

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Naso

9 Sivan, 5784 – June 15, 2024

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

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn
North Miami Beach, FL

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THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

במדבר ו', כ"ד: וְבֵרַכְךָ יְהוָה וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ:

רש"י ד"ה יברכך: שיתברכו נכסך:

ישמרך: שלא יבואו עליך שודדים ליטול ממך, שהנותן מתנה לעבדו אינו יכול לשמרו מכל אדם, וכיון שבאים לסטים עליו ונוטלין אותה ממנו, מה הנאה יש לו במתנה זו, אבל הקב"ה הוא הנותן הוא השומר. והרבה מדרשים דרשו בו בספרי:

Bamidbar 6:24: May Hashem bless you and watch over you.

Rashi Heading: **May (He) bless you so** your possessions will be blessed. **And watch over you:** that no thieves shall attack you and steal your money. When one gives his servant a gift, he cannot protect it from anyone else. If robbers come and take it from him, what benefit does he have from this gift? As for the Holy One blessed be He; however, He is the One who gives *and* protects. There are many Midrashic interpretations of this verse in the Sifri.

Synopsis

This week, we read the Torah portion of Naso. Hashem gives a special command to the Kohanim, the descendants of Aharon, to bless the Jewish people with a three-fold blessing. The first blessing is "May Hashem bless you and watch over you." Rashi cites the words "may (He) bless you." He explains that this means "that your possessions shall be blessed." He then cites the words "and watch over you." He describes this at great length with an allegory. He explains that when one gives his servant a present, he cannot protect it. However, Hashem is both the One who gives and protects. Rashi concludes that "there are many Midrashic interpretations of this in the Sifri." The implication is that this contrasts with his explanation, which is Peshat.

We understand that even according to Peshat, the priestly blessing is a unique, general blessing. Why would Rashi explain that it merely blesses one's property and not oneself? Furthermore, the first explanation the Sifri offers for "may Hashem bless you" is quite different from that which Rashi uses. The Sifri explains that He may bless you with a known blessing written in the Torah. This blessing includes not only one's property but also his health, children, and spiritual needs. Why does Rashi ignore this all-encompassing blessing that is explicit in the Torah? This certainly would seem much more likely to be Peshat!

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Additionally, *before the priestly blessing*, all possible blessings were listed in the Torah portion of Bechukosai¹. These are the blessings that G-d promises us for keeping Torah and Mitzvos. Even in our Parshah, one would receive great wealth as a reward for giving the Kohanim the presents due to them².

That is the answer to our question. According to Peshat, Rashi cannot say that these blessings include life, health, property, money, children, or anything else. These are all contained within other Berochos, which the Torah has already promised. Therefore, Rashi says, "Your possessions shall be blessed." The blessing is in quality as opposed to quantity. That property that you already own will increase. It will grow and improve more than that which could be naturally expected.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Naso, we find that the Kohanim are commanded to bless the Jewish people. The blessing is given with the specific text of a three-part blessing, as specified by the Torah. The fact that Aharon's descendants would bless all Jews with this text throughout all generations tells us how broad a range of meaning is contained in this Berochoh.

The first part of this blessing is³ "May Hashem bless you and watch over you." Rashi cites the words "may (He) bless you." He explains these words by saying, "that your possessions shall be blessed." Rashi then cites the words "and watch over you." He explains this by saying, "No thieves shall attack you and steal your money." He continues with a lengthy allegory. "For when one gives his servant a gift, he cannot protect it from anyone else. If robbers come and take it from him, what benefit does he have from this gift? As for the Holy One blessed be He; however, He is the One who both gives and protects." Rashi concludes his comments by saying, "There are many Midrashic interpretations of this verse in the Sifri."

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

The blessing with which G-d commanded the Kohanim to bless the Jewish people must be unique. This priestly blessing should be expected to be very general, touching on all aspects of a Jew's life. We need to understand how Rashi can explain that this special blessing applies only to our possessions!

Furthermore, let us look at the first interpretation which the Sifri offers for the words "may Hashem bless you." It says that this refers to the Berochoh, which is explicitly stated elsewhere in the Torah. The Torah tells us⁴, "You shall be blessed in the city, and you shall be blessed in the field. Blessed will be the fruit of your womb,

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1. See the verses beginning with Vayikroh 26:3.
 2. See Our Parshah, Bamidbar 5:10 and Rashi's comments.
 3. Our Parshah, Bamidbar 6:24.
 4. Parshas Ki Savo, Devorim 28:3-6.

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the fruit of your soil, your livestock, the offspring of your cattle, and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed will be your basket and your kneading bowl. You shall be blessed when you come, and you shall be blessed when you depart." Furthermore, it is written that⁵ "And all these blessings will come upon you and cleave to you, (only) if you obey the Lord your G-d." Here, we see that the priestly blessing does not merely refer to property. The blessing applies equally to one's body, children, and health. As we see in the continuation of the verses, it even applies to spiritual matters. It says⁶, "The Lord will establish you as His holy people as He swore to you if you observe the commandments of the Lord your G-d, and walk in His ways."

Why does Rashi ignore this explanation, which seems to fit so well with Peshat, explaining that it refers only to property? Moreover, Rashi's source for this blessing is from the Sifri. However, the Sifri writes that "He will bless you with property – יברכך בנכסים." Why does Rashi change that to "your property shall be blessed – שיחברכו נכסך." Note that Rashi does not just change the wording; the change also affects the meaning.

We also find something difficult to understand in Rashi's explanation of the words "and watch over you." The simple meaning would seem to be that Hashem will guard the individual. However, according to Rashi's explanation, G-d promises to watch over how He blesses the individual.

The Explanation

We have learned *earlier* of the blessings we will receive for fulfilling Torah and Mitzvos¹. When we read of the priestly blessings, we immediately have a question. What new is being added here? The priestly blessings must contain something over and above those promised earlier.

The blessings we spoke about earlier serve as a reward for performing Hashem's Will. Perhaps we can say that the priestly blessings are more remarkable. They apply even to one who has not done what G-d wanted. Even such a person will receive these blessings. However, that is untenable. We must say that there is also an advantage in blessings for one who fulfills G-d's Will. What do these blessings add to the Torah promised us earlier?

This is why Rashi did not explain the words "may He bless you" according to the first explanation in the Sifri. Those blessings are stated explicitly in the Torah. Granted, they include everything; they apply equally to one's body, children, health, spiritual and physical needs. However, all those blessings are included in those we were already told are a reward. What does the priestly blessing add?

Rashi explains that the priestly blessing adds a qualitative difference, not merely a difference in quantity. That is the difference between "being blessed with property" (as it is written in the Sifri) and your "property being

5. Parshas Ki Savo, Devorim 28:2.

6. Parshas Ki Savo, Devorim 28:9.

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blessed." The meaning here is that a special blessing will rest on whatever property and possessions one has. Everything will increase supernaturally.

This is similar to that which happened with our forefather Yitzchok. His crops were blessed in a manner that⁷ "Yitzchok planted in that land, and he found in that year a hundred-fold. Hashem blessed him." As Rashi explains⁸, "Although the land was not as abundant as it should have been⁹... and the year was not as abundant as it should have been¹⁰... for each measure they estimated that it could produce, it produced one hundred."

Rashi mainly writes "your possessions" rather than "your money." That is because "possessions" include everything that one owns without exception. This special Berochoh rested within everything.

We still need to understand why Rashi explains the words "watch over you" in a manner that deviates from the simple explanation. We just used an example from our forefather Yaakov. To cite another example, Hashem told Yaakov,¹¹ "And behold, I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go..." G-d promised Yaakov simply that He would protect him. However, here, Rashi explains that Hashem will guard that with which we were blessed. Why does Rashi deviate from Peshat?

The explanation is that the blessing of Hashem "watching over" us meant guarding our persons. It obviously should have preceded the blessing of Hashem, which was "blessing us." Since Rashi explains that "blessing us" refers to our possessions, protecting our bodies must come before blessing our property. Once Rashi tells us that the first Berochoh, "blessing us," refers to property, "watching over," us must also refer to property.

Rashi's explanation of "watch over you" is a direct continuation of his explanation of "bless you." The blessing Rashi is discussing is superior to all other blessings written in the Torah. It does not come as a reward for one's actions. Instead, these blessings come to every Jew regardless of his performance of Torah and Mitzvos. Whatever he owns is blessed; it produces far more than that which would be naturally expected. This could easily arouse the jealousy of those around us. Therefore, in addition to blessing us, G-d watches over us. He assures us that no thieves can take our blessed possessions.

That is the reason for Rashi's lengthy explanation. He describes in detail one who "gives his servant a gift." He explains that "he cannot protect the gift from anyone else. If robbers come and take it from him, what benefit does he have from it?" People will be jealous of the incredible gift that we receive from Hashem. Therefore, His gift includes His great protection. Only the Holy One blessed be He both gives and protects.

7. Parshas Toldos, Bereishis 26:12.

8. See Rashi's comments, *ibid*.

9. It was outside of Israel.

10. It was a year of famine.

11. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 28:15.

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However, we cannot say that this Berochoh is limited to guarding our property. Rashi concludes that "there are many Midrashic interpretations of this verse in the Sifri."

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

The priestly blessings apply in all times and places¹². In other words, even outside of Israel during exile, it is a positive commandment for Kohanim to bless the Jewish people. These blessings help every Jew, whatever his spiritual circumstances may be.

The reason these blessings are so special is explained in works of Chassidic philosophy¹³. It is because they come from an unusually lofty spiritual level. Concerning this level of spirituality, the observance of a Jew is irrelevant. All that matters is the inherent connection between the essence of the soul and G-d. Therefore, blessings transcend entirely nature, and they reach every Jew at every time and place.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Naso 5737, and Shabbos Parshas Naso and Beha'aloscho 5741)

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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12. These are the words of the Sefer Hachinuch Mitzvah 378.

13. See Likkutei Torah at the end of Parshas Korach. See also Ohr Hatorah on our Parshah beginning with page 270. See also Sefer Hamaamorim 5629.

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May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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