

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on SheMoTh

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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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Many of today's examples deal with the idiom method. An idiom is a group of words whose meaning transcends the meaning of the individual words. Rashi commentators frequently get involved in details: Why does this group of words mean what it does? The Rashi Newsletter makes the contribution that the group of words is simply an idiom. The reason for the idiom is secondary.

Synonym-Parallelism *Daily Rashi* Thursday 1/8/2015 Ex01-07a

Biblical Text: Ex01-07a

And the Jews [in Egypt]

- *were fruitful*
- *insectified*
- *and multiplied*
- *and were very*
- *very*
- *huge*

Rashi Text: The Jewesses gave birth to sextuplets.

As we go through the Rashi commentators we will see numerous themes about the correct and incorrect way of reading Rashi.

Mizrachi, Rashi commentator: This Rashi comes from the Great Genesis Midrash. Some say six children at a time and some say 12 children at a time [The implication seems to be that 6 children correspond to the 6 bullets or 12 children corresponding to the 6 bullets each with an indication of at least

2].

An all this is simply a mnemonic.

Comment: Notice how the association of 6 bullets with 6 children is not seen as something deep but as something whimsical without firm foundation. It is simply not based on any principles. The Rashi Newsletter transfers this approach to other cases in Rashi where the derivation seems to be based on association.

Sifsay Chachamim, Rashi commentator: The derivation is not from the 6 bullets but from the biblical word *insectified* which connotes having *swarms* of children.

Comment: In several early articles of mind I distinguish between Rashi content and Rashi form.

- The Rashi content is simply that the Jewesses had many children; Rashi learns this by using the synonym method: *insectified* vs. *giving birth* means having many children
- But the Rashi form is based on the 6 bullets. This is just a mnemonic. The contribution of the **Rashi NewsLetter** is to point out the mnemonical aspect is in form only; the content still has a solid basis.

Gur Aryeh, Rashi commentator: I reject the idea that this is learned from the word *insectified*. After all there are many verses that use insectified such as God's blessing to Noah after the flood: *And you, be fruitful and multiply; insectify the earth and multiply* (Gn09-07). The intent is not that Noah and his descendants should all have 6 children.

There are two approaches to explaining the Rashi on **Ex01-07**

- *Insectified* could refer to population shifts over larger and larger areas (such as insects do) and such as applies to Noah. Contrastively, when not speaking about population shifts, *insectified* would mean having many children
- A deeper approach uses **parallelism**.
 - Throughout the Bible we use the phrase *be fruitful and multiply*
 - However **Ex01-07** uses *fruitful*, *insectify* and *multiply*

The breaking up of the idiom *fruitful and multiply* with *insectify* points to an intense *fruitful and multiplying*.

Rashi NewsLetter Approach: Most of what the **Rashi Newsletter** contributes has been discussed above. The **Rashi Newsletter** contributes explicit identification of rules; while the Rashi commentators use these rules without identifying them as unifying themes.

- **Grammar method:** A denominative is a verb that comes from a noun. Some common English examples are *to flower*, *to hammer*, *to dust*. Hence from the noun *insect* we would get the denominative *to insectify*, which would mean behaving like insects.
- **Synonym method:** We introduced the idea that *insectified* vs. *fruitful* or *multiply* are synonyms with different nuances. *Insectify* would connote many births
- **Parallelism method:** We contrasted *fruitful & multiply* vs *fruitful insectify and multiply*
- **Mnemonic:** We emphasized that while a Rashi *form* could be mnemonical the *content* can still be solid.

The Rashi commentators did not make explicit their methods. By making the contribution of making the methods explicit we give a handle to understand them in a deeper way.

Summary: What then is the correct explanation of the Rashi. We suggest as follows: *The simple meaning of fruitful, insectify, multiply, vs. fruitful, multiply is that the Jewesses had multiple births. Rashi expresses this using a pun - 6 bullets, 6 children. One need not take this literally.*

Notice how our summary used elements of all Rashi commentators.

Idiom Daily Rashi Friday 1/9/2015 Ex04-10b

Note: An Idiom is a group of words whose combined meaning exceeds or is different than the individual words.

Biblical Text: Ex04-10a,b

[Background: God had just asked Moses to lead the Jewish people. Moses refuses] *Please God I am not been a man of words, ..., because I am stutterer*

Rashi Text: The literal Hebrew phrase the Bible uses is *heaviness of mouth*. This means a stutterer (Rashi gives the Old French)

Rashi NewsLetter Approach: Rashi is identifying an idiom. The two words *heavy* and *mouth* when combined together have nothing to do with *heaviness* or the *mouth*, rather they refer to *stuttering*.

Mizrachi, Rashi commentator: The word *mouth* in the phrase *heaviness of mouth* refers to speech, which comes from the mouth. *Heaviness* of speech refers to stuttering. You cannot say that it literally refers to a heavy mouth since mouths are not heavy. Also God's response *who gives a mouth or mutism to a person,...is it not I God?*, shows we are dealing with speech difficulties.

Gur Aryeh, Rashi Commentator: Rashi explains the phrase *heavy mouth* as referring to stuttering since heaviness is not something that happens to lips.

Comment: Notice how

- The Rashi commentators explain why the phrase can't be literal
- The Rashi Newsletter identifies the Rashi comment as an idiom.

So the Rashi commentators focus more on what shouldn't be done while the Rashi Newsletter focuses more on what should be done.

Idiom *Daily Rashi* Saturday 1/10/2015 Ex06-07c

Note: An Idiom is a group of words whose combined meaning exceeds or is different than the individual words.

Biblical Text: Ex06-07c

[Background: The verse describes how Pharaoh rejected the Jews request for a religious holiday from work. Pharaoh addresses the task masters] *Place on the Jews the same quota of bricks as*

they had until now, don't diminish, because they are goofing off, therefore they ask for religious holiday.

Rashi Text: The literal Hebrew phrase the Bible uses is *yesterday and 2 days ago*. This means *until now*

Rashi NewsLetter Approach: Rashi is identifying an **idiom**. The two words *yesterday* and *2-days ago* when combined do not mean *yesterday and the day before*, rather they mean *until now*.

Mizrachi, Rashi commentator: You can't interpret this literally (*yesterday and 2 days ago*), because if you so interpret, why would they be complaining (Before 2 days ago this was the quota). Therefore Rashi interprets the verse to mean *until now*. Rashi relies on the idiomatic meaning of the word *yesterday* [by itself] which can mean *a long time*, for example **Job08-08:09**, *Ask the earlier generations [who knew] for we ourselves are only here yesterday [recently] like a shadow on the ground* (Therefore you should ask previous generations who have more experience).

According to Rashi, we don't really need the addition phrase *like 2 days ago* since *yesterday* by itself implies *until now*.

Sifsay Chachamim, Rashi Commentator: Rashi is explaining that *yesterday* is not literal but like the *yesterday* in *for we are only here yesterday* [recently]. However the phrase *yesterday and 2 days ago* emphasizes that *yesterday* is *not literal*, just one day ago, but refers to the broader meaning of *until now*.

Comment: Notice how

- The Rashi commentators explain why the phrase can't be literal
- The Rashi Newsletter identifies the Rashi comment as an idiom.

So the Rashi commentators focus more what shouldn't be done while the Rashi Newsletter focuses more on what should be done.

Also I disagree with Mizrachi and Sifsay Chachamim. There are 3 levels of meaning as presented in the following table

- *yesterday* (literally) - means the day before today
- *yesterday* (broadly) - means recently
- *yesterday or 2 days ago* - means until now.

Non-Verse Idiom *Daily Rashi* Sun-Mon 1/11,12/2015 Ex06-07c, Gn01-04a

Biblical Text: Ex08-07c

[The verse is describing the birth of Moses. Recall Pharaoh had decreed that all male children should be thrown into the Nile.]
His mother saw that he was good and hid him 3 months

Rashi Text: The underlined word good means that the house was filled with light when Moses was born.

As we read the Rashi commentators, notice how they interpret the appearance of light literally.

Mizrachi, Rashi commentator: The Talmudic Rabbis derive that good means light from the verse **Gn01-04** *And God saw*

that the light was good. Just as in that verse good means light so too in this verse.

This light explains why her mother tried to save him by placing him in a boat on the Nile. After all, did not all mothers want to save their children? Such a rescue attempt would be futile. But she saw that this child was different and worthy of a miracle.

Gur Aryeh, Rashi commentator: Didn't all mothers want to preserve their children as much as possible? Why then did seeing the light motivate saving the child?

You must therefore assume that there was a decree "If a child is found in your house you will be executed." Hence no one tried to save children. But this child had light. Hence he was worthy of a miracle.

Rashi Newsletter Approach: We have seen in the past few weeks that Rashi need not be taken literally if the biblical text supports this.

In this case we use the **NonVerse** method.

- If I asked 10 mothers what does it mean for a child to be *good* they would respond, *A child is good if he doesn't cry?* (All 10 of them:)).
- If I further asked the mothers, *And when is a child very good,* they would respond *When (s)he has a bright smile.* Notice the word *bright* an English metaphor for cheerful smiles.

We next use the **idiom** method. If *bright* means *smile* in the context of babies in English, then *light* means *smile* in the

context of babies in Hebrew.

What happened? Most babies cry and therefore they let the surrounding people know they are there. There is no point in attempting to save them. However, Moses did not cry that much. He was full of light, smiles. His mother hid him because he wouldn't cry and give away his existence.

Additionally, a baby that doesn't cry has a certain regal atmosphere to him. The baby makes a point and then stops crying instead of doing it incessantly. Such a baby, with a regal demeanor, would appeal to the royal household. The mother therefore took a gamble and placed him on the Nile at the time of day when Pharaoh's daughter regularly bathed in the hope she would keep him.

Rav Hirsch in his commentary goes a step further. *Do you notice how first the midwives violated Pharaoh's orders and then his own daughter violated his order? Was anyone afraid of death? No! For everyone perceived Pharaoh's order as paranoid and no one paid attention to him.* The Jews and Egyptians were well integrated and therefore we could have the possibility of the child being saved.

I have left to explain one thing: How do I deal with the Talmudic text *Just as good in the verse God saw the light was good, means light, so too the good in the verse the baby was good means light?*

To answer this I cite from a memorable lecture of my teacher of Rashi, the Rav, Rabbi Joseph Baer Soloveitchick. "*Rashi*

explains the good in the verse God saw the light was good to refer to prophetic light, the light of dreams. Why? Because the term good is a moral term.

- For a person to be *good* means that he is moral
- What does it mean for light to be *good*. How can a moral term, *good* be coupled with an inanimate object, light.
- The answer is that the *light* refers to prophetic light which is consistent with the moral nature of good.

We see from this analysis that *good* means different things in different contexts.

- For a person, it means a moral character
- For light, it means the capacity to dream and see visions, a characteristic of moral people
- For babies, it means bright smiles, cheerfulness, a characteristic of moral people.

Summary: Have we explained the simple meaning of the verse or have we deviated into homily? The Rashi newsletter answers such questions by identifying Rashi rules.

- The **NonVerse** rule identifies special contexts like babies not crying or bright smiles as being good.
- The **Idiom** rule shows that *good* person, *good* light, *good* baby have specific meanings in all languages. We need not assume that the baby always smiled. It is enough to assume that the baby was good and that the princess might want him.
- It is in this sense that it is the simple meaning of the verse. Good baby (whatever that means) ==> Fit for the palace==> Worth a gamble to place him on the Nile.
- We aren't sure of details but that is the most reasonable

interpretation of the verse.

To recap: The *general* outline (good==> fit for the palace==> worth a gamble to save) is indeed the simple meaning of the verse. The *specific* details are hypotheses; they may be reasonable or they may be alternatives.

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