

## ParShaT *NiTzaViM* 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 a simply explained Rashi using the concept of puns and double meanings.]

**Rashi #1 Biblical Text: Dt30-03a**[The following verse the consequences of the Jews, while in exile, repenting and returning to God] *God will return you, and have pity on you.*

**Rashi Text (Selection):** The Hebrew word used, Shin-Beth, means *He [God] will return. However, the Hebrew word for returning others uses the causative tense Hey-Shin-Yud-Beth. As it were, just as the Jews were in exile, so too God was in exile with the Jews. When they return, as it were, He returns with them. [Rashi then cites further explanation: We can say further [without saying God was in exile] The day of redemption is so difficult that God has to hand hold the Jews and return them one by one as the verse says: Is 27:12, You will be gathered, one, one, Jewish People. Rashi further shows that this idea applies to non-Jewish nations. We find by the return of the Egyptians from the Egyptian exile that the verse says (Ez. 29:14) I will return the exile of Egypt. [Again with the personal return vs the causative return]*

**The Problem:** Rashi as stated is ungrammatical. He basically asserts that the single sentence is making two comments

\* God will return Shin-Beth

\* God will return you Hey-Shin-Yud-Beth

**The Solution Method, Puns:** There are many authorities who believe that a verse can only have one natural meaning. In my book on Rashi on my website I give the following counter-example:

*The stupid Mayer finally allowed the building permit*

This sentence clearly has two meanings each of which is spontaneous, instant, and natural to any literate speaker.

*The Mayer is stupid*  
*The Mayer allowed the building permit*

Of course, in this sentence, the two meanings are natural and grammatical. Also, in my book, is the following example, a comment, Abe makes to his date Rose, at a dinner.

*Please, pass me the Roisens*

Here again, we naturally and spontaneously hear two separate sentences

*Pass me the raisins*  
*Pass me yourself, Rose*

As these two examples show, sentences with multiple meanings are quite common. They occur in all languages.

**Application to our verse:** There is no longer any problem. The verse because of the incorrect (non causative) conjugation has two separate meanings

*God will return*  
*God will return your exiles*

Rashi, explains this in two ways, in accordance with *fillin* principle of Rashi which states that after exposing a core *peshat*, Rashi might *fill in* the details in several ways, none of which he commits to. One approach is to say that God Himself was in exile and hence he has to return; the other approach is that God comes to take each person by the hand and bring him/her back.

Rashi also shows that use of this pun is standard and applies to other situations of exile.

The secular literature refers to a pun based on a mis-spelling as a metaplasma. It is one way (deliberate misspelling) that an Author can indicate *intent to pun*.