

Rashi--an acronym formed by the letters of his name, Rabbi Shelomo Yitzhaki--was a commentator who lived from 1040-1105 (During this time, contemporaries included the three greatest scholars of Spanish Jewry including Solomon ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi, and the Ibn Ezra). Although we do not know much about his family, legend has it that he is from the lineage of the Davidic dynasty. Further, legend dictates that his father, who was forced to give up a precious stone, received Rashi as compensation as a son, and got a heavenly proclamation that stated that his son will illuminate the eyes of all of Israel in regard to Torah studies. In addition to our lack of information about Rashi's early life, we believe that he started school at the age of five during Shavuot--the festival celebrating the receipt of the Torah on Har Sinai. In his responsa, he notifies his audience that he got married while still a student and then pursued his studies in Troyes in 1070. Rashi was very poor and wasn't supported as a Rabbi of his community. Rather, his poverty forced him to resort to making and selling wine to make a living, and learn Torah only the rest of the day. In only 65 years, studying and working with Torah only as a secondary occupation, Rashi's literary and intellectual achievements are incomprehensible. He created comprehensive commentaries on the whole Torah and Talmud and these commentaries spread like wildfire to all corners of the world including Asia, Spain, Germany, France, Africa and Babylon. Given all the difficulties of handwriting these notes without the printing press his great success and proliferation only prove his achievements to be even grander.

In terms of Rashi's commentaries in general, his primary purpose, wasn't "simply to write a commentary," but rather, he wanted to incorporate some Rabbinic sources in his works. Rashi agreed with the premise that there were multiple layers of interpretation and he often gave multiple layers of meaning to the verse on which he was commenting: he often gave an answer pertaining to the simple meaning based on rules of grammar and context and more obscure midrashic interpretations. In the Talmud, Rashi states that, "one text may yield several meanings, and one thing God has spoken and two things I have heard." Rashi carefully selected these Rabbinic and Midrashic works, and he often expounded upon and gave novel interpretations based upon his own ideas and the ideas of others to create multiple meanings of the text. However, in Masechet Shabbat on daf 63A, Rashi also states "a biblical text may not depart from its straightforward meaning. In this case Rashi neglected the midrashic interpretations and only gave his simple pshat approach. As seen from his seemingly contradictory approaches to commenting, Rashi infused both these ideas as he sometimes agreed with the exegesis of the midrashic interpretations and sometimes disagreed and neglected them, in order to give the most comprehensive, yet simple approach possible.

Rashi has a comprehensive study and commentary on the Tanach, and his interpretations are used by almost anyone, on any level trying to learn the intricacies

and analysis of the torah. Rashi's commentary is now used as the standard for learning at a young age and old age alike. In his commentary, as stated above, Rashi often gives a simple pshat approach and/or a more "out there" midrashic approach. In his attempt, to give the simple "pshat" approach, he implemented grammar, language, the way of the world and how things worked, and legal analysis. In his use of language, Rashi primarily used the French language to highlight key roots of words in order to derive and understanding. Over 3,000 French words appear in his comprehensive commentary to convey the meanings of biblical words.

Further rashi attributed much importance to linguistic and grammatical aspects of the torah. Rashi was strongly influenced by grammaticians and Hebrew linguists such as Menachem b. Saruq, and Dunush ben Labrat. In his commentary he explains words based on the nuances of each word and why it was selected. For example, if there were two synonyms, there was a nuance between them that Rashi had to explain.

Another aspect of his pshat commentary is that he tried to explain how things were in biblical times. Rashi did a lot of experiencing and observing for the purpose of being able to relay this information to his audience and make it visual. For example, he experienced winemaking, animal husbandry, agriculture, textile production, leather treatment, banking, metalwork and other things and conveys these experiences to the audience to get a sense of what things were like. Further, it has also been said that he often drew pictures in his original manuscripts to help his audience visualize his commentary to an elevated degree also.

As stated, rashi often brought in midrashic sources and only about a quarter of his work is completely his own. Rashi claims that his choice of midrashim was purposeful and not arbitrary, as many people today think, and that his midrashic interpretations serve to give an extra layer to the verse. Rashi had many Midrashim at his disposal, yet he only used a small percentage, carefully examining each one, and only inserting the most pertinent or correct into his commentary. Today, as we try to reconcile why Rashi occasionally provided us with obscure midrashim that weren't necessary given the already sufficient answers, we believe that he was trying to be didactic and instruct us morally or to show that god has a hand in everything.

In respect to his commentary on the talmud alone, Rashi, draws from knowledge from the rest of the talmud and brings this information to light only at the most relevant times. Rashi, unlike many other commentaries, comments from line to line, elucidating on what is clearly stated and sometimes punctuating the unpunctuated text to make the reading clear to the reader.

On the other hand and without relevance to his commentaries, he also did a couple of other secondary things that have actually proven to be significant. For example, through his commentaries, he contributed strongly to the revival of the hebrew language as he himself, was a great poet. In fact, Yitzchak Avinry has made a

dictionary of Rashi's hebrew uses and shows the full extent as to how much Rashi contributed to language. Many hebrew words are found for the first time in Rashi's works and this use of hebrew terms helped spark a revival of Hebrew in the Middle ages--a time when it had been slowly dying out.

Therefore, it is evident that Rashi has left a major mark on the world and has significantly contributed to our everyday studying of torah and use of modern language. In hindsight, we see that his work prompted jewish study curriculums that are still in existence over a thousand years later. His accomplishments in his short life of only 65 years is remarkable and only highlights the extent of his greatness.

Sources:

Wikipedia on Rashi: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashi>

Essays on Biblical and Related topics: Rashi the Commentator

Rashi, by Avraham Grossman

Chapter 1 Commentary

(כב) וַיֵּצֵא פַרְעֹה לְכָל־עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כָּל־הַבְּנֵי הַיְלִיד הַיְאֹרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל־הַבָּת תַּחֲיִין: ־ו

The context of this pasuk is that Pharaoh is commanding the bay boys to be thrown into the river. Presumably, when it says that וַיֵּצֵא פַרְעֹה לְכָל־עַמּוֹ we think he is talking to his whole nation regarding throwing the Jewish babies into the Nile. However, Rashi has a different approach:

(כב) לכל עמו - אף עליהם גזר. ל יום שנולד משה אמרו לו אצטגניניו היום נולד מושיען, ואין אנו יודעין אם ממצרים אם מישראל, ורואין אנו שסופו ללקות במים, לפיכך גזר אותהיום אף על המצרים, שנאמר כל הבן הילוד, ולא נאמר הילוד לעברים, והם לא היו יודעים שסופו ללקות על מי מריבה:
"To all his people" refers to the Egyptians also having to throw their babies into the Nile. Because, on the day that Moshe was born, Pharaoh's astrologers told him that Israel's savior was born that day and they did not know if he was Egyptian or Israeli. However, the astrologers did know that his fate had something to do with water. Because of this ambiguity, Pharaoh decreed that all Egyptians too must throw their newborn babies into the Nile. As it says כָּל־הַבְּנֵי הַיְלִיד הַיְאֹרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל־הַבָּת תַּחֲיִין but it does not specify just the Hebrew boys, and thus the verse implies that it is both kinds of babies. And also, the astrologists didn't know that Moshe's destiny of suffrage through water would occur in regard to Meribah.

This Rashi is a great example of the way that Rashi's commentary works. First, he found a nuance in the way that the Pasuk was written in order to arrive at his explanation. Although his explanation is the best way to interpret the pasuk disregarding context, his explanation is in fact contradictory to logical thought based on context. Therefore, in order to rationalize/compensate for this illogical thought, he brings in a midrash to back up his reasoning and fill in the gaps.

Perek 3

Round 1

(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אֲנִי כִּי אֵלֶךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם)
(יב) וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־אֵהְיָה עִמָּךְ וְזֶה־לְךָ הָאוֹת כִּי אֲנִי שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ בְּהוֹצִיאֲךָ אֶת־הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן)
אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה

Rashi's Commentary:

(יא) מי אנכי - מה אני חשוב לדבר עם המלכים)

וכי אוציא את בני ישראל - ואף אם חשוב אני, מה זכוב ישראל שתעשה להם נס ואוציאם ממצרים

(יב) ויאמר כי אהיה עמך - השיבו על ראשון ראשון ועל אחרון אחרון, שאמרת מי אנכי כי אלך אל פרעה, לא שלך היא, כי אם משלי, כי אהיה עמך, וזה המראה אשר ראיתבסנה לך האות כי אנכי שלחתיך, וכדאי אני להציל כאשר ראית הסנה עושה שליחותי ואיננו אוכל, כך תלך בשליחותי ואינך ניזוק. ושאלת מה זכות יש לישראל שיצאוממצרים, דבר גדול יש לי על הוצאה זו, שהרי עתידים לקבל התורה על ההר הזה לסוף שלושה חדשים שיצאו ממצרים. דבר אחר כי אהיה עמך וזה שתצליח בשליחותך לךהאות על הבטחה אחרת שאני מבטיחך, שכשתוציאם ממצרים תעבדון אותי על ההר הזה, שתקבלו התורה עליו והיא הזכות העומדת לישראל. ודוגמת לשון זה מצינו (ישעיהולז ל) וזה לך האותו אכול השנה ספּיח וגו', מפלת

סנחריב תהיה לך אות על הבטחה אחרת שארצכם חרבה מפירות ואני אברך הספּיחים:

According to Rashi on pasuk 11, Moshe has two separate hesitations:

- 1) Why am I significant enough to speak with kings
- 2) And even if I am good enough and significant enough, why is bnei Yisrael deserving of a miracle that I should take them out of Egypt.

Rashi interprets Hashem's response in two ways, separated by "davar acher." This phrase always introduces another answer in Rashi and indicates to us, the audience, that Rashi isn't so confident with his first approach.

- 1) Hashem addresses Moshe's concerns in order that they are asked. He addresses Moshe's first concern by saying that it is not your significance that requires him to speak to kings, but rather, it is my (Hashem's) significance that allows it. Moshe is merely a tool in the process. Further, he assures Moshe that he will succeed: Hashem says that may this burning bush miracle be a sign to

you that I have sent you and that you will succeed. The message of the burning bush to Moshe is that just as the thornbush is Hashem's instrument and isn't consumed, so too Moshe is also the instrument and will not be punished by Pharaoh. Therefore, Hashem addresses Moshe's first concern by telling him, you don't have to be significant, you are just a tool, much like this bush.

Then, Hashem continues and addresses his second concern. Hashem tells Moshe that Bnei Yisrael don't necessarily deserve it, but Hashem must release them so that they can receive my torah in three months time.

- 2) Hashem says that I will be with you, and the fact that you (Moshe) will succeed in your mission will be your sign that I will fulfill my next promise. The promise is that when you will leave Egypt, you will go up on the mountain and receive my torah. And this is the reason that Israel deserves to be sent out of Egypt--for this torah that I promised them. Rashi then provides a textual proof from Isaiah 37:30 to prove that a future event is a sign for an event that is even further in the future. וְזֶה-לְךָ הָאוֹת means the downfall of sancherev will be a sign for you of the fulfillment of the promise that I will deliver you into a land filled with fruit. Therefore, the sign in this approach isn't the burning bush, but rather the fact that they will leave egypt and the sign is a proof that they will receive the torah.

Chapter 24 Commentary

שמות פרשת בא פרק יב

(טו) שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו אך ביום הראשון תשביתו שאר מבתיכם כי כל-אכל חמץ ונקרתה הנפש ההוא מישראל מיום הראשון עד-יום השבעי

רש"י שמות פרשת בא פרק יב:

(טו) שבעת ימים - שטיינ"א של ימים [קבוצה של שבעה ימים רצופים]:

שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו - ובמקום אחר הוא אומר (דברים טז ח) ששת ימים תאכל מצות, למד על שביעי של פסח שאינו חובה לאכול מצה, ג ובלבד שלא יאכל חמץ. מנין אף ששה רשות תלמוד לומר ששת ימים. זו מדה בתורה, דבר שהיה בכלל ויצא מן הכלל ללמד, לא ללמד על עצמו בלבד יצא, אלא ללמד על הכלל כולו יצא, מה שביעי רשות אף ששה רשות, יכול אף לילה הראשון רשות, תלמוד לומר (להלן פסוק יח) בערב תאכלו מצות, ה הכתוב קבעו חובה:

In these series of Rahis on pasuk 12, Rashi derives the laws for which days a person is obligated to eat matzah.

(On the first dibur hamatchil shivat yamim, Rashi comments "a seteine of days" Seteine, means a group of seven in old french and has similar roots to the english septet. Later, in his commentary on Shemot 29:30, Rashi explains that this usage implies consecutive days.

(כיל) שבעת ימים -א רצופין) Therefore, we know that the seven days of not eating chametz are consecutive.)

Further, Rashi finds an apparent contradiction in the text. In our pasuk it says “for a seven day period” you shall eat matzos but in Devarim 16:8 it says “for a six day period” you shall eat matzos” Rashi says that this contradiction is intentional and teaches us a law about the seventh day. We learn that on the seventh day there is an obligation to not eat chametz, but there is no obligation to eat matzah as in the prior six days.

Then Rashi tries to derive this Halacha for the other six days:

Rashi asks: From where do we know that it is voluntary to eat matzah even on the other six days?

Answer: From our pasuk which states: “a seven day period.”

At first we are perplexed as we thought this pasuk comes to teach us that we don't have an obligation to eat matzah only on the seventh, but then Rashi says that the pasuk comes to teach us the halacha in regard to all seven days.

Rashi explains that this is a principle in the torah (one of the thirteen principle we derive from a Baraisa of R” Yishmael): A law which was included in a broad category that was later contradicted doesn't only come to teach us a new law about itself, but it also comes to teach us about a new law about the entire category.

When we apply this torah principle to our case, the broad category is our pasuk which says that for seven days we are supposed to eat matza on seven days. Then, when the smaller contradictory category of eating matza on six days is introduced, we derive the halacha that eating matzah is voluntary on the seventh day. But then the torah principle of Rabbi Yishmael teaches us that just as eating matzah is voluntary on the seventh day, so to this law applies to the general category and eating matzah on all six days is therefore voluntary.

As of now Rashi explains that on all seven days, eating matzah is voluntary. However, this is evidently not the case. Therefore, to teach us otherwise, that we must eat matzah on erev pesach, pasuk 18 states that “on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening you shall eat matzos,” and from this pasuk it is established that eating matzos on the first night of pesach is an obligation. (Rashi teaches this Halacha but it is originally found in Pesachim on daf 120a.)

Therefore the final law is that the only time it is obligatory to eat matzah in this 7-consecutive-day period is on the first night.

(יג) וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרַת וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה לְשֹׁפֵט אֶת־הָעָם וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם עַל־מֹשֶׁה מִן־הַבֹּקֶר עַד־הָעֶרֶב:

Rashi's Commentary

(יג) ויהי ממחרת - מוצאי יום הכיפורים היה, כך שנינו בספרי, ומהו ממחרת, למחרת רדתו מן ההר. ועל כרחק אי אפשר לומר אלא ממחרת יום הכיפורים, שהרי קודם מתנתורה אי אפשר לומר (פסוק טז) והודעתי את חקי וגו', ומשנתנה תורה עד יום הכיפורים לא ישב משה לשפוט את העם, שהרי בשבעה עשר בתמוז ירד ושבר את הלוחות, ולמחר עלה בהשכמה ושהה שמונים יום וירד ביום הכיפורים. ואין פרשה זו כתובה כסדר, שלא נאמר ויהי ממחרת עד שנה שניה, אף לדברי האומר יתרו קודם מתן תורה בא, דשילוחו אל ארצו לא היה אלא עד שנה שניה, שהרי נאמר כאן (פסוק כז) וישלח משה את חותנו ומצינו במסע הדגלים שאמר לו משה (במדבר י ט) נוסעים אנחנו אל המקום וגו', (שם לא) אל נא תעזוב אותנו, ואם זו קודם מתן תורה, מששלחו והלך היכן מצינו שחזר ואם תאמר שם לא נאמר יתרו אלא חובב, ובנו של יתרו היה, הוא חובב הוא יתרו, שהרי כתיב (שופטים ד יא) מבני חובב חותן משה:
Passuk 13: And it was on the next day:

Rashi says that the next day means the day after yom kippur as it says in the text of sifre (actually the Mechilta, which the Rashi refers to as the Sifra). On Yom Kippur, Moshe received the second set of tablets and descended from Har Sinai, and then this story takes place the day after. "The next day" surely means the day after Yom Kippur and it would be impossible to give any other interpretation because of pasuk 16.

(טז) כִּי־יְהִי לָהֶם דָּבָר בָּא אֵלַי וְשִׁפְטֵתִי בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין רֵעֵהוּ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי אֶת־חֻקֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת־תּוֹרֹתָיו:

In pasuk 16, Moshe says that when they have a matter to judge, I make known the statutes of God and His laws," and if the Torah had not yet been given, this verse could not exist in its place. Further, this verse could not have been written in regard to Moshe teaching after the first set of tablets was given, but before Yom Kippur because Moshe descended the mountain on the 17th of Tammuz and broke the first set of tablets. Then, the next day he judged Bnei Yisrael and the next morning he ascended the mountain again early in the morning, stayed for 80 days and then finally returned on Yom Kippur. Moshe was busy and secluded the whole time and could not have ever taught the torah until after Yom Kippur. Therefore, the only plausible option is that the next day means after Yom Kippur when Moshe came down from the mountain the second time and was no longer busy.

Rashi elaborates on these dates in his commentary on 33:11.

בשבעהעשר בתמוז נשתברו הלוחות, ובשמונה עשר שרף את העגל ודן את החוטאים, ובתשעה עשר עלה, שנאמר (שמות לב ל) ויהי ממחרת

He says that on the 17th of Tammuz, Moshe descended and broke the tablets. Then, on the 18th, he burned the golden calf and judged the sinners and then on the 19th he ascended again. Moshe was surely busy during this time as he was on the mountain, and even when he was not on the mountain, he could not have sat down and taught Bnei Yisroel.

Rashi continues to detail the time that this is happening. Rashi says that this is not in chronological order. If this was in chronological order, Bnei Yisrael would not yet have received the Torah, but Rashi is saying that based on pasuk 16, they surely have received the Torah. Rashi says that this story did not take place until the second year in the midbar even though the giving of the Torah was in the first year and comes a perek later.

Rashi is able to reconcile this even with the people who say that Yitro came to join the Jews even before the Torah was given. (In Avodah Zara on 24a there is a dispute as to when the Yitro story took place. Even though the story with Yitro takes place even before this one in the order of the text, one opinion is that the Yitro story did not happen until after the Torah was given also.) In pasuk 27, when Moshe sends Yitro away, that did not happen until the second year, after the torah was given. This is because in Bamidbar after it talks about the travels of the ten tribes in the second year, Moshe asks Yitro in 10:29-31, to not leave Bnei Yisrael. Therefore, if in fact, Yitro's return happened before the Torah was given, then once Yitro left again, how could we account for him returning that would warrant Moshe asking Yitro to stay in the second year. Therefore, Moshe's request for Yitro to stay in the second year must be the same incident when Yitro left Bnei Yisrael in pasuk 27 in our perek. Therefore, it is out of chronological order, and this all happens in the second year, after the giving of the Torah.

Surely, Rashi has proven the the Yitro story took place in the second year, but if people say that it isn't a good proof because in Bamidbar it says Chobab, that isn't a good argument because Chobab and Yitro are the same person. As is says Chobab, the father in law of Moshe. (If Yitro is the father-in-law of Moshe, and so is Chobab, then Yitro must equal Chobab.

Rashi has defended himself from all attacks and made his hard-to-reconcile approach fit in with the text. Rashi is going out of his way to go against the pshat and say that this portion isn't in chronological order. The pshat would be that "the next day" was a transition phrase, literally meaning the next day, after pasuk 12 when Yitro had a feast with Moshe and the elders. Rashi is giving a drashic approach to teach a lesson from the story and show that Bnei Yisrael was very quick to rush into learning and to delve into the intricacies of the Torah. It has only been one day since they received the second set of tablets, and already, there is a long line of people, living torah lives, who want to ask the highest authority and follow the Torah perfectly. Rashi is surely trying to show Bnei Yisrael's enthusiasm for the torah, especially after the holiest day of the year.

(ד) אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאֲשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל-כַּנְפֵי נְשָׂרִים וְאָבָא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי:

(ד) אתם ראיתם - לא מסורת היא בידכם, ה' ולא בדברים אני משגר לכם, לא בעדים אני מעיד עליכם, אלא אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים, על כמה עבירות היו חייבין ליקודם שנדווגו לכם, ולא נפרעתו מהם אלא על ידכם

ואשא אתכם - זה יום שבאו ישראל לרעמסס, שהיו ישראל מפוזרין בכל ארץ גושן, ולשעה קלה כשבאו ליסע ולצאת נקבצו כלם לרעמסס. ואונקלוס תרגם ואשא, ונטלית יתכון, כמו ואסיע אתכם, תיקן את הדבר דרך כבוד למעלה

על כנפי נשרים - כנשר הנושא, גוזליו על כנפיו, שכל שאר העופות נותנים את בניהם בין רגליהם, לפי שמתיראין מעוף אחר שפורח על גביהם, אבל הנשר הזה אינו מתיראאלא מן האדם, שמא יזרוק בו חץ, לפי שאין עוף אחר פורח על גביו, לכך נותנן על כנפיו, אומר מוטב יכנס החץ בי, ולא בבני. אף אני עשיתי כן, (שמות יד יט) ויסע מלאכהאלהים וגו' (שם כ) ויבא בין מחנה מצרים וגו', והיו מצרים זורקים חצים ואבני בליסטראות והענן מקבלם

ואבא אתכם אלי - כתרגומו

אתם ראיתם

You have actually seen, meaning that it is not a tradition, but have actually physically seen. God did not send a verbal storytelling of His miracle, or a testimony by a witness. Rather, Bnei Yisrael have physically seen god's hand in punishing Egypt, which is only a small part of what Hashem could have done. Further, Hashem only punished the Egyptians for their sins in relation to Bnei Yisrael and didn't punish them for their other sins such as murder, immorality, and idolatry, as seen in the Mechilta.

In this commentary, Rashi is teaching two separate lessons:

- 1) In Rashi's time and our's, we see that many religions are based upon one person getting a revelation, not seen by anybody else. But Rashi is explaining that the Jewish people actually saw the hand of god in his miracles and that they themselves are witnesses.
- 2) Rashi brings this idea that Hashem punished Egypt for Bnei Yisrael's sake to teach the extent to which hashem cares for us and protects us over anything else.

ואשא אתכם

When it says that Hashem carried Bnei Yisrael, it referring to another miracle when Bnei Yisrael were departing from Egypt. This refers to the fact that Bnei Yisrael were scattered around Goshen, and when they were ready to leave, God quickly and miraculously gathered them to Ramses. Onkelos, the pshat, translates this a God transported Bnei Yisrael and he made them travel. This pshat explanation makes Hashem's action mundane. However, Rashi is taking the Midrash approach to further God's miracles and make Bnei Yisrael even more indebted to God.

על כנפי נשרים

Like an eagle who carries its babies on its wings, God carries the children of Israel. All other birds carry their offspring between their feet because they are afraid that another bird will fly above them. But the eagle is a bird that is only afraid of men and their bows and arrows but not of other birds, as the eagle is the highest flying bird and no bird can fly above it. Therefore, the eagle puts its offspring upon its wings since no bird will snatch it from atop of its wings and if a man shoots an arrow at it, the parent eagle will take the blow. The eagle's thought process is that it is better for it to take the blow than its child. And God also did this like an eagle as we find in 14:19-20.

(יט) וַיִּסַּע מִלְאֲךְ הָאֱלֹהִים הַהֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵי מַחְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלָּךְ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּסַּע עִמּוֹד הָעֵנָן מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמֵד מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם:
(כ) וַיָּבֹא בֵּין מַחְנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הָעֵנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיָּאָר אֶת־הַלְּיָלָה וְלֹא־קָרַב זֶה אֶל־זֶה:
כָּל־הַלְּיָלָה:

In these pesukim the angel of Hashem comes between the Jews and the Mitzrim. The Mechilta says that the Egyptians shot arrows and catapulted stones and that Hashem's cloud protected Bnei Yisroel.

Rashi is using a Drashic approach and extending the metaphor beyond what one would get out of reading this verse according to the pshat. Rashi does this to elevate Hashem's actions to show how much Hashem cared for us and how indebted Bnei Yisrael really are to Hashem because of it. The more Hashem did for us in our redemption, the more we should be willing to return the favor and follow Hashem's commandments.

ואבא אתכם אלי

Rashi says that it is best explained according to onkelos who says וקריבית יתכון לפולחני, meaning that I brought you close to my worship. The phrase does not mean that Hashem brought Bnei Yisrael close in terms of their location nor does it mean that Hashem brought them close under his rule since Hashem's presence and rule are everywhere. Again Rashi goes with this type of interpretation as a lesson that Hashem did us all this good and we should follow in His commandments.