

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Mishpotim

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Compiled from the works of
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Mishpotim**

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות כ"ג, כ': הנה אנכי שלח מלאך לפניך לשמרה בדרך ולהביאך אל המקום אשר הכנתי:

רש"י ד"ה אשר הכינתי: אשר זמנתי לתת לכם, זהו פשוטו ומדרשו אל המקום אשר הכינתי כבר מקומי ניכר כנגדו, וזה אחד מן המקראות שאומרים, שבית המקדש של מעלה מכוון כנגד בית המקדש של מטה:

Shemos 23:20: Behold, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.

Rashi Heading - that I have prepared: that I have prepared to give to you. This is its simple meaning. Its Midrashic interpretation is, "That I have prepared": My place is already recognizable opposite it. This is one of the verses that state that the heavenly Temple is directly opposite the earthly Temple.

Synopsis

In our Torah portion, Mishpotim, the Torah tells us that Hashem sent an angel to guard the Jewish people and to bring them to the place which He has prepared. Rashi offers two explanations of the place "that I have prepared." He tells us that "I have prepared it to give to you." Various commentaries point out that the question bothering Rashi is that the Torah does not say for whom G-d prepared the place. The Torah only says "that I have prepared." Therefore, Rashi tells us that Hashem prepared this particular place for the Jews.

However, this leaves us with an additional difficulty. Why *doesn't* the Torah tell us for whom the place was prepared? It is because of this question that Rashi adds a second, Midrashic interpretation. He writes that "My place is already recognizable opposite it." Based on this interpretation, the Torah is saying that Hashem prepared the place for Himself, meaning as His Temple. We find that the verb "prepare" without any modifier means for oneself.

However, if all that is bothering Rashi is that the Torah does not write explicitly for whom Hashem prepared the place, he could have simply cited the words "that I have prepared," and written "for you." Why does he write anything more?

The explanation is that Rashi is actually bothered by a different question. The Hebrew verb "prepare" connotes making an actual change in an object in order to get it ready for something. Here, Hashem made no change to the Land of Israel in order to give it to the Jews. To the contrary, the land was inhabited by seven Canaanite nations. It would take many years before we would actually enter the land, conquer it and divide it. When Rashi explains "that I have prepared," he changes from the Hebrew word for preparation used by the verse. He uses a word which connotes preparation, but also has the meaning of inviting. Hence, we see that Hashem

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gave the Jews a “verbal” invitation to the land which would ultimately become theirs.

This explanation is somewhat difficult. Usually, the word which is actually used by the verse means to make a change to an object in order to prepare it for *someone* or *something*. That is why Rashi also offers a second explanation. Hashem did not prepare the *land* for us; rather He prepared the *Temple*. He changed it by making the heavenly Temple recognizably opposite the earthly Temple.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah reading, Mishpotim, Hashem tells the Jewish people that¹ “Behold, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.” Rashi cites the words from the verse “that I have prepared,” and first explains that Hashem is saying “that I have prepared to give to you. This is its simple meaning.”

Various supercommentaries² explain why Rashi finds a need to explain the seemingly obvious meaning of this verse. The Torah says that Hashem has prepared a place. However, it seems to neglect to tell us for whom He prepared it. Therefore, Rashi explains that He prepared it “to give to you,” i.e. the Jewish People. However, according to this explanation there seems to be a difficulty in understanding the verse. Why, indeed, does the Torah *not* tell us for whom G-d prepared this place? Therefore, Rashi offers a second explanation. He says that “its Midrashic interpretation is, ‘That I have prepared.’ My place is already recognizable opposite it. This is one of the verses that state that the heavenly Temple is directly opposite the earthly Temple.”

Accordingly, when the Torah says that Hashem prepared this place, it means that He prepared it for Himself, i.e. to serve as his Temple. When it says that one prepared something, and does not use a modifier telling us for whom he prepared it, it is understood that the prepared it for himself³. It is only necessary to specify for whom it was prepared if it was for someone else.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Based on the above, we need to understand why Rashi was bothered by the fact that it does not say for whom Hashem prepared this place. The verse is discussing the Jewish people. It seems obvious from the verse's context that He prepared the place for the Jews.

It is also not clear why Rashi is so verbose in his comments. We know that Rashi never uses more words than are absolutely necessary. If all that Rashi is explaining is for whom Hashem prepared the place, he could have cited the words “that I have prepared,” and written “for you⁴.” That would have been enough to answer this

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 23:20.

2. See the commentaries of Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi, Devek Tov and the Sifsei Chachomim on this verse.

3. See the commentary of Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi here.

4. In fact, those are the exact words of the ibn Ezra's comments on this verse.

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question. Additionally, Rashi changes the language of the Torah. In the verse, the Hebrew word which we translated as “prepared” is “Hachinosi – הכינותי,” which comes from the Hebrew word “Hachonoh – הכנה,” meaning preparation. In Rashi’s comments he uses a different verb which *can* have the same meaning. Rashi writes “Hizmanti - הזמנתי,” from the word “Hazmonoh - הזמנה.” Even if both words are synonymous, why would change from the word used by the verse itself?

Additionally, we need to understand Rashi’s second explanation. First Rashi tells us that the words “that I have prepared” mean that “My place is already recognizable opposite it.” But he adds to this that “this is one of the verses that state that the heavenly Temple is directly opposite the earthly Temple.” What does this add to our understanding of the verse? One cannot even explain that Rashi is citing this as a proof to his words for the benefit of the beginning student. The beginning student has already, at this point, learned twice from Rashi that the heavenly Temple is directly opposite the earthly Temple⁵. And in neither of those instances did Rashi say that there are other instances where the Torah says the same thing.

The Explanation

Rashi is actually bothered by an obvious question. The Hebrew word for preparation as used in our verse, “Hachonoh – הכנה,” generally has a specific meaning. It implies preparing an object by making a change in it in order to make it usable for a specific purpose. Here, when the Torah says that Hashem prepared “the place,” presumably the land of Israel for the Jews, the implication should be that He got it ready for us. However, judging by the context in which this is written, the land appears to have been far from ready.

Hashem did indeed promise us that he will give the Jews Israel. But that and all of the promises concurrent with this verse are in the future tense. Additionally, Hashem told us that it will be a long and tedious process. It would span many years. He promised us that⁶ “My angel *will* go before you, and bring you to the Emorim, the Chittim, the Perizzim, the Cena’anim, the Chivvim, and the Yevusim, and I *will* destroy them.” It then goes on to say that⁷ “... I *will* drive out the Chivvim, the Cena’anim, and the Chittim from before you. I *will* not drive them away from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field outnumber you. (Rather,) I *will* drive them out from before you little by little, until you have increased and can occupy the land.” It would be many years before this would actually happen.

Therefore, Rashi explains that when the Torah says “Hachinosi – הכינותי,” I have prepared, what it actually means is that “Hizmanti - הזמנתי,” I have invited. Hashem is welcoming us to the land. He is inviting us, and telling us that at a future point in time He will make the changes necessary to transform the land of the seven nations into the Holy Land.

5. See Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 28:17 and Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 15:17.

6. Our Parshah, Shemos 23:23.

7. Our Parshah, Shemos 23:28-30.

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However, Rashi is not satisfied with this explanation. Generally, the word which the Torah uses to mean “prepared” does imply that a change was made. He therefore offers us a second interpretation. He tells us that “its Midrashic interpretation is, ‘That I have prepared.’ My place is already recognizable opposite it. This is one of the verses that state that the heavenly Temple is directly opposite the earthly Temple.”

According to this explanation, the object of the verse is different. Hashem is not saying that He prepared the land of Israel for the Jews. Rather He is telling us that He prepared the Holy Temple for the Jewish Nation. He did make changes in order to ensure that it would be ready. What did He change? Rashi tells us that He saw to it that His place, the heavenly Temple, would be noticeably opposite the earthly Temple. This was the case regarding our forefather Yaakov. When he saw the site of the Temple⁸ “he was frightened, and he said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’” He actually felt the sanctity of the earthly Temple. In other words, one could notice, recognize that this was the location of the earthly Sanctuary

However, we need to reconcile this with the above-mentioned verses⁹. The earthly Temple was in the Land of Israel. The land was still in the possession of the Canaanite nations. Hashem told us what a long process it would be before we could actually inhabit the Holy Land, including the Sanctuary! How is it possible to say that G-d made the Temple ready for us? It would seem to have been far from ready!

That is why Rashi adds the words that “This is one of the verses that state that the heavenly Temple is directly opposite the earthly Temple.” Rashi is letting us know that there was a change. However, the change did not take place now. The change took place in days of yore. Hashem created the world in such a manner that the heavenly Temple was *always* directly and obviously opposite the earthly Temple. That is the way that things would always be; just as they were in the days of our forefather Yaakov. Rashi is letting us know that our verse is just one of several that make this point.

A Halachic Lesson from Rashi

The Talmud tells us of a dispute between the two Sages Abaye and Rovo¹⁰. Their dispute involves the question of designation. If one designates something for a specific purpose, is it considered as if he had actually performed an action? The Hebrew word for designation is the same as the word which Rashi uses for preparation or invitation, namely “Hazmonoh - הזמנה.”

The Talmud specifically discusses a case of shrouds which were woven for a person who was deceased, but were not yet used. One is prohibited from deriving benefit from that which is to be used for a corpse. Abaye

8. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 28:17. Note that this was also the first time that Rashi said that the heavenly Temple is directly opposite the earthly Temple.

9. See footnotes 6 and 7.

10. See Talmud Sanhedrin 47b.

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is of the opinion that the shrouds are prohibited for any use by anyone other than the corpse. His reason is that according to him, verbal designation is considered the equivalent of an action. Conversely Rovo, is of the opinion that they may be used for any other purpose until they are actually placed on the corpse. His reasoning is that verbal designation is not considered an action. That is one particular case. However, it has ramifications throughout Jewish law.

One can see how this relates to Rashi's two explanations. According to the first explanation, which as Rashi says is Peshat, the very fact that Hashem designated the Holy Land for the Jews was considered as if He had actually prepared it. It is as if Israel had been transformed into a land fit for the Jewish Nation. In other words, according to Peshat designation is the equivalent of an action.

On the other hand, the second, Midrashic explanation which Rashi gives is that unless an actual change was made in the object itself, it is meaningless. From this we can derive that according to the Midrash, designation has no significance.

(Adapted from a talk given on Motzo'ai Shabbos Parshas Mishpotim, 5739)

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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

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