

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Teitzei

9 Elul, 5780 – August 29, 2020

Compiled from the works of
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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: וְהָיָה בְּהִנָּיִט ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ | לֵךְ מִכָּל אִיבִיב מִסָּבִיב בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ תִּמְחָה אֶת זֵכֶר עַמְלֹק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא תִשְׁכַּח:

רש"י ד"ה תמחה את זכר עמלק: מאיש ועד אשה מעולל ועד יונק משור ועד שה. שלא יהא שם עמלק בזכר 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 as follows. "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.'"

It may seem that Rashi is explaining the scope of the Mitzvah. It is not to merely wipe out the humans, but the animals as well. 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 to be quite clear. This is especially true, since during our first encounter with Amalek, shortly after we left Egypt, the Torah teaches us the same concept. "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 very obvious 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. 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 the memory of Amalek. 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 us¹ to "wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens. You shall not forget!" This is the commandment of obliterating the memory of the nation of the Amalek. Rashi cites the words of the Torah "you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek," and explains that this applies to² "'Both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep,' so that the name of Amalek should never again be mentioned³, even regarding an animal, to say, 'This animal was from Amalek.'"

It would seem that Rashi is teaching us the scope of the Mitzvah of wiping out the memory of Amalek. It does not merely apply to killing humans. Rather, we are commanded to destroy all of 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, rather 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 meaning of those words. Perhaps Rashi is explaining the concept of erasing the memory of Amalek. He is teaching us what it entails. This is also untenable because we have already encountered the same phrase regarding Amalek. Soon after the Jews left Egypt, Amalek attacked us. After defeating them, Hashem said,⁴ "... 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?

Our understanding is that Rashi is expanding the scope of eradicating the memory of Amalek. He is 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 in the verse there, so they are not included in the words "ox and sheep."

1. Our Parshah, Devorim 25:19.

2. I Shmuel 15:6

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

4. Parshas Beshalach, Shemos 17:14.

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The words which 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.

Furthermore, we have already discussed many times that Rashi is particular regarding the words from the verse, which he cites as the heading of his comments. In the heading of these particular comments, Rashi quotes the words "you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek." However, he is seemingly only explaining the words "the remembrance of Amalek," and not "you shall wipe out."

The Explanation

There is one glaring question that begs to be asked, according to Peshat. The Torah commands us to *wipe out, erase* the remembrance of Amalek. This memory must be wiped out from the place where it exists, namely 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 thoughts⁵? Can one prevent the idea of Amalek from entering his mind? Our Sages said⁶ that there are three sins from which one is never saved, and one of them is thoughts of sin. The fact of the matter is that thinking about this Mitzvah causes one to remember Amalek!

The earlier verse, which discusses erasing the memory of Amalek, does not present this problem. There it says that "*I will surely wipe out* the memory of Amalek." In other words, the *Almighty*, Hashem, Who is *Omnipotent* assures us that *He* will wipe out the memory of Amalek from our hearts and our minds. However, here, it is not understood. 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 from the minds of every human being who is "under the heavens!"

Therefore, Rashi explains to us that there is not a Mitzvah to remove the memory of Amalek from our minds. That would be impossible, and Hashem does not demand the impossible. Instead, the commandment is to destroy those things which remind us of the name of Amalek. 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

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.

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regarding an animal, to say, "This animal was from Amalek." In this manner, *as a matter of course*, the memory of Amalek will be erased from the world.

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

This is also seen from 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 is a result of what Amalek did to us. We are commanded to remember⁷ "how he happened upon you on the way and cut off all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary, and he did not fear G-d." In other words, if the idea here 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 being commanded to remove everything from the world, which can perpetuate the memory of Amalek. Only in that manner can they truly be forgotten.

Rashi is not citing this verse from I Shmuel as a proof-text. He is merely telling us the extent to which the Mitzvah extends; men, women, children, and animals. That's why Rashi does not precede the verse by saying "as it is written" (or other words to that effect). 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 cruelty to animals; one could not make a significant, lasting change in an animal. It will always be recognized as an animal that belonged to Amalek. However, there is no such restriction regarding a house or another object. Therefore, homes that were taken from them can be changed in such a way that they will bear no resemblance to the house which belonged to Amalek. Since they can be changed significantly and permanently, it is considered as if they had been destroyed. That is the reason that Rashi adds the words, "This animal was from Amalek." He is telling us that this *only* applies to an animal. It does not apply to other properties.

This also answers another question that is asked by the great codifiers of Jewish law. In the Book of Esther, it is written⁸ 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 is known, was a direct descendant of Amalek. We are commanded to wipe out his memory; how could she keep Haman's house?

7. Our Parshah, Devorim 25:18.

8. Esther 8:7.

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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 which was owned by Amalek. To do so does not perpetuate their memory. On the contrary, in this manner, Haman's house was transformed into a Jewish house.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

As explained in the mystical works of the Torah and in works of Chassidic philosophy, the spiritual nature of Amalek is to make one cold, indifferent. Not caring, not being excited about Torah and Mitzvos, is the lowest level one can reach. If one is not excited about learning 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 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, coldness, and indifference from a meek Animal Soul, which is compared to a sheep. Then, and only then, can we attain the proper level of excitement in all of our divine service?

(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Parshas Teitzei 5725)

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

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