

## ParShaT *SheMiNi* One Pager Series

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**[Background:** We have been bringing controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we examine a Rashi-Ramban interaction in which they help each other but do not really disagree]

### **Rashi #1a Biblical Text: Lv11-29:38**

A) [VERMIN] There are the ritually impure to you from the vermin...the rat, mouse, ...lizard, snail....

B) [TOUCH] WHOEVER TOUCHES them when dead will be ritually impure [or] if [part] of them falls whether on UTENSILS OF WOOD, GARMENTS, SKIN,...shall be ritually impure

C) [INSIDES] For a CLAY VESSEL: Whatever falls\* INTO ITS MIDST...shall be impure

C1) \* Onto ANY FOOD WHICH HAS BEEN MOISTENED...

D1) [ATTACHED] If their carcasses fall...into ovens...it will be impure

D2) But a WATER SPRING is PURE

D3) Unless you are TOUCHING A VERMIN CARCASS

E1) [MOISTENED SEEDS] Vermin carcasses falling on seeds leave the seeds pure

E2) But if the SEEDS have been moistened, and their carcasses fall, it is ritually impure

**Summary:** We have paragraphed the above text into five parts A,B,C,D,E. We can summarize as follows

\* The chapter speaks about ritual impurity of VERMIN (A)

\* VERMIN transmit impurity through TOUCH and INSIDE (BC)

\* Impurity is transmitted to PEOPLE (whoever...), UTENSILS (B), and MOISTENED edibles (C)

\* SPRING WATER cannot become ritually impure UNLESS you are directly touching the vermin carcass. But utensils attached to the ground like OVENS do become impure (D)

\* SEEDS can become impure only if they are moist (E).

**Inside:** We clarify the transmission through INSIDE: If a dead mouse enters the air-space of an oven in which something is being cooked, then it is INSIDE the oven. Even if the mouse doesn't touch the oven and even if the mouse doesn't touch the food, nevertheless the food becomes IMPURE because it and the mouse are both INSIDE the oven. We therefore say that *INSIDE transmits impurity* like TOUCH.

**Pragmatics:** Before presenting the Rashi and Ramban we explain why we paragraphed the biblical text. Many Rashi comments are on the meaning of words and on grammatical conjugation. Grammatical conjugation means how you say in Hebrew *I ate, I fed (caused someone else to eat), I was eaten (by an animal), or I will eat, I did eat, I am eating*. However, pragmatics, a new branch of grammar, teaches that grammar can also deal not just with the word but with the phrase and paragraph as a whole. There are rules for reading paragraphs. The above paragraphing of the biblical narrative into A,B,C,D,E shows paragraph organization. Rashi and Ramban are commenting on the paragraph organization.

**Rashi:** Rashi explains the two sentences in E: (Carcasses on seeds leave them pure; but prior moistening of the seeds, renders them impure to a carcass). Rashi explains "Seeds only become impure if there is prior moistening"

**Ramban:** Ramban does not disagree with Rashi. Ramban focuses on the fact that moistening is mentioned in both C) and E). Ramban offers two explanations: #1) C) mentions requirements of moistening in the case of the INSIDE of a clay vessel while E) mentions requirements of moistening generally. #2) C) mentions requirements of moistening for FOOD while E) mentions requirements of moistening for SEEDS.

**Complementing each other:** Rashi and Ramban deal with paragraph structure. Rashi explains the internal dynamics of paragraph E. Ramban then explains the need for both Paragraphs C and E. Rashi and Ramban complement, not argue.