

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)}

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT: (c) Rashiyomi.com 2025, Dr. Russell Jay Hendel, www.Rashiyomi.com/copyrights.htm

ACCESS: The materials on this website are free; We accept no donations from anyone. Citation with Attribution is required.

DATE/AUTHOR: Dec 11, 2025 Russell Jay Hendel DSJS, Ph.D.

VERSION NUMBER: Version 4

RASHI ID: Gn40-23a,b, Gn41-12a,b,c,d

PESHAT: THE SPONTANEOUS REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE

- A fresh analysis of the two years from Joseph's first dream interpretation to his standing before Pharoh
- We show that Joseph has certain immaturities which prevented him from appearing before Pharoh
- We show using before-after texts how Joseph outgrew these immaturities
- We also explain the Rashi critique of the Chief butler.

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: Gn40-23a,b, Gn41-12a,b,c,d

BIBLICAL TEXT:

- A. (Joseph interpreted the dreams of the Kings master chef and wine butler. We cite excerpts from the dialog). *Joseph came to them in the morning and saw they were worn out*
- B. (They then told him they were concerned about dreams they had; Joseph responded) *Interpretation belongs to God; tell me (they then told him their dream and Joseph interpreted them. *
- C. (Joseph Continues) *Perhaps you will remember me to Pharoh when the occasion arises, and you will please do me a favor: I will leave this prison. Because I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews and here also, I did no crime that they put me in the pit.*
- D. (The text continues) *But the master butler did not remember Joseph and forgot him.*
- E. (Statement of the Kings master wine butler to Pharoh who was inquiring about the interpretation of dreams). *And there with us [in prison] was a Hebrew, Kid, A Slave of the Master Chef, and we told to him [our dream] and he interpreted them, each person, according to his dream he interpreted*

NOTE: We classify this as a paragraph Rashi since Rashi asks, "paragraph questions." *What is the theme and motif behind the narrative? What values does this narrative imply?* First, we state the Rashi text with my comments and then we present a holistic explanation.

RASHI TEXT:

(Rashi on C,D) *Rashi blames the 2 years extra stay of Joseph in prison on his asking for help and states, "He should have relied on God"* [My comments on this Rashi: But there is nothing morally wrong, or even morally non-preferable if, while relying on God, you ask people for help]

(Rashi on E) The master butler was a wicked person. Rather than acknowledge the good Joseph did he insults him as much as possible calling him a kid (immature), a Hebrew (a foreigner), and a slave (someone who has no business before kings). [My comments on this Rashi:] But the master butler had been thrown into prison because of one of Pharaoh's temper tantrums and was in fact exonerated. He was legitimately concerned that if he brought an immature person with slave like character before Pharaoh, Pharaoh would lose his temper again? Doesn't this justify his behavior? Why insult him?

SOME FURTHER JUSTIFICATION OF CALLING JOSEPH IMMATURE and SLAVE

We bring two comparisons of statements of Joseph *before* and *after* his prison stay. These comparisons show that Joseph was indeed immature and slave like and had to grow up before appearing to Pharaoh.

Comparison #1:

While in prison: *"Doesn't interpretation belong to God, tell me"*

2 years later: *Without me you will get your interpretation. It is God who answers and restores peace of mind to Pharaoh/*

My comment: Notice the immaturity in prison: God gives interpretations so tell me. The emphasis is on the self. Here we see self-centered concerns

Notice the maturity two years later: *It is not from me but from God.* A deemphasis on the self.

Comparison #2:

While in prison: Perhaps you will remember me to Pharaoh when it is appropriate for you and get me out of this prison....

2 years later: (After Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream). Pharaoh should select a wise insightful person and appoint him over Egypt.

My comment: Joseph, in asking for help, was speaking *to* the chief butler instead of speaking *with him*. Joseph states what he wants without asking for participation on the Chief Butler's part. His request is framed as a personal favor, an act of kindness

Contrastively, 2 years later, Joseph does not tell Pharaoh to appoint him. He also does not speak about doing favors. Rather, he frames his remarks by acknowledging that it is Pharaoh's decision and appeals to the skills (wise and understanding) needed for the job. In other words, Joseph no longer lived in a world of connections and favors as he did in prison; he lived in a world of experience and skills with recognition that final decisions are not the result exclusively of logic but of the person who owns the decisions.

FINAL ANALYSIS:

- Joseph, while in prison, was both immature (self-centered), slave-like (not performing best practices of good teamwork (e.g. soliciting feedback when making requests), power-based (people did favors if they felt like it) versus skill and experienced based
- Thus, before appearing to Pharaoh, he had to *grow up*.
- Rashi appears to *blame* this on his asking the chief butler. What Rashi really is saying is *he asked him without dialoging with him for example, asking Is the dream interpretation satisfactory, allowing the Chief Butler to spontaneously offer to do Joseph a favor*. This Joseph's error is not *that* he asked but *how* he asked
- The Chief butler had every right to forget Joseph and ignore his memories when they popped up since he was concerned about his safety. But Rashi notices that *besides* calling Joseph *immature* and *slave like* he also called him *a Hebrew, a foreigner*. Rashi correctly reads into this that the Chief Butler was prejudiced and biased against Joseph and hence interprets all his characterization (*immature* and *slave like*) as pejorative.

FURTHER COMMENTS

Gn40-23a,b states

- A) The Master Butler did not remember Joseph
- B) He forgot him (every time the memory came back)

Rashi literally says: Did not remember Joseph: That day; He forgot him: After a while.

But consistent with other Rashi comments, I interpret B, as the habitual as indicated in the translation. In other words, now and then, Joseph's image popped up in his mind and he forgot him.

QUICKY RASHIS

VERSE ID	Text of Biblical Verse	Hebrew Word	Figure of Speech	Brief Explanation
Gn37-02b	Joseph <i>teenaged</i> with the children of Bilhah and Zilpah	<i>Na'ar</i>	Metonymy	From <i>teenager</i> we obtain the verb form <i>to teenage, to act immaturely like a teenager</i> (The verb form of a noun is called <i>the denominative</i>)
Gn37-02d,e	Joseph brought their <i>chatter</i> to his father <i>as evil</i>	<i>Dibatham Ra'ah</i>	Synonyms	Among words referring to speech, <i>dibbah</i> refers to <i>chatter</i> or <i>chit-chat</i> . Bad chatter would refer to the negative aspects
Gn37-03a	Jacob liked Joseph over all his sons because he was a <i>son of old age</i>	<i>ben zekunim</i>	Idiom	<i>Ziknah</i> refers positively to the elderly (as people who have a rich experience of life). The idiom <i>son of old age</i> has 3 meanings suggested by Rashi: (i) literally the son he bore in his old age, (ii) son=disciple of rich experience, (iii) a son which resembled his father in looks

Gn37-03b	Jacob made for Joseph a <i>passim vest</i>	<i>passim</i>	Synecdoche	The root of <i>passim</i> is <i>pas</i> meaning dwindling, ceasing. Rashi gives two explanations: i) the material, <i>silk</i> , was dwindled (very flat and thin); (ii) the vest form, was a <i>multi-colored stripes</i> (each stripe dwindling to the neighbor stripe). Rashi points out <i>that if so the multiple stripes refer to the multiple periods of Joseph's early development in with each period dwindling after completion and proceeding to the next period.</i> (Rashi actually connects the letters of <i>passim</i> with four periods of Joseph's life but that is just a coincidence; Rashi's main point is that the vest was multi-colored indicating multiple growing periods)
Gn37-07a	Joseph and his brothers were <i>sheaving sheaves</i> in the field	<i>me'al'e'mim</i>	Metonymy	From the noun <i>alumim</i> , <i>sheaves</i> , we obtain the verb form, <i>to sheave</i> (Going from a noun to a verb is called a <i>denominative</i>)
Gn37-13a	Jacob said to Joseph: Your brothers are pasturing the flocks in Schem; I would like to send you to them; Joseph <i>I am at your service</i>	<i>hineni</i>	Idiom	From <i>hiney</i> , meaning <i>behold</i> , we obtain <i>hineni</i> , <i>lit. behold me</i> , meaning <i>I am ready</i> ; this corresponds to the English idiom <i>I am at your service</i>
Gn37-23a,b	They stripped Joseph of his <i>overgarment</i> , the <i>silk (stripped?) overgarment</i> that was on him	<i>cetoneh (passim)</i>	Synonyms	<i>Cetoneh</i> means an <i>overgarment</i> worn over the undergarments; <i>cetoneh passim</i> would refer to a <i>vest</i> worn over the overgarment
Gn37-25a	They looked up and an Arab <i>caravan</i> was passing by	<i>or-chat</i>	Synecdoche	<i>Orach</i> refers to a (non major) road or path. From this noun we obtain another noun, <i>orchat</i> , referring to a <i>caravan</i> , a <u>group travelling along the paths</u>
Gn37-25c,d,e	Necoth	Their camels bore, <i>mixed crushed spices, tree-oils, and hidden fragrance perfume</i>	Synonyms	Rashi simply says they sold mixtures of perfume (but elsewhere Rashi explains each one). We can derive the meanings from the roots: <i>Necoth</i> from Nun-Kuph-Aleph, <i>to hit</i> , would mean <i>crushed spices</i> which Rashi explains means a mixture of spices; <i>Tzari</i> from <i>Tzarah</i> , meaning, <i>suffering</i> , could refer to the form of dripping tears and would therefore refer to <i>tree-oils</i> which are oozed out in dripping from the tree; <i>Lot</i> meaning <i>hidden</i> resembles the modern perfume, <i>hidden fragrance</i>
Gn37-26a	Betzah	Judah said to his brothers: What is the <i>prize-cut of money</i> that we will obtain from killing our brothers. (Rather) lets sell him	Synonyms	Among words meaning compensation and payment, <i>betzah</i> refers to a coveted payment from a project worked on. Judah points out that since Joseph is our brother we will not be happy with ourselves if we kill him; there is no <i>coveted payment</i> Instead he suggests <i>selling him</i> so that they don't feel guilty about what happens to him

Gn37-27a	His brothers heard	(Judah suggested selling Joseph instead of trying to kill him) The brothers accepted this	Synecdoche	The words for <i>hearing, listening</i> etc. besides referring to the physical act of hearing can also refer to <i>accepting</i> a suggestion
Gn37-30a	Where will I come	Reuven returned to the pit but Joseph was not there and Reuven said <i>where will I come</i>	Idiom	Rashi says that the idiom, <i>where will I come</i> , resembles the English idiom, <i>where can I hide</i> , signifying extreme embarrassment
Gn37-35b	Daughters	All his sons and daughters arose to comfort Jacob	Synecdoche	Although <i>daughters</i> could also refer to his actual daughters, Rashi points out that it is common for <i>daughters</i> to refer to <i>daughter-in-laws</i>
Gn37-36a	Joseph was sold to the master butcher of Pharoh	<i>tabachim</i>	Metonymy	From the verb, <i>ta-bach</i> , to slaughter, we obtain the noun, <i>ta-bach</i> , a butcher