

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Vayelech

6 Tishrei, 5783 – October 1, 2022

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

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Rashi in His Own Words

דברים ל"א, י"ז: וְתָרָה אִפִּי בּוֹ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְעִזְבֹתֵיהֶם וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי מֵהֶם וְהָיָה לָאֵכָל וּמִצָּאָהוּ רַעוּת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
הָלֹא עַל כִּי אֵין אֱלֹקֵי בְּקִרְבִּי מִצָּאוֹנֵי הַרְעוֹת הָאֵלֶּה:
רש"י ד"ה והסתרת פני: כמו שאני 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 told¹, "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 challenging to explain Rashi in this manner. The simple explanation that Rashi explains is that Hashem "hiding His face," so to speak, is an expression of His anger. This is clear from the verse itself saying, "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, which 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

1. Our Parshah, Devorim 31:17.

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precedes the commission of a sin. This causes the nation to be consumed with many evils and troubles. That would refer to anger. This is not what Rashi is discussing here. Instead, Rashi is referring to Hashem's Providence *after* the Jews reach the stage of being consumed. That is when Rashi says Hashem behaves as if He does not see their distress. He chooses not to see the pain of the Jewish nation. He does not listen 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 Hashem rebukes the Jewish nation several 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 foremost commentators, explains the analogy of Hashem "hiding His face" (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 put, an expression of hiding the Divine face would be one of anger. In the priestly blessing, which expresses His love toward us, we say Hashem should³ "cause His *countenance* to *shine* to you and to favor you." This demonstrates that G-d is "happy" with us. The opposite would be that Hashem hides His countenance from us, indicating 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" as 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."

2. See Footnote 1.

3. Parshas Naso, Bamidbar 6:25.

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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 note 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*?"

From the above, it seems that there are two types of Providence. The first is the Providence before sinning. This causes the nation to be consumed with many evils and troubles. This is not what Rashi is discussing. Instead, 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. Instead, it means that Hashem chooses not to see their grief. He does not listen to their outcry to save them. This also explains why Rashi says, "He does not see," rather than "He does not supervise." As Rashi explained, this verse does not discuss the lack of Providence that brought about the Jews' dilemma. Instead, it talks 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. The reason is that Hashem is Omniscient; He knows all and sees all. However, the Torah often describes G-d's Hashem's "behavior" metaphorically, and Rashi 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 tells us two different things. Firstly, it tells 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 (so to speak) no longer among the Jewish nation! It would seem that the verse should have first stated that Hashem would 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 abandon them!

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

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This also explains why Rashi writes that Hashem treats the Jews *as though* He does not see their troubles. If Hashem were to hide His face from the Jews (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 Hashem hid His face, He would not see us (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, and it merely appears as if He is hiding His face (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 this year. This Shabbos is called by two different names; it is known either as Shabbos Shuvah or Shabbos Teshuvah⁵. The Ten Days of Teshuvah are the days beginning with Rosh Hashanah and concluding with Yom Kippur.

We know that the content of the weekly Torah portion is related to the time we read it, and it is pretty easy to see the connection 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 that we find in this Torah reading, and these words help return us to Hashem with a whole 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 week's six workdays, so is the case with Shabbos (Te)shuvah. It is not simply repentance for sin. Instead, 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 return 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, even though the Jewish people's actions led to "Hashem's fury raging against them on that day, abandoning them and hiding His face from them," he is still with us. He still

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.

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feels (so to speak) the suffering of the Jewish people. He behaves toward the Jews "as if" he does not see their pain, only emphasizing His great love for the Jewish nation.

The Alter Rebbe explains⁷ this with a parable. It is comparable to how a father behaves toward his son, who is in his home. If the father *hides his face from him*, it is so that the son takes to heart the love that his father feels toward him. At some point, the son will realize that his father is there with him but is merely hiding. This will cause the son's love toward his father to be that much more significant and more revealed. The same is true regarding our Teshuvah on this Shabbos. On this day, we realize that our heavenly Father is with us, although He is acting "as if" He does not feel our suffering. This will cause us to return to Hashem with our hearts and souls. We will indeed all be sealed for a good year, both materially and spiritually, and it will bring us to the ultimate blessing of Moshiach now!

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

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

Click here to dedicate a week, a month, or a year of the Rashi of the Week.

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You can find our blog [here](#).

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

**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 שיהיו

* * *

IN HONOR OF

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

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 שיהיו**

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. ג. צ. ב. ה.

נדבת בני משפחתה שיחיו

*** * ***

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם"

חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו

מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

מאריס

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