

ParShaT *VaYeChi* – One Pager Series

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Rashi #1: Biblical Text:Gn47-29d [Jacob requesting that Joseph bury him]....Do for me kindness and truth

Rashi Text: Kindness and truth This is the kindness of burial since it is a kindness without any reciprocity; since the dead cannot pay back those who bury them and therefore it is a *kindness and truth*

Rashiyomi Explanation: This Rashi uses the *figure of speech* exegetical pillar, more specifically, it uses the *idiom*. An *idiom* is a collection of words whose meaning transcends and is different than the collection of individual meanings.

Example 1: "*He gave me a hand*" is an idiomatic phrase meaning "*He helped me*" Here the idiomatic phrase "*He gave me a hand*" has a meaning "*He helped me*" which transcends the meaning of the individual words such as "hand"

Example 2: So too, in this verse, Rashi is identifying *kindness and truth* as an idiom meaning *burial*.

Why didn't Rashi say this is an idiom? Because no word in Hebrew grammar at the time meant idiom.

But what about Rashi's explanation which sounds sort of mushy "*It is not a kindness but a kindness in truth since there is no possibility of reciprocity.*" Rashi is not deriving the idiom but rather *conjecturing the historical evolution* leading to this idiom. In a similar manner, very frequently, when people help each other, they engage in "work with their hands" and hence they are as it were *lending* a hand. So the Rashi has two parts: The 1) Rashi *form* which is a speculation on how the idiom came into existence; 2) *peshat* that *kindness and truth* is an idiom meaning burial.

Rashi #2: Biblical Text:Gn48-02b [Joseph was coming to Jacob] Jacob strengthened himself and sat up

Rashi Text: Strengthened himself: Jacob did this because even though Joseph was his son, Joseph was a king and royalty must always be shown respect We find similar respect shown even to evil kings since Moses showed respect to Pharaoh, and Elijah showed respect to Achav [Rashi cites verses documenting this respect but this need not concern us now]

Rashiyomi explanation: Rashi here uses the powerful *database* method: He asks the query, "*How often do we find signs of respect to Kings*" The database query shows that besides the usual respect (subjects bowing to Kings they have loyalty to) we find respect even where we may not think it warranted such as to evil kings (Pharaoh, Achav) and to children who were Kings (Joseph to Jacob).

Peshat or Derash? We may inquire if this is a *research* finding or is it *peshat*, the spontaneous instant reaction to the verse statement. The correct perspective is that two organs of the Rashi anatomy are being used: *Derash* in the sense of *research* process is used to uncover typical patterns among the people. The database inquiry shows that indeed people always respected kings even if they were beneath them (e.g. a son) or wicked (e.g. Pharaoh and Achav). Therefore, once we know this cultural pattern, we understand and are empathic with the instant and spontaneous response of a native of the culture to the statement that Jacob strengthened himself on his bed "As a sign of respect for Josephs' reign."