

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

The Festival of Sukkos

Tishrei 15, 5784 – September 23, 2023

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
The Festival of Sukkos
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Introduction¹

We again skip the regular weekly portion this week because, on Shabbos and Sunday, we will celebrate the first two days of Sukkos. The special Torah reading is from Vayikroh 22:26 through 23:44. It tells us that a newborn calf, lamb, or kid must remain with its mother for seven days and that one may not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day. The rest of the Torah reading tells us of the year's festivals, including Shabbos. The Rebbe explains a Rashi, which tells us why the Torah lists Shabbos among the holidays.

Rashi in His Own Words

ויקרא כ"ג, ג': ששית ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי שבת שבתון מקרא קדש כל מלאכה לא תעשו שבת הוא לה בכל מושבותיכם: רש"י ד"ה ששת ימים: מה ענין שבת אצל מועדות, ללמדך שכל המחלל את המועדות מעלין עליו כאלו חלל את השבתות. וכל המקיים את המועדות, מעלין עליו כאלו קיים את השבתות:

Vayikroh 23:3: (For) six days work may be performed, but on the seventh day, it is a complete rest day, a holy occasion; you may not perform any work. It is Shabbos to the Lord in all of your dwelling places.

Rashi Heading: (For) six days: Why does Shabbos appear here among the festivals? To teach you that whoever desecrates the festivals is considered as if he had violated Shabbos and that whoever fulfills the festivals is considered as if he has fulfilled Shabbos.

Synopsis

This week, on Sukkos's first day(s), we read from the Torah about each festival². Immediately afterward, the Torah pauses to tell us about Shabbos³; "(For) six days work may be performed, but on the seventh day, it is a complete rest day, a holy occasion; you may not perform any work. It is Shabbos to Hashem in all of your dwelling places." We know that Rashi is particular about each word he uses, including the words that serve as his comments' headings. Here, he is bothered by the fact that resting on Shabbos is placed together with the commandments regarding keeping the festivals. He clarifies this by asking, "Why does Shabbos appear here

¹. This introduction is not a part of the Sichah. It is the sole responsibility of the translator.

². See Parshas Emor, Vayikroh 23:4-37.

³. Ibid., Vayikroh 23:3.

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among the festivals⁴?" This being the case, we must understand why the heading of his comments is "for six days?" His problem is not regarding the mention of the six weekdays but rather the day of Shabbos! Quite often, Rashi will follow the words he cites from the verse with "etc." (וגו' in Hebrew) to allude to the end of the verse. However, here, he does not do so.

Additionally, we need to understand why Rashi begins with the negative, "whoever desecrates the festivals is considered as if he had desecrated Shabbos," rather than the positive, "whoever fulfills the festivals is considered as if he has fulfilled Shabbos."

The question as to why Shabbos appears among the festivals is not a vital question, according to Peshat. As other commentaries say, we can include Shabbos together with the festivals. Even though it is not among the "appointed holy days which we designate⁵," it still needs to be mentioned together with the holidays to highlight the differences between Shabbos and the festivals. The problem that bothers Rashi is why the Torah needs to tell us that "for six days, work may be done." The Torah must only mention Shabbos here, not the six weekdays. Rashi explains this by comparing the severity of performing labor on a festival to the seriousness of working on Shabbos.

When the Torah says that "(for) six days one may work," it does not use the word "six" as an adjective, the number of days that one may work. Instead, as Rashi explains in other places throughout the Torah, "six - שש" is a noun, a unit of time. Rashi explains that the Torah is designating two distinct divisions of time. One measure of time is a weekday, during which one may perform labor. The other is Shabbos and festivals during which one may not work. That explains why Rashi only cites the words from the verse "(for) six days." That is his point that a six-day workweek is one unit of time. That also answers why Rashi begins with the negative, "Whoever desecrates the festivals is considered as if he had desecrated Shabbos." He explains that Shabbos and festivals are a time unit during which work may not be performed.

Rashi's Explanation

The Torah reading for Sukkos's first day(s) tells us about each festival. Immediately after introducing the discussion of the festivals, the Torah pauses to tell us about Shabbos; "(For) six days work may be performed, but on the seventh day, it is a complete rest day, a שבת שבתון (a holy occasion) during which you may not perform any work. It is Shabbos to the Lord in all of your dwelling places." Here, Rashi seems to be bothered by the fact

⁴. See Rashi ibid.

⁵. See ibid., ibid. 23:2, ibid. 23:4 and ibid. 23:37.

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that after introducing the laws of the festivals, the Torah interrupts with the commandment of resting on Shabbos. He clarifies this by asking⁶, "Why does Shabbos appear here among the festivals?"

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

We know that Rashi is particular about all the words he uses, including those that serve as his comments' heading. Why is the header of his explanation "for six days?" His problem is not regarding the mention of the six weekdays but rather the day of Shabbos after introducing the festivals!

Quite often, Rashi will follow the words he cites from the verse with "etc." ('וגו' in Hebrew) to allude to the end of the verse. If he did so here, it would include the words "seventh day." However, here he does no such thing.

There are instances that Rashi cites the first few words of a verse without writing, "etc., He still explains the entire topic. For example, when describing the Ephod, one of the priestly garments, the Torah says,⁷ "and they shall make the Ephod of gold, blue, purple, and crimson wool, and twisted fine linen, the work of a master weaver." Rashi cites the words, "and they shall make the ephod," and explains as follows. "If I tried to explain the making of the Ephod and the Choshen according to the order of the verses, their explanation would be fragmentary, and the reader would make a mistake in combining them. Therefore, I am first writing how they were made in their entirety. This is so that the reader will be able to run through it quickly." We see that even though Rashi is explaining the entire process of the Ephod, he only cites the words, "and they shall make the Ephod," without even writing, "etc. - 'וגו'." However, that only applies in an instance where the first words of the verse contain at least a part of the entire content which Rashi is explaining. That is not the case with Rashi's comments here.

We also need to understand why Rashi begins with the negative, "whoever *desebrates* the festivals is considered as if he had desecrated Shabbos," rather than the positive, "whoever *fulfills* the festivals is considered as if he has fulfilled Shabbos."

The Explanation

It may be possible to explain the mention of Shabbos in the following manner. The Torah tells us that we may not be any more lenient regarding a holiday than we are regarding Shabbos. There is a fundamental difference between Shabbos and festivals. Hashem created the world in six days, and on the seventh day, He rested (as so to speak). Therefore, we must keep Shabbos. Since then, there has been an ongoing cycle of six weekdays followed by Shabbos. In other words, Hashem Himself sanctified the Shabbos. The festivals, on the other hand, are blessed

⁶. As a rule, Rashi does not ask questions; he provides answers which explain potential difficulties.

⁷. See Parshas Tetzaveh, Shemos 28:6 and Rashi's comments there.

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by the Jewish nation, meaning by the Sages. The Torah tells us the date when each festival is to be observed. The day the month begins is decided by the Sages, specifically the Supreme Jewish Court in Jerusalem, called the Sanhedrin⁸. Shabbos is mentioned to teach us that although it is sanctified by G-d, and the festivals are sanctified by man, we must be equally careful regarding both of them.

However, this answer does not suffice. When the Torah compares Shabbos to the holidays, it does not speak about desecrating either, but rather about observing both. This shows us that it is not implying any leniency regarding festivals.

Instead, the explanation is as follows. When the Torah says that "(for) six days labor may be performed," it does not use the word "six" as an adjective, the number of days during which work may not be performed. Instead, as Rashi explains in many other places throughout the Torah, "six - שש" is a noun, a unit of time. Rashi gives a similar explanation several verses further⁷. It is written "And you shall bring a fire offering to the Lord for a seven-day period (שבעת ימים)" Rashi cites the words "for a seven-day period" and explains that "(The Hebrew is שבעת ימים lit., a "seven" of days.) Wherever the שבעת appears, it denotes a noun, and (thus, the expression here שבעת ימים means) "a week of days"; *septaine* in Old French (which is the noun, as opposed to sept, meaning the number seven). Likewise, every (construct expression like) שלשת, תמשת, ששת, שמונת (literally means, respectively,) "an eight of," "a six of," "a five of," "a three of," (meaning a unit consisting of one of these numbers)⁹.

What Rashi is explaining is that the Torah is designating two distinct units of time. One unit of time is a weekday, during which labor may be performed; the other is Shabbos and festivals during which work may not be performed. That explains why Rashi only cites from the verse "(for) six days." That is his very point that a six-day workweek is one unit of time. That also answers why Rashi begins with the negative, "whoever desecrates the festivals is considered as if he had desecrated Shabbos." He is explaining that both Shabbos and festivals are a time unit during which work may not be performed, as opposed to a weekday on which labor may be performed.

A Deeper Explanation from Rashi

The Sages tell us in the Midrash that "six days you shall work" is a positive commandment of the Torah. This means that not only *may* work be done during the weekdays but that it is a *mitzvah* to perform work. This is following the teaching that "Hashem should bless you in all that you do," meaning that you must do something, i.e., work, to provide a vessel to hold G-d's blessing.

⁸. See Rambam Laws of the Sanctification of the New Moon. "The sanctification of the new month has been entrusted to the Sanhedrin. The new month does not begin until it has been sanctified by the court, and the day that they establish as Rosh Chodesh is Rosh Chodesh."

⁹. See Parshas Emor, Vayikroh 23:8 and Rashi's commentary.

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However, all of this is regarding the body, the physical body in which Hashem clothes the G-dly soul conceals the Divine manifestation within the world. That is why the laws of nature, with which G-d created the world, must be followed. However, on Shabbos and holidays, when the Divine soul is revealed, these laws do not apply.

Since the G-dly soul is higher than the body, its revelation on the holy days influences the body. Despite the limitations of the physical body, the soul can elevate the body and bring it out of its natural limits. The soul will remove the body from exile, and we will merit the actual redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

(Compiled from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Emor 5734)

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

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