

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

27 Iyar, 5778 – May 12, 2018

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

Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

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Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא כ"ו, ג': אם בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ויעשיכם אתם:

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

Rashi Heading: and observe My commandments: You shall toil in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill (the commandments). This is similar to¹ "(Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances...) and learn them, and keep in mind to do them."

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Behar-Bechukosai, G-d tells us that² "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! Therefore, Rashi explains that "following in My statutes" refers to toiling in Torah study. "Observing My commandments," says Rashi, means toiling in Torah study as well. However, it refers to a different level of Torah study. It means toiling in Torah in order to derive its practical laws.

The Torah's words seem clear enough; why does Rashi explain them in a manner which seems to be different than the simple meaning of the words? We know that "following His statutes" cannot simply mean keeping the commandments, because the next few words in the verse mention Mitzvah observance. Therefore, we must say that it means Torah study. However, Torah study is also a Mitzvah. Therefore, "observing My commandments" also includes Torah study. It cannot refer to a quantitative difference in Torah study, because

1. Devorim 5:1.

2. See Vayikroh 26, beginning with verse 3.

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then it would merely be more of the same Mitzvah. Therefore, Rashi says that it is a qualitative difference, namely "toiling" in Torah study. Even one who learns Torah without great effort is also "following His statutes."

However, we are still left with a difficulty. Rashi is explaining the verse "If you follow My statutes," as meaning that you toil in Torah. This is above and beyond the Mitzvah ("and observe My commandments") which includes the commandment of Torah study. The two seem to be in the wrong order. One would think that it should begin with something simpler, fulfilling the commandments. It could then progress to something more difficult, such as toiling in Torah study! Therefore, Rashi explains that here "observing My commandments" means "toiling in the study of Torah *in order* to observe and fulfill the commandments." The two are in the correct order, because observing the Mitzvos also refers to toiling in Torah study, but in a qualitatively different manner; toiling in order to extract the practical law from the Torah.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Bechukosai, the Torah tells us that "If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them," we will receive many blessings. "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, etc." Rashi cites the words "If you follow My statutes," and explains that "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." Immediately following this, Rashi explains the next words in the verse. He explains that "and observe My commandments" means that "you shall toil in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill (the commandments). This is similar to "(Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances...) and learn them, and keep in mind to do them". We see that here Rashi also understands fulfilling the commandments as toiling in Torah.

Rashi's source for his commentary is from the Midrash³. However, we know that Rashi does not quote Midrashim unless they are needed in order to explain Peshat. That explains why Rashi quotes the entire text of the Midrash, "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." Had Rashi merely stated that "if you follow My statutes" means that you must toil in Torah study, I would think that he was simply telling us the simple definition of "following My statutes." That would not be true, because the translation of "הוֹקוֹתַי - My Statutes" is generally commandments. However, in this instance that cannot be the case, because the

3. Toras Kohanim 26:2.

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Torah immediately tells us to observe the commandments. Therefore, Rashi explains that here it means to toil in Torah.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi is basically explaining to us that in this context the word(s) "חוקותי - My Statutes" does not have its usual meaning of Mitzvos, but rather it refers to Torah study. In order to tell us this, it would seem that Rashi only needed to cite the word "If in My statutes," and to state that "I might think that this refers to commandments." Why does he say that it refers to "*the fulfillment* of the commandments?" The question is even stronger. In the Midrash which Rashi quotes, it indeed does say "I might think that this refers to commandments." Rashi adds the words "the fulfillment."

Rashi's reason for changing the meaning of the word here is because it says further on in the same verse "observe My commandments," From this Rashi derives that here "My statutes" refers to Torah. However, how do we know that it specifically refers to *toiling* in Torah?

Commenting on the words "and observe them," Rashi writes "you shall toil in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill (the commandments)." This would seem to contradict what he just wrote a few lines earlier, "When Scripture says, 'and observe My commandments,' the fulfillment of the commandments is (already) stated." In other words, first he defines "and observe My commandments" as the fulfillment of the Mitzvos. He then says that "and observe My commandments" means "you shall toil in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill (the commandments)."

The Explanation

The beginning student is well aware that Torah study is a Mitzvah. It is therefore understood that "going in My statutes" cannot mean Torah study, because immediately following that it says "and observe My commandments." Obviously, this includes Torah study. Therefore, Rashi understands that the verse means to bring Torah study to a higher level. However, we cannot be speaking about learning more Torah. A difference in quantity would be irrelevant. Whether one learns more or less Torah, he is fulfilling the same Mitzvah. This is comparable to the Mitzvah of Tefillin. Whether one wears Tefillin for a longer time or a shorter time, he is performing the same Mitzvah. Rather the Torah study we are discussing here must be *qualitatively* greater. It is from this that Rashi understands that here, the meaning of going in My statutes is to *toil* in Torah. No matter how much effort one puts into his study, he is fulfilling the same commandment. However, the quality of the Mitzvah is greater.

However, based on this another matter requires explanation. The order of the verse seems to be difficult to understand. First the verse says "If you follow My statutes," which means a level of Torah study which is qualitatively greater. It then says "and observe My commandments," which refers to merely *fulfilling* (all of the

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commandments including) Torah study. One would think that the verse should first discuss simply studying Torah, and then go on to discuss exerting oneself in Torah study.

Had "If you follow My statutes" meant Torah study, and "observe My commandments" meant Mitzvoh fulfillment, there would be no question about the order of the verse. One must first learn in order to be able to perform Mitzvos. However, learning in order to be able to act does not require any extra toil. It is from this that Rashi deduces that applying extra effort in Torah study is not merely learning for the sake of learning. There is also a level of toil in learning in order to know how to fulfill Hashem's commandments. This is the reason that Rashi quotes the verse "and learn them, and keep in mind to do them." In whatever manner one learns, it must be in order "to keep in mind to do them," meaning to fulfill the commandments.

This also explains why Rashi explains "and fulfill My commandments" with the words "you shall toil in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill (the commandments)." The words "you shall toil" are actually referring back to "If you follow in My statutes." Rashi writes them here in order to explain the order of the verse. It begins by discussing a high level of learning Torah; applying great effort in order to learn. The verse then concludes that this same approach must be used when studying in order to know how to observe the commandments.

A Deeper Explanation from Rashi

Because "going in My statutes" refers to exerting oneself in Torah study, there must be a connection between "statutes - חוקים" and toiling in Torah study. It is written that⁴ "Torah is light," which means that everything in Torah provides us with illumination. The use of the word "statutes – חוקים" to describe toiling in Torah, means that there is a connection between the two.

In order to understand this, we must first understand the meaning of the word "statute - חוק" as it is used in relation to Mitzvos. There are three general categories of Mitzvos:

1. Testimonies - עדות: These are laws which testify to a certain event which took place. For example, keeping Shabbos is a testimony that G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.
2. Laws - משפטים: These are laws which have an explanation which is understood by human intellect. An example would be the prohibition against stealing.
3. Statutes - חוקים: These are Mitzvos whose reason is beyond our comprehension. An example of that would be not wearing a garment which contains both wool and linen.

Hebrew is called the "Holy Tongue." Every Hebrew word has a special, Divine significance. The word used in our verse for law, a statute, is the word חוק which is related to the Hebrew word for engraving - חקיקה. This means that there is a connection between super rational laws and engraving. Just what is that connection?

4. Mishlei 6:23.

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One of the differences between engraving and writing is that engraving takes a great deal more effort and exertion. Likewise, it takes a great deal of effort to fulfill a commandment which is not understood. The only reason to fulfill the Mitzvoh is because the King decreed that I must. To fulfill a command which I find logical is not all that difficult.

This also enables us to understand the words "חוקותי - My Statutes," and its connection with חקיקה- engraving, and חוקים, laws which transcend human understanding. We can now understand the connection to toiling, exerting oneself in Torah study. This toil must be beyond all reason. However, despite going beyond reason, I must understand the Torah which I learn to whatever degree possible. As a result of toiling in the study of Torah, our hearts will be pierced, engraved. The Torah which we learn will even break through, engrave, a heart of stone, if we exert ourselves above our nature.

(Compiled from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai 5725)

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the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיחיו Morris**

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

* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Hatomim Avrohom Moshe ben Mina Esther שי' Gordon
For a complete and speedy recovery**

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DEDICATED BY HIS CLASSMATES

in

YESHIVAH TORAH OHR שיחיו

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR MOTHER
Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacoheן ע"ה Cohen
Passed away on 8 Shevat, 5778
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY

* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheן ben Tzivia שי' Cohen
For a complete and speedy recovery**

* * *

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

*

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

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

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

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לזכות

הת' אברהם משה בן מרת מינה אסתר שי' גארדאן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נדפס ע"י חבריו התמימים

בישיבה תורה אור

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לעילוי נשמת

מרת ברכה בת ר' צבי נחמי' הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטר ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

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לזכות

ר' שלום משה הכהן בן צבי' שי' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מאריס

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יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן