

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vo'eschanan

16 Menachem Av, 5779 – August 17, 2019

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית ז', י"א: וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת הַמִּצְוָה וְאֶת הַחֻקִּים וְאֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:
רש"י ד"ה היום לעשותם: ולמחר לעולם הבא ליטול שכרם:

Devorim 7:11: You shall therefore, observe the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command to you today to do them.

Rashi Heading - this day to do them: But in the future (literally tomorrow), in the World to Come, you will take their reward.

Synopsis

In the end of this week's Torah portion, Vo'eschanan, the Torah tell us to keep the Mitzvos which He commands us today to do. Rashi explains that what the Torah means is that we must keep the commandments today, but we will receive their reward "tomorrow," in the World to Come.

What is Rashi actually telling us? In the previous verse we were told that Hashem rewards those that hate Him (meaning the wicked) to their face. He rewards them in this world; He does not wish to reward them in the World to Come. However, for the righteous there is no reward in this world. This explanation seems difficult to understand. The beginning student has been taught numerous times that there *is* reward for Mitzvos in this world. In fact, shortly after this, the Torah tells us that¹ *because* you will obey the Mitzvos which Hashem will give you, He will love you, bless you, cause you to multiply and give you the many blessings which are enumerated in the verse! We see clearly here and elsewhere that there *are* rewards in this world! How can Rashi say that there is no reward in this world?

Rashi's wording is taken from a similar phrase which is written twice in the Talmud. In the Tractate Eiruvim the Talmud says that "today is to do them and tomorrow is to receive their reward." Rashi however chooses the version from Tractate Avodah Zarah which says that "today is to do them and tomorrow is to *take* their reward." We need to understand why.

1. Our Parshah, Devorim 7:13-16.

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The reason is, because of the difference between “receive” and “take.” If I receive something, I am being passive. Everything rests in the hands of the one who gives it to me. However, if I take the reward, it is mine. I earned it and I deserve it. That is why Rashi, who is extremely precise with his language, chooses the version that one *takes* the reward. According to Rashi there is indeed a reward in this world. Hence there is no question.

Rashi’s Explanation

At the conclusion of this week’s Torah portion, Vo’eschanan, the Torah tells us² to “... observe the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command to you today to do them.” Rashi cites the words “today to do them,” and comments that “but in the future (literally tomorrow), in the World to Come, you will take their reward.”

What is Rashi teaching us here? Various commentaries explain that earlier the Torah said that³ “He repays those who hate Him to their face in order to cause them to perish; He will not delay the one who hates Him, but he will repay him to his face.” Rashi explains there that Hashem rewards an evil person for the good which he does “during his lifetime. He pays him his good reward in order to cause him to be lost from the World to Come.”

In other words, Rashi is telling us that Hashem immediately rewards an evil person for the good which he does in this world. In this manner Hashem avoids rewarding him in the world to come. This is in contradistinction to “the one who observes the commandments etc.” The righteous person receives his reward in the “World to Come⁴.” This is in keeping with what the Sages say that there is no true reward for what one does in this world. All real reward is reserved for the world to come⁵.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

There is an obvious difficulty here in understanding Rashi’s words. How can we say that according to Peshat there is no reward in this world? The beginning student has already learnt many times that there are physical rewards which will come as a result of fulfilling Mitzvos! One small

2. Our Parshah, Devorim 7:11.

3. Our Parshah, Devorim 7:10.

4. See Rashi’s comments to Parshas Vayeishev, Bereishis 37:2. “When Yaakov wished to dwell in tranquility, the troubles of Yosef sprang upon him. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, ‘What is prepared for the righteous in the world to come is not sufficient for them, but they seek to dwell in tranquility in this world as well?’”

5. See Talmud Kiddushin 39, b. See also the conclusion of Tractate Chullin.

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example (of many) is⁶ “If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them, 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 ...” Furthermore, *immediately* following this verse the Torah says⁷ “And it will be, *because* you will heed these ordinances and keep them and perform, that Hashem your God will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your soil, your grain, your wine, and your oil, the offspring of your cattle and the choice of your flocks, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you ...” This is just the beginning of a long list of blessings which Jews will receive for observing the Torah. Hashem has promised us countless rewards until this point. They are all Peshat – the level at which Rashi explains. How can we explain that Rashi is telling us that the beginning student is to understand that there is no reward in this world?

A number of commentaries explain the reason for reward in this world based on the famous teaching of the Rambam⁸. The Rambam explains that in this world there is no reward for the sake of reward. The entire reason for one receiving benefit in exchange for fulfilling G-d’s will, is in order to make it possible for him to continue carrying out what Hashem wants. If one is, G-d forbid not well, it will make it difficult for him to do what Hashem wants him to. If he demonstrates that he wants to perform Hashem’s will, Hashem will keep sickness away from him. However, this is not a reward; this is the way that Hashem allows one to serve Him. The actual reward does not come until the World to Come. According to the Rambam the ultimate reward does not come until later.

However, we cannot explain Rashi’s meaning according to Peshat in this manner. Rashi comments make it impossible to say so. The Torah says⁹ “I will turn towards you, and I will make you fruitful and increase you, and I will set up My covenant with you.” Rashi cites the words “I will turn towards you,” and explains as follows. “I will turn away from all My affairs to pay your reward.’ To what may this be compared? To a king who hired some workers. Only one of them worked for him for a long time, while all the others did not. When they presented themselves to receive payment the king quickly paid the others a small amount. To the one who had worked long

6. Parshas Bechukosai, Vayikroh, beginning with 26:3-4.

7. Our Parshah, Devorim 7:12-13.

8. See Rambam Laws of Teshuvah Chapter 9, Paragraph 1.

9. Parshas Bechukosai, Vayikroh 26:9.

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he said, ‘They worked merely a little for me, but with you, I must now turn my attention to calculate the substantial amount that I owe you.’ Likewise, G-d will quickly pay the nations the small amount He owes them for their few good deeds. He will then turn His attention, as it were, to the Jewish people, to calculate their great reward.”

From Rashi’s explanation it is clear that there is reward in this world. The benefits which one receives for following the Torah are not merely an intermediary “perk,” in order to allow him to continue serving Hashem. Rather, He turns away from all of His affairs (as so to speak) in order to reward us.

The Explanation

There is a similar phrase mentioned twice in the Talmud. Rashi actually quotes these words as his comments here. In Tractate Eiruvin¹⁰, the Talmud says that “today is to do them and tomorrow is to *receive* their reward.” Rashi however chooses the version from Tractate Avodah Zarah¹¹; “today is to do them and tomorrow is to *take* their reward.”

What is the difference between “receiving” and “taking?” One who receives something is being passive. Everything rests in the hands of the one who gives it to him. He receives neither more nor less than what the one who gave it decided. However, if one *takes* the reward, it is his. He earned it and deserves it. That is why Rashi, who is extremely precise with his language, chooses the version that involves taking the reward. According to Rashi there is indeed a reward in this world according to Peshat.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

The difference between “receiving” and “taking” can further be explained as follows. There is a difference of opinion whether reward and punishment are cause and effect, or whether they are miraculous¹². One opinion is that Hashem neither punishes nor rewards someone because he did something which is intrinsically good or bad. Rather the reward or punishment which the person receives is a miracle. The other opinion is that they are a part of nature which was built into the creation. If one performed a certain act he is either punished or rewarded in a way which suits the action.

10. Tractate Eiruvin, 22, a.

11. Tractate Avodah Zara, 3, a.

12. See Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rashab Volume 1, beginning with Page 395. See also Likkutei Sichos Volume 5 Page 135, ff. 23.

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This also adds explanation to the difference between “receiving” and “taking.” If we say that the reward for performing a Mitzvah is natural, it is built into the action. The performance of the Mitzvah automatically generates the reward. Otherwise the generation of the reward requires a separate action.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vo'eschanan 5725)

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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

*

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