

ParShaT *BaMiDBaR* - One Pager Series

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Rashi #1:

Biblical Text: Nu04-13b [Background: The bible is discussing the disassembling of the Desert Temple prior to journeys] They will dust the altar and spread over it a royal-purple garment

Rashi Text: The word *dust* means to *remove dust*. Perhaps a more accurate translation is *They will ash the altar and spread over it a royal-purple garment*. So, the Rashi comment would then be: *To ash means to remove the ashes*.

Rashiyomi comments: Grammar: Rashi here uses the great Grammatical exegetical pillar. Most people have memories of *verb conjugation* in Hebrew Grammar school. For example, from the root *cap-h-tavu-veth (katav)* one obtains *katavti* (I wrote), *echtov* (I will write), *nictavti* (I was written about), *hictiv* (I dictated (to someone else to write)). The method of taking a 3-letter verb root and endowing it with meanings based on time (past, future), person (I, you, him), plurality (I, we), mode (active-passive), etc. is called conjugation. The student learns various conjugation tables by which this is accomplished.

Verb Conjugation: But verb conjugation is not the only function of grammar. Another equally important grammatical function is to create verbs (activities) out of nouns (things). The Rashi we just analyzed does exactly that: From the word *deshen* which means *ashes* Rashi derives the verb *dishen* which means to *remove the ashes (To ash)*.

Denominatives: The reason this is not typically taught (even in English) is because the full theory was only recently developed. Carolyn A Gottfurcht (2007) from Northwestern University wrote a doctoral thesis in linguistics in which she uncovered 8 types of denominatives: Just as medieval Hebrew grammar, the grammar of conjugation, was in part derived from the similar efforts among Arab grammatical scholars, and just as Biblical grammar is nevertheless classified as religious teaching (*limudei kodesh*), so too, we may derive new Biblical grammar from Gottfurcht's thesis. This new grammar is classified as religious teaching (*limudei kodesh*). In fact, it will help us understand Rashi.

The Eight Denominative Types: Here are Gottfurcht's 8 types of denominatives (with examples).

- **Resultative** -the verb activity results in the noun object, for example, *to mummify, to flower,*
- **Privative**-the verb activity removes the noun object, for example, *to dust*
- **Instrumental**-the verb activity refers to the typical usage of the instrument or noun object, for example, *to hammer, to dress, to sponge*
- **locative** –the verb activity indicates arriving at the location of the noun or object, for example, *to hospitalize*
- **performative**- the verb activity results in a performance of the noun object, for example *to tango*
- **ornative**- the verb activity adds outer parts, for example *to bejewel*
- **ablative**- the verb activity removes outer parts, for example, *to shell nuts*
- **simulative**-the verb activity seeks to resemble the noun or object, for example, *to guard* (do activity of the guard)

Application of Denominative Theory to Rashi: Here are some Rashi examples:

- 1) From the noun *ash*, we obtain the verb *to ash*, to remove the ash (Nu04-13) [Privative denominative]
- 2) From the noun *armed*, we obtain the verb, *to arm oneself* (Nu31-03b) [Ornative denominative]
- 3) From the noun *fruit*, we obtain the verb, *be fruitful* [Gn01-22b] [Simulative denominative]