

ParShaT *Ki ThaVoH* One Pager Series

<https://www.Rashiyomi.com/rule3722.pdf> Adapted from The Rashi Newsletter,

(c) Rashiyomi.com September 2022, Dr. Hendel, President,

Full statement of copyright is found at www.Rashiyomi.com/copyrights.htm

[Background: We continue to bring controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we bring a simply explained Rashi which has stumped both religious and secular scholars..]

Rashi #1 Biblical Text: Dt26-05b [The following verse describes the thanksgiving prayer that the person who brings first fruits to the Temple recites responsively with the attending Priest] *You will respond and say before God your Lord: “A wandering Aramean was my father; [so] he went down to Egypt and lived there with only a small number of people; but he became there a great, powerful, influential nation.”*

Rashi Text (Selection): A wandering [Aleph Beth Daleth] Aramean was my father: [Read it] Lavan [the Aramean] tried to destroy [Aleph-Beth-Daleth] my father [Jacob].

The Problem: Rashi ignored the simple straightforward meaning of the text and twisted it out of its meaning by playing games with the root Aleph-Beth-Daleth. Rashi of course was following some very old traditions found in the Talmud and Sifray. How can this be justified?

Possible Solutions: The Jewish commentaries come up with the most ingenious solutions. i) Perhaps it is a case of a read and written text (But there is no read and written text here). ii) Perhaps it is a strange conjugation which we find in other languages (But there is nothing strange about the conjugation). iii) Academic scholars also have no way of justifying this. One scholar said the Midrash arose while the Jews were under various rules (Greeks in the time of the Maccabean, or when under Egyptian rule (3rd century BCE) and the Syrians were regarded as enemies. The Midrash uses the term Aramean to focus on its current enemies without getting caught. But other scholars have rejected this for a variety of reasons.

The Simple Rashiyomi Solution: Basic to the Rashiyomi approach is that sentences can have multiple *peshats*, multiple spontaneous, instant meanings. In my book the following is a punchy example

The stupid mayor finally allowed the building permit.

What is the *peshat*, the straightforward meaning(s) of this sentence? Clearly the sentence has two *peshats*:

The building permit was obtained

The Mayor is stupid

That is what we spontaneously hear. The person making the statement cannot say that the stupidity of the Mayor is a homily read into the text. It is the *peshat* of the text. We can hold this person responsible. For example we can ask the person for an apology.

The “A” Word: In this verse Jacob is called an *Aramaean*. Jacob is a patriarch. Aram was a place of people like Laban who were crooked. The term *Aramaean* is pejorative. It is no different than calling Jacob a *shegetz* a modern pejorative term. It is also no different than calling the Mayor *stupid*.

The Two Peshats: So when the sentence

A wandering Aramaean was my father

using the “A” word to insult Jacob is stated, there are two *peshats*

Jacob wandered a lot (couldn't stay in one place)

In Aram, Laban tried to Aramaize him – he married him to several local woman; double crossed him continuously in his job; and when he tried to escape pursued him to finish the job [Rashi mentions this] Finishing the job doesn't mean killing him; it rather means assimilating him. Jacob was placed in an environment where he had to behave like Laban to survive (becoming an Aramaean)

Relevance to the Thanksgiving Prayer of the First Fruits: The two *peshats* make enormous sense in the context of the Thanksgiving Prayer of the First Fruits. The bringer of Fruits in effect says

Even the Patriarch Jacob was affected by the evil habits of Laban. We therefore thank God that we live in our own land where we are free of hostile influences and can develop spiritually as we wish.