

English Abstract

The Distinction Between the Methods of Pshat and Drash in Rabbinical Literature

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This article deals with one of the most fundamental questions of Biblical commentary, one which many researchers have already discussed in detail. Aside from the singular opinion of Yonah Frenkel, there is broad consensus among researchers, that the sages of the Mishna and Talmud did not draw a distinction between the method of literal interpretation- the pshat, to that of homiletic exegesis- the midrash.

Some of the researchers such as Loewe and Kamin, focused on investigating the terminology employed in rabbinic literature and sought to produce evidence supporting the aforementioned issue.

In more focused circumstances, some of the studies such as those of Ahrend and Halivni, delved especially into the meaning of the term "pshat" and its derived words based on the postulation that there is a connection between the term "pshat" as it was defined during the Middle Ages, and the same term in its original context. This way they tried to conclude that the distinction between the terminologies for the methods as they have been known to us since the Middle Ages did not exist in Rabbinic literature and that the term itself had undergone linguistic diachronic changes. There are at least two problems in this type of study.

First, the use of the term "pshat" in rabbinic literature is not necessarily connected to this definition in the Middle Ages, and therefore in any case it is also not connected to the distinction between commentary types or methodologies.

The second, which is the main one, is that the term "pshat" in its commentary usage already appears in Amoraic connections (Rabbis from the Third to early Sixth Centuries) and onwards, As such, it is not possible to draw conclusions from it regarding Rabbinic literature in general.