

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis on Bo
Vol 24#23 - 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.

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Meaning-Hononym Method *Daily Rashi* Jan13th 2015, Ex12-30a

Biblical Texts: Ex12-30a

[Background: God had just brought the plague of first borns; many Egyptian houses had dead] *Pharoh got up at night*

Current Rashi text: *Got up: From his bed*

Contribution of Rabbi Boncheck and Rashi NewsLetter:

Rabbi Boncheck in his new book, *Rashi: The Magic and Mystery*, introduces the following rule about the meaning of the hononym *got up*

- If *got up* is the only verb in the verse then it means to *get up from sleep and bed*
- If *got up* is accompanied by another verb it means to *stand up for oneself*. Rabbi Boncheck cites **Gn04-08: Kayin Got up and Killed Abel**, which should be translated *Kayin stood up for himself and killed Abel*

In the Rashi newsletter we classify this as the **Meaning-Hononym** rule. So the point here is we might think that Pharoh *getting up* means he *stood up* for himself and defied God and Moses as he did all these years. Therefore, Rashi makes the point that he *got up* from his bed; he wasn't standing up to anyone anymore.

Parallelism-Meaning-Connective Words *Daily Rashi* Thur-Fri Jan 14-15th 2016, Ex12-02a,b

Biblical Texts: Ex12-02a,b

- (A) This new-moon is for you the beginning of months
- (B) It is the first month of the year for you

Current Rashi Text: (A) This is a connective word that always refers to pointing at something. God showed him the new-moon sliver and indicated that when it was in this form the month has to be declared

(B) Nissan (the month in which Passover falls) is the "January" or first month of the Jewish New Year.

Contribution of Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter introduces the **Meaning-Connective Word** method. Hebrew has various connective words *also, if-then, this*, words which are conjunctions, demonstrative pronouns or adverbs. These words have specific meaning and application to a sentence. The use of the demonstrative pronoun *this* according to Rashi always refers to a specific pointing. Throughout Rashi's commentary whenever *this* occurs in the biblical text, Rashi interprets it as meaning a pointing. So here, Rashi states that God *showed* him the lunar form indicating the beginning of a month. As we go through the annual cycle we will have occasion to see many such examples.

To understand the simple meaning of the text we have to use the theory of parallelism advocated by James Kugel who wrote the beautiful, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History*. Kugel's basic idea is as follows

Two parallel passages, say AB, *should* be interpreted in

such a way that the B clause simultaneously accepts the statement of the A clause and carries it a little bit farther, develops it, and enlarges it. Contrastively, it is wrong to interpret parallel passages as repetition; it is also wrong to interpret parallel passages as totally independent with no overlap. Rather the proper procedure is to see the B passage as building and extending the A passage.

With this in mind we now explain **Ex12-02**

- (A) [God to Moses] You see this moon sliver; this is the way you establish the beginning of any month
- (B) And furthermore, this particular month [Building on (A)] will be the first of the months of the year [In other words, Nissan, the month which houses Passover, is the "January" of months]

The simple elegant way I have taken the AB clause in **Ex12-02** makes the parallel verse read in a punchy straightforward style.

Contribution of Rabbi Boncheck: Rabbi Boncheck in his new book, *Rashi: The Magic and the Mystery*, does not agree. Rabbi Boncheck falls into the classical fallacy of claiming that Rashi deals with Peshat and Derash, that Rashi gives both straightforward and homiletic meaning. The error Rabbi Boncheck makes is not paying attention to the *meaning* of biblical *form*; Kugel's criteria of parallelim unequivocally requires a climactic development of the A-B clause. If the *second* B clause says that Nissan is the "January" of months, then the A clause must be saying something more specific. And indeed, since *this* connotes a pointing, Rashi correctly interprets the A clause as indicating how *every* month starts.

We have *pure peshat*. There is no dichotomy. But we respectfully point out

- One part of the peshat is the peshat of a *word* meaning
- The second part of the peshat is the peshat of a biblical *form* and *style*. But it is Peshat, you simply have to listen to it. Many scholars such as the Ibn Ezra, Ramban and Rabbi Boncheck fall into the error of calling an inference from form as homily when in fact it is Peshat. In fact, Grossman in his recent book on Rashi makes the same error: He explicitly states that Rashi is a commentator on words not on style and overall issues. This is not true. This verse is one example of Rashi's concern for both meaning and style.

Comment: Someone (perhaps Rabbi Boncheck himself!) will demur: But how does the Rashi Newsletter interpret Rashi's explicit statement *but a verse never leaves its simple meaning; the verse means that Nissan is the January of months*.

Simple, how we explain it. We interpret Rashi's statement *a verse never leaves its simple meaning* as follows *a parallel verse [in boths its A and B parts] never leaves its unified theme*. This is in fact how we did interpret it.

**Parallelism Meaning Unified Meaning *Daily Rashi* Saturday
Jan 16, 2016, Ex13-16a**

Biblical Text: Ex13-16a

[Background: The verse discusses the obligation to wear Tefillin] And you will bind them as a sign on your arms and as *totafoth* between your eyes.

Current Rashi Text: Rashi explains the meaning of *totafoth*. Several explanations are given

- *Tat* in Kaspian means two; *Pat* in African dialects means two. So the *totafoth* refer to the 4 (2+2) housed tefillin.
- Menachem (the grammarian) says it comes from *Tf* which means *to speak* (**Ez21-02, Mi02-06**)
- There is a parallelism with **Ex13-09** where the purpose of tefillin is for *remembering*.

If one looks carefully one sees *three* distinct explanations of tefillin in Rashi: a) 4, b) *to speak*, c) *remembering*.

Rome Rashi Text and old manuscripts:

- *Totafoth* are for the purpose of *seeing* the commandments spoken about in the Tefillin
- [Hence the phrase *Tefillin between our eyes* meaning *visions [tefillin] that we see [eyes]*
- Similarly **Ez21-02** and **Mi02-06** are also interpreted as meaning *seeing* vs *speaking*.
- The point is that the prophet simultaneously *speaks* and has *visions*

Contribution of Rashi Newsletter: First let us present the point of the various Rashi commentators.

The verses in question with phrases such as *Tff to the Southern People* have their meaning inferred through context. Context suggests that *Tff* means to prophesy As can be seen Rashi identifies two activities of a prophet

- speaking
- vision.

The approach of the Rashi Newsletter is to seek a unified meaning to the underlying verb *Tet-Pay*. We have the following meanings

- handbreadth, *smallest* unit of measurement
- infant, *smallest* example of person
- hankkerchief, *smallest* example of garment
- droplet, *smallest* measure of liquid.

Based on these known meanings all of which have a unified meaning of *smallest* we can extrapolate to other areas

- Area of speech: This would refer to *nuanced speech*, a *nuance* being the *smallest* unit of communication
- Area of vision: This would refer to *blinks and eye contacts*; In fact Yosef Hallel translates the Isaiah verse describing the flirtatious behavior of the Jewish women *walking and eyeing, angering with their legs* (Note: Alternate translations are walking and tip-toeing (tip-toe being the smallest unit of walk)).

Bottom line: *TTf* would be seen not as *any* speech but *nuanced* speech. A good reprimand technique is to reprimand through *nuances* and *inuendoes* vs. explicit confrontation. It follows that the various verses in Ezekiel, Micah and other places on prophecy should be translated e.g. as *Nuance to the Southern people*. This would indicate reprimanding them in a non-confrontational manner.

Finally, the Tefillin, the *Totafoth* would be the *nuance ornaments* and would refer to a life where all items in this world

that we encounter on a day to day basis should *nuance* to us biblical imperatives and stories. For example if we hear about a person double crossed on his job we might respond *Another Laban-Jacob incident* nuancing the story of Jacob who worked for his father-in-law for 20 years and was double-crossed 10 times.

I believe the Rashi Newsletter through its emphasis on unified meaning has given serious contributions to the understanding of this biblical text and the commandment of Tefillin.

Rabbi-Ishmael-Example *Daily Rashi* Sunday Jan 17, 2016, Ex11-05a

Biblical Text: Ex11-05a

[Background: The verse discusses the plague of the first born]
God will smite all firstborn in Egypt

- From the firstborn of Pharaoh (who sits on on his throne)
- To the firstborn of the maidservant
- and all firstborn of animals

Current Rashi and Elkavitz Rashi Text:

- The firstborn of maidservants were punished because the maidservants also used the Jewish slaves
- The firstborn of animals were punished because the Egyptians worshipped the animals

In the First Printed Rashi Text:

- The Rashi comment on firstborn maidservants is printed after the biblical text on maidservants

- The Rashi comment on firstborn animals is printed after the biblical text on animals

But in the Elkavitz and other Rashi texts, *both* comments are made on the biblical text dealing with maidservants

Comment: As can be seen the two versions of texts only differ on where the Rashi comments are made, not on their substance. Yosef Halel gives possible reasons for the difference.

Contribution of Rashi Newsletter: Rashi is using here the **Rabbi Ishmael** style rules. The Rabbi Ishmael style rules lay down the rules of paragraph development. In this paragraph

- The Theme sentence, God will smite all firstborn, is developed by
- The Example sentences, the firstborn of maids and animals.

Rashi explains how the examples subsume all dimensions of involvement with the Jewish people

- The Government (Pharoh) who ordered Jewish enslavement
- The maids who also occasionally used the Jewish slaves
- The animals who although they didn't enslave the Jews were worshipped by the Egyptians

It therefore was not necessary to mention the people who regularly used the Jewish slaves.

The **Rabbi Ishmael style** rules frequently develop a theme sentence by painting a panoramic picture covering all dimensions.

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