

Ramban

- Ramban-Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman
- Rabbi, philosopher and physician during the 11th century.
- He was born in 1194, in Girona Spain and died in 1270, in Acre Israel.
- Name of Nahmanides comes from greek which is the son of Nachman.
- The ramban had different teachers, some being Judah Ben Yakar, Meir ben Nathan, and Azriel of Gerona, who influenced the ramban into kabbalah.
- At the age of 16, he already started to make a reputation for himself and he started to write about Jewish Law.
- He wrote a book called the Iggeret Hakodesh, which was given to his son at his wedding as a gift and it talks about laws concerning marriage, holiness, and sexual relationships.
- He wrote another book called Torat Ha-Adam, which discusses laws about mourning rites, burial customs, etc.
- The last work of the Ramban was his commentary on the Torah. The Ramban usually in his commentary brings up rashi and then disagrees with it.
- Another commentary at the time of the Ramban was Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Ramban was an adversary to him.
- In the year 1263, the Ramban was involved in a disputation, and as a result of this whole disputation, even though he won, he was exiled from spain for 2 years for writing against christianity. However this exile ended up being a permanent exile.
- After 3 years, he ended up in the old city and made a shul, called the Ramban Synagogue. He then moved to Acre, and there he was very involved with spreading jewish learning, which was very much neglected at the time.
- In the year 1270, at the age of 76, the ramban died and was buried most likely in Hebron, but there is some disagreement,

His methodology:

- Thematic- He looks at the overall context and tries to find the common theme rather than looking at each individual pasuk and find the meaning
- Kabbalist- he looks into the deeper meaning of things and gives lessons.
- He uses reality (Derech Eretz)- instead of saying things that might not make sense logically, he uses logic and normal things to make his point.
- Super Commentator- he comments on other prashant and usually redefines what they say or disagrees with them.

Bamidbar:

Perek 1: Pasuk 18

The Ramban asks a question on pasuk 18 and his question is why does it specify the date that bnei yisroel gathered?

The reason is because the entire count doesn't only take one day but rather it takes a long time so the specific day is referring to the last day of the count. (This is a very classic Ramban answer because it's a very logical approach as to why it says the specific day)

Perek 1: Pasuk 32

The Ramban's question on the pasuk is why does it say Ephraim first if Manasseh is the older brother and also, why is Yosef's name specifically associated with him?

The reason that it said Ephraim first was because Ephraim was the head of division and he was the primary one, while Manasseh was the one who was subordinate to Ephraim. Also, another answer is that Ephraim had more children than Manasseh.

2 examples where order is reversed:

- Manasseh name was first during the second count but that was because at that time, he was more numerous than Ephraim and he took his inheritance first.
- Ephraim name as mentioned first during the 12 spies but Yosef's name was mentioned with Manasseh.

The answers that the Ramban gave fits well with the idea of making everything fit thematically and also practically. Its thematic because he used the idea that when Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, he blessed Ephraim first so here the torah says his name first. And it's also very logical because if someone is more primary and numerous, than their name would be mentioned first.

Perek 5: Pasuk 15

Cite:

(טו): לא יצק עליו שמן -

שלא יהא קרבנה מהודר, שהשמן קרוי אור והיא עשתה בחשך.

ולא יתן עליו לבונה - שהאמהות קרויות לבונה שנאמר (שה"ש ד ו): אל גבעת הלבונה, וזו פירשה מדרכיהן (תנחומא נשא ג).

כי מנחת קנאות הוא - הקמח הזה, מעוררת בה שתי קנאות קנאת המקום וקנאת הבעל (ספרי נשא נ), לשון רש"י מדברי רבותינו:

ועל דעת כל המפרשים "כי מנחת קנאות הוא" לומר בעבור שזאת המנחה מנחת עונש היא גרועה להיות שעורים בלא שמן ולבונה, כי המנחה אשר אזכרתה לרצון לה' באה סלת חטים בשמן ולבונה.

ולפי דעתי, טעם "כי מנחת קנאות הוא" יחזור אל ראש הפסוק, יאמר שיביא האיש את הקרבן על אשתו כלומר במקומה, כי מנחת קנאות היא להזכיר עונה ואיננו ראוי שתביאנו היא משלה, אבל הוא יקריב מנחה לשם שיקנא את קנאתו וינקום את נקמתו ממנה:

וטעם השעורים, שתהיה סערת חמת ה' חמה יוצאה סער מתחולל על ראש הרשעה יחול, וכעניין צליל שעורים האמור בגדעון (שופטים ז ג): שפתרו אותו לסער ומהומה רבה. וכן בכלי חרס, סימן שתשבר ככלי יוצר, וכן העפר, כי עפר היא ואל עפר תשוב. וטעם "הוא" על הקמח, ויש לו סוד, כי למטה (בפסוק יח): בהיותו ביד האשה אמר "היא", ועתה הזכיר הזכרון תחלה, ואמר כי היא מזכרת עון:

Translation:

The husband should not pour oil over her head because oil is like "light" and she should not be beautified. The husband should not put frankincense because the 4 mothers were referred to as

frankincense and the wife parted from their good ways. It's a meal-offering of jealousies- the unsifted flower. It brings up 2 jealousies against her- the jealousy of Hashem and of the husband. (all of the above was from rashi)

According to other opinions- "for it is a meal offering of jealousies" means since the meal offering is an offering of punishment, it is an inferior offering, consisting of barley and no oil or frankincense. For a meal offering whose memorial portion is burned to bring favor from god, comes made of sifted wheat flour with oil and frankincense.

"For it is a meal offering of jealousies" is referring to the beginning of the verse. The verse says that a man shall bring the offering for his wife in her place because (for) it is a meal offering of jealousies to be a reminder of her violation and it wouldn't be proper if she had to bring the offering from her own money. The husband brings the offering to god so that he will be jealous on God's behalf and avenge his vengeance from her. The reason there is barley is because there should be a "storm of Hashem. A fury shall go forth; a tempest shall seek rest; it will rest upon the head of the evil woman." It is like the idea of barley with regards to Gideon, which they interpreted as the cause for storm and panic. Also it is similar because the vessel the women uses to drink from is a pottery vessel and it is a sign that she will be "broken like a potter's vessel" and also that just like the vessel is made of dirt, she is made of dirt and will return to the ground.

The reason it says "it" in male is because it's referring to the flour earlier in the pasuk.

Analysis:

The Ramban is initially disturbed from the fact that the torah says NOT to pour oil on the woman's head and then it quotes rashi to answer the question. The ramban then has an issue when the pasuk says "FOR it is a meal offering of jealousies". His issue is: What is this statement giving a reason to- why does it have to say for? He then answers this question by saying that it refers to something in the beginning of the pasuk, which is a typical Ramban thing because his approach is very thematic because he is trying to make everything fit together. The ramban then just addresses the reason for why it says "it" in a male writing.

Perek 11: Pasuk 12

Cite:

האנכי הריתי את כל העם הזה על דעת אונקלוס כמו על ברכות הורי (בראשית מט כו) כי האב יקרא הורה מפני שנותן ומזמין ההריון יאמר אם אני אביהם או אמם שילדתי אותם ובעלי הפשט אמרו בהפך האנכי אמם שהייתי הרה בהם ויולדת וכן ותהר את מרים ואת שמי (דברי הימים א ד יז) שהרתה וילדה אותם או אנכי אביהם שילדתיהו כמו ויולד נח (בראשית ו י) לאביך זה ילדך (משלי כג כב) וזולתם ואמר כאשר ישא האומן את היונק האב או האם ועל דעתי הכל מליצה באם וטעמו כמו האנכי הריתי את כל העם הזה ואנכי ילדתיהו והזכיר כן כי האשה תסבול צער גדול הבנים בזכרה מה שסבלה בהם מלידה ומבטן ומהריון ואמר "אומן" כי הוא אומן לא אומנת

Translation:

What did Moshe mean by conceiving and giving birth to the people? The ramban quotes onkeles who says the following:

The meaning of the word "Hariti" is similar to the meaning in the blessings of my "father's", meaning "hariti" is referring to the father. The father is called a "Hore" because he gives or brings about the pregnancy. Moshe is asking "Am I their father or am I the mother who gave birth to them?"

However, those who go according just to the meaning of the pshat say the opposite. Moshe is first saying "Am I their mother who conceived and bore them?" Similarly, the word "vatahar" in the verse "vatahar" "his wife conceived" miriam and shammai means that she conceived and gave birth to them. Moshe is then continuing and asking "Or am I the father who bore them?" The word of "Vayoled" can also be for a male, just like it says "Noach (vayoled) begot" and it says "to your fathers who bore you (yaldecha)" and other verses like them.

The ramban next question is: What did moshe mean by referring to a nurse in the next part of the metaphor?

The ramban explains that moshe then said "as a nurse carries a suckling" which either refers to a mother or a father.

The ramban own opinion:

In my opinion, the entire verse is a reference to the mother. Its meaning is as if it had stated "Did I conceive this entire people AND give birth to it?" Moshe spoke this way (using the mother instead of the father) because a women has more tolerance than a man regarding the difficulties of raising children, as she remembers how she suffered with them from birth and from the womb and from conception." And also the text states "nurse" in male form because if she were a nurse, he would be an "Omen" and not an "Omelet".

Analysis:

The ramban is bothered by the fact that moshe is asking 2 different things that seem the same and also a little peculiar. The ramban then quotes onkeles, who gives one approach, and then offers another approach that is the polar opposite of what onkeles said. The ramban then asks what Moshe meant by a nurse, and then the ramban concludes that really moshe is only asking one things and only comparing himself to a mother. He does this by explaining the pshat as moshe saying and instead of it meaning or. The ramban bringing in sources and then reinterpreting them is a very common thing for the ramban to do (he is being a super commentator).

Perek 13: Pasuk 32:

וטעם ויוציאו דבת הארץ וגו' אל בני ישראל - כי הלכו מלפני משה ואהרן והיו אומרים באהליהם כי היא ארץ אוכלת יושביה. כי מתחלה, כשהיו אומרים להם לפני משה שהארץ זבת חלב ודבש זולתי שהעם חזק וכלב היה אומר "כי יכול נוכל לה", היו העם פוסחים, ומהם בוטחים בכחם וגבורתם ומהם בעזרת השם בגבורים. אז הוציאו להם דבה בפני עצמם, דכתיב הארץ אשר עברנו בה וגו' - עד שילינו כל העדה, וזה טעם מה שאמר (להלן יד לו) וישובו וילינו עליו את כל העדה להוציא דבה על הארץ. והיה זה, כי האנשים האלה בראותם העם אשר כגובה ארזים גבהו וחסון הוא כאלונים, נפל פחדם עליהם והמסו לב אחיהם, וכאשר ראו כי עדיין היו ישראל נועצים לעלות ויהושע וכלב מחזקים את לבם, הוציאו דבה בשקר: כדי לבטל עלייתם על כל פנים:

ודע כי מוציא דבה הוא כסיל אשר יאמר שקר, אבל המגיד אמת יקרא "מביא דבה", כמו שנאמר (בראשית לז ב) ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה אל אביהם. ועל זה נענשו למות במגפה, שנאמר (להלן יד לז):
:וימותו האנשים מוציאי דבת הארץ רעה במגפה לפני ה

Translation:

And they brought forth an evil report of the land which they spied out to the binei yisrael. This really means that the spies left Moshe and Aharon and went around in the people tent and said that the land is a land eaten up by the inhabitants of the land. When they were speaking to the people in front of Moshe and Aharon that the land was good and it flowed with milk and honey but the people in the land are fierce. Caleb said that "we are definitely able to overcome it". The people hesitated between the opposing reports and there were some of them who trusted in their power and strength and there were some of them who trusted in Hashem against the mighty in Israel. Then the spies spread the evil to the people as it says "The land to which we have passed to spy it out, is a land that is eaten up by the inhabitants thereof, etc." And they said these things until they caused the whole congregation to complain, this being the sense of the verse, as it says "and they returned and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up the evil report against the land." This happened because when the spies saw the people whose height was like the height of the cedar and he was as strong as the oaks, the fear of them was fallen upon them and they made the hearts of their brothers melt. Then, when the spies saw that the people were still considering to go to the land and that Yihoshua and Caleb were encouraging them to do so, they created a false report in order to stop them from going by any possible means. One who brings forth bad words is a fool if he spoke falsely but one who brings a truthful bad report is called "one who brings dibah" as it says "Yosef brought the "evil report of them" unto their father". It was because of their FALSE report that they were punished by death through a plague as it is said "those men (spies) that brought forth an evil report of the land died by a plague before Hashem.

Analysis:

This Ramban is explaining the issue with the meraglim's sin because from the text, their sin doesn't seem so bad and if that's true, then why do they have such a bad punishment. The Ramban then realizes that the spies must have said something else or done something worse than just the plain psbat.

Perek 16: Pasuk 1

פרשה זו יפה נדרשת במדרש רבי תנחומא (קרח ב) ויקח קרח לקח עצמו לצד אחד להיות נחלק מתוך העדה לעורר על הכהונה וזהו שתרגם אונקלוס ואתפלג נחלק מתוך העדה להחזיק במחלוקת וכן מה יקח לבך (איוב טו יב) לוקח אותך להפליגך משאר בני אדם לשון רש"י ודעת המדרש אינו כפירוש הרב אבל אמרו שם אין ויקח אלא לשון פליגה שלבו לקחו כענין שנאמר מה יקח לבך ואינו רוצה לומר שלקח עצמו לצד אחד וכן מה יקח לבך אינו שיקח אותך לצד אחד להפליג עצמך משאר בני אדם אבל כונת המדרש בויקח קרח שלקח עצה בלבו לעשות מה שיספר כי הלקיחה תאמר על העצה והמחשבה וכן מה יקח לבך מה מחשבה יקח לך לבך שתחשוב בסתר לית דין ולית דיין ולא תגלה אותה או מה ירמזון עיניך שמתוך רמיוזתיך נכר שאתה כופר במשפט האלהים ולא תפרש זה אבל תקרא תגר כמסתיר עצמו ואל יפז אמר זה לאיוב קודם שגילה איוב מחשבתו במאמר ברור שאין לבורא השגחה בפרטי הנבראים השפלים ולכך אמר לו

(שם כב יג) ואמרת מה ידע אל הבעד ערפל ישפוט והוא ענין המענה ההוא למתבונן בו וכן לשון לקיחה במחשבה קחו מוסרי (משלי ה י) ולבלתי קחת מוסר (ירמיהו יז כג) אמרו עוד במדרש (רבה יח טז) ויחלוק וידבר ויצו קרח אינו נאמר אלא ויקח מה לקח לא לקח כלום אלא לבו נטלו אמר הכתוב מה יקחך לבך והוא כמה שפירשתי ואונקלוס שתרגם ואתפלג פתר הענין לא הלשון כמנהגו במקומות רבים וכן תרגם על דבר קרח (להלן יז יד) על פלוגתא דקרח ותרגם בדבר בלעם (להלן לא טז) בעצת בלעם כי הוא מזכיר הענין בתרגומו ור"א אמר ויקח קרח אנשים דרך קצרה כמו חמור לחם (שמואל א טז כ) ואחרים אמרו כי "ודתן" כמו ואלה בני צבעון ואיה וענה (בראשית לו כד) ותקונו ויקח קרח דתן ואבירם ולפי דעתי אין צורך כי הגון הוא בלשון שיאמר ויקח קרח ודתן ויקומו ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן כי בכל תחילת מעשה תבא לקיחה והוא לשון התעוררות במעשה ההוא וכן ואבשלום לקח ויצב לו בחייו את מצבת (יח יח) ואם תחפוץ לפרש כי הלקיחה על הדבר אשר יזכיר אחרי כן ויקח אבשלום את המצבת ויצב לו בחייו כך תפרש ויקח קרח את האנשים מבני ישראל חמשים ומאתים ויקומו לפני משה ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן

Translation:

This section is interpreted in the midrash of Rebbi tanchuma. "Korach took" means he took himself over to one side so that he would be separated from the rest of the assembly so that he could argue against the priesthood of Aharon. This is also what Onkeles meant when he translated the phrase as "korach separated himself" meaning, he separated himself from the assembly to cause conflict. Similarly, in the phrase, "How does your heart **take** you?", which means that your heart takes you to separate you from the rest of the people. All of this is from rashi. However, the view of the Midrash Tanchuma is not the way that Rashi had explained it. Rather, they stated there "the meaning of "vayicach" is an expression referring to division, which means his heart took him. It is like the phrase "how does your heart take you?" And the phrase doesn't mean that Korach took himself to one side, but similarity to the phrase, "How does your heart take you?", does not mean that his heart takes him to one side to separate himself from the rest of the people but the intention of the midrash when using this phrase is to show that Korach took- he took counsel in his heart to do what he will do in the following story. Because the root of the word "Lacach" can also be said when talking about a thought or an idea. Similarity, in the phrase, "How does your heart take you?", really means "what is the thought that your heart adopts for you, that you secretly think, there is no divine justice and no judge, but you don't reveal this publicly." And also in the phrase "what do your eyes intimate" means that it is noticeable in your eyes that you deny the justice of God and you don't state this explicitly but you level the complaints as one who conceals himself. Eliphaz had said this Job before Job revealed his thoughts in an explicit statement (the questions asked before was Eliphaz speaking to job). That is why Eliphaz said to Job in a later response "And you say, what does god know? Can he judge from behind his thick cloud?" (The ramban now gives many examples of how the word lacach means adopting an idea)

- "Accept my discipline and not my silver and in order not to accept, rebuke" (accept is from the word lacach)

The ramban goes back to explain why his reading of the midrash tanchuma must be correct: It says more in the midrash that the torah did not use any words such as: separated, assembled, spoke, or commanded but rather it says he took. What does "took" mean. He didn't actually take anything but it means that his heart took him. This is the same idea as the phrase "how does your heart take you?" And this is what I explained.

Ibn Ezra translates this phrase to mean that Korach took people and it was speaking in an elliptical manner. Just like when it says "a donkey of bread" (which means a donkey carrying bread).

Other people say that..

But in my opinion there is no need for all of this. Because it is appropriate in the hebrew language to say that “Korach took and dathan and they stood and they gathered together against moses- without stating what they took.” The word “taking” can appear at the beginning of any action and it is an expression of one bestirring oneself to do that action. Just like it says “Absalom had taken and erected for himself in his lifetime the pillar” and if you want to explain this phrase by saying that the word “taking” refers to the object mentioned later in the verse, and you want to say the phrase means “Absalom took the pillar and erected it for himself in his lifetime”, then you may explain our verse similarity by saying “Korach took the 255 men from the children of israel (which is mentioned later) and they stood before Moshe, and they gathered together against Moshe and against Aharon.

Analysis:

The ramban uses many of his normal methods. First of all, he quotes many different parshanim and explain how each person interpreted the pasuk. He then acknowledges all of the

Perek 22: Pasuk 13

Cite:

"לתתי להלך עמכם" - אלא עם שרים גדולים למדנו שרוחו גסה ולא רצה לומר שהוא ברשותו של מקום אלא בלשון גסות ולפיכך ויסף עוד בלק שלח שרים לשון רש"י ואינו נכון כי כל כבודו שיתפאר ויתגדל בדבר השם ועוד שהוא לא היה חושב שיתן לו רשות ללכת עם שרים אחרים נכבדים אבל טעמו שאין השם חפץ שילך כלל והנה בלק חשד אותו כי להרבות שכרו אמר כן ולכך אמר לו (פסוק לז) למה לא הלכת אלי האמנם לא אוכל כבודך ועל כן הוסיף שלוח שרים רבים ונכבדים להראות לו כי הוא חפץ בו מאד ונדר לתת לו הון ועושר ככל אשר יצוה ויגזור עליו ובלעם השיב להם (פסוק יח) אם יתן לי בלק וגו' לא אוכל לעבור את פי ה' כי הוא אלהי ולא אוכל לעשות קטנה או גדולה אם אעבור את פיו כי בשמו אני עושה או יאמר לא אוכל לעבור את פיו בדבר קטן או גדול כי הוא אלהי ואני עבדו

Translation:

The ramban's question is why did Balak send people a second time?

“Hashem refuses to let me go with you” This implies that Hashem only allows him to go with officers that are greater than the people Balak sent the first time. We learn from this that Bilam had an arrogant spirit, and that he wouldn't want to admit that he is under the present of Hashem unless it was in an arrogant tone. Therefore, Balak went to send officers a second time, thinking that if he sent better officers, Bilam would come. That was all rashi, but this explanation does not make perfect sense because Bilam's entire honor consisted of glorifying and exalting himself in the fact that he listens to the word of God. Also, Bilam did not really think that God would let him go with higher ranking officers. Rather, the meaning of the pasuk, “Hashem refuses to let me go with you”, is that it wasn't God's desire that he should go at all. However, Balak interpreted this as Bilam only wanting him to increase his money. He said to him much later “why did you not go to me? Am I not capable of honoring you?” And this is the reason he went to send more officers, and better officers, to show him that he wanted him to come. And he promised to give his riches and his wealth and whatever he would command and decree upon him. But Bilam responded to Balak by saying “With all his money I could not go against the word of hashem because he is my God.” And I couldn't do anything great if I went against his word, because I act through his name.

Alternatively, Bilam is saying “I can’t violate his word in any matter, small or great, because he is my God and I am his servant.”

Analysis:

The Ramban when analyzing this pasuk uses many different methods. One method he uses is his thematic method, which is when he looks at the overall story and tries to figure out what makes sense in the story. When Rashi reads this pasuk, he puts a lot of emphasis on the word “you”, which is more of a drash approach, and it is also omni significance. Rashi tries to find a problem with Bilam over here because since Rashi knows that Bilam isn’t good later in the torah, he tries to find a fault in him in this story. However, the Ramban doesn’t take this approach but instead interprets this very literally. He thinks that there is nothing wrong with Bilam at this time and this fits in with the story taking place. Another method that the Ramban uses is his super commentator, which means that he comments on another parshan, in this case Rashi.