



Likkutei Sichos

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A Unit of Six Days

Translated by Rabbi Mendel Rapoport
Edited by Rabbi Eliezer Robbins and Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

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1.

A QUESTION OF WORDS

We have spoken numerous times regarding Rashi's absolute precision in the wording of his Torah commentary. This precision applies not only to the body of his commentary, but also to his caption, which he quotes from the verse (that prompts his remarks).

In light of this introduction, one of Rashi's comments on our *parshah* needs to be clarified: At the beginning of the section dealing with the festivals¹ (after the preface, "{Hashem} spoke... speak to the Jewish people... the festivals of Hashem... these are My festivals"), the Torah says:² "For six days, *melachah*³ may be done, but the seventh day is a Shabbos of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any *melachah*..." (Afterward, the Torah continues, "these are His festivals" and enumerates all of the festivals.)

Rashi quotes the words "six days" in his caption and comments: "Why is the Shabbos juxtaposed with the festivals?⁴ In order to teach that a person who desecrates the festivals is regarded as though he desecrated the Shabbos, and he who keeps the festivals is regarded as though he kept the Shabbos."

We need to clarify: The difficulty in the verse is — in **Rashi's** own words — "Why is the subject of **Shabbos** juxtaposed with the festivals?" As such, he should have **only** quoted the words "but the seventh day is a Shabbos." Instead, he only quotes the words, "six days," while he does not even allude to the words "but the seventh day is a Shabbos" by adding the word, "etcetera"!

¹ *Vayikra* 23:1-2.

² *Vayikra* 23:3.

³ {The 39 categories of creative activity prohibited on Shabbos.}

⁴ {The times of which are variable, being dependent upon the proclamation of the Sanhedrin.}

2.

WHAT IS THE QUOTE?

We can surmise that Rashi does not quote the words “six days” separately {in order to comment on these words}, but rather (as the beginning of) the entire verse {to which his comments apply}:

As in several other instances, Rashi quotes the beginning of a verse or subject (without even adding “etc.”), although his explanation is relevant to the entire verse or subject.

For example: On the verse,⁵ “they shall make the *ephod*,”⁶ Rashi comments:

If I would try to explain {the making of the *ephod* and the *choshen*⁷ according to the order of the verses, my explanation would be fragmentary and a reader might err....} Therefore, I am writing {the sequence of} how they were made....

Rashi then explains **all** of the details involved in the making the *ephod*, as recorded in the entire *parshah*. Nevertheless, Rashi only quotes the words, “they shall make the *ephod*” (without adding “etc.”).

Similarly, we find this practice in Rashi’s explanation (which immediately follows his remarks on the words, “six days”) of the verse, “These are the festivals of Hashem, the holy convocations, which you shall designate in their appropriate times.”⁸ Rashi explains the rationale for repeating the **entire** verse;⁹ nevertheless, he only quotes the beginning of the verse, “these are the festivals of Hashem,” without writing, “etc.”

⁵ *Shemos* 28:6.

⁶ {Lit., “apron.” This was one of the eight garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*.}

⁷ {The breastplate. This was one of the eight garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*.}

⁸ *Vayikra* 23:4.

⁹ {Just stated in 23:2.}

However, Rashi's remarks on our verse cannot be understood in this way. Rashi is only satisfied quoting the beginning of a verse or subject when what he quotes contains (at the very least, a part of) the content of his explanation. As in the examples mentioned previously, Rashi is not satisfied quoting, "you shall make"; he also adds, "(you shall make) **the ephod**," because he addresses the *ephod* in his explanation — making the *ephod*. Similarly, regarding the verse, "these are the festivals of Hashem, etc.," Rashi is not satisfied quoting the word, "these"; rather, he quotes, "these are the festivals of Hashem."

However, in our case: In Rashi's remarks, the relevant words are "(Why is) **the subject of Shabbos...**"; but the words, "six days" do not convey (even a part of) "the subject of Shabbos"!

3.

ANOTHER QUESTION

Another question regarding Rashi's wording: Why does Rashi begin with the negative — "he who **desecrates** the festivals" and not with the positive — "he who **fulfills** {the obligations of} the festivals?" This question is especially salient since the {first} juxtaposed verse¹⁰ suggests that the similarity {of Shabbos to the festivals} is something positive.

(Although this interpretation (in this order) was quoted from *Toras Kohanim*,¹¹ it is well-known (as mentioned several times) that in his commentary, Rashi does not necessarily quote the teachings of our Rabbis in their exact words. Rather, he paraphrases the teachings in a way that best clarifies the simple understanding of a verse — and specifically using the clearest style. In addition, the *Toras Kohanim*, according to our version, presents its explanation *not* on the particular words of the verse, but rather

¹⁰ {v. 23:2, which refers to both Shabbos and the Festivals.}

¹¹ {A Midrash on the Torah.}

on the general subject matter. {Thus, the order in which the words are presented is not instructive.})

Seemingly, we can explain this as follows: The purpose of juxtaposing Shabbos and the festivals is primarily to warn a person not to treat *melachah*¹² on the festivals lightly. Since the entire calendrical framework of the festivals (and consequently, the prohibition against *melachah*) depends on the **Jewish court**, the primary emphasis and warning {implicit in this teaching} is that “he who **desecrates** the festivals is regarded as though he had desecrated the Shabbos.” For this reason, Rashi begins with the primary point (“he who desecrates”) and only afterward, he continues {with the secondary point} (“he who fulfills”).

This answer, however, is insufficient. Since the **verse** equates Shabbos to the festivals (not by using a negative expression — desecrating Shabbos or the festivals, but rather) by issuing the positive commandment to **keep** and **fulfill** {the obligations of} the festivals (from which we derive the concept that “he who desecrates...”) — Rashi in his commentary on the **verse** should have only presented the positive aspect. At the very least, Rashi should have followed the order of the proof-text — “he who fulfills etc.,” followed by, “he who desecrates etc.”!

4.

INTRODUCTION TO SHABBOS

The explanation is:

The question, “Why is the subject of Shabbos juxtaposed to the festivals?” in regards to Shabbos **alone**, does not pose a great difficulty according to the simple meaning of the text. As many of the commentaries explain, even Shabbos is included by the phrase, “these are the festivals of

¹² {Lit. “work.” This term refers to acts that are halachically considered *work* and therefore are prohibited on Shabbos and the festivals.}

Hashem.”¹³ Since Shabbos is a day when *melachah* is forbidden, we can refer to Shabbos as an “appointed day.”¹⁴ Even if we were to presume that Shabbos cannot be considered one of the “appointed festivals of Hashem which you shall designate,” we can nevertheless understand the mention of Shabbos to be parenthetical, in order to differentiate between Shabbos and the festivals: a) Unlike the festivals {the sanctification of} Shabbos day does not depend on the Jewish court;¹⁵ b) In contrast to the festivals, Shabbos is referred to as *Shabbos Shabbason*¹⁶ because *melachah* for food preparation is also forbidden.

Rashi’s conundrum relates to the introduction to Shabbos: “For six days *melachah* may be done.” It is understandable why the Torah must preface with “for six days *melachah* may be done” the first time that the Torah commands us to observe Shabbos. Since the Torah forbids *melachah* on Shabbos, the Torah first clarifies that we must not be concerned for our livelihood because “for six days you shall work and perform all of your *melachah*.”¹⁷

[Furthermore: a) The preface “for six days” is appropriate in that verse; the reason for keeping Shabbos is because “for **six days** Hashem created...He rested {on the seventh day}; b) From the words, “for six days you shall work and perform all of your *melachah*,” we learn — as **Rashi** himself states — that “when Shabbos arrives, it should appear as if all of your work is complete, etc.”]

Our *parshah*, *parshas Emor*, however, is not the primary source for the mitzvah of Shabbos. (Here it is mentioned incidentally because of the festivals.) The question therefore arises: What connection does the **introduction** to Shabbos, “**for six days**,” have with the “festivals”? The Torah should have begun with the clause “but the seventh day is a *Shabbos Shabbason!*”

¹³ *Vayikra* 23:4.

¹⁴ {*Mo-ed* in the original Hebrew. This is the same word used to refer to the festivals in the Torah.}

¹⁵ {Which were set by the Jewish court every year until the creation of the present day Jewish calendar by Hillel Neisah in 359 CE..}

¹⁶ {Lit. “Shabbos of *Shabbason*.” This term connotes a higher level of Shabbos, a day of **complete** rest.}

¹⁷ {*Shemos* 20:9.}

Rashi resolves this difficulty by prefacing with (a teaching of our Sages): “Why is the subject of Shabbos juxtaposed to the festivals? In order to teach you that he who desecrates, etc.” The Torah wants to equate the severity of doing *melachah* on the festivals to the severity of doing *melachah* on Shabbos. We will then immediately understand why the Torah begins with the introduction, “For six days *melachah* may be done.”

5.

A UNIT OF SIX DAYS

The explanation:

The term “six days” does not refer (only) to six **individual** days, but rather to a unit of days (as well); a time period of six days. As Rashi comments a few verses later on:¹⁸ “**Wherever** the word *shivas*¹⁹ is used, it is a noun which means a septet of days.... And so, too, **any** instance of the term an *shmonas* {an octet}, *sheishes* {a sextet}, etc.,” **one** six-day unit, or seven-day unit, or eight-day unit.

This is what, “For six days *melachah* may be done” means: Hashem set forth a **distinct** time period of “six days”; **only** in this period is *melachah* allowed. Meaning, *melachah* is forbidden during all time periods that are not included in the (**mundane**) “six days” (the days of the **week**).

In light of this, we understand why, before introducing the portion dealing with the festivals, the Torah prefaces with the clause, “For six days *melachah* may be done:” The Torah defines two kinds of general time-spans regarding the performance of *melachah*: a) the time of the “six days,” when *melachah* is permitted — “work may be done”; b) **every** other time, when *melachah* is forbidden.

¹⁸*Vayikra* 23:8.

¹⁹ {The nominalized form of the Hebrew for “seven” .}

It is therefore understood how our Sages learn from here that “he who desecrates the festivals is regarded as though he had desecrated the Shabbos; and he who keeps the festivals is regarded as though he had kept the Shabbos.” True, regarding punishment, and the like, the prohibition of *melachah* on Shabbos is different from that of the festivals. Nevertheless, in general, performing *melachah* on the festivals (since it is not included in the “six days” time period) is in the **same** category as Shabbos — it is as if he desecrated the Shabbos, etc.

6.

TWO TIME PERIODS

In light of this explanation, we can understand why Rashi only quotes the words “six days,” and does not even add “etc.” This is to stress that “six days” is a distinct construct and category — and the next segment of the verse, “and on the seventh day etc.,” is not a **continuation** to the “six days” (on the subject of the verse — *melachah*). Rather, it is a second sort of time period when *melachah* is forbidden; consequently, “he who desecrates... and he who keeps, etc.”

Rashi also does not add in his quotation, “*melachah* may be done,” because performing *melachah* then is **permissible**. The distinction between the “six days” and (Shabbos and) the festivals relates to the **prohibition** against performing *melachah*.

Alternatively: With the words “six days,” Rashi refers to the **general** subject of the “six days,” as we find regarding “they shall make the *ephod*,” as mentioned above.

With this explanation, we can appreciate the order of Rashi’s comments: First, he mentions “he who desecrates,” followed by “he who fulfills.” The general equivalence of Shabbos to the festivals is derived from the words “six days,” as discussed. This demonstrates that the focus here is

on the **desecration** of the festivals: A person who violates the festivals by performing *melachah*, thereby violating the restriction of the “six days,” imparts {something of} the permissible category {*melachah*} into the forbidden time period, outside of the “six days” time period. Consequently, it is “as if” he has violated the Shabbos. And from the downside, we can infer the upside — from this {negative consequence}, we understand that “he who fulfills the festivals... is regarded as though he had kept the Shabbos.”

7.

THE DUALITY OF THE JEW

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

There is a well-known statement of our Sages regarding the verse, “For six days you shall work” — “This {phrase, ‘you shall work’} constitutes a positive commandment.” Meaning, performing *melachah* during the six week-days is not something that the Torah merely **permits**; rather, it is a **commandment** and a method of serving Hashem. As known, one must preface {Shabbos observance} with {the pursuit of a livelihood}, “in all that you do” — creating a natural conduit, in order to bring about that “Hashem, your L-rd, will bless you.”

On the other hand, **this** manner of conduct only suits the physical body of a Jew, the way his soul is expressed in his body. Due to the concealment {of Divinity} experienced in the body, a person must conduct himself, according to **the Torah**, in a manner that most accords with the natural order.²⁰ As our Sages say, “One does not rely on a miracle”;²¹ “the law of the land is the law {of the Torah}”;²² and the like.

From the perspective of a Jew’s soul, however, it is not only unnecessary to perform *melachah* but on the contrary, there should be no

²⁰ See *Berachos* 35b: “*Harbei asu...*”

²¹ See *Pesachim* 64b; *Zohar*, vol. 1, pp. 111b, 112b.

²² *Gittin* 10b.

melachah at all. Being that the soul is not confined to the body and its nature, and the soul “was not sunk into exile,”²³ the soul is beyond the concealment {of Divinity} in this world. The soul stands “in front of the King”²⁴; at this level {of closeness to Hashem}, performing *melachah* is comparable to “one who gestures in front of the King.”²⁵ The soul is akin to “one who **prays** the entire day.”²⁶ Consequently, it is forbidden to perform *melachah*, even to “gesture,” for the entire day. Therefore, from the soul’s perspective, a state of “rest” is mandated.

These are the two extremes demanded of a Jew: During the “six days,” during which, **in accordance with Torah**, he is involved with his bodily needs, this “work” is a **positive commandment**. On Shabbos and festivals, when the Jewish people are illuminated by the *light* of their souls, a person must go beyond attending to the body and its natural needs; therefore, it is understandable that performing work during those times would be inconceivable.

Since the soul is beyond the body and exile, eventually the soul will also prevail over the body. Notwithstanding the present constraints of the body in exile, the potency of the soul, which is beyond constraints and exile, will be expressed through the body, until the soul will actually free the body from exile, with the complete and ultimate redemption through our righteous Moshiach, imminently.

-Based on a talk delivered Shabbos *parshas Emor*, 5734 (1974)

²³ *Likkutei Dibburim*, vol. 4, p. 692b.

²⁴ {This connotes a closeness to Hashem and therefore a reality of G-dliness.}

²⁵ *Chagigah* 5b. {I.e., it shows disrespect.}

²⁶ *Berachos* 21a.