



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

Reading Blessings

Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Tavo | Sichah 2

The Verse:

“Hashem will return you to Egypt in ships, on the way of which I said to you, “You shall never again see it!” And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as slaves and maidservants — and there will be no buyer.” (*Devarim* 28:68)

Rashi’s Commentary:

Rashi’s approach to the curses in this *Parshah* is to understand each detail the Torah adds as another prophecy of retribution. As follows:

In ships — “in boats, in captivity.” The ships are not just the means of transportation that will deliver them to their captors; they are an additional method of punishment. Captives on a ship, in close quarters with their captors, are treated more cruelly than usual.

And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies — “You will seek to be sold to them as slaves and as maidservants.” Not only will the Jews suffer the disgrace of slavery, they will be so desperate that they will seek out their enemies as masters.

But there will be no buyer — “For they will decree upon you death and annihilation.” Though the lack of a buyer is ostensibly a positive thing, Rashi’s approach is to understand it as yet another curse. Their enemies will not want to buy them as slaves because they would rather “decree... death.”

Rashi's Deep Blessings:

Chassidus explains that the curses in the Torah are, in reality, lofty blessings that cannot be expressed in a positive fashion. Instead, they manifest as negative experiences. (*Likkutei Torah, Bechukosai* 48a) The more horrific the curse, the deeper the blessing. It follows that by magnifying the curses, Rashi simultaneously magnifies the blessings hidden within them, as follows:

The hidden blessing within exile and captivity is the opportunity to elevate the darkest elements of the world to holiness. By living in strange and distant lands, the Jewish people can bring the light of G-d to every corner of existence. Rashi's commentary on this verse goes further: Exile benefits not only the darkened sparks in the universe, it also "blesses" and benefits the Jewish people themselves. For by descending into exile, they have the ability to transform themselves into *baalei teshuva* — masters of return and reinvention.

This is the meaning of the opening words of the verse, "Hashem will return you." Even though the verse speaks of a seemingly negative journey to "Egypt," a place of personal and spiritual constriction, we are assured that it is Hashem Who brings us on this journey.

The apparent "curses" in Rashi's commentary serve to explain how this personal transformation is achieved.

And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies — "You will seek to be sold to them as slaves and as maidservants." In exile, a person learns to "seek out" G-d with his own internal motivation, and not to rely on external Divine inspiration. This is the Divine service of a "slave" who works against the grain of his natural defiance, as opposed to the "son" who effortlessly and naturally loves his father and wants to fulfill his father's expectations.

But there will be no buyer — The phrase “there will be no” can be homiletically read as “He Who is No-thing,” meaning, the Essence of G-d that is indefinable. G-d Himself, this deeper reading suggests, will “buy,” taking in the soul of the returnee.

Rashi adds: “For they will decree upon you death and annihilation.” When a person initiates a movement toward G-d, his soul becomes wrapped in ecstasy; he is filled with a desire to leave the shackles of the material world and occupy himself solely with Divine pleasures. This is described in our verse as the soul’s “death and annihilation,” its burning desire to become subsumed within G-d Himself.

In ships — “in boats, in captivity.” A ship protects its passengers from the raging ocean. This is a metaphor for Torah and *mitzvos*, which enable a person to sail through the raging waters of life. Here, Rashi cites the Aramaic translation of ships, “*sefinos*.” The “translation” of a Hebrew word represents its lower manifestation, the way that concept appears in a lower dimension. The “translation” of ships alludes to the Divine service unique to exile, the work of transforming the internal and external darkness to light.