

## ParShaT *VaYiQRaH* One Pager Series

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**[Background:** We have been bringing controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we examine a secular academic paper that helps understand Rashi.]

**Rashi #1a Biblical Text: Lv01-09** Offer all [the organs], smoke them on the altar; an *olah* offering [Rashi: Offer it intentionally for the sake of an offering], a roasted meal of savory aroma for God.

**Rashi #1b Biblical Text: Lv01-14:17** If you offer a bird as an *olah*...the priest offers it all and smokes it on the altar, it is an olah [Sifre like Rashi on #1a: The offering must be made intentionally for the sake of an offering], a roasted meal of savory aroma for God.

**Rashi #1c Biblical Text: Lv06-02c** This is the law of *olah*, it is the olah [Rashi: [It must be fit to be offered to God; so an animal which humans had sinned with may not be offered] on the altar firewood on the altar....

**Acknowledgement:** The ideas below come from an academic paper of Professor Holmstead, JBL, 132(3), published in 2013. Holmstead encourages more dialogue between linguists and manuscript analysts; I am using his ideas to encourage more dialogue between linguists and exegetical commentators.

**The roasted meal of savory aroma for God:** This is not the standard translation so I explain it. i) The word *lechem* means *bread* but also generally means *food*. ii) *isheh* is the feminine form of *aysh*, *fire*. Following standard linguistic patterns, the feminine form indicates the *recipient* of the masculine form. In English we might say *I roasted the roast* where the first *roast* in the sentence is the verb referring to the activity of the fire and the 2nd *roast*, is the recipient of the fire and roasting. Hence *lechem isheh* would mean *roasted meal*. iii) *Rayach nichoach*

is usually translated as sweet smelling. But in the context of food, *savory aroma* is much more accurate. Hence, *lechem isheh rayach nichach* is translated *roasted meal of savory aroma* for God. (cf. Malacahi 1:6-8; offerings should be of high quality.).

**The Three meanings of the Hebrew *hu*:** The underlined word it in Rashi #1b above, is the translation of the hebrew word *hu*. As Holmstead points out, *hu* has three distinct meanings in Hebrew.

**#1 Pronoun referring to noun:** It is a pronoun which refers to some other noun. In this case *it* refers to the underlined word bird; the sentence would mean this *bird* is an *olah* offering. Critique: Holmstead notes that this is the traditional way this sentence is taken. But I would object. What is its purpose? The paragraph opens *if you offer a bird as an olah then do the following*. It is not stylistic to repeat at the end *this is an olah*.

**#2 Resumption:** A typical sentence using a pronoun for resumption might be the following: *Ladies and Gentlemen I introduce our CEO; he makes the decisions*. The word *he* refers back to the *immediately preceding* CEO; it is a resumptive pronoun. Critique: Holmstead notes that the Lv text could not be a resumptive pronoun since *olah* is feminine and *hu* is masculine. I agree. But I add that resumption usually indicates emphasis. For example, I could have said *Ladies and Gentlemen I introduce our CEO who makes the decisions*. By *resuming* the reference to the CEO, *he makes the decision*, I create an emphasis. In my article *Biblical Formatting*, JBL, 35(1), 2007, I refer to this as an *unspecified emphasis*.

**#3 The verb *is*:** The sentence would read *an olah is a roasted meal of savory aroma to God*. Critique: Holmstead notes there are agreement problems with this translation (what is before the *is* and after it should agree in plurality, and person (1st, 2nd, 3rd)), he cites several examples where *hu* can mean *is* even if there is no agreement. He also discusses the historical use of *hu* as *is*.

**Rashi-Midrashic comments:** Whether we use the idea of *resumption* or *the verb is* there is unspecified emphasis in these sentences. Rashi takes this emphasis simply: "Have intention that the offering be for God; Make sure the offering is of high quality." This approach is sharper to an approach based on extra words.