

## The 10 RashiYomi Rules

*Their presence in Rashis on VaYiGaSh*

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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](mailto: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.*

## **Meaning-Idiom Daily Rashi Thursday 12/25/2014 Gn44-18a**

### **Biblical Text: Gn44-18a**

*And Judah approached him [Joseph] and said: "Please my lord: I would like to speak into your ears"*

**Rashi Text:** In other words, may my petition actually be absorbed by you.

**Rashi Commentator, Mizrachi:** Rashi is pointing out that we do not interpret speak into your ears literally because it is impolite for a commoner to whisper into a king's ears.

**Rashi Commentator, Gur Aryeh:** ... We cannot interpret speak into your ears literally because i) it is improper to whisper to a King and ii) when you whisper you whisper into only one ear not two!

**Rashi Commentator, Raam:** Speak into your ears a request for personal attention and absorption is emphasized since Judah was speaking by way of an interpreter (who might in translation lose the tone and anguish in Judah's voice)

**Rashi Newsletter approach:** We accept all the above comments. We modestly add the unifying concept that Rashi is using the **meaning-idiom** method. Recall that an **idiom** is a collection of words that means more than the sum of the individual words. Phrases such as *out of the blue, once in a blue moon, rub someone the wrong way, give it a shot, a piece of cake, in hot water* are examples of idioms in English.

In other words, Rashi is explaining that the Hebrew *speak in your ears* is a biblical **idiom** meaning *I hope you really listen to my anguish and are emphatic to my statements*.

Because speak into your ears is an **idiom**, it follows that it is not literal (as the Rashi commentators point out).

**Parallelism Grammar Daily Rashi Friday 12/26/2014 Gn44-31a**

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**Parallelism Grammar *Daily Rashi* Friday 12/26/2014 Gn44-31a**

**Biblical Text: Gn44-31a**

- **Gn44-22** *We [Joseph's brothers] said "The lad [Benjamin] cannot leave his father [As you requested that he be brought to Egypt] since if he leaves his father he [Benjamin] might die..."*
- **Gn 44-31** [If you now keep Benjamin as a slave because he stole your goblet then] *When he [Jacob] sees that the lad [Benjamin] is not there, he [Jacob] will die*

**Rashi Text:** The word he in **Gn44-31** refers to Jacob.

**Rashi Commentators, Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh:** The word he could not refer to Benjamin since then the sentence would mean *he [Benjamin] is probably dead* and this is not Hebrew usage.

**Rashi Newsletter Contribution:** We make 3 contributions

- By using the **parallelism** method we see that 9 verses earlier in **Gn44-22** the identical phrase *he dies* is used. There the *he* does refer to Benjamin. Consequently, a reader might think that the *he* in **Gn44-31** also refers to Benjamin. Therefore, Rashi explains that Jacob (not Benjamin) will die when Jacob does not see Benjamin.
- By using the **Grammar** method we see that the issue is the true referent of the pronoun *he*. In English, pronouns refer to the last mentioned noun. Contrastively, in Hebrew, pronouns refer to the best selection of noun. Another way of stating this is that listening in Hebrew requires more active participation (that in English) since the listener must interpret the speaker's statements.

The context, as just indicated determines reference. In **Gn44-22** the context is that Jacob was worried about Benjamin travelling on the road lest he die. In **Gn44-31** the context (especially in the following verse) is that the shock of losing Benjamin would kill Jacob.

- Finally we note that *he dies* in **Gn44-22** means *he might die*. The Rashi commentators point out that the interpretation of **Gn44-31** as *he is probably dead* is incorrect. The commentators are correct. *Might* refers to a subjunctive sense and that is an allowable interpretation. On the other hand *probably* refers to an adverbial modification of the verse and that would require an extra word indicating probably.

We think the parallelism of verses 22 and 31 capture the true driving force of the Rashi: Rashi was concerned that a biblical

reader would transfer the usage from verse 22.

Rabbi-Ishmael Style *Daily Rashi* Sat-Mon 12/27-28/2014 Gn47-27a, Gn24-55b,c

**Biblical Text: Gn47-27a**

*The Jews dwelled*

- *In the country of Egypt*
- *In the country of Goshen*

**Rashi Text:** That is, Goshen is a state within Egypt

**Rashi Commentator, Mizrachi:** Rashi clarifies that

- Goshen is in Egypt
- But that Egypt is not in Goshen (Which you might have thought since Goshen is listed second)

**Rashi Commentator, Gur Aryeh:** Rashi clarifies that they dwelt in Goshen which is in Egypt; they did not dwell in two countries (dual citizenship).

I would support the Gur Aryeh's concern about an interpretation of possibly dual citizenship, dwelling in two countries, since a verse explicitly states that the Egyptians despised eating with Jews (So perhaps the Jews worked in the country of Goshen but because of Joseph had Egyptian citizenship also)

**Exercise:** Find the verse which states that the Egyptians despised eating with the Jews.

**Rashi Newsletter Contribution:** Rashi Newsletter contributes the method of **style** that *the general biblical style is to state*

*super categories first and then subcategories* (Rashi Pesachim 6).

Rabbi Ishmael called this the **General-Detail** style rule. Although this rule is typically understood to apply to legal matters, a contribution of the Rashi Newsletter is that the Rabbi Ishmael rule is a general principle of **style** applying broadly to both legal and non-legal spheres.

Here are some other examples. In each example the list gets more and more specific. Notice the strength of this poetic form.

Example 1: Jer02-06 *Where is the Lord who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us*

- *through the wilderness,*
- *through a land of deserts and of pits,*
- *through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death,*
- *through a land that no man passed through,*
- *where no man dwelt*

Example 2: Gn47-11 *Joseph settled his father and brothers*

- *In the country of Egypt*
- *In the best of the states*
- *In the state of Raamsayth*

Example 3: Gn24-55b,c They said: [Do not leave immediately] let the girl [our daughter] stay

- for days [Rashi: A year]
- or 10 [Rashi: 10 months. Why not say the reverse *a few days or 10 days?* Because it is not the nature of people to ask for a

little and if they don't get it, to ask for alot. Rather people ask for alot and if they don't get it they ask for a little.]

To recap, the Bible's style (in general) is to state the general category first and then zero in on the specific category.

## 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

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**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

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**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)

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**IV-PARALLELISM:** (Ex20-04) Dont **POSSESS** the gods of others Dont **MAKE** idols RASHI: So both **POSSESSion & MAKING** of idols are prohibited

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**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.

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**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

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**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)

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**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

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**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.

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**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