

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis For Parshat VaEyQueV
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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 Malbin.

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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- This week we do several Rashis from the Shemah prayer.

Format-Climax Daily Rashi Dt11-16a Monday Aug 3, 2015

Biblical Text: Dt11-16a

- *Watch yourselves*
- *Lest your hearts are seduced*
- *And you depart*
- *And work for other gods*
- *And bow to them*

Rashi: The underlined word depart means depart from the observance of commandments and because of this you then serve other gods. When a person departs from the Torah he joins other religions. Similar logic you find in King David's prayer when Saul was pursuing him: *For they have banished me from God's presence and told me to worship other gods*. Did anyone really tell David to worship other gods? But rather, once you depart from the Jewish community, you end up clinging to other religions.

Contribution of Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, Sifsay Chachamim

Rashi commentators: Of course, the issue with Rashi is how he derives that *depart* means *depart from observance*. Several attempts are made. Interestingly, these attempts use different Rashi rules.

- **Parallelism:** One argument is that since there are two clauses i) depart ii) work for other gods, this twoness implies a distinctness. You cannot argue that *work for other gods* is the

explanation of the appositive *depart*; rather, each clause describes a different evil; since the last clause describes idol worship the initial clauses must be describing non observance.

- Synonyms: Another argument is that *depart* always refer to *omission of positive commandments* rather than *performance of prohibitions*.

Contribution of Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter makes three contributions.

First: Notice in the verse above that there are five bullets not two. This suggests the **Climax** principle. The **Climax** principle simply means that Rashi is showing a progression. Rashi did not comment on the other bullets and hence the Rashi commentators did not mention this. The contribution of the Rashi Newsletter is to look at the whole verse and explain it consistently with the focused Rashi comment. Let us carefully go over the verse.

- 1) You let down your guard. You think your environment is safe
- 2) You toy with ideas. You are not literally *seduced* but certain ideas look interesting and worthy of discussion
- 3) Lets be real. No one gets up one day and bows to idols. But if your guard is down and you have friends from the other side with interesting conversation, maybe you forget a few commandments now and then. You don't violate prohibitions but you *depart*.
- 4) Again: No one gets up one day and bows to idols. But if your friends are from another religion, if you find them

interesting, if you forget to do a few commandments, then maybe you see nothing wrong in spending money and going to their affairs. Here (as we shall see later) *worship other gods* should be better translated as *work for other gods*. We will actually show a Rashi below where Rashi interprets the biblical text as meaning *supporting* functions in other religions.

- 5) Now - *after* you let your guard down, you found certain ideas in other religions interesting, you omit observances and you support their functions - *after this*, you may not find it so loud if during one of these functions you find yourself prostrating like everyone else in the room. This is exactly how it happens.

I am reminded of a non-Jewish friend of mine. A very nice person. He married an Indian women. I asked him: But don't you have to perform Indian rituals with statutes of their gods? He responded: "Well yes; but that is just for the wedding."

Second: As just shown, use of **Climax** has implications for outreach. The Rashi Newsletter approach is richer than that of the Rashi commentators in that it gives a five stage delineation to apostasy. This makes it easier for outreach practitioners to stop the apostasy. You identify the level the person is on and make sure the next level is not reached.

Third: The firm commitment of the Rashi Newsletter is consistency. Throughout our approach to the Torah we consistently show how **Climax** is used by Rashi in several verses and has tremendous implications for outreach. Another

beautiful example might be found on **Lv26-14:15** which I encourage the reader to lookup. In a mere two verses, Rashi completely studies the transition from occasional lack of studying to denial of God. Again: No one gets up and denies God; but it can happen over time and through a sequence of stages.

In passing: It is important to emphasize that outreach people are always asking for funding and studies; not needed. One need only open the Torah and Rashi and a wealth of good solid studies, useful to every outreach coordinator is made available.

Format *Daily Rashi* Dt11-18a Tuesday Aug 4, 2015

Biblical Text: Dt11-18a

Watch it, let you be seduced...depart...work for other gods and God will be angry with you ...and ... and you will be lost quickly from the good land that God gives you....Place these ideas on your hearts and souls, bind them [with tefillin] as signs on your arms.....

Rashi Text: The phrase *place these ideas* indicates that when in exile you should be distinguished in commandments.

Contribution of the Rashi NewsLetter and Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, Sifsay Chachamim, Rashi commentators. Both the commenators as well as the Rashi Newsletter explain the Rashi using the **paragraph formatting** rule. The biblical text (in fact one of the three biblical texts comprising the *Shma*) is seen as comprised of distinct paragraphs with distinct thematic

sentences. Here is an outline.

- **Dt11-13:15** If you observe Gods commandments it will be good for you
- **Dt11-16** Watch out that you dont deviate to other religions
- **Dt11-17** Because God will punish you and you will lose your land
- **Dt11-18:20** Place these words on your heart, souls, arms....
- **Dt11-21** In order that you live for a long time on your land.

All the Rashi commentators as well as the Rashi Newsletter explain the driving force of the Rashi from the *sequence* of paragraphs. The paragraph about placing these words on our hearts, souls, arms, etc. comes *after* the paragraph on exile. So the *sequence* of paragraphs emphasizes that the command to place words on our hearts is sequential to our exile, that is, we are not to give up but still observe commandments in the exile.

One Rashi commentator asks how the last paragraph *in order you live long* fits in with the paragraph sequence. Perhaps **Dt11-18:20** is saying, *to avoid exile*, watch the commandments so that you live long. The answer is that the last paragraph follows the exile paragraph. In other words

- Observe commandments
- If not you will be exiled

- But if you are exiled, you should still perform the commandments (Don't give up)
- And as a result of performing the commandments in exile, you will merit to come back to your land.

The contribution of the Rashi Newsletter, is to make explicit that paragraph juxtaposition is a major Rashi (and for that matter, Talmudic) rule. Interestingly, the Rashi-Talmudic rule of paragraph juxtaposition (We have called it *formatting* and have explained it using *sequencing*) according to one opinion in the Talmud does not fully apply in the book of Deuteronomy.

**Contradiction *Daily Rashi* Dt11-16c, Dt28-64a, Ex20-03b
Aug5-7, 2015**

Biblical text: There are 3 verses. Here are the texts.

- You will not have other gods
- Watch yourself lest you work for other gods
- You will be exiled and in those lands work for other gods.

Rashi text:

- Other gods refers to gods that other people have designated for themselves
- Work for other gods, is, as the Aramaic translation says, pay taxes for the national religions in other countries
- Other gods refers to gods that are *otherwise* to their

worshippers. Their worshippers pray for them but the gods are as other and will not listen.

Contribution of the Rashi commentators, Mizrachi, Gur

Aryeh, Sifsay Chachamim: The Rashi commenators point out the problem: What do you mean *other gods*? There are no other gods?

So far so good. But the Rashi commentators then fall into the trap of explaining Rashi as twisting the meaning of the word *other*: i) not other gods, but gods of others, ii) not other gods, but gods that are otherwise to their worshippers. This twisting of word meaning creates a feeling of arbitrariness. In other words the Rashi commentators approach this Rashi using the **meaning** rule.

Similarly, with the verse *work for other gods*. Here also, the Rashi commentators are disturbed by the implication that God is in effect cursing us to worship idols in exiled nations. To avoid this, they explain the phrase to refer to raising taxes.

Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter prefers to explain Rashis based on consistent use of rules. We explicitly contribute the **Contradiction** rule. We also explicitly contribute citations of the biblical texts creating the contradictions.

- **Dt04-35** explicitly says that there is only one God and *there is none besides him*. This verse justifies the **Contradiction**

implied by the phrase *other gods*.

- **Dt13-01:06** explicitly says that *even* if there are signs and prophetic commands, idolatry is absolutely prohibited. So how can God give a prophetic promise that we will be exiled and worship other gods.
- **Dt32-12** explicitly says about our God, that when he does something He needs no helpers. (Yet as we will see, other gods, do need helpers, implying they are not so Divine).

The second contribution made by the Rashi Newsletter is not to blindly use the **meaning** rule and twist words out of their meanings which Rashi appears to do (but does not really do).

We insist that the biblical verse speaks about *other gods*. Let us now revisit the Rashis.

- Since there is only one god, what could the phrase *other gods* mean? Rashi explains that there are so to speak two ways to become a god: i) Something is really a god with godlike powers or ii) a group of people designate this being as a god. Note the subtlety: Rashi is *not* explaining the phrase *other gods*. Rashi is also not reexplaining the word *other*. Rather, Rashi is simply explaining what the phrase *other gods* means in light of the fact that there are no other gods. The fact that this appears like a pun - god of others - doesn't mean that Rashi is twisting the word *other* out of its ordinary meaning. Rashi frequently uses puns when the real derivation lies

elsewhere.

- Similarly, when Rashi explains that we will raise taxes for the national religions of the countries we go to, he is simply resolving a contradiction

- God would never prophetically promise that someone would worship idols

- So the verse promising we will *work for other gods in the countries we are*

- exiled* must be interpreted lest restrictively; *work* is used in the sense of

- support*. The contradiction is resolved through broad vs restrictive

- interpretation.

- Finally when Rashi comments on our verse, *you will worship other gods*, with the comment, *the gods are others to their worshippers*, Rashi is explaining why a *god* needs *supporters and workers*. After all, if he is a god, why can't he do things himself? Why does he need help? Here again, Rashi is not explaining the meaning of the word, *other*, Rashi is not retranslating *other*; rather Rashi is explaining the paradox or contradiction that a god needs helpers. Rashi phrases this explanation in terms of a pun but Rashi is not commenting on meaning but rather explaining a contradiction.

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