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**RASHI ID: Ex25-29a, Ex25-29b, Ex25-29c, Ex25-29d, Ex25-29e**

A fascinating Rashi whose full understanding requires integrating four distinct sources: (i) Rashi on Chumash, (ii) Rashi on TB Menacoth 97a (where the same verse is explained), (iii) The body of the Talmud-Mechiltah, (iv) The Oonkelos Aramaic translation, and possibly the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Temidin, Chapter 4). My explanation here follows the Rashi on Menacoth which differs from the Rashi on Chumash. Besides there 5 primary sources both Ramban and Ibn Ezra comment.

An unusual feature of these explanations mentioned in the Rashi in the Talmud is Rashi's comment that *The explanations of these words are not traditions [from Sinai] but based on the multiple synonyms whose individual meanings we attempt to explain.*

The Rashi on the Talmud explains the four synonyms in the verse which refer to four Table utensils:

- **KeARoThauV** - *molds* (used to fashion the dough into a particular form)
- **VeCaPoThauV** - *dish-trays* (they were supplemental to the bread and held the frankincense)
- **OoKeThoThauV** - *prop-stands* (from the root *kasheh* meaning hard or in this case sturdy; they were stands going from the floor to a height above the table and were used to hold the rod-aerators used both to support the bread loafs and to aerate them)
- **OoMeNaKiYoThauV** - *aerator rods* (from the root *na-ki* meaning *clean*; they were perforated rods allowing air to circulate preventing mould).

These four translations, adopted by Rashi and Rambam correspond to the meaning of these words or their roots in the Bible.

- **KeARaH** throughout the bible means a *large dish or bowl* and hence can refer to the *molds* for shaping dough into bread.
- **Caph** means *hand*; the dish-tray for food supplements which has the *form* of a *hand*
- **KaTheh** related to **KaSheh** means *hard* and can refer to anything *sturdy*. Here we name an object by properties of what it is made of similar to naming *eye-glasses* as *glasses* in English
- **NaKi** meaning *clean* could easily refer to the function of the aerator rods, to *prevent mold*.

This is pretty straightforward; 4 words with known functions and meanings refer to 4 utensils connected with the Temple table with a correspondence that is natural and intuitive.

The four utensils are however mentioned twice in the bible. One of them has a phrase, underlined below, which suggests, also naturally, an alternate translation, which is defended in the Talmud, adopted by Oonkelos and further defended by the Ramban.

- Ex25-29 Make the *bowls*, the *dish-trays*, the *stands*, and the *aerator rods* by which protection was afforded

- Ex37-15 They made the utensils connected with the Temple Table: the *bowls*, the *dish-trays*, the *aerators rods*, and the *stands* by which protection was afforded

The underlined statement by which protection was afforded at Ex37-15 is connected (i.e. follows immediately) the *stands* suggesting that the translation *stands* is incorrect, that it should rather be *aerators*. In other words, the sequence in Ex37-15 suggests that the four biblical Hebrew words, despite their usage and etymological meaning, should be translated as *bowls*, *dish-trays*, *stands*, and *aerator-rods*. To make this clear, Ex37-15 suggests that the Hebrew word from the root *kasheh*, *hard* should be translated as *aerator rods* and the Hebrew word from the root *nakeh*, *clean*, should be translated as *stands*; even though this is contrary to the etymology, it is defended by the word order by which protection is afforded which naturally connects with the word immediately preceding it whose root is *clean*.

Of course, this poses problems: Why should words have meaning contradicted by their root meaning and usage. Another problem is why is the phrase by which protection is afforded correctly linked to the Hebrew word whose root is *clean*, in Ex25-29.

Despite these problems, the alternate translation is suggested in the Talmud, then picked up by the Aramaic translation, Oonkelos, and defended by the Ramban.

Ibn Ezra explains the strange positioning of the by which protection is afforded: “In the Bible, explanatory (adjectival) phrases need not occur *immediately* after the word they modify. In this verse we are listing 4 things and the explanation of the function of the 3<sup>rd</sup> listed item, *aerator rods*, is mentioned at the end.

I offer a 2<sup>nd</sup> explanation based on the figure of speech, *locative metonymy*, the tendency to name items by their location. As an amusing example, little children, might call *their doll* as *their crib* reflecting that dolls are located and found in cribs. Here, the infants, rename an object based on location. Another very common example might be a phrase like *Israel won the war* when in fact it is *The Israelis that won the war*. Israel is the name of a country and place; people win wars not places. But in all languages we associated people with the land they live on and their country.

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