

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on Bamidbar-NaSoH

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GOALS

The goal of the Weekly Rashi Digest is to use the weekly Torah portion to expose students at all levels to the ten major methods of Rashi's commentary. Continual weekly exposure to these ten major methods facilitate the acquisition, familiarity, and facility with the major exegetical methods. This year, 2012-2013, we are concentrating on the **grammar** rule. We acknowledge benefitting from Dr. Isseroff's book, *An Introduction to Rashi's Grammatical Explanations in the Book of Genesis*, 1985, Published by the Torah Education Department of World Zionist Organization, MP Press Inc, ISBN 965-222-049-3. For a full lightning statement of all Rashi rules see the Appendix.

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Connective words - *Akh - Usually, most of Daily Rashi: Sunday May 12, 2013*

Every language has connective words which can connect two sentences or connect nouns with the adjectival phrases modifying them. Some common examples of connective words in English are *because, and, or, if-then, from, when,*

A beautiful discovery by Rashi, following the researchers of the Midrash, is that in biblical Hebrew, each connective word has multiple meanings, sometimes as many

as half a dozen meanings. The most famous example points out that the biblical Hebrew word *ki*, can have any of the following six meanings! *rather, perhaps, because, when, if-then, that*. As several Rashi researchers have pointed out, this principle of multiple meanings applies not only to *ki*, but generally applies to all connective words and prefixes.

So biblical Hebrew is unlike English:

- English is user friendly; the speaker explicitly by choice of words tells the listener exactly what the speaker intends to say
- Contrastively, in Hebrew, the speaker and listener share the discovery of meaning: The speaker says something, but the listener has a choice of meanings.

Perhaps the reason for biblical Hebrew in doing this is that by the listener participating with the speaker in identifying meaning the listening experience is intensified, facilitating retention of communication.

Today we study the biblical Hebrew connective word, *Aleph-Caph-Lamed*. It can mean

- *Nevertheless*
- *Most of*
- *Probably (most of the time)*
- *Usually (most of the time)*

As we go through the yearly cycle we will see examples of each of these meanings, thus sharpening the students eye to various nuances of the connective.

Example from this week's parshah.

Example 2: Nu02-49a

Background:

Biblical chapter **Nu02**, discusses the census of the Israelite tribes in the wilderness.

Biblical text: You *probably* (**akh**) will not census the Levites among the Israelites

Rashi: You probably won't census them. Why? Because the purpose of the census is contrastive; the current census is compared to after-sin census to show the effects of sin. However, the Levites, who did not sin in the Golden calf are probably not expected to sin in future sins and therefore a census is not needed.

Comment: We have approached this Rashi using his 2nd explanation which in our opinion is always the true explanation. Other scholars have different approach to 2-explanation Rashis. For example, the Lubavitch Rebbe holds that Rashi presents two comments when neither is sufficient to explain the biblical text. As you can see, the translation of akh as probably is punchy, to the point, and seems to fully explain the verse.

Example 1: Lv27-28a

Biblical text: *Most [Akh] charamim [a technical Hebrew term connoting dedication] which a person sanctifies to God from his possessions....can neither be sold nor redeemed [since] all charamim are sacred to God.*

Rashi: The word *most* [akh] implies limitation [most, but not every]. To explain this note that there are 3 ways a person could make a *Cherem*.

- (A) He could say e.g. this animal is a Cherem *for the temple*
- (B) He could say e.g. this animal is a Cherem *for the Priests*.
- (C) He could say e.g. this animal is a Cherem.

Cases (A) and (B) are clear. Case (C) is ambiguous

You could interpret that case (C) is interpreted to mean a dedication to the temple since the end of the verse states *all charamim are sacred to God*

You could cite the verse that *Every cherem in Israel belongs to you the Priests* (Nu18-14), implying that case (C) is interpreted to mean a dedication to the Priests.

REFERENCES

Russell Jay Hendel, *The Meaning of Akh*, **The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series**, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 100 - 109, 2005

Verbs - Active and Passive Voice

Daily Rashi: Monday May 13, 2013

All languages have the capacity to express concepts in the *active* or *passive* voice. Here are some simple examples in English.

- Active: *I ate the apple*
- Passive: *The apple was eaten by me.*

Both these sentences describe identical scenes. They however differ in *style*.

Style conveys extra nuances of meaning. A skilled author can use *style* to indicate things not explicitly stated in the text. There is no one set of rules for *style*. As we go through the year we will tune our ears to the various nuance implicit in use of active and passive. We present below a Rashi on today's Parshah.

Today we explore implications of the passive.

Examples from today's Parshah

Example 2: Nu01-16a

Background: The bible lists the tribal governors that will assist Moses in performance of the census.

Biblical text: *These are the congregant invitees, governors of the tribes, they are the head of the Jewish population.*

Rashi: *Invitee* is a passive participle of the verb *to invite*. Why? At prestigious functions one always wants the leaders invited as it gives more credibility to the function. So one of the biblical names for leaders is *invitees*.

Daily Rashi: Tuesday May 14, 2013

Example 3: Nu05-18f

Background: The bible is discussing the suspected wife ceremony in which the woman is subjected to a frightening ceremony in order to get her to confess. A climactic part of the ceremony is forcing the woman to drink from the waters in which the document of suspicion is mixed.

Biblical text: *And the bitter cursing waters come into the women...*

Rashi: It is tempting to translate *bitter cursed waters* but the verb used is active, not passive. The correct translation is *bitter cursing waters*.

Comment: Rashi's point seems grammatical but is really much more subtle. Part of the ceremony, attempting to get the woman to confess, is exposing her to items that would lead to sin.

- For example, the woman's upper blouse is ripped open indicating a possible path to sin
- For example, the woman drinks water symbolizing to-and-fro emotions, again indicating a possible path to sin.

Thus water, describing an emotional state, leads to sin and hence the water-emotional state is actively cursing rather than simply cursed.

Example 1: Ex25-40b

Background: This verse discusses God's command to Moses to construct the Temple Candellabrah.

Biblical text: *See and do as you are shown on the mountain.*

Rashi: The underlined words *are shown*, are passive and in present tense. This contrasts say with Ex27-08 (discussing the construction of the altar) *as He showed you on the mountain, so will they construct*. Here the past tense and active voice are used.

We conclude that Moses had to be shown a model Candellabrah (The instructions of construction were not sufficient; Moses also had to see a diagram). Unlike other Temple utensils which Moses was shown once (past tense) Moses was repeatedly

shown the Candellabrah construction (present). This implies that Moses had difficulty in understanding the construction and had to be shown it again. The use of the passive emphasizes Moses helplessness; he simply didn't understand the construction and had to be reshown it.

Why? Why emphasize that Moses did not understand the Candellabrah. Philosophically, the Candellabrah symbolizes education. Moses was in his eighties and was an angel. He was a perfect being. He therefore could not understand education, the transformation from an ignorant to a knowledgeable being. Hence, he required special prophetic revelations to understand the nature of education.

Verbs - Conjugation

Daily Rashi: Wednesday May 15 2013

Although this Rashi is a bit technical, addressing Hebrew conjugations, I will follow my usual custom of finding English equivalents. Additionally, even those fluent in Hebrew will find something new here.

Hebrew

- Consists of *three-letter-roots*.
- The roots are *conjugated* by adding letters before (*prefixes*) and after (*suffixes*) the root.
- Each conjugation is referred to as a *Binyan* (a construction).
- Each Binyan has its own characteristic *meanings*.

Hitpael Examples

The *hitpael* construction adds a *hey* and *tauv* before the root letters. The *hitpael* construction is used to indicate *interactive* activity. Here are some examples:

- **Nu01-18a** [The bible is discussing the census] *And they genealogized the Jews by family.* Rashi: The Hebrew root, **Yud-Lamed-Daleth**, means *birth*. In the causative mode (**hifil**) it means *to deliver* [a baby]. In the interactive tense (**hitpael**) it means *to genealogize*.
- **Lv26-12a** [The Bible lists the reward for observing the commandments.] *And I [God] will stroll among you and I will be your God.* Rashi: The Hebrew verb used is the interactive form (*hitpael*) of the verb meaning *to walk*. *Walking* in the active tense if purposeful: You go from one place to another. In the *hitpael* tense the root means *to stroll*, to interactively walk in friendship with someone else.

Also note the contrastive concluding phrase: Although I am your God and leader nevertheless I will stroll amongst you. [*Strolling with God* refers to an intimate relationship of prophecy without burning fire dreams where God's commands to his prophets are easy to implement by people.]

- **Gn34-09** [Chamor, negotiating a deal with Jacob to unit with him] *And we will (interactively) marry: your daughters we will take for ourselves, and our daughters you can take for yourselves*
- **Ex08-04** [Moses bragging about God's power to Pharoh] *Moses said to Pharoh: Interactively glorify [God] by me: Name the time when I should pray for you your servants and maids, to remove the frogs from you and your house...and he [Pharoh] said, 'Tomorrow'; and Moses said 'As you stated [so shall it be] in order that you know that there is none like our God*
- **Gn37-18** [Background: Joseph was coming to his brothers who happened to hate him because of his dreams] *They [Joseph's brothers] saw him from afar and interactively plotted against him in order to kill him* [Here the intent is that when Joseph came to them they started an interrogation (presumably about his dreams); the interrogation was not investigative but provocative in order for them to justify (in their minds) executing him.]

Rashi makes a further point about the prepositional phrase used with the interactive hitpael mode

- If the interactive activity is shared, one would use prepositional connectives meaning *with*
- If the interactive activity is one-sided, one uses a prepositional connective connoting *objects*.

Examples:

Gn34-09 (Above)

- Chamor speaks about marrying of them (*hithchatnu othanu*) instead of the more shared
- marrying with them (*hithchatnu emanu*)

Gn37-18 (Above)

Similarly, since Joseph's brothers were not interested in the truth, the verse uses the objective case

- They plotted on him (*Vayithnaclu otho*) instead of the shared
- They plotted with him (*Vayithnaclue ito*) which e.g. would be appropriate if they really wanted to find out what his views were (instead of making up their minds before hand (In such a case another verb would have been

used)

Daily Rashi: Thursday May 16 2013

Hifil Examples

The *hifil* indicates the causative tense, causing someone else to do something. Very often the causative takes on a distinct meaning as the following example shows.

Biblical text: Nu04-18a [The Bible is discussing the responsibilities of the Priests. Among their responsibilities are dealing with the holy of holies; the Levites were prohibited from directly dealing with the holy of holies under penalty of death] *Do not cause the Levites to die.* Rashi: The biblical root, Caph-Resh-Tauv means: a) to cut in the active mode (**Qal**); b) to go to hell (be cut off from the Jewish people) in the passive mode (**Nifal**) ; c) to cause someone else to die in the causative mode (**hifil**)

Biblical text: Lv09-12: *They slaughtered the elevation offering; the priests presented to Aaron the blood ...*

Rashi: *Presented* (**vayamtziu**) is the causative of the verb *to find* (**matzah**) since when you *present* something you cause the person you are presenting to, to *find* the object presented.

Nifal Examples

The *nifal* generally indicates the passive and deemphasizes the subject.

Biblical text: *And these [birds] you shall despise from the birds; they will not be eaten for they are despicable.*

Rashi: The verses uses the passive - *they will not be eaten* - vs. the active - *do not eat them*. Thus, the passive has a broader interpretation and prohibits adults from letting minors eat them.

APPENDIX

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES / THE 30 RASHI RULES

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I-REFERENCE: Dt26-05d *We went down to Egypt with a few people* explained by Gn46-27: with 70 people

II-MEANING / Lexicography / Dictionary: EXAMPLE (Connectives) KI means IF,PERHAPS,RATHER,BECAUSE,WHEN,THAT (Rashi on Gn18-15a Gn24-33a) **EXAMPLE (Nuances):** YDA means FAMILIAR, not KNOW (eg Dt34-10a) eg Gn04-01 Adam was FAMILIAR with his wife **EXAMPLE (Idioms)** ON THE FACE OF means DURING THE LIFETIME (Rashi on Nu03-04a Gn11-28a Ex20-03c Dt05-07a) **EXAMPLE (Synonyms)** *Marchesheth* means pot; *Machavath* means frying pan (Lv02-05a, 07a) **EXAMPLE (Hononyms)** SHAMAH can mean listen, hear, understand: (Gn42-23a) *They didn't appreciate that Joseph understood them* (Note: They knew he was listening) **EXAMPLE (Metonymy)** (Lv02-11a) *Don't offer ...any honey as sacrifices* RASHI: *honey* includes any *sweet fruit juice*

III-GRAMMAR: EXAMPLE: BA-ah means CAME;ba-AH means COMING(Gn46-26a) **EXAMPLE:** Hitpael conjugation has different rules if 1st root letter is Tzade (Gn44-16a)

IV-PARALLELISM: (Ex20-04) Dont **POSSESS** the gods of others Dont **MAKE** idols RASHI: So both **POSSESSion & MAKING** of idols are prohibited

V-CONTRADICTION: (Nu04-03, Nu08-24a)Levites start Temple work at 25; Levites start temple work at 30. RASHI: They apprentice at 25 but start actual service at 30.

VI-STYLE: RABBI ISHMAEL RULES: EXAMPLE: (Simple verses should be generalized): (Rashi Pesachim 6) (Dt25-04a) *Dont MUZZLE an OX while THRESHING* RASHI: Dont STOP any WORKING ANIMAL from eating

VII-FORMATTING: EXAMPLE (BOLD indicated by Repetition): Ex12-09c) COOK COOK it in water (So COOKED-COOKED is understood the same way bold is understood by modern reader) RASHI: Preferred to COOK it in water; But COOK it at all costs(Even if you dont have water) **EXAMPLE: (BULLETS indicated by Repeating keywords)** (Ex03-11a) Who am I - **THAT** I should go to Pharaoh - **THAT** I should take the Jews out of Egypt RASHI: Repeated word **THAT** creates BULLET effect - Pharaoh was a difficult king (Bullet one) - Jews were not yet ready for freedom (Bullet two) **EXAMPLE (Climax assumed in any Biblical list):** (Dt19-11a) *If a man HATES, SPIES, CONFRONTS & KILLS.* RASHI: Bible identifies 4 stages to murder(indicated by capped words)

VIII-DATABASE: EXAMPLE: *God spoke to Moses to say over* introduces about 7 dozen biblical commandments; *God spoke to Aaron to say over* only introduces 2 commandments. RASHI: (Lv10-03b) Aaron was silent when his sons died because they served in the Temple drunk; hence he merited that the commandment prohibiting priests to work in the Temple drunk, was given to him

IX-NON VERSE: EXAMPLE: (Use of Algebra)(Ex38-26b) *Temple donations of silver were 100 Kikar and 1775 Shekel from 630,550 half-shekels* RASHI: So one Kikar of silver = 3000 Shekel.

X: SYMBOLISM: EXAMPLE: (Use of puns) (NuXX-XX) Moses made a copper snake for people to look up to when bitten by snakes (so they should pray and recover) RASHI: (Nu21-09a) The Hebrew root for copper and snake are identical (Cf. The English *copperhead*) Moses made the metal snake copper colored to symbolize the snake