

## Parshat Eikev

# Rain In Its Time

*Parshat Eikev describes G-d’s promise to provide blessings to the Jewish people, upon their fulfillment of His mitzvot. Rashi’s commentary on the verse, however, prompts a series of questions. This Sicha analyzes Rashi’s specific wording and provides an enriched appreciation of the blessings’ meanings.*

This week’s *parsha* discusses the corollaries of listening to or ignoring G-d’s statutes and the blessings that ensue when one listens to G-d. The verse states:

### Text 1

And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments that I command you this day to love the Lord, your G-d, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give the rain of your land at its time, the early rain and the latter rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil.

*Devarim 11:13-14*

On the words of the verse, “I will give the rain of your land,” Rashi comments, and explains the reason for these blessings:

### Text 2

You will have done what is [incumbent upon] you; [so] I will do what is [incumbent] upon Me.

*Rashi, Devarim 11:14*

Rashi elucidates that the reason that the Almighty will give rain is because the Jewish

people fulfilled those mitzvot that they were obligated to keep.

There are a number of difficulties with Rashi’s explanation of these words ““I will give the rain of your land.”

- A) In general, Rashi only adds explanation to the verse when there is a question in the simple understanding which necessitates elucidation. What is the difficulty in this verse that Rashi wished to explain?
- B) Rashi’s clarification does not seem to add anything that is not directly understood from the text itself. The verse already stated, “If you hearken to My commandments...I will give.” What is added to the straightforward meaning of this statement in Rashi’s explanation?
- C) Rashi’s elucidation seems to revolve around the words, “I will give,” in that he explains the *reason* that G-d will give rain. If that is indeed the case, why does he quote the words, “the rain of your land,” as well as this is a part of the verse that seems to need no explanation?

### All that is incumbent

There are those that explain that Rashi’s intent is to contrast the blessings that are stated here, in *Parshat Eikev*, with the blessings that are stated

earlier, in the *parsha* of Bechukotai. In Bechukotai the verse states:

### Text 3

If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them, I will give your rains in their time, the Land will yield its produce, and the tree of the field will give forth its fruit.

*Vayikra 26:3-4*

It is because of the differences between the two verses and the blessings that are stated in each *parsha*, that Rashi sees the need to explain our verse.

### Text 4

[Rashi's] intent is to provide a reason why here [in *Parshat Eikev*] the blessings are multiplied in a way that it is not in other places. For regarding the statement<sup>1</sup>, "If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them," the verse<sup>2</sup> merely writes, "I will give your rains in their time," however it does not state [as our verse does] that there will be "early rain and the latter rain"<sup>3</sup> or that "I will give grass in your field"<sup>4</sup>...all these various details are written in this *parsha*. It is for this reason [that Rashi explains that this is because] "You will have done what is [incumbent upon] you; [so] I will do what is [incumbent] upon Me." Meaning to say, that because...you fulfilled all of my precepts out of love...I too must do what is incumbent on Myself to the point that there is no good that I do not do for you.

*R. Eliyahu Mizrachi, Devarim 11:14*

He explains that Rashi wishes to explain the reason that the blessings stated in our *parsha* are greater than those stated in Bechukotai. The reason that is explained is "because...you fulfilled all of my precepts out of love...I too must do what is incumbent on Myself to the point that there is *no good* that I do not do for you."

This explanation, though, is difficult for the following reasons:

- A) When Rashi quotes part of a verse in his introductory statement it is because the words that he quotes are those which *necessitate* his explanation. The words that Rashi cites for his commentary are, "I will give the rain of your land," which are the same idea as the words, "I will give your rains in their time," which were stated in *Parshat Bechukotai*. According to the above explanation though, what triggered Rashi's explanation was the rest of the verse wherein is expressed the *difference* between these two *parsha's*, and not these words that Rashi quotes.
- B) According to the above explanation, the blessings that are found in *Parshat Eikev* are *greater* than those blessings mentioned in Bechukotai (as here, G-d details the various aspects of blessing that He will provide). This though, does not fit with what Rashi *himself* explains. Rashi explains in *Parshat Bechukotai*, on the words, "the tree of the field will give forth its fruit," that "This refers to trees that do not bear fruit, but are destined to bear fruit in the future." Meaning to say, that the verse in Bechukotai discusses supernatural blessings. Yet, the blessings in our *parsha* are those that are encloded in nature. It is

<sup>1</sup> Vayikra 26:3.

<sup>2</sup> Vayikra 26:4.

<sup>3</sup> Devarim 11:14.

<sup>4</sup> Devarim 11:15.

therefore clear that the blessings mentioned in Bechukotai are greater than those mentioned in our parsha and not vice-versa.

It is therefore clear that the explanation offered above cannot possibly be the reason that Rashi explains “You will have done what is [incumbent upon] you; [so] I will do what is [incumbent] upon Me.” We therefore must analyze the verses mentioned above to discover the reason for Rashi’s explanation.

### Differences in Rashi

In the continuation of the above verse, G-d promises that the rain will come “at its time,” which is similar to the statement in Bechukotai which declares, “I will give your rains in their time.” However, there are differences between the way Rashi elucidates these words in our *parsha* and the way that he explains them in the *parsha* of Bechukotai:

**Parshat Eikev:** “At night, so it will not disturb you. Another explanation of “at its time” is: On Shabbat [Friday] nights, when everyone is at home.”

**Parshat Bechukotai:** “At a time when people do not usually go out, for example, on Shabbat Eve.”

While the explanations are similar, there are a number of differences which provoke the following questions:

- A) Why is it that in *Parshat Bechukotai* Rashi is satisfied with the explanation, “for example, on Shabbat Eve,” while in our *parsha* he prefaces another explanation of “at night, so it will not disturb you?”
- B) In our *parsha*, the explanation that rain will fall Friday nights is brought as a *second* explanation. Meaning to say, that the *primary* explanation of the words “at its time” according to Rashi, is

that the rain will fall at night. This is in contradistinction with that which is explained in *Parshat Bechukotai*, where, on the words “in their times” he *only* mentions Friday nights.

- C) The order of the explanation in reference to the rain falling on Shabbat is different as well. Whereas in *Parshat Bechukotai* Rashi *begins* by explaining, “at a time when people do not usually go out,” and only *afterwards* does he give an example of “Shabbat Eve,” in our *parsha* he does the *opposite*. He *first* explains, “On Shabbat nights,” and only then does he *add* that it is a time “when everyone is at home.”
- D) In Bechukotai, he phrases his statement in the negative: “At a time when people *do not* usually go out.” In our *parsha*, he focuses on the positive: “when everyone is *at home*.” Why the difference?
- E) In Bechukotai, Rashi uses the term “people,” (are home on Shabbat) as if to say that it is not everyone and in our *parsha*, Rashi writes “everyone.”
- F) In our *parsha*, in introducing his second explanation Rashi adds a seemingly superfluous phrase by saying, “Another explanation of ‘at its time,’” repeating the words from the verse, which seems to be unnecessary.

### The explanation

There is a focal difference between the blessings that are stated in Bechukotai and the blessings that are stated in our *parsha*.

Concerning the blessings of Bechukotai the verse states, “I will give your rains in their time”—the rains of the Jewish people, whereas in our *parsha* the verse states, “I will give the rain of your land at its time”—the blessing of the land.

In Bechukotai the primary blessing is to the *Jewish people*, whereas and in our *parsha* the

primary blessing is on the *land*, but that by extension the owners of the land are blessed as well.

It is for this reason that the blessings in Bechukotai transcend nature, while the blessings in our *parsha* are limited to nature. When the blessings are directed at the *Jewish people*, the blessings are supernatural, according to the needs of the *individual*, even when those needs are not natural.

However, when the blessings are on the *land*, they are unable to transcend nature, as the entire idea of the land *is* nature.

This is expressed in the verse<sup>5</sup>, “So long as the *land* exists, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” When the Torah wishes to express that the natural order will last, it tells us about the land. A blessing in land is found within the confines of nature—it does not transcend it.

### Reason for the difference

Rashi reveals the intention behind the differences of the blessings expressed in our *parsha* versus those blessings expressed in Bechukotai in his statement, “You will have done what is [incumbent upon] you; [so] I will do what is [incumbent] upon Me.”

It is for this reason that the blessing in *Parshat Eikev* is, “I will give the rain of *your land*.”

The reason that the blessings here are only limited to nature, is because “You will have done what is [incumbent upon] you.” Given the fact that the Jewish people only did what they were *obligated* to do but not *more*, so too, G-d blesses them in the same way. “I will do what is [incumbent] upon Me,” but not more, in a way that would transcend nature.

<sup>5</sup> Bereishis 8:22.

<sup>6</sup> Vayikra 26:3.

However, the blessings in Bechukotai that transcend nature are due to the fact that the Jewish people as well serve G-d in a way that transcends their own nature. This is expressed in the explanation that the blessings of Bechukotai revolve around.

On the verse there<sup>6</sup>, “If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them,” Rashi comments:

### Text 5

I might think that this refers to the fulfillment of the commandments. However, when Scripture says, “and observe My commandments,” the fulfillment of the commandments is [already] stated. So what is the meaning of “If you follow My statutes”? It means that you must toil in the study of Torah.

*Rashi, Vayikra 26:3*

Because the Jewish people do not only learn Torah according to their obligation, but instead toil in it beyond their natural inclination, they are blessed as well with blessings that transcend nature.

### Question

However, Rashi’s explanation on another verse in *Parshat Ki Tavo* seems to negate this explanation.

On the verse<sup>7</sup>, “Look down from Your holy dwelling, from the heavens, and bless Your people Israel, and the ground which You have given to us, as You swore to our forefathers a land flowing with milk and honey,” Rashi

<sup>7</sup> Devarim 26:15.

comments on the words, “Look down from Your holy dwelling” and states:

### Text 6

We have fulfilled what You have decreed upon us. Now You do what is incumbent upon You to do<sup>8</sup>, for You said, “If you follow My statutes... then I shall give [you] your rains in their [proper] time...”

*Rashi, Devarim 26:15*

Rashi seems to make a hybrid of what he explains in our *parsha* in the first half of his explanation there, with the statement, “We have fulfilled what You have decreed upon us. Now You do what is incumbent upon You to do,” and follows with the opposite theme, that as a reward, G-d will repay us as stated in Bechukotai, “then I shall give [you] your rains in their [proper] time...”

By explaining that “then I shall give [you] your rains in their [proper] time” is a reward for fulfilling “what You have decreed upon us,” Rashi seems to negate what was previously explained that G-d only blesses the *Jewish people* in a way that transcends nature, when they too go beyond the letter of the law and *toil* in Torah.

### Decrees and obligations

Upon analyzing Rashi’s exact statement, however, it is clear that Rashi circumvents this question through slight variation of his words, which brings about a tremendous difference in the intent of the statement.

**Parshat Eikev:** “You will have *done* what is [incumbent upon] you; [so] I will do what is [incumbent] upon Me.”

**Parshat Ki Tavo:** “We have fulfilled what You have *decreed* upon us. Now You do what is incumbent upon You to do.”

By changing the words “what is *incumbent* upon us” to “what You have *decreed* upon us,” Rashi explains that the reason for the blessings which transcend nature is due to Israel’s fulfillment of the *mitzvot* in a manner that transcends human logic. Rashi explains the following regarding those *mitzvot* that are referred to as decrees:

### Text 7

Because Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, “What is this commandment, and what purpose does it have?” Therefore, the Torah uses the term “statute.” I have decreed it; You have no right to challenge it.

*Rashi, Bamidbar 19:2*

Rashi is not discussing those *mitzvot* that are done because they are understood logically but those that supersede reason and are fulfilled in a way that one fulfills a decree.

Because the person transcends the limitations of his intellect and fulfills these commandments by nullifying himself to G-d’s will, the reward for that act as well is that G-d’s blessings are brought upon him in a way that override nature.

### The needs of the land

It is because of the general difference between Bechukotai and Eikev mentioned above, that causes the difference of the words “I will give the rain of your land at *its time*” that is stated in our *parsha* and the words “I will give your rains in *their time*” that is stated in Bechukotai.

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<sup>8</sup> Sifrei, Ma’aser Sheni 5:13.

In Bechukotai, where the blessing of rain is referred to as “*your rains*,” and comes to Israel as a reward to for transcending nature, the rain comes at a time that it is most convenient for *them*.

The time that is most suitable is during the periods when he does not go out *at all*.

Therefore Rashi writes, that the rain falls “at a time when people *do not usually go out*, for example, on Shabbat Eve.” Although in order for rainfall that falls in such a short period of time to be adequate for the produce to grow is beyond nature, they are nevertheless bestowed with a blessing that transcends nature because of their actions of toiling in Torah beyond their obligation.

However, in our *parsha*, the blessing is referred to as “the rain of your *land*.” It is because the blessing is directed towards the land that the rain is according to the needs of the nature of the land. It is for this reason that Rashi explains that the blessing here is that rain should fall “at night,” (*leilot*) in the plural, and not only once a week, on Shabbat; as according to the perimeters of nature, the land needs rain more often than once a week.

### The proper time

Both verses say that rainfall will come in its proper time. In Bechukotai the verse states, “I will give your rains in *their* time,” and in our *parsha* the verse states, “I will give the rain of your land at *its* time.” However, within the proper time for rainfall there are two approaches:

- A) When the blessing is directed to *Israel*, then the time of the rain depends on Israel as its starting point and the needs of the land are dependent on their needs. It is for this reason that when Rashi defines the word “in *their* time” he states, “at a time when people do not

usually go out (*at all*), for example, on Shabbat Eve.” It is for this reason that he *first* states “at a time when people do not usually go out” and only *afterwards* does he say “for *example*, on Shabbat Eve.” By doing so he stresses that the *time* for rainfall in this scenario is at a time when it is exceedingly convenient.

- B) When, however, the blessing is for the *land*, as in the statement in our verse, “I will give the rain of your land,” then the primary concern is the land and Israel’s work *on it*, and the general convenience of Israel is secondary. That being the case, the primary time for rainfall is at a time when it is not being worked on—at night. It is for this reason that Rashi explains firstly that the time for rainfall is “at night,” being that nighttime is not a time that the fields are worked on. In order to further explain what the advantage of rainfall is at night, Rashi continues and states that the reason is “so it will not disturb you.” Indeed, this that rain falls at night is not for the land per say, but for the people that need to work on the land.

### The difficulty

There is however, a difficulty with Rashi’s first explanation where he defines “at *its* time,” which necessitates Rashi’s second explanation that rainfall will come on Shabbat eve. The difficulties are as follows:

- A) If the verse wished to state that rainfall would come at night, it could have easily switched the word “at *its* time,” (*b’ito*) which is one word, to the word “at night,” (*baleilot*) which is one word as well.
- B) Rashi’s explanation for “at *its* time,” that it is in a time that does not disrupt work, is not completely satisfactory, as the

simple explanation of “at its time” is the time for rain in general—not taking into account the needs of the people working the land. According to Rashi’s (first) explanation though, the reason that the rain falls at night is for the people working and has nothing to do with the time of rain in and of itself.

It is because of these questions that Rashi brings his second explanation that “at its time” is “On Shabbat [Friday] nights, when everyone is at home.” For this second explanation therefore, Rashi again quotes the words “at its time,” to express that what necessitated the second explanation is the definition of the words “at its time.”

Nevertheless, the primary explanation for the words “at its time” is “at night,” as this fits with the general intent of the verse. For this reason, regardless of the questions on this explanation, Rashi still brings it as the first and therefore principal explanation.

### **Additional differences**

According to what was explained in regard to Bechukotai speaking of the reward for toiling in Torah and our *parsha* discussing the reward for fulfilling one’s obligation, another difference in the two *parshiyot* becomes clear:

Being that Bechukotai discusses the reward for toiling in Torah, it is evident that there are only a distinct quantity of people that fall into this classification. However, our *parsha*, which discusses fulfilling one’s obligations, includes the *entire* Jewish people.

With this in mind the differences between the two Rashi’s can be illuminated:

- A) In our *parsha*, Rashi writes “when everyone is at home”—i.e., *all* of the Jewish people as opposed to a select few. However, in Bechukotai, Rashi writes, “At a time when people do not usually go out” and does not use the word *everyone*, as he is only discussing those specific individuals that toil in Torah study.
- B) In our *parsha*, Rashi writes “when everyone is at home” in the positive, as opposed to his commentary in Bechukotai, where he negates the notion of going out and writes “at a time when people *do not* usually go out.” The reason for the difference is because of the variance of individuals that each *parsha* discusses.

Pertaining to “everyone” it is not possible to say that they *categorically* do not leave their home Shabbat nights, as, though they are generally home, they do still go out of their houses to visit others or to go to the synagogue<sup>9</sup>. However, regarding those that toil in Torah, when they are absolved from laboring in employment (which they are busy with during the rest of the week) they use all their free moments to toil in Torah and “do not usually go out.”

### **The lesson**

From all of the above, the greatness of studying Torah and doing *mitzvot* with exertion is clear. It is not satisfactory to merely fulfill one’s obligations; one must transcend their nature and do *mitzvot* above and beyond the natural order of their body and their soul.

A person is likely to think to themselves: why must I exert myself in Torah and *mitzvot* if I am

of rain, as there are indeed people that go out at this time.

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<sup>9</sup> It is for this reason that in our *parsha*, Shabbat nights cannot be completely referred to as the time

already immersed in holiness according to what I am obligated?

The answer however, is that when an individual is lacking in exertion and toil, not only can they not be sure lest they falter and sin, but it is considered in a sense as if they do not serve G-d.

### Text 8

This will explain the statement in the *Gemara*<sup>10</sup> that "One who is serving G-d" refers to him who reviews his lesson 101 times, while "One who serves him not" refers to him who repeats his lesson no more than 100 times. This is because in those days it was customary to review each lesson one hundred times, as, indeed, illustrated in the *Gemara, ibid.*, by the example taken from the market, where donkey-drivers used to hire themselves out at a rate of

ten *parasangs* for a *zuz*, but for eleven *parasangs* charged two *zuzim*, because that exceeded their customary practice.

*Tanya, Ch. 15*

A person who does not go the extra mile is as if he does not serve G-d at all, as all that he does is according to his nature.

When, however, a person transcends their nature and serves G-d in a way of toil, then G-d blesses the Jewish people in a manner of which he transforms negativity into good.

*(Based on Likutei Sichos 19, Eikev 4, reworked by Rabbi Dovid Markel. To see other projects and to partner in our work, see: [www.Neirot.com](http://www.Neirot.com).)*

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<sup>10</sup> Chagiga 9b.