

לעילוי נשמת
 מרת עקא עדנה
 צפורה ע"ה
 בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



על פי אלהי ארץ

AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Supernatural Teshuvah

זאת חקת התורה וגו' דבר אל בני ישראל
 ויקחו אליה כרה אדמה וגו'

This is the decree of the Torah... speak to Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take to you a completely red cow... (Bamidbar 19:2)

It is known that possessing a first edition of *Noam Elimelech* is a *segulah*; people spend vast sums to obtain one,

Wisdom, Prophecy and Torah may dictate that *teshuvah* is not an option, but Hashem says that no matter the state of the person or the manner of his sin – one can always do *teshuvah*.

and those in need of a *yeshuah* often borrow one. I have discovered just such a *segulah*.

Rashi comments on our pasuk that the Satan and the nations harass Klal Yisrael about *parah adumah*, asking what it is all about. The pasuk therefore describes it as a *chukah*, an unexplained decree, meaning that one may not question it.

The *Noam Elimelech* points to Rashi on a later pasuk (19:22), where he provides a logical explanation for *parah adumah*, citing R. Moshe Hadarshan: "It is comparable to the child of a maidservant who soiled the king's palace. People said, 'Let his mother come and wipe up the mess!' In the same way, *Let a cow come and atone for the sin of the egel (calf)*." If *parah adumah* can be logically explained, why does the Torah classify it as a *chukah*?

The *Noam Elimelech* answers that the true depth of this reason cannot be understood by the nations. It is only in the following manner that they can understand it: The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 4b) states that Bnei Yisrael should not have been vulnerable to the *chet ha'egel*; it was well below their *madreigah*. This was especially so since they had just accepted the Torah and been freed of the *yetzer hara*. The sin was "imposed" upon them, as if it had been decreed by Heaven that they would commit it, in order to demonstrate the way of *teshuvah* for future generations. This *teshuvah* was *parah adumah*. In other words, *parah adumah* is *teshuvah* for the *chet ha'egel*,

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Just One Day

זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל

This is the teaching (Torah) regarding a man who dies in a tent. (Bamidbar 19:14)

The Gemara² expounds: "אין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה – The words of Torah can only endure in one who kills himself over it." But in a different place, the Gemara (Yoma 85b) derives from (Vayikra 18:5) וְחַי בָּהֶם – *and by which he shall live*, that one should live by the Torah and not die by it. How do we understand these seemingly conflicting teachings?

The Midrash³ recounts that Reish Lakish was originally part of a band of three robbers. After his encounter with R. Yochanan, he left his partners and did heartfelt *teshuvah*, devoting himself entirely to Torah and *tzedakah*. On the day Reish Lakish passed away, his former cronies died as well. Upon their arrival in the upper worlds, Reish Lakish was ushered immediately into Gan Eden, while the two others were escorted to Gehinnom. The bandits protested, "Master of the world! Do you overlook a person's actions? Reish Lakish committed thievery together with us, and while he is in Gan Eden we

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2 Berachos 63b, Shabbos 83b

3 Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer, 43

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and the *chet ha'egel* was made happen in order to demonstrate *teshuvah*.

The *Noam Elimelech* concludes, “והוא – and it itself is a *chukah*; therefore, the pasuk describes [*parah adumah*] as a *chukah*.” What is he referencing with “it itself is a *chukah*”; the *chet ha'egel*, or *teshuvah*? In standard editions, the text reads, as above, “והוא – בעצמ,” in *lashon zachar*. Clearly, he refers to the *chet ha'egel*. Since the *chet ha'egel* was compelled upon Bnei Yisrael as if it were a *chukah*, and *parah adumah* is a result of it – *parah adumah* is itself considered a *chukah*.

But in the first edition, the *vav* of וְהוּא is cut short; it reads וְהוּאִי, in *lashon nekeivah*. If so, it would seem to refer to *teshuvah*. What about *teshuvah* is a *chukah*, an inscrutable decree? Sometimes a person does seem to be beyond the pale of *teshuvah*. The *chukah* aspect of *teshuvah* decrees that this is never possible: nobody is ever beyond *teshuvah*.

The Midrash¹ relates that a question was asked respectively of Wisdom, Prophecy, Torah, and Hashem: “What is the punishment of a sinner?” Wisdom replied, “הַפְּסָדִים יִרְדְּרֵךְ רָעָה – Evil pursues sinners (Mishlei 13:21).” Prophecy replied, “הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחַטָּאת הִיא תָמוּת – The soul that sins shall die (Yechezkel 18:4).” Torah replied, “Let him bring a *korban*, and he will be atoned.” But Hashem replied, “Let him do *teshuvah*, and he will be atoned.”

Nevuah said that a sinner must die, because a person descends to this world for the single purpose of fulfilling Hashem's will. Just as a tool that doesn't

work will be removed from its production line, so too, one who is not living out the purpose of his creation ought not to continue existing. Torah advised atoning for one's sin with a *korban*. But Hashem provided another possibility: *teshuvah*.

Did Wisdom, Prophecy and Torah get it wrong?

The answer is no. According to the rules of logic and justice, one cannot wiggle one's way out of *aveiros*, particularly severe ones, with *teshuvah*. But Hashem informs us that there is an unexplainable *chukah* of *teshuvah*, which dictates that one can always do *teshuvah*, no matter what.

This is the meaning of the pasuk (Yechezkel 36:25), וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים, וְטָהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם – Then I will sprinkle pure water upon you, that you may become cleansed; I will cleanse you from all your contamination and from all your idols. The *mefarshim* explain that atonement by means of *teshuvah* is like the purification of the *parah adumah* waters. *Parah adumah* is a *chukah*; it defies understanding; and the same is true of *teshuvah*. Wisdom, Prophecy and Torah may dictate that *teshuvah* is not an option, but Hashem says that no matter the state of the person or the manner of his sin – one can always do *teshuvah*.

We are now in the middle of Tammuz; the days of *teshuvah* are approaching. Let us begin now cleansing our hearts. *Teshuvah* is always effective – and necessary.

(חקת תשפ"ב – ס"ג מאמר ג)

The *mefarshim* discuss the phrasing of the pasuk, זאת חקת התורה. Since this *parshah* discusses *parah adumah*, why doesn't it begin זאת חקת הפרה or זאת חקת ההטהרה? The way the pasuk is worded implies that it is relevant to all of Torah. In what way is it so?

Rashi explains the Torah's description of this mitzvah as a *chukah*: לפי שהשטן ואומות העולם מונין את ישראל לומר מה המצוה והזאת ומה טעם יש בה – Because the Satan and the nations of the world badger (מויין) Klal Yisrael, saying, ‘What is this mitzvah, and what reason is there for it?’

The expression “מויין” is a derivative of אונאת דב – אונאה. Simply, it relates to אונאת דברים, harassing someone with words; the nations harass us about this mitzvah. But if so, why the grouping of the Satan and the nations of the world? What do they have to do with each other?

We may suggest that מונין is not referencing אונאת דברים, but אונאת ממון, financial deception. Like a dishonest salesman, both the Satan and the nations do their best to deceive us with false attractions, blinding the eyes of Yidden with the pleasures and opportunities of this world.

But every Yid knows the answer to this trickery: זאת חקת התורה. The Torah is חקוּרָה, etched into every Jewish heart, and with it one can wage war against the *yetzer hara* and close one's eyes to the glittery enticements this world has to offer. This is how we can guard ourselves from the evil forces.

(חקת תשפ"ב – ס"ג מאמר ד)

1 Yalkut, Tehillim 702 and Yechezkel 358; Pesikta D'Rav Kahana, 24:7

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sit in Gehinnom!" Hashem replied, "He did *teshuvah*, and you did not." The robbers responded, "Give us the chance, and we will do tremendous *teshuvah*!" Hashem replied, "*Teshuvah* can only be done until the day of death."

The *Tiferes Shlomo*⁴ explains that this is the intent of the Mishnah (Avos 2:10), "ושוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך – and repent one day before your death." The Gemara (Shabbos 153a) explains that one should always do

One who is on a truly high *madreigah* knows that all his time, energy and resources are to be used for the pursuit of eternal life, to the exclusion of all else

teshuvah since he does not know when he will die. The *Tiferes Shlomo* suggests another approach: when the inevitable occurs and one stands judgment before Hashem, he will wish for just one day back on this world to do *teshuvah* – but it will be too late. What if he would be granted this one day? He would certainly make the most of it, utilizing every moment for Torah, mitzvos and *avodas Hashem* to the utmost. It would be the most uplifted, inspired day! This is what the Mishnah means to say: make every day into the יום אחד, the "one day" you will wish you had, because once you miss your chance it will be too late.

This, says the *Tiferes Shlomo*, is the meaning of the pasuk (Devarim 11:13) וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַעְתֶּם תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם – *It will be that if you listen to My commandments that I command you today. One's avodas Hashem must be with a feeling of today: This is the one day I have been granted for teshuvah, which I cannot do once I die.* The Gemara (Eiruvim 22a) teaches similarly, on the pasuk (Devarim 7:11) אֲשֶׁר – אֶנְכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם – *that I command you today, to perform them* – "Today – to perform them, and not tomorrow to perform them." We can only do the mitzvos today; tomorrow we won't have the chance.

With this the *Tiferes Shlomo* answers our opening question. אין דברי תורה מת־קיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה means that one can only keep the Torah properly if he sees himself as already in the next world, burning with a desire to do *teshuvah*. He views every day of his life as a gift from Hashem, a "one day" opportunity to improve his ways. It is by working to attain this mindset that one truly fulfills וְחִי בְּהֶם, living by the Torah in the most real sense, utilizing every living moment for *avodas Hashem*.

Let us look at this a bit more deeply. The Gemara (Gittin 47a) relates that Reish Lakish would not save up any money; he would use whatever money he had to live day by day.⁵ When he passed away, he left over only a small container of spice. As he left this world, he applied to himself the pasuk (Tehillim 49:11), וְעָזְבוּ לְאַחֲרֵיהֶם חֵילָם – *they left their possessions to others.*

The Chofetz Chaim explained⁶ Reish Lakish's lament: the time he invested to earn the funds to purchase the spice could have been better used for Torah and *avodas Hashem*, thereby acquiring eternal life. In fact, it is told of the Chofetz Chaim himself that he practiced this form of caution with his resources. He was once asked why he didn't own a certain basic *sefer*. He replied, "In order to purchase it, I would have to invest time to earn the necessary money. I would rather use that time to earn *Olam Haba*. When I need that *sefer*, I can borrow it." The Chofetz Chaim noted the above Gemara, which teaches this lesson.⁷

The Gemara's statement אין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה is made by Reish Lakish; having done a complete *teshuvah*, he fully understood the true meaning of וְחִי בְּהֶם, that every moment of life and all of one's resources must be channeled toward living the high life, a life of *Olam Haba* on this world.

We often rationalize that we need one amenity or another to maximize our productivity in *avodas Hashem*. But one who is on a truly high *madreigah* knows that all his time, energy and resources are to be used for the pursuit of eternal life, to the exclusion of all else. Although we are not on this *madreigah*, we ought to at least be aware of the proper mindset of a Yid, and in this way we will be inspired to try and make the most of our time.

(חקת תשפ"ב, סי'ג מאמר א)

4 Beginning of Chukas

5 See Rashi

6 See Dugma'os M'Darkei Avi, 55; Chafetz Chaim al HaTorah, Naso, Ma'asai L'Melech, 1, and Va'eschanan, Ma'asai L'Melech, 14

7 This story was related by eyewitnesses; see the Torah journal Amalah Shel Torah, vol. 4 p. 74 (Bnei Brak 5741).

Outside In

וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיהָ פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה תְּמִימָה וְגו' וְהוֹצִיא אֹתָהּ אֶל
מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְגו' וְהִזָּה אֶל נֶכַח פְּנֵי אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

And they shall take to you a completely red cow... and he shall take it out to the outside of the camp... and sprinkle [some of its blood] toward the front of the Ohel Mo'ed.

(Bamidbar 19:2-4)

Rabbeinu Shlita was asked:

The basic preparation of the *parah adumah* has to occur outside all three camps – *Kehunah*, *Leviyah*, and *Yisrael*. Additionally, both this preparation and the sprinkling of its blood need to be in a place where one could see the *Ohel Mo'ed*. During the time the Beis Hamikdash stood in Yerushalayim, this was possible outside of Yerushalayim (all of which was *Machaneh Yisrael*), in a place that overlooked the Beis Hamikdash. But during the time of Mishkan Shiloh, the *halachah* was that any place from where one could see the Mishkan was considered *Machaneh Yisrael*.⁸ This seems problematic. The *parah adumah* needed to be prepared where the Mishkan was visible, but could not be done in any of the camps. How was this possible? Is it conceivable that during all three hundred and sixty-nine years of Mishkan Shiloh, no *parah adumah* could have been prepared?

Perhaps, according to the Sfas Emes⁹ that if one could see Mishkan Shiloh from outside of Eretz Yisrael, that place is not considered *Machaneh Yisrael*, a *parah adumah* could have been prepared in such a

place. After all, one could see the Mishkan from there, but it is outside all the camps.

Alternately, the Gemara (Pesachim 85b) states that rooftops and attics of Yerushalayim are not sanctified with the *kedushah* of Yerushalayim.¹⁰ Presumably the same is true of Shiloh. If so, the *parah adumah* could have been prepared on a rooftop or in an attic of Shiloh which overlooked the Mishkan.

Rabbeinu Shlita responded:

To start with, the problem does not seem very compelling. The Mishnah (Parah 3:5) teaches that the *parah adumah* of Moshe lasted until the days of Ezra. Perhaps this was so by *hashgachah pratit*, as indeed it could not have been prepared during the time of Mishkan Shiloh.

You suggested that the *parah adumah* could have been prepared outside of Eretz Yisrael, in a place overlooking Shiloh. I do not know whether this would have been realistically possible. And even if Shiloh could be seen from across the Yarden,¹¹ it is possible that *ever haYarden* had the status of Eretz Yisrael in that a place overlooking Mishkan Shiloh would be considered *Machaneh Yisrael*. Additionally, even if one could see Shiloh from outside Eretz Yisrael by standing on a tall mountain, it may not have sufficed.¹²

You further suggested that the *parah adumah* could have been prepared on a

rooftop overlooking Mishkan Shiloh, since rooftops didn't have the *kedushah* of their locale. However, there is an important distinction here. True, rooftops weren't sanctified with the *kedushah* of the ground beneath them, but the *kedushah* of *Machaneh Yisrael*, which was resultant of a line of vision to the Mishkan, certainly applied to rooftops, as well.¹³ In fact, the Gemara (Zevachim 118b) states that in order to be considered *Machaneh Yisrael*, there could be nothing blocking one's vision of the Mishkan. Clearly, it was not the location that mattered, but rather an actual line of vision.

The truth of the matter is that the full preparation of the *parah adumah* did not need to be done within visibility of the Mishkan, but only the sprinkling of its blood. The rest of the preparation needed only to be done "opposite" the Mishkan, meaning toward the east.¹⁴ Conversely, the sprinkling of blood did not need to be outside of the camps, only the rest of the preparation. Accordingly, perhaps most of the *parah adumah's* preparation could have taken place behind a wall which obscured the Mishkan, but its blood sprinkled beyond the wall where the Mishkan could be seen.

(בבואות דשא – חוקת תשפ"ב)

8 This follows the opinion of some Acharonim (see Keren Orah and Sfas Emes to Zevachim 112b), that any place where the Mishkan could be seen was not only fit for eating kodashim kalim, but was actually considered Machaneh Yisrael.

9 Zevachim 112b

10 See Minchas Chinuch, 362

11 Shiloh was northeast of Yerushalayim.

12 See Zevachim 118b, "בעי ר' ירמיה, עומד על גבי הנחל ורואה, (יושב) בתוך הנחל ואינו רואה, מאי," If one had extraordinary eyesight, too, it might not have sufficed; perhaps Shiloh needed to be visible to anybody from that location.

13 See Sfas Emes, Zevachim 118b

14 See Rambam, Hilchos Parah 4:6 with the mefarshim