

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on KoRaX

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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 Multiple Rules Nu16-01b Thu-Mon 6/19-21/14

Rashis covered: Nu16-02b Gn43-15a Lv08-02b Nu16-02a Nu16-05a

Today's issue covers 5 Rashis. All these Rashis focus on the Rashi **meaning** method and its consequences. We also use the **reference, non-verse** (other languages), methods. Consequently, we have combined all 5 days together. Those however, who like to study one Rashi per day may still do so.

Today's Rashi looks like a simple dictionary **meaning**. There is nothing so vibrant, dynamic and pulsating as a Rashi on dictionary meaning. Curiously, the artificial intelligence people, when they started working on machine intelligence also thought that the hard part was grammar and that dictionary meaning could be fed into computer memory. We now know how complex dictionary meaning is.

Besides the Rashi meaning rule, these tiny but sharp Rashis will afford us a glimpse at the Rashi **non-verse** method rules, the skillful use of other languages.

Finally this deceptively innocent dictionary **meaning** will afford us an insight into literary criticism methods, the feel for *irony, tension, paradox and ambiguity*, methods skillfully used by the modern biblical author, Aviva Zornberg.

Let us begin.

Rashi text: **Gn43-15a**

Background: Joseph's brothers were told they would not get food unless they brought their brother Benjamin. Their father, Jacob, is preparing them for the journey, and assisting them with gifts for Joseph. Jacob then mentions the request for Benjamin.

Biblical text: *Persuade Benjamin to go...*

Rashi: The Hebrew verb used, **LQX**, usually means take. However, we may use the non-verse method, and see how *take* is translated in other languages. In Aramaic as well as in English the *taking* of a person is contrasted to the taking of an object. Although English allows you to say *take so and so with you* it really means *invite him with you* or *persuade him to go with you*.

This is reflected in the act of taking. For both gifts and people, *taking* them with you *results* in the gift or person travelling with you. But

- To *take* gifts you physically grab and carry them;
- To *take* people you do not grab them; you *invite* or *persuade* them to go with you.

Note how we have embedded the Rashi translation *persuade* in the body of the biblical text.

Advanced Rashi: But to stop at the grammar and meaning would do a dishonor to Rashi. Feeling and insight must blossom from the grammatical seed. One school literary criticism, emphasizes finding irony, paradox, ambiguity and tension in texts. This leads to the following Zornbergian type insight based on this Rashi.

Benjamin knew that his brother, Joseph, after all the fights with his other brothers was dead. Benjamin knew that something strange happened and Shimon was not there. He obviously did not want to go down to Egypt; even if the source of family food would not be obtained. He had to be persuaded to go.

There is also a strong element of irony or paradox here. Jacob had ordered Joseph to check the status of the brothers and this led to his death. Now Jacob no longer gives orders; he rather requested and invited. He had learned his lesson.

The above analysis, combining grammar and criticism, presents a true model of learning Rashi. To paraphrase Aaron Nimzovitch, a great chess pedagogist, "*Your eyes on grammar and meaning; your mind on feeling and emotions; that is the true essence of learning Rashi as giving the simple textual approach.*"

We continue this analysis with further Rashis.

Biblical Verse: Lv08-02b

Background: One of the great spiritual moments in the Exodus: God is commanding Moses to inaugurate Aaron as High Priest to the Temple service.

Biblical Text: God said to Moses to say over: *Invite* Aaron, along with the priestly garments, and with the anointing oil, and the sacrifices....

The Hebrew root used **L-Q-X** means both take and invite.

The translation of *take Aaron* as *invite Aaron* also has elements of tension, ambiguity, irony and paradox.

We can feel the tension and ambiguity. He is not just being taken, these are not just ceremonial sacrifices, the clothes are not just uniforms which must be worn, rather they are invitations, an honor which Aaron may not feel worthy to but which he is nevertheless being invited to.

We can also empathize with the paradox and irony: Just recently, Aaron's two sons offered non-invited incense to God and immediately died; yet now Aaron is being invited to successfully do what his children failed at.

Biblical Verse: Nu16-01b *And Korax talked himself into it, along with Datan and Aviram and they, along with 250 distinguished heads of state, stood up against Moses saying: "We have had enough of you; everyone is holy; everyone has prophetic dreams; what then is your claim to rule over us?"*

Based on the Rashi comments we have analyzed above, Rashi's **meaning** rules should now be clear

The Hebrew root, **L-Q-X**, means

- *take*, when referring to a physical object
- *invite or persuade*, when referring to a person
- *talking oneself into something*, when used reflexively on oneself.

In the preceding examples in this weeks digest we spoke about the application of textual criticism methods, the search for tension, ambiguity, irony and paradox in the Rashi. In the other examples,

- In the Benjamin and Aaron example, Rashi does not even hint at the tension
- In this example, Korax, Rashi actually makes explicit the tensions involved.

Rashi, **Nu16-01a**, states *This portion is beautifully nuanced in the Midrash Tachuma compedium of exegesis.*

Note the unusual feature of this Rashi. Rashi does not, as he usually does, give a terse summary of the analysis of Korax's personality: Why did he rebel? Didn't he know that God would kill him? What was he feeling? What caused this.

Rather, Rashi simply says in effect, *There is a great deal of personality insights to Korax and they are listed in the Midrash Tanchuma.*

As an example of one of the Midrashim brought by Rashi consider the following:

Biblical Text: Nu16-05a [Moses speaking to Korax] *Korax [sleep it out] in the morning God will let us know who belongs to him.*

Rashi Text: By using the phrase, *in the morning*, Moses insinuated *perhaps you are*

drunk Korax, sleep it off, and we will discuss tomorrow.

How did Rashi infer this nuance? Some would argue that *The Bible is never conversational; if it used the phrase 'Lets talk in the morning' then it must have some hidden meaning.*

But *lack of conversational phrases* is not a Rashi rule acknowledged on this list. It is too vague.

I prefer the approach using **references**: Recall that Aaron's two sons died because they got drunk and thought they could act like High priests (**Lv09**). Moses attributed the same problem to **Korax** - he thought he should have power because he was under the influence.

I wouldn't totally ignore the phrase *in the morning*. I wouldn't however base my analysis on it; I would use it as supportive text. I would here use the Rashi **meaning** method, and regard *in the morning* as an **idiom** similar to the English *sleep it off* and lets talk.

On a deeper level, I would consider the Rashi comment on *in the morning* to be an extension of the comment on our initial verse: *Korax talked himself into it* - such a phrase naturally evokes images of drunkenness.

To sum up, I think the main driver of the Rashi comment on the biblical phrase *in the morning* may be found in the initial verse *Korax talked himself into it*. However, we can support this Rashi comment with the **reference** and **idiom** rules.

The interplay between the various verses and Rashi comments gives insight into what is primary and what is secondary in understanding Rashi as the intended meaning of the text.

References

If you have enjoyed the slight excursion into literary criticism you might enjoy the following standard text.

Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 2nd Edition, **2006**, Routledge, Taylor and Francis,

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