

בס"ז

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

The First Day of Pesach Shir Hashirim

15 Nissan, 5782 – April 16, 2022

Compiled from the works of
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Shir Hashirim
Likkutei Sichos Volume 1, Page 59**

Rashi in His Own Words

שיר השירים א', ב': יִשְׁקֵנִי מִנְשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ כִּי טוֹבִים דְּלִידָה מִיַּיִן:

רש"י ד"ה כי טובים: ונאמר דוגמא שלו על שם שנתן להם תורתו ודבר עמהם פנים אל פנים ואותם דודים עודם ערבים עליהם מכל שעשוע ומובטחים מאתו להופיע עוד עליהם לבאר להם סוד טעמיה ומסתר צפונותיה ומחלים פניו לקיים דברו וזהו ישקני מנשיקות פיהו:

Shir Hashirim 1:2: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for your love is better than wine.

Rashi Heading: for... is better: This figure of speech was used because He gave them His Torah and spoke to them face to face, and that love is still more pleasant to them than any pleasure. They are assured by Him that He will appear to them to explain to them the secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries, and they entreat Him to fulfill His word, and this is the meaning of "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth."

Introduction

This week and the next, we will not begin by examining an apparent difficulty in one of Rashi's comments to the weekly Parshah. The reason is that we will not read the regular weekly Torah Portion. Both this Shabbos and next, we will celebrate the holiday of Pesach – Passover. Hence, we will read a special portion from the Torah related to the Parshah. After the festival, we will continue the regular order of reading the Torah.

However, there is never a difficulty in finding comments of Rashi on every book of the Tanach. Rashi's commentary became the gold standard for biblical commentaries. He interpreted and explained nearly all aspects of the Torah. His commentary covers almost the entire Bible - Tanach, meaning the Chumash, the Books of the Prophets, and the Writings - Kesuvim. Additionally, he explained nearly the whole Talmud. This would be no small accomplishment for an academic with lots of time. However, for one who served as the rabbi of a community, was busy helping Jews from the devastation wrought by the Crusades to Jewish communities in Europe, taught daily classes in a Yeshivah which he founded, worked as a vintner, and only lived to the age of 65, this was truly incredible.

However, this only reflects the quantity of his work; the quality is indescribable. Before Rashi's commentary, the Talmud was available to scholars alone. It is written in a terse manner, seemingly digressing from topic to topic without punctuation. It is difficult for a layperson to realize whether something the Talmud says is a question or an answer. Rashi changed all of that. He supplied the "key," which opened the Talmud and

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made it available to everyone. He explains clearly and concisely, phrase by phrase, exactly what the Talmud is saying. In much the same way that he made the Chumash available to beginners, he did the same for the Talmud.

Whoever follows our "Rashi of the Week" knows how succinctly Rashi explains Peshat, the simple meaning of the entire Torah. The Rebbe explains unequivocally what Rashi is saying. Since Rashi, for the most part, gives answers rather than questions, at times, it isn't easy to understand what is bothering Rashi. The Rebbe always clarifies this. Rashi's comments include everything that the youngest student with the least background needs to understand each verse's simple meaning.

Additionally, he hid within his commentary the greatest mysteries of the Torah and practical lessons for each of us in our service of Hashem. The Alter Rebbe, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, said that "Rashi's commentary on Chumash is the 'wine of Torah.' It opens the heart and uncovers one's essential love and essential fear (of G-d). Rashi's commentary on Talmud opens the mind and uncovers the essential intellect¹." Besides explaining the simple meaning of Rashi, the Rebbe reveals instances where we see the mystical secrets of Torah revealed in Rashi, as well as the cases in which we find practical lessons in the service of Hashem hidden in Rashi.

Rashi himself points out in his commentary to the Chumash several times, and the Rebbe's commentary on Rashi serves as a constant reminder, that Rashi is there (primarily) to explain Peshat. However, Peshat is a relative term. In Rashi's explanation of the Chumash, he explains the Torah's simple meaning for a total beginner. However, in the books of the Prophets, the level of Peshat he presents is not quite as simple. We see this clearly in Rashi's commentary, and the Rebbe explains a very logical reason for this. In a letter from 5732 - 1972, the Rebbe notes that "Rashi's explanations of the Prophets and Scriptures are also according to Peshat. They are a continuation of his commentary on the Torah. However, in the books of the Prophets and Writings, he is not as particular regarding what constitutes Peshat. This is likely because the student studying the latter books of the Bible is older." He clarifies this further in a talk on 7 Tammuz, 5743 - 1983. He states that "Rashi's style in explaining the latter books of the Bible is not as precise as his style explaining the Chumash. Although both explain the simple meaning of the verse, the definition of what constitutes the simple meaning of the latter books is not as limited as the simple meaning of the Chumash. It has a broader connotation. This is because one's Torah studies begin with the Chumash, the Five Books of Moshe, in keeping with the curriculum for Torah study, which the Sages laid out for us². Once he has completed the Chumash, before he begins studying the Prophets, he has already completed the entire Chumash with Rashi's commentary, including all of the teachings of the Sages that Rashi quoted. Therefore, the student is ready for a broader definition of Peshat.

1. See Hayom Yom, entry for Shevat 29.

2. See Pirkei Avos, 5, 22. "He (Ben Hai Hai) would say, 'Five years is the age for the study of Scripture (which begins with Chumash). Ten, for the study of Mishnah ...'"

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Shir Hashirim - The Song of Songs

Of all of the books in the Bible, the Song of Songs seems to be the most enigmatic. There does not seem to be anything Biblical or holy about it without any commentary or explanation. Yet it is called the "Song of Songs," implying that it is the greatest song. Rashi comments on its first verse that "it is the greatest of all songs uttered to the Holy One, blessed be He, by His nation." Rabbi Akiva said that³ "the entire universe is unworthy of the day Hashem gave the Song of Songs to the Jewish Nation. All of the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the holy of holies." How do we reconcile the two? On the one hand, the book does not seem particularly holy. On the other hand, the Sages, who truly understood what sanctity means, deemed it more sacred than all of the other books of the Writings?

The explanation is that the entire work is an analogy, and it describes the relationship between Hashem, our husband, and the Jewish people, His wife. Although we left Him and consorted with (seemingly) different men - gods (with a lowercase "g"), we will return to Him, and He will take us back.

There is a widespread custom to read Shir Hashirim on Pesach. Nevertheless, this is not the custom in Chabad. However, it is the custom in many fine Jewish communities to do so. Additionally, the Code of Jewish Law cites this custom. There is also a connection between the text of the Song of Songs and Pesach. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to use this time to explore one of several comments the Rebbe made about a Rashi in Shir Hashirim

We need to understand just how Shir Hashirim connects Pesach. The answer is in the Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law. The Ramoh⁴ states⁵ that it is customary to read Shir Hashirim on the Shabbos of the intermediate days of the festival. If the festival begins on Shabbos, as is the case this year, it is read on the last day of Pesach." In the Shulchan Aruch Horav⁶, it says the same thing⁷. "We are accustomed to read Shir Hashirim on the Shabbos of the intermediate days of Pesach because it contains the concept of the Exodus from Egypt. The connection to the Exodus is because it is written,⁸ "With My mighty steeds who battled Pharaoh's riders I revealed that you are My beloved."

3. Mishnah Yadayim 3, 5.

4. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1520 - 1572), who was born and lived in Krakow, Poland. Since the Code of Jewish Law was written by Rabbi Yoseph Karo who followed the Sephardic customs, Rabbi Isserles added notes wherever the Ashkenazi custom is different.

5. Shulchan Aruch, Section Orach Chaim. Chapter 490, Paragraph 9.

6. This is the Code of Jewish Law composed by the Alter Rebbe, the first Rebbe of Chabad.

7. Chapter 490, Paragraph 17.

8. Shir Hashirim 1:9.

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Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Shir Hashirim – the Song of Songs tells us of a request made by the Jewish people to the Holy One blessed be He, their "husband." Their request is⁹, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for your love is better than wine." Rashi explains this with the following comments. "Scripture uses this figure of speech because He gave them His Torah and spoke to them face to face. That love is still more pleasant to them than any pleasure. He assures them that He will appear to them to explain to them the secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries. They entreat Him to fulfill His word, and this is the meaning of 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.'"

Rashi's words seem to require explanation. The Sages taught us that we must use great care in disseminating "the secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries." The Mishnah teaches that¹⁰ "One may not expound ... the subject of the Chariot before one person alone unless he is a sage and comprehends of his knowledge." The subject of the Chariot refers to the Prophet Yechezkel's vision of a Heavenly chariot, and this was a prophetic revelation of Divine mysteries¹¹, meaning Kabbalah. This Mishnah teaches that the Sages placed severe restrictions on teaching "the secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries." How can Rashi say that he assures the Jews "that He will appear to them to explain the secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries." This is precisely what the Mishnah says not to expound.

The Explanation

The Rebbe explains¹² that more and more leniency has been granted throughout the generations regarding the study of the mysteries of the Torah. During the era of the Talmud, only select individuals were permitted to study Kabbalah, which required a great deal of spiritual preparation. Later on, the Ari Zal¹³ taught that not only is it permissible to spread the study of the mysteries of the Torah, but it is a Mitzvah. Later on, the Baal Shem Tov¹⁴ was told that the Ultimate Redemption would not come until his fountains, which include the mystical aspects of Torah, have been spread forth to the outside, i.e., to those that appear to be outside, far from such concepts. By the time of the Alter Rebbe, all restrictions were lifted. The commandment to spread mystical teachings became stronger with each ensuing generation. "Your love is better than wine" means that "He will appear to them to explain the secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries." Rashi explains that Hashem

9. Shir Hashirim 1:2.

10. Mishnah Chagigah Chapter 1, Mishnah 2.

11. See Yechezkel, beginning with 1:1.

12. Likkutei Sichos, Volume 1, Page 59.

13. Rabbi Yitzchok Luria (1534 – 1572), who lived in the Holy city of Tzefas. He was the most famous Kabbalist of his day.

14. Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov was the eighteenth century Eastern-European rabbi who founded the Chassidic movement.

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will not reveal the true innermost secrets of the Torah until He appears to us, meaning until the coming of Moshiach. Nevertheless, we must prepare ourselves now.

The Ari Zal said that one must taste the Shabbos food on Friday afternoon¹⁵. He says that this is based on the statement,¹⁶ "Those who taste it will merit life." This is Halachah¹⁷. The week has seven days. So too is the world has seven millennia. Each millennium represents a day of the week. Now that we are more than halfway through the sixth millennium, it is Friday afternoon. We must taste the Shabbos food, i.e., the Torah of Moshiach. In Rashi's words, this refers to the "secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries." Now we all must study Chassidic philosophy to at least "taste" that which is to come.

The Rebbe explains¹⁸ that aside from our redemption, there is also the redemption of Hashem (so to speak). This is because He placed Himself into exile with us. However, additionally, there will also be a redemption for the Torah. Now, throughout our exile, the *entire* Torah cannot be revealed. When Moshiach comes, it will first be that "He will appear to them to explain to them the secret of the Torah's reasons and its hidden mysteries," the Torah which Moshiach will teach us.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Toldos, 5718)

I hope 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](#).

15. Sha'ar Hakavanos 62, a.

16. This is taken from the Mussaf service for Shabbos.

17. Mogen Avrohom to Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Chapter 250.

18. Likkutei Sichos Volume 25, Page 59.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE**

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

**Dr. Mindel Rivka (Muriel) bas Reb Menachem Mendel Shlomo ע"ה
Stitt**

Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Lech Lecha, 10 Mar-Cheshvan, 5782
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY שיחיו

* * *

IN HONOR OF

The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיחיו

Morris

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride
to their family and a Torah light to their community

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

**Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיחיו
Morris**

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Esther שתחי Sharabani

May she go from strength to strength in
health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON

Mr. Gershon (Geri) שי' Bentov

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

מרת מינדל רבקה בת ר' מנחם מענדל שלמה ע"ה

סתית

נפטרה ש"ק פרשת לך לך, יו"ד מר-חשון תשפ"ב

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדבת בני משפחתה שיחיו

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חיילי "צבאות השם"

חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו

מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

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