



Shlomo Rayman
Beit Shemesh
Chapter Director

Sweet Taste of Curiosity

Growing up, when someone in my family asked a worthy question, it was declared a ‘Slurpee Question’ and they were rewarded with a large slurpee from 7-Eleven. The excitement my parents had over clever questions combined with the delicious taste of carbonated-sugar-water played a significant role in my love for learning, my curiosity, and my sweet tooth. Looking back, this is actually quite counterintuitive. One would expect parents to reward answers! Where does this love for questions come from? The *mitzvah* of *parah aduma* is filled with enigmas. A cow is used, despite its resemblance to the golden calf. The *kohanim* who prepare the ashes and purify others, become impure themselves. The cow is slaughtered outside the *Beit Hamikdash*, something normally forbidden. Though, the biggest enigma is that history’s smartest person, Shlomo Hamelech, didn’t have an answer! I’m sure that in this publication alone, there are multiple answers to these very questions. Sometimes we are too quick to offer superficial answers and we minimize the importance of dwelling on a question.

There are other questions our greatest leaders have asked without answers. Why is there evil? Why isn’t there obvious divine justice? Sometimes asking and pondering over these questions is more important than having the answers. To ask questions is to care about the truth and to believe in the value and importance of our role in this world. To question the mitzvot is what drives us to understand them. To question evil is what drives us to fight it. How fortunate we are to be part of a tradition that values and encourages questions. Stay curious and keep asking!



Menachem Kramer
11th Grade, Ramat Beit Shemesh

The Protection That Peace Provides

In the middle of this week’s parsha, we are told about the death of Ahron. We see that Am Yisrael was deeply affected by this news and every household, man and woman, mourned the loss for 30 days. The question that arises from this is what warranted such an extreme reaction from the people, which was unlike any other reaction that took place after the deaths of other leaders?

The answer can be found by analyzing a singular character trait that Ahron embodied, which was a drive for Shalom/

Peace. Rashi explains that Ahron was a “Rodef Shalom,” or pursuer of peace within Am Yisrael, and actively strove to settle arguments between people. We also know that the Ananei Hakavod, which had been protecting Bnei Yisrael in the desert, were brought in Ahron’s merit, and Rashi explains that they disappeared when he died. This left Am Yisrael susceptible to attacks from other nations like we see in the following pasuk that says that a Canaanite nation fought with Bnei Yisrael immediately following the death of Ahron, because the Ananei Hakavod had disappeared.

The reason that this explains the extended mourning of Ahron is that Ahron was the generator of peace within the nation. His actions allowed for an atmosphere of peace to be produced around the nation, and in the merit of the peaceful surroundings the Ananei Hakavod were brought to protect the nation. However, when Ahron died, the nation lost their source of the peaceful atmosphere and protection that emerged from that atmosphere, and as a result mourned that loss greatly.

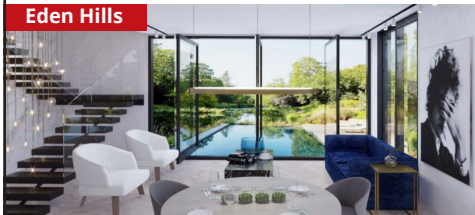
From here we can learn the importance of creating peace between people and settling arguments. Just as the Ananei Hakavod protected Am Yisrael in the desert and flattened the roads for them in the merit of the peace within the nation, so too when we come together and stop arguing we will be protected from all problems and the path forward will be much smoother. ■

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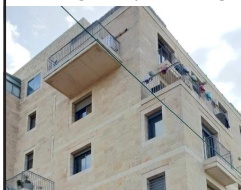
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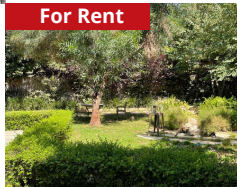
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