

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.Rashiyomi.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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DATE/AUTHOR: Jul 3rd, 2025 Russell Jay Hendel DSJS, Ph.D.

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PESHAT: THE SPONTANEOUS REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE: Two great gems.

- We derive the 13 principles of good charity giving and hosting
- We show a beautiful example of textual criticism of Rashi by a Rishon along with a Rashi emendation

VERSES: *Gn18-04a,Gn18-04b, Gn18-04c, Gn18-05a, Gn18X05a, Gn18-05b, Gn18-05c, Gn18-05d, Gn18-06a, Gn18-07a, Gn18-07b, Gn18-08a*

The 13 Principles of Good Charity and Hosting

We study the biblical paragraph Gn18-04:08 describing how Abraham gave hospitality to the three people passing by. Although Rashi brings many midrashim, the *peshat* straightforward meaning of this paragraph is the principles of good charity and hosting. About 8 Rashi principles are used in this paragraph. However, it would obscure the paragraph theme to do each one separately and hence the choice to treat by a paragraph. The table below contains sequentially the clauses of the paragraph, the main theme of this clause in the context of the paragraph and good charity and hosting principles, the Rashi principle used, and any homiletic Rashis introduced.

Verse, Rashi	Translation (Dialogue from Abraham to guests)	Main point within paragraph	Rashi rule used	Rashi rule explained	Homilies in Rashi
Gn18-04a	<i>Please, let water be taken for you</i>	The host does most of the work and does not ask guests to participate	Grammar	The passive is used (<i>taken for you</i>) instead of the active (<i>take water</i>).	Because you Abraham had water taken by a messenger I will reward that your children get water taken by a messenger (Moses gave the Jews water)
Gn18-04b	<i>Wash your feet and rest under the tree</i>	If you have personal needs impose them softly without over burdening guests	Parallelism	Abraham: Wash and Rest Lot: Rest and wash	In ancient East people worshipped dust on legs. Abraham did not want idolatry in his house, so he requested washing first.
Gn18-04c	<i>Rest under the tree</i>	Address both basic and higher needs of guests. The trees were oak trees with much shade	Cross-Reference	(Gn18-01, Gn14-13) Abraham dwelt in the <i>oak tree valley</i> of Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre	
Gn19-05a	<i>I will take a</i>	Fulfill the needs of your	Synonyms	<i>Bread</i> is synonymous with food that satisfies and prevents	Rashi supports these

	<i>loaf of bread, and you will satisfy</i>	guests so that they themselves will feel satisfied		further hunger	nuances with verses about bread: Ju19-08, P104-15
Gn19X5a	<i>And you will satisfy your needs</i>	Do appeal to guests' needs but not to the more sensational emotions (e.g. the verse didn't say <i>satisfy your passions</i>)	Synonyms	Lamed-Beth refers to emotions while Lamed-Beth-Beth refers to passions	Rashi provides homily that angels have no passions
Gn19-05b	<i>After that you are free to go</i>	Value guests time. An important part of hospitality is letting them leave after providing their needs	Paragraphs	First: In a narrative paragraph with sequential items, each item is distinct and contributes to the paragraph meaning. 2 nd : There is emphasis in the verse with the introduction <i>after that</i>	
Gn19-0c,d	<i>Because you have passed by my house</i>	Emphasize to guests that your hospitality is not a burden but rather an honor and privilege	Paragraphs, Meaning	Rashi explains that the Hebrew <i>al kayn</i> indicates <i>cause</i> . In a paragraph of sequential clauses each clause contributes uniquely to the whole.	
Gn19-06	<i>Abraham quickly went to the tent to Sarah and said: Quickly prepare</i>	Work zealously and energetically for the guests	No Rashi	The paragraph uses <i>quickly</i> 3 times and <i>run</i> (Indicating quickness) once	
Gn19-06a	<i>Quickly prepare three units of coarse and fine flour, knead and make pastries</i>	Prepare both <i>food</i> and <i>utensils</i>	Parallelism	<i>Coarse</i> and <i>fine</i> are in parallel but contradict each other. Fine flour was used for baking while coarse flour was used to clean the pots	
Gn19-07a	<i>And Abraham ran to the cattle: He took a soft, good, young cattle</i>	Prepare the best for your guests needs	Multiple adjectives	Abraham prepared tongue and mustard (a reasonable speculation on the reason for taking the choicest cattle)	
Gn18-07b	<i>And he gave it to the lad</i>	Do involve other people in your hospitality so as to create a hospitality team	Paragraphs	In a narrative paragraph of sequential statements each clause gives distinct meaning to the paragraph	It is reasonable that <i>lad</i> in this verse refers to his son, Ishmael
Gn18-08a,b,c	<i>He took the cream and milk and the meat which he prepared and placed before them</i>	Have contingency plans if something does not work out	Parallelism, Meaning	Preceding verses mention: <i>pastries and meat</i> , while this verse mentions <i>cream, milk, and meat</i> . Apparently, the pastries could not be prepared so Abraham had a contingency plan to give them milk and cream. (The translation of <i>cream</i> , and <i>made</i> as meaning prepared re provided)	It was customary in the mid-east that women during their period did not prepare foodstuffs. Even today there are restrictions on women working in perfumeries since research has shown certain toxins would damage the perfume. Because of the prophecy (of future birth) Sarah's period resumed
Gn19-08	<i>And he stood over them while they ate</i>	After fulfilling guests' needs, stand by for any extra requests.	No Rashi	There is an emphasis that after providing their needs, Abraham still stood ready in case new requirements of guests emerged.	

VERSE: Gn14X14b

This is a beautiful Rashi. Here we see textual analysis of the Rashi and biblical texts at its best; it is not however done by modern scholarship but rather by our very own medieval scholars. Let us examine:

Verse Text *Abraham heard that his nephew was captured; he girded his mentees the students of his household, 318 people, and he pursued them till Dan. And he divided on them at night – he and his servants – and he smote them pursuing them till Chovah on the left of Damaseck.*

We, as is our custom, will first the correct explanation (requiring amending Rashi texts). Then with that background we will review what is currently in our Rashi texts. As already mentioned this analysis was done the medieval authorities in fact the *Minchat Shai* and the *Midrash Tanchuma*.

Correct Explanation (Midrash Tanchuma)

Rashi comment amended (by Midrash Tanchua): Notice the three pronouns *he, he, he*. But Abraham did not pursue them alone but with his 318 staff. It should say *they* not *he*. Here is how the Midrash

- Tachumah explains the three phrases:
- He (Abraham) girded his mentees (318 of them)
 - He (Abraham and the mentees acting as a military unit) pursued them till Dan
 - He (Abraham) divided in the pursuit, he went one way and his mentees under their leadership went another. (This is a familiar war tactice).
 - He (both divisions, Abraham and the mentee division) pursued them till Chovah.

We learn about the 2 divisions from the verse text *he divided on them at night he and his servants* showing that two divisions were formed one led by Abraham and the other leading the mentees. Since the Bible identifies Eliezer as the chief of staff, servants, and mentees, (Gn15-02) it is very reasonable that Eliezer led the mentee division of servant staff.

Current Corrupt Rashi Explanation Uncovered by Minchat Shai

First some background. *Gematria* is the process of assigning numerical values to words. When to words have the same numerical value it suggests linkage. To illustrate this technique we consider the word *cab*. *C* is the 3rd letter of the English alphabet, *a* is the first letter, and *b* is the 2nd letter. The sum of the values of these letters 3+1+2=6 is the *gematric* or numerical value of *cab*.

With this background, Rashi makes two comments:

1st: The Gematria of Eliezer (in Hebrew) is 318. Thus Rashi concludes that the 318 staff were one person Eliezer.

2nd: Rashi notes that the plural trainees or mentees is spelled deficiently trainee or mentee (but pronounced as plural). Rashi uses this as proof that Abraham took with him only Eliezer and the two conquered the five kings.

The corruption of this text is pointed out by the *Minchat Shai*.

There is no biblical manuscript including very old ones where mentee is spelled deficiently!

Very early Rashi manuscripts do not have this Rashi comment that *mentee is spelled deficiently and refers to Eliezer who is 318 in Gematria*

Thus the *Minchat Shai* identifies the current Rashi text as unauthentic and corrupt. This is supplemented by the *Midrash Tanchuma* text which providers a satisfying explanation of the underlying Rashi comment.
