



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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This Shabbat we will read *Parshat Chukat*, which introduces us to the mystical cure for impurity, the mysterious inexplicable concept of the *para aduma* - the red heifer.

The Chasidic Masters saw in these *pesukim* not only the *halachic* remedy to purify those who have become ritually impure, but also an eternal message regarding the relationship between the Jewish people and the *Torah Hakedosha*.

One of the perplexing aspects of the *Para Aduma* ritual, is that the *Kohanim* who were involved in preparing the ashes of the *para aduma* became *tamei*- impure through the process. In preparing the mystical compound which would return others to purity, they in turn became *tamei*.

The *Avodat Elazar of Koshnitz zy'a*, offers an original interpretation to explain the hidden significance of this peculiar phenomenon based on the opening verse - *Zot Chukat HaTorah* -*This is the inexplicable principle of the Torah*.

Our verse not only describes the mysterious nature of the para aduma, but also teaches us a very fundamental idea about Torah itself. Like any remedy, when channeled appropriately it can transform and cure and bring complete healing, or if chas v'shalom it is misused, taken out of context and applied inappropriately then it can bring further deficiency and harm.

The *Admor, Reb Dovid of Tolna zy'a*, clarifies this important idea further:

Why does the verse state this is the

inexplicable principle of the Torah? What is the connection or parallel to be drawn between the para aduma and the entire Torah? Just as the para aduma has the capacity to both purify and render impure, so too the Torah can either be a source of ultimate purity, or chas v'shalom, the opposite. One whose scholarship and knowledge of Torah leads to haughtiness, rather than humility and refined character, is one who has become spiritually deficient.

The *Netivot Shalom, the Admor of Slonim zy'a* offers a different interpretation of our verse *Zot Chukat HaTorah*. Our verse, explains the Rebbe, is not only introducing us to the *para aduma* as a vehicle to restore purity, but also an eternal message which applies even now in the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash* and of the *para aduma*. ***Zot Chukat HaTorah***- In our current state, without the *Beit HaMikdash* and with no *para aduma*, the vehicle for we Jews to experience some form of a return to purity is by immersing ourselves in the study of *Torah-Zot Chukat HaTorah!*

The *Bat Ayin, the Rebbe of Avrich zy'a*, similarly points out that the *para aduma* is on some level meant to be a *tikkun* (fixing/correction) for the impurity introduced into the world through the *Cheit HaEgel* (The Sin of the Golden Calf).

The Rebbe taught:

Our Master, the Toldot Yaakov Yosef, zy'a, wrote that Cheit HaEgel impacted future



Title page of Bat Ayin, the Rebbe of Avrich

generations, and that the word *egel* is an acronym for the words *arayot* (illicit behavior), *gezel* (theft) and *lashon hara* (inappropriate speech).

So too, the *tikkun* for all of these, as represented by the *para aduma*, also comprises an acronym for the word *egel*-*Avoda*, *Gemilut chasadim* and *Limud Torah*...

The *Bat Ayin* taught that the *para aduma* not only provided a metaphysical healing for those who had come into contact with impurity, but also came to teach us how to overcome the impact that resulted from the *Cheit HaEgel*.

The **Noam Elimelech, Reb Elimelech of Lijensk zy"א**, extends this idea even further. If indeed the essence of the *para aduma*, is meant to be a *tikkun* for the *cheit haeigel*, then in its essence it is a vehicle for *teshuva*, reminding us that a Jew can always return, even after inexplicable, inexcusable mistaken behavior. This very idea, that *Hashem* allows us to return, to leave those transgressions behind, seemingly is beyond our human comprehension- *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* capacity to forgive, his compassion is beyond any logic or human comprehension. Hence, *Zot Chukat haTorah*, this gift of *teshuva* represented by the ritual of the *para aduma* is indeed a *chok*, it is beyond our human capacity to fully appreciate the magnitude and depth of *Hashem's* mercy and compassion.

Yehi Ratzon, may we merit that our *limud Torah*, should indeed bring purity to our minds and hearts, cultivate an opportunity for continued personal growth, and that we soon merit to experience the building of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the return of all its associated sacred and wondrous rituals. ■

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