



Likkutei Sichos

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Let It Rain

Translated by Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

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1.

On the verse, “And I will provide rain for your land at its {right} time...,” Rashi quotes the words,¹ “And I will provide rain for your land,” and comments,² “You have done what is incumbent upon you; so I will also do what is incumbent upon Me.”

What is not understood:³ What difficulty, in the simple sense of the verse, is solved by Rashi's interpretation, “You have done what is incumbent upon you...,” especially considering that Rashi seemingly doesn't contribute any novel insight into the *obvious* meaning of the verse?

Mizrachi suggests that Rashi's intent is to explain why in the *parsha* here so many details of the blessing are delineated: “and I will provide rain for your land,” “the early rain and the late rain; and you will gather in your grain...,” “And I will provide grass... and you will eat and be sated” – whereas in *parshat Bechukotai*,⁴ it says succinctly, “and I will provide your rains at their times.” Therefore, Rashi explains, “You have done what is incumbent upon you.” Meaning, since you have done *everything* you were obliged to do, “I will also do what is incumbent upon Me,” i.e., I will fulfill all My obligations, and no favor will be withheld from you.”

It is difficult, however, to explain Rashi's commentary this way because:

a) Rashi quotes only the words “And I will provide rain for your land,” without even adding “etcetera.” In other words, justification for Rashi's interpretation is found in *these* quoted words, whereas according to *Mizrachi's* approach, the necessity for Rashi's interpretation arises *only* from the *continuation* of the passage. *And on the contrary*, in terms of just *these* words, “And I will provide rain for your land,” the verse in *parshat Bechukotai* is similar to the verse here.

b) According to *Rashi's interpretation*, the blessings in *parshat Bechukotai* are superior to those in our *parsha*. As Rashi comments there on the phrase, “and the tree of the field {will give forth its fruit}” – “These are non-fruit bearing

¹ Deuteronomy 11:14.

² Based on *Sifri* on the *parsha*, ch 41, near the end.

³ Also not understood is why Rashi also cites the words, “rain for your land.” Seemingly, he should have quoted only the word, ונתתי, “and I will provide.” (At most, Rashi could have just alluded to these words, by adding, *etcetera*.)

⁴ Leviticus 26:4.

trees that in the future will bear fruit.” Meaning, the blessings then will exceed the norms of nature, and so, are far loftier than the blessing of our *parsha*.

2.

CONTRASTING RASHI’S DIFFERING COMMENTS

When comparing the continuation of these two passages, a number of differences in Rashi’s comments on the two can be discerned: Here, Rashi quotes the word, בעתו, “at its time,” and comments: “In the evenings, so as not to disturb you; alternatively: בעתו – on Shabbat evenings, when everyone is found at home.”

In contrast, on the word, בעתם, “at their times,” in *parshat Bechukotai* (“I will provide your rains at their times”), Rashi comments,⁵ “at an hour when people are not accustomed to go out; for example, on Shabbat evenings.”

We need to clarify:

a) Why is Rashi satisfied in *parshat Bechukotai* with the interpretation, “for example, on Shabbat evenings,” whereas in our *parsha*, Rashi offers an additional interpretation (besides the interpretation “on Shabbat evenings”)?

b) Moreover, Rashi presents here the interpretation “on Shabbat evenings” as a *secondary* one, implying that this interpretation is *not* the principal one according to the plain sense of the verse. The primary and principal interpretation is that בעתו, “at its time,” refers to ordinary *evenings* – contrary to the interpretation in *parshat Bechukotai* where the *only* interpretation presented for בעתם, “at their times,” is specifically “on Shabbat evenings.”

c) In *parshat Bechukotai*, Rashi first identifies the time in general terms – “at an hour that people don’t go out,” and then notes the time precisely, “for example, on Shabbat evenings.” In contrast, in our *parsha*, Rashi presents this information in the opposite order: first Rashi writes, “on Shabbat evenings,” and then afterwards, “when everyone is found at home.”

d) In *parshat Bechukotai*, Rashi couches his description in the negative – “(at an hour) when people are *not* accustomed to go out.” In contrast, here Rashi puts it in the positive – “when everyone is *found* at home.”

e) In *parshat Bechukotai*, Rashi says, “when people,” whereas here he says, “when *everyone*.”

⁵ Based on *Torat Kohanim* on the verse; *Vayikrah Rabbah*, *loc cit*.

f) Before Rashi presents his second interpretation here, “on Shabbat evenings,” he first again cites the word *בְּעֵתוֹ*, *at its time* (“alternatively: *at its time* – on Shabbat evenings...”).

3.

THE RECIPIENT OF THE BLESSING

The solution to all these difficulties:

The basic difference between the blessing in *parshat Bechukotai* and the blessing in our *parsha* is that in *parshat Bechukotai*, it says, “And I will provide *your* rains in their times” – the rains are those of the *Jewish* people – whereas here it says, “And I will provide rain for *your* land” – the rain is that of the *land*. In other words, in *parshat Bechukotai*, it is the Jewish people who are blessed with rain. In contrast, in our *parsha* the land is the recipient of the blessing (and the land then serves as the medium through which the blessing devolves upon those who possess the land, the Jewish people).

This explains the different types of blessings in *parshat Bechukotai* (supernatural) and in our *parsha* (natural): In *parshat Bechukotai*, when directed to the *Jewish people*, the blessing is unconstrained by the limits of nature. Jews are blessed in accord with *their* needs even if the blessings do not conform to the norms of nature.

In contrast, in our *parsha*, when the blessing is directed to the *land*, the blessing is conferred in a manner that conforms to the land – which is inherently emblematic of *nature*, *similar* to the idea expressed by the verse,⁶ “So long as the *land* exists... shall not cease” – but not in a manner that surpasses nature.

4.

THE REASON FOR THE DIFFERENT BLESSINGS

With his remarks on the phrase, “and I will provide *rain for your land*”⁷ – “You have done what is incumbent upon you; so I will also do what is incumbent

⁶ Genesis 8:22.

⁷ On this basis, answered, too, is the question as to why Rashi cites also these words from the verse (see fn. 3 *supra*).

upon Me,” Rashi clarifies the reason for the difference between the blessing in *parshat Bechukotai* and the blessing in our *parsha*:

The blessing in our *parsha* is linked to *land* (and to what it represents – nature) because here the Jewish people do *only* what is compulsory – “what is incumbent upon you” – but do nothing *more*. Therefore, God responds (in kind), “*I will also do*”: just “what is incumbent upon Me.” To be sure, a blessing is conferred, but only one that conforms to the norms of nature – nothing more.

In contrast, the blessings in *parshat Bechukotai* are given as reward when the Jewish people conduct themselves in a way prescribed by the verse, “If you will go in My commandments,” which implies, as Rashi interprets, “you are *preoccupied* in Torah study.” The Jewish people are not simply engaging in compulsory study, but are “preoccupied in Torah study,” studying *more* than what is required by the mitzvah of Talmud Torah. Accordingly, God’s blessing is beyond nature, and is not confined to just what is “*incumbent upon Me*.”

5.

PERFORMING THE MITZVOT AS DECREES

Seemingly, one can raise the following question: On the verse in *parshat Ki Tavoh*,⁸ “Gaze down from Your holy abode,” Rashi comments: “We have done what You decreed upon us, so now You do what is incumbent upon You to do; for You have said, ‘If you will go in My commandments... then *I will provide your rains in their time*.’”

Meaning, the supra-natural reward “I will provide your rains in their time” is conferred for doing “what You have decreed upon us.” On the face of it, a person complying with God’s decree is the same thing as a person doing what is incumbent upon them (ostensibly, the same scenario Rashi discusses here in *parshat Eikev*)?

Rashi himself resolves this difficulty, however, with his remarks by changing and adding to his wording. Rashi does not say there, “We have done what is incumbent upon us,” as he does in his commentary here in *parshat Eikev*, but rather “We have done what You *decreed* upon us.” In other words, the reward is conferred not for performing the mitzvot in a manner that engages human intellect and acquiescence, the way that rational or testimonial precepts are

⁸ Deuteronomy 26:15.

observed. Rather the reward is conferred for performing the mitzvot in the same manner that irrational statutes⁹ or *decrees* are observed. That is, the mitzvot are performed with complete abnegation of one's intellect. As Rashi puts it, "It is a *decree* before Me, and you are not permitted to question it."

Since the mitzvot are performed using the soul-powers that surpass human intellect (and human nature), therefore, the reward conferred by God is commensurate – "I will provide *your rains* (*yours*, in the sense that the rains mirror your own behavior) in their time" – a blessing that surpasses nature, as explained above.

6.

THE RAINFALL IS IN ACCORD WITH WHAT OR WHO IS BLESSED

This above-described, general distinction between *parshat Bechukotai* and our *parsha* also explains the different interpretations Rashi gives for the term בעתם, "at their times," (בעתו, "at its time") in the two places:

In *parshat Bechukotai*, where the blessing of rain is given (mainly) to the *Jewish people* ("your rains"), the rains fall when most convenient for the Jewish people – and for them, it should rain ideally when they are not walking about in the streets (at all). Accordingly, Rashi interprets the term בעתם "at an hour when people are not accustomed to go out; for example, on Shabbat evenings," even though limiting rain to such a narrow window of time (only "on Shabbat evenings") requires supra-natural intervention in order to enable sufficient rain accumulation.

In our *parsha*, however, which speaks about the blessing conferred (primarily) to the earth ("your land") – and so conforms to the inherent constraints of land (nature), as explained above – Rashi interprets the term בעתו as a time (for rainfall) that conforms to the natural order of things, viz., "in the evenings," without qualifications. It rains on a number of evenings of the week, and not just on "Shabbat evenings," for otherwise the rainfall would not suffice without a miracle.

⁹ In the Hebrew original, *chukim*.

The above distinction is also related to the meaning of the terms, בעתו, “(rain for your land) *at its time*,” and בעתם, “(you rains) *at their times*.” Both terms refer to times designated only for rain, times when there is no movement whatsoever, except for the falling rain. Such times can occur in two ways:

1. When the *Jewish people* are blessed, then the timing for the rain depends on the *Jewish people*, in general, in all respects: When is the time designated for the exclusive presence of rain outside? “at an hour when people are not accustomed to go out (*altogether*); for example, on Shabbat evenings.”

[Accordingly, Rashi does not (first) say: “On Shabbat evenings,” (and then), “at an hour when people go out” (similar to his phrasing in in *parshat Eikev*) – because {in this context} the *meaning* of the word בעתם is “an hour when people are not accustomed to go out,” and so that time is designated for rain to fall. Only after defining the term does Rashi give an example of such a time – “*for example*, on Shabbat evenings.”]

2. When the *land* is blessed, “rain for *your land* at its time, בעתו” (as is the case in our *parsha*), the blessing is still linked to the Jewish people – in terms of their relationship with (working) the land – then the phrase *at its time* refers to a time when no one is doing any work in the fields. Accordingly, Rashi clarifies that the import of the term בעתו, in the context of “rain for *your land*,” is “in the evenings,” a time when fields are not worked.

In what respect is the land blessed when rain falls only in the evenings? Addressing this question, Rashi goes on to say that this phenomenon is in fact not a blessing for the land, *per se*. Rather the rain falls only at night, “so as not to disturb *you*”: It is for the benefit of the Jewish people who labor in the fields during the day (during day-light, as it says,¹⁰ “And Jacob left {from his work in} the field in the evenings”), so that they are not troubled by having to work in the rain.

¹⁰ Genesis 30:16.

8.

THE NEED FOR RASHI'S SECOND INTERPRETATION

Rashi is not content with interpreting the word בעתו as meaning “in the evenings” – because of the following difficulties:

1. Why would Scripture use the word, בעתו, “at its time,” to imply, בלילות, “in the evenings,” instead of using the word בלילות¹¹ itself (a single word, as is בעתו)?

2. The explanation of the word, בעתו, is not smooth because “at *its* time” connotes (the rain’s) ideal time *in general* – not just in terms (of working) the land. This is particularly true since the blessing [of the rain falling at its time] is not for the sake of the land but for the sake of the *Jewish people* (to spare them from excessive trouble), as explained above.

Therefore, Rashi offers a second interpretation: “Alternatively: בעתו, on Shabbat evenings, when everyone is found at home.” Rashi quotes the word בעתו again because the advantage of this second interpretation over the first is in the meaning of the word בעתו, as explained above.

Nonetheless, understanding בעתו as implying “in the evenings” (unqualified) is Rashi’s first and primary interpretation, since it fits in best with the general subject matter, as explained.

9.

DIFFERENCES IN DICTION EXPLAINED

In light of the explanation of the difference between the blessing in *parshat Bechukotai* and the blessing in our *parsha*, another difference emerges:

Over there, Scripture speaks about the reward given to those individuals who are wholly immersed in the study of Torah, a select group from among the Jewish people. In contrast, our *parsha* discusses the reward given to all those who carry out “what is incumbent upon” them, i.e., those who fulfill the Torah and its mitzvot in general, a blessing that applies to *all* the Jewish people.

On this basis, the differences in diction, noted earlier, in Rashi’s two interpretations can be explained:

¹¹ See also *Maskil Le'David*, ad loc.

1. Here Rashi says, “when *everyone* is found at home,” i.e., all the Jewish people. In contrast, in *parshat Bechukotai*, he says, “at an hour when *people*, בני אדם, don’t go out...” – and does not say *everyone*, כל, because over there Scripture is discussing only those who are preoccupied with the study of Torah.¹²

2. Here Rashi makes a positive statement, “(everyone) is found at home” (and doesn’t use negative diction, “are not accustomed...”), because it is impossible to say that all Jews refrain from going out on Shabbat nights, inasmuch as some people do go out to pray, to visit, and so on. Rather, one can only say that people (most of the time) are “found at home.”

However, in *parshat Bechukotai*, where only those who are *preoccupied* with Torah-study are discussed, it is understood that when all weekday work is prohibited, they give expression to their essential character, i.e., by preoccupying themselves {even more intensely} in Torah-study. Consequently, on Shabbat evenings (not only are they to be “*found* at home,” but moreover), they are “*not accustomed to go out*.”¹³

[Therefore, Rashi does not interpret (as he does in *parshat Bechukotai*) the word בעתו, “at its time,” as meaning – “at an hour when people are not accustomed to go out; for example, on Shabbat evenings”: the very fact that people are just to be “found at home,” indicates that this is not really “at its time,” i.e., it is not a time exclusive for the rain, because ultimately, some people do venture forth in the street, so it not solely a time for rainfall.

This is not the case, however, in *parshat Bechukotai*, where it speaks about those who are preoccupied in the Torah-study. These individuals are “not accustomed to go out.”]

10.

CONTRASTING RASHI’S DIFFERING COMMENTS

The lesson that can be derived and applied in our divine service:

From this discussion, the great importance of laboring and exerting oneself specifically in the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvot can be seen. It is not enough to study Torah and to observe all of its precepts, but rather, Torah study and mitzvot observance must be accompanied with labor and exertion that

¹² {Although the term בני אדם is fairly inclusive, still, when compared with the term הכל, the former term is more restrictive.}

¹³ Nonetheless, even there Rashi does not categorically state that they do not go out (at all), but just that they are “not accustomed to go out,” for they may in fact leave their homes occasionally on Shabbat nights to go to the synagogue, or some place similar.

pushes a person beyond his natural comfort zone, and even beyond the natural constraints of his *Godly* soul.

Someone, however, might object, maintaining that there is no necessity for divine service of this sort. After all, he already deports himself as a perfect “picture” of holiness, learning Torah and observing all its commandments. If so, what compelling reason is there for him to break the nature (habit) of his *divine* soul?

Regarding this complaint, we answer: Consider the declaration, “We have done what You *decreed* upon us.” This conduct is precisely what God *decreed*, viz., that a Jew should alter his nature. In this way, specifically (through service characterized by the phrase, “with all your might”) does a person “perform the Will of God.”¹⁴

If one is lacking in the fulfillment of the directive to serve God “with all your might,” then one cannot be certain about the integrity of one’s service – and so must pay heed to the warning,¹⁵ “Take care, lest your heart be tempted.” Moreover, any divine service that fails to effect a change in a person’s nature {is not genuine service at all, and} is called, “he does *not* serve Him,”¹⁶ “Israel does not carry out the Will of God.”¹⁷

By serving God this way, “with all of one’s might,” a person elicits a supernal radiance that is also unconstrained and unlimited. The far-reaching effects of this unbounded flow is alluded to in *parshat Ki Tavoh*, in the verse, “Gaze down from Your holy abode”: Even a word that throughout Scripture is used to denote the antithesis of a blessing is transformed into “a term that denotes a blessing.”¹⁸

From talks delivered on *Shabbat Parshat Eikev* and *Shabbat Parshat Re’eh* 5734

¹⁴ *Brachot* 35b. See *Chidushei Aggadot Maharsha*, *ad loc.*

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 11:16. See Rashi’s commentary, *ad loc.*

¹⁶ See *Chagiga* 9b.

¹⁷ *Brachot*, *loc cit.*

¹⁸ See Rashi on Gen. 18:16.