

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis in ShoFeTiM
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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

This issue highlights "the wrong way" to interpret Rashi. I refer to a pickiness approach where every little word is twisted. Contrastively, we present alternatives.

I consider this one of the main contributions of the Rashi Newsletter.

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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| Verse Code | Verse text | Rashi Rule | Rashi Subrule | Rashi Rule code | Derivation of Rashi Comment From Biblical Text Using the Rashi Rule and Subrul |
|--------------|---|------------|---------------|-----------------|---|
| Dt16-19 a | See Dt16-19c | | | | |
| Dt16-19 b | See Dt16-19c | | | | |
| Dt16-19 c | *don't pervert justice *don't recognize presence *don't take bribes | Format | Climax | 7 | *Don't pervert justice [Don't call innocent guilty or guilty innocent] "Even if you uphold justice, Don't recognize appearance e.g. by speaking softly to one litigant and harshly to another * Even if justice is upheld and no differentiation is made, do not ttake bribes even to reach a decision you already reached but did not release. Because this bribe taken by you will blind the eyes of other people who will think money is the cause |
| Dt18-01 b | See Dt18-02c | | | | |
| Dt18-01 c | See Dt18-02c | | | | |
| Dt18-01 c | See Dt18-02c | | | | |
| Dt18-01 d | See Dt18-02c | | | | |
| Dt18-01 e | See Dt18-02c | | | | |
| Dt18-02 a | See Dt18-02c | | | | |
| Dt18-02 b | See Dt18-02c | | | | |
| Dt18-02 c | See Dt18-02c | Format | Reference | 7 1 | Levites/Priests * Cannot inherit with ANY Jewish inheritance *Rather they will inherit what God gave them * As God told them (e.g. In Nu18:20) *thus * Levites / Priests obtain altar offerings, tithes, and similar gifts (listed in Nu18) * Levites / Priests do not participate in ANY other Jewish conquest such as division of land, alliance conquests by tribes, future wars and conquests, or any other conquest |

Format-Climax-Grammar Daily Rashi Thur-Sat Sep. 8-10, 2016, Dt16-18a,b,c

Background: [Moses presents the obligation to appoint Judges and the laws governing them]

Biblical Text: The Biblical text is listed in column 1 of this table.

| Sentences in Dt16-18 | Example of prohibition (Rashi) | How it is climactic | Conceptual prohibition |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|------------------------|
| <i>Don't pervert justice</i> | Don't declare the innocent guilty or the guilty innocent | Beginning of 3 prohibitions | Perversion |
| <i>Don't recognize presence</i> | Don't speak softly to one litigant and harshly to another. Don't let one litigant sit while the other stands. | Justice may be upheld (innocent is innocent and guilty is guilty); but Judge differentiates between litigants | Differentiation |
| <i>Don't take monetary bribes</i> | Do not, even after deciding the case but before pronouncing judgement, accept a cash amount to declare a certain position which you would have done anyway (So why not take the money) | Justice is upheld and all litigants are treated equally. However the taking of money creates an <i>bad appearance</i> which might lead others to think that the bribe was the cause of the judgement | Appearance |

Rashi: Rashi interprets the 3rd prohibition, the prohibition against taking monetary bribes,

- Not as a prohibition against a judge taking bribes to change a verdict, but rather
- As a prohibition against a judge taking a bribe even though the verdict agrees with the goal of the person giving the bribes.

Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi comment is based on the climax principle A good account can be found in Kugel's wonderful book, *The idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History*, first published in 1981. One of Kugel's insightful contributions to understanding the Bible is the way he proposes reading parallel passages, that is repeated consecutive passages with however slight

differences. Kugel says

- It is a mistake to read the repeated passage as a pure repetition
- It is equally a mistake to read the repeated passage as talking about something else
- Rather the proper way to read the 2nd repeated passage is as intensifying the first passage by repeating it and *adding* something.

We should make clear that, the *fact* of 3 or more consecutive passages, in and of itself, without the meaning of any particular word, justifies and even requires the climactic interpretation.

The table above applies this method of climactic interpretation to the 3 parallel passages in **Dt16-18**:

- The 2nd prohibition adds to the 1st prohibition: Besides not outright perverting justice one should not even show differential treatment
- The 3rd prohibition adds to the 1st two prohibitions. Even if litigants are treated equally and there is no differential treatment one should not accept money even for something one would have done already.

Before examining how the Rashi commentators explain this we add a novelty. We answer the question, "Why not?" What is wrong with a judge taking a bribe after he has written a decision before pronouncing it. After all, the bribe will not influence the decision which is already written.

The Rashi Newsletter answer to this is based on a grammatical nuance that the Rashi commentators overlooked. Notice the skillful use of singular-plural in this verse

- *[Singular] You should not pervert justice*
- *[Singular] You should recognize presence*
- *[Singular] You should not accept bribes*
- *[Plural] Because bribes blind the eyes of the [Plural] wise and make crooked the the words of the [Plural] righteous.*

Before we explain this singular-plural anomaly, we note that biblical scholarship uses the many singular-plural verses in Deuteronomy to suggest that Deuteronomy came from two distinct sources (and hence the differing pluralities).

However, we can explain the singular-plural simply:

- Don't you, the Judge, take bribes (even on something truthful) because
- Others (Plural you) who are wise and righteous will be blinded by this and think that the money caused the verdict.

In American law, we call such violations of ethics, *appearance* violations. Nothing un-ethical has been done but rather it *appears* that something wrong has been done and that might influence others. The reason appearance violations are prohibited is because of the atmosphere and possible influence they create.

Contribution of Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, Sifsay Chachamim, Rashi commentators: All the commentators use the *extra word* or *already said* approach to Rashi. For example, *The prohibition of taking bribes could not refer to taking bribes to pervert justice since that was already said in the phrase 'don't pervert justice'; hence Rashi interprets it otherwise.*

Such an approach is not complete. For one thing, it does not tell us *how* to interpret the repetition. Also, it acts like any repetition in the Bible is a no-no. The way the Rashi Newsletter has taken the verse is that a collection of consecutive phrases in parallel justifies, in and of itself, seeing the latter phrases as adding something to the initial phrases. This is a universal way to read parallelism in all languages.

Format-Reference *Daily Rashi* Sunday-Friday Sep 11-16 2016 Dt18-01b,c,d,e:02a,b

Background: [These verses are self contained and do not need a background. Notice the repeated form.]

Biblical Text: **Dt18-01:02.** Notice the repetition corresponding to rows one and two.

| Priests Levites | No portion in Israel with Jews | [Rather] God is their inheritance | As He said |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| <i>Priests/Levites, all Levites</i> | <i>will have no a) portion and b) inheritance in Israel</i> | <i>they will eat from the a) altar fire and b) God's inheritance</i> | |
| <i>They</i> | <i>a) will have no portion with their brothers</i> | <i>b) God is their inheritance</i> | <i>As He spoke to him</i> |
| | | | |

Contribution of Rashi Newsletter: The Rashi Newsletter interprets repetition in the Biblical text the same way it interprets bold, italics and underline in the modern text, as connoting emphasis. This emphasis makes the contrast - *no portion in Israel, but portion from God* - a contrast which is repeated in two consecutive verses, as comprehensive as possible. The idea of letting repetition (or bold in modern writing)

indicating emphasis and comprehensiveness is a consequence not of words but of **Formatting**. A full discussion of this rule can be found in my article *Biblical Formatting* (Jewish Bible Quarterly), accessible at www.Rashiyomi.com/biblicalformatting.pdf

Furthermore, the verse explicitly uses the **Reference** rule, *as He spoke to him*. The table below lists all discussions of inheritance for Jews and Levites/Priests.

| Biblical source | Summary of paragraph | Relevance to Dt18-01:02 |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Nu18-08:20 | Priests receive (food) gifts from altar offerings | The Divine altar fires and His Inheritance they [Priests/Levites] will eat; God is his inheritance as He said to him |
| Nu18-21:24 | Levites receive tithes | The Divine altar fires and His Inheritance they [Priests/Levites] will eat; God is his inheritance as He said to him |
| Nu18-25:32 | Levites tithe to Priests | The Divine altar fires and His Inheritance they [Priests/Levites] will eat; God is his inheritance as He said to him |
| Nu35-01:08 | Levites get 48 cities | The Divine altar fires and His Inheritance they [Priests/Levites] will eat; God is his inheritance as He said to him |
| | | |
| Nu26-52:56 | Divide the land by lot | No portion or inheritance with brothers / Jewish people |
| Nu32-01:43 | 2.5 tribes took lands of Sichon and Og | No portion or inheritance with brothers / Jewish people |
| Dt20-10:15 | Future conquests of Jewish nation | No portion or inheritance with brothers / Jewish people |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Joshua (Chapter 15 and further) | Joshua divides land | No portion or inheritance with brothers / Jewish people |
| Judges (Chapter 1 and further) | After Joshua's land tribes fight to take their possession | No portion or inheritance with brothers / Jewish people |

With this background we can now understand Rashi.

Rashi: Priests / Levites:

Do not, like their Jewish brethren, inherit

- With the 2.5 tribes in transjordan
- With the tribes that Joshua conquered Israel for
- With the remaining tribes (after Joshua's death) who conquered territories for each other (alliances) and themselves
- With the division by lot that Moses instructed
- With future conquests of the Jewish nation

Do inherit

- The 24 gifts mentioned in **Nu18** (for example, parts of the peace offerings)
- The tithes
- The Terumah of Tithes

- The 48 cities allotted to them

Rashi makes these comments on the various phrases in the verses.

Contributions of Rashi commentators: The Rashi commentators do not take the **Reference** approach listed above. Rather on each phrase of the verse they attach some comment: *This word refers to the following conquests (which Levites can't participate in); This refers to the following divisions.* Similarly, on the positive parts of the verses they make a comment on each phrase: *This word refers to the following gifts which the Priests/ Levites may have; This word refers to the following other gifts which the Priests/ Levites may have.*

The problem with this approach is that we are not told how each word refers to something. Sometimes it looks natural (for example, the phrase *altar fires* clearly refers to the offering partakings that Priests may have). But sometimes it looks quite arbitrary.

In fact, Rashi at one point says *I don't know what this is*. When Rashi said *I don't know what this is* to what was he referring. Here are two opinions.

- Some Rashi commentators say that Rashi was stumped by the phrases *inheritance of 5, inheritance of 7 etc.* in the Sifre. When Rashi said *I don't know what this is* he was referring to the Sifre's interpretation. But these phrases have known meaning (Thus the inheritance of 5 refers to the 2.5 tribes given inheritance by Moses and the 2.5 tribes allotted by Joshua ($2.5+2.5=5$)).
- The Rashi Newsletter says that Rashi was not stumped on the meaning of for example *inheritance of 5*, but rather on the *how* this meaning is derived from the verse. In other words, Rashi was objecting or expressing lack of understanding of the Sifre's approach

that each word in the verses refers to some specific act of inheritance. The Rashi Newsletter agrees with Rashi's lack of understanding; there are no known rules to explain how the Sifre derives from each word some meaning. The Rashi Newsletter's position is that the **Formatting** of a repeated verse connotes emphasis and the **reference** explicitly stated in the verse asks us to look up all inheritances and bar Levites from the Jewish inheritances except for those given to them.

In this case, we see that the approach of the Rashi Newsletter is more natural and enables the student to participate with Rashi in the derivation.

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