

[Background: We devote this year's issues to defenses of Rashi from other commentators and bible scholars. Today we defend Rashi against Dr Sarah Qamin a Rashi scholar. In the text below, Adam & Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit and acquired knowledge. The text states:]

Rashi #1,2 Biblical Text: Gn03-22a, b

God, Lord, said: Behold, the humans have become like the Number One of Us [Rashi: God] since [after the sin] he knows both good and evil; and now: [we are concerned] lest he stretch forth his hand and also eat from the tree of life and live forever [Rashi: Since he lives eternally and knows good and evil, people could be misled to think of him as a god]

Rashi: (1,2) The Rashi comments are indicated through underlines and through the use of courier fonts. We have embedded them in the translation.

Explanation: The literal biblical text states, “The humans have become like one of them.” Rashi translates the underlined phrase similar to the English phrase *the number one*, that is, *unique*. To support this translation of Rashi we can provide the following examples

Example #1: [Isaac lied to King Avimelech, saying his wife was his sister. The King however caught them fooling around while viewing from his window. Angrily Avimelech tells Isaac] What is this that you have done to us: The number one of the nation [me, The King] almost slept with her (Gn26-09)

Example #2: [The Patriarch Jacob in blessing his children said] May Dan judge his nation like the number one of the Jewish tribes [That is the best tribe]

Example #3: [In the Song of Songs, the man speaks about his partner] There are 60 queens, 80 royal escorts, and unlimited maidens [But] My dove, my perfect one is the number one

Comments: The English translations have glossed over some subtleties in the translation of the Hebrew which we now mention. We have used “the” (“the one”) in all translations, but there is no “the” in Example #3 or #2. Example #1 uses a 3rd person “the number one of the nation” to refer to himself. This enables us to better understand Gn03-22 which has no “the” and uses a “3rd person” to refer to himself. Literally the text says, “Man has become like (the) number one of them” (use of 3rd person to refer to oneself which does occur in literature).

Dr. Sarah Qamin: All the above is straightforward. Yet Qamin in her doctoral thesis uses this Rashi to show that Rashi was not always interested in *Peshat*. Remarkably, after citing Examples #1 and #2, in the very same paragraph she denies that *one* can mean *the number one* or the *unique one*. I have no way of explaining this academic blindness; but it does occur (even in the physical sciences). Perhaps she was tied to dictionary meaning and could not see Scriptural Figures of Speech with their bounce and naturalness, which is what Rashi calls the *peshat*.