

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 30 #13, Dec. 13, 2018

Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, VaYiGaSh

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We do some quickies, Rashis with quick explanations, today. We also emphasize how Rashi comments should be analyzed; this will be useful to teachers, Rabbis, and secular researchers. We encourage questions on difficult Rashis. Send inquiries to RashiYomi@GMail.Com

Rashi, on **Gn44-18**, Judah approached Joseph and said: "Please my master: Let me please cite a few words in the ears of my master", states Let my words penetrate through your ears.

To understand how to understand this Rashi, we review the basic 10 RashiYomi rules. The very purpose of the RashiYomi rules is to facilitate focus; what should the reader be looking for in this Rashi.

First, we use the **Synonym Method** of the Rashi **Meaning Rule**. There are two words for speaking in biblical Hebrew: *Amar* and *Dbr*. RashiYomi has explained on numerous equations that *Amar* means speak while *Dbr* means *cite*.

- This *speaking-cite* distinction is consistent with the Talmudic dictum that *Dbr* is harsher in tone than *Amar*. Indeed, *speaking* indicates a discussion where there is give and take; contrastively, *cite* indicates a citation, something done which you can't really do anything about.
- For example, a driving ticket in the United States is called a *citation* to emphasize that the police officer is *citing* the regulations, indicating something that will not be discussed about. The full justification of *amar* vs. *dbr* as *speaking* vs. *cite* can be justified by the

Database method, presented below for another aspect of this Rashi.

- *Dbr* as meeting cite is also consistent with the many legal biblical paragraphs that begin *God cited to Moses to say over*, indicating that Moses should simply teach the legal wording to the nation. (Contrastively, *amr*, beginning a legal citation, indicates a law that is discussed not just cited).

Why is *cite* used in **Gn44-18**? Quite simply and logically, you don't, when you are upset, *speaking*, pour force your heart, to a political leader. By saying *cite* Judah indicated that his words were prepared. In effect he said, *I wish to cite to you, that is, I have prepared comments*.

Second, the verse speaks about *citing in the ears*. Rashi simply says, *let my words penetrate your ears*. But Rashi's comment doesn't really give us further understanding of this phrase *cite in ears*.

The rule used here is the **Verb-Preposition rule** of the **Rashi Grammar Method**: This rule teaches us that a verb can change its meaning depending on the prepositional phrase accompanying it. This is an important rule so let me elaborate. Readers of Rashi know to translate the verb in a biblical verse. However, the English translation of a verb depends both on the conjugational mode used as well as the

prepositional phrase used. *Cite to*, *Cite in ears*, may have totally different English translations. Therefore, when translating a verse, *or*, when attempting to understand a Rashi comment on a verse's meaning, always pay attention to the conjugation and prepositional phrase used.

Verse	Request	Leadership	Why discussion necessary
Gn23-16	Abraham requests Chitites to grant a burial plot for his wife	Chitite leadership	Necessary to discuss and bargain over price
Jo20-04	Negligent murderer requests asylum in a murder-refuge city from the city leadership	City leadership	Necessary to explain circumstances of killing and show that it was negligent and not willful or premeditated
2S03-19	Avner requests Benjaminite loyalty to King David. Avner also intends to request Israeli loyalty to King David	Leadership of Benjamin and other Tribes	Discussion is needed in transferring loyalty from former rulership of Saul.

But how can we ascertain the meaning of the prepositional phrase? For this we use the Rashi **Database method** which is fancy language for finding other verses with the phrase *cite in ears*. These days, where Database queries are easy for everyone, all readers of Rashi, whether sophisticated scholars or not, can make the Database query and seek commonality.

The results of the **Database** query are summarized in the table above. In each case, a person probably began the conversation with a political leader with a citation, a prepared set of comments. However, the situation required discussion and bargaining afterwards. Thus, *cite in ears of* means *cite and discuss*. An alternative formulation is *cite and persuade* since in these examples an attempt at persuading leadership is present.

The two items Rashi is commenting on, *cite*, *cite in ears*, now make enormous sense.

- Judah began his talk with a *citation*, *prepared remarks*, as that is the way you proceed when speaking to leadership
- However, Judah was asking a pardon for Benjamin with Judah taking his place. This is non-standard and unusual and requires discussion, persuasion and bargaining.

Rashi, on **Gn45-08a**, [God] *He made me a father to Pharoh and his household*, explains that father means friend and advisor.

To understand this Rashi we again use the Rashi methods. The Hebrew word *av* normally means *biological father*. But that wouldn't make sense here, as you can't become a biological father.

Rashi uses the **Synonym** method of the **Meaning** Method: *Av* can mean *friend and advisor*. Already here we must distinguish between a shallow and deep approach. Did Rashi really look up in a dictionary and find *av* means *friend*?

No! Rashi here uses the **Literary Figures of Speech** method of the **Meaning** method. Words take on new meaning based on standard figures of speech. One important figure of speech is the synecdoche-metonymy figure of speech according to which a word can take on the meaning of something that it is a good example of. For example, *honey* has come to mean *sweet* since honey is a good example of sweetness. Hence, *father*, being a good example of friend and advisor, can come to mean friend and advisor.

So far, we have used two subrules of the **Meaning** method: **Synonym** and **Figures of Speech**. Notice that the **Synonym** method is conclusory, it simply states a conclusion without depth. Contrastively, the **Figures of Speech** method gives depth; it discusses the process of how meaning evolves. We can give

further depth by using a 3rd Rashi rule: The **Database method**. We can simply seek verses where *Av* means *friend* and *advisor*.

Gn04-20,21 provides two examples. *Yaval* was the *father* of *campers*; *Yuval* was the *father* of musicians. In these verses, *father* is used in the sense of *friend and advisor*. Moreover, *father* is also used in the sense of *leader and founder*. This is typical of the **Database method**. Besides justifying the Rashi comment, one also expands the Rashi comment and gives it new meaning and nuances.

Rashi, on **Gn04-11a**, [Joseph speaking to brothers] *Tell my father ... come to Egypt ...less you and everything belonging to you become impoverished*, translates the Hebrew word *tivaresh* as meaning *impoverished*.

Again, we have meaning in this verse, but the Rashi method used is the Grammar method. The Grammar method teaches, as mentioned earlier in this digest, that meaning, English translation, does not just depend on the grammatical root of a word but also depends on i) the conjugational mode, ii) the prepositional connecting phrase used, and several other factors.

This verse affords a wonderful example.

- The underlying root, **Yud-Resh-Shin**, means *inherit* in the Qal, (active) conjugational mode.
- The same root in Piel (intensive) means to cause poverty (to negate one's inheritance) (See Dt28-42a for an example) Piel very often refers to negation of an activity. For example, the Hebrew verb for root, **Shin Resh Shin**, means *to root (to plant)* in the active mode, but means *to uproot* in the intensive mode.
- The same root in the Nifal (passive) means to become poor, become impoverished.

This set of Rashis show how different English translations can be for the *same* root in different conjugational modes. In fact, this root has 3 different meanings in three modes: *inherit*,

become poor, cause poverty.

Rashi on **Gn45-04a**, *Joseph said to his brothers: Please approach me, and they approached. He said, I am Joseph your brother whom you sold towards Egypt*, remarkably says, He saw them embarrassed, so he spoke to them softly; he showed them he was circumcised

Quite remarkable. Where does Rashi get that Joseph showed his brothers that he was circumcised? Also, are we to believe this literally? Does a head of state get undressed and show he is circumcised? Both from a derivational and interpretive viewpoint this does not make sense.

The proper procedure in this case, as in the other cases in this digest, is to use the Rashi rules. Here we use the powerful **Parallelism rule**. Consider, the following two statements of Joseph to his brothers

Verse	Phrase 1	Extra phrase	Extra Phrase
Gn45-03	I'm Joseph		
Gn45-04	I'm Joseph	your brother	that you sold towards Egypt

As my high-school teacher of saintly memory, Rabbi Amnon Haramati always told us, *it is ok to read Rashi but first read the verse*.

Look at the verse! Do you notice that your brother is an extra phrase verse 4 but not verse 3? Up to this point Joseph spoke harshly to his brothers. Now, besides using the word *please* (verse 4) he uses the word *brother* which Rashi describes as a soft tone.

Now look at the last extra phrase. It doesn't say *that you sold to Egypt* but rather *that you sold towards Egypt*. Notice the emphasis, *towards Egypt* not *to Egypt*.

The Rashi is now clear. Joseph was in Egypt. He was a political leader. Egypt was known for its witchcraft and other nefarious practices. In

fact, Joseph tried to convince his brothers that he knew the mysterious arts of divining, as the Bible explicitly tells us, *He sat his brothers, the oldest in the first-born seat, the youngest in the youngest seat, and the men (his brothers) were astonished.* Later on, Joseph says, *What is this act you did (To steal my silver goblet). Don't you know I am a diviner?*

After such a treatment, his brothers would logically think that Joseph had adopted Egyptian methods. For this reason, Joseph says *that you sold towards Egypt vs. that you sold to Egypt.* Joseph thereby indicates that he was on the periphery of Egypt and never in the midst of it. He never got involved in Egyptian practices. Rashi summarizes this with *he showed them he was circumcised.* Here *circumcised* is used in its symbolic sense of *restrictive in sexual activity.* Joseph never even got involved in the Egyptian culture (it is very likely he told them that he didn't come to power through having an affair with Potiphar's wife; rather he came to power through his knowledge of dream interpretation; he was uncircumcised, he was still Joseph.

This is the simple meaning of the verse. Again, the crucial point to emphasize here is method. We are reading the verse first, and Rashi second. In reading the verse, we use the ten lenses of the ten Rashiyomi rules which tell us what to look for.

APPENDIX

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES

A Lightning Summary with Examples

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Rule I-REFERENCE: EXAMPLE: Dt26-05d *We went down to Egypt with a few people* explained by Gn46-27: with 70 people

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Rule 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 (e.g. 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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Rule III-GRAMMAR: EXAMPLE: BA-ah means COMING not CAME(Gn46-26a) **EXAMPLE:** A grammatical conjugation in the Hitpa'el if 1st root letter is Tzade (Gn44-16a)

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Rule IV-PARALLELISM: EXAMPLE: (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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Rule V-CONTRADICTION: EXAMPLE: (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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Rule 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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Rule VII-FORMATTING: EXAMPLE (BOLD indicated by Repetition): Ex12-09c) 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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Rule 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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Rule 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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Rule 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