

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis For Parshat KoRaCh

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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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- *I am frequently asked why I appear to ignore Talmudic statements or appear to twist Rashi's words. Today we will see several Rashis that ignore Talmudic statements or must be interpreted by twisting. I cite several Rishonim who approach it this way and defend what they do. This gives us insight into requirements of interpretation.*

Meaning-Idiom *Daily Rashi* Monday Jun 15th, 2015 Nu16-02b

Biblical Text: Nu16-02b

Korach took [hold of himself] with Datan Aviram and

Rashi: [Rashi here explains the meaning of *took*]

- The underlined word *took* means *separated* himself to one side to dispute with the congregation on who should be High Priest
- The Aramaic translation translates *Korach separated himself*
- A similar translation of *took* occurs in **Job16:12**. Job's friends were rebuking him for doubting God's providence and letting him *get carried away with himself*. The actual **Job 16:12** says *Why do you let your emotions [lit. heart] take hold of you...that you give God a piece of your mind..*
- Another approach: *Korach took the heads of the community (took them with words) since take can be translated as persuasion.*

Approach of the Rashi Newsletter: We have translated the biblical Hebrew text with an English idiom: *Took hold of himself.*

Note: That this appears odd. After all, there is no reason to assume the Biblical translation has anything to do with the English idiom; furthermore, this English idiom appears to have nothing to do with Rashi.

However, our translation does fit the verse nicely and tie in with the biblical word *took*. Let us therefore see what some of the Rashi commentators say.

Ramban, commentator and Rashi commentator: Rashi seems to disagree with the Midrash he cites! For

- the Midrash cites the verse in Job *why let your heart (emotions) take over you* while
- Rashi says *Korach took himself to one side against the congregation*.

Mizrachi Rashi commentator: The Mizrachi spends a long time defending Rashi against the Ramban. Here are three of his arguments.

First: The Mizrachi correctly points out that the word *side* can mean *logical side* as well as *physical side*. So when Rashi says that Korach took himself to one side it could mean to one logical side which aligns with the Job verse of his emotions taking hold of him.

Second: The word *take* refers to *emotional events*.

- The verse in Job refers to ones emotions (heart) taking hold of oneself
- The verse in Numbers must refer to emotional persuasion which *leads* to Korach separating himself to one side.

Thirdly: Here is an analogy which will help understand the Mizrachi. This analogy is not given by the Mizrachi but illustrates a fundamental technique, *intermediate mediating variables*.

Consider the situation with Samuel. The literal Hebrew translation of Samuel is Hear-God so we will call him HearGod.

Chana, his mother was barren. She prayed for a child, and she finally got pregnant. The verse says **1Sam1:20** *She called the child HearGod because she asked God for the child.*

This verse appears contradictory If the justification for the name is *asked God* then the name should be *AskGod*. If the name is *HearGod* the verse should have said *She called him HearGod because God heard her prayers*.

We can resolve this contradiction using the method of intermediate mediating variables. The verse is translated as follows:

- She asked for the child
- God heard her prayers and therefore
- She called the child HearGod because
- Of the combination of asking God and God hearing.

In other words, we perceive *asking God for the child* as one step in a two step process resulting in *God Hearing Her prayers*. Therefore the verse properly reads *She called him HearGod because she had asked God for the child* [and as a consequence God heard her].

I would apply the same logic here to Rashi

- As Mizrachi points out, the word *take* (when connected with heart) is emotional. It refers in Job to the emotions getting the better of a person
- A *consequence* of this emotional takeover is setting oneself aside.

Just as in the Samuel verse we combine the *asking from God with God hearing* so to in the Numbers verse we combine *the emotions taking over with separation from the community*.

Comments: Notice how

- The Ramban approached Rashi-Midrash literally. Midrash speaks about *overtaken by emotions (heart)* while Rashi speaks about *separation from the community*. This does create a problem but only if you are picky and literal
- The Mizrachi uses a broad approach. The context of the word *take* is emotional and all translations have to follow it.

Thus the idea I have frequently cited that our approach to Rashi should be broad is justified fully by this Mizrachi.

Comments: The astute reader may ask: *You have defended nicely that the verse means an overtaking of emotions; why then have you translated took hold of himself.*

Actually, the Midrash shows that *take* when the subject is *the heart* means an overtaking of emotions. In this verse the *problem* is that *take* occurs without an object. Nothing was taken.

In other words I am dealing with the grammatical problems of the verse (distinct from the translation problems). I have translated the verse reflexively (and sometimes the Qal construction can be used reflexively). *Korach took himself*. But that immediately conjurs up the English idiom *Took hold of himself*.

But then am I not disagreeing with Rashi? No! For Rashi's main goal was not to translate *overtaking emotions* (which would require mention of the word *heart*), nor was his goal to translate *separation from the community* (which is inconsistent with the emotional context); rather Rashi's goal was to establish that the word *take* in this verse is emotional.

I therefore translated *took hold of himself* since that is the closest English usage consistent with an emotional context.

Comments: Finally, we have to deal with the 2nd interpretation of Rashi. Rashi mentions that *take* can refer to *verbal taking* persuasion.

My opinion is that Rashi deals with two distinct and separate problems in the verse and therefore brought in two interpretations

- The first problem is what the phrase *Korach took* means: Rashi established that it refers to the emotional sphere and I have approximated this with the English, *he took hold of himself*
- The 2nd problem is the last half of the verse: *Korach took [hold of himself] with Datan, Aviram, and On.*

Rashi is explaining what the other people, Datan, Aviram and On are doing in the verse. Korach took hold of himself and persuaded (verbal taking) Datan, Aviram and On to take hold of themselves and join him.

Comments: Note a few weeks ago I mentioned the Lubavitch Rebbe's (z"l) position that when Rashi brings two opinions he is satisfied with neither of them. My own opinion is that the 2nd one is always correct and that the first one can be refuted.

However the two opinions brought by Rashi today ("take to one side" and "Verbally take others") *clearly* are *not* two opinions on one verse; rather they are two opinions/comments on two parts of the verse. The first part of Rashi deals with Korach *taking*. The second part of Rashi deals with the 2nd half of the verse *taking ...with Datan Aviram and On*. So this Rashi does not illustrate (one way or the other) the controversy between the Rebbe and myself.

Meaning Synonyms *Daily Rashi* Tuesday June 16th, 2015, Nu16-27a

Biblical Text: Nu16-27a

[Background: Korach had rebelled against God with Datan and Aviram. Moses visits Datan and Aviram's house to talk to them but they come out rebellious]

...Datan and Aviram went out [of their house] standing with wives and children.

Rashi: *Went out standing* to blaspheme and curse. We find

similarly that Galyath the Philistine also went out standing to blaspheme and curse.

Sifsay Chachamim, Gur Aryeh and Mizrachi Rashi

commentators: It is amusing to see the attempts of the Rashi commentators to explain this. For example

- **Contradiction method**: On the one hand it says that *they went out of their houses*; on the other hand it says *they were standing*. Which is it; were they *standing* or *going*. To resolve this contradiction Rashi explains *standing* metaphorically: blaspheming and cursing.
- **Superfluity method**: It would be enough to say *that they went out*. No one leaves their house sitting or sleeping or reclining. When you leave you are standing. So the statement *they went out standing* has an extra word. The extra word is used exegetically to refer to blapheming and cursing.

Note: The Rashi newsletter never uses the method of superfluity also known as omnisignificance. We in fact have shown this rule to be incorrect. The rules used by the Rashi newsletter are always more focused.

Approach of the Rashi Newsletter: We use the synonym method. True, the Hebrew word *niztavim* is translated as standing but the real Hebrew word for standing is *omdim*. If you examine the *usages* of *Niztavim* in the bible you will find that it is used in the sense of *Authority* and *Power*. The *Niztav* is a person who *stands over the community* to run it. In the military sphere the *Matzav* is a support plank to enable soldiers to overrun a fortress and attack. There are additional usages of the Hebrew word *niztav* but this is the dominant one. Even a simple

verse like *God stands (Nitzav) to fight for His nation* really has a connotation of Authority and Power (e.g. *God is armed to fight*).

So the simple straightforward meaning of the verse is *Datan and Aviram went out of their houses Authoritatively*.

Rashi then is not commenting on the word standing but on the word Authoritatively. Rashi explains that the *nuances* of Authoritatively are nuances of defiance with its concurrent blasphemy and concurrence.

Here again I am using the method of *intermediate mediating variables*.

Rashi is

- Not commenting on the contradiction (went out <-> standing)
- Not commenting on the superfluity (went out (standing))
- But rather is translating Nitzavim with the proper nuance (Authoritatively) and then
- Indicating the consequences of this translation (Authoritatively => defiantly)

Formatting - Paragraphing *Daily Rashi* Wednesday Jun 17th, 2015 Nu17-05a

Biblical Text: Nu17-05a

[Korach had just been destroyed in a massive earthquake. The people in his group had attempted to offer incense in copper incense wands. These incense wands were beaten and made into coverings of the altar] *As a commemoration to the Jews in order that no foreigner (non priest) come near to the altar to*

*offer incense **and** [therefore] there will not be (further rebellions) like Korach and his community.*

Rashi: Rashi's comment is indicated by the parenthetical insert [therefore].

Approach of the Sifsay Chachamim, Gur Aryeh and Mizrachi Rashi commentators: You could ask on Rashi by citing the Talmudic statement *Whoever rebels like Korach and his community violates a negative prohibition as it says there should not be like Korach and his community*. You could ask if Rashi is contradicting this Talmudic statement. The commentators do not think so.

The commentators prove their point, that Rashi does not contradict the Talmud, using the bolded word **and**. This word proves that the statement "There will not be like Korach" is not a stand-alone statement but rather it is connected to the rest of the sentence ("and"). The Rashi commentators then classify this Talmudic statement as just a hyperbole and exaggeration.

Approach of the Rashi Newsletter: The **Formatting-Paragraph** method basically says that a group of consecutive sentences are connected ("the paragraph"). It turns out there are 5 types of sentence connections. One famous type of connection is *consequence*. That is all that Rashi says: The two sentences are *connected* ("and") and they are connected using the consequence connection. We have indicated this Rashi comment with the parenthetical insert *therefore*.

Contributions of the Rashi newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter

accepts the Rashi commentator position that there is sentence connection and explicitly identifies the Paragraph method. There are in fact 5 methods of connecting sentences and consequence is one of them. Contrastively, the Rashi commentators just mention the idea of *consequence* without seeing it as a more general pattern.

Comments: Notice how the Rashi commentators explicitly reject a Talmudic literal interpretation as *hyperbole and exaggeration (Asmachtah)*. The Rashi Newsletter also indulges in such reinterpretations of Talmudic passages.

But what justifies the Rashi commentators so rejecting. They themselves indicate their reasoning: *..because the verse explicitly uses the keyword **and** a word indicating connection; the most likely connection in this case is consequence.*

We have here the basis for many Rashi Newsletter reinterpretations: *If you have a well known rule, used dozens of times, and there are clear formatting features such as keywords indicating the presence of the rule then you can be certain that that is the meaning of the verse and are justified in reinterpreting any Midrashic passages that say to the contrary.*

Style Daily Rashi Thursday-Friday Jun 18-19, 2015 Nu18-18a,b

Biblical Text: Nu18-18a,b

Background. The Bible is discussing the gifts to the Priests. In this particular passage it discusses the firstborn of animals. *The firstborns of sheep, oxen and goats have sacred status; their blood is spilled on the altar but their meat is consumed by the*

priest.

But their meat [of the firstborn]

- belongs to you [The priests]
 - Like
 - The breast that is waived and
 - The right thigh
- It belongs to you.

Rashi: Note that the phrase *belongs to you* is repeated (dark circle bullet at beginning and end). Also note that the breast and thigh gifts are used as a comparison. Taken together this implies that the meat of the firstborn offering

- Is eaten the day of offering, that night and the following day just like the Peace offering meat (Lv07-16:17) which also has a breast and thigh gift (Lv07-29:32)
- However, we do not say the breast-thigh resemblance is to make the firstborn like the thanksgiving offering which also has a breast and thigh gift but is only eaten the day of the offering and that evening but not the following day (Lv07-15)

Approach of the Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter has explained the Rabbi Ishmael style rules to be rules of

- Paragraph form (So the paragraph can start with a general statement (e.g when a man suspects his wife) followed by a

more specific statement (...that she committed adultery); other styles are **detail-general** or **general-detail-general** (**theme-detail-theme**)

- Each style form has rules indicating whether the examples are specific (restrictive) in nature or just examples which are meant to be generalized (broad).

The verse we are studying has such a **theme-detail-theme** style.

- The theme is the phrase *belongs to you* ; themes are indicated by dark circled bullets
- The details are *[belongs to you] like the breast and thigh*

The Rabbi Ishmael style rules require a **theme-detail-theme** passage be interpreted broadly. Since there are two sacrifices that have a breast and thigh and one of them can be eaten that day and night while the other can be eaten that day and night and the following day, we interpret broadly: The meat of the firstborn can be eaten for that day, that night and the following day.

Approach of the Sifre, Sifsay Chachamim, Ra'am, Gur Aryeh and Mizrachi Rashi commentators:

The Sifre is a collection of exegetical compilations on the Bible. It is frequently the basis of Talmudic derivations. While the Sifre is lengthy it is the basis of all the commentaries. We summarize key points on the issue *the verse allows the meat of the firstborn to be eaten by the priests but for how long (that day, that night? the following day?)*.

- Sin offerings are eaten that day and night so maybe firstborn meat is eaten that day and night
- But the verse compares the firstborn to offerings with breasts

and thighs; so maybe it is like the peace offering which is eaten that day, that night and the following day

- Or maybe it is like the thanksgiving offering, also a breast-thigh offering but the priests eat that day and night
- But the verse emphasizes *it will belong to you* twice indicating a broad interpretation So we interpret broadly: It can be eaten that day, that night and the following day
- Finally there are other verses on the firstborn: **Dt15-19:20** says that firstborns are eaten *yearly* (literally *year by year*) before God. Punning on the biblical phrase *year by year* there is implication that if you offered a firstborn on the last day of one year then you eat its meat that day and the first day of the next year (and the intervening night). So you literally eat it in two years, year by year. Thus this *year by year* verse shows firstborn are eaten that day and night and the next day.

The Rashi commentators all base themselves on this Sifre and ask all sorts of questions: Here is a sample

The Sifre indicates two derivations i) *it will belong to you* is repeated twice and ii) eat the firstborn yearly. Why do we need two sources. Maybe one suffices. Some answers are

- If I only had the *eat year by year verse* I might say one is *obligated vs permitted but not required* to eat the day of offering that night and the intervening day (So it would be prohibited to eat it all in one day)
- Also if I only had the *eat year by year verse* I meant think the permission (or obligation) to eat that day that night and the next day only applies when the offering is on the last day of the year.

The just cited arguments represent a dialogue between the Ra'am and Gur Aryeh. Other arguments are similar in flavor. They are Talmudic and hair splitting in flavor.

The way the Rashi Newsletter approached this as a *theme-detail-theme* passage makes great sense and avoids these issues. The interpretation is broad and therefore we interpret broadly: that day, that night and the following day.

We have left to deal with one issue

Why doesn't Rashi use the traditional terminology **General-Detail-General**? Instead Rashi refers to the phrase being repeated twice?

I would respond by pointing out that the author of this comment in the Sifre is Rabbi Akivah who belonged to a different school than Rabbi Ishmael. Rabbi Ishmael used the language of *General-Detail-General*. Rabbi Akiva uses the language of *extension-restriction-extension*. Thus Rashi's exact language which is taken verbatim from the Sifre is *the verse added another belonging*. This is similar to Rabbi Akiva's approach of *extension*. There are further details on the difference of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael but the basic idea of a paragraph form which indicates generalization is agreed to by both of them (They disagree on terminology and how much to generalize)

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