

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on Jethro

Vol 21#09 - 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.

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 transitions in the Rashi Newsletter we welcome positive and negative comments as well as requests. Please send all comments to RashiYomi@GMail.Com.

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Reference - *Daily Rashi Wednesday, Thursday Jan 15,16 2014*

Rashis covered: Ex20-08a, Dt05-12b

This week's issue illustrates several Rashi interpretations which *seem* to contradict Rashi's own language. I try and show that my proposed interpretation has much merit and clarifies the text in a clear manner consistent with Rashi's language. The first two examples are most famous and therefore illustrative of my approach.

Commonality: The verses below both are biblical Decalogue versions of the 4th commandment requiring Sabbath observance.

Questions: After reviewing the two verses 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.

- **Ex20-08:11** Commemorate the Sabbath
- **Dt05-12:15** Guard the Sabbath ...*as the Lord your God commanded you*

Here are the answers to the questions.

- 1) Both verses speak about the requirement to observe the Sabbath
- 2) But there are two differences indicated by the underlined words
 - Exodus says *commemorate* while Deuteronomy says *Guard*, the Sabbath
 - Deuteronomy emphasizes as *God commanded you*.

Homeschooling exercise: The following is an excellent exercise for homeschooled children as well as for adults.

- Ask the child what is the same in both verses (This can be particularly easy since the sameness is indicated by a repeating phrase)
- Then ask the child what is increased and added in the second verse. (This is also

easy since the added attribute is explicitly mentioned.)

Rashi answers these two questions as follows:

- *Commemorate* and *Guard* were stated simultaneously by God
- The reference *as God commanded you* refers back to **Ex16-23:28** where the Jews were commanded to observe the Sabbath at Marah

I would *supplement* Rashi with the following novel interpretation:

- The Jews were indeed commanded to observe Sabbath in Marah as related in **Ex16-23:28**.
- But as related in **Ex16-23:28**, *some* Jews did not observe the Sabbath.
- So, when God gave the Decalogue
- - To those who *already* observed the Sabbath, God simply said *Commemorate it*
- - To those who violated the Sabbath, God said *Guard it...as God commanded you*.

In other words

- Rashi is traditionally interpreted to mean that *every* Jew heard simultaneously *Commemorate* and *Guard*
- Contrastively, I am interpreting this Rashi to mean *each* Jew heard what (s)he needed (Some needed to commemorate and some needed to be admonished to observe and guard).

Although Rashi doesn't explicitly state this I believe this approach is more satisfying. Note Rashi does not say that *every* Jew heard simultaneously. He simply says *Commemorate and Guard were said simultaneously*. Rashi does not clarify whether the simultaneity was in the individual or in the community. I therefore believe I have the license to interpret Rashi as suggested.

Reference - *Daily Rashi Friday, Saturday Jan 17,18 2014*

Rashis covered: **Ex19-03b, Ex19-03c**

Commonality: The verse phrases below speak about God's commandment to Moses to teach the Torah.

Questions: After reviewing the two verses 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.

Ex19-03 *God called to Moses from the mountain as follows this is what*

- *you should say to the house of Jacob*
- *you should narrate to the children of Israel*

Here are the answers to the questions.

- 1) Both verses describe how God asked Moses to relate the laws
- 2) One verse uses *say* while the other verse uses *narrate*
- 3) One verse speaks about *the house of Jacob* while the other verse speaks about *the sons of Israel*

Rashi explains that

- *house of Jacob* refers to the women who are spoken to in a softer tone (hence the verb *speaking* which is non-confrontational)
- *children of Israel* refers to the men who are spoken to more sharply (hence the verb *narrate* which is harsher than *speaking*)

However, Rashi never declares the source of his inference. True he does mention

- *speaking in a soft tone* which *appears* to be a comment on the verb *speaking*;
- Similarly, he mentions *narrating to them laws as harsh as sinnews*. Here the biblical word for *sinnews* comes from a similar Hebrew root to the word for *narration*. Again it *appears* that Rashi is *deriving* his comments from the nuances of the verbs.

Not so! I believe the Rashi is more straightforward:

- *House of Jacob* clearly refers to the *household* which would include women and small children
- *Children of Israel* can sometimes refer to the entire Jewish community and sometimes more specifically can refer to the males who typically lead the

community. Since there is a contrast here - *house of Jacob, children of Israel* - it is reasonable to use the narrower interpretation of *children of Israel*. (This is similar to for example the word *day* which can mean the 12 hour lit part of the day or the entire 24 hour day).

Why do I reject the interpretation that *narrate* is a harsh communication while *speak* is a softer communication? Because, if we look at the usage of *narrate* in the Bible we do not see it used for harshness. Indeed, the Passover Haggadah is commanded with the word *narrate* which shows it is suitable for small children.

What then do I do with the Rashi explicit statements of *harshness* which comes from the same biblical root as *narrate*? This is an important question! I take it as being a Rashi pun to help people remember the Rashi comment but I do not take it as a derivation. This distinction between actual derivations and cute formulations is fundamental in clarifying many Rashis. Rashi frequently uses cute formulations to make his comments memorable; but the actual derivation is other than what is in the formulation!

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