



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | Tetzaveh | Sichah 1

Adding to the Count

Translated by Rabbi Shmuel Kesselman
Edited by Rabbi Eliezer Robbins and Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses in this translation are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Great effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time striving for readability. However, the translation carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed — please send all comments to: info@projectlikkuteisichos.org**

1.

TWO OPPOSITE INTERPRETATIONS

Regarding the command,¹ “Make the robe of the *ephod*...,”² the Torah says,³ “Its neck opening shall have a woven hem all around it, like the neck opening of a coat of armor; it shall not be torn.” Rashi quotes the words, “it shall not be torn,” and explains: “So that it will not tear, and whoever tears it violates a prohibition...” (as will be discussed in section 2).

We must clarify: Rashi (first) explains that “it shall not be torn” means, “**So that** it will not tear.” Thus, Rashi clearly maintains that “it shall not be torn” is not a separate point (and command). Rather, this clause serves to explain why the Torah instructs that “its neck opening shall have a hem... like the neck opening of a coat of armor, (**so that**) it shall not tear.”

Why then does Rashi go on to add (using the letter ‘*vav*’ {‘and’} indicating an addition), “And whoever tears it violates a prohibition,” indicating that the clause, “it shall not be torn” is (**not** meant as a rationale, but as) a command, a separate prohibition?

An even greater conundrum: The *Talmud*⁴ records, “Rachava said in the name of Rabbi Yehuda: One who tears one of the priestly garments incurs lashes, as it says, ‘It shall not be torn.’ Rav Acha Bar Yaakov challenged: Perhaps the Torah means, ‘make a hem for it so that it will not tear?’ {The *Talmud* responds} Is it written ‘so that it will not tear?’” Meaning, if we explain the clause, “it shall not be torn,” as, “**so that** it will not tear,” this **cannot** be construed as a prohibition.

¹ *Shemos* 28:31.

² {The *Kohen Gadol*, during his service in the *Mishkan* and Temple wore eight garments. Our *parshah* contains detailed instructions as to how these garments were to be made and how they were to appear. The *ephod*, or apron, was made from blue, red, and purple wool, white linen, and gold strands. The apron was tied by a belt around the waist and covered the lower half of the body in the back and partially in the front. Two straps protruded from the back, angled over the High Priest’s shoulders, where a gold chain connected them to the breastplate. At the end of the straps were two stones on which the names of the twelve tribes were inscribed.}

³ *Shemos* 28:32.

⁴ *Yoma* 72a.

[However, to address this issue, the Torah commentators⁵ follow one of two paths. Some explain that “it shall not be torn” only provides a rationale for that which was stated previously {i.e., the instruction to make a hem}, and some explain that this clause serves as a separate prohibition.]

As such, it is puzzling: How can Rashi combine two contradictory explanations in the same interpretation?⁶

2.

WHERE DOES *PSHAT* CONNOTE A MITZVAH COUNT?

Rashi continues:

This is enumerated among the Torah’s prohibitions. Likewise, {the commands} “and the breastplate shall not move,”⁷ and likewise, “they shall not be removed from it,”⁸ said regarding the Ark’s poles {are enumerated among the Torah’s prohibitions}.

At first glance, it appears that Rashi adds the point, “This is enumerated⁹ among the Torah’s prohibitions” to prove that “it shall not be torn” is a prohibition, despite the verse’s implication (as Rashi first explains) that {“it shall not be torn” is not a command, but an explanation as to why a hem is to be woven, i.e.,} “**so that** it will not tear.”

⁵ *Rasag, Avrohom ben HaRambam* commenting on this verse.

⁶ *Tzeidah Laderech*, explains that Rashi offers two alternative explanations of this verse. However, this answer is unsatisfactory, for Rashi would have indicated as such.

⁷ *Shemos* 28:28. {The context is as follows: “They must link the bottom of the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the *ephod*... The breastplate shall not move (come loose) from the *ephod*.”}

⁸ *Shemos* 25:15. {The context is as follows: “The poles must remain in the Ark’s rings, they shall not be removed from it.”}

⁹ {In the Hebrew original, “*minyan hamitzvos*, literally, the enumeration of the *mitzvos*. The *Talmud* (*Makos* 23b) writes that Moshe was given 613 *mitzvos* at Sinai, 365 prohibitions corresponding to the days of the year; and 248 positive commandments corresponding to the limbs of the human body. Neither the *Chumash* nor the *Talmud* offer an exact list. Therefore, many of the great Sages of the early second millennium sought to write and compile exact lists of the *mitzvos* and their definitions, such as Rambam, Rav Saadia Gaon, and *Sefer HaChinuch*. }

This is difficult to understand. Rashi's interpretations are always based on *peshuto shel mikra*.¹⁰ What is Rashi's basis in ***pshat*** that "it shall not be torn" is counted as a prohibition?

[Indeed, Rashi previously mentions the concept of *minyán hamitzvos*,¹¹ and so this concept obviously plays a role in an explanation based on ***pshat***. But we see no compelling evidence, based on the simple sense of these verses, that "it shall not be torn" is enumerated among the prohibitions.]

3.

IS IT A PROBLEM OR NOT?

Rashi's closing words are even more difficult: "Likewise, 'the breastplate shall not move,' and likewise, 'they shall not be removed from it,' mentioned regarding the Ark poles." Commentators¹² suggest that Rashi's intention in bringing these two examples is to present parallel texts to the clause "it shall not be torn," which serves both as a prohibition and as a rationale for that which was stated previously ("so that it will not tear"). This is because in both examples, the simple meaning of, "it shall not move," and, "they shall not be removed," is, "**so that** it shall not move," and, "**so that** they will not remove them." Nonetheless, both are independent prohibitions that are enumerated among the Torah's prohibitions.

What remains unclear [in addition to the difficulty (similar to that raised in section 2) regarding each of these examples: What is Rashi's basis in ***pshat*** that they are to be counted as Torah prohibitions?]:

In his remarks on the verses, "it shall not move," and, "they shall not be removed," Rashi does not explain that these clauses serve as both a rationale and an independent prohibition. Thus, however we look at this issue, we face an

¹⁰ {In the Hebrew original, "*peshuto shel mikra*," often referred to as "*pshat*." Rashi states in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: "I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Torah." Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

¹¹ *Bereishis* 32:5; *Shemos* 24:12; see also *Bamidbar* 15:39.

¹² *Sifsei Chachamim*'s gloss on Rashi (in the name of *Gur Aryeh*).

enigma: If explaining “it shall not be torn” as both a prohibition and a rationale is difficult, Rashi should have addressed this issue in his remarks on the earlier verses, “it shall not move,” and, “they shall not be removed from it.” And if Rashi maintains that this explanation does not pose a difficulty [on the contrary — it is so simple that Rashi does not need to write it because the novice student of Scripture¹³ will reach this conclusion by himself], what compelled Rashi to offer this explanation here (and even support it with proofs)?

4.

STRANGE TERMINOLOGY

Some commentators¹⁴ resolve the first question (above in section 1) as follows: *Peshuto shel mikra* implies that “it shall not be torn” (“it shall not move,” and, “they shall not be removed”) are not commandments. Rather, each of these verses provides a rationale for what was stated previously. However, had the Torah **only** intended to provide a rationale, it should have written, “**so that** it will not tear” (as the *Gemara* asks). By writing, “**it shall not be torn**” (“**it shall not** move,” and, “**they shall not** be removed”), the Torah hints that these clauses have a **double** meaning: (a) Understood simply, they provide a rationale for an earlier directive; and, (b) a **commandment**, “It shall not be torn.”

However, a difficulty remains (as mentioned above in section 3): Why does Rashi not offer this explanation **earlier** in his remarks on, “it shall not move,” and, “they shall not be removed”?

¹³ {“*Ben chamesh lemikra*,” in the Hebrew original, meaning, “a five-year-old beginning to study Scripture.” This is a term borrowed from *Pirkei Avos*, which teaches that the appropriate age for a child to begin studying Scripture is at the age of five. Rashi wrote his commentary on *Tanach* to solve problems that a 5-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse. Additionally, Rashi never expects the student to know more than the plain meaning of the earlier verses in the Torah.}

¹⁴ *Sifsei Chachamim* (in the name of *Gur Aryeh*) gloss on Rashi.

5.

EXTREME PASSIVE

The explanation: According to *pshat*, “it shall not move,” and, “they shall not be removed” are **not** rationales but commandments. For, as mentioned, if they were rationales, the Torah would have written, “**so that** they will not be removed,” and, “**so that** it will not move” (as the *Gemara* asks).

Although the Torah does not write {in the imperative form}, “**you** shall not **remove** them,” or (“**you** shall not **move**”), a command directed toward a **person**, written in second person, **you** shall not do so. But, “they shall not **be removed**” {in passive form} means that **the poles** should not be removed from the rings (and likewise, “**it** shall not move”).

Nonetheless, we can still interpret these verses as commandments. The onus is upon a **person** to ensure that the poles are not removed from the rings (and likewise, that “it shall not move”). This is similar to the command earlier in the verse, “**The poles shall be** in the Ark's rings,” which is certainly a **commandment** despite the Torah not speaking of a **person's** action, but rather speaking of the **poles** (“**The poles shall be** in the Ark's rings”).

However, our verse is unlike the other verses. Our verse states, “*lo yikarei'ah* {it shall not be torn}” (with the vowel *kamatz* under the letter *kuf*, and the vowel *tzeirei* under the letter *reish*), in the *nif'al*¹⁵ verb construct. Thus, **if** the phrase, “*lo yikarei'ah*” is a commandment, it must come to modify and add to the prohibition. As **Rashi** clarifies (regarding the verse,¹⁶ “No work *yei'aseh* {may be done} on these days”), “even through others.”¹⁷¹⁸ This implies that the

¹⁵ {In the Hebrew language, root-verbs are generally two or three letters, that are then plugged in to many different forms depending on the vowels, prefixes, and suffixes, in order to change the tense, person and subject. The *nif'al* construct takes the verb, places a *nun* as the prefix and adjusts the vowels as such turning the verb into passive form.}

¹⁶ *Shemos* 12:16. {This verse discusses the obligation to refrain from working on festivals.}

¹⁷ {That is to say that a Jew cannot have another person perform work on his behalf on the festivals.}

¹⁸ The difference between *yikarei'ah*, *yei'aseh* and *yei'achel*, (where the first letter word's root has the vowel *kamatz*, in comparison with *yizach* {it shall not move} and *yasuru* {they shall not be removed}) is that these words in the *nif'al* construct include any way of performing the activity. As Rashi writes, “even through others.” Similarly, “*lo yei'achel*” which Rashi (*Pesachim* 21b s.v. *Lo*) explains to mean “any type of eating.” Whereas *yizach* and *yasuru* do not give this connotation.

commands, “it shall not move,” and “they shall not be removed” (and many other warnings given regarding the *Mishkan* and its furnishings) do not apply to others who do so {whereas, “it shall not be torn,” is forbidden even for others}. However, *pshat* doesn’t support making such a distinction.

Therefore, Rashi explains this clause to mean, “so that it will not tear.” That is, this verse’s unusual construct indicates this clause is offering a rationale, unlike, “it shall not move,” and, “they shall not be removed.”

Nonetheless, the verse does not explicitly state, “**so that** it will not tear,” but rather, “it shall not be torn.” This indicates that it is **both** a command and an independent prohibition (as in section 4, above).

6.

THE CONSTRUCT’S DOUBLE FUNCTION

We still need to clarify, however: If this clause is intended as a **command**, why does the Torah only allude to this command (by not writing directly, “**so that** it will not tear)? A command should be written clearly and explicitly!

To address this question Rashi continues, “This is enumerated among the Torah’s prohibitions....” Although “*Lo yikarei’ah*” also connotes a prohibition, this clause is not to be construed as the source of prohibition against tearing the robe, for we already know this from elsewhere, as we will explain. Rather, the Torah’s intention here “to **enumerate** it among the prohibitions.” In other words, the verse intends to enumerate this **previously known** prohibition among the 365 prohibitions. **Therefore**, this clause must connote a prohibition, but **this** prohibition can only be written as a hint.

What is the source of the prohibition against tearing the robe? It is clearly **understood** based on a **previous** verse:¹⁹ “Make sacred garments... that are **for dignity** and **beauty**,” and a torn garment is neither dignified nor beautiful.

¹⁹ *Shemos* 28:2.

THE FORBIDDEN COUNT

Seemingly, this explanation might raise a question: In many places,²⁰ the Torah adds a second prohibition so that a person “violates two prohibitions,” or the like. Nonetheless, both prohibitions are written as commandments. Accordingly, why here does the Torah not write explicitly that tearing the robe is prohibited (even though the Torah’s intent is only to point out that this prohibition is to be enumerated among the prohibitions.)

Rashi addresses this issue by writing, “Whoever tears it violates a prohibition, **because this** is enumerated among the Torah’s prohibitions” (and not, “**and this** is enumerated...”). Meaning, the **reason** a person who tears the robe violates a prohibition is because “this is enumerated among the Torah’s prohibitions.” In other words, the reason why a person who tears the robe violates a prohibition is **only** because “this is enumerated among the Torah’s prohibitions.”

In other instances, the Torah adds prohibitions in order to impress upon a person the severity of these prohibitions, so he will more easily avoid transgressing.

In contrast, by teaching that “whoever tears the robe violates a prohibition,” the Torah does not intend for a person to feel that this prohibition is more severe. Rather, the Torah’s intent is to **enumerate** *tearing the robe* among the prohibitions as an **outcome** of the teaching that “whoever tears the robe violates a prohibition.” Since this prohibition is not meant to make people view this sin more severely, it can be hinted at {and does not need to be spelled out explicitly}.

On this basis we can also understand why Rashi **deviates** from the *Gemara’s* wording. The *Gemara* writes, “One who tears one of the priestly

²⁰ See Rashi’s commentary on *Shemos* 34:23 (“**Many commandments...** {in the Torah are stated and repeated, many of them three or four times, in order to increase a person’s liability and to mete out punishment according to the number of prohibitions...}”); *Vayikra* 6:6, 11:44, 23:31.

garments **incurs lashes**,” while Rashi writes, “Whoever tears the robe **violates a prohibition**.” Rashi’s wording does not emphasize the **severity** of the prohibition of tearing the robe (to the extent that by doing so, a person incurs lashes). On the contrary, “*Lo yikarei’ah*” only implies a prohibition as a consequence of (this prohibition) being “enumerated among the Torah’s prohibitions.”

8.

ADDING MITZVOS TO MISHKAN CONSTRUCTION

Still, this explanation is still not altogether cogent. Why specifically here does Torah add a prohibition solely in order to enumerate it among the prohibitions? To address this question, Rashi continues: “Likewise, ‘and the breastplate shall not move’; and likewise, ‘they shall not be removed from it,’ mentioned {regarding the Ark’s poles}.” Neither of these verses are the first in which these prohibitions are taught. Accordingly, we can conclude that regarding the construction of the *Mishkan*, the Torah’s intent is to increase the number of prohibitions.

When discussing the breastplate the Torah says,²¹ “They shall attach the breastplate... with a *techeles*²² cord so that it will **remain** above the *ephod*’s belt.” Rashi explains, “So that the breastplate will be **attached** to the *ephod*’s belt.” We already know, though, that the breastplate must be **attached** to the *ephod*. Similarly, regarding the Ark’s poles, the Torah says,²³ “The poles shall remain in the Ark’s rings.” That the poles must remain in the Ark’s rings was already clearly commanded.

Nevertheless, Torah adds the **prohibitions**, “it shall not move,” and, “they shall not be removed.” This proves that generally, regarding constructing the *Mishkan* and the priestly garments, the Torah’s intent is to increase the number of prohibitions. Consequently, we have a better

²¹ *Shemos* 28:28.

²² {A color identified as turquoise or light blue.}

²³ *Shemos* 25:15.

understanding of why the Torah writes, “it shall not be torn” (and not, “**so that** it will not tear,”) **solely** to add a prohibition.

9.

HOW TO TEAR

Rashi’s commentary contains wondrous *halachic* novellae {which we will appreciate by prefacing with a ruling of Rambam}. Rambam rules as follows:²⁴

One who tears the robe’s neck opening incurs lashes, as it says, “It shall not be torn.” This applies to all the priestly garments. One who tears them in a destructive manner incurs lashes.

At first glance, Rambam’s implies a distinction between the laws of the robe and the other garments. One who tears the other garments only incurs lashes if he does so “with destructive intent,” but one who tears the robe’s neck opening incurs lashes in any case.

The later rabbinical scholars²⁵ explain the Rambam’s position: A person who tears any of the priestly garments incurs lashes based on the proof-text, “You shall not do so....”²⁶ (**This** prohibition only applies to destroying with destructive intent.) In contrast, the source of the prohibition of tearing the robe is, “it shall not be torn,” for which a person is liable to receive lashes in any event.

However, Rashi maintains that according to *pshat*, the Torah repeats, “it shall not be torn,” **not** in order to add another **prohibition**, but rather to enumerate this prohibition “among the Torah’s prohibitions.”

²⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Klei Hamikdash*,” ch. 9, par. 3.

²⁵ {In the Hebrew original, “*Achronim*”; literally, “the later ones.” The term *Achronim* refers to the Rabbis of the late 15th century, and on.} *Minchas Chinuch*; *Tzafnas Paneach al Harambam*; *Hafla’ah*, “Addenda” (54b); reproduced in *Tzafnas Paneach’s* commentary on Torah, loc. cit.

²⁶ *Devarim* 12:4. {The context is as follows: The previous verses discuss what is required of the Jewish nation upon entering the Land of Israel: “Do away with all the places where the nations whom you are driving out worship their deities.... You must tear down their altars, break up their sacred pillars, burn their *Asherah* trees, and chop down the statues of their deities, obliterating their names from that place.” The following verse, “You shall not do so to Hashem...,” as indicated above, forbids destroying holy objects or garments.}

What thus emerges is that Rashi maintains (in his Torah commentary) that no distinction is to be made between the robe and other priestly garments regarding the method of tearing.

10.

THE WINE OF TORAH

From the “wine of Torah”²⁷ in Rashi’s commentary:

Seemingly, we must clarify (in light of the deeper teachings of Torah): Why does Rashi quote the prooftext, “it shall not move,” from our *parshah*, **before** quoting the prooftext, “they shall not be removed,” found in the **previous** *parshah*?

Also, why does Rashi repeat the word, “**vechein** {and likewise}, ‘they shall not be removed’”?

These questions point to the following: The prohibition that “they {the ark’s poles} shall not be removed” provides additional proof beyond the prohibition that “it {the breastplate} shall not move,” and is a greater novelty. Therefore, Rashi mentions “they shall not be removed” after writing, “it shall not move.” For this reason, Rashi repeats “*vechein*.”

The explanation: The prohibition, “it shall not be torn” is not unexpected. It is well understood that damaging the priestly garments is prohibited.

Rashi then continues, “**and likewise**, ‘the breastplate shall not move,’” teaching us that removing the breastplate from the *ephod* is also prohibited, even though doing so is not **destructive**. However, this prohibition, too, is understandable, as the Torah says,²⁸ “Aharon will bear the names of the children of Israel on the breastplate of judgment **on his heart...** as a constant **remembrance** before Hashem.”

²⁷ {“*Yeiyno shel Torah*” in the original Hebrew, i.e, the deeper teachings of Torah.}

²⁸ *Shemos* 28:29.

In contrast, the rationale for the command that “the poles shall remain in the Ark's rings, they may not be removed from it”²⁹ is not at all understood. The Ark's poles were made to carry the Ark from place to place. Why, then, must they **always** remain in the rings? On the contrary! Simply understood, it would have been more sensible for the poles to have been inserted in the rings when a need arose to transport the Ark.

To address this issue, Rashi writes (offering a second prooftext), “**likewise**, ‘they shall not be removed from it,’ said about the Ark’s **poles**,” indicating that to remove the poles from the rings is also prohibited, **equal** to the prohibition of tearing and destroying the priestly garments.

11.

TORAH MUST TRAVEL

Why, in fact, was it forbidden to remove the poles from the Ark's rings? *Sefer Hachinuch*³⁰ explains:

We were instructed not to remove the Ark's poles from the Ark in case the need arose to travel somewhere with the Ark quickly. Perhaps due to the travail and haste we would neglect to ensure that the poles were tightly inserted.... But if the poles remained ready at all times and were never removed from the Ark, they would remain firm.

From this we can glean a wondrous directive relevant to every person's *avodah*:

The Ark held the tablets, exemplifying Torah. As the *Chinuch* writes:³¹ “The Ark housed the Torah.”

²⁹ {Ibid 25:15}

³⁰ *Mitzvah* 96.

³¹ Ibid.

Even a Jew who studies Torah is considered analogous to “an Ark,” for he becomes a place where the Torah resides. He may entertain the following thought, especially if Torah is his occupation: “At the times when I must devote myself to Torah study, I must be entirely invested in study and detached from everything around me. **At that time**, what sense would it make for me to think about another Jew?”

This then is the lesson from the Ark poles: Even when the Ark was in the Holy of Holies, the holiest place in the world (thus, only the *kohen gadol* entered that chamber on Yom Kippur) the poles had to be “**prepared at all times**” in order to **quickly** bring the Ark to wherever it was needed. Moreover, removing the poles from the rings would have been **just as** severe as tearing and damaging the priestly garments!

So, too, regarding the Torah: No matter how invested a Jew is in studying Torah, he must **always** be ready to bring the Torah whenever and wherever it is needed. He should do this “quickly,” bringing Torah to more and more Jewish people.

-From a talk delivered Shabbos *parshas Tetzaveh*, 5732 (1972)