The 10 RashiYomi Rules

Their presence in Rashis in MaTToS MaThaY Vol. 29#17 - Adapted from Rashi-is-Simple

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Hebrew-English Rashi: http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm

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.

Two goodies for today. First, in response to the survey we are holding on what features of Rashiyomi Newsletter to add (and which to diminish) several people have asked for a Q&A, Question and Answer section. In fact, we had this several years ago and it died out (from a paucity of questions). So, I am renewing it but I need people to submit. Questions are posted anonymously unless attribution is specifically requested. I have one O&A below.

Second: I am devoting the whole issue to an important Rashi on the evil of slander, a major Jewish category. We also illustrate how a recent,

major, Jewish writer on Rashi fell into the trap of believing that some Rashi comments are motivated for moral exhortation without being intrinsic to the text. We shall explain the Rashi fully.

Enjoy

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.

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Q&A: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question:

Dear Dr. Hendel,

It's nice to make contact after reading you over the years on Lookjed. I just posted in Ask the Beit Midrash and wondered if you could suggest simple classifications for Rashis we teach in fifth grade. Here is my post:

We're trying to maximize what we get out of every Rashi we teach in fifth grade. Towards that end, I've begun making a chart to classify what each Rashi we teach focuses on. As a rough guide, I've used the Table of Contents of the two volume פירוש רש"י לתורה - עיונים by Nechama Leibowitz (Open University course written by Prof. Moshe Ahrend). I've tried to limit it to topics we'd discuss with fifth graders. I'd welcome comments and refinements. Then I hope to classify which elements are in each Rashi we currently teach, which should help us make intelligent choices for the future.

ביאור מילה אחת לשון יתרה קושי דקדוקי

לשון חסרה סדר מילים

סתירות

פשט ודרש

מדרש אגדה - למה מובא

מילוי פער במקרא

Thanks!

RESPONSE:

Dear Inquirer

You give 9 methods in Hebrew. These methods are translated into English below and underlined. In five cases the Rashiyomi Newsletter agrees with your approach of your nine methods. In four cases Rashiyomi has an alternative approach.

WHERE RASHIYOMI AGREES WITH YOUR LIST (The list of methods in the question above)

1) <u>Explaining one word</u> – This is the Rashiyomi MEANING METHOD.Note Rashiyomi gives 10 submethods to the meaning method.

- 2) Grammatical Problem This is the Rashiyomi GRAMMAR METHOD
- 3) Missing language Ellipsis is part of the GRAMMAR METHOD (Grammar is not just conjugation)
- 4) Word order Syntax order (Where does the Subject, Verb, Object come in a sentence) is part of GRAMMAR
- 5) Contradictions This is the Rashiyomi CONTRADICTION METHOD

WHERE RASHIYOMI HAS A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO YOUR LIST (The list of methods in the question above)
6) Extra word – This is too vague - Rashiyomi advocates using the PARALLELISM method and detecting differences
Note: This can be done with students starting around age 5 (At age 5 you have to draw the parallelism;
At higher ages (e...g 9-11) you can ask them to make the parallelism

- 7) <u>Peshat and Derash</u> Rashiyomi rejects there is such a distinction. When Rashi gives two explanations the first one is usually overly simply (not Peshat so much as the reading of a simple person (Pashut)) while the second one that appears homiletic is really grammatically based. The **challenge** is to reduce all Peshat and Derash to Grammar, Meaning and Parallelism. Also note that many scholars (e.g. the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel, Zts'l) have a different approach to two explanations in Rashi.
- 8) Why does Rashi bring Midrash Aggadah Rashiyomi is not primarily interested in historical comments. The question we would ask is "How does this Midrash aggadah" resolve a MEANING, GRAMMATICAL or PARALLELISM in the text
- 9) Filling missing motives and backgrounds Rashiyomi rejects that texts are ambiguous and that readers may fill in the texts in several ways. Rather Rashiyomi uses the REFERENCE or OTHER VERSE method. If something is told without motive then another verse is likely to fill in the motive or background. So, when teaching Bible I do not recommend asking open-ended questions "What could the motive be" "How does this reflect on character". Rashi Rashiyomi asks the reader "Where else is this episode or person mentioned and how can this OTHER VERSE (Reference) shed light on what is going on"

Note: I have used this method on 5-15 year olds. For 5-year olds I will bring the other text and ask them how it illuminates the current text. While for 15 year olds I might ask them to use a search engine and find the other texts.

Symbolism - Other Verses *Daily Rashi* Nu33-18a *Thur* 7/12/2018

Biblical Text: They journeyed from Chatzayroth and encamped in Rithma.

Rashi Text: [Why was the placed called *Rithma*.] Because of the incident of the 12 spies [who slandered the land of Israel] [The Biblical root of the geographic place, *Rithma*, is **Resh-Tauv-Mem**, **RTM**, which means *burning coal*.] as

it says (Ps120:04) *The warrior arrows are sharp with burning coals* [burning coals are a metaphor for slander]

Contribution of Dr. Avraham's Grossman's book, Rashi: Dr. Grossman, recently wrote a comprehensive book on Rashi. This book deals with all aspects of Rashi's life. I highly recommend it.

Dr. Grossman devotes a chapter to Rashi's biblical commentaries (As you probably know, besides the biblical commentaries, Rashi's output included his commentary on the Talmud, his legal responsum in his capacity as head of a Talmudic center of learning, and his poetical prayers, some of which have entered our prayer books and liturgy. Again, I strongly encourage reading the book which exists in both Hebrew and English)

Dr. Grossman does accept the erroneous view that not all Rashis are grammatically derived from the text. Hence, he attributes certain Rashi comments to alternative motivations such as: i) historical, ii) morally exhortative, iii) emotionally supportive, iv) socio-political.

The Rashi we are studying today is an example of such an error. Let us carefully study Dr Grossman's analysis

Rashi cites a later written Psalm as proof that *burning coals* refer to slander. [This is anachronistic] Furthermore there is no basis in the text to support this position. [Since we can't explain the Rashi comment grammatically,] we attribute his remarks to use the text as an opportunity and springboard for moral

exhortation against the very bad character trait of slander. He thereby hoped to encourage proper moral behavior in his generation.

Dr. Grossman brings other Rashi comments in this section of the book to *support* his thesis that certain Rashi comments should be approached this way.

Dr. Grossman did not invent this approach to Rashi. Many scholars (in previous generations) held this position also. So, Dr. Grossman is simply citing an established viewpoint and showing support with a variety of texts.

The position of the Rashiyomi Newsletter is that *all* Rashi comments are grammatically based. A major purpose of the Rashi Newsletter and a major mission of the Rashiyomi corporation is to defend this position.

In the rest of this digest, we will fully defend this Rashi. When completed the reader will have the tools to defend this Rashi comment as grammatically based and the straightforward author-intended meaning of the text.

However, the error Dr Grossman made is not obvious or superficial. We will carefully have to review half a dozen aspects of Dr Grossman's explanation to refute it. This is as it should be.

One last point: On the one hand I recommend reading the book while on the other hand I identify errors in the book. There is no contradiction. If the book was riddled with errors I would not recommend it. *Most* of the book has a lot

of useful information on Rashi including the chapter on biblical exegesis. I regard the book as no different than a purchased suit that does not fit. True, you would look like a fool if you wore it without first fixing it, but the remedy to the unfit suit is not throwing it away or asking your money back but rather fixing it.

Friday 7/13/2018 - Other Verses, Daily Rashi

Our first step in analyzing the Rashi is to cite the surrounding verses and then apply the **Reference** or **Other Verse** method. The context here, is that the Bible is listing the sequence of journeys the Jews went through. In the citation below, each journey is assigned one bullet with the corresponding **Other Verse** in parenthesis

- They journeyed from Sinai (Nu01-01)
- they encamped in Kivroth Taavah (Nu11-34)
- They journeyed from Cavorts Taavah
- They encamped in Chatzayroth (Nu11:35)
- They journeyed from <u>Chatzayroth</u>
- They encamped in <u>Rithmah</u> (cf. **Nu12-16** And afterwards, the nation journeyed from <u>Chatzayroth</u> and encamped in the <u>Paran Desert</u>.... [The incident of spies follows in the next biblical chapter]

As can be seen from the *sequence* of consecutive verses and the supporting **Other Verses**, the Bible here is

identifying *Rithmah* with the *Wilderness of Paran* where the spy-incident happened.

This is our modest first step in understanding Rashi. The Bible in an **Other Verse** clearly and unequivocally identifies the place the Jews encamped after Chatzayroth to be one place that had two names, *Rithmah*, *Paran-desert*. We also know that the incident of spies happened in the *Paran Desert*.

Saturday 7/14/2018 - Meaning-Symbolism

Paradoxically, what we are writing in this segment would be agreed upon by both Dr Grossman and Rashiyomi.

- Dr. Grossman argues that the association between *burning coal* and *slander* is weak and anachronistic but used for moral exhortative purposes.
- Rashiyomi argues that it is strong and intrinsic to the text.

With this in mind, let us make an initial examination.

• **Nu13-20** describes the spy report as *bringing forth talk* or *speech fabrication* [Note, throughout the bible the verb *bring forth* is <u>never</u> used to indicate a report brought forth from the mouth. Rather, *bring forth* is always used to indicate *fabrication*. Another example of *bringing forth a bad name* to indicate *fabrication* is found in the chapter dealing with the husband who fabricates a report that his virgin wife cheated on him prior to marriage

- (**Dt22-13:19**; See **Dt22-19** using the phrase *brought* forth a bad name)].
- **Ps120-02** identifies its topic as *false lips*, *crooked tongue* and later describes it as *sharp arrows* and *burning coals* (**Ps120-04**)

Thus both Dr. Grossman and Rashiyomi see a clear association between burning *coals* and *fabricated slander*. A glance at the code of Jewish law and the Talmud shows that *slander* and *fabrication* is considered a very very grave sin. Indeed, the inference that *slander is a grave sin* is in fact derived and supported by the spy story since the Jews lost the land of Israel because they accepted the fabricated slander of the spies.

While Dr. Grossman and Rashiyomi agree with this, they disagree on its relation to the text.

- Dr. Grossman considers the association weak and anachronistic since the Psalm with the metaphor of burning coal for slander was written much later than the Bible.
- Contrastively, Rashiyomi considers this association the simple straightforward meaning of the text based on grammatical rules. We have not yet defended this but will do so in the next two Daily Rashiyomi digests discussed immediately below.

Sunday 7/15/2018 - Meaning-Symbolism

First, we clarify a subtlety. The verse which justifies associating burning coal with slander is the warrior arrows are sharp, with burning coals. But what justifies interpreting this as a metaphor? Perhaps the Psalmist, as happens in numerous other Psalms is talking about an enemy attack, coupled with slander.

To answer this, we cite the entire Psalm. In each verse we underline the descriptors of evil.

1) A song of [hope for] ascents, to God, during personal troubling times

I called, He heard:

- 2) "God: Save my soul from false lips, from deceitful language"
- 3) [To my enemies I say] What will deceitful language give to you? What will it add to you?
- 4) [But] The <u>warrior arrows</u> are sharp with <u>burning</u> coals
- 5) Woe to me that I was a non-citizen in <u>stretchers</u> [of truth] [a pun on the place Meshach meaning <u>stretching</u>], with the <u>tents of darkness</u> [a pun on the place Kedar meaning <u>darkness</u>]
- 6) More than enough, has my soul dwelled with the <u>haters of peace</u>
- 7) [For] I am peace and that [is how] I will <u>speak</u>; it is them [that are for] war

Notice that in the 7 verses,

- 3 of them are specific to speech (false lips, deceitful language, speak),
- 3 of them are general (personal troubles, Meshech-Kedar, peace haters) and
- One is specific to war (warrior arrows, burning coals).

The fact that there is one anomalous verse on military action (arrows, coals) and the majority are neutral or on something else (slander), makes it reasonable to interpret this one verse as indicating a metaphor for slander. That is *sharp arrows* and *burning coals* describe slander and are not meant literally.

Now we can ask the deeper question of *Why*. *Why* is slander compared to a burning coal? Here is a contrastive analogy:

If I eat ham, I have violated in that moment the prohibition of eating non-Kosher food. I may enjoy the ham. But after consumption that is the end of the sin. I may have a pleasant memory of it, but the sin happened in a moment.

Contrastively, if I hear fabricated slander on someone it is like being burned. On the moment of being touched by the hot coal, I may recoil with displeasure. But the burn grows. It is not an incident of a moment. Left untreated, the burn continues to burn and with more intensity.

In other words, an important characteristic of slander differentiating it from other sins is that it is not a sin of a moment but a sin that *grows over time*.

All this is nice. But we still must respond to Dr. Grossman's position that the Rashi is anachronistic.

Monday 7/16/2018 - Meaning-Symbolism

Let us summarize where we are. Using the **Other Verse** method, we showed that the Bible refers to the same place with two names.

Proper names have a special status in the Bible. The well-known Bible-study popularizer, Dr Nechama Leibowitz (Nechamala) held the position that *all* names have significance and indication about the feature of the place or person being described.

The Rashiyomi position is less strong. Rashiyomi only recognizes inferences based on the 10 Rashiyomi rules. Rashiyomi frowns on deriving something without further justification such as **meaning**, **grammar**, **parallelism**, **symbolism** etc.

If the Bible gives two names for a place, *Rithma*, *Paran-Desert*, then we are justified in understanding one name as the Proper Name (Paran-Desert) and the 2nd name as indicating a nickname, an important incident that happened at this place. In creating a nickname, we use the **metonymy-synecdoche** principle (**part of the Meaning**)

Method) of naming an object, person, or place by a principle characteristic of it.

This however is only the beginning. All we have established is that *Rithma* describes an important event. We don't yet know *how* it describes nor even *what* it describes.

Such an explanation will see *Rithma* as a metaphor, a name symbolically indicating the event. As such, the rules of **Symbolism** apply. Here we follow the Symbolic Theories of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. Although Rav Hirsch wrote in a flowery manner his goal was not to be flowery but on the contrary to eliminate floweriness from symbolism and replace it with a logical foundation. To achieve this logic Rav Hirsch rigidly allows 4 methods of symbolism interpretation (and only these methods may be used)

- Meaning by Function (e.g. the *United Nations* is named after its function)
- Meaning by Form (e.g. the Pentagon is name after its' form and appearance)
- Linguistic association in Hebrew for example the root **Shin-Kuph-Daleth** simultaneously means *almond* and *quickly* and hence the *almond vision* of Jeremiah symbolically indicated the prophecy was going to happen *quickly* (Jr01-12).

• Story association in the Bible - This is the method we will use to show that *burning coal* is not an anachronism; in fact, the Biblical symbolism is quite old. We explain this immediately below.

The first incident of slander is related in Gen 3. There the snake slandered God who prohibited eating from the tree of good and evil. The snake slandered God as follows: *So what if God said, 'don't eat from the tree.'* [Why did God so say] *Because God knows that on the day you eat from the tree you will become like gods to know good and evil.* In other words, the snake insisted that God didn't give the prohibition to protect man, but rather to protect Himself, from competition.

As a result of this story, *slander* is compared to *snake venom*. As we explained above, the danger of snake venom is not a danger of the instant, rather, it is a danger of growth over time. Yes, the initial byte causes pain, but the real danger is that over time the snake venom enters the victim's blood stream and gradually paralyzes him.

This growth over time property of slander is also reflected in the text of the above story. For after the snake slandered God it doesn't say Ánd Eve sinned and ate from the fruit." Rather a growth over time is described: "The woman saw, that i) the fruit looked good for consumption, ii) it had a glamorous appearance, iii) She took from the fruit and [finally] iv) she ate it.

Thus, the sin happened *over time*. There was study of the fruit. She even first *took the fruit* to study it. The words of the snake coupled with this look-over led to sin. Thus indeed, the words of the snake *descended into the woman like venom*.

Here the biblical commentators who connect the snake with slander (which was initially justified by the story) use the Rav Hirsch method of *function*. In summary the symbolism connecting *snake* with *slander* is justified by two methods:

- Story of biblical association (Gen 3)
- Function (Function of both snake venom, and slander is besides the initial pain to *grow over time*)

Using these ideas, we can connect this to *burning coal* a later symbolic association with slander

• A *burning coal* like snake venom and slander has an initial pain followed by a period of growth leading to more damage

We can clinch this association by pointing out that one of the Hebrew words for *snake* is *burner* (*Saraf*). Here we use a 3rd symbolic method, linguistic association.

Finally, we must respond to Dr. Grossman's assertion of anachronism, that the Psalm symbolism of burning coal happened at a later period. Quite simply, I have in numerous articles explained that we must distinguish between

- The underlying reason for a Rashi comment, which indeed is *always* grammatical
- The underlying expression and communication of that Rashi comment. Rashi, despite, his logical foundation, might decide to communicate a comment using a pun or a later use of language. Such a communication is not intended as the original reason but rather as a punchy method to help people remember the Rashi comment. As a simple example, Rashi might decide to take a logically justified comment using a gematria or pun. Rashi never intended this gematria (numerical association) or pun as the reason, but rather simply as a cute method to remember it.

SUMMARY: Here are the main points in this Rashi

- Using the Other Verse method, we see that the Bible names the same place with two names, *Paran-Desert* and *Rithmah*
- Rashiyomi Newsletter does not believe in explaining all names. However, a 2nd name is typically interpreted as a nickname describing a crucial event that happened at a place, or by a person. This uses the **Metonymy-Synecdoche** Meaning method.
- The Biblical root of *Ritmah*, the nickname for the *Paran Desert* means a *burning coal*.
- To understand the *metaphor* of *burning coal* we must use the *symbolism method*. The two names justify the

- identification of the metaphor but Rav Hirsch, to avoid fancifulness, recommends using specific methods to understand symbols. Of the 4 Rav Hirsh methods three are used to explain *Rithmah*.
- Biblical Story The snake was the first biblically recorded instance of slander. Therefore, the *snake* is a symbol of *slander*.
- Function The function of both *snake venom* and *slander* is to both have an initial pain followed by a period of growth with further damage. This growth period is reflected in the Biblical text's description of how Eve sinned.
- Linguistic Association The word *burn* simultaneously refers to a *fire burn* and a *snake*. Hence, *burns* may also be used to indicate *slander*.
- Although the Rashi comment that *Rithmah* refers to the spy sin of slandering God is grammatically sound based on a dual name and clear symbolism, Rashi chose to communicate this comment using an anachronism of a later Psalm in which the *burn-slander* association is mentioned.

Note: Since this Rashi comment is justified without the Psalm we can turn around and say that the Psalmist (who might have been King David or someone who

dedicated the Psalm to King David) was someone who used a biblical metaphor to compose the Psalm.

- The biblical emphasis that slander *grows over time* as indicated by the use of *burn* to indicate *slander* has legal implications since it shows that *unchecked slander* is not a sin of the moment but a sin that grows over time and has deleterious consequences which the speaker could not have necessarily foreseen.
- Conclusion: Rashi was not making exhortative moral comments which he attached whimsically to the biblical text in order to emotionally encourage his readers. Rashi was doing what he always did; applying clear and specific grammatical rules to expose the simple, straightforward, author-intended meaning of the text.

Praise be Him who chose them and their learning!

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES / THE 30 RASHIRULE

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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

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 (egg Dt34-10a) egg 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**) *Marchese* means pot; *Machinate* 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* <u>honey</u> as sacrifices RASHI: honey includes any sweet fruit juice

III-GRAMMAR: EXAMPLE: BA-ah means Candelabras means COMING(Gn46-26a) **EXAMPLE:** Whiptail conjugation has different rules if 1st root letter is Trade (Gn44-16a)

IV-PARALLELISM: (Ex20-04) Don't **POSSESS** the gods of others Don't **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 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

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) 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