

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 24

Ekev, Sicha 2

The Verse:

Moshe exhorts the Jewish people to follow G-d's commands:

"For G-d, your God, is God of gods and the Lord of the lords, the great mighty and awesome God, Who will show no favor, nor will He take a bribe." (Devarim 10:17)

The Rashi:

Who will show no favor — if you cast off His yoke.

Nor will He take a bribe — to appease Him with money.

The Questions:

1. Regarding Rashi's first comment. Obviously the meaning of G-d not showing favor to the Jewish people is in the scenario of "if you cast off His yoke." When else would we expect Him to not show favor, when we do follow G-d's path? This response of G-d to disobedience is established since parshas Bechukosai! (Commentaries explain that Rashi is resolving a

contradiction from the verse in the Priestly blessing, "G-d will show favor to you," by saying that our verse refers to our disobedience. But this is unlikely, for Rashi comments on that verse "He will restrain His anger," meaning that that verse is also speaking of a scenario where we "cast off His yoke," inciting G-d's anger. If so, then we actually have a contradiction between both verses — when we disobey G-d, does He show favor, or not show favor?)

2. Reading Rashi's second comment. What kind of monetary bribery is meaningful to G-d? Commentaries explain that this refers to sacrifices or donations to the Temple treasury, and that such expenditures do not appease G-d without sincere repentance. But why would the verse censure these specific mitzvos as bribery, and not all mitzvos? The monetary aspect is not what would sway G-d, it is the mitzvah which we might think can "bribe" Him. Why not interpret the bribe as simply referring to any mitzvah?
3. Why does Rashi include the words "Nor will he take" in his citation? He is commenting on the meaning of

“bribing” G-d, why does he not just cite that one word?

The Explanation:

Rashi is specific in his language. The form of disobedience meant here is “if you cast off the yoke.” A person can fail to perform a specific mitzvah, large or small, and still maintain a general commitment to G-d. But casting off the yoke refers to a radical rejection of G-d’s authority, a conscious decision to act solely according to one’s own desires. Regarding a momentary lapse in observance, the Torah says earlier, “G-d will show you favor,” but here the Torah speaks off this radical rejection, and therefore G-d, “will show no favor.”

Rashi reaches this conclusion because of the context of this verse. Earlier in the chapter, Moshe said, “And now, O Israel, what does G-d, your God, ask of you? Only to fear G-d, your God...” Rashi commented, “Even though you did all this, His mercy and His affection are still upon you, and with all that you have sinned against Him, He demands nothing of you, except only to fear...” Thus, Moshe just finished saying that G-d is patient with the Jewish people, and forgiving of individual transgression. Therefore, this verse must be speaking of a more serious rebellion against G-d.

This leads to the second comment about bribery. This cannot refer to general mitzvah observance, for the verse just made clear that G-d does not show favor to one who has cast off His yoke. But there is another possibility — the monetary expiation of sin. The Torah warns a court not to “accept payment for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death.” That is, not that the money

sways G-d’s judgment, obviously, but rather, that a person can redeem themselves from guilt with money. The reason being, that money purchases sustenance for the person, and therefore the payment of money can, theoretically, stand in for his physical punishment. An owner of a goring ox, for example, pays the “money of his soul” to the victim instead of paying with his life.

Yet this verse makes clear that a person who has thrown off the yoke of G-d cannot earn relief from a monetary payment. This is also why Rashi includes the words “Nor will He take...” for in general monetary payment can be an effective form of expiation, but in this scenario, G-d “will not take” this from an unrepentant person who has disregarded G-d’s yoke.

Pirkei Avos Connection:

The final Mishnah of chapter four of Pirkei Avos says, “Before Him there is... no favoritism, and no taking of bribes.” Because Pirkei Avos speaks to the striving chassid, this cannot refer to the disobedient individual of our verse. Rather, this refers to a person who is observant of the mitzvos, and yet, the Mishnah teaches, each mitzvah and transgression is accounted for separately. G-d rewards each mitzvah and exacts punishment for each transgression.

This underscores the great novelty of Teshuva, which the Midrash calls “bribery that You take in this world from the sinners.” Unlike a regular mitzvah which cannot cancel the effect of a transgression, repentance has the ability to literally transform transgressions into merits.
