

# The Rashi Database Project

GOALS: \* Show that all Rashid comments are spontaneous, instant, effortless reactions of a native speaker to the biblical text.

\*This is accomplished by skillful English translations instantly suggesting the Rashid comment to the reader

\* Additionally, each Rashid comment is examined using the 10 organs of the Rashid anatomy.

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(MAIN BIBLIOGRAPHY): DT = Doctoral Thesis ([www.Rashiyomi.com/Rashibook.htm](http://www.Rashiyomi.com/Rashibook.htm),

MG=Modern Grammar with Applications to Rashid ([www.Rashiyom.com/Rashibook2.htm](http://www.Rashiyom.com/Rashibook2.htm) ))

OTHER COMMENTATORS (ABBREVIATIONS): R=Ramban, T=Baal Turim, K=Kli Yakar, I=Ibn Ezra, H=Hendel

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**RASHI ID: Ex34-29a, Ex34-29b, Ex34-30a, Ex34-31a, Ex34-31b, Ex34-32a,  
Ex28-34a, Ex34-27a**

**PESHAT: SPONTANEOUS, REACTION TO SKILLFUL ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

**WHAT IS NEW:** This week reviews the famous “Moses had horns” verse with a simpler explanation provided by me. This week also presents a Ramban Rashi controversy; we show that Ramban overlooked the fact that two separate derivations were being made.

**NEW FORMAT:** Starting today we will no longer be using the spreadsheet to include long narratives. Rather we link the spreadsheet to a word document with the narrative. **LET ME KNOW HOW YOU THE READER LIKE THIS** (Simply hit **REPLY** to the email and write in the **SUBJECT LINE** either **LIKE**, **PREFER OLD WAY**, **INDIFFERENT**). There will be many more formatting innovations in the coming months and we look forward to readers for feedback.

## TODAYS CHALLENGING RASHIS

### Ex34-29a

**Ex34-29a** When Moses went down from the mountain he did not know that his face-image had become blinding.

**Rashi Rule:** Paragraph Continuation

**Rashi Narrative:** Recall that Moses was in the mountain 40 days three times (e.g. Dt09), once to receive the first set of 10 commandments, once to entreat that the Jews not be destroyed for the sin of the golden calf, and a third time to receive the second set of 10 commandments. The purpose of mountain ascent for the second and third time are mentioned in the preceding paragraphs (Ex32-30:31, and Ex34-01:03, Ex34-28)

Very simply Rashi takes Ex34-29 as a continuation of the narrative, in other words, it refers to the 3rd ascent of 40 days whose purpose was obtaining the 2nd set of ten commandments.

**Ex34-29b** When Moses went down from the mountain he did not know that his face-image had become blinding.

## **Rashi Rule:** Figures of Speech

**Rashi Narrative:** The literal translation of the verse is *the light of his face was horned*. As is well known there were medieval artists who drew Moses with horns in his head. The translation we have given *his face-image was blinding* can be derived from a variety of similar metaphors in English all based on the rules governing figures of speech.

Recall that concepts can be named by the way they *feel*. For example

\**hardship* comes from the word *hard* describing the feelings associated with hardship

Similarly, in English

\* *biting cold* describes the a cold situation by the feeling it creates a feeling similar to being bitten.

Hebrew employs a similar idea to describe cold:

\* *thorny* (tzi-nah) names the cold because it feels as if *thorns* were piercing your skin.

In English a very bright light, e.g. the sun during a July noon, is called a

\**blinding light* because a glaring sun often makes you feel like spontaneously closing your eyes (so you can't see and are blind).

Hebrew similarly names a blinding light by how it feels

\**horned light because when seeing it you feel as you have been gored*.

**Homily:** Rashi then discusses *why* Moses merited that his face was blinding. Rashi citing earlier authorities explains that this came from his intercession to understand God's ways. Other Rashi commentators similarly connect his *blinding* with his intercession on behalf of the Jewish people (which culminated in God revealing to him his methods of mercy).

**Ex34-30a** *The Jewish people saw that Moses face-image was blinding and were afraid to come near him.*

**Rashi Rule:** Parallelism

**Rashi Narrative:** Rashi contrasts

\* Ex24-10:11 At the revelation the Jews saw God and were able to continue their normal lives (eating and drinking)

\* Ex34-30 After the sin of the Golden Calf the Jews were afraid to even see Moses, God's prophet.

Rashi attributes the difference to the sin of the Golden calf which made them lose their innocence and pre-occupied them with fears.

I would add to the Rashi contrast, the experience of Adam and Eve in paradise: Before their sin they spoke with God freely while after their sin they were embarrassed and hid from God (Gn03-08)

**Ex34-31a** *Moses called to them; Aaron and the princes in the congregation returned and Moses spoke to them. Afterwards, the entire Jewish people came; Moses commanded them everything that God commanded him on Mount Sinai.*

**Rashi Rule:** Synonyms (Prepositions)

**Rashi Narrative:** Rashi explains that the following two phrases have the same meaning.

- \* prince in the congregation
- \* princes of the congregation

Even though this is obvious, this is the only place in the entire Bible where the phrase *princes in the congregation* is used and therefore Rashi had to assure us that it has the same meaning as *princes of the congregation*.

**Ex34-31b,32a** [The congregation was afraid to come to Moses because his face-image was blinding] *Moses called to them; Aaron and the princes in the congregation returned and Moses spoke to them. Afterwards, the entire Jewish people approached Moses commanded them everything that God commanded him on Mount Sinai.*

**Rashi Rule:** Parallelism

**Rashi Narrative.** There is a Rashi-Ramban controversy here. Ramban overlooked the fact that Rashi was making two separate comments from two separate textual cues; he erroneously thought that the two comments came from the same textual cue. To fully understand the controversy we first explain the verse and then show how while Rashi used two textual cues, if you use one textual cue, it can mislead the reader.

Recall that the congregation was afraid to approach Moses because his face image had become blinding. Ex34-31:32 indicates four stages as indicated by the underlined words

\*First: Moses spoke to Aaron and the princes. We are not told *what* he told them; given the

context, he probably told them that God had forgiven the sin of the golden calf and that a second set of ten-commandments were given to him.

\*Second: Something happened afterwards. Most reasonably, Aaron the princes returned to the congregation to explain what they had been told: That God had forgiven them and that a second set of ten commandments was given.

\* Third: Upon hearing that God had forgiven them, the Jewish people approached.

\* Fourth: Moses then told them (both the princes and the people) the contents of the ten commandments.

Notice that interpreting these verses, I interpret the *them* in *commanded them* to refer to both the Jewish people and the princes. To fully appreciate this interpretation of *them* consider the following two sentences:

\* Jim met his friends. They went to the movies.

\* Jim met his friends. They had just come from the movies.

In the first sentence, the plural *they* refers to both Jim and his friends while in the second sentence the plural *they* refers to Jim's friends and excludes Jim.

Using this example we see that the phrase *Moses commanded them* could either refer to the Jewish people excluding the princes *or* it could refer to both the Jewish people and the princes.

Let us think about it. Moses originally came down the mountain, without knowing his face was blinding. His intention was to teach the 10 commandments to the entire Jewish nation. But they were afraid to approach him because of his blinding face. When he called upon them only Aaron and the princes approached. So Moses first task was to calm them down and assure them that there was nothing to be afraid about since God had forgiven them.

There was no point to teach the elders the 10 commandments because Moses wanted to personally teach everyone. So Moses had to wait till the princes returned to their tribes, explained to them that God had forgiven them, upon which the Jewish people felt comfortable approaching Moses. *That* is when Moses began teaching the commandments.

All this is straightforward and consistent with textual cues. The above explanation is the explicit explanation of the Ramban. Because Rashi brings in a separate comments (not yet discussed), Rashi appeared to disagree with the Ramban. Rashi appeared to say that he first commanded the princes and then commanded the Jewish people. However, this appearance is contradicted both by the difference verbs used, *spoke*, *commanded*, as well as the cue *afterwards* connoting a calling off period.

This appearance of Rashi is also contradicted by the Rashi text. Rashi states *the text speaks in the present* by which he means that what Moses told the elders is simply a continuation of the preceding narrative of the past 2 chapters in which we are told that Moses interceded for the Jewish people and they were forgiven. Rashi felt that saying *the text speaks in the present* sufficed and it wasn't necessary to explicitly state the content of what he told as *God forgiving the people*.

But what is Rashi's second comment? What caused the confusion?

Rashi's second comment is based on a parallelistic comparison of several different introductions and conclusions to biblical chapters. Three good examples are

- \* Lv12-02 God spoke to Moses to speak to the Jews (this is the most common introduction)
- \* Nu30-02 Moses spoke to the princes
- \* Lv23-01 (God told Moses to speak to the Priests)--> Lv23-16 (God told Moses to speak to Aaron)--> Lv23-24 (The concluding verse: Moses spoke to Aaron, his children, and the Jewish people)

Based on these multiple verses, Rashi following the Talmud Eruvin 52, deduces the *lecture format* used in transmitting the Torah. It was not our traditional *professor to student* format but more resembled a *train the trainer* format:

- \* God taught Moses
- \* Moses taught Aaron
- \* Then Aaron's children were taught
- \* Then the nation princes
- \* Then the Jews taught each other.

(More details can be found in the Rashiomi posting at Nu30-02a).

Notice that this Rashi comment dealing with the *teaching format* differs from the first Rashi discussed above dealing with the Jewish people's fear of approaching Moses (and we follow the explicit the Ramban and the implicit Rashi that Moses did not teach the commandments to the elders but told them they were forgiven).

Ramban (and for that matter several Rashi commentators) apparently thought that the two comments were *both* derived from the sequence of talks to Moses in Nu34-31,32

- \* First Moses spoke to the elders
- \* Then afterwards Moses *commanded them* (=The Jewish people and excluding the elders).

But the way we have approached this both Ramban and Rashi would agree that Nu34-31,32 states:

- \* First Moses *spoke* to the princes and assured them that God had forgiven them
- \* The princes communicated this to the Jews who then, feeling relieved, approached Moses
- \* Moses then commanded them, both the elders and the Jewish people

Rashi then adds how the teaching format was: Moses->Aaron->Aaron's sons--> Princes-->Jewish people, a totally separate comment justified by separate verses.

# DATABASE ENTRIES

The Free Downloadable Excel based database is found at  
[http://www.Rashiyomi.com/The\\_Rashi\\_Database\\_Project.xls](http://www.Rashiyomi.com/The_Rashi_Database_Project.xls)

**VERSE:** Ex34-29a  
**TRANSLATION:** *When Moses went down from the mountain he did not know that his face-image had become blinding*  
**METHOD:** Paragraph Continuation  
**BRIEF EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-29a](#)

**VERSE:** Ex34-29b  
**TRANSLATION:** *When Moses went down from the mountain he did not know that his face-image had become blinding.*  
**METHOD:** Figures of Speech  
**BRIEF EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-29a](#)

**VERSE:** Ex34-30a  
**TRANSLATION:** *The Jewish people saw that Moses face-image was blinding and were afraid to come near him.*  
**METHOD:** Parallelism  
**BRIEF EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-29a](#)

**VERSE:** Ex34-31a  
**TRANSLATION:** *Moses called to them; Aaron and the princes in the congregation returned and Moses spoke to them. Afterwards, the entire Jewish people came; Moses commanded them everything that God commanded him on Mount Sinai.*  
**METHOD:** Synonyms (Prepositions)  
**BRIEF EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-29a](#)

**VERSE:** Ex34-31b  
**TRANSLATION:** *[The congregation was afraid to come to Moses because his face-image was blinding] Moses called to them; Aaron and the princes in the congregation returned and Moses spoke to them. Afterwards, the entire Jewish people approached Moses commanded them everything that God commanded him on Mount Sinai.*  
**METHOD:** Parallelism

**BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-29a](#)

**VERSE:** Ex34-32a

**TRANSLATION:** [The congregation was afraid to come to Moses because his face-image was blinding] *Moses called to them; Aaron and the princes in the congregation returned and Moses spoke to them. Afterwards, the entire Jewish people approached Moses commanded them everything that God commanded him on Mount Sinai.*

**METHOD:** Parallelism

**BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-29a](#)

**VERSE:** Ex28-34a

**TRANSLATION:** [The congregation was afraid to come to Moses because his face-image was blinding] *Moses called to them; Aaron and the princes in the congregation returned and Moses spoke to them. Afterwards, the entire Jewish people approached Moses commanded them everything that God commanded him on Mount Sinai.*

**METHOD:** Parallelism

**BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-29a](#)

**VERSE:** Ex34-27a

**TRANSLATION:** *God said to Moses, write down for yourself these words, because by these words I have made a contract with you and Israel*

**METHOD:** Pronoun Omissions

**BRIEF  
EXPLANATION:** [Ex34-27a](#)





