

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

EMOR

Pause for Thought

Concept: The Role of the Tipcha in Pshat and Drash

וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת תְּמִילַת תְּהִינָה:
עַד מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה':

*You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the rest-day... seven complete weeks. Until the morrow of the seventh week, you shall count fifty days, and you shall offer a new meal-offering to Hashem.*¹

INTRODUCTION: YOU SHALL COUNT FIFTY DAYS?

Rashi address what appears to be a basic contradiction within these two verses. The first verse says to count seven complete weeks, which equals forty-nine days, while the next verse says to count fifty days! The first explanation offered by Rashi is that the place to pause when reading the second verse is after “you shall count,” so that the words “fifty days” do not represent days that you should count, but are rather connected to the second half of the verse, which now reads as follows:

- עַד מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּסְפְּרוּ.
- חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה'.

- ▷ *Until [but excluding] the morrow of the seventh week, you shall count.*
- ▷ *[When you reach] fifty days, and you shall [then] offer a new meal-offering to Hashem.*

This explanation, whose source is in the Toras Kohanim, is characterized by Rashi as *drash*, who then proceeds to offer a *pshat* explanation as well. However, upon further investigation, it would appear that the first approach is not only *drash*, it is also actually impossible.

¹ Vayikra 23:15-16.

THE STOPS AND STARTS OF TAAMEI HAMIKRA

As we have discussed on numerous occasions, the words of the Chumash are accompanied by *taamim* (cantillation notes). The primary function of these *taamim* is to indicate where in the verse one should pause, thereby forming the phrases of the verse. The most prominent pausal notes for us to be aware of are:

- ▷ *Esnachta* – a note underneath the word that looks like a stirrup
- ▷ *Zakef (katan)* – two dots on top of the word.

These notes have the pausal function of a comma, and sometimes of a semi-colon. The implications for our verse are that the word “הַשְּׁבִיעַת” has a *zakef* pause, while the word “יוֹם” has an *esnachta* pause. This means that the three words “תִּסְפְּרוּ הַמְּשִׁים יוֹם” are clearly one phrase – “you shall count fifty days”. How then can the *drash* come and split this phrase up, assigning “תִּסְפְּרוּ” as the final word of the first half of the verse, and “הַמְּשִׁים יוֹם” as the beginning of the second? It seems that what the *taamim* have joined together, the *drash* has torn asunder!

Now, we might be inclined to simply say that the *taamim* are relevant only for the *pshat* reading of the verse, while the *drash* does not recognize their role. However, I believe that the matter in fact goes deeper than that, namely, that the *drash* actually has a different way of responding to the *taamei hamikra*. To understand how this is so, let us first meet another one of the *taamim*.

INTRODUCING THE TIPCHA

One of the *taamim* that features in every verse in the Torah is known as a *tipcha*. It is conveniently shaped as a comma, and it also functions as a somewhat milder pause. Rashi, in numerous places in his commentary on the Torah, clearly takes note of the *tipcha* and explains the verses accordingly.² Indeed, in one place, he states explicitly that his explanation is based on the question of which word in the phrase carries the *tipcha*.³

2 See e.g. Rashi to Bereishis 49:9, s.v. *miteref* and s.v. *b'ni*, Bamidbar 14:40 s.v. *asher* and Devarim 33:26 s.v. *ain*. [See also Rashi to Yirmiyahu 4:1, Yeshayahu 40:13, Shir Hashirim 1:4 and Koheles 5:11.]

3 See Rashi in Devarim 29:20, where he notes that the verse there uses the phrase “בספר התורה הזה”, with the masculine word “זה”, while earlier in Devarim (28:61) it says “בספר התורה הזאת,” using the feminine word “זאת”. Rashi explains that in the first case, the word “זה” is used because it qualifies the masculine word “בספר”, while in the second case, it uses the word “הזאת”, since it qualifies the word “התורה”, which is feminine. He adds that the distinction between these two cases is indicated by the *tipcha*, which in the first case is under the word “התורה”, which is then read together with “בספר”, so that the meaning is “in this book of the Torah,” while in the second case the *tipcha* is under “בספר”, resulting in a pause, so the words “התורה הזאת” are read together, which then means “in the book of this Torah.”

IN THE SELICHOS: VAYIKRA B'SHEM HASHEM

The pausal effect of the tipcha finds practical expression regarding the way we recite our prayers. In the selichos, as a prelude to the Thirteen Attributes of Divine mercy, we recite the introductory verse which says:

וַיִּרְדּוּ ה' בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שֵׁם וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם ה'

Hashem descended in a cloud and stood with him [Moshe] there, and He called out with the Name Hashem.

The translation we have given for the final three words of the verse is actually one of two possibilities, depending on whether one reads all three words together or pauses before the final word – “Hashem”.

- If they are read all together, it would mean, “And he [Moshe] called out in the Name of Hashem.”⁴
- If one pauses before the final word, it means, “And He [Hashem] called out with the Name ‘Hashem’.”⁵

And indeed, the Mishnah Berurah⁶ writes in the name of the Abudraham⁷ that one should pause slightly between the words “*b'shem*” and “Hashem”, on account of the *tipcha* under the word “*b'shem*”.

In light of this, returning to our verses regarding counting the omer, Rabbeinu Bachye points out that the word “תִּסְפְּרוּ” is accompanied by a tipcha, and that this is the basis for the drash which splits up the phrase “תִּסְפְּרוּ הַמַּשִּׁים יוֹם” into two.

HOWEVER...

While this now sounds very simply as if the *drash* is also following the taamim, this is not the case. There is one very important qualification regarding the pausal role of the tipcha, namely, when it appears in a very brief phrase and is bracketed by stronger pauses, its capacity to function as a pause is effectively nullified.⁸ This means that if two (or three) words are both preceded and followed by stronger pauses such as *esnachta* or *zakef* (or the end of a verse), then those words are read together as one phrase, even if there is a *tipcha* present among them. The most helpful example of this is our own verse, where the phrase “תִּסְפְּרוּ הַמַּשִּׁים יוֹם” comes with a *zakef* immediately before it and ends with an *esnachta* (under the word “יוֹם”). As such, there is no question that these three words are to be read together as one phrase, and the *tipcha* in the word “תִּסְפְּרוּ” should not have asserted itself to break up the phrase. And yet the *drash* insists that it does!

What is the way to understand all of this?

4 Although only Hashem was mentioned by name in the beginning of the verse, the pronoun “he” in “he called out” nonetheless refers to Moshe, since the final word mentions Hashem explicitly.

5 Since the final word “Hashem” denotes the name that was expressed, but not an actual reference to Hashem, we revert to the default rule that a pronoun refers to the most recently mentioned noun – in this case, Hashem, as mentioned in the beginning of the verse.

6 581:14.

7 *Hilchos Tefilos ha'Taanios*. See also Rashi to Shemos loc. cit., with commentary *Zefer Zikaron* by R' Avraham Bukarat.

8 This principle emerges from Rashi in Shir Hashirim 8:6 (s.v. *eish*), commenting on the words “רשפי אש שלהבתייה”.

REVELATIONS FROM THE VILNA GAON: A MAJOR PRINCIPLE IN DRASH

Commenting on the opening verse of the Torah, “בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ” – *In the beginning, God created the heaven and earth,*⁹ the Midrash states that the word “אֶת” as appears together with “הַשָּׁמַיִם – the heavens” and “הָאָרֶץ – the earth” comes to include all of their derivatives, which were also created in some basic form on that first day.¹⁰

We know that every comment of the midrash has some basis in the verse. What is the basis of the midrash on this occasion? The word “אֶת” in this verse is certainly not unusual or redundant – Lashon Hakodesh requires it to denote the objects mentioned there: the heavens and the earth!

The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary Aderes Eliyahu,¹¹ explains that many *drash* statements of Chazal are based on the following principle. Often, words in Lashon Hakodesh have more than one meaning. In any given context, it is easy to ascertain which among those meanings is being employed by the verse, which then gives us the *pshat*. However, what the *drash* will then do is enlist other meanings of that word as providing secondary meanings of the verse. Here, too, the word “אֶת” generally denotes an object, and does not itself even have a translation, and this is clearly the *pshat* meaning in the opening verse of the Torah. However, sometimes the word “אֶת” means “with”, for example the verse that describes the Children of Israel who descended to Egypt “אֶת יַעֲקֹב” – *with Yaakov*.¹² Therefore, the *drash* enlists this additional meaning of the word to uncover additional layers of understanding, even when it is not being used by the verse for that purpose on a *pshat* level.¹³

This is a truly fascinating and profound idea regarding the interplay between *pshat* and *drash* in the Torah – one that is revealed to us, literally, from “the beginning”!

FROM WORDS TO NOTES – APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE

Taking this principle of the Vilna Gaon in hand, let us proceed to apply it to the *taamei hamikra*. Essentially, as we have seen, the *tipcha* contains an element of pause, which is generally expressed on a basic *pshat* level. As such, even in a case where the rules of *pshat* determine that the pausal quality of the *tipcha* is disregarded, the *drash* re-asserts it and interprets the verse accordingly! Thus, in our case, although the word “תִּסְפְּרוּ” is sandwiched between two stronger pauses, so that the pause within its *tipcha* is eclipsed on a *pshat* level, the *drash* re-emphasizes it and reads it as the dividing word in the verse.

What emerges is that, in the same way that the *drash* has a more expansive methodology than the *pshat* regarding the meanings of words of the Torah, so too, with regard to the syntactical signals of the *taamim*!

OTHER EXAMPLES: LIFNEI HASHEM TIT’HARU

To help us absorb this idea, let us consider another one or two cases where it is expressed. The final Mishnah in Maseches Yoma¹⁴ reads:

דרש ר' אלעזר בן עזריה: ”מכל תטאתיכם לפני ה' תטהרו”, עבירות שבין אדם למקום
יום הכפורים מכפר, עבירות שבין אדם לחבירו אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה את
חבירו.

9 Bereishis 1:1.

10 Bereishis Rabbah 1:19, cited in Rashi ibid, verse 14 s.v. yehei.

11 Bereishis ibid.

12 Shemos 1:1.

13 On a halachic level as well, the Gemara records that one of the sages of the Mishnah, Shimon Ha’amsuni (and after him, R’ Akiva) would expound on every instance of the word “אֶת” in the Torah as including something, see e.g. Bava Kama 41b.

14 85b.

R' Elazar ben Azaria expounded, "From all your sins before Hashem you shall be purified,"¹⁵
[regarding] sins between man and Hashem – Yom Kippur atones; regarding sins between man and his
fellow man – Yom Kippur does not atone until he appeases his fellow.

How does the verse cited by R' Elazar ben Azaria form the basis for his exposition? Where do we see it distinguishing between different categories of sin? The Maharsha¹⁶ explains that R' Elazar ben Azaria reads the verse as qualifying the capacity of Yom Kippur to atone, for it states that "From all you sins before Hashem you shall be purified." The implication is that purification, i.e. atonement, on Yom Kippur is only assured for sins that are between man and Hashem. For sins between man and man, however, there is no such unequivocal assurance, as the matter also depends on another factor – namely, appeasing his fellow, as R' Elazar ben Azariah states.

However, when we look at the *taamim* in that verse we will see that this reading appears to contravene them. The word "חטאתיכם – [from all] your sins" has a *zakef*, which indicates that we should pause there. This means that the words that follow, "לפני ה' – before Hashem", are not connected in a way that then qualifies the type of sin we are talking about (sins before Hashem). Rather, the final three words of the verse, "לפני ה' תטהרו", are a self-contained phrase – "before Hashem you shall be purified"!

Yet, here too, the penultimate word of the verse, "Hashem", has a *tipcha*. The *drash* exposition therefore takes note of this and reads the verse with the *tipcha* as the dominant pause, thereby joining together the words "from all you sins before Hashem," i.e. sins between man and Hashem¹⁷

IN AZ YASHIR: THE MEANING OF THE WORDS "B'MAYIM ADIRIM"

In *Az Yashir* (the Song of the Sea), the verse describes how the Egyptians drowned in the sea like lead:

צָלְלוּ כַעֲוֹפֹת בְּמַיִם אֲדִירִים¹⁸

The final word, "אֲדִירִים", means "mighty", but what is this word describing? Rashi on that verse does not comment, but he does discuss this matter elsewhere. In the Song of Devorah in Sefer Shoftim,¹⁹ it relates how Yael incapacitated the wicked general, Sisera, before killing him:

מִיָּם שָׁאֵל חֶלֶב נִתְּנָה בְּסִפְלֵי אֲדִירִים הִקְרִיבָה חֶמְאָה

He asked for water, [yet] she gave him milk, in a cup of the mighty she presented cream.

Rashi explains that the term "סִפְלֵי אֲדִירִים" denotes a cup that is normally used for water. To explain how the word "אֲדִירִים" refers to water, he cites the phrase in *Az Yashir*, "בְּמַיִם אֲדִירִים – in mighty waters". We see that, according to Rashi, the word "אֲדִירִים – mighty" describes the waters in which the Egyptians drowned, so that the meaning of the verse is: "They [they Egyptians] drowned like lead in mighty waters."

However, the Gemara explains the word "אֲדִירִים" very differently. In *Maseches Menachos*,²⁰ it states that although the Egyptians were considered mighty, Hashem was mightier and drowned them in water.

15 Vayikra 16:30.

16 Chiddushei Aggados, Yoma ibid.

17 Interestingly, in the chazzan's repetition for Mussaf on Yom Kippur, where it relates the order of avodah of the day, the quote from this verse also ends with the word "Hashem", with the final word of the verse, "תטהרו – you shall be purified," mentioned only in the following paragraph. This appears to be in accord with the reading of the verse as per R' Elazar ben Azariah's exposition.

18 Shemos 15:10.

19 5:25.

20 53a.

The Gemara's source for the idea that the Egyptians were mighty is, “צָלְלוּ בְּעוֹפְרֵת בְּמֵי אֲדִירִים”. Rashi²¹ explains that according to the Gemara, the word “אֲדִירִים” describes, not the waters, but the Egyptians, who were mighty! This means that the words “בְּמֵי אֲדִירִים” are not to be read together. Rather, one should pause at the word “בְּמֵי”, so that it reads: “they drowned like lead in water, the mighty [Egyptians].”

The Gemara's reading, which pauses at the word “בְּמֵי”, would appear to be supported the fact that it is accompanied by a *tipcha*. As such we ask: Why did Rashi in Shoftim differ from the Gemara's explanation and insist instead on reading the words “אֲדִירִים בְּמֵי” together? Once again, the answer is that in this verse, the rules of *pshat* dictate not to pause at the *tipcha*. Since the earlier two words “צָלְלוּ בְּעוֹפְרֵת” end with a *zakef* pause, the final two words must be read together – “in mighty waters”. Yet, here too, the Gemara approaches these words through the lens of *drash*, whereby the *tipcha*'s signal to pause is asserted above other pauses, and the words are read accordingly.²²

The Torah is referred to as a song,²³ and it indeed fascinating to see how *pshat* and *drash* have their own methodologies regarding how the words of Torah are to be sung.

21 Menachos ibid.

22 The Mishnah Berurah (51:17), citing the Pri Megadim, writes that when reciting Az Yashir in pesukei d'zimra, one should pause between the words “בְּמֵי” and “אֲדִירִים”, as per the Gemara in Menachos. In terms of our discussion, and in light of Rashi's comment in Sefer Shoftim, it is noteworthy that the Pri Megadim is recommending to read these words in accordance with the *drash*'s relationship to the taamim, and not that of *pshat*.

23 Sanhedrin 21b, based on Devarim 31:19.