

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on VaYiShLaCh

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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.

Daily Rashi Thursday-Monday 12/4-8/2014 Gn32-04a

In this week's issue we deviate from our usual format

- *Instead of doing 5 Rashis*
- *We will do 5 approaches to one Rashi*

In so doing, we will explore how the Rashiomi Newsletter's approach of 10 rules, gives a handle by which we can understand, evaluate and assess different approaches to Rashi.

We will also see how many of the criticisms against certain Rashi interpretations are echoed by the Rashi commentators. The use of these critical techniques by the Rashi Newsletter is rooted in similar critical comments among the Rashi commentators.

Finally, as the Rashi Newsletter always does, we provide a new explanation that is short punchy and convincing to this very difficult problem.

We hope you find this presentation approach exciting

Biblical Text: [Jacob was nervous about meeting his brother who had wanted to kill Jacob 20 years ago. He prepares for the meeting] *Jacob sent before him messengers to Esau*

Rashi Text: [The Hebrew word for *messengers*, *Malach*, simultaneously means i) human messengers and ii) angel, messengers of God. Rashi explains:] The underlined word *messengers* means Divine messengers, Angels. That is, Jacob sent Angels to Jacob (not human messengers).

Rashi Newsletter and Commentators: Everyone is anxious to

know why the word messengers which in the context of humans means human agents is interpreted by Rashi to mean Angels. This simple question generates numerous responses. Along the way we shall have a chance to examine diverse Rashi rules and assess their usage.

NonVerse *Daily Rashi* Thursday 12/4/2014 Gn32-04a

The Biblical and Rashi text are presented at the beginning of this digest.

Mizrachi, Rashi Commentator: Mizrachi cites the Midrashic compilation, **Genesis Rabbah**, 75:4, which offers the following logical **non-verse** method based on the Talmudic logical inference method, *a fortiori*.

We find the following when people were in trouble

- Hagar, a mere maid, ousted by Sarah, saw 3 saving angels
- Eliezer, a slave, seeking a wife for Isaac, was aided by angels
- Joseph, pursued by his brothers, had help from angels.

Exercise 1: Using a search engine find the verses or Rashis which justify the above 3 statements. (The solution to the exercise will be presented next week)

The midrash concludes: *If a maid, slave and the youngest of the tribes had angels helping them, wouldn't it stand to reason that Jacob, a Patriarch, would have angels helping him. This justifies Rashi's interpretation of messengers as Angels.*

The Mizrachi himself, demurs to this logic. *The same logic would justify interpreting messengers in the following verse as*

meaning angels (which is clearly absurd) Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the King of Sedom (requesting permission to go through his country).

Exercise 2: Find the location of the verse just cited (Solution next week)

In other words, Mizrachi objects to distinguishing between the following

- Our *general* expectation that Jacob would have aiding angels
- Our *specific* expectation in this verse that Jacob sent angels

Mizrachi correctly explains that the Midrash Rabbah's argument only establishes a general expectation that Jacob would have aiding angels; this doesn't apply to this verse.

So our first attempt to understand Rashi using the **non-verse** method does not work. We seek other approaches.

Parallelism *Daily Rashi* Friday 12/5/2014 Gn32-04a

The Biblical and Rashi text are presented at the beginning of this digest.

Mizrachi, Raam, Sifsay Chachamim, Rashi commentators: The Raam, Sifsay Chachamim, Mizrachi offers an explanation of why Rashi interprets *messengers* as *angels* based on the powerful Rashi method of parallelism.

- *Jacob sent before him messengers to Esavu*
- *Israel sent ----- messengers to Sichon, King of...*

- *Moses sent -----messengers to the King of Sedom....*
- *Joshua sent -----two spies*

Sifsay Chachamim, Raam, Mizrachi notes the lack of the underlined words before him. Raam, Mizrachi, Sifsay Chachamim conclude *These messengers were the messengers mentioned immediately before this verse where it says Jacob went on this way; he bumped into Angels of God. Jacob said when he saw them, This is a Divine camp, and he called the name of that place Camps. And Jacob sent messengers before him.*

So Raam, Mizrachi, Sifsay Chachamim interpret the underlined words *before him* to mean *before this passage*. Doesn't this appear as far fetched and silly?

I am sometimes criticized for disagreeing with Rashi commentators. But lo and behold look at the **Levush Orah's** harsh criticism of this explanation of the Raam (Thus we see that my comments are rooted in those of the commentators)

Levush Orah, Rashi commentator: *I am shocked at this sage, the Raam - who always seeks the simple meaning of the text, and always tries to defend Rashi as only seeking the simple meaning of the text as he himself indicates in several places - how then can this sage interpret before him to mean before this passage, which is a very far-fetched interpretation even according to the Midrashic approach. It would have been better for Rashi to say nothing on this verse.*

Furthermore this is based on parallelism that sent never occurs

with before him. But that is not true. Thus we have the verse Jacob sent before him Judah to the land of Goshen. So we have the principle

- If you are waiting for a response from the messengers before taking further action (like war) you say sent
- But if you are sending messengers and simultaneously taking action (such as the case with Jacob who was going to Goshen anyway and sent Judah before him) you use the phrase sent before him.

In this case, Jacob sent messengers and simultaneously was going to Esau (independent of what the messengers said) since he couldn't turn back (because he was fleeing from Laban). So the phrase sent before him is justified.

I would object further to this explanation. In the preceding paragraph it says that *Jacob met a camp of Angels and called the place Camps*. The plural camps refers to both Angel and Human camps. But if so, perhaps the messengers Jacob sent were human. In other words perhaps the juxtaposition of the Angel camp and Jacob's messengers is

- contrastive, humans vs angels, instead of
- parallel, angel messengers like the angels he met.

So the powerful parallelism method did not solve the Rashi quandry: *Why did Rashi interpret messengers as Angels. We must seek further.*

Paragraph/Context *Daily Rashi Sat. 12/6/2014 Gn32-04a*

The Biblical and Rashi text are presented at the beginning of this digest.

Gur Aryeh: Gur Aryeh explains why Rashi interpreted *messengers* as *Divine messengers, Angels*. His explanation is based on the context in the surrounding paragraphs. The context method is a powerful Rashi method and is mentioned in the 13 rules of biblical interpretation introduced by Rabbi Ishmael. Here is a rough outline of the Gur Aryeh's approach

- When Jacob left his house he had the famous ladder dream with angels going up and down.
- Throughout the bible one goes up to Israel but down from Israel
- Immediately before this verse of Jacob sending messengers it says that Jacob saw a camp of angels and named the place, camps.
- The plural camps corresponds to the angels of Israel (*up* in the ladder dream) and angels of the diaspora (*down* in the ladder dream).
- Recall the Patriarch Isaac promised the land of Israel to Jacob because Jacob disguised himself as Esauv. So Esauv hated Jacob and didn't want to let him have Israel
- So to make his point, that he did deserve Israel, Jacob sent Israeli Angels to Esauv.

Exercise 3: Look up all verses and Rashis cited. (Solutins next week)

No one criticizes this. I would simply argue that it is not punchy; it is too intricate. It involves the weaving of a tale from diverse surrounding texts. Let us therefore reexamine another use of the **context/paragraph** method from just one chapter

Gn32. Perhaps this is punchier.

Paragraph (Context) *Daily Rashi* Sunday 12/7/2014 Gn32-04a

The Biblical and Rashi text are presented at the beginning of this digest.

Levush Orah: The Levush Orah presents the following explanation of why Rashi interpreted messengers as meaning angels. We present the following bulleted outline of his argument. All statements occur in **Gn32**

Exercise 4: Look up each italicized cited verse (in the summary below) in **Gn32**.

- Jacob, when he actually met Esauv said *You appear to me as an Angel*. Rashi explains: *Implicit in Jacob's statement was the fact the frequently saw angels. He said this to intimidate Esauv who would have to reckon with the angels Jacob knew*
- Prior to meeting Esauv, *Jacob actually fought and defeated an Angel*. Rashi explains: *Jacob fought and defeated the guardian angel of Esauv, symbolic of the fact that Esauv had no power over him.*
- We conclude from these two events that Jacob used angelic encounters to avoid a military confrontation with Esauv. It follows that Jacob sent actual angels to Esauv to make it clear that he surpassed Esauv spiritually and therefore should not be started up with.

Again, this is rather intricate and lacks punchiness. We now

present a punchy slick explanation of why Rashi interpreted messengers as angels. We argue that this is the true explanation.

Parallelism *Daily Rashi* Monday 12/8/2014 Gn32-04a

The Biblical and Rashi text are presented at the beginning of this digest.

Rashi Newsletter Approach: We use, perhaps the most powerful Rashi method, **parallelism**.

There were two occasions when Jacob sent to Esauv

- He sent a *greeting* to Esauv
- He sent a *gift* to Esavu.

Let us compare the language used.

- [Greeting] ...*Jacob... sent messengers/angels*
- [Gifts] ...*Jacob... said ...servants/slaves*

Exercise 5: Look up the verses just cited. Solution presented next week.

The parallelism is bold, punchy and to the point.

- When Jacob sent his gift he uses his *servants*
- If he had also used his servants when he sent his greeting then the Bible should have used the same term. However, the Bible uses the term *Malach* which can equally mean *human messenger* and *Angel, Divine messenger*. The **parallelism** therefore implies that he didn't use servants for the greetings, rather he used actual angels.

Some scholars approach Rashi through the motto *What is bothering Rashi*. Here Rashi is bothered by the use of two different terms, *messengers vs servants* in two parallel passages. Rashi addresses this parallelism by interpreting *malach* as Angels vs messengers.

We hope you enjoyed the approach presented this week in which instead of doing five Rashi we explored five explanations of one Rashi. In other words, we studied Rashi in depth vs breadth. We also explored how each Rashi method can be used to explain a Rashi but there is one preferred explanation which is punchiest. Feel free to comment by sending an email to RashiYomi@GMail.Com, especially if you want more digests like these.

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