

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on VaYaySheV

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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: [Joseph had told his dreams to his brothers. His brothers accused him of wanting to reign over them. There was tension. The brothers went to sheppard in a nearby town. Jacob sends Joseph to see how things are going.]

A man found him, and indeed, he [Joseph] was wandering in the field; the man asked him as follows, "What do you seek;" and he [Joseph] said "My brothers is what I seek. Please tell me where they are shepparding" And the man said, they have left here; for I have heard them saying 'Let us go towards Dothan.'

Rashi Text: *The underlined word man refers to the Archangel Gabriel as it says (Dan09:11) "and the man Gabriel"*

Rashi Newsletter and Commentators: Everyone is anxious to know why the word man refers to the angel Gabriel. Pretty wild? In attempting to answer this question we will see the commentators use the following five Rashi rules:

- Meaning
- Grammar
- Parallelism
- Database
- Symbolism.

Thus we will have an exciting journey. We will give a novel approach at the end and startingly bring in a beautiful approach to Rashi commentaries found in the Guide to the Perplexed. Let us begin this remarkable journey.

Meaning *Daily Rashi* Thursday 12/11/2014 Gn37-15a

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

Mizrachi, Rashi Commentator: Mizrachi cites the **Midrash Tanchuma** compilation. Mizrachi understands the Midrash Tachuma as using the **Meaning-Database** rule. *Since the word man is used in Gn37-15a and Dan09-11 speaks about the man Gabriel it follows that the word man refers to Gabriel.*

Mizrachi demurs: If you accept that logic then *every* biblical mention of *man* would be a reference to Gabriel. Clearly that is

rediculous.

Note the critical technique used to reject the Rashi: Mizrachi invokes an argument of *consistency*. If the rule that *man* meant Gabriel was true it would be consistently true throughout the bible in all occurrences of *man*.

Rashi Newsletter comment: But it isn't so rediculous. There is in fact a **meaning-database** rule. For example *everyone knows that calf refers to a young bull; but how young? Remarkably only one verse speaks about calf and an age, a one year old calf, and from this verse we infer that calf generally refers to a bull in the first year of life (until 1)*.

Nevertheless, the Mizrachi's objection is valid. There are two many instances of *man* occurring biblically to assert that in all of them *man* means Gabrielle (On the other hand, there is no contradiction in asserting that every occurrence of calf means within the 1st year). So the objection is valid.

Exercise #6: Fine the unique verse where a calf is identified as a one-year old calf. Examine the Rashi on it. (Answers to exercises will be given once a month)

Parallel Daily Rashi Friday 12/12/2014 Gn37-15a

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

Raam, Rashi commentator: Compare the following two verses

- [Jacob when meeting Charanites] Do you know Laban?

- [Joseph when meeting the man] *Where are my brothers?* Raam argues that since Joseph did not first ask "Do you know my brothers" but rather immediately asked "Where are my brothers" we infer that Joseph *knew* that the man knew where they were, in other words, Joseph understood the man was an angel.

Ibn Ezra demurs: Perhaps Joseph intended "If you know, where are my brothers."

Exercise #7: Find the verse where Jacob asked *Do you know Laban*.

Synonyms *Daily Rashi* Saturday 12/13/2014 Gn37-15a

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

There are a variety of words indicating a chance meeting

- *They happened on each other Example: Ruth /Boaz*
- *They met each other Example: Moses/Aaron*
- *He found him Example: Today's verse*

The term *found* is peculiar. It makes it sound as if the man was looking for something and found Joseph. As if, someone, (God), had sent him.

Exercise 8: Find the the verses for the three examples in the previous paragraph. Answers to exercises will be given once a month.

The Rashi Newsletter demurs: Consider the verse *the patrol*

police found me and hit me. These patrol police are not angels!

Exercise 9: Find the verse just cited (Hint: It occurs in Songs 5)
Notice that I have deviated from the standard English translation.

Omnisignificance *Daily Rashi* Sunday 12/14/2014 Gn37-15a

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

Omnisignificance is not a Rashi Newsletter method. However, many Rashi commentators use this principle. The principle asserts that *everything* (omni) has significance because the Biblical Authorship is Divine. Therefore if there are extra words they were intended for exegetical purposes.

In this case, we note that the verse has many *conversational* items, phrases such as *he was wandering in a field*. These words are extra.

Omnisignificance concludes *The use of such phrases emphasizes that God arranged Joseph's wandering and his subsequently being found by the Angel Gabriel (It was a Divine plan)*.

This Omnisignificance approach is used by the Rashi commentator, **Gur Aryeh** as well as by the modern Rashi commentator **Rabbi Boncheck** who popularized the study of Rashi in his series of books *What is Bothering Rashi*.

The Rashi Newsletter demurs: There are problems with using **omniscience**.

- The main problem with the omniscience principle is that it defines a problem but does not indicate how to obtain a solution. Here the Bible *does* use a conversational phrase *he wandered in the field*. But how does that justify the inference that he was found by an Angel.
- A second problem with the omniscience principle is that it is ill defined. What does *conversational* really mean. Contrastively, the other Rashi principles such as parallelism, grammar, synonyms have well defined recognition.

We will reexamine the phrase *he was wandering in the field* in the next **Daily Rashi** using the **symbolism** rule.

Grammar-Parallel-Symbolism Daily Rashi Monday
12/15/2014 Gn37-15a Gn37-17a Gn37-17b

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

Gur Aryeh, Malbim, Rashi commentators: Notice the repeated use of the underlined word *man* in the biblical text:

A man found him, and indeed, he [Joseph] was wandering in the field; the man asked him as follows, "What do you seek;" and he [Joseph] said "My brothers is what I seek. Please tell me where they are shepharding" And the man said, they have left here; for I have heard them saying 'Let us go towards Dothan.'

Malbim explains a general principle, *A repeated noun, when a*

pronoun would have sufficed, emphasizes a distinct noun meaning.

Just to make application of this principle clear the text could say

- *A man found him...*
- *And he said 'What do you seek'*
- *And he said 'They have left here...'*

In other words, the bible could have repeatedly used the word *he*; it didn't have to repeat the word *man*.

The Malbim's principle explains that

- The use of man by itself refers to a man while
- The use of man man indicates a non-standard use of *man* What else can *man* mean. The word *man* in Hebrew, can also mean, as in English, *adult, distinguished person, ("a man")*. So here it could refer to someone distinguished (not necessarily an angel but perhaps an important dignitary).

A famous **Zohar** uses the Rashi **synonym** method. *There are four words for man*

- *Enosh (a perjorative term)*
- *Gever (indicating a fighter)*
- *Ish (indicating someone distinguished)*
- *Adam (emphasizing the image of God, someone very important)*

The Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter would supplement this use of the **Grammar** rule with the following use of the **Parallelism** rule. Let us re-review the biblical text at **Gn37**.

- *These are the happenings of Jacob: Joseph was 17 years old*

and he teenaged with the sons of the maids who married his father...

- A man (adult) found him while he was wandering in the field; the adult asked him what do you seek..... The adult said, "Your brothers left here; I heard them saying, 'Let us go to Dothan'"

In other words, besides the **grammar** rule there is the strong **parallelism** of Hebrew words *naar-ish*. These Hebrew words can be translated as (*child/teenager/kid*) vs. (*man/adult*). Since Joseph was 17 perhaps the most picturesque contrast is *kid-adult*.

The conclusion we obtain is as follows

- **Grammar:** The Bible uses the word *man man* indicating a non-standard use of *man*
- **Parallelism:** Additionally the bible contrasts *teenager* with *man*.

So the bible seems to be emphasizing that Joseph was found *by an adult*.

But so what? What does being found by an adult mean. Also that is not what Rashi says! He interprets *man* not as adult but as the Angel Gabriel.

We need a third Rashi rule. We use the **symbolism** method. Joseph had two dreams that were identified in the biblical text *as dreams*. We contend that this biblical passage that we are examining is also a dream a non identified dream. **Symbolism** is a Rashi Newsletter method.

But can a non-identified dream be regarded as a dream? Yes. For example, the Rambam in the Guide to the Perplexed, which by the way is not just a philosophical text but contains a wealth of exegetical material, explains the talking donkeys in **Nu22** as a dream *even though the text does not call this a dream*. Why? What is the principle which Rambam uses.

These principles are explained using the Rashi Newsletter **Symbolism** method criteria, *If a biblical passage has many queer statements - for example, talking donkeys - and if these queer statements have clear symbolic meaning using clear biblical symbols, then one is required to interpret the passage symbolically.*

Before proceeding, we explain the nature of a non-identified biblical dream. The non-identified biblical dream refers to a real event which later was incorporated into a dream. In the case before us, Joseph was indeed wandering in the field, and indeed met someone whom he asked for his brothers. He then also had a dream to that effect.

Let us apply these criteria to the biblical passage before us. We are justified in interpreting this passage as a dream because of the many queer phrases in the passage. To wit

- *A man found him (instead of met him)*
- *He was wandering in the field (conversational)*
- *What do you want? My brothers; where are they? (Instead of the more natural, do you know them? If so where are they)*

Notice that we have seen all these bullets in previous digests. The contribution of the Rashi Newsletter is to unify these weaker

arguments into a unified whole using the **symbolism** method. The **symbolism** of the passage is presented in the following table.

The Table should be read as follows.

- Reading the left hand column down presents the biblical passage.
- Reading the right hand column down presents the symbolic meaning.
- Reading row by row presents the symbolism. Notice especially the symbolic interpretation of the city named Dothan, as *Doth* a religion; the brothers were taking the law into their own hand (creating a new religion). Such interpretation (consistent with Rashi) normally *is not* justified, but *is* justified in symbolism.

Biblical Text	Symbolic Meaning
<i>An adult found him</i>	Joseph became aware of the need for <i>adulthood</i> . Joseph was about to discover the <i>adult</i> within him
<i>He was wandering in the field</i>	He was naïve, behaving like a teenager. He naively assumed that his brothers would accept him as leader. Joseph erred in the dream of the field where the sheaves of the brothers bowed to him. Joseph assumed the brothers would simply accept him as leader
<i>The adult asked him</i>	Joseph had to reexamine his dream from an adult perspective
<i>What do you want</i>	Joseph had to first see the dream not as reality (the brothers would bow to him) but as inner seeking. What personal wish does the dream indicate?
<i>He said, It is my brothers I seek</i>	Brotherhood! The dream means Joseph wish to be accepted as a co-brother, not as the youngest kid
<i>Please tell me where they sheppard</i>	Please tell me how to achieve brotherhood. No fighting or bickering but peaceful social shepparding where I am leader.
<i>The adult said</i>	Again Joseph behaved liked a teenager. He wasn't thinking as an adult; his brothers were not going to accept him
<i>They left this place</i>	<u>Your brothers are no longer here with you (You don't have brothers; grow up)</u>
<i>I heard them saying</i>	Possibly
<i>Let us go towards Dothan (New Religion)</i>	They are giving up your father's religion. The Bible says that while Joseph's father was angry, he nevertheless "watched" the matter. Maybe Joseph would be great. The brothers were deviating. They didn't care to watch and wait. They were about to <u>take the law into their own hands</u> .

In the above table, we have underlined the two passages since Rashi brings these them. What the Rashi Newsletter contributes is an explicit identification of these isolated Rashi comments as indicating an overall interpretation of the passage as a dream.

Summary: The Rashi Newsletter believes the interpretation of the passage is based on three Rashi rules

- Grammar - no use of pronouns (man...man....man)
- Parallelism - teenager vs man man man
- Symbolism (the various strange phrases, *he was found by a man, he was wandering in a field, (direct asking) where are my brothers* justifies this)

What about Gabriel? We seem to have deviated from Rashi by

interpreting *man man man* as adulthood vs Gabrielle. Our interpretation is very reasonable, justified by the parallelism of *adult-teenager*. How then can we justify Rashi?

But lo and behold, carefully examine Rashi's language

- Rashi does *not* say "The word *man* refers to Gabriel."
- Rashi does not even say "He is Gabriel"
- Rather on the word *man* Rashi comments "This is Gabriel"

Rashi does not even say "He is Gabriel" The word *this* does not refer to the word *man* but to the whole dream. If it referred to the word *man* it would say *He is Gabriel*.

When Rashi says *this is Gabriel*, Rashi means *This symbolic interpretation emanates from the attribute of Justice, governed by the archangel Gabriel*. And what is the translation of saying that *this is Gabriel*? Simple. Joseph was about to get what he deserved. Joseph was an immature teenager, he tattletaled, hung around the maids, and he expected his brothers to bow to him. In fact, his brothers were about to create their own religion and sell him, mocking at his dreams. This is the inner meaning of reference to Gabriel, he got what he deserved.

Notice how in the end we used many of the points mentioned by the Rashi commentators. The primary purpose of the Rashi newsletter is not to replace these commentators but rather to place their comments on a solid basis, unifying them, and supplementing them.

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