

# The Rashi Database Project

GOALS: \* Show that all Rashid comments are spontaneous, instant, effortless reactions of a native speaker to the biblical text.

\*This is accomplished by skillful English translations instantly suggesting the Rashid comment to the reader

\* Additionally, each Rashid comment is examined using the 10 organs of the Rashid anatomy.

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(MAIN BIBLIOGRAPHY): DT = Doctoral Thesis ([www.Rashiyomi.com/Rashibook.htm](http://www.Rashiyomi.com/Rashibook.htm),

MG=Modern Grammar with Applications to Rashi ([www.Rashiyom.com/Rashibook2.htm](http://www.Rashiyom.com/Rashibook2.htm) )}

OTHER COMMENTATORS (ABBREVIATIONS): R=Ramban, T=Baal Turim, K=Kli Yakar, I=Ibn Ezra, H=Hendel

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**RASHI ID: Dt33-24a, Dt33-24b, Dt33-24c, Dt33-25a, Dt33-25b**

## PESHAT, SPONTANEOUS, REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

**PREPARATORY REMARKS:** An important point raised in my Doctoral Thesis is that the *lemma* or *Biblical text on which Rashi comments* or the *Beginning Words of the Rashi comment*, may be a collection or *group* of words. Today we study the Rashi comments on one of the tribes that Moses blessed before his death. We cannot understand the *individual* Rashi comments without *holistically* looking at the entire passage.

**MULTIPLE OPINIONS:** Both Rashi and the other commentators offer multiple opinions on certain and phrases. For example, the Hebrew word *davechah* only occurs once in the bible in this passage. In my Doctoral Thesis I point out that Rashi very often cited *simpleton* explanations based on a person not familiar with language or grammar; in such a case Rashi’s final comment is his *preferred* explanation of the text. Thus we will see in Rashi and in other commentators various opinions. The interpretation I present below seems to be Rashi’s final comment and also is consistent with the passage considered as a *whole*.

**AN ISSUE:** The biblical text opens with the phrase *Asher is blessed over all other sons*. This triggers the problem, “Why?” How one son could be more blessed than the others? Ramban and Kli Yakar citing the Bereishith Rabbah connect this with a similar comparative statement of Leah, who upon the birth of Asher said: *In my happiness (Hebrew for Asher) for I have been made happy with children, she nicknamed him Asher*. Rashi does not explicitly cite Leah but cites the Sifrey who points out the problem: *Asher is blessed over all the children*.

Therefore, our explanation will show the parallelisms with the blessings of Leah and Yaakov.

Biblical Texts:			
Dt33-24a, Dt33-24b, Dt33-24c, Dt33-25a, Dt33-25b	<i>Asher is blessed over the other sons</i> (1) [From Leah]	[From Jacob (2)]	[From Moses]
		<i>He will be the most desirable of his brothers</i> (2a)	<i>As long as you live you will be the talk of the town</i> (5)
		<i>Dipping in oil his feet</i> (2b)	<i>Steel and copper</i> (3) <i>are your shoes</i> (4)
Rashi	(1) Leah said upon the birth of Asher, “In my happiness ( <i>AShRi</i> ) because God has made me		

<p>comments</p>	<p>happy (<i>AiShRuni</i>) with children, therefore she nicknamed (her newborn child ) <i>ASheR</i></p> <p>Rashi cites the Sifrey who emphasizes the comparative point of Asher over all the other children.</p> <p>Rashi continues “<i>But I don’t know how</i>”</p> <p>This is not a criticism by Rashi of the Sifrey. Rather it is a <i>lead</i> into the next Rashi comment which explains <i>how</i> Asher was more blessed than the other children.</p> <p>(2) Here Rashi uses the <b>parallelism</b> rule. The first column parallels the blessings of Jacob while the 2<sup>nd</sup> column indicates the blessings of Moses.</p> <p>Jacob blessed Asher: #2) He will give the dainties of monarchs and #1) he will have oiled bread.</p> <p>Corresponding to #1, Moses said #2b) <i>He dips his feet in oil</i>. Rashi cites the case of a merchant who needed a large shipment of oil and found abundance from the tribe of Asher.</p> <p>Corresponding to #2) Moses said #2a) <i>He will be the most pleasant of all the sons</i>.</p> <p>Although the <i>phraseology</i> of Moses and Jacob are different, their message is identical.</p> <p>MOSES: He is the most pleasant of the brothers JACOB: He gives royal dainties  MOSES: He dips his feet in oil: JACOB: He has oiled bread</p> <p>(3) I reversed the order in the verse (Which uses a chiasmic (criss-crossed) parallelism) in order to highlight the parallels. Here Rashi uses the <b>Meaning-Figures of Speech-Spatial Form Metaphors</b> rule Just as <i>hand, foot, head</i>, refer to the <i>handle, bottom and top</i> of an object so too the <i>shoes</i> of an object refer to its bottom and to the item protecting the feet. Asher’s boundary was on the sea giving him in effect a <i>steel</i> border (Enemies could not attack).</p> <p>The Hebrew word used actually means <i>iron</i> but in English the metaphor <i>steel borders</i> sound better.</p> <p>A good modern example of <i>natural protective borders</i> is Switzerland whose mountains protect is and makes attacks less likely (Hence it is able to preserve its neutral status).</p> <p>(4) Besides having a natural boundary of the sea, Asher had many mountains rich in copper and steel (thus both protecting and affording assets to improve their economy).</p> <p>Interestingly, Rashi adds a comment: <i>This verse refers to all of Israel: Asher is the shoe of Israel (boundary point)</i>.</p> <p>However, I don’t believe that Rashi intended to say this was the exclusive meaning of the verse. Just as <i>Asher</i> is the <i>shoe</i> (Bottom) of Israel, it is also the <i>bottom</i> (last) blessing. The next verse switches from the individual tribes to the totality of Israel. Rashi simply points out that this verse which talks about Asher <i>could have a double use</i>: (1) <i>Asher has good boundaries</i>; (2) <i>Israel itself has Asher as a boundary</i>. Thus, this verse serves <i>both</i> as the end of the Asher blessing and the beginning of the next paragraph. Such poetic techniques of double belongings are called <i>syncopation</i> in music. Although Rashi does not explicitly state the verse could be referring to Asher it is obvious. So, I think Rashi is making a poetic point that the verse has an</p>
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*extra* (not *exclusive*) reference to all of Israel.

(5) I have translated this as *for as long as you live you will be the talk of the town*. Illumination of Rashi comes from I and R: People see the one-time biblical word, *davechah* as *zalim* since **B-D** interchange between Hebrew and Aramaic. This is a popular device and hence Rashi mentions it; but he doesn't mention it as the truth but as a simpleton approach.

Even if Rashi believed that *davechah* meant *zalechah*, that words means oozing. Rashi then has to take a second step: *oozing* refers to old age when your time *oozes away*. Could be, but it is a one-time metaphor and that would be very rare. Rashi would have to then take the verse to mean that *ashers* maturity (old age) was like his youth: copper-iron mountains, natural boundaries, and oil filled lands. The problem with this interpretation is that it does not fit into the parallelism.

Rashi does mention in the 2<sup>nd</sup> interpretation that the nations will be oozing with money and *dovvim*. Hence, I think *dovvim* is a separate term. In fact, *dovaiv* does mean *talking or murmuring*. Interestingly this comment is cited by *I* (Ibn Ezra) who dismisses it as ridiculous.

But based on a comment of Rashi in Job 38:28 that *aleph* as a prefix or suffix letter refers to the personalization of the item, a point championed by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, we can suggest an explanation. Words ending in *aleph* denote personalization: Thus *daleth-caph* means crushed while *daleth-caph-aleph* means personally crushed (a person with crushed testicles); *Zayin -resh* means foreign while *zayin-resh-aleph* means personally foreign (i.e., Snot); *mem-resh* means bitter while *mem-resh-aleph* means personally bitter (one's gall bladder). [This is from a paper I wrote in 1980, "The Sacred Letters" which never got published].

Continuing with this theme, *davechah* would mean *personal talk* corresponding to the English *talk of the town*. This is almost explicit in Rashi's comment *all nations will seek your copper iron and oil, they will talk about you and ooze out money to get it*.

I prefer this explanation since it is consistent with the parallelism.

\* Jacob said: *Asher gives royal dainties*

\* Moses said: *You are the most desirable of the brothers*

\* Moses concludes: *For the rest of your life, you will be the talk of the town*.

### 10 ORGANS OF THE RASHI ANATOMY: Dt33-24a, Dt33-24b, Dt33-24c, Dt33-25a, Dt33-25b

Organ	Brief Explanation	Rashi	My emendations
Lemma,	Beginning words, what is Rashi commenting on	<i>Five separate phrases</i>	Rashi is talking about the <i>paragraph as a whole</i>
Number of Rashi comments		5	None
4 Exegetical Pillars	How is Rashi deriving this comment	<i>Parallelism Meaning-Figures of Speech- Spatial Metaphors (Synecdoche)</i>	

Form	How does Rashi express his idea	Rashi is explicit on the metaphor. Rashi is silent on the parallelism	I have added explicit mention and comparison with the blessings of Leah and Jacob
Reasonable speculations		<i>Rashi cites the Talmudic story of a merchant in need of oil who came to Ashers territory and found much oil.</i>  On <i>talk of the town</i> Rashi picturesquely mentions the non-Jewish nations oozing money and talking about coming to Asher (Certainly reasonable speculation)	Clearly Rashi just uses this to <i>illustrate</i> as he explicitly indicates by saying: <i>as we have learned in Maseceth Menacoth</i> . In this case the form indicates that the speculation <i>illustrates</i> the main text.
Consequences	Lessons learned	None	None
Language Nuances	Recognized by literate speakers	Spatial metaphors ( <i>shoe = bottom</i> ) are recognized by literate speakers	None
Simpleton explanations		Not explicit	Rashi's explanation of <i>davechah</i> as meaning <i>oozing</i> clearly shows Rashi catering to the very popular <i>Aramaic-Hebrew duality</i> . I cite <i>I</i> (Ibn Ezra) who does not believe <i>talk of the town</i> is a reasonable explanation. I however show that Rashi's explanation ( <i>talk of the town</i> ) is more consistent with the parallelism
Homily	Explanations taken out of context of verse	Rashi points out that the last verse of the Asher blessing <i>could</i> also be the <i>first verse</i> of the following paragraph addressing all of Israel. This double meaning however is not homily but a poetic technique; in music it is called syncopation.	I make explicit that Rashi is not stating this as the <i>exclusive</i> explanation but as an <i>additional</i> explanation.
Moral exhortation		<i>None</i>	None