

Para Adumah- Outside Korbon

by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

Parshas Chukas opens with the laws of the Parah Adumah, the laws of the Red Heifer and the laws of impurity originating in death. All of these laws are *chukim* which means that these are laws that we follow only because they are Hashem's decrees. They are unlike Mishpatim where we either readily see the reasons are to maintain order in society or the reasons are given.

Regarding the fact that Elazar was to be in charge of making the ashes of the *Para Aduma*, Rashi states it was a mitzvah for the vice Kohen-Gadol and the Ramban says it was a *horaas Shaah*, temporary dictate to keep Aharon out of this area of law. One possibility is that would not be proper for Aharon to be so involved in a procedure that was done outside of the Bais Hamikdash. Another possibility is that since Aharon was involved in making the golden calf, even if justified, it would be more proper for someone else as we have the principle that an accuser cannot defend. For the making of *Paros Adumos* in the future, the Ramban refers to the Sifre who brings a dispute as to whether or not we need the Kohen Gadol specifically.

Rashi and Ramban both tell us that this is the classic mitzvah that the Satan and the nations taunt us by asking us how it makes us better. This mitzvah is indeed the classic *Chok* as even Shlomo Hamelech, with all of his wisdom, was unable to fathom it. We may be able to understand certain parables in this area as those given by Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan that Rashi quotes. Perhaps we can understand the parable Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan brings that Am Yisroel sinned with the golden calf and made the king's palace dirty. So the mother, the heifer, is cleaning it up. When Am Yisroel received the Torah at Har Sinai they became like angels. The sin of the golden calf brought death back into the world. The Mother of the calf, the red heifer gives us a means for purification from the impurity of death. But the real essence of purity and impurity and how the ashes of the Red Heifer mixed with flowing water cure this impurity and create impurity for the one who is pure remains a mystery to us.

The Ramban elaborates on this notion that the nations taunt us with this mitzvah more. He refers to what he wrote regarding the *Sair Laazazel*, the scapegoat [Vayikra 16:8] that the *Para Aduma* and the *Sair Laazazel* are two korbonos that atone outside of the Bais Hamikdash itself as if they were brought inside. In the case of the *Sair Laazazel*, it appears as if sacrifices are being brought to spirits [also referred to as *seeirim*] in the wilderness as this is the ultimate destination of that goat. The truth is, however, the goal is to get rid of that spirit of impurity. That being the case, the ultimate destination must be outside and not on the altar inside the Bais Hamikdash. The *Para Adumah* is similar as the reason for

the impurity is death which also must be fixed outside. The impurity is because of the trouble brought about by the first snake which brought sin and death into the world. The fortunate few who die by *neshika* [literally, the kiss of death] do not transmit any impurity because they perfected themselves. Therefore, the Torah states, *zos chukkas Hatorah* to mean that all of these concepts are *nechkak*, etched into our Torah and Mesorah.

In the end, this mitzvah is a mystery. Yet it is Hashem's decree. Like all of Hashem's decrees we follow them whether we understand them or not. The truth is however, even mitzvos that we think we understand must be treated as Hashem's decrees and not simply logical or good ideas. It is Hashem through the Torah who gave us all of his laws and all of the conditions for them to be applied. This cannot be accomplished by our logic. Ultimately, we have to apply to all of Hashem's mitzvos, *Zos Chukas Hatorah*.