

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Terumah

4 Adar, 5783 – February 25, 2023

Compiled from the works of

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות כ"ה – ב': דבר אל-בני ישראל ויקחו לי תרומה מאת כל-איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את-תרומתי:
רש"י ד"ה ויקחו לי תרומה: לי לשמי:

Shemos 25:2: "Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering. From every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering."

Rashi Heading - and have them take for Me an offering: (meaning that the offering must be) dedicated to My name.

Synopsis

In our Torah portion, Terumah, the Torah commands the Jews to build the portable Tabernacle. This Tabernacle (Mishkan) would serve as a "dwelling place" for Hashem. It would serve this purpose throughout the forty years of wandering in the wilderness (and beyond). Hashem commanded us to build it of objects which He commanded the Jews to donate "to Me." What is the meaning of "to Me?" Rashi cites the words "and have them take for Me an offering." He explains that the offerings must be "dedicated to My name." Why does Rashi need to explain this at all? The beginning student would understand that we had to take the offerings for G-d.

Several commentaries explain Rashi's difficulties as follows. What need is there to *take* something for Hashem? The entire world is His! Furthermore, taking something for Him would imply that it was further from Him before that point, and one "took" it closer to Him. However, this concept can only apply to limited, physical people. Hashem has no body, has no limitation of time and space! Because of these difficulties, Rashi explains that here the meaning of taking an offering for Hashem is that it is "dedicated to His name."

However, we cannot say that this is what bothers Rashi. First, Rashi only cites the words from the verse he is explaining. If only the words "for Me" disturb him, why does he also quote the words "have them take (for Me) an offering." In addition, we find several verses that the beginning student has already learned, similar to our own. The Torah already discussed giving things to G-d, yet Rashi saw no need to explain those instances. Giving something to Hashem means dedicating it to His name, an idea that does not trouble the beginning student.

Without Rashi, we would have thought that the words "for Me" in our verse mean we are transferring the donations to the heavenly domain. That is why Rashi includes "have them take" and "an offering" in his heading. The word "take" implies that the offering is being taken from the individual's domain and brought into G-d's

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realm, and that is the implication of the word "take." The word offering, related to the Hebrew word elevated, also implies that we are transferring the object into Hashem's domain. Rashi includes those words in his heading to show us that the words "for Me" do not teach us that we are giving Hashem's offerings to Him. Instead, they teach us that the offerings must be "dedicated for My name." One must bring an offering with the intent that it is for Hashem's name.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah reading, Terumah, G-d commands the Jewish nation to build the Mishkan, meaning the Tabernacle. The Mishkan was the portable Sanctuary the Jews would carry in the desert for forty years. Who would supply the materials needed to build this Sanctuary? We find the answer to this question in our Parshah. Hashem told Moshe¹ to "Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering. From every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering." Rashi cites the words from the verse "have them take for Me an offering" and explains that it means that the offering must be "dedicated to My name."

Quite a few of the supercommentaries ask what Rashi finds difficult in Peshat about G-d saying that the Jews should take the offerings for "Me.," i.e., Hashem². It does not seem to require any explanation!

These words can bother the beginning student on two counts. The simple meaning of taking an offering for Me is that we must give it to Hashem. However, this explanation is untenable. Scripture says³ that "the land and the fullness thereof are the Lord's." Furthermore, it says⁴, "If I (meaning G-d) were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness is Mine." In other words, everything already belongs to Hashem. How is it possible to *give* or *take* something for Him?

Furthermore, the idea of *taking* something for Hashem implies that the object was far from him before one took it. The one who took it brought it close to Him. Thus, this expression is only appropriate for a physical human being. However, we cannot use this phrase regarding G-d, Who has no physical body or form. He is neither limited by time nor by space. Nothing in the world is either near or far from Him. Thus, it would be impossible to draw anything closer to Him. These commentaries explain that it is for these two reasons that Rashi explains that "taking for Me" is not to be understood in the literal sense. Instead, here it means taking offerings for My sake.

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 25:2.

2. See the Mizrachi, Sefer Hazikaron, the commentary of the Maharik, Gur Aryeh, Be'er Mayim Chaim, Devek Tov and others on this verse.

3. Tehillim 24:1.

4. Tehillim 50:12.

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Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

The above leaves us with several difficulties which we need to resolve. Firstly, we know how particular Rashi is with the words he cites from the verse to serve as the heading for his comments, and he only quotes the words he is explaining. Based on the above explanation, the verse's only difficulty is understanding the phrase "for me." Why does he cite "have them take (for Me) an offering."

Additionally, earlier verses in the Torah use similar expressions regarding Hashem. The beginning student already learned that our forefather Yaakov said⁵, "... everything that You give me, I will surely tithe *to You*." In other words, he specifically promised to offer a tenth of everything to Hashem. Likewise, we find that Hashem commanded us to⁶ "sanctify to Me every firstborn ..." In neither case does Rashi need to explain what giving something to Hashem means. From this, it is clear that these expressions do not bother Rashi. Tithing or giving something to the Almighty refers to consecrating an object to Him, and one is not (G-d forbid) giving Him something He needs. Instead, we must say that Rashi's explanation is necessary to answer a different question.

The Explanation

Without Rashi's comments, we would learn simply that the words "for Me" mean that the offered objects are to become consecrated to Hashem. In other words, they become heavenly property, which one may not use for personal needs. Therefore, Rashi cites the words "have them take" and "an offering." These words negate that idea.

The word "take" connotes moving something from one place to another. It does not merely refer to a physical location; it also means transferring something from one person's property to another's. In other words, "take" in this verse means the transfer of offerings to G-d; it becomes a consecrated object.

The Hebrew word "Terumah - תְּרוּמָה," which we have translated as an offering, can have two possible meanings according to Peshat. We find the first translation in Rashi's comments on our very verse. He explains the word "Terumah" to mean "separation. They shall set apart from their property an offering for Me." This means that the sanctified object was separated from the individual's property and moved into the heavenly domain. The second translation of "Terumah" is "lifting," meaning physically raising something if the object under discussion is a physical object. However, if the point is an item's ownership, it refers to transferring it to a higher domain⁷.

5. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 28:11.

6. Parshas Bo, Shemos 13:2.

7. We find that Rashi himself explained the same concept earlier. The Torah tells us how Avrohom bought a burial plot for his wife Soroh from Ephron. In Bereishis 23:17 the Torah says that "and so the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, facing Mamre, was established (as Avrohom's possession)." Rashi explains that the Hebrew word meaning "was established" literally means "rose up, or was elevated." Rashi explains there that "It experienced an elevation, for it left the possession of a simple person (and went) into the possession of a king."

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In our case, we mean that we lift the offering from the Jew's possession to Hashem's.

From this, we can see Rashi's reason for citing the words "have them take" and "an offering." He demonstrates that the words "for Me" cannot mean that the offered objects become heavenly property. We already know that from the words "take" and "offering." Therefore, Rashi explains that "for Me" means "dedicated to My name." Rashi is teaching us that donating an offering to Hashem does not suffice, and one must do it to dedicate it to Hashem's name.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Rashi's commentary on the Torah contains profound teachings in all Torah aspects, including the Torah's mysteries. Rashi explains in our verse, quoting from the Talmud⁸, that our portion alludes to three different Terumos, meaning offerings. One of these was the mandatory half-shekel offering, which each Jew had to bring yearly. The Temple treasury used this to fund all of the communal offerings. They would bring these sacrifices on behalf of every Jew. The point is that each Jew was obligated to offer all of these sacrifices. By contributing a half-shekel, each individual had a part in each offering. If someone refused to give this particular offering, the court would force him to do so. If we compel someone to donate something, how can Rashi say that he must intend to dedicate it to Hashem's name? In such an instance, he has no such intent. Quite to the contrary, he is telling us that he does not wish to give.

The explanation is as follows. These offerings were to build and maintain the Sanctuary, serving as G-d's dwelling place. There are two prerequisites for the construction and preparation of any palace⁹. First, we must remove all dirt from the location, and the next step is to arrange all of the most beautiful furniture within the palace. In terms of Hashem's service, this applies to the two things that we must fulfill.¹⁰ "Shun evil, and do that which is good." Specifically, shunning evil is only a preparation for building the palace for Hashem, and we make the palace by doing that which is good.

For this reason, our intent matters the most when performing positive actions. The primary concern for shunning evil is that we do not perform any wrong acts. That is how we "clean out the palace," to enable us to bring in the beautiful furniture and prepare the palace for Hashem. Regarding positive actions, we are more concerned with intent.

We do so to ensure we fulfill our obligations and build the palace, even if we must force one to fulfill his duty. When it comes to positive actions, we must perform them to dedicate them to Hashem's name.

8. See Talmud Yerushalmi Shekalim 1:1, and Talmud Megillah 29, b.

9. See Likkutei Torah Parshas Balak, Page 70, Column 3. See also there Parshas Shelach Page 36, Column 4.

10. Tehillim 34:15.

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For this reason, the Sages said¹¹, "one should always occupy himself with Torah and Mitzvos even if it is not for its own sake, with pure intent. The reason is that as a result of performing Torah and Mitzvos for ulterior motives, he will come to perform them with pure intent." In other words, it is not because superficially performing Mitzvos is sufficient. Instead, ultimately, one will come to have the proper intentions. At that time, he can complete and perfect Hashem's dwelling place in this world.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Terumah, 5725)

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

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

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11. See Talmud Pesachim Page 50, Side b. See also the Laws of Torah Study from the Alter Rebbe Chapter 4, Paragraph 3.

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May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride
to their family and a Torah light to their community

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in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

מאריס

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