

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Tetzaveh

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Compiled from the works of  
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi  
Parshas Tetzaveh**

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

שמות כ"ח – ל"א: ועשית את מעיל האפוד כליל תכלת: ל"ב: והיה פי ראשו בתוכו שפה יהיה לפיו סביב מעשה ארג כפי תחרא יהיה לו לא יקרע:

רש"י ד"ה לא יקרע: כדי שלא יקרע, והקורעו עובר בלאו, שזה ממנין לאוין שבתורה, וכן (פסוק כ"ח) ולא יזה החשן, וכן (שמות כ"ה, ט"ו) לא יסורו ממנו. הנאמר בבדי הארון:

**Shemos 28:31:** And you shall make the robe of the Ephod<sup>1</sup> entirely of blue wool. **32:** Its opening at the top shall be turned inward. Its opening shall have a hem around it, which is the work of a weaver. It shall have (an opening) like the opening of a coat of armor<sup>2</sup>; it shall not be torn.

**Rashi Heading - it shall not be torn:** (meaning that its opening shall be turned inward and it shall have a hem around it) so that it shall not be torn. The one who tears it transgresses a negative commandment, which is included in the Torah's negative commandments<sup>3</sup>. Likewise,<sup>4</sup> "and the Choshen<sup>5</sup> will not move<sup>6</sup>," and so too<sup>7</sup>, "they shall not be removed from it" mentioned regarding the poles of the Ark.

**Synopsis**

In our Torah portion, Tetzaveh, the Torah commands us to make the eight vestments worn by the High Priest, Kohen Gadol while serving in the sanctuary. The "robe of the Ephod" that he wore was to have an opening

1. The Torah describes the eight vestments worn by the high priest (beginning with Our Parshah Shemos 28:2). *Ibid.* 28:4 the Torah lists the vestments. One of these is the Ephod, which is a sort of apron. The robe of the Ephod which we are discussing here is the tunic upon which the Ephod was worn. The opening of which the verse speaks is for the Kohen Gadol's head.

2. Rashi explains that based on this we know that the openings of the suits of armor worn in their time were folded inward.

3. The Talmud says (Makos 23, b) that 613 commandments were given at Sinai; 365 of which are negative ("thou shall not") and 248 are positive ("thou shall"). However, the Talmud does not delineate which Torah commandments are included in the list. Therefore, there was quite a bit of discussion among the rabbis of the Middle Ages regarding which commandments to count. Rashi is teaching us that not tearing the robe of the high priest is one of the 365 negative commandments.

4. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:28.

5. The Choshen was the breastplate which was worn by the high priest. It is described in Our Parshah, Shemos 28:15.

6. This is similar to the context of our verse. First the Torah says that "they shall fasten the Choshen by its rings to the rings of the Ephod with a blue cord, so that it may be upon the band of the Ephod." The verse then concludes "and the Choshen will not move."

7. Parshas Terumah, Shemos 25:15.

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at the top, and the neckline was to be turned inward and have a hem around it. The Torah says it shall not be torn, and Rashi begins his explanation by stating that it was made with an inward opening and a hem not to be ripped.

Furthermore, he states that one would transgress a negative commandment by tearing it, for this is one of the Torah's negative commandments. Rashi's initial comments imply no prohibition against tearing the garment; the verse merely tells us why they made it this way. However, his concluding remarks clarify that ripping the tunic was a Torah prohibition!

The explanation is that Rashi is saying that both things are correct. We must say that it is a commandment. Otherwise, the Torah would have said, "so that it shall not be torn," rather than "it shall not be torn." If the Torah were writing a commandment, it would have said that one may not tear it. However, the Torah uses the passive voice, i.e., "It shall not be torn." From this, Rashi derives that the Torah prohibits us from tearing the robe and commands us to make it with a hem so it will not be ripped.

### **Rashi's Explanation**

In this week's Torah reading, Tetzaveh, the Torah commands us (among other things) to make eight special garments that the Kohen Gadol must wear while performing his service in the sanctuary. The Torah describes the tunic that he wore. It then tells us<sup>8</sup>, "Its opening at the top shall be turned inward. Its opening shall have a hem around it, which is the work of a weaver. It shall have (a neck hole) like the opening of a coat of armor so it shall not be torn." Rashi cites the words "it shall not be torn." This explains why "its neckline shall be turned inward, and it shall have a hem around it." He writes that this was done "so that it shall not be torn." However, Rashi continues and notes that "the one who tears it transgresses a negative commandment. Tearing it is included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah. Likewise, 'and the Choshen will not move,' and 'They shall not be removed from it' mentioned regarding the poles of the Ark."

Some commentaries explain Rashi in the following manner<sup>9</sup>. Rashi tells us the meaning of "it shall not be torn." First and foremost, the Torah teaches us that according to Peshat, the verse means that the tunic was made in a manner that would not allow it to be torn. The same is true of the Torah's words, "the Choshen will not move" and "they shall not be removed from it."

However, the Torah is teaching us more. Otherwise, the verse could have said that the robe was made this way *so that* "it shall not be torn." It would have told us the same regarding the two proof texts Rashi quotes. The

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8. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:32.

9. See the commentaries of Sifsei Chachomim (quoting the Gur Aryeh), Be'er Yitzchok, Nesinah Legeir and others.

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Torah would have said *so that* "the Choshen will not move" and *so that* "they shall not be removed from it." However, the Torah neither states nor implies that what it writes earlier is why "it shall not be torn." The same is true of the other verses cited by Rashi. This teaches us that the robe not being torn is *not* merely a result of how they made it. Instead, we are commanded not to tear the robe. It is one of the Torah's prohibitions.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

From the beginning of Rashi's comments, it is evident that the tunic shall not be torn *because* "its opening shall be turned inward and it shall have a hem around it." It is a simple case of cause and effect. However, Rashi says, "*and* the one who tears it transgresses a negative commandment." Note the word "and," which clarifies that this is a continuation of what he previously said. It would seem that the two explanations are mutually exclusive. Either the Kohen Gadol's robe is not torn because of how they made it, or ripping it is prohibited. Indeed, some biblical commentaries explain that "it shall not be torn" is the natural result of how it was made, and others define it as a negative commandment<sup>10 11</sup>.

From the Talmud, we see that the two explanations are not compatible with each other. The Talmud writes the following<sup>12</sup>. "Rechava said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah, 'One who tears the priestly garments is to be punished with lashes, for the Torah said, 'it shall not be torn.'" Rav Acha bar Yaakov questioned this. 'Perhaps the Torah commands us to make it so that it should not be torn?' He responded that the Torah does not say so that it should not be torn.'" From here, we see that not being torn is either a result of how they made it or a prohibition. It cannot be both.

Furthermore, Rashi writes, "This is included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah." What relevance does that have to Peshat?

Moreover, Rashi goes on to cite two examples. "Likewise, 'and the Choshen will not move,' and 'They shall not be removed from it' mentioned regarding Ark's staves." We understand that Rashi cites these two instances because they are both a reason and a negative commandment. However, we can ask the same question regarding both of these verses. Rashi says that both of these verses are prohibitions included in the number of the Torah's negative commandments. How does Rashi derive this, according to Peshat? Additionally, both of these verses appear before the verse we are discussing. If Rashi needs to explain here that "it shall not be torn" has two

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10. See the commentary of the Rasag, Rabbi Avrohom the son of the Rambam, the Tzeidoh Laderech and others.

11 The Tzeidoh Laderech writes the following. "With this that Rashi first writes that it is cause and effect, and then says that 'one who does so transgresses a negative commandment,' he means that it can either be explained in one way or the other." However, it is difficult to explain it in this manner. When Rashi offers two different explanations for something, he always says so explicitly.

12. Talmud Yoma 72, a.

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meanings, why didn't he give the same explanation there?

### The Explanation

According to Peshat, all three expressions, 1.) "it shall not be torn," 2.) "and the Choshen will not move," and 3.) "they shall not be removed from it," must be understood as commandments. Had they merely been effects, the Torah would have said, "*so that* it shall not be torn," "*so that* the Choshen will not move," and "*so that* they shall not be removed from it." However, there is a difference between our verse and the earlier two verses, which Rashi cites. The Torah writes our verse in the passive voice. It does not say, "You shall not tear it." Instead, the Torah writes that "it shall not be torn." We know that when a verb is written in this form, it adds something to the fundamental prohibition. Rashi taught us this regarding the Torah's prohibition against working on festivals.

Regarding the first and last days of the holiday of Pesach, the Torah says that<sup>13</sup> "... no work may be performed on them ..." It does not use the active voice. Namely, you may not perform any work. Rashi explains that this teaches us that labor may not be completed "even through others." In our verse, Rashi derives from the passive voice that aside from the prohibition of tearing the tunic, it must also be made so that it will not be torn.

We now understand that "it shall not be torn" is one of the Torah's 365 negative commandments. We know this because otherwise, the Torah would have said: "*so that* it not be torn." One would think that if Hashem issued a command to the Jewish people, He would do so in an obvious way. Why would he do so in a manner that could lead to a misunderstanding?

This explains why Rashi said, "This is included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah." We are already aware of the prohibition on tearing a Kohen's vestments. The only purpose of writing this prohibition here is to include it as one of the Torah's 365 prohibitions.

From where would we know of this prohibition? From the Torah's commandment to Moshe, we would know that<sup>14</sup> "you shall make holy garments for your brother Aharon, honor, and beauty." A torn garment has neither honor nor beauty. Rashi says this clearly in his commentary on the Talmud. The Talmud says it is<sup>15</sup> invalid if a Kohen performed his service with torn garments. Rashi explains that this is the case even if the garments are new. He argues that torn garments are not fit for performing the Temple service because they lack the requirement of honor and beauty.

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13. Parshas Bo, Shemos 12:16.

14. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:2.

15. See Zevachim 18, at the beginning of side b.

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### A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Rashi cites the proof, "and the Choshen will not move," which is in our Torah portion, before mentioning the evidence "they shall not be removed from it" regarding the poles of the Ark, which appeared earlier in the Torah. He also writes "likewise" before each proof. The reason is that never being allowed to remove the Ark's poles is far more novel than the other two teachings.

The reason for the prohibition against tearing the priestly vestments is apparent; no one would think that we would be allowed to destroy holy objects. Likewise, the prohibition against moving the breastplate from the Ephod is understood. Granted, it does not involve any destruction. However, the verse following Rashi's proof text explains why one may not remove it<sup>16</sup>. "Thus shall Aharon carry the names of the sons of Yisroel in the Choshen of judgment over his heart when he enters the Holy. It is a remembrance before the Lord at all times." These words teach us that he must always wear the Choshen. However, what possible reason could there be for never removing the poles from the rings that attach them to the Holy Ark? The purpose of the staves was to carry the Ark. What need could there be for them to remain attached to the Ark when it was at rest in the Holy of Holies?

The Sefer Hachinuch explains the poles remaining attached to the Ark at all times<sup>17</sup>. Hashem commanded us to leave the staves in the Ark at all times, even when it is at rest in the Holy of Holies, to ensure that we are always ready to carry the Holy Ark out. The Sefer Hachinuch explains<sup>18</sup> that the two tablets rested in the Ark. Accordingly, the Ark was Torah's dwelling place. The same is true of a Torah scholar, and the Torah *dwells* within him. However much one has invested in the Torah, he should never think he is exempt from going out into the world to help a fellow Jew. There is no difference whether he needs material or spiritual help, and he must be ready at a moment's notice to go out and answer the call.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh, 5732)*

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

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16. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:29.

17. See Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 96.

18. *Ibid.*

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