

# RASHI'S EXEGETICAL CATEGORIZATION WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PESHAT AND DERASH ;

ACCORDING TO HIS COMMENTARY TO THE BOOK OF GENESIS AND SELECTED PASSAGES FROM HIS COMMENTARIES TO OTHER BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

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## INTRODUCTION

The intention of this study is to examine whether Rashi (R. Solomon Yitzhak, Troyes, northern France, 1040-1105) deliberately and clearly distinguishes between *peshat* and *derash* as two different exegetical methods. Rashi himself does not use the terms *peshat* and *derash*, but "פשוטו של מקרא", and some nouns and verbs which derive from the root דרש. He never defines the meaning of these terms, not even in his few comments on his method of interpretation. Therefore, our starting point in examining this question is necessarily external to Rashi. It is based on *our* definition of the terms *peshat* and *derash*. Our question is, therefore, whether such a distinction between the two categories, as defined in this study is expressed in Rashi's terms, in his methodological statements or in his interpretations.

*Peshat* according to our definition is an explanation in accordance with the text's vocabulary, syntax, context, literary form and structure in their mutual relationships. Thus, an explanation according to the method of *peshat* takes into consideration all the linguistic elements, the way

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they are combined and interact, while giving each element a meaning within the complete structure. The evaluation of the explanation as right or wrong is not included in this definition.

The definition of the term *derash* is based on Heinemann's detailed description of its elements. According to Heinemann,<sup>1</sup> the belief in the divine origin of the Torah gave rise to the view that the language of the Torah is different from human language, and therefore requires special forms of interpretation. Heinemann points out three principles underlying the *derash* method: (a) A minute interpretation of all the details in Holy Scripture. (b) The intention of each detail is but to impart instruction. (c) All the elements of any utterance (the letters, the words, the verses and the sections) can be interpreted not only as parts of their contexts, but also as independent elements, which can join other elements and produce an unlimited number of combinations. In Heinemann's view the third principle is the most important one for the definition of *derash*. It is indeed, respective of this point, the independence of the elements of the utterance, that the *peshat* and the *derash* totally differ from each other.

Rashi's awareness as a commentator will be examined according to these definitions, and an attempt will be made to find out whether the distinction between *peshat* and *derash* finds expression in his explanations and terminology, and especially if the term "פשוטו" and the root "דר"ש, as used by Rashi, correspond with what we designate as *peshat* and *derash*.

No special or comprehensive study has been devoted to the problem of Rashi's conception of *peshat* and *derash*. The problem has been dealt with in the framework of general studies relating to Rashi. It was generally assumed that Rashi's term "פשוטו של מקרא" and the root "דר"ש have the same meaning as the terms *peshat* and *derash*. Since Rashi does not define what he means by the term "פשוטו" and the root "דר"ש, naturally the scholar's own conception of the terms was projected on Rashi. Moreover, scholars did not always explain their own usage of the terms *peshat* and *derash*, and quite often these terms were used by the same scholar with different shades of meaning. Therefore it is necessary to clarify the term "פשוטו של מקרא" and the root "דר"ש as used by Rashi—and in view of the conclusions reached, discuss the meaning of his methodological statements.

Rashi's spiritual background is rooted in the world of the Sages, the Talmud and the Midrash; his terminology is drawn from their vocabulary.

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1. J. Heinemann, *Darkhei ha-Aggadah*<sup>3</sup> (Hebrew), Jerusalem 1970, pp. 96-136.

Thus, we must first examine the distinction between *peshat* and *derash* in the literature of the Sages, in order to gain a better understanding of Rashi's approach, and a better appreciation of his uniqueness.

## "פשטיה דקרא" AND "פשוטו של מקרא" IN THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

Are the terms "פשטיה דקרא", and "פשוטו של מקרא" in the Babylonian Talmud identical with what we designate as *peshat*, and is a distinction between *peshat* and *derash* reflected in the interpretations themselves, and in other terms?

In most studies it is assumed that the terms which derive from the root פש"ט indicate literal meaning, i.e. the *peshat* method of interpretation, and consequently that they prove the distinction between *peshat* and *derash*. R. Loewe,<sup>2</sup> in a study published in 1964, rightly objected to this view; the terminology based on the root פש"ט does not indicate the *peshat* method of interpretation. The same appears on examination to be true of other terms (ממש, ודאי, משמע, דברים ככתבם), which are usually taken as indicators of the *peshat* method. Even the Sages' criticism of explanations not conforming to the method of *peshat*, does not indicate discrimination between *peshat* and *derash*.

### The Root פש"ט

The meaning of the root פש"ט in the Babylonian Talmud should be deduced from the semantic and contextual aspects.

As far as the semantic aspect is concerned, the meaning of the root פש"ט as "interpret" is derived from the meaning "to spread" or "to straighten." Hence, it was deduced by some scholars that *peshat* means either straightforward interpretation, in contrast with *derash*, or a well-known (wide-spread) interpretation, which is consequently authoritative. These views cannot possibly be accepted, because on the one hand there is no interpretation which does not, in a way, straighten the problems, but from this nothing can be learned about the way the problems are solved: and on the other hand, the meaning of authoritative interpretation does not explain how the main meaning—"to comment" was derived.

As regards the contextual aspect, no specific method of interpretation can be deduced from the explanations in which the verb פש"ט appears.

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2. R. Loewe, "The 'Plain' Meaning of the Scriptures in Early Jewish Exegesis", *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies I* (1964), pp. 140-86.

From our point of view, they may belong to the *peshat* category as well as to the *derash* category; and it seems that the meaning of "לפשוט", like the meaning of "לדרוש", is general. An examination of the nouns results in a less clear picture, but still it leads to the conclusion that they do not indicate interpretation according to the *peshat* method.

The Talmudic expressions, in which the nouns "פשטיה" and "פשוטו" appear are: "פשטיה דקרא במאי כתיב" (BT Keth., 111b, Kidd. 80b, Erub. 23b, Hull. 6a, 133b, Arakh. 8b); "אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו" (Sabb. 63a, Yeb. 11b, 24a; in Aramaic: Keth. 38b, Yeb. 24a); "סבר כפשטיה" (Zeb. 103a, Arakh. 32a), "אי מדרשא . . . אי מפשטיה" (Sanh. 100b).

In the context of "אין מקרא יוצא וגו'", "פשוטו" indicates the literal, immediate and elementary meaning, but the other expressions occur in various kinds of explanations, most of which are not literal, so that the term *peshat* is hardly suitable for them. Two basic views emerged from this finding in scholarly literature: (a) The Sages' concept of *peshat* is different from that of present day scholars. This view is based on the assumption that the terms above indicate *peshat* as a method of interpretation. (b) The terminology derived from פש"ט does not indicate the *peshat* method of interpretation. Some scholars assume that the Hebrew term (פשוטו) means literal interpretation, whereas the Aramaic (פשטיה) means a well-known and widespread interpretation. Others are of the opinion that the two terms are identical and denote a well-known and authoritative interpretation.

The first view is based on identity of meaning between *peshat* and the terms discussed above. However it seems unjustified to assume such an identity, since it has no support from the interpretations themselves. We can neither accept the distinction between the Hebrew and the Aramaic concerning the meaning of the terms, since they both occur in the same expression (Yeb. 24a); nor can we accept the view of *peshat* as an authoritative explanation, since no proof that the explanations were accepted as authoritative has been adduced.

Our view is that the terms do not indicate a method of interpretation, we suggest the same meaning for both terms, which is "the text itself," similar to the terms "מקרא", "כתב". Our main support comes from the context in which the question "פשטיה דקרא במאי כתיב" is found. This question is repeated in six places, which are dissimilar with respect to the method of interpretation, but which do possess a common structure: first, the verse is given, because it is required for the Talmudic discussion. Subsequently, the question "פשטיה דקרא במאי כתיב" is presented, and

finally the verse itself is interpreted. Therefore we can assume that the question means: "what is the sense of the verse itself?" This meaning also fits the other expressions where the terms are to be found. It is true that the term "פשוט" as part of the rule "אין מקרא יוצא מדי פשוט" refers, unlike "פשטיה", not to the text itself but to its immediate, literal meaning. Yet this difference is due to the different contexts of the Hebrew and Aramaic terms; it does not reflect a fundamental difference in meaning.

The term "פשוט" is found only within the framework of the rule "אין מקרא יוצא מדי פשוט" which is interpreted by us: the text itself cannot be "eliminated", "uprooted". Such an elimination necessarily amounts to ignoring the literal meaning, and therefore in the context of this rule, the term "פשוט" has the nuance of literal meaning. The meaning of "כפשטיה" as referring to the literal meaning may also be explained by an analogy with the expression "ככתבו" and "כמשמעו". "כתב" and "משמע" indicate the written or the oral linguistic unit, yet the expressions "ככתבו" and "כמשמעו" indicate the meaning of the unit as it is written or heard, i.e., its literal meaning.

We cannot know with certainty how this semantic development has taken place. We are of the opinion that *peshat* and "פשוט" have nothing to do with פשט in the sense of בא"ר (interpret), but with פ"ט (spread), as if the text lies open or is spread in front of the reader. This view can be supported by using פשט to indicate that a book is lying open to be read [PT Sabb. 16: 6; see also Eliezer Ben Yehuda, *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew*, Tel-Aviv: 1949-59, Vol. XI, p. 5270 (re. *peshat*) on PT Sabb. 16: 1].

Whereas the above explanation is only hypothetical, we are almost certain—and it is actually the core of our argument—that the terms deriving from the root פשט do not reflect a conscious conception of *peshat* as a clearly distinguished interpretative category.

The terms "דברים ככתבם", "משמע", "מש", "ודא", which are usually understood as indicators of literal interpretation also do not reflect a distinctive category. It is true that these terms indicate a literal meaning, and thus reflect a distinction between a literal and a non-literal meaning; but literal meaning is not identical with the interpretative category of *peshat*. *Peshat* is not the strict literal interpretation of any one component of an expression, but an interpretation which takes into account all the linguistic elements and gives each of them a meaning within the whole. Wherever the whole does not point to a literal meaning, e.g., in cases of idiomatic or metaphoric usage, an explanation according to

"דברים ככתבם", "משמע", "מש", "ודאי", would be contrary to a *peshat* interpretation. Moreover, the literal interpretation is a very prominent means in the *derash* method, which is based on the exact interpretation of one element, often without considering or even in contradiction with other elements and the complete framework. Thus the four terms mentioned function in both categories of interpretation, *peshat* and *derash*.

Further proof that the Sages distinguished between *peshat* and *derash*, and valued the *peshat* method more than the other, is adduced by scholars from the Sages' criticisms of interpretations which are not according to the *peshat* method. In our view, these criticisms do not prove such a distinction, because the interpretations mentioned are neither invalidated for being of the *derash* method, nor replaced by a *peshat* interpretation. (See Sifre D., chap. 1; Midr. Till. 12:5; Sifre N. 75; Safra 6a; BT Yoma 76a; Sanh. 67b; Sanh. 38b; Midr. Till. 104:9).

#### THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS "פשוטו של מקרא" AND "מדרשו" IN RASHI'S VOCABULARY

The differences between Rashi's usage of the root פש"ט, and the usage in the Talmud and the other sources of the Sages' works are: (a) Rashi uses only "פשוטו", and only in its Hebrew form. (b) "פשוטו" occurs in the Talmud only three times, always as part of the rule "אין מקרא יוצא מידו", "פשוטו" whereas in Rashi's commentary on the book of Genesis alone "פשוטו" is to be found more than forty times, though only twice as part of the rule (15:10; 37:17; also in Ex. 12:2, and in Rashi's introduction to the Song of Songs), and the remainder as part of various other expressions. (c) Whereas in the Talmud the terms *peshat* and "פשוט" do not necessarily appear within the context of a literal interpretation, in Rashi "פשוטו" appears only in linguistic-contextual interpretations, which are *peshat* from our point of view. (d) Only once in the Talmud, in the words of Abbaye (a Babylonian *amora* who lived from 278-338 C.E., and served as head of the Talmudic academy at Pumbedita), a term derived from the root פש"ט is opposed to a term derived from the root דר"ש, indicating the contrast between the literal and non-literal meanings. In Rashi, in most cases, when an explanation accompanied by the term "פשוטו" is contrasted with an explanation which is not "פשוטו", the term used in the latter is derived from the root דר"ש.

Apparently these differences can justify the following conclusions: (a) The wide distribution of the term "פשוטו" in Rashi (b, above) proves its importance in his thinking. (b) The appearance of the term "פשוטו" along with the root דר"ש (d, above), and the fact that the term is used

by Rashi in contexts which are different from those in the Talmud (c, above), indicate that the term "פשוט", according to Rashi, refers to an explanation which is methodically distinguished from the one marked by the root ש"ר.

The first conclusion—the importance of the term "פשוט" in Rashi's thought—seems certain; but the second one—the existence of a clear distinction with a well-defined terminology—deserves further investigation.

#### A. "פשוטו של מקרא"

Whenever the term "פשוט" is being used in Rashi's commentary it is always in a literal interpretation, never in a non-literal one. This is one kind of interpretation defined by us as *peshat*. Yet there is no proof that Rashi means the method of *peshat* in his use of the term "פשוט". The meaning of "פשוט" itself is the literal immediate meaning, or sometimes even the text itself. We may prove this by (1) The parallelism between "כפשוטו" and "כמשמעו" (Num. 28 : 3; Deut. 1 : 6, 7 : 7, 8 : 1; Prov. 18 : 16; introduction to the Song of Songs). (2) The expressions in which "פשוט" is the object of the interpretation and not the interpretation itself (Lev. 1 : 15; Ex. 9 : 32; Gen. 33 : 20, 37 : 2; also his interpretation to BT Keth. 38b).

Most expressions in Rashi, in which "פשוט" occurs like "לפי פשוטו" : Gen. 1 : 4; 2 : 5; 9 : 7; 14 : 15; 15 : 5; 25 : 26; 27 : 28; 27 : 42; 37 : 17; 45 : 24. "מיושבין על פשוטו" (Gen. 3 : 22), may be understood in this way. Others (like "זהו פשוטו" Gen. 7 : 22; 12 : 3; 32 : 32; 40 : 5; 42 : 14; 43 : 14; 44 : 18, or "ואין זה פשוטו של מקרא" Gen. 35 : 16), which hardly bear this proposed meaning, might be explained as abbreviations. Thus, according to our suggestion "זהו פשוטו" is abbreviated from "זהו משמעו לפי פשוטו" (see also, Prov. 13 : 14; Ex. 34 : 73; Deut. 4 : 2; 22 : 26; Is. 15 : 27).

The fact that "פשוט" can be found within the framework of allegorical interpretations, and that it is parallel to the term "מליצה" (see hereafter), prove that "פשוט" indicates nothing more than the literal, immediate meaning, and not an interpretative category.

Rashi interprets the books of Proverbs, and the Song of Songs as allegories therefore assuming that two levels of meanings are intended in them; the literal and the allegorical. Yet the term "פשוט" in Rashi refers only to the literal level, whereas according to our definition of *peshat* both levels would have to be considered as *peshat*, because in

an allegorical work both are intended in the text. This is the difference between the concept of *peshat* and the term "פשוטו" in Rashi's usage.

Rashi designates the literal level of the book of Proverbs as "מליצה". He uses this term because it appears in the beginning of the book (1:6). Both in the opening, and throughout the entire book, Rashi uses "מליצה" to indicate the literal meaning (1:6; 19:15; 19:28; 27:27; 31:13; 31:30), whereas "משל" denotes the allegorical meaning. The term "מליצה" in Rashi's explanations to Hab. 2:6, and also in his interpretations to Gen. 42:23; Job 33:23 means the speech itself. In Rashi's commentary on the book of Proverbs, the terms "פשוטו" and "מליצה" have parallel meaning: The same kind of interpretations are accompanied both by the term "מליצה" and by "פשוטו" (10:4; 13:4; 15:30; 18:5; 24:10; 30:31; 18:16; 18:22), and the pair of terms "משל" and "פשוטו" is parallel to the pair "משל" and "מליצה" (13:4). Thus there is a parallelism not just in function, since the "פשוטו" and "מליצה" refer to the literal level, but also in the meaning of the terms. In any case "פשוטו" does not mean a *peshat* method of interpretation.

Also as part of the rule "אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו", "פשוטו" refers to the literal meaning (Gen. 15:10, 37:17; Ex. 12:2; in a slightly different wording it appears in the introduction to the Song of Songs; Lev. 25:15, which is probably an addition; *Responsa Rashi—Solomon ben Isaac*, ed. Israel Elfenheim, New York: 1943, p. 293). According to Rashi, just as in the Talmud, the rule intends to preserve the validity of "פשוטו של מקרא", the plain meaning of the Bible, beside another legitimate interpretation, which is not "לפי פשוטו". It is hard to decide whether here, as in the Talmud, this meaning of the term "פשוטו" is derived from the meaning of the rule, or it is the meaning of the term as used by Rashi. The fact that the term "פשוטו" in Rashi always accompanies only literal interpretations, would support the assumption that the term means not just the text, but the text in its literal meaning.

#### B. *The Meaning of the Terminology Derived from the Root דר"ש*

Does the root דר"ש in its nominal and verbal usages, indicate a distinct method of interpretation, which differs from the *peshat* method?

Apparently, two phenomena support this assumption: (a) Most interpretations accompanied by the root דר"ש are what we call an interpretation according to the *derash* method. (b) In dual-interpretation, where one interpretation is marked by "פשוטו", the other, which is indicated by the root דר"ש, is generally the kind of interpretation that we would define as *derash*.



Nevertheless, not all the contexts of the root  $\text{דר"ש}$  point to this meaning. It appears that the root in its various forms indicates the source of the interpretation as taken from the Sages, and not its method as *derash*. Even though the correlation between the terminology of the root  $\text{דר"ש}$  and the nature of the interpretation as *derash* is not accidental, still it is not essential to the meaning of the root itself. The verb " $\text{לדרוש}$ " according to Rashi means "to comment", and does not necessarily contradict a simple or plain interpretation.

The evidence concerning the terms " $\text{מדרש אגדה}$ ", " $\text{מדרש}$ ", " $\text{אגדה}$ " is ambiguous. Sometimes the terms cannot be interpreted as pointing to a *derash* method, but rather as indicating one or many interpretations of the Sages, i.e., the terms testify to the source of the interpretation. In other instances the terms indicate an interpretation which is different from the one " $\text{לפי פשוטו}$ "; but in most cases the terms might be understood both ways.

The cases where the terms indicate the source of the interpretation, and not the *derash* method, can be classified in four categories:

- 1) The context refers to sources among which  $\text{מדרש אגדה}$  is mentioned (Gen. 15:2; 45:23; Ex. 10:21; Lam. 2:9).
- 2) The terms do not refer to an interpretation according to the method of *derash* (Gen. 50:5; Song 1:14, 7:5; Gen. 3:21, 4:3; 14:3; 14:10).
- 3) The terms do not occur in a context where *peshat* and *derash* are contrasted (Num. 28:15, 29:35 — in both cases the expression " $\text{מדרשו}$ " " $\text{אגדה}$ " appears; " $\text{אגדה}$ " indicates a contrast to " $\text{הלכה}$ ", whereas " $\text{מדרשו}$ " merely means an interpretation. Sometimes " $\text{מדרש אגדה}$ " appears also in contrast with halakhic content; see Num. 5:10, 19:22. Other examples of the term are used neither in contrast with  $\text{הלכה}$  nor *peshat*: Prov. 26:27, 9:9; Song 2:3; Gen. 33:14).
- 4) The terms appear as part of phrases like " $\text{מדרש אגדה אומר}$ " (says) (Gen. 11:28, 14:13; Num. 34:2; Prov. 30:31; Eccles. 12:6), " $\text{מדרש אגדה דורש}$ " (interprets) (Gen. 37:2; Lam. 1:7; Eccles. 1:11), " $\text{מדרש אגדה פותר}$ " (interprets) (Ex. 10:21; Prov. 19:7, 30:31), " $\text{מדרש אגדה מכנה}$ " (names) (Eccles. 2:21, 4:13). This is also the usage of the terms in the introduction to the Song of Songs and in Gen. 3:8.

Only one kind of context points to the usage of the terms as representing the *derash* method: The cases of dual-interpretation, in which both interpretations are taken from the sources, but only the one which is not " $\text{כפשוטו}$ " according to Rashi, is preceded by one of the terms discussed (Gen. 12:11, 42:8, Ex. 15:26; Num. 16:5; Lam. 2:2).

It seems that in these cases, the expression "מדרש אגדה" indicates not only that it is taken from the sources but also that it is not "לפי פשוטו". Yet even here, it seems that the expression "מדרש אגדה" itself does not actually indicate the nature of the interpretation, but rather its being taken from the sources, and Rashi's need to indicate the source since the interpretation is not literal (כפשוטו).

Most cases which include these terms do not belong unequivocally either to the first category or the second, but rather they are dual-interpretations (see below), in which the interpretation "לפי פשוטו" is Rashi's, the other one being from the sources. That is to say that the terms refer to the source, but the reason for bringing the source is because the interpretation is not the literal one, i.e. "לפי פשוטו".

Thus, the terminology based on the root דר"ש, even more clearly than "פשוטו", does not indicate an interpretative category. In a way, the absence of terminology in Rashi, proves that distinct categories of interpretation did not crystallize. Undoubtedly, Rashi does distinguish between interpretations which are "לפי פשוטו" and those which are not; but this distinction is reflected only within the dual-interpretation. The question is whether his concern was with the distinction *per se* between "פשוטו" and "מדרשו", or with something else which could be clarified by the dual-interpretation phenomenon.

### C. *The Dual-Interpretation: "פשוטו" in Contrast with "מדרשו"*

The term "פשוטו" occurs only within the framework of dual-interpretation (e.g., Gen. 1:1, 2:19, 12:5, 22:5, 23:17, 40:5. This generalization is valid for Rashi's commentaries on the Pentateuch, excluding Gen. 2:5, and Ex. 31:10 on the book of Proverbs and the Five *Megillot*). The term never appears in a single interpretation, even if it is of the same kind as those that are indicated by "פשוטו". The root דר"ש occurs not only in the dual-interpretation, but the expressions "מדרשו" or "מדרש אגדה" occur mostly within the framework. This points towards a connection between the usage of the terms, especially "פשוטו", and the intention of dual-interpretations. The term "dual-interpretation" is used here to designate two interpretations, brought by Rashi, of which one is "לפי פשוטו", and the other is not, in the sense that it does not present the literal meaning based on context and syntactic structure.

#### 1. Terminology

From the point of view of terminology, the dual-interpretation can be

classified into three types: (a) Both interpretations are accompanied by the terms. (b) Only the term "פשוטו" in its various combinations is mentioned. (c) Only a term deriving from the root דר"ש is mentioned. From the point of view of order, it appears that either one of the two interpretations may come first or second.

A classification of all the dual-interpretations in the book of Genesis from the above points of interest shows: (a) The interpretation "לפי פשוטו" is the primary one in the greatest number of cases. (b) When only one term is mentioned, it always accompanies the second interpretation. (c) There are linguistic expressions characteristic of the various forms of dual-interpretation. Thus we conclude that there is a connection between formal factors and the usage of terminology by Rashi. Therefore we assume that there is no difference in Rashi's usage of the various expressions including the term "פשוטו" and the root דר"ש. For example, in a dual-interpretation the term "מדרשו" usually comes opposite the term "פשוטו", whereas the term "מדרש אגדה" is characteristic of a dual-interpretation which includes only one term. Thus we infer that "מדרשו" is identical with "מדרש אגדה". The form "מדרשו" is a result of "stylistic assimilation" to "פשוטו", with which it usually occurs conjointly.

There is no difference in meaning between the interpretations, which have the terms at the beginning, and those which have them at the end, since the interpretations are not essentially different from each other. The choice between the various manners of expression seems to be a matter of stylistic variation.

## 2. The Considerations Underlying the Dual-Interpretation

The examination of the two interpretations, "לפי פשוטו" and "לפי מדרשו", within the framework of dual-interpretation shows that both relate to the same issue in the text: a word, a syntactic problem or a problem concerning the subject requiring explanation. In addition, the interpretation "לפי מדרשו" may actually invalidate the meaning "לפי פשוטו", since it might be understood as the only possible meaning of the text. We argue that Rashi's purpose in presenting a dual interpretation is to prevent invalidation of the literal meaning of the text. Thus the consideration underlying the dual-interpretation is actually "אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו".

The view may be confirmed by the singular interpretations, which are not "לפי פשוטו". Most of these interpretations are of one of the following kinds: (a) Interpretations which leave the verse as it is in terms of context and syntax, and become integrated with it in terms of its

subject (Gen. 1: 22; 3: 7; 25: 31; 37: 29). (b) Interpretations which manifest a totally different level of meaning, and leave the literal text as a separate entity of meaning (Gen. 1: 4; 2: 6; 9: 12; 3: 6; 17: 24-25; 24: 8; 24: 29; 25: 25; 38: 30; 21: 7).

In contrast with these kinds, the "מדרשו" type of interpretation within the framework of dual-interpretation refers to the meaning itself of the verse, and does not become a subject-unit within it. Usually it explains the meaning through etymology, or according to the biblical language, taking into consideration the syntactic structure. Also, it is not opposed to the context. In light of these characteristics of the interpretation, according to "מדרשו" within the dual-interpretation, it appears that its result might be להוציא מקרא מידי פשוטו (to deprive the verse of its literal meaning), because the meaning suggested by it might be understood as the exclusive meaning. Therefore, in such cases, Rashi presents another interpretation as well, which is "לפי פשוטו".

The rule "אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו" is mentioned by Rashi only three times, but in interpretations which are very similar to the dual-interpretation (Cf. Gen. 14: 18 with Rashi's interpretation to Gen. 15: 10; Gen. 37: 17 with his interpretation to Num. 29: 5. Also cf. Rashi's interpretation to Ex. 23: 5, to his comments on this verse in *Responsa Rashi*, Elfenbein, p. 295). This seems to indicate that the principle (... אין מקרא) even though it is not mentioned often — plays a very important role in Rashi's commentary.

### 3. The Relation Between the Interpretations Within the Framework of Dual-Interpretation

The difficulty in clarifying the question of the relationship between the two interpretations, lies in the fact that Rashi neither explains the phenomenon of the dual-interpretation, nor why he decided to bring it, and what the relationship is between the two interpretations included within it. It seems that it is based on the general conception of attributing simultaneous, multiple meanings to each verse. This conception is clearly expressed by Rashi in connection with allegorical interpretations; although our concern is not with allegorical interpretations, Rashi's comments on them might be useful to our present purpose.

Underlying Rashi's conception is the statement in the Gemara about the multiplicity of meanings in the text (BT Sanh. 34a). The Gemara does not mention "כפשוטו" as a separate meaning within the other meanings. Rashi's quotation of the Gemara concludes with the rule "אין מקרא יוצא מידי

פשוט" (introduction to the Song of Songs, *Responsa Rashi*, Elfenbein, p. 293; also Rashi's interpretations to Gen. 33: 20; Ex. 6: 9). The difference between Rashi and his sources concerning the multiplicity of meanings, is that whereas Rashi's sources do not distinguish between the various meanings in respect of the method of interpretation, Rashi—facing this multiplicity—presents the literal meaning in its syntactic structure, and in its context as a distinct meaning. The conception of multiplicity of meanings of the divine word is a basic religious assumption, which underlies the dual-interpretations as well, yet it does not explain this phenomenon. Rashi never presents "many meanings," only two; it seems that the selection of meanings he presents is determined by another principle beside the one of multiplicity of meanings.

From the examination of the nature of the dual-interpretations, it appears that the assumption underlying the dual-interpretations is that the choice of expressions cannot be accidental, since the text is God's word. Most dual-interpretations share two qualities which lead us to the above assumption. (a) Both interpretations relate to the same matter in the verse. (b) In most cases the language of the verse is unusual as compared with biblical usage, or bears another possible meaning, which is not "לפי פשוט". Rashi's reasons for adducing an interpretation in addition to the one "לפי פשוט" were not ideological or educational. His approach is mainly that of a commentator. However, his text is God's word, and therefore neither the vocabulary, nor the syntax, and not even the spelling can be accidental; whenever an unusual manner of expression is chosen, or a manner which might be interpreted not only literally, both liberal and non-liberal interpretations should be presented, for both are intended in the text. Thus the dual-interpretation itself is essentially a reasoning for the text as it stands; indeed, most of the dual-interpretations in Genesis accompany ambiguous expressions (Gen. 2: 19; 8: 7; 23: 17; 28: 19; 29: 12; 30: 11; 32: 11; 32: 32; 33: 8; 37: 35; 42: 8; 44: 18; 46: 28; 46: 30), ambiguous use of the tenses (12: 11; 18: 18; 38: 15), unusual usages (19: 12; 37: 2; 43: 14), syntactic difficulties (1: 1; 17: 1), subject matter, and difficulties of logic (1: 4; 1: 27; 2: 19; 9: 2; 9: 7; 36: 20; 37: 15; 38: 26).

## METHODOLOGICAL STATEMENTS AND THEIR ILLUSTRATIONS

### A. *Methodological Statements*

The root י"ש"ב, as a noun or a verb in various conjugations and expressions, appears very frequently in Rashi's statements about his own method of

interpretation (Gen. 20 : 13, 16; Ex. 23 : 2; Is. 26 : 11; Zech. 1 : 8; also Gen. 19: 15; 50: 5; Ex. 11: 4, 15: 1; Lev. 25: 15; Deut. 32: 12; Eccles. 4: 12). The exegetical method reflected by Rashi's use of the root "ש"ב can be clarified in the following ways: 1. by examining the meaning of the root in Rashi's usage; 2. by examining the characteristics of Rashi's interpretations; 3. by examining the nature of the interpretation, in the context of which the root appears. The question underlying our examination is whether Rashi's methodological statements prove a distinction between *peshat* and *derash*, or an intention to interpret according to the *peshat* method. Rashi's most important statement is to be found in Gen. 3 : 8: "There are many midrashic explanations and our teachers have already collected them in their appropriate places in Bereshit Rabba, and in other midrashim. I, however, am only concerned with the plain sense of Scripture (פשוט), (אגדה המיישבת דברי המקרא דבר דבור על אופניו)" translated by A. M. Silbermann and M. Rosenbaum, *Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Prayers for Sabbath and Rashi's Commentary*, London: 1929-34, 5 vols.).

Both parts of this statement were understood as referring to one issue, i.e. the intention to interpret according to the *peshat method* "...אגדה המיישבת" was interpreted as Aggadah that is "פשוטו של מקרא" or close to "פשוטו", and the term "פשוטו" was identified with *peshat*. Rashi himself does not identify "אגדה מיישבת" or close to "פשוטו". Therefore we must understand this expression with the help of Rashi's own terminology, and interpretation of the verse (Gen. 3 : 8). Rashi's interpretation of Prov. 25 : 16 (quoted in the statement): Ps. 88:16; Song 5:12, and his *Responsa* (Elfenbein, p. 296) lead to the conclusion that the root "ש"ב in his usage means "to settle", "to put in place", "to arrange evenly", which from the exegetical point of view signifies harmonizing the different parts of the interpretation, arranging the components to suit the contextual integrity.

Other usages of the root confirm this specific meaning: "יש מדרשי אגדה אבל אין מיושבין על פשוטו" (there are interpretations of the Sages, but they do not fit into the text—Gen. 3:23; also Song 2:7), and especially "כל הפנים הללו במדרש ואיני יכול ליישב עליהן מקרא שלאחריו" (all these meanings are to be found in the Sages' interpretations, but I cannot fit the text to them—Eccles. 7:21): It is the text (המקרא) here which should "להתיישב" —adapt itself to the meanings found in the Midrash. "פשוטו של מקרא" and "אגדה המיישבת" in Rashi's statement in Gen. 3 : 8 denoting the two main components in Rashi's interpretation: what is explicitly stated, and what is added by the Sages—both components creating conjointly the complete sequence.

An analysis of the interpretation itself to Gen. 3: 8 supports our explanation above: Rashi's interpretation to "And they heard the voice of the Eternal God walking about in the garden..." is a literal repetition of the verse while clarifying the participle "walking". Rashi's interpretation to "רוח היום" (wind of the day) is not according to the immediate—literal meaning. רוח (wind) is interpreted as a direction, יום (day) as the sun. In Rashi's words: "And they heard—what did they hear? They heard the sound of the Holy One, blessed be He, as walked in the garden. *In the Wind of the Day*—in that direction to which the sun travels, which is the west, for towards evening the sun is in the west, and they committed the sin in the tenth hour". The important point for us is that Rashi's decision whether the direction is east or west is based on the Sages' words (Sanh. 38b) that Adam and Eve committed the sin in the tenth hour. This information is not in the text, but is used by Rashi to explain the text.

This interpretation is not according to the *peshat* method, but rather is integrated into a complete subject unit in Rashi's interpretation. It does not indicate that in his statement Rashi meant to declare his intention to interpret according to the *peshat* method, neither that "אגדה המיישבת" is related to the interpretative category of *peshat* nor to the distinction between *peshat* and *derash*. The counter-distinction in Rashi's statement is between "אגדה המיישבת" and "שאיננה מיישבת". This is not similar to the apposition *peshat* and *derash*.

The midrashim from Bereshit Rabba (chap. 19: 7-8) which Rashi does not include in his interpretation are not of the kind "אגדה מיישבת" because they take the sentence apart syntactically, without fitting it with the context. It cannot be maintained that they are not included in Rashi, because they are not according to the *peshat* method. The same conclusion emerges from the analysis of the other statements that were examined (introduction to the Song of Songs, Gen. 33: 20; Ex. 33: 13; Gen. 49: 22). The difference between the Sages' interpretations which Rashi includes, and those which he does not include is not a difference between *peshat* and *derash*, but rather between interpretations which agree both with the context, and with the linguistic features, and those which do not. When Rashi refers to midrashic explanations, which he does not include, it should be understood as an *ad hoc* remark, and not as an essential criticism of *derash* as an interpretative method.

#### B. *Illustration of the Principle* "אגדה מיישבת"

Rashi's statements about his interpretative method always serve as an

explanation for the inclusion or rejection of interpretations from the Sages. However, Rashi usually includes or rejects interpretations without any explanation. We wish to show that the principles formulated by Rashi in his few statements did guide him in his selection of the Sages' interpretations, and therefore reflect his interpretative approach. We chose Rashi's interpretations according to subject units, and not single verses, in order to illustrate his intricate considerations in selecting the interpretations of the Sages. His over-all principle is the completeness of the unit in terms of its subject. This completeness is broader than the immediate biblical context, blending as well with the Sages' words. The units chosen for illustration are as follows: Gen. 3; Gen. 4: 15, 23-25; Gen. 15: 9-21; Num. 12; Rashi's interpretations to the formula "ויחי אהרן" (Gen. 15: 1, 22: 1; 22: 20, 39: 7, 40: 1; I Kings 17: 17, 21: 1; Esther 3: 1).

Rashi's interpretations to all these units cannot be characterized in terms of *peshat* and *derash*. All of them include midrashim, which were integrated by Rashi with the text, although their content is not explicitly stated in the text. However, Rashi's choice proves that he carefully considered the language of the verse, its subject and difficulties.

Rashi's methodological statements are never presented for their own sake, but rather always in connection with the Sages' interpretations. This could prove that Rashi's aim was not just to interpret the text, but to do so as much as possible according to the sources. The great number of the Sages' interpretations adduced by him, also attests to this aim.

Rashi does not define his method with the help of the term *peshat*. This term is not to be found in his vocabulary. Instead, he uses the term "פשוט", which does not indicate an exegetical method, but rather the text itself in its literal meaning as a syntactical unit. Rashi's method is not identical with what we call *peshat*. Therefore in order to define his method, we must, out of necessity, make use of his own terminology — and especially the root י"ש"ב, the expression "אגדה המיישבת" and the term "פשוט" as understood by Rashi.

## CONCLUSION

An examination of Rashi's terms, statements and interpretations has led us to reply in the negative to the question we posed at the beginning — whether Rashi distinguished between the exegetical categories *peshat* and *derash*. Rashi's innovation in relation to his sources is remarkable. He was highly cognizant of the verse's vocabulary, its syntax and context.



Rashi distinguished between these factors, the literary meaning of the text, and non-literal meanings, providing the literary meaning with the term "פשוטו". Yet neither his terms nor interpretations express a clear and well defined distinction between *peshat* and *derash*.

However, Rashi's grandson, Rashbam (R. Samuel ben Meir) clearly distinguished between *peshat* and *derash*. His terminology relating to the *peshat* category is well-defined. Rashbam consistently interpreted in accordance with the *peshat* method; that is to say, he limited himself to the text itself, interpreting it according to its vocabulary, syntax and context, in relation to biblical parallels, according to common sense as well as *derekh erez* (what is customary). Unlike Rashi, Rashbam did not integrate biblical text and Midrash.

It was Rashi who paved the way towards a clear distinction between *peshat* and *derash* in the writings of his successors. Yet in his commentaries, such a distinction still remains unrevealed.

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