

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 30 #18, Jan. 16, 2019 *Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, YithRo*

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Sometimes the RashiYomi approach of this Newsletter differs from the more traditional approach. We give examples in this week's issue. Please send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com

Ex18-01d,
Yithro heard all God did
- To Moses and
- To Israel, His nation,
Rashi states
This shows that Moses is
weighted equally to all of
Israel

The traditional way of taking this Rashi is in terms of

- Content, versus
- Form

That is, we assume in terms of worth (content) Moses is equal to Israel. Such an interpretation looks at Moses' prophecy.

However, Rashi on **Dt02-16:17** as well as on **Ex25-22b** explicitly emphasizes that Moses' prophecy is *only* for the sake of Israel. It follows that Moses is not equal in worth to all of Israel, rather, he is secondary to the interests of the nation.

Furthermore, it is against our tradition to deify or overpraise Moses. True, he is the father of all prophets and is the authority for the Torah, but that doesn't make him equal to all of Israel.

I would take the Rashi on **Ex18-01d** as referring to *form weight*. As can be seen in the Figure above, Moses receives one bullet and

Israel, His Nation, receives a second bullet. In my article, *Biblical Formatting*, I explain that the Bible indicates a *bulleting format* by using a *repeated connected word*. So, the following

- To Moses
- To Israel

with the repeated connecting word *to* indicates to the biblical reader what to the modern reader is conveyed by bulleting.

If the text had said

- To Moses and Israel

without the *repetition* of the word *to*, it would not indicate equal *form weight*.

So Rashi is commenting on the *biblical form*, that the *repeated keyword*, *to*, indicates a *bullet-like form with equal bullet weights to all bullet items*.

This equal bullet-form does not necessarily translate into equal worth as the traditional approach seems to think. It simply translates into *distinct* contributions. For example

- Moses' contribution was giving the Torah
- The Jewish nation received freedom from slavery and nationhood.

On **Ex18-01b, d, e** stating

Yethro

- A. heard
- B. all God did for Moses and Israel
- C. That he took the Jewish people out of Egypt

Rashi makes distinct comments on what he Jethro found out

- A. Splitting of the sea and war on Amalayk
- B. The manna, well, and Amalayk
- C. The Exodus

The traditional Rashi approach seeks to identify why certain examples (sea splitting, Amalayk) are given in A) while other examples (manna, well, Amalayk) are given in B). Interesting distinctions are made.

Just to illustrate the cleverness of these distinctions one Rashi commenter distinguishes between

- Items that last (manna, well, Torah)
- Items that happened in past (sea splitting, Amalayk)

The position of the Rashiyomi Newsletter is that these distinctions are unnecessary. Rashi should always be seen as explaining the text using the 10 principles of Rashi explanation that we have proposed.

Using this approach, I will outline what Yithro heard. I will then show that it fits in *both* with the text, the Rashi, and above all with philosophical considerations intrinsic to the Parshah. Here is an outline:

I: What actually happened so far in Exodus
II: What is the *theme*; what are the *details*
III: *How* does #I relate to Jethro's visit
IV: Can we find I, II, III in Rashi and the Text?

I: What actually happened so far in Exodus

Here is a list

- The Exodus (**Ex1-12**)
- The splitting of the sea (includes burial of Egypt and the Great Song poem) (**Ex13-15**)
- The water provisions (**Ex16**)
- The manna (**Ex16**)
- Another water provision (**Ex17**)
- The war on Amalayk (**Ex17**)

II: What is the *theme*; what are the *details*

The

- Theme is the Exodus
- Details are sea split, water, manna...

Here we use the Rashi **prepositional meaning method**. The word **Caph-Lamed** in Hebrew can mean

- *All*
- *Whole*
- *Parts*

So **Ex18-01d** should be translated that Yithro heard all the *parts* (**Caph-Lamed**) of what God did to Israel that he took them out of Egypt.

Such a Rashi interpretation, using the **Rashi meaning method**, connects the theme and details nicely.

III: *How* does (I) relate to Jethro's visit

Here I cite Rashi. On the opening Biblical phrase *Yithro heard all God did to Moses and Israel*, Rashi does not say

What did he hear?

Rather Rashi says

What did he hear that he came?

Rashi is not interested in what Yithro heard; but rather, what made him come to Moses. To fully understand this, we use the **Rashi Reference method**. Let us look at some other verses in this Chapter which tell us what Yithro really liked about the Jewish God

On **Ex18-10:11c,d**, *Yithro rejoiced on all the good God did to the Jews ...He said ...now I know that the Jewish God is greater than all other gods since in the matter they sinned, He*

(God) did on them, Rashi simply explains

The Egyptians sinned by ordering the drowning of Jewish babies and God retaliated by drowning the Jews in the sea

So what impressed Yithro was not that God was like other gods, a god of power, but rather a God of justice and precise retaliation.

We can extend this idea to other incidents. Other gods are known for being mighty warriors and demanding sacrifices from their subordinates. Not so, the Jewish God:

After taking them out of Egypt, there were no sacrifices to God; rather God provided the Jews food and water. Other gods are not known for being charitable.

We can go further with the victory over Amalayk

Other gods are known for the power and might that they overpower mighty nations with great force. But the Jews won the war with Amalayk not by power but by prayer (It says so explicitly in **Ex16**).

Let us now return to Yethro's statement *The Jewish God is greater than all other gods*, and enumerate what Yithro saw

- Other gods demand sacrifices from subordinates while the Jewish God provided food and water (*manna, well*)
- Other gods enshrine themselves in power while the Jewish God enshrines himself in precise retaliation (*Sea sink*)
- Other gods win wars through power while the Jewish God enables winning of wars through prayer (*Amalayk*)

This is justified by the **Rashi Reference Method**. It is also intrinsic to Rashi's opening

question: What is it he heard that made him come?

IV: Can we find I, II, III in Rashi and the Text?

We have just shown how the Biblical text and Rashi text indicate the approach we are taking. Let us recap

Yithro heard (Rashi: God provides not demands food, water; God wins war through prayer; God enshrines not through power but retaliation) **all parts** (**Rashi Meaning Method**) *of what God did for Moses and the Jews that he took them out of Egypt* (Rashi: The Theme - Rashi actually says *this is the most important*; I have translated *most important* to refer to theme while the other items are details and parts).

Finally, we note that along the way we have examined other Rashis such as **Ex18-09b** *Yithro rejoiced on all the good* (Rashi: Manna, Well, and Torah).

Throughout this approach I have not emphasized the details in the Rashi but rather the details in the verse (which have great overlap with our current text of Rashi). The approach of the Rashi NewsLetter is consistent with the Rashi 10 Methods and with the Biblical text.

We believe this a legitimate way to approach Rashi and the text. Note also the philosophic benefit; we learn what is important in the Exodus; not the power but the spirituality and justice.

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)

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

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.

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

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)

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

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.

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