

# 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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## VERSION NUMBER: Version 4

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

#### **WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE**

- Ibn Ezra demurs to a Rashi explanation, “But this phrase never means this elsewhere in the Bible.” We refute the Ibn Ezra’s critique by showing that Rashi was *not* explaining the meaning words; rather, Rashi was employing the Rabbi Ishmael Style rules which requires generalization; several examples are brought throughout the Bible showing how “ox” is generalized to any animal, “prostitute” is generalized to any serious violation of intimacy, “widows and orphans” are generalized to any person with weak social support.
- We similarly respond to an objection of the Ramban by showing that Rashi used the Rabbi Ishmael Style rules requiring generalization.

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Lv21-07a, Ex21-28a, Ex22-17a, Ex22-21a, Ex22-30b, Dt13-07f, Dt15-19b, Dt23-11a, Dt25-04a, Dt23-18a, Dt23-18b

(A priest:) Should not take (marry) a prostitute or profaned woman

**Rashi Rule:** Rabbi Ishmael Style Rules

**Rashi Comment:** The verse states

[A priest] Will not take a prostitute or profaned woman

Rashi explains that the verse prohibits marrying a woman who had intimacy with one of the forbidden relations for example an adulteress.

Ibn Ezra demurs: *But throughout the Bible prostitute always has a clear meaning* [not the one Rashi mentioned]

To answer the Ibn Ezra, we review the *Generalization* principle of the Rabbi Ishmael Style rules. A simpler example might be Dt25-04a, *Don't muzzle an ox while threshing*. Rashi explains that it is forbidden to deprive *any animal* of food while it is assisting humans (for example, Jewish Eskimos are forbidden to muzzle their dogs while pulling their sleds).

It is ridiculous to explain Rashi as reinterpreting *ox*. Throughout the bible, *ox* refers to *oxen*. Rather, the basis of Rashi's derivation is the Rabbi Ishmael Generalization Style Rule which states that unless otherwise indicated every biblical law is generalized (See Rashi, Pesachim 6). So, although the verse prohibits the very specific case of muzzling an ox, the prohibition applies to all animals.

Similarly, in our verse, the verse prohibiting a prostitute is generalized to a prohibition of marrying any woman who had serious unions of intimacy violating fundamental laws. The following table gives other examples where the law of the verse is generalized: It refers not only to what is mentioned in the verse but anything similar.

Thus, the correct answer to the Ibn Ezra is that Rashi was not *redefining* prostitute or oxen but rather Rashi was *generalizing the specific prohibition*.

Rashi	Text of Verse	Generalization	What the Torah Gave	Why is it typical
Ex21-28a	When an ox gores a man or woman and they die	The same law applies to other animals ( besides an ox) that kills people	The Torah gives the usual case	Usually, oxen gore
Ex22-17a	You should not let a female witch live	The same law applies to male witches	The Torah gives the usual case	Most witches were females
Ex22-21a	Don't abuse at all a widow or orphan	The same law applies to all people (not just widows and orphans)	The Torah gives the usual case	Abuse typically targets widows and orphans who are typically weak
Ex22-30b	Don't eat the flesh of an animal mutilated in the field	The same law applies if the animal was mutilated in the house	The Torah gives the usual case	Most animal mutilations happen in the field
Dt13-07f	When a relative privately seduces you to worship idols	The same law applies if the seduction was open and not private	The Torah gives the usual case	Seduction to sin is usually done privately
Dt15-19b	Do not put the first born of ox to work; do not share the first born of sheep	The prohibition equally applies to putting a first-born sheep to work or sharing a first-born ox	The Torah gives the usual case	Typically, you work with oxen and share sheep
Dt23-11a	If a person became ritually impure from a nocturnal accident	The same law applies if the accident happened by day	The Torah gives the usual case	Impurity accidents typically happen by night
Dt25-04a	Don't muzzle an ox while threshing	It is prohibited to muzzle (or prevent from eating) other animals you are	The Torah gives the usual case	Typically work was done with oxen (but work by other animals is possible)

		working with		
Dt23-18a	There should be no Jewish prostitutes	Living together outside of marriage is also prohibited	The Torah gives the usual case	Prostitutes are extreme examples of people who have relations outside of marriage
Dt23-18b	There should be no male Jewish prostitutes	This applies whether the male prostitute is with other men or otherwise	The Torah gives the usual case	

**Table Lv21-07a:** 10 Rashis where the Biblical text is generalized from a specific example.

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**Lv21-15a Lv21-14a Lv21-07b**

(A) He [the high priest who experienced a death] should not leave the Temple *and he shouldn't profane the holy place of his God.....*

(B) He should marry a virgin....A widow, divorcee, profaned woman and prostitute, these he should not take rather a virgin.

(C) *And he shouldn't profane his descendants in his nation...*

**Rashi Rule:** Rabbi Ishmael Rules

**Rashi Comment:** Statement (B), the *specific* prohibition of a high priest marrying a widow, divorcee, etc., is sandwiched between (A) and (C) both of which prohibit the high priest from profaning his descendants.

The Rabbi Ishmael style rules dictate *how* specific prohibitions are treated. When a *specific* prohibition is sandwiched between two *general statements*, the Rabbi Ishmael style rules require generalizing the specific example beyond its literal meaning. Hence

- It is prohibited for a high priest to *marry* a widow, divorcee, etc.
- It is similarly prohibited for the high-priest to have *intimacy* with the widow, divorcee etc.

Both these activities if performed in violation create a stigma in the resulting children if any. These children are *profaned* and lose their status as *priests*.

This approach to Rashi (which unfortunately is not explicit in Rashi) answers the objections of the Ramban to Rashi. Ramban points out that

- There are two distinct prohibitions according to the Talmudic interpretation: A prohibition of marriage and a prohibition of intimacy *both* of which cause *profaning* of descendants.
- Rashi literally simply says *that if the high priest married one of these his descendants are profaned, that is, lose their priestly status.*

According to my suggested approach to Rashi, Rashi would agree there are numerous ways that the high priest's progeny can get profaned including *marriage* and *intimacy*. That is, his purpose of making his comment was

- Not to be restrictive and say that *only* by marrying does he profane his descendants but rather
- To show that the prohibition *causes a consequence* of *profanation* of descendants.

QUICKY?	VERSE ID	Text of Biblical Verse	Hebrew Word	Rashi Rule / Figure of Speech	Rule Support	Brief Explanation	Notes
Quicky	Lv21-02a	Except to his wife [lit. leftover]	<i>She'e'ro</i>	Synecdoche		There are 3 Hebrew <i>idioms</i> made with the word <i>she'er</i> which means <i>leftover</i> : (i) <i>she'er be'sa'ro</i> the leftover of this flesh is an idiom meaning a <i>relative</i> ; (ii) <i>she'er a-viv</i> the leftover of this father is an idiom meaning <i>his father's wife</i> ; (iii) <i>his leftover, she'e'ro</i> , his leftover, is an idiom meaning <i>his wife</i> . These idioms are similar to the English idiom, <i>my other half</i> (Referring to a <i>wife</i> ).	
Quicky	Lv21-17a	A blemished priest may not offer offerings (lit. the bread of God)	<i>le-chem e-lo-hauv</i>	Synecdoche		Just as honey refers to anything sweet, so too, bread can refer to the meal, and in the Temple context it can refer to offerings.	
Quicky	Lv21-18b	A person without a nose (lit. <i>netted person</i> )	<i>Cha-rum</i>	Form		A person without a nose <i>appears or has the form</i> of a net (because of the two nostril holes)	
Quicky	Lv21-18c	A person whose limbs are different lengths (lit. <i>a stretched person</i> )	<i>Sa-ru-ah</i>	Form		A person whose limbs are of different lengths <i>appears or has the form</i> of a person whose organs have been stretched.	
Quicky	Lv21-21c	See Lv21-17a	See Lv21-17a	See Lv21-17a		See Lv21-17a	
Quicky	Lv21-20a	a person with lying eyebrows (lit. humped)	<i>gi-ben</i>	Form		The word <i>gav</i> can refer to a backbone or hump. This has the same form as lying sprawled out eyebrows.	
Quicky	Lv21-20b	a person with streaks in his eyes (lit. thin)	<i>dak</i>	Form		Streaks in the eye appear to be thin lines	
Quicky	Lv21-20c	A person with white streaks through his iris and pupil (lit. mixed up)	<i>te-va-lul</i>	Form		A person whose eye-white streaks into the iris and pupil has the appearance of someone whose eye components have been mixed.	