no circumstances does he wish to “step on” Mitzvos. However his attitude is less

4. This is the source of Rashi.

5. Tehillim 49:6.

6. Tehillim 19:12.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

than perfect. He wants to fulfill *all* Mitzvos. He knows that he must fulfill all Mitzvos. However he has priorities. Step number one is to take care of the head. He will obviously try to keep all commandments, including those which are taken lightly by most people. However he feels that for now he must throw certain Mitzvos under his heels. He must wait to fulfill certain Mitzvos until he is ready. He must wait until he has perfected his head!

Each of us must learn a daily portion of Chumash, Tehillim and Tanya. We must all learn Rambam every day. But is that where we should begin? Torah is so big!!! There is so much to get done. And yes, it is impossible to do everything at once.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

This can be compared to a person who wants to bestow kindness upon his fellow Jew. If his fellow has no hat, no shoes or no shirt, what should he do? Should he first get him a tie? Everything must indeed be done with an order.

The Evil Inclination tells me to first get him shoes and a shirt, etc. From that point we can go further. But the fact is that we can and we must do all *Mitzvos*! The very word Mitzvah means connection. That is the way in which I can connect myself to Hashem. However, I need to get all of it. I cannot begin by figuring out what is more or less important. I have to do everything without exception. I cannot take a rest. Just as a living person cannot pause breathing. He may say that he has more fundamental things with which to occupy himself now. The Yetzer Hora is called a craftsman in his job. He is capable of persuading anyone to go along with him. But using the power given to us by Hashem, we can all stand up to him. Even King Dovid could (and did) successfully pray for G-d to save him from temptation, the same is true of each and every one of us.

Dovid is called Dovid King Moshiach. The time of his arrival is coming closer and closer. With the help of our learning from him and following in his footsteps, we shall certainly reach that Divine revelation now!

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Eikev 5740)

I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

For questions, subscriptions or dedications our email address is
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**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיקו Morris**

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**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיקו Morris**

* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Tzivia ש' Cohen**

&

Mrs. Berocho bas Soroh שתח' Cohen
For a complete and speedy recovery

* * *

**DEDICATED BY
Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar ש' Mars**

*

May he merit to be a Chossid, a Yerei Shomayim and a Lamdon

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

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לזכות

ר' שלום משה הכהן בן צבי' שי' כהן

ומרת ברכה בת שרה שתחי' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מארס

יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן