

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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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 explore an exciting translation issue involving Rashi, Rambam, Ramban, the Talmud, Oonkelos, and Ibn Ezra. We show how a simple etymological approach, adopted by Rashi and Rambam, explains the verse neatly. But the positioning of some adjectival phrases explaining the functions of the items indicated by the nouns led the Talmud, and then Oonkelos and Ramban to explain differently. Ibn Ezra comes to the rescue in defending Rashi, Rambam and the straightforward etymological approach. I supplement with an additional explanation based on the work I have been doing on figures of speech. So this simple translation turns into an exciting lively issue.

RASHI ID: Ex25-28a, Ex25-29a, Ex25-29b, Ex25-29c, Ex25-29d, Ex25-29e, Ex25-30a

Ex25-29a

A fascinating Rashi whose full understanding requires integrating four distinct sources: (i) Rashi on Chumash, (ii) Rashi on TB Menacoth 97a (where the same verse is explained), (iii) The body of the Talmud-Mechiltah, (iv) The Oonkelos Aramaic translation, and possibly the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Temidin, Chapter 4). My explanation here follows the Rashi on Menacoth which differs from the Rashi on Chumash. Besides there 5 primary sources both Ramban and Ibn Ezra comment.

An unusual feature of these explanations mentioned in the Rashi in the Talmud is Rashi's comment that *The explanations of these words are not traditions [from Sinai] but based on the multiple synonyms whose individual meanings we attempt to explain.*

The Rashi on the Talmud explains the four synonyms in the verse which refer to four Table utensils:

- **KeARoThauV** - *molds* (used to fashion the dough into a particular form)
- **VeCaPoThauV** - *dish-trays* (they were supplemental to the bread and held the frankincense)
- **OoKeThoThauV** - *prop-stands* (from the root *kasheh* meaning hard or in this case sturdy; they were stands going from the floor to a height above the table and were used to hold the rod-aerators used both to support the bread loafs and to aerate them)
- **OoMeNaKiYoThauV** - *aerator rods* (from the root *na-ki* meaning *clean*; they were perforated rods allowing air to circulate preventing mould).

These four translations, adopted by Rashi and Rambam correspond to the meaning of these words or their roots in the Bible.

- **KeARaH** throughout the bible means a *large dish or bowl* and hence can refer to the *molds* for shaping dough into bread.
- **Caph** means *hand*; the dish-tray for food supplements which has the *form* of a *hand*
- **KaTheh** related to **KaSheh** means *hard* and can refer to anything *sturdy*. Here we name an object by properties of what it is made of similar to naming *eye-glasses* as *glasses* in English
- **NaKi** meaning *clean* could easily refer to the function of the aerator *rods*, to *prevent mold*.

This is pretty straightforward; 4 words with known functions and meanings refer to 4 utensils connected with the Temple table with a correspondence that is natural and intuitive.

The four utensils are however mentioned twice in the bible. One of them has a phrase, underlined below, which suggests, also naturally, an alternate translation, which is defended in the Talmud, adopted by Oonkelos and further defended by the Ramban.

- Ex25-29 Make the *bowls*, the *dish-trays*, the *stands*, and the *aerator rods* by which protection was afforded
- Ex37-15 They made the utensils connected with the Temple Table: the *bowls*, the *dish-trays*, the *aerators rods*, and the *stands* by which protection was afforded

The underlined statement by which protection was afforded at Ex37-15 is connected (i.e. follows immediately) the *stands* suggesting that the translation *stands* is incorrect, that it should rather be *aerators*. In other words, the sequence in Ex37-15 suggests that the four biblical Hebrew words, despite their usage and etymological meaning, should be translated as *bowls*, *dish-trays*, *stands*, and *aerator-rods*. To make this clear, Ex37-15 suggests that the Hebrew word from the root *kasheh*, *hard* should be translated as *aerator rods* and the Hebrew word from the root *nakeh*, *clean*, should be translated as *stands*; even though this is contrary to the etymology, it is defended by the word order by which protection is afforded which naturally connects with the word immediately preceding it whose root is *clean*.

Of course, this poses problems: Why should words have meaning contradicted by their root meaning and usage. Another problem is why is the phrase by which protection is afforded correctly linked to the Hebrew word whose root is *clean*, in Ex25-29.

Despite these problems, the alternate translation is suggested in the Talmud, then picked up by the Aramaic translation, Oonkelos, and defended by the Ramban.

Ibn Ezra explains the strange positioning of the by which protection is afforded: “In the Bible, explanatory (adjectival) phrases need not occur *immediately* after the word they modify. In this verse we are listing 4 things and the explanation of the function of the 3rd listed item, *aerator rods*, is mentioned at the end.

I offer a 2nd explanation based on the figure of speech, *locative metonymy*, the tendency to name items by their location. As an amusing example, little children, might call *their doll* as *their crib* reflecting that dolls are located and found in cribs. Here, the infants, rename an object based on location. Another very common example might be a phrase like *Israel won the war* when in fact it is *The Israelis that won the war*. Israel is the name of a country and place; people win wars not places. But in all languages we associated people with the land they live on and their country.

QUICKIES

VERSE ID	Text of Biblical Verse	Hebrew Word	Figure of Speech	Brief Explanation
Ex25-07b	Take voluntary gifts for My [God's] sake, gold, silver, copper....filled stones	avnay shoham ve-avnay miluim	Meronymy	Just as we call the King the Crown, the elderly Greybeards, and soldiers the sword, so too we call studded stones filled stones - holes are drilled in the stone which are then filled with various gems.
Ex25-12b	Cast for it four golden rings on its four corners [lit. hammered parts]	nathata al arbah paamothauv	Synecdoche	Just as the overcoat is the garment that is worn over the others, just as slippers are the types of shoes that you just slip into, just as glasses are the kitchen utensil typically made of glass, so too, the corners of an object are the parts that are typically hammered (to achieve the sharp angle)
Ex25-12d	Two rings will be on one side [literally rib] and two rings on its second side [lit. rib]	shtay tabaoth al tzaloh haechath	Form	Just as the head of an object refers to its top, just as the handle of a utensil refers to the handles which protrude like hands from the body of the utensil, so too the ribs of an object refer to its sides
Ex25-13a	Make four poles [lit. boughs] from Shittim-trees	ashitha badim	Form	Just as the head of an object refers to its top, just as the handle of a utensil refers to the handles which protrude like hands from the body of the utensil, so too boughs refer to poles because they have the same form and shape
Ex25-25a	Make a golden belt [lit. closed loop] around it [the table]	ashitha lo misgereth	Form	Just as the head of an object refers to its top, just as the handle of a utensil refers to the handles which protrude like hands from the body of the utensil, so too a closed loop refers to a belt since it has the form of a belt (something you snap and close) and the function of a belt (it gives support)
Ex25-02a	Take for My Sake [lit. to me] voluntary donations	yikchu li terumah	Pronouns	The Hebrew word Lamed-Yud, Li, or Lamed-Caph, LeChah, literally means to me (or to you); in the bible it means and is used to indicate for my sake (for your sake) for your own benefits and purpose
Ex25-08a	Make for My Sake [lit. to me] a temple	asu li mikdash	Pronouns	The Hebrew word Lamed-Yud, Li, or Lamed-Caph, LeChah, literally means to me (or to you); in the bible it means and is used to indicate for my sake (for your sake) for your own benefits and purpose
Ex24-21b	If you make an altar for My Sake [lit. to me]	mizbach avanim taaseh li	Pronouns	The Hebrew word Lamed-Yud, Li, or Lamed-Caph, LeChah, literally means to me (or to you); in the bible it means and is used to indicate for my sake (for your sake) for your own benefits and purpose

Ex18-27a	<i>He [Jethro] went for his own sake [lit. to him] to his land</i>	<i>vayalech lo</i>	Pronouns	<i>The Hebrew word Lamed-Yud, Li, or Lamed-Caph, LeChah, literally means to me (or to you);in the bible it means and is used to indicate for my sake (for your sake) for your own benefits and purpose</i>
Ex13-02b	<i>Send for your own sake [lit. to you] men who will spy Canaan that I am giving to the Jews as an inheritance</i>	<i>shelach lechah</i>	Pronouns	<i>The Hebrew word Lamed-Yud, Li, or Lamed-Caph, LeChah, literally means to me (or to you);in the bible it means and is used to indicate for my sake (for your sake) for your own benefits and purpose</i>