

# The 10 RashiYomi Rules

## *Their presence in Rashis For Parshat BalaQ*

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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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- *My very first Rashi. One of my sisters, while we were in high school asked me for help with her Chumash homework. This is how I explained the Rashi. My fascination with Rashi started then. More comments below.*

**Parallelism *Daily Rashi* Sunday -Friday Jun 28-Jul 3rd,  
2015 Nu22-05d,e,f:06a:11a,b**

**Biblical Text: Nu22-05d,e,f:06a:11a,b**

The

- Verses and Rashi comments are presented in 4 tables below
- The Rashi commentators and other comments are presented afterwards as a sequence of bullets. Here is a brief overview and background.
- Balak, King of Moab, requested Bilam a sorcerer to curse the Jewish people. This request is cited in **Nu22-05**
- God asked Bilam what Moab wanted and Bilam *repeated* Balak's request in **Nu22-11**. However the repetition is not verbatim. There are subtle differences.
- Thus we have what the Rashi commentators call *doubled paragraphs*. The comparison of these double paragraphs (almost identical passages with however minor differences) is done using the method of **parallelism**.
- **Parallelism** is a major Rashi method acknowledged by all Rashi commentators. An excellent book on the subject is by James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History*, Yale University Press, 1981.
- A contribution of the Rashi Newsletter is to graphically display the parallelism using Tables which highlights

differences and extra words.

- The Rashi commentators do explain many of the Rashi comments using contrasts. The Rashi Newsletter contribution is to *holistically* portray all commonalities and differences in one set of tables.
- In reading Rashi it is important to emphasize that Rashi is not deriving his comments from *extra words, or word nuances*. Rather Rashi is deriving his comments from the fact of parallelism.
- In reading the tables below, the top rows in the 4 tables correspond to **Nu22-05** while the 2nd row corresponds to **Nu22-11**. The last row corresponds to Rashi comments.
- There are 11 differences but only 6 Rashis! For many years I have advocated that the Reading of Rashi must be participatory not passive. I call this the *Rashi workbook approach*. After reading Rashi comments, we must actively apply Rashi's ideas to other differences in the verse.
- As you read the 4 tables keep in mind Rashi's basic premises.
  - BILAM: Hated the Jews and wanted them exterminated.
  - BALAK: Was a King. His view was political. The Jews were a possible threat and therefore he wanted a light attack to detour them to other areas. Balak did not mind the Jews per se.
- Those who like to read one Rashi a day may read one table a

day. You can also chose to read one Rashi a day since there are 6 Rashis.

|                    |        |   |  |
|--------------------|--------|---|--|
| Nu22-05 King Balak | Behold | A nation  | left Egypt   |
| Nu22-11 Bilam      | Behold | The nation  | Leaving Egypt  |
|                    |        | <i>The = specificity. Bilam hated Israel specifically. King Balak was concerned about any nation (a nation) threatening him</i> | <b>(Rashi)</b> <i>Left=past</i> ; Balak is not upset that Israel conquered Egypt. He is upset they are near him. Contrastively Bilam hated Israel and all their accomplishments like conquering Egypt. (This Rashi comment occurs on the next word in the verse, <i>Behold</i> ) |

|                    |   |  |   |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| Nu22-05 King Balak | <u>Behold</u>   | he covers the land   | And he dwells opposite me   |
| Nu22-11 Bilam      |   | He covered the land  |   |
|                    | <b>(Rashi)</b> For Bilam, the conquest of Egypt was sufficient reason to curse the Israelies.<br><br>For Balak, the conquest of Egypt was a thing of the past. Hence he has to give a reason for his request. This new reason begins with <i>Behold</i> indicating a separate reason. | <b>(Rashi)</b> <i>Covers is a past conjugation to indicate a habitual present.</i> King Balak emphasizes not personal hatred but reasons for concern. Israel had just conquered Sichon and Bashan with whom Moab had an alliance; hence he was concerned about the Israeli presence. | <b>(Rashi)</b> King Balak was against the Jews because they were right next to him ( <i>he dwells opposite me</i> ) and therefore (in his mind) they posed a threat.<br><br>Contrastively, Bilam hated the Jews period. Their conquest of Egypt was sufficient to justify his hatred.<br><br>Rashi notes this distinction but adds a pun. The spelling of <i>opposite me</i> suggests the word <i>opposition</i> . Rashi does <i>not</i> derive his comments from the pun but rather from the parallelism. This is an important point in reading Rashi. |

|                    |     |               |              |             |                           |
|--------------------|-----|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Nu22-05 King Balak | Now | Please        | curse for me | This nation |                           |
| Nu22-11 Bilam      | Now | I wish you go | Damn for me  | him         | For he is greater than me |

|  |  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
|  |  | King Balak is diplomatic and uses the word <i>please</i> . Bilam waters this down and uses the subjunctive (I <i>wish</i> you go) Bilam was filled with hatred. People like that can't say <i>please</i> . | <b>(Rashi)</b> <i>Damn</i> is a stronger term than <i>curse</i> . This is consistent with Bilam's hatred of the Jews vs. Balak's political concerns. | A sign of hatred is that you can't acknowledge anything good about the hatee (Hence Bilam couldn't call him a <i>nation</i> ) | Bilam exaggerates the Israeli size. The Israelies were numerically smaller (They had God on their side which is why they won). |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|

|                    |                        |   |                |  |
|--------------------|------------------------|---|----------------|--|
| Nu22-05 King Balak | Perhaps I will be able | To land an attack on him  | And banish him | From the land  |
| Nu22-11 Bilam      | Perhaps I will be able | To wage war on him  | And banish him |  |
|                    |                        | <b>(Rashi)</b> King Balak just wanted an attack in order to get Israel out of his neighborhood. Bilam wanted a full fledged war |                | <b>(Rashi)</b> Balak wanted Israel to go away from near him ( <i>from the land</i> ). Bilam wanted Israel totally destroyed. |

### Some further comments

- Notice that Rashi in Table 2 uses a pun. Many people reading Rashi think that this is the driving force of the Rashi (the defective spelling of *opposite* which makes it sound like *oppose*). However Rashi's true reason is the parallelism. How do I know? Because the other surrounding 5 Rashis are clearly based on the parallelism. Therefore I interpret the pun as supportive (but not the driving reason for the Rashi) This is true despite the fact that Rashi does not explicitly mention the contrast that the phrase is absent in **Nu22-11**.
- The Rashi commentators mostly mention the parallel contrasts (and as I indicated the Rashi Newsletter, graphically describes this and does it holistically). Various other comments are made by the Rashi commentators **Raam, Sifsay Chachamim, Gur Aryeh, Mizrachi**, some of which I indicate below

- The commentators point out that the statement that the Israelies *covered the earth* couldn't be true since the Jewish wilderness camp was 12 square (roman) miles, hardly a covering of the earth. The commenators use this phrase *covering the earth* to support Rashi's interprretation referring it to the conquest of two nearby kingdoms, Sichon and Bashan. (We derived this from the difference of *covering*, *covered* referring to a recent event)
- There are comments on Rashi and the commentators on the verb *nackeh bo* smite him (vs go to war with him). There is debate whether the verb is single or plural and whether the initial nun is a root letter or indicative of the plural. Rashi himself cites a mishnaic use of *nacheh* meaning *diminishing*. I have stayed away from all of this; it is sufficient that Bilam's word *wage war* is contrasted with *naceh* which either means an *attack* or *diminishing*.
- We have translated the appropriate Hebrew words *damn* vs *curse*. But one Rashi commenator asks *How does Rashi know that one word is worse or stronger than the other?* I would respond, Rashi may have actually derived that one word is *stronger* (*damn* vs. *curse*) because the *overall* parallelism justifies it (That is since Bilam hated the Jews he must have used a stronger term). Such inferences are part of the parallelism experience. In other words in this case instead of using the known fact that *damn* is stronger than *curse* to explain the parallelism, the opposite, the known parallelism justifies the inference that *damn* is stronger than *curse*.

## 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 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

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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) 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