The RashiYomi NewsLetter
The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 30 #15, Dec. 25, 2018
Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, SheMoTh

(I) *A very interesting question this week which will take up the entire issue.* (II) *We encourage questions from readers; please send inquiries to Rashiyomi@Gmail.Com.* **(III)***Special Free Offer***** *The Koren Steinsaltz publishers are offering a free download of the new Steinsaltz Chumash (Just parshah Shemoth). The url for download is here*

https://mailchi.mp/korenpub.com/steinsaltzshemotdownload11356224

(IV) *Note: The Koren publishers have introduced the idea of citing Chumash in bold and inserting parenthetical clarifying material in non-boldface without parenthesis. Since Rashiyomi frequently makes such insertions, this formatting idea is welcome; it is already used in Rashiyomi (with underlines or different fonts) and we will so continue.*

QUESTION: In a recent issue you stated that DBR means CITE and AMR means to SPEAK. Do you have a database of "Vayomer H' el Moshe leimor"s that generally demonstrate the distinction (hopefully, w/ a practical difference :)) you're making? Taking one example off the top of my head: what about Ex 31:12 calls out for a "Vayomer" rather than a "Vaydabeir" along the lines you're drawing? Maybe that's not such a great "Vayomer", given the immediately-following "V'atah dabeir".... How about Nu 15:37, a/k/a/ the 3rd "Shma" paragraph? Oops, it too is immed. followed by a "Dabeir".... Perhaps we can posit, along the lines you drew, that a "Vayomer" w/out a following "dabeir" is usually a dialogue rather than a statement, but I'm still unsure that there is a difference to infer from the distinction....

The general question brought by this reader is *how* we ascertain **Synonym-Homonym** translations. Recall that the **Synonym-Homonym Method** is a major Rashi method. But *how* do we know how to interpret Biblical Synonyms?

The reader who inquired presents the *easy* or *obvious* way: Simply list a collection of verses where the words have obviously different meanings. An example occurs in last week's Parshah (**Vayechi**). Rashi on **Gn50-15b** states that the Biblical word *lu* has three meanings:

- Upon hearing the Spy report that Israel was unconquerable the Jews started complaining. They began by saying *If only we died in Egypt* Here the Hebrew word *lu* is an interjection expressing a wish *if only it were so* (**Nu14-02a**).
- When discussing the stupidity of anti-Semitic nations God points out *if perhaps they were intelligent, they would see through it – How*

else could one [Semite] *pursue 1000* [Jews] *or two pursue 10,000 unless their God had forsaken them* (**Dt32-30**) Here *lu* means *if* or *possibly.*

- When Jacob died the brothers, apprehensive that Joseph would retaliate for their harsh treatment of him, stated *Perhaps Joseph will hate us and return on us the evil we placed on him* (**Gn50-15b**). Here *lu* means *perhaps.*

So, it seems natural that this is the way to go, this is the way to approach all meaning in the Bible. Simply create a list or database of all occurrences of the word and list the meanings.

Unfortunately, this does not work. Why? Because of the frequency (number of times) of occurrence of Biblical words. There are two problems – *too many* and *too little*.

- Too few occurrences to infer meaning: Suppose, *as frequently happens,* that a biblical word only occurs five or six times (sometimes only once). There may not be enough examples to ascertain meaning. In fact, many controversies over meaning, whether among Jewish commentators or secular scholars, arise, precisely because of the lack of frequency.
- Too many occurrences: Suppose, as happens with **Daleth-Beth-Resh** and **Aleph-Mem-Resh** that words occur several 100 times There are so many occurrences that it becomes impossible to pinpoint a meaning. Almost anything you say is likely to have one or more exceptions casting doubt on all theories.

This doesn't mean that meaning cannot be ascertained in the above two cases. It rather means, that meaning cannot be ascertained by the obvious *make a list, identify all distinct meanings* method. Instead, other methods have to be used.

Today we discuss *how* to ascertain the semantic nuances of **Daleth-Beth-Resh** and **Aleph-Mem-Resh**. As just indicated, we cannot use the *list and identify* method because almost anything we say will have exceptions.

We now list five principles.

Principle 1 – English Translations: The first principle offered is to use *possible* English translations. Why? Because as native English speakers we are familiar with the nuances and bounce of English terms. Even scholars fluent in biblical Hebrew are not necessarily fluent in nuances and subtleties since they do not speak biblical Hebrew on a regular basis (This argument of regular usage is made by Rambam in his preface to the Holiness Order of the Mishnah). Here is another way of formulating this: If you want to know *possible* synonyms and homonyms use an English Thesaurus since you are more likely to understand such nuances.

The idea and importance of using English translations was introduced in my article *Peshat and Derash,* Tradition 1980.

Principle 2 – Meanings of the Underlying roots: Since frequency will not reveal to us the underlying meanings, a study of the underlying roots, **Daleth-Beth-Resh** and **Aleph-Mem-Resh**, might shed light on directions of nuance. These directions may then in turn be concretized by our awareness of English synonyms.

Let us apply this: The root **Daleth-Beth-Resh** means *collection.* Here are 4 examples of meanings of **Daleth-Beth-Resh** where the dominant idea is collection:

- A swarm (collection) of bees.
- Pestilence, a collection of dead bodies
- Rafters, a (simple) collection of logs
- A herd (collection) of sheep

Upon reviewing this list, one notices that the English synonym, *citation,* would correspond nicely since a *citation* is a collection of words. It is cited, the emphasis being on the string of words, with the content being secondary. A citation is conclusory without further discussion

Contrastively, the root **Aleph-Mem-Resh**, also, besides meaning speak, refers to a *branch*. In fact, it can have a verbal form: *God has branched you this day to become his precious nation* (**Dt26-17**).

We are indebted to the Master of Nuance, Rabbi Samson Hirsch, who beautifully presents the many plant-verbal dual meanings in Hebrew

Hebrew Root	Plant World	Verbal World
Ayin Tzade	Tree – fruit producing plant	Advice- fruitful idea
Mem-Lamed-Lamed	An isolated leaf	An isolated word (*holophrastic* describes the speech patterns of frequent one-word sentences)
Aleph-Gimel-Resh	Harvest of plant grains	A letter (*igereth*) – a harvesting of ideas
Samech-Ayin-Pay	Small Branch	*Tangent* – referring to people who *go out on a tangent*

Table 1: Verbal-plant duality (Rav Hirsch)

Continuing our analysis of the root, **Aleph-Mem-Resh**, we see that it means a major branch (for example a major nation as in **Dt-26:17**). Thus **Aleph-Mem-Resh** would mean a major concept or thought. Contrastive to **Daleth-Beth-Resh** it would focus on the underlying idea. In modern Hebrew, *ma'amar* refers to a position paper, the development of a major idea.

Summary: Based on the above we suggest
• **Daleth-Beth-Resh**: *Citation*
• **Aleph-Mem-Resh**: *speech, idea, discussion*
I emphasize that we have only used two principles. This does not lead to a final conclusion but rather a proposed direction to explore. Other principles are needed.

Principle 3 – Sources: In fact, there are four Rashis on **Daleth-Beth-Resh** vs. **Aleph-Mem-Resh**. Rashi had literally 100s of cases but only selected four. They are presented in Table 2.

What emerges from Table 2 is *refinement* of our suggested *dbr-cite—amr-speak* proposal:
• **DBR** means *citation-like* or *conclusory* – it refers to stating a bottom line without discussion
• **AMR** refers to development, exploring branches of ideas, a request for give and take.

Verse-Rashi	Verse Text	Rashi Text	Elaboration of citation-speech distinction
Nu12-01a	*Miriam cited against Moses: ...did God only speak to Moses; he spoke to us also*	*Cited* connotes harshness	The verse continues: *Did God only speak to Moses...he spoke to us also.* There is no discussion but rather a conclusion.
N12-01a (Citing Gn19-07)	Lot when approached by townspeople to homosexually rape his guests states: *He said (Discussed): ...have my daughters; do what you want to them …*	**Aleph-Mem-Resh** connotes petitionary tone	Lot does not state a conclusion: It is wrong to rape; he rather discusses and petitions for alternative ideas such as raping his daughters
Lv10-19a	Aaron answering Moses who blew up at Aaron's sons for not consuming the sin offering: *Aaron cited…they had a death today; should they consume a sin offering*	**DBR** connotes a brazen tone	Aaron here had to contradict Moses his teacher. He does not do this discussionally but rather cites the appropriate law (on the day of death there is no consumption for priests)
Ex32-07a	(Upon the Jews creating the Golden Calf) *God cited to Moses: Go down* (from the mountain)	*Citation* here refer to a harsh tone	God's comments are not discussional. For example, when God confronted Adam for sinning, he began conversationally 'Where/How are you'. He continued conversationally 'perhaps you have eaten…'; contrastively here, God simply speaks in a conclusory manner: *Go-down.* There is no discussion.

Table 2: 4 Rashis on the meaning of AMR/DBR

Principle 4 – Learn/Teach – infer/interpret:
What has emerged from the first 3 principles is that **DBR** and **AMR** have slightly different tones. We can summarize as follows:

- **DBR** means *citation-like, a conclusory statement* without further discussion. Hence, **DBR** is harsher and more brazen in tone since the speaker relies on the cited words rather than on a defense of ideas
- **AMR** means *speak, discussional, conversational,* a suggestion with intent of exploring branches of the idea with a petition for give and take, further exploration and understanding.

It is of utmost importance to remember that all translation works two ways

- We may be using the verse to *infer* or *find out* the meaning of the word
- However, certain verses could be interpreted both ways. In such a case *we apply* the meaning inferred from other verses to this verse to learn and ascertain meaning.

Thus, when Rashi says that a word means something he might either be

- Telling you that you can infer the meaning of the word from the context of the verse, *or*
- Telling you that you can apply the meaning of the word to this new verse context.

In this spirit, we can now do what the reader who inquired was doing. We can review verses and apply our findings. The inquirer presented verses where both **AMR** and **DBR** occur. We could take this to refer to the traditional style of Jewish learning (especially in Talmudic times)

- First, the Rebbe would teach the *Mishnah* by having his students *memorize* (=cite, DBR) the *Mishnah.*
- Then, there would be Talmudic like *discussion* (AMR)*, give and take, exploration* of nuances of the Mishnah.

I would argue that this Talmudic approach was introduced by Moses himself. A famous modern paper (cited in the introduction to the Korain Tanakh) points out that the number of Biblical paragraphs numerically equals the number of days in the Jewish year, leading this scholar to conjecture that the Jews in the Wilderness reviewed the Torah by doing one Parshah each day.

I would piggy-bank on this idea and imagine that the Jews first read (cited, **dbr**!) the biblical Parshah and then discussed (**amar**!) the nuances. This is similar to the reading of the Torah in Talmudic-Geonic times where the Torah was read verse by verse and then interpreted in Aramaic. It is also consistent with the Talmudic method of learning. We might call this method *cite-discuss, dbr-amr.* What the inquirer has discovered is a biblical basis for this pedagogic approach in biblical language.

Principle 5 – Uniqueness of language: The reader may have noticed how we vacillated in our proposed explanation: First we translated **DBR** as *cite,* then we translated as *cite-like, conclusory.* Which is it?

The correct response is that each language is indigenous to its native speakers. There is rarely a 100% correlation between the nuances of words in any two languages.

Thus, the most we can hope for is *useful translations, translations that point to nuances which we ourselves, whose native tongue is not-biblical, do not fully empathize with.*

We hope this issue, which has explored challenges (and rewards) of translations of nuances of biblical words with many occurrences has given the reader insights into the richness of possibility in biblical translation.

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 <u>a few people</u>* explained by Gn46-27: *with <u>70</u> 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 <u>honey</u> as sacrifices* RASHI: *honey* includes any <u>sweet fruit juice</u>

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Rule III-GRAMMAR: EXAMPLE: BA-ah means COMING not CAME(Gn46-26a)
EXAMPLE: A grammatical conjugation in the Hitpael 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 **POSSESSion** & **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 - 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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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