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Our mission is to show all Rashi comments as Peshat, the simple straightforward meaning of the text following the same laws of interpretation governing ordinary everyday conversation.

The main Rashiomi categories of interpretation are :

- 1) **Grammar:** *Including verb conjugation, rules of style, paragraph development, and all relations of form and meaning*
- 2) **Parallelism:** *Including all nuances and inuendoes arising from same-verse parallelism, multi-verse parallelism, database inquiries, and contradictory verses*
- 3) **Symbolism:** *including parables, images, metaphors, similes, motifs, archetypes, signs, and tokens*
- 4) **Meaning:** *including all figures of speech*



Verse Text Dt25-06b

You will responsively say before God [At the Temple]: My father [Jacob] was a displaced [Gn28-42:43] Aramaean [Gn28-05]; he [then] went down to Egypt, he stayed without citizenship there with only a few people, but became a great nation

Rashi Text:

Laban wanted to *destroy* the Jewish people [as it says in **Gn31-24:29**]

Supplementary material

- We have interpreted “father” as referring to Jacob. Some commenters interpret it as referring to Abraham.
- The biblical root **Aleph-Beth-Daleth** means both *displaced* or *destroy*. The text is making a simple statement that Jacob was a *displaced* Aramaean; Rashi however, seems to interpret that the Aramean wanted to *destroy* Jacob.
- Why? This Rashiomi issue will answer this.

RASHI RULE USED TO EXPLAIN THIS RASHI

- This Rashi is explained with the Rashi Meaning Method
- Remember the Meaning method allows all figures of speech
- In this Rashi we use the methods of puns.
- Most people (including learned Rabbanim) are surprised to learn that even secular scholars consider puns as *peshat*, as the simple meaning of the text
- Puns allow a sentence to have two simple meanings
- We show examples on the next slide
- (Important) You can't use puns when you feel like. You must see a textual indication that the Author intended you to hear this pun. Otherwise the pun is not simple meaning (and Rashi will not use it)

Examples of Intended Puns

EXAMPLE 1: The doctor tried to convince his patient that high blood pressure affects one's life and that he must change his eating habits. So he wrote on the prescription: *Remember: When you have high blood pressure your life is at steak*

ANALYSIS: The doctor's prescription message contains a pun: The doctor's message has two meanings: 1) Your life is at stake, 2) You must cut out salty meats like steak if you want to lower blood pressure.

INDICATION OF INTENT: Do you notice that the doctor deliberately mis-spelled *steak*. This is a spelling pun. The technical name is metaplasms. You don't have to know the technical name. You do have to know that mis-spelling is considered a way to indicate Author intent of a pun and consequent double meaning.

RECAP: The Rashiyomi definition of *Peshat* is anything that people in a conversation would recognize as intended. If you saw the doctor write this message would you agree that the doctor intended two messages for his patient? If so, it is *Peshat*, the simple meaning(s) of the text.

Examples of Intended Puns

EXAMPLE 2: The group of teenage kids just killed skunk. They decided to get rid of it and threw it in the small pond. They were caught, and admitted we *stank* the dead skunk.

ANALYSIS: The confession message contains a pun: The message has two meanings: 1) We sank the skunk into the pond 2) The skunk stank up the pond (Which is how they were caught)

INDICATION OF INTENT: Do you notice that the confessor deliberately mis-spelled and mispronounced *sank* as *stank*. This is a spelling pun. The technical name is metaplasma. You don't have to know the technical name. You do have to know that mis-spelling is considered a way to indicate Author intent of a pun and consequent double meaning

RECAP: The Rashiyomi definition of *Peshat* is anything that people in a conversation would recognize as intended. If you caught these teenagers and they admitted they *stank* the sunk would you agree that they were confessing to being the cause of stinking up the pond? If so, it is *Peshat*, the simple meaning of the text.

Application of Rashi Rule to Dt26-05b

We use the Rashi Grammar rule. Please see the examples in the Table below. Notice the correct and incorrect ways to attribute. The noun must always go first followed by the adjective describing it. This is a rule of word order.

But the verse should have said *My father was a displaced Aramaean*

Instead it says *Aramaean: my father is displaced* Notice, how the word order is incorrect.

So here we do not have mis-spelling but mis-use of grammar. This mis-use of grammar indicates intent to pun. The sentence now has two intended meanings.

Rashi did not have to tell the obvious meaning that *Jacob who lived in Aram was displaced*. Instead Rashi points out the pun: The Aramean, Laban his father-in-law, displaced him. Rashi even goes further (allowed in a pun) and reads displaced as an active verb: *destroyed my father*

Correct	Incorrect
The ice(s) are cherry (colored)	The cherry is iced
The mother dropped the baby	The baby dropped the mother
On thanksgiving, we ate the turkey	On thanksgiving, the turkey ate us
My father was a displaced Aramaean	An Aramaean, my father (he) displaced

Discussion Points

- There are many scholarly papers on this verse. There are also many Jewish commentaries on this verse. They ask questions such as why Rashi read *displaced* as *destroyed*. What we have contributed is the idea that the verse has an intended pun justifying two meanings in it.
- Once the pun is established, we can bend some words a little bit (the way we do in ordinary conversation when we pun). The present tense of the root **aleph-beth-daleth** has a **vav** and means *displaced* while the past tense without a **vav** means *destroy*. People wonder if Rashi's text lacked a **vav**. The answer is simple. Of course it had a **vav**. Rashi was punning and he punned because the verse indicated intent.
- Rashi adds more comments (Which we didn't cite). Rashi explains: *Since Laban intended to destroy Jacob [Gn31-24:29] the verse acts as if he actually destroyed him. When dealing with non-Jews we can equate intent with action.*
- Why didn't I quote Rashi on this? Because it is not part of the simple meaning of the verse and its pun. It's an afterthought about our relationship with non-Jews. Rashi, recall, lived during the first crusades. In certain ways, the crusades were worse than the holocaust: They lasted 200 years not 5 years; there were 6 of them not one; after the holocaust the Jews were given Israel - after the crusades the Jews were not given anything except another stab in the back by being blamed for the great Bubonic plague. So Rashi had reason to be bitter to non-Jews. He in fact wrote several beautiful poems (*piyyutim*) on the horrors of the crusades. Some of these prayers are in our prayer books. This newsletter however only deals with the *Peshat* that Rashi so insightfully gives.