



NOACH

RASHI: AN INTRODUCTION

A Primer for a New Year of Torah Studies

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

G-d instructs Noah—the only righteous man in a world consumed by violence and corruption—to build a large wooden *tevah* (“ark”), coated within and without with pitch. A Great Deluge, says G-d, will wipe out all life from the face of the earth; but the ark will float upon the water, sheltering Noah and his family as well as two members (male and female) of each animal species.

Rain falls for forty days and nights, and the waters churn for 150 more days before calming and beginning to recede. The ark settles on

Mount Ararat, and from its window Noah dispatches a raven, and then a series of doves, “to see if the waters were abated from the face of the earth.” When the ground dries completely—exactly one solar year (365 days) after the onset of the Flood—G-d commands Noah to exit the *tevah* and repopulate the earth.

Noah builds an altar and offers sacrifices to G-d. G-d swears to never again destroy all of humankind because of their deeds, and He sets the rainbow as a testimony of His new

covenant with the human race. G-d also commands Noah regarding the sacredness of life: murder is deemed a capital offense, and, while people are permitted to eat the meat of animals, they are forbidden to eat flesh or blood taken from a living animal.

Noah plants a vineyard and becomes drunk on its produce. Two of Noah’s sons, Shem and Japheth, are blessed for covering up their father’s nakedness, while his third son, Ham, is punished for taking advantage of his father’s debasement.

THE REBBE'S INSIGHT ON RASHI:

A bold and unique
perspective



RASHI

- Rabbi Shlomo ben Rabbi Yitzchak
- Famous for his commentary on the Torah and Talmud; known as "Rashi"
- Known for clarity and brevity in his commentary



TEXT 1A

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra

כּוֹכֵב דְרַדְּ מִצְרַפְתָּהּ מִחֲנִיָּה עָרַךְ עַל יְטִבָּתָהּ.

. . . פִּירוּשׁ נּוֹרָא שָׁם לַתּוֹרָה עַל כֵּן נִקְרָא פִּרְשׁוֹן דְּתָא.

סְפָרוֹ גּוֹאֵל אֵל כָּל שׂוֹאֵל וּבִישְׂרָאֵל הוּא תִרְצָתָהּ.

A star has gone forth from France, a community established on firm foundations.

. . . An awe-inspiring commentary he penned, his sobriquet: exponent of faith.

His is a book of redemption for all who question, pleasing to the nation Israel.

TEXT 1B

*Nachmanides,
Introduction to
Biblical Commentary*

ואשים למאור פני נרות המנורה הטהורה, פרושי רבנו
שלמה, עטרת צבי וצפירת תפארה.
. . . . לו משפט הבכורה, בדבריו אהגה, באהבתם אשגה.

I will place as illumination before me the lights of the pure candelabra, the commentaries of Rabbi Shlomo, a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty. . . .

To him go the rights of the firstborn: I will study his words with soaring love.

TEXT 1C

*Rabbi Menachem
Me'iri, Introduction
to Commentary on
Mishnah, Avot*

וראש לכל החיבורים שנתחברו דרך פירוש, הם פירושי רש"י זכרוננו לברכה.
ואם רבו הלוחמים עליו, כלי זיינו עליו ותשובתו מתוך דבריו כולם נכונים
למבין.
אין מעלתו נכרת רק ליחידים כי במילה אחת יכלול, לפעמים, תירוצים של
חבילי קושיות.

Chief among all commentators is Rashi, of blessed memory.

If his attackers are numerous, he is equipped to defend, parrying with words succinct and wise.

Only select thinkers discern his greatness, deflecting bundles of questions with but a word.



On the surface,
Rashi's commentary
may seem elementary;
however, the sages tell
us that His concise
explanations possess
significant depth.

TEXT 2A

*Rabbi Yeshayahu Halevi
Horowitz, Shenei Luchot
Haberit, Masechet
Shevuot (Oz Vehadar), p. 8*

כי חיבר החיבור שלו ברוח הקדש.

[Rashi] wrote his commentary
with Divine inspiration.

TEXT 2B

*Rabbi Chaim Yosef David
Azulai, Shem Hagedolim,
Marechet Soferim, Os
Shin*

ודקדק מאד בלשונו שרמז כמה
חידושים בשינוי אות אחד.

He was extremely precise with his words, hinting at multiple teachings with the change of a single letter.

RASHI'S SUPERCOMMENTARIES

- Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi, known by the acronym Re'em
- Rabbi Yehudah Loew, Gur Aryeh
- Rabbi David Prado, Maskil LeDavid
- Rabbi Mordechai Yoffe, Levush Ha'orah
- Rabbi Shabtai Bass, Siftei Chachamim

TEXT 3A

Zohar, vol. 3, Raya
Mehemna, p. 110a

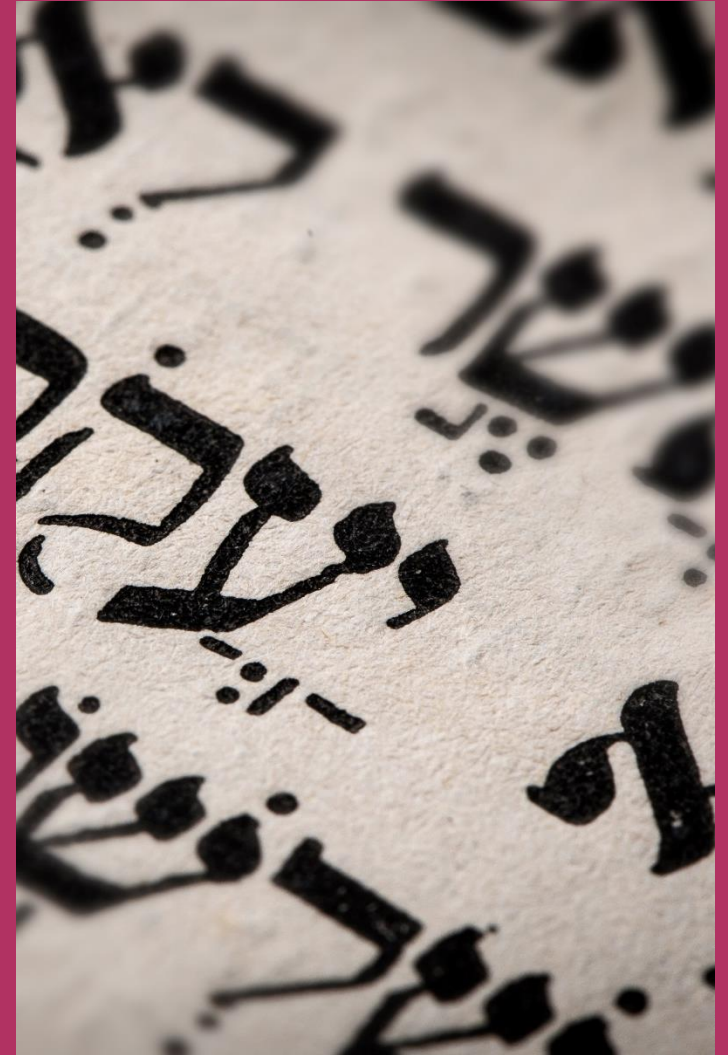
בְּאוֹרֵי־תָא, פְּשָׁטִי"ם, רְאִיוֹ"ת, דְּרָשׁוֹ"ת, סוּדוֹ"ת.
וְלַעֲיָלָא סְתָרֵי סְתָרִים לָהּ.

The Torah [can be understood on four levels]: the plain understanding, the allegorical understanding, the homiletical understanding, and the mystical understanding.

Beyond these are secrets upon secrets [known only] to G-d.

FOUR WAYS TO UNDERSTAND TORAH

1. Literally
2. Allegorically
3. Homiletically
4. Mystically



TEXT 3B

Rashi, Genesis 3:8

יֵשׁ מִדְּרָשֵׁי אַגְדָּה רַבִּים וְכָבֵד סְדְרוֹם רַבּוֹתֵינוּ עַל מְכוּנָם בְּבִרְאשִׁית
רַבָּה וּבִשְׁאֵר מִדְּרָשׁוֹת.
וְאֲנִי לֹא בָאתִי אֶלָּא לְפִנְשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא וּלְאַגְדָּה הַמִּיִּשְׁכֶּת דְּבָרֵי
הַמִּקְרָא דְּבָר דְּבוּר עַל אִפְנֵיו.

There are many Agadic [nonlegalistic explanations in the] Midrash. These were arranged by our sages in proper order in the Midrash, Bereshit Rabah, and other Midrashic texts.

I, however, have come only to teach the plain meaning of the text. And [I will also use] such Agadic texts that clarify the [plain meaning of the] biblical text, each word in its proper way.

TEXT 4

Rabbi Tuviah Blau, *Kelalei Rashi*, p. 15

אנו מוצאים בענין זה
שיטות שונות אצל מפרשי
רש"י.

הרא"ם, למשל, סובר כי
רש"י משתמש במדרש,
"כל היכא דאיכא למידרש."

לעומתו רבי דוד פראדו,
אחד מגדולי פרשני רש"י,
בספרו משכיל לדוד, כותב,
"לא נחית רבינו לדרשה
אלא אם כן הוכרח." כלומר
כאשר הפשט אינו מספיק.

[With respect to this question] we
find multiple approaches among the
supercommentaries on Rashi.

Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi, for example,
thought Rashi “makes use of
homiletic interpretation wherever
possible” [cited in the introduction to
Maskil LeDavid].

In his [introduction to] Maskil LeDavid,
Rabbi David Prado, one of the great
supercommentators on Rashi,
disagreed. He wrote, “Our teacher
only made use of homily when
absolutely necessary,” meaning when
the literal translation failed to satisfy.

TEXT 4

Rabbi Tuviah Blau, Kelalei Rashi, p. 15

לעומת אלה אנו מוצאים דעה
שונה בתכלית, היא דעתו של
בעל ספר זכרון, "מנהגו . . .
שבוחר יותר במדרש . . .
מהפשט הנראה לכאורה
בישוב הכתוב." וביתר
בהירות, "ברוב פסוקי התורה
מניח פשט הכתוב ומביא
מדרשם זכרונם לברכה. ואף
על פי שלפעמים כותב, 'ואני
ליישב פשוטו של מקרא
באתי,' לאותו פסוק בלבד
יכוון, לא לכל התורה."

On the other side of the spectrum, we find the opinion of [Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi, the] author of *Sefer Hazikaron*. [In his supercommentary to Exodus 13:17] he wrote that Rashi “chooses homiletic interpretation . . . over the obvious and plain meaning of the text.” He stated even more clearly, “Rashi neglects the literal meaning of most biblical passages and relies instead on the homiletic interpretations of our sages, of blessed memory. When he wrote on several occasions ‘I have only come to reconcile the plain meaning of the text,’ he referred only to the specific passages under discussion, not to the entire Torah.”

Unlike other commentators on Rashi, the Rebbe took Rashi's words at face value. The Rebbe says that Rashi's primary goal is to teach the Torah in the most basic way possible.



TEXT 5

Mishnah, Avot 5:22

בֶּן חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים לְמִקְרָא.

At the age of five, one studies Torah.

בֶּן עָשָׂר שָׁנִים לְמִשְׁנָה.

At the age of ten, one studies Mishnah.

בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר לְמִצְוֹת.

At the age of thirteen, one is obligated in mitzvot.

בֶּן חֲמִשׁ עָשָׂר לְגִמְרָא.

At the age of fifteen, one studies the Talmud.



Rashi only addresses the questions that would bother a five-year-old who is learning the Torah for the first time.

TEXT 6A

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Torat
Menachem 5744:2,
p. 952*

כבר שקלו וטרו בקובצים בפירוש
רש"י, ותירצו כמה תירוצים . . . אבל
תירוצים אלו נכתבו באריכות גדולה,
דף וחצי, וכיוצא בזה, ומתוך הבאת
כמה וכמה מקורות מדברי חכמינו
זכרונם לברכה, מפרשים, כו' עד
למקור מלקוטי שיחות כרך פלוני,
הערה פלונית.

ומכיון שמדובר אודות בן חמש למקרא,
טוען הוא מה רוצים ממנו עם אריכות
גדולה כזו? רצונו להבין את דברי
רש"י בפשטות ובקיצור כדי שיוכל
אחר כך לשחק. ואין מה להסביר לו
שקלא וטריא ארוכה עד להוכחה מ . . .
כרך פלוני . . . הכתובה ללא נקודות.

The explanation for Rashi's comment was debated in several publications, and several answers were offered. . . .

However, each answer took up, on average, a page and a half. They cited many teachings from our sages, of blessed memory, from other commentaries, even citing certain pages and footnotes from [my teachings in] Likutei Sichot.

However, we must remember that these explanations are presented to five-year-olds who wonder why we pester them with lengthy lectures. They want a simple and quick explanation of Rashi so they can go and play. Engaging in lengthy explanations with citations from Hebrew texts [especially texts] written without vowels, is off the mark.

TEXT 6B

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Sichot
Kodesh 5731:1, p. 243*

די אלע ענינים דארפן זיין מוכרח
על פי פשטות הכתובים און רש"י
דארף זיך ניט פארלאזען אויף
דעם שפתי חכמים אדער אויף
דעם מזרחי און די אנדערע
פירושים. וואס זייער פירושים
האט מען דאך געשריבען מיט
הונדערטער יארען נאך רש"י. און
בשעת רש"י האט דאס געלערנט
מיט זיין תלמיד האט ער דאס
פארשטאנען אן זייער פירושים.

במילא דארף דאס אלץ זיין
מוכרח על פי פשטות הכתובים.

Rashi [wrote his commentary in a manner that his] teachings are obvious from a plain reading of the biblical text. Rashi does not rely on the supercommentaries of Siftei Chachamim, Rabbi Mizrachi, or others to explain his meaning. These commentaries were written hundreds of years after Rashi wrote his commentary. When Rashi taught his students, they understood him without the aid of these commentaries.

Therefore we, too, should be able to understand Rashi by perusing the plain meaning of the biblical text.

Rashi's explanations are intended for young children who do not rely on sophisticated explanations or have advanced knowledge of Halachah, Talmud, Kabbalah, etc.



TEXT 7

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, ibid., pp.
138-139*

די מפרשים אויף פירוש רש"י זיינען בעיקר מפרש רש"י על דרך
ההלכה, על דרך הרמז, על דרך הדרוש, און על דרך הסוד. וואס
בנוגע דרך הסוד איז דאס בעיקר דער פירוש פון מהר"ל מפראג,
גור אריה, וואס בכמה מקומות לערנט ער רש"י על דרך הסוד
שבתורה.

The supercommentaries on Rashi primarily explain Rashi in the manner of Halachah, allegory, homily, or mysticism. With respect to the latter, it is primarily the commentary of Rabbi Yehudah Leib Loew from Prague, author of Gur Aryeh, who often explained Rashi according to the mystical tradition.

QUESTION

If, according to the Rebbe, Rashi only intends to teach the plain meaning of the text, why does Rashi cite the Midrash frequently?

ANSWER

According to the Rebbe, Rashi's frequent citations of the Midrash are integral to understanding the plain meaning of the text. The Rebbe extensively explored many such anomalies in Rashi's interpretations.



Rashi Sichos:
A tribute to
Rebbetzn Chana.

TEXT 8

*“Revolution in Rashi,”
Derher, 28 Shevat
5775, p. 42*

The Rebbe arrived at his place. Instead of starting his sichah as soon as he sat down, as he usually did, the Rebbe requested that a Chumash [a copy of the Pentateuch] be brought to him. That the Rebbe should request a book during a farbrengen was extremely rare. It was the first indication that something unusual was underway.

The Chumash was brought, and . . . the Rebbe opened it to parshat Noach, and began reading and translating the first passage. He then moved on to Rashi, reading and translating the second Rashi on the parshah.

It was a beautiful scene; hundreds of Chasidim crowding around as the Rebbe sat and taught Rashi like a teacher in cheder. First translating, and then proceeding to ask several penetrating questions, cutting to the very heart of Rashi’s words.

No one realized it at the time, but this was a historic moment. The Rebbe had just—quietly and without much fanfare—launched a revolution that would accompany every Shabbat farbrengen for the next 23 years and would change the way we look at Rashi.

The Rebbe viewed the four categories of understanding Torah not as separate fields but entwined aspects of one unified whole.




TEXT 9

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 29, p. 213*

ווי גערעט כמה פעמים איז תורתנו הקדושה א תורה אחת.
פנימיות התורה און חלק ההלכה שבתורה זיינען כולא חד . . . ווי
א גוף ונשמה.
דאס הייסט אז אלע חלקי התורה זיינען מתאים מיט די אנדערע און
זיינען עולה בקנה אחד.

I have explained many times that our holy Torah is a single Torah.
The inner dimension of the Torah and the Halachic dimension of
the Torah are all one, . . . like a body and soul.

This means that all the sections of the Torah fit together like
multiple parts of a single branch.



The Rebbe often said that Rashi's simple explanation of the text unveiled many 'wonders'—new depths in other areas of the Torah.

TEXT 10A

*Rabbi Yeshayahu Halevi
Horowitz, Shenei
Luchot Haberit,
Masechet Shevuot (Oz
Vehadar), p. 8*

כי בכל דיבור ודיבור של רש"י יש דברים נסתרים
נפלאים . . . צאו וראו ברש"י שעל התורה,
שהקורא סובר שהוא קל, ראו . . . ותמצאו נפלאות.

There are hidden wondrous teachings in every
word of Rashi. . . . Peruse Rashi's comments on
the Torah. At face value, you might think it is light
reading, but look, . . . and you will find wonders.

TEXT 10B

Hayom Yom, *29 Shevat*

דער אלטער רבי האט אמאל געזאגט: פירוש רש"י
אויף חומש איז יינה של תורה, פותח הלב ומגלה
אהבה ויראה עצמיות.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, [also known as] the Alter Rebbe, once said, “Rashi’s commentary on the Torah is the wine of the Torah. It opens the heart, bringing to the surface our inherent love and awe of G-d.”

TEXT 10C

*Rabbi Mordechai Yoffe,
Levushei Or Yekaros
(Lublin, 1595), p. 23*

כל הדברים שבפירוש רש"י יש בהם
נגלה ונסתר. ושניהם אמת.

Every word in Rashi's commentary
contains a revealed understanding
and concealed strata. Both are true.

Rashi's simple explanations are sourced from the highest level of Torah and therefore contain wondrous gems and deep teachings.



TEXT 10D

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 5, p. 1*

דער פירוש פון רש"י על התורה, הגם אז
ער קומט צו מפרש זיין פשוטו של מקרא
. . . אנטהאלט ער אבער אויך ענינים
מופלאים פון די אנדערע חלקי התורה,
אפילו אויך רזין דאורייתא. וכידוע דער
ווארט פון אלטן רבין אז "פירוש רש"י
אויף חומש איז יינה של תורה."

נאר בכדי צו קענען דערגרונטעווען זיך
צו די ענינים מופלאים און יינה של תורה
וואס אין פירוש רש"י מוז מען פריער
דורכלערנען און פארשטיין דעם פירוש
הפשוט. וייל אויך זיי, די ענינים
מופלאים און יינה של תורה האט רש"י
אריינגעשטעלט אין דעם פירוש לויט
פשוטו של מקרא.

Although Rashi's commentary on the Torah explains the plain meaning of the text, it also contains wondrous teachings from other sections of the Torah, including the mystical mysteries of the Torah. As Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe, famously said, "Rashi's commentary on the Torah is the wine of the Torah."

However, to dig through to the wondrous teachings and the wine of the Torah, we must first study the plain meaning of Rashi's commentary. Because Rashi embedded the wondrous teachings and the wine of the Torah into the plain meaning of the Torah's text.

THE PRINCIPLES OF RASHI

1. Rashi speaks to the five-year-old student and explains the text in the plainest possible way—in a way children can understand.
2. Rashi does not present questions. He explains the passage, and the questions fall away. We must, therefore, always determine precisely which question Rashi was addressing.
3. Rashi only offers two explanations when neither captures the plain meaning of the text fully. However, the two always complement each other. In such instances, the explanation that is presented first is smoother and more conducive to the plain meaning.
4. Rashi does not usually cite the source of his teachings. He only cites the source or the name of the person he is quoting to answer a question a student might ask. If he cites a name or a source, we must ask which question Rashi is attempting to answer.

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. Rashi's words are precise. Every word contributes to our understanding of the text. If a word appears superfluous, we must ask why it was included.
2. Rashi begins each comment with a header comprised of the words from the passage he intends to address. These headers are precise. They include every word Rashi addresses—never more, never less. When unnecessary words appear in the header or when words appear to be missing, there is a reason.
3. Rashi only addresses questions that arise in the mind of a five-yearold. On the other hand, Rashi addresses every question a five-year-old might ask. If you think of a question that Rashi did not ask, it is either not a question or was already answered.
4. Rashi teaches in the order that the child studies. Rashi, therefore, does not ask questions on passages or rely on sources the child has yet to study. On the other hand, Rashi expects the child to remember everything taught up to that point.

KEY POINTS

1. Rashi's commentary on the Torah explains the plain meaning of the biblical text.
2. Rashi's commentary was revered by his contemporaries and ever since. More than three hundred supercommentaries were written on Rashi.
3. They outline the questions that Rashi addressed and explain his often enigmatic language.
4. The Rebbe presented an original way to analyze Rashi that demonstrates Rashi's commitment to the plain meaning of the text. At the same time, the Rebbe extracted many deep nuggets from Rashi's commentary.
5. In the course of his teachings, the Rebbe articulated hundreds of hermeneutic principles by which Rashi operated when writing his commentary.

TEXT 11

*Rabbi Tuviah Blau,
Kelalei Rashi, pp. 71–112*

ענינו של רש"י הוא לפרש את הכתובים
אך ורק לפי פשוטם . . . ואפילו אם
הדברים סותרים את כל הדעות. . . בדרך
ההלכה. . . משמעות המושג פשט היא
בדרגתו הפשוטה ביותר . . . שהדברים
יובנו אפילו על ידי ילד בן חמש.

הוא בא לסלק ולתרץ כל קושי . . . העלול
להתעורר בהתאם לרמת ידיעותיו של בן
חמש. כיוון שכן כאשר יש קושי ש . . .
ברור מאיליו ההסבר לבן החמש . . . אין
רש"י טורח להסביר אותו.

בדרך כלל הוא מתחיל מיד בהסברת
הענין באופן שהקושי מסולק אגב הרצאת
הדברים . . . עלינו לבדוק היטיב איזה
קושי בא רש"י לסלק.

Rashi's purpose is to explain the plain meaning of the text, . . . even if this contradicts all the Halachic opinions. . . . When we say plain, we refer to the plainest meaning, . . . one that is understood by a five-year-old.

Rashi's purpose is to address every difficulty that might arise on the level of a five-year-old's knowledge. Therefore, when the answer is obvious to the child, Rashi doesn't bother to explain it.

Rashi typically begins by immediately presenting the explanation such that all questions fall away. . . . It's the student's job to determine which questions Rashi was looking to address.



TEXT 11

*Rabbi Tuviah Blau,
Kelalei Rashi, pp. 71–112*

מאחר ובן החמש לומד את התורה
לפי סדר, סומך רש"י בכל מקום
בתורה על דברים האמורים בתורה
לפני כן.

רש"י מביא שני פירושים לדבר אחד
כאשר יש קושי לפי הפשט בכל אחד
בהם והם משלימים זה את זה. . .
הפירוש הראשון הוא העקרי משום
שהוא חלק יותר וקרוב יותר לפשוטו
של מקרא.

רוב מאמרי חכמינו זכרונם לברכה
המצוטטים בפירוש רש"י באים ללא
ציון מקורם ומבלי להגדירם
כמדרשיים. במקרים אלה הדרשות
מתחייבים בהכרח מפשוטו של מקרא.

Inasmuch as the five-year-old studies the Torah in order, Rashi relied in all cases on what the Torah [and Rashi] explained earlier.

Rashi brings two explanations when each is not perfectly consistent with the plain meaning of the text and when each complements the other. . . . [In such cases] the first explanation that Rashi offers is primary because it is smoother and closer to the plain meaning of the text.

In most instances, Rashi quotes our sages without citing the source and without identifying them as a Midrash. In these instances, the Midrash is consistent with the plain meaning of the text.



TEXT 11

*Rabbi Tuviah Blau,
Kelalei Rashi, pp. 71–112*

ביטויים כמו "דרשו רבותינו"
"מדרש" באו לאמר שאין פירוש זה
חלק לגמרי . . . אם כי הוא יכול
להתאים לפשוטו של מקרא.

רש"י מצטט בדבור המתחיל רק את
המלים אותן הוא בא לבאר . . . ולא
יותר . . . ולא פחות . . . כן מעתיק
רש"י את המלים שמהן הכרח
לפירושו.

ברוב המקרים אין הוא מציין את
מקורם שכן ציון המקור אינו הכרחי
להבנת פשוטו של מקרא. באשר
רש"י מציין מקור לדבריו, מהווה
רמז למקרה שאצל התלמיד יתעורר
קושי מסויים . . . שאז תמצא
התשובה במקור המסומן

When Rashi uses phrases such as “our sages taught” or “Midrash,” he intends to inform us that this explanation is not entirely consistent with the text’s plain meaning, . . . though it can be made to fit it.

Rashi only cites the words from the passage that he intends to address. . . . He never cites an additional word. . . . He never fails to cite a word that he addresses. . . . Rashi also cites words from the passage that serve as proof for his explanation.

In most instances, Rashi does not cite the source of a teaching because the source doesn’t aid our understanding of the plain meaning of the text. When Rashi does cite the source, it indicates that a question might arise. In this case, the answer can be found by examining the original source text.

