

Rashi #1, #2, #3, #4: Biblical Text: Nu20-14:15a,b,a,b [Background: The Jewish people are about to go into Israel. Travel would be faster if they could go *through* the land of Edom rather than *around* it. Moses therefore requests on Israel's behalf the right to go through. Here is what he says]

*This, is the statement of your brother(A) Israel
You [Edom] know (B) all the happenings that occurred to us
Our fathers (A) went down to Egypt; we (A) dwelled (C) in Egypt many years; but the Egyptians mistreated us (C)
and our fathers (D).*

Rashiyomi explanation: [We first give the Rashiyomi explanation and then examine the Rashi text. This will facilitate understanding. We preface our remarks by observing that the above passage is a *diplomatic message*. There are several *diplomatic messages* [communications between sovereign nations] in the Bible. Very often these diplomatic messages contain import styles used by diplomats. In fact, Rabbi Judah, the author of the Mishnah, who had frequent dealings with the Roman government would always read Gn32,33, a dialog between Jacob and Esau, the leaders of the Jews and Edom, prior to talking to Rome since he learned valuable diplomatic style. If the reader likes, Rashi gives the rules of *diplomatic grammar*. We now comment.]

- (A) *Your brother: You know: Our fathers: Our fathers:* A important diplomatic point in any dialogue is to emphasize *commonality*, common, desires and values, of the two nations. In this case Moses emphasizes brotherhood since even though Edom was at war frequently with Israel, they too believe in prophecy. In a similar manner,
- (B) *You know all that happened.* The Jews and Edom have a shared history in the early years. Again, there is emphasis on commonality. This is the *general idea* of which Rashi gives an important *example*: We find in Gn36-10 that the father of Edom (Esau) separated from the father of the Jews (Jacob) because their assets were too wealthy and each needed their own land. This incident shows an early precedent for respect of property (which is the content of Moses message)
- (C) *Mistreated:* Rashi states *with many and plentiful disturbances*. However, Moses simply modestly says *mistreated*. Although Rashi does not comment on the word, *dwelled*, this word is consistent with the use of *mistreatment* which is a *light* or *diplomatic* way of discussing problems. Although we were *foreigners* in Egypt but Moses said we *dwelled*. Similarly Moses simply says *there were mistreatments* without going into details. This is an important point in diplomacy: Not to emphasize one's personal problems but to simply focus on issues.
- (D) *Mistreated our fathers:* Undoubtedly the reference is to the actual historical mistreatment of the patriarchs; for example, Gn12 relates how Sarah was abducted by a Pharaoh of Egypt. There too God saved him. Moses brings this point to show that unlike Edom, the Jews are not a people of power. They patiently wait for salvation and endure many tribulations. Therefore, their statement and petition that they will not take food and water from Edom should be believed.

Rashiyomi explanation: [We now review the actual Rashi texts on A,B,C,D]

- (A) *Brothers:* Why did Moses mention brotherhood here? Moses emphasized that we are descendants of the same father, subject to the same prophecy of *being a non-citizen*. Above I simply pointed out the *general idea*: Mention commonality.
- (B) *You know all the tribulations that befell us:* We have already discussed in the Rashiyomi section that Rashi cites Gn36-10. Our point is to see this as an example of a *general* requirement in diplomacy to emphasize the common.
- (C) *The Egyptians mistreated us:* Rashi says "We suffered many tribulations" This was cited in the Rashiyomi explanation section. We explained that *despite* our suffering many tribulations Moses simply said *mistreated* to comply with diplomatic style requirements of not dwelling on personal problems in a diplomatic exchange.
- (D) *Mistreated our fathers:* Rashi says: From here we learn that the patriarchs suffer in the grave (their souls suffer) when Jews are mistreated. But the text actually refers to the actual sufferings of the fathers (Gn12). We regard this Rashi as a fanciful form similar to the *principal-pal* pun which helps you remember that *principal is a person by noting the last 3 letters are pal* which of course is silly but helps memory. So too, Rashi dresses up the passage in fancy form.