

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 17

Shmini, Sicha 4

The Verse:

In the laws detailing the animals which are unfit for consumption, the Torah states:

“Any [creature] that goes on its belly, and any [creature] that walks on four [legs] to any [creature] that has many legs, among all creeping creatures that creep on the ground, you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.” (Vayikra 11:42)

The Rashi:

Rashi identifies the creatures alluded to in the verse’s descriptions, and in its many uses of the term “any.”

That goes on its belly — This is the snake
The word *gachon* denotes “bending low” [and it is used to describe the snake] because it moves while bent in a prostrated posture, prostrated on its belly.

Any [creature] that goes — [This comes] to include earthworms and what resembles those that resemble them [i.e., that have

tiny legs, but nevertheless slither like a worm on their bellies].

That walks on four — This refers to a scorpion.

Any [creature] — [This word comes] to include the beetle, called *escarbot* in French, and what resembles those that resemble them.

Any [creature] that has many legs — This is the centipede, a creature with legs from its head to its tail, on either side, called centipede [in French].

The Questions:

1. The noun *gachon* first appears in the book of Bereishis, in the story of Adam, Chava, and the snake. Why does Rashi define the term here (“bending low because it moves while bent in a prostrated posture”) and not in parshas Bereishis?
2. From the phrase “Any creature that goes” Rashi deduces that the verse is adding certain categories of creatures: “earthworms and what resembles those that resemble them.” In effect, two categories are

being added here. Earthworms (which are similar to snakes) and creatures that merely resemble earthworms.

Seemingly, however, the singular form of “any creature that goes...” should yield only one additional category, not two! In fact, the Talmud only adds the category of earthworm from the extra word “any.” Why, then, does Rashi read the addition as referring to two categories of creatures?

The Explanation:

The term *gachon* only ever refers to a snake, and the scorpion is the only creature that crawls on four legs. Therefore, the Torah could have simply said, “snake and scorpion.” From the fact that the Torah referred to these creatures with more generic terms Rashi deduces that the verse means to include a broader category of creatures — ones that resemble snakes in their characteristic of slithering on their bellies, and that resemble scorpions in their characteristic of walking on four legs.

If the verse would have said “all snakes” and “all scorpions” we would be able to include every species of snake and scorpion, but not other creatures which resemble snakes and scorpions in these unique characteristics. By saying “Any [creature] that goes on its belly,

and any [creature] that walks on four [legs]” we know that any creature that is similar to snakes and scorpions in these aspects is included.

Just as in the first two phrases of the verse, a specific creature is intended, along with those similar to it. So, too, in the third phrase: Any [creature] that has many legs. Although there are many creatures that fall under this description, Rashi understands that one species is intended, the centipede, which is an extreme example of a creature having many legs. The inclusive word any is then used to include other creatures with many legs as well.

The Lesson:

The snake represents the evil inclination. At first, it causes the person to “bend low,” eventually influencing him to “prostrate on its belly,” to be consumed with earthly concerns. The antidote to this is to “lift one's eyes,” to Heaven and focus on spiritual goals.

Through the power of Torah (represented by the letter vav of *gachon* which is the halfway point of the entire Torah), the evil inclination is refined and it ceases to be a force for evil, instead being transformed into a force for good.
