

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 10th, 2025 Russell Jay Hendel DSJS, Ph.D.

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

THEME, THIS ISSUE: Rashi explains meaning arising from good examples. For example honey can mean sweet. This is call by the linguists, synecdoche.

RASHI ID: Gn14-14a, Nu02-17c, Nu03-01a, Nu06-12b, Nu08-06a, Nu08-06a, Nu11-16c, Nu16-01b, Nu17-23c, Nu22-03b, Nu22-08c, Nu22-24a, Nu27-18a, Nu27-22a, Nu27-25a, Nu30-04a, Nu31-06c

PESHAT: THE SPONTANEOUS REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS ISSUE: *In English, the word honey can also mean sweet. The reason honey can mean sweet is because honey is a good or typical example of sweetness. Naming something by a good example of it occurs in all languages and all time periods. Linguists call this figure of speech, synecdoche.*

Rashi is explicit about this principle in several places. For example, on Nu30-04a, “If a woman vows in her father’s house” Rashi explains that in her father’s house does not mean literally that the woman is physically there but rather it means that she is being brought up by her father. Similarly, Nu02-17c, “... as they encamped so they journeyed every person on his hand” Rashi explains that on his hand means at this residence. Rashi then continues: “But residence is not just another meaning of hand since the usual meaning hand is still relevant to residence it referring to a domain where a person can stretch his hand and take anything.”

On other Rashi comments however Rashi just translates the word. Since I know that Rashi considers the original meaning and the new meaning connected and that the verse need not be literal (as we have just seen), I consider these Rashi translations as examples of synecdoche (to me it is as if he said his principles their explicitly).

The Table below contains all Rashi comments (so far in the database) where Rashi uses synecdoche in Bamidbar. As time goes on this digest will grow eventually encompassing all Rashi translations that exemplify synecdoche.

Those few Rashis where Rashi is explicit are called the Metropolitan Rashis since they are like the busy Rashi comments with full explanation and illuminate other similar Rashis.

| Rashi Index | Verse | Translation | Rule | Rashi Comment |
|-------------|-------|-------------|------|---------------|
|-------------|-------|-------------|------|---------------|

| | | | | |
|---|----------|--|------------|--|
| | Gn14-14a | He [Abraham] girded [for war his mentees | Synecdoche | A defining characteristic of a soldier is the <i>unleashing of the sword</i> when he draws the sword out of his sheath. We could describe this as <i>emptying his sheath of the sword</i> and hence <i>emptying</i> synecdochally means <i>unleashing</i> and by meronymy refers to <i>girding</i> (preparing) for war. Thus the verse translates: Abraham <i>prepared</i> his mentees for war. Rashi does not give this etymology based on synecdoche; rather he cites many verses where the verb to <i>empty</i> refers to preparation and activities of soldiers. |
| c | Nu02-17c | *As they encamped so did they journey, every person with his residence-tent [lit. hand] under their [respective] flags | Synecdoche | *Hand can mean personal residence. One's personal residence is a good example of a place when one can grab with one's hand anything they wish. |
| a | Nu03-01a | These are the disciples [lit. descendants] of Moses and Aaron | Synecdoche | Children can mean disciples since children are a good example of a mentoring relationship between mentor and mentee |
| b | Nu06-12b | The first days will not count [lit. fall] | Synecdoche | Fall, a spatial concept, when used with enumerations , means that these enumerated no longer count since falling is a good example of omitting or losing something |
| a | Nu08-06a | Persuade [lit. take] the Levites ...for servicing the Temple | Synecdoche | Take can mean persuade since taking to one's side or location as in the English Idiom, he is on our side, is a good example, of what happens when you persuade someone to come to your side |
| a | Nu08-06a | take=persuade | Synecdoche | Take can mean persuade since taking to one's side or location as in the English Idiom, he is on our side, is a good example, of what happens when you persuade someone to come to your side |
| c | Nu11-16c | take=persuade | Synecdoche | Take can mean persuade since taking to one's side or location as in the English Idiom, he is on our side, is a good example, of what happens when you persuade someone to come to your side |
| b | Nu16-01b | take=persuade | Synecdoche | Take can mean persuade since taking to one's side or location as in the English Idiom, he is on our side, is a good example, of what happens when you persuade someone to come to your side |
| c | Nu17-23c | It let forth flowers, it budded buds, it weaned almonds | Synecdoche | Wean can refer to the process of a bud becoming a fruit since weaning in the animal sphere is a good example of a process over time transforming a new living thing into a maturer one. |

| | | | | |
|---|----------|---|------------|--|
| b | Nu22-03b | <i>Moab was depressed [lit. thorn-ed] from the Israelites</i> | Synecdoche | Thorn can mean despised or upset with since as in the English Idiom a thorn on my side thorns are a good example of something that is continually annoying you |
| c | Nu22-08c | <i>Stay over tonight and I will return a response as God speaks to me; they stayed over [lit. sat] with him</i> | Synecdoche | Sit can mean stay over in one's place since sitting is a good example (relative to standing and walking) of staying in a place for a while (A standing person looks like he might move and a walking person actually moves while a sitting person appears to be remaining in his place) |
| a | Nu22-24a | <i>The angel stood in the fox-trail of the vineyard</i> | Synecdoche | Fox can mean fox-trail and then can also mean trail since fox-trails (typically not that wide) are good examples of where foxes stalk to obtain food, the reason being, that the predators of foxes are typically bigger and couldn't fit in the fox-trail. |
| a | Nu27-18a | <i>take=persuade</i> | Synecdoche | Take can mean persuade since taking to one's side or location as in the English Idiom, he is on our side, is a good example, of what happens when you persuade someone to come to your side |
| a | Nu27-22a | <i>take=persuade</i> | Synecdoche | Take can mean persuade since taking to one's side or location as in the English Idiom, he is on our side, is a good example, of what happens when you persuade someone to come to your side |
| a | Nu27-25a | <i>On the (holi)day of first fruits</i> | Synecdoche | First-fruits can refer to the holiday of Shavuoth because the first fruits of the wheat harvest are brought as an offering on it and on no other holiday making first fruits a good example specific to Shavuoth. |
| a | Nu30-04a | <i>*When a woman takes a vow while being brought up by her father in her youth [lit in her father's house]</i> | Synecdoche | * In her father's house is a good example of being brought up by one's father because the phrase in-her-father's-house is a good example of being brought up by one's father. Rashi explicitly points out that even if she didn't physically live in her father's house the verse still applies. |
| c | Nu31-06c | <i>Moses sent them to war with Pinchas the priest who had the military trumpets and the Holy Ark [lit. had in his hand]</i> | Synecdoche | In his hand can mean possessing it since having something in one's hand is a good example of possession. |