



Sicha Summary

Chelek 16 | Vayakhel | Sichah 3

The Verse:

“The screen for the entrance to the Courtyard... twenty *amos* long, and the height, in width, five *amos*, *le’umas* the curtains of the Courtyard.” (*Shemos* 38:18)

The Rashi:

Le’umas the curtains of the Courtyard — like the measure (the height) of the Courtyard curtains.

Rashi’s Intent:

Commentators explain that the word *le’umas* often means “opposite.” Yet that cannot be the case here, for the screen of the courtyard was not opposite, i.e., facing, the curtains. Therefore, Rashi explains that here, *le’umas* means, “corresponding to” the height of the Courtyard curtains.

The Questions:

There are other instances where the word *le’umas* cannot be understood as “opposite.” In those contexts, Rashi sometimes explains the word to mean “above.” If Rashi were to apply this definition to verse, it would read: “and the height, in width, five *amos*, *above* the curtains of the Courtyard.” Meaning, the height of the courtyard curtain would be ten *amos* — five *amos* taller than the curtains that flanked it on both sides.

Instead, Rashi defines *le’umas* to mean, “corresponding to;” this definition is not found anywhere else in the *Chumash*.

Why would Rashi choose such an anomalous definition, as opposed to one that has well established precedents?

The Explanation:

If the verse's intent was to set the height of the screen at ten cubits, the verse would have simply said so. Rashi understood, therefore, the phrase "*le'umas* the curtains of the Courtyard" as an explanation of the reason the screen's height must be five *amos* — because the screen was to function as an extension of the Courtyard's curtains. Thus, the screen had to be five *amos* as well.

To understand why it was important that the screen's height should correspond to that of the curtains, we can look to the laws of *mezuzah*.

There is a dispute whether or not one is obligated to affix a *mezuzah* to an entryway without a door. *Rambam* maintains an entryway must have a door to be eligible for a *mezuzah*. *Ra'avad* maintains it does not.

The rationale behind the dispute can be explained as follows: What is the function of a door? Either (a) a door is a part of the entranceway, the purpose of which is to serve as an opening — allowing entry and exit; or, (b) a door has a distinct function — closure.

A *mezuzah* is meant to be placed at the entrance to a room. It follows that if the function of a door is to complete an entranceway, then there must be a door in order for the entranceway to require a *mezuzah*. If, however, the function of a door is mainly to close the entrance, then the presence of a door is irrelevant with respect to the obligation of affixing a *mezuzah*.

From Rashi's commentary, we can infer that he maintains that the screen of the courtyard served as a closure. For, as mentioned above, Rashi saw the screen as an extension of the curtains. Just as the curtains served to partition the *Mishkan* from the outside world, the screen completed this objective of the curtains.

This is consistent with Rashi's position in the *Talmud*, where he says that even an entrance without a door requires a *mezuzah* (as explained above, according to the opinion that a door is not integral to an entranceway).

The Deeper Dimension:

A door can be seen as a metaphor for the Divine quality of *malchus*, the intermediary between the world of absolute Divine reality and the worlds where this reality is concealed. *Malchus* serves both functions of a door: It closes and conceals the contents of the higher world from the lower worlds. But it also allows some limited revelation of G-d's *light* through the "entryway."

In the straightforward reading of Scripture, which is the approach of Rashi's commentary, a door is an obstacle. Meaning, in our earthly-bound perspective, where we see only surfaces, *malchus* is a door that does not allow us to experience the Divine.

And yet, the word the Torah uses to describe the screen's height, "*le'umas* the curtains," implies similarity, not absolute imitation. Meaning, the screen played a similar role to that of the curtain — it did conceal, but it was possible to repurpose the screen as a door for the sake of revelation.

Through persistent work in this world, we can transform *malchus* from an agent of concealment into an agent of revelation, opening the door so that G-d's infinite reality is perceived clearly in this world.