



כללי רש"י - Klolei Rashi

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Rashi's General Principles

Rule # 1

Rashi's objective is to explain on the simple, basic meaning of passage, it's *peshat*. As Rashi declares in his commentary (on Genesis 3:8_ "I have come to explain on the simple meaning of the verse." To this end, Rashi clarifies any glaring issues with narrative coherency, or any contextual or linguistic problems, that arise in the understanding of straightforward, basic meaning of a passage.

Rule # 2

The definition of *simple* is determined by the initial perception of a young, novice student of scripture, who already possesses a basic knowledge of the Hebrew language. In the Mishnah he is referred to as the *ben chamesh lemikra* – " a five-year-old [is at age for] the study of Scripture."

Rule # 3

The student is assumed to have age-appropriate, empirical knowledge of the world around him, and is assumed to be able to apply this knowledge when learning scripture.

Rule # 4

Typically, Rashi doesn't state what the problem is that his commentary addresses, because Rashi considers the problem to be self-evident. Rashi, therefore, simply supplies the solution.

Rule # 5

Every word from the verse quoted in the header to Rashi's commentary is germane to his explanation. Either a quoted word is problematic, or it is somehow supportive of Rashi's interpretation.

Rule # 6

Rashi's commentary is never verbose. Every word is chosen with the utmost precision and contributes to Rashi's explanation. Thus, if an uncommon expression is used, this is done so intentionally.

Rule # 7

When Rashi offers two interpretations, it is because neither of them suffices to resolve all the difficulties in the first interpretation are not present in the second. However, because the first interpretation fits in best with the plain meaning of the verse, it is primary and thus presented first.

Rule # 8

When Rashi offers more than two interpretations, it is because any two of these interpretations possess a common difficulty not shared by the third.

Rule # 9

Rashi does ordinarily anticipate textual contradictions in Scripture. Only *after* the scriptural contradiction is encountered, does Rashi normally explain the discrepancy. If an apparent contradiction is explained *before* the conflicting verse has been encountered, the primary purpose is to clarify some other difficulty in the verse – not the contradiction.

Rule # 10

Ordinarily, Rashi does not bring supporting evidence for his interpretation, when he is certain that his interpretation will resonate immediately with his reader. If Rashi does bring support, then it is because interpretation introduces either: (a) an unusual and novel idea; (b) an unconventional explanation of a word; (c) some other difficulty that may make his interpretation appear implausible. In these instances, Rashi buttresses his interpretation by citing supporting verses, or rabbinic teachings.

Rule # 11

When Rashi quotes a *Midrash*, or the like, without introducing it as such, then the *Midrash* is essential to the basic understanding of the passage, although Rashi may alter the wording of the *Midrash* accordingly.

Rule # 12

When an explanation is contextually justified, but linguistically strained, Rashi may introduce this explanation as originating from a *Midrash*, or the link, thereby alluding to an additional reason that further justifies his interpretation.

Rule # 13

Rashi notes the names of the quoted rabbinic authorities only when this augments, albeit in allusion, the understanding of the subject.

Rule # 14

If there is a variant edition of Rashi's commentary, then although that version may not be common, it, too, follows Rashi's principles of interpretation.

Rule # 15

There is no reason to assume that the name of a person in the *Chumash* hints at, or in any way communicates, the personality (or main virtue) of a person, (except when the verse itself emphasizes the relationship).

Rule # 16

The *Shaloh* (in his Mesechta Shavuot, p. 181a) writes that "withing each and every word of Rashi... there are profound ideas." After analysis and due deliberation of Rashi's commentary, one can uncover concepts that shed light on various *halachic* topics.

Rule # 17

Although Rashi's commentary is focused on elucidating the straightforward meaning of a verse, his commentary also contains a deeper, Spiritual dimension, "the wine of Torah," as Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi refers to it, which is incumbent upon the student to ponder.