

**The 10 RashiYomi Rules**  
*Their presence in Rashis on VaYeChi*  
**Vol 24#20 - 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.*

**YEAR 2015-2016:** *This year I am reviewing comments from the book Yosef Hallel, by Rabbi Brachfeld. This book studies original Rashi manuscripts: i) The first (printed) version (of Rashi), ii) Elkavetz, iii) Rome, iv) Zamorah, v) Soncino, vi) some handwritten manuscripts. (One can and should google these to find out about them; some of these are online (with others)). My goal this year is to show that the methods approach of the Rashi Newsletter, what is Rashi's method?, can yield the same insights as the textual approach. We believe this important since a doctrinal position of the Torah is that it should be accessible to everyone (Deut. 30:11-14). Manuscript analysis is only available to scholars while the Rashi methods used the Rashi Newsletter are accessible to everyone. I would say more but throughout the year each issue will elaborate on this point.*

*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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**Formatting Daily Rashi Thur Dec 24 2015, Gn47-29f**

## **Biblical Texts: Gn47-29f**

[Background: Jacob went down to Egypt to reunite with Joseph. He is dying and asks to be buried in Israel. The following is Jacob's request to Joseph]

- Please: If you will do me this favor
- Please: Place your hand under my thigh [A sign of oath and promise]
- Please: Do not bury me in Egypt (But bring me to Israel)

**Current Rashi text**: No Rashi.

**Addendum Elkavitz text**: Sometimes in manuscripts there are additional Rashi comments at the end of each Parshah. In the Elkavitz text, after all the Rashi comments on Vayechi, there are additional Rashi comments. On this verse the Rashi comment says the following:

From the bulleted threefold repetition of *please* we infer proper manners: When a person asks a favor, he can ask until 3 times and then (if he doesn't get what he wants) should abstain.

**Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter**: First, we identify this Rashi as following the **Formatting** rule. The **Formatting** rule teaches that a repeated keyword functions in the biblical text like a bullet in the modern text.

Next: I am indebted to Rabbi Dr Isidore Twersky (Talner Rebbe) who taught us to approach such midrashim qualitatively, not quantitatively. According to Rabbi Twersky, what is

identified in the Rashi is

- Not the *number* of times one can ask a favor
- But the *number of attributes* of favor request that one can ask.

Based on the three bullets, indicated by the three occurrences of *please* one can

- Ask ones friend, generally, to do a favor
- Ask for committment (promise, oath, no going back)
- The actual favor.

**Reference *Daily Rashi* Friday Dec 25 2015, Gn48-22e**

**Biblical Texts: Gn48-22e**

[Background:Jacob is blessing Joseph]

And I [Jacob] am giving you one more portion than your brothers, Schem, which I took from the Emorites with my sword and bow.

**Current Rashi text:** *Sword and bow refer to wisdom and prayer*

**Elkavitz Rashi text:** Sword and bow are interpreted like the Aramaic translation: Wisdom and prayer.

**Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter:** Notice, how the Elkavitz Rashi text appeals to authority: *Since* the Aramaic translation interprets sword and bow as wisdom and prayer, Rashi is justified in so doing. Contrastively, the Rashi Newsletter advocates a rule-based approach. We have to go back to **Gn34** to explore how Schem was conquered. It says

there in **Gn34-13**, *The children of Jacob answered Schem and Chamor deceptively.*

The Hebrew word for deceptively, *armah* also can mean, cunning. So the word *deceptively* refers to use of wisdom. What actually happened is that Jacob's children convinced the city to circumcise. On the 3rd day they were weak. At that point, Shimon and Levi (with their staff) could conquer the city. It explicitly mentions the sword there **Gn34-26**. Without the deception motivating them to circumcise, Shimon and Levi by themselves could not have conquered the city.

So the current verse: *I am giving you Schem which I conquered with my sword and bow* literally refers to *sword and bow*.

However, Rashi adds *wisdom and prayer*. Rashi's intent is

- Not to reinterpret the words sword and bow which everyone knows means sword and bow and not wisdom
- To remind us that the sword operation was successful - 2 brothers against a whole city - because of the preparatory deception which resulted in their circumcision and consequent weakness.

The reason I am emphasizing this here is because many scholars create a schism between the simple and homiletic meaning of the text. They assert

- The simple meaning of the text is **sword and bow**, referring to the military conquest of Schem in **Gn34**
- The Rabbis introduced a homiletic meaning by reading into the text the meanings of wisdom and prayer

Not so.

- The text has one meaning: *Sword and bow* referring to a military operation
- But a military operation was not sufficient without preparatory deception.

Thus there is no schism between the simple and homiletic meaning.

Interestingly, a major Rashi commentator, the Raam, denies that sword and bow refer to the military operation since Jacob was very angry at Shimon and Levi who performed the operation. I however would argue that

- **Gn34-13** unequivocally states that the children or Jacob were deceptive and talked the city into circumcising themselves. So *all* children conspired in the deception.
- The military operation by Shimon and Levi was not originally planned (If the city was weak, they could take their daughter and go without killing anyone) So the anger at Shimon and Levi does not contradict the approval of the deception.
- Also, Jacob was angry at Shimon and Levi, but his anger was not moral but rather operational: Jacob explicitly says "I am afraid that the surrounding cities will gather on me and kill me" He doesn't rebuke them for their moral action. In fact, they answer their father, "Should we let our sister be treated like a prostitute."
- Although in **Gn49**, Jacob curses Shimon and Levi it is not clear if he curses them for their actions on Schem or their actions on Joseph
- Finally we point out that a few weeks ago I showed that Dinah was not raped but seduced and kept in the city (Similar to the way ISIS today lures young western woman to them

with promises of adventure and then kidnaps them). If that is so, it is borderline whether a military aggressive operation was justified (They were justified in weakening the city and saving Dinah).

- Finally, since Jacob did not approve of the military operation, for that reason, he may have given the city to Joseph rather than Shimon and Levi.

Bottom line: The verse speaks about Schem, which Jacob acquired with sword and bow. Rashi in commenting "wisdom and prayer" is not intending to *replace* sword and bow with wisdom and prayer but rather to *supplement* that the sword-bow military operation was preceded by a preparatory deceit.

**Reference *Daily Rashi* Saturday Dec 26 2015, Gn48-16b**

**Biblical Texts: Gn48-16b**

[Background: Joseph brings his 2 children to Jacob to be blessed. Jacob places his right hand on the younger child not on the eldest. Jacob explains that although both children will be leaders of great tribes, the younger child would surpass the oldest in reputation. Rashi in fact points out that this prophecy (that the younger will surpass the oldest) was fulfilled since Joshua who descended from the younger son, brought the Jews into Israel and did many miracles and surpassed in reputation the famous people from the descendants of the eldest son, e.g., Gideon, who won military victories for Israel]

*May God bless the lads*

**Current Rashi text**: *Lads* refers to Menasheh and Ephraim,

Joseph's two children.

**Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter:** Rashi here uses the **reference** rule. The context is that Jacob was blessing Joseph's children, Menasheh and Ephraim, so that the word children refers to them.

**Rabbi Bonchek's contribution:** Rabbi Avigdor Boncheck recently published another book on Rashi, "Rashi: The Magic and Mystery." There are many gems in this book and I recommend it since it is written in plain simple language.

Rabbi Boncheck frequently has different concerns than the Rashi Newsletter. On this Rashi, I am content to say that the **reference** rule is used. Rabbi Boncheck, however, asks, "But is it not obvious that *lads* refers to the lads under discussion, *Ephraim and Menasheh*." In other words, Rabbi Boncheck, following a long line of Rashi-ists, rejects the idea that Rashi spoke the obvious.

Rabbi Boncheck then answers the question of why Rashi spoke the obvious as follows

- We already gave background above that Jacob placed his right hand on the younger child rather than the eldest
- Jacob explained that the younger child would achieve greater reputation than the eldest
- This is a prophecy and is illustrated by the fact that Joshua a descendent of Ephraim, the youngest, who brought the Jews into Israel, surpassed in reputation Gideon, a descendent of the oldest, who achieved military victories for the Jews
- Thus it *appears* that the passage speaks about Joshua and

Gideon. Moreover, it appears that the simple meaning of the passage refers to Joshua and Gideon since the passage is prophetic.

- Rashi therefore contradicts this appearance by emphasizing that the simple meaning of the passage is about Menasheh and Ephraim, Joseph's children.
- In passing, Rabbi Boncheck cites the Midrash Rabbah that *lads* refers to Joshua and Gideon.
- Rabbi Boncheck even finds verses where Joshua and Gideon are referred to as lads!

I would go a step further and explain Rashi's approach to the simple meaning of the text as follows

*The text is referring exclusively to Menasheh and Ephraim. There is a prophecy that Ephraim's tribe will surpass Menasheh's tribe in reputation. That is the simple meaning of the text. The text in no way references Joshua and Gideon. However, Joshua and Gideon are illustrative examples of the Jacobian prophecy. That is however all they are. They are illustrations. Joshua and Gideon are not intended to be the meaning of the text.*

**Parallelism *Daily Rashi* Sunday Dec 27 2015, Gn48-16c**

**Biblical Texts: Gn48-16c**

[Background: Joseph brings his 2 children to Jacob to be blessed.]

- **Gn48-16c** *May God bless the lads ...and may they be fruitful like fish in the land*



- **Ex01-07** The Jews [in Egypt] were fruitful and multiplied...and swarmed

**Current Rashi text:** Fruitful like fish was used because there is no evil eye on fish

**Elkavitz Rashi text:** Fruitful like fish was used because there is no evil eye on fish, because the water covers them (So no one can see them)

**Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter:** Although Rashi did not explicitly mention **Ex01-07** the Rashi Newsletter suggests that the driving force of Rashi is the comparison of statements of rapid growth in the **Gn48-16** and **Ex01-07**. Here is the point

- Swarms of flies do indeed multiply but they can become a nuisance to people. In fact, that is what happened in Ex. The Jews multiplied and the Egyptians became suspicious of them (and then they turned around and slaved them)
- Schools of fish also multiply. However because they are at the bottom of the sea no one minds them.

What is the analogy?

- If Jews multiply in a land and *participate* in all aspects of the culture, then they become noticable and a concern
- However if Jews multiply and occupy themselves with Jewish values such as learning (compared to water), no one notices them and there is no concern.

The midrash expresses the possibility of a non-Jewish host being concerned about a rapid Jewish growth with the phrase

*evil eye*. Similarly the midrash expresses Jews occupying themselves with Jewish values such as Torah by using the metaphor of water.

Thus

- Being fruitful like fish was a *blessing of Jacob*
- Being fruitful like a swarm of flies was *the actual practice*

**Comment:** Notice how this Rashi (and its alternate texts) cannot be understood without reference to symbolism. We must understand the metaphors and symbolism of

- evil eye = concern and worry about consequences (of Jewish rapid growth)
- flies vs fish = Jewish population involved in same activities as non-Jewish host
- Fish vs flies = Jewish population involved in Jewish activities.

**Meaning-Reference *Daily Rashi* Monday Dec 28 2015, Gn49-04e**

**Biblical Texts: Gn49-04e**

[Background: Jacob is explaining why Reuven, the eldest, forfeited his firstbornship. Reuven interfered with his father's marital life]

**Gn49-04e** You then desecrated [the firstbornship]; when you went up on my *spread*

**Current Rashi text:** The word *spread* refers to a bed [reserved

for intimacy]. It is called a *spread* since one spreads on it colored and decorated sheets. Here are some verses using this word

- **Ps63-07** I indeed remember you while on my spread
- **Ps132-03** If I will go on my bed of spreads ...until I find a place for God

**Several Rashi handwritten texts and the Vanizah text:** These texts differ in

- The order of the two cited Psalmic verses
- Omission of one of the verses.

**Contribution of the Yosef Halel:** Yosef Halel, as just mentions, points out that all the Rashi texts use Scriptural support; they differ in which verses are used and in their order. Yosef Halel analyzes the various possibilities

- Perhaps the verses are cited in the order they occur in the book of Psalms
- Perhaps the **Ps132** is cited first since it explicitly mentions the word *bed* and is therefore clearer.

**Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter:** The Rashi Newsletter is rule-based not text based! A major Rashi rule is **meaning**. A major subrule of the **meaning** rule is the use of **cross-references**, other verses with the target word that shed meaning on the word.

I routinely advise my students when studying Rashi *not* to use the Rashi verses! Instead one should use a search engine or a Konkordance and review as many verses as possible till one re-

discovers the meaning for themselves.

## 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