

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.

PUBLICATION: www.Rashiyomi.com/RashiDatabase.htm

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

MG=Modern Grammar with Applications to Rashi (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: Gn37-03b, Gn37-02b, Gn37-07a, Gn37-25a, Gn37-26a, Gn40-01c,
Gn37-02c, Gn31-30b, Gn38-27b, Gn40-06a, Gn40-11a, Gn38-01a, Gn38-01b,
Gn38-02a, Gn37-02e, Gn37-25b**

PESHAT, SPONTANEOUS, REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATION

RASHI vs. MIDRASH: We will continue with the *routine* Rashi comments begun last week. However, we will also include Rashi comments with substance and nuance. Readers of the *Rashi Newsletter* have told me that they enjoy seeing analysis where Rashi *selects* from competing Midrashic explanations.

Gn37-03b *Jacob made for Joseph a thinned coat*

The actual Hebrew term used, *passim* is traditionally translated as *multi-color*. The Midrash Rabbah presents five explanations of the word:

- i. *Tailored* since a tailored coat thins out the material to make it look fit
- ii. *Silk* since silk is a relatively thinned out fabric
- iii. *An acronym for the tribulations Joseph went through*
 - o P = *Potiphar's house where Joseph was enslaved*
 - o S = *Socharim = the merchants to whom the brothers sold Joseph*
 - o I = *Ishmaelim = The Arab (Ishmael) caravan to whom the merchants who purchased Joseph sold them*
 - o M = *Medanim = The final merchants who brought Joseph to Egypt*
- iv. *The Lottery* = The preceding explanations translate the root of *passim* as *dwindling, thinning, disappearing* as in the Psalmic verse *piety has ended and faith has dwindled (thinned or disappeared) from people*. The last two explanations translate *pas* as *cut*. Here the cut pieces resemble a lottery. They see Judah *picked by lottery* (Judah was the brother recommending Joseph be sold)
- v. *The cut (split) of the Reed Sea*: Because of the sale of Joseph the brothers went down to Egypt and when redeemed went through the splitting of the red sea.

A remarkable diversity of translations. Rashi selected in his commentary ii) and iii): He translates *passim* coat as *silk coat* and then adds the Midrash relates it to the various items he went through. But Rashi is only concerned with *peshat*, the straightforward meaning of the verse. Why does he consider these two items *peshat*?

Rashi in his commentary defends himself. He points out that in Samuel, Tamar, King David’s daughter was depicted as wearing a *passim coat* because such dress was the custom of royalty. Recall that silk came from the far east and therefore was costly because of the cost of transportation. Additionally, it is a fine product. Hence Rashi selected ii) since it fits with the text: Jacob gave Joseph a *royal cost*. As already explained, *silk* is called *passim* because it is a thin (dwindling if you like) fabric.

What about Rashi’s selection of iii). We can interpret this as *peshat* also if we look at the underlying idea. The idea of the acronym is that Joseph went through many stages in his life each of which lasted shortly, dwindled, and then disappeared (*pas*). In fact, (if we could read Joseph’s resume) upon becoming Vice-King of Egypt, Joseph had gone through the following stages each of which contributed to his skill set:

- i) **Chief warden – Counseling others:** He was chief warden in the prison where he counseled the prisoners,
- ii) **Chief of Staff – Growing out of Teenagerhood:** He oversaw Potiphar’s house where he was slave. Here Joseph learned that it is not status (slave or free) that makes a person but skill sets. Joseph also had grown out of his teenage preoccupation with his looks which got him into trouble with Potiphar’s wife.
- iii) **Accomplishment vs. Intention:** Joseph went through a brotherhood stage in which he thought the most important thing in life is to exchange visions and dreams and declare intent. Here he learned that people evaluate you about what you *have* done not what you *intend* to do.
- iv) **Dream:** Finally, Joseph went through a dream stage where important and motivating dreams that formed the core of his motivations were established.

I am not arguing that these four stages correspond to letters that spell the Hebrew word *passim*. Rather I am arguing that Joseph went through several stages each of which was short-lived and then dwindled and disappeared (*pas*) and this was symbolized by the *thinned cost*.

In summary, Rashi selected from the five midrashim based on considerations of *Peshat*. He chose those explanations consistent with what these coats were used for (royal apparel) and his multi-stage career path. See the following Summary Table.

Source	Narrative
Bible	Jacob made Joseph a <i>thinned</i> (or <i>dwindling</i>) coat
Midrash Rabbah (5 interpretations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Tailored (thin down garment to fit the person) ii) Silk (a thin material_ iii) Acronym for the various ordeals Joseph went through iv) Lottery (Judah was picked to recommend selling) v) The splitting (thinning) or Reed Sea when they left Egypt brought about by Joseph

Rashi's selections	Jacob made Joseph a silk coat Also: The coat refers to the ordeals Joseph went through
Justification of Rashi (Silk)	We find Tamar, King Davids daughter wore a <i>silk coat</i> and the verse states <i>this was the custom among royal people</i> . Recall that silk is expensive (because it has to be transported from afar). So, the intent of the verse is that Jacob made Joseph a silk coat, indicating he was of royal lineage
Justification of Rashi (ordeals of his life)	Joseph went through stages. Each lasted a short time and thinned out. The stages gave him the skill sets necessary for his future leadership. We identified four stages i) Dreams, forming motivation ii) Seeking brotherhood through promises and dreams rather than accomplishments iii) Chief of staff (even though a slave) in Potiphar's house. During those years Joseph outgrew his teenaged-ness iv) Chief of staff in prison. Joseph learned the value of networking through counseling and help

OVERVIEW – REST OF POSTING: In the rest of the posting, I continue with *routine Rashi Comments*. These comments typically have a clear lemma (beginning phrase), are one comment, are stated in Midrashic form, do not derive moral consequences and are not simplistic. While going through these Rashis (both this week and in the coming weeks) I will emphasize the following approaches introduced or emphasized in my doctoral thesis.

- *Reading literary* as a basis for Peshat
- *Denominatives* (Discussed last week: Making a noun into a verb)
- *Metonymy*: Frequent associations (e.g., calling American people by the place they live in, America)
- *Hypernymy*: Naming examples of a category by the overall category, or explaining the nuances of a particular category example
- *Word meanings* (especially if based on roots)
- *Symbolism*
- *Routine grammar*
- *Paragraph grammar* (including parallelism)

DENOMINATIVE: The following table lists *denominatives* in this week's parshah.

Verse	Text	Underlying noun	Denominative (Verb from noun)	Comments
Gn37-02b	Jospeh <i>teenaged</i> himself with the	Teenager	Teenaged (Simulative)	Behaved like a teenager: Making eye contacts,

	children of maids		denominative)	grooming, gait
Gn37-07a	We were sheaving sheaves	Sheaf	Sheaving (putative denominative)	Making sheaves

Table: Denominatives (making verbs out of nouns) in *Parshat Vayayshev*

METONYMY: Next we list metonymies in this week's parshah. Some examples of metonymy (associating two things that go together) might be *American won the war* which really means *The American people won the war* (So associating people and country) or *baker* associating the activity of baking with the person (the baker) in charge.

Verse	Text	Underlying word	Metonymy
Gn37-25a	An Arab <i>caravan</i> was passing by	<i>Trail</i> is the Hebrew word used for caravan	Caravans travel on trails
Gn37-26a	Head <i>butcher</i> of Pharaoh	To slaughter	The butcher is the person who does the slaughtering
Gn40-01c	Head <i>baker</i> of Pharaoh	To bake	The baker is the person who does the baking

ROUTINE GRAMMAR: The following are some routine grammar from this week's parshah

Verse	Text	Grammatical item
Gn37-02c	Joseph teenaged <i>with</i> the sons of the maids	The Hebrew connective word <i>eth</i> can mean <i>with</i> as it does in this verse
Gn31-30b	They took the coat <i>of</i> Joseph	English: <i>coat</i> means <i>coat</i> . When followed by <i>of</i> we say it is in the construct state and it refers to the coat of someone. Rashi explains how the construct state is formed in Biblical Hebrew
Gn38-27b	She had <i>twins</i>	Metaplasms: Use of deliberate misspelling to achieve a secondary pun effect. Many scholars consider these puns a grammatical tool (<i>peshat</i>) similar to other tools. Rashi explains that <i>twiins</i> spelled fully (two <i>i</i>) means both children turned out

		righteous while <i>twns</i> spelled deficiently (no <i>i</i>) means there was a deficiency in one of the offspring.
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TRANSLATIONS (Based on Roots): The following are translations provided by Rashi. I typically try to connect these with the underlying root. Yet some people consider this “my” explanation and not intrinsic to Rashi. Either way have some fun with the associations.

Verse	Text	Rashi translation of word	My translation based on underlying root
Gn40-06a	They were <i>zoafim</i>	Depressed	<i>Worn out from this (zayin = zeh) is fatigued (ayef)</i>
Gn40-11a	I <i>squeezed</i> the grapes into Pharaoh’s cup	<i>Squeezed</i>	I point out the relationship between pairs of roots one with <i>Shin</i> and one with <i>sin</i> e.g. i-a) <i>shachat</i> =to slaughter animals (make them bleed), i-b) <i>sachet</i> = to squeeze grapes (make them ooze) , ii-a) <i>eshkol</i> = grape cluster, ii-b) <i>schel</i> = clever, smart, (very fruitful (like a cluster)); iii-a) <i>sheker</i> a lie iii-b) <i>saker</i> , eye flirting (deceptive with the eyes)

SYMBOLISM Symbolism is an old favorite of mine. I offer a new approach to symbolism in my doctoral thesis.

Gn39-06b *Joseph’s master put him in charge and didn’t know anything of his affairs except the bread he ate*

Rashi: *Bread, he ate* refers to the women he had intimacy with

In many languages female symbols are typically soft while male symbols are typically hard or strong. *Bread* has no bones making it ideal for a female symbol. Another example (of Bread=female)

Ex02-20b Why did you leave the man. Invite him and let him eat *bread*

Rashi: Invite him and go out with him. Maybe he will marry one of you.

I would suggest that the famous “Man doesn’t live by bread alone” referring to the Manna could be generalized to indicate that food and intimacy are not the only sources of mental engagement available for people.

Finally, if *bread* = female then *kneading bread* = the activity done with females = intimacy
This usage is found in Job 31:10

PARAGRAPH: Gn38-01a,b *At that time, Judah went down from his brothers and steered towards an Adullamite person whose name is Chirah. There Judah saw a daughter of a merchant named Shua and he married her.*

Rashi: *went down*; From his brothers and *steered*: From his brothers

At first blush Rashi appears strange. Isn't it obvious that he steered from his brothers? But Rashi is deeper. Rashi does not interpret

(Rejected by Rashi) went down from his brothers and steered towards an Adullamite

But rather interprets

(Proposed by Rashi) *Went down from his brothers and
*Steered from his brothers towards an Adullamite

In other words, Rashi sees this as a sort of bulleted list representing two stages
* First he went down from his brothers who no longer looked up to him (because he had recommended selling Joseph for money and they regretted it)
* Second: In addition to losing respect from his brothers he steered towards the business world (although still remaining a Shepard). This is indicated by the reference to the daughter of a *merchant* as well as his partnership with an Adullamite.

To understand this recall that Rashi states as follows

Gn37-26a Judah said to his brothers *what cut is there for us in our murdering Joseph our brother; (rather) lets sell him, so that we ourselves don't harm him because he is our brother and family*

Rashi: *Cut: Money*

The Hebrew word used has many meanings. The best English translation is *a cut* which is a slang word for monetary share in a transaction. But it is a mistake to think Rashi translated this word based on dictionary usage. Rather Rashi translated this based on i) the possible meanings of the Hebrew word and ii) the context of what follows which shows Judah deviating from the shepherd world of his family veering towards the business world. We see several things in this chapter which are non-shepherd but standard-business. For example, Judah had no transparency with Tamar: Instead of telling her, *two of the men you married died and if you marry my third son, I fear he will die* he created a subterfuge *wait till the third son grows up to marry*. Similarly, Tamar, seeing that she was never married to the third son even after he grew up, took the law into her own hands (as happens in the business world): She seduced Judah, got pregnant, and demanded reacceptance.

Summary: Rashi is based on overall context. Because of the double verb *go down, steer towards* Rashi interprets that Judah left the nomadic shepherd life (though still doing business with sheep) and veered towards the business world This veering is consistent with his recommendation to *sell* Joseph and receive a *cut* which Rashi interprets monetarily. The four Rashi comments involved work together:

Verse	Biblical text with Rashi comments embedded
Gn38-01a	<u>Went down</u> from his brothers: They no longer respected him Went down from his brothers: They no longer respected him
Gn38-01b	<u>Wend down</u> , and <u>deviated</u> from his brothers: Left their nomadic way of life
Gn38-02a	Judah married the daughter of a <u>merchant</u>
Gn37-26a	Rashi translates <i>betzah</i> as <i>cut</i> that is <i>monetary cut</i> consistent with Judah's deviation away from a nomadic life towards a business life (<i>cut</i> is also

	consistent with the English idiom)
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Table: Context showing that *betzah* refers to monetary cut (Rashi's translation)

READING LITERACY: The major contribution of my doctoral thesis was to equate

Peshat = straightforward meaning of text = reading literacy

This is a contribution because *reading literacy* is a well-established field, and its purpose is to teach and assess if people understand the straightforward meaning of various reading passages.

Verse	Text /word	Nuance	Reading literacy
Gn40-01c	Baker	Exclusively refers to bread (Rashi)	A literate speaker instantly recognizes that <i>baking</i> unlike <i>cooking</i> is specific to bread
Gn37-02e	<i>Dibathan</i> = murmurings / chatting	Refers to chatter type talk (in contrast to say <i>speech, instructions, storytelling</i>)	A literate speaker instantly recognizes that <i>dibathan</i> is not any speaking but a chatter type speaking.

The following is an example of *paragraph reading literacy*. We formulate it in terms of a reading literacy exam.

Verse	Text
Gn37-25b	Judah recommends that Joseph not be killed; rather he should be sold. Joseph was sold to an Ishmaelite caravan transporting a variety of perfumes
Added fact (Rashi)	Arabs usually transport various oils which have bad odors
Reading literacy question	What is the significance in the paragraph that the caravan was transporting perfume
	<p>A) It was the perfume season (Season when perfume is sold)</p> <p>B) It was a rebel Arab caravan because they didn't sell the traditional Arab goods</p> <p>C) (Consistent with several verses) God arranged that the caravan that picked him up had perfumes so he would not have to smell</p>

	bad oils
	C is the correct answer and consistent with other verses (e.g., The statement that God gave Joseph grace while a slave in Potiphar's house of that God gave Joseph grace while in prison)
<i>Peshat</i>	Note: Although this is an inference and not the direct meaning of the words from the point of view of reading literacy it is <i>peshat, the straightforward meaning of the text</i> . Reading literacy tests expect native or literate speakers to <i>recognize the paragraph constructions</i> and the significance of its parts.