

Note: We are performing our annual askathon for suggestions. One person wrote, "Give me something I can use at the Friday night Shabbath Table." This digest fulfills that. We encourage others to ask for what they want.

Rashi #1,#2,#3,#4: Biblical Text: Dt13-04:05a,b,c,d:

- * After God, your Lord, go
- * Him, you shall revere
- * To His commandments, guard
- * To his voice, listen
- * Him, serve
- * To Him, cling.

Rashi text #1, #4: *Guard his commandments* = observe the Torah, *listen to his voice* = the voice of the prophets, *serve him* = Temple service, *cling to him* = resemble him: for example deeds of kindness, burials, and sick visitations.

The key to reading Rashi: The above verse has a *parallel structure*: The verse consists of six sentences with the same 2-phrase form, #i) a reference to God, #ii) a reference to an activity. Kugel explains that the key to interpretation of parallel passages is *climax*. Each of the six units should accept the previous one and build on it.

Friday Night Shabbath Table: This makes for an excellent dinner discussion. Instead of first reading what Rashi says, ask everyone at the table to explain how they *hear* the *tone* of these six verbs, how they see the climax. Then when the discussion is completed, you can read Rashi and this digest. Perhaps your ideas are better (than mine) or perhaps the ideas here answer problems you couldn't solve.

My solution to the six stages: Here is my solution to the six stages.

- **Stage 1:** *Go after God or Walk after God.* Create a community centered around God.
- **Stage 2:** *Revere Him.* People in a bar form a community. But there is no reverence in a bar. The Godly community must *additionally* be a formal and reverential community
- **Stage 3:** *Observe his commandment = The Torah.* Every community has communal activities they are known for. The Godly community is known for their Torah observance.
- **Stage 4:** *Listen to His Voice = Voice of the Prophets.* I would go a step further. After all, prophets do not give eternal commands since the Torah commandments are fixed. Rather, prophets give attitude or to use a catchy phrase, prophets give daas Torah = The Torah View. For example, the prophet Michah said, "Israel! What does God ask of you except doing civil law, loving kindness, and modestly walking with God" Here Michah gives *attitude* and *Torah viewpoint*: In performing the commandments, people should focus on *justice, kindness, and modesty*. If Rashi is understood this way we don't have to take Rashi literally and restrictively. He wasn't, by saying *prophets*, giving the only example. Rather, Rashi was illustrating! Any communal leader who communicates Torah attitude and viewpoint should be listened to.
- **Stage 5:** *Serve Him = Temple service.* Every community be it a political party, a computer programming community, or a particular group of scientists, has their annual meetings. The *annual meeting* is the place where people get together, network, hear talks on important ideas, and renew their sense of community. The paradigm of annual meeting is of course the 3 pilgrimages to Jerusalem by the entire nation at the three commemorative festivals. But also meeting in the synagogue; or even meeting (regularly) to say Psalms.
- **Stage 6:** *Cling to Him = resemble His ways.* To use a fancy term, God becomes my role model. I visit the sick and say "If God can visit the sick so can I." A judge patiently listens to a defendant trying to avoid conviction and says, "If God listens to judged parties prior to sentencing so can I." In fact, my teacher Rabbi Soloveitchick, the *Rav* pointed out that obligations can be given either by *law* or by *role modeling of God*.