

The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis on BeHa'alothecha-Shelach

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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. This year, 2012-2013, we are concentrating on the **grammar** rule. We acknowledge benefitting from Dr. Isseroff's book, *An Introduction to Rashi's Grammatical Explanations in the Book of Genesis*, 1985, Published by the Torah Education Department of World Zionist Organization, MP Press Inc, ISBN 965-222-049-3. For a full lightning statement of all Rashi rules see the Appendix.

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Indirect Objects

Daily Rashi: Sunday-Monday May 26-27 2013

According to Rashi, indirect objects in Hebrew, always indicate *purpose* or *dedictation*. Here are a few examples

- ***Daily Rashi: Sunday May 26 2013***
- Nu13-02 (God speaking to Moses) *Send at your discretion (if you want to) people to spy out Canaan*

• ***Daily Rashi: Monday May 27 2013***

- Nu10-02 *Make for yourself personal silver trumpets: ... you can use them to gather the nation...*
- Ex25-02 *Speak to the Jews and let them dedicate to me Temple donations*
- Lv27-30d *All produce-tithes (whether) from seeds or from fruits, ... is dedicated to God [Rashi mentions one consequence of this: Since the tithe is dedicated to God, it must be consumed under conditions of sanctity in Jerusalem]*

As we go through the yearly cycle we will have the opportunity to see other examples of this approach of Rashi to indirect objects. There are 1-2 dozen such Rashis on Chumash.

Comment. Rashi, on Nu10-02 gives 3 possible interpretations of *personal*: People will trumpet before you (Moses) as a sign of honor

The position on our email group, is that when Rashi gives three such interpretations, he is pointing to the underlying unity: *personal* trumpets. All Rashi wanted to comment is that they are personal. How they are personal - exclusive use, funding, purpose - is not known. Thus Rashi is not supporting multiple interpretations but rather given the true underlying unity. This is an important point in studying Rashi.

Formatting - Crossout

Daily Rashi Wednesday May 28, 2013

English allows the use of non-word *formatting* to indicate meaning. Examples include:

- bold
- italics
- underline
- bullets
- paragraphing
- strikeout

In my article, Biblical Formatting, I show that the biblical text also has formatting techniques with

- the same goal as English formatting, but with

- different forms.

Today we focus on the formatting technique of ~~strikeout~~.

- In English, ~~strikeout~~ is indicated by stricken text
- In Hebrew, ~~strikeout~~ is indicated by dots above the text.

Although the form - dots, ~~strikeout~~ - differs, the meaning remains the same.

- In English, ~~strikeout~~ indicates that while the stricken word should be in the sentence it isn't
- In Hebrew, dots above the word also indicate that while the word should be in the sentence it isn't.

In translating a biblical sentence with ~~strikeout~~ into English we actually use the English ~~strikeout~~ formatting to emphasize the meaning of the ~~strikeout~~.

There are 10 examples of dots, or ~~strikeout~~, in biblical Hebrew.

Example 2: Nu09-10a

Background: The Bible discusses the right of people who were unable to observe the Passover to observe Passover 2, a month later.

Biblical text: *Speak to the children of Israel as follows: When a person is ritually impure or on a ~~distant~~-rode, either you or future generations, then that person will hymake a Passover to God, on the second [Hebrew] month on the 14th*

Rashi: The word ~~distant~~ is struck-out. The person must observe Passover 2,

- Certainly if a person is on a distant rode
- But even if the rode is not strictly distant but he couldn't get to the Temple on time on Passover 1.

Comment: The law is that we measure how long it would take a person to stroll to Jerusalem *at a leisurely pace*. That distance is *near* while anything further is *far*. Notice the elegant beauty that the ~~distance~~ gives rise to the legal formulation of *distance at a leisurely pace*.

Example 1: Nu03-39a

Background: The bible is discussing the census that Moses took of the various tribes and the Levites in the wilderness.

Biblical text: *These are the census figures of Moses and ~~Aaron~~...*

Rashi: Technically, Aaron should be censused with the Levites. So

- We expect Aaron to be included
- But he wasn't censused with them because he was a Levite; consequently he is stricken out which in Hebrew is indicated by dots.

Comment: The above analysis bears strong and new ideas on the idea of *Peshat*, the simple meaning of the text. Although the Rashi commentary is based on inuendo and non-explicit verbal meaning, it nevertheless is *Peshat*. Why? Because the dots correspond to strikeout and strikeout in English is part and parcel of the simple meaning of the text.

Plural vs. Singular

Daily Rashi Wednesday-Thursday 5-29:30-13

The first example in today's posting uses both the *grammatical* rashi method which we have been studying this year as well as the *database* method which we will study in a future year. The second reference gives us an interesting insight to feminist issues.

Daily Rashi Wednesday May 29, 2013

Example 1: Nu13-21:23

Background: God had told Moses to send spies to look over Israel before its conquests from the Canaanites. Moses sent spies and gave them orders. The bible records what they did.

Biblical text:

- They went up, and
- They searched the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, as men come to Hamath.
- They ascended by the south, and
- He came to Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the sons of Anak, were. Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.
- They came to the brook of Eshkol, and

- They cut down from there a branch with one cluster of grapes, and
- They bore it between two on a pole; and from the pomegranates, and the figs.

Rashi comment: Notice how all sentences begin with the plural *they* while one sentence begins with the singular *he*. The blatant anomaly is indicative of author support. Only one of the spies came to Hebron, the well-known burial place of the Patriarchs.

We are not told anything else such as who this person was or why he came there. However, given the context of the spy story it is very reasonable that Calev came to pray for the spiritual strength to disagree with the other spies who slandered God and said he couldn't keep his promise to bring the Jews to Canaan and overpower them.

Comment. Notice how we separated this Rashi into

- a grammatical-database rule
- an argument of reasonableness

We believe this two fold approach to Rashi is the proper approach for understanding many Rashis. It was first put forth in my article on Rashi cited below in the reference section. I call it the *principle of stages*. The idea is to explain Rashi in two stages, the first rule-based and the second hunch-based. This brings back a certain degree of objectivity into what would otherwise be subjective Rashi.

Daily Rashi Thursday May 30 2013

Example 2: Nu12-01

Background. Moses had separated from his wife because of his constant call to prophesy. Aaron and Miryam, his siblings, decided to try and get them back together.

Biblical text. *She spoke, Miryam and Aaron, about Moses, concerning the Ethiopian wife that he had married for [indeed] he had married her.*

Rashi. Notice the

- singular predicate - *she spoke* -
- with the plural subject, *Miryam and Aaron*.

The grammatical rule is as follows

- A plural subject requires a plural predicate

- A plural subject with a single predicate is used to indicate that only one of the subjects instigated the action while the other subject tagged along.

Applying this to Nu12-01 we see that

- although Aaron and Miryam both knew about the separation of Moses and his wife
- only Miryam instigated a get-back-together plan which required Aaron's help (For this reason it was Miryam that was punished for slandering Moses, not Aaron)

Acknowledgement. This principle was enunciated by my teacher of Rashi, the Rav, Rabbi Joseph Baer Soloveitchick, who gave several other examples of it. It is also discussed in my article on Rashi cited below in the reference section. In that article I point to the temptation to interpret this Rashi in an anti-feminist manner: *Since a woman is listed first she must have started the conversation.* Not so! The inference is based on a sound grammatical rule having nothing to do with current politics.

References

Russell Jay Hendel, "*Peshat and Derash: A New Intuitive and Analytic Approach,*" **Tradition** Vol 18#4, pp 327-342, 1980

APPENDIX

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 (Honymys)** 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 dont 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) (NuXX-XX) 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