

## KNOW YOUR COMMENTATORS. RASHBAM VS. RASHI

### Rashi's Methodology

#### Genesis 3, 8

וישמעו. יש מדרשי אגדה רבים וכבר סדרום רבותינו על מִכּוֹנֵם בְּבִרַי וּבְשָׂאָר מִדְּרָשׁוֹת; וְאֵינִי לֹא בְּאֵתִי אֶלָּא לְפָשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא וּלְאֵגְדָה הַמִּישָׁבֶת דְּבַרִי הַמִּקְרָא דְּבַר דְּבוּר עַל אֶפְנֵי: וישמעו. מה שמעו? שמעו? אֶת קוֹל הַקֶּב"ה שֶׁהִיא מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּגַן:

I AND THEY HEARD — There are many Midrashic explanations and our Teachers have already collected them in their appropriate places in Genesis Rabbah and in other Midrashim. I, however, am only concerned with the plain sense of Scripture and with such Agadoth that explain the words of Scripture in a manner that fits in with them. וישמעו AND THEY HEARD — What did they hear? They heard the sound of the Holy One, blessed be He, as He walked in the garden (see Genesis Rabbah 19:12).

#### Intro to Shir Hashirim

אחת דיבר אלהים, שתיים זו שמעתי (תהלים סב יב). מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים, וסוף דבר אין לך מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו ומשמעו. ואף על פי שדיברו הנביאים דבריהם בדוגמא, צריך ליישב הדוגמא על אופניה ועל סדרה, כמו שהמקראות סדורים זה אחר זה.

“God has spoken once, twice I have heard this” (Psalms 62:12). From one verse, emerge several explanations. [However] in conclusion, a verse does not depart from its literal sense and meaning. Although the Prophets have employed metaphors, let each metaphor be explained simply, each statement fitting its context.

#### Rashbam's Intro to Parashat Vayeshev יעקב תולדות

” Also Rabbi Shlomoh, my mother's father of blessed memory (Rashi) the brilliant exegete, who wrote commentaries on the entire Bible, was careful not to ignore the plain meaning of the text. I, Shmuel, son of Rabbi Meir, Rashi's son-in-law, have argued with him, and he admitted to me that if he had the opportunity, he would compose an additional commentary in which he would concentrate on the plain meaning as it became clearer to him with each passing day. [I believe that the wording here means that Rashi meant that just as his published commentaries consisted mostly of anthologies, i.e. his quoting existing interpretations, so he would search out more commentaries based on the plain meaning to present to the reader when publishing another commentary. Ed.] I am now presenting to the reader what earlier exegetes had to say on our verse.

אלה תולדות יעקב - וגם רבינו שלמה אבי אמי מאיר עיני גולה שפירש תורה נביאים וכתובים, נתן לב פירש פשוטו של מקרא. ואף אני שמואל ב"ר מאיר חתנו צ"ל נתווכחתי עמו ולפניו והודה לי שאילו היה לו פנאי, היה צריך לעשות פירושים אחרים לפי הפשטות המתחדשים בכל יום. ועתה יראו המשכילים מה שפירשו הראשונים.

**Rashi v. Rashbam, 22, 1**

Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test, saying to him, “Abraham.” He answered, “Here I am.”

יְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:

Rashi: אחר הדברים האלה. יֵשׁ מְרֻבּוֹתֵינוּ אוֹמְרִים (סנהדרין פ"ט) אַחֲרֵי דְבָרָיו שֶׁל שָׂטָן, שֶׁהִיא מְקַטְרֵג וְאוֹמֵר מְכַל סְעוּדָה שֶׁעָשָׂה אַבְרָהָם לֹא הִקְרִיב לְפָנָיךְ פֶּר אֶחָד אוֹ אֵיל אֶחָד; אָמַר לוֹ כְּלוּם עָשָׂה אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבִיל בְּנוֹ, אֵלֶּי הֵיטִי אוֹמֵר לוֹ זָבַח אוֹתוֹ לְפָנָי לֹא הָיָה מְעַכְבֵּ; וַיֹּא אַחֲרֵי דְבָרָיו שֶׁל יִשְׁמַעְאֵל

AFTER THESE THINGS [or, WORDS] —Some of our Rabbis say (Sanhedrin 89b) that it means after the words of Satan who denounced Abraham saying, “Of all the banquets which Abraham prepared not a single bullock nor a single ram did he bring as a sacrifice to You’. God replied to him, “Does he do anything at all except for his son’s sake? Yet if I were to bid him, “Sacrifice him to Me”, he would not refuse”. Others say that it means “after the words of Ishmael” who boasted to Isaac that he had been circumcised when he was thirteen years old without resisting.

**Rashbam:** Here too, the words mean that what follows occurred after Avraham and Avimelech had concluded their covenant according to which until the fourth generation Avraham’s descendants would not register a claim against lands owned by the Philistines at this time. G’d became very angry at this high-handed action by Avraham, seeing that he had given away lands which were part of what G’d had promised to Avraham and his descendants at the “covenant of the pieces” in chapter 15. We know that a condition of that covenant had been not to allow a single soul of the Canaanites to survive in that land, according to both Deuteronomy 20,16 as well as according to Joshua 13,3 and 15,45-47. Clearly lots had been cast concerning the lands owned by the 5 Philistine rulers, and who was to settle in those lands after the conquest. As a result of Avraham’s high-handed action...

**Does Rashi always follow the simple reading?****Ex. 2, 23**

A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God.

*What is bothering Rashi?*

וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם — he became stricken with leprosy (and therefore may be spoken of as dead; cf. Numbers 12:12), and he used to slaughter Israelitish children and bathe in their blood as a cure for his disease (cf. Targum Jonathan and Exodus Rabbah 1:34).

**Ex 2, 23**

וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם. נֶצְטָרַע וְהָיָה שׁוֹחֵט תִּינוּקוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְרוֹחֵץ בְּדָמָם (שמות רבה א')

**Genesis 1, 1**

בראשית ברא אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דרשני, כמו שדרשוהו רבותינו בשביל התורה שנקראת ראשית דרכו (משלי ח'), ובשביל ישראל שנקראו ראשית תבואתו (ירמיה ב'); ואם באת לפרשו כפשוטו, כך פרשהו בראשית בריאת שמים וארץ, והארץ הייתה תהו ובהו וחשך ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ולא בא המקרא להורות סדר הבריאה לומר שאילו קדמו, שאם בא להורות כך, היה לו לכתב בראשונה ברא את השמים וגו' שאין לה ראשית במקרא שאינו דבוק לתבה שלאחריו,

בראשית ברא IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED — This verse calls aloud for explanation in the manner that our Rabbis explained it: God created the world for the sake of the Torah which is called (Proverbs 8:22) “The beginning (ראשית) of His (God’s) way”, and for the sake of Israel who are called (Jeremiah 2:3) “The beginning (ראשית) of His (God’s) increase”. If, however, you wish to explain it in its plain sense, explain it thus: At the beginning of the Creation of heaven and earth when the earth was without form and void and there was darkness, God said, “Let there be light”. The text does not intend to point out the order of the acts of Creation — to state that these (heaven and earth) were created first; for if it intended to point this out, it should have written 'וגו' השמים ברא את השמים בראשונה “At first God created etc.” And for this reason: Because, wherever the word ראשית occurs in Scripture, it is in the construct state. E. g., (Jeremiah 26:1) “In the beginning of...

### Ex. 2, 6

When she opened it, she saw him, the a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said, “This must be a Hebrew child.”

ותפתח ותראהו את הילד והנה נער בכה ותחמל עליו ותאמר מילדי העברים זה:

*What is bothering Rashi?*

תפתח ותראהו. את מי ראתה? את הילד, זהו פשוטו. ומדרשו (שם), שראתה עמו שכינה:

ותפתח ותראהו lit., AND SHE OPENED IT AND SHE SAW HIM — whom did she see? את הילד THE CHILD. This is the literal sense of the suffix in ותראהו. A Midrashic explanation is (taking את in the sense of “with” — she saw Him with the child): she saw the Shechina with him (cf. Sotah 12b).

### What is pshat? What is drash?

1. Inject the supernatural. see as many miracles as possible.
2. Use alternate, secondary meanings of a word.
3. Fill in the gaps
4. Learn lessons from "extra" words

a. "and Jacob feared greatly and he was troubled" (Gen. 32,8)

ויירא ויצר. ויירא שמה ירג, ויצר לו אם ירג הוא את אחרים (בראשית רבה ותנחומא)

Why did he fear? Midrash- He feared that he would be killed (by Essau). He was troubled that maybe he would kill others.

### **Rashi sometimes gives you both pshat and drash. Why?**

את אמתה means her handmaid. Our Rabbis, however, explained it in the sense of hand (cf. Sotah 12b) — but according to the grammar of the Holy Language it should then have been written אַמְתָּה, dageshed in the מ. — And the reason why they explained את אמתה to mean ידה “she stretched forth her hand” is because they hold that Scripture intentionally uses this term to indicate that her hand increased in length several cubits (אמה, a cubit) in order that she might more easily reach the cradle.

את אמתה. אֶת שְׁפָחָתָהּ. וְרַבּוֹתֵינוּ דְרָשׁוּ (סוֹטָה שׁם), לְשׁוֹן יָד, אֲבָל לְפִי דְקַדְדוּק לְשׁוֹן הַקֶּדֶשׁ הִיא לֹא לְהַנְקִיד אֶמְתָּה, דְּגוּשָׁה, וְהֵם דְרָשׁוּ אֶת אֶמְתָּה – אֶת יָדָהּ, וְנִשְׁתַּרְבְּבָה אֶמְתָּה אֲמוֹת הַרְבֵּה:

### **Is Rashi a commentator or a baal mussar, a teacher, an educator?**

#### **Lev. 5, 17**

And a person who, without knowing it, sins in regard to any of Hashem’s commandments about things not to be done, and then realizes guilt: Such a person shall be subject to punishment.

אִם-נִפְשֵׁל כִּי תִחַטָּא וְעָשָׂתָה אַחַת מִכָּל-מִצְוֹת יְיָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וְלֹא-יָדַע וְאִשָּׁם וְנִשָּׂא עֹוֹנוֹ:

AND HE DOES NOT DISCOVER THAT HE IS GUILTY, AND BEARETH HIS INIQUITY — R. José the Galilean said, “See, Scripture (God) punishes him who has no sure knowledge that he has sinned (in as much as it requires him to bring a guilt-offering); how much the more does it follow that He will punish him who does know that he is sinning and yet willfully does it.

*Was there an issue in the text?*

#### **What makes Rashi Tick?**

Was he influenced by the simple interpreters of the bible in the secular world at that time?

Was he trying to argue against Christians in the simplest way?

Was he trying to do peshat and/or whatever he couldn’t resist saying?

Why he trying to encourage the discouraged Jews?

Is he only trying to do peshat?

Prof Touito: He is trying to bring the spirit of the sages in a rational way to those swayed by the renaissance of the 12<sup>th</sup> cent.

