

# The 10 RashiYomi Rules

*Their presence in Rashis on Chukath-Balak*

## Vol 20#10 - Adapted from Rashi-is-Simple

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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.*

*For the half year period Oct-2012 through May-2013 we studied the Rashi grammar rule. This entire series will be summarized and conveniently available in zip format in the near future.*

*For the coming half year period, we will study the Rashi reference rule, also known as the citation rule or colloquially at the other-verse rule. This deceptively simple rule- the use of citations or references by Rashi - is actually a super-rule, that dominates a large portion of Rashis. This rule was chosen by the authors of the Passover Haggadah and is exclusively featured in the Aramaean tried to destroy my father Haggadah passage.*

*We are also devoting this series to home-schoolers. The Rashis will be presented in home-schooling format and can be used on any age group above 5. Nevertheless, the scholarly aspect of the Rashi will not be ignored: Citations and references are very popular in Rabbinic sermons and in Talmudic passages.*

*We briefly illustrate the richness of the reference/citation rule by exploring the sister rule, reading comprehension, so popular now in America. Consider the sentence: At a red light, Abe quickly jumped out and purchased a coke for Sarah. Consider the following levels of reading comprehension questions:*

- *Citation level: Who purchased the coke. **Answer**: Abe*
- *Inference level: From where did Abe jump out. **Answer**: A car*
- *Speculation level: Why did Sarah need a coke. **Answer**: She was very thirsty.*

*Students in first - third grade may find the citation level easy but the inference and speculation level hard. The speculation level is frequently powerfully used in Rabbinic sermons. This is but a taste of what we will do this year.*

*As usual, when making transitions in the Rashi Newsletter we welcome positive and negative comments as well as requests. Please send all comments to [RashiYomi@GMail.Com](mailto:RashiYomi@GMail.Com).*

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## Reference - *Daily Rashi Sunday June 16 2013*

The question and answer below can be used as a starting point for teaching young children or in a rabbinic sermon.

Read the reference and target verse below and then answer the questions.

- **Reference verses Jr48-47** *Woe to you Moab; the nation of Kemosh is lost*  
**Reference verses Ju11-24** [Yiptach speaking to the Moabites who wanted to claim land won a war several 100 years earlier] [Don't you agree] *whatever Kemosh your god conquers for you is conquered?* [So too] *Whatever our God conquers for us is conquered for us.*
- **Target verse Nu21-29b** [Korach attacking Moses' rule] *Woe to you Moab; you, the nation of Kemosh, are lost.*

Question: What information do the reference verses give about the target verse.

Answer: Both verses refer to Kemosh. We learn from **Ju11-24** that Kemosh was the god of Moab.

## Reference - meaning - *Daily Rashi Monday June 17 2013*

Rashi here uses references to illuminate word meaning. To often we treat word meaning as equivalent to looking up something in a dictionary. Not so! Word meaning is a dynamic live process.

The exercises below are good for both children and adults. One should spend some time and ask why different activities are called by the same word. What are the commonalities? How many can you formulate? Even you or your child formulating one is worthwhile.

Read the two verses below and then answer the following question: *What does the word Pisgah mean.* [Hint: From the underlined words, *castles, go up, scan* what can you say about the height or depth of a *Pisgah*]

Here are the 2 verses.

1. **Dt03-27** [God speaking to Moses at the end of the life; God grants Moses' request to see Israel] *Go up [Moses] to the head of the Pisgah; scan west, north,*

*south and east and see with your [own] eyes*

2. **Ps48-14** [Psalmist praising Israel] *Place your attention on her storage; pasgu her castles*

Answers: The underlined words *go up*, *scan* and *castles* imply something tall and high. Hence

- (Rashi) Pisgah is a high place, a hill or mountain
- *Pasgu her castles* means *climb her castles* or *appreciate the height of her castles*

## Reference - meaning - *Daily Rashi Tuesday June 18 2013*

Rashi here uses references to illuminate word meaning. To often we treat word meaning as equivalent to looking up something in a dictionary. Not so! Word meaning is a dynamic live process.

The exercises below are good for both children and adults. One should spend some time and ask why different activities are called by the same word. What are the commonalities? How many can you formulate? Even you or your child formulating one is worthwhile.

Read the two verses below and then answer the following question: *What does the phrase niddah water mean.* [Hint: From the underlined words, *stones at me*, *sprinkle niddah water*, what can you infer about its meaning?]

Here are the 2 verses.

1. **Aycah03:53** [Jeremiah describing the abuse of the Jews] *They yadu stones at me*
2. **Nu19-21**...*and the person who sprinkles the niddah water will wash his clothes*

Answers: The underlined phrases, *stones at me*, *sprinkle*, suggest some type of throwing. Hence the Rashi comment: *Yadu means to throw.*

**Comment:** Rashi is actually using two methods here

- Grammatically, the root of the noun *niddah*, is **yud-daleth-hey**. The prefix **nun** indicates passivity (something thrown). Because the first letter is a **yud** (a weak letter) it falls off and is not visible in the noun *niddah*.
- Semantically, we could infer that the verb form of hand (the meaning of *yud-daleth*) is to throw. However, Rashi provides us with some verses *yadu stones at me* where this is clear.

It is very important not to be oversimplistic. Rashi is using two rules and we must address this.

## **Reference - inference *Daily Rashi Wednesday June 19 2013***

The question and answer below can be used as a starting point for teaching young children or in a rabbinic sermon. As we explained in our introduction:

- certain reading comprehension deals with raw words
- certain reading comprehension deals with inferences from these words

Please read the sentences below and then answer the accompanying reading-inference questions.

### Sentences

1. When it started raining, I ran home quickly, and changed my clothes.
2. I stayed up all night writing the presentation but missed presenting it early the next morning.
3. **Nu20-01:02** Miryam died; the nation complained to Moses about the lack of water.
4. At the red light, I jumped out of my car to buy a coke.

### Questions

1. Why did I have to change clothes?
2. Why did I miss the presentation?
3. Why did the nation lack water?
4. Why did I jump out of my car?

### Answers:

1. Because I was wet from the rain.
2. Because I overslept from staying up all night.
3. Because the righteous Miryam died; her merit enabled us to have water in the wilderness.
4. To buy a coke.

Comment: Notice the difference between sentence #4 and sentences #1-#3.

- In sentences #4, the reason for jumping out the car, buying the coke, is explicitly mentioned in sentence #4. Contrastively,
- In sentences #1,2,3, the reasons are not explicitly mentioned in the sentence but rather have to be inferred. To wit, one has to infer that

1. my clothes were wet because of the rain (Only raining is explicitly mentioned in sentence #1)
2. I missed the presentation because I overslept
3. The nation lacked water because they didn't a righteous person such as Miryam to merit water.

**Comment:** This, the difference between explicit and inferred reading comprehension, is an important principle in both teaching elementary school and reading Rashi. The technical form which drives the Rashi comment is *juxtaposition*, the sequential reading of two consecutive verses. In such a case the first verse is a reference for the 2nd target verse. One method of dealing with juxtaposition is an inference of causation.

Another important observation is that *from* sentence #1 we do not learn that rain gets you wet. On the contrary, we apply our previous knowledge that rain gets you wet *to* interpret the sentence. In a similar manner, Rashi does not learn *from* Nu20-01:02 that the righteous give us the merit to have water; rather, Rashi applies the know principle that the merit of the righteous enables us to have water *to* this verse. This is an important methodological aspect of teaching Rashi.

## **Reference - No! *Daily Rashi Thursday June 20 2013***

Note: The following Rashi explanation is not suitable for home-schoolers (it is too advanced). It is also a bit longer than usual. However, as a special treat we examine a very deep Rashi and controversy between Rashi and Rashbam.

From time to time, I will include in this newsletter examples where Rashi appears to use the **reference** method but in reality other methods apply.

### **Nu21-30**

- *And we nired them:*
- *Lost was Cheshbon [capital of Moab] to [the city] Divon*
- *We destroyed them until Nophax which extends to Maydva*

Rashi cites one verse representative of 3 verses **1Ki34-36, 1Ki15-04, 2Ki08-19** which all say *I [God] will leave a nir to my servant David*. Rashi explains that *nir* here means *a kingdom*. Rashi then applies this kingdom meaning to **Nu21-30**.

It appears that Rashi is using the **reference** method since he cites other verses with the word *nir* in question.

But if we check we find that *nir*, in the majority of biblical verses means

- *to plough* as a verb and
- *a field* as a noun.

In fact the 3 verses in Kings are the only exception.

A typical verse (charmingly using both the verb and noun) occurs at **Ho10-12**

- *Seed charity*
- *Harvent kindness*
- *Plough a field* [of charity and kindness] (*niru lachem nir*)
- *For then is the proper time to seek God*
- *until He comes*
- *and rains on you charity*

To properly understand Rashi we must use the parallelism, the method by which a verse is broken into parallel parts which reflect on each other in meaning.

Parallelism is a powerful technique used frequently in biblical interpretation.

### **Nu21-30**

1. *And we nirred them:*
2. *Lost was Cheshbon [capital of Moab] to [the city] Divon*
3. *We destroyed them until Nophax which extends to Maydva*

Note the climactic development of verbs in this verse *nir, lost, destroy*. Using this climactic list we are inclined to interpret *nir* as meaning *kingdom, the king's field of operations* (note the similarity to the English idiom, *field of operations*). To wit

- an ordinary field may have an unkept appearance as well as weeds
- a *nirred*, ploughed, *field* is neat looking with no weeds

By analogy, a *nirred* (ploughed) *field* would symbolize a kingdom with an orderly appearance without significant crime and rebellion (weeds). Using this sense of *nir* (*plough*) we can re-examine Rashi's interpretation of **Nu21-30**

### **Nu21-30**

1. *And we nirred them* [certain cities were totally destroyed but left with people who surrendered and the buildings were left intact]
2. *Lost was Cheshbon [capital of Moab] to [the city] Divon* [*lost* is a higher level of destruction]
3. *We destroyed them until Nophax which extends to Maydva* [*destroy* connotes complete obliteration of all people and buildings]

Rashi could have justified the *field-kingdom* symbolism citing other biblical paragraphs using it such as **Is05-01** discussing God's attempt to save Israel which is compared to a vineyard:

*Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; And he dug it, and cleared away its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in its midst, and also made there a winepress; and he looked for it to yield grapes, and it yielded sour grapes*

Rashi, instead of citing this Isaiah passage, cites the usage of *nir* in Kings to show that *nir* can be applied to kingdom matters.

### **Summary:**

**Nu21-30** means that the Jews (1) ploughed Moab, leaving survivors and buildings, (2) made certain cities lost and (3) (totally) destroyed Nofax to Maydvah. This translation is justified by principles of the **parallel** and **climax** methods. Rashi cites a reference verse to justify that biblical symbolism; *nir* (plough/field) symbolizes the king's *field of operation, his kingdom*.

**Comment:** The Rashbam on this verse completely misunderstands Rashi. He alleges that Rashi interpreted *nir* as a noun and points out that *nir* is a verb. The reason Rashbam misunderstood Rashi was because Rashi cites a verse where *nir* is a noun.

But as we have seen *nir* functions as both a noun and verb (See our citation from Hoseah). Furthermore, Rashi's purpose of citing this verse was to justify symbolism; Rashi nowhere made a pronouncement that *nir* was a noun, nor was that his intent.

It is not the custom of this newsletter to examine controversies with Rashi from other commentators since we seek to accentuate the positive not the negative. However, from time to time we will examine such controversies. As a general rule, the Rashbam was ignorant of matters of advanced matters of style, climax and poetry, areas in which Rashi showed a particular adroitness.

## **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

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**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*

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**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)

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

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**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.

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**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

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**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)

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**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

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**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.

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**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