

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#2, Mar. 21th, 2019 *Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, SheMiNi*

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*We need questions! Please **send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com** Today I present an advanced use of the Rashi Reference method. My original Rashi Newsletters (and the current website) still call Rashi the King of Databases. The Rashi on which this is based occurs in this week's Parshah. I will also review Rashi comments where it appears that Rashi is milking a word's nuance whereas the real Peshat comes from elsewhere. This issue is a must for those who wish to see how all Rashis are the simple spontaneous reading of the verse, the Peshat.*

Biblical Text: Lv11-43:44

Do not abominate your souls with crawling [non-kosher] crawlers; do not remove the purity of your souls with swarming creatures *because* I am the Lord your God who *raised* you from Egypt.

Rashi (abridged and rewritten)

The School of Rabbi Ishmael taught abstention from non-kosher foods is sufficient to justify the Exodus since the verses used *raised you from Egypt* rather than *took you out of Egypt*

This Rashi applies the **Database Method**. To fully understand it we present it in steps.

Step 1: There are 613 biblical commandments. Some of these commandments occupy verses while others occupy paragraphs.

Step 2: Many commandments are simply stated without reason. Others are stated with some type of reason such as the commandment to observe a holiday to commemorate a historical event. We then to think that the Exodus from Egypt is the reason for many

commandments. But that is because we say the *Shma* prayer which contains the Tzitzith commandment which exhorts us to observe the commandment *because God took us out of Egypt*.

Step 3: We can create a Database query. How many of the 613 commandments actually mention the Exodus? This can be done provided you had a database that tagged verses by their commandment number. The remarkable answer is that only a dozen commandments mention Exodus.

Very often the mention of the Exodus is justifiable and intuitive. For example, the Bible exhorts us not to abuse non-citizens *because you were non-citizens in Egypt and know how painful abuse is*.

Step 4: The genius of Rabbi Ishmael is to perform a nested query. Take the results of the 1st query, the dozen commandments which mention the Exodus. Now perform a second

query (this query can be done with modern databases such as Sequential Query Language (SQL).) Query the Exodus-justifying commandments for rare use of verbs denoting the Exodus.

This may sound too sophisticated for a query, but I will show you how it is done. In fact, queries like are frequent.

For each mention of the Exodus from Egypt there is some verb describing the Exodus. It is routine in databases besides the words used to tag the words with their grammatical function. This is not that hard but does require work.

Most databases allow an artificial intelligence feature. This sounds fancy but all it means it is allowing a collection of synonyms which refer to *Exodus and leaving*. For this one can use a Thesaurus. One can then make a histogram showing the frequencies of various verbs. Finally, one can compute average frequencies and average deviations and identify as *rare* those frequencies which are several standard deviations below the average. This is all fancy, but it simply means that if almost every verse uses the language *take out - I am the Lord, thy God, who took you out of Egypt* – and one verse uses *raise – I am the Lord, thy God, who raised you from Egypt* – then the term *raise* has significance. It is intended by the Author, whether the Author is human or Divine to indicate nuance. (The above mumbo jumbo on averages and average deviations is simply to show that modern databases can perform this activity if they are set up properly).

Step 5: Now we have to explain the Database anomaly? Why does the Laws of Kashruth use the term *raise*? Rabbi Ishmael answers, that abstention from eating crawling creatures and abstention from non-Kosher animals is sufficient to avoid the Egyptian techniques used to degrade us. This subtle nuance is indicated by the rare use of *raise*.

This is a classical application of the very

powerful, beautiful, yet intuitive **Database method**.

Step 6: We have left to admire Rashi and Rabbi Ishmael. Neither of them had computers laptops or database. Yet by pure thought they could notice an exception (raise vs take out) to an exception (mention of the Exodus in a commandment. This is the essence of commenter genius.

Biblical Text Lv11-46:47

This the law of [kosher] the [kosher] animal and bird, living creatures in water, creatures swarming on earth *To differentiate* between not pure and pure; between animals which can be eaten and animals which cannot be eaten.

Rashi: It is not enough to know the kosher animals, birds, and fish. Rather you have to be totally proficient in them.

To fully appreciate this Rashi and its adherence to the *Peshat* we show the approaches of the Malbim and Rashiyomi.

Step 1: Malbim: Malbim, uses the **Rashi Meaning-Synonym Method**. Did you know that Malbim actually wrote a sort of thesaurus explaining the nuances of many Synonyms? Malbim discusses the unique meanings and nuances of the biblical word used, *differentiate*, to show that it requires expertise and knowledge.

Malbims' explanation is not enough: The Malbim frequently leaves us with a sort of sour taste. On the one hand who can dispute that *differentiate* does mean knowledge of nuances? On the other hand, is that what the text is saying?

Step 2: To clarify the Malbim as stated I cite a famous principle of Rashi (Pesachim 6): *All biblical verses are meant to be generalized*. Here is a good example: **Ex21** speaks about the payment of damages when a person's *ox* gores. Suppose their *dog* causes damage. Do we argue

ala Malbim that *ox* means *ox* not *dog* and therefore you are not responsible? Certainly not. Rather we argue that *ox* is an example and a person is responsible for damages from any animal.

So, we see that biblical verses were *intended* to be generalized! How then can Malbim state that we interpret the verse based on the specific nuances. That contradicts biblical style which requires generalization.

Step 3: Rashiyomi approach: We don't believe that this Rashi can be adequately defended with the Rashi **Meaning Synonym Method**. Instead, we advocate using the **Parallelism Method** uncovering a simple rule of style.

The rule of style can be inferred from the examples presented in Figure 3 below.

Lv07-37: These are the offering laws
Lv12-07 These are the childbirth laws
Lv15-31 These are laws of sexual issues
Lv14-54 These are leprosy laws <i>to teach...</i>
Lv13-59 These...clothing leprosy laws <i>to purify</i>
Lv11-46 These are kosher law <i>to differentiate</i>

Figure 3: Two styles by which to close a collection of chapters. The verdant style (top row) lists the listing of topics. The violet style (bottom row) besides listing the list also encourages application, teaching, and differentiation.

In each case the bible has spent several chapters discussing laws. For example, in the case of childbirth laws the bible discusses birth of a male and birth of a female. It then summarizes by listing the list! *These are the laws of childbirth for a male or female.*

In the case of Lv07-37 the bible is closing a 7-chapter discussion of offerings. It lists the types discussed: *elevation, satisfactions (minchah), sin offering, guilt offering.*

However, the violet examples (2nd row) differ from the verdant examples (1st row). In the violet examples (2nd row) besides listing the list there is an added verse: *to teach, to differentiate, to purity or declare impure.*

The style conclusion is simple:

- For certain laws the Bible wants you to be aware of general categories
- For other laws the Bible wants you to be actively involved in expertise in applying them

This is intuitive. After all, if you eat 3 meals daily you should know how to differentiate between various laws.

Step 4: We now return to our verse in **Lv11**. Notice how our verse using *differentiate* parallels other passages using *teach, purify*. The message is clear:

The Rashi content is

- (Malbim) Not based on nuances of a particular word
- (Rashiyomi) Based on the stylistic emphasis on some type of more detailed knowledge whether it is *teach, purify, differentiate.*

In conclusion we see here the difference between

- The Malbim: **Meaning-Synonym Method**
- Rashiyomi: **Parallelism-Grammar-Style Method.**

We believe this approach makes these Rashi comments more plausible and more natural.

Using this understanding of Rashi which emphasizes the *general* tone of *differentiate, teach, purify*, we can understand Rashi's next two comments

The verse should have said *between an ox and donkey*. But these are already mentioned. Why then does it say *to differentiate between the pure and not-pure*. For example: If an animal is Kosher but only part of the trachea was cut it is impure and cannot be eaten.

The verse should have said *between dears and arods*. But these are already mentioned. Why then does it say *to differentiate between the edible animal and the non-edible animal*? For example: If a Kosher animal was properly slaughtered but found to be a *trayfah* (roughly, an animal with a fatal defect like a punctured lung), then it may not be eaten.

Step 1: Again, superficially, Rashis like this can give one a sour taste. Is Rashi really claiming that the verse is talking about an improperly slaughtered animal or a properly slaughtered animal found to be a *trayfah*? Is this the *peshat* of the verse? If not, isn't Rashi simply *reading derashoth into the verse*? I thought Rashi was only giving *Peshat*, the simple meaning of the verse. How could such obscure laws be the simple interpretation of the verse?

Step 2: We can answer this using the preceding analysis. I enumerate the bullet points, citing Rashi and showing how he should be interpreted.

1. *The verse should have said between an ox and donkey.*

The explanation of this is simple. Rashi is referring to the distinction between the verdant and violet summaries in Figure 3. The standard summary is a listing of a list.

2. *These are already mentioned.*

Rashi here is not referring to the chapters where they are mentioned. He is referring to the previous verse, *This is the Torah of Kosher laws: Animals and birds...* We need not read too much into his selection of different animals (ox, donkey). Rashi's point is that we expect just a list style (green in Figure 3) but a violet style (*differentiate, teach*) is used.

3. *Teaches you about a kosher animal that wasn't properly slaughtered or that was slaughtered and found to be a trayfah.*

Rashi here is not *exhausting* the verse meaning with these examples. Rather, he is *illustrating* the verse meaning with these examples. The actual verse refers to *any and all types of differentiation and teaching*. Rashi simply gives a few examples. If Rashi is seen as given *example* rather than *explanations* there are no longer any problems. Rashi's main point is that this is a violet-summary (listing the list and differentiate/teach) vs a verdant summary (listing list). Rashi gives examples of how one can have expertise.

Step 3: In passing this is intuitive: After all,

why should the man in the street have to know the expertise details of offerings. The priests have to know that. But all Jews should be familiar with laws of Kashruth since they eat daily.

We hope the examples in this issue shed light on how a proper Rashi interpretation can make a verse bouncy and natural without pickiness or reading into. We also showed how our commenters had database minds.

Praise Be Him Who Chose Them & Their Learning

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