

Tamim Tihiyeh Im Hashem Elokecha

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Some verses in the Torah go to the heart of the Jewish people. One of these is “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” “be whole with Hashem your God” (*Devarim* 18:13). Indeed, the Ramban and the Rambam debate whether “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*” should be counted as a distinct mitzva among the 613 (per the Ramban) or, instead, as a generalized statement addressing the complete system of *mitzvos* as a whole (per the Rambam). Rashi’s interpretation of “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” that individuals and the nation should walk simply with Hashem throughout life, places him in agreement with the Rambam that this verse is an all-encompassing precept rather than a separable mitzva.

Yet, in contrast with both the Rambam and the Ramban who interpret this verse conceptually, Rashi approaches his explanation from a literary analytical framework, focusing most centrally on the verse’s words in a way that highlights underlying subtleties. Rather than reaching his conclusion primarily by conceptual thought or philosophic reflection, Rashi arrives at his interpretation of this verse through strong focus on the Torah’s language.

In addition, apparently emulating what he perceives as the Torah’s style of careful expression, Rashi uses great precision in his *own* language. Through words packed with meaning, Rashi’s compact, precise, nuanced language in his comment to this verse – like DNA encoding a tremendous amount of creative information – conveys layers of implication for the development of the individual and the composition of the nation. Thus, Rashi’s explanation of “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” especially when seen alongside the interpretations of the Rambam and the Ramban, gives a glimpse into his unique blend of accessible simplicity and well-woven complexity.

The Interpretations of the Rambam, the Ramban and Rashi

The Rambam, the Ramban and Rashi present three different interpretations of “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*.”

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The verses beforehand and afterward discuss the prohibitions against consulting any of a variety of soothsayers. Given this context, the Rambam understands “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*” to prohibit belief in occult pseudo-science. According to the Rambam, this prohibition has sweeping conceptual application, as it requires a person at all times to seek truth and avoid superstition or any other type of foolish belief system (*Hil. Avoda Zara* 11:16).

Indeed, the Ramban comments that the reason the Rambam omitted “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*” from the *Sefer HaMitzvos* potentially is that the Rambam believes it encapsulates the entire Torah, and the Rambam declines to count all-encompassing *mitzvos* among his count of the 613 (*Sefer HaMitzvos, Shoresh* 4). As the Ramban states when discussing the eighth mitzva that he says the Rambam should have included:

ואולי חשב הרב שהיא צוואה כוללת המצות כולן ללכת בדרכי התורה כענין שני
(תהלי' קיט) אשרי תמימי דרך ההולכים בתורת ה' ולכן לא הביאה בחשבוננו.
*And perhaps the master [i.e., the Rambam] thought it is a commandment
that encompasses all of the commandments, to walk in the way of the Torah,
as it says (Psalms 119) 'glad are the wholehearted [temimei darech] who
go in the Torah of Hashem,' and accordingly he did not include it in his
count.*

The Ramban, himself, counts “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*” as a separate mitzva within the *taryag* (Ramban, *Mitzvos Shachach Osan HaRav* 8). He speaks of instances when soothsaying and similar practices appear to have been efficacious and concludes that, nevertheless, the verse “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*” specifically prohibits reliance on these ways of anticipating the future because they corrode reliance on Hashem as the real power deciding outcomes (Ramban on *Bereishis* 17:1 and *Devarim* 18:9-13). Thus, the Ramban enumerates a separate mitzva among the 613, based on “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” to internalize and – by relying on the Torah’s prescribed methods to address paths forward – to act upon the fact that Hashem ultimately determines the course of human experience.

Rashi presents a third understanding of the verse “*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” explaining that it tells us to desist from putting too much thought into future events altogether. He states (*Devarim* 18:13):

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך. התהלך עמו בתמימות ותצפה לו ולא תחקור אחר
העתידות אלא כל מה שיבא עליך קבל בתמימות ואז תהיה עמו ולחלקו (ספרי קעג).
Be whole with Hashem your God. Walk with Him wholeheartedly and

look toward Him – and do not investigate into future events; instead, accept everything that comes upon you wholeheartedly. And then you will be with Him and within His portion (Sifrei 173).

The Rambam and the Ramban focus on the permissible and impermissible ways of examining the future, while Rashi raises the more fundamental question whether the future should be critically examined *at all*.¹ Rather than interpreting “*tamim tihyeh im Hashem Elokecha*” as a mandate to seek truth and avoid foolish belief systems generally, like the Rambam does, or as a specific requirement to internalize the conviction that Hashem is the final arbiter of human events and there is no other inevitability, like the Ramban does, Rashi explains this verse as saying that our primary response to an uncertain future is to stay focused on the present, walking simply with Hashem and not becoming overly concerned with future events.

It is difficult to understand what exactly Rashi means when he says not to investigate into future events, given the need to intelligently think ahead. But his approach comes into sharp focus through close analysis of the language that he uses to comment on this verse.

His’halech Imo BeSemimus

First, it is noteworthy just how original Rashi’s formulation is. Although he bases his interpretation on *Sifrei* 173, that statement in the *midrash* simply says:

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך. כשאתה תם חלקך עם ה' אלקיך וכן דוד אומר (תהלים כו:יא) ואני בתומי אלך פדני וחנני (תהילים מא:ג) ואני בתומי תמכת בי ותציבני לפניך לעולם.

Be whole with Hashem your God. When you are whole, your portion will be with Hashem your God. And thus did David say (Tehillim 26:11): “And I in My wholeness will go; redeem me and be gracious unto me,” and (Tehillim 41:13): “And I in my wholeness You supported me and You placed me before You forever.”

¹ It is possible to understand Rashi as saying the same thing as the Ramban and to explain Rashi’s statement “*lo sachkor achar ha-asidos*,” “do not investigate into future events,” to mean to avoid using the occult methods that are listed in the prior verses, and, instead, to use methods to which the Torah attests, such as the *nevi'im* and the *urim ve-tumim*, as the ways of anticipating the future (see, for example, Rashi’s comments on Bamidbar 23:23 and *Devarim* 18:14). However, my father-in-law, Rabbi Levi Meier *zt”l*, told me that he heard from HaRav Yitzchak Twersky *zt”l* that Rashi’s statement “*lo sachkor achar ha-asidos*” is a third interpretation of this verse, separate and apart from those of the Rambam and the Ramban, and it means – as it states on its face – to refrain from overthinking the future.

Rashi changes the *Sifrei's* statement to his longer and completely original statement. Indeed, Rashi's opening phrase "*his'halech imo be-semimus*," "walk with Him wholeheartedly," is the closest to the *Sifrei's* language but, even in this phrase, he amends the *Sifrei* (1) to use the full form "*tamim*" instead of the abbreviated form "*tam*" and (2) to add the word "*his'halech*," "walk."

The reason Rashi opts for the word "*tamim*" rather than "*tam*" is because "*tamim*" is the word that the verse uses and Rashi hews closely to the verse's language. And the reason Rashi adds the word "*his'halech*" – and why he uses the *hispa'el* (reflexive) verb form "*his'halech*," "walk," rather than the simple verb form "*leich*," "go," which the *Sifrei* uses in its quotation of *Tehillim* 26:11 – likely is because, while the word "*tamim*" generally means "whole" or "unblemished" (see, for example, Rashi's comments to *Vayikra* 1:3 and 23:15), the previous verses in the Torah that use the word "*tamim*" to describe a person's relationship with Hashem always connect it with the word "*his'halech*."

Thus, *Bereishis* 6:9 states:

אלא תולדות נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדרתיו את האלקים התהלך נח.
These are the descendants of Noach – Noach was a righteous man; he was whole in his generations; Noach walked with God.

Likewise, *Bereishis* 17:1 states:

ויהי אברם בן תשעים שנה ותשע שנים וירא ה' אל אברם ויאמר אליו אני קל שקי התהלך לפני והיה תמים.
And when Avram was 99 years old, Hashem appeared to Avram and said to him, "I am Keil Shakkai – walk before Me and be whole."

Given the Torah's correlation between the words "*tamim*" (whole) and "*his'halech*" (walk) when describing a person's relationship with Hashem, and considering the *Sifrei's* quotation of *Tehillim* 26:11 about "going" with "wholeness," Rashi formulates the opening part of his explanation of this verse as "*his'halech imo be-semimus*," "walk with Him wholeheartedly."²

With this basis for adding the word "*his'halech*," a pivotal emphasis comes into high relief that this walking with Hashem occurs in the here-and-now. At the beginning of Parshas Noach, Rashi contrasts the Torah's use of the word "*his'halech*" about Noach and Avraham as follows (*Bereishis* 6:9):

² By adding the word "*his'halech*," Rashi also alludes to the fact that the system of *halacha* is the central orienting point for this relationship with Hashem, given that the word "*his'halech*" derives from the same root as the word "*halacha*."

את האלקים התהלך נח. ובאברהם הוא אומר אשר התהלכתי לפניו (ברא' כד:מ) נח היה צריך סעד לתמכו אבל אברהם היה מתחזק ומהלך בצדקו מאליו.

התהלך. לשון עבר וזהו שמושו של ל' בלשון כבוד משמשת להבא ולשעבר בלשון אחד. קום התהלך (ברא' יג:יז) להבא, התהלך נח לשעבר. התפלל בעד עבדיך (שמואל א' יב:יט) להבא. ובא והתפלל אל הבית הזה (מ"א ח:מב) לשון עבר, אלא שהו"ו שבראשו הפכו להבא.

Noah walked with God. In the case of Avraham it says "[Hashem] before Whom I walked" (Bereishis 24:40); Noah needed support to uphold him, but Avraham would strengthen himself and walk with righteousness by his own effort.

Walked. This is in the past tense. And the following is the usage of the "lamed" [i.e., the second letter of the root which gets a dagesh] in the "heavy" conjugation: it serves both as the future tense [i.e., the imperative] and as the past tense in the same form. "Arise walk" (Bereishis 13:17) is future; "Noah walked" is past. "Pray for your servants" (Shmuel I 12:19) is future; and "When he shall come and shall pray toward this house" (Melachim I 8:42) is past, only that the "vav" at the beginning of the word changes it into the future.

As opposed to Noah who, even when he walked with Hashem, used it merely as a crutch for support without any capacity to stand on his own feet, and whose walking with Hashem ultimately was a thing of the past – and in contrast to Avraham whose spiritual strength grew like a wellspring in unprecedented manner from the depths of his own prodigious soul, and whose walking with Hashem was future oriented – the prescription “*tamim tihyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” in Rashi’s estimation, is to walk alongside Hashem presently. This verse’s distinguishing word is “*im*,” to be with Him. As a result, Rashi explains the verse to mean “*his’halech imo*,” walk with Him, and, thereby, actively engage in a relationship with Hashem in the here-and-now (see also *Midrash Tehillim* 119).

u-Setzapeh Lo

Yet, Rashi introduces a paradox with his next phrase “*u-setzapeh lo*.” The word “*tetzapeh*” means “watch” but with the specific connotation to mean “watch from a distance.” So, while Rashi’s first phrase “*his’halech imo be-semimus*” establishes awareness of walking with Hashem presently, his second phrase “*u-setzapeh lo*” simultaneously communicates its exact opposite: this relationship with Hashem is

always aspirational, forever further ahead – it is something we have to seek with eager anticipation and to strive toward, but only asymptotically, without ever fully reaching it.³

The following are some examples of Rashi using the word “*tetzapeh*” to have an expectant, distant, future oriented quality, rather than an already actualized one. Commenting on the verse in *Parshas Vayigash* about Yaakov’s reaction to Yosef’s second dream, Rashi uses the word “*metzapeh*,” based on the same root as *tetzapeh* (*tz-p-h*), to mean looking forward with anticipation (*Bereishis* 37:11):

שמר את הדבר. היה ממתין ומצפה מתי יבא וכן שמר אמנים (ישעיהו כו:ב) וכן לא תשמר על חטאתי (איוב יד:טז) לא תמתין.

He watched the matter. He was awaiting and looking forward to when this would come to pass. In the same sense we have (Isaiah 26:2) “that watch for faithfulness” [i.e., for the performance of a promise] and (Job 14:16) “do not watch for my sin” which means “do not wait [for my sin]”.

In his interpretation of the verse’s phrase “*leil shimurim*” to describe the night of the Exodus, Rashi again uses the word “*metzapeh*” to mean looking forward with excited expectation (*Shemos* 12:42):

ליל שמורים. שהיה הקב"ה שומר ומצפה לן לקיים הבטחתו להוציאם מארץ מצרים.
It was a night of watching. The Holy One Blessed Be He was watching and looking forward to [this night], to fulfill His promise to take them out of the land of Egypt.

Likewise, in his explanation to *Yeshayahu* 33:6, Rashi paraphrases the *gemara* in *Shabbos* 31a that correlates the words “*chosen yeshuos*” with being “*metzapeh le-yeshua*,”

³ This is similar to what the Ba'al Shem Tov says about the inexhaustible “*temimus*” of talmud Torah: “A man once found an enormous treasure, way beyond his ability to carry. Even if he returned countless times to the site, he’d never be able to carry more than the tiniest fraction of it home. He was overjoyed at the wealth he was able to take back but he also realized that he had to leave behind thousands of times more. When a tzaddik studies Torah for the sake of heaven, he’s filled with joy, but he also realizes that he hasn’t learned anything compared to what remains, and the more he learns, the more he realizes how little he knows. And when a tzaddik serves God sincerely, and enjoys even the least glimpse of His awesome glory, he realizes that he hasn’t even begun to serve Him according to His greatness. ... The psalm verse says ‘God’s Torah is perfect, restoring the soul.’ I tell you the Torah is still perfect; no one has yet touched even the tip of its smallest letter. As of this hour it’s still quite perfect. ... This verse can also be translated and understood another way: ‘When God’s Torah is studied with perfect simplicity’—that is, when a person studies Torah with pious innocence, believing that he’s not even begun to comprehend its depths, that he hasn’t yet plumbed the meaning of even one letter, then ‘it restores the soul.’” Yitzchak Buxbaum, *The Light and Fire of the Baal Shem Tov* (New York, 2005) p. 257.

and uses the word “*tzipisa*,” as meaning to maintain a sense of eager expectancy. Rashi says:

.... דבר אחר אמונת עתך. את שהאמנת בהקב"ה בעתים שעברו עליך וצפית לישועה
תהיה לך לחוסן

... Another explanation is [as follows]: Faith of your times. That you believed in the Holy One Blessed Be He in times that passed over you and you looked forward to salvation shall become your strength.

Moreover, in his comments on the following verses, Rashi consistently uses words with the root *tz-p-h* to mean anticipation of something in the future: *Devarim* 28:65; *I Shmuel* 1:12; *Yeshayahu* 21:6; *Yermiyahu* 5:22; *Yechezkel* 36:17; *Hoshea* 4:8; *Micha* 7:4 & 11; *Tehillim* 62:2, 73:7, 93:5; *Mishlei* 25:14; *Iyov* 11:20; and *Koheles* 11:4.

Thus, in Rashi’s comment on “*tamim tihyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” the word “*tetzapeh*” means to be a seeker looking toward Hashem. And the dialectic accordingly emerges that (1) Rashi’s first statement tells us to walk with Hashem presently while (2) his second statement, at the same time, emphasizes Hashem’s distance.

One resolution of this dialectical tension between our proximity to and distance from Hashem is its ability to foster an energetic sense of aspiration and reach. Indeed, the word “*tetzapeh*,” which Rashi uses, conveys eager anticipation and a capacity to direct inner vision toward something or someone else that is not casual, disinterested or passive. The term “*tetzapeh*” does not reflect a wait-and-see posture. Rather, it is filled with directed emotion, brimming with expectancy. This inner, cognitive, emotional aspect is significant because the course of events of life lived with awareness of the presence of Hashem and aspiration toward an ongoing relationship with Him, notwithstanding that the goal will not be entirely actualized, is completely different than life lived without this consciousness.

VeLo Sachkor Achar HaAsidos Ela Kol Ma SheYavo Alecha Kabbel BeSemimus

These implications of Rashi’s first two statements provide context, and thereby interpretation, for his next phrase: “*ve-lo sachkor achar ha-asidos ela kol ma she-yavo alecha kabbel be-semimus*,” “and do not investigate into future events; instead, accept everything that comes upon you wholeheartedly.”⁴ In making this third statement, Rashi addresses the verses before and after “*tamim tihyeh im Hashem Elokecha*” and says that the problem with going to soothsayers is not simply their particular

⁴ There is a poetic, almost lyrical quality to this statement, especially considering that the words “*ha-asidos*” and “*be-semimus*” have the same number of Hebrew letters and rhyme.

approach of how to consider the future but, rather, becoming too preoccupied with future events at all. Yet, the question arises how far Rashi's statement goes, given that, at least to some extent, we need to think about the future so that we rationally plan ahead. What does Rashi mean when he explains the verse as stating that we are not supposed to examine future events?

When read in conjunction with Rashi's first two statements in his comment, the following words in Rashi's third statement indicate what he is emphasizing: (1) "*tachkor*," in his phrase "*lo sachkor*," and (2) his repetition of the word "*be-semimus*."

"*Chakira*" means critical examination, as in the *mishna*'s phrase "*drisha ve-chakira*" about cross-examining witnesses (*Sanhedrin* 32a). And "*asidos*" means the occurrence of future events generally, such as in *Devarim* 32:35: "*ve-chash asidos lamo*," "and future events rush upon them." When stating "*lo sachkor achar ha-asidos*," Rashi is saying that we should not treat the future as a puzzle to be analyzed or a riddle to be solved but – instead, more centrally – to take in the mystery of things as they unfold, anchored in our present relationship with Hashem and aspiration toward a future one. The point here is not to avoid practical considerations of the future altogether. It is, rather, that we should refrain from allowing these considerations to become our *main* preoccupation, which should be reserved for Torah, and, more precisely in the context of Rashi's comment on this verse, for our relationship with Hashem.

This is also reflected by Rashi's repetition of the word "*temimus*" (which, indeed, reiterates the verse's term). Rashi's initial use of the word *temimus* in his comment is an adverb modifying how we should walk with Hashem, *i.e.*, wholeheartedly. But the second time Rashi uses this word in his comment to this verse, in addition to being an adverb indicating how we should accept the course of events as they come, it can also function as a noun. Rashi's first sentence says that we should walk with Hashem in a manner of "*temimus*" and his next sentence says that we should accept things and view them from within the prism of this previously referenced "*temimus*," *i.e.*, the perspective that we maintain from within our relationship with Hashem.

Hence, a deeply connected kind of dialogue emerges in which one engages actively in a relationship with Hashem and then interprets each of life's experiences through the lens of this relationship. In this sense, the "*beis*" of the second use of the word "*be-semimus*" means, not only to approach life's vicissitudes with wholeheartedness, but also within – *i.e.*, inside of – our state of mind when wholeheartedly walking with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Rashi's repetition of the word "*be-semimus*" refers back to his prior use of this word to mean, as used its second time, to approach the uncertainties of life by constant recourse and reference to this integrated, integrating relationship.

The impact of this cultivated awareness of the presence of Hashem throughout the course of one's life is expressed by HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l in many places, including the following description of one of the great lessons from his mother:

*"Most of all I learned that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there is a flavor, a scent and warmth to mitzvot. I learned from her the most important thing in life—to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting upon my frail shoulders. Without her teachings, which quite often were transmitted to me in silence, I would have grown up a soulless being, dry and insensitive."*⁵

The privilege of engaging a person of high stature leaves a great, potentially indelible, impression on us. All the more so an experience with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Our awareness of this relationship transforms our quality of mind and consciousness (see, for example, the Rama's opening comment on the Shulchan Aruch). By maintaining this relationship as our primary focus, rather than preoccupying ourselves with fear based on uncertainties about the future, we recalibrate our spiritual orienting point and, thereby, move a seemingly inevitable set of present circumstances toward a different future trajectory. So, the tendency to become overly preoccupied with anticipated outcomes, "*lachkor achar ha-asidos*," is in fact erroneous because the lived experience of our relationship with the *Ribbono Shel Olam* on a consistent basis powerfully recalibrates the course of future events. This apparently is what Rashi means when, in the context of the rest of his comment on this verse, he explains "*tamim tihyeh im Hashem Elokecha*" as saying not to overthink the future.⁶

VeAz Tihyeh Imo U-LeChelko

The concluding sentence of Rashi's comment is "*ve-az tihyeh imo u-le-chelko*," "and then you will be with Him and of His portion," which raises the following two questions.

- First, given that Rashi's opening phrase tells us to walk with Hashem (*imo*), what does he add by saying that "then" (*az*) you will be with Him (*imo*) – if you "walk with Hashem," isn't it self-evident that "then you will be with Him"?

⁵ HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *A Tribute to the Rebbetzen of Talne*, Tradition 17:2, Spring 1978, p. 77.

⁶ In a comment strikingly similar to the one here, Rashi also expresses this connection between one's relationship with Hashem and trust about the future in his explanation of the *gemara* at the top of *Shabbos* 88b.

- Second, what does Rashi mean by adding the word “*u-le-chelko*,” “and of His portion,” after the word “*imo*,” “with him”? Indeed, the word “*imo*” mirrors the language of the verse, but why does Rashi, interpreting the verse, add the word “*u-le-chelko*” after “*imo*”?

The Maharal addresses the first question in *Gur Aryeh*. He states that the verse’s phrase “*im Hashem Elokecha*” is somewhat redundant because, just as the description of Yaakov as “*ish tam*” is self-explanatory, the words “*tamim tehiyeh*” would have been sufficient in and of themselves. The added phrase “*im Hashem Elokecha*” conveys something additional. According to the Maharal’s understanding of Rashi, this additional point is that the phrase “*im Hashem Elokecha*” relates both to the verse’s initial charge as well as to its resulting effect. So, when Rashi concludes his comment with the statement “*ve-az tihyeh imo u-le-chelko*,” “and then you will be with Him and of His portion,” he means that the verse should be read as follows: “Be whole with Hashem your God and, as a consequence, you will be with Hashem your God.”⁷ The Maharal explains:

ואז תהיה עמו ולחלקו. דבר זה הוציא מדכתיב “עם ה’ אלקיך” דלא הוה למכתב רק “תמים תהיה”, כדכתיב (בראשית כה:כז) “ויעקב איש תם”, ומאי “תמים תהיה עם ה’ אלקיך”, אלא פירושו שאז תהיה עם הקדוש ברוך הוא ולחלקו. ואף על גב ד“עם ה’ אלקיך” פירושו ‘התהלך עמו בתמימות’, מכל מקום כיון דלא הוה צריך למכתב רק “תמים תהיה”, הוה כאילו נכתב “עם ה’ אלקיך” שני פעמים ... אבל השתא פירושו “תמים [תהיה] עם ה’ אלקיך” ואז “תהיה עם ה’ אלקיך”.

And then you will be with Him and of His portion. This statement [of Rashi] comes from [the part of] the verse “with Hashem your God;” otherwise, it would have simply written “Be whole,” as it writes (Bereishis 25:27) “and Yaakov was a whole man.” And what [is implied by] “Be whole with Hashem your God”? The explanation is that then you will be with the Holy One Blessed Be He and of His portion. And even though the interpretation of “with Hashem your God” is “walk with Him wholeheartedly,” nevertheless, since it only had to write: “Be whole,” it is as if it had written “with Hashem your God” twice ... [and] now its interpretation is “Be whole with Hashem your God” and then “you will be with Hashem your God.”

In this manner, Rashi interprets the phrase “*im Hashem Elokecha*” to mean that

⁷ It is noteworthy that the *dibbur ha-maschil* for Rashi’s comment is literally the entire verse, which might be the only time that Rashi cites the whole verse as the phrase he is interpreting.

being with Hashem is both the initial catalyst and the resulting endpoint of the verse's instruction "*tamim tihiyeh*."

Incidentally – but significantly – Rashi's approach provides basis for the position later centralized by the Chasidic movement that genuine connectedness with Hashem is not only "a difficult ideal reached ... at the end of a journey" but also "the starting point."⁸ This position diverged from the predominant approaches of the previous kabbalistic and philosophic movements which overwhelmingly had maintained that actual close connection with Hashem is reserved for the elite few. In contrast, Chasidic thought advocated the idea that the force of a religiously sincere act, directed by *halacha* and focused on relationship with Hashem, could result in genuine connection with Hashem, even for those who did not yet have the chance to follow a course of intensive and prolonged development of the mind and soul. The spiritual and intellectual underpinnings of this later Chasidic development are present in Rashi's formulation about this verse that our relationship with Hashem is both the initial cause and the resulting consequence – the starting step as well as the ultimate, even if ultimately elusive, goal – of sustained religious connection and aspiration.

This broad understanding of this verse also addresses the question why Rashi adds the word "*u-le-chelko*" at the end of his comment. This word is present in the *Sifrei* which states "*ke-she'ata tam chelkecha im Hashem Elokecha*," "when you are whole, your portion is with Hashem your God." But Rashi changes the *Sifrei*'s word "*chelkecha*," "your portion," to "*chelko*," "His portion," and also doubles the description to say that you will be both (1) "*imo*," "with Him," and (2) "*le-chelko*," "of His portion." By adding the word "*u-le-chelko*," Rashi likely is making reference to the verse in *Parshas Ha'azinu* which defines the "portion of Hashem" as "His nation" (*Devarim* 32:9):

כי חלק ה' עמו יעקב חבל נחלתו.

For the portion of Hashem is His nation; Jacob, the lot of His inheritance.

Thus, Rashi's pairing the words "*imo*" and "*le-chelko*" alludes to his interpretation of this verse as speaking, not only to select individuals, but also to the nation as a whole. In this sense, Rashi reads the verse as obliquely stating both "*tamim tihiyeh im Hashem Elokecha*," "be [individually] whole with Hashem your God," and "*tamim*

⁸ Alex Sztuden, "*Everyone Asks Where He Is*": *Mystical-Hasidic Elements in U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham*, The Orthodox Forum: Contemporary Uses and Forms of Hasidut (Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier ed., New York, 2022), at p. 161.

tihyeh am Hashem Elokecha,” “be whole as the nation of Hashem your God.” By transposing the *Sifrei*’s language from “*chelkecha im Hashem*” to the phrase “*tihyeh imo u-le-chelko*,” Rashi conveys his understanding of this verse – applying the definition of the “portion of Hashem” in *Parshas Ha’azinu* and incorporating the insight of the Maharal discussed above – to be as follows:

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך ואז תהיה עם ועם ה' אלקיך.

Be whole with Hashem your God and then you will be with, and the nation of, Hashem your God.

This is what Rashi apparently means by doubling the statement at the end of his comment to say “*imo u-le-chelko*,” “with Him and of His portion.”

Of course, all of these thoughts and concepts that Rashi explains, elucidates and alludes to are most concisely encapsulated and carried around on a consistent basis by the language of the verse itself: “*Tamim tihyeh im Hashem Elokecha*,” walk simply with the *Ribbono Shel Olam* in all places at all times, both individually and as a nation, throughout all of life.

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