

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on VaEthChaNaN

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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.

The most frequent questions I receive about the Daily Newsletter are the following.

- *What do the classical commentators on Rashi say about his reasons?*
- *If they say such and such what are you adding?*
- *If they don't say what you say, why are you saying it?*

So the next year, or perhaps more, will be devoted to citing Rashi commentators and explaining how the methods of the Newsletter sharpen and crystallize them. We will be citing mostly from the 4-6 classical Rashi commentators: Sifsay Chachamin, Gur Aryeh, Mizrachi, and Chizkuni. We will occasionally add insights of Rav Hirsch and Malbim.

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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Grammar *Daily Rashi* Dt04-041a, Ex15-01a Thur-Fri 8/7,8/14

Biblical Text (Dt04-41a): [Literal translation] *Then Moses will set aside three refuge cities in the Transjordan.*

Rashi Text: Then Moses will: Moses was anxious in his heart to set the cities aside

even though they did not function (as refuge cities) till the Jews were in Israel. Moses said, "There is an opportunity to perform a commandment and I will therefore do it."

Let us see what the Rashi commentators say.

Sifsay Chachamim (Paraphrased): Rashi uses the contradiction method

- Then (Hebrew *az*) indicates immediacy
- Will set aside indicates future action.

Rashi resolves the contradiction as follows

- Moses immediately set them aside
- But the cities would only function in the future.

Gur Aryeh/Mizrachi: The future connotes present intent and wish. A parallel example is **Ex15-01** "*Then* [after the Egyptians drowned at the sea] Moses and Israel *will* sing to God." But they sang then; why use the future? The response is that *will* sing refers to present intent.

Rashi-Newsletter approach: We apply modern grammatical categories to basically say the same thing Gur Aryeh/Mizrachi are saying but base it on universal grammatical categories.

Modern Grammar has introduced a concept of *mood*. Consider the following sentences discussing the reading of the Rashi Newsletter

- **Indicative** I will read the Rashi Newsletter
- **Imperative** Read the Rashi Newsletter
- **Subjunctive** I wish I could read the Rashi Newsletter.

All three sentences deal with the same identical act, reading the Rashi newsletter. They differ in the relation of that act to reality.

- **Indicative:** Describes a real world event
- **Subjunctive:** Describes a personal subjective wish of what the future will look like (look like in the mind of the speaker but not in the real world)
- **Imperative:** Describes a required behavior in the future (it is not optional).

We need one more ingredient: Hebrew unlike English has two basic conjugation forms, past and future. These conjugation forms have to suffice for several distinct meanings. Very often future is used to indicate the subjunctive and imperative.

There are other independent ways to indicate the imperative and subjunctive (for example a suffix hey indicates the subjunctive; hence the beginning of the sea song, *ahsirah lashen, I wish I could sing to God* (Not as commonly translated, I will sing to God).

Using this background we can give a proper Rashi translation to **Dt04-41a**: *Then Moses wished to set aside three cities in the Transjordan (as refuge cities).*

Of course, Moses actually set the cities aside: But they didn't function as refuge cities until much later- hence the use of the subjunctive.

Similarly, Rashi would translate **Ex15-01**: *Then Moses and Israel wished to sing to God: "I wish to Sing to God because of his greatness..."*

What about the sifsay chachamim who approached Rashi with the contradiction method. Is this incorrect? No, it is not incorrect. Because if nothing is bothering me then the future conjugation always refers to the future. It is only when there is some contradiction or something bothering me does the future conjugation refer to something else. For **Dt04-41** we have a contradiction between "*Then* (connoting now) and *Moses will set aside* (connoting future)." Alternatively we have a contradiction between Moses setting aside cities now which won't take effect till the future.

Summary:

Rashi Newsletter: Approachs the verse through an analysis of Mood(Subjunctive)
Mizrachi/Gur Aryeh: Also approaches through use of future conjugation to indicate wish

Sifsay Chachamim: Adds the point that we have a contradiction in the verse pointing to a disparity between the present and future.

Next, it is interesting to see how the Rashi commentators, comment on **Ex15-01**, *then Moses and Israel will Sing (Yashir)*

- **Sifsay Chachamim:** Rashi explains why a future conjugation is used on a present activity.
- **Gur Aryeh:** Rashi explains the *yud* the prefix letter indicating future in the word (Yashir); because it was on a wish.
- **Mizrachi:** Mizrachi brings down the Ramban who demurs "And what will the

Master (Rashi) do with the verse (Ps 78:40) *how often they will incite him in the wilderness*. [Mizrachi's point here is that if Rashi truly believes that *will* indicates a *wish* then he would have translated (Ps 78:40) as *how often they wished to incite him in the wilderness* (when in fact they did incite him, not wished to incite him).

Mizrachi then suggests an answer. I would answer by citing the grammatical theory we used above. Hebrew has only two conjugation forms and these two forms must suffice for over a dozen meanings. So it is not surprising that one conjugation, the future conjugation (will) can refer to several things. In addition to referring to

- the actual (*indicative*) future and
- the *subjunctive* (wish) it can also refer to
- a *habitual* activity.

For example,

- I am eating an apple, refers to the simple present
- I read Rashi Newsletter every week, refers to a habitual present, that is, activity that does not happen in one point in time but happens periodically.

The principle is that the future conjugation can refer to

- the future
- the subjunctive
- the habitual

Applying this to Psalm 78:40 refers to a habitual past activity: *How often they [the Jews] rebelled against God in the wilderness*.

Summary: We reviewed two Rashis commenting on a future conjugation (will do such and such) without a future meaning. We showed the Rashi commentators grasped the idea of conjugations with multiple meanings. In this case the future conjugation besides meaning the future can also refer to *wishing* and *habit*. We brought modern Grammar theory to clarify and elucidate how these commentators explain Rashi. We also used it to respond to the Ramban. The use of modern Grammar helped crystalize the Rashi comments.

Idiom *Daily Rashi* Ex20-03c Dt05-07a Sat-Tue 9-12/14

Verses: Ex20-03c, Dt05-07a

Biblical text: [Decalogue] You shall not have the gods of others *on my face*.

Rashi: The phrase *on my face* means *during my lifetime*; it also means *any place*

Rashi Newsletter explanation: *on the face of a person* is an **idiom** meaning during the lifetime. Recall that an **idiom** is a collection of words whose collective meaning is different and distinct from the sum of the meanings of the individual words. The **idiom** method is a submethod of the **meaning** method.

This Rashi newsletter explanation is based on several other biblical occurrences

- **Gn11-28** Charan died *on the face of Terach his father* [during the lifetime, that is, while Terach, his father was still alive (The son died first)]
- **Nu03-04** Nadav and Avihu died *on the face of Aaron* [during his lifetime]
- **Ex20-03c** You will not have the gods of others *on My face*
- **Dt05-07** You will not have the gods of others *on My face*

In all four cases, Rashi translates *on the face* as *during the lifetime*. So we conclude this is an **Idiom**. It is noteworthy, that the Rashi commentators (Sifsay chachamim, Gur Aryeh, Mizrachi) do not bring the Genesis and Numbers case. *Before* reading Rashi it is important to realize there are other verses with the same phrase and same meaning - this lends credibility to the idea that this is an **idiom**.

Note: Rashi adds an additional explanation in his commentary on the Decalogue: *In any place*.

Before citing the Sifsay Chachamim, Gur Aryeh and Mizrachi we introduce the idea on which it is based: *What-if analysis*. The idea of *what if analysis* (a technique known very well to excel programmers) is to explore *why would one say otherwise* and then *see the verse as emphasizing a counterpoint*. Let us now cite the three *what-if-analysis* brought by the Rashi commentators. In each case we begin with the question *why would one think otherwise*.

Question: Why would one think that the prohibition of idolatry does not apply in all places?

Response: Perhaps the prohibition of idolatry only applied in Egypt (Where it led to corruption). Or, perhaps the prohibition of Idolatry only applied in Israel where the non-Jewish inhabitants wanted to get their land back by intermarrying with us.

Conclusion: Hence Rashi emphasizes that the prohibition of idolatry applies *in any place*

Question: Why would one think that the prohibition of idolatry does not apply for all

times.

Response: Perhaps the prohibition of idolatry only applied to the generation who left Egypt since the idolatry was an important step in subjugating them. I however would not think that some passing acts of idolatry (say done for social purposes) applied in other lands (where the consequent corruption is not that obvious)

Conclusion: Hence Rashi emphasizes that the prohibition of idolatry applies *in any time*.

Question: If God wanted to say *have no gods of others forever* why didn't he just say so. Why say *have no gods of others on My face*.

Response/Conclusion: Rashi commentators suggest that *on my Face* adds something to the phrase *forever*. *On my face* means *in any place and forever*.

I would add a novelty that *on my face is nuanced and suggests* the punishment mentioned in Lv19 that *God places His face against the idolatrous molech worshipers*. In other words, *on my face*, has nuances of confrontation and punishment.

Summary: If we now read the verse and Rashi, meaning is more pregnant - *have no gods of others on my face - any other place even not in Egypt, any other time even after the Exodus, and be aware of punishment*.

We think this approach of *what if analysis* sheds light on Rashi commentators and is very useful.

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