

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis in VaYaYSheV
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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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Bullets-Reference *Daily Rashi* Gn37-08 Mon 12/19/2016

Background: Recall that Joseph, one of Jacob's children had been telling dreams to his brothers and interpreted them to mean he would one day reign over them and help them. His brother's were jealous. They felt he was an immature person (**Gn37-02**) and did not like his aspirations nor the way his father favored them

Biblical Text:

[After Joseph told his dream to his brothers] and they hated him more

- on his dreams and
- on his chattings.

Rashi: (**Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter:** Notice the repetition of the connecting preposition on. In my article, *Biblical Formatting*, Jewish Bible Quarterly, which can be accessed at www.Rashiyomi.com/biblicalformatting.pdf I show that the Bible used repeating keywords the same way a modern author might use bullets. A modern author uses bullets to indicate *unspecified emphasis, that is,*

each bullet is to be understood as having a distinct nuance. The biblical Author could have said on his dreams and talks or on his dreams and on his talks. The second of these methods indicates bullets while the first does not. Given this Author-intended unspecified emphasis, Rashi explains what the intended emphasis is).

- The brothers hated Joseph because of his dreams

The brothers hated Joseph because of something else which is called his *chattings*. Rashi identifies this fault with the fault listed in **Gn37-01** where *chattings* is also mentioned: *Joseph was 17 years old, he would shepard the sheep with his brothers, and he would hang out with the children of Bilhah and Zilpah his father's wives; Joseph would portray to his father their chattings as bad.*

In other words, the brothers hated Joseph both because of his dreams and because of his tattle-tailing.

Comment: Note a very important point. Rashi did not simply make a punchy word association - the bible used the word *chattings* in two verses. Rather Rashi only made this word association after the bible, through the use of biblical bullets, as indicated by a repeating keyword, *on ...on*, explicitly indicated that the bible intended an unspecified emphasis. This is an important point. The secularlists would have us beleive that Rashi was not giving the simple meaning of the text, that he was playing word games to create morally uplifting and exhortative messages. Not so. Rashi was also initially basing himself on grammar. A word association such as *chatting chatting* is only justified if some other biblical rule explicitly requires it.

Bullets-Reference *Daily Rashi* Gn37-08a:22a:22b Tue-Wed 12/20-21/2016

Background: Recall that Joseph, one of Jacob's children had been telling dreams to his brothers and interpreted them to mean he would one day reign over them and help them. His brother's were jealous. They felt he was an immature person (**Gn37-02**) and did not like his aspirations nor the way his father favored him. For example, Joseph's father made Joseph a special striped suit (**Gn37-03**). As Joseph came to visit his brothers his brothers plotted against him. When he finally came the bible explains what they did.

Biblical text: When Joseph came to his brothers they (he) stripped Joseph

- Of his clothing
- Of his striped suit that was on him

Rashi text: [**Contribution of Rashi Newsletter:** Notice the repetition of the connecting preposition of. In my article, *Biblical Formatting*, Jewish Bible Quarterly, which can be accessed at www.Rashiyomi.com/biblicalformatting.pdf I show that the Bible used repeating keywords the same way a modern author might use bullets. A modern author uses bullets to indicate *unspecified emphasis, that is, each bullet is to be understood as having a distinct nuance*. The biblical Author could have said of his clothing, the striped suit on him or of his clothing of his striped suit on him The second of these methods indicates bullets while the first does not. Given this Author-intended unspecified emphasis, Rashi explains what the intended emphasis is).

The brothers stripped Joseph both of his suit and the rest of his clothes.

Comment: A classic advanced method of studying Rashi is to compare in detail the Rashi text with the original midrashic text that Rashi bases

himself on. Here is the comparison with **Genesis Rabbath 84:16**. Notice the agreements and omissions

Biblical Text Gn37-22	Midrash Rabbah 84:17	Present in Rashi?	Absent in Rashi
They stripped Joseph	This refers to his coat		Absent in Rashi
Of his clothes	These are his clothes (e.g. shirt)	Present in Rashi	
Of his suit	This refers to his suit	Present in Rashi	
That was on him	This refers to his pants		Absent in Rashi

Notice how Rashi only took the distinctions justified by the repeating keywords, *of*. He rejected the other two nuances. Apparently the Midrash Rabbah tried to milk every phrase for a nuance. This is a common midrashic technique, *each phrase has a nuance*. However, Rashi avoided this approach (even though he is accused of using it). Rashi's approach is grammatical. He only emphasized derivations that were grammatically based. This is an important contribution of Rashi to exegesis.

Comment: There are tremendous psychological forces at play in this Rashi of which we mention only a few. First: The brothers were originally jealous of Joseph's suit, a suit his father had made for Joseph but not for any other brother. But they didn't suffice at stripping Joseph of his suit. They stripped him of everything. Such exaggerations brought on by jealousy, hatred and other negative emotions is common.

An important point to make is that the level of degradation (complete stripping instead of just his suit), was probably a strong factor in Joseph not making any attempt to return home. There was no home to return to. Furthermore, the next event might be worse!

A second point to make is that the expulsion of Joseph from the Jewish community led to his making liasons with Egypt and ultimately led to our being enslaved there for 400 years. Similarly, Absalom's expulsion

from Israel after he murdered his half-brother who raped his half-sister led him to make alliances and this caused a bloody civil war. In other words, such expulsions from the Jewish community - whether of Joseph, Absalom, or even Spinoza - has always led those expelled to form liasons with strange cultures and has hurt the Jewish community significantly.

Grammar Puns *Daily Rashi* Gn42-24c Nu12-01b Thur-Fri Dec 22,23 2016

Background: Joseph, Jacob's son, was favored by his father Jacob, over the other brothers. This caused hatred and jealousy. Additionally, Joseph had dreams of reigning over the brothers and in his teenage years was a tattletale (**Gn37-02**). When Joseph visited his brothers, they plotted to kill him. In translating a verse above we used the word *they* but put *he* in parenthesis. We did not explain this parenthetical insert and hence the reason for this posting.

Biblical text: **Gn37-23:24**. When Joseph comes to his brothers they stripped him of his clothing and suit. They (he) took him and threw him towards a pit.

Biblical text: **Gn42-24c** (**Background**: Joseph's brothers had come to Egypt where Joseph ruled and delivered food. His brothers did not recognize him. Joseph spoke harshly to them and accused them of espionage.) *Joseph took Shimon and imprisoned him in front of his brothers.*

Rashi text: (Why Shimon?) Shimon was the person who threw Joseph into the pit. Hence Joseph imprisoned Shimon. Also, Shimon was the instigator. When the verse says (when Joseph was approaching) *they saw him from afar and plotted to kill him...they said to their brother - behold*

here is the master of dreams it was Shimon doing the talking.

Contribution of the Rashi Newsletter: This is rather an interesting Rashi.

- The Rashi comment occurs on **Gn42-24c**
- However the source for the Rashi comment is **Gn37-23!**

Thus a person or even a scholar studying this Rashi might erroneously conclude that Rashi was being homiletic and speculative. Rashi appears to make his comment on the speculative basis that *since Joseph jailed Shimon it must be the case that Shimon was somehow responsible for causing this*. Such a logic is not a Rashi rule. It is reasonable but not a plausible argument.

But Rashi *always* bases himself on grammar. In this case Rashi bases himself on the grammatical rule known as metaplasms. For a general explanation please see my article, Biblical Puns, Jewish Bible Quarterly, accessible at www.Rashiyomi.com/puns.pdf. In this posting, we state enough basic theory to clarify the rule.

A metaplasms is a *deliberate* misspelling of a word. The metaplasms adds nuances to the normal interpretation of the text. Metaplasms, when properly used, is regarded as a grammatical rule, no different than any other grammatical rule.

In this case we can use an English misspelling to mirror the biblical misspelling, a technique already introduced in my article. Here is the text (with the metaplasms)

And he, took him [Joseph] and they threw him into a pit.

As you can see the literal spelling of the words suggests that *he* (*an individual, one brother*) *threw him into a pit*. However, upon closer scrutiny, the *t* and *y*, surround the *he*. Thus the verse actually reads *they threw him*.

All this is in English. In the Hebrew text, the word for *they took*

- Is *spelled* as if it was singular
- But is *pronounced* as if it was plural.

The nuances and conclusion are obvious

- One brother instigated this - he grabbed Joseph
- The other brothers (who may have initially protested) then joined in.

Homily or simple meaning? The people who write about *peshat* for example Livni but even Leibowitz do not show any deep understanding of language and therefore their conclusions are hollow and superficial. It is simply well known that over 50% of communication consists of nuances.

To base our understanding of the biblical text on a literal meaning is to assume that all its beauty and bounce must be thrown away.

Contrastively, to read whatever we wish into the text is pure homily. How then should we proceed? We should proceed based on grammatical principles of nuance. I briefly cite one or two other examples of such nuanced writing in the Biblical text. The 2nd example is based on grammar but alas we don't always teach grammar.

Example 1: Nu12-01b She - Miryam and Aaron - spoke about Moses....

Rashi: What does it say *she* vs. *they*. After all Miryam and Aaron are plural. The plural subject should have a plural predicate, *they*. The

(skillful) use of a single predicate (she) with a plural subject means that Miryam started the conversation and Aaron tagged along.

Example 2: [Background: Biblical punctuation is the most advanced in the world with close to two dozen punctuation marks (English has about half a dozen). The equivalent of the comma is the *tipchah* which is actually written like a comma. Consider now the following verses]

- They did - Moses and Aaron (did)
- He did - Moses and Aaron (did).

It is a principle of Biblical Cantillation grammar that these two sentences are punctuated differently as follows:

- They did, - Moses and Aaron
- He did - Moses, and Aaron

In other words when the verb is singular it is connected with the first mentioned member of the subject; otherwise when plural it is connected with the group of subjects.

These examples should convince the reader that there is a concept of *grammar of nunaces* and it governs many biblical sentences leading naturally to Rashi insights that are the simple meaning of the text.

For more on biblical cantillation grammar which is a whole field onto itself with many exegetical implications for the biblical text, see Elishah Ben Ezra's excellent book with free excerpts on his website

<http://www.mikra-massorah.org/>

We close with some rather juicy points about Rashi. We have just seen that Rashi bases himself on the Biblical Metaplasms, *they (he) took Joseph and threw him into the pit*. But that is not all Rashi says. Rashi

says

- When the verse says *they spoke one to another: Here is that master of dreams coming...Now let us go and kill him....* it was Shimon that instigated this.
- Rashi does not (anyplace) mention that Shimon grabbed Joseph to throw him into the pit.

But this is part of Rashi's greatness. If the metaplasmus tells us that Shimon was the one who grabbed him (and therefore Joseph jailed him) it stands to reason that he was probably the one who instigated the conversation. This again is simple meaning of the text. Rashi does not become literal about the nuance - the nuance paints a character, the character of Shimon and proper understanding of him. If this is the way Shimon was then he probably instigated conversations. Rashi emphasizes this.

Acknowledgement: The above derivation of the Rashi comment based on the metaplasmus with the Rashi not occurring in this Parshah but in the next Parshah, this derivation, is explicitly mentioned by the **Matnoth Kehunah**, a commentary on the **Midrash Rabbah 84:16**.

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