

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#20, August 1st, 2019 *Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, DeVaRim*

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*In this issue, we examine a simple Rashi on meaning. We explore the rarely understood Rashi Synonym Method. We show how other verses shed light on meaning. We also show how other Rishonim may shed light on Rashi, something not fully explored. Finally, we show a method advocated by me, the skillful use of English translations. This short but informative issue is a must for anyone who wants to understand Rashi's approach to meaning. **Therefore, please feel free to send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com***

Dt01-27a Biblical Text: [The text speaks about the reaction of the Jews to the spy report]

- You RGNed in your houses and said
- Because of God's hatred for us
 - He took us out of Egypt
 - To surrender us to the Emorites to destroy us

Rashi text:

You RGNed means you slandered. Cf. Prov 18-08 the words of the slanderer are like shattering blows

I: Rashi Synonym Method

As we read the verse and its surrounding verses, we sense some type of opposition

- You didn't acquiesce to go up [to Israel]
- You rebelled the word of God
- You RGNed in your houses
- You said
 - With Hatred, God
 - Took us out of Egypt
 - To surrender us to the Emori
 - For them to destroy us

The job of the commenter is to clarify which of many types of oppositions are indicated by the Hebrew RGN. As the underlined words show

there are many nuances of opposition: *not acquiesce, rebel, rgn, said*

When there are competing nuances from which the commenter must select, we speak about the **Rashi Synonym Method**.

II: Rashi's Statement

Rashi simply says *the Hebrew **rgn** means slander, fabrication.*

However, the story begins here, not ends here. As I pointed out in my seminal article, *Peshat and Derash* (Tradition 1980), the job of the translator is to find a comparable English translation.

First let us examine other support.

III: Supporting Verses

Rashi in fact cites a verse in Proverbs with **rgn**. Like many words with unknown meaning, there are just 6 verses in the Bible with this verb. Of these 6 verses there are only 3 distinct verses (because of duplications). They are summarized in the table.

Pr26-20 Without wood the fire goes out; without slander (**RGN**) the fight dies

Pr26-22 The words of slander (**RGN**) shatter, descending into the belly

Pr16-28 Slander (**RGN**) separates a teacher

IV: More Commentary

The Rashi translation, *slander*, certainly fits, but can it be made more precise?

We see a hint in the Rashi on **Pr16-28**. Rashi adds that **RGN** refers to *slander and complaints*.

V: The RaDaQ's Insight

We don't normally look to other commenters as *explaining* Rashi. On the contrary: Aren't the commenters supposed to be disagreeing?

No! Commenters can both disagree, support, defend, or nuance each other.

The **RaDaQ** in an almost unnoticed but beautiful moment uses the powerful **Parallelism Method**. Before presenting his case, recall the basic idea of Kugel (in his book, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*) that Parallel passages

- Do not repeat
- Do not say something different
- But rather repeat with amplification.

I refer to this interpretation with climactic nature of parallel passages as Kugelian parallelism. Let us examine

- You did not acquiesce to go up
- You rebelled the word of God
- You RGNed in your houses
- You said: "With hatred God took us out of Egypt"

Let us now examine these four underlined phrases from the point of view of climax:

- Did not acquiesce: Simple disagreement
- Rebel:
- RGN in your house:

As the RaDaQ says

These are people whose thoughts and plans are for evil; they look for complaint and argument; they say one thing publicly and another privately. And therefore, the verse says in your houses.

Simply charming! How many people could read this verse or even the RaDaQ himself and ignore the subtlety that the **RGN** which Rashi translates as *slander* was *in your house*.

By emphasizing this biblical text, RaDaQ transforms the nuances of **RGN**. It is not just public slander. It is *slander in your house*, *cussing and murmuring*. It is something low key which you do in your house

VI: Support or Disagreement

But is the RaDaQ disagreeing or supporting Rashi?

Since RaDaQ cites a biblical extra word emanating from the **Rashi Parallelism method**, we think it justified to say that RaDaQ was amplifying on Rashi. *RGN doesn't just mean slander but means cussing and murmuring*.

VII: Hendel's Approach

In my original and first paper on *Peshat and Derash* (Tradition 19980) I advocate that true understanding of Rashi requires finding a *comparable English translation*.

We believe *cussing and murmuring* has the nuances of both *slander* and *in one's house*. It captures the type of nuances in the word **RGN**.

VIII: Does it Work?

To test our suggested translation inspired by the

Radaq and consistent with Rashi's interpretation both here in Deuteronomy and Proverbs we must revisit all verses and test the suggested interpretation of *cussing and murmuring*. Does this translation correctly capture the nuances of the verses? Does it add something? A review is presented in the table.

Dt01-26:27 You didn't acquiesce; you rebelled; you cussed/murmured in your houses

Pr26-20 Without wood the fire goes out; without murmuring and cussing_(RGN) the fire dies

Pr26-22 The content of murmurs and cusses (RGN) shatter, descending into the belly

Pr16-28 Murmuring and cussing (RGN) separates a teacher

The reader is asked to judge the translation of these four verses, the only four distinct biblical occurrences of **RGN** in the Bible. Does the suggested translation of *murmuring/cussing* catch the flavor and nuances of the verses more than the translation *slander*? This is not an objective determination. Rather it is a sense of feel and subjectivity but nevertheless immensely real.

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 offerings* 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 Hitpa'el 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 - Pharoh 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