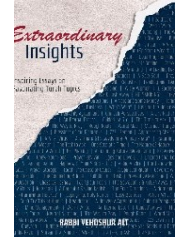
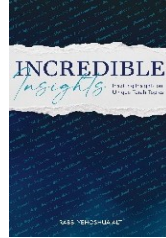


Fascinating INSIGHTS

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Actual Ashes

R' Chaim Vital once asked the Arizal if it is permitted to use the שמות הקדושים, holy names of Hashem¹ or the שבועה of the Kadmonim that they used for practical Kabbala for knowledge of wisdom and the like. The Arizal answered those sages that used the holy names of Hashem had the ashes of the Parah Adumah (which purifies one from טומאת מת, coming into contact with the dead) like R' Tarfon but we who are טמאי מתים are forbidden with these things.²

The Chida³ writes one who wants to sanctify and separate himself from the ways of the world, even with great effort it won't help because of the old and new impurities... It is obvious to me that the Arizal was purified with the ashes of the Parah Adumah through Eliyahu Hanavi and then wondrous Ruach Hakodesh rested on the Arizal... On a similar note, Eliyahu Hanavi would bring the ashes of the Parah Adumah to the Baal Shem Tov every Erev Yom Tov in order to purify him for Yom Tov.⁴

The Avodas Yisrael says that through the reading of Parshas Parah, one gets a spiritual purification.⁵ On Shabbos Parshas Parah, the Beis Aharon would say that **one must believe just as the ashes of the Parah Adumah purify to offer the Korbon Pesach so too when we read Parshas Parah it purifies each one according to his level, for the light of Pesach.**⁶ In the words of R' Tzadok Hakohen:⁷ reading Parshas Parah helps to purify one's heart from the impurities of the Yetzer Hara.

Bar Mitzvah of a Non-Jew

When does a non-Jew become Bar Mitzvah? This may sound like a bizarre question, but it has practical ramifications. Non-Jews are obligated in observing the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach, the seven Noachide laws.⁸ Do these obligations begin at age 13, the age when a Jew becomes Bar Mitzvah?

¹ The Chida writes that he saw in Italy a commentary of the Remak on the Torah written *Al Derech Sod* and a Sefer Hamitzvos written *Al Derech Sod*. Both of these were written in Italian. The Chida also writes that he saw from R' Chaim Vital that the Remak had to exert himself tremendously because the external evil forces tried to prevent the Remak when he would be engaged in learning after *Chatzos Layla* alone with the Zohar. He got rid of these forces through the *Sheimos Hakdoshim*, Holy Names of Hashem (Shem Hagdolim, Maareches Sefarim, 94).

² Shulchan Aruch of the Arizal, Krias B'Chochmas HaKabbala, 12. See the Karbon Nesanel at the end of Mesachta Rosh Hashana, אות ט.

³ Midbar Kedaimos, אות כו, מערכת א.

⁴ Imrei Dvash, p. 16.

⁵ Avodas Yisrael, Parshas Parah, s.v. והנה בשבת. See Sefas Emes, Parshas Parah, תרמ"א, s.v. וקבעו. Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim, 685:7.

⁶ Beis Aharon, p. קמ"ד.

⁷ Pri Tzadik, Parshas Parah, 1. See also 7.

⁸ Sanhedrin 56.

The Chassam Sofer⁹ writes that a Jew becoming Bar Mitzvah at 13 according to the Rosh is a Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai.¹⁰ The Rambam tells us that shiurim, numbers, were only given to Jews. Therefore, a non-Jewish katan (under age 13), who reaches the stage of bar daas (intellectual maturity), would be obligated in the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach.¹¹

This would seem problematic because the gemara¹² says that there is nothing that is forbidden to a non-Jew that is permitted for a Jew. Would a katan that is a Jew be responsible for the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach since there is nothing that is forbidden for a non-Jew and permitted for a Jew? This question is answered with the opinion of many achronim that a Jew who is a katan is obligated in the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach.

Priceless Pain

Obviously, course we don't ask Hashem for suffering but the following can give us an enlightened perspective. A chassid that was enduring an immense amount of pain came to his Rebbe for a bracha to relieve him of his suffering. The Rebbe was unavailable and so he waited there for the Rebbe. The chassid fell asleep in the waiting room and had the following dream. In the dream, he ascends to heaven where he was being judged. He sees the scale of his mitzvos and avairos. There are hundreds of black malachim created from sins which they place on one side of the scale. On the other side of the scale, the white malachim place his mitzvos. However, the avairos outweigh the mitzvos. Since he endured suffering in his life, it counters some of his sins. Still, the avairos outweigh the mitzvos. Then he screams out, "please give me more suffering." Suddenly, he wakes up and the gabbai tells him the Rebbe is ready to see you and give you a bracha for your suffering. The chassid declines and says, "I don't need a bracha for that anymore."

The story is told of a Jew that rented an apartment for 10,000 dollars per year which he would pay annually. Once, the landlord took a trip to a distant country and so he appointed an assistant who would collect the annual payment. This assistant was an anti-semitic and he raised the rent to 11,000 dollars. The Jew was unable to

afford the raise in rent but he managed to come up with 10,900 dollars. The assistant told the Jew that for each missing dollar, he will receive three lashes. And so, because 100 dollars was missing from the rent, the Jew received 300 lashes. When the landlord returned from his trip the Jew told him what transpired. The landlord was upset and told his Jewish tenant that for every lash you received, you will get four dollars from the assistant. So, for 100 lashes, you will get 400 dollars from the assistant. And that is what happened. When the Jew arrived home, his wife saw that he was sad. He tells her about the money he received which leaves his wife bewildered as to why he was sad. He explained, "If I would have received 500 lashes, I would have received 2,000 dollars!" The lesson is that for each drop of pain, one will receive a lot more "money" in heaven.

A Cow Above Intellect

Parshas Parah deals with the Parah Adumah.¹³ This connects to Purim¹⁴ as is shown in the following: Haman is hinted to in המן העץ, have you eaten of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat (Eitz Hadaas). We know that the נחש brought death to the world¹⁵ and it is the Parah Adumah that atoned for מת טמא. Furthermore, Parah Adumah is a as it is beyond our understanding¹⁶ חוקק and in context of the first sin, the Nachash said if you eat from it then והייתם כאלה-ים, you will be like Hashem.¹⁷ Thus Parah Adumah atones for the which brought death¹⁸ עגלת back to the world as we were on the level of Adam before the sin, at Matan Torah where death didn't exist.

Purim and Parah Adumah are both the idea of Emuna. On Purim we fulfill יעד דלא יעד, beyond our intellect¹⁹ and concerning the Parah Adumah, even the wisest man, Shlomo, didn't understand it as it says אמרתי אהכמה והיא מובילי, רחוקה ממני²⁰ I thought I could become wise but it is beyond me.²¹

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Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of three books including the recently released Extraordinary Insights, in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

⁹ Yoreh Deah 317. See also 184.

¹⁰ שו"ת הרא"ש 16.

¹¹ Minchas Chinuch 190.

¹² Sanhedrin 59a.

¹³ See Mishna Brura 685:1.

¹⁴ Actually, פורים (Purim) is the same sum as פרה אדומה. Also contained in the word פורים is פורים.

¹⁵ Chullin 139b, Breishis 3:11. See Shabbos 55b. Additionally, the Nachash said לא מות תמתוך, you won't die (Breishis 3:4).

¹⁶ Bamidbar 19:2.

¹⁷ Breishis 3:6.

¹⁸ Is it any coincidence that the word פרה is in כפרה (atonement)?!

¹⁹ Thus Purim is called so (Esther 9:26) על שם הפור, a lottery. This is the essence of Purim—that it seems random but really it is all from Hashem and as it says (Mishlei 16:33) בחיק יוטל את הגורל ומה' בחרו משפטו, when the lot is cast in the lap, its entire judgement has

been decided by Hashem (R' Karlenstein, Kuntros on Purim p. 105).

²⁰ Yoma 14a. Koheles 7:23. Only Moshe understood it. The Chida points out the first letters of שרפת החטאת, they shall take for the contaminated person some of the ashes of the burning purification animal (Bamidbar 19:17) spell שלמה. The gemara tells us the 50 Shaarei Bina were given to Moshe. Shlomo wanted to be like Moshe. A Bas Kol then came out and said ישר דברי אמת ולא קם נביא... עוד, a Navi amongst us will never rise like Moshe (Devarim 34:10)—Rosh Hashana 21b. Taking the initials in the proper order (as ישר means straight) we see it spells למשה, since only he understood it. Parenthetically, והיא רחוקה has the same numerical value as פרה אדומה 341.

²¹ Tisha Bav also requires Emuna since we don't have the Beis Hamikdash. It therefore is no surprise that we read Parshas Chukas (Parah) then.