The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis For Parshat ChuKaTh
Vol 23#23 - Adapted from **Rashi-is-Simple**
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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.

The most frequent questions I receive about the Daily Newsletter are the following.
- *What do the classical commentators on Rashi say about his reasons?*
- *If they say such and such what are you adding?*
If they don't say what you say, why are you saying it?
So the next year, or perhaps more, will be devoted to citing Rashi commentators and explaining how the methods of the Newsletter sharpen and crystallize them. We will be citing mostly from the 4-6 classical Rashi commentators: Sifsay Chachamin, Gur Aryeh, Mizrachi, and Chizkuni. We will occasionally add insights of Rav Hirsch and Malbim.

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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- *We deal with one verse today; we show how a literal interpretation of Rashi leads to many problems. We show a straightforward interpretation of Rashi that involves almost no twists of words but avoids the problems raised by the Rashi commentators.*

Grammar *Daily Rashi* Monday -Thur Jun 20th, 2015 Nu21-30a,b,c,d

Biblical Text: Nu21-30a,b,c,d

[Note: The verse is a poetic verse describing the conquest of Moab by the Jews. We deviate from our traditional format today. We translate the verse three times corresponding to three approaches. For each approach we list comments using footnotes and indicate whether the source was Rashi, our Newsletter or the Rashi commentators.]

Approach I, Approach of the Rashi Newsletter:

- We will kingdomize[1] them[2] [destroy their kingdom]

  o Lost is Cheshbon [their capital]

  o Departed[3] is Devon [a key city]

- We will destroy[4] them[4] until Nofax which borders on Maydvah

Notes:
1) This word is the tough word in the verse (Other explanations are agreed to by everyone)

i. To *kingdomize* means to destroy an enemy kingdom; similar usage may be found in *to dust* which means to remove dust.

ii. The Hebrew word used, *Nir,* originally means *field,* and as Rashi points out can mean *kingdom* (the king affectionately looks at his kingdom and calls it *my field*) (See **1K11:36** for the use of *Nir* in the sense of kingdom)

iii. [Not in Rashi] The initial letter of the verse is a *vav* vowelized with a *patach.* This is known as the *conversive vav* since it indicates a future tense when prefixed to a verb conjugated in the past. I would argue that this *vav* with its punctuation proves that the word *VaNiram* must be interpreted as a verb.

iv. The question then becomes how we transit from the *noun,* kingdom, which Rashi explains is the meaning of *Nir,* to a *verb*. I would use the grammatical technique of *denominatives*. A denominative simply refers to the ability of a noun to become a verb. For example the English word *dust* is a noun. However the English word *to dust* is a verb meaning to *remove the dust.* There are other forms to denominatives such *to hammar* indicating *usage of a hammar* or *to flower* indicating *creation of the noun (flower).* So I think we must translate *VaNiram* as meaning *let us destroy their kingdom* or in analogy with *to dust* lest us *kingdomize them.*

v. Summary:

   a. Rashi explains that the word *Nir* can mean kingdom

   b. Rashi omits mentioning that the Vav with vowelization *patach,* (Va) indicates a conversive vav and hence requires that *Nir* is to be interpreted as a verb. My opinion is that Rashi left this out because it was obvious and did not need commentary

   c. Combining a) and b) and using the technique of the denominative, we interpret *VaNiram* to mean *we will kingodmize* (destroy their kingdom) them

2) Rashi commentator, **Mizrachi**, explains that the terminal Mem in the Hebrew *VaNiraM* is a pronominal suffix. In other words

   i. Mems in verbs could indicate a root letter or

   ii. If the mem is terminal it could indicate the direct object of the verb (Verb+M➔Do the activity to *them*) The terminal mem indicates the

recipient of the activity

3) Rashi here bases himself on the Aramaic translation. The word *ad* normally means *until.* In fact in the 2nd half of the verse that is what it means. However as the Rashi Commenator **Gur Aryeh** points out, the 2nd half of the verse already has a *destroy until* (*We will destroy them until Nofax*). It wouldnøt be stylistically accurate to have two *destroy untils* in the same verse. Hence, argues the **Gur Aryeh**, Rashi interpreted the first *ad* not as meaning *until* but as meaning *departed.*

3) Again grammar is used here. The Rashi commentators all explain that the letter *shin* has a *dagesh* in it. This *dagesh* (a dot in modern notation) indicates a missing root letter (and requires pronunciation with a liason - *va – nas-shim* vs. *va-na-shim).* Hence the root would be *shim-mem-mem,* the Hebrew root for destruction.

4) Rashi explains that the *mem* terminating the word *vanashiM* is not a root letter but a pronoun suffix. In Hebrew you indicate an object (we will destroy *them*) not with a word (*them*) but with a suffix letter (Mem). So *vanasshiM* means *we will destroy them.*

Approach II, approach of some modern scholars.

- We will shoot[1] them[2] down

    o Lost is Cheshbon [their capital]

    o Departed[3] is Devon [a key city]

- We will destroy[4] them[4] until Nofax which borders on Maydvah

1) As I mentioned the major interpretive problem with the verse is the mysterious word *VaNiRam.* Some modern scholars take this word from the biblical root *yud-resh-hey* to shoot. So they would translate *VaNiram* as meaning *we will shoot them (down).* The trouble with this interpretation is that the proper conjugation should be *vaniraym,* a different spelling. This does happen in biblical Hebrew but we try and avoid it if we can

The other footnotes have been explained in **approach I.**

Approach III, approach of Rashi commentators Mizrachi, Sifsay Chachamim

- As for their kingdom[1]:

  o Lost is Cheshbon [their capital] [from their kingdom]

  o Departed[2] is Devon [a key city] [from their ki.ngdom]

- We will destroy[3] them[4] until Nofax which borders on Maydvah

1) The Aramaic translation, translates *VaNiRam* to mean *their kingdom*. Since Rashi explicitly mentions **1K11:36** where *Nir* is the noun, kingdom, and since Rashi does not mention that the word is to be treated as a verb, the Rashi commentators **Mizrachi** and **Sifsay Chachamim** assume that Rashi interpreted *VaNiRam* as a noun. We have already indicated that this would contradict the *prefix conversive vav (with patach) which exclusively refers to verbs.* These Rashi commentators interpret the opening word as a nominal phrase: *Their kingdom.*

   The remainder of the first half of the verse *lost is cheshbon departed is devon* (or alternatively *lost is cheshbon until devon*), this remainder is a complete sentence and does not need the extra nominal phrase *their kingdom.* Hence the Rashi commentators translate the nominal phrase as *introductory.* To support this, they note that Rashi himself in explaining the verse translates *their kingdom is lost, cheshbon is lost* connecting the two verbs. The **Mizrachi** and **Sifsay Chachamim** also see this as a motivating factor for Rashi to interpret *ad* as meaning *departed* instead of *until.* In this way the first half of the verse opens up with *"Their kingdom´* and then has two bullets: *Lost is Cheshbon, Departed is Devon.*

The suggested translation would be perfectly valid if the verse read *veniram* instead of *vaniram.* The other footnotes were explained in **Approach I.**

Comment: Let us examine, *relative to what Rashi actually says,* the difference

between the approach of the Rashi Newsletter and the Rashi commentators

- Rashi himself says that the Hebrew word *Nir has nuances of kingdom* Rashi cites **1K11:36** where Nir actually means kingdom.

- So the Rashi commentators view Rashi as saying that *Nir <u>does</u>* mean kingdom and they interpret Rashi as saying that this word is a noun. They then have to deal with the dangling noun at the beginning of the verse and arrive at the solution we presented above

- But Rashi does not literally say that *Nir means kingdom.* Rashi says that *Nir has the <u>nunaces</u> of Kingdom* (<u>*leshon*</u> *malcuth*). Thus the literal reading of Rashi is open to interpretation as a verb since a verb (destroy the kingdom) would be consistent with Rashi∅s *nir has nuances of kingdom*

As can be seen the Rashi Newsletter approach is as consistent with the original Rashi language as the Rashi commentators.

<u>Comment:</u> All three approaches have problems which we now list. This (having problems) is common in poetical passages where authors invent strange conjugations without precedent (So it is hard to know what is intended)

- <u>Modern commentators</u>: They interpret *we will shoot them down.* They problem with this is that it would require *VaNiraym*

- <u>Rashi commentators</u>: They interpret *Niram* as a noun header: Their kingdom: *Lost is cheschon, departed is devon.* The problem with this is the prefix conversive vav (*VA Niram*) which always indicates a verb.

- <u>Rashi Newsletter approach</u>: We interpret using a denominative *We will kingdomize them.* The problem with this approach is the conjugation. Granted Rashi is coining a new verb *Nir* but if it followed grammatical conjugation it would have to say *VaNeNiraym.*

So, as often happens with poetical passages we are left with the sense of the verse and a variety of approaches no one of which is perfect. Each approach can be redeemed if we assume a non-standard conjugation is used.

APPENDIX

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES / THE 30 RASHI RULES

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NOTE ON COPYRIGHTS:

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I-REFERENCE: Dt26-05d *We went down to Egypt with <u>a few people</u>* explained by Gn46-27: *with <u>70</u> people*
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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 (Metonomy) (**Lv02-11a) *Don't offer ...any <u>honey</u> as sacrifices* RASHI: *honey* includes any <u>sweet fruit juice</u>
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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)
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IV-PARALLELISM: (Ex20-04) Dont **POSSESS** the gods of others Dont **MAKE** idols RASHI: So both **POSSESSion** & **MAKING** of idols are prohibited
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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.
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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
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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 - Pharoh 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
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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
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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.
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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