

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Shabbos
Chol Hamoed Sukkos

19 Tishrei, 5782 – September 25, 2021

Compiled from the works of
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn
North Miami Beach, FL

A Project of
Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
Copyright 2021©

An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos¹

Likkutei Sichos Volume 21, Pages 232 – 237

Rashi in His Own Words

שמות ל"ג, כ"ג: וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת כַּפֵּי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת אַחֲרַי וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרָאוּ:
רש"י ד"ה וראית את אחורי: הראהו קשר של תפילין:

Shemos 33:23: Then I will remove My hand, and you will see My back, but My face shall not be seen.

Rashi Heading - and you will see My back: He showed him the knot of (His) Tefillin.

Synopsis

In our special Torah reading, we find that Moshe asks Hashem to² "Please show me Your glory. "To this Hashem responds³, that "You will not be able to see My face. "Several verses later, G-d explains that⁴ "You will see My back, but My face will not be seen." Rashi, citing the words from the verse "You will see my back," explains that Hashem "showed him the knot of (His) Tefillin."

Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the Torah. Why does he find it necessary to explain what is meant by Hashem showing Moshe His back? The beginning student has already encountered several anthropomorphisms. The Torah mentions G-d's "back," however, we know that Hashem has no image or form. There, this cannot be Rashi's problem. Even the total beginner understands that this is an allegory. The same verse discusses Hashem's face, and Rashi does not comment on that. There are easier ways of explaining the metaphorical meaning of Hashem's "back" (as so to speak). If the question that bothers Rashi is how we can attribute a physical quality to Hashem, we gain nothing by saying that Hashem's "back" refers to His "Tefillin!"

Based on the above question, the explanation is that Rashi is not bothered by the fact that the Torah mentions G-d's face or His back. That is a typical sort of expression in the Torah which is understood by all. Rather Rashi is bothered by a different question. After Moshe's request to see G-d's "glory," and before Hashem's answer that "You shall see My back, but my face shall not be seen," G-d says that⁵ "I will let all My goodness pass before you; I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and I will favor whom I

1. Inasmuch as this Shabbos is one of the intermediate days of Sukkos, there is a special Torah reading. It is found in Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:12-26. We are there presenting an explanation of a Rashi in this Torah reading.

2. Shemos 33:18.

3. Shemos 33:20.

4. Shemos 33:23.

5. Shemos 33:19.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

wish to favor ..." How does this answer Moshe's request that Hashem shows him his glory? Rashi answers this question by saying⁶ that "The time has come that you will see some of My glory that I will permit you to see because I want and I need to teach you *the order of prayer* ... I will (therefore) let all of the attributes of My goodness pass before you while you are hidden in a cave ... I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you to teach you the procedure for begging for compassion, (i.e., praying) ... According to this procedure, (during) which you (will) see Me enwrapped and proclaiming the Thirteen Attributes (of Mercy), teach the Israelites to do likewise." Following this, Hashem says⁷, "You will not be able to see My face ...," which Rashi explains to mean, "even when I let all of My goodness pass before you"

It follows that what it says in our verse "and you shall see My back" is not the beginning of a new statement by G-d. Instead, it is the continuation of the previous verses. Moshe will see the back of G-d "enwrapped (in a Tallis) and praying." However, Moshe will *only* see Hashem's back. How can this represent seeing Hashem's glory? If G-d is wrapped in a Tallis, He is not visible! This is especially difficult since a Tallis is not a garment made of expensive, precious material for "glory and beauty," as were the Kohanim – priests' vestments. Usually, a Tallis is a simple woolen garment!

This is why Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe the knot of His Tefillin. The child who is beginning his studies knows that at times the one who leads the congregation in prayer at times only wears a Tallis, and at times he wears Tefillin as well. The head Tefillin forms a crown, which indeed demonstrates glory. The knot on the back of the head Tefillin is specifically what forms the crown. Hence, the beginner understands from Rashi that Moshe will indeed see Hashem's glory.

Rashi's Explanation

We find two simultaneous events in the Torah portion, which we read for the intermediate Shabbos of Sukkos. G-d teaches Moshe how to pray on behalf of the Jewish people. He also asks Hashem to "Please show me Your glory." To this, Hashem responds, "You will not be able to see My face." Several verses later, G-d concludes that "You will see My back, but My face will not be seen." Rashi, citing the words from the verse "You will see my back," explains that Hashem "showed him the knot of (His) Tefillin."

Seemingly, Rashi is answering a question for the beginning Torah student. We know that Hashem has neither a form nor an image. How can the Torah say that G-d will show Moshe His back? Therefore, Rashi explains that the Torah means is that He will show Moshe the knot of His Tefillin.

6. Ibid.

7. Shemos 33:20.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the Torah. Why does he find it necessary to explain what is meant by Hashem showing Moshe His back? Why does this require an explanation? We cannot say that Rashi is bothered by the use of anthropomorphism. Although Hashem has no image or form, the beginning student has already encountered many physical characteristics attributed to G-d throughout the Torah. The beginning student understands that these are all metaphorical. Actually, in the very same verse which we are discussing, Hashem's face is mentioned. Rashi offers no comment whatsoever because none is needed.

If Rashi is looking for an allegorical explanation of Hashem's "back," there are many more straightforward ways to explain it than the "knot of G-d's Tefillin." The face symbolizes one's essence. One's back, on the other hand, represents more superficial aspects of one's personality. However, what does the knot of Tefillin symbolize?

Furthermore, Rashi includes in the heading of his comments the words "you will see." In his explanation, he uses the words "I will show you." Why is this so? We know that Rashi is very precise with the words he uses for his headings and his commentary itself. Yet it seems that he is only explaining the words "your back," not the words "you will see," or "I will show you."

The Explanation

The explanation is that Rashi is not bothered by the Torah mentioning G-d's face or His back. That is a typical sort of expression in the Torah and is understood by all. Rather Rashi is bothered by a different question. After Moshe's request to "Show me Your glory," and before Hashem's answer that "You shall see My back, but my face shall not be seen," G-d says⁸ that "I will let all My goodness pass before you; I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and I will favor when I wish to favor ..." What possible connection does this have to Moshe's request that Hashem shows him his glory? Rashi answers this question by saying⁹ that "The time has come that you will see some of My glory that I will permit you to see because I want and I need to teach you *the order of prayer* ... I will (therefore) let all the attribute of My goodness pass before you while you are hidden in a cave ... I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, to teach you how to beg for compassion, (i.e., pray) ... According to this procedure, (during) which you (will) see Me enwrapped (in a Tallis) and proclaiming the Thirteen Attributes (of Mercy), teach

8. Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:19.

9. See Rashi's comments to Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:19.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

the Jews to do likewise." Following this, Hashem says, "You will not be able to see My face . . .," which Rashi explains to mean, "even when I let all of My goodness pass before you . . ."

It follows from this that when our verse says "and you shall see My back," it is not the beginning of a new subject but rather the continuation of the previous verses. Moshe will see the back of G-d "enwrapped (in a Tallis) and praying."

However, this only engenders another question. Moshe will see Hashem "conducting services, praying while enwrapped with a Tallis" only after G-d passes. In other words, Moshe will see Him from behind. That being the case, how can we say that Moshe will see Hashem's glory? If He is wrapped in a Tallis, He is not visible! This is an even more significant question because all that Moshe will see is Hashem's Tallis! One does not make a Tallis from expensive, precious materials. Generally, it is a simple woolen garment!

This is why Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe the knot of His Tefillin. The child who is beginning his studies knows that at times the one who leads the congregation in prayer only wears a Tallis. This would be true of Shabbos and festivals. During the week, he wears Tefillin in addition to the Tallis. The Tefillin on his head form a crown, which certainly demonstrates Hashem's glory. It's not the *straps* of the Tefillin that form the crown. The straps hang down in front of the one who wears them. It is the knot on the back of the head Tefillin which forms the crown. The beginning student is also aware that most of the time, the head Tefillin are not visible from behind. The Tallis usually covers them. This is why Rashi tells us that Hashem made a point of "showing" Moshe the knot of His Tefillin.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

It is apparent that because we are discussing these two subjects simultaneously, they must be related to each other. There is a connection between Moshe's request to see G-d's glory and G-d teaching Moshe how to pray on behalf of the Jews. Beseeching forgiveness for the Jewish people must be an essential part of seeing Hashem's glory. This is the case even if we can only see his glory "from behind."

To understand this connection, we must first answer a different question. Why was it so crucial for Hashem to be "wearing" a Tallis while reciting the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy? One would think that the recitation of these attributes, with or without a Tallis, is what matters. After all, it is the prayer that brings about forgiveness.

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

One of the answers to this question is that one of the causes of sin is forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is also the cause of impure forces within the world. In the realm of holiness, our Sages tell us that¹⁰ "There is no forgetfulness before Your holy throne."

Why is this so? What is the correlation between memory and holiness? The answer is that it is the nature of every Jew to believe that¹¹ "In the beginning, Hashem created the heaven and the earth." Furthermore, it is a part of the nature of every Jew to believe that G-d is creating the world every moment. This being the case, how is it possible for a Jew to ever sin? The firm belief that Hashem created one this very second should prevent him from sinning! At times there may be circumstances that cause one to sin. Nonetheless, he is aware that G-d also *created* those circumstances at this moment. The answer is that it is only possible for a Jew to sin if this "slips his mind" temporarily.

What does that have to do with Tallis and Tzitzis - Fringes¹²? Not only a Tallis, but as we see from Rashi, Tefillin are also a part of the equation. The answer is that both help us remember all of Hashem's commandments. Regarding Tzitzis, it says¹³, "and when you see it, you will remember all of the commandments of the Lord to perform them." Furthermore, it says¹⁴, "So that you remember and perform all of my commandments."

Regarding Tefillin, it says¹⁵, "It shall be to you as a sign upon your hand and as a remembrance between your eyes." The Tallis and Tefillin remove the cause of the sin, the forgetfulness. Then, the result is removed, and Hashem will forgive the Jewish Nation.

(Adapted from a talk given on Motzo'ai Shabbos Parshas Tiso 5739)

I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

To dedicate a week, a month, or a year of the Rashi of the Week, [click here](#).

You can find us on the web at www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org.

You can find our blog [here](#).

10. See Talmud Berachos 32, b and the Laws of Torah Study by the Alter Rebbe, Chapter 2, and Section 10.

11. Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis 1:1.

12. Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:37 – 41.

13. Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:39.

14. Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:40.

15. Parshas Bo, Shemos 13:9.

**IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

* * *

IN HONOR OF
The Soldiers of Tzivos Hashem **Chaim** and **Aiden Oded** שיקחי **Morris**

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem M.** and **Chaya Mushka** שיקחי **Morris**

* * *

IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther** שתחילי **Sharabani**

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON
Mr. **Geri** שילי **Bentov**

מוקדש לזכות
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לזכות
חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס
*

נדפס ע"י הוריהם
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לזכות
מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני
*

נדפס ע"י בנה
ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב