

# The 10 RashiYomi Rules

*Their presence in Rashis on VaAyRaH*

## Vol 21#06 - Adapted from Rashi-is-Simple

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2013

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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.*

*We are currently in our 5 year, half-year cycle:*

*\* For period: Oct 2012 - May 2013 - we studied the Grammar rule*

*\* For period: June 2013 - Sep 2013 - we studied the Reference rule*

*\* For period: Oct 2013 - May 2013 - we will study the Parallelism rule*

*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.*

*Here is a very simple example of parallelism: Gn49-11 states  
(Because of the plenty in Judah's reign) Clothes are washed in wine  
(Because of the plenty in Judah's reign) "Suth" [are washed] in blood-of-grapes*

*Rashi comment: Wine is parallel to blood-of-grapes, showing that blood-of-grapes means wine  
Similarly, Clothes are parallel to suth showing that suth means cloathing.*

*Thus the parallelism method explores repeated verse phrases and allows inferences based on the repeated passages.*

*As usual, when making tansitions 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 Tuesday/Wednesday Dec 24,25 2013*

Rashis covered: Ex06-13b,c

Note: Starting this issue, we will give more attention to how the Rashi interpretation we are giving in this digest correlates with Rashi's actual language.

Commonality: The verse phrases below all speak about *commands*.

Questions: After reviewing the two verse phrases discuss the following

- 1) What is the same in the verses
- 2) What is different in the verses
- 3) How would *you* explain the difference (Hint: You may have to look up the verses to ascertain their context)

After answering these questions, we will see how the great Rashi resolved them. Although Rashi's answer is deeper, it is important for readers of Rashi to practice answering the Rashi questions by themselves in order to sharpen their textual focus thereby enriching the Rashi experience.

- **Ex06-13b** *God commanded Moses and Aaron for the Jews*
- **Ex06-13c** .....*and* .....*for Pharoh*

Here are the answers to the questions.

- 1) All verses speak about *for whom* Moses was given commands
- 2) The two verse phrases indicate two recipients
  - Moses was given commands for the Jews
  - Moses was given commands for Pharoh

Interpretation I: Straightforward interpretation (Peshat)

The two recipients of the commands each had different requirements.

- The Jews were being prepared for the Exodus and hence the commands by Moses in **Ex12** to take lambs as well as to prepare to flee Egypt
- Pharoh was warned (during the 10 plagues) to let the Jews go.

Rashi calls this interpretation the *straightforward (Peshat)* meaning of the text. Rashi then offers a second interpretation which he calls the *exegetical (Derash)*

interpretation of the text.

### Interpretation II: Exegetical interpretation (Derash)

The two recipients of the commands each had different requirements.

- Moses was told to give his commands to the Jews with patience and understanding because they could be rebellious at times
- Moses was told to treat Pharaoh with respect and dignity (even though he mistreated the Jews) because he was royalty.

How should we deal with these two interpretations. Every expounder on Rashi has to deal with this two-interpretation issue. For example

- Some people assert that the straightforward interpretation is what the text really means, while contrastively, the exegetical interpretation is something fanciful, read into the text (This is not true as we will show below)
- The Lubavitch Rebbe, z'tsl, asserts that when Rashi gives two interpretations neither of them *fully* explains the text. Hence Rashi gives two interpretations each of which has some component of truth.
- The position of this email list, is that, without exception, when Rashi gives two interpretations, then it is the exegetical one which is the real straightforward meaning of the text; when Rashi uses the Hebrew word *Peshat* he refers not to the simple meaning of the text but rather to simple people (*peshutay haaam*) who interpret the text superficially.

Here is the defense that the straightforward interpretation I given above is incorrect and the exegetical interpretation II given above is the correct straightforward meaning of the text. First note the following:

- Parallelism: It is undisputed that there is a parallel text. So *superficially* the text seems to be saying that God is commanding Moses to Pharaoh regarding the Jewish matter.
- For for: However it is a stylistic feature of the bible that a repeating keyword indicates a bullet type atmosphere. In other words had the text stated |  
- God commanded Moses and Aaron for the Jews and Pharaoh, versus  
- God commanded Moses and Aaron for the Jews and for Pharaoh  
then we would be justified in adopting Interpretation I, the straightforward interpretation above. However, this now is a superficial interpretation since it ignores the repeating keyword *for* which in turn indicates a bullet-type structure. The bullet type structure *requires* a certain aspect of separateness and

distinctness for each bullet. For a reference on this stylistic feature of the Bible see my article, *Biblical Formatting* referenced below

- For vs to: An even deeper point is the use of the prepositional connective, *for*, vs *to*. As we discussed last week, **Volume 21, #5**, the phrase *command so and so* means to command a person, while *command for so and so* means to prepare a messenger (in this case Moses) to give commands to *so and so*.

But it now immediately follows, that the biblical text indicates two command preparations (as indicated by use of *for* and by the repetition of *for*)

- Clearly God prepared Moses for commands to Pharaoh by asking Moses, despite Pharaoh's massive murders, to treat him with respect (e.g. at **Ex11-08** Moses says *Your servants will come to me to ask me to leave* while at **Ex12-30:32** we find that Pharaoh himself came; we consequently see that Moses did not want to humiliate Pharaoh)
- Clearly, God wanted Moses to be patient with the Jews (as we see from God's severe punishment of Moses when he lost his temper on them at **Nu20-07:12**)

Here is a short summary and recap. *Superficially (Peshat) the text seems to be saying that God commanded Moses to Pharaoh about the Jewish matter. However, because the text uses a bulleted structure and a prepositional connective of for, the straightforward meaning of the text is that God prepared Moses for commands to both the Jewish people and to Pharaoh. By reviewing Moses' actual life, we infer that the preparation for the Jewish people required patience while the preparation for Pharaoh required respect.*

Praise be Him who chose them and their learning!

## References

Russell Jay Hendel, *Biblical Formatting*, **Jewish Bible Quarterly**, 35(1), pp 17-27, 2007.

## Reference - *Daily Rashi Thursday-Saturday Dec 26-28, 2013*

Rashis covered: **Ex07-19b,c,d**

Background: The Bible is describing the destruction of the Nile, the first plague of the 10 plagues brought by God on Egypt.

Commonality: Both words speak about attacks on water

Questions: After reviewing the three words discuss the following

- 1) What is the same in the words
- 2) What is different in the words
- 3) How would *you* explain the difference (Hint: You may have to look up the verses to ascertain their context)

After answering these questions, we will see how the great Rashi resolved them. Although Rashi's answer is deeper, it is important for readers of Rashi to practice answering the Rashi questions by themselves in order to sharpen their textual focus thereby enriching the Rashi experience.

- **Ex07-19** *God said to Moses, say to Aaron, take your staff and spread your hand on*
- *the waters of Egypt*
- *on their rivers*
- *on their forests*
- *on their ponds*
- *on all collected waters of Egypt*

Here are the answers to the questions.

- 1) All three words speak about collection of waters. This is also indicated by the **general-detail-general** structure --- *Egyptian waters, collected waters*.
- 2) To answer what these words refer we have to use the basic Rashi method of non-verse methods; that is we must seek guidance from the science of irrigation to inform us of the types of water collections used to irrigate.

Irrigation teaches us that when doing irrigation, water is diverted from a main natural source by either

- using canals, which Rashi describes as *like our rivers*, in other words, man-made irrigation objects which resemble rivers, flowing water. The canal water is diverted to fields using two main methods (which sometimes hybridize)
- furrow irrigation, in which parallel furrows are made in fields, with plants and crop between the furrows. The water is diverted from the canals into the furrows which water the crop. Rashi refers to this as flowing channels. Rashi does not mention the etymology but in my opinion, *yeor* means a *forest*, and the collection of water furrows in a field branching from main canal arteries resembles a thicket of forest branches
- basin irrigation, in which to use Rashi's language *water is gathered without further flow*. Etymologically, the Hebrew word *agam* comes from *guma*, the

reed, and would connote a place of reeds such as a pond or basin. In basin irrigation, basins are artificially created with banks. It is best suited for crops that can stay a long time in water.

Here is the translation of the verse according to Rashi:

- **Ex07-19** *God said to Moses, say to Aaron, take your staff and spread your hand on*
- *the waters of Egypt*
- *on their canals*
- *on the water furrows*
- *on their basins*
- *on all collected waters of Egypt*

Several comments are worth mentioning:

General-detail-General: Since the verse as shown above has a **general-detail-general** method the verse refers to *any* irrigation method that resembles canals, water furrows or basins. As already indicated above, furrow irrigation and basin irrigation are the two main methods of irrigation from which other methods are derived. Hence this verse indicates that *all* Egyptian irrigation was attacked.

Non-verse method. The serious student of Rashi should review methods of irrigation. Popular (and scholarly ) accounts may be found by googling *irrigation* or googling *furrow irrigation, basic irrigation, canal irrigation* or *Egyptian irrigation*. Needless, to say, academic scholars of irrigation as well as farmers can also add basic information.

I emphasize that the non-verse method *is* a Rashi method. Too often, I hear even from respected Rabbis, that such details are not necessary, the argument being that they are not Torah. We find such attitudes in the Talmud! A Rabbi asked his son why he didn't attend certain lectures and the son replied 'Why should I seeing that he talks about health matters which are not Torah.' His father replied 'That is all the more reason to go.' True understanding of Rashi (such as the three Rashis done today) requires knowledge of the underlying science.

For example, furrow and basin irrigation are best suited for different crops. Thus we see in this first plague the seeds for the later plagues, such as the 8th plague which attacked Egyptian crop.

Man-made water collections: I have interpreted Rashi to mean that all three words refer to man made objects. Regarding *furrows* Rashi explicitly says *made by people*.

Regarding *rivers* which I have translated as *canals* Rashi also explicitly says *like our rivers* implying they are man-made (not natural). Finally, knowing that there are two basic methods of irrigation (from which other methods derive), furrow and basin, helps us understand that their ponds were not attacked but rather their pond like irrigation units.

The fact that man-made water collections were attacked (instead of the Nile itself, which is the way I am interpreting the Rashi and verses), gives us a deeper understand of the plagues. Rav Hirsch explains that the first 3 plagues attacked the Egyptian idea of citizenship, that they owned their land (We also see this in the later plagues, the 5th, 7th and 8th, in which mainstay of the Egyptian economy was attacked.) Egyptians indicated their pride and ownership in the land by their canal system which enabled them to sustain a rich economy. The blood appeared, not in the Nile, but rather in the irrigation system itself: The message was clear: Why should God attack the Nile, His own creation. Rather, God attacked the irrigation system, the Egyptian ownership of the Nile, thereby indicating that the Egyptians were not the *owners* of the land and consequently they had no right to enslave the Jews.

War and sactions: Finally, this Rashi gives us insights into military methods. Sometimes, certain acts would be considered *acts of war* justifying a military response. In fact, even in modern times, other countries diverting water from the Nile are seen as a *threat* to Egyptian national security (and hence the need for treaties to allow such usage).

A modern military approach uses the sanction. An economic sanction is a severe attack on a nation which however would not justify a military response. If one studies carefully the plagues - frogs humiliating the Egyptians, painful (but not life threatening) lice, attacks on crop, dense fogs/darkness inhibiting movement - all of them are sanction-like; they severely attack Egypt but don't justify an outright act of war. So too the first plague. It would have been an act of war to attack the Nile itself. By preserving the Nile but attacking the man-made irrigation objects, a sort of sanction approach was used. It was only in the last plague, the smiting of the first born, that a military approach was used. But God had prepared the Egyptians for this strike so that instead of retaliating, they let the Jews go.

## 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 (Honyms)** 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



