

# The RashiYomi NewsLetter

## The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#11, May 30th, 2019 *Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, BaMidBaR*

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*This issue devoted to questions sent in. Please feel free to send questions on Rashi to [RashiYomi@GMail.Com](mailto:RashiYomi@GMail.Com)*

I have a question on Parshat Behar.

The Torah says *the 10th day of the seventh month, Yom Hakippurim*

Rashi asks why the Torah tells us it's Yom Kippur? We should know that.

Rashi answers that the Torah is teaching us that the shofar blowing for Yovel (the 50<sup>th</sup> year) may be done on the Sabbath whereas the shofar blowing on Rosh Hashana may not be done on the Sabbath except in the presence of a court.

That is obviously only a verse mnemonic (asmachta), since the blowing of shofar is not Biblically prohibited (the prohibition of playing musical instruments is only Rabbinic)

So, I have two questions:

(1) Why would Rashi suggest that as the answer to the question, if it could not possibly be the original intent of the verse, and

(2) What is the "real" answer to his question?

We will devote the issue to this question. This will take us into the study of Parallelism. Recall that the **Parallelism Method** is a major Rashi method. We will have an opportunity to study it and see how Rashi used it.

Some scholars think that Parallelism is a modern method anticipated by Rashi's

grandson the Rashbam (This is based on an erroneous interpretation of Rashi to Ex15:06.) Some editions see Rashi as crediting his grandson the Rashbam with Rashi's awareness of the **Parallelism Method**. Actually, Rashi always used the **Parallelism method** but Rashbam introduced him to a special type of Parallelism called staircase parallelism.

We need not go into this here. It suffices to explain the verse. I also point out that one of the great Rashi interpreters, the Mizrachi, provides everything we say today (with one exception) in this posting. However, we are formulating this Mizrachi in terms of parallelism. The Mizrachi himself asks the two questions that the inquirer asked. With this background we begin by presenting the verse, showing its nuances, and how Rashi dealt with them.

### I: The Verse Lv25-09

Blast [sing]	A staccatoed shofar	In the 7 <sup>th</sup> month, 10 <sup>th</sup> day	
Blast[plural]	A shofar	On Yom Kippur	Throughout all the land
		Sanctify the 50 <sup>th</sup> year	
		Declare freedom	In the land to all inhabitants

We immediately see the differences emphasized

by the parallelism.

- I. Why is the first half of the verse in the singular while the 2<sup>nd</sup> half is in the plural (In English “you” is both singular and plural while in Hebrew the words for singular and plural you are different)
- II. Why *staccatoed shofar* vs. *shofar*
- III. What is the significance of 7<sup>th</sup> month 10<sup>th</sup> day vs. *Yom Kippur*
- IV. Why is *throughout the land* mentioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

## II: The Real Answers

Corresponding to questions I-IV, we have answers I-IV.

- I. The commandment to blow shofar falls on both the individual and community; hence the singular and plural.
- II. The word *staccatoed* is the best English translation I could find to the Hebrew *Teruah*. It refers to a bullet-like set of short notes (da da da da). Whereas a shofar blast refers to one long sound (da..) From the sequence of words *shofar – staccatoed – shofar* we infer that the blowing should consist of i) a long blast ii) a bullet like blast, following by a iii) long blast.

We can find further amplification of this using the Rashi **Reference Method**. **Nu11-04:06** speaks about the following blasts and their meanings:

- a. Long blast *means* attention nation
- b. Bullet like blast *means* bustling activity (to gather up and prepare to move)
- c. Terminal long blast *means* actually start the movement

The *long blast-bullet-long blast* sequence was used when Moses wished to announce that the Jews must pack and go to a new place.

Rav Hirsch emphasizes the symbolism provided by the verse:

- d. Long blast = attention
- e. Bullet like = activity
- f. Long blast = Actual attention and moving.

Rav Hirsch points out the Jubilee is also a moving (in the social status sphere)

- Long blast = attention nation
- Bullet like = activity to pack
- Long blast = Actual movement; in this case not physical movement but e.g. slaves move to freedom, sold land reverts to owners.

To summarize: The *long-staccato-long* (the actual sequence used in Hebrew and the corresponding more elaborate sequence in Numbers) indicates a transfer either in physical or social position.

III: As the Mizrachi notes “7<sup>th</sup> month 10<sup>th</sup> day” and “Yom Kippur” are simply two names for the same thing. It is characteristic of parallelism to repeat with different verbs. For example, in the morning prayers we say

- I will bless **You** *every day*
- I will praise **your name** *forever*

In this example, *ble*ss and *pr*aise are two words for the same concept; similarly, *You* [God] *and Your Name* are two words for the same concept; finally, *every day* and *forever* are two names for the same concept.

Thus far is what the Mizrachi says. I would however add. Modern Parallelism theory as explained by James Kugel in his book, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, argues that Parallelism doesn’t just blindly repeat; rather it uses climax. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the verse *builds* and *elaborates* on the first part of the verse.

Rashi actually used this climactic idea of Parallelism. In the table above, I have shown the continuation of the verses. We have the following parallel ideas

- 7<sup>th</sup> month 10<sup>th</sup> day
- Yom Kippur
- Sanctified 50<sup>th</sup> year
- Freedom to slaves

We easily see the climax here. It is not just the 7<sup>th</sup> month and 10<sup>th</sup> day but is part of the atonement process. Just as the Jews on Yom Kippur were told that the horrible sin of the Golden calf involving murder and adultery were forgiven, so too, slaves on the holy 50<sup>th</sup> year, are told that their monetary and economic sins are forgiven, and they are free.

IV: *Throughout the land* is mentioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half for the reason mentioned in difference #I above. The shofar blowing is both communal by the court and community based *throughout the land*.

### III: How did Rashi communicate the answer

Now that we have seen

- The parallelism
- The meaning of the nuances

We can begin to see what Rashi did.

Rashi states as follows:

Why does it say *Yom Kippur* after it says 7<sup>th</sup> Month 10<sup>th</sup> day? Don't I know that *Yom Kippur* falls on the 7<sup>th</sup> Month, 10<sup>th</sup> day?

But this teaches you that shofar blowing on the 50<sup>th</sup> year [overrides the Sabbath] is in *all the land* [and the court] while shofar blowing on Rosh Hashana [overrides the Sabbath] is a court [decreed] event; the concept of *all the land* is not mentioned.

To fully understand this notice how I bracketed several phrases in Rashi. What Rashi really wished to say is the following

Why does it say *Yom Kippur* after it says 7<sup>th</sup> Month 10<sup>th</sup> day? Don't I know that *Yom Kippur* falls on the 7<sup>th</sup> Month, 10<sup>th</sup> day.

But this teaches you that shofar blowing on the 50<sup>th</sup> year is both in *all the land* and the court while shofar blowing on Rosh Hashana is a court decreed event; the concept of *all the land* is not mentioned by Rosh Hashana.

My opinion is that Rashi wished to tie together the various parallel nuances:

- The 50<sup>th</sup> year has a singular-plural form (first half, singular; 2<sup>nd</sup> half plural)
- The 50<sup>th</sup> year explicitly mentions *throughout the land*.

As we can see these are differences I and IV in our list of Parallelism differences presented in Section II. The *Yom Kippur*- (7<sup>th</sup> month, 10<sup>th</sup> day) is difference III. Rashi is explaining that the 50<sup>th</sup> year is *both*

- A court declared event
- A community event like Yom Kippur where each and every slave is freed, and all land owners are "forgiven debt" and receive their sold land.

Rashi however did not discuss the technical *blast-staccato-blast*.

This is my opinion of what Rashi wanted to say.

### IV: But what did Rashi actually say

Several times I have explained that Rashi may have a deep answer but *express* that deep answer using a pun or other silly mnemonic.

In this verse, with its subtle singular-plural differences Rashi suffices with *expressing* the difference using the Rabbinic injunction of blowing shofar. Rabbinically, shofar is *blown everywhere* on the 50<sup>th</sup> year but not blown *everywhere* on Rosh Hashana (which falls on a Sabbath). This is a simple well-known rabbinic

law which helps the reader of Rashi to see the more detailed concepts of

- Singular – plural
- Court vs community
- Forgiveness of debts and slave status

Rashi was using the Rabbinic commandment as mnemonic device to facilitate communication of the 4 parallel differences.

Why am I so sure of this? First, the Mizrachi explains it this way. But secondly and deeper, Rashi frequently takes a sound grammatical idea that is technical and expresses it in a way that it is easy to remember. In this case the idea of using a Rabbinic prohibition which applies to Rosh Hashana but not to the 50<sup>th</sup> year is a cute way of weaving together the many aspects of the verse.

As we go through the Rashi cycle this year I will bring more examples of where Rashi used silliness like puns to communicate deep ideas.

Just last week we saw Rashi as a Bais Yaakov teacher. Instead of mentioning a sophisticated database query (about 90 times it says *God spoke to Moses* but here it says *God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai*) Rashi uses a silly child like riddle to help the reader remember it “What does the 7<sup>th</sup> year laws have to do with Mount Sinai.” The purpose here is not to *explain* the text but to make sure it is remembered.

Finally, I note that the reason Shofar blowing is prohibited on Rosh Hashana is not so much that it is a musical instrument but rather a concern that someone might accidentally transfer the shofar in the public domain to learn how to blow. Since my whole point was not about the reasons for the prohibition but why Rashi chose to explain a biblical verse with a rabbinic concern, I, (like Rashi!), chose a simpler formulation of the Rabbinic prohibition to get my idea across.

*Praise be Him Who Chose Them and 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 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