

ParShaT *Acharay-Moth* - One Pager Series

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[**Background:** We have been bringing controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Universally, academic scholars either reject that Rashi employed parallelism or that he understood parallelism using picky differentiations. Today's examples beautifully refutes this.]

Rashi #1a,b Biblical Text: Lv18-05, Lv18-04, Lv19-37

Lv18-05	<u>Watch</u>	my statutes	and civil laws	that a person does	and lives by them
Lv18-04	My civil laws	<u>do</u>	my statutes	<u>watch</u>	to walk in them

Table 1: Parallelism of Lv18-05 and Lv18-04.

Lv18-05	Watch	my statutes	and civil laws	
Lv19-37	Watch	<u>all</u> my statutes	and <u>all</u> my civil laws	

Table 2: Parallelism of Lv18-05 and Lv19-37

Parallelism: What is parallelism? It is not really a technical term. Look at the 2nd table comparing Lv18-05 and Lv19-37. Parallelism simply *lines up* almost identical phrases in the two verses, notes differences, and produces commentary. As you can see, the two verses, Lv18-05 are identical except for the addition of the word all (twice) in Lv19-37.

Similarly in the first table comparing Lv18-05 and Lv18-04, the verbs *do* and *watch* occur in both verses and the things to do and watch, *the statutes and civil laws*, are also in both verses. The verses differ in how the verbs and nouns are paired. Lv18-04 says

Do the civil laws

Watch my statutes

while Lv18-05 states using a sandwiching effect.

Watch (my statutes and civil laws) that a person does

With this background let us see what Rashi actually says.

Rashi #1b: Table 2, which shows the added word all in Lv19-37, implies that all minutiae not explicitly mentioned should also be watched (and hence the word all)

Rashi #1a: Another matter [referring to Table 1]: To make certain that both *watching and doing* are applied the statutes and civil laws. [The repeated verse in Lv18-05 was necessary] Because Lv18-04 *only* associated *watching* with *statutes* and *doing* with *civil laws*. [Therefore the extra parallel verse, Lv18-05, was necessary which emphasizes

*Watch my statutes and civil laws, requiring *watching* to both *statutes* and *civil laws*
My statutes and civil laws which a person *does*, requiring *doing* to both *statutes* and *civil laws*.*

Biblical Scholars: It is clear that the biblical scholars are wrong. Rashi makes two comments on Lv18-05 and *both* of them address parallelisms, one comment addressing parallelism with the preceding verse and the other comment addressing the parallelism with a verse in Lv19.

We can go farther. I once conducted a statistical survey of how often Rashi makes comments based on parallelism, that is, based on comparing similar verses. Any reader can replicate this experiment. On Ex 21 I counted 14% of the Rashis are based on parallelism.

Omnisignificance and pickiness: Kugel accepts that Rashi employed parallelism He instead criticizes Rashi for being picky; for finding details in minutiae that are not there. But let us carefully look at *how* Rashi addressed the parallelistic differences:

Table 2 has the extra word *all*. Rashi modestly says, *This includes other minutiae of the laws*

Table 1 switches the order of the verbs *watch* and *do* with respect to the *statutes* and *civil laws*. Rashi modestly says, *This shows that both watched and doing apply to both statutes and civil laws.*

We hardly think this an example of Talmudic pickiness.

Conclusion: Rashi used parallelism as a basis for commentary. He used the parallelism in a modest but straightforward manner.