

Rashiyomi
Volume 32, Number 6
© Rashiyomi.Inc, Oct 31, 2019
Gn12-05a

Rashiyomi@GMail.Com

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Dr. Russell Jay Hendel; President

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 Gn12-05a ...

Abraham [ordered to leave his birth country] took:

- *His wife Sarah*
- *His nephew Lot*
- *All property that they acquired, and*
- *The souls they made in Charan*

Rashi Text:

- i) The phrases *the souls they made in Charan* refers to the converts they converted
- ii) Abraham converted the males and Sarah converted the females
- iii) But the *Peshat*, simple reading of the text is that it refers to slaves/workers that they **acquired** in Charan for we do find that the verb *to make* is used to indicate acquisition[[For example: In English we say, referring to work, this is **what I made**]]

Supplementary Material

- This is an important Rashi Digest since Rashi gives two explanations, one of which, Rashi calls the *Peshat*, the simple meaning of the text
- Apparently, this Rashi illustrates that sometimes Rashi deviated from the *Peshat* to explore moral ideas (such as converting people to God)
- Not so!!! What we show is that Rashi's first explanation *the converts they converted* is in fact the simple meaning of the text
- We then have to explain how we know this and to accomplish this we will present a very important Rashi principle which enables you to understand many Rashis as *Peshat*
- We must also explain how Rashi *seems* to say the opposite of what we claim

RASHI RULES USED TO EXPLAIN THIS RASHI

- This Rashi uses three Rashi rules to explain the text
 - The **Rashi Grammar rule**
 - The **Rashi synonym-nuance rule** a subrule of the Rashi meaning rule
 - The **Rashi Parallelism rule**
- **Rashi Grammar Rule:** Quite simply,
 - A **plural** verb indicates that **multiple people** did something while
 - A Singular verb in Biblical Hebrew indicates either
 - ❖ One person leading or doing the activity
 - ❖ A group of people doing the activity as a unit
- **Rashi Parallelism Rule:** Quite simply, this rule states that if a verse **repeats** a phrase with slightly different nuances then the **2nd repetition accepts the 1st and builds further on it**. We show examples below
- **Rashi Synonym-Nuance Rule:** Quite simply this says that if two synonyms have slightly different nuances, as reflected in spoken language, then the choice of one synonym over the other communicates its particular nuances.

Examples

GRAMMAR: The fact that Plural indicates multiple people doing the activity does not need examples since we are all familiar with it.

PARALLELISM EXAMPLE: Ex20-03 repeats the prohibition against idolatry

- You should not have (possess) other gods...
- You should not make for personal use (that is monetary gain) idols and any image....

The Rashi parallelism principle requires that the 2nd repetition accept the 1st repetition and build further on it. In this case

- **First repetition:** You should not have, that is, possess, idolatry
- **Second repetition:** Besides prohibiting full possession, you should not partially possess or gain from idols such as by manufacturing them and selling them to others for gain

Here the two repetitions reflect a building from a prohibition of full possession to a prohibition of just gain.

Examples (Continued)

SYNONYM EXAMPLE: Consider, in English, the synonyms, **Blueprint** versus **Template**.

- **Blueprint** has a connotation of something used for buildings or very complex projects
- **Template** has a connotation of something used for forms where there is a minimum to add
- Someone might object: But you are not sure if it is a building or a very complex project. True: There could be multiple nuances: The point here is that the synonym rule points to a direction. The reader may still have to chose between competing explanations and nuances.

Application of Rashi Rule to Gn05-12a

- **Grammar Rule:** It says *the souls they made in Charan* implying **plurality**; both Abraham and Sarah acted.
- Indeed, we think of converting (or acquiring workers) as something the *boss* does: If so, it should say *the souls he made in Charan*, since he was the leader
- This makes intuitive sense:
 - Men and women have different vulnerabilities and different needs
 - Men and women obtain different benefits from either employment (workers) or religion
 - Thus you need a man to work with men and a woman to work with women
- **Parallelism Rule:** Notice the parallelism in the verse (parenthetical inserts show the parallelistic climax)
 - Abraham took Sarah his **wife**
 - (Moreover besides his wife) he took his **nephew**
 - (Moreover besides immediate family) he took his **property** (He didn't just flee with nothing)
 - (Moreover besides family and property) he took *the souls he made* (implying something more than property ; implying people whom he helped shape, that is **converts**)
- **Synonym Rule:** The real clincher is the fact that slaves are referred to as **souls**. In the bible (and throughout literature) slaves are referred to as **slaves or property**; if they are called **souls** then it indicates something higher that would happen by conversion

DISCUSSION POINTS

- My first focus is on the basic Rashi approach used here to show the *Peshat* the simple meaning of the text: Rashi
 - Did not have one problem (the meaning of **make** which could indicate **conversion** or **acquisition**) but rather, had
 - Two problems: (The meaning of **make** and the use of **soul** to indicate slaves)
- Let us carefully explore this idea: That Rashi had two problems not one problem
 - If Rashi had one problem, the meaning of **make**, then the simple meaning of the text would be that Abraham *made an acquisition in Charan and obtained many slaves*. Such an explanation is consistent with the word **make**
 - But Rashi had two problems. Why are slaves called **souls**? The *only* answer to this question is that the slaves were **converted**.
- But, wait a minute, you will say: Rashi called *making slaves the Peshat*: Doesn't that refute what you said?
- No! I have explained many times that **Peshat** can either mean
 - The **simple straightforward meaning of the text**, or
 - The **superficial simplified meaning of the text**; the meaning as read by a **simple** person (*Pashut*)
- In summary:
 - If you only notice one problem in the verse, the meaning of **make**, then the **superficial** meaning of the verse is that Abraham *made an acquisition* in Charan, an acquiring of slaves, which he took with him
 - If however, you notice two problems in the verse, the meaning of **make**, and the nuances of **soul**, then the **simple meaning** of the verse is that Abraham besides taking his property took those **slaves** who had become **souls** under his tutelage. And just as Abraham converted so too did Sarah convert indicated by the plural **they made**
- As you can see this **not one problem but two problems**, is a very powerful tool. It enables us to see Rashi as *Peshat* even where that appears unlikely.