

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Mishpotim

27 Shevat, 5783 – February 18, 2023

Compiled from the works of

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A Project of

Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos

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

Likkutei Sichos Volume 21, Pages 133 – 137

Rashi in His Own Words

שמות כ"ג, כ': הנה אנכי שלח מלאך לפניך לשמרה בדרך ולקביאך 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 bring them to the place He prepared. Rashi offers two explanations of the site "that I have prepared." He tells us, "I have prepared it to give to you." Various commentaries point out that Rashi's question is that the Torah does not say for whom G-d prepared the place, and 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? That is why 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 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 explicitly write for whom Hashem prepared the place, he could have cited the words "that I have prepared" and written "for you." Why does he write anything more?

The explanation is that Rashi is bothered by a different question. The Hebrew verb "prepare" connotes making an actual change in an object to get it ready for something. Hashem did not change the Land of Israel to give it to the Jews. On the contrary, the land was inhabited by seven Canaanite nations. It would take many years before we would enter the land, conquer it and divide it. When Rashi explains "that I have prepared," he changes from the Hebrew word for the preparation used by the verse. He uses a word that connotes preparation but also has the meaning of inviting. Hence, we see that Hashem gave the Jews a "verbal" invitation to the land, which

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would ultimately become theirs.

This explanation is somewhat difficult. Usually, the word used by the verse means to change an object to prepare it for *someone* or *something*. That is why Rashi also offers a second explanation. Hashem did not prepare the *land* for us; instead, He prepared the *Temple* and 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 people¹, "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 begins by explaining that Hashem is saying "that I have prepared to give to you. This is its simple meaning."

Various supercommentaries² explain why Rashi needs to explain this verse's seemingly obvious meaning. The Torah says Hashem has prepared a place; however, it neglects 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, the verse seems difficult to understand. Why 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 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 he prepared it for himself³, and 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 discusses the Jewish people, and it seems evident from the verse's context that He prepared the place for the Jews.

It is also not clear why Rashi is so tedious in his comments. We know that Rashi never uses more words than are necessary. If all that Rashi is explaining is for whom Hashem prepared the place, he could have cited the

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.

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words "that I have prepared" and written "for you⁴." That would have been enough to answer this question. Additionally, Rashi changes the language of the Torah. In verse, the Hebrew word which we translated as "prepared" is "Hachinosi – הכינתי," 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 the Torah change from the term 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 "My place is already recognizable opposite it." But he adds, "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 proof of 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 Temple here below⁵. In neither instance did Rashi say that there are other places where the Torah says the same thing.

The Explanation

Rashi is 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 changing it to make it usable for a particular 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 would be a long and tedious process. It would span many years. He promised us⁶, "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 says⁷, "... 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 becomes 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 happen.

Therefore, Rashi explains that when the Torah says, "Hachinosi – הכינתי," I have prepared, what it means

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

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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is that "Hizmanti - הזמנתי," which also means inviting. Hashem is welcoming us to the land, and 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.

However, Rashi is not satisfied with this explanation. The word the Torah uses here to mean "prepared" does not always mean a change was made. He, therefore, offers us a second interpretation. He tells us that "its Midrashic definition 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 does not say that He prepared Israel's land for the Jews. Instead, He tells us that He prepared the Holy Temple for the Jewish Nation. Hashem did make changes to ensure that it would be ready. What did He change? Rashi tells us that He saw 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 Temple,⁸ "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 felt the sanctity of the earthly Temple. In other words, one could recognize that this was the location of the earthly Sanctuary

However, we need to reconcile this with the verses mentioned above⁹. The earthly Temple was in the Land of Israel. The land was still in possession of the Canaanite nations. Hashem told us what a long process it would be before we could 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, "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 the days of yore. Hashem created the world so that the heavenly Temple was *always* directly and obviously opposite the earthly Temple. That is how things would always be, just as they were in the days of our forefather, Yaakov. Rashi is letting us know that our verse is only one of several that make this point.

A Halachic Lesson from Rashi

The Talmud tells us of a dispute between the 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 acted? The Hebrew word for classification is the same as the word which Rashi uses for preparation or invitation, namely "Hazmonoh

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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- הזמנה."

The Talmud explicitly discusses a case of shrouds that 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 believes that the shrouds are not permitted for any use by anyone other than that corpse. His reason is that, according to him, the verbal designation is considered the equivalent of action. Conversely, Rovo thinks they may be used for other purposes until they are placed on the corpse. He reasons 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, as Rashi says, Peshat, the fact that Hashem designated the Holy Land for the Jews was considered as if He had 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 action.

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

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

I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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to their family and a Torah light to their community

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in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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