

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on VaYayTzaY

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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.

Synonyms *Daily Rashi* Thursday-Friday 11/27-29/2014 Gn30-22a, Gn19-29a, Gn08-01b

Background: We present three Rashis which appear homiletic and not intrinsic to the text. We cite the approaches of the various Rashi commentators. We also show how modern scholarship deals with these types of Rashis. The **Rashi Newsletter** approach uses the **synonym** method which makes the Rashi appear spontaneous and natural. In the first Rashi below, Leah had many children and Rachel had none.

Biblical Text: Gn30-022a *God remembered Rachel, she conceived and gave birth to a son*

Rashi Text: God remembered that Rachel tricked Jacob into marrying Leah and gave up her own marriage and love (She let Leah marry first lest Leah be shipped away to someone irreligious person)

Modern scholarship: The plain meaning of the biblical text simply indicates that God remembered Rachel and enabled her to have a son. There is no indication *in the text* of God remembering specific good deeds. Thus we conclude that the Midrashic Rabbis read this into the text to emphasize moral values; however the text itself does not so indicate.

Rashi commentators - Sifsay Chachamim, Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh:

Sifsay Chachamim: It is just that God remembered Rachel

- Rachel remembered her sister and let her marry Jacob first so she shouldn't be rejected in humiliation
- Therefore it is just that God remembered Rachel to have children so she shouldn't be rejected in humiliation.

Notice that Sifsay chachamim does *not* address how Rashi inferred this. Rather, the Sifsay Chachamim addresses the justice of the remembrance. Let us see the next Rashi commentator.

Gur Aryeh: *Remember* is used on something forgotten and just remembered. But Rachel was a righteous woman. Righteous women always stand in God's eye because of His Providence. Therefore the word *remember* cannot refer to Rachel herself. It must instead refer to some good deeds of hers.

Gur Aryeh grapples with the problem of derivation. However his approach is a bit ad hoc. The Mizrahi begins to use Rashi rules.

Mizrahi: Rashi consistently interprets *remember* as *remembrance of good deeds*

- **Gn19-29a**, God remembered Abraham and saved Lot when destroying Sedom.
Rashi: God remembered that Lot did not squeal on Abraham when he said that his wife was his sister
- **Gn08-01b**, God remembered Noah and the animals in the ark.
Rashi: God remembered that the animals refused to sin with the humans when they approached them and that Noah had voluntarily separated from his wife.

Here Mizrahi uses the Rashi **database** rule. Rashi consistently interprets *remember* as *remembrance of Good deeds*. A check with a biblical search engine indeed confirms that the three examples we are studying are the only verses using the phrase *God remembered*.

However, Mizrahi has still not answered the question *how did Rashi derive this?*

Rashi NewsLetter Contribution: The Rashi newsletter advocates skillful English translations using **synonyms**. The synonym skillfully captures the nuances that enable Rashi comments to be spontaneous and natural.

We suggest that the proper translation of the Hebrew *Zachar* is *reminisce* not *remember*. The three Rashis now appear as intrinsic to the text and make perfect sense.

- **Gn30-22a**, God *reminisced* about Rachel and gave her a son
Rashi: God *reminisced* Rachel's good deeds (The most blatant good deed is the one mentioned one chapter earlier, that she gave up her marriage for her sister so that her sister should not be shamed)
- **Gn19-29a**, God *reminisced* on Abraham and saved Lot when destroying Sedom.

Rashi: God reminisced about the good times (The most obvious good deed is Lot not squealing on Abraham when he said that his wife was his sister)

- **Gn08-01b**, God *reminisced* on Noah and the animals in the ark.

Rashi: God remembered about the good times - that Noah had voluntarily abstained from relations while God was destroying the world and that the animals refused to sin with the humans when they approached them.

Our translation of the Hebrew *zachar* as *reminisce* is consistent with other biblical verses. We select only three. As an exercise the interested reader should use a biblical search engine and find others.

- **Lv Chapter 2**: The plant offerings (*Michah*) consisting of flour (symbolizing our basic material needs), oil (symbolizing wealth) and frankincense (symbolizing satisfaction), have a fistful placed on the altar as a *reminiscence to God*. In other words, we *reminisce with God about the good deeds done with our wealth and this brings us nearer to God* (In Hebrew the word for sacrifice, *korban*, comes from the root meaning *near*).
- **Nu15-40**: In the chapter on the Tzitzith it says that we should look at them *in order to reminisce and do God's commandments*. This makes sense. Remembering something does not necessarily lead to action. But *reminiscing* about the good times we had with the commandments would lead to further action since we wish to capture the moment.
- **Jr02-02**: This famous verse is sung at weddings: *Thus says God [to Israel] I reminisce to you the kindness of your youth, [that you left the richness of Egypt] walking after me [to receive the Torah] in a wilderness without vegetation.*

On a final note, modern scholars would respond to my posting by asking for (further) proof that the Hebrew *zachar* means *reminisce*. By proof they refer to usage in nearby languages. I would however argue that the consistent treatment of this verb as meaning *reminisce* (Rashi **Database** method) is itself a proof since it reflects ancient understanding of the word.

Meaning-Hononyms, Reference *Daily Rashi* Sunday 11/30/2014 Gn30-17a

Background: Leah and Rachel argued about who would have the madrakes (love

flowers) to seduce Jacob that night. Leah retained the mandrakes, in fact, gathered by her son Reuben, and Jacob spent the evening with her.

Biblical Text: Gn30-17a *God accepted Leah's prayers and she had another son*

Rashi Text: Because Leah constantly strived to have children.

Rashi Newsletter Contribution:

The actual Hebrew word used is *listen*. However, the Hebrew word *shamah*, can, like the English word *listen* mean *listen, understand, harken, accept*. We have already used the Rashi **hononym** method and translated the Hebrew word *shamah* which normally means *listen* as *accepted*, which when used in reference to God, means *accepted prayers*.

But we don't find any mention of prayer. Rashi therefore interprets *God accepted Leah's prayers* to refer to *Leah's thoughts and aspirations*. It is clear from this biblical Chapter, **Gn30**, that Leah constantly sought to win her husband's love by having children. Rashi introduces a concept that ones thoughts and aspirations are a form of prayer (Technically, Jewish law requires prayer be articulated albeit silently).

I would add on Rashi: Each of the children's names in this chapter reflect a prayer type motif: e.g. The Bible explains that *reuben* etymologically means *God heard my suffering*; *shimon* means *God heard how hated I am*. Although Leah uses the past tense, people who pray use the past tense as affirmation for their future directed prayers: e.g. *God, hear my suffering*; *God, hear how hated I am*. Thus I would interpret Rashi's comment *God heard her aspirations* to mean *God heard her prayers embedded in the aspirations and reflections of her children's names*.

I am surprised that no other Rashi commentator brings this obvious connection that the *names* of Leah's children *as indicated in the biblical text*, reflect her prayers and aspirations. Here we use the Rashi **reference** method.

Now let us look at how the Rashi commentators handle this.

Sifsay Chachamim: The Hebrew word *listened* refers to prayer but we find no prayer. Hence Rashi refers *listened* to her aspirations.

Here Sifsay Chachamim is in effect using the Rashi **hononym** method since the word *listen* is reinterpreted as *listen to prayer* that is *accept prayer*. Gur Aryeh is similar.

Gur Aryeh: One never uses the phrase *God listened* unless it refers to prayer. But Leah already had 4 children. Nevertheless, because she aspired to have children we refer to it as a prayer.

Here again, Gur Aryeh reinterprets *God listen* as *God accepted [prayers]*.

Rashi Newsletter Contribution: The contribution of the Rashi Newsletter is to explicitly identify this as the **hononym** rule. We also made the contribution that the *text* of Leah's prayers may be found in the names of her sons.

Meaning-Hononyms *Daily Rashi* Monday 12/1/2014 - Gn31-40a

Background: Laban pursued Jacob and caught up with him. Jacob gives Laban an argument stating that he suffered terrible working conditions and never took something that didn't belong to him. (And therefore wants to be left alone!)

Biblical verses: Gn31-38,40

- ...I never ate [Ochol] your sheep
- ... I was burned [Ochol] by the drought

Rashi: [We amend Rashi and explain why below]

- The first Hebrew *Ochol* means *eat*
- The 2nd Hebrew *Ochol* means *burned, consumed* [eaten up]

Rashi Commentators - Sifsay Chachamim, Mizrachi:

Sifsacy Chacahmim: The second Hebrew *Ochol* above means *burned, destroyed*

Mizrachi: The second Hebrew *Ochol* means *burned, destroyed*. [Mizrachi then cites verses where the Hebrew *Ochol* means *destroyed*. It means *destroyed* and does not mean *to eat*.]

Rashi Newsletter Contribution: Both the above commentators simply explain the meaning of the word. What the Rashi newsletter contributes is pointing out that two

verses before the very same root, *ochol*, is used and means *eat*.

My opinion is that Rashi never functions as a dictionary; rather Rashi always presents contrasts. Here Rashi contrasts the same Hebrew word being use within two verses and having two different meanings: *eat*, *destroyed*.

Finally, note the English analogy, that the English *consume* means both *eat* and *destroy*.

In summary, the Rashi Newsletter identifies the rule used as the **hononym** method and further emphasizes that the two hononymic uses of *ochol*, *eat*, *consumed*, occur within two verses. Thus Rashi specifically emphasized meaning here since the reader might get confused.

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