The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis in TaZRiAH MeTzoRaH
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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 the presence of Jewish Law in verses and Rashi.

This week we follow Rashi who presents the symbolic interpretation of Leprosy purification. We will see in this purification procedure all laws and guidances on how to cure people with bad personality traits.

I will attempt to send out the Parshah over a week in advance.

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.

Reference, Database, Symbolism *Daily Rashi* Lv14-04b,c,d,f Apr 19-Apr 22, 2018

Rashi comments on the *symbolic* meaning of the Leper (Metzorah) purification procedure. Many people are resistant to symbolic explanations. For example, they don't consider them objective the same way they would consider grammar objective. Of course, we do have two rules: The Rashi Grammar method and the Rashi Symbolism method. In presenting today's Rashis, I want to focus on why people get turned off by symbolism. So I will present it in a color-coded question and answer format. My goal is to enable you to appreciate that symbolic interpretations are not very different than grammatical interpretations.

Student: *Why do you call symbolism objective. Can't you say whatever you want? I am of course interested in Rashi's opinion but isn't that all it is. There is nothing objective about it.*

Rashi Newsletter: *What is true is that symbolism is not algorithmic. You can program a computer to conjugate grammatical forms but you can't program a computer to interpret symbolically. However, that does not mean that the interpretation is not rule-based nor does it contradict that it is the intended meaning of the text.*

Student: *How can you say that? Isn't it true that every commentator has their own symbolic interpretation?*

Rashi Newsletter: *In this particular case (leprosy) the answer is, "No." All commentators without exception interpret leprosy as dealing with bad personality traits. It is true that some commentators will emphasize slander, some will emphasize arrogance, some will emphasize lack of understanding and judgement of others but everyone agrees that leprosy corresponds to the general category of bad personality traits. In any particular situation you can emphasize one of these traits but the general category is agreed on.*

Student: *Even if everyone agrees on it, there is no basis for it. It is based on a word play of Metzorah = Motzih Rah (leprosy = fabricating bad things).*

Rashi Newsletter*: Incorrect! The word play is just a memory device. The fact that leprosy symbolizes bad personality traits comes from a biblical paragraph with two sentences* (**Dt24-09,08**)*: i) Remember what God did to Miriam, ii) Be very careful about leprosy. Miriam, you recall, was punished with leprosy for speaking improperly about Moses. There is an emphasis on slander but as the chapter involved shows (Nu 12) there were personality comparisons* (**Nu12-02**) *("They said: Did God just speak to Moses? Doesn't he speak to us")? Again, we have the idea that leprosy is connected with the Miriam story and the Miriam story represents an entire complex of bad personality traits which manifested itself (or concluded) with bad talk. Here Rashi uses the Reference Method, not a play on words which is just a mnemonic.*

Student: *But even if there is a basis for one interpretation (so it does look objective) why should I study this. If I have a bad personality trait I would go to a therapist.*

Rashi Newsletter: *Therapist? What is their batting average? How often do they cure people? Rather, they take your money to listen to your problems and offer occasionally an insight. They aren't interested in curing you in a month because they want the copays to be steady. Instead they talk about how you are working through your problem and "making progress."*

Other approaches might use drugs. If your young child has bad personality traits – screams, insults, and says bad things about people – the therapist might just shut him up with say Ritalin without attempting to cure. The goal might be removal of your embarrassment and annoyance. There would be no goal to cure.

Finally, there are some modern therapy schools that aim to cure. But they just imitate what is in the Torah. Why pay someone when your Rabbi and circle of friends can do a better job.

Student: *The therapy is in the Torah? Where? I never heard of this.*

Rashi Newsletter: *Yes you did. For example Rashi mentions that Cedars are lofty trees corresponding to arrogance while hyssops are lowly grass corresponding to low society people. Rashi similarly emphasizes that the worm corresponds to low social strata. The symbolism emphasizes learning humility.*

Student: *There you go again: Is that objective or is it something that some Rabbi wants to tell us and attaches to the text.*

Rashi Newsletter: *It is quite objective. You are asking a good question, "What is your methodology?" Fortunately, these days you can quickly get a listing of every place in the Bible where cedars are mentioned. You can actually see that cedars correspond to aristocrats and powerful people. It was a way of talking not something you had to think about. Take a look for example at 2Kings14-08:10 and Psalms 29 (e.g. Psalms 29:05) where cedars are used matter-of-factly to describe high society, aristocratic, powerful people. It is worthwhile to review a dump of all places where cedar occurs in the bible and see that this symbol is objective.*

In passing, it was part of the greatness of Rabbi Hirsch to advocate such use of database inquiries (the <u>Rashi Database method</u>*) to objectively define symbolic meaning.*

Student: *Hirsch was objective?*

Rashi newsletter: *He advocated use of* <u>Database inquiry methods</u> *which is the golden standard for interpretation even among secular bible scholars.*

Of course Rav Hirsch speaks in flowery language. But you shouldn't hold that against him. His methodology was quite sound.

Student: *Are there other examples where Rav Hirsch uses the Database method*

Rashi Newsletter: *Yes with birds. Rashi simply says that birds speak because they chirp a lot. Rav Hirsch does not say anything here on Metzorah. But throughout his commentaries (e.g. Lev 1:14-17 and various Psalms where birds are used) not to mention the covenant of cuts (Gen 15:09-10) Rav Hirsch does a* <u>Database method</u> *inquiry of what birds are used to symbolize in the Bible. It would do you good to replicate this analysis which as I indicated can be done quickly today with computers.*

Rav Hirsch explains that birds are animals without any territory who escape danger by their power of flight. Unlike other animals, which stake out territory and defend them, the birds have no territory; they rather escape attack by flying away. Hence, among other things because they are territoryally poor, the poor are represented in offerings by birds.

Rav Hirsch does not apply this to leprosy but the idea seems to be that people with bad personality traits have them because they have no territory. They resemble wild field birds. Think about it, if you do not belong to a group, then you can chirp and complain a lot because you will be thrown out anyway. Thus

the bird symbolizes lack of belonging which is the root of a complaining personality and bad traits.

<u>Student</u>: *Now you are making up your own commentaries and deviating from Rashi. This is what I said to being with. There is no objectivity.*

<u>Rashi Newsletter</u>: *I am not making anything up. I am filling in gaps. The objectivity comes from the <u>Database method</u> which says that birds do not belong to any territory. Rashi seeks to emphasize an additional attribute of birds, that they chirp a lot. I am tying Rashi's comment to the basic symbolism of birds in the bible: Birds chirp because they don't belong anyplace. I am not differing from Rashi but supplementing him. And I am supplementing him not with my own words but with the results of a Database inquiry.*

<u>Student</u>: *So what is the cure then? Not belonging has nothing to do with arrogance or being low level.*

<u>Rashi Newsletter</u>: *Good point. For some reason, Rashi interprets the cedar-hyssop but not the worm-dyed-wool. It is not hard to interpret this and the interpretation fits in to what we have been talking about. Wool comes from sheep an animal with a well-known symbolism throughout the bible. Sheep symbolize the social creature, the creature that has a community in which (s)he mingles and has territory on which (s)he grazes. This is the exact opposite of the bird. It is also the opposite of the worm which lives by leaching off other creatures. (Rashi only emphasizes the low level of the bird)*

<u>Student</u>: *Are you claiming that this is objective*

<u>Rashi Newsletter</u>: *You are asking the wrong question. After all I told you methodology. My methodology following Rav Hirsch is to use Database inquiries. I am claiming*

> i.*Leprosy = bad personality traits and bad speech patterns (from Miriam)*

> ii.*Cedar-hyssop are biblical symbols of arrogance-aristocrats and lower society people*

> iii.*Birds symbolize avoidance and escape, not belonging to any territory*

> iv.*Sheep-worms correspond to a social community with territory vs. living off others.*

You could claim that this is my own or Rashi's but if you sat down with the Database inquiry and reference to Miriam you would find you have very little

leeway. In fact, a good exercise is to try and interpret differently and see if your interpretation differs that much. When I teach Bible classes I find this a good technique to show symbolism objectivity.

Student: *How much of this is Rashi's and how much is (supplemented by) you?*

Rashi Newsletter: *Going back to my list above (i)-(iv) we have as follows:*

  i. *Leprosy = Miriam = Slander + bad personality traits (Explicit in Rashi)*

  ii. *Cedar-hyssop = aristocrats-lower segments =arrogant-humble (Explicit in Rashi)*

  iii. *Birds = not belonging to any territory is not in Rashi but comes from one of our great commentators, Rav Hirsch; I have used it to supplement and explain Rashi, that birds chirp (people slander) because they are constantly running away and being thrown out*

  iv. *Sheep-worms = belong to a social community vs leaching off others is not explicit in Rashi. But is justified by the biblical use of sheep and is sound fitting into everything we have done. At any rate, Rashi does mention that worms like hyssops correspond to lower strata of society. However the contrast of cedar-hyssop and sheep-worm are different: One is a contrast of arrogance-low society while the other is a contrast of a social community of helpers vs. leechers.*

So as you see over 50% of the interpretation is explicit in Rashi. The main point to emphasize is that the interpretations we have given are based on a methodology, the <u>Database method.</u>

Student: *Well you have given me something to think about. I still don't believe it but I will look over these Database dumps and see if I can come up with something else. I find it hard to believe that there is one interpretation.*

Rashi Newsletter: *I am delighted you intend to sit down and think of alternative interpretations that are nevertheless consistent with the database inquiry.*

Student: *One last question: How does this replace therapy*?

Rashi Newsletter *As to the replacement of therapists: Next time you see someone ranting and raving invite them to mingle with people and belong to a community. If they complain (as a simple example) about the way the synagogue is run invite them to join a committee (become a sheep instead of a leeching worm) and give advice on how the synagogue should be run (This assumes that the committee*

members are socially cooperative and nice; if they aren't let him change synagogues). That should be sufficient to cure the person since they will be working in a group and find that some ideas are accepted while some ideas require time to implement.

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES / THE 30 RASHIRULE

NOTE ON COPYRIGHTS:

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I-REFERENCE: Dt26-05d *We went down to Egypt with a few people* explained by Gn46-27: *with 70 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 (Homonyms)** 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*
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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 **POSSESS**ion & **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