

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#24, August 29th, 2019 Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, ShoFeTiM

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Since we missed Re'eH last week we have two Rashi in this issue: One from Re'eH and one from ShoFeTim. They are both typical Rashis where we think Rashi was engaging in homily, not Peshat. We present basic techniques to help you see the Peshat (straightforward) meaning in Rashi. This issue is a must for those who want to learn about Rashi and Peshat. **Please feel free to send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com**

Dt16-11a

Biblical Text: Be happy before God your Lord

- **You**
 - 1) **Your son**
 - 2) **Your daughter**
 - 3) **Your servant**
 - 4) **Your maid**
- **And**
 - 1) **The Levite (of your city)**
 - 2) **The alien**
 - 3) **The orphan and**
 - 4) **The widow in your midst**

Rashi: [The verse juxtaposes] Your four against my four. If you make my 4 happy, then I will make your four happy.

I: Peshat? Simple Meaning?

We understand this Rashi; but it doesn't appear as the simple meaning of the text. On the contrary, Rashi appears to be making a play on numbers; he is juxtaposing the first four people (son, daughter...) with the last four people (Levite, Alien...). Rashi then refers to *your four* and *My four*; he says that God is making a deal: *Make mine happy and I will make yours happy.*

Certainly, this is an important point, to be charitable. But is this the simple straightforward meaning, *the Peshat*, of the verse?

II: Rashi Database Method

To begin our search for *Peshat* we cite other verses mentioning family. Notice how besides the family others are mentioned and the extra in every verse is different.

Verse	Situation	Family	Others - Extra
Ex20-10	Sabbath	Son, daughter, servant, maid	Animals, aliens
Dt05-14	Sabbath	Son, daughter, servant, maid	Ox, donkey, animals, aliens
Dt12-18	Offering consumption	Son, daughter, servant, maid	Levite
Dt16-11	Holiday	Son, daughter, servant, maid	Levite, alien, orphan, widow
Dt16-14	Holiday	Son, daughter, servant, maid	Levite, alien, orphan, widow

Next we use the **Database Method** to find out what the Bible says on these extra people.

Person	Verse	What it says
Levite	Dt14-27	Don't desert him because he is not a landowner
Alien	Dt10-19 Lv19-23	Love the Alien Don't abuse him
Orphan Widow	Dt10-18 Dt27-19 Ex22-21	God loves them Curse those who misjudge them Don't dare abuse them

So, these people (Levite, alien, orphan, widow) have special protected biblical status. God goes out of His way to love them and protect them.

III: Rashi Other Verse Method

We can now understand the simple meaning, the Peshat, of **Dt16-11**

Verse: Be happy, you

* your son, daughter, servant and maid

* The Levite, alien, orphan, and widow

Rashi (rewritten): The Bible lists 8 people. The first four frequently occur together and represent *the family*. The second four occur sometimes together and sometimes in isolation. They are the classes of people that God has specifically asked us to be careful about their feelings.

Rashi derived this using the **Other Verse method** coupled with the two **Database Inquiry methods** mentioned above.

IV: But What About the 4 for 4 Rhyme

Our explanation of Rashi sounds reasonable. But, the argument goes, *that is not what Rashi said*.

An important principle I have laid down is that

- Rashi content is always based on sound principles
- Rashi form can sometimes be child-like and rhyme like. Rashi does this to facilitate remembering the Rashi comment. It also aids in teaching little children who love such rhymes.

In other words, instead of Rashi giving you an abstract lecture about database inquiries and other verses (the way we did in this RashiYomi digest above), instead Rashi relies on the teacher (me 😊) to point out the sound basis, and instead engages in puns and rhymes to assure that people remember it. For that reason,

Rashi states *Your four versus my four: You watch mine and I will watch yours*.

Of course, Rashi couldn't have meant that as the reason since as we saw above many verses have 4 of the family versus only 1 or 2 of the biblical protected classes. Rashi's comments about *I will protect yours if you protect mine* is simply a paraphrase of the **Database inquiry** we made above about how we should treat these people.

Notice how the rhyme is catchy: *four for four*. In an age without internet and i-phones this rhyme helps people remember it.

In summary: Rashi points out that the eight people in the verse divide neatly into two classes; one class is our family with whom we should enjoy and the other are the people that God specifically protected in the Bible; God asks us to make them happy also. Rashi expressed this in a fanciful rhyme, but the real underlying reason is as I explained.

V: A Pun

Here is our next Rashi from Shofetim

Dt20-03a [When you go out to war,..., the priest approaches and speaks to the nation] And he says to them: Hear Israel you are going to war today on your enemies, do not be soft hearted, do not fear, do not get rattled....

Rashi: The Priest is telling them *If your only merit is that you say Hear Israel [The prayer in Dt06-04 Hear Israel, God is our Lord, God is One] then you have enough merit to win over your enemies*.

Here we have a much stronger case against the argument that Rashi is giving us Peshat.

- The verse is not speaking about the prayer in **Dt06-04**. It simply says that the Priest spoke to the people and said *Hear Israel....* That is the *Peshat, simple meaning*. How can you say otherwise?
- Rashi is actually making a pun here. The

phrase *hear Israel* is not taken in terms of what it means but as a pun to refer to praying another verse. That is a direct contradiction to the idea of the simple meaning of the verse.

VI: An Illustrative Example

Consider the following

Abe has been dating a woman named Rose.

They have a dinner one night. At one-point Abe says:

Pass me the Roisens

Rashi-like comment: Notice how the word *raisins* is deliberately misspelled and mispronounced. Abe is making a pun: He does want the raisins; but he also wants Rose herself. His statement *Pass me the Roisens* is a pun indicating that he would like Rose to pass her herself. Note: A pun based on a deliberate misspelling is called a metaplasmus.

I think most people would agree that this is the straightforward and simple meaning of this statement. In other words, Abe intended both a request for raisins and a request for Rose. Personally, I define *Peshat* as *author-intent*. If it appears that the author intended it, then even though the same sentence has two interpretations, they are both *peshat*. The key point: Do you believe Abe intended both statements (Pass me raisins and pass me Rose) If yes, then you have agreed that they are both *Peshat*.

VII: Application to Our Verse

You will say, *But where is the metaplasmus in our verse*. What is misspelled? Aha! Read the table!

Statement of Priest	Is verb single or plural
Hear Israel	Single
You are going to war	Plural
On your enemies	Plural
Do not get soft hearted	Plural
Don't fear	Plural
Don't get rattled	Plural
Don't get shattered	Plural

Pure simplicity! Pure beauty! *Hear Israel* is misspelled: It should be plural but is instead singular. Hence, Rashi metaplasmically refers it to the *Hear Israel* prayer at **Dt06-04** said daily

VIII: A Touch of Philosophy

But why does Rashi continue *If all you do is say this prayer you have merit to win?*

Because it is normal in any war to pep up the soldiers prior to the war. People have to know what they are fighting for. So the Priest states, if you are already talking about God's oneness every day, then you know what we are fighting for: We are fighting to preserve our freedom from idolatrous practices which destroy and subjugate the mind and instead stay with the One God who gives us the freedom to remain ourselves.

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 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