

בס"ז

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayelech

6 Tishrei, 5780 – October 5, 2019

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

Likkutei Sichos Volume 34, Pages 194 – 199

Rashi in His Own Words

דברים ל"א, י"ז: וְחָרָה אַפִּי בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְעִזְבוּתִים וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פְנֵי מַהֵם וְהָיָה לְאֹכֵל וּמְצָאָהוּ רַעוּת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא הֲלֹא עַל כִּי אִין אֱלֹקֵי בְּקִרְבִּי מְצָאוּנִי הֲרַעוּת הָאֵלֶּה:
רש"י ד"ה והסתרת פני: כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם:

Devorim 31:17: And My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. They will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them. They will say on that day "Is it not because our G-d is no longer among us, that these evils have befallen us?"

Rashi Heading - and hide My face: As though I do not see their distress.

Synopsis

In this week's Torah portion, Vayelech, we are told that¹ "My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. They will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them. They will say on that day 'Is it not because our G-d is no longer among us, that these evils have befallen us?'" Rashi explains that when Hashem says that He will hide his face, it means that He will act "as though I do not see their distress."

The Mizrachi, one of Rashi's supercommentaries, explains that what Rashi means is that Hashem will withhold His providence from the Jewish people. He will conduct Himself as if He does not see their distress.

However, it is difficult to explain Rashi in this manner. The simple explanation, which Rashi is explaining, is that Hashem "hiding His face" as so to speak is an expression of His anger. This is borne out by the fact that the verse itself says that "My fury will rage against them." Why does Rashi explain that Hashem is withholding His providence? It would seem more apropos to explain that He is angry at the Jews. Furthermore, why does Rashi write "as though I do not see their distress?" It would seem more appropriate to have written "as though I do not see *them*," not their distress. That would express withholding His supervision of the Jews.

The explanation is as follows. There are two types of G-dly providence. There is providence that precedes the commission of a sin. This causes the nation to be consumed, with many evils and troubles befalling them. That would refer to anger. This is not what Rashi is discussing here. Rather, Rashi is

1. Our Parshah, Devorim 31:17.

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referring to Hashem's providence *after* the Jews reach the stage of being consumed. That is when Rashi says that Hashem behaves as if He does not see their distress. He chooses not to see the distress of the Jewish Nation. He does not hearken to their outcry to save them. However, once the Jews do Teshuvah, all is forgiven. At that point He saves them.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah portion, Vayelech, we find that the Jewish Nation is rebuked a number of times. Among the words of rebuke, G-d says that² "My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. They will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them. They will say on that day 'Is it not because our G-d is no longer among us, that these evils have befallen us?'" Rashi cites the words "and hide My face," and comments that it will be "as though I do not see their distress."

The Mizrachi, one of Rashi's major commentators, explains the analogy of Hashem "hiding His face" (as so to speak). It is an anthropomorphism meaning that He withholds His providence over us. This is what Rashi means by saying that it will be "as though I do not see their distress."

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

This does not seem to fit with the explanation of the verse according to Peshat. Simply explained, an expression of hiding the Divine face would be one of anger. In the priestly blessing, which is an expression of His love toward us, we say that Hashem should³ "cause His *countenance* to *shine* to you and to favor you." This demonstrates that G-d is "happy" with us. The opposite of this would be that Hashem hides His countenance from us, which would indicate that He is "unhappy" with the Jewish people.

It would seem that Rashi's commentary would have been closer to Peshat, had he defined the "hiding of the Divine face" like anger. It would have:

- 1.) Fit better with the beginning of the verse, "My fury will rage against them," (meaning anger) and
- 2.) Explained the allegory in such a way that it applies to the entire "face;" not merely to hiding His "eyes."

Why does Rashi explain it as withholding His providence?

Furthermore, why does Rashi write that it is "as though I do not see their *distress*?" It would seem much more appropriate to write that it is "as though I do not see them." If Rashi's point is that there will be a lack of Divine providence, why limit it to not seeing *their distress*? Why does he not write that Hashem will not see "*them*?"

2. See Footnote 1.

3. Parshas Naso, Bamidbar 6:25.

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From the above, it seems that there are two types of providence. The first is the Providence prior to sinning. This causes the nation to be consumed, with many evils and troubles befalling them. This is not what Rashi is discussing. Rather, Rashi is talking about the second type of Providence. Once the Jewish people reach the stage of being consumed, at that point Hashem behaves as if He does not see their distress. This does not mean that He does not supervise the Jews. Rather it means that He chooses not to see their distress. He does not hearken to their outcry to save them. This also explains why Rashi says that "He does not see," rather than "He does not supervise." This verse, as explained by Rashi, is not discussing the lack of Providence which brought about the Jews' dilemma. Rather it is talking about the situation after being consumed and falling prey to many evils.

However, we still need to understand why Rashi writes that G-d acts "*as though*" He does not see their distress. Obviously, the reason is that Hashem is Omniscient; He knows all and sees all. However, the Torah often describes G-d's Hashem's "behavior" in an allegorical manner. Rashi very rarely points it out. It is understood. Even had Rashi not written the words "as if," we would have understood them.

The Explanation

This verse is actually telling us two different things. Firstly, it is telling us that Hashem will abandon the Jewish Nation. It then says that G-d will hide His face from them. The order of these two does not seem to follow. Once Hashem *abandons* the Jews (G-d forbid), and is no longer found with them, what is added by the fact that He will hide His face from them? He is (as so to speak) no longer among the Jewish Nation! It would seem that the verse should have first stated that Hashem will hide His face from the Jews. This is applicable even when He is in our midst. Then, the verse could add that in addition to hiding His face, He will actually abandon them!

From this Rashi derives, that these are two different types of punishment. The first is abandonment (G-d forbid). This refers to the lack of Providence which brings us about the present situation. This is followed by Hashem hiding His face from them. This comes after all of the troubles which have befallen the Jews. At that point, He conducts Himself "as if he does not see our troubles."

This also explains why Rashi is particular to write that Hashem treats the Jews *as though* He does not see their troubles. If Hashem was to actually hide His face from the Jews (as so to speak) it would defeat the entire purpose. The point is that as a result of suffering the Jews return to G-d with complete Teshuvah. At that point, He will return to the Jews. If He was actually hiding His face, He would not see us (as so to speak), and consequently not return to us.

What follows is that the first punishment, the abandonment which brings about the difficult situation, is truly something of substance. However, Hashem's hiding His face from us is purely imaginary.

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It merely appears as if He is hiding His face (as so to speak). However, once the Jews return with complete Teshuvah to Him, He returns to them, saving them from their afflictions.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Our Torah portion, Vayelech, often falls out on the Shabbos during the Ten Days of Teshuvah, meaning to return to G-d⁴, as is the case this year. This Shabbos is called by two different names; it is known either as Shabbos Shuvah or as Shabbos Teshuvah⁵. The Ten Days of Teshuvah are the days beginning with Rosh Hashanah and concluding with Yom Kippur.

It is well known that the content of the weekly Torah portion is related to the time in which it is read. It is quite easy to see the connection here between the Torah portion of Vayelech and these ten days. In as much as this is a time of Teshuvah, returning to G-d, we read the words of rebuke which are found in this Torah reading. These words help return us to Hashem with a complete heart.

In a certain respect, Shabbos (Te)shuvah is greater than the other nine days of Teshuvah. Just as Shabbos transcends the natural order of the six workdays of the week, so too is the case with Shabbos (Te)shuvah. It is not simply repentance for sin. Rather, it marks a return to Hashem, as King Solomon teaches us⁶, "... the soul returns to G-d Who gave it." Rather than repenting for sins, we are restoring, returning our souls and ourselves to G-d. Our Divine service reaches a higher level of Teshuvah.

Rashi alludes to this by writing that G-d's hiding His face from us is "*as though*" He doesn't see the Jews' distress. In other words, despite the fact that it was the Jewish people's actions which led to⁷ "Hashem's fury raging against them on that day, abandoning them and hiding His face from them," nevertheless, He is still with us. He still feels (as so to speak) the suffering of the Jewish people. The fact that He behaves toward the Jews "as if" he does not see their pain only emphasizes His great love for the Jewish Nation.

The Alter Rebbe explains⁸ that this is comparable to the way that a father behaves toward his son who is in his home. If the father *hides his face from him*, it is in order that the son takes to heart the love that his father actually feels toward him. At some point, the son will come to the realization that his father is actually there together with him, but is merely hiding. This will cause the son's love toward his father to be that much greater and more revealed. The same is true regarding our Teshuvah on this Shabbos. On this

4. The Torah portion of Vayelech is read on this Shabbos whenever Rosh Hashanah is on Monday or Tuesday.

5. It is referred to as "Shabbos Shuvah," because the first words of the Haftarah, the portion of the Prophets read immediately after the Torah reading, are (Hoshea 14:2) "Shuvah Yisroel, Return, O Israel ..." It is also known as "Shabbos Teshuvah," because it is one of the ten days specifically dedicated to performing Teshuvah, i.e. returning to Hashem.

6. Koheles 12:7.

7. Paraphrased from our verse.

8. Likkutei Torah, Parshas Tavo, Page 48, at the end of Column 4.

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day we realize that our heavenly Father is actually with us, despite the fact that He is acting "as if" He does not feel our suffering. This will cause us to return to Hashem with all of our hearts and souls, and to be sealed for a good year both materially and spiritually. It will bring us to the ultimate blessing of Moshiach now!

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayelech 5742)

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR FATHER

Mr. **Sholom Moshe** ben Reb **Shlomo Meir** Hacoheן ע"ה **Cohen**

Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HIS DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW

RABBI SHMUEL AND RIFKA ש' **MENDELSON**

מוקדש לזכות
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' שלום משה בן ר' שלמה מאיר הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטר ש"ק פ' בשלח, י"ג שבט, ה'תשע"ט

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

נדפס ע"י בתו וחתנו שיחיו

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