

English Abstract

Insight into Rashi's commentary on the Torah through analyses
of Rashi's first comment on Genesis 1:1

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The research presents new insights in the first Rashi on the Torah that sheds light on Rashi's entire commentary to the Torah. It shows that this commentary contains three parts that interact with each other. It comes to define the Torah as a book of law in contrast to the prophets and scriptures. Dissection of the various parts of the commentary reveals additional conceptual elements. One of them involves an innovative understanding of the word "Bereshit". It continues to explain the historical background that was main reason Rashi wrote his commentary to the Torah. The Torah commentary intended to help Jewish Society culturally and spiritually. However, there was also a special historical reason that Rashi opened his commentary with this unique introduction to the way he saw the Torah and its contents. Through the prism of the first paragraph of Rashi's commentary on the Torah a new insight into the methodology of Rashi's commentary on the Torah is revealed.

In any case, the existence of terms and expressions which in themselves imply direct exegetic awareness; expressions such as "The Torah 'spoke' as if in the present" or "The Torah 'spoke' as if in the language of human beings", in themselves prove awareness to an exegetic process, which in itself is the basis to the distinctions between methodologies.

At its center, this article presents disagreements in rabbinic literature, which for the purpose of our discussion we have named "methodical disagreements". In them disagreements in various commentary methods are presented, this in itself bears witness towards awareness of distinctions between the commentary methods. Follow-ups of such types are disagreements can be found not only in Tannaitic Literature

(First to early Third Century Rabbis), but also in later works such as Bereshit Rabba (mid Fifth Century). In any case, as the years advance, the less those disputes appear.

To strengthen our conclusion we presented further examples of the distinction between Biblical exegetic methods, both from Second Temple period literature, and that of early church theologians. And despite the fact that there is no broad linkage between those literary anthologies and Rabbinic literature, these examples can strengthen the feasibility of this distinction also amongst the Rabbinic Sages during the Mishnaic and Talmudic era.