

The RashiYomi NewsLetter

The 10 RashiYomi Rules, Vol 31#16, July 4th, 2019

Their Presence in this Week's Parshah, ChuQuaS

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*A special treat this week: We show that the Red Heifer does have a reason that is reasonable and understandable. We combine Rashi's and Rav Hirsch's explanation. We also explain why the Midrash says that King Solomon found the Red Heifer difficult (After all it wasn't difficult for anyone else) **Please feel free to send questions on Rashi to RashiYomi@GMail.Com***

Nu19:01-06 Biblical Text

- A) Let them [the people] take to you
- B) A completely red
- C) cow
- D) without blemish
- E) who has never had a yoke on her
- F) Give it to Elazar the Priest
- G) Let him take her out of the camp
- H) And slaughter her before him
- I) Elazar takes from the blood and
- J) He sprinkles 7 times to the Temple
- K) Let him burn the cow
- L) He takes
 - a. A cedar
 - b. A hyssop
 - c. Wool
 - d. Died worm red

I: The Biblical/Rashi Text

The Biblical text is stated in yellow font on a purple background on the left-hand side of this page. The Rashi comments are indicated by superscript letters (A, B, C, ..., F). The content of these Rashi comments is indicated, also in a yellow font on a purple background on the right-hand side of this page. The two tables are aligned so you can see each Rashi comment by glancing between the two tables.

Rashi

- A) People must participate
- B) Sinful (red symbolizes *hot* and sin)
- C) Cow=adult; calf=teen.
- D) To restore lack of blemish to Jewish people
- E) Adults must accept yolk of religion
- F) The vice-priest performs (Aaron can't)
- G) Rashi: No comment: Hirsch: Doesn't belong
- H) Rashi: No comment: Hirsch: Kill animality
- I) Rashi: No comment: Hirsch: Soul remains
- J) Rashi: No comment. Hirsch: Soul holy
- K) Rashi: Destroy and erase sin
- L) He takes
 - a. Highest of plant world
 - b. Lowest of plant world
 - c. (Hirsch) Highest animal world
 - d. Lowest animal world

Note: Rashi says *the highest must become low to avoid sin. These 3 items align with the 3000 Jews killed in the sin of the Golden calf and the Cow atones for this golden calf.*

II: Rashi Symbolism Method

Before explaining Rashi's (and Rav Hirsch's addendums) comments we must explain briefly about symbolism. Is symbolism the simple meaning of the text? Is it a layer above the text? Is it intended and required to be heard by those who read the Bible?

We can answer these questions briefly though long defenses exist elsewhere.

To assist us in doing this we take the core idea of this symbolism, the difference between *adulthood* and *teenagehood*. We present it and then show the symbolic enactment is a natural way to express this. The table below explains the difference between adulthood and teenagehood.

	Adult	Teen
Social Recognition	Based on skills you are good at	Based on externals like looks, the physical
Satisfaction / Happiness	Accomplishment of skills in addition to physical	No skills; so, focus only on physical
Balance	Burden & Accomplishment	No responsibilities yet; so, focus only on happiness

Let us review this table:

- The *adult* is distinguished by the skills and abilities they have, for example, a medical doctor, a programmer, a musician, etc. Contrastively, the teen (or the pure teen) has no skills yet. So, all they can do is focus on externals like looks and the physical
- Both the adult and teen derive pleasure from the physical (food, relationship, and shelter) But that is *all* the teen has. The adult also derives satisfaction from the fact that (s)he is needed, only (s)he can do the skills (s)he has mastered, and his/her accomplishments are recognized. Consequently, the *adult* has other outlets for satisfaction while the *teen* does not.
- Because the *adult* is self-sufficient, in addition to enjoying the world he sometimes must confront it. Others may be dependent on his skills. Contrastively, the *teen* doesn't have any responsibilities; no one is dependent on

him/her. So, his/her exclusive focus is on happiness

We can now address the goal of this section: Can we speak about symbolism of figurative ideas, words, or actions as being no different than ordinary discourse. The answer is yes! Consider the following English statements:

- He is behaving like a *kid* (*teen*)
- King Solomon behaved like a *teen*; he thought that the solution to political harmony was marital relations with surrounding countries (**1Ki11**)
- The Jews who built the golden calf (*teenage cow*) were themselves behaving like *teens*; all they cared about was partying, without any (spiritual) responsibilities. The important thing was to use religion to perfect the physical

Even though these statements use figures of speech, they are considered normal discourse, the straightforward meaning of the statement, the so-called *Peshat*.

Now, consider the following statements echoing the symbolic interpretation of Red Heifer presented by Rashi and Rav Hirsch.

- The people who built the golden teen-cow (calf) were themselves teens. If they behave liked a cow-adult they wouldn't have had these problems.
- King Solomon approached political harmony like a teen; the important thing was marital relations with surrounding nations. The idea of an adult approach to politics, of basing political harmony on unique skills which other nations need, was foreign and distant from him.

I believe these statements also have intuitive appeal as *Peshat*, as the straightforward meaning of the narrative, a meaning which merges the literal (*cow-calf*) and the figurative (*adult-teen*). We all speak that way in ordinary discourse (as in the English examples I just

gave show).

This also highlights the main themes of this digest and of Rashi/Hirsch's commentary on the Red Heifer

- The Red Heifer reminds people that *adulthood* is the goal; they must resist the temptations to behave like the *teen*
- King Solomon himself behaved like a teen. That is why he personally could not understand the Red Heifer. It is not that *intellectually* it was above him; rather it was *emotionally* above him. In other words, the statement *he couldn't understand the red adult cow ceremony is not a statement about its comprehensibility; rather, it is a statement about King Solomon's emotional maturity.* The Bible itself decries King Solomon's emotional maturity and makes it clear that he *deserted God*. These are not *my* ideas; the Bible spends an entire chapter detailing how Solomon behaved like the teen and deserted God (**1Ki11**).

The bottom line is we will not take the statement that King Solomon couldn't understand the Red Heifer laws as a *prohibition* or *statement* that we can't understand it. In fact, many people like Rashi and Rav Hirsch did understand it. Rather, the Midrash, is simply echoing the Biblical narrative that Solomon deserted God by behaving like a teen and hence couldn't emotionally relate to the Biblical chapter telling us not to behave like a teen. (as we might say in English: *He simply didn't* (i.e. refused to) *understand*)

With this background we now analyze passages A-K from the text and Rashi at the beginning of the digest (Please review them as we go through them). Throughout, our goal is to show that this Chapter contrasts the *adult* versus the *teen*.

Rashi does mention the main theme: He explicitly compares the Red Heifer to the Golden Calf. In statement C) Rashi explicitly

contrasts the *adult* vs. *teen*. The contribution of Rashiyomi is to see this comment as the theme, as the fundamental driver of all other comments.

With this background we will now analyze the statements of the Bible, Rashi, and Rav Hirsch.

III: Statements A-E

Rashi says the following:

- A) The *people* must take the Red Heifer to the priest.

Unlike other priestly procedures where the priest just teaches and the offeror passively listens and learns, here, active participation is needed. It is needed to overcome the active participation, constantly present in society, to revert to the *teen* style. Rashi explicitly notes that by the Golden Calf sin, the people helped construct the idol. Hence, they must actively participate to atone for it.

- B) Rashi simply says that *red* corresponds to sin which the Red Heifer atones for. Rav Hirsch takes it this way also. The *red* corresponds to the *teen* tendency to want to be *hot*.

Thus, the idea here is to point out to the offeror that (s)he thinks she must be *red* (*hot*) but in fact the cow is burnt, and that idea is negated.

- C) This is the main theme: *Cow=Adult; Calf=Teen*. The statement by the Priest here is to remind the offeror to focus on skills and accomplishments rather than physical prowess. As Rashi explains *Let the adult come and atone for teen* referring to the fact that the Red Cow atones for the golden calf.

- D) Rashi explains *unblemished* as the goal of the procedure; the restoration of lack of blemish in the offeror and Jewish

people who blemished themselves with the golden calf.

Without disagreeing with this, I would supplement simply point out that the teen wants lack of blemish in the physical area while the adult focuses more on lack of blemish in the skill area.

- E) Rashi and Rav Hirsch both explain *no yoke* as lack of responsibility and dealing with burden. There are many ways to look at this, but they are all equivalent.

Rashi and Rav Hirsch explain *lack of yoke* to refer to the teen tendency to have everything done for him/her. The people who sinned with the Golden Calf did not want the responsibility of Religious Burden; instead religion was simply a way to have fun and party.

Without disagreeing with this, I have seen this *lack of yoke* idea as subsumed in the general *adult-teen* contrast that adults take on burdens; they have responsibilities, things to accomplish, things on which others depend on them whether these be in the religious sphere or business or social sphere.

IV: Statements F through K

Curiously, Rashi only comments on statement F. Rashi is silent on biblical statements G-K. We therefore supplement Rashi's comments with those of Rav Hirsch whose ideas complement and are consistent with Rashis.

- F) Unusual for the Bible, it is Elazar (Aaron's son) who performs the ceremony, not Aaron. Before presenting Rashi we point out how this fit in with the *adult-teen* theme: If indeed, the important thing in life is skills, then a *teen* like Elazar can perform *adult*

functions (those of the high priest) if they have the skills necessary to do it. Thus, Elazar's performance reflects the theme that for the teen to become adult all that is needed are skill competencies.

Rashi however, instead of emphasizing the positive (Elazar was competent to perform) reviews the negative: *Aaron made the golden calf; therefore, he would be inappropriate to atone for it.*

I think Rashi's point here is Aaron behaved like a *teen* in the Golden Calf. The Bible itself (**Dt09-20**) mentions Aaron's sin. Therefore, Aaron who behaved once like a *teen* could not teach the fundamental idea of acquiring skills and becoming an *adult*. Hence, Elazar was selected to perform the procedure.

Whether we emphasize the positive or negative we arrive at the same conclusion; it however is fruitful to look at both sides of this.

- G) (Hirsch) The cow is *taken out of the camp* thereby symbolizing that *teen behavior*, emphasis on the physical, lack of responsibility, and ignoring skill competencies, has no *place* in the Jewish community.
- H) (Hirsch) On the contrary: Man's job is to *slaughter* (kill, diminish, or remove) the *red-hot teen who took his red heat into adulthood and never bore a yoke.*
- I) (Hirsch) Although Rashi exclusively focuses on the contrast of the golden calf and the Red Heifer, R. Hirsch also emphasizes that the Red Heifer is used to purify those who have been in contact with the dead. This doesn't disagree with Rashi, as R. Hirsch is making the point that it is sin, preoccupation with *redness, perfection, and teen* that leads to death.

In this case, R. Hirsch emphasizes that it is only the cow that is slaughtered and burned. The blood of the cow, symbolizing the soul, is spared the burning.

- J) In fact, the blood is *sprinkled* towards the Temple. Thus, the soul is spared death provided it redirects itself (redirects after being expelled from the camp) towards holiness.
- K) (Rashi and Hirsch) This unyoked animal teen is burnt and destroyed.

V: Statement L

- L) Both Rashi and R. Hirsch take the *cedar-hyssop* as the contrast between the high and mighty (*cedar*) and low (*hyssop*).

However, R. Hirsch correctly observes that *worm-dyed wool* has two elements: The *worm* and the *wool* from the *sheep*. Hence, R. Hirsch correctly sees *sheep* = *mammal* = *top of animal world* while *worm* = *bottom of animal world*.

In other words, R. Hirsch sees both *cedar:hyssop* and *sheep:worm* as symbolic of the *high* and *low* (one in the plant world and one in the animal world).

Before discussing Rashi, let us complete the explanation as given by R. Hirsch.

R. Hirsch emphasizes that the *adult-teen* lesson is given to all whether they are *high up* (Cedar/Sheep) or *low down* (hyssop/worm). The message is thereby given that all must seek *adulthood* and avoid *teenness*.

Rashi emphasizes that *to achieve*

atonement, let the haughty (cedar) lower themselves like a hyssop. Rashi also mentions these three items correspond to the 3 thousand who died in the golden calf.

But we have already seen that there are 4 items. I therefore would argue that Rashi, who sometimes *expressed* his ideas using puns and correspondences did so here. Rashi was not trying to explain the three items (3 items = 3 thousand) but to create a mnemonic.

Furthermore, Rashi emphasizes the badness of *haughtiness (cedar)* and the virtues of *lowness (hyssop)*.

But I would not praise lowness. After all lower socio-economic strata also sin and also behave like *teens*.

So again: I would see Rashi as simply stating the theme *cedar=high, hyssop=low* and then creating some mnemonic puns. Alternatively, I could see Rashi as mentioning one side of the coin the other side being completed by the reader: The high must lower themselves; *and* the low must raise themselves. You cannot remain high or low without succumbing to teenness. You must pull in the opposite direction.

As to the explanation: I would simply say that *whether* you are in a high-socio-economic stratum (*cedar-sheep*) or low socio-economic strata (*hyssop-worm*), each stratum has its own temptations to behave like the *teen*. If you are high, you think you can get away with everything and have the right to focus on pleasure (as did King Solomon who intermarried with all nations); if you are low then you think of yourself as *trash* who can never achieve anything and

therefore might as well enjoy oneself.

Thus, the approach suggested by Rashiomi would simply build on Rashi who said a) the haughty must lower themselves to which we add b) *and* the low must raise themselves.

Whatever the reader wishes to believe, it is clear that the fundamental idea of cedar:hyssop = high:low is explicitly made by both Rashi and Rav Hirsch.

VI: Summary

Biblical Narrative	Symbol
Let the people take a	Not learned passively; requires active participation
Red unblemished cow that never had a yoke	The <i>teen</i> (calf) focuses on <i>red-hot</i> and physical <i>perfection</i> ; the <i>teen</i> never bore <i>responsibility</i> and took this into adulthood (<i>cow</i>)
Elazar performs	Although not the High Priest, if a person has necessary skill competencies, they can perform
Take cow out of camp; slaughter it; sprinkle blood; burn it	The red-hot teen who exclusively focuses on animality must be ousted and destroyed. Only the spiritual redirected to holiness remains
Take cedar:hyssop and worm-dyed:wool	The lesson is for high and low. The high must lower themselves; the low must raise themselves.

We summarize the high-level symbolism in the

table below. We again mention that our understanding of the Red Heifer is not contradicted by the Midrashic statement that King Solomon couldn't understand it; the Midrash is simply criticizing Solomon for behaving like a *teen* and thinking that political peace could be made by political intermarriage.

APPENDIX

THE 10 RASHI RULE CATEGORIES

A Lightning Summary with Examples

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Rule I-REFERENCE: EXAMPLE: Dt26-05d *We went down to Egypt with a few people* explained by Gn46-27: with 70 people

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Rule II-MEANING / Lexicography / Dictionary:

EXAMPLE (Connectives) KI means IF,PERHAPS,RATHER,BECAUSE,WHEN,THAT (Rashi on Gn18-15a Gn24-33a) **EXAMPLE (Nuances):** YDA means FAMILIAR, not KNOW (e.g. Dt34-10a) egg Gn04-01 Adam was FAMILIAR with his wife **EXAMPLE (Idioms)** ON THE FACE OF means DURING THE LIFETIME (Rashi on Nu03-04a Gn11-28a Ex20-03c Dt05-07a) **EXAMPLE (Synonyms)** *Marchese* means pot; *Machinate* means frying pan (Lv02-05a, 07a) **EXAMPLE (Homonyms)** SHAMAH can mean listen, hear, understand: (Gn42-23a) *They didn't appreciate that Joseph understood them* (Note: They knew he was listening) **EXAMPLE (Metonymy)** (Lv02-11a) *Don't offer ...any honey as offerings* RASHI:

honey includes any *sweet fruit juice*

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Rule III-GRAMMAR: EXAMPLE: BA-ah means COMING not CAME(Gn46-26a)

EXAMPLE: A grammatical conjugation in the Hitpa'el if 1st root letter is Tzade (Gn44-16a)

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Rule IV-PARALLELISM: EXAMPLE: (Ex20-04) Don't **POSSESS** the gods of others Don't **MAKE** idols RASHI: So both **POSSESS**ion & **MAKING** of idols are prohibited

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Rule V-CONTRADICTION: EXAMPLE: (Nu04-03, Nu08-24a) Levites start Temple work at 25; Levites start temple work at 30. RASHI: They apprentice at 25 but start actual service at 30.

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Rule VI-STYLE: RABBI ISHMAEL RULES: EXAMPLE: (Simple verses should be generalized): (Rashi Pesachim 6) (Dt25-04a) *Don't MUZZLE an OX while THRESHING* RASHI: Don't STOP any WORKING ANIMAL from eating

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Rule VII-FORMATTING: EXAMPLE (BOLD indicated by Repetition): Ex12-09c) COOK it in water (So COOKED-COOKED is understood the same way bold is understood by modern reader) RASHI: Preferred to COOK it in water; But COOK it at all costs(Even if you don't have water) **EXAMPLE: (BULLETS indicated by Repeating keywords)** (Ex03-11a) Who am I - **THAT** I should go to Pharaoh - **THAT** I should take the Jews out of Egypt RASHI: Repeated word **THAT** creates BULLET effect - Pharaoh was a difficult king (Bullet one) - Jews were not yet ready for freedom (Bullet two) **EXAMPLE (Climax assumed in any Biblical list):** (Dt19-11a) *If a man HATES, SPIES, CONFRONTS & KILLS.* RASHI: Bible identifies 4 stages to murder (indicated by capped words)

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Rule VIII-DATABASE: EXAMPLE: *God spoke to Moses to say over* introduces about 7 dozen biblical commandments; *God spoke to Aaron to say over* only introduces 2 commandments. RASHI: (Lv10-03b) Aaron was silent when his sons died because they served in the Temple drunk; hence he merited that the commandment prohibiting priests to work in the Temple drunk, was given to him

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Rule IX-NON VERSE: EXAMPLE: (Use of Algebra)(Ex38-26b) *Temple donations of silver were 100 Kikar and 1775 Shekel from 630,550 half-shekels* RASHI: So one Kikar of silver = 3000 Shekel.

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Rule X: SYMBOLISM: EXAMPLE: (Use of puns) Moses made a copper snake for people to look up to when bitten by snakes (so they should pray and recover) RASHI: (Nu21-09a) The Hebrew root for copper and snake are identical (Cf. The English *copperhead*) Moses

made the metal snake copper colored to symbolize the snake