



# Likkutei Sichos

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## Invited or Prepared?

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## 1.

### A PLACE HASHEM PREPARED

In his commentary on the verse,<sup>1</sup> “Behold, I will send an angel before you... and to bring you to the place I have prepared, הֵכַן־יֵי,” Rashi explains: “*I have prepared* — that I have prepared to give you.” (Rashi then gives another explanation, discussed below, in Section 2.)

Commentators<sup>2</sup> explain that Rashi here forestalls a question: The verse says “הֵכַן־יֵי, I have prepared,” without specifying for whom Hashem has prepared the place. Rashi, therefore, explains that “I have prepared” the place “to give **to you.**”

[However, this interpretation is strained since Scripture could have explicitly stated, “I have prepared **for you.**” Rashi, therefore, offers an alternate interpretation (discussed in Section 2) that “the place that I have prepared, “הֵכַן־יֵי,” means “already My place is recognizable opposite it... that the Heavenly Temple is aligned with the terrestrial Temple.” According to this interpretation, Hashem “prepared” the place for **Himself**. It is as if the verse said “that I have prepared for Myself.” (Scripture needn’t state explicitly “for Myself” since “the usual connotation of the word הֵכַן־יֵי is {preparing} for oneself.”)]<sup>3</sup>

However, this explanation of the commentators is perplexing since

a) According to *pshat*,<sup>4</sup> to begin with, there is no difficulty with the verse using the word “הֵכַן־יֵי” without further qualification<sup>5</sup> because this arrangement was obviously for the Jewish people (concerning whom the verse is speaking).

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<sup>1</sup> *Shemos* 23:20.

<sup>2</sup> See here *Re'em*; *Devek Tov*; *Sifsei Chachamim*.

<sup>3</sup> This is the wording of *Re'em* on *Shemos* 23:20.

<sup>4</sup> {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture.” When the plain meaning is understood clearly, Rashi does not comment. Though the Torah has interpretations of various depths, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

<sup>5</sup> Note *Bereishis* 43:16.

b) On this basis, Rashi should have explained **concisely** (similar to *Ibn Ezra's* wording here): “*That I have prepared* — for you.” Why does Rashi (a) explain at length — “**that I have prepared to give** (to you); and moreover, (b) why does Rashi **diverge** from the wording used in the verse (הַכְּנִיָּהּ), and instead write “זְמַנִּי”?<sup>6</sup>

## 2.

### UNDERSTANDING RASHI

Subsequently, Rashi continues:

This is its simple meaning. Its midrashic interpretation: “*to the place I have prepared*, My place is already recognizable opposite it.” This is one of a number of verses that imply that the Heavenly Temple is directly aligned with the terrestrial Temple.

The reason that Rashi, in this (second) interpretation, repeats his quotation of the words “to the place I have prepared” is understood: He does this to hint that the midrashic interpretation is more compatible with the **semantic meaning of the words** (in the verse), “to the **place**” — and not, “to the land” — since הַכְּנִיָּהּ refers (not to the **land** of Israel, but) to the **place of the Temple**.

[This point still does not pose a compelling challenge to the “simple” interpretation of the verse (Rashi’s first explanation), since Scripture also refers to an entire land as a “place.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, from the continuation {of the Torah’s narrative}<sup>8</sup> here, seemingly, it is incontestable<sup>9</sup> that “and to bring you to the

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<sup>6</sup> {Both words mean “prepared.”}

<sup>7</sup> For example, see *Bamidbar* 32:1, 32:4; 10:29; 14:40.

<sup>8</sup> {“For My angel shall go before you and bring you to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite...” (*Shemos* 23:23).}

<sup>9</sup> Based on this, when Rashi writes, “{as for} its midrashic interpretation;” it also pertains to the subsequent understanding of the words “the place” — even though Rashi’s **primary** intent in clarifying “this is its simple meaning. {As for} its midrashic interpretation;” is related to the concept of “preparation” here (whether it is a preparation on earth, **as is simply understood**, or a spiritual preparation above in the Heavenly Temple). It is worth noting the distinction between the expressions “its simple meaning” and “the simple meaning of the verse” stated in Rashi’s commentary, as clarified in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, pp. 81-82.

place...” refers to the land of Israel as a whole (and **not** to a specific place in the land of Israel).<sup>10</sup>

However, since according to the verse’s “midrashic” interpretation (a) the meaning of “to the place” **differs** from its simple, semantic meaning; and (b) the words “that I have prepared” are smoother {than according to the *pshat* interpretation} (as discussed below), therefore, Rashi quotes these words again when he presents the “midrashic interpretation.”]

Still, we need to explain Rashi’s addendum: “**This is one of several verses that imply** that the Heavenly Temple...” Of what relevance is it to know (or for Rashi to emphasize) that there are **other** “verses that imply that the Heavenly Temple...”?

We cannot argue that since this idea {that the earthly Temple is aligned with the celestial one} may be incomprehensible to a novice student of Torah,<sup>11</sup> Rashi must add this remark to support his interpretation, similar to the avowal he makes in several places: “I have found a companion for him {i.e., a precedent of such usage}.” Meaning, although the idea introduced by Rashi’s interpretation may be doubtful to a novice student, Rashi remarks that this idea is also alluded to elsewhere in Scripture.

We cannot make the above argument because **earlier**,<sup>12</sup> in two places, Rashi already referred to this idea that “the Heavenly Temple is directly aligned with the terrestrial Temple,” and in neither of these instances does Rashi add the words (the proof —) “This is one of several verses that imply...”

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<sup>10</sup> And it is particularly challenging to maintain that “place” refers to the Temple. For even if the entry of the Jewish people into Israel had not been delayed for 40 years — according to the straightforward understanding of Scripture — the Temple would still have been built only sometime after the Jewish people had conquered and settled the Land.

<sup>11</sup> {In the Hebrew original, “*ben chamesh lemikra*”; meaning, “a five-year-old beginning to study Scripture.” This term is borrowed from *Pirkei Avos*, which teaches that the appropriate age for a child to begin studying *Chumash* is five. Rashi wrote his commentary on *Chumash* to solve problems that a 5-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse.}

<sup>12</sup> *Bereishis* 28:17; *Shemos* 15:17.

### 3.

#### DELVING FURTHER IN RASHI

We also need to clarify certain nuances in Rashi's commentary:

- a) The source of “its midrashic interpretation” is the *Tanchuma*.<sup>13</sup> However, the *Tanchuma*'s wording is, “This is one of several verses that clarify that the **terrestrial** Temple is directly aligned with the **Heavenly** Temple.” Why does Rashi reverse the order and say “that the **Heavenly** Temple is directly aligned with the **terrestrial** Temple”?
- b) Another version<sup>14</sup> of Rashi says: “...that the Heavenly Temple is directly aligned with the **terrestrial one**” (and not “the terrestrial **Temple**”). Why (in this version) does Rashi omit the word “Temple,” especially since Rashi, in the previous two places, does include the words “the terrestrial Temple”?

### 4.

#### DEFINING “PREPARED”

The explanation:

Rashi here anticipates a simple question concerning the words “that I have prepared.” The word “prepared” indicates that something has been modified to make it “prepared” and suitable for a particular purpose. This leads to a question on our verse: What is meant by “I have prepared” the land of Israel to bring the Jewish people there when we find no indication of any **change** to the land's previous state?

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<sup>13</sup> *Tanchuma*, “*Mishpatim*,” sec. 18.

<sup>14</sup> The second ed. of Rashi (given the stamp of approval by Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz [the grandfather of Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, composer of “*Lecha Dodi*”], after review). This version is also found in one of the manuscripts of Rashi in the Rebbe's possession.

**On the contrary**, the Torah’s continued narrative<sup>15</sup> emphasizes that the land was still **not** prepared for the Jewish people. The Torah says that the Seven Nations were living in the land of Israel, and they would have to first be driven out. As the verse puts it,<sup>16</sup> “I will annihilate them” and “I will drive them away”<sup>17</sup> (speaking in the future tense). Furthermore, this would not happen in the immediate future, as doing it immediately **not** was feasible (“Lest **the land become desolate**”).<sup>18</sup> Instead, it would be done gradually, in the manner described as,<sup>19</sup> “Little by little I shall drive them away.” —

Thus, what does the verse mean when it says, “(and to bring you to the place) **that I have prepared**”?

Rashi answers, “(that) הֵכַנְתִּי, I have prepared” in our verse means (not actively preparing, as is the translation in many places,<sup>20</sup> but rather) “that זְמַנְתִּי **to give** to you”, זְמַנְתִּי means (also) זְיַמֵּן — to invite. The meaning of the verse is that Hashem prepared the place only by way of invitation, similar to the way a person invites guests — his invitation does not require action, it is only a (verbal) notification. Similarly, Hashem “reserved” the land of Israel<sup>21</sup> for the purpose of **later** gifting it to the Jewish people (“that I have prepared to give to you”).

However, since, in most instances, preparation entails modifying and making something ready, Rashi offers another interpretation: “And its midrashic interpretation is..., **My place is already recognizable opposite it.**” Based on **this** interpretation, a place was changed and made ready — not the place of the terrestrial Temple, but rather the place of the **Heavenly** Temple — “**My place** is recognizable opposite it.”

For this reason, Rashi uses nuanced wording when he says, “that the **Heavenly** Temple is directly aligned with the **terrestrial** Temple.” He does not say it in the (reverse) order (like the wording) of the *Tanchuma* because the

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<sup>15</sup> *Shemos* 23:23, 23:28 ff.

<sup>16</sup> {*Shemos* 23:23.}

<sup>17</sup> {*Shemos* 23:30.}

<sup>18</sup> {*Shemos* 23:29.}

<sup>19</sup> {*Shemos* 29:30.}

<sup>20</sup> See *Bereishis* 43:16; *Shemos* 16:5 (and *Targum Unkelus*); et al.

<sup>21</sup> See Rashi, *Bereishis* 1:1; elucidated in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 10 ff.

preparation occurred in the place of the “Heavenly Temple.” “My place” (of the Heavenly Temple) became “**recognizable opposite it**” (opposite from the place of the terrestrial Temple).

## 5.

RASHI RESOLVED

However, this alone is insufficient —

It is unreasonable to say that Hashem prepared the place of the Heavenly Temple and this had no effect on the place of the **terrestrial** Temple with which it was “**directly aligned.**”

This is evident in the verse (where Yaakov says),<sup>22</sup> “And this is the gate of the heavens” — the first time Rashi mentions that “the Heavenly Temple is directly aligned with the terrestrial Temple.” Yaakov felt the holiness in this place on Earth, and thus he declared, “How awesome is **this** place! This is none other than the abode of Hashem, and this is the gate of the heavens.”

Since concerning this place, this verse says, “that I have prepared” — the place of the Heavenly Temple was prepared in a manner that “My place is **already** recognizable opposite it” — it should have been “recognizable” in the place of the terrestrial temple as well. How does this align with the continuation of the Torah’s narrative **emphasizing** that the land of Israel (including the place of the Temple) was **not** at all ready at that time for the Jewish people to (even) enter the **land**?<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, Rashi elucidates, “**This is one of the several verses that imply** that the Heavenly Temple...”: Our verse is not saying that Hashem’s preparation of aligning the Heavenly Temple directly with the terrestrial Temple

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<sup>22</sup> *Bereishis* 28:17.

<sup>23</sup> Meaning, even if you intend to suggest that some (spiritual) preparation also occurred in the place of the terrestrial Temple, this preparation should have been emphasized in the continuation of this narrative. Scripture should not have highlighted just the opposite idea — the unpreparedness of the land.

happened **then** because the preparation referred to in the verse, “I have prepared,” occurred much earlier. Our verse is just one of several (including preceding verses) that convey the same point: “The Heavenly Temple is directly aligned with the terrestrial Temple” (took place earlier). [It was always the case] “My place is already recognizable opposite it” was brought about earlier.

Thus, the question is resolved as to why we don’t find a change was made in the place of the terrestrial Temple **at that time**.

On this basis, the other version of Rashi — which says “that the Heavenly Temple is directly aligned with that of the earth” (rather than “the terrestrial **Temple**”) — is understood. The omission {of the word “Temple”} emphasizes that the preparation of the Heavenly Temple was not predicated upon the state of the place on which the terrestrial Temple was situated. The Heavenly **Temple** exists even if there is **no** terrestrial Temple; it is “directly aligned with **that of the earth**” (which does not have a “**Temple**”). Thus, it is not a contradiction to say, “My place is already **recognizable** opposite it” while, nonetheless, there was no visible change in the place of the Temple. On the contrary, gentile nations occupied the place of the Temple, the very antithesis of {the spiritual character of} the Temple.



## 6.

IN HALACHAH

Among the halachic concepts that can be derived from Rashi's commentary:

Amongst *Rishonim*,<sup>24</sup> there is a dispute regarding Abayei's position<sup>25</sup> that “הַזְמִינָה, designation, is significant.” They argue whether, according to Abayei, *verbal* designation is also significant.<sup>26</sup>

— There is also a consequential difference in its **actual application**, since (also) according to Rava's position<sup>27</sup> (whose opinion halachah follows) that “designation is not significant,” there are certain instances when “designation” is, in fact, taken into consideration<sup>28</sup> —

We can say that this is the practical halachic difference between Rashi's two interpretations:

Based on the “*pshat*” interpretation that when the verse “says that הַכְנֵתִי, I have prepared,” it means “זְמִינֵתִי, I have designated to give to you” without performing some **action** to prepare the place to ensure it is ready), *verbal* designation is regarded as **preparation** — it “is significant.”

According to “its midrashic interpretation,” however, the word “הַכְנֵתִי” connotes a discernible preparation in the item being prepared (correspondingly) — “**My place is already recognizable** opposite it.” Thus, it is reasonable to say that “verbal designation is not significant.”

— From a talk delivered on *motzei Shabbos kodesh, parshas Mishpatim*, 5739 (1979)

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<sup>24</sup> {Talmudic and halachic scholars who lived circa. 1000-1500 C.E.}

<sup>25</sup> *Sanhedrin* 47b.

<sup>26</sup> See *Chidushei HaRan*, on *Sanhedrin* 47b; *Sanhedrin* 48a, *Tosafos*, s.v. “nesano”; *Shiltei Gibborim* on *Berachos* 23b.

<sup>27</sup> *Sanhedrin* 47b.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 42, par. 3 and commentaries thereon; *Rema*, loc. cit. (and in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid*, par. 6: “Concerning actual practice, one should be stringent and follow this viewpoint”).