

CHAPTER AU: THE FAMOUS COOK-BOIL CONTRADICTION

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AU.1 – Review of hypernymy: To fully understand the Rashi studied today, we must completely understand *hyponymy*. We start with a simple example:

Color is the category or hypernym

Red, blue, yellow, green, ... are the examples or hyponyms

Here is another example

Fruit is the category or hypernym

Orange, Cherry, Apple, Banana,... are the examples or hyponyms

The following example sheds additional light on the use of *hypernymy*:

Day, the 24-hour cycle, is the category or hypernym

Night, and *day* (12-hour cycle) are the examples or hyponyms

Notice in the last example, that *day* functions with two meanings

It can restrictively mean the 12-hour part of the day

It can expansively mean the entire 24-hour day

This is typical. Very often one hyponym is a *good example* of the hypernym and it acquires two meanings. This uses *synecdoche*, a figure of speech, which names a general class by a particularly good example. This happens in all languages. Here is an example of synecdoche

Honey can refer by virtue of the figure of speech to anything sweet, the hypernym

The hyponyms include, sugar, honey, and anything else sweet you wish to mention.

Because of synecdoche, we always have to ascertain, when reading a passage, biblical or otherwise, whether a word's meaning is specific and restrictive, a hyponym, or whether a word's meaning is expansive and general, a hypernym. Rabbi Akiva in fact taught that the essence of biblical exegesis is *ribui* and *miute*, *expansive* and *restrictive* meaning (TB, BK 117b); in many cases these expansive-restrictive meanings arise from the presence of hypernymy. Thus the modern concept of hypernymy neatly corresponds to some of the classic Talmudic ideas of expansion and restriction.

AU.2 A Biblical Example: Dt16-02 states, concerning the Passover offering on the Passover holiday

Biblical Text: You will cook (*bashal*) and eat

Rashi text: Cook here refers to roasting which is also called cooking

As written, this Rashi may not be immediately intuitive. After all, people do not use the word cooking to refer to roasting. Further illumination about this lack of intuition is obtained from the Radaq who in his biblical dictionary (*Shoroshim*) states

Bashal – Throughout the bible *bashal* means to cook (that is cook with water) except for one instance *cook by fire* where it means to roast.

We see here two commentaries. We can explain their difference of opinion using the concept of hypernymy.

Rashi: *Cook* is both a hypernym (all food preparation even roasting) and hyponym (cook in water)

Radaq: *Cook* is a hyponym meaning cook in water

Notice, that in English, *cook* can mean any food preparation (hyponym) including baking and roasting (though in Hebrew, *cook* would never refer to *baking*.)

AU.3 Further Complications: In an effort to defend Rashi, commenters use the contradiction method arising from the following passage:

Ex12-09:10 Eat the meat [Passover offering] on this night [Passover] fire-roasted with matzoh over bitter herbs Do not eat it half-cooked nor cooked in water; rather roasted ...

It appears that Rashi was simply trying to prevent a contradiction between

Dt16-07 Cook it

Ex12-09:10 Roast it

by suggesting that *cook* can mean *roast*. But can it? Remember, a contradiction does not justify *peshat* in our way of thinking; only an instant and spontaneous reaction of a native speaker.

Bible scholars are also perplexed by the contradiction. The contradiction appears over and over in many papers, just as the contradiction is dealt with by many Jewish commenters. We will examine the rich set of commentaries below.

AU.4 Traditional Biblical Commenters: Most commenters echo the thoughts mentioned above that *cook* functions as both a hypernym and hyponym. Here are some sample commentaries. Some like Ibn Caspi and Hoffman use the language we used above of general and restrictive meanings. Rashi can also be understood that way. Finally, notice a second explanation of why *bashal* occurs in Deuteronomy; this explanation is given by Rav Hirsch and Bechor Shor.

Rashi: Cook also refers to roasting

Rashbam: Roasted

Ibn Ezra: In fire (2Ch35:13)

Bechor Shor: Cook also refers to roasting. Since Ex12-09 speaks about cooked in water it follows there can be cooking by fire

Hoffman: Cook means preparation of food by fire...here it means roast (2Ch35:13) The *restrictive* meaning of cooking by pot is cooking by water (boiling) (Ex12-09)

A second approach to explaining cooking is that since on Passover there is both the Passover sacrifice and the general holiday offering, therefore cook could refer to the holiday offering just as in 2Ch35-13 it says

They cooked by fire (roast)the Passover according to law

And the [other offerings] they cooked in pots, cauldrons, and pans to please the nation

Ibn Caspi: [Cook is a]*General* category referring to all types of cooking including roasting.

Rabbi Hirsch: on Passover there is both the Passover sacrifice and the general holiday offering, therefore cook could refer to the holiday offering just as in 2Ch35-13 it says

They cooked by fire (roast)the Passover according to law

And the [other offerings] they cooked in pots, cauldrons, and pans to please the nation

AU.5 Secular Scholars: To resolve the Ex-Deut. contradiction several means are employed. Some use the linguistic method we just mentioned. A very good secular paper is by Ehud Ben Zvi, ("Revisiting 'Boiling in Fire' in 2 Chron. 35.13 and Related Passover Questions Text, Exegetical Needs, Concerns, and General Implications" in Isaac Kalimi and Peter J. Haas (eds.), *Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity* (LHBOTS, 439; London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006) 238-50.) Ben Zvi acknowledges that many scholars, resolve this contradiction, by assuming that *cook* can be a hypernym (general cooking) (J. G. Mcconville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSup 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984): 117-18; J. R. Shaver, *Torah and the Chronicler's Work: An Inquiry into the Chronicler's References to Laws, Festivals, and Cultic Institutions in Relationship to Pentateuchal Legislation* (BJS 196; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 116. See already Mekilta, Pisha [~:i], chapter 6, 83 (J. Z. Lauterbach edition, 50). Cf. J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1996), 155.

Ben Zvi also acknowledges that this contradiction keeps on popping up in the literature (I. L. Seeligman, "The Beginnings of Midrash in the Books of Chronicles," *Tarbiz* 49 (1979/80): 14-32 (31-32) (Hebrew); I. Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 156-58.)

Some other approaches to resolving the contradiction are to regard the Chronicle text as a commentary on the Torah explaining the contradiction by expanding the meaning of the word. The idea of a commentary approach, one verse in the Bible explaining others, is called *intertextuality*.

Another approach (not consistent with orthodox Jewish beliefs) is that Deuteronomy does contradict Exodus; Exodus was perhaps a one-time command for the generation in Egypt. However, Deuteronomy is a book reflecting a centralized monarchy and reflects a tendency to centralize and normalize all sacrifices in the Temple. This idea of "evolution" is also common in

certain Christian circles that do not see the Bible as a unified whole but rather as evolving (e.g. Peter Enn, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* Paperback; HarperOne publishers, 2015) However, this approach is contradicted by the Bible itself which explicitly declares the laws of the Egyptian Passover as binding on all generations (e.g. Ex12-14).

AU.6 Summary: We can summarize the above as follows:

Ex12 speaks about *roasting* while Dt16 speaks about *cooking*; 2Ch35 speaks about *cooking in fire*

A simple way out is to assume that *cook* is both a general and particular word (hyponym/hypernym) As a hypernym it refers to all cooking methods while as a hyponym it refers to cooking by water

There are also some other approaches such as the argument that Dt16 speaks about both the Passover and holiday offerings as well as the non-orthodox approach that Deuteronomy represents an evolution from Exodus.

AU.7 – Source of Disagreement: Although there are many secular and religious scholars that say that *cook* is a *hypernym* and can mean cook (in water) or roast, both Radaq and Ben Zvi disagree. We therefore cite Radaq and Ben Zvi.

Radak says

Throughout the Bible cook always mean cook by water except from the one exception in 2Ch35-13

Ben Zvi says

In all instances in which the meaning of bashal is clear, it involves boiling(e.g. Exod 12:9; 23:19; 34:26; Lev 6:21).

We will answer these objections below.

AU.8 – Beginnings of Response, Statistics: Both Radak and Ben Zvi speak about *all instances of bashal*. However, according to the Strong Concordance (entries 1310 and 1311), or, by a simple use of a search engine, *Bashal* occurs only 30 times in the Bible.

Furthermore, the 30 occurrences can be lowered. Some phrases occur repeatedly. For example *don't cook a kid in its mother's milk* occurs three times (Ex23-19, Ex34-26, Dt14-21) This would lower the count to 28 occurrences.

So right here we have the germ of the solution. 28 or 30 occurrences is not very many. It will be hard to generalize. This is a general problem with Biblical Hebrew since most roots occur very infrequently making it difficult to settle controversies on meaning.

AU.9 – Lets Actually Look at the 30 Occurrences: There are some surprises here and this will help our analysis. Here are the six usages of *bashal* in the Bible.

- 1) In the active tense (*qal*), *bashal* refers to the *ripening of grain* (Yoel 4:13)
- 2) In the causative (*hifil*) tense, *bashal* refers to the *ripening of fruit* (Gn40-10)
- 3) In the intensive tense (*piel*) with an indirect object of a liquid, *bashal* means to *cook* in water (Ex12-09, Ex23-19, Ex34-26, Dt14-21)
- 4) In the intensive tense, active or passive (*piel, pual*) with an indirect object of a pot (*cooked in a pot*) (Nu11-09, Lv06-21, 1Sa02-13:14) it could either mean *cooked in water*, or, I think more preferably, could mean *pot-roasted* (in oil.) To support this translation of *pot-roasted* notice that the Rambam, Laws of Passover, 8:6, in describing the prohibition of cooking the Passover lamb in water, enumerates several methods
 - 1) “Prohibition of cooking in water, fruit juice, or other liquids;”
 - 2) Prohibition of roasting in a pot,
 - 3) [Cooking, pot-roasting is prohibited] It is permitted to grease the lamb with wine, oil, fruit juice, other liquids (except water) prior to roasting
 - 4) After being roasted it is permitted to dip the cooked lamb in fruit juices and other liquids
- 5) In the intensive tense (*Piel*) with an indirect object of *fire* (*cooked in fire*), *bashal* clearly means to *barbeque* (2Ch35-13)
- 6) In the remaining verses, *bashal* occurs in the intensive without an indirect object. We could translate it as the hyponym *cooked* (in water); we could also simply translate it as the hypernym *cooked* indicating some food preparation method.

Radaq, in his book *Shoroshim* acknowledges #1 and #2 and states

The two meanings (ripening of grain and fruit) and cooking meat) are the same. Both refer to changing inedible food to edible food. However with plants, the ripening process is natural while with meat the ripening process is man-made.

Using this we can begin to explain the grammatical tense indicators associated with each meaning:

- 1) If there is no man-made expenditure of energy, if the maturation of the grain happens naturally, then the *light active tense* is used
- 2) For fruit, Hebrew perceives the plant as matured and once matured it *enables* (*causative tense*) to allow the emergence of flowers and fruit.
- 3)-6) If the *intensive tense* is used, it connotes man-made activity and refers to cooking (in water), roasting (in a pot), barbequing on a fire.

Using this overview of *all* occurrences of *bashal* (all 30!) we see that in the intensive tense without an indirect object it can refer to

cooking in water,
barbequing in fire, and
cooking (roasting in a pot)

If this verb has so many meanings then clearly it is functioning as a hypernym. It is the general category which can take on varied specific meanings. Furthermore, using synecdoche, it usually refers to cooking in water.

This review of all cases clearly refutes the Radaq's description of *cook by fire* as an exception, since indeed, if there are only 30 cases, you can't refer to any one meaning as an exception. If we are aware that *bashal* can refer to cooking in *water*, *fire*, or a *pot*, we see these are not exceptions. This review of all cases, also answers Ben Zvi who suggests that 2Ch35-13 is unusual, prompting a viewpoint that 2Ch35-13 represents an attempt to harmonize two contradictory texts. Not so! All hypernyms refer to multiple items; this is not a contradiction.

To illustrate the power of this point, consider the following facetious example:

If one who didn't know English, was investigating English and noticed that the word *fruit* can sometimes refer to *apples* and sometimes to *oranges* and sometimes to *bananas*, it would be ridiculous to assert that the usages of the word *fruit* are contradictory. It would also be ridiculous to say that fruit had different meanings in different periods. Rather, the correct statement is that these multiple meanings prove that *fruit* is a hypernym.

We believe this analysis satisfactorily answers the Radaq and Ben-Zvi. In terms of Rashi rules, we highlighted the fourth exegetical pillar, *meaning including figures of speech*. A correct understanding of synecdoche and hyponymy shows that the usages of *bashal* are perfectly normal and that it is a hypernym (general term for cooking) as most commentaries and many secular scholars state.

AU10 - Why not simply say *roast*? We have explained the Rashi; but why didn't the bible simply say

Dt16-07 Roast (the Passover) and eat it?

Why say *cook* (the Passover) and cause all these problems? There is no commentary (religious or secular) answering this. We propose to answer it as follows: The two passages state

Ex12-09:10 Only eat the Passover roasted on fire; not cooked (particular term, hyponym)
in water

Dt16-07 Cook (general term, hypernym) the Passover

The following general rule applies to parallel passages with different terms; this rule is used many times throughout the Sifray.

If two parallel passages use two terms
One very restrictive and one a little bit more expansive
Then broaden the restriction.

So if

The Bible had only said Ex12-09:10 , fire-roast the Passover, then only pure roasting is allowed

But since the bible also says Dt16-08, *cook* the Passover, although we can ‘t cook it in liquid, we can still

Grease the lamb with wine, honey, and fruit juices prior to roasting it. We can also eat the roasted lamb using a dip method into liquids (which impart taste) [Rambam: Laws of Passover 8:6, items #3 and #4 cited above]

This Rambam is based on a Mishnah in Pesachim 40b. There is no Talmudic or Midrashic source for this law presented in either the Talmuds or the Sifra, Sifray and Mechiltah. I believe that the above is the true derivation.

We can further appreciate this derivation by examining three methods to indicate *don’t cook in water, but you can grease (prior to roasting) in fruit juices, wine, and oil and create dips (after roasting) in fruit juices.*

Method 1: (Sequential Narrative, used by the Rambam, Passover 8:6) 1) Do not cook the Passover in water. 2) Do not pot-roast the Passover (in oil). 3) But you can grease the lamb in fruit juices, and other liquids except water prior to roasting; 4) You can also create dips after roasting in fruit juices, wine, oil, and other liquids

Method 2: (Footnotes.) Do not cook the Passover in water.¹ Do not pot-roast the Passover in oil.¹

NOTES: 1) But you can grease the lamb prior to roasting in fruit juices, wine, oil, and other liquids and you can create dips after roasting in fruit juices and other liquids.

Method 3: (Parallelism (Used by Bible)

Do not cook the Passover in water; you must roast it
Cook the Passover

In other words, the alternating parallel terms used in Method 3 is simply the way the Bible indicated footnotes. Hendel (Biblical Formatting, Jewish Bible Quarterly, 35(1), 2007) makes this point that the Bible uses different methods from modern formatting to indicate bulleted lists, emphasis, and in this case nuanced exceptions of a general rule. Thus these interpretations are *peshat* since they are the way the native biblical listener heard these passages; indeed, the point made by Hendel is that

A native biblical speaker hears repeated words, or, in this case, parallel passages with different terms the same way

A modern speaker hears bullets and footnotes

It is simply a matter of conventions of formatting.

AU.12 - Other examples of hypernymy: The example presented today is not isolated. Perhaps the best example in biblical exegesis of using hypernymy in to give words dual meanings is the delightfully simple 4-word verse Dt25-04:

Don't muzzle an-ox while-threshing

Each of the three words is made from a hyponym into a hypernym

*Muzzle- means muzzle but it can also mean the general category any interference

*Ox means ox; but it can also mean any animal

*Threshing means threshing but it can also mean any routine activity of an animal

Thus the verse as a whole means

Don't muzzle or *interfere* with the eating by *any animal* while *doing its normal work*

This approach to generalizing verses using hypernymy is explicitly stated in Pesachim 6b, Rashi.

In other words, the tools are universal tools that govern the interpretation of the entire bible.