

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,

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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PESHAT, SPONTANEOUS, REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATION

ROUTINE RASHI COMMENTS: We will continue with the *routine* Rashi comments begun recently. However, we will also include Rashi comments with substance and nuance. Some comments are in order here: Yitzchak Avineri wrote the *Heikhal Rashi* an encyclopedic work collecting all Rashi's explanation of meaning. My specific contribution is to emphasize the high-level use of figures of speech to explain meaning. In some cases, I bring in Midrashim or other biblical commentators. Thus, these postings are organized by *figure of speech* techniques. Readers will benefit in seeing *how* words acquire meaning. I will not get into a debate on whether these were Rashi's intentions or whether I am reading them into Rashi. I simply point out that Rashi explained the precise nuances of biblical words and I am classifying them by major techniques of *figures of speech*. Some of these figures of speech occur explicitly in Rashi.

SYNENDOCHE Synecdoche explains how a word like *honey* can come to refer to *anything sweet*. The best way to understand this is that *honey* is an *outstanding example* of *sweetness* and hence acquires a new meaning. The technical *figure of speech* term for *outstanding example* is *synecdoche*.

Gn41-02: The biblical word *achu* means *marsh*. Rabbi Hirsch explains: The root of *achu* is *ach*, *brother*; the *marsh* is an outstanding example (synecdoche) of the brotherhood of plants.

Gn41-12b: Describing Joseph, the chief butler says *and with us was a Hebrew teenager*. Rashi explains that the chief butler was insulting and pejorative since *teenager* means *he behaved like a kid* (as in the English idiom). Here too, *teenager* is simply an outstanding example of *behaving like a kid*.

Gn41-03a, Gn41-19a, Gn41-19b: In describing the emaciated gaunt cows and ears of grain at least three adjectives are used which have clear and specific other meanings: *thin*, *poor*, *empty*. Here also we have synecdoche since i) *poor* people are likely to be emaciated, ii) a sickness of malnutrition, kwashiorkor, is characterized by emaciated empty looking skin folds; iii) malnutrition is often characterized by thinness of skin. All these are outstanding examples (synecdoche) associated with lack of nutrition. It is interesting how the Bible uses multiple words and multiple synecdoches to paint these pictures of emaciation.

Gn41-05b, Gn41-07a: The bible seeks to describe cows and plants as *plump* or *healthy* looking. It uses the word *brioth* from the root *barah* which means *to create*. Compare the English idiom *looks new*. Something *new* or something *just made* (*created*) is an outstanding example (synecdoche) of healthy and plump-looking.

The following table summarizes the above Rashi comments and adds some extra (for which we don't think any narrative need be provided).

Verse	Text	Eng. Translation	Meaning of Root	Technique	English Metaphor
Gn41-02b	<i>Achu</i>	Marsh	Brother	Synecdoche	
Gn41-05b	<i>BriOtH</i>	Healthy, Plumb	Created	Synecdoche	looks new"
Gn41-07a	<i>BriOtH</i>	Healthy, Plumb	Created	Synecdoche	looks new"
Gn41-08b	<i>CharTuM</i>	Witches/Magicians	Nostrils	Synecdoche	
Gn41-12b	<i>NaaR</i>	Kid	Youth	Synecdoche	behaves like a child/kid
Gn41-19a	<i>DaLoTh</i>	Emaciated	Poor	Synecdoche Hypernymy	
Gn41-19b	<i>RaKoTh</i>	Missing	Empty	Synecdoche	kwashiorkor (malnutrition disease)
Gn41-03a	<i>DaKoTh</i>	Emaciated	Thin	Synecdoche	

HYPERNYMY: Hypernymy is a fancy name for *category*. The simplest example is that *color* is the hypernym (parent category) while blue, green, yellow, ... are the hyponyms (children, or examples). Sometimes it helps to see the meaning of a word by understanding that the word refers to the overall category (hypernym) and applies to many examples. Interestingly, early language acquisition reflects hypernymy. If you teach a child the word *dog* for example, the child might refer to any animal using the word *dog*. Here the child does not yet grasp the difference between the *hyponym* (child, example) and *hypernym* (category, parent).

Gn41-01a: A punchy example occurs in Gn41-01a *At the end of two years*. The Hebrew word for *end*, *katz*, has several meanings all of which have to do with *the end*. In fact, a closer analysis shows that they sometimes refer to the abrupt end. The varied meanings of this root are as follows

- *Nausea* sudden end to digestion
- *Summer* end (or termination) of the blossomings of Spring
- *Branchlets* the outermost branches on trees
- *Hair locks* the *terminal parts of hair*
- *Awakening* abrupt end of sleeping

The word also denotes *thorns* which *abruptly cut (form an end)* and it can by synecdoche refer to any cutting instrument.

As indicated at the beginning *katz* in contrast to *sof* both of which mean end seem to differ in their nuances (Rashi doesn't say anything explicitly and the examples don't fully support what I am about to say but the examples do point in this direction): *Katz* seems to point to an end which contradicts the past (perhaps an abrupt ending) in contrast to *sof* which emphasizes the natural end. In the examples given above, *nausea*, *summer*, *awakening* all point to a contradiction or abrupt end to the previous digestion, blossoming and sleep. It is harder to defend this for branchlets and locks: Perhaps the idea in locks is that the locks don't just end the *strand* of hair but look different.

When studying Rashi, it is important to go beyond Rashi and seek nuances even if Rashi doesn't explicitly mention them. The verse *at the end (katz-abrupt end) of two more years in prison* is quite

different than *at the end of two more years in prison*. The nuanced *katz* beautifully sets the stage for *an abrupt end* to Joseph's troubles. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, sold multiple times, double crossed by his master's wife, and ignored by the chief butler. But now that is *abruptly ending*. His life is about to turn around. The entire narrative shows Joseph's rise to a well-groomed, counselor, sought and admired by kings, who made his way to the vice presidency of Egypt.

MERONOMY: Meronomy refers to the whole-part relationship. The examples illustrate.

Gn41-05a: Pharaoh dreamt of *seven ears of grain in one shoot*. Here, the *ears* are part of the shoot. The word for shoot, *kaneh* is also the word for *nest*. Charmingly, the relationship of a nest to its nestlings or fledglings is completely analogous to the relationship of ears of grain to its hosting shoot.

The interpretation of this in the context of the dream is that although the 7 years of famine were seven in count, they were one bundle (without respite).

Gn41-15a process starting with listening and ending in interpretation. The various parts of the process reflect meronomy. Just to be clear, the process starts with *hearing* (as literally stated) continues to *understanding* and culminates with an interpretation. Also note that Joseph's interpretations were not complicated but rather his interpretation reflects almost the same content as the dream (the interpretation naturally evolves from the dream).

SPATIAL-LOCATIVE: These are meanings depending on location, spatial and temporal form.

Gn41-14a: A reference is made to the *prison* which is called the *pit*. Rashi explains that *prisons* (in biblical times) were not buildings as they are today but rather pits in the ground. Thus, the word for prison reflects its shape and form.

Gn41-08a: Pharaoh, getting up from his dreams *was obsessed*. The Hebrew word for *obsessed* is the same word for the clapper of a bell. Just as a bell's sound is *periodic* so too the obsessed person has periodic thoughts of his obsessions. He tried to get away from them only to see them return. Compare the English *throbbing thoughts* where *throbbing* is spatially or temporally like a repeating bell.

GRAMMATICAL: Gn41-06a,b speaks about the ears of grain *prior-destroyed*. Rashi explains that the word *prior* means *east*; the particular nuance of *destroyed* is *pounded*. Altogether Rashi interprets the phrase *prior-destroyed* as *east-wind-pounded*.

How did Rashi arrive at this? First, the use of *spatial-locatives* for the four directions is known in Hebrew. *East* is called *prior* in many verses just as *west* is called *behind*. Compare the English *the sun rises in the East and sets in the west*. The phrase *east-destroyed* suggests *pounding*, destroyed by a strong East wind. This inference is motivated by the grammatical form itself.

CONCLUSION: As previously indicated these *routine* Rashi do not have the issues *perшат, derash, homily etc.* since they are translations. Hence, we momentarily stopped making the 10 row charts in favor of exploring the varieties of figures of speech.