

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

PUBLICATION: www.Rashibyomi.com/The_Rashi_Database_Project.htm from the Rashi website www.Rashiyomi.com

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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VERSION NUMBER: Version 4

RASHI ID: Gn42-03a, Gn42-03b, Gn42-04a, Gn42-05a, Gn42-06a, Gn42-07a, Gn42-08a, Gn42-08b, Gn42-09a, Gn42-09b, Gn42-10a, Gn42-11a, Gn4-11b, Gn42-12a, Gn42-13a, Gn42-14a, Gn42-15a, Gn42-15b, Gn42-16a, Gn42-17a, Gn42-19a, Gn42-19b, Gn42-19c, Gn42-20a, Gn42-21a, Gn42-21b, Gn42-22a, Gn42-23a, Gn42-23b, Gn42-23c, Gn42-24a, Gn42-24b, Gn4-24c,

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

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE

- A fresh analysis of the meeting of Joseph with his brothers

ISSUE SUPPLEMENTS

Every issue now has a quicky sheet. Lists of Rashi translations and grammatical points in spreadsheet form on the bottom of the issue. The main juicy part usually emphasizing some Midrash, controversy, or psychological point, is at the beginning.

VERSES: Gn42-03a, Gn42-03b, Gn42-04a, Gn42-05a, Gn42-06a, Gn42-07a, Gn42-08a, Gn42-08b, Gn42-09a, Gn42-09b, Gn42-10a, Gn42-11a, Gn4-11b, Gn42-12a, Gn42-13a, Gn42-14a, Gn42-15a, Gn42-15b, Gn42-16a, Gn42-17a, Gn42-19a, Gn42-19b, Gn42-19c, Gn42-20a, Gn42-21a, Gn42-21b, Gn42-22a, Gn42-23a, Gn42-23b, Gn42-23c, Gn42-24a, Gn42-24b, Gn4-24c

BIBLICAL TEXT: This chapter dealing with the meeting of Joseph and his brothers nicely divides into 3 paragraphs.

PARAGRAPH 1: Gn42-03:05 – Jacob worried about avoiding accidents

The *theme* of this paragraph is Jacob's worry *less an accident happens*. The biblical text explains that Jacob didn't send Benjamin for this reason. But the text, in two places, emphasizes that the 10 brothers came *amidst* the comers to Joseph. The

emphasis on *midst* ties in with *less an accident happen*. The brothers were not to be conspicuous; they should blend together with the crowd. Rashi suggests that Jacob actually advised his sons to enter through different portals so as to be inconspicuous; but the driving force is the paragraph theme, *less an accident happen*.

Contrasting within the paragraph the reference to the brothers – sometimes *children of Israel* and sometimes *Joseph’s brothers* - suggests that they wanted to see if they could locate Joseph. Rashi notes the unusual emphasis on numbers: *Joseph’s brothers, the 10 of them*, suggesting that they all had different approaches to Joseph. Rashi does not give details. Perhaps some brothers just wanted to see if he was alive; they didn’t really want him back while other brothers wanted to redeem him.

PARAGRAPH II: Gn42-07:17 – Cross examination of Joseph of his brothers

The theme of this paragraph is verse 8: *Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn’t recognize him*. The simple meaning of the sentence is of course that Joseph was 17 when he left, he didn’t yet have a beard, and his mannerisms were boyish. (Rashi simply mentions the beard but his general demeanor should also be brought in.)

But the placement of this verse here designates it as a theme sentence. So, this verse acquires an additional meaning in the context of the paragraph: Joseph had mercy and recognized his brothers, but they were cruel to him. The paragraph emphasizes that Joseph dreamt dreams to help them as he was doing now in providing food. It is interesting to compare Joseph’s treatment of his brothers with their treatment of him as shown in the following table

Speaker	Accusation	Confinement	Regret
Joseph	You are spies	Joseph imprisoned them	Joseph recanted “I fear God so I will let you bring home food”
His brothers	You want to reign over us	They threw Joseph in the pit	No mention of fear of God by the brothers is given. Judah simply mentions there is no profit in murder

Thus, the incidents of this paragraph support the general theme.

Rashi also notes how the harsh cross examination led the brothers to start thinking about Joseph. Thus, they admitted to feeling guilty about what they did v21) and under conditions of cross-examination they begin to speak imprecisely as shown by

several contrasts. Initially they said, “We are all brothers” while later on they said, “The 12 of use are brothers with one home and one disappeared.” They also spoke in holophrastic sentences (short one-word sentences) “No my lord”.

Although we don’t know exactly what transpired between them it is easy to guess: Joseph knew they entered in different gates because he had records of who came into Egypt. It is very possible that the brothers, eager to find Joseph, were asking about the slave trade in Egypt. So, Joseph lured them into discussing this and pointed out that asking for a country’s slave trade is spying. Rashi learns this from the emphatic pronouns used in the dialogue. *This is exactly why I claimed you were spies.*

To summarize, we don’t know exactly what they spoke about, but normal cross examination procedure would lure them into speaking about their missing brother and their desire to find him.

PARAGRAPH 3: Gn42-19:24 Guilt, Fear of God, Imprisonment of Shimeon

The brothers spoke among themselves in Hebrew not realizing Joseph could understand them because an interpreter was used. They express guilt about Joseph. During the dialogue it emerges that Reuven defended Joseph. He was the oldest and thus the conversation enlightened Joseph with his innocence. Since Shimeon was 2nd oldest he probably advocated killing Joseph. It is not hard to imagine, that people knew that Jacob’s 2 sons Shimeon and Levi destroyed a city in which their sister was raped. So, Joseph was gathering a picture of whom to blame. Rashi gives specific details, but we can focus on high level items like the conversation they were having and their history.

As pointed out above, Joseph emphasizes that he *fears God* a phrase we never find in the brother’s discussion of selling him. He allows them to return with food and to prove their story by bringing Benjamin. (Apparently it didn’t make sense that ten of them came and left one behind). He jailed Shimeon as the one who instigated his sale. Rashi points out that at the time of sale Shimeon probably man-handled him for example pushing him in the pit. The way to take these Rashis is suggestions of the paragraph themes that Joseph took out on the perpetrator of his sale without knowing exactly what details took place. Note: The Rashi comment that he treated Shimon nicely in prison is similar to the way prisoners of war are treated today – they are treated nicely because they offer the opportunity for exchange.

Although we have gone over these Rashi in paragraph form instead of phrase by phrase, the interested reader can go to the texts and see each Rashi comment as fitting into the overall paragraph theme.

QUICKY RASHIS

VERSE ID	Text of Biblical Verse	Hebrew Word	Figure of Speech	Brief Explanation
Gn42-06a	The brothers <i>ground-faced</i> themselves to Joseph	<i>ground-face-prostrated</i>	Idiom	The phrase <i>they face-ground-prostrated</i> themselves refers to a bow not just from the hips, but where the entire body is placed on the floor
Gn42-07a	Joseph <i>foreignized himself</i> to his brothers	<i>foreignized</i>	Grammar	To <i>foreignize</i> is to behave like a stranger and foreigner
Gn42-09a	Joseph remembered the dreams that he dreamt <i>for</i> his brothers	<i>dreams dreamt for someone</i>	Prepositional Connectives	To indirect object - <i>dreamt for them</i> - indicates an intent to target that person for help. Although Rashi here says that <i>for them</i> means <i>about them</i> , this contradicts what Rashi says in several other verses, Ex25-02, Nu10-02, Nu13-02 that <i>for</i> indicates intent to help. Thus, we have reason to override the current Rashi text if favor of the others.
Gn42-09b	You have come to find out the <i>vulnerability</i> (lit. the <i>nakedness</i>) of the land	<i>vulnerability (nakedness)</i>	Synecdoche	<i>Nakedness</i> is a good example (<i>synecdoche</i>) of <i>vulnerability</i> and hence <i>nakedness</i> comes to mean <i>vulnerability</i> (Just as <i>honey</i> means <i>sweet</i>)
Gn42-11b	We are <i>simple folks</i> (lit. <i>yes folks</i>)	<i>simple folks (lit. yes folks)</i>	Synecdoche	A strong characteristic of <i>simple people</i> is their response to questions with yes-no. They do not tend to bargain and hide their intentions. Hence <i>yes folks</i> mean <i>simple folks</i>
Gn42-15a	<i>By the life of Pharoh if you will leave here</i>	Two phrases: <i>by the life of Pharoh and if you will leave here</i>	Idiom	<i>By the life of Pharoh</i> is an idiom indicating <i>oath</i> . <i>If you will leave here</i> is the <i>oath</i> way of saying: <i>I swear that you will not leave here unless...</i>
Gn42-15b	<i>By the life of Pharoh if you will leave here</i>	Two phrases: <i>by the life of Pharoh and if you will leave here</i>	Idiom	<i>By the life of Pharoh</i> is an idiom indicating <i>oath</i> . <i>If you will leave here</i> is the <i>oath</i> way of saying: <i>I swear that you will not leave here unless...</i>
Gn42-16a	You will be imprisoned and your claim tested: <i>Is the truth with you?</i>	<i>Is the truth with you</i>	Idiom	The interrogative <i>is the truth with you</i> is used to indicate <i>whether your story holds</i> . So, the sentence means: You will be imprisoned and tested whether the truth is with you (whether your claim is true)

Gn42-17a	Joseph gathered them into <i>the guarded place</i>	<i>the guarded place</i>	Synecdoche	<i>The guarded place</i> means <i>prison</i> since <i>prisons</i> are a good example of <i>guarded places</i>
Gn42-20a	we will get the facts, and your claim will be <i>amended</i>	<i>amened</i>	Synecdoche	<i>amen</i> means confirmed since saying <i>amen</i> is a good example of affirmation and confirmation
Gn42-21a	<i>But indeed</i> , we are guilty about mistreating our brothers	<i>but indeed</i>	Grammar	The word <i>but</i> indicates an exception, for example <i>I would love to have come BUT I did not receive an invitation</i> . The BUT clause indicates why the previous clause does not hold. When BUT begins a sentence, it is excepting something understood but not explicit. Thus here: Joseph gave them a good deal, but they were still worried because (BUT) they felt guilty. The statement that Joseph's deal is good is not explicit but understood. Rashi mentions foreign languages; the RADACK (Shoroshim) gives several verses with this usage
Gn42-21b	Therefore, this <i>came</i> upon us	<i>came</i>	Grammar	When B-AH is accented on the 1st syllabus it refers to the ACTIVE, 3rd Person, masculine, past tense. (When accented on the last syllabus it refers to an ongoing process of coming)
Gn42-23c	<i>the interpreter</i>	<i>the interpreter</i> vs. <i>an interpreter</i>	Grammar	The article THE indicates something well known. By saying THE interpreter instead of AN interpreter, the text indicates that the interpreter was known. Rashi gives a reasonable speculation that it must have been Joseph's eldest son: Menasheh.