

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Ki Siso

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

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

שמות ל"ג, כ"ג: וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת כַּפֵּי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת אַחֲרָי וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרָאוּ:

רש"י ד"ה ורואית את אחוריי: 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 this week's Torah portion, Ki Siso, Moshe asks Hashem to<sup>1</sup> "Please show me Your glory." Hashem responds,<sup>2</sup> "You will not be able to see My face." Several verses later, G-d explains<sup>3</sup>, "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 must he explain what Hashem means by showing Moshe His back? The beginning student has already encountered several anthropomorphisms. However, when the Torah mentions G-d's "back," the beginning student knows 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. There are more natural ways of explaining the metaphorical meaning of Hashem's "back" (so to speak). Why explain 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, we gain nothing by saying that Hashem's "back" refers to His "Tefillin!"

Based on the above questions, we can explain that Rashi is not bothered by the Torah mentioning G-d's face or His back; that is a typical expression in the Torah, and all understand it. Rather, Rashi is bothered by a different question. Moshe requested to see G-d's "glory." Before Hashem's answer, "You shall see My back, but not My face," G-d says<sup>4</sup>, "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

1. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:18.

2. Ibid, Shemos 33:20.

3. Ibid, Shemos 33:23.

4. Ibid, Shemos 33:19.

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glory? Rashi answers this by saying<sup>5</sup>, "The time has come for you to see some of My glory, and 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 Jews to do likewise." Following this, Hashem says,<sup>6</sup> "You will not be able to see My face ...." Rashi explains this 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. 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 made of expensive, precious material for "glory and beauty," as were the vestments 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; at times, he also wears Tefillin. The head Tefillin forms a crown, which indeed demonstrates glory. The knot on the back of the head, Tefillin, forms the crown. Hence, the beginner understands from Rashi that Moshe will see Hashem's glory.

### Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Ki Siso, we find two things happening simultaneously. G-d teaches Moshe how to pray on behalf of the Jewish people, and Moshe asks Hashem to "Please show me Your glory." Hashem responds, "You will not be able to see My face." Several verses later, G-d concludes, "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 Hashem meant He would show Moshe the knot of His Tefillin.

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5. Ibid.

6. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:20.

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### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the Torah. Why must he explain what Hashem means by 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 has already encountered many physical characteristics attributed to G-d throughout the Torah. The beginning student understands that these are all allegorical. In the very same verse 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." On the one hand, the face symbolizes one's essence, and one's back symbolizes more superficial aspects of one's personality. However, we have no idea what the knot of Tefillin symbolizes.

Furthermore, in the heading of his comments, Rashi includes the words "you will see." His explanation consists of the phrase, "I will show you." Why is this so? We know that Rashi is very precise in 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 back. That is a typical sort of expression in the Torah and is understood by all. Rather, Rashi is bothered by a different question. First, Moshe requests that Hashem show him His glory." Hashem responds, "You shall see My back, but not My face." Before this response, Hashem says<sup>7</sup>, "I will let all My goodness pass before you. I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will favor those whom I wish to favor...." How does this connect with Moshe's request that Hashem show him his glory?

Rashi answers this question by saying<sup>8</sup>, "The time has come that you will see some of My glory that I will permit you to see. I want 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 the same."

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7. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:19.

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

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Following this, Hashem says<sup>9</sup>, "You will not be able to see My face ...," which Rashi explains means "even when I let all of My goodness pass before you ...."

It follows 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 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 Moshe will see is Hashem's Tallis! A Tallis is not usually made from expensive, precious materials. Generally, it is a simple woolen garment!

For this reason, 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, demonstrating 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 also knows that the head Tefillin is usually invisible from behind, and the Tallis generally 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 these two subjects are being discussed simultaneously, they must be related. 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 essential to 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 reciting 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, which is also the cause of negative, impure forces within the world. In the realm of holiness, our Sages tell us<sup>10</sup>, "There is no forgetfulness before Your holy throne."

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9. Our Parshah, Shemos 33:20.

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

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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 that<sup>11</sup> "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 second should prevent him from sinning! There may indeed be circumstances that cause him to sin at times. Nonetheless, he is aware that G-d also created those circumstances. 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 a Tallis and Tzitzis - Fringes<sup>12</sup>? 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,<sup>13</sup> "and when you see it, you will remember all of the commandments of the Lord to perform them." Furthermore, it says,<sup>14</sup> "So that you remember and perform all of my commandments."

Regarding Tefillin, it says,<sup>15</sup> "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. Therefore, the result was removed, and Hashem forgave the Jewish Nation.

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

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

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11. Parshah 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.

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