

# The Rashi Database Project

## NEW AND IMPROVED

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.Rashibyomi.com/RashiDatabase.htm](http://www.Rashibyomi.com/RashiDatabase.htm)

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

MG=Modern Grammar with Applications to Rashid ([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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DATE/AUTHOR: Sep 3rd, 2023, Russell Jay Hendel DSJS, Ph.D.

**RASHI ID: Gn42-06a, Gn42-07a, Gn42-08a, Gn42-08b, Gn42-09a, Gn42-09b, Gn42-10a**

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

**WHAT IS NEW:** *This week's digest reviews a Ramban-Rashi dialogue. We claim that Ramban was not disagreeing with Rashi but clarifying Rashi. The key to today's analysis is the realization that both Rashi and Ramban were commenting on paragraph structure.*

## TODAYS CHALLENGING RASHIS

**VERSE:** Gn42-06a Gn42-08a Gn42-08b Gn42-09a

**METHOD:** Paragraph Development

**CITATION OF BIBLICAL TEXT:**

*Frequent questions I receive are, "What gives you the authority to reinterpret Rashi: If he says one thing how can you argue that he meant something else?" and "What authority gives you the right to settle controversies between Rashi and other commentators such as the Ramban and Ibn Ezra?" The 4 Rashi comments connected with Joseph's reuniting with his brothers afford an opportunity to answer these questions.*

*First, the verse literally says, 'Joseph remembered the dreams he dreamt for them [his brothers].' Our current Rashi text reinterprets he dreamt for them as meaning he dreamt about them. But there are about a dozen Rashi comments scattered throughout the Torah in which Rashi emphasizes that the indirect pronouns for you, for me, always mean for your own benefit [cf. Ex25-02a, Nu13-02b, Nu10-02b]. Hence based on these other Rashis, I believe Rashi on the verse the dreams he dreamt for them would say 'the dreams he dreamt for their purpose and good,' the emphasis being that he dreamt for his brothers not for himself. In my doctoral thesis I explicitly lay down a rule that Rashi reinterpretation should be based on many similar Rashi comments of the same nature (Chapter 4).*

*This interpretation says the following about the two ways of interpreting Josephs' dreams: Joseph asserted that he was trying to help his brothers; their bowing to him meant they would*

*thank him for his expertise. Contrastively, Joseph's brothers explicitly accused him of wanting power and the right to rule over them. Joseph answered his brother's concerns in his second dream, the dream of the stars bowing to him. In this dream, each brother is his own star; Joseph, the baby in the family, also has an expertise, a star. Thus, his brothers' bowing to him is a thank you for Joseph using his skills to preserve food. Hence, the dreams according to Joseph's interpretation are fulfilled.*

*Based on paragraph context, this simple contrast is summarized in the verse: Joseph [did] recognize his brother's; but they did not recognize him. This emphasis on paragraph context explains why I reject the interpretations of the Ramban and Ibn Ezra. Ibn Ezra dotting on the repetition of recognized says, (a) he recognized his brothers generally (1st statement of recognition) and (b) he recognized them individually (2nd statement of recognition). Ramban, focusing on the fulfillment of the bowing dream suggests that Joseph wanted the 2nd dream in which Benjamin bows to be fulfilled. But Ramban ignores that Jacob already showed false items in the dream (such as Rachel bowing). Thus, Ramban is very weak.*

*Finally, Rashi, Ramban, and ibn Ezra cite the Midrash Rabbah that Joseph's brothers did not recognize him because he had not had a beard yet. This is silly and superficial. I would simply interpret beard as indicating maturity (Why didn't the text simply say so? Because Hebrew has no word for maturity). The verse would mean that Joseph recognized his brothers' skill sets (their beards) because they had already had them; the brothers did not recognize Joseph because he had no skill set when he left and now, he had matured (beard). As to the verse Joseph disguised himself and spoke harshly: Rashi seems to be making a pun that disguise coming from the word meaning foreign, means he behaved like a foreigner, leading to Ramban rejecting this idea. But Rashi is basing himself on the hitpa'el conjugation which indicates activity under an outside influence. Here, under the outside influence of his brothers not recognizing Joseph, Joseph disguised himself and behaved harshly.*

## DATABASE ENTRIES

*The Free Downloadable Excel based database is found at [http://www.Rashiyomi.com/The\\_Rashi\\_Database\\_Project.xls](http://www.Rashiyomi.com/The_Rashi_Database_Project.xls)*

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>VERSE:</b>             | Gn42-06a   |
| <b>TRANSLATION:</b>       | <i>They [Joseph's] brothers bowed to him [lit. subdued on their face earthwards]</i>   |
| <b>METHOD:</b>            | Synonyms   |
| <b>BRIEF EXPLANATION:</b> | There are several words and idiomatic phrases referring to bowing in Biblical Hebrew. In English, bowing refers to bending at the hips. In biblical Hebrew bowing can refer to point bowing where one's head touches the ground and prostrate bowing where one goes to a push-up position on the ground with one's face, hands and legs on the floor. The idiom for this type of bowing is subdued themselves on their face earthward. We have translated as bowing instead of prostration since it is a more familiar English word. |

**VERSE:** Gn42-07a

**TRANSLATION:** *Joseph recognized his brothers; he disguised himself: He spoke harshly to them: 'From where do you come?'. They said, 'From Canaan to acquire food.'*

**METHOD:** Grammar

**BRIEF EXPLANATION:** Frequent questions I receive are, “What gives you the authority to reinterpret Rashi: If he says one thing how can you argue that he meant something else?” and “What authority gives you the right to settle controversies between Rashi and other commentators such as the Ramban and Ibn Ezra?” The 4 Rashi comments connected with Joseph’s reuniting with his brothers afford an opportunity to answer these questions. First, the verse literally says, ‘Joseph remembered the dreams he dreamt for them [his brothers].’ Our current Rashi text reinterprets he dreamt for them as meaning he dreamt about them. But there are about a dozen Rashi comments scattered throughout the Torah in which Rashi emphasizes that the indirect pronouns for you, for me, always mean for your own benefit [cf. Ex25-02a, Nu13-02b, Nu10-02b]. Hence based on these other Rashis, I believe Rashi on the verse the dreams he dreamt for them would say ‘the dreams he dreamt for their purpose and good,’ the emphasis being that he dreamt for his brothers not for himself. In my doctoral thesis I explicitly lay down a rule that Rashi reinterpretation should be based on many similar Rashi comments of the same nature (Chapter 4).[continued in Gn42-08a]

**VERSE:** Gn42-08a

**TRANSLATION:** *Joseph recognized his brothers but they didn't recognize him*

**METHOD:** Paragraph context

**BRIEF EXPLANATION:** [Continued from Gn42-07a] This interpretation says the following about the two ways of interpreting Joseph’s dreams: Joseph asserted that he was trying to help his brothers; their bowing to him meant they would thank him for his expertise. Contrastively, Joseph’s brothers explicitly accused him of wanting power and the right to rule over them. Joseph answered his brother’s concerns in his second dream, the dream of the stars bowing to him. In this dream, each brother is his own star; Joseph, the baby in the family, also has an expertise, a star. Thus, his brothers’ bowing to him is a thank you for Joseph using his skills to preserve food. Hence, the dreams according to Joseph’s interpretation are fulfilled. [Continued in Gn42-08b]

**VERSE:** Gn42-08b

**TRANSLATION:** *Joseph recognized his brothers but they didn't recognize him*

**METHOD:** Paragraph context

**BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:**

[Continued from Gn42-08a] Based on paragraph context, this simple contrast is summarized in the verse: Joseph [did] recognize his brother's; but they did not recognize him. This emphasis on paragraph context explains why I reject the interpretations of the Ramban and Ibn Ezra. Ibn Ezra dotting on the repetition of recognized says, (a) he recognized his brothers generally (1<sup>st</sup> statement of recognition) and (b) he recognized them individually (2<sup>nd</sup> statement of recognition). Ramban, focusing on the fulfillment of the bowing dream suggests that Joseph wanted the 2<sup>nd</sup> dream in which Benjamin bows to be fulfilled. But Ramban ignores that Jacob already showed false items in the dream (such as Rachel bowing). Thus, Ramban is very weak. [Continued in Gn42-09a]

**VERSE:**

Gn42-09a

**TRANSLATION:**

*Joseph remembered the dreams he dreamt for them: He said to them: You are spies, to see the vulnerability of the land [lit. the nakedness of the land] you have come.*

**METHOD:**

Pronouns

**BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:**

[Continued from Gn42-08b] Finally, Rashi, Ramban, and ibn Ezra cite the Midrash Rabbah that Joseph's brothers did not recognize him because he had not had a beard yet. This is silly and superficial. I would simply interpret beard as indicating maturity (Why didn't the text simply say so? Because Hebrew has no word for maturity). The verse would mean that Joseph recognized his brothers' skill sets (their beards) because they had already had them; the brothers did not recognize Joseph because he had no skill set when he left and now, he had matured (beard). As to the verse Joseph disguised himself and spoke harshly: Rashi seems to be making a pun that disguise coming from the word meaning foreign, means he behaved like a foreigner, leading to Ramban rejecting this idea. But Rashi is basing himself on the hitpa'el conjugation which indicates activity under an outside influence. Here, under the outside influence of his brothers not recognizing Joseph, Joseph disguised himself and behaved harshly.

**VERSE:**

Gn42-09b

**TRANSLATION:**

*Joseph remembered the dreams he dreamt for them: He said to them: You are spies, to see the vulnerability of the land [lit. the nakedness of the land] you have come.*

**METHOD:**

Synecdoche

**BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:**

*There is an interesting controversy here between Rashi and the Ibn Ezra. The verse literally says, 'The nakedness of the land.' Ibn Ezra interprets this based on form: nakedness of the land means the secrets of the land; he argues that nakedness and secrets are typically hidden and have to be uncovered. Rashi bases himself on synecdoche the figure of speech which names things based on good examples, for example, calling something sweet, honey. Nakedness is a good example of the weak points by which one approach somebody; hence by synecdoche it refers to any vulnerability. Rashi explicitly says, 'You seek to find what is the easiest way to enter the land.'*

**VERSE:  
TRANSLATION:  
METHOD:  
BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:**

Gn42-10a

*They said: 'No my lord,' 'Rather your servants have come to acquire food.'*

Interrogative

*Rashi is quite deep here. Joseph said, 'You are spies.' However the brothers re-interpreted this declarative statement as a question: 'Perhaps you are spies?' They responded to the re-interpreted question: 'No my lord; rather [than being spies] we have come to acquire food.'*