

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#18, July 18th, 2019 *Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, Pinchas*

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Rashi frequently uses puns to explain the Peshat or simple meaning of the text. But how can a pun be classified as the simple meaning of the text? This issue will answer this question. Please feel free to send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com

A man and woman, Abraham and Rose, are on a dinner date. During the meal, pointing to a plate of raisins, Abe says

Pass me the Roisens

I: Puns as Author Intended

The purple table above gives an example of a metaplasma, a pun based on deliberate misspelling and mispronunciation.

Clearly, everyone hearing this conversation understands Abe as simultaneously asking

- Pass me the raisins
- (Also) Pass me yourself (Rose)

In my article, *Biblical Puns*, **Jewish Bible Quarterly**, 34(3), 2006, I argue that the correct definition of *Peshat* is author-intended. Since we hear Abe's sentence *pass me the Roisens* as a deliberate request for both raisins and Rose herself, the *Peshat* of this sentence simultaneously points to two messages.

One could argue that *pass me the raisins* is the *Peshat* while *pass me yourself* (Rose) is *derash*. You could do that. But what would you accomplish? You would then have to additionally start explaining which *derash* is author-intended and which isn't.

A much cleaner way of approaching this is to

define *Peshat* as *all meanings that are clearly author intended*. This is what I suggested.

And why am I so certain that Abe intended this? Perhaps he didn't intend this? Perhaps we are reading this into the text? But the point here is that by using a deliberate misspelling and mispronunciation, we are assured that Abe did intend this.

Quite remarkably, we see here, that the *Peshat*, according to my definition of author-intent, can include multiple and simultaneous meanings!

The view that *puns* are author intended is held by a variety of secular authors on secular literature. They see these puns as following grammatical rules and intended by the author.

I would further argue that the reason we accept as *peshat* that

- A Hebrew verb conjugation ending in *ti* (e.g. *Shamarti*) refers to *I* (I watched) while
- A verb conjugation ending in *ta*, (e.g. *Shamarta*) refer to *you* (you watched)

is because we were taught this way in elementary schools and practiced it sufficiently often till we accepted it as natural. If only are children were taught the grammar of puns in elementary schools and practiced it, they would accept that *puns* are *Peshat* and we would all have a greater appreciation of Rashi.

II: An Example from This Weeks Parshah

Name of Tribal Ancestor	Name of Tribe
Numel	<i>HaNeMuely</i>
Tzfon	<i>HaTzefony</i>
Shaylah...	<i>HaShayLany...</i>
Yimnah	HaYimnah

Nu26-05:50 contains the names of about 5 dozen grandchildren of Jacob, tribal ancestors of the various tribes and sub clans.

- For all but one, the tribal name adds a
 - he* prior to the name and a
 - yud* after the name
 as shown in the red font above
- For one exception, Yimnah, there is no *yud* added after the name. By coincidence, this is the only tribal clan with a *yud* and *hey* already in the name. This is shown in the green font on the purple line.

Here is the crucial inference Rashi is making

The facts that i) one in 5 dozen tribes has a yud and hey in their name and also ii) that this is the one tribe to which a hey and yud were not added shows intent. What type of intent? Intent of pun. The letters Yud-Hey spell Yah, the name of God.

With this background that

- Peshat* means author-intended
- A one in 5-dozen anomaly of a name with a *yud-hey* which spells the name of God,

we can see, understand, and regard as *Peshat* the actual Rashi text.

Because the nations would tease the Jews: *You were slaves in Egypt. If your masters owned you, they also owned your wives. Why the emphasis on genealogy?*

Therefore, each tribal clan has the name of God, *Yud-hey* in it.

This is hinted at by **Ps122-04** *The Tribes of Yah (God) are testimony to Israel.* God's [name] testifies that they kept their genealogy.

Therefore, in all names except *Yimnah* (who already had a *yud* and *hey* in his name) the tribal clan's name was formulated with an extra *yud* and *hey* to emphasize that the parenthood was Divine (without illegitimacy).

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 offerings* 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 **POSSESSION & 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