

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: Jul 3rd, 2025 Russell Jay Hendel DSJS, Ph.D.

VERSION NUMBER: Version 2, 2025 (v1,2023)

RASHI ID: Gn32-02a, Gn32-03a, Gn32-04a, Gn32-04b, Gn32-05a, Gn32-06a, Gn32-06b, Gn32-06c, Gn32-06b

PESHAT: THE SPONTANEOUS REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE:

A fresh analysis of the attempt by Jacob to reconcile himself with Esauv prior to meeting him. We show five distinct attempts by Jacob to either acknowledge that Esauv acquired the blessings or that Jacob did not care about them since in obtaining a wife he had to give them up.

VERSES: Gn32-02a, Gn32-03a, Gn32-04a, Gn32-04b, Gn32-05a, Gn32-06a, Gn32-06b, Gn32-06c, Gn32-06b

Overview: Recall that Jacob, at this mother's suggestion, stole the birthright blessings from Esauv (who had sold them) and because Esauv wanted to kill Jacob, Jacob fled. Jacob now is returning home and has to deal with this issue. This, the dealing with the Esauv issue, is the *theme* of the paragraph. The paragraph gives both *background* and *supportive* facts and arguments.

Biblical Narrative	Function in the paragraph	Rashi comments
(Laban departed and) Jacob continued on his way; he bumped into Angels of God	This is background material showing that although Esauv had military superiority Jacob had spiritual superiority and the support of Angels	<i>Angels of God:</i> They were actual angels (the word <i>malach</i> can also mean messengers). Rashi suggests that since God ordered Jacob to return to his father in Israel, God sent Angels, to help him, consistent with Jacob's being helped by Angels while living with Laban (Gn31-11)
When Jacob visioned them, he said (to himself) <i>this is a camp of Angels</i> ; therefore, they nicknamed the place <i>Twin Angels</i>	Angels had already been mentioned as assisting Jacob while with Laban. Presumably the Angels that <i>came</i> with him to Laban. Now that he is returning home, he saw another camp of Angels prompting a response of <i>surprise</i> , <i>this is a camp of Angels</i> . So, there were twin camps of Angels, and he nicknamed the place <i>Twin Angels</i> . The background here emphasizes that Jacob was not alone but received help.	Grammar - Plurality: A suffix <i>mem</i> indicates plural; A suffix <i>mem</i> preceded by an <i>ah yim</i> indicates a plurality of twins. <u>Examples:</u> Eyes (<i>aynayim</i>);ears (<i>aznayim</i>), hands (<i>yadayim</i>), feet, <i>raglayim</i>). Hence: <i>machanayim</i> would indicate a twin set of camps; and therefore, just as the angels he bumped into were Angels of God, so too the Angels with him by Laban were Angels of God. [We several times mention these Angels had helped Jacob with Laban (Gn31-11)]
Jacob sent Angels before him to his brother Esauv,	With the above background the main theme of the paragraph, Jacob dealing with Esauv's former hatred, is dealt with.	Rashi emphasizes, based on paragraph context, that the Hebrew <i>malachim</i> here which could mean either <i>messengers</i> or <i>angels</i> means <i>angels of God</i> .
In the direction of Seir, the Sedomite fields	Recall, Esauv was promised the land of Seir (Dt02-05). Also recall, from the story of Lot, that the Sedomite fields were known for their rich physicality and lushness (Gn13-10:12). By sending Angels in that direction Jacob begins his attempted reconciliation with Esauv <u>by emphasizing that he Jacob recognizes Esauv's rights to physicality and lushness (which both Jacob and Esauv were promised)(1)</u>	Grammar: Direction in Hebrew can be indicated either by a <u>prefix Lamed</u> (<i>le-eretz seir</i> , would mean <i>to Seir country</i>) or a <u>suffix Hey</u> (<i>artzah seir</i> means in <i>the direction of Seir country</i>). I have investigated further this rule and found that the <i>suffice hey</i> indicates <i>direction</i> without necessarily an arrival while <u>prefix lamed</u> indicates both <i>direction</i> and <i>intended eventual arrival</i> .

He commanded them as follows: This is what you should say to <u>my master</u> (1) Esau	Unlike the rest of the paragraph, Esau is called <u>master not brother</u> ; here we see again attempted reconciliation by Jacob who acknowledges that <u>Esau is the master (so to speak the firstborn)</u> This contradicts the blessing that Jacob will be the <u>master (1)</u>	In my doctoral thesis I point out that when several phrases in a paragraph support a theme in Rashi comments, Rashi need not comment explicitly on all of them but may suffice with highlighting one or two leaving the reader who may in fact be an instructor to fill in the rest himself. That is, omission by Rashi does not imply Rashi was unaware of the comment.
I <u>stayed over</u> (1) by Laban and therefore was delayed until now [to reach out]	Stayed over!?! But Jacob was there 20 years, married two women, and worked for the local city officials (Laban). By using <i>stayed over</i> Jacob emphasizes that “ <i>I did not seek a position; did not throw in the towel to become like Laban; did not join the town culture; and in general I am not interested in that type of leadership.</i> ”(1) Here Jacob continues the reconciliation by address a key point of the blessings he stole: <i>Nations will serve you; ...You will be master to your brothers</i> But Jacob rather than having people work <i>for him</i> instead himself worked <i>for them</i> ; instead of being a leader he was in effect a stranger. So, Jacob repudiates interest in the content of the blessings!	There are two synonyms for <i>dwelling</i> : <i>resides (lit. sits)</i> indicating a permanent resident and <i>being a non-citizen</i> which as the name implies, is a secondary citizenship status.(2)
And that is why I <u>delayed until now</u> (1) (to communicate with you)	No Rashi but its support of reconciliation is clear: <u>Jacob explains that Isaac’s request to go to Laban to get a wife in effect overrode the blessings since he had a non-leadership life struggling for livelihood.</u> In other words, almost immediately after the blessings Jacob rejected them to find a wife(1).	
I acquired <u>cattle and donkeys, herds, servants, and maid servants</u> , (1)	The blessing Jacob stole promised <i>plentitude of grain and wine arising from good rainfall and rich land</i> (i.e. food without much toil); but I had to acquire these assets through hard work	Rashi points out the contract with the blessings. Rashi also explains GRAMMAR: <i>cattle and donkeys</i> are <u>collective nouns</u> (so the singular refers both to the singular and plural)
And I sent - <u>To</u> tell my Lord - <u>To</u> find favor in your eyes	After the above supportive arguments, Jacob concludes with his request: <i>reconciliation</i> through finding favor in your eyes.	The repeated underlined keyword <i>to</i> creates what in modern typography would be a bulleted list: Jacob emphasizes - I want you to know this (that I have not been pursuing the blessings) - I want to earn your favor (Reconciliation)

NOTES

- (1) The 5 underlined items with a (1): --- *i) Sedomite fields, ii) My master Esau, iii) non-citizen by Laban, (iv) that is why I delayed (v) I had to work for my assets (cattle, herds, donkeys, servants)* --- indicate support by Jacob for the reconciliation since Jacob didn’t seek the promises of the blessings and Jacob acknowledges Esau’s interest in them.
- (2) Many current Rashi manuscripts have a *gematria (play on letters)*: The letters of *garti* (be a non-citizen) when descrambled spell *taryag* the number of biblical commandments affirming that Jacob was observant even in Laban’s house. However, very early manuscripts of Rashi do not have this *gematria*. It started appearing in the 16th and 17th century; apparently, it was put in by a printer to increase marketability, and it was so successful that people incorporated this into future Rashi texts (Academic paper by *Macks* 1996).