

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis in VaYayTzaY
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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 year I am focusing on parallelism, that is, those Rashis that can be derived from tabular representations of verses.

I will attempt to send out the Parshah over a week in advance.

Today is a Rashi Special showing how a Rashi that looks as the height of homily is actually the simple meaning of the text.

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 Subrule
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Symbolism *Daily Rashi* Gn28-11a,16a,17a,17b,17c Mon-Fri 12/5-9/2016

Background: This story is complicated. To fully understand Rashi we must first understand the text. Important highlights of the story are presented below. One of my great joys in explaining

Rashi is showing that so called Midrashim, homiletic explanations of Rashi and the Rabbis, are in fact the simple straightforward meaning of the text. Today's set of Rashis is an excellent illustration.

- Jacob, at his parent's advice, left his hometown of Beer Sheva towards Charan
- On the way, one evening, he stopped to rest at a town called Luz
- There in Luz, he had a vivid prophetic dream, where God promised to give him Israel and to be with him
- Jacob was surprised by the intense prophetic dream in such a rural place
- He realized that the place was holy and the place
 - Was a house for God
 - Was renamed Bethel (House of God)
 - Was a gate to heaven.
- To clarify the journey and relations to other places, Rashi presents a diagram of Beer Sheva, Jerusalem (Temple mount) Beth El, Charan. A crude map is produced in Figure 1.

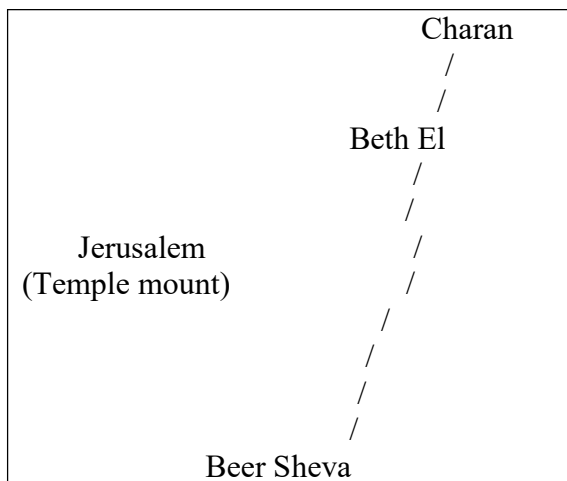


Figure 1: Crude geographic map showing relation of four important areas. Map is crude and approximate

With this background let us look at some Rashi's

Biblical Text: (Gn28-11a, Gn28-16a, Gn28-17a,b) *Jacob came to the place he stayed over because sun had set he took from the stones of the place ...he slept in that place....he*

dreamt...he woke up from his sleep and said “Indeed, God is in this place and I didn’t know And he revered and said: How revered is this place this must be the house of God and this is the Gate of Heaven

Rashi: *It says the place but doesn’t indicate which place. So it must be the place mentioned elsewhere. The place refers to the Jerusalem Temple mount, Har Moriah where Abraham bound Isaac in the Akaydah.*

Contribution of the Secular Bible Scholars and Modern Orthodox Bible Scholars: They see this Rashi as homiletic and fanciful. The text simply says that Jacob came to *the place*. Why call it the Mount Moriah. Isn’t that fanciful? The better bible scholars as well as such modern orthodox scholars as Livni and Grossman, see in Rashis like these *a clear deviation from the simple meaning of the text. Rashi’s purpose was exhortative, to comfort the masses with pleasant and inspirational stories. However noble that is, it has nothing to do with the text.*

Really? I would argue that these scholars have ignored fundamental grammatical and literary form cues in the text. Let us examine

Step I of analysis – *the place was important*:

- The text calls it the place vs. a place. There is emphasis that it is well known
- As can be seen in the citation above, the noun place is repeated *the place...the place...the place...* These repetitions are indicated by underlines in my citation above. Such repetition of a noun when a pronoun would have sufficed indicates emphasis
- The text notes the presence of a vivid prophetic dream leading Jacob to identify the place as a place of God.
- We conclude the obvious conclusion: The text indicates *the place* was something important

Step II of analysis – *the place was a house of God*

OK: We have established that the bible goes out of its way to emphasize that this place was an important place. But why call it Mount Moriah. In fact Mount Moriah was very far away. This is not a contribution of modern archaeologists but of Rashi himself as shown in Figure 1 and as stated in Rashi Gn28-17a.

To fully understand Rashi we have to recall the dream’s contents

- God was standing over Jacob and said: I am the God of your fathers Abraham and Isaac

- This land is given to you (Note: This is the promise to Abraham and Isaac which is now being transferred to Jacob also).

So the *content*, not the *place*, of the dream refers to patriarchal continuity. Jacob realizes that something triggered this awareness of patriarchal continuity, and that something must be the place. We conclude the obvious conclusion: The place was more than important, it was Godly and Divine; it was a house to divinity as evidenced by the special dreams that occurred in that place. We note in passing, that one approach to dream interpretation is to see important dreams as triggered by places, events, etc.

All we have established at this point, was that Jacob realized that if a special dream happened in this place it must be important. We as yet have no further connections.

Step III of analysis – Mount Moriah

But why does Rashi call Bethel, Mount Moriah when in fact Jerusalem was quite distant?

To answer this we must use a missing link which the Biblical and modern orthodox scholars have totally ignored. *This is a dream. Dream's have their own methods of interpretation which give the simple straightforward meaning of the dream.* As we will see below, and as summarized in Figure 2, Jacob interprets the *horizontal* road (Beer Sheva-Jerusalem-Bethel) to be a *vertical* road (Earth – Mount Moriah/Temple – Gate of Heaven). This is illustrated in Figure 2

HORIZONTAL PICTURE		SYMBOLIC OF VERTICAL	
	BethEl		Gate of Heaven
	/	/	Source of prophecy
Jerusalem	/	/	
Mount Moriah	/		God's house/
Akaydah	/		Heavenly Temple
	/	/	
	/	/	
Beer Sheva	/		Earth

Figure 2: Dream interpretation of Beth-El/Mount Moriah/Beth El as leading to Gate of Heaven.

This perspective is justified by the dream itself. Jacob identified the following

- Dream in a place seeing God = So the place is the Gate of Heaven = source of dreams
- Patriarchal continuity (Akaydah) = The dream content, patriarchal continuity, jumped into this dream at a place distant from Jerusalem

- Beer Sheva = Earth

The *horizontal* becomes the *vertical*. This is standard dream interpretation. Using this we can understand the various midrashic terminologies. Let us summarize. Jacob came to a place and had a vivid dream. The dream content dealt with patriarchal continuity. Rashi never meant to say that Beth El was Mount Moriah. Indeed, it is Rashi himself, in **Gn28-17a** who denies the literal meaning of this. However, Rashi did equate the dream content with the Akaydah. The Akaydah represented the Patriarchs Abraham and Isaac at their best; Jacob's important dream connected him to the Akaydah. Jacob's dream made him the 3rd patriarch. The actual place of the dream was far away from the Temple mount but the Temple mount flew into the dream. All this language is justified in dream interpretation.

- There was a *jumping of place*. Mount Moriah jumped to Beth El. This is simple to interpret using the following equations

Mount Moriah	=	Patriarchal continuity
Beth el	=	Place of Jacob's dream

So we see that the patriarchal continuity of Jerusalem / Mount Moriah / Akaydah jumped to Jacob's place. Such symbolism is normal in dreams (This is a key point: When we refer to *peshat* simple meaning of text it depends on context. The simple meaning of a dream text is totally different than the simple meaning of an ordinary text)

- Jacob called the place he was at *reverant*. Indeed, in this dream Jacob realized that he was a continuation of Abraham and Isaac.
- On the biblical text *and I (Jacob) did not know it was a place of God* Rashi says *If I did know I wouldn't have slept there*. Indeed, Jacob left his house with a potential for being murdered by his brother. He didn't think himself yet as the continuation of the patriarchs. But after the dream he realized he was a continuation. When he says *I didn't know* it means he didn't realize that as a result of what just happened with the stealing of the blessings – he, Jacob, was now successor to Abraham and Isaac. This placed him in a state of reverence.

We have left to deal with one more Rashi. The Biblical text (**Gn28-11a**) states that Jacob was *pga* in the place (Bethel). *Pga* usually means *to bump into*. It very rarely means *to pray*. It is possible to find verses supporting each one. Rashi here interprets *pga* to mean *pray*.

Doesn't this prove that Rashi was engaged in fancy? He wanted to emphasize Jacob's religiosity *at the expense* of the simple meaning of the biblical text. There can't be any linguistic justification of selecting a secondary meaning of a word over a primary meaning.

But the answer is simple: Rashi selected the secondary meaning based on the *context* of the paragraph and this is a legitimate interpretative technique. Examine

- In this place Jacob had a prophetic dream ensuring him the place of the 3rd patriarch
- In this place Jacob was promised the land of Israel
- In this place Jacob was further promised to be a blessing for the entire world

So the *context* of the chapter is spiritual not physical. The place itself acquires symbolic meaning as the gate of heaven. Therefore, if the text uses the word *pga* it is *preferable* to interpret this as *prayer*, a secondary meaning of *pga*, rather than as *bump into*. There are some further hints in the text

- Interpreting the text as saying *bumped into* would not make much sense. Jacob bumped into *the place* but had to sleep on stones! So it wasn't even a town. It was just a collection of stones. Why then call it *the place*? Why suggest he bumped into it if it was not a town
- The text "i) he *pga* in the place ii) he stayed over there because iii) the sun had set" makes it sound as if the *pga* activity took some time. Thus he was at the place and *pga* and when he finished the sun had set so he had to stay over. The interpretation *pga = pray* is consistent with something that took a lot of time. *Pga = bump* is inconsistent.

Summary of all Rashis: Here is a summary going over all five Rashis

- The text indicates that Jacob came to a place that wasn't even a town and slept there
- However he had a vivid prophetic dream promising him to be the 3rd patriarch and continuing the traditions of the other two patriarchs
- This led Jacob to interpret the place as triggering a prophetic dream. In other words
 - The place was inspirational of divine dreams
 - The place therefore was a gate to heaven and God
 - The dream content was about patriarchal continuity symbolized by the Akaydah and Mount Moriah. The Rabbis express the duality that BethEl was Mount Moriah because *Mount Moriah flew to BethEl* to be in Jacob's dream.
- All this lead to Jacob's reverence of the place.

- Because of this context, the Rabbis interpret *pga* as meaning *pray*.

In terms of biblical scholarship the key point is that

- Just as it is important to adhere to rules of grammar in biblical narrative
- It is equally important to adhere to symbolic rules in symbolic events like dreams.
- It is also important to interpret biblical roots based on context.

This is the fundamental error made by Biblical scholars like Livni or Grossman. I have carefully examined all examples brought by Livni and Grossman where they claim that Rashi deviated from the simple meaning of the text. In each case, Rashi was using symbolic methods on symbolic texts.

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES / THE 30 RASHIRULE

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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