

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 30 #16, Dec. 31, 2018

Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, VaYRaH

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This week's Parshah is full of Parallelisms. So, we use the Parshah to show some quickies on how to apply the very important Parallelism principle. We received no questions this week. We invite questions on the Parshah; email questions to RashiYomi@GMail.Com.

The following charming parallelism was one of two parallelisms uncovered by a computer program, RashiYah, that I wrote (I knew all the others)

Ex06-15 The descendants of Simon Yemuel...and Saul the son of the Canaanith, these are the descendants of Simon

Gn46-10 The descendants of Simon Yemuel...and Saul the son of the Canaanith

Notice that the two verses are identical except for the concluding phrase in **Ex06-15**, *these are the descendants of Simon*.

The essence of the **Parallelism method** is to identify small differences in two verses which are otherwise identical. In the above example, the two verses are identical except that one verse, **Ex06-15**, has an extra concluding phrase *these are the descendants of Simon*.

Notice the emphasis is not on extra words but rather on the contrast that one verse has this phrase, but the other doesn't. The phrase present in only one verse creates an *emphasis*.

One must now attempt to understand the nuances of the emphasis: Why was it emphasized that these are indeed the descendants of Simon? This question seems to

suggest that I might think that one of the children was not a descendant, and hence, the verse has to emphasize that they are descendants.

Upon reading the verse we see that one of the descendants of Simon is called *Saul the son of the Canaanite woman*.

From this emphasis and nuance Rashi, following the sages, infers the following:

- Recall that Dinah, Jacob's daughter (**Gn35**) was raped by a Chivite one of the Canaanite constituent nations
- Also recall that Levi and Shimon saved Dinah from Schem.
- It is plausible that when Shimon came to save Dinah, she complained that she was a rape victim, and no one would marry her; so, Shimon offered to marry her.
- Their first child was named Saul. To emphasize that Shimon was the father, not the rapist, the verse emphasizes *these are the descendants of Shimon*.

Because these inferences are based on nuance, very often there are other explanations which however are consistent with the nuances of the verse. In this case, the argument presented is so logical and compelling (rape victims do worry about getting married and people question who the true father is) that I know of no alternatives

mentioned in the Midrash.

This example shows the characteristics of the **Parallelism** method. It is not based on **Grammar**, but it is not based on pure whim. It is based on nuance. It is important for the serious student of Rashi to understand this connection between nuance, emphasis, and Rashi.

Ex07-19b,c,d The verse relates that the plague of blood was on *the rivers, the irrigation canals, and the ponds*.

Rashi explains the three terms referring to bodies of water using the **Synonym** submethod of the Rashi **Meaning** Method

- River
- Irrigation canal
- Ponds

Rashi says nothing further; he only explains the Synonyms by appropriate translations.

There are several points we have to make on such **Synonym** Rashis.

First: Without Rashi many people read the verse holistically *The plague of blood was on the water bodies* without specifying the types of bodies involved: *Rivers, canals, ponds*. In other words, Rashi affords us nuanced depth into the textual meaning.

Second: Sometimes (though not in this Rashi) Rashi or the Midrash explains *how* the nuances' meaning is known. We therefore offer supplementary material to Rashi by justifying the meanings in terms of biblical roots:

- **Nun-Hey-Resh**, meaning river, would come from the root **Hey-Resh-Hey** (the preliminary **nun** is a weak letter) which means *pregnant*. It would describe a river as a body of water of constant rebirth, the idea being that the water you see this moment is renewed the next moment because of the river's flow. In fact, this causes a dilemma with regard to blessings: Can one make a blessing on the

water of a river prior to drinking? After all, if I make a blessing on an apple, I then eat that apple. But if I make a blessing on river water then the water I drink is different than the water I saw a moment ago. Thus indeed, rivers are water bodies of constant rebirth.

- **Yud-Aleph-Resh**, the irrigation canal, comes from the biblical root, **Aleph-Resh** (vegetables) (again, the **Yud** is a weak letter). **Aleph-Vav-Resh** is known for meaning light and fire. But it also means vegetable and barn. The irrigation canals had the purpose and function of growing **Aleph-Resh**, vegetables.
- **Aleph-Gimel-Mem-Nun**, the pond, comes from the Biblical root, **Gimel-Mem** which means *also* and also refers to *reeds* (The idea being that reeds soak in extra water corresponding to the word *also* soaking in extra meaning). The pond is a place where reeds grow.

Third: We have explained this Rashi as emanating from the **Synonym** method since rivers, canals, and ponds are sort of synonyms. However, a more precise formulation refers to hypernymy and hyponymy. This is a general issue in all of literature. A hypernym refers to a category while the hyponyms refer to members of the category. The simplest example is that dogs, cats, lions, and tigers are hyponyms of the hypernym, animal. As we indicated above, the identification of the nuances in hyponyms is one task Rashi does; Rashi thereby gives richness to a verse that might be understood in terms of a hypernym. In this verse

- Without Rashi we would read this verse hypernymically: *The plague of blood is on the water bodies*
- With Rashi we read it with nuance and richness, hyponymically, *the plague of blood is on the rivers, canals, and ponds*

Fourth: Very often (though not in this case) the Midrash explains why *each* of the terms is needed. This absence of further explanation encourages students of Rashi (such as ourselves) to guess the nuance in each term. Here is my own interpretation; I encourage

other readers to attempt to formulate:

- The *river* was attacked (turned to blood) because the main river of Egypt was the Nile which the Egyptians worshipped as a god
- The *canals* were attacked to emphasize that even the man-made consequences of the god-Nile had to be attacked
- The *ponds* were attacked to underscore that this was not just an attack on the gods but on the Egyptians, who were being deprived of water reserves and supplies.

In summary, this Rashi is a model of hypernymy interpretation. These Rashis are typical. I have mentioned the various interpretive issues that typically go along with such interpretations: *justification, distinction and need, derivation, and hypernemic richness*. We encourage all readers to apply these methods in the many hypernemic Rashis that they encounter.

Ex07-19a *God said to Moses: Tell Aaron to stretch forth his hand with his staff (to bring the plague of Frogs).*

Rashi: Aaron was asked to do this in the plague of blood and frogs (Aaron stretched his staff not Moses) because the Nile river which carried the basket with baby Moses protected him and therefore it would be unfitting for Moses to attack the Nile that did him a favor; instead Aaron was asked to do it.

Here Rashi uses the powerful **Database** method a sister of the **Parallelism** method. The **Parallelism** method typically compares two verses while the **Database** method compares many verses.

The issue raised by Rashi is *Who waived the staff to bring each plague*. True, Rashi only mentions two of the plagues, *Blood and Frogs* but to properly understand and appreciate Rashi we must examine all 10 plagues. This is a simple exercise which we invite the reader to do. The results are presented in Figure 2. Notice

how the examination of all cases greatly expands the Rashi. Rashi was content to mention one or two examples and a general method but left it to the reader to fully explore all cases and apply the principles he mentions.

- 1-Nile to blood: Aaron waived the staff
- 2-Frogs from Nile: Aaron waived the staff
- 3-Lice from Ground: Aaron waived his staff
- 4-Animal mixtures: No staff
- 5-Pestilence of animals: No staff
- 6-Boils from dust heavenly: Moses & Aaron
- 7-Hail from heaven: Moses
- 8-Locusts: Moses
- 9-Darkness from heaven: Moses
- 10-First born: No staff

Figure 2: Who waived staff in each plague.

Figure 3 summarizes Figure 2

Aaron waived staff – Plagues 1,2,3
Moses waived staff – Plagues 7,8,9
Aaron and Moses together waived – Plague 6
No staff waived prior to plague -Plagues 4,5,10

Figure 3: Summary of Figure 2.

Notice how Rashi's explanation appears simplistic now. Rashi says *Aaron did water plagues*; but that is not true since Aaron participated in Plague 6 and also did Plague 3 which did not involve water.

This is a very important principle in Rashi: He sufficed with simplicity; he never got involved in Talmudic type acrobatics; he left that to the reader. Part of the Rashi experience is to fill in for Rashi.

Let us try and fill in for Rashi

- Moses did all plagues where the staff was waived towards heaven
- Aaron did plagues where the Nile or the earth were hit by the plague
- The 6th plague had no staff but dust from the ground was thrown to heaven so both Aaron and Moses participated.
- It is not clear why no staff was used in plagues 4,5, 10.

Rashi now *explains* the distinction. *Moses was left in a boat in reeds of the Nile. Hence the earthly reeds and the Nile river both protected Moses and therefore he didn't hit them.*

Notice how we expanded Rashi's explanation from *the water saved Moses* to *the water and earthly reeds saved Moses* (Initially Moses' mother placed the basket in the reeds; some commentators think the intent was for the mother to go back and feed him daily).

But now we must go a step further: Why is Rashi involved in such sentimentality: After all the Nile is not a living being who feels; why should it matter if Moses hits it. Indeed, the Nile was worshipped as a god and Moses opposed idolatry; why shouldn't he hit the Nile. In fact, Moses identifies himself as attacking the gods of Egypt which includes the Nile.

I think the point here is that Moses and Aaron were symbolically making fun at Pharaoh. It is as if they said: *You Pharaoh enslaved the Jews; you humiliated them and had disregard for their feelings; but our God is the exact opposite; not only do we care for human feelings we even practice kindness by treating the inanimate as if they had feelings and are careful not to engage in any act of hurting.*

In summary, this Rashi is typical. You can't learn Rashi by just reading him. You have to follow his lead. It may require creating lists and carefully expanding what he says. Finally, the icing on the Rashi cake is to understand the Rashi as exposing us to deep and profound moral principles.

Ex08-27b Moses prayed, and mixed animals departed

Ex08-08:09 Moses prayed...the frogs died ...they odored the land

Rashi: Notice from the Parallelism, that the frogs *died* while the mixed animals *departed*. Why the difference? Because if the animals died, the Egyptians would benefit from their fur and hence they departed. On the other hands, the frogs died *as part of the plague* since the

dead frogs filled the land with a horrific odor.

We brought this last Rashi as an example of simple Parallelism: a straightforward difference and a reasonable explanation. No further clarification or research is needed.

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

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

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 **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