

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos

19 Tishrei, 5786 – October 11, 2025

Compiled from the works of  
**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**  
**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

by  
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn  
North Miami Beach, FL

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## An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos<sup>1</sup>

Likkutei Sichos Volume 21, Pages 232 – 237

### Rashi in His Own Words

שמות ל"ג, כ"ג: וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת פְּנֵי יִרְאִיתְךָ אֶת אַחֲרֵי וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרְאוּ:

רש"י ד"ה וראית את אחורי: הראהו קשר של תפילין:

**Shemos 33:23:** Then I will remove My hand, and you will see My back, but My face shall not be seen.

**Rashi Heading - and you will see My back:** He showed him the knot of (His) Tefillin.

### Synopsis

In our special Torah reading, we find that Moshe asks Hashem to<sup>2</sup> "Please show me Your glory. "To this Hashem responds,<sup>3</sup> that "You will not be able to see My face. "Several verses later, G-d explains<sup>4</sup> that "You will see My back, but My face will not be seen." Rashi, citing the words from the verse "You will see my back," explains that Hashem "showed him the knot of (His) Tefillin."

Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the Torah. Why does he find it necessary to explain what is meant by Hashem showing Moshe His back? The beginning student has already encountered several instances of anthropomorphism. The Torah mentions G-d's "back," however, we know that Hashem has no image or form. There, this cannot be Rashi's problem. Even the total beginner understands that this is an allegory. Actually, in the very same verse, it discusses Hashem's face, and Rashi does not comment on that. There are easier ways of explaining the allegorical meaning of Hashem's "back" (as so to speak) than by saying that it is a reference to the "knot of G-d's Tefillin. If the question that bothers Rashi is how we can attribute a physical quality to Hashem, nothing is gained by saying that Hashem's "back" refers to His "Tefillin!"

The explanation is, based on the above question, that Rashi is not bothered by the fact that the Torah mentions G-d's face or His back. That is a common sort of expression in the Torah that is understood by all. Rather, Rashi is bothered by a different question. After Moshe's request to see G-d's "glory," and before Hashem's answer that "You shall see My back, but my face shall not be seen," G-d says<sup>5</sup> that "I will let all My

1. Inasmuch as this Shabbos is in the intermediate days of Sukkos, there is a special Torah reading. The Torah Reading for Shabbos Chol Hamoed is found in Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:20-23. We are there presenting an explanation of a Rashi in that reading.

2. Shemos 33:18.

3. Shemos 33:20.

4. Shemos 33:23.

5. Shemos 33:19.

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goodness pass before you; I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and I will favor whom I wish to favor ..." How does this answer Moshe's request that Hashem show him his glory? Rashi answers this question by saying<sup>6</sup> that "The time has come that you will see some of My glory that I will permit you to see, because I want and I need to teach you *the order of prayer* ... I will (therefore) let all of the attributes of My goodness pass before you while you are hidden in a cave ... I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you to teach you the procedure for begging for compassion, (i.e., praying) ... According to this procedure, (during) which you (will) see Me enwrapped and proclaiming the Thirteen Attributes (of Mercy), teach the Israelites to do likewise." Following this, Hashem says,<sup>7</sup> "You will not be able to see My face ...," which Rashi explains to mean "even when I let all of My goodness pass before you ..."

It follows that what it says in our verse, "and you shall see My back," is not the beginning of a new statement by G-d. Instead, it is the continuation of the previous verses. Moshe will see the back of G-d "enwrapped (in a Tallis) and praying." However, Moshe will *only* see Hashem's back. How can this represent seeing Hashem's glory? If G-d is wrapped in a Tallis, He is not visible! This is especially difficult since a Tallis is not a garment that is made of expensive, precious material for "glory and beauty," as were the vestments worn by the Kohanim – priests. Usually, a Tallis is a simple woolen garment!

This is why Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe the knot of His Tefillin. The child who is beginning his studies knows that at times the one who leads the congregation in prayer wears only a Tallis, and at times he wears Tefillin as well. The head Tefillin form a crown, which certainly demonstrates glory. The knot on the back of the head Tefillin, is specifically what forms the crown. Hence, the beginner understands from Rashi that Moshe will indeed see Hashem's glory.

### Rashi's Explanation

In the Torah portion that we read for the intermediate Shabbos of Sukkos, we find two events that coincide. G-d teaches Moshe how to pray on behalf of the Jewish people. He also asks Hashem to "Please show me Your glory." To this Hashem responds, "You will not be able to see My face." Several verses later, G-d concludes that "You will see My back, but My face will not be seen." Rashi, citing the words from the verse "You will see my back," explains that Hashem "showed him the knot of (His) Tefillin."

Seemingly, Rashi is answering a question for the beginning Torah student. We know that Hashem has

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6. *Ibid.*

7. Shemos 33:20.

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neither a form nor an image. How can the Torah say that G-d will show Moshe His back? Therefore, Rashi explains, what was actually meant was that He will show Moshe the knot of His Tefillin.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

Rashi is explaining Peshat, the simple meaning of the Torah. Why does he find it necessary to explain what is meant by Hashem showing Moshe His back? Why does this require an explanation? We cannot say that Rashi is bothered by the use of an anthropomorphism. Although Hashem has no image or form, the beginning student has already come across many physical characteristics attributed to G-d throughout the Torah. The beginning student understands that these are all allegorical in nature. Actually, in the very same verse that we are discussing, Hashem's face is mentioned. Rashi offers no comment whatsoever, because none is needed.

If Rashi is looking for an allegorical explanation of Hashem's "back," there are many simpler ways to explain it than the "knot of G-d's Tefillin." The face symbolizes one's essence. One's back, on the other hand, represents more superficial aspects of one's personality. However, what does the knot of Tefillin symbolize?

Furthermore, Rashi includes in the heading of his comments the words "you will see." In his explanation, he includes the words "I will show you." Why is this so? We know that Rashi is very precise both in the words he uses for his headings and in his commentary itself. Yet it seems that he is only explaining the words "your back," not the words "you will see," or "I will show you."

### The Explanation

The explanation is that Rashi is not bothered by the Torah mentioning G-d's face or His back. That is a common sort of expression in the Torah, and is understood by all. Rather, Rashi is bothered by a totally different question. After Moshe's request to "Show me Your glory," and before Hashem's answer that "You shall see My back, but my face shall not be seen," G-d says<sup>8</sup> that "I will let all My goodness pass before you; I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and I will favor when I wish to favor ..." What possible connection does this have to Moshe's request that Hashem show him his glory? Rashi answers this question by saying<sup>9</sup> that "The time has come that you will see some of My glory that I will permit you to see, because I want and I need to teach you *the order of prayer* ... I will (therefore) let all the attribute of My goodness pass before you while you are hidden in a cave ... I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, to teach you how to beg for compassion, (i.e., pray) ... According to this procedure, (during) which you (will) see Me

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8. Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:19.

9. See Rashi's comments to Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:19.

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enwrapped (in a Tallis) and proclaiming the Thirteen Attributes (of Mercy), teach the Jews to do likewise." Following this, Hashem says<sup>10</sup> that "You will not be able to see My face ...," which Rashi explains to mean "even when I let all of My goodness pass before you ..."

It follows from this that when our verse says "and you shall see My back," it is not the beginning of a new subject, but rather the continuation of the previous verses. Moshe will see the back of G-d "enwrapped (in a Tallis) and praying."

However, this only engenders another question. Moshe will see Hashem "conducting services, praying while enwrapped with a Tallis" only after G-d passes. In other words, Moshe will see Him from behind. That being the case, how can we say that Moshe will see Hashem's glory? If He is wrapped in a Tallis, He is not visible! This is an even greater question, because all that Moshe will see is Hashem's Tallis! A Tallis is not usually made from expensive, precious materials. Generally, it is a simple woolen garment!

This is why Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe the knot of His Tefillin. The child who is beginning his studies knows that at times, the one who leads the congregation in prayer only wears a Tallis, such as on Shabbos and festivals. During the week, he wears Tefillin in addition to the Tallis. The Tefillin on his head form a crown, which certainly demonstrates Hashem's glory. It's not the *straps* of the Tefillin that form the crown. The straps hang down in front of the one who wears them. Instead, it is the knot on the back of the head Tefillin that forms the crown. The beginning student is also aware that most of the time, the head Tefillin are not visible from behind. The Tallis usually covers them. This is why Rashi tells us that Hashem made a point of "showing" Moshe the knot of His Tefillin.

### A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

It is apparent that because these two subjects are being discussed at the same time, they must be related to each other. There is a connection between Moshe's request to see G-d's glory and G-d teaching Moshe how to pray on behalf of the Jews. Beseeching forgiveness for the Jewish people must be an essential part of seeing Hashem's glory. This is the case even if we can only see his glory "from behind."

To understand this connection, we must first answer a different question. Why was it so crucial for Hashem to be "wearing" a Tallis while reciting the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy? One would think that the recitation of these attributes, with or without a Tallis, is what really matters. After all, it is the prayer that brings about the forgiveness.

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10. Parshas Tiso, Shemos 33:20.

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One of the answers to this question is that one of the causes of sin is forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is also the cause of hostile, impure forces within the world. In the realm of holiness, our Sages tell us that<sup>11</sup> "There is no forgetfulness before Your holy throne."

Why is this so? What is the correlation between memory and holiness? The answer is that it is the nature of every Jew to believe that<sup>12</sup> "In the beginning Hashem created the heaven and the earth." Furthermore, it is a part of the nature of every Jew to believe that G-d is creating the world every moment. This being the case, how is it possible for a Jew to ever sin? The firm belief that Hashem created one this very second should prevent him from sinning! Granted, at times, there may be circumstances that cause one to sin. Nonetheless, he is aware that G-d also created those circumstances at this moment. The answer is that it is only possible for a Jew to sin if this "slips his mind" temporarily.

What does that have to do with a Tallis and Tzitzis - Fringes<sup>13</sup>? Not only a Tallis, but as we see from Rashi, Tefillin are also a part of the equation. The answer is that both help us remember all of Hashem's commandments. Regarding Tzitzis, it says,<sup>14</sup> "and when you see it you will remember all of the commandments of the Lord to perform them." Furthermore, it says,<sup>15</sup> "So that you remember and perform all of my commandments." Regarding Tefillin, it says,<sup>16</sup> "It shall be to you as a sign upon your hand and as a remembrance between your eyes." Once the Tallis and the Tefillin remove the cause of the sin, the forgetfulness, the result is also removed, and the Jewish Nation is forgiven.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Motzo'ai Shabbos Parshas Tiso 5739)*

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

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11. See Talmud Berachos 32, b and the Laws of Torah Study by the Alter Rebbe, Chapter 2, and Section 10.

12. Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis 1:1.

13. Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:37 – 41.

14. Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:39.

15. Parshas Shelach, Bamidbar 15:40.

16. Parshas Bo, Shemos 13:9.

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May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride  
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