

בס"ה

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Ki Siso

18 Adar, 5780 – March 14, 2020

Compiled from the works of
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THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Ki Siso

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Rashi in His Own Words

שְׁמוֹת ל"ג, כ"ג: וְנִסְרַתִּי אֶת פְּנֵי וְרָאֵתִי אֶת אַחֲרֵי וְפָנֵי לֹא יִרְאֶה:

רש"י ד"ה וְרָאֵת אֶת אַחֲרֵי: הַרְאָה קָשָׁר שֶׁל תְּפִילָּין:

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 this week's Torah portion, Ki Siso, we find that Moshe asks Hashem to¹ "Please show me Your glory." To this, Hashem responds,² "You will not be able to see My face." Several verses later, G-d explains³ 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."

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. When 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. Actually, in the very same verse, it discusses Hashem's face, and Rashi does not comment on that. There are more natural ways of explaining the metaphorical meaning of Hashem's "back" (as so to speak) than by saying that it is a reference to the "knot of G-d's Tefillin. If the question that bothers Rashi is how we can attribute a physical quality to Hashem, nothing we gain nothing by saying that Hashem's "back" refers to His "Tefillin!"

The explanation is, based on the above questions, 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. All understand it. 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 says⁴ 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 ..." How does this answer Moshe's request that Hashem shows him his glory? Rashi answers this question by saying⁵ 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

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:18.

2. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:20.

3. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:23.

4. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:19.

5. *Ibid.*

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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, and 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 says,⁶ "You will not be able to see My face ...," which Rashi explains to mean "even when I let all of My goodness passes 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. Rather, 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 that is made of expensive, precious material for "glory and beauty," as were the vestments are worn by the Kohanim – priests. 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 only wears a Tallis, and at times he wears Tefillin as well. The head Tefillin forms a crown, which certainly demonstrate 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

In this week's Torah portion, Ki Siso, we find two things happening at the same time. G-d teaches Moshe how to pray on behalf of the Jewish people, and Moshe 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 what was meant was that He would show Moshe the knot of His Tefillin.

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 it 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

6. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:20.

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has already come across many physical characteristics attributed to G-d throughout the Torah. The beginning student understands that these are all allegorical. 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 simpler 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, symbolizes more superficial aspects of one's personality. However, we have no idea what the knot of Tefillin symbolizes.

Furthermore, Rashi includes in the heading of his comments, the words "you will see." In his explanation, he consists of the words "I will show you." Why is this so? We know that Rashi is very precise both in the words he uses for his headings and in 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 common 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 says⁷ that "I will let all My goodness pass before you; I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and I will favor those whom I wish to favor ..." What possible connection does this have to Moshe's request that Hashem show him his glory? Rashi answers this question by saying⁸ 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 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 (in a Tallis) and proclaiming the Thirteen Attributes (of Mercy), teach the Jews to do likewise." Following this, Hashem says⁹ that "You will not be able to see My face ..." which Rashi explains to mean "even when I let all of My goodness passes 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 leads us to 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

7. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:19.

8. See Rashi's comments to Our Parshah, Shemos 33:19.

9. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:20.

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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 greater question because all that Moshe will see is Hashem's Tallis! A Tallis is not usually made from expensive, precious materials. Generally, it is a simple woolen garment!

It is for this reason that Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe the knot of His Tefillin. The beginning student knows that at times the one who leads the congregation in prayer only wears a Tallis, such as on Shabbos and festivals. During the week, he wears Tefillin in addition to the Tallis. The Tefillin on his head forms 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. Rather, the knot on the back of the head Tefillin forms the crown. The beginning student is also aware that most of the time, the head Tefillin are not visible from behind. They are usually covered by the Tallis. 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 quite apparent that because these two subjects are being discussed at the same time, 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 important 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.

One of the answers to this question is that one of the causes of sin is forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is also the cause of negative, 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 the world this very second should prevent him from sinning! Granted, at times, there may be circumstances that cause him to sin. Nonetheless, he is aware that those circumstances were also created by G-d this moment. The answer is that it is only possible for a Jew to sin if this "slips his mind" temporarily.

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

11. Parshah Bereishis, Bereishis 1:1.

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What does that have to do with a 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 says,¹³ "and when you see it, you will remember all of the commandments of the Lord to perform them." Furthermore, it says,¹⁴ "In order that you remember and perform all of my commandments."

Regarding Tefillin, it says,¹⁵ "It shall be to you as a sign upon your hand and as a remembrance between your eyes." Once the Tallis and the Tefillin remove the cause of the sin, the forgetfulness, the result is also removed, and the Jewish Nation is forgiven.

(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.

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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.

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