

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Terumah

4 Adar I, 5779 – February 9, 2019

Compiled from the works of

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Terumah**

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות כ"ה – ב': דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ-לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבוּ תִקְחוּ אֶת-תְּרוּמָתִי:
רש"י ד"ה ויקחו לי תרומה: לי לשמי:

Shemos 25:2: "Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering. From every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering."

Rashi Heading - and have them take for Me an offering: (meaning that the offering must be) dedicated to My name.

Synopsis

In our Torah portion, Terumah, the Torah commands the Jews to build a portable Tabernacle, called the Mishkan" in Hebrew. This would accompany them throughout the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, serving as a "dwelling place" for Hashem. It was to be built of objects which G-d commanded the Jews to donate "to Me." What is the meaning of "to Me?" Rashi cites the words "and have them take *for Me* an offering (meaning a donation)," and explains that the offerings must be "dedicated to My name." Why does Rashi need to explain this at all? The beginning student would understand that the offerings had to be taken for G-d.

A number of commentaries explain Rashi's difficulties with these words as follows. What need is there to *take* something for Hashem? The entire world is His! Furthermore, taking something for Him would imply that until one took it, the object was further from Him. Upon taking it, he brought it closer to Hashem. However, this concept can only apply to physical people who are limited by time and space. No such limitation applies to G-d; He has no body! Therefore, Rashi explains that here the meaning of taking an offering for Hashem is that it is "dedicated to His name."

However, we find a number of such verses which the beginner has already learned. The Torah already discussed giving things to G-d, yet Rashi found no need to explain those instances. Obviously, the meaning of *giving* something to Hashem, or *taking* something for Him, does not trouble the beginning student.

Without Rashi, we would have thought that the words "for Me" in our verse means that the donations are transferred to the heavenly domain. That is the reason that Rashi includes the words "have them take" and "an offering" in his heading. The word "take" on its own implies that the offering is being taken from the individual's domain and brought into G-d's domain. That is the implication of the word "take." The word offering, which is related to the Hebrew word elevated, also implies that the object is elevated into Hashem's domain. Rashi includes those words in his heading to show us that the words "for Me" do not teach us that the offerings are given to

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Hashem. Rather they teach us that the offerings must be “dedicated for My (Hashem’s) name.” They must be given with the intent that they are for Hashem’s name.

Rashi’s Explanation

In this week’s Torah reading, Terumah, G-d commands the Jewish nation to build the Mishkan. This was the Tabernacle, the portable sanctuary which the Jews would carry in the desert for 40 years. Who would supply the materials from which this sanctuary to be built? The answer to this question is found in our Parshah. Hashem told Moshe¹ to “Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering (donations). From every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering.” Rashi cites the words from the verse “have them take for Me an offering,” and explains that it means that the offering must be “dedicated to My name.”

Quite a few of the supercommentaries ask what Rashi finds difficult in Peshat about G-d saying that the offerings are to be taken for “Me.,” i.e. Hashem². It does not seem to require any explanation!

These words can bother the beginning student on two counts. The simple meaning of taking an offering for Hashem, is that it should be given to Him. However, this is untenable. Scripture says clearly³ that “the land and the fullness thereof are the Lord’s.” Furthermore, it says that⁴ “If I (meaning G-d) were hungry I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are Mine.” In other words, everything already belongs to Hashem. How is it possible to *give* Him something, or to *take* something for Him? Furthermore, the idea of *taking* something for Hashem implies that before one took it the object was far from him. The one who took it brought it close to Him. Such an expression is only appropriate for a human being. However, it cannot be used in connection with G-d, Who has no physical body or form. He is neither limited by time nor by space. Everything is neither near nor far from Him. Thus it would be quite impossible to draw anything closer to Him. These commentaries explain that it is for these two reasons that Rashi explains that here “taking for Me” is not to be understood in the literal sense. Rather here it means taking offerings for My sake.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

This leaves us with a number of difficulties which we need to resolve. Firstly, we know how particular Rashi is with the words which he cites from the verse to serve as the heading for his comments. He only quotes the words which he is explaining. Based on the above explanation the only difficulty in the verse is in understanding the words “for me.” Why does he also cite the words “have them take an offering.”

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 25:2.

2. See the Mizrachi, Sefer Hazikaron, the commentary of the Maharik, Gur Aryeh, Be’ar Mayim Chaim, Devek Tov and others on this verse.

3. Tehillim 24:1.

4. Tehillim 50:12.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Additionally, there are earlier verses in the Torah where similar expressions were used regarding Hashem. The beginning student already learned that our forefather Ya'akov said⁵ that "... everything that You give me, I will surely tithe *to You*." In other words, he specifically promised to offer a tenth of everything he receives to Hashem. Likewise, we find that Hashem commanded⁶ to "sanctify to Me every firstborn ..." In neither case does Rashi find a need to explain what is meant by giving something to Hashem. From this it is clear that Rashi is not bothered by these expressions. Tithing or giving something to the Almighty refers to consecrating an object to Him. One is not (G-d forbid) giving Him something which He needs. Rather we must say that Rashi's explanation is necessary in order to answer a different question.

The Explanation

We would learn simply that the words "for Me" mean that the objects which are offered are to become consecrated to Hashem. In other words, they become heavenly property, which is not permitted to be used for one's personal needs. However, Rashi negates this idea by citing the words "have them take," and "an offering" in addition to the words "for Me."

The word "take" has the connotation of moving something from one place to another. It does not merely refer to a physical place; it also has the meaning of moving something from one person's property to that of another's. In other words, the meaning of "take" in the verse is that the offerings are transferred from the original owner's property to that of G-d. It becomes a consecrated object.

The Hebrew word "Terumah - תְּרוּמָה," which we have translated as offering, can have an additional meaning according to Peshat. The first translation is found in Rashi's comments on this very verse. He explains the word "Terumah" to mean "separation. They shall set apart from their property an offering for Me." According to this meaning, the sanctified object was separated from the individual's property, and moved into the heavenly domain. The second translation of "Terumah" is "lifting up." This means physically raising something, if the object under discussion is something physical. However if that which is being discussed is an item's ownership, it refers to transferring it to a higher domain⁷. In our case what is meant is that the offering leaves the ownership of an individual Jew, and is raised to Hashem's domain.

From this we can see Rashi's reason for citing the words "have them take" and "an offering." He is demonstrating that the words "for Me" cannot mean that the objects which are offered become heavenly property.

5. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 28:11.

6. Parshas Bo, Shemos 13:2.

7. We find that Rashi himself explained the same concept earlier. The Torah tells us how Avrohom bought a burial plot for his wife Soroh from Efron. In Parshas Chayei Soroh, Bereishis 23:17 the Torah says that "and so the field of Efron which was in Machpeilah, facing Mamre, was established (as Avrohom's possession)." Rashi explains that the Hebrew word meaning "was established" literally means "rose up, or was elevated." Rashi explains there that "It experienced an elevation, for it left the possession of a simple person (and went) into the possession of a king."

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

We already know this from the words “take” and “offering.” Therefore, Rashi explains that the meaning of “for Me” is “dedicated to My name.” Rashi is teaching us that donating an offering to Hashem does not suffice. One must do it for the sake of dedicating it for Hashem’s name.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Rashi’s commentary on the Torah is known to contain wondrous teachings in all aspects of Torah. This includes the mysteries of Torah. Rashi explains on our verse, quoting from the Talmud⁸, that our portion is actually alluding to three different Terumos, meaning offerings. One of these was the mandatory half shekel offering which had to be brought every year. This offering was used to fund all of the communal offerings, which were brought on behalf of each and every Jew. The point is that each Jew was obligated to bring all of the communal offerings; in this manner each individual actually had a part in each sacrifice which was offered. If someone refused to give this particular offering, the court would force him to do so. If someone is forced to give something against his will, how can Rashi say that he must have the intention of dedicating it to Hashem’s name? In such an instance he has no such intention. Quite to the contrary, he does not necessarily wish to give.

The explanation is as follows. All of these offerings were for the purpose of building and maintaining the sanctuary, which was to serve as G-d’s dwelling place in this world. As in the construction and preparation of any palace, two things are needed⁹. First any and all dirt must be removed from the palace. The next step is to arrange all of the most beautiful furniture within the palace. In terms of our service of Hashem, this applies to the two things which are demanded of us.¹⁰ “Shun evil, and do that which is good.” Specifically, shunning evil is only a preparation for building the palace for Hashem. We actually build the palace by doing that which is good.

It is for this reason that our intent is of primary concern when it comes to performing positive actions. The most important concern when it comes to shunning evil is that we actually do not perform any acts which are wrong. That is how we “clean out the palace,” in order to enable us to bring in the beautiful furniture and prepare the palace for Hashem. Regarding positive actions we are more concerned with intent.

We must insure that we fulfill our obligations and build the palace. *If* there is a need to force one to fulfill his obligation, we do so. However, when it comes to positive actions, we must perform them with the intent that we are dedicating them to Hashem’s name.

It is for this reason that the Sages said that¹¹ “one should always occupy himself with Torah and Mitzvos even if it is not for its own sake, with a pure intent. The reason is because as a result of performing Torah and Mitzvos for ulterior motives, he will come to perform them with a pure intent.” This means to say, that it is not

8. See Talmud Yerushalmi Shekalim 1:1, and Talmud Megillah 29, b.

9. See Likkutei Torah Parshas Balak, Page 70, Column 3. See also there Parshas Shelach Page 36, Column 4.

10. Tehillim 34:15.

11. See Talmud Pesochim Page 50, Side b. See also the Laws of Torah Study from the Alter Rebbe Chapter 4, Paragraph 3.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

because performing Mitzvos in a perfunctory is sufficient. Rather because ultimately one will come to have the proper intentions. At that time he will be able to complete and perfect Hashem's dwelling place in this world.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Terumah, 5725)

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On the Occasion Of his *Upsherenish* (First Haircut),
5 Adar I, 5779 – ה' אד"ר, ה'תשע"ט

AND IN HONOR OF HIS BROTHER

The Soldier of Tzivos Hashem **Chaim** שיחזי' **Morris**

*

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* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR FATHER

Mr. **Sholom Moshe** ben Reb **Shlomo Meir** Hacoheh ע"ה **Cohen**
Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FAMILY שיחזיו

**מוקדש לזכות
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש**

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ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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