



# Parshanut and Polemics V

Marty Lockshin, Torah in Motion 5781



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# Review: Rashi on Na"kh

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Rashi says explicitly that he is offering explanations of biblical passages that will be useful to refute the explanations of the *minim*.

Rashi says explicitly that some of those explanations that he offered differ sharply from what the classical rabbis had said.

Rashi also explains some texts (e.g. Isaiah 52-53; the "Suffering Servant") in a way that undercuts the Christian interpretation of the text without saying that he is doing so.

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# Rashi on the Torah

Use of the word מִיָּוֵן/מִיָּוֵיִם in the Torah commentary four times total; three of them in quotations from classical rabbinic sources.

The argument from silence.

Are there comments where Rashi takes on Christianity without saying that he is doing so?

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## Rashi (quoting from Sifri) on Deut 32:21

בגוי נבל אכעיסם – אילו המינין,  
וכן הוא אומר: אמר נבל בלבו אין  
(אלוהים תהלים י"ד:א').

**I will vex them with a nation of  
fools:** This refers to the *minim*, as  
it is written, “The fool says in his  
heart, ‘There is no God.’” (Psalms  
14:1)

## Rashi on Gen 6:6 (independent use of the word

### (מינים)

**ויתעצב אל לבו:** ... וזו כתבת י  
לתשובת המינין, גוי אחד שאל את  
ר' יהושע בן קרחה אמר לו: אי  
אתם אומרים שהקב"ה רואה את  
הנולד. אמר לו: הין אמר לו:  
הכתוב ויתעצב אל לבו. אמר לו:  
נולד לך בן זכר מימך. אמר לו: הין.  
אמר לו: ומה עשית. אמר לו:  
שמחתי ושימחתי את הכל. אמר  
לו: ולא היית יודע שסופו למות.  
אמר לו: בשעת חדותא חדותא  
בשעת אבלא אבלא. אמר לו: כך  
מעשה לפני הקב"ה

**God was saddened:** ...The  
following [extract from Midrash  
Rabbah] I am writing in order to  
refute the arguments of the  
*minim*: A gentile once asked Rabbi  
Joshua, son of Korcha, "Do you  
not admit that the Blessed Holy  
One, knows what is to happen in  
the future?" He replied, "Yes." The  
gentile retorted, "But is it not  
written 'and He was saddened'?"  
He answered: "Have you ever had  
a son born to you?" The reply was

## Genesis 15

גַּרְיָאֵם אֶבְרָם הָיוּ לִי לֹא נִתְּתָה זָרַע  
וְהִנֵּה בֶן בֵּיתִי יוֹרֵשׁ אֹתִי

Abram said, "Since You have granted me no offspring, my steward will be my heir."

וְהִנֵּה דָבָר ה' אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר לֹא  
יִרְשֶׁךָ זֶה כִּי אִם אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ  
הוּא יִרְשֶׁךָ

The word of the LORD came to him in reply, "That one shall not be your heir; none but your very own issue shall be your heir."

בְּיָוֶצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הִבֵּט  
לָא הַשְׁמַיְמָה וְסָפַר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם  
תּוּכַל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה  
יִהְיֶה זָרְעֶךָ

He took him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He added, "So shall your offspring be."

וַיִּרְאֵהוּ וַיִּחְזַקְתֵּהוּ לֵב עַד־רָחֵם

## Romans 4

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (והאמין בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה)

4 Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. 5 However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

## Romans 4 (cont.)

9 Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. 10 Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! 11 And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.



וְהֵאֱמַן בְּה'  
וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ  
צְדָקָה  
(בְּרֵאשִׁית טוּן

He believed in God; He [God] reckoned it for him [Abram] as merit.

or

He believed in God; he [Abram] considered it [God's promise] a free-gift from Him [God].

## Reconstructed Rashbam on Gen 15 (from alhatorah.org; Rabbi Dr. Hillel Novetsky)

והאמן בי"י ויחשבה לו צדקה -  
אברם האמין בי"י ממה שבישר לו  
ואמר שיהיה לו זרע, ואברם חישב  
לו שהוא צדקה שהקב"ה עושה לו,  
ואין זה בזכותו כי אם בצדקה  
וברחמי שדי, והו עיקר פשוטו.

Abram believed what God had  
promised him—that he would  
have a child. Abram thought that  
God was doing him a favour  
(צדקה)—that it was not because  
of his own merit. Rather it was  
צדקה and God's mercy on him.  
This is the true plain meaning.

... As for those who say that the  
phrase means that God  
considered Abraham's faith as  
צדקה and that God graciously  
accepted Abraham's faith, they

ולדברי האומר ויחשבה לו...  
צדקה - שהקב"ה חשבה לאברהם  
צדקה, ו[ב]סבר פנים יפות קבל  
הקב"ה אמונתו של אברהם,

## Shadal (1800-1865) on Gen 15:6

ויחשבה לו צדקה – אברהם  
חשבה להקב"ה צדקה וחסד, ר'  
יוסף בכור שור, רמב"ן, רלב"ג, בעל  
העקדה, דון יצחק

ואמנם שתהיה האמונה נחשבת  
לזכות לאדם, זה אינו לא לפי  
השכל ולא לפי התורה והנביאים

Abram considered what God had  
promised him צדקה, an act of  
grace, following the interpretation  
of Rabbi Yosef Bekhor Shor,  
Ramban, Gersonides, Rabbi Isaac  
Arama, Abarbanel ... .

The idea, however, that faith  
should be thought of as  
something that makes a person  
righteous contradicts logic and  
contradicts the Torah and the  
Prophets.

## Rashi Gen 15:6

ויחשבה לו צדקה - הקב"ה  
חישבה לאברהם לזכות על  
האמנה שהאמין בו      The Blessed Holy One accounted  
unto Abram the faith with which  
he had trusted in Him as a merit.

## Genesis 49:10

לֹא יָסוּר שֵׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה וּמַחְקֶק  
מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד כִּי יָבֹא שִׁילֹה  
וְלוֹ יִקְהַת עַמִּים

NJPS: The scepter shall not depart  
from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff  
from between his feet; So that  
tribute shall come to him And the  
homage of peoples be his.

King James: The scepter shall not  
depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver  
from between his feet, until Shiloh  
come; and unto him shall the  
gathering of the people be.

## Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho* (120)

He speaks therefore in the passage relating to Judah: 'A prince shall not fail from Judah, nor a ruler from his thighs, till that which is laid up for him come; and He shall be the expectation of the nations.' And it is plain that this was spoken not of Judah, but of Christ.

## Rashi Genesis 49:10

עד כי יבא שיליה - מלך המשיח,  
שהמלוכה שלו, וכן תרגם  
אונקלוס  
עד כי יבא שיליה means until the  
King Messiah will come, whose  
will be the kingdom (Genesis  
Rabbah 99:8). Thus, too, does  
Onkelos render the verse.

## Rashi on Psalm 21

**מהדורות הכתב:** רבותינו פתרוהו  
על מלך המשיח; ונכון הדבר  
לפותרו עוד על דוד עצמו, לתשובת  
המינין שפקרו בו

**Mikraot Gedolot Ha-keter:** The rabbis interpreted this psalm as referring to the messianic king; it is fitting to interpret it about King David himself, as an appropriate refutation of the heretics who found in it support for their heretical beliefs.



## Genesis 3-4

וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ ה' אֱלֹהִים מַגֵּן עֵדֹן לְעַבְדֹ  
אֶת הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִשָּׁם. כִּבֹּ  
וַיִּגְרֹשׁ אֶת הָאָדָם וַיֵּשְׁבוּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגֹן  
עֵדֵן אֶת הַכְּרִבִּים וְאֵת לֶהֱט הַחֶרֶב  
הַמַּתְּפָכֶת לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ  
הַחַיִּים.

So the LORD God banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken. He drove the man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חֹהָה אֲשֶׁתּוֹ וַתֵּהָרָה  
וַתֵּלֵד אֶת קַיִן וַתֵּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ  
אֶת ה'. בַּוַּתְּסֹף קָלַדְת אֶת אַחִיו אֶת  
הַבֵּל ...

Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the LORD." She then bore his brother Abel.

## Rashi Genesis 4:1

והאדם ידע - כבר קודם הענין  
שלמעלה, קודם שחטא ושנטרד  
מגן עדן, וכן ההריון והלידה. שאם  
כתב 'וידע אדם', נשמע שאחר  
שנטרד היו לו הבנים.

Adam ידע his wife Eve [means  
that he *had known* his wife Eve,]  
before the events of the previous  
story, before he sinned and was  
thrown out of the Garden of Eden.

So also the pregnancy and birth  
[were in Eden]. Had the text said  
אדם וידע then it would have  
meant that his children were born  
after he was thrown out of Eden.

# John Chryostom (d. 407), Homilies on Genesis

Whence, after all, did he [Adam] come to know that there would be intercourse between man and woman? I mean, the consummation of that intercourse occurred after the Fall; up till that time they were living like angels in paradise and so they were not burning with desire, not assaulted by other passions, not subject to the needs of nature, but on the contrary were created incorruptible and immortal, and on that account at any rate they had no need to wear clothes . . . Consider, I ask you, the transcendence of their blessed condition . . .

## Genesis 3-4

וַיִּשְׁלַח ה' אֱלֹהִים מַגֵּן עֵדֹן לְעַבְדֹ  
אֶת הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִשָּׁם. כִּבֹּ  
וַיִּגְרֹשׁ אֶת הָאָדָם וַיִּשְׁכַּן מִקְדָּם לְגֹן  
עֵדֹן אֶת הַכְּרִבִּים וְאֵת לֵהט הַחֶרֶב  
הַמַּתְּפָּכֶת לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ  
הַחַיִּים.

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתְּהַרֵ  
וַתֵּלֶד אֶת קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קִנִּיתִי אִישׁ  
אֶת ה'. בַּוַּתְּסֵף לָלֶדֶת אֶת אָחִיו אֶת  
הָקַל ...

So the LORD God **banished** him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken. He **drove** the man out, and **stationed** east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Now the man **knew/had known** his wife Eve, and she **conceived** and **bore** Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the LORD." She then **bore** his

## Genesis 31:33-34

וַיְבֹא לָבֵן בְּאֵהָל יַעֲקֹב וּבְאֵהָל לְאָה  
וּבְאֵהָל שְׂתֵי הָאֲמָהוֹת וְלֹא מָצָא  
וַיֵּצֵא מֵאֵהָל לְאָה וַיְבֹא בְּאֵהָל רְחֵל.  
וְרָחֵל לָקְחָה אֶת הַתְּרָפִים וַתִּשְׂמֶם  
בְּכֹר הַגְּמָל וַתִּשֶׁבַע וַתֵּלֶקֶם וַיִּמְשָׁשׁ  
לָבֵן אֶת כָּל הָאֵהָל וְלֹא מָצָא

So Laban went into Jacob's tent and Leah's tent and the tents of the two maidservants; but he did not find them. Leaving Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent.

Rachel, meanwhile, **had taken** the idols and placed them in the camel cushion and sat on them; and Laban rummaged through the tent without finding them.

## Radak Genesis 4:1

והאדם ידע את חוה אשתו – כיון  
שנולד לו כח התאוה ובאשתו גם  
כן, ידעה והרתה ואחר כן ילדה  
לשבעה חדשים או לתשעה, ואין  
ראיה מזה שהרתה וילדה ביום  
אחד כדברי הדרש

Adam knew his wife, Eve – once  
his instinct of sexual desire was  
aroused [from eating from the  
tree] and his wife's also, he knew  
her and she conceived, either  
seven of nine months later. There  
is no proof from this verse that  
she conceived and gave birth on  
the same day, as the midrash  
writes.

## R. Yosef Bekhor Shor (Gen. 3:17)

ואותה ברכה שברכנו בששי לומר:  
פרו ורבו, לאחר שסרחו היתה,  
שהוצרכו לפריה ורביה

The blessing which God gave to them [ostensibly] on the sixth day [of creation] (Gen 1:28), “Be fruitful and multiply,” was [actually not given to Adam and Eve until now,] after their sins. For only now did they need to reproduce.

## Sanhedrin 38b

אמר רבי יוחנן בר חנינא: שמים  
עשרה שעות הוי היום. שעה  
ראשונה הוצבר עפרו, שניה נעשה  
גולם, שלישית נמתחו אבריו,  
רביעית נזרקה בו נשמה, ...  
שביעית נזדווגה לו חוה, שמינית  
עלו למטה שנים וירדו ארבעה,  
תשיעית נצטווה שלא לאכול מן  
האילן, עשירית סרח, אחת עשרה  
נידון, שתים עשרה נטרד והלך לו,  
שנאמר (תהלים מט, יג): "אדם  
ביקר כל יליו".

Rabbi Yohanan b. Hanina said: The  
day [of the creation of humans]  
was twelve hours long. In the first  
hour, his [Adam's] dust was  
gathered together. In the second it  
was formed into a shape. In the  
third his limbs were stretched out.  
In the fourth, he received his soul.  
... In the seventh, he was  
matched with Eve. In the eight,  
two climbed into the bed and four  
came out. In the ninth hour he  
was told not to eat of the tree. In