

ParShaT *VaYaYSheV* – One Pager Series

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Rashi #1: Biblical Text Gn37-14:16 *Jacob sent Joseph from Chevron Valley [to check on his brothers] and he [Joseph] came near Schem. A man found him and unexpectedly he [Joseph] was confused in a field; the man asked him “What are you seeking?” And he [Joseph] said, “It is my brothers that I seek; please tell me where they are shepherding?” And the man said, “They have departed from this” [I said this] because I overheard them saying, “Letting us go toward Religionville.” Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Religionville.*

Rashi text #1a: Chevron Valley: But it should be Mount Chevron. The biblical phrase refers to the depths and ugliness of Chevron, burial places of the Patriarchs who were told their descendants would be non-citizens [As a result of the kidnap of Joseph, the Jews went down to Egypt where they had to remain 200 years].

Rashi text #1b: Schem: A place associated with troubles and divisiveness: i) Dinah was raped in Schem leading the brothers (Shimon, Levi) to take the law into their own hands; ii) The Tribes sold Joseph there, iii) The Davidic Kingdom was split there hundreds of years later [1Ki12-01].

Rashi text #1c: Man, Man, Man: This is Gavriel who is called “the man” (Daniel, 9:1)

Rashi text #1d: They journeyed from this: They are going away from [this] brotherhood.

Rashi text #1e: Towards Religionville, ...in Religionville: They are creating their own law in order to kill you.

Rashi #1f: Biblical texts never leave their plain meaning.

Comments: Rashi interprets this Biblical passage as a vision, a dream, in which the Archangel Gavriel appears to Joseph. Before defending this as *peshat*, the spontaneous and instant reaction to the text, we first interpret the dream. This is a very profound Rashi illuminating the entire essence of the Bible and Jews.

Rashi Interpretation: Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers, unwittingly setting up the Chevron valley-visions, the visions of the Patriarchs, who were told their descendants would be non-citizens in Egypt. Although the plain text is true, Joseph actually was found confused in a field, and asked a man there for help; as often happens, this real world experience triggered a dream. In the dream that night, Joseph saw himself confused in the field, [about the dream of the field, where his brother’s sheaves bowed to his upright sheave which he interpreted to mean that he would one day help his brothers, achieving brotherhood]. An Angelic Figure [indicated by the triple repetition *man, man, man* (instead of using a pronoun)] representing Joseph’s right to achieve his own manhood, his own adult life, appeared to him. The dream figure asked, “What are you seeking?” Joseph replied, “Brotherhood is what I seek.” The dream figure responded, not with “They journeyed from here” but “They journeyed from *this* (*this* referring to brotherhood)” Translation: “You do not have any brothers; You will not acquire brotherhood by helping them” The dream figure further said: I *overheard* them [Translation: Don’t you get the vibrations of all the bickerings, yellings at you, and hatred]. They are going towards their own religion and law [Yes: Religionville was the name of a place; by repeating Religionville the Bible indicates its symbolic significance in a dream] The man in effect continued: “Don’t you remember what happened in this place where we met (Schem)? Don’t you remember how Dinah was raped; how Shimon and Levi took the law into their own hands, contradicting their father’s wishes? They asserted the means justifies the ends (killing to avenge rape). Don’t you remember this place? Don’t you understand you are next?”

Peshat: I have asserted that *peshat* is the spontaneous instant reaction to a text. But the above does not appear spontaneous and instant. Good question. The actual definition of *Peshat* is “spontaneous and instant to a native speaker *familiar with the culture*.” The issue here is the status of dreams. Modern man does not use dreams. If he has a problem he takes a drug or goes to a therapist. Not so the Biblical man. At Sinai we became a nation of prophets. The Jews in the wilderness spent their lives helping each other with their personal problems and growth; Aaron and Miriam were their leaders (Nu12), prophets, and hence experts in dreams. If you accept this, then the idea that a real world event triggered a dream and that Joseph, still immature, was warned not to go, *is* spontaneous. If you don’t accept this, the dream looks homiletic; but that doesn’t violate our definition of *Peshat*. *Peshat* is not what is spontaneous and instant to you and me but rather to the biblical speakers, to a nation of prophets. And if you understand this interpretation of Rashi, then suddenly all of Exodus and Leviticus, the symbolic books, the Temple vessels, the varied-colored offerings, become symbolic rituals, waking dream symbols to rehabilitate the biblical viewer. In summary although there are linguistic hints at this dream interpretation- i) Chevron Valley vs. Mount Chevron, ii) man-man-man, iii) religionville-religionville, iv) they journeyed from this vs. they journeyed from here – the ultimate test of the Rashi is whether you expect and perceive biblical man as a person to whom dreams, dream warnings, and dream interpretations, are a daily part of his life.