

Rashi #1: Biblical Text: Nu26-05 [Background: Rashi explains how the name of each grandson of Jacob, for example ZeRaCh, was made into a name of a tribe for example ZaRchiY]

Biblical Text Corresponding to Zerach is The Zarchy (HaZarchY) subtribe

Rashi text: (A) Because the nations would tease the Jews [as follows]. (B) What value is there in tracing family lineage (tribe and tribal family)? (C) Isn't it obvious that the Egyptians who owned the slaves had affairs with their mothers (So we have no way of knowing the true parent)? (D) For that reason [of teasing] God placed his name on each subtribe by prefixing each name with the letter Hey and suffixing each name with the letter Yud. [So e.g. ZRaCh (the name of the grandson of Jacob) became the H-ZRCh-Y = HZrchY tribe with a prefix Hey and suffix Yud]. (E) By doing this God testifies that they are Godly [YH spells the name of God and indicates that the families are Godly]. (F) The Psalmist when he says Ps 122:4, The Tribes of YH (God) are Testimony to the Jews because the name of God in the tribal names testifies to their Godliness (chastity). (G) As proof you find that in all of the subtribes there is prefix Hey and suffix Yud, H-ChnCh-Y, H-Plu-Y, except for the tribe corresponding to grandson YiMNaH whose name was not changed to HYiMNY since YiMNaH already had a YH in his name (and therefore did not need an additional one)

Rashiyomi explanation-Puns (Secular): This Rashi explains the biblical text using the literary vehicle of the pun. Some people do not think that puns can be *peshat*. So we show a simple example where everyone would agree that the sentence has two meanings, its ordinary meaning, and the pun; both meanings are the *peshatt*. Here by *peshat* we mean a *spontaneous and instant* reaction to a text. The example we give concerns a man named Abraham having a dinner date with a woman named Rose. During the meal Abe says, *Pass me the Roisens*. Our spontaneous response to this is that Abe didn't want just raisins, he in fact was making a pass at Rose whom he wanted to pass herself to Abe.

Rashiyomi explanation-Puns (Rashi): A Rashi identical to the Raisen-Roisen pun occurs at Esther 1:11. King Achashveirosh, who was drunk from 7 days until his heart was "good in wine", asked that "the Queen be brought in Royal Crown before the men's banquet to show her beauty because she was attractive." Rashi takes it as obvious that he wanted her to do a strip act (everything but her crown) to entertain the men. Again, this Rashi reflects an instant response to the text.

Rashiyomi exegetical pillar: Rashiyomi explains that there are 4 basic exegetical pillars by which Rashi explains verses: Dictionary meaning-grammar, parallelism, symbolism, and figures of speech. Figures of speech include all figures of speech including puns. Starting with Heller's seminal paper in the 70s of the last century, several scholars have seen puns as simply another grammatical tool by which authors communicate. This is true even among secular scholars. The technical name for a pun based on misspelling, for example Roisen, is called a metaplasmus.

Can you prove an author intended a pun? A crucial issue in puns is whether the author intended them or whether the reader read them into the text; that is, can we prove the author intended a pun. I answer this crucial question with a "yes" in my article *Biblical Puns*, BJQ, 2006. In fact I use this Rashi as an example. This is section G of Rashi. The proof is as follows: There are about 60 grandsons of Jacob mentioned and all but one of them does not have a Yud-Hey, (The name of God) in their spelling. The 59 names without a Yud-Hey get a Yud-Hey added to their name, so that for example, ZRCh becomes H-ZRCh-Y= H-ZRch-Y, while the one name that *already* has Yud-Hey in its name, YimnaH does not have his name changed. This proves that the YH was deliberately added. And as Rashi explains in D,E this creates a metaplasmus. Just as one when we call Raisins, Roisens, we are punning on Rose, so to when you call ZRCh, HZRcY we are punning on ZRaCh that he is Godly (YH).

What About the Rest of Rashi: The above is the heart of Rashi. The real core of Rashi. Everything else is a fanciful elaboration to uplift spirits of the Jews of his times who probably were raped and had children born out of wedlock. Rashi weaves a tale, that the non-Jews teased the Jews that they don't know who their real children are (Parts A,B,C). Did this happen? Perhaps? It is reasonable. We call it fill-in. It is not the heart of Rashi. Rashi indeed does twist the Psalmist verse out of its context and injects it unjustly with a literalism: Rashi translates *The Tribes of God are testimony to the Jews*, as *The Names of the Tribes of God are testimony to the Jews*. But our key point, is that beneath all the flowery talk, the moral uplifting, and the cute puns, there is a solid literary-grammatical reason that supports Rashi. To paraphrase the great Chess pedagogist, Aaron Nimzovitch, *Your mind on the four exegetical pillars and their grammatical basis, your eyes on uplifting spirits, this is the true and deepest meaning of explaining, reading, and understanding Rashi.*