

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 Rashi comment to the reader

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

MG=Modern Grammar with Applications to Rashid (www.Rashiyom.com/Rashibook2.htm)}

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PESHAT: THE SPONTANEOUS REACTION OF NATIVE SPEAKERS FAMILIAR WITH WORD NUANCES

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE

- We analyze a controversy of Rashi and Ibn Ezra. We show that
 - They both basically agree
 - Rashi is more detailed with richer nuances
 - Rashi addresses more textual concerns

VERSES: Ex15-06a, Ex15-06b, Ex15-06c, Ex15-06d

Biblical text:

<i>Your right hand (1)</i>	<i>God</i>	<i>Adorned with might</i>	
<i>Your right hand (1)</i>			<i>Pulverizes (2) the enemy</i>

Notes:

(1) Notice how the first column is repeated while the 2nd-4th are not repeated giving the parallelism table a staircase-like design. Hence, the academics refer to this type of parallelism as staircase parallelism. Rashi gives and cites several examples of it throughout the bible.

Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra explain that staircase parallelism indicates repeated action. It is important to emphasize that Rashi, in this verse, derives the repetition, that is, God pulverizes the enemy again and again, from the conjugation of the word pulverize (See note (2)).

Another important point is that Rashi goes a minor step more than Ibn Ezra. Staircase parallelism indicates more than just repetition according to Rashi; rather, it indicates unexpected repetition, a repetition you wouldn't have expected. In this verse, if one thinks about ordinary warfare, we think of an initial display of power which then winds down; however, God,

unlike humans, does not have a winding down. God continually pulverizes with the same strength and power. To use Rashi's language and metaphor: *God's left hand* (weaker winding down) *becomes a right hand*.

Rashi makes a comment that *according to the peshat of the verse*, God's right hand which is adorned with might smashes the enemy. *Here, readers mistakenly think peshat refers to the simple straightforward meaning of the verse, implying that other readings are homily.*

Not so. In my doctoral thesis I point out that the word *derash* has 7 flavors or meanings. I use the English example *drive*: The simple meaning of *drive*, is a means of motion. But the *nuanced meaning of drive, nuances to a native speaker, is drive a car*. It would be a mistake to say that *drive a car* is *derash* or *homily*; it is in fact the simple *peshat*, what the word *drive* means.

Hence, a conclusion of my doctoral thesis is that *peshat* could refer to the *simple meaning of the text*. But it can also refer to *the simpleton meaning of the text by a non-native speaker*. Thus in this verse, Rashi is explaining how a *simpleton* person untrained in poetic reading might read the verse totally ignoring the straightforward *peshat* meaning of the staircase parallelism.

Finally, we deal with a cryptic comment of Rashi: *When the Jews fulfill the will of God, His left hand becomes a Right hand*. To fully understand this, we look at its source in the *Midrash Rabbah*. The *Midrash Rabbah* contrasts our verse and a corresponding verse in La02-03

Your right hand God pulverizes the enemy
God withdrew his right hand for the enemy (to destroy)

The two verses contradict each other. Rashi following the Midrash explains

When the Jews do God's will, His left hand becomes a Right hand
When the Jews sin, He withdraws his Right hand.

In other words,

Ibn Ezra exclusively dealt with the meaning of *this* verse
Rashi dealt both with the meaning of this and other verses

(2) The verse uses the future conjugation, *tiratz, will pulverize*, to describe a present action. Hebrew grammar uses the future conjugation when it wants to indicate the *habitual*. The *habitual* refers to *repeated* activity. The verb *go* in the sentence *I go to work by train* does not indicate present, future, or past activity, but rather, indicates a *habitual* activity, something I always and repeatedly do. Hebrew indicates the habitual (among other ways) using the future conjugation on a present activity.

Thus Rashi derives the *repeated* nature of God pulverizing the enemy from the habitual, not from the staircase parallelism.

VERSE ID	Text of Biblical Verse	Hebrew Word	Figure of Speech	Brief Explanantion
Ex13-17a	<i>When Pharaoh let the nation go, God did not gently-guide [lit. gentle] them through Philistine lands lest the nation have regrets because of the sight of all the military activities and they would want to return to Egypt</i>		Hypernymy	<i>The Hebrew root used, Nun-Cheth-Hey means gentle. However, the context of the verse indicates some type of movement-guidance. Rashi simply notes this: Gentle means guide them gently. More deeply, the parent category of guiding movements [hypernym] has many children types [hyponyms] of movements such as gently-guiding, quickly guiding, etc. Thus, Rashi really is indicating that the text coins an idiom: gently-guide using the verb gentle</i>
Ex13-17b	<i>When Pharaoh let the nation go, God did not gently-guide them through Philistine lands lest the nation have regrets because of the sight of all the military activities and they would want to return to Egypt</i>		Grammar Unified Meaning	<i>The Hebrew root Nun-Cheth-Mem has two meanings: i) console, and ii) regret. They have in common that both refer to a change of attitude. In regret the person regretting initiates this change of attitude by regretting a past action. In console other parties attempt to persuade the consoled person to accept to change their attitude that the deceased is alive; they console him and make him aware of the deceased's death and urge him to remember him/her and the positive influence they had.</i>
Ex13-18a	<i>God steered [lit. circled] the nation towards the Sea of Reeds</i>		Synecdoche	<i>The Hebrew root Samech-Beth-Beth refers to encirclement. As an adjective it would mean surrounded. As a verb it should mean to go around in circles. By synecdoche, it also means to steer since going around in circles is a good example [synecdoche] of steering.</i>

<p>Ex13-18c</p>	<p><i>A fifth [cheth-mem-shin] of the Jews left Egypt</i></p>	<p>Metonymy - Synecdoche</p>	<p><i>The Hebrew root cheth-mem-shin means five. From this root we obtain the grammatically related meaning [metonymy] of one-fifth. Rashi cites this explanation from the Bamidbar Rabbah. But Rashi also cites that the commonly accepted meaning of cheth-mem-shin is armed and even brings Aramaic precedents. This can be explained by synecdoche. A good example [synecdoche] of five is the hand which has five fingers. In English, a person holding a weapon (or to whom a weapon is accessible on him) is said to be armed since the arm is a good example [synecdoche] of use of weapons. In Hebrew we say the person is handed or more precisely fived. Rashi appears to say that the simple meaning is armed, and the homiletic meaning is one fifth. But in my doctoral thesis I show that the simple meaning is armed. Rashi calls it Derash because Derash can indicate nuanced simple meaning. The translation of armed is really the reading of a simpleton ignorant of reading comprehension. For the primary source of meaning is context not the dictionary. In this case the previous verse said the Jews (who were slaves) were frightened by military activities; it wouldn't make sense based on context to say they were armed. Furthermore, the previous verse says that the Jews were so frightened by military activities that they would want to return to Egypt to slavery!!! Clearly, they were emotionally weak. Rashi's translation of one fifth is now pregnant with meaning. Four fifths of the Jews died during the plagues and only one fifth left and even this fifth could easily be persuaded to return</i></p>
<p>Ex14-03b</p>	<p><i>Pharoh will think concerning [lit. to] the Jews that they are confused on direction</i></p>	<p>Grammar Pronouns</p>	<p><i>Hebrew uses prefix letters - beth- caph-lamed- mem (BiChLaM) - to indicate prepositional connectives. Although each letter has a primary meaning, the meanings all interchange. For example, the primary meaning of a lamed before a word is to; In this verse this primary meaning would lead to the absurd translation Pharoh will say to the Jews. Rashi explains that the prefix lamed in this verse means concerning or about. For this reason, we have translated say as think which is more appropriate (since he wasn't necessarily talking to anyone) Thus, the verse is translated, Pharoh will think concerning the Jews</i></p>

<p>Ex14-03c</p>	<p><i>Pharoh will think about the Jews that they are depressively confused on direction</i></p>		<p>Root Meanings</p>	<p><i>[Directly from my doctoral thesis] The Hebrew root Beth-Vav-Caph means confused. Rashi scholars believe that the root of the Hebrew word in this verse. But Rashi gives examples from other roots with Beth and caph such as Beth-Caph-Hey. This has led Rashi scholars to say that Rashi was a product of his times and believed in two letter roots (a theory that was popular around Rashi's times and had recently been replaced with a uniform three-letter root theory). My position is that Rashi recognizes a new verb root here Nun-Beth-Caph. Rashi explains that while Beth-Vav-Caph means confused, Nun-Beth-Caph means depressively confused, that is, a confusion, where the confused person gives up and stops trying. This suggested new root and its meaning would fit in nicely with the other verses that Rashi cites. For example, the verse in Job would be translated Could you come to the whirlpools the whirlpool being an example of an oceanic encounter that leaves you depressively confused that is incapable of further action.</i></p>
<p>Ex14-07a</p>	<p><i>Pharoh took 600 choicest chariots (lit. selected chariots)</i></p>		<p>Metonymy</p>	<p>The Hebrew root Beth-Cheth-Resh means to select. By metonymy it refers to the choicest and best since those are the things that one typically selects (metonymy). Rashi also explains the anomalous combination of plural and singular. The verse says 600 implying plural but then uses the singular to describe the choicest. Rashi explains that grammar allows use of the singular for the plural when one wants to emphasize that each chariot was choicest (not just most of them).</p>
<p>Ex14-07c</p>	<p><i>Captains [lit. 3rds] over all forces</i></p>		<p>Metonymy</p>	<p>Generals are first in command. Majors are 2nd in command and are assigned to each region of the army. The individual forces are governed by captains who report to the majors who know the guidelines of the generals. Thus, the captains are typically 3rd in command and hence the Hebrew word for captain comes from the Hebrew root meaning three.</p>
<p>Ex14-24b</p>	<p><i>God scanned [lit. doorposted] on them</i></p>		<p>Hypernymy</p>	<p>Both Hebrew and English have many words meaning looking over. One type of looking over is a wide range scan. This is typically done to assess situations. Hebrew derives the word for a high-range scan from the word doorpost since the doorpost top is typically higher and would correspond to the scanning operation.</p>

Ex14-24d	<i>God tumulted them</i>		Denominatives	Just as from the noun tango we obtained the verb to tango, from the noun hospital we obtain the verb to hospitalize, from the noun tumult we obtain the verb tumulted. The grammatical term for changing a noun into a verb is denominative. Rashi also cites the Pirkey Rabbi Eliezer that the core of a tumult is the noise.
Ex15-06c	<i>God's right hand is adorned with might</i>	Adorned (Ne-Da-Ri)	Grammar	Rashi explains that the Hebrew Ne-Dar and Ne-Da--ri a have the same meaning. The extra terminal <i>ri</i> is simply "a poetic adornment which occurs frequently in the biblical text"