

# The Rashi Database Project

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**THEME, THIS ISSUE: Prepositions**

**RASHI ID: Ex13-18b,Ex16-06a,Ex06-16b,Ex14-28a,Ex27-03g,Ex27-19,Ex18-27a,Ex25-02a,Ex25-08a,Nu10-02a,Nu10-02b,Nu13-02b,Dt01-30a,Dt32-08c,Ex04-16a,Ex14-14a,Gn28-15c,Gn30-30a,Nu25-13c,Nu34-17a,Nu11-29a,Nu11-29b,Dt32-28a ,Ex14-03b,Gn20-13c,Gn21-06a,Gn24-07d ,Gn26-07a,Nu14-14a,Nu17-05b,Ex14-15a,Ex29-36a,Gn37-18a,Nu03-09b,Gn04-01c,Ex09-29 ,Ex32-03b ,Gn06-13c,Gn14-10b,Gn28-02a,Gn28-02b,Gn32-04b,Ex15-23a,Gn46-01a,Gn18-02b,Ex28-22b,Gn14-06c,Ex12-09e,Ex20-21c,Gn32-22a,Ex35-22a,Gn49-13b,Nu28-10b ,Ex06-26b,Gn27-40a,Dt22-21b,Gn35-07a,Gn45-16a,Gn24-23,Gn01-01b,Gn06-03a,Gn39-23a,Gn10-12a,Nu14-11c,Nu14-20a,Nu15-03c,Dt01-01b,Dt01-01c**

**PESHAT: SPONTANEOUS REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS**

**WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE:** *This issue was motivated by a new series on Grammar found on the AlHatorah website. The AlHatorah website is a website providing free access to a wide variety of biblical commentaries. One can pick a verse and read 2-3 dozen commentaries on it. The website has other Jewish sources also. Another website with similarly many Jewish sources is the Sefaria website.*

*There is a new unit on the AlHatorah website explaining basic grammar. I volunteered to review this unit and am doing so by collecting Rashi comments illustrating the grammar. The current digest on Rashi commenting on prepositions corresponds to the Preposition unit of this series.*

*The Website owners said my Rashi examples are illuminating and expressed intent to incorporate them. Note, my website typically defends Rashi over other commentaries. The*

*AlHatorah website is more neutral simply presenting alternate opinions. One way they may incorporate my Rashi comments is to show how other commentaries interpreted these verses differently than Rashi.*

*There are currently 12 units; this is the 1st I am commenting on. So perhaps there will be up to 12 such digests. I typically will not comment until I have found about a dozen Rashi comments illustrating the principles.*

*The AlHatorah series addresses basic grammar. It has the following advantages: (i) it is free (ii) despite it being comprehensive in what it covers it is brief and compact, (iii) it is in English with Hebrew words in Hebrew, (iv) it has frequent exercises to help those readers who wish to practice.*

*We now return to what is new in this issue. This issue is dedicated to prepositions. Prepositions are words like in, on, to, from which connect parts of the sentence. If new Rashis with prepositions arise this issue will simply be updated. The issue is constructed as series of tables: Each table indicates a meaning of prepositions. Almost all prepositions in Hebrew have multiple meanings and Rashi illuminates the particular applicable enabling the verse to make sense.*

**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITIONS - BETH**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
beth	in	bishvil	Because	Gn01-01b	<i>Because</i> of the choicest [the Torah, the Jewish people] God created the heaven and earth (1)
beth	in	bishvil	Because	Gn06-03a	I will not constantly re-examine forever <i>because (account of)</i> people (or <i>because</i> ) they are made of flesh; I will give it another 120 years
beth	in	bishvil	because	Gn39-23a	The head of prisons did not check Joseph <i>because</i> he saw that God was with him
beth	in	bishvil	because	Gn10-12a	God said to Moses: Stretch forth your hand over the heavens <i>because (lit. in order to bring) the locusts</i>
beth	in	bishvil	because	Nu14-11c	God said: How long will this nation mock and not believe me <i>because of (despite)</i> all the miracles I did in their midst
beth	in	bishvil	because	Nu14-20a	God said: I have forgiven (them) <i>because</i> of your prayers
beth	in	bishvil	because	Nu15-03c	If you make an offering to please God, to fulfill a vow <i>or because</i> of your voluntary offerings or <i>because</i> of your holiday offerings
beth	in	bishvil	because	Dt01-01b	This is the rebuke Moses gave to the Jews at transjordan: <i>because</i> of their sins in the desert and <i>because</i> of their sins in the Moabite plains

beth	in	bishvil	because	Dt01-01c	This is the rebuke Moses gave to the Jews at TransJordan: <i>because</i> of their sins in the desert and <i>because</i> of their sins in the Moabite plains
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NOTES: (1) Rashi shows that the usual translation *in the beginning God created the heavens and earth* is flawed and incorrect since the verse does not use the word *beginning* but uses the word phrase *beginning-of* which, based on numerous example, is an idiom meaning the *choicest and best*.

### TABLE – PREPOSITIONS – ELLIPTICAL PREFIX BETH

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
blank / missing / elliptical		Prefix Beth	in	Dt22-21b	Take the teenager out to the door of his father's house and stone her because she has done a filthy thing to prostitute <i>while in</i> her father's house
blank / missing / elliptical		Prefix Beth	in	Gn35-07a	He built an altar there and named the place, God <i>in</i> the House of God, because God appeared to him there when he was fleeing from his brother
blank / missing / elliptical		Prefix Beth	in	Gn45-16a	The news was heard <i>in</i> Pharoh's household
blank / missing / elliptical		Prefix Beth	in	Gn24-23	He said to her, "Whose daughter are you; please tell me"; is there place to stay over <i>in</i> your father's house (See Rashi Gn37-07a)

**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITION – AL=BE**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
Al	on	Prefix Beth	by	Ex06-26b	They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh whom God said to them, "Take the Jewish people out of Egypt <i>by</i> their tribes
Al	on	Prefix Beth	by	Gn27-40a	*You will live <i>by</i> your sword

**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITION – AL = SAMUCH**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
Al	on	samuch	on (Spatial); right after (temporal) (1)	Ex35-22a	The men came <i>right after</i> the women
Al	on	samuch	on (Spatial); right after (temporal) (1)	Gn49-13b	Zevulun will dwell by sea ports...the sides of his inheritance will be <i>right near</i> Tzidon (2)
Al	on	samuch	on (Spatial); right after (temporal) (1)	Nu28-10b	Offer these holiday sacrifices <i>right after (i.e. near)</i> the two daily sacrifices (3)

NOTES: (1) The Hebrew *al* literally means *on*, a spatial notion. When used in a temporal context it has a meaning of *right after*.

(2) The word *on* in this verse is spatial and refers not to Tzidon lying *on top of* Zevulun's inheritance but rather Tzidon lies *right near* Zevulun's inheritance. (So in this verse *on* has a 2-dimensional (near) vs. a 3-dimensional (on top of) meaning.

(3) The daily offerings were two: One in the morning and one in the evening. The Additional Sacrifices (*mosafim*) were not after them (since nothing was offered initially at night). Also they need not be brought *right after*. Rashi himself translates *al* as *besides*: *offer these holiday sacrifices besides the daily sacrifice*. While *besides* does fit in to this verse, it is not consistent with the other verses. Perhaps *near* is better here. There is no perfect English translation but *on* which spatially means *on top of* here means *on the temporal basis determined by the two daily sacrifices*.

**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITION – AL = NEAR**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
al	on	samuch	near	Gn18-02b	He lifted his eyes and saw: Behold, 3 people were standing <i>near</i> him
al	on	samuch	near	Ex28-22b	Make <i>near</i> the choshen thick bordered golden ropes(1)
al	on	samuch	near	Gn14-06c	He defeated the Chori in their mountain (Mount) Seir until Ayl Paran that was <i>near</i> the desert
al	on	samuch	near	Ex12-09e	Don't eat it raw or boiled rather roasted its head <i>near</i> its legs and <i>near</i> its stomach(2)
al	on	samuch	near	Ex20-21c	Make an earthen altar for me: Slaughter <i>near</i> it your herds and cattle(3)
al	on	samuch	near	Gn32-22a	The gift passed by <i>near</i> him while he was innig that night in the camp(4)

NOTES: (1) Rashi explains based on the continuation of verses: Rings were placed on the borders of the Chosen; the golden cords passed through these rings so they could be attached firmly to the Ephod

(2) Rashi further explains *its head near its legs near its stomach* as meaning *the animal was left not further dissected according to its form during life*

(3) Rashi proves that *al* cannot mean *on* in this verse: *Animals were never slaughtered on the altar; rather they were slaughtered near the altar and then brought to the altar to be offered.*

(4) The verse literally says *the gift passed by his face* which Rashi explains *the gift passed by before him*. To mean this consistent with the other translations we have translated *the gift passed by near him*.

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**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITIONS – SUFFIX HEY = TO (1)**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
suffix hey		le	to	Gn14-10b	*The remaining [defeated troops] fled <i>to</i> the mountains
suffix hey		le	to	Gn28-02a	Get up and travel <i>to</i> Padan Aram
suffix hey		le	to	Gn28-02b	*Get up and travel <i>to</i> Padan Aram
suffix hey		le	to	Gn32-04b	*Jacob sent angels before him <i>to</i> Esau his brother <i>to</i> the Land of Seir, the Sodomite fields
suffix hey		le	to	Ex15-23a	*The Jewish people came <i>to</i> Bittersville but they couldn't drink the waters because they were bitter
suffix hey		le	to	Gn46-01a	*Israel [Jacob] journeyed with all belonging to him, he came <i>to</i> Beer Sheva

NOTES: (1) In a recent article in the Jewish Bible Quarterly I suggest that suffix hey has a nuance of arriving at while prefix lamed just indicates direction. So e.g. Gn46-01 *Jacob journeyed with all belonging to him arriving at Beer Sheva.*

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**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITIONS – ETH (1)**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
eth			on him	Gn37-18a	Before Joseph came they plotted <i>on him</i> to kill him
eth			amongst	Nu03-09b	The Levites are given to him <i>from amongst</i> the Jewish people
eth			with	Gn04-01c	Chava called her first son's name Acquire because she acquired a person <i>with</i> God
eth			from	Ex09-29	When I leave <i>from</i> the city (See Rashi on Gn06-13c)
eth			from	Ex32-03b	The people unloaded themselves <i>from</i> the jewelry of their families
eth			from	Gn06-13c	I (God) will destroy them <i>from</i> the land

NOTES: (1) The Hebrew word *eth* typically is not translated. It is used to indicate the following word is the object (recipient of the activity) rather than the subject (cause of the activity). However *eth* can take on a variety of meanings such as *from*, *with*, *amongst* as shown in this table. There does not seem to be a unifying meaning

**TABLE GRAMMAR: *al kayn* means *one contributing factor***

At first blush, *al kayn* simply means *because*. However, Rashi, based on a Midrash Rabbah (1), explains that *al kayn* means *one contributing factor*. Thus on each verse with *al kayn* Rashi’s job is to explain the *multiple reasons* behind something.

Verse, Rashi ID	Text of Verse	What is being explained	What is the contributing factor to this mentioned in the verse	What are other contributing factors.
Gn29-34a,b,c	She became pregnant again and gave birth: <u>She</u> said now my husband will attach himself to me(2); therefore <u>he</u> (3) called the child <i>levi</i> attached)	Why the child was named <i>attached</i> (Levi)	Because she had given birth to four children (2)	<i>Names</i> in the Bible are very often <i>nick-names</i> . In this case, if his name was <i>attached</i> every time he did someone a favor he would get teased “You are attaching yourself to the person you did the favor.” Additionally, Levi served in the Temple where he assisted in <i>attaching</i> people to each other and their spouses through the offerings (3)
Nu10-31b,c	(Moses speaking to his father in law who was about to return home) Please do not leave usDt. Stay with us because you are familiar with our journey stops in the	Why Moses wants his father-in-law to stay	Because he knows the desert terrain well and can guide us on our journey stops	(Not explicit in Rashi but obvious) Moses wanted his father in law to stay so that his wife and children would have their (grand)father with them

	desert and can help guide us			
Dt15-11a,b	Poverty will never cease from the land. Therefore, I command you as follows: open your hands to your brothers, your poor, and to the destitute in your land	Why did God command to give money to the poor	It is good advice for your benefit: If <i>poverty will not cease from the land</i> because of economic cycles then the person you give to today may in fact give to you when you become poor	(a)One should give to the poor because it is a Divine command like any other commandment, (b) (Stated above in verses) If you have the means to give and don't, the poor person might pray in anguish which could have deleterious consequences for you.
Dt10-09a,b	Therefore Levi did not have an assigned piece of Israeli land: God is his inheritance	What did Levi not inherit a piece of land in Israel like the other tribes.	<i>God is his inheritance</i> meaning that the Levites obtain the Levite gifts (such as tithes) and therefore are not dependent on the land for food	(Explicit in Rashi) The Levites assist in Temple work. Thus their time is devoted to mastering the Temple services and therefore they do not have time to devote to agricultural matters.
Gn18-05d	Rachel said: God has judged me and also heard my prayers as a consequence he gave me a son: Therefore she called his name <i>judged</i> (Dan)	What did she name the child <i>judged</i> (Dan)	Because God judged her (that her co-wife had children but she did not)	(Mentioned in Verse) God heard her prayers for a child. (4)
Gn38-26c	Judah said: She is more correct that me since I wouldn't let her marry my son Shaylah	Why is Tamar, who had an affair while she was waiting for Shaylah to grow up, not being executed	Judah acknowledges that she had the affair because she had been lied to about Shaylah: She was told she could marry him when he grew up and he was not given to her	The other contributing factor in fact explicitly told in the narrative was that Judah was the person she had an affair with so it wouldn't be right for him to execute her for his affair.

#### NOTES

(1) The exact language of the Midrash is “Whenever the Hebrew *al kayn* is used there are many tenants” There are various explanations of what this cryptic passage means; the most reasonable one and in fact consistent with this whole table is that *many tenants* means *many causes*. Normally words for *therefore*, *because*, *since* indicate a cause for the matter under discussion. But when *al kayn* is used it indicates *multiple causes* which the Midrash picturesquely describes as *multiple tenants*.

(2) Rashi answers the obvious question: Leah had 4 children: Why was she excited at this 4<sup>th</sup> child. Rashi explains that other great nations like the Arabs were blessed with 12 tribes. It stands to reason that if Jacob would become a great nation he also would have 12 children. Since there were four wives each one would contribute 3 children. Since this child (Levi) was Leah's fourth child, she now had exceeded her quota and would be recognized more by her husband. The Midrash couches this numerical argument as a prophecy: “The matriarchs knew that Jacob would have 12 children.

(3) Note in the verse the switch in pronouns: *She* said my husband will attach himself to me; therefore *he* called the child *attach*. Throughout this parshah the names of the children were given by the mother not the father; Levi is the one exception where the naming is attributed to the father. This is consistent with how we have treated *al kayn* as indicating multiple causes: *Besides* the fact that Leah felt that this fourth child would attach her to her husband, Jacob observed that as Levi (attached) grew up he frequently attached and endeared himself to people by doing them favors. Hence, Jacob seconded Leah's naming of the child due to the child's behaviors. Thus there were three stages to Levi's life: a) birth, b) childhood, c) adulthood. At birth Leah realized she had more than her quota of children; during childhood, Levi (nicknamed attached) always helped people leading to this father confirming the name *attach*; during adulthood, Levi worked in the Temple where he assisted in getting people to attach to each other, Levi continued his reputation of *attachment*. The Midrash, harping on the *she-he* pronoun switch in the text of the

verse picturesquely says “God (he) called him Levi because of his future work in the Temple”

(4) Rashi noting the unusual spelling of the biblical word for *God has judged me (danani)* indicates an intense form of judging. Rashi explains that Rachel said *I was judged, convicted, and now acquitted*. She was judged because she tricked Jacob into marrying Leah by sharing highly personal cues between Rachel and her husband; convicted because she was judged with no children while Leah who was not the preferred wife had 4; acquitted because God finally forgave her and gave her a child. Thus all these factors are contributing reasons for calling the child, *judged*.(Dan).

**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITION – PREFIX LAMED (About) (1)**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Dt32-28a	Moses commanded to them Joshua <i>about</i> their affairs
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Ex14-03b	Pharoh will say <i>about</i> the Jewish people, "They are confused in the land (about which way to get out); the wilderness has closed on them"
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Gn20-13c	When we (Abraham and Sarah) started wandering I told Sarah, "This is the favor you should do for me: When we get to a new place say <i>about</i> me he is my brother"
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Gn21-06a	Sarah said, "God made me public laughter (because I gave birth at 90); whoever hears about me will laugh(rejoice) <i>about</i> me"
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Gn24-07d	* God, the Lord of the heavens Who took me from my father's house and my homeland, Who spoke <i>about</i> me and Who swore to me, 'To your descendants I will give this land"...(1)
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Gn26-07a	The local residents asked <i>about</i> his wife; he responded "She is my sister" because he was afraid of being murdered to obtain his wife
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Nu14-14a	They will say <i>about</i> the inhabitants of this land, "God couldn't bring them to Israel; so he slaughtered them in the desert"

Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Nu17-05b	These will be commemorative for the Jewish people in order that no foreigner, who is not a descendant of Aaron, offer incense; so there should not be like Korax and his gang, as God spoke through Moses about him
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Ex14-15a	Why Moses do you pray <i>about</i> what I should do; you have the initiative -
Prefix Lamed	to	al	about	Ex29-36a	Make an oxen sin offering for that day <i>about</i> ( <i>lit. account of</i> ) atonement

NOTES: (1) Rashi particularly emphasizes that when *prefix lamed* is use with a verb indicating *talking and communication* then the correct translation is *talking about* rather than *talking to*. A good example is Gn20-13: *Do me a favor when we enter a new place and say about me that 'He is my brother'*; It wouldn't make sense to say *when we enter a new place say to me 'You are my brother.'*

**TABLE: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITION – PREFIX LAMED (For)**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
le	to	bishvil	for	Dt01-30a	God your Lord Who walks for you, He will war <i>for</i> you
le	to	bishvil	for	Dt32-08c	When the One on High gave inheritance to the nation, when He separated the people of the earth, He fixed borders <i>for</i> the numbers of the Jewish people
le	to	bishvil	for	Ex04-16a	Aaron will speak <i>for</i> you to the nation
le	to	bishvil	for	Ex14-14a	God will war <i>for</i> you while you remain silent
le	to	bishvil	for	Gn28-15c	* I (God) will not desert you until I have accomplished what I spoke (promised your ancestors) <i>for</i> you (1)
le	to	bishvil	for	Gn30-30a	God blessed you <i>for</i> ( <i>account of</i> ) my walking/working with you

le	to	bishvil	for	Nu25-13c	This will for him and his descendants, an eternal priestly treaty, because he was possessive <i>for</i> his Lord, and brought atonement on the Jewish people
le	to	bishvil	for	Nu34-17a	These are the names of the people who will inherit <i>for</i> you the land, Elazar the Priest and Joshua son of Nun
le	to	bishvil	for	Nu11-29a	(Moses said to Joshua) Are you possessive <i>for</i> my sake
le	to	bishvil	for	Nu11-29b	(Moses said to Joshua) Are you possessive <i>for</i> my sake

NOTES: (1) Rashi uses this as a proof text that *prefix lamed* could not mean *to* but must mean *for you*: “Indeed: This is the first time God speaks to Jacob; so God couldn’t be saying “What I have said to you” rather it must mean “What I have said about you.”]

**Table: GRAMMAR – PREPOSITION – LECHAH (for Personal use)**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
le-chah	to	bish-vil-chah	personal	Ex18-27a	Moses sent his father-in-law off; and he went back to his land <i>for personal</i> reasons (1)
le-chah	to	bish-vil-chah	personal	Ex25-02a	Tell the Jewish people to take <i>for my personal</i> use donations (2)
le-chah	to	bish-vil-chah	personal	Ex25-08a	The Jewish people will build <i>for my personal</i> use a Temple and I will dwell among them (2)
le-chah	to	bish-vil-chah	personal	Nu10-02a	Make <i>for your personal</i> use, trumpets (3)
le-chah	to	bish-vil-chah	personal	Nu10-02b	Make <i>personal</i> trumpets for yourself (4)
le-chah	to	bish-vil-chah	personal	Nu13-02b	Send <i>for your personal</i> benefit people who will spy out Canaan (5)

NOTES: (1) Rashi further explains: *Jethro was very impressed about monotheism and the Jewish conception of God. He decided to create a Friends of Monotheism society when he went back home*

(2) Rashi explains the personal use: *Dedicate the donations to God*

(3) Rashi explains the personal use: *They will blast for you the same way they blast for kings*

(4) Rashi explains the personal use: *These trumpets will be exclusively for you; no other person can use them*

(5) Rashi explains the personal use: *The Jewish people had already been promised a land flowing with milk and honey. But God offered Moses the right to spy for their personal strengthening just to confirm the promise prior to entry.*

**TABLE: GRAMMAR - PREPOSITIONS – EXTRA PREFIX LAMED (1)**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
Prefix Lamed		blank		Ex14-28a	The waters returned; they covered the chariots and the riders, ( ) all of Pharaohs army coming after them in the sea
Prefix Lamed		blank		Ex27-03g	Make its sweeping pans to dust it, its dusters, its bowls, its forks, and its prongs, ( ) all its utensils should be copper
Prefix Lamed		blank		Ex27-19	( )All Temple utensils for all services all pegs and the pegs of the courtyard: They will be copper (See Rashi on (Ex14-28a))

NOTES: (1) In these verses, there is a prefix lamed which however has no meaning. That is, Rashi interprets the verse by omitting the prefix lamed which is extra. These extra prefix lameds are indicated by parenthesis ( ) in the last column. Rashi explains *An orator or writer will use an extra prefix lamed for purposes of emphasis even though it has no meaning relevant to the verse.*

**TABLE: GRAMMAR - PREPOSITIONS – ELLIPTICAL PREFIX LAMED (1)**

Hebrew	Usual English Translation	Alternate Hebrew	Alternate English	Verse	Text of Verse with alternate translation in italics
blank / missing / elliptical		Prefix Lamed	towards	Ex13-18b	God turned the nation <i>towards</i> the wilderness path, <i>towards</i> the reed sea
blank / missing / elliptical		Prefix Lamed	towards	Ex16-06a	<i>Towards</i> evening you will become aware that God took you out of Egypt
blank / missing / elliptical		Prefix Lamed	towards	Ex06-16b	Your servants are not given stubble but are told to create bricks and as a result your servants are smitten and it is accounted as a sin <i>towards</i> your nation

NOTES: In these verses a *prefix lamed* is missing.. By inserting the *prefix lamed* translated as *towards* the verse makes sense.

## Ex41-42a

Biblical Text: *[they will offer two daily offerings a day and I will dwell amongst them and ] then they will realize that I am the Lord, their God, who took them out of Egypt in order to be able to dwell among them.*

Rashi Text: In order to be able to dwell among them: (Rashi) For that purpose.

Discussion: To facilitate the discussion, we distinguish between pre-requisite and purpose. Take a simple example, going to a concert.

- The prerequisite for going (what you have to do *beforehand* ) is buy a ticket
- The purpose of going, (what you accomplish *after* you enter) is hearing the concert piece.

In Hebrew you indicate *purpose* not, as in English, with a word or phrase, but by prefixing the word with the letter *lamed*. The letter *lamed* indicates the preposition *to* and is more generally used to indicate where you are going to in the future. Hence, it is the ideal indicator of purpose.

Rashi however *phrases* this with the Aramaic *al menath*. Now the Rashi-Aramaic phrase *al menath kayn* indicates prerequisite. Hence, Ramban erroneously thought Rashi interpreted the verse as a prerequisite rather than as purpose. Ramban demurs: *But the prefix lamed is never used that way.* Ramban gives some discussion and then cites the Ibn Ezra who explains explicitly that the *lamed* indicates *purpose and goal*. Ramban concludes by pointing out that this idea, *that God's purpose is to find dwelling among us* is a mystical secret.

And in fact, all the kabbalists, and later chasidus, for example Lubavitch chasidus, emphasize that God seeks dwelling among us. This idea occurs in diverse branches of Judaism: For example, Heschel wrote a book *God in Search of Man*.

Just to be clear, I answer the Ramban's objection by pointing out that

- *al menath kayn* is always used by Rashi for *prerequisites*, while
- *al menath*, is frequently used by Rashi to indicate future goals

I close by explaining *why* God seeks man. Imagine the Egyptian world where people live with dead animals, where you work 24/7, where food is overabundant and people overeat. If you view that world you don't see God's presence. Now imagine the Jewish world, where we abstain from impurities like dead animals; where work during the week is interrupted with rest and tranquility, where we control what we eat, and where Temple rituals are adorned with the most magnificent and colorful of dresses. In such a world you *do see* God's presence. Thus, the statement, *God seeks dwelling among humans* means that without exemplary human behavior we cannot be aware of God's presence.

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