

# 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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MG=Modern Grammar with Applications to Rashi ([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: Gn18-15a, PART I

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

**MANUSCRIPTS:** This article answers the following questions:

- Does Rashi always give the reason for what he says?
- If not, what is the process for providing these justifications of Rashi comments if he himself did not explicitly provide them?
- What is the process justifying supplementation and clarification of Rashi comments not explicitly provided by Rashi.

An alternate formulation of these three questions is the following:

- When reading a Rashi text, including when reading Rashi manuscripts, what is the process justifying supplementing the Rashi text with reasons, clarifications, and modifications?

The vehicle by which this article answers these questions will be the 3 dozen Rashi comments on the Hebrew word *Ki*, *Caph-Yiud*, which indicates conjunctive connective words such as *because, if, that, when, perhaps, rather, except, and unless*. We present a carefully selected set of examples that naturally motivate our principles of justification.

A summary of the conclusions we reach is the following, and is built on work in Chapter 4 of my Doctoral Thesis, *The Dynamics of Peshat and Derash in Rashi, Chapter 4* [<http://www.Rashiiyomi.com/Rashibook.htm>].

### **SUMMARY OF SUGGESTED APPROACH TO RASHI COMMENTS (including those in**

**MANUSCRIPTS):** Based on examples, I formulate the following *principle of reading Rashi manuscripts and concepts*. Even with the best of manuscripts all the following hold:

- You cannot infer Rashi's intent from one Rashi comment
  - If Rashi is commenting on a word, you must look at *all* Rashi comments on that word
  - If Rashi is commenting on a conjugation, you must look at *all* Rashi comments on that conjugation
  - If Rashi is commenting on the reason for a commandment, you must look at *all* Rashi comments on that commandment

In other words, Rashi's point of view can only be obtained by looking at *all* Rashi comments together and applying this whole to *each* particular Rashi comment

The examples justifying this are found in *Example 1* below.

- Rashi may attempt to harmonize his translations with various midrashim in a manner that appears forced. In such a case I believe we can take Rashi's comment and reject that attempted harmonization. Very often this can be justified by translating the underlying biblical passage into English (*Example 2* illustrates this principle)
- Rashi may appear to provide an exhaustive list when in fact he only gives a partial list or a list that must be amended. Both explicit Rashi comments as well as English translations can justify this transition from the perception of an exhaustive list (*all* cases) to a good working rule of thumb covering most examples (*most* cases) (*Example 3* illustrates this point).
- Finally, Rashi may formulate something in the Hebrew of his time which may lack the precision present in other languages such as English. In such a case it is justified to clarify the Rashi comment with these added nuances. The section marked *Nuances* illustrates this point.

Prior to doing Examples 1,2,3, we start with a simple example. In all examples, the goal is to introduce a Rashi comment where we are more or less forced to deviate from what Rashi says on the surface.

**BEGINNING EXAMPLE:** Ex15-19a, if translated with the usual translation of *ki* as *because* reads

(3) *God will reign forever because (Ki) Pharaoh's army came on us in the sea and God drowned them in the sea and the Jews were able to escape.*

Rashi commenting on *because Pharaoh's army came* says the following:

(4) *Because Pharaoh's army came: When Pharaoh's army came.*

In other words, Rashi is translating (3) as follows:

(5) *God will reign forever [as shown] when Pharaoh's army came on us in the sea and God drowned him and the Jews were able to escape to the other side.*

Already emendations of Rashi have taken place. The lemma (beginning words) of the Rashi comment in (4) are only one phrase:

(6) *Because Pharaoh's army came.*

However, to better understand Rashi the entire previous verse has been cited as part of the lemma. That is, we emended the lemma to read as follows:

(7) *God will reign forever [as shown] when Pharaoh's army came*

To make the translation flow in good English the parenthetical phrase *as shown* is inserted.

To return to the main point of this illustration, Rashi nowhere gives principles of what he is doing. It is probably reasonable to infer that Rashi is indicating in (4) that *when* is one meaning of *Ki*. But he doesn't say so. Moreover, he is silent on the other three meanings.

In other words, if this is the only Rashi comment I read, I would not know of an underlying rule.

However, we find this underlying rule in several other Rashi comments perhaps the fullest being the Rashi comment on Gn18-15a. This verse deals with Sarah ridiculing the idea of what was prophetically

told her that she would give birth; Sarah said: *I am after menopause; will I then give birth?* God informs Abraham of this; Abraham and Sarah then have a dialogue. In this dialogue we underline the Rashi comments or translations which we have embedded in the English translation.

(8) Gn18-15 Sarah denied she was laughing because she was afraid; [Abraham however ] said, No! Rather you laughed.

Rashi besides explaining that the two underlined words are translations of the same Hebrew word *Ki*, adds as follows:

(9) *The word Ki has four nuances: if, perhaps, rather, and because.*

So the Rashi on Gn18-15a gives a full statement of the theory of *Ki*. This full statement is not repeated in every other of the 3 dozen Rashi comments on *Ki*. Returning to our example, the Rashi on Ex15-19a brought in items (3)-(6), must be supplemented with Rashi's own statement in (9) found in the Rashi comment on Gn18-15a. This justifies our seeing Ex15-19a as an application of the general theory presented in Gn18-15a to the particular case in Ex15-19a.

**MORE MEANINGS OF KI, Example 1:** After reading (9), the Rashi comment on Gn18-15a, we might think that we at least know Rashi's view: There are four meanings to *Ki*. However we can't be content to read one statement of theory. Perhaps there are others. Perhaps they appear to contradict (or supplement) this one comment.

In fact, there are four Rashi comments on the idiomatic phrase *ki al kayn* which has the word *ki* followed by *al kayn*. A typical occurrence occurs at Nu10-31c presenting the dialogue of Moses and his father in law Jethro. During this dialogue, triggered by Jethro's statement that he was returning home, Moses invites him to stay with the Jewish people. The following translation of the text embeds the Rashi comment.

(11) *And he [Moses] said, "Please don't leave us," on account of the fact that you are familiar with our journeys in the desert and can be for us a pair of eyes guiding us.*

Rashi's actual comment, says

(12) *Ki al kayn: On that you are familiar*

I have adjusted this to English by the translation on account of the fact that. The basic point of this example is that Gn18-15a (9) which states there are four meanings has to be modified in light of another Rashi comment. True, the meaning we have given on account of the fact that contains two of the four meanings: *account* means *because* and Rashi considers *that* like *if* (this is discussed below)

We also mention that the phrase *ki al kayn* is used when a verb immediately follows it: on account of the fact that you know our journeys.

Thus, we have amended Rashi's statement on Gn18-15 stated in item (9) that *Ki has four meanings: if, because, rather, that*. We are emending it as follows (in light of the explicit statement by Rashi (12))

(12.5) *Ki has four meanings: if, because, rather, that. If immediately following Ki there is a verb, then there is a 5<sup>th</sup> meaning using the phrase *ki al kayn*, (account of that).*

Slowly we are getting a glimpse of how emendation of Rashi (such as adding *ki al kayn*) as well as supplementation of Rashi (Such as adding this applies when a verb immediately follows, takes place.

We therefore review some more examples.

**MORE MEANINGS OF KI, Example 2:** Jacob was told he would not get food during the famine unless his son Benjamin went down to Egypt. He proceeds to give an argument to his sons, asking them why they revealed this. Gn43-07 states

(13) *The man[Joseph] asked us about ourselves and our family, “Is your father still alive? Do you have a brother” and we answered him according to his questions. Could we possibly have known that he would say to us to bring down Benjamin.*

Rashi comments consistent with the embedded underlined translation in (13):

(14) *Ki that he would say: That he will say. Ki can mean if and if can mean that. This then is one of the four meanings of Ki. Because this use of Ki is like the use of im (if) in the sentence “I will not eat until (ad im) I deliver my message.*

I know no explanation justifying that *if* and *that* (or for that matter *until*) have similar meanings. Rashi is clearly attempting to fit in the meaning *that* into the traditional four meanings. In other comments Rashi leaves out this attempted fitting. For example, in Moses’ petition not to destroy the Jewish people he begins his prayer

(15) [If you were to destroy them] Egypt would hear that you took the Jews out of Egypt (only to kill them in the desert).

Rashi is terse

(16) *Ki you took the Jews out of Egypt: This Ki means that: That you raised them out of Egypt.*

In (16) unlike in (14) there is no attempt by Rashi to classify this meaning of *that* as belonging to the four meanings that Rashi gave in (9). There is no attempt to say that *that* is like *if*.

What emerges from this example is that Gn18-15a with its theory that there are 4 meanings of Ki must be supplemented, based on Rashi’s own statements, that there are more than 4 meanings. For example, *Ki* can mean *that*; similarly, as part of phrases such *Ki al kayn*, *ki* can mean *on account of*.

This leads to the following emendation of the Rashi statement on Gn18-15a found in item (9) above: *The word Ki has four nuances: if, perhaps, rather, and because.*

(17) *Among the meanings of Ki there are the following four: if, perhaps, rather, and because*

In other words, it seems reasonable to interpret the Rashi comment “*there are four meaning*” as indicating

- There are *at least* four meanings vs.
- There are *only* four meanings and all other meanings fit into them.

**MORE MEANINGS OF KI, Example 3:** The preceding examples, amply justify the basic principle of manuscripts, we have to read all Rashi comments on a word, conjugation, or justification. We might hope, after reading all comments, that at least we would have a complete theory. The following verses show that Rashi omitted commentary on certain meanings of *ki*.

The idiomatic phrase *ki im* can mean *rather*, for example,

(17.5) Nu26-33 ZlafChad did not have sons, *rather* daughters.

*Ki im* can also mean *except*, for example

(18) Nu26-65 Because God said to them that they will die in the wilderness and none of them survived *except* Kalev and Joshua.

*Ki im* can also mean *unless*, for example:

(19) Gn32-27 “Let me go because dawn has come.” He responded, “I will not let you go *unless* you bless me.”

*Ki im* can even depart from its idiomatic meaning and be translated literally *because, if*. For example,

(20) Ex08-17 Let the Jews go. *Because if* you don’t let them go, behold, I will send on you a plague.

Rashi is silent in commenting on these verses. Now it is true that *except* and *unless* have nuances similar to *rather*.

- *Rather* contradicts the entirety of something said and offers an alternative
- *Except* does not contradict the entirety of what is said, but indicates *some exceptions*.
- *Unless* contradicts the future continuation of an activity contingent on something being done.

So, while it is true that we could fit in *except* and *unless* into the nuances of *Ki*, meaning *rather*, this is not sufficient. The more correct statement is

(21) *Ki* has a meaning of *rather* which can manifest itself in meaning as *rather, except, or unless*.

So, in this case we are not contradicting or denying what Rashi says, that *ki* has four nuances but we are supplementing it in two ways.

- We are re-translating the Rashi statement based on the Talmudic-Midrashic statement that *Ki has four meanings* to more precisely mean *Ki has four nuances of meaning*
- We are then concretizing the manifestation of the nuances by giving specific translations (in this case *rather, except, unless*).

In making this emendation, we are assisted by English translations.

**NUANCES:** The preceding example leads to exploration of other examples where a single nuance of meaning gives rise to different translations. This can be seen with the translation of *ki* as having a nuance of *perhaps*. Compare the following verses (on all of which Rashi comments).

- Ex23-05 *Perhaps* you will see the donkey of a person you hate overwhelmed by its burden, and you will abstain from helping him; [No] do help him.
- Dt07-17a *Possibly* you will think, “These nations [Canaan] are bigger and more powerful than me; how can I conquer them;” [No!] Don’t be afraid of them because will deliver them to you.
- Dt20-19c When you besiege a city for a while in order to fight it and grab it, do not destroy its trees to make weapons because you eat from these trees. *Would* you [make] people like the trees to come into a self-afflicted siege [to motivate soldiers to quicker action].

In these examples the doubt, the nuance of *perhaps*, is translated as *perhaps, possibly, would* each with different nuances. For example, *perhaps* is more definite than *possibly* corresponding to the natural tendency not to want to help those you hate; contrastively, *possibly* connotes something that may

happen without a commitment to it happening. *Would* is a conditional auxiliary verb used to indicate possibility that is not expected.

A word about Dt20-19c: Recall that in some armies, soldiers are asked to engage in self-sacrifice to prove determination and readiness to fight. The most famous example is the request of cutting of fingers during the Bar Kochba rebellion (Jerusalem Talmud, Taanith 4:5 (24b)).

In these examples also, we see that a nuance of meaning can manifest itself in a variety of ways.

**CONCLUSION:** We reiterate our position on how to read Rashi comments in general whether they are found in ordinary texts or manuscripts. Note: Gelles in his thesis on Rashi explicitly states that going to manuscripts (vs. current texts) don't really help in arriving at the underlying theory of Rashi.

- Even if you have the best manuscript, you cannot ascertain Rashi's understanding of a particular verse by reading exclusively his comment on that verse.
- Rather, you must read all Rashi comments on that word, conjugation, or justification.
- The collection of comments typically points to a basic theory as well as the interpretation of what Rashi said.
- Once the issue is known, supplemental cases, not found in Rashi may be added.
- The technique of skillful English translations helps to elucidate Rashi. Rashi's own comments also help in supplementation.

## PART II: 36 EXAMPLES

Using the theory developed in Part I, we now list 36 examples of Rashi comments on *Ki* (including several comments on *ad im*). We group these according to 10 translations. Where possible we regroup these according to the 4 categories Rashi indicates in one of his comments though as we have seen above *Ki* also means (according to Rashi), *that*, and *when*. At the end we report on a brilliant hyper-modern grammatical insight of Malbim which explains a long-standing anomaly of *im* meaning *when*. The results are summarized in the following table.

Main Rashi Category	English Translation	Examples
<b>Because</b>	Because	**Gn18-15a she said I didn't do it BECAUSE she was afraid
		*Gn41-49a they will gather so much grain until they will stop counting BECAUSE there are no words for such great quantities
		Gn50-19 Don't be afraid of my retaliation BECAUSE "am I in place of God?"
		*Dt32-36a Vengeance, when they become weak, is mine BECAUSE their fall is imminent.
		*Dt07-07c It couldn't be because of your outnumbering other nations that God desires you BECAUSE you are the smallest of all the nations.

	On account of	<i>Gn18-04g Eat first and then continue your journey ON ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT you came to the shade of my abode</i>
		<i>Gn33-08c Accept my gift because ON ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT I see your face as the face of an angel and you should accept it</i>
		<i>Nu10-31c Please stay with us ON ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT you are familiar with our entire journey</i>
		<i>Nu14-43a Don't go up to the mountain and get defeated by enemy ON ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT you deviated from God</i>
<b>Rather</b>	Rather	<i>Gn18-15 No! I didn't do it. He replied no, RATHER you did do it</i>
		<i>Gn18-26b Please come to my house: NO RATHER we will stay in the street</i>
		<i>Gn31-16a (Paraphrased) You are not stealing from him, RATHER the money you made belongs to us and our children</i>
		<i>Dt15-08a Don't be stingy, RATHER open your hand to him</i>
		<i>Dt09-05a not because of your righteousness are you conquering these nations; RATHER because of their wickedness</i>
		<i>*Dt07-8a You are not inheriting this land because of your large population; RATHER because of God's love to you and the oath...</i>
	Except	<i>Gn40-14 in 3 days you will get your job back of chief butler and things will be normal EXCEPT for your memory of being with me here: when things become good for you please do me a kindness and get me out of here</i>
	Until (ad im)	<i>Gn24-19a She drew water for them UNTIL their thirst was quenched]</i>
		<i>Gn24-33a I will not eat UNTIL I say my message</i>
		<i>Gn28-15b I will not desert you UNTIL I do for you what I promised</i>
<b>Perhaps</b>	Perhaps	<i>*Ex20-22c Do not build altar from hewn stone; PERHAPS you might cut with iron and desecrate it.</i>
		<i>*Ex23-05 PERHAPS you will see your friend's animal collapsing because of its burden you abstain from helping him? [Rather] Help him.</i>
	If perhaps	<i>Gn03-01c even IF PERHAPS God said don't eat from any tree</i>
		<i>*Nu05-20a And you: IF PERHAPS you have behaved foolishly</i>
		<i>*Ex23-33a ....Do not allow these nations to remain here lest they lead you to sin IF PERHAPS you worship their gods leading to them becoming an obstacle</i>
		<i>*Dt07-17a IF PERHAPS you think these nations outnumber and</i>

		<i>out power you how can I conquer them: Don't fear then</i>
	Would	<i>Dt20-19c Don't destroy the fruit trees because you eat from them and they should not be destroyed. WOULD you make people like the trees to be under siege</i>
<b>That</b>	That	<i>Nu11-12a Did I bear in pregnancy this nation; did I give birth to them; THAT you should tell me carry them</i>
		<i>*Nu14-13b Egypt will hear THAT you raised this people from Egypt</i>
		<i>*Nu20-29a The entire nation saw THAT Aaron died</i>
		<i>**Gn43-07d He asked us where we were born and our family Could we now THAT HE would ask us to bring down Benjamin</i>
		<i>Gn31-52a This heap is a witness THAT(im) I will not violate you, and you will not violate me</i>
<b>When</b>	When	<i>Ex15-19 God will reign forever (as shown) WHEN [ki] Paroh army came and god drowned them</i>
		<i>*Dt32-03a May my words sprinkle like due WHEN I call the name of God give honor...</i>
		<i>Nu15-02a WHEN you come to the land and offer an offering</i>
<b>When there is a chapter with several paragraphs</b>	Rules for a chapter with several paragraphs each of which is one possibility (Opening paragraph uses KI which introduces the cases while later paragraphs use IM which can mean <i>when</i> ) See notes below	<i>Lv01-02 PARAGRAPH KI: These are CASES of a soul offering a plant offering: *Lv02-14 WHEN (im) you offer an omer [Cite Malbim]</i>

We explain the very last row of the above Table. The explanation is due to MALBIM. MALBIM points out that when a *chapter* has a list of possibilities, the chapter will *open* with *ki* and then *each paragraph of possibility* begins with *im*. In this case *im* does not mean *if* but can also mean *when*, or *in the event of*. Lv01 is a good example

**OPENING SENTENCE: WHEN (KI) a person offers an offering...from cattle and herds..**

1 <sup>st</sup> CASE:	IF (IM) it is an elevation offering from cattle
2 <sup>nd</sup> case	IF (IM) it is an elevation offering from the penned animals
3 <sup>rd</sup> case	IF (IM) it is an elevation offering from birds

Lv02 shows an example with a chapter within a chapter (hence two *KIs*).

OPENING SENTENCE:	WHEN (KI) a soul offers a plant offering
1 <sup>st</sup> PARAGRAPH:	WHEN (KI) you offer OVEN BAKED IF it is cooked on a griddle IF it is cooked in a POT IF it is the FIRST FRUIT Minchah

This novelty of the Malbim settles the problem of why the first fruit offering begins with IF. That particular IF means WHEN and doesn't necessarily indicate IF in the sense of uncertainty.

### 10 ORGANS OF THE RASHI ANATOMY: (See above for list of 36 Rashis)

Organ	Brief Explanation	Rashi	My emendations
Lemma,	Beginning words, what is Rashi commenting on	<i>Ki</i> <i>Im</i> <i>Sometimes with the word following it</i>	I have added the <i>gathering</i> of all such Rashis. The unified set of Rashis shows more than any individual Rashi. See the essay. <i>Ki</i> turns out to have 10 distinct English translations (not 4)
Number of Rashi comments		1	None
4 Exegetical Pillars	How is Rashi deriving this comment	<i>Grammar-Meaning-Connective words</i>	None (I point out that only some of the 36 Rashis contain the "theory" while others just contain the application)
Form	How does Rashi express his idea	Explicit	None
Reasonable speculations		<i>None</i>	None
Consequences	Lessons learned	None	None
Language Nuances	Recognized by literate speakers	None explicit	By using English translations we obtain further nuances that are not always visible in Hebrew. For example <i>rather</i> can mean <i>except</i> or <i>until</i> .

			Similarly <i>perhaps</i> can mean <i>if perhaps, possibly etc.</i>
Simpleton explanations		None	None
Homily	Explanations taken out of context of verse	<p>Rashi engages in twice in Homily</p> <p>#1) Rashi acknowledge that <i>that</i> is a meaning of <i>ki</i> but tries to <i>fit in</i> this meaning of <i>that</i> in the meaning of <i>if</i></p> <p>#2) Rashi cites the aramaic translation which translates Nu20-29a <i>the nation was afraid because Aaron died</i> (and his merit no longer stands for them</p>	<p>#1) I show that there are many more meaning to <i>ki</i> than the 4 mentioned by the Talmud (For example, <i>except, until, on account of</i>). I therefore suggest that this Rashi comment reflects an attempt which must be rejected (and which Rashi did not consider final)</p> <p>#2) Rashi himself critiques the Aramaic translation. I do not think he believed in it. Rather, he was explaining that the Aramaic translation came from an attempt to translate <i>ki</i> as <i>because</i>. Rashi clearly rejects that <i>ki</i> always means <i>because</i> and hence I argue he did not accept the Aramaic translation.</p>
Moral exhortation		None	None