



Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Bechukosai | Sichah 2

The Verse:

“I will turn to you, I will make you fruitful, and I will increase you.”
(*Vayikra* 26:9)

The Rashi:

I will turn to you — I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward. To what can this be compared? To a king who hired workers, etc., as recorded in *Toras Kohanim*.

I will make you fruitful — with fruitfulness and proliferation.

And I will increase you — with a dignified posture.

The Questions:

- 1) What is unclear about the phrase “I will turn to you” that prompted Rashi to explain it?
- 2) How does the parable of the king aid in our understanding of the verse?
- 3) In *Bereishis*, Rashi explains that the word “fruitful” means that a person has one child, and the word “proliferate” means that a person has many children. (*Rashi on Bereishis* 1:22) How, then, does Rashi interpret the clause here, “I will make you fruitful,” as meaning “with fruitfulness and **proliferation**?”

The Explanation:

The difficulty with the clause “I will turn to you” is that this clause should have introduced all the Divine promises in our *parshah*, immediately

following the opening verse, “If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them....” (*Vayikra* 26:3)

To explain why this clause was placed in the middle of the promises and rewards for fulfilling Torah and *mitzvos*, Rashi presents the parable of “a king who hired workers.”

A king has no need to hire workers, as he can command his subjects to do as he wishes. A king only hires workers and remunerates them generously when there are non-essential tasks to be done, that go beyond the call of duty.

In the analogue, the *parshah* opens with G-d promising a reward for those who “will go in My statutes and observe My commandments,” which means, as Rashi explains, “you shall toil in Torah” — more than is required, and “toil in Torah in order to safeguard and fulfill...”

Thus, the Jewish people are given two types of reward for going “in My statutes...”: a) A reward for their basic observance of Torah and *mitzvos*; and b) a special reward for toiling in Torah beyond what they are obligated to do.

First, the Torah describes the reward for basic observance, “I will grant your rain **in its time**” (*Vayikra* 26:4) alongside the nations of the world, who also receive reward for fulfilling their basic obligations. Then the Torah introduces the second type of reward for going beyond the letter of the law: “I will turn to you.” Being that this reward is uniquely set aside for those who perform tasks for the King that go beyond their obligations, He gives them His special attention when rewarding them: “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward.”

This explains why Rashi interprets “I will make you fruitful” as, “fruitfulness and proliferation.” Because this reward is in recognition of the Jewish people striving to do more than they are obligated, the blessing of fertility is also bestowed beyond what is normative. In this case, within the

“fruitfulness,” which normally means having one child, there is the promise of “proliferation,” meaning, a guarantee to having children who will be fertile, ensuring that the person’s descendants proliferate until the end of time.

The Meaning of Work:

A deeper question can be asked: By saying “I will turn away from **all My duties** to pay your reward,” Rashi implies that rewarding the Jewish people is not among “My (G-d’s) duties.” Why would rewarding the Jewish people not be included in G-d’s duties?

A “duty” is something someone does for some external purpose, it is not reflective of a person’s true essence. When G-d interacts with Creation, He acts out of “duty” — His Essence is not manifest; it is only His diffused light that is present in Creation. But when a Jew goes beyond his obligation and toils in Torah with his very essence, it elicits a parallel reaction from G-d, “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward.” This reward is expressed in physical terms, because when G-d’s Essence is manifest, the distinctions between matter and spirit are dissolved, and G-d’s blessing is found in material things as well.

Lingering Self:

Yet, this blessing is still referred to as “reward,” which implies a distinct sense of self that is being rewarded. This is because even when a Jew serves G-d and studies Torah with the intention of becoming united with G-d, it is still possible that he is being driven by a spiritually “selfish” desire — that **he** should become united with G-d. Therefore, he is “rewarded” as a distinct being.

But when a Jew performs his service without calculations, then the promise, “I will turn to you” is given optimally, as this section of our *parshah* concludes, “I led you *komemiyus* (upright).” *Komemiyus*, a plural form, connotes that G-d’s “stature” and the Jewish people’s “stature” become one.