

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#22, August 15th, 2019 *Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, EyQueV*

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In this issue, we examine in depth how to approach a Rashi which nuances the meaning of words. We show how to use English skillfully to catch these nuances. Therefore, please feel free to send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com

Dt07-12a,b Biblical Text:

- As you complete learning-mastery of these civil laws,
- And you guard and practice them
- Then
- God will guard for you the covenant and kindness that he swore to your forefathers

Rashi text:

- ❖ The Rashi translation is embedded in the above translation.
- ❖ However, Rashi formulates his translation as a pun thus confusing his message
- ❖ We will show both Rashis'
 - Intended message
 - Actual Form

I: Rashi Synonym Method

Dt07-12 is typically translated in English translations of the Bible as *if you listen* (or harken) *to these commandments*.

There are problems with this

- *Eyquev* is not the usual word for *if*
- *Tishmeun* is not the usual word for *listen*

True, the basic idea of the verse is that *if you listen to these commandments God will guard for you the covenant that he swore to your forefathers*, but the Hebrew words used are not

the usual words.

So, we don't just have a meaning problem but a **synonym-meaning** problem or a nuance-meaning problem. To recap

- What are the nuances of *eyquev* vs *im* (if)
- What are the nuances of *tishmeun* vs *tishmeu* (listen)

Whenever we have a basic translation, but the Hebrew text indicates something further we have the **Rashi synonym method**.

II: Terminal Nun

Let's first understand something that Rashi does not explain, the terminal nun.

In Hebrew you can append a terminal nun to any verb. Sometimes we don't translate these terminal nuns. But perhaps they have meaning?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch deals with this problem on **Ex21-18**: *When two people dispute+nun and one person hits the other with a fist or stone....* [the verse then gives monetary compensation laws]

Rav Hirsch in his commentary points out that we are not dealing with a dispute here but rather a fist-fight. Rav Hirsch suggests that a terminal

nun suffixed to a Hebrew verb indicates *intensity*

- Riv = dispute
- Rivun = fight

Using this idea, we would argue that

- Tishmeu = listen
- Tishmeun = listen intensely; learn-and-master!

It would follow that **Dt07-12** is basically saying that if Jews

- *Learn-and-master the laws*
- *Create safeguards for the laws preventing accidental violation*
- *Practice them*

then God will uphold his covenant

III: Rashi's Actual Statement

Rashi actually says

if the light commandments
that people trample on with their heels
are listened to (with terminal nun)

The second line in the above translation of Rashi is a pun on the Hebrew word used, *eyquev* which means *heal*. Rashi is treating this this word not as meaning *if* but as being the *object* of the verb *to listen*. Rashi is saying *if you listen to the heel commandments, the light commandments that no one cares about*.

We do have to deal with why Rashi says this. But right now, we are trying to first understand the verse. I would therefore suggest, *for the moment*, to ignore the second line (We will put it back later). Rashi now reads as follows

if the light commandments
are listened to (with terminal nun)

I suggest that Rashi is interpreting the terminal nun which as we said means *learning and mastery*. Rashi is describing this learning and mastery as *listening even to the light parts of the commandments* which is exactly what

learning and mastery means.

IV: What Could *Eyquev* Mean?

Fortunately, we have an English idiom *on the heels of*. We therefore list several possible English translations.

- *If you learn & master...God will ...*
- *On the heels of your learning & mastering ...God will...*
- *Consequent to your learning and mastering... God will...*
- *As you complete learning and mastery...God will....*

Which translation is correct? But the point here is that we are translating nuances. No translation is perfect. All of them pretty much capture the Biblical text. I have chosen the last bullet *as you complete* since *on the heels of* in English seems to connote something immediate.

How did Rashi translate *eyquev*? Remember, we have interpreted his comments to refer to the terminal nun of *tishmeu* so that it means *learn and master* rather than *listen*.

One could argue that Rashi treats *eyquev* as the object of listen: If you listen to *heel commandments* (light ones which people step on). The trouble with this translation is that we still need a word in the sentence meaning *if* and we can't use *eyquev* since we make *eyquev* into a noun. We could try and say that Rashi saw *eyquev* as having two meanings *if* and *light commandments*. But this is getting very complicated.

It would appear that Rashi was comfortable with translating *eyquev* as meaning *if*. The translation that I suggested *as you complete* is also OK but not officially mentioned by Rashi. Rashi's main point was to translate the terminal nun of *tishmeu*.

VI: Why the Pun

Why did Rashi put in this pun *when you listen to the heel commandments*.

I have explained several times that Rashi frequently has a

- Sound grammatical explanation
- Fancy poetic form

Rashi does this because there were no iPhones or even pads and the punchy poetics makes the comments easy to remember. In fact, if you asked a memory expert, *How do I memorize this Rashi* they would respond *create an exaggerated picture* which is exactly what Rashi did, he created a picture of stomping with one's heels on light commandments.

VII: Summary

There were two problems in the verse

- Why use *eyquev* to mean *if*
- Why use *tisheun* to mean *listen*

We have explained that a terminal *nun* denotes intensity, fight vs. dispute, and learning mastery vs. listening. This learning mastery would be expressible in terms of light aspects of the commandments. So indeed, Rashi was addressing the *tishmeu* vs. *tishmeun* problem.

Rashi expresses this intense listening, the learning and mastery by making a pun on *heel*. However, Rashi never explicitly translates *heel*.

Perhaps Rashi was satisfied with the meaning *if*. Or, perhaps the idiom *on the heels of* (in both English and Hebrew) connotes immediacy which we have translated as *you complete* and this was obvious without requiring Rashi to comment.

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