

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on BaMidBaR

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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 have studied parallelism for about a year now. We are trying a new format: We are covering all Rashi rules and giving brief explanations.

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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Daily Rashi Idiom Thur May 22, 2014

Rashis covered: **Nu01-16**

Background: The biblical text, in the preceding verses of Chapter 1, lists the tribal governors participating in the census. Verse **Nu01-16** then says as follows.

Biblical Text: These [governors] are the *called of the nation*

Rashi, applies the **idiom** rule to the phrase *called of the nation*. To appreciate the Rashi we recall the definition of an **idiom**: *An idiom is a collection of words, whose meaning transcends the sum of the meanings of the individual words.*

Rashi: *Called of the nation* is an **idiom** meaning *distinguished national leaders*. What is the rationale of the **idiom**? Distinguished people are typically *called* to major events. Hence the **idiom**, *called of the nation*, should be translated *distinguished national leaders*.

Rashi here uses the literary principle, found in all languages, of **synecdoche**. Synecdoche simply says that you can name something by a frequent good example or characteristic unique to it. As a simple example, in many languages (not just Hebrew or English) the word *honey* means something or someone *sweet*. Here, *honey* is a good example of sweetness and hence honey can actually mean sweetness.

Comment: We have taken an aggressive approach to this Rashi. Rather than just dismissing Rashi as presenting a dictionary definition, we describe Rashi as actively understanding a new meaning to a dictionary entry. This is a proper approach, since meaning (in all languages) is not fixed. Consequently, the understanding of transformation of meaning is a major task of commentators.

Daily Rashi Idiom Fri May 23, 2014

Rashis covered: **Nu01-18**

Background: The biblical text, in the preceding verses of Chapter 1, lists the tribal governors participating in the census. Verse Nu01-18 then says as follows.

Biblical Text: There is a census - Jews will be *born* according to family and household

Rashi, applies the **idiom** rule to the word *born*. To appreciate the Rashi we recall the definition of an **idiom**: *An idiom is a collection of words, whose meaning transcends the sum of the meanings of the individual words.* We also recall that the **hithpael** conjugation refers to reflexive and interactive activities.

Rashi: *born according to family* is an **idiom** meaning *certifying their birth by family*. What is the rationale of the **idiom**? A certification of birth, a birth certificate,

is so to speak an interactive (**hithpael**) affirmation of birth. Hence, the hithpael conjugation of *born* idiomatically refers to *certification*.

Comment: We have taken an aggressive approach to this Rashi. Rather than just dismissing Rashi as presenting a dictionary definition, we describe Rashi as actively understanding a new meaning to a dictionary entry based on grammatical forms. This is a proper approach, since meaning (in all languages) is not fixed. Consequently, the understanding of transformation of meaning is a major task of commentators.

Daily Rashi Idiom Sat May 24, 2014

Rashis covered: **Nu03-04**

Background: The biblical text, in the preceding verses of Chapter 3, lists the four children of Aaron. Verse **Nu03-4** then says as follows.

Biblical Text: *Nadav and Avihu died...on the face of Aaron...*

Rashi, applies the **idiom** rule to the phrase *on the face of Aaron*. To appreciate the Rashi we recall the definition of an **idiom**: *An idiom is a collection of words, whose meaning transcends the sum of the meanings of the individual words.*

Prior to explaining the idiom we point out an interesting feature of this idiom. Both adults and children are encouraged to do an electronic search of the phrase *on the face of* in biblical literature. One finds several dozen cases.

It is Rashi's genius to distinguish two subcases: a) events that happen *on the face of the earth* b) events that happen *on the face of a person*. *On the face of a person* only occurs five times in the bible; contrastively, *on the face of the earth* (or other natural entities) occurs several dozen times. For example, when discussing the flood, the verse speaks about God wiping *all souls on the face of earth*.

Rashi: *On the face of a person* is an idiom meaning *during the lifetime of the person*. The rationale for the idiom is simple: As long as the person is alive one has to answer to his facial expressions.

It is a beautiful and instructive exercise, for both adults and children, to *check* the application of this Rashi rule to the other 4 times that *on the face of a person occurs*. Such checking enriches the Rashi experience, making it appear sound and

rational.

As a simple example of this exercise we review the Decalogue prohibition (**Ex 20:03**) *You will not have the gods of others on My face*. Rashi interprets this as follows: *You will not have gods of others (idols) while I (God) am alive (That is always)*

Comment: We have taken an aggressive approach to this Rashi. Rather than just dismissing Rashi as presenting a dictionary definition, we describe Rashi as actively understanding a new meaning to a dictionary entry. This is a proper approach, since meaning (in all languages) is not fixed. Consequently, the understanding of transformation of meaning is a major task of commentators.

Daily Rashi Literary Figures of Speech Sun May 25, 2014

Biblical Text: **Nu03-01**

These are the children of Moses and Aaron....these are the children of Aaron...

Rashi: The opening sentence states that the chapter will discuss the children of Moses and Aaron; but the chapter only goes on to discuss the children of Aaron! Such an anomaly justifies a literary extension of the meaning of *children*: *Children* can mean *students*. The literary technique used is common in all languages and is called *synecdoche*. *Synecdoche* refers to naming something by a good example or frequently occurring attribute. A classical example, in many languages, is using the word *honey* to refer to anything *sweet*. Here, a particularly good example of *sweetness*, honey, is used to name *sweetness* itself.

Rashi elaborates further by pointing out that **Nu03-01** actually says *These are the children of Moses and Aaron on the day that God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai*.

Rashi elaborates: *Moses became the teacher-parent of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai when he taught the Jews the Torah.*

Comment: We have taken an aggressive approach to this Rashi. Rather than just dismissing Rashi as presenting a dictionary definition, we describe Rashi as actively understanding a new meaning to a dictionary entry. This is a proper approach, since meaning (in all languages) is not fixed. Consequently, the understanding of transformation of meaning is a major task of commentators.

Daily Rashi Word Meaning Monday May 26 2014

Biblical Text: Nu01-49

Background: Moses had just been instructed to conduct a census of the Jews by tribe. God then continues his orders with the following command.

Biblical text: *Probably don't count the levites amongst the Jewish people*

Rashi: The word *probably* can be explained by the following model of the censii of the Jewish people: *Very often we find a census after a major punishment of the Jewish people (For example, the census in Numbers 25 after the plague for the sexual sins with the Moabites in Numbers 24) The purpose of the census is to see how bad the punishment was and how many Jews were left.*

Using this model - census anticipates punishment - we can see the census in Numbers 1 as corresponding to the sin of the spies who rejected God's providence and His ability to bring us in to Israel (Nu. 13). The Jews were constantly complaining ever since they left Egypt (e.g. Ex 13) and it was expected that they would not really want to go into Israel. However, just as the Levites did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf (Ex 33) so too, probably, the Levites would not participate in a rebellion against God concerning entry into Israel.

For this reason the verse says probably do not count the Levites. That is, since they probably will not rebel, you will not have to count them to ascertain how many were lost.

Note: The above explanation is based on translating the Hebrew word *akh* as meaning *probably*, a contention made in my article "The meaning of Ach" published in **BOR Hatorah**, vol 33#1, 2005.

APPENDIX

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES / THE 30 R0ASHI 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:** Hitpaal 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