

Rashiyomi
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Gn21-01a,b,c,d

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Our mission is to show all Rashi comments as Peshat, the simple straightforward meaning of the text following the same laws of interpretation governing ordinary everyday conversation.

The main Rashiomi categories of interpretation are :

- 1) **Grammar:** *Including verb conjugation, rules of style, paragraph development, and all relations of form and meaning*
- 2) **Parallelism:** *Including all nuances and inuendoes arising from same-verse parallelism, multi-verse parallelism, database inquiries, and contradictory verses*
- 3) **Symbolism:** *including parables, images, metaphors, similes, motifs, archetypes, signs, and tokens*
- 4) **Meaning:** *including all figures of speech*



Verse Text Gn21-01a,b,cd

- a) *Abraham prayed for Avimelech and his household was able to give birth...*
- b) *God **had remembered** Sarah as he **said***
- c) *God **did** to Sarah as he **decreed***
- d) *Sarah gave birth to a son to Abraham...*

Rashi Text:

- a. Why is this text out of sequence (*it **had** occurred*)? To juxtapose it to Abraham's prayer for Avimelech: This shows if you pray for someone else you get answered first
- b. **As he said**: Gn17-15: Sarah will have a child
- c. **As he decreed**: Gn14-1,4: Your son will be your heir
- d. **As he decreed**: To Abraham

Supplementary Material

- This is an important digest since it illustrates two principles we have been discussing:
 - The principle that the **past conjugation** means **past perfect** (*had already...*)
 - The principle that Rashi may be addressing **two issues** each with its own cues
- This digest is also important since we show how a leading Biblical Scholar, understood the Midrash on which Rashi based himself to be against parallelism which this biblical scholar thinks was introduced later in biblical history.
- We also show that this biblical scholar contributed greatly to our understanding of Biblical Parallelism
- However, we show that already Rashi advocated parallelism in the same sense
- We further show that Rashi's treatment of the parallelism on this verse is deeper and more mature

RASHI RULES USED TO EXPLAIN THIS RASHI

- This Rashi uses three Rashi rules to explain the text
 - The Rashi Grammar rule
 - The Rashi Cross-Reference rule
 - The Rashi Parallelism rule
- **Rashi Grammar Rule:** Quite simply,
 - A past conjugation (e.g. *pakad*) indicates the *past perfect*, God **had remembered** Sarah
 - A future conjugation with a conversive vav (e.g. *Vayifkad*) indicates the *simple perfect*, God **remembered** Sarah
- **Rashi Parallelism Rule:** Quite simply, this rule states that if a verse **repeats** a phrase with slightly different nuances then the **2nd repetition accepts the 1st and builds further on it**. We show examples below. This formulation **accept and add** or **accept and build** was introduced by David Kugel and is a very deep explanation of biblical Parallelism
- **Rashi Cross-Reference rule:** Quite simply this rule states that sometimes the Bible will cite itself. In such a case, Rashi's and our job is to present the verses cross-referenced and cited.

RASHI GRAMMAR RULE

- We elaborate more on the Grammar rule
- Another English example is the difference (in English!) between the **past perfect** and the **simple past**.
- Here are the rules (Examples on the next slides):
 - The **simple past** connotes something in the past like dinner (e.g. *I ate dinner*)
 - The **past perfect** indicates events prior to that dinner (e.g. *I had eaten the apple at lunch*)
- In
 - English you indicate the past perfect with **had**
 - In Biblical Hebrew you indicate the past perfect with the past conjugation (e.g. **Yadah**)
 - You indicate the simple past with a future and a **conversive vav** (e.g. **Vayaydah**)
-

Examples

GRAMMAR EXAMPLE

Let us suppose we are discussing the dinner I had last night

- Simple past: If I say I ate this apple then it means I ate it at dinner
- Past perfect: If I say I had eaten this apple, it means eating of the apple was before the dinner, say at lunch

PARALLELISM EXAMPLE: Ex20-03 repeats the prohibition against idolatry

- You should not have (possess) other gods...
- You should not make for personal use (that is monetary gain) idols and any image....

The Rashi parallelism principle requires that the 2nd repetition accept the 1st repetition and build further on it (Accept and build or Accept and add) In this case

- First repetition: You should not have, that is, possess, idolatry
- Second repetition: Besides prohibiting full possession, you should not partially possess or gain from idols such as by manufacturing them and selling them to others for gain

Here the two repetitions reflect a building from a prohibition of full possession to a prohibition of just gain.

Examples (Continued)

CROSS REFERENCE EXAMPLE: Consider the following verses

- God had remembered Sarah **as he had spoken** ...she gave birth to a **boy** (Gn21-01:02)
- I (God) will bless her (Sarah) and will give from her to you a **boy** (Gn17-14)
- Clearly **as he had spoken** in Gn21-01:02 cross references Gn17-14 where the promise is made

Application of Rashi Rule to Gn21-01

- **Grammar Rule:** It says that *God* **had remembered** *Sarah (and she had given birth to a boy)*
- Thus this had already happened. Why not put the story in its proper place? Why put it here?
- Rashi answers:
 - Because we were just told that Avimelech's household couldn't give birth but when Abraham prayed for them, they were able to give birth.
 - Then in the very next sentence, we are reminded that God had already remembered Sarah who gave birth
- Rashi infers: **Whoever prays for someone (e.g. Abraham praying for Avimelech) will have his own prayers (Abraham had prayed that his wife should have a child) answered first (because indeed the verse says: God had remembered Sarah)**

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Many people incorrectly think that Rashi held that
 - Order in the Torah is arbitrary! Not so! Rashi held that
 - Biblical order is not exclusively temporal.
 - Other sources of order (besides time) might be operative.
 - For example in this passage (**Gn21-01**) Rashi uses a causal order: The fact that Abraham prayed for Avimelech enabled his own prayers for his own wife to be answered first.
 - NOTE: Ramban who allegedly disagrees with Rashi on issues of biblical order also explicitly states the principle that we have just given: *Order is usually temporal but the Bible may indicate that some order is operative*

Application of Rashi Rule to Gn21-01

- The parallelism of this verse is exhibited in this table.
- The first two rows present the verse in parallel form. You read left to right the 1st row and then the second
- The third row shows the differences in the parallel structure
- The fourth row shows the authors who emphasized different nuances in the parallelism

God	Remember /did	Sarah	As he had	Said/decreed	Citation
<i>God</i>	<i>Had remembered</i>	<i>Sarah</i>	<i>As he had</i>	<i>said</i>	Gn17-14...Sarah will be blessed ...she will have a boy
<i>God</i>	<i>Did</i>	<i>To Sarah</i>	<i>As he had</i>	<i>Decreed</i>	Gn14-1,4...Do not fear Abraham, your servants son will not be your heir but rather your son who comes from you, it is he who will be your heir
Parallelism	Remember: did			Said: decreed	Birth: Heir
Author:	Kugel				Rashi

- Recall that in a parallel passage the 2nd row must **accept and build** or **accept and add** to the first row
- Kugel is rather shallow: Besides **remembering** Sarah, God also **did** what he remembered
- Rashi is deep: Besides the physical process of **giving birth**, the child will grow up and be **Abraham's heir**

DISCUSSION POINTS

- To fully appreciate this we cite from Kugel's book, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, pg. 99
- Notice the highlighted words **A and B now have entirely different meanings.**
- In other words, they are not following the accept and build (or accept and add) principle of parallelism since the two clauses are totally different.

This verse is a fairly straightforward piece of parallelism: "did for" is perhaps a stronger or more direct verb than merely "remembered" or "took note of"), but the similarity in meaning is unmistakable, particularly via the parallelism of "as he had said...as he had spoken" This same verse is treated in the Targum Yerushalmi (also called Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) – which may represent one of the earliest written layers of the Midrashic approach – in the following manner:

And the Lord remembered Sarah as he had said / And the Lord did for Sarah as *Abraham had spoken* to him in his prayer concerning Abimelekh//

This last is an allusion to the previous chapter, in which Abraham prays on behalf of Abimelech and his wife. The midrashist understands that just as that prayer was effective for them so was it effective for Sarah's barrenness. The result of this interpretation is that **A and B now have entirely different meanings.** In the first half of the verse God remembers Sarah in accordance with His *own word*; in the second half He acts on Sarah's behalf in accordance with *Abraham's words*

DISCUSSION POINTS

- We now answer Kugel by making two points
- **POINT 1:** In previous digests, we have discussed the *two issues in one Rashi* approach to Rashi
- Kugel is correct that the Midrash Yonathan violates parallelism
- The Midrash makes the mistake of not seeing two issues in this verse
- Rashi corrects this Midrash by separating the two issues.
- One issue is the juxtaposition of Chapters
- Rashi correctly sees this as a Grammatical issue with the past perfect; nothing to do with parallelism
- Rashi makes his point that whoever prays for someone will have his own prayers answered first

- **POINT 2:** Rashi, though not the Midrash, accepts Kugel's idea: In a parallel passage, clause 2 *accepts and builds* on clause 1
- This idea of *accept and build* is a major contribution of Kugel and has greatly advanced our understanding of parallelism
- But on this verse Kugel's application of this principle is shallow while Rashi's is deep
- Kugel sees *did* (did to Sarah) as stronger than *remember* (God remembered Sarah).
- But this is shallow: After all we expect God to fulfill His own promises
- Contrastively, Rashi by using the citations of *spoke* and *decree* and seeing what those verses say suggests
- That the *accept and build* manifests itself in having a child and furthermore, having that child grow up to be a heir.