

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Teitzei

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## An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Teitzei

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### Rashi in His Own Words

דברים כ"ה, י"ט: והיה בהגים ה' אלקיך | לך מפל איביך מפביב בארץ אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך נחלה לרשתה תמסה את זכר עמלק מתסת  
השמים לא תשכח:

רש"י ד"ה תמחה את זכר עמלק: מאיש ועד אשה מעולל ועד יונק משור ועד שה. שלא יהא שם עמלק נזכר אפילו על הבהמה, לומר  
בהמה זו משל עמלק היתה:

**Devorim 25:19:** It will be, when Hashem your G-d grants you respite from all your enemies around (you) in the land which the Hashem, your G-d, gives to you as an inheritance to possess, you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens. You shall not forget!

**Rashi Heading - you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek:** "Both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep," so that the name of Amalek should never again be mentioned, even regarding an animal, to say, "This animal was from Amalek."

### Synopsis

At the end of this week's Torah portion, Teitzei, the Torah teaches us the Mitzvah of wiping out the memory of the nation of Amalek. Rashi cites the words "you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek" and explains it as follows: "Both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep. The name of Amalek should never again be mentioned, even regarding an animal. (One should not) say, 'This animal was from Amalek.'"

It may seem that Rashi is explaining the scope of the Mitzvah. It is not merely to wipe out the humans but the animals. However, this isn't easy to understand. Why does Rashi need to explain this at all? Neither the words nor the concept is problematic. "Wiping out the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens" appears clear. This is especially true since the Torah taught us the same concept during our first encounter with Amalek. "Inscribe this as a memorial in the book and recite it into Yehoshua's ears that I will surely wipe out the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens." Yet there, in the earlier verse, Rashi finds no need to explain the meaning of wiping out Amalek.

The explanation is that Rashi is answering a pronounced question. How can the Torah command us to wipe out the memory of Amalek? Can we control our thoughts? The Torah could command us not to think about Amalek, and we can be commanded not to dwell upon them. How can we manage what we remember and what we don't? Therefore, Rashi explains that the commandment is to destroy everything that perpetuates Amalek's memory. This includes their animals. Hence, they will be forgotten as a matter of course.

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### Rashi's Explanation

At the end of this week's Torah portion, Teitzei, the Torah commands us<sup>1</sup> to "wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens. You shall not forget!" This is the commandment to obliterate the memory of the nation of Amalek. Rashi cites the words of the Torah, "You shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek," and explains that this applies to<sup>2</sup> "'Both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep,' so that the name of Amalek should never again be mentioned<sup>3</sup>, even regarding an animal, to say, 'This animal was from Amalek.'"

It seems that Rashi is teaching us the Mitzvah's scope of wiping out Amalek's memory. It does not merely apply to killing humans. Instead, we are commanded to destroy all their animals as well. This must be a part of the Mitzvah, according to Peshat; otherwise, the name of Amalek would still be remembered – This cow belonged to Amalek. Furthermore, killing the people of Amalek does not remove their memory; instead, it removes them.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Why does Rashi need to explain this? He cannot be explaining the meaning of the words "erase the memory of Amalek - תמחה את זכר עמלק." The beginning student already knows the translation of those words. Perhaps Rashi is explaining the concept of erasing Amalek's memory and teaching us what it entails. This is also untenable because we have already encountered the exact phrase regarding Amalek. Soon after the Jews left Egypt, Amalek attacked us. After defeating them, Hashem said,<sup>4</sup> "... Inscribe this as a memorial in the book, and recite it into Yehoshua's ears that I will surely wipe out the memory of Amalek - מחה אמחה את זכר עמלק (nearly the same words which are used here) from beneath the heavens." There, Rashi found no need to explain what the Torah meant to convey. Why does he suddenly need to explain this concept here?

We understand that Rashi is expanding the scope of eradicating Amalek's memory and teaching us that the commandment includes Amalek's animals. This being the case, why does he quote the part of the verse from I Shmuel, which says, "Both man and woman, infant and suckling ...?"

Additionally, we need to understand why Rashi does not cite the end of the verse, which he quotes from I Shmuel, "... camel and donkey." These are listed separately there, so they are not included in the words "ox and sheep."

The words Rashi cites from I Shmuel appear in the Tanach - Bible. Before quoting a verse from the Bible, Rashi generally writes something to the effect of "as it is written." Why does he not do so here? Rashi explains, "so that the name of Amalek should never again be mentioned, even regarding an animal." Rashi then goes further and writes, "to say, 'This animal was from Amalek.'" These other words seem to be redundant.

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1. Our Parshah, Devorim 25:19.

2. I Shmuel 15:6

3. The Hebrew word נִזְכָּר, meaning mentioned, comes from the Hebrew root נָזַר, remember. Mentioning something causes it to be remembered.

4. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 17:14.

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Furthermore, we have often discussed that Rashi is particular regarding the words from the verse, which he cites as the heading of his comments. In the header of these specific comments, Rashi quotes the words, "You shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek." However, he seemingly only explains the phrase "the remembrance of Amalek" and not "you shall wipe out."

### The Explanation

According to Peshat, one glaring question needs to be asked. The Torah commands us to *wipe out and erase* the remembrance of Amalek. This memory must be wiped out from where it exists, within our minds and hearts. It would be understood if the Torah commanded us not to think about Amalek or to remove his memory from our minds. However, how can the Torah command us to eradicate the memory of Amalek? How can the Torah command one to control his thoughts<sup>5</sup>? Can one prevent the idea of Amalek from entering his mind? Our Sages said<sup>6</sup> that there are three sins from which one is never saved, and one of them is sinful thoughts. The fact is that thinking about this Mitzvah causes one to remember Amalek!

The earlier verse, which discusses erasing Amalek's memory, does not present this problem. It says, "*I will surely wipe out* the memory of Amalek." In other words, the *Almighty*, Hashem the *Omnipotent*, assures us that *He* will wipe out the memory of Amalek from our hearts and minds. However, it is not understood here. How is it possible for a limited human being to remove something from his mind? We are commanded not only to erase his memory from our minds but the minds of every human being!

Therefore, Rashi explains that there is no Mitzvah to remove Amalek's memory from our minds. That would be impossible, and Hashem does not demand the impossible. Instead, the commandment is to destroy things that remind us of Amalek's name. As Rashi says clearly, everything related to Amalek is included; "ox and sheep, so that the name of Amalek should never again be mentioned, even regarding an animal, to say, "This animal was from Amalek." In this manner, *as a matter of course*, Amalek's memory will be erased from the world.

This also explains why Rashi cites the words "you shall wipe out (the remembrance of Amalek)" in the header of his comments. Rashi explains that their remembrance will be wiped out by destroying everything associated with the name Amalek.

This is also seen in Rashi's language. He specifies that the commandment is to destroy "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep." We may have thought that this commandment resulted from what Amalek did to us. We are commanded to remember<sup>7</sup> "how he happened upon you on the way and cut off all the stragglers at

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5. What we can and must refrain from, is entertaining untoward thoughts. However, one cannot prevent a thought from entering his mind.

6. Talmud Bava Basra 164, at the end of Side b.

7. Our Parshah, Devorim 25:18.

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your rear when you were faint and weary, and he did not fear G-d." In other words, if the idea is to take revenge against Amalek for what they did to us, only the men would be involved! The women, babies, oxen, and sheep did not attack us! However, we are commanded to remove everything from the world, which can perpetuate Amalek's memory. Only in that manner can they be forgotten.

Rashi does not cite this verse from I Shmuel as a prooftext; he merely tells us the extent to which the Mitzvah extends: men, women, children, and animals. Therefore, Rashi does not precede the verse by saying "as it is written" (or other such words). That is also why he does not quote the end of the verse. There is no reason to do so; what he has told us makes his point.

However, there is another difficulty remaining. If we are to destroy everything called by Amalek's name, why does the commandment not include *all* of Amalek's property? Why did the Torah not command us to destroy their homes to prevent anyone from saying, "This house was from Amalek?"

The explanation is that because of the prohibition against animal cruelty, one could not make a significant, lasting change in an animal. It will consistently be recognized as an animal that belonged to Amalek. However, there is no such restriction regarding a house or another object. Therefore, homes taken from them can be changed so that they will not resemble the place that belonged to Amalek. Since they can be changed significantly and permanently, it is considered as if they had been destroyed. That is why Rashi adds, "This animal was from Amalek." He is telling us that this *only* applies to an animal, and it does not apply to other properties.

This also answers another question that the great codifiers of Jewish law asked. In the Book of Esther, it is written<sup>8</sup> that King Achashverosh said, "... behold I have also given the house of Haman to Esther ..." How was Esther allowed to accept Haman's house? Haman, as known, was a direct descendant of Amalek. We are commanded to wipe out his memory; how could she keep Haman's house?

The various commentaries and Halachic authorities offer different answers to this question. However, according to Rashi and the simple explanation of the Torah, this poses no problem. It is permitted to keep a house that Amalek owned, which does not perpetuate their memory. On the contrary, in this manner, Haman's home was transformed into a Jewish home.

### **A Deeper Lesson from Rashi**

As explained in the mystical works of the Torah and works of Chassidic philosophy, the spiritual nature of Amalek is to make one cold and indifferent. Not caring and not being excited about Torah and Mitzvos are the lowest levels one can reach. If one is not enthusiastic about learning the Torah and fulfilling Mitzvos, he is not likely to persevere in their fulfillment. Therefore, we must remove all traces of the spiritual Amalek. This applies to humans, i.e., removing the spiritual Amalek from our Animal Soul, meaning the animal within us. It also

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8. Esther 8:7.

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includes all spiritual levels of souls: men, women, and children. Not only does it apply to a powerful Animal Soul, which is comparable to an ox. We must even remove Amalek's coldness and indifference from a meek Animal Soul compared to a sheep. Only then can we attain the proper level of excitement in our divine service.

*(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Parshas Teitzei 5725)*

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

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

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

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**Mrs. Esther** שתחי **Sharabani**

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

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