

## ParShaT *BoH* One Pager Series

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**[Background:** We continue to bring controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we bring one of the most famous contradictions between biblical books. You wouldn't believe how many papers have been written on this contradiction. The text deals with the Passover lamb that must be eaten on Passover]

**Rashi #1 Biblical Text: Ex12-09** Don't eat the Passover lamb half cooked or cooked in water (boiled); rather eat it roasted

**Biblical Text: Dt16-07** Cook it [Rashi: This means *roast* since *cooking* includes *roasting* ] and eat it in the place God chose;

**Biblical Text: 2Ch05-13** They cooked the Passover in fire according to law

**Academic Scholarship:** Academic scholars view the bible using the lens of contract law. In Ex12-09 it says *not* to eat the Passover *cooked in water*; but then in Dt16-07 it says to eat is *cooked*; the emphasis is that the same word, *cooked* is used. The academic scholars say that this means there is a contradiction!. They then review the 2Ch05-13 text and remarkably say, "The Chronicler attempted to reconcile the contradiction by creating a new term *cooked in fire*." As mentioned earlier there are several dozen academic papers on these 3 verses; all papers are alarmed at the contradiction.

**Generic Brands, Synecdoche, Natural Metaphor:** To explain the Rashi we have to separate ourselves from contract law; in contract law a word always has the same meaning. In ordinary language this is not so. Consider *generic brands*. Words like *google*, *taser*, *popsicle*, *xerox* originally referred to specific companies; but they were so widely used and accepted that they underwent semantic transformation. They came to refer to the general class; so *xerox* could refer to any copier; *google* could refer to any search engine. This is an example of *hypernymy*; it is also an example of natural metaphor, in this case, *synecdoche*. What we take

away from this is the opposite perspective of contract law; the same word (*xerox*, *google* ) can mean totally different things.

**The Rashi Explained:** Suddenly we have no problem, no contradiction. The word *cook* (*bishul* ) in Hebrew is both a specific term, a hyponym, meaning to cook in water (to boil) and also a general term, a hypernym referring to any means of food preparation. This is similar to *google* which refers to a specific company and to the general idea of a search engine; it is similar to *xerox* which refers both to the specific photocopier and to the general photocopier.

So we have the following meanings

\*In Ex12-09 it means to *specifically boil* (cook in water)

\*In 2Ch05-13 it means to *specifically roast* (cook in fire)

\*In Dt16-07 it means *generally cook* which in this case means *roast* since the Passover must be roasted

There is no contradiction; there is rather a use of a single word with multiple meanings reflecting the natural evolution of language.

**An analogy:** The following analogy may be helpful. *Please xerox(a) 5 copies of this letter; but do not use the xerox(b) machine in room #1 since it is constantly in need of repair. Did you create the 5 copies. "I created them using the xerox(c) in room #2"*

In this analogy, *xerox* occurs 3 times: In usage (a) it refers to the general meaning of copying; in usage (b) it refers to a specific machine in room #1; in usage (c) it refers to a specific machine in room #2. These three meanings do not create contradictions. They rather reflect the nature plasticity of language.