

ParShaT *Emor* 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-Ibn Ezra comment. Malbim shows Rashi correct]

Rashi #1a Biblical Text: Lv21-02 ...tell the priests: "They should not defile themselves to anyone except to his i) significant other...ii) *to this father*, iii) *to his mother*, iv) *to his son*, v) *to his daughter*, vi) *to his brothers*, and vii) *to his virgin sister who was never married*,

Rashi: Significant other refers to his wife.

Ibn Ezra: Significant other means the general category of *relatives*. In other words the verse should read *except to his relatives*: i) *to this father*, ii) *to his mother*, iii) *to his son*, iv) *to his daughter*, v) *to his brothers*, and vi) *to his virgin sister who was never married*.

Modern Scholarship #1: Modern scholarship tends to side with Ibn Ezra. A typical comment might be:

*Rashi follows the Talmudic school who believed in *omnisignificance*, that each and every word of the Bible must have a meaning, and therefore the Talmud and Rashi invent a meaning which is read into every word.

* Contrastively, Ibn Ezra, was a member of the new *peshat* school in Northern France which preferred non-forced grammatical readings of the text. Here, Ibn Ezra takes a simple approach of *category* (relatives) - *examples* (father, mother...) which is preferred.

Modern Scholarship #2: The last 20-30 years has seen new movements in modern scholarship particularly in linguistics, pragmatics, and the *close reading of the text* movement. A typical linguistic study might find different meanings in a word based on the words connected to it. Illustrative is the English *father*:

* *grand-father* refers to the *father's farther*

* *father-in-law* refers to the *wife's farther*

* *father* refers to one's actual *father*.

Maybe you and I take this for granted but that is because we are literate English speakers. If we didn't speak English we would look at a study like this as being picky and seeking nuance in every word or phrase

The Malbim: The Malbim, one of our great pre-modern exegetes, was 150 years ahead of his time. He was writing commentaries which look like modern linguistic papers. Let us look at the beautiful analysis he provides for the root **Shin-Aleph-Resh**. This root means *left over*. In analogy with English we have translated it as *the other part*. There is in fact an English idiom, *the significant other* which in English refers to a spouse. This is the best English analogy I could find. Let us apply it to the five meanings of **Shin-Aleph-Resh**

- 1) *One's significant other* refers to one's *food* since it is the *other part* of you which is about to become you (Cf. Ex21:10, Ps. 71:80, *the husband will not diminish her [his wives' food (sha'arah) clothing, and marital frequency; God rained on the Jewish people food (food) from heaven*)
- 2) *One's significant other* can also refer to one's *flesh* (Ps 73:26, *My flesh and heart yearn for the Rock of My Heart: God forever*)
- 3) e.g. The *significant other of his father* refers to *relatives* through the father (such as a sister through the father). Here the Hebrew word *she'er* is coupled with the Hebrew word *avichah*.
- 4) The *significant other of his flesh* refers generally to his *relatives* (Lv.25:49 *his uncle, or nephew or from amongst the significant others of his flesh from his family will redeem him*)
- 5) The *significant other* without any further qualification, by itself, refers to one's *wife*.

Tabular Summary: The following table summarizes in a clearer manner.

Meaning ID	Phrase	Meaning	Sample Verse
1	significant other of oneself	one's food	Ex21-10, Ps71-80
2	significant other of oneself	one's flesh	Ps73-26
3	significant other of a father	paternal relative	Lv18-12
4	significant other of one's flesh	general relative	Lv25-49
5	significant other	one's wife	Lv23-02

Meaning of *she'er* (lit. *leftover*) which we translate as *significant other*

Conclusion: This one pager showed how a linguistic analysis, listing word occurrences and their meanings, was able to successfully resolve a controversy between Rashi and Ibn Ezra.