

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Kedoshim

6 Iyar, 5776 – May 14, 2016

Compiled from the works of
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

A Project of
Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
Copyright 2016©

An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Kedoshim

Likkutei Sichos Volume 27, Pages 141 – 148

Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא י"ט, י"ד: לא תקלל תרש ולפני עור לא תתן מכשל וְנִרְאֵתָ מֵאֲלֹקִים אֲנִי ה':
רש"י ד"ה ולפני עור לא תתן מכשל: לפני הסומא בדבר לא תתן עצה שאינה הוגנת לו, אל תאמר מכור שדך וקח לך חמור,
ואתה עוקף עליו ונוטלה הימנו:

Vayikroh 19:14: You shall not curse a deaf person. You shall not place a stumbling block before a blind person, and you shall fear your G-d. I am the Lord.

Rashi Heading: You shall not place a stumbling block before a blind person: Before a person who is “blind” regarding a matter, you shall not give advice that is improper for him. (For instance), do not say to someone, “Sell your field and buy a donkey (with the proceeds)” while you plan to cheat him since you yourself will take it from him (by lending him money and taking the donkey as collateral. He will not be able to take the field because a previous creditor has a lien on it.)

A Brief Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Kedoshim, tells us that one may “not place a stumbling block before a blind person¹.” Rashi explains that here a blind person refers to one who is “blind,” meaning ignorant, regarding a particular matter; “placing a stumbling block before him” means giving him bad advice. Rashi, as always, is explaining the simple meaning of the verse. Why does he not do so here? Why can he not simply say that the verse means that one may not place a stumbling block before one who is actually blind (G-d forbid), thereby causing him to stumble?

Rashi goes on to give an example of bad advice. He says that “one may not say to someone, ‘Sell your field and buy a donkey (with the proceeds),’ while you plan to cheat him since you yourself will take it from him.” Why does Rashi need to give us an example of bad advice; it is a very simple concept. Once he does bring an example, why does he not bring a simpler example!

1. Vayikroh 19:14.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Additionally, the example of bad advice which he does cite is telling someone to sell his field and buy a donkey. Why does he add that “you plan to cheat him?” That does not make the advice better or worse. Aside from that, selling ones donkey may be good advice. There are advantages to having a donkey; the payment for work performed with a donkey is immediate, and the donkey is the one that does the work.

The explanation is as follows. When the Torah repeats the same concept twice, we must try to find something new which it is teaching us. The Torah already discussed causing bodily harm to another, causing one to “stumble.” The beginning student already learned that² “If a person opens a pit, or if a person digs a pit and does not cover it, and a bull or a donkey falls into it ... the owner of the pit shall pay, he shall return money to its owner ...” In other words, we were already taught not to cause damage to another. What we learned previously discusses the obligation for monetary compensation and not the prohibition of digging a pit. However, if one is punished for committing an act, it is certainly prohibited! Here, according to Peshat, Rashi is telling us that we are being taught a novel concept; we already know that we may not cause physical harm to another. Therefore, Rashi explains that the Torah is referring to giving bad advice.

However, there are times that I will be giving my fellow good advice, but I will also be thinking about how I can benefit from it. This too is not acceptable. The Torah says that we must love our fellow as ourselves; the advice I give my friend must purely be for his benefit. That is why after stating the advice of buying a donkey, Rashi adds the words “while you plan to cheat him.” It is possible that buying a donkey may be good advice. Nevertheless I must have my fellow's benefit in mind, and no one else's.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Kedoshim, tells us that one may “not place a stumbling block before a blind person.” Rashi explains that here a blind person refers to one who is “blind,” meaning ignorant, regarding a particular matter. Rashi further explains that “placing a stumbling block before him” means giving him bad advice.

2. Shemos 21:33 – 34.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Rashi continues with an example of “advice that is improper for him,” saying that it means telling one's friend “‘Sell your field and buy a donkey (with the proceeds)’ while you plan to cheat him since you yourself will take it from him.”

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

As we have stated many times, Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the verse. Why doesn't Rashi explain simply that the Torah is referring to placing a stumbling block in front of one who is actually blind (G-d forbid)? In fact, why does Rashi need to state anything? On the surface, the explanation seems quite obvious.

Rashi says that a stumbling block refers to “advice that is improper for him.” He gives an example of telling one's friend “‘Sell your field and buy a donkey (with the proceeds),’ while you plan to cheat him since you yourself will take it from him.” There seems to be no need for an example. We all understand what improper advice is.

Since Rashi obviously feels that he needs to give an example, why can he not use a simpler example? There are many types of bad advice.

Moreover, the source of this Rashi is a Midrash. The Midrash gives other examples of bad advice, which are seemingly simpler than the example which Rashi cites. The first example which the Midrash offers is suggesting to someone that he leave on a journey at the break of dawn, in order that he be attacked by highwaymen. The second is that he leave in the middle of the afternoon, in order that he succumbs to a heatwave. The third is that he tells someone that a certain woman is fit according to Jewish law to marry a Kohen, although she is not. Finally, the Midrash uses the example which Rashi cites. Why does Rashi cite the last example used by the Midrash, rather than one of the first which are all simpler?

If for whatever reason Rashi chooses the last reason, why does he have to conclude by saying that “you plan to cheat him since you yourself will take it from him?” That seems to be irrelevant. Additionally, it does not serve to make the advice any less fitting!

The Explanation

Let us begin by dealing with the last two questions. Even the beginning Torah student understands that in terms of earning a livelihood, a donkey could be more beneficial than a field. A donkey can work both day and night. The donkey carries the heavy loads, meaning that there is less work for the owner to do. A field can (usually) only be taken care of during the day. It also involves a tremendous amount of exertion on the part of the one who owns it. He

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

must perform all of the labors associated with farming; he must plow, sow, reap, harvest, etc. He does not make any profit whatsoever until all of this is complete. However, while working with a donkey one can see a profit (almost) immediately. It would seem from this that the advice to sell his field and buy a donkey is quite good, at least in the short term.

That is why Rashi adds the words “you plan to cheat him since you yourself will take it from him.” Although the advice is sound, the one who is giving the advice does not have his friends benefit in mind. It is, in Rashi’s words, “advice that is improper *for him*.”

The fact is, however, that in the long term the advice is actually not good *for him*. A field does not die, unlike a donkey. Working with a donkey involves travelling, often far from home, whereas a field is usually nearby. There are numerous reasons why selling his field and buying a donkey may not be good advice *for him*. In this manner it is similar to the other examples quoted by the Midrash. Leaving on a journey early in the morning is generally good advice, but in this case it is a stumbling block, it was not good advice *for him*. Aside from that, if in reality the suggestion to buy a donkey is good advice, what difference does it make that the one who offers the advice will claim his field?

The answer to all of the above questions is understandable to all, beginner and advanced student alike. When the Torah repeats something which we know from before, we must try to look for an additional teaching which is added by its repetition.

We already know from what the Torah previously said³, that “If a person opens a pit, or if a person digs a pit and does not cover it, and a bull or a donkey falls into it ... the owner of the pit shall pay, he shall return money to its owner ...” In other words, we were already taught not to cause damage to another by placing a stumbling block before him, i.e. *doing damage*. We learned that such acts are *prohibited*. Despite the fact that what we learned previously discusses the obligation for monetary compensation and not the prohibition of causing harm to another, if one is punished for committing an act, it is certainly prohibited! Here, according to Peshat, Rashi is telling us that we already know that it is prohibited to damage another. Therefore he explains that in our verse we are being taught a novel concept. Rashi explains that the Torah is referring to giving bad advice, advice which is bad for the one whom we are advising.

3. Shemos 21:33 – 34.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

This is why Rashi does not quote the first three reasons of the Midrash. Suggesting to someone that he leave on a journey at the break of dawn in order that he be attacked by highwaymen, or suggesting that he leave on a trip in the middle of the afternoon so that he succumbs to a heatwave, are the equivalent of digging a pit in a public place. Telling someone that a certain woman is fit according to Jewish law to marry a Kohen, while she is not, is digging a “spiritual pit.”

However, there are times that one gives his fellow good advice, but is also thinking about the benefit he can derive from it. This too is not acceptable. The Torah says that we must love our fellow as ourselves, the advice I give my friend must purely be for *his* benefit. That is why after stating the advice of buying a donkey, Rashi adds the words “while you plan to cheat him.” It is possible that buying a donkey may be good advice; nevertheless I must have his benefit in mind, and no one else’s. The Torah tells us to love our fellow as ourselves; while giving him advice I must place myself in his shoes.

Deeper Explanation from Rashi

As we said above, it is not enough to give a friend good advice. One must consider only his benefit, and not any benefit which may accrue to one's self whatsoever. At the time that he gives the advice, he must totally divest himself from the situation. That is the true fulfillment of “loving your fellow as yourself,” and this brings about the true unity of all Jewish people.

(Compiled from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Kedoshim 5741)

To dedicate a week, a month or a year of

The Rashi of the Week, visit

www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org/dedications.html

You can find us on the web at www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

* * *

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

*

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

* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Elisha, Daniel and Yacov שיחיו Nakash**

*

**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Mr. and Mrs. Yaniv and Bryna Chana שיחיו Nakash**
May Hashem grant them material and spiritual success in all matters

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Sholom Dovid ben Reb Yitzchak Hacoheh ע"ה Mankes**
Passed away on 11 Teves, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mr. Rafael Yoel ben Reb Sholom Dovid Hacoheh שי' Mankes**
Passed away on 28 Nissan, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

**IN HONOR OF
Shimshon ben Chassibah שי' and Yosef Yitzchok ben Sarah שי'
For a complete and speedy recovery**

*

**DEDICATED BY
Mr. and Mrs. Yonatan Itsik Hacoheh and Shaindel Miriam שיחיו Mankes**

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Dr. Chaim Yitzchok ben
Reb Yechiel Moshe ע"ה Handwerger**
Passed away on 25 Adar II, 5776
May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

**DEDICATED BY HIS CHILDREN
Mr. and Mrs. Yoav and Devorah Leah שיחיו Handwerger**

**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

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

*

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

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

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" אלישע, דניאל ויעקב שיחיו נקש

*

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

ר' יניב וזוגתו מרת בריינא חנה שיחיו נקש
שיזכו להצלחה רבה ומפלגה בגו"ר בכל הענינים

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

ר' שלום דוד בן ר' יצחק הכהן ע"ה מנקס
נפטר ביום י"א טבת ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

לעילוי נשמת

ר' רפאל יואל בן ר' שלום דוד הכהן שי' מנקס
נפטר ביום כ"ה ניסן ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

לזכות

ר' שמשון בן חסיבה שי'
ור' יוסף יצחק בן שרה שי'
לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

*

נדפס ע"י משפחתם

ר' יונתן איציק הכהן
וזוגתו מרת שיינדל מרים שיחיו מנקס

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

ר' חיים יצחק בן ר' יחיאל משה ע"ה
האנטווערקער

נפטר ביום כ"ה אדר שני, ה'תשע"ו

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

נדפס ע"י בנו וכלתו

ר' יואב וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה שיחיו האנטווערקער

* * *

נדפס ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מארס

*

יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן