

ParShaT *EyQueV* One Pager Series

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[**Background:** We continue to bring controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we bring a Rashi-Ramban-Kli Yakar controversy.]

Rashi #1 Biblical Text: Dt07-11:12

	<i>Guard</i>	<i>The commandments, statutes, and <u>civil laws</u></i>	<i>Which I command you this day</i>	<i>To <u>do</u> them</i>	
<i>On the heels of</i>	<i>Intensely listening</i>	<i>To these <u>civil</u> laws</i>		<i>And <u>guarding</u> and <u>doing</u> them</i>	<i>God will guard for you the covenant</i>

The three commentators, Rashi, Ramban, and Kli Yakar read this second verse in three different ways. Let us review.

Rashi Text (Rashiyomi interpretation): Rashi translates - *heels of* as meaning *consequence*. Indeed, there are many biblical verses where *heels* means consequence. (e.g. Dt26-05). So Rashi is quite straightforward

- Rashi translates *tishmeun* as meaning *intensely listening*. That is
 - *Tishmeu* means *to listen*
 - *Tishmeun* means *to intensely listen*

Grammarians refer to the meaning of *intensely*, arising from a terminal *nun* suffix, as the *paragogic nun* or *nun intensificum*.

Rashi continues with his translation of the verse: “*If you intensely listen to the commandments implying even to the light commandments which people belittle, then you will experience God guarding the covenant.*”

Rashi goes a step further and creates a pun: *If you listen to the light commandments which people trample on with their heels*, thus creating a link to the phrase *heels of meaning consequence*.

Ramban Text: Ramban exploits the parallelism shown in the table above. In the first line it mentions *commandments, civil laws, and statutes* while on the bottom line it only mentions *civil laws*.

Ramban points out that people respect *commandments* and *statutes* as something religion should be doing; but so to speak one does not need religion for the civil laws since man would create them anyway. Thus people *belittle civil laws*. Hence Ramban sees the mention of *belittling* (Rashi's *commandments which people belittle*) from the verse emphasis on civil laws.

Ramban points out that *heels* at the bottom or end of the body could indicate the *end* and *consummation* of a matter, its *reward*. For example, the word *acharith* which comes from the word *achar* means *reward*.

Hence Ramban interprets the verse: *As a reward for listening to the civil laws which people belittle, God will guard the covenant*.

Kli Yakar Text: Kli Yakar argues using the principle of synecdoche (good example). For example, an *overcoat* is the clothing that goes *over* everything else and is a good example of *over*. Similarly, *glass* (as in *glass of water*) is a good example of a utensil typically made of *glass*. Kli Yakar argues that the *heels* are the commandments which typically are belittled and trampled on with ones heels. He interprets the verse: *If you listen to the heel commandments, along with the civil laws, God will guard the covenant*.

Conclusion: My own opinion, is that the KliYakar is slightly forced in rendering the verse, though he bases himself on precedent.

I believe the best way to approach the verse is to combine Ramban and Rashiyomi: i) The parallelism emphasizes civil laws which people think should not be in religion, ii) the paragogic nun emphasizes *intensely* listening (even to light matters).