

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis on BaMiDBaR
Vol 23#18 - Adapted from Rashi-is-Simple

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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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- *Today we bring a surprise appearance of the RaDaQ whose dictionary, (Grammatical) Roots is very important in understanding the Bible. Although RaDaQ did not write a commentary on Rashi, his works can be used to understand Rashi.*

Formatting-Daily Rashi Sunday-Saturday May 17th-23th, 2015

Biblical Text: Nu21-30b, Nu03-39a, Gn33-04b, Dt29-29a, Gn37-12a, Nu09-10a, Gn18-09a, Gn19-33c

Nu03-39a: All that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and ~~Aaron~~ numbered at the commandment of HaShem, by their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.

Comment: In our Biblical texts, there are dots on the word *Aaron*. We have indicated these dots with a crossout of the word Aaron as shown above (~~Aaron~~) In my article, "Biblical Formatting", Jewish Bible Quarterly, Vol 35(1), pp. 17-27, 2007, I show that the following are perceived and read the same way

- A biblical Author using dots above a word
- A modern author using strikeout.

In other words, the biblical Author indicates what the modern author wishes to indicate by strikeout, by using dots.

Rashi: ~~Aaron~~ was stricken from the census--that is, he wasn't counted since he was a Levite.

Approach of the Rashi Newsletter: If you review Nu03 you see that the Levites were counted and in fact three Levite families were counted. These Levite families originated from the 3 children of Levi: Gershon, Kehath, Merari (Ex06-16). However, although Aaron was a descendant of Levy, he was given his own tribe, the Priesthood. Hence, he wasn't counted among the Levites.

Therefore, a scribe reading, **Nu03-39**, *these are the census of Moses and Aaron* might think that *Aaron* is a mistake and not reproduce this word in his own scroll of the Torah. The argument would be *Aaron was counted as a Levite because he was distinguished as a priest; it stands to reason that since he was a distinguished priest he wouldn't be involved in counting the Levites* (

Such reasonings could easily lead to errors in scrolls. The job of the special scribes, the Masorites, was to prevent reasonable errors from happening in transcription of the Torah scrolls. The Masorites lived after the destruction of the Temple and after the biblical text was finalized. They preserved the text with marginal notes. These marginal notes of theirs are called the Mesorah commentary. Any strange text (for example, a word that occurs only once in the bible) was noted by them in their marginal commentary. In this way, the Marorah, the tradition of the text was preserved with high accuracy. You can see the Mesorah commentary in many good Bibles.

Ezra, the scribe, returned the Jews from their first exile. He also established the great court of 120 prophet-sages who fixed many of our traditions. Ezra found 10 instances in the bible (8 in the Torah) where a scribe could err. Ezra therefore introduced the placing of dots on these letters (The Torah scroll, the letters, paragraphing and pronunciation could not be tampered with; so Ezra added dots). The dots indicated that *you might think this word does not belong here but it indeed does*.

Here is another obvious example: Recall Jacob, the patriarch,

stole the birthright blessings from Esauv. Esauv was infuriated and wanted to kill Jacob. The two were estranged for several decades. Upon meeting the verse says that Esauv *kissed* Jacob. This doesn't sound right since both before and after their meeting Esauv hated Jacob. So the word *kissed* looks like an error. Ezra therefore placed dots on the word *kissed* to emphasize that it was not a mistake.

There are two possible explanations of why it was not a mistake:

- Perhaps this was the one time in their lives when Esauv and Jacob really liked each other
- Perhaps it was a kiss in appearance only; it was insincere.

The full set of examples of dotted words are presented after we discuss the Rashi commentators on this verse and the contribution of the Rashi Newsletter.

Sifsay Chachamim, Gur Aryeh, Raam and Mizrachi Rashi

commentators: Interestingly, on this Rashi the Rashi commentators function as the *Rashi commentator team*. The individual commentators do not fully explain the Rashi, but the *team* together does.

We start with the **Mizrachi** who dwells on the following contradiction

- Rashi says that the word *Aaron* is written with dots (stricken) because he was not *counted*
- But the text is speaking about *counting* not *being counted*. Rashi *should* have said Aaron had dots (stricken) because he did not do any *counting*.

The Mizrachi then reviews all the other *dotted verses* and shows that the *dots* strike or delimit the activity of the verse.

The **Raam**, a Rashi commentator frequently cited by the Sifsei Chachamim and Gur Aryeh, suggests that

- Aaron was not counted amongst the levites and also
- Aaron did not do any counting (and hence the word Aaron is stricken in the phrase *the census that Moses and Aaron counted*)

The **Gur Aryeh** rejects the Raam and brings in the census practices.

- The governors of each tribe participated in the counting
- Aaron was the governor of the Levites but he was not counted, like other princes, with his tribe
- However, he did participate in the counting just as all governors participated with the census of their tribes.

Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter explicitly mentions the idea of the **Formatting** rule. The Formatting has a functional purpose, to prevent errors. The Rashi Newsletter also brings the history of the dots, an innovation of Ezra the scribe to preserve the biblical text. This explanation is based on the Midrash, Avoth DeRabbi Nathan. What emerges (and this answers the paradox raised by the Mizrachi) is that

- The statement *Aaron wasn't counted among the Levites* is not the inference of the dots on Aaron but rather
- The statement *Aaron wasn't counted among the Levites* is the reason for the dots on Aaron. The dots on Aaron are there to counter the possible misinterpretation that since Aaron wasn't

counted he didn't count and the word *Aaron* is in error

- Besides the dots added by Ezra the Scribe to prove this, we can infer from the biblical text, itself that all tribes were counted by their governors. So I know that Aaron did the counting; the dots are there to avoid an error.

We now present the other 7 biblical examples of verses with dots on a word. The examples are enumerated (with explanations) in **Bamidbar Rabbah** 3:13. 8 of these 10 examples are explained by Rashi in his commentary on the Bible. They are presented in the list below along with the accompanying Rashi interpretation. In each case, Rashi interprets the verse to emphasize that although it may appear that a word in the text is in error, it really belongs there.

- **Nu21-30b:** *We have shot at them--Heshbon unto Dibon is destroyed, and we have laid waste even unto Nophah ~~that~~ reaches to Maydvah* Rashi: The clause that reaches to Maydvah introduced by the relative pronoun ~~that~~ is stricken indicating that the destruction discussed in this clause was stricken out. In fact the Jews destroyed (a) *both* cities (buildings) and inhabitants until Nopach but (b) *only* destroyed cities (but apparently let the inhabitants flee) until Maydvah. Hence the Maydvah destruction was stricken and weakened as it only applied to the cities and not the people.

- **Nu03-39a:** *All that were numbered of the Levites,*

whom Moses and ~~Aaron~~ numbered at the commandment of HaShem, by their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.

Rashi: ~~Aaron~~ was stricken from the census--that is he wasn't counted since he was a Levite. But he nevertheless did participate in counting.

• **Gn33-04b**: *And Esau ran to meet him [Jacob], and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and ~~kissed~~ him; and they wept.* Rashi: The kiss should be stricken from the record! It wasn't a real (i.e. sincere) ~~kiss~~ since Esau really hated Jacob. **Rashi offers an alternative explanation**: The kiss should be stricken from the record since it was the only sincere kiss. All other kisses were insincere.

• **Dt29-29a**: *The secret things [sins] belong unto HaShem our G-d; but the things [sins] that are ~~revealed~~ belong [are visited] unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.* Rashi: *Revealed* should be stricken. ~~Revealed~~ sins weren't always visited upon the community; they weren't visited upon the community till after the conquest of Israel in the time of Joshua when all Jews lived together and became responsible to each other.

• **Gn37-12a**: *And his brethren went to ~~shepard~~ their*

father's flock in Shechem. Rashi: The word *shepard* should be stricken out since they didn't really go to ~~shepard~~ sheep; rather they went to escape their father who favored Joseph. To echo what we have been saying: *Since* the following verses discuss their plot to kill Joseph, it might appear that they went away in secret. The verse therefore explains that they did not go shepard the sheep and used that as an excuse to plot Joseph's death.

- **Nu09-10a:** *Speak unto the children of Israel, saying: If any man of you or of your generations shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey ~~afar off~~, yet he shall keep the passover unto HaShem;*

Rashi: The requirement *far off* should be stricken. One need not be absolutely ~~far away~~ - but ~~far away~~ enough not to be able to come to Jerusalem.

- **Gn18-09:** *And they said ~~to him~~: 'Where is Sarah thy wife?' And he said: 'Behold, in the tent.'* Rashi: The phrase *to him* should be stricken. They said it generally, not just to him. When they met Abraham *they said ~~to him~~* where is your spouse. Similarly when they met Sarah *they said* where is your spouse.

- **Gn19-33c** *And they made their father drink wine that night; and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, ~~nor when she~~*

~~arose~~. Rashi: The phrase ~~nor when she arose~~ is dotted indicating a
strikeout: Lot really did know when she arose and even so did not avoid a recurrence on the 2nd night with his second daughter. [How can Rashi say he did know if the verse explicitly say he didn't know? Probably Rashi meant that e.g. he had a visual sexual dream about the affair so he really suspected it].

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 don't 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) 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