

The 10 RashiYomi Rules
Their presence in Rashis in Ki ThaVoH
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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 continue learning Jewish laws derived from the Parshah even if Rashi did not cover all of them. We deal with the famous law prohibiting putting a stumbling block before the blind which is interpreted to prohibit giving bad advice and has lots of uses in contemporary society. Rashi did cover some of these laws and we cover the rest.

Enjoy

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

Russell Jay Hendel, President, Rashiyomi

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Questions and Answers.

As a result of our survey I have resurrected the Q&A section of the Newsletter. Below please find an inquiry and the Rashi Newsletter response.

Questions: As a result of our survey, several people said they particularly enjoyed issues where I took approaches to the Bible by modern authors and refuted them.

David HaLivni Weiss is a modern author who wrote a book *Peshat and Derash* (Oxford University Press, 1998). In that book Weiss attacks the idea that Rabbinic exegesis is the natural meaning of the text. Weiss actually introduces the idea of *read into* and *read from* the text. Using these catchy phrases, he describes many Rashis and Talmudic laws as *read into* the text; they are not there but read into.

Weiss claims that there have been various periods when different approaches to the Bible were prevalent. During the Talmudic period, Weiss claims, there was no interest in the principles explaining what the text says. The interest was in finding pegs to Talmudic laws. These pegs, Midrash, were never intended to be the true meaning of the text. Contrastively, Weiss claims that today we are interested in textual meaning.

Interestingly, Weiss gives only a few major examples, one of them being the laws prohibiting placing a stumbling block before the blind. He totally ridicules these laws as having nothing intrinsic to do with the text.

Rashiyomi Response: There are two verses connected with prohibiting placing a stumbling block before the blind. One of them is in this week's parshah. Today we go through the laws. We cite the law mentioned by Rashi and also half a dozen other laws. We show how they follow from the Rashiyomi basic 10 methods. These are methods by which all texts were written. They are the Author-intended meaning of the text.

Please send inquiries on anything bothering you in Rashi. Questions should be sent to RashiYomi@GMail.Com.

Please feel free to ask questions on particular Rashis. Send inquiries to Rashiyomi@GMail.com. All questions are posted anonymously unless otherwise indicated.

Parallelism Daily Rashi Lv19-14b, Dt29-18a Apr 24-Apr 28, 2018

Background: David HaLivni Weiss, wrote a book, “*Peshat and Derash*, Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis,” Oxford University Press, 1998. In that book Dr. Weiss advances the idea that *Derash* was read into the text by the Talmudic sages. Dr. Weiss also suggests that the concern with the *Peshat*, simple meaning, was a later development.

However, Weiss totally ignores the very rich literature showing that exegesis emanates from sound principles. In fact, two books had been written on **Parallelism** about 10 years before he published this book and had he applied their methods he could have seen that his analysis was faulty. The two books are James Kugel, "The Idea of Biblical Poetry:

Parallelism and Its History," John Hopkins University Press, 1998 (originally written in 1980) and Adele Berlin, "The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism," 2nd Edition, Eerdsman, 2007 (Originally written in 1985).

To support his thesis that Talmudic exegesis ignores the simple meaning of the text and reads into the text desired exegesis Dr Weiss presents 3 examples one of which we cover today. The example deals with the prohibition of giving bad advice. What we try and do today is show how the laws derived from the Talmud can naturally be seen as emanating using the **Parallelism** method.

With this background let us begin.

Biblical Text:

- **Lv19-14** *In the presence of a blind person, do not put a stumbling block*
- **Dt27-18** *Cursed be him who misleads a blind person on the road.*

Rashi Text: We go beyond the Rashi text who deals with one of the five differences in these two verses. The verses are presented in parallel fashion below. We spend a long time on the narrative, so people can see how the differences give rise to laws. We hope this will be clearer.

Notice how we numbered the Rashi derivations (1)-(5). We now go through each of these derivations very slowly so that the derivation will be clear. We summarize at the end with two tables.

Difference (#1, #2) in the table below

First: We note that the Leviticus verse prohibits placing a *stumbling block* before the blind. Any person (including Weiss) could easily check in a Biblical search engine. Besides this verse, there are 11 other verses where *stumbling block occurs*. Although double imagery is used *stumbling block on the road* all 11 verses do not deal with physical stumbling but with moral and intellectual error. That's right; all of them.

So, it is clear just from the usage of the word *stumbling block* that the Bible prohibits misleading a person into moral error. To give a person a ham sandwich and tell him it is a kosher tuna sandwich is *to place a stumbling block* and is biblically prohibited.

This derivation uses the Rashi **Meaning** method. It is also possible to see supportive emphasis in the verse. Here are two distinctions.

- **Lv19-14** Before the blind, don't place a stumbling block

- **Dt27-18** Don't deceive the blind

The distinction is in word order. The Leviticus verse emphasizes *blind* by placing it up front in the sentence rather than at the end.

Since this is an advanced Talmudic method let us make up some English examples and go over them.

1a1) Don't drive your car

1a2) It is the car that should not be driven

Inferences: 1a2) emphasizes that it is *cars* that should not be driven. 1a1) emphasizes the prohibition on driving. Most people drive a car. But the person prohibiting probably would prohibit motorcycles and bicycles.

You will ask, "But it doesn't say so? Isn't this *reading into the verse* as Weiss says?" The answer is no! It is biblical style to *teach by examples, by typical day to day activities*. The Bible could be abstract *don't drive anything*, but the Bible prefers to be picturesque and say *don't drive a car* (the way you usually do). This is biblical style which *intends* that all examples be generalized. See Rashi Pesachim 6a who makes this point.

Now since *stumbling block* (and hence *blind*) refer in the rest of the Bible exclusively to spiritual-moral errors and morally blind people, I might think there is no prohibition on physically stumbling. Hence 1a2) says *It is the car that should not be driven* and Leviticus 19:14 says (*it is*) *before the blind that you should place no stumbling block*. By placing the words up front we indicate emphasis on that object. It is cars that should not be driven, and it is blind people that should not be stumbled.

So, the two verses together prohibit both physical and moral stumbling; hence one sentence has blind at the beginning (to emphasize the literal) and one has it at the end. Let us look at one more made up example of word emphasis.

1b1) I watched the movie

1b2) The movie was watched by me.

Inference: 1b2 emphasizes that the person actually went to the movies. While 1b1 allows that maybe the person saw the movie as a rerun on TV.

So, the point here is that words at the beginning or end of a verse can allow looser translation (end of sentence) or require strict-only translation (beginning of sentence). By using both the Bible says *neither physical nor moral*. The main derivation however is from the word *stumbling block* which means moral.

We give another supportive nuance in the verses. This derivation is easy

- One verse says *don't mislead a blind person on the road*
- The other verse leaves out the word road (Don't place a stumbling block before the blind)

So, the parallelism emphasizes *on the road*. You are not just stumbling the person (perhaps intellectually) but actually stumbling the person *on the road*. So, the verse refers to actually placing a physical stumbling block before a blind person on the road leading to the person's fall

So, from this parallelism we learn that whatever else we say, physically stumbling a blind person is prohibited.

Just to recap: There are 3 derivations here

- #1) *Stumbling block always* means moral stumbling
- #2) *on the road* emphasizes even physically stumbling
- #3) *Before the blind don't place a stumbling block vs don't mislead the blind* emphasizes *literally blind* as well as *any blind* by sentence position.

The net effect of all 3 derivations is that both moral obstacles (giving a ham sandwich) and physical obstacles (tripping a blind person) are both biblically prohibited.

Difference #3) in the Table Below

Notice the difference in referring to the blind in the two verses

- **Lv19-14** in the presence of the blind don't place a stumbling block

- **Dt27-18** *Don't mislead the blind*

So, the prohibition is only on (directly) in the presence.

What is an example of indirect? Here is a good example from the Talmud.

- *I can't sell non-kosher meat to Jews since I am placing a prohibited product, non-kosher meat, before the spiritually blind*

- *But I can sell non-kosher meat to non-Jewish wholesalers even though they sell to Jews. Why? Because I am not placing the non-Kosher meat directly in the presence of the Jews but rather selling them indirectly through a non-Jew.*

Lv19-14 makes it clear that the prohibition is only on direct selling - in the presence - but indirect selling is OK even if you know it might be resold. We learn this from the extra word presence of the blind. The extra word is in turn emphasized by the **parallelism**.

What is the point though? Is this nit-picking? No: It clarifies the verse intent. People do not have the responsibility of stopping all potential evil. If they did, they would be afraid to sell anything for fear it would be misused. However, people should not directly aid evil.

Another good example would be giving drinks to someone who is a designated driver. That is in fact criminal even in American law. Contrastively, I can give someone a bottle of liquor for a party because I don't have direct knowledge of how it will be used.

Differences #4) in the Table Below

Distinguishing between an *activity* and the *object* of that activity is a really advanced Talmudic method of exegesis. So, this definitely deserves some explanation. Again, we illustrate with some simple example pairs of sentences.

1a1) A ritually impure person sitting creates impurity

1a2) A ritually impure person sitting on a seat creates impurity

Inference: Now let us look at **1a1/1a2**: You could sit on a log or garbage pail (**1a1**). However, sitting on a seat indicates sitting on something made for sitting (**1a2**).

In fact, this distinction is the basis for the biblical inferences on **Lv16-04**. There is an emphasis that it is not just the act of sitting but rather the act of sitting on something made for sitting. A ritually impure person who sits on say a pail or

something not made as a seat does not transfer ritual impurity since the person *is* sitting but *is not* sitting on a seat.

1b1) I was thirsty, so I drank

1b2) I was thirsty, so I drank a drink

Inference: Let us look at **1b1/1b2**: If you drank a drink you probably bought a Coke or an OJ (Orange Juice). While if you just drank maybe you went to a water fountain or placed your mouth under the faucet. The point here is that the mention of the object, drink, creates emphasis and specificity on something typically drunk.

Again: Think of this as the *style* of the Bible. It is also the style of poets and to some extent of lawyers (though not as much).

We now apply this method and approach to **Lv19-14** vs **Dt27-18**

- **Lv19-14** Don't place a stumbling block

- **Dt27-18** Don't deceive.

The emphasis in **Lv19-14** is on something that is actually a stumbling block, and something given to the person. You are not just deceiving him, but you are using a known stumbling block and giving the person something. Here are the laws derived from this

There is only prohibition if what you place is a *real* stumbling block. Not if it is a *possible* stumbling block. We learn this from the emphasis, stumbling block

- **Lv19-14** Don't place a stumbling block

- **Dt27-18** Don't deceive.

From the phrase *place the stumbling block* we infer that it has to be a real stumbling block. Suppose I sell a sieve to a Jew in the 7th year (which is observed in Israel these days). Suppose the Jew is suspected of violating the 7th year laws. Is it prohibited to so sell? After all this person can now harvest and sieve wheat with the sieve I sell him.

But the key test is *exclusivity*. Is the sieve *exclusively* used for a prohibited purpose? Is it a stumbling block? The Talmud (in this case the Jerusalem Talmud) points out that sieves can be used for household kitchen purposes. It is not exclusively used for prohibited field purposes. Hence, it is permitted to sell the sieve to the Jew suspected of 7th year violations. It is similarly permissible in American law to give a bottle of liquor for a party to a person. True, they may

misuse the bottle and give it to a designated driver, but you don't have the responsibility of stopping all potential evil, only direct and actual evil. So, giving drinks to a designated driver is criminal and even in American law.

Difference #5) in the table below

Notice the difference in verbs, activities in the two verses

- **Lv19-14** in the presence of the blind don't place a stumbling block

- **Dt27-18** Don't mislead the blind

One verse prevents anything that deceives. But the other verse only prohibits if there is placing. Here is the Talmudic example distinguishing these two.

The *two-river side law*: Suppose I buy a ham sandwich for a fellow Jew who does not keep kosher. Then I have actually given a stumbling block (non-kosher food)

But suppose the ham sandwich is on the table within arm's reach at a party and I pass it to the Jew who does not keep kosher. Jewish law explains that I have not violated the prohibitions in **Lv19-14** and **Dt27-18**. Why? Because I have not *placed* anything. It was there anyway. To use the language of activities and objects we might respond

- True I did help him sin (gave him a ham sandwich) (I deceived him)

- But I did not place before him anything. It was there anyway; I have not violated the prohibitions of placing a stumbling block.

This distinction is typically illustrated in the Talmud with a cup of wine on one of two sides of a river. If I cross the river and give the cup to someone who has vowed not to drink liquor I have violated placing a stumbling block before the blind (We are all blind with regards to liquor). But if the cup of wine is on the same side of the river I have not violated anything since I have not placed the cup; the cup was there. Hence the catchy name, "*the two-river side exemption*"

Again, what is the point? The point is that you are responsible when your contribution makes a difference (you go to the store and buy the ham sandwich) You are not responsible if you are helping him do something he could do anyway.

Summary

I hope the above narrative makes the Rashi and Talmudic exegesis clearer. I have summarized the five laws in the table below to provide additional clarity. The numbers refer to the numbers in the Table on top.

Law	Verse inferred from	Text of Verse	How text implies law
#1) Prohibition of morally stumbling a blind person	Lv19-14	Don't place a stumbling block before the blind	All other 11 occurrences of stumbling block in the bible even with their double imager (stumbling block on road) refer to moral and spiritual stumbling not physically stumbling
#2) Prohibition of stumbling a blind person whether physical or spiritual	Contrast of Dt27-18 Lv19-14	Contrast of *Don't mislead blind <u>on the road</u> vs. * Don't mislead a <u>blind person</u> *Before <u>blind</u> don't place stumbling block	On the road implies physical stumbling (emphasis is on the physical road). A) If before blind is at beginning of sentence it emphasizes a literally blind person; B) If blind is at end of sentence it allows any type of generalization (even spiritually blind)
#3) Permission to sell to wholesaler who sells to Jews	Lv19-14	<u>In the presence of a blind</u> don't place a stumbling block	Emphasis is on <i>presence</i> : So, selling to a middle man is permissible
#4) Two-side-river permissibility. You can hand a cup of wine to someone who has vowed against drinking wine if the cup of wine is right there	Lv19-14	Don't <u>place</u> a stumbling block before the blind (This contrasts with the simpler <i>don't mislead the blind</i>)	The prohibition is on <i>placing</i> or giving the stumbling block. If it is already placed there you are not violating anything
#5) Permission to sell a sieve to a person on the 7 th year when field sieving is prohibited since the sieve is not exclusively used for field sieving (maybe the buyer wants it for his kitchen use)	Lv19-14	Don't give a <u>stumbling block</u> before the blind (This contrasts with the simpler <i>don't mislead the blind</i>)	The prohibition is on placing an actual stumbling block (so the requirement of exclusivity)

Praised be Him who Chose Them and Their Learning

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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 (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 honey as sacrifices* RASHI: *honey* includes any sweet fruit juice

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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)

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IV-PARALLELISM: (Ex20-04) Don't **POSSESS** the gods of others Don't **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) *Don't MUZZLE an OX while THRESHING* RASHI: Don't 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 - 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

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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