

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on ChaYaY SaRaH

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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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Hi. Welcome to another year of Rashiyomi. In addition to presenting the classical Rashi commentators, we will emphasize my unique contribution to the biblical understanding of Genesis, namely, that Genesis is a book about prophecy. Genesis is not about history and is not about cosmology. It is about the creation of prophecy and the

contribution of the prophets to human history.

Contradiction Daily Rashi Friday 11/13/2014 Gn25-06a

Background: Abraham's wife Sarah, had died. Abraham arranged a wife for Isaac his son. He then prepared for end of life issues.

Biblical Text: Gn25-06a

Abraham gave [estate] presents to the sons of the concubines

Rashi Text: *Concubines is written deficiently. There was only one concubine; she was called two names, Hagar and Keturah.*

But *concubines* is written as a plural word. There is no deficient writing (singular). This is the big problem that all the commentators deal with

Rashi commentators - Levush Orah, Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh:

Levush Orah: The *yud* is missing from the Hebrew word *pilagshim*. This would be similar to spelling *concubines* as *concubins* in English. The deficient spelling points to a deficiency in plurality; there was only one concubine.[Comment: one problem with this approach is that in fact *pilagshim* is *not* spelled deficiently]

Mizrachi: Granted that the word *concubines* is spelled deficiently but it still has a terminal "s" indicating plurality. I would therefore suggest that the word is a pun: *pilagshim* = *pilegesh shm*, the concubine *there* at the well, the concubine who prayed to God to save Ishmael.

Gur Aryeh: **Judges 12:07** says that *yiftach* was buried in the cities of Gilad. But surely he was only buried in one city. So we must interpret **Judges 12:7** to mean *he was buried in one of the cities of Gilad*. So too, **Gn25-06a** means *And to one of concubines he gave presents*.

Rashi Newsletter Contribution: All the Rashi commentators assume that it is **Gn25-06** that is written deficiently. Not so!!!! Behold, **1Ch01-32** states *The children of Keturah the concubine of Abraham were...* Notice the singular spelling! So we interpret the Rashi comment *it is written deficiently* not to refer to **Gn25-06**

but to refer to **1Ch01-32!!!** Rashi's uses the **contradiction** method.

- **1Ch01-32** speaks about the *concubine of Abraham*
- **Gn25-06** speaks about the *concubines*

Rashi resolves this **contradiction** the same way he resolves many other contradictions

- There was only *one person*
- But she had *two names*, Hagar and Keturah.

Does this make sense? Of course: After all Abraham was forced by his wife to banish Hagar because her son Ishmael was a bad influence on Isaac. Abraham remarried her after Sarah's death and also renamed her. So indeed: There was one concubine but two marriages and two names. The Bible beautifully mirrors this interrupted and resumed relationship by a skillful use of singular and plural. There is however no need to assume deficient spellings, puns, or obscure grammatical rules.

Contradiction, Grammar *Daily Rashi* Friday-Sunday 11/14-16/2014 Gn24-50a Gn24-52a Gn24-56a

Background: Eliezer has presented his case that Abraham, his master, wanted Rivkah for a wife for his son Isaac. Laban (brother) and Bethuel (father) agree and Eliezer bows to God. We examine several Biblical verses connected with this episode

Biblical Text:

- **Gn24-50a** *And he answered, Laban and Bethuel, "The matter was caused by God, we can't disagree, behold our daughter, take her and go back."*
- **Gn24-52a** *When the servant of Abraham heard these words he bowed to God*
- **Gn24-26:27** [Eliezer had prayed that the woman who would be charitable to him would be Isaac's wife; he just gave presents to the woman who was charitable and was shocked to learn that she indeed was Laban's daughter, the person his master Abraham has sent him to find] *And the man bowed to God; he said Bless*

be Godwho placed me on the true road to obtain....

- **Gn24-56a** *Her brother and mother said [We said she could marry Isaac but nevertheless] let her stay with us a year or 10 months and then go*

Rashi Text:

- **Gn24-52a** *We infer from this good manners: When you hear something good it is good manners to thank God*
- **Gn24-56a** *"Her brother and mother" - where was her father? Aha! He must have opposed the marriage. An angel came and killed him so only her brother and mother were left.*
- **Gn24-50a** *Did you notice that Laban spoke before Bethuel his father (The verse says *And he answered: Laban and Bethuel*) This shows he had no manners since he spoke before his father.*

These Rashi comments troubled the great commentators. We offer new methods and new insights. We reverse our traditional order: We state the Rashi Newsletter contribution first and then state how the commentators deal with this. We also note that the Rashi commentators add additional insights using textual criticism methods on the Midrashic sources that Rashi cites.

Rashi Newsletter Contribution:

Grammar Rule: *When there is a plural subject and singular predicate we interpret the sentence to mean that the first mentioned subject instigated the action and the second mentioned subject just tagged along.*

We apply this rule to **Gn24-50a**. *And he answered: Laban and Bethuel: saying, "The matter comes from God...we agree"* Notice

- The plural subject: *Laban and Bethuel*
- The singular predicate: *He answered*

So we infer that

- Laban, her brother did the talking

- Bethuel her father tagged along; (he didn't really want the marriage.)

It is important to emphasize that Rashi infers two things from this verse

- He infers that Bethuel was opposed to the marriage
- He infers that Laban had bad manners since he should have stepped aside and discussed the matter with his father instead of just barging in and talking

In terms of Rashi explanations, it is important to emphasize that

- The Rashi comment does not come just from the order: *Laban, Bethuel*
- It also or mainly comes from the singular predicate and plural subject

The Rashi commentators do not comment on this verse. I learned this grammatical principle from Rabbi Dr. Soloveitchick (the *Rav*) and give several examples in the following posting for Monday Nov 17, 2014, below.

Gn24-56a Rashi: *"Her brother and mother?" Where was her father, Bethuel. It teaches that he opposed the marriage but an angel killed him.*

As we have just seen we infer Bethuel's opposition to the marriage

- Not from the omission of *father* in the phrase *brother and mother*, but
- From the singular predicate *he*, and plural subject *Laban Bethuel*.

In other words, the assumption that Bethuel died because of opposition to the marriage, certainly not stated explicitly in the text, is inferred from the very strong grammatical argument *he answered - Laban and Bethuel*. If then Bethuel is omitted in the following verse we can infer he died. Other (non Rashi) explanations are also acceptable. Perhaps for example, his marriage died; since he was not longer *the boss* he may have abandoned his wife and son.

We have one more supportive argument that Bethuel died; this is found in the very next comment.

Parallelism

- **Gn24-26:27** [After discovering that the charitable women who helped him was indeed Rivkah] *He bowed - he blessed God*
- **Gn24-56** [After hearing that Rivkah's relatives consented to let her marry Isaac] *He bowed - -----*

Do you notice the difference in the two verses? See the underlined phrase!

- When he only meets Rivkah, he both bows and blesses God
- But when he is promised Rivkah can marry Isaac, he only bows!

We can explain this by the previous Rashi that Bethuel died, that indeed, Laban spoke in front of him and Bethuel was opposed to the marriage. Bethuel is not mentioned later on and he presumably died (or abandoned his wife).

So there were two emotions: Bethuel's death and the promise of Rivkah being Isaac's wife. Eliezer could not bless God if Bethuel died! But he was still obligated to somehow thank God for obtaining Rivkah as a wife. For this reason he only bowed and did not bless. Rashi infers this from the parallelism.

We have supplemented the Rashi explanation: *One must always thank God for good tidings (such as marriage prospect) even if bad tidings come at the same time (Bethuel's death or his abandonment of his wife)*

Rashi commentators - Sifsay Chachamim, Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh:

The grammatical explanation *he spoke Laban and Bethuel* we gave above is not found in any of the Rashi commentators. In fact, they do not add much by way of explanation. We cite two comments from the commentators. In the posting for Monday Nov 17 2014 we present this very important principle presented by the *Rav*.

Comment on relationship of Rashi and Midrashic sources: It is known that Rashi rarely made comments himself. Instead he skillfully selects comments from the vast majority of midrashim. The Midrashic compilation, Genesis Rabbah, *does* mention the principle that *from here (the bowing) we learn to thank God on all good occasions*.

But the Genesis Rabbah makes this point on **Gn24-26:27** (when Eliezer discovers that the charitable woman is Rivkah, and he bows and blesses God), not on **Gn24-52** (when Eliezer actually finds out that Rivkah consents to marry Isaac, and he bows but does not bless). Why then does Rashi deviate from the Midrashic comment on **Gn24-26:27** and instead bring the comment on **Gn24-52**.

- Mizrachi suggests that the Midrashic text was corrupt. After all, the real place to infer thanking God is when the final news is heard that Rivkah consents to marry. Therefore, the Mizrachi posits that Rashi amended the Midrashic text so that the comment belongs on **Gn24-52**.
- Sifsay chachamim offers a different approach: **Gn24-26:27** mentions bowing *and* blessing; hence there is no need for Rashi to *connect* bowing with giving thanks. Contrastively, **Gn24-52** *only* mentions bowing. Hence, it is necessary for Rashi to connect the bowing with thanking God. This explains why Rashi mentions the good news-thank God connection on **Gn24-52**.
- Rashi Newsletter: We have offered a totally different approach. We infer that one should thank God on good events from the **parallelism** of **Gn24-26:27** and **Gn24-52**. So indeed, the Genesis Rabbah mentions the connection of bowing

and blessing on **Gn24-26:27** where bowing and blessing are mentioned. Rashi however skillfully points out that the derivation did not come from **Gn24-26:27** but rather from the parallelism of **Gn24-26:27** (*bow, thanks*) and **Gn24-52** (*bow*). It is this **parallelism** which emphasizes that thanks must be connected with good news. Thus Rashi does not deviate, but rather supplements and completes, the Genesis Rabbah by pointing out the 2nd verse in the **parallelism**.

Comment on Bethuel's death: Sifsay chachamim fills in operational details on how he died. *Eliezer came to a strange town laden with wealth. It would only be natural to kill him and to obtain this wealth. Eliezer knew this and therefore said when food was placed before him "I will not eat till I talk." Eliezer knew the food was probably poisoned. While he was talking one of the angels that Abraham sent with Eliezer switched plates between Eliezer and Bethuel so that when they started eating Bethuel immediately died.*

Cute! But not necessary. Note that this switching of plates so that the murderer should die from his own poison is a frequent theme in literature books and TV (and it all comes from this Rashi!)

Grammar *Daily Rashi* Monday 11/17/2014 - Gn09-23a

Background: Noah had just left the ark. He gets drunk and rolled around naked in his tent. Shem and Yefeth cover him up.

Biblical Text: Gn09-23a *And he took - Shem and Yefeth - the garment and covered up Noah.*

Rashi Text: *It doesn't say and they took but and he took. This teaches that Shem instigated the act.*

Rashi commentators - Mizrachi: The Mizrachi cites the Genesis Rabbah which emphasizes that the instigation of action is inferred from the grammatical singular on a plural subject.

Mizrachi cites several other verses with singular predicates and plural subjects. We will analyze these in future issues.

Rashi Newsletter Contribution: As mentioned in the previous posting, the *Rav*

formulated this grammatical principle as follows: *When a subject is plural - e.g. Shem and Yefeth - but the verb/activity is singular - e.g. he took - then we interpret the sentence as meaning that the first mentioned person in the subject instigated the act while the other just tagged along.*

Notice that this Rashi comment explains a subtle point not brought by the other commentators: In **Gn09-26:27** Noah *blesses* the God of Shem and but only wishes that Yefeth *reside with* Shem's. Why the discrepancy? After all, they both covered their father's nakedness.

But the Rashi comment explains this. Shem instigated the act while Shem just tagged along. Hence, Shem's God is praised while Yefeth is only praised to live with Shem.

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