

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#12, Jun 6th, 2019
Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, NaSoH

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This issue devoted the orphan Rashi method, the Reference Rule. We show its power in last week's parshah, this week's parshah, and next week's Parshah. Please feel free to send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com

A Happy and Joyous Shavuoth holiday to all of the RashiYomi Family. Please find at the following URL a comparison of the two versions of the Ten Commandments, one in Shemoth, Exodus, and one in Deuteronomy, Devarim, as well as the nuances inferred from their differences.

<http://www.RashiYomi.com/shavuoth.pdf>

I: The Rashi Reference Method

The **Rashi Reference method** does not seem that sophisticated. After all, it simply comments on one verse by citing another verse.

However, the idea of combining *two* texts requires executive function the advanced mental capacity to multi-task. Thus, despite its simplicity, the Rashi Reference method, is quite sophisticated.

Very often Rashi does not cite a reference: This does not mean he was unaware of it; rather he relied on the teacher to relay this other verse citation to his students; Rashi himself may then concentrate on further support of his point which is not obvious in the referenced verse.

Proof of the power of this method comes from the Passover Haggadah. The sages who wrote this Haggadah, has a single opportunity, over one evening, to interest people at the Passover meal with exegetical methods. They, however, chose only one method. The verse, *My father [Jacob] was a wandering Aramaean; he descended to Egypt and became very great...*, that verse, is expounded in the Haggadah, by citing a Reference verse for each phrase in this verse. So, the method is important

Today we will study the **reference method** in three parshahs, last weeks, this weeks, and next weeks.

II: Question on Lv25-01

Two weeks ago, in Volume 31 Number 9, we discussed the Rashi on **Lv25-01**, *God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai...to say over*. There we pointed out, that most verses say *God spoke to Moses to say over, while here at Lv25-01, it says God spoke to Moses, at Mount Sinai, to say over*. The emphasis on the underlined phrase, at Mount Sinai, an emphasis highlighted by the parallel contrast,

But a stronger more immediate proof exists. Both **Lv26-46** and **Lv27-34** explicitly state that the commandments of Leviticus were given at Sinai.

Lv26-46

- 1) These are
- 2) The statutes, commandments, and Toroth,
- 3) which God gave between Him and the Jewish people,
- 4) *at Mount Sinai*

Lv27-34

- 1)
- 2) These are
- 3) the commandments
- 4) that God commanded the Jewish people
- 5) *At Mount Sinai*

As can be seen both verses emphasize the Sinaitic origin of the Leviticus commandments. Why then did Rashi resort to the Rashi **Parallelism** or Rashi **Database Method** when he could have simply cited another verse which was in fact right nearby. (In passing, this question was raised by the Rabbi of the synagogue where I lein weekly).

III: Why Rashi overlooks the Reference Method

My opinion is that Rashi intended his commentary primarily for teachers who would then teach their students (This is called the train *the trainer* method).

Consequently, if there were two proofs or two defenses for a Rashi comment, Rashi would

- Leave the easy defense for the instructor, who probably knew about it, to teach his students
- Rashi, in his commentary, would only comment on the more sophisticated method thus showing multiple support for an idea.

IV: Other Examples of this Approach

A similar approach is used by the Malbim on **Lv01-05**. **Lv01** deals with the elevation offering.

The elevation offering has many details and procedures. Certain procedures may be done by anyone while certain procedures can only be done by Priests.

The idea that non-Priests helped with the slaughtering is explicitly stated in **2C30-17**. This uses the Rashi Reference method. Rashi however does not mention this. Malbim in his commentary points out the verse.

At **Lv01-05** also, Rashi brings the more sophisticated proof leaving the easier proof to the teacher of the students. The more sophisticated proof involves a comparison of sentence subjects in **Lv01**. This is presented in the table below. Notice how

- The subjects change from *person* to *priest*. We have clarified this with two different color backgrounds. Each line has
 - The grammatical subject italicized
 - The offering activity underlined
- Hence the Rashi comment, *priesthood is only Required from receiving the blood and after*

We can now see the Malbim's point.

- The use of the Rashi Reference Method to justify non-priests such as Levites slaughtering is obvious
- Therefore, Rashi brought to our attention the grammatical proof

- When a *person* offers an offering
- [you] offer your offering from cattle and fenced animals
If the offering is an elevation offering, then
- [you] offer it as an unblemished male
- [you] bring it to the Temple to be pleasing for God
- [you] lean your hand on the head of the offering...
- [you] slaughter the cattle before God
- The *Priests* receive the blood
- [they] throw the blood on around the altar
- [he] strips the offering skin
- [he] cuts it up to pieces
- The *priests* place a fire on the altar
- [they] arrange wood on the altar
- The *priests* arrange the cuts and head...
- [he] washes in water the intestines ...
- The *priest* then offers it on the altar

V: God Spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai #2

There are about 100 verses introducing paragraphs of the form *God spoke to so and so* ... Most of them are of the form *God spoke to Moses* But two of them are *God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai*... One of these two occurs at **Lv25-01**. The other occurs at **Nu03-14**.

Rashi does comment on **Lv25-01** but does not comment on **Nu03-14**. Why? This too is an important principle in understanding Rashi. *Rashi may have an explanation of a certain verse phenomenon which occurs in several verses. Rashi may then explain this phenomenon on each verse; or, Rashi may explain it once and leave it to the teachers for whom he is writing to apply his explanation to the other verses.*

Let us recall the reason **Lv25-01** has the added underlined phrase *God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai*. It has this to emphasize that all laws, including the 7th year Sabbatical laws, were given at Mount Sinai at the Decalogue,

even though those laws find amplification either in Leviticus or in Moses farewell speech. The reason the 7th year law was picked was because it is a law that is simultaneously mentioned in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy thus proving that the Law is Sinaitic.

Let us apply this reasoning to **Nu03-14** which deals with the census of the Levites and the replacement of the Levites by the firstborn. This replacement of firstborn by Levites is a later development not originally intended by God; the replacement happened because the firstborn did sin with the idolatrous golden calf, but the Levites did not sin; hence, God gave the priestly rights of the firstborn to the Levites.

But if this was not originally intended by God, perhaps the order of replacement did not happen at Sinai! It is precisely for this reason that **Nu03-14** emphasizes that the replacement of the Levites by the firstborn happened at Sinai.

The biblical narrative also confirms this. Recall that Moses ascended Mount Sinai three times, starting on Shavuoth and ending on Yom Kippur when the Jewish people were forgiven. During this 120-day period, the Jews sinned with the Golden calf, Moses organized disciplinary action, implemented by the Levites who did not sin, and went back up to Sinai to obtain the 2nd tablets.

So, we see, that the *reason* for the Levites replacing the firstborn occurred during the 120 days during which Moses was on Sinai. But then it is very reasonable that the *consequent* order of replacement of firstborn by Levites also happened during this time. This in fact is the reason that **Nu03-14** states *God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai*.

Again, my opinion is that Rashi wrote his commentary for teachers using a *train the trainer* mode. Therefore, Rashi relied on these teachers who themselves were scholars to supplement verses with missing Rashis, with Rashi comments from other verses. Rashi also

relied on these teachers to fill in more obvious explanations of Rashi comments such as use of the **Rashi Reference Method**.

VI: Levite service of i) service and ii) Transport

Nu04-47a,b

[Levites] *From age 30 until 50, all those who come to serve*

- *Service of service*
- *Service of Transport*

For the Desert Temple.

Let us first explore Rashi's literal explanation

- *Service of Service* refers to musical accompaniment to Temple activities with cymbals, lyre, and violin. This is a service (musical) which supports another service (Temple offerings) and hence it is called a service of a service
- *Service of Transport* means like it sounds [that is, transporting the Temple]

VII: Service for another service?

Rashi does not appear straightforward and bouncy. It sounds like Rashi is being picky on the phrases used: *A service [music] which supports another service [offering]*. Is this the simple *peshat*, naturally flowing meaning, of the verse? Even if it is, is Rashi's explanation a justification of this assertion?

In fact, it is Rashi's like this which *turn people off*. Rashi appears homiletic, picky on words, and fanciful. We therefore propose another explanation for Rashi and then explain the Rashi

VIII: Rashi Reference Method

Quite simply we can use the Rashi Reference Method, the theme of this posting. We can ask: What does a routine database inquiry show about Levite service.

This sounds like a very labor-intensive task. But it isn't. Searching for the word *Levites* as a

whole or part word we find only 255 occurrences throughout the Bible. That is not much to read. It takes about 15 minutes. And the results?

- **2C34-12, 2C29-25, 2C20-19** and many other verses explicitly state that the Levites specialized in music, song, and poetry.
- Our own chapter, Nu04, speaks about the Levites transporting.

So, there you have it. It is the Rashi Reference Method, not some pickiness on phrases that teaches us that Levites were involved in song.

We have already in previous sections of this posting pointed out that Rashi may leave the obvious to teachers and fill in the harder tasks.

We also understand the Rashi comment

Service of transport - as it sounds

Since that is written write here in our text.

VIII: So, what was Rashi Adding?

What then was Rashi doing when he explained

This is a service (musical) which supports another service (Temple offerings) and hence it is called a service of a service

Rashi was explaining that *service of service* is an idiom. Idioms recall are figures of speech. They refer to collections of words which mean something different than the combined meaning of all the words. There was no word in Medieval Hebrew for idiom. Hence Rashi could not come out and say *this is an idiom* referring to musical service.

In numerous places, Rashi indicates that something is an idiom. In each case, Rashi explains how the collection of words came to mean something transcending the combined meaning. Here Rashi explains that probably at

some early stage people would tell the Levites that they performed the service nicely: The Levites would reply that the Priests, not the Levites, perform the service. So, the people coined a term, service of service to complement the Levites and distinguish it from the actual offering service.

Rashi's comments are speculative on the origin of the Idiom. However, the simple meaning of the biblical narrative is that Levites perform two tasks *and* from reviewing the references in the Bible we know that these two tasks are transport and music.

Note finally, that the bible uses the introductory key word *service*: It says *service of service* and *service of transport*. In my article Biblical Formatting, I explain that repeated keywords function in biblical Hebrew like bullets in English; they itemize each item. So, by saying

- Service of service
- Service of transport

The bible indicates that two types of Levite Tasks are being done. We know what these services are because we reviewed the 255 occurrences of Levite in the Bible and only found two services. Finally, Rashi speculates on how the bouncy term *service of service* came to mean musical performance.

In terms of rules:

- The use of repeating keywords indicating bullets comes from the **Rashi formatting method**
- The use of Idioms comes from the **Rashi Meaning-Figure-of-Speech method**.
- The discovery of Levite tasks is done by the **Rashi Reference method**.

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*

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

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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