

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis in BaLaK
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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.

Hi

In this and future issues I will focus on how
- certain indefensible Rashis can be defended
- certain incorrect explanations of Rashi are exposed
- How alternate explanations may be supplied
- I will also emphasize the primary Rashi sources, the
Great Midrash and the Rashi commentators as sources of
correct understanding of Rashi.

Hope you enjoy

Russell Jay Hendel, President, Rashiyomi

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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Format-Paragraph Parallelism Grammar *Daily Rashi*

Thur 7/21/2016 Nu22-13b

Background: Balak, King of Moab, tried to hire Bilam to come to curse the Jews.

Biblical Text:

- *And God said to Balaam, You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people; for they are blessed.*
- *And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, Go to your land; for the Lord refuses to let me go with you.*
- *And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went to Balak, and said, Balaam refuses to come with us.*
- *And Balak sent again princes, more, and more honorable than they. And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus said Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I beg you, hinder you from coming to me; For I will promote you to very great honor,*

Rashi: *God refuses to let me go with you; but I can go with other than you who are more honorable.*

Rejected possible explanation of the Mizrachi and Gur Aryeh, Rashi

Commentators: It might appear that Rashi is using the **Grammar** rule: *God refuses to let me go with you, but I can go with other than you.*

In fact Rashi appears to say this. This is typical: We can read Rashi and then read into it false explanations consistent with Rashi's literal wording. In fact one can argue further that Bilam could have simply said *God refuses to let me go* and leave out the word *with you*. Thus the word *with you* are extra and superfluous which in some people's minds justify learning a Rashi principle.

The Mizrachi and Gur Aryeh reject this explanation. They point out that *not with you* occurs frequently in the Bible and there is no reason to interpret it in other cases as meaning *not with you* but with others. An example is actually given from later in this chapter.

In other words, Mizrachi and Gur Aryeh reject this possible explanation of Rashi since it is not *consistently* used. Consistency is a strong requirement of any rule.

Contribution of Mizrachi Rashi commentator: Mizrachi notes the sequence

- *Bilam: God wont let me go with you*
- *Balak: I will send more distinguished messengers and offer you more.*

Here Mizrachi uses the **Paragraph** method, part of the **Format method**, the method of seeing sentences in a paragraph unified. The statement *God won't let me go with you* is contrastive to the immediately following *I will send more distinguished messengers and offer you more*. As indicated, Mizrachi sees the two paragraph sentences as developing the paragraph theme by contrast.

Contribution of Gur Aryeh Rashi commentator: Gur Aryeh notes the parallelism of God's statement and Bilams citation

- God: You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the nation

because it is blessed

- Bilam: God said, don't go with them.

Notice how Bilam omitted the underlined part of the first sentence which is an absolute prohibition of going. By omitting this sentence Bilam indicates an intention that perhaps he can get a better deal.

Summary: We have seen three attempts to explain Rashi

- **Grammar** method - don't go with them, but rather with others
- **Paragraph** method - don't go with them; Balak then sends other messengers
- **Parallelism** Method - Bilam left out a crucial part of God's prohibition thereby opening the possibility of further dialogue.

The **Grammar** method approach is rejected because of lack of consistency. The Rashi comment seems to be derived from the **Paragraph** and **Parallelism** method together. Note also how Rashi's literal language does not help arrive at the correct method. Rather, one has to do a close reading of the text.

Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter's contribution is to make explicit the types of rules being used and to show their correctness and utility. We especially emphasize that some people love to learn Rashi by nuancing a word or by counting superfluous words. As this Rashi shows, this is not necessarily the correct method. Sometimes Rashi learns things from overall paragraph structure.

Formatting - Parallelism *Daily Rashi* Fri 7/22/2016 Nu22-05b

Background: Balak, King of Moab, saw Israel conquer two

neighboring countries. Since Israel was camped by him, he had concerns that he would be next. He therefore sent messengers to Bilam to curse the nation. We compare

- Balak's original request
- Bilam's summary of Balak's request.

Biblical Text:

Balak's original request: Behold, the nation leaving Egypt; Behold it has covered the earth and is sitting nearby me....please curse them

Bilam's summary:-----Behold, the nation leaving Egypt ----- has covered the earth ----- ...please curse him

Rashi: Rash explains Balak's statement "Behold the nation leaving Egypt" - Bilam could say "So what - why does it bother you?" Therefore Balak continues: "Behold, it has covered the earth and is sitting nearby me."

Contribution of Mizrachi and Gur Aryeh, Rashi Commentators: The double repetition of the underlined behold indicates that the first behold is an introductory statement. In English this would be indicated by a colon.

RE: The nation leaving Egypt:

It has covered the earth and is sitting by me. Could you curse me.

Contribution of Rashi Newsletter: In my article Biblical Formatting accessible at <http://www.Rashiyomi.com/biblicalformatting.pdf>, I lay down the principle that Modern formatting - non-verbal written signs that inform meaning - is implemented in the Bible through skillful use of repeated words. Here are some examples

- Modern bold is indicated through a repeated word (e.g. the biblical *smite smite the city by sword* has the modern effect of **smite** *the city by sword*).
- Modern bullets are indicated through a repeated word before phrases (usually a connective word). For example the biblical (**Ex18-01**) *Jethro heard all that God did for Moses and for Israel* has the effect *Jethro heard all that God did for*
 - Moses
 - Israel
- The current Rashi shows how a repeated word sandwiching a short phrase has the effect of a colon.

The Rashi rule used here is the **formatting** rule, the rule governing non verbal meaning through the arrangement and formatting of a text.

A second contribution of the Rashi Newsletter is use of the **Parallelism** rule. Note, in the biblical citation above how Bilam does not use an introductory phrase and leaves out the phrase *Israel is camped near me*.

Let us carefully consider the difference in nuance between these two

- 1) Balak did not blame the Jews for leaving Egypt. They were defending themselves against slavery. Hence for Balak, it is an introductory phrase.
- 2) But Balak is concerned that Moses was at war on two neighboring states, Sichon and Og.
- 3) To clinch matter, Balak is concerned that Israel is now encamped by his nation. Apparently he is next to be conquered and wants defense.

Balak is a King and asks in a respectful manner.

- 1) Contrastively Bilam mentions the exodus (and conquest) of Egypt
- 2) and also the covering of the land referring to the conquest of the

neighboring states

3) Bilam omits mention of the fact that Israel is camped near Sichon.

We can see an underlying theme to these nuances.

1) Balak does not mind Israel for freeing itself from slavery; he minds conquest of neighboring nations and having a new nation camped right by him

2) Contrastively, Bilam opposes and hates the Jews. It doesn't matter if they are camped near Moab. Bilam opposes the Jews for conquering Egypt and the neighboring nations.

Summary: We see some interesting aspects of Rashi comments here. Rashi sometimes makes inferences based on **parallelism**; these can be nuances and subtle not something black and white. We also see that repeated words are not just "extra words" but indicate emphasis which in modern writing is done by formatting.

Database *Daily Rashi* Sat-Sun 7/23-24/2016 Nu22-05d, Nu22-06b

Background: Balak King of Moab asks Bilam to curse the Jews.

Biblical Text:

- (*Balak*) sent messengers to Bilam on the land of his nation saying *The Jews left Egypt: ...Please curse them*
- *For I know: Those you bless are blessed and those you curse are cursed*

Rashi: Land of his nation means the land of Bilam's nation

(How did he know that his curses work) Because Bilam aided Sichon by a curse and they conquered the city of Cheshbon belonging to Moab

Contribution of Literary method: There is a school of thought in Literature that reads literature by filling in gaps. The argument then is, that since Balak said *I know those you curse are cursed*, he must have had some previous knowledge (Filling the gap). They then go further and assume that Sichon defeated Cheshbon a Moabite city by hiring Bilam to curse Moab. Balak now does an about face and hires Bilam to curse the Jews.

Notice that the literary method is not frivolous. It tries to listen to the text. But it is not mechanical or semi-mechanical.

Contribution of the Maharzu, a commentator on the Great Midrash:

As many people know, many Rashi comments come directly from the Great Midrash, a collection of beautiful exegetical items on the five books of Moses and the Megilot. Maharzu creates a parallelism between the two verses cited in the Biblical text section above. If Bilam was not from Moab but from another nation, how could Balak *know* that Bilam's curses and blessings work. Hear Maharzu uses the synonym method:

- When you know something you normally use the word *hear*: For example when Pharaoh summons Joseph to interpret his dream he says to Joseph, Gn41-15, *I have heard about you that you know how to interpret dreams*. Another good example is Job's apology to God (Jb42-05) after God reveals himself to Job: *I had only heard about You; but now I personally have seen You.*
- So the Maharzu contrasts *hear* and *know*. *Know* is used for personal knowledge and experience. As mentioned this is the synonym method.

Now that we know what the verse says, we have to ask *why* it says it. How could Balak know this. For this we need the Great Midrash.

Contribution of the Great Midrash: The Great Midrash on Numbers, 20:7, cross-references the Great Midrash on 19:30. This is one of the five places in the Bible where it uses the very rare expression, *Therefore there is a saying*. Here is the list. We use the **database** method to find it.

Gn10-09 Therefore we have the saying: Like Nimrod, a hunting warior before God

Nu21-14 Therefore there is a saying in the book of Wars of God....

1S19-24 Therefore they say: Is Saul also among the prophets

2S05-08 Therefore they say: The blind and lame should not be in Gods house

Nu21-27 Therefore the parable makers say:Come to Cheshbon (Capital of Moab) let it be rebuilt and founded as a city of Sichon. For a fire went out Chesbon, a flame from the Scihon cities....

Notice how **Nu21-27** stands out in that it is not just any saying but a saying of parable makers. To understand the meaning of parable makers we see that the prophecies of Bilam are called parables:

Nu23-07:18,24-03:15:20:21:23. It is rare in the Bible for a prophecy to be called a parable but there are other examples such as **Is14-04**

Ez17-02. Apparently this refers to prophecies that are stated as riddles or parables. Let us summarize

- **Nu21-27** mentions the parable makers who prophesied about the loss of Chesbon a Moabite city to Sichon
- Conspicuously, Bilam is called a parable maker
- An examination of the text of **Nu21-27** shows that *fires* and *flames*

are mentioned, *fire* and *flame* being the symbol for prophecy as in **Ex19, Ex20 and Ez01** (The decalogue and the chariot).

- Thus it would emerge that parable makers, presumably Bilam, issues a prophetic curse by means of which Moab lost the city of Chesbon to Sichon. But if this is so, then Moab had personal experience of the power of Bilam's curse.

Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter has assisted this Rashi by offering classification.

- **Synonym** method: There is a difference between *knowing* something (personal experience) and *hearing* it (Maharzu)
- **Database** method: Emphasis in the war to conquer Sichon are the Parable makers (A subject is never given anywhere else in the Bible on parables)
- **Synonym** method: Prophecies have many names. Bilam's prophecies are known as parables.
- **Symbolism** method: There is added support for this whole interpretation using the words *fire*, *flame* which could refer to prophecy as they do throughout the bible. However, this is only supportive since *fire*, *flame* could also be symbolic of destruction.

Finally we note that Rashi interprets *on the land of his nation* to refer to Bilam. All the commentators - Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh etc. - try to figure out what profundity there is here. But the Maharzu we cited shows that this Rashi - which is indeed obvious - is simply a contrast to the phrase *I know*. Maharzu correctly points out that Balak could only know something about a foreigner if he personally experienced it. So our position is that Rashi did not intend this as a comment per se but rather

as background to understand the Rashi comment on *I know*.

This has been a difficult Rashi to explain. It is tempting to see the sages as using literary methods and filling in gaps. But as the sources we brought show there is solid ground here based on synonyms and database comparisons.

Also it is important when reading Rashi to use the commentators on the Midrash Rabbah, the Great Midrash. This is often overlooked.

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