



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 11 | Mishpatim | Sicha 2 | Kitzur

Verse:

When [literally: if] you lend money to My people, to the poor person [who is] with you, you shall not behave toward him as a lender; you shall not impose interest upon him. (Shmos 22:24)

Rashi:

When you lend money to My people: Rabbi Ishmael says: Every *im* (if) in the Torah implies an option or condition except for three, and this is one of them.

Question:

In five places Rashi himself explains that the word *im* (if) (does not imply something optional, but) is an obligation; why then does Rabbi Yishmael say that there are only three places where *im* implies an option?

Explanation:

Rabbi Yishmael is referring to cases where *im* is written in a context that could be construed as either optional or obligatory. There are, however, other cases in which the word *im* appears as part of a story, or as a condition; those cases are not included by Rabbi Yishmael.

There are, however, three exceptions (where *im* is obligatory). Those are cases in which *im* appears before the introduction of the commandment. In such cases, we cannot explain that *im* is a condition (if you lend money to a fellow then you should not act like

a creditor), because it does not make sense to stipulate a condition before the underlying commandment has been introduced. Rabbi Yishamal therefore explains that there are three places where *im* implies an obligation.

Based on the above we will understand why the two other cases where Rashi says that *im* implies an obligation (*Im Yihiye Hayovel, im Kofer Yushas Alav*) are not included in Rabbi Yishamal's statement, because they are not subject to the concept of optional or obligation. (The Yovel occurs in the fiftieth year, and does not depend on human action. And the imposition of the Kofer payment applies only in an extraordinary event, the death of a person. The concept of optional and obligatory, however, applies to situations that are a common occurrence).

The Name of the Author

The reason Rashi quotes the name of the sage who taught the teaching: Rabbi Akiva believes that when "the Jewish people perform the will of Hashem their work is done through others." So one could argue that if someone is poor, his poverty is because he is not performing the will of Hashem. As such, there is no obligation to lend such a person money, but rather doing so is optional. Rabbi Yishmael, by contrast, believes that it is an obligation to "engage in the way of the earth," meaning that one is obligated to seek to earn a living in a natural way. Accordingly, it is easy to make a mistake in determining the appropriate quality and quantity of the effort necessary to extend in order to earn a living. As a result it is more likely and understandable that a person will become poor and require a loan. As such, obviously, to offer a loan is an obligation.

Wine of Torah:

Rabbi Yishamal was a High Priest and represents the service of the *tzadik* (righteous person). The mindset of the *tzadik* is that "I can [i desire to] eat meat of the *chazir* (swine) but what can I do, my Father in Heaven decreed against it." (Meaning, the prohibition need not repulse him, as he refrains from the prohibition only because it is the desire of Hashem). Rabbi Yishamal therefore says that in most places the meaning of the word *im* is optional, because the person will fulfil the *mitzvah* even if it is not an obligation. Rabbi Akiva, however, was the descendent of a convert, and represents the service of the *baal teshuva*. Rabbi Akiva therefore believes that a person should adopt the attitude of the *baal teshuvah* who says, "I do not desire meat of the *chazir*" (which ensures that he does not sin, as he prohibition repulses him). Rabbi Akiva therefore interprets *im* as implying an obligation, because a *baal teshuvah* needs the additional

force of an obligation to help him be extra careful. (Similar to the statement after one does *teshuvah*, “if he was accustomed to read one page, then he should read two.”)