

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Tetzaveh

11 Adar I, 5779 – February 16, 2019

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

שמות כ"ח – ל"א: ועשית את מעיל האפוד כליל תכלת: ל"ב: והיה פי ראשו בתוכו שפה יהיה לפיו סביב מעשה ארג כפי תחרא יהיה לו לא יקרע:

רש"י ד"ה לא יקרע: כדי שלא יקרע, והקורעו עובר בלאו, שזה ממנין לאוין שבתורה, וכן (פסוק כ"ח) ולא יזח החשו, וכן (שמות כ"ה, ט"ו) לא יסורו ממנו. הנאמר בבדי הארון:

Shemos 28:31: And you shall make the robe of the Ephod¹ completely of blue wool. **32:** Its opening at the top shall be turned inward. Its opening shall have a hem around it, which is the work of a weaver. It shall have (an opening) like the opening of a coat of armor²; it shall not be torn.

Rashi Heading - it shall not be torn: (meaning that its opening shall be turned inward and it shall have a hem around it) in order that it shall not be torn. And the one who tears it transgresses a negative commandment, for this is included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah³. Likewise,⁴ “and the Choshen⁵ will not move⁶,” and likewise⁷, “they shall not be removed from it” mentioned regarding the poles of the ark.

Synopsis

In our Torah portion, Tetzaveh, the Torah commands us to make the eight vestments which were to be worn by the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, while serving in the sanctuary. The "robe of the Ephod" which he wore was to have an opening at the top. The opening was to be turned inward and have a hem around it. The

1. The Torah describes the eight vestments worn by the high priest (beginning with Our Parshah Shemos 28:2). *Ibid.* 28:4 the Torah lists the vestments. One of these is the Ephod, which is a sort of apron. The robe of the Ephod which we are discussing here is the tunic upon which the Ephod was worn. The opening of which the verse speaks is for the Kohen Gadol's head.

2. Rashi explains that based on this we know that the openings of the suits of armor worn in their time were folded inward.

3. The Talmud says (Makos 23, b) that 613 commandments were given at Sinai; 365 of which are negative (“thou shall not”) and 248 are positive (“thou shall”). However, the Talmud does not delineate which Torah commandments are included in the list. Therefore, there was quite a bit of discussion among the rabbis of the Middle Ages regarding which commandments to count. Rashi is teaching us that not tearing the robe of the high priest is one of the 365 negative commandments.

4. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:28.

5. The Choshen was the breastplate which was worn by the high priest. It is described in Our Parshah, Shemos 28:15.

6. This is similar to the context of our verse. First the Torah says that "they shall fasten the Choshen by its rings to the rings of the Ephod with a blue cord, so that it may be upon the band of the Ephod." The verse then concludes "and the Choshen will not move."

7. Parshas Terumah, Shemos 25:15.

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Torah goes on to say that it shall not be torn. Rashi begins his explanation by saying that it was made with its opening turned inward and with a hem in order that it not be torn. Furthermore, he states, that by tearing it one would transgress a negative commandment; for this is one of the Torah's negative commandments. Rashi's initial comments imply that there was no prohibition against tearing the garment; the verse is simply telling us why it was made in this manner. However, his concluding remarks make it clear that tearing the tunic was actually a Torah prohibition!

The explanation is that Rashi is saying that both things are true. We must say that it is a commandment. Otherwise the Torah would have said "*in order* that it shall not be torn" rather than simply "it shall not be torn." If the Torah was simply stating a commandment it would have said that one may not tear it. However, the Torah uses the passive voice here, i.e. "it shall not be torn." From this Rashi derives that the Torah is both prohibiting us from tearing the robe, and commanding us to make it with a hem in order that it shall not be torn.

Rashi's Explanation

In this week's Torah reading, Tetzaveh, the Torah commands us (among other things) to make eight special garments which the Kohen Gadol must wear while performing his service in the sanctuary. The Torah describes the tunic which he wore. It then tells us that⁸ "its opening at the top shall be turned inward. Its opening shall have a hem around it, which is the work of a weaver. It shall have (a neck hole) like the opening of a coat of armor; it shall not be torn." Rashi cites the words "it shall not be torn," and apparently explains the reason that "its opening shall be turned inward and it shall have a hem around it." He writes that this was done "in order that it shall not be torn." However, Rashi continues and writes that "and the one who tears it transgresses a negative commandment, for this is included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah. Likewise, 'and the Choshen will not move,' and likewise, 'they shall not be removed from it' mentioned regarding the poles of the ark."

There are commentaries who explain Rashi in the following manner⁹. Rashi is telling us the meaning of the words "it shall not be torn." First and foremost, the Torah is teaching us that according to Peshat the meaning of the verse is that the tunic was made in such a manner that would not allow it to be torn. The same is true of the verses "the Choshen will not move" and "they shall not be removed from it."

However, if that was all that the Torah was teaching us, the verse would have said that the robe was made in this way *in order that* "it shall not be torn." It would have said the same regarding the two proof texts which Rashi quotes. The Torah would have said *in order that* "the Choshen will not move," and *in order that* "they shall

8. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:32.

9. See the commentaries of Sifsei Chachomim (quoting the Gur Aryeh), Be'er Yitzchok, Nesinah Legeir and others.

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not be removed from it." However, the Torah neither states nor implies that what is written earlier is the reason that "it shall not be torn." The same is true of the other verses cited by Rashi. This teaches us that the robe not being torn is *not* simply a result of the way in which it was made. Rather, we are commanded not to tear the robe. It is one of the Torah's prohibitions.

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

From the beginning of Rashi's comments, it is obvious that the tunic shall not be torn *because* "its opening shall be turned inward and it shall have a hem around it." It is a simple case of cause and effect. However, he goes on to say "*and* the one who tears it transgresses a negative commandment." Note the use of the word "and," which makes it clear that this is a continuation of that which he previously said. It would seem that the two explanations are mutually exclusive. Either the Kohen Gadol's robe not being torn is because of the way in which it was made, or tearing it is a prohibition. Indeed, we find that there are biblical commentaries who explain "it shall not be torn" to be the natural result of the manner in which it was made, and others that explain it as a negative commandment^{10 11}.

In fact, from the Talmud we see that the two explanations are not compatible with each other. The Talmud writes the following¹². "Rechava said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah, 'One who tears the priestly garments is to be punished with lashes, for the Torah said, 'it shall not be torn.'" Rav Acha bar Yaakov questioned this. 'Perhaps the Torah commands us to make it in a manner that it should not be torn?' His response was, that the Torah does not say in order that it should not be torn.'" From here we see that it not being torn is either a result or a prohibition. It cannot be both.

Furthermore, Rashi writes that "this is included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah." What relevance does that have to Peshat?

Moreover, Rashi goes on to cite two examples. "Likewise, 'and the Choshen will not move,' and likewise, 'they shall not be removed from it' mentioned regarding the poles of the ark." We understand that Rashi cites these two instances because they are both a reason and a negative commandment. However, we can ask the same question regarding both of these verses. How does Rashi understand according to Peshat that both of these verses are prohibitions which are included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah? Additionally, both of these verses appear before the verse we are currently discussing. If Rashi needs to explain here that "it

10. See the commentary of the Rasag, Rabbi Avrohom the son of the Rambam, the Tzeidoh Laderech and others.

11 The Tzeidoh Laderech writes the following. "With this that Rashi first writes that it is cause and effect, and then says that 'one who does so transgresses a negative commandment,' he means that it can either be explained in one way or the other." However, it is difficult to explain it in this manner. When Rashi offers two possible explanations for something, he always says so explicitly.

12. Talmud Yoma 72, a.

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shall not be torn" has two meanings, why didn't he give the same explanation there?

The Explanation

According to Peshat, all three expressions, "it shall not be torn," "and the Choshen will not move" and "they shall not be removed from it" must be understood as commandments. Had they merely been effects, the Torah would have said "*in order that* it shall not be torn," "*in order that* the Choshen will not move" and "*in order that* they shall not be removed from it." However, there is a difference between our verse and the earlier two verses which Rashi cites. Our verse is written in the passive voice. It does not say "you shall not tear it." Rather the Torah writes that "it shall not be torn." We know that when a verb is written in this form, it is adding something to the basic prohibition. Rashi himself taught us this regarding the Torah's prohibition against working on the festivals. Regarding the first and last days of the holiday of Pesach the Torah says that¹³ "... no work may be performed on them ..." It does not use the active voice, namely you may not perform any work. Rashi explains there that this teaches us that work may not be performed "even through others." In our verse, Rashi derives from the use of the passive voice that aside from the prohibition of tearing the tunic, it is also to be made in a manner that it will not be torn.

We now understand that "it shall not be torn" is one of the Torah's 365 negative commandments. We know this from the fact that otherwise the Torah would have said "*in order that* it shall not be torn." One would think that if Hashem is issuing a command to the Jewish people, He would do so in a way that was totally clear. Why would he do so in a manner that could lead to a misunderstanding?

That is the reason that Rashi told us that "this is included in the number of the negative commandments in the Torah." We are already aware of the prohibition to tear a Kohen's vestments. The only purpose of writing this prohibition here is in order to include as one of the Torah's 365 prohibitions.

From where would we know of this prohibition? We would know it from the Torah's commandment to Moshe that¹⁴ "you shall make holy garments for your brother Aharon, for honor and beauty." It is quite obvious that a torn garment has neither honor nor beauty. Actually, Rashi says this clearly in his commentary to the Talmud. The Talmud says¹⁵ that if a Kohen performed his service with torn garments it is invalid. Rashi explains that this is the case even if the garments were new. The reason he gives is that torn garments are not fit for performing the Temple service, because they lack the requirement of honor and beauty.

13. Parshas Bo, Shemos 12:16.

14. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:2.

15. See Zevachim 18, at the beginning of side b.

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A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

Rashi cites the proof “and the Choshen will not move” which is in our Torah portion before citing the proof “they shall not be removed from it” regarding the poles of the ark, which appeared earlier in the Torah. He also writes the word "likewise" before each proof. The reason for this is that never being allowed to remove the poles from the ark is a far more novel than the other two teachings.

The reason for the prohibition against tearing the priestly vestments is fairly obvious; no one would think that we would be allowed to destroy holy objects. Likewise, the prohibition against moving the breastplate from the Ephod is understood. Granted, it does not involve any destruction. However, the verse immediately following Rashi's proof text tells us the reason that it may not be removed¹⁶; "Thus shall Aharon carry the names of the sons of Yisroel in the Choshen of judgment over his heart when he enters the Holy, as a remembrance before the Lord at all times." This means that he must always wear the Choshen. However, what possible reason could there be for never removing the poles from the rings which attach them to the Holy Ark? The purpose of the poles was in order to carry the ark. What need could there be for the poles to remain attached to the ark when it was at rest in the Holy of Holies?

The reason for the poles remaining attached to the Ark at all times is explained by the Sefer Hachinuch¹⁷. He writes that we were commanded to leave the poles in the Ark at all times, even when it is at rest in the Holy of Holies, in order to make sure that we should always be ready to carry the Holy Ark out. The Sefer Hachinuch explains¹⁸ that the Ark, in which the two tablets were housed, was the dwelling place of Torah. The same is true of a Torah scholar. The Torah is housed within him. No matter how much one has invested in Torah, he should never think that he is exempt from the obligation to go out into the world. If a fellow Jew needs help, whether materially or spiritually, he must be ready at a moment's notice to go out and answer the call.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh, 5732)

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16. Our Parshah, Shemos 28:29.

17. See Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 96.

18. *Ibid.*

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Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

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