

## ParShaT *BeShaLaCh* - One Pager Series

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**Rashi #1: Biblical Text: Ex14-03a,b,c,d:** [God said to Moses to say over and discuss. Speak to the Jews: Let them retreat and camp before Mountain Mouth ...] As a consequence, Pharaoh will say concerning the Jews, “They are aimlessly running around the land [because] the desert has closed in on them

**Rashi Text: #1** As a consequence: Pharaoh will say they are confused and stuck in the land *because* of their retreat.

**Rashiyomi Explanation:** Rashi here explains *sentence connection in a paragraph*. Just as Rashi explains *grammar* and *word meaning* so too, he explains *paragraph construction* and sentence connection within a paragraph. Here he explains the first sentence – *God’s command to retreat* – as the cause of the second sentence – *Pharaoh will think the Jews are confused*. Note that the Hebrew text simply uses *vav* which is usually translated as *and*. A famous paper states that *vav* can have 70 meanings including *or, therefore, etc.* This known fact is not always used (but should be). An English instructor would advise students of composition to use *connective words* to highlight important sentence connections within a Paragraph (e.g. Jones-Faulkner, *Writing Good Prose*, 1977) Because of this, we have translated *vav* as *as a consequence*. Such a translation provides added clarity.

**Rashi Text: #2:** Concerning: The *prefix lamed* (normally meaning *to*) here means *concerning*. [Rashi gives several other verses where *prefix lamed* means *concerning*.]

**Rashiyomi Explanation:** Note that if *prefix lamed* means *to* the sentence would ludicrously be translated as *And Pharaoh will say to the Jews*. Rashi explains that *Pharaoh will say concerning* the Jews is a better translation.

**Rashi Text: #3:** The land has closed around them: They are imprisoned. In other words, they are in a desert without a place *to* go and without knowledge *from* where to get out.

**Rashiyomi Explanation:** The actual Rashi text *is* found in Rashi but *not* as a separate comment. However, a careful reading of the text says *they are running aimlessly because the desert closed on them*. My opinion is that there were originally two Rashi comments, one on *they are closed in the land* and one on *they are aimlessly running*. Our current texts have only one Rashi comment. The Rashi copyist who transmitted the texts (there were no photocopy machines in the 11<sup>th</sup> century!) saw this as one comment and corrupted the original Rashi text.

**Rashi Text: #4:** They are running aimlessly in the land. Englander argues that Rashi believed in the 2-letter root theory, being influenced by *Menahem’s notebook* a well-known grammar text of this time. Today we believe all Hebrew words have 3 letter roots. But Englander admits that “Rashi is not primarily disagreeing with grammar but with meaning.” Exactly correct. I will therefore show that Rashi discovered a new Hebrew root nun-beth-caph. Here are the three roots and here are verses for each. **#I Beth-Caph-Hey**, *to cry*. The 3-letter rootists think Rashi’s verses come from BCH. We however will show this does not make sense. **#II: Beth-Vav-Caph**: *Confused*. Rashi explains *a situation where one doesn’t know how to get out or where to go*. IIa) *Haman’s decree to destroy the Jews went forth...and the city of Shushan was confused* (Est. 3: 15). IIb) *Prosperous are those who find strength in You (God)...when they go through the depths of confusion, they suddenly see a fountain* (Ps 84:7) [The 3-letter rootists incorrectly see this as a reference to crying]. IIc) *God bounds rivers from confusion* (Job 28:11) [the 3 letter rootists say this refers to *crying* but clearly the point is that *rivers* travel without stopping (getting confused where to go next). **III) Nun-Beth-Caph** – a new root by Rashi. Unlike **beth-vav-caph**- *passive confusion, not knowing where to exit or where to go but standing indecisively* - **nun-beth-caph** refers to *active confusion*, where you continually run around aimlessly in circles trying to leave from or arrive at a new place. IIIa) The whirlpool is illustrative of this activity. *Can you come to a whirlpool* (Job 38:16). IIIb) *Because the Jews are trapped in the desert they are aimlessly running around* (**Nun-beth-caph**) *in helplessness* (Ex13-3)